



Ministry of Islamic Affairs,
Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Muhammad Bin Abdulwahhâb

His Life and The Essence of His Call

The reform call in the Arabian Peninsula. Its basis, purposes and objectives. The truth about the rising doubts of the call and its blessing results and outcomes

حياة الشيخ محمد بن عبد الوهاب وحقيقته دعواته

(باللغة الإنجليزية)

By

Prof. Sulaiman Bin Abdurrahman al-Huqail
Professor of Education
Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University

With an Introduction

By

His Eminence
Sheikh Saleh Bin Abdulaziz Al-Sheikh
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**IN THE
NAME OF
ALLAH
MOST
GRACIOUS,
MOST
MERCIFUL**

Contents

Chapter I

The Life of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb

Foreword by His Excellency Sheikh Saleh ibn
Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad Al Sheikh, Minister of
Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Call and Guidance. 7

Preface:	10
1. Introduction: The Religious Condition of the Islamic World in General and Najd in Particular at the time of the Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb	14
2. Early Life of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb	21
3. Journey of the Sheikh to the Hijaz	24
4. Back to Najd	27
5. The Sheikh in Basra	28
6. The Sheikh Never Visited Iran	30
7. Factors That Influenced Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and Led Him to Become a Religious Reformer	33
8. Foundation of the Call at Huraimilâ'	36
9. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb in 'Oyayneh	42

10. Reform Programme of the Sheikh in ‘Oyayneh	47
11. The Relationship between Uthman ibn Muammar and Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb	59
12. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb in Diraiya	63
13. The Meeting and the Agreement	64
14. Activities of the Sheikh in Diraiya	67
15. Publications of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb	75
16. The Contemporary Leaders of Saud Family, Examples of their Struggle and Help for the Call of the Sheikh	81
17. Muhammad ibn Saud, the First Founder of the First Saudi Dynasty	
18. Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud, the Second Founder of the First Saudi Dynasty.	86

Chapter II

The True Facts about the Calling of Sheikh

Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb 93

19. The Real Objectives of Opponents behind Naming of the Call as Wahhabism - The Historical Facts	95
20. Beliefs of the Sheikh	101
21. The bases of the Call of the Sheikh	115

22. Motives of the Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and it's general objectives 140

Chapter III

Refutations of the Doubts raised against the Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and the Counter-Evidence

23. The Magnanimity of the Opposition to the Reformative Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb – Some Examples 147
24. The Reasons for the Opposition to the Call of the Sheikh 148
25. Some Renowned Opponents 158
26. The Doubts and Allegations regarding the Call – A Reply 167
27. The Allegation that the Sheikh and His Disciples' Call Resembled that of Abdulwahhâb ibn Rustam al-Kharji, the founder of the Rustam Dynasty in Morocco 192
28. The Allegation that the Sheikh and His Followers Declared Others to be Non-believers 206

Chapter IV

The Result and Impact of the Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb – An Appreciation of Unbiased Scholars and Writers and Their Defence of the Call

29. Important Factors for the Success of the Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb	220
30. The Impact of the Call of the Sheikh in Najd in Particular and the Arabian Peninsula in General	222
31. The Spread and Expansion of the Call of the Sheikh in the Islamic World	231
32. Some Excerpts from the Writings of some Unbiased Scholars and Authors on the Sheikh	236
 Bibliography	 244

**Introduction by His Eminence
Sheikh Saleh ibn Abdulaziz Al-asheikh
Minister of Islamic Affairs, Endowment,
Call and Guidance**

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, the Almighty, and May peace and blessings be upon Muhammad, his family and companions.

Discussion about the life and work of reformers and religious leaders is not tiring no matter how many times it is repeated. It is not boring even if it is returned to for the reason that speaking of them helps one widen one's mental horizons. The writer and the speaker benefit from it. Likewise, the reader and the listener are rewarded.

Writings about our Imam Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb have been numerous, but they are following in step, and reconsideration in word or thought has not been forthcoming. Therefore the generations are still in need to renew their knowledge about the life and work of the Imam.

The call of the Imam is the call of Islam and the call of pious predecessors. There are a number of ways to look at it. A historian will elaborate, a litterateur will exaggerate, a scholar will lay a foundation for learning and a teacher will try to reconcile the teachings, and so on.

The feeling of a teacher that there is need to remember the call - its basis, principles and components for succeeding generations resulted in the present research. It is presented to awaken this generation and end their long and deep slumber.

It is true that a teacher and a scholar of education looks at the inherited, long-honored heritage as he looks at the future. It was because of our past that we have reached the present, and through it we will reach the remote end by the grace of the Almighty, Allah.

This was the aim of the scholar of education and one of the teachers of our generation, Professor Dr. Sulaiman ibn Abdulrahman Al-Huqail and the reason he brought out this book. He had to undergo a long trial in its compilation, but the effort exerted is highly appreciated because of the great need of our generation for such a book.

When the noble brother Dr. Sulaiman presented me with a copy of it, and I turned the pages, my eyes were proud to see it. The research is unique and distinct from other works. A reader will leaf through its pages and pass through the elegant garden without the least fatigue. It excels in style and is fully documented. Scholars have attended to doubts and the pioneers have supplied replies transcending any fear of any challenge. When you go through it you feel as if you are observing the call yourselves and walking with it. It inspires, rather ignites your interest in the glorious history and the solid convictions, i.e. the faith of Islam and the call of Muhammad (PBUH).

The author does not leave you until you feel, either partly or fully, the impact of the call of our celebrated Imam on other reform calls. Every one of these reform calls has its share in renewing Islam and accordingly in the eyes of Allah.

I would like to congratulate my brother on this excellent research work, and, at the same time, I would like to apologize for writing a short introduction although I

promised to write a comprehensive one. I hope I will fulfill my promise in the forthcoming editions, God willing. May Allah raise the position of this call and defeat its opponents.

I urge youths and adults as well as the researchers, to take advantage of this book. I would like this book to be presented as a gift for every school student as a magnificent hand has penned it specifically for the younger generation.

I pray that Allah bestows His blessings on our Imam and those that helped him, and may He raise their positions high. I also pray that Allah blesses his family and helps the nation through them. Verily He is the Listener and Respondent. Again, I pray that Allah, the Exalted, bless the author Dr. Sulaiman al Huqail and reward him for taking such pains in writing the book. May He also grant success to his family and friends.

May there be peace and choicest blessings on Muhammad, his family and companions.

Saleh ibn Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad Al-asheikh.
Riyadh 26/10/1419H

Foreword

All praise and thanks is due Allah. We seek help from Him and His forgiveness. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger.

The book, *The Biography of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and the Truth of His Call* is basically a research work. It was originally presented for the Masters Degree in Culture and History at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt. I decided to publish it after further research and writing on the life of the Sheikh, his call, his efforts towards this end and the endeavors of the Saud family in support of the call, its propagation and establishment.

The book aims at presenting the facts about the Salafi Da'wa (the call of the pious predecessors) and what it stood for, based on authentic sources, and the sublime targets it endeavored to realize.

Further, the objective of the book is to clear doubts created about the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb in a critical and academic way. It also aims at strengthening Muslim culture by presenting authentic facts about the call of the pious predecessors and their sound track. It desires to point out the facts for those who are unaware of them and to reply to critics in suitable manner.

The critics of the call are of two categories. The first category consists of those who are ignorant of the facts of this call. Whatever they know is wrong and based on the

information provided by opponents who distorted facts about the call, its preacher, its supporters and the country of Saudi Arabia. This opposition is due to the apparently biased propaganda against the call and not because of the call itself. This misleading opposition needs to know the facts of the call of the predecessors' so that they can correct their negative stand.

The second category consists of people who know the facts of the call of the pious predecessors but are hostile to it. They are opposed to the man who called for it, and his supporters because of evil intentions, malice, jealousy, dislike of good to others, love of being prominent or unmindful of the impact of such activity. They are fanatics also. This kind of criticism and antagonism needs to be handled by appropriate replies. There should be sufficiently wide knowledge to face challenges of such kinds of people and answer them point by point. There is no doubt that whoever is acquainted of the real *Salafi* (pious predecessors) call is well equipped with clear evidence and authoritative sources. He will be much stronger, clearer and more appealing in arguments than the opponents of the call are. They criticise the call on the basis of mistaken information and fabrications. These replies and facts about the *da'wa* (call) will cement the dignity of the Muslim culture. The reader will know the reality of the call and will defend it with vision and scholarship.

In pursuit of this aim, the book has been organized into four chapters. The **first chapter** lays out the religious conditions of the Muslim world in general and that of the Najd plateau in particular at the beginning of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb. It deals with the genealogy of the Sheikh, his early life, his journeys in quest

of knowledge, his historical meeting with the ruler of Dira'iyah, Muhammad ibn Sa'ud, the impact of this fruitful meeting, his reformatory program at Oyayneh and Dira'iyah and introduction of some of his important books. The chapter ends with the biographical description of the two rulers of the Sa'ud family living in the time of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, i.e. Muhammad ibn Sa'ud, the founder of the first phase of the Saudi rule, and Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Sa'ud, the second founder.

The **second chapter** deals with the facts of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. It points out the fact that the Sheikh did not begin any new school of religion. The essence of his call is to cleanse the concept of Islamic monotheism from the stains of paganism and polytheism. The exposition of his real call has been made under four headings: (a) Exposé of the Real Objectives of Opponents behind Naming the Salafi call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, Wahhabism, (b) Presentation of the Beliefs of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb from His Books and the Books of His Followers, (c) Explanation of the General Basis of the Call and the Noble Purpose behind It (d) The Lofty Ideals Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb Endeavored to Realize.

The **third chapter** describes the doubts that surrounded the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb because of the opponents of Salafi school of thought. It brings to light the magnitude of opposition that the Sheikh faced, the causes of that opposition and some famous critics of the call. This chapter closes with a review of the points raised about the call of the Sheikh.

The treatise of Sulaiman ibn Salim has achieved a widespread circulation. It distorts the noble Salafi call and

misrepresents the Sheikh. It contains important points of disagreement with the call. The text of the treatise has been copied along with the reply of Sheikh ibn Abdulwahhâb. The replies of the scholars of the call have also been mentioned.

This chapter concentrates on refuting two **main objections** to the call of the Sheikh. These objections are still being discussed and circulated in many Muslim countries by the call's opponents. The **first objection** is the allegation that Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and his followers are Kharijites. Their call is similar to that of Abdulwahhâb ibn Rustam al-Kharji, the founder of the Rustamia State in Morocco.

The **second objection** is the allegation that Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and his followers have declared normal Muslims to be non-believers, that is if they do not conform to his teachings.

The **fourth chapter** deals with the consequences and the noble impact of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb as well as the causes of success of the Salafi call and its spread and prevalence in the Najd in particular, and the Arabian Peninsula and the Muslim world in general. The chapter concludes with the excerpts from the tributes of scholars in praise of the Sheikh as well as their defense of the call and their description of its characteristics.

In the end, I pray for Allah, the Exalted, the All-Powerful to apply our actions to His pleasure and approval and to make us benefit from our learning and what we wrote and put it on the scale of virtuous deeds in the Hereafter. Verily He is the Listener and Respondent. And may peace and blessings be on our Prophet, his family and his companions.

Prof. Dr. Sulaiman ibn Abdulrahman Al Huqail
Riyadh, 8/11/1418H

1. Preview

The Religious Conditions of the Muslim World in General and of the Najd in Particular at the Time of the Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb

The noble reformation movement of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb, May Allah bless him, began at the beginning of the 12th century of the Hijri, the 18th century of the Gregorian era. Imam Muhammad Ibn-Saud was all along supporting and helping him in his noble efforts. This was a period of great degradation of the Muslims throughout the world. Various historical sources and biographers, with different points of view, present a very lamentable picture of the religio-political and social conditions of the time.

According to these historical sources, the Muslim world was passing through decadence and was at the brink of collapse in all aspects, the intellectual, the religious, the moral, the political and the social. All fields suffered very badly, and a state of confusion prevailed everywhere. Waves of despotism, persecutions and anarchy engulfed the political and social arena. People of many Muslim lands had deviated from the teachings of Islam, both in the concept of the attributes and qualities of Allah and in the socio-political and

moral fields.¹ In the field of religion, paganism and polytheism had made inroads into the belief of many people. Graves and tombs of saints and pious people had become places of worship. Supplication to living and dead saints had become common. The traits and characters forbidden by Islam had spread far and wide and the mystic schools had become popular resorts for deviants. These were the circumstances when Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb launched his reformation movement.

Sheikh Sulaiman ibn-Sahman has given a vivid picture of the condition of the Najd area, "People have loosened their connection with Monotheism (pure monotheism) and religion. They have put their effort into calling for help from sources other than Allah through the mediation of saints and pious people, even through idols, images and devils." Many believed that trees and inanimate objects could bring benefit. They sought blessings from the trees, hoping that their work would be accepted at all times.² What ibn-Sahman narrated about the Najd was to be observed in many Muslim lands. "And in Egypt, the land of Al-Azhar University, people raised the banner of idol worship and Pharaonic supplication, and a state of fake dervishes arose."³

¹ Mohammad Qutb, *Islamic Culture*, Jeddah, Science Publishing Center at King Abdulaziz University, 1410H. P167

² Sheikh Sulaiman ibn Sahman, *Al-Diya al-Shariq (The shining Glow)* (1344H), p. 7.

³ *Al-Shubhat al-Lati Uthirat harwa D'awat al-Imam Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb w al-Radd.* (Imam Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb week's research) *'Alaiha*, edited by Abdul Karim, vol. 2, p. 204.

The books like *Tabaqât al-Kubra* (Great high levels) of Sha'râni of that period contain such strange and blatant infidelity. It is stated in one paragraph, that Allah has assigned an angel to each grave of the saints to grant the supplications of anyone who might supplicate to that saint.

In the Hijaz, supplication at graves was rampant. The grave of Khadija (May Allah be pleased with her) at al Mu'allât and the Tomb of Abu-Talib were among the places of supplication and invoking intercession for worldly gain. In Yemen, as in Hudyeda, Hadramaut and Yafi', famous graves and tombs were the centers of supplication and worship. Similarly in Syria, Damascus, Aleppo and remote parts were full of such places, where people used to go to seek blessings. In Iraq, the graves of Abu-Hanifah, and Ma'arûf Karkhi were places of such activities. Shiites, likewise, did the same at Najaf, the place where Ali ibn Abu-Talib (May Allah be pleased with him) was martyred, and at the tombs of Husain and Kazim in Karbala. People used to come to these graves and such places, supplicated and worshipped there and wanted these graves, tombs, etc. to fulfil their needs and remove their difficulties.⁴

As places of worship and places to receive blessings, tombs and graves had spread into all cities of the Muslim world. Some scholars with selfish motives brought out books for the general reader depicting the etiquette of visiting these

⁴ Husain ibn Ghannâm: *Rawdhatu 'l-Afkâri wa 'l-Ishâmu 'l-Murtâdi hála 'l-Imâm wa Ta 'dâdu Ghazawâti Dhawi 'l-Islâm*, (the garden of thoughts and understanding about the Imam and the count of battles of Islam)p.5 & 6.

graves. They supported all sorts of innovations near these places.

The American writer **Lothrobe Stoddard** wrote, "The Muslim World had reached the climax of its decline in the 18th century. The decline and downfall sank to the lowest level. Milieu clouded and the darkness had its imprint everywhere and to every direction. Moral degradation had been very common. The Arab cultural legacy had faded. Muslim nations were overwhelmed by passion and lust, and the virtues had died down. Ignorance dominated their lot. Governments had turned into tools of despotism, anarchy and assassinations.⁵" Religion was darkened and wrapped into calamity. The monotheism taught by the Prophet to the people was veiled in superstition and mystic formalism. Ignorant people entered mosques in large number for long supplications. Groups of beggars and the destitute roamed from place to place with amulets and beads on their necks, misleading people and making them superstitious. People were encouraged to visit as pilgrims to the tombs of saints. Petitions for intercession from the buried people were adorned and beautified. The value of the Qur'an had vanished. Drinking and taking drugs like opium had become common everywhere. Vices were rampant, and people were without worry or fear of forbidden things. Even Makkah and

⁵ The Present Muslim World: Lothrobe Stoddard. Arabic translation by 'Ajjaj Nurwaihid and annotated by Shakib Arsalan, vol.1, p. 295.

Madinah were duped into the same state of affairs like other cities and towns of the Muslim world. In short, Muslims adopted, in practice, all the traits of non-Muslims. The currency of all the teachings of Islam had dwindled and waned. Had the Messenger returned to this earth at that time and seen all those things in the Muslim world prevailing in the name of Islam, he would have been enraged.⁶

Husain ibn Ghannam has described the condition of Najd before the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, "The religious condition of the towns of Najd presented a horrible picture. People visited the grave of *Zaid ibn Khattab* at *Jubaila* in order to request that he relieve them of their sufferings, plead their case to Allah and fulfil their worldly needs. They claimed that there were some graves of the companions of the Messenger of Allah at *Dira'iya*. They used to dedicate themselves to and almost worship them. Their hearts were free from fear of Allah. They were afraid of graves and tombs and fearfully approached the supposed graves of the companions. They believed that they could respond to their calls earlier than Allah could." People used to visit *Ghubaira* Valley in an unprecedented, abominable way. They were under the pretext that there the grave of *Dhirar ibn Azor* was to be found. There was a male palm tree in the town of *Afra*. It was called " *al-Fihal* ". Men and

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

women used to go to it and were busy with abominable acts that were forbidden by religion. A pauper would visit *al-Fihal* to have his income increased. Someone sick would visit it for a cure from illness. A spinster would go to it and call it in all humility, “*O Fahl al-Fuhul*, [O male of males], grant me husband before the year is over.”

There was a tree called the Tree of the Wolf. Women blessed with a male child would go to the tree and hang a piece of old, worn cloth on it, believing that her child would be saved from envy and death.

At *Kharj*, there was a person known as *Taj*. People had invented deviant practices. They made him votive offerings and believed he had the supernatural power to help or harm them. Large number of people used to visit him as pilgrims. Superstitious myths and stories were woven around him.⁷

Sheikh Abdullatif ibn Abdurrahman ibn Hasan has summarized the condition at the time Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb started his reform movement. He wrote, “People of his [i.e. Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb’s] time and area had strayed far from Islam in those days. The legacy of true religion had withered away and the rules of the rightly guided people had collapsed. Most of the people exhibited

7. *Tarikh Najd* (The History of Najd) by Husain ibn Ghannâm, pp. 11 & 12 with adaptation.

the traits of the influence of the “*jahiliya*”, the Period of Ignorance. The banners of the Shariah lay in the dust in those days. Ignorance and blind obedience had become the order of the day. Youngsters were being brought up under the protection of the people of those cities and countries, and their senior people were on the path of their predecessors. Shariah was all but forgotten, and the revealed text of the Qur’an and the principles of the Sunnah were obliterated. The paths of their forefathers on the wrong way were in vogue, and the stories of soothsayers and misguided people were popular and held in esteem. They got rid of monotheism and religion and struggled hard to establish their links with saints, holy men, idols, images and devils besides Allah. Even the so-called scholars and their rulers and overall leaders were marching on the same path, the popular salty sea. Popular custom and traditions had coated their eyes and desire and lust had imprisoned them, keeping them from rising to the centers of guidance, the coherent and compact text and clear signs and verses.”⁸

In short, this was the religious condition of the Muslim World in general and Najd in particular at the time of the appearance of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. We mentioned it in the prologue to the life of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. We will discuss

⁸Abdullatif ibn Abdurrahmân ibn Hasan Al Sheikh: *Majmû'atu'l-Risâ'ili wa'l-Misâ'ili'l-Najdiyya*, (Najdi group of letters and issues) vol.3, pp. 381-382.

further the facts about his call in detail in the forthcoming pages, God willing.

2. Early Life of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb

His Genealogy:

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb ibn Sulaimân ibn 'Alî ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Râshid ibn Barîd ibn Mushrif at-Tamîmî was born in the year 1115H/1703G. He was descended from the tribe of Tamîm, which had kept to their native in the Najd region, settled there and made it their homeland. They left the desert life and adopted other honorable activities like agriculture and trade.⁹

It is known that his family in Najd excelled in honor because of the scholars in the family in the later part of the fifth century of the Hejira. Similarly it had excelled in the recent past. His grandfather Sulaiman ibn 'Alî was referred to for religious verdicts in all matters during his lifetime and scholars and students flocked to him in quest of knowledge. He was a *faqîh* – a jurist, fully conversant with various schools of thought. Ibn Bashir said, "His grandfather Sulaiman was the referee of the Najd in his time on all

⁹ Mahmûd Taha, *Jughrâfiyatu Shibahi 'l-Jazirati 'l-'Arabiya*, (The Geography of the Arabian Peninsula) vol. 2 (Cairo: 1965 C.E), p. 145.

religious matters. He was known as the Scholar of Najd, *Âlim Najd*. He was deep in knowledge. The presidency ended with him. He was known as the bright star of learning. He compiled books and delivered legal verdicts, *fatâwâ*. The scholars of Najd used to refer to him in matters of jurisprudence, etc. He studied under renowned scholars like Sheikh Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Mushrif and others.”¹⁰

Sheikh Sulaiman had two sons, Abdulwahhâb and Ibrahim. Both of them studied well and excelled in studies. Ibrahim confined himself to studies and like his father gave religious verdicts, *fatâwâ*, and taught students.

Abdulwahhâb, however, was appointed as judge at Oyayneh under the reign of Abdullah ibn Hamad ibn Muammar. But when Muhammad ibn Hamad succeeded, he was deposed. Abdulwahhâb had two sons, Muhammad and Sulaiman. Sulaiman¹¹ was a scholar and a jurist and succeeded his father as the judge of Horaimila. He was among the bitter opponents of the call in the beginning, but Allah guided him later.

Muhammad was the man of the call for reform in Najd, which we will discuss in detail in the chapters to follow. Sheikh Muhammad was born in the year 1115H/1703G at Oyayneh when his father was the judge. Sheikh Abdulwahhâb used to teach hadith and Qur’anic exegesis,

¹⁰ Amin Sa’id, *Siratu’sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb* (The Wahhabi sm Religion & State) (Beirut: Shirkatu’t-Tûzi’I’l-‘Arabiya, 1384), p. 8.

¹¹ Sulaiman was opposed to his brother, fought against his call and even helped his opponents but later offered his oath of allegiance to him in a group.

tafsir. His instruction was under the influence of the school of Ahmad ibn Hanbal. It was the part of his job as a jurist. His house was the center for the students and some scholars. This was the time of dialecticism and dialogues on *fiqh*, i.e. jurisprudence and religious issues. The child grew and became a boy in this environment. He used to observe the sittings of his father closely and listen to the talks and discussions about the people and their controversies.¹²

Thus Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb grown up with an open mind and broad culture in comparison to the generation he belonged to. He memorized the Qur'an before he was ten years old. He was very intelligent and quick in memorization and eloquent in speech. "His brother Sulaiman reported that his father expected him to be a very promising boy. He used to be astonished at his power of understanding at such a young age. He used to say that he profited from his son in understanding some (religious legal) rulings."¹³

Thus, when he reached the twelfth year of his life, his bright excellence was visible in a clearer form. His understanding was widened and thoughts brightened. He understood whatever innovations, myths and deviations were prevalent in the society and the environment. He could not appreciate the stand of the religious scholars of Najd, i.e. silence and placidity. He thus resolved to open the way of the

¹² Dr. Abdulhamid al Batriq: *Al-Wahhâbiya, Dîn wa Dawla*, (Wahhabism) research published in the *Annual of the College of Girls*, Ain Shams University, p. 42.

¹³ Husain ibn Ghannâm, *Târîkh Najd, (The History of Najd)* p. 75.

pious predecessors to eliminate innovations and purify Islam from superstitions and myths.

He began to negate these myths and innovations, and started calling people to keep clear ward off the deviations. When the Sheikh realized that the people of Oyayneh did not care to listen to the truth, he decided to leave Najd and go to the holy places in the Hijaz, first of all to perform the Hajj and then to study.

3. Journey to Hijaz

Sheikh Muhammad sought permission from his father to travel to the Hijaz. His father gave his son his permission to leave and provided him with the necessities that he might need on his journey. The Sheikh travelled to Makkah and performed his Hajj there, where he acquainted himself of the conditions of the Muslims. He then went to Madinah, where he came across two eminent scholars. Their impact on his life remained forever.

One of them was Sheikh Najdi. His family was prominent in honor and dignity. He had influence and precedence in the town of Majma'a.¹⁴ He was an intelligent scholar and fond of and attracted to the books of Imam ibn

¹⁴ Majma'a is the capital of the Sudair region, which is situated at a distance of 225 km. north of Riyadh.

Taymiya and loved his opinions. The name of this reputed scholar was Sheikh Abdullah ibn Ibrahim ibn Saif. He was very sad over the conditions Najd had reached those days. Ignorance was widespread, and vices had raised their heads. People had deviated from pure monotheism. He disliked it very much and wanted to eradicate the ignorance through reasoning and persuasion. He understood that the best means of revival of monotheism was through call and guidance and dissemination of knowledge. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb narrated, "I happened to be with Sheikh Abdullah one day. He asked me, 'Wouldn't you like to see what armament I've prepared and gathered for Majma'a?' I said, 'Yes, I would.' He then caught hold of my hand, led me to his room full of books and said, 'This is what I have prepared for al-Majm'a.'"

In Madinah, again, Sheikh Muhammad met another scholar of high repute. He was Muhammad ibn Hayat as-Sindhi.¹⁵ He was of Indian origin and belonged to Salafi school of thought. This Sheikh had a strong link with Ibn Saif. He introduced him to Sheikh Muhammad. Sheikh Sindhi was much opposed to innovations. Sheikh Muhammad studied under him, and Sheikh had a great impact on his life. The fact is that Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb inherited much from these two religious scholars. He also

¹⁵ He authored a book named *Tuhfatu'l-Anami fi'l 'Amali bi-Hadithi' n-Nabi* ﷺ. (the public masterpiece in working according to the prophet (pbuh) Hadith) He also has a commentary on *Al-Arba 'ini' n-Nawawiya* (the Forty Hadith of Nawawi).

derived inspirations from other scholars in Madinah, like Sheikh Daghistânî and Ismail al- 'Ajlawnî.

Innovations were rampant in Madinah as well. One day Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was near the grave of the Messenger (PBUH). He noticed a group of people near the holy room. They were calling the Prophet and appealing for his help and for doing things that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had come to forbid and eradicate. He was opposed to such things, he saw, from the core of his heart. When he saw the Madinah scholar Sheikh Sindhi approaching him, he asked Sheikh As-Sindhi, "What do you say about these people?" Sheikh Sindhi replied:

"Verily, these people will be destroyed for that which they are engaged in (idols-worship). And all that they are doing is in vain." (Qur'an, 7:139)¹⁶

There is no doubt that the journey of the Sheikh to Al-Hijaz was of much benefit to him. He could observe the life of the Muslims of the then Islamic world during the Hajj at the holy House of Allah. It was a representative gathering. He could acquaint himself with the scholars of the holy cities, Makkah and Madinah. He learned from them whatever he needed. After fulfilling his aim of journeying to the Hijaz, he decided to return to Najd as polytheism and ignorance had

¹⁶ Also see Ali al Tantawi: *Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, 1318H*. P17

clouded it. He resolved to fight innovations, myth and image worship wherever and in whatever form it was visible or in any way the situation called for. They prayed for his success and wished him well. He said He left Madinah for Najd.

4. Back to Najd

The Sheikh returned to Najd happy. Travel to the Hijaz had been very beneficial to him. He had performed the obligatory Hajj and visited the Messenger's city, Al-Madinah (May there be the best and the choicest mercy on the dwellers of the city). He had equipped himself with knowledge from the scholars of the holy places. While he had been staying there, he had continued to have links with his hometown, Oyayneh, and he had kept his father informed about his learning and discussions on the jurisprudence (*fiqh*) of Imam Ahmad. He used to write letters and lessons in his own hand. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was fast in writing and was a scribe with a beautiful hand. He could fill a whole copybook in one sitting with a clear and beautiful script without the least feeling of exhaustion.¹⁷

Sheikh Muhammad continued this until he decided to travel to Iraq to benefit himself from the fountain of knowledge there. He left Oyayneh for Iraq in 1136H/1724G.

¹⁷ Husain Khalaf as-Sheikh Khaz'al, *Hayâtu 'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb* (The life of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb) Beirut: Matâbi'u Dâri'l-Kutub, 1968), p. 60.

5. Sheikh Muhammad in Basra

When Sheikh Muhammad reached Basra, he met Sheikh Muhammad al-Jumû'î,¹⁸ a Salafi scholar, under whom he studied Arabic and hadith. He stayed there for some time reading him literature and hadith. He used to oppose the polytheistic activities and innovations and stood against them. His Sheikh appreciated his pupil's gesture and his stress on monotheism and benefited by his discussions.¹⁹

As a matter of fact, Sheikh Muhammad did not concentrate on studies alone while he stayed at Basra. He also fought the innovations of the radical shias, like sanctifying graves and glorifying the saints, etc. He was very shocked of the many myths and innovations he found there, that had been attributed to religion, and were inherited by the people from one generation to the next and that had become a matter of dogmatic truth for them.

The Sheikh exposed the innovations and opposed them. He explained facts about monotheism in his sessions. He once described these sittings by saying, "People involved in polytheistic activities used to come to me and express their doubts. I used to explain that all kinds of prayer and worship belonged to Allah alone. Prayer to and worship of any other being is invalid and uncalled for. They used to remain seated, stunned at what I said and not uttering a single word."²⁰

¹⁸ In reference to a group of residential areas in the city of Basra.

¹⁹ 'Uthmân ibn Abdullah ibn Bishr, *'Unwânu 'l-Majdi fi Tâ'rikh Najd* (the Title of Glory) 1402H, vol. 2, p. 8.

²⁰ Husain ibn Ghannâm, *Târikh Najd, (The History of Najd)* edited by Nasser al-Asad, p. 26

Thus, the Sheikh began opposing the innovations at Basra as he used to oppose them in the Hijaz and at Oyayneh. Some of the inhabitants were hurt at Sheikh Muhammad's criticism of their innovative beliefs. They thus, started putting embarrassing questions to him in order to instill him with doubt. However, the Sheikh replied to them with firm and solid arguments. That cleared the doubts and clarified the right belief and rejects the refutations. One of his replies to the questions he used to be asked happened to be, "All kinds of prayer and worship is due Allah alone. Any kind of worship to any one beside Allah is invalid and forbidden. And whosoever calls any other than Allah is committing error."²¹

Despite what the Sheikh faced at Basra from the extremist Shias, there were people who believed in what he said and defended him. But the opponents were much more in number than his supporters and friends. The opponents hatched conspiracies against him and decided to hurt him for his incessant criticism. One day a group of them came to him at noon. The evil designs were apparent on their faces. They threatened him to kill if he did not leave Basra. Sheikh Muhammad thereupon left Basra for the peace and safety of his life.²² The Sheikh departed Basra for Zubair²³ on foot without any provisions. He became very thirsty on the way

²¹ Husain Khalaf, *Hayat al Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahháb (The Life of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahháb)* p.62.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Zubair is a big village inhabited by people of Salafi (Pure Monotheistic) belief. It is the ancient Basra. To be found there is the grave of the great Companion Zubayr, and it is named after him.

and was near death. Allah then blessed him. A man from Zubair, who was known as Abu Humaidan, saw him. He was riding a donkey, and he took the Sheikh with him on his donkey and escorted him to Zubair.

Sheikh Muhammad stayed at Zubair for some time and then wanted to leave for Syria. He had no money as the imprudent people of Basra who had driven him out had seized everything he possessed. In the meantime, he received the news that his father had moved to Huraimilâ' from Oyayneh because of differences with the emir, Muhammad ibn Hamad ibn Muammar.

The Sheikh thereupon thought of returning to Najd. He passed through al-Ahsâ' and met Sheikh Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Abdullatif al-Ahsâ'î. He paid him respect and stayed with him for some days, well attended by studies and discussions. Thereafter he left for Huraimilâ' and joined his father.

6. Proofs indicating that the Sheikh never visited Persia

Before concluding about the travels and journeys of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb out of Najd, we would like to point out the error committed by many historians.

Some people have related that Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb travelled Persia and that he stayed in Kurdistan. Many historians have committed this mistake. For example, the orientalist Margoliouth has mentioned in the Encyclopaedia of Islam that the Sheikh got married to a woman in Baghdad. When she died he inherited two thousand *dinar*. He then travelled Kurdistan and Hamdan.

Many European writers have referred to this story, like Bergis, Zwemer and BalGerif.²⁴ This mistake is not confined to the orientalists. The writer of *Lam'u'l-Shihâbi fî Sîrati Muhammad ibn Abdi'l-wahhâb* (the brightness of a star) has related that the Sheikh travelled to Persia and studied philosophy and wisdom there. Hafiz Wahaba has copied the story of Ibn Abdulwahhâb's journey to Persian land from this book in the footnote of his book, *Jaziratu'l-'Arab* (Arab Peninsula) on page 336. Thereafter all writers have referred to this journey, depending on the one source, i.e. "The Brightness of a Star" in the biography of *Muhammad ibn Abdi'l-wahhâb*. None of them has ever referred to the original sources on the subject, such as *Tâ'rikh Najd* (History of Najd) of Ibn Ghannâm and *'Unwânu'l-Majd* (Title of Glory) of Ibn Bashr. It is incorrect for many reasons:

First: After going through the books of the Sheikh and his treatises, we can say that he never referred to the Persian land in the list of places he ever visited.

²⁴ Ahmad Ali Al-Saud, p.10.

Again, we find not a single letter written by the Sheikh to any of the contemporary scholars in Persia in his lifetime. Is it thinkable that he lived and studied without having some sorts of relationship with any one there?

Second: Neither of the historian Ibn Ghannâm nor Ibn Bishr refers to his journey to Persia. Had this ever happened, they must have mentioned it, as both of them were very keen to collect all about the life of the Sheikh and commit them to writing. All the writers who referred to this journey depend only on one single source, i.e. "The Brightness of a Star in the Biography of Muhammad ibn Abdi'l-wahhâb". This historian is not a reliable source for the simple reason that the author of this book was against the Sheikh, his call and his supporters.

Third: All the writers who were keen to record every thing that proved his intelligence skills, and ability never mention that the Sheikh had any knowledge of the Persian language. Again, none of his legacies ever point to the fact that the Sheikh was acquainted with the Persian language.

For all these reasons we can not accept the opinion of any one who says and claims that the Sheikh visited Persian lands during his study journey.

7. Factors that had an impact on the life of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and made him a religious revivalist:

There are several of factors that influenced Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. Some of the important factors were:

First: The Home. We have seen that the Sheikh grew up in a house of learning, jurisprudence and judgement. His father Abdulwahhâb was a Hanbali jurist and his grand father Sulaiman, in his time, was Sheikh of Najd. No doubt such an environment will have a dominant impact on the religious and practical life whomever it nourishes.

Second: Ibn Taymîya. Another factor that had great impact on his life and attracted his attention toward the Salafi school of thought was the personality of Ahmad Taqîyu'd-Din ibn Taymîya, who lived in the eight century of the Hejira.²⁵ Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb studied his works very deeply, and some of them he copied in his own handwriting. Some of the treatises of Ibn Taymîya copied by Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb are preserved in the British Museum.²⁶ The fundamentals Sheikh Muhammad called for, were the same for which Ibn Taymîya called. Both of them called for a return to

²⁵ Dr. Hasan Sulaimân, et al., *Tâ'rikhu'l-Mamlakati'l-'Arabiyati's-Sa'udiya* (The History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) (Cairo: 1960), pp. 56-60.

²⁶ Ahmad 'Alî Al Sa'ud, p. 12.

Qur'an, the Book of Allah, and the Sunnah of His Messenger, for a following of the path of the pious predecessors, and to oppose and resist the innovations attached to Islam. Thus, the call of Sheikh Muhammad is considered a dilatation of the call of Ibn Taymîya. "Within the framework of the Quran, and the Sunnah and what was correct stated from the Companions, Ibn Taymîya was free in his thought."²⁷

Ibn Taymîya was keen in fighting evils and innovations, especially the things and acts that were the means leading to *shirk*, paganism or polytheism. Calling on others instead of, or in addition to Allah for supernatural help, seeking blessings from trees and stones and sanctifying them through the belief that they could harm or benefit them were against the teachings of the Messenger of Allah. This impact is evident in the movement of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. The main treatises of the Sheikh written for the people are replete with examples from Sheikh Ibn Taymîya or from his explanations of some verses of the holy Qur'an or of the hadith of the Prophet.

Third: Journeys. The journeys Sheikh Muhammad undertook had great impact on his life. He went to

²⁷ Muhammad Abu Zahra, *Ibn Taymîya: Hayatuhu wa Asrahu wa Ârâduhu wa Fiqhih*, (The life, time, view and philology (fiqh) of ibn Taymeyah), p. 6.

Makkah and met large number of pilgrims. He could understand much of the conditions of the Muslims of the Islamic world, outside of the Arabian Peninsula, through them. When he went to the city of the Messenger (PBUH) he met with scholars there. This had great impact on the call of the Sheikh as he noticed the innovations prevalent in Madinah as well. When he travelled to Basra, he witnessed whatever was there in the manner of innovations and myth that had no place in the religion. The fact is that all the travels of the Sheikh widened his horizon and apprised him of the errors and failings spread all over the Muslim world. This stimulated him to plan to call the people to the pristine form of Islam.

Fourth: The Society. The society into which Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb (May Allah bless him) brought was in need of reform of the belief, and the in which environment he lived was one of innovation and myth. This degenerate environment made Sheikh Muhammad to resolve to fight myth and innovation and spread the pristine principles of Islam.

8. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb in Huraimilâ', and the Beginning of the Call.

Sheikh Muhammad returned from Basra through al-Ahsa to Huraimilâ' as his father used to live there. With his advent to Huraimilâ' the foundation of his call was laid. Here his call entered a new phase. We can call the period of his 15 years stay at Huraimilâ', after return from his journey, as the formative period for the great jump of his call. He stayed at Huraimilâ' from 1139H till his departure to 'Oyayneh in 1153H. Allah bestowed this period on him for preparation and inspiration. The fact is that Sheikh Muhammad never remained in peace, tranquility or rest. He was attached to his father in learning and teaching. When he observed that the people of Huraimilâ' were steeped into ignorance, his enthusiasm intensified to relieve his people of the ignorance they were living in and teach them the basic principles of religion, Islam. He thus began his call publicly, called the people to return to the Book, the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the path of the pious predecessors. The society of Najd was not prepared to accept what the Sheikh was calling for. The people, therefore, opposed the call and tried to get rid of the person calling for pristine Islam. When Abdulwahhâb realised that his son was over enthusiastic about his open preaching and that the people were bent upon opposing this call and were approaching men in authority, he became worried about his son. He advised him to be moderate and to avoid running for it in haste.

He acquiesced in the advice of his father and after the death of his father in 1153H/1729G, he became active in his call. He exerted his efforts with all zeal and fervor. News about him transcended the entire region. People spread the news of the call and many people accepted and followed him and attended his sessions. He preached and guided the people. He then started sending his men and letters to adjoining cities for preaching. The following is the text of the first such letter sent to the people of Arid:²⁸

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

From Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, to whatever Muslims this letter may reach.

May peace and bless of Allah be upon you, and may Allah bestow His Mercy on you and bless you. May Allah be Merciful to you. Allah sent Muhammad (PBUH) to people as a herald, with a warning and glad tidings, glad tidings for those who followed him, that they would enter Paradise and a warning for those who did not follow him, they would enter Hell. You know that whosoever knows it should acknowledge and confess it. Monotheism, was the message that [the Prophet] conveyed to people. Allah sent his messengers for this thing. The majority of the pious

²⁸ Husain ibn Gharnâm, *Tâ'râkh Najd, (The History of Najd)* edited by Dr. Nâseru'd-dîn al-Asad, 3rd Printing, (Beirut: Daru'sh-Shurûq, 1414, pp. 316-317.

people believed it. Whatever is beyond it is polytheism, about which Allah, the Exalted said:

Verily, whosoever sets up partners in worship with Allah, then Allah has forbidden Paradise for him, and the Fire will be his abode. (Qur'an 5:72)

So when you confirm this and see that people say it, it is good. Among the opponents who skip and desist turns to disbelief and liable to be fought against, if they were in the religion of Allah and His Messenger. We have come to you to oppose them and fight, but we advise you through it to adhere to what you left out, i.e. the religion of Allah and His Messenger, if you belong to the community of Muhammad, inwardly and outwardly.

I would like to convey this to you with an example.²⁹

Qibla, the Direction of Prayer: The Prophet (PBUH) and his followers pray, and the Christians also pray. Each has his *qibla* or direction of prayer. The *qibla* of the followers of Muhammad (PBUH) is the holy House of Allah, whereas the Qibla of the Christians is the East, the place of sunrise. All of us perform prayer, but we differ about Qibla. Say, if a follower of Muhammad (PBUH) confirms it (i.e. the claim to believe in the teachings of the Messenger) but

²⁹ *Ibid.*, *Tā'rikh Najd*, (The History of Najd) p, 217.

dislikes facing the Qibla and loves those who face the sun, do you think he is a Muslim? This is what we call for and stand for. Allah, the Exalted sent the Prophet (PBUH) to call people to monotheism, and not to call on anyone with Allah, be he a prophet or any other. The Christians call on Jesus, the messenger of Allah as well as pious people, and (the Christians) say that they will stand as mediators for us before Allah. Therefore, all who believe in monotheism should treat it like the *qibla* and consider shirk, polytheism, facing East, although the matter of monotheism is greater in importance than the *qibla*.

I advise and urge you not to waste the bounty of Allah. Do not prefer the Christian religion to your religion. What do you say of the person who faces Allah and knows that monotheism is His religion and the religion of His Messenger, whereas he hates it and hates whoever follows it? Do you think Allah will pardon him? Advice is for those who fear the Hereafter. But for hearts free from it, we have nothing to do for them.”

Sheikh Muhammad was not content only with that during his staying at Huraimilâ’. He wrote a valuable book during this period putting the fundamentals of his call into it. It is named *Tawhîdu ’l-Ladhi Huwa Haqqu ’llâhi ’alâ ’l-’abîd* (Monotheism is Allah’s obligatory rights upon his worshippers). Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb has explained the Islamic belief with clear details depending on the noble

Qur'an and the holy Sunna. The method he adopted is that he presents a verse of the Qur'an that calls for monotheism, explains it and then adds the sayings of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) that support the meaning. Thereafter he points out whatever spoils the belief of the Muslim, and describes the ways people follow that lead to polytheism. He puts the examples thereafter under "Chapter on the Cause of the Disbelief of the Progeny of Adam and Giving Up Their religion, Was That They Overly Revered Pious People". He said, "Allah, the Exalted says:

"O people of the Scripture! Do not exceed the limits in your religion..." (Qur'an 4:171)

Bukhari narrated from Ibn Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) the saying of Allah, the Exalted:

"And they have said: 'You shall not leave your gods, nor shall you leave Wadd, nor Suwa', nor Yaghuth, nor Yaouq nor Nasr." (Qur'an 71:23)

Ibn Abbas said these names were the names of pious people among the followers of Noah. When they died, Satan inspired them to make statues of them at the places they used to stay and name children after them, which they did. They were not worshipped until (this first generation) died and knowledge of them disappeared. After the death of this generation, these statues began to be worshipped.

Ibn Umar said, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, do not treat me as the helpers of the Jesus treated Jesus, son

of Mary. I am a slave of Allah so say 'the slave of Allah and His Messenger'.

This was the method followed by Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb in his book. His aim was to describe the reality of *tawhîd*, monotheism. His endeavors continued at Huraimilâ'. People supported him and took it for granted that Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was true and that his call was correct and genuine.

On the other hand, others opposed his call, ridiculed him and stood against his call. The political unrest in Huraimilâ' helped opponents. Two big tribes in Huraimilâ' had been opposed to each other for a long time. Each tribe was desirous of leading Huraimilâ'. The leadership of the town was with them. When one tribe was under control of the town, he had no power over the other tribe. The leadership of the town in those days supported the opposing people. The opposition was based on strife, assaults and corruption on the earth.³⁰ The rulers of Huraimilâ' in the time of Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb were extremely arrogant and were mischief-makers. Their mischief and offences against people had increased. Their crimes had stepped up. The Sheikh forbade them to commit such acts. This was uncomfortable and frightening for them. They wanted to get rid of him and hatched a conspiracy against him. They planned to cause the wall of his house fall on him one night. They would have killed him had one of his neighbors not noticed it. He shouted loud and warned people about them. They were frightened

³⁰ *Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb* by Ali Tantawi, vol. 2, p. 22.

and fled away. The Sheikh after this conspiracy thought not to continue in Huraimilâ'. He thought it was advisable for him and for the call that he migrate to his home town, Oyayneh, where he grew and where his family members and friends lived. The ruler of Oyayneh those days was 'Uthmân ibn Mua'mmar. He had declared his acceptance of Sheikh Muhammad and support of his call.

Whatever preceded it, we can safely say that the period he passed in Huraimilâ' proved to be the period of foundation and the first phase of his call. During this period, the Sheikh prepared himself for the great task of starting to execute his reform program.

9. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb in Oyayneh

When Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb reached Oyayneh, its emir, Uthman ibn Mua'mmar, greeted him passionately. He was warmly welcomed and greeted. The Sheikh was pleased and happy at the support of Emir 'Uthman. Upon the urging of 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammar to strengthen the bonds of love and friendship between him and the Sheikh, where the later got married to "Seyyida 'Jawhara" the Emir's aunt. Emir Uthman desired to join and cooperate with Sheikh Muhammad. Allah fulfilled his desire. The Sheikh told him, "I hope and feel that if you stand to help *La ilaha il Allah* (Monotheism), Allah will support you,

and you will rule Najd and its people of the desert.”³¹ ‘Uthman agreed to what the Sheikh said, and he took oath of allegiance for the help and support and followed his call. He helped the Sheikh with all that he had in his power. Ibn Muammar stood for ordaining good and forbidding evil and made the Shariah the law of the land within his jurisdiction. He put an end to tyranny and subdued the offenders. When the helpers of the call saw his position in Oyayneh, they joined the Sheikh. They received the requisite honors and positions from Ibn Mu‘ammar. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb did not lag behind in guiding the people while he was in Oyayneh. He used to send letters to other places, like Dira’iya, Thadiq and Majma’, describing the reality of monotheism and meaning of Islam. The following letter can be presented as example of his messages sent to the adjoining areas.

The Sheikh wrote to Abdullah ibn Issa, reputed scholar of Dira’iya, a letter as follows:³²

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

From: Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb to Abdullah ibn Issa.

Peace be on you and Allah bless you with His Mercy and Blessings.

Ibn Qayyim said in his book, “*Fi Aiyalam al Muqin*” wrote:

³⁰ Otman ibn Bishr, Title: *Al Majd (the Glory)* P9.

³¹ Husain ibn Gharnâm: *Td’rikh Najd*, (The History of Najd) p. 355.

Allah said:

But if they answer you not, then know that they only follow their own lusts... (Qur'an 28:50)

So there are only two ways – there is no third choice – either to respond to the Messenger or to obey lusts. He then explained and said, “Then the Exalted informed that whosoever orders or follow orders other than the way of the Messenger, he thus followed *Taghut* either way:

Have you seen those who claim that they believe in that which has been sent down to you, and that which was sent down before you, and they wish to go for judgement (in their disputes) to the Taghut while they have been ordered to reject them. But Shaitan (Satan) wishes to lead them far astray. (Qur'an 4:60)

Ibn Taymīya said, “*Taghut* is everything that a worshiper transgresses the limits of his deity: whether passing judgement or seeking judgement. Thus the *Taghut* of every nation is the one who pass judgement contrary to the orders of Allah and His Messenger, follows somebody in defiance of Allah, or obeying in matters while not knowing that it is the obedience of Allah. These are the *Tawāghīt* (singular: *Taghūt*) of the world. If you look at and consider the conditions of the people with it, you will see that there are many people who avoid obeying Allah and following His

Messenger. They are obeying *Taghut* and following them. People do not stick themselves in the way of the successful and rightly guided people of this *ummah* (nation). The rightly guided people of the *ummah* are the Companions of the Messenger of Allah and those who followed them. Allah, the Exalted said:

But they have broken their religion among them into sects, each group rejoicing in its belief (Qur'an 23:53)

It also means that “they cut off their affairs between them. All groups have books, and each group rejoices with what it has.”

The word al-Zobor is used. It means books. That is, every group has made up a book and sticks to it. Each acts according to what it has and not the books of others. It is all alike in practice. Allah said:

On the day when some faces will become white and some faces will become black.... (Qur'an 3:106)

Ibn Abbas said, “The faces of the people of the Sunnah and conformity will become white whereas the faces of the dissenting and deviating people will become black. All these statements are from Ibn Qayyim.

Sheikh Taqîyu'd-Dîn in his book *Kitabu'l-Îmân* said, “Allah, the Exalted said:

They took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allah. (Qur'an 9:31)

In the hadith of Ibn Hatem it is said that (Ibn Hatem) told the Prophet (PBUH): "We do not worship them." The Prophet (PBUH) asked, "Is it not a fact that if they make things unlawful which Allah has made lawful and you follow them, and they make things lawful which Allah made unlawful and you follow them." Ibn Hatem said, Yes, this we do." The Prophet (PBUH) said, "This is worship." This has been reported by Ahmad, Tirmidhi and others.

Abu al Alia said, "They found in the book of Allah what has been ordered and what has been forbidden. But they said, "We will not precede our monks in any thing. So whatever they order us to do we do and whatever they forbid we abstain." It is like "*They threw away the book of Allah behind their backs.*" (Qur'an 2:101) Here ends the statement of Ibn Taymiya.

Look at the above statement and compare the conditions of the people, see yourself, judge the things around you by any criteria and try to find out what excuse you have in the Hereafter on the stand you are maintaining. If you have any doubt cite them. God willing, I will clear them. The problem is like the bright sun. However, whomever Allah guides, none can mislead him and the one Allah misguides, there is none to guide him. In case your mind does not

accommodate or hold it, pray to Allah and supplicate, especially before dawn, for [God] to guide you on the right path and make clear to you what is wrong. Stick to and strengthen your religion. Paradise and Hell is before you. May Allah help you. Do not disapprove of this statement. By God, I intended only what is good and profitable. May there be the peace and blessings of Allah on Muhammad, his family and his companions.

10. The Reformative Program of the Sheikh in ‘Oyayneh: The Elimination of Forbidden things.

Like in many other places in the Muslim world, in ‘Oyayneh some trees were considered holy, graves were sanctified and some stones were considered to be able to relieve troubles and cause benefit. The Sheikh thought it fit to eliminate these abominations that corrupted the correct beliefs.

a. Cutting the trees that had been sanctified

Some Muslims in Najd had sanctified some trees, some palm trees. Myth prevailed there. They sought mediation, too, through them. An uglier course of action was that a woman whose marriage was delayed used to go to a male palm tree, embrace it and call it saying, “O the male of the males, I would like to have husband before the year is over.” There was a famous tree known as *Tarafiya*. People used to go to it, grasp it and hope for recuperating and blessings from that

tree. The Sheikh used to hire people to cut down these trees. One such big tree was left in 'Oyayneh. It was known as the Wolf Tree. The Sheikh's followers could not cut it down. It was surrounded by many myths and had many 'believers'. The Sheikh went to this tree himself and cut it down. He recited:

And say: "Truth has come and Batil (falsehood) has vanished. Surely! Batil is ever bound to vanish."

(Qur'an 17:81)

When the people did not find the tree the next day, they expected Sheikh to receive harm as a consequence but found that nothing happened to him.

b. Demolition of domes

The Sheikh took the second step. He resolved to demolish the domes erected on the graves, which had become the objects for the people. They had become the places to seek blessings and invoking the buried for help. All went contrary to the Islamic teachings. The Sheikh exchanged views with the emir, 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammarr. The emir agreed to what he said. In the town of al Jubailah, there was a dome on a grave that was allegedly that of Zaid ibn al Khattab. People had sanctified it and were going there as pilgrims, doing a retreat at the grave (like *ea'tikaf* in a mosque), were wiping the grave, etc. The Sheikh wanted to

demolish the dome and consulted the emir, ‘Uthman ibn Mu‘ammar. ‘Uthman said go ahead and demolish it. The Sheikh feared for Uthman from the people of Jubailah. He, therefore, arranged Bedouins for defense and to aid the emir. The Sheikh went to Jubailah. Emir ‘Uthman was with him along with six hundred people. When he approached the dome, people of Jubailah moved to stop his party by force. Uthman got ready to fight, deployed his force and prepared his armament. When the people noticed the emir’s determination, they refrained from stopping it by force. They went forward to forbid the emir and the Sheikh from demolishing it and warned them of the evil consequence. When the Sheikh noticed such an attachment, he stepped ahead with the axe and hit its sides. His followers followed him and the dome disappeared. Nothing happened to the Sheikh. There was uproar in Najd from these steps. The people alleged that the Sheikh was an innovator and disbeliever, out of the pale of Islam. These evil allegations could not deter the Sheikh from his commitments. He undertook to defend his stand about the call and countered the critics with wisdom and a pleasing and sensible manner. He sent letters to some scholars. The following letter is an example of the letters written to various scholars of Sudair, Washm and Qassim, as guidance to work for the establishment of true religion.

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

From: Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb

To: Whoever may receive this letter

As-Salaamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakatuhu
(peace and blessings be upon you)

To: Specially to Muhammad ibn Ubaid, Abdulqadir al Udaili and his son, Abdullah ibn Saheem, Abdullah ibn Udhîb, Humaidan ibn Turki, Ali ibn Zamil and Muhammad Abalkheil ibn Abdullah³³

Verily Allah, the Exalted sent Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) as the last of the messengers. Allah has guided us to the perfect code of life, *dîn*, through him. He gave us the complete and grand laws, rules and regulations. The core and the cream of all these is sincerity to the religion for the sake of Allah, worshipping Allah alone and associating nothing with him. In negating polytheism, *shirk*, Allah alone should be called and nothing else, be they angels, prophets or others. One should prostrate and kneel to Allah alone. One should call on Allah alone to remove eliminate any harm (supernatural) and seek blessings, good fortune, happy endings, etc. from none but Allah.

³³ Husain ibn Ghannâm: *Tâ'rikh Najd*, (The History of Najd) edited by Nâsiru'd-din al-Asad, p. 246. Also see *al-Duraru's-Sunniya*, (The Sunnah's Jewels) vol. 2, pp. 20 & 22.

Only Allah, and Allah alone, can cause good. One should fear Allah alone. One should swear only by Allah. Slaughter must be made only in His name. All kinds of worship belong to Allah, the only one. There is none besides Him. This is the meaning of, 'there is no god but Allah,' He is the only one to return to, the only refuge, the only intended and desired being, the only one of real trust and reliance. It seems very easy for the one who does not know, and very great for the one who knows. Those who understand know that there are a lot of deviations with which the Devil plays. He has made association with Allah, polytheism, glittering for people. He seduces them in the name of love and respect for the pious people. This statement has two bases.

The First Basis

You know that the nonbelievers who fought the Messenger of Allah (Peace and blessings be upon him) were aware of Allah and were sanctifying Him. They were making the Greater Pilgrimage and the Lesser Pilgrimage, *'umra*, and thought they were on the religion of Ibrahim al-Khalil (Abraham). They were witnessing that it was only Allah who creates, sustains and manages the universe, and that there is none associated with Him in these spheres. As Allah said:

Say, "who provides for you from the sky and from the earth? Or who owns hearing and sight? And who brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living? And who disposes the affairs? They will say, Allah.... (Qur'an 10:31)

So you know that the nonbelievers were witnessing all these.

The Second Basis

The people of the *Jahiliya* (the Time of Ignorance) were calling the pious people like the angels, Issa (Jesus), Uzair, etc. Anything associated with them was named god, but they never meant that they were the creator and the sustainer. They were calling the angels, and Issa saying that 'they are our mediators before Allah.' They were saying: "we worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah" (Qur'an 39:3). The meaning of *ilah* (god) in their dictionary was the same as we have, i.e. that which is cloaked in a shroud of mystery. They called their Sheikh (a pious man) *fuqara*. By this they mean that they are liable to be called, they can profit and hurt. Nonbelievers, however, confess that creation and sustenance is for Allah alone. Their associated beings were not gods in that sense. The purpose of naming them god was because they were present before them. They could see them and touch them. But the polytheists of our time are much more deviant than

they were in the time of the Messenger of Allah. This deviancy is for two reasons:

First

The nonbelievers called on the prophets and the angels for blessings, gains, etc. in the times of affluence and ease. But in the time of calamities and disasters they were calling on Allah alone, very sincerely, as Allah, the Exalted said:

And when harm touches you upon the sea, those that you call upon besides Him vanish from you except Him (Allah alone).... (Qur'an 17:67)

Second

The polytheists in our time call even such people who are no match to Jesus and the angels. If you would ponder, you would realise that this earth had never witnessed a worse paganism before, i.e. worshipping statues, etc. The earlier polytheists used to go to the graves of the prophets, whereas the men of our time go to the graves of Companions like Zubair and Talha. If some one comes with an argument from the Qur'an, as is the general tendency, it will be sheer mockery and ignorance. Please look into *al-Iqna'* under the Chapter 'Ruling about Apostasy'. It mentions a very terrifying thing. It says that if a person commits such things, he apostates, his blood becomes legal. That is, he

becomes liable to be killed. It is like the belief that prophets and pious people are mediators between him and Allah...and so on. If you think that my statement is exaggerated, and that even if these acts are forbidden, the person committing such acts does not go out of the pale of Islam... If you think people of our age commit such extravagant acts on land and at sea, at the graves of prophets and pious people and it does not take them out of the religion of Islam, I then ask you to guide me please. Advise me (with proper arguments from the primary sources, the Qur'an and the Sunna). In case it becomes clear to you that whatever I have said is right and that there is no doubt about it, it is your duty to make this public, educate men and women. May Allah bless the dutiful and the repentant with His mercy.

There is no doubt that a penitent is like the one who did not commit any sin. May Allah guide both of our brothers and us to what Allah loves and to whatever pleases Him. Was-Salaam."³⁴

This was the way Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb used to reply and respond to the critics of his call. He depended on the noble Qur'an and the precincts of the Messenger of Allah,

³⁴ Ibn Ghannâm, *Tâ'rikh Najd*, (*The History of Najd*) edited by Nâsirü'd-din al-Asad, pp. 355-358.

May peace and blessings be upon him, and the way of pious predecessors of this community in all his replies.

c. Implementation of the punishment of adultery

Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb was able to have great and deep impact on the society in which he was living. Everybody was taking account of the activities in which he or she found himself or herself involved. The amount of the impact can be ascertained by the following example. A young lady from Najd came to the Sheikh and confessed that she was married and had committed adultery. She wanted that the Sheikh punish her according to the Shariah. The lady knew that the punishment was the severest one humanity knew, i.e. stoning to death. Still she came forward herself, confessed the guilt and demanded the punishment. It was due to strong and deep faith. She wanted to be purified in this world and save herself from the constant punishment in the Hereafter. It was the call of her heart and mind. No doubt it was the excellent example of self-sacrifice in the way of requisites.

The Islamic code is generous. It is free from doubts. None is punished on presumptions, assumptions and doubts. The Sheikh opened the door of her escaping the penalty. He asked her if she had been forced. She said that she had participated in the crime willingly, that she had not been compelled.

The Sheikh thought over it and asked her to come after her menstrual period was over. The young lady continued to come to the Sheikh. She went to the Sheikh four times and insisted on punishment. Such wondrous examples are rare indeed in the history of mankind. He then implemented the code with the cooperation of the emir, 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammar. This news spread to every nook and cranny and adultery stopped. May Allah grant you the forgiveness, O repentant soul.

d. Congregational Prayer

The Sheikh found that the Muslims at 'Oyayneh were not keen on congregational prayers although congregational prayer is one of the great signs and focal points of Islam. He therefore asked the ruler of 'Oyayneh, 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammar to form a body to implement good and prohibit evil. The first task of the body would be to pressure people to offer prayer in congregation. The body practically implemented this important task. As a result, the mosques were full of praying people and sessions of learning and remembrance were established. This increased the social contacts of the people of 'Oyayneh.

The Sheikh Leaves 'Oyayneh

The Sheikh stood for the above mentioned reformation program in 'Oyayneh with full force of his faith. The news of the call and the support Emir 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammar for the cause spread far and wide in Arabia. It also reached to the rulers of Najd and Ahsa in particular. The opponents of the call believed that the victory of the call would end their control over the people of their respective areas. They therefore took all possible steps to control it. "They comprehended that the call would fill the hearts of the ignorant general people and that they would stand for the Sheikh's way, come out against their rulers and declare their disobedience to them."³⁵

Thus the opponents complained about the Sheikh's conduct and the support of Emir 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammar to Sulaiman Al-Muhammad, Chief of Bani Khalid in Ahsa. 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammar received salaries from Sulaiman. Sulaiman became afraid of the call of Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. "Sulaiman sent letter to 'Uthman threatening him, that if ['Uthman] did not kill or expel the Sheikh from his jurisdiction, his stipend and income from Ahsa would be stopped."³⁶ Ibn Mu'ammar did not respond to the demand of the ruler of Ahsa in the beginning. But the circumstances were all against the Sheikh and Ibn Mu'ammar. Ibn Mu'ammar later realized that he could not afford to do away

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

with the demands of the ruler of Ahsa, so he asked the Sheikh to leave 'Oyayneh.

However, Arab ethics did not fail him. Ibn Mu' ammar did not betray his promise. He told the Sheikh, "Sulaiman has asked me to kill you. I cannot afford to flout his orders, yet it is against the manhood and manner to kill you while you are our neighbor. Thus it is in the interest of your dignity and life that you leave our land."³⁷

When the Sheikh learned of the stand of 'Uthman, he understood that there was no place for him in 'Oyayneh. Thus the Sheikh left it after he had stayed four years there. During this period, 'Uthman ibn Mu' ammar stood as a sincere helper to him. He believed in the truth of the call and was the torchbearer. He was the first to come forward to assist the call and struggle for it. The Sheikh thereupon decided to go to Dira'iyah. There he had a lot of followers. Again, the Emir of Dira'iyah, Muhammad ibn Saud, was famous for his piousness piety and power.

³⁷ Ibn Bashr, *op. cit.*

11. The Facts of the Relationship between ‘Uthman ibn Mu‘ammar and Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb

Any unbiased research worker on the history of the call and the life of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb in ‘Oyayneh can never deny the great role played by ‘Uthman ibn Mu‘ammar for the cause of the call and the man of the call. Ibn Mu‘ammar embraced the call and left no stone unturned in its support and for its success. He stood by the Sheikh in ease and difficulty. He firmly stood by him like a rock, sincerely, when the Sheikh wanted to eradicate evil from the area. He stood with him in implementing the Islamic code of life. He listened to him when the Sheikh advised that people should pray in congregation, and when the Sheikh advised eliminating excesses done to people.

This is the truth about the relationship between the Sheikh and Emir ‘Uthman. These are the historical facts. But some historians accused Ibn Mu‘ammar of a plot that has no historical evidence to support it and is hardly acceptable to an unbiased researcher. Some biographers of the Sheikh reported that the emir wanted to kill him when he left for Dira’iya. Probably this mistake crept in because of what the Najdi historian ‘Uthman ibn Bashr mentioned in his book *Unwânu’l-Majd li Tâ’rîkh Najd*. It said, “Ibn Mu‘ammar sent the message to Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb saying that “Sulaiman has ordered us to kill you. We cannot afford his anger and cannot defy his commands because we do not have sufficient strength to fight him. At the same time, it is

against the ethics and chivalry to kill you in our country. It is, therefore, in the interest of your dignity and life that you leave our country.” He sent a horseman named al-Farîd. The emir said, “Ride your horse and go with this man to wherever he wants.” The Sheikh said he wanted to go to Dira’iya. The horseman rode his horse and the Sheikh left ahead of the horseman. The Sheikh was alone. He had only a fan with him and it was extreme summer. Ibn Mu‘ammar told his horseman, “When you reach your brother Yaqub, kill him near him”. The horseman moved on, and the Sheikh was ahead of him. The Sheikh did not pay attention to him. When the horseman intended to kill him, Allah stopped his hand and nullified the plot. Fear filled his heart and he failed to move even a step. He then turned his horse and returned to ‘Oyayneh and told Ibn Mu‘ammar that he was extremely afraid.”³⁸

What the Najdi historian, ‘Uthman ibn Bashr ascribed to Ibn Mu‘ammar is not supported by the historical facts. His contemporary historians admit to nothing about this incident. Husain ibn Ghannâm, the student of the Sheikh and the author of *Rawdhatu’l-Ifhâm*, an authentic book on the biography of the Sheikh, also does not indicate the allegation put forward by Ibn Bashr about Ibn Mu‘ammar. Had this story been true Ibn Ghannâm would have known it much before Ibn Bashr who did not see the Sheikh himself. Also Ibn Bishr was not a student of the Sheikh. Again, Ibn Bishr himself has withdrawn the story and acquitted ‘Uthman ibn Mu‘ammar of the charge.

³⁸ Ibid., p.19.

Ibn Bashr said, "May Allah bless you. In the first edition of the book, I did talk about Uthman ibn Mu'ammār, as it was reported to me, that he had ordered his horseman to kill the Sheikh in that way and things like that. Further research into the matter convinced me that there was no truth in it. I, therefore, have deleted it from the manuscript."³⁹ Ibn Bashr denied the story, yet still some historians continue to write about it, as if it was a proven fact despite the fact that the writer himself retracted the story.

The truth is that the ascription of the murder plot of the Sheikh to 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammār is false. History has witnessed that he was the first to assist and defend the call and help the Sheikh in implementing the reformative program in 'Oyayneh. Ibn Ghannâm said, "Thereafter he decided to leave the place and move to 'Oyayneh and reside there. This he resolved after Allah guided 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammār to accept the bright, true religion. Something entered his heart and he announced before assembly of the people and his friends his acceptance and love for the call. When the Sheikh entered this country, 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammār stood with the Sheikh and assisted him and struggled for the call. He issued orders that the people should follow the Sheikh and that they must not oppose and dispute him. He made it binding, in general and in particular, to obey his words and commands. He asked people to stick to the call

³⁹ Ibid. vol. I (Baghdad Printing), p. 15.

and be straight and just. He wanted them to show all respect for the Sheikh. After the directives for the call, complete adherence was sought. The call received full attention. The Sheikh began to receive respect and dignity. His words were heard and followed. The call received attention in all the areas under the domination of 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammār. The news spread far and wide and the believers were much pleased. They reformed themselves and put the conditions back on the right track. Truth spread in every direction from that place, and his teachings spread everywhere."⁴⁰ 'Uthman was not contented to help the call in his area of domination. When the Sheikh left for Dira'iyā and began living there, the first deputation to reach Dira'iyā for an oath of allegiance at the hands of the Sheikh was from 'Oyayneh. The emir also invited the Sheikh to return to 'Oyayneh. Thus, we can safely say that 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammār helped the man's call for reform personally and with his power and wealth. It is thus absurd to think that he plotted to kill him when the Sheikh decided to leave for Dira'iyā. The fact is that the situation was very much against the Sheikh and the emir in those days. It was therefore advisable on the part of the Sheikh to leave the place. The emir helped the Sheikh with his horseman when in 'Oyayneh and when he decided to leave for Dira'iyā.

⁴⁰ Husain ibn Ghannām, *Rawdhātu 'l-Afkār wa 'l-Ishām*, (*The garden of thoughts and understanding*) vol. 1, p. 31.

12. The Sheikh in Dira'iyah

The Sheikh left 'Oyayneh in 1158H and reached Dira'iyah at the time of the afternoon prayer. "He passed his first night in the house of Abdullah ibn Suwalim. People flocked to see him there. Ibn Suwailim was annoyed, and afraid of the emir of Dira'iyah, Muhammad ibn Saud. But the Sheikh advised ibn Suwailim to remain calm and quiet."⁴¹

The Sheikh moved to the home of his student Ahmad ibn Suwailim the next day. The house became full with his supporters and followers. Thaniyan and Mashari, brothers of the Emir, Muhammad ibn Saud, were among them. They tried to persuade their brother to see the Sheikh. He was hesitant in the beginning. They went to his wife, Moudhi ibnet Abi Watban. She was an intelligent and pious lady. They, the brothers of the Emir, acquainted her with the position of the Sheikh and the facts about his call. They convinced her and instilled in her heart a love of and interest in him and in helping and supporting the cause. When her husband, Muhammad ibn Saud, entered the house she told him, "Allah has delivered this man (the Sheikh) to you. He is a gift to you. Honor what Allah has bestowed on you."⁴² The emir agreed. He called his brother Mashari and asked him to invite the Sheikh to him. Mashari, on the other hand, suggested that his brother go to the Sheikh himself and see

⁴¹ 'Uthmān ibn Bashr, *Tā'rikh Najd*, (The History of Najd) vol .1, p. 11.

⁴² *Ibid.*

him. He said, "Go to him. Honor and pay him regard. So that he can be rescued from the evil of people."⁴³

13. Meeting and Agreement

Emir Muhammad ibn Saud went to the house of Ahmad ibn Suwailim and welcomed the Sheikh. The emir said, "Welcome to a place better than yours. Be glad with honor, dignity and strength." The Sheikh said, "I congratulate you with the good tidings of dignity and strength, i.e. *La ilaha il Allah*. Whoever holds it and assists it, owns countries and people. The message of monotheism is the first message the messengers called to from the beginning to the end."⁴⁴

The Sheikh then enlightened him about the message of the Messenger of Allah, Peace and blessings be on him, and the path he followed and the path of the pious predecessors. He explained what they ordained and what they forbade. He told him that every kind of innovation is deviation and going astray. He elucidated how Allah inspired his Messenger to struggle and fight in the way of and for the cause of Allah and how the Messenger enriched people and made them brothers. He pointed out the condition of the people of Najd

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 1. p. 11.

in those days, their violating Islamic injunctions, involvement in polytheistic practices, innovations, divergences, ignorance and injustices. After listening to the Sheikh, the Emir said, "O Sheikh! This is the religion of Allah and His Messenger. There is no doubt about it. Be happy and have glad tidings of any help on the way, of whatever you ask for. And fight and struggle against those who oppose monotheism. But I would like to put two preconditions:

First. When we stand by you and help you in the struggle and fight in the way of Allah, and Allah opens victories for us, towns and cities subdue, I am afraid you may leave us in exchange for others.

Second. I, as a rule, take from the people of Dira'iyah something as tax at the time of harvest. I am afraid you'll forbid and say take nothing from them.

The Sheikh replied, as far the first point is concerned, stretch your hand, 'blood for blood and destroy for destroy'. As far as the second point is concerned, possibly Allah will open victories for you and will give so much that will be better than what you get from taxes. Emir Muhammad ibn Saud thereupon stretched his hand and gave an oath at the hands of the Sheikh on the Religion of Allah and His Messenger, jihad in the way of Allah, implementation of the Shariah, establishment of good and elimination of evil. The Sheikh stood up and remained with the Emir, and thus agreement between the Sheikh and the Emir concluded with the assistance and help for truth and fighting polytheism.

Thus Muhammad ibn Saud joined the call. The foundation stone of the first phase of the Saudi rule was laid with this agreement of the Sheikh and the Emir. The news of this agreement was wide spread in Najd towns by the year 1157H/1746G. As a result, people flocked to Dira'iyah for oath of fealty to the call. It became the capital of a religio-political state and a center of martial activities. Accommodations in Dira'iyah proved tight as large numbers of the followers of the Sheikh poured in from 'Oyayneh and other places of Najd. Dira'iyah and those who migrated to it passed through an economic crisis. But later conditions improved because of the war booty and the Zakah, the poor payment, which began to be collected from the areas subdued or areas having given allegiance to Dira'iyah. When 'Uthman ibn Mu'ammal knew about the agreement of the two Muhammads, he regretted the exodus of the Sheikh from his area. He requested him to return and promised to help and assist and defend him. The Sheikh replied, "It is not in my hands now. Decision lies in the hands of Muhammad ibn Saud. If he decides I go with you, I will do and if he decides I live with him I live with him. I can not exchange a person who received and welcomed me for another."⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Husain ibn Ghannâm, *Ta'rikh Najd, (The History of Najd)* edited by Nâsiru'd-dîn al-Asad, p. 82.

14. Activities of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb in Dira'iya

a) Lessons on *Tawhîd*, Islamic Monotheism

The Sheikh, after being established in Dira'iya, devoted to teaching the way he used to do in Basra, Huraimilâ' and 'Oyayneh.

He taught the people monotheism. Historians are unanimous that in Dira'iya he started his lectures on the meaning of *La ilaha illa'llâh*. He said that there are two aspects of the declaration, negative and affirmative. *La ilaha*, there is no god, negates every thing that is worshipped and *ila'llâh*, but Allah, affirms that worship, all sorts and kinds of worship, are due to Allah alone. There is no partner to Him in any way. He is Exalted and All-High. He said that the perception and knowledge of Allah is possible through His signs and creatures, like the sun, the moon, the stars, night and day. The Sheikh also taught them the meaning of Islam. He said that it means surrender to Allah alone, with the real concept of monotheism, and submission to Him with all kinds of obedience. He also taught them the life of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) (Peace and blessings be upon him), his mission, his struggle for preaching of Islam and his emigration from Makkah to Madinah. He explained to them that the first thing he called to was *La ilaha illa'llâh*, there is no god but Allah. The Sheikh concentrated on explaining the

same in his writings. He wrote a series of books and treatises, which proved his deep understanding of the fundamentals of the Shariah. He (May Allah bless him with mercy) continued his lectures till his death.

b). Correspondence with Other Areas and Towns

When the Sheikh completed his work in Dira'iyah and guided the people towards real monotheism, he opened a new chapter for the call. He wrote letters to the people of the adjoining areas like Huraimilâ' and Riyadh, and to Arab rulers, Jurists and scholars, calling them to return to monotheism, to pristine Islam. You will find an example of such correspondence below.

The following is the letter sent to Al-Suwaidy, the Scholar of Iraq. It was in response to a letter written to him wherein he had been informed about what people said about him. He was asked to clarify. The Sheikh to replied the letter as follows:

In the name of Allah, the most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

*Salâmun 'Alaikum wa Rahmatu'llâhi wa
Barakatuh*

[I was] very pleased to receive your letter. May Allah make you the leader of the pious and one of the

preachers of the True Religion of the Chief of the Messengers.

I would like to inform you that, by the grace of Allah, I am a follower and not an innovator. My belief and religion is the religion of Allah. My way is the way of the People of Sunnah and Congregation – *Ahlu's-Sunnah wa'l-Jamâ'a* – and the leaders of the Muslims, like the celebrated four Imams and their followers till the day of Judgement. I have, however, brought to light the real teachings of Islam and have called people to be sincere to the religion of Allah. I forbade them to call on the living and the dead among our pious people for supernatural help. I ask people to abstain from associating any one, in any way with Allah, to refrain from any kind of worship like slaughter, votive offerings, vouch for and prostration's and the like to anyone except Allah. All such things are due to Allah alone. It is not allowed even for the closest angels and the messengers. This is what the messengers of Allah called for, right from the first to the last of them. This is the stand of the *Ahlu's-Sunnati wa'l-Jamâ'a* – the bulk of the majority on the path of the Messenger. I made it clear that the first group among the Muslims to introduce the element of paganism in the community were the damned and wicked Shiites. They call on Ali and others to fulfill their needs and to remove their troubles. I am a man of position in my village. My words are listened to. Some chiefs opposed this call because it was against the environment they were

brought into. Prayers are established and obligatory alms are collected under my directives and other such obligatory duties being performed as ordained by Allah. I forbade them to take 'interest' and usury. I forbade them to take intoxicating drinks. Similarly I stood against the rest of the forbidden things. There was no possibility for the chiefs and the leaders to find fault in it and slander [me]. All such actions are appreciated and loved by people. The enmity of the opposing forces to my calling the people to monotheism and forbidding them from polytheism took different shapes. They cloaked this enmity from the eyes of the public by saying that this is against the path of the majority. This trial and the intrigue greatly increased due to the plot of the Devil and his band. There are allegations that a wise man feels ashamed of to talk about. Fabrications and slanders are rampant. What you mentioned in your letter are among them, such as I consider and declare people, who do not follow me, as nonbelievers, that the marriages of such people are void, etc. I wonder how a wise man can think of my doing such stupid things. How can a person say that he is a Muslim and that he is a nonbeliever, that he is wise and that he is mad?

Similarly the allegations levelled against me about the tomb of the Messenger of Allah are baseless. They allege that I said, "Had I power and control I would have demolished the tomb of the Prophet (PBUH). As far the book *Dalâ'ilul-Khairat* (*The*

Indications of Blesses) is concerned, there is truth in it. There is solid reason for it. I advise all brothers who listen to me, that the book of Allah, the Qur'an, should receive prime importance. Nothing else should replace it. Nothing else should be considered preferable. Reading any thing other than Qur'an must not be considered superior or equal to the Book of Allah. But whoever alleges that I ask them to burn it or that I forbid praying for the peace and blessings upon the Messenger of Allah in any way is a blatant liar and inventor. In short, whatever is alleged beyond calling the people to Islamic monotheism, and forbidding them from indulgence in polytheism is false and without foundation. This fact might be hidden to others, but I hope, it should not be hidden to your honor or anyone from your area. Even a most popular man who sincerely stands to acquaint people with the real teachings of Islam, forbids them to call on people in the grave [for help], will come across a host of enemies and jealous people. Ruling classes and their lackeys prove much more stubborn in negative responses and come out with the type of allegations you hear now. They misguide people by saying, "Beware of this man." There would be allegation that this man is playing down the pious predecessors and the like. Whereas calling to pristine Islam enhances the dignity and restores the prestige of the pious predecessors. I would like to remind you that it is an essential part of the creed to preach what the Messenger came with and

stand up for it as Allah commanded prophets to do before the last Messenger. Allah said:

And (remember) when Allah took the Covenant of the Prophets, saying: "Take whatever I gave you from the Book and Hikmah (understanding of the Laws of Allah, etc.), and afterwards there will come to you a Messenger confirming what is with you; You must, then, believe in him and help him." (Qur'an 3:81)

Thus when all of it is made obligatory; it is not valid to leave it.

I therefore appeal you to help the religion of Allah and His Messenger with the realm of possibility and capability. Allah will raise your prestige, even if it is done only with your heart and prayer, as the Messenger of Allah said, "When I ask you to do a thing, do it according to your capacity." If you find that my words are acceptable to my brothers, Allah wastes not the reward of any act of piety.

Strange things came out from the leaders of the opponents of the call. When I explained to them the words of Allah in accordance with the celebrated commentators remarks about the verse:

Those whom they call upon, desire (for themselves) means of access in their Lord (Allah), as to which of them should be nearest and ... (Qur'an 17:57)

and

And they say, "These are our intercessors with Allah. (Qur'an 10:18)

and

We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah. (Qur'an 39:3)

and what Allah, the Exalted said about the confessions of the nonbelievers in the verse:

Say (O Muhammad) "Who provides for you from the sky and from the earth? Or who owns hearing and sight? And who brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living? And who disposes the affairs? They will say Allah. Say, "Will you not then be afraid of Allah's punishment (for setting up rivals in worship with Allah)?"

(Qur'an 10:31)

and the rest, they say it is not worthy for us to follow the Qur'an and the examples it produced, or the words of the Messenger or the pious predecessors. We obey only what the followers (of the later period) explained to us. I told them I argue with the statements of the followers of Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii and Hanbali. I

argue with the books of the followers of their reputed and trusted scholars. When they denied I copied the statements and quoted for them from every school of thought and mentioned what they said and I say about calling upon at the graves and dedication for the graves. Their comparison with their respective sources confirmed my stand yet their opposition increased further.

As far as charging people with unbelief is concerned, I do it only to those who, after knowing and being fully convinced, abuse it and forbid people to act according to the teachings of Islam and persist in their evil – forbidden activities. I charge them only of the unbelief. The bulk the *'Umma* – the bulk of majority, by the grace of Allah, is not like such adamant people.

There is the further allegation of waging war against Muslims. The fact is that we did not fight with a single person until now save and except those who violated the Islamic injunctions and killed people. Those who came to our areas and where there was no way left but to defend and fight some of them in combat according to the dictum, 'Reward for the evil is its like.' Similarly we fight against those who publicly denounce the religion of the Messenger after they are fully educated.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Ibn Ghannām, *Tā'rikh Najd, (The History of Najd) pp . 302-322.*

The Call to Jihad

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb observed that his opponents and enemies were not content with criticism only. They continued ridiculing the call in public and alleging unfounded things against men of the call. They even prepared to combat and attack them. The Sheikh thereupon called his followers to jihad in the way of preaching and defending the call. The followers realised that the call must be defended with force. They realised that truth needed to be guarded and protected with the sword. They rallied round their leader. The combat therefore began from the year 1160H. It continued even after his death. A chain of combat followed. As the first was yet to come to an end, another war was imposed. The battles were with the tribes and rulers of the adjoining areas. The first battle was fought in Muharram 1159H.

15. Publications of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb.

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb (May Allah bless him with mercy) left valuable property in the form of books and treatises. It is a library and a fountain from which to quench the thirst. The following is a description of some of his important writings:

1. Kitabu't-Tawhîd [The Book of Monotheism]

This was the first book written by Sheikh Muhammad (May Allah bless him with mercy). The main purpose of the

book is to elucidate the concept of monotheism and that of *shirk*, polytheism, as well as matters related to them. The book, *Kitabu't-Tawhid*, is the nucleus around which revolves other books of the Sheikh and his followers.

This book consists of Qur'anic verses and Hadith, traditions of the holy Prophet, that clarify and explain the verses. It also details the excellence of the declaration, *Lā ilaha ila'llāh*. Similarly it discusses numerous kinds of polytheism. In the words of the historian Ibn Bashr, "His book is the best on the subject by any author."⁴⁷

A number of commentaries have been written on this book. *Fathu'l-Majid* by Sheikh Abdulrahman ibn Hasan al Sheikh is the most famous among them.

2. Kitabu Kashfu'sh-Shubhât [Book on Removing Doubts]

This is a small book with few pages. It resembles a letter, like the letters he used to send with his men to chiefs and other leaders. It is not known when this book was written. It is, however, like the preface and introduction of the call of the Sheikh. It is a summary of monotheism as well as the nature of polytheism and its causes. It represents one of the steps through which the call passed. It represents the period of intellectual struggle leading toward physical conflict between the helpers and the opponents of the call. The Sheikh has refuted the charges and allegations of

⁴⁷ Ibn Bashr, *'Urwatnu'l-Majid, (Title of Glory)* vol. 1, p. 166

infidelity and polytheism and has nipped their arguments in the bud.

The Sheikh, in this book, has mentioned the arguments of the people who themselves cling to saints, wiping their hands on tombs and like actions. They argue that they thereby pay respect to pious people. They appeal to the saints and the pious people to mediate, to supplicate, as they are the best people among them. The Sheikh stated that going to pious people and asking them to supplicate on their behalf could be valid in case of the living ones. This can never be valid in case of the dead. With death, the relation between life and living people is discontinued. There is no difference between the one who hopes for blessings near the grave of a saint and the one who worships idols. Both of them consider that there are intercessors and mediators between Allah and himself. The nonbelievers of the Quraish, who fought the call of monotheism, were on the same ground. They believed that Allah was the great creator, but that there were gods other than Allah who interceded and brought benefit and loss. These gods are in the way of Allah:

We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah (Qur'an 39:3)

The Sheikh continued to put forward various examples of this kind of polytheism in opposition to the beliefs of some of the Muslims about saints and pious people.⁴⁸ This book

⁴⁸ *Kashf al Shubhat* (The revelation of refutes) P220, thereafter as supplement to the collection of *Monotheism at Najdia*.

has been published independently many a time and often as part of collections. Pages 233 to 258 of the *Tâ'rikh Najd* (The History of Najd) by Husain ibn Ghannâm edited by Dr. Nâsîru'd-dîn al-Asad published in Cairo in the year 1381H also copied this book.

3. Kitabu'l-Kabâ'ir (The Book of Major Forbidden Things [in Islam])

The Sheikh has elucidated things contrary to the fundamentals of Islam. This book has been published a number of times.

4. Kitabu'l-Sîrati'l-Mukhtasira (The Book of the Short Biography [of the Prophet])

This is a small book on the life of the Messenger (May peace and blessings be upon him). This is a short summary of the biography by Ibn Hisham in the style of the Sheikh. It has been published a number of times.

5. Kitabu'l-Usûli'th-Thalâthati wa Adillatiha (The Book on the Three Fundamentals of Islam and Their Proofs)

In this work, there are explanations of the knowledge of Allah, the knowledge of His prophet and the knowledge of Islam with related arguments.

6. Kitabu Usûli'l-Îmân (The Book on the Fundamentals of Belief)

The Sheikh has explained the knowledge of Allah and belief in Him. This book also discusses belief in destiny and the motivation to acquire knowledge.

7. Kitâbu Fadhlî'l-Islâm (The Book on the Excellence of Islam): This book discusses the Excellence of Islam and elucidates it.

8. Kitâbu Shurûti'l-Salâti wa Arkâniha (The Book on the Conditions and Pillars of Prayer): This book was compiled to apprise readers on Prayers. It is divided into chapters. The first chapter is named Manners to go for Prayer.

9. Kitâbu Majmû'i'l-Hadîthi 'Alâ Abwâbi'l-Fiqh (The Book of Hadith Collection according to the Fields of Jurisprudence)

10. Kitâbu Mukhtasiri'sh-Sharhi'l-Kabîri wa'l-Insâf (The Book of a Short Commentary on Major Sins and Justice)

11. Kitabu'l-Hadî'n-Nabawî (The Book on the Guidance of the Prophet)

12. Kitabu Masâ'ili'l-Jahilîya (The Book on the Problems of the Time of Ignorance)

Other than the works above, the Sheikh had many long and short treatises that he used to send to the rulers, Arab chiefs and scholars. His pupil Husain ibn Ghannâm has collected all such treatises that he could lay his hands on and wrote it down in the first part of his history, *Rawdhatu'l-Afkâri wa'l-lfhâmi li-Murtâdi hala'l-Imâmi wa Ta'dâdu'l-Ghazawâti Dhawî'l-Islâm*. Dr. Nâsiru'd-dîn al-Asad edited the book and had it published in the name of *Tâ'rikh Najd*, Cairo Edition, in the year 1381H/1961G. Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University has taken the responsibility of publishing all the works of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb.

The style of the Sheikh in all his books and treatises is easy and clear. One can understand them without difficulty. He presents his opinions directly, free from any artificial style. The Sheikh was keen to use literary language in his works. However, he also used local dialects of the Najd in some of his treatises. While writing to Abdullah ibn Issa he used Najdi dialects freely.⁴⁹ But it was rare.

Death of the Sheikh

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb (May Allah bless him with mercy) died in Shawwal 1206H after attaining ninety-one years of age. Most of his life passed in preaching

⁴⁹ *Rawdhatu'l-Afkâri wa'l-lfhâm*, (The garden of thoughts and understandings) vol. 1, p. 371.

Islam and reforming society accordingly. The news of death shrouded Dira'iyah with general grief. This grief engulfed the Arab Peninsula wherever the news of his death arrived. Arabia had lost a great reformer. Scholars like the great Imam and reformer Allama Muhammad ibn Ali al Shawkani lamented his demise. Allama Shawkani is reported to have said in a couplet, 'The mountain of knowledge, the beacon of light, the pivot of the learned society, the great guide has passed away leaving people lamenting and bewailing as the great flow of learning is stopped.'

16. Contemporary Saud Family Chiefs of the Time of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb

Citation of some examples of their efforts for the success and establishment of the call.

It is appropriate to talk, in brief, about two persons of the Saud family before discussing the reality of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. They were the contemporaries of the Sheikh. They stood with the Sheikh and helped him till the call achieved success. We mentioned before that the Sheikh met the Saud family when he arrived in Dira'iyah in the year 1158H. There was an agreement between the Sheikh and Muhammad ibn Saud, the first founder of the Saudi Dynasty. We confine ourselves in the

following pages to these two Saudi chiefs, as they were the contemporaries of the Sheikh.

First: Imam Muhammad ibn Saud

Muhammad ibn Saud was born in the year 1100H/1687G in Dira'iyā. He ruled Dira'iyā from 1139H to 1179H, i.e. forty years. The first half of his rule belongs to the period before the Sheikh and the second half passed with the Sheikh in Dira'iyā. Muhammad ibn Saud could establish justice and maintain peace in the city of Dira'iyā during his period of rule. Justice was done also to his adversaries inside the city.

Ibn Ghannâm, Ibn Bashr and Ibn Sahman have described the good qualities of Muhammad ibn Saud. Ibn Ghannâm said, "Emir Muhammad ibn Saud was known for his good character and a man of good faith. He earned fame for his fair dealings with people."⁵⁰

Ibn Bashr said Muhammad ibn Saud received and gave shelter to Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb without the least fear of reproach and admonition from the critics or conspiracies of the opponents. He kept helping Islam and got ready for battle. He exerted all efforts to establish it. He stood against all opposition and defended it. Nothing could deter him from his firm resolve.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Munir al-'Ajlânî, *Tâ'rikhu Biladi'l-'Arabiyati's-Sa'udîya*, (The history of Saudi Arabia's lands) vol.,1, pp. 109-123.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

One of the pioneers of the 'predecessors' call, Sheikh Sulaiman ibn Sahman said, "One of the wonderful additions to the call was the understanding and accord of Muhammad ibn Saud when circumstances were difficult and when there was no help. He kept to helping the call and did not worry about opposition from near or far. Even when some people segregated and isolated him for his support to the call, he paid little attention to blame or blasphemy. He was free from any doubt in his mind and continued his support. Allah then established him firmly in his lifetime around the area of his control. People submitted to him and followed him. After his death, his offspring continued to follow suit for the call as usual."⁵²

The author of *Lam'u'sh-Shihâb* described the generosity of Muhammad ibn Saud, his love for his countrymen and his desire to see the number of his people increased. He said, "People trustworthy and well informed about Muhammad ibn Saud have reported that he was a very generous and pious man. He was very noble in character. He was a rich man with a lot of palm trees, dates and agricultural produce. The number of animals passed beyond count only to increase his magnanimity. People came to ask him for help, and he was very generous, especially to those who were pious and deserving.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 109-127

It is famed that Muhammad ibn Saud did not like to see any youth from his place and from his group to remain a bachelor. He used to ask reasons for not marrying. If it was reported that he had no money to pay dowry, ibn Saud would provide the dowry and will ask him to marry. If he knew that someone was refusing to give hand of his daughter though the proposer was of the same status, he would go to the parents and would admonish them. He would stand guarantee for the parents fearing any bad treatment from the proposer to the girl. He used to fulfill the conditions. All this was due to his sublime nature and his generosity. He wanted to see his fellow men in good circumstances and with numerous offspring.⁵³

Spreading of the call during the time of Muhammad ibn Saud

When Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb reached Dira'iyah there was an agreement between the Sheikh and Ibn Saud. Thereafter he started calling people to the right path guiding them with good manners. But many people took objection to it. They rather prepared themselves to combat the call with force. Thus defense became imminent. The Sheikh called his followers to defend the 'call of the Pious Predecessors'. They responded to the call. Muhammad ibn

⁵³*Ibid.*, pp. 128

Saud, the ruler of Dira'iyah, was among the forerunners. He along with others came forward to help and defend the call. The Saudi victory went on increasing gradually. Initially it was limited to very few areas. Later it spread over and reached up to the way of Washm. The rule of Dira'iyah was later extended to Sudair and Mahmal. Riyadh also bent under the might of Dira'iyah. Later, however, Riyadh requested for a truce.

Muhammad ibn Saud died in the year 1179H. He was succeeded by his two sons, Abdulaziz and Abdullah. Abdulaziz acceded to the emirate but Abdullah did not. His son Turki, however, was reinstated after the downfall, and his sons assumed kingship thereafter. It continues with them. Muhammad had two more sons, Faisal and Saud. Both of them were martyred in his lifetime.

Imam Muhammad ibn Saud could establish an independent Islamic Arab dominion in Dira'iyah before his death. This state began extending its territory while that its opponents began to shrink. To his sons, ibn Saud left this dominion, whose flag flew over many areas. All of Najd came under its sway and missionaries spread over various cities, villages and valleys of Najd.

Imam Muhammad ibn Saud (May Allah bless him with mercy) ruled over for a long time, laying foundation of a state, doing social reforms, securing victories and

propagating the call. He died contended with his services. The most important event of his period was the establishment of the call of the pious predecessors.

Second. Imam Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud, the Second Founder of the First Phase of Saudi Rule.

Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud was born in 1136H in Dira'iyā. His contact with Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrāb began when the Sheikh was in 'Oyayneh. He was sent to him to seek an explanation of Suratu'l-Fātiha (Chapter One: the Opening). The Sheikh wrote an exegesis of the Surah for him. This excellent explanation has been included in the history written by Ibn Ghannām.

When the Sheikh reached Dira'iyā, Abdulaziz was attached to him and was very regular in attending his lectures. He felt proud of the leadership of the Sheikh and was attentive to his call. He was very eager to earn his pleasure and was quick to fulfill his desires. The Sheikh loved him much and used to praise him in private as well as public gatherings.

Muhammad ibn Saud, the founder of the Saudi dynasty, died in 1179H. Abdulaziz succeeded him as the emir of Dira'iyā. He was then forty-six years old.

Abdulaziz is considered the second founder of the first phase of Saudi Rule. He associated with his father in the

foundation and consolidation of the Rule. He helped his father in his middle age and represented him when he was old. When his father died, he took over power and carried the flag high with strength and faith. He subdued the cities through battle and diplomacy. The state was run under the rule of Shariah. He added a number of territories to the state of his father.

Allah blessed the small state that he inherited from his father. He kept the flag high. Within few years after the death of his father, Abdulaziz was able to annex the states of Najd and Ahsa, Mountains of Shamr and Tihamah, the peaks of Ubaidah and the highlands of Hijaz. His authority was recognised in Qawasim, Oman, Ziarah and Bahrain. The gates of the holy Mosques were also opened for him. Zakah reached him even from Syria and Iraq.⁵⁴

His state extended and the capital of his reign, Dira'iyah, became very large. It became the largest city of the Arabian Peninsula. The prophecy of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb proved true. The Sheikh had promised in the first meeting with Muhammad ibn Saud, that in case he were sincere to the oneness of Allah, to monotheism and to the implementation of the Laws of Allah, he and his sons would own the Arabian Peninsula.

Abdulaziz was able to put an end to the rule of Ibn Duwas in Riyadh, which opposed the state of the call for over twenty-eight years. He also subdued the Emirate of Ibn

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 17.

Uraie'r in Ahsa and Qateef. That state had vehemently opposed the Salafi call. The fact remains that Muhammad ibn Saud and his son Abdulaziz performed the noble duty after their agreement with the Sheikh. The service rendered by them was excellent from both the national and the religious point of view. The True Religion was freed from superstitions, myth and ignorance and the country from anarchy and tribalism. But leaving this magnanimous noble duty clearly manifest where we stand in the comity of nations now, Muhammad and after him Abdulaziz established the call and unified the Arabian Peninsula under one banner. This was a great achievement and the world focussed attention toward this gigantic success. This resulted into the establishment of a free and powerful Arab state after a long absence of the Arabs from the political scene.⁵⁵

Qualities of Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud and his Humanitarianism

When one goes through the biography of Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud, one comes across the fact that his greatness did not lie on his courage and victories alone. More than anything else, he was great in his manners and noble character. This is manifested through his general behavior. He loved and paid regard to scholars. He had a keen interest in student affairs. He was generous to the poor and was a helping hand to the weak. He hated tyranny and oppression. His love for justice was unique. He always stood by the side

⁵⁵ibid., vol. 2, p. 19.

of the Islamic penal code, always abstained from forbidden things. He was famous for his modesty and simplicity.

Some statements by unprejudiced scholars about Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud bear it out very explicitly. For example:

Ibn Bashr depicted him, “He was very sympathetic and kind with his subjects and especially to his countrymen, the people of Dira’iya. He was very generous in donating money and paying charity to the poor. He loved acquainting himself with the conditions of the poor people.⁵⁶ He was very generous in giving money paying charity to his people, the delegation, leaders, judges, scholars, students, Qur’an students, muezzins and the imams of the mosques.

Dira’iya boys used to raise their writing tablets before Emir Abdulaziz after they had completed their lessons and left the teacher. They used to show him (the emir) their writing. The Emir used to pay money to the one that excelled in writing. Others also received their share. Children of a dying person from all parts of Najd used to come to the Emir for help, and he used to help them generously. Probably they were registered in the state treasury for continuous help. He used to inquire about the judges and also about the orphans of Dira’iya and other places and used to pass orders to help them.

⁵⁶ *Unwānu 'l-Majd min Tā'rikhi Najd*, (lights of glory in the history of Najd) vol. 1, p. 266.

He used to write quite often to district chiefs, urging them to educate people, teach them how to read and write. Stipends were sanctioned for the purpose from Divan, the State treasury. Those who were old enough were asked to enter Dira'iyah and live there with their dependents. Ibn Bashr adds, "Imam Abdulaziz (May Allah bless him with mercy) was very Godfearing. He used to utter the name of Allah all the time. He was particular in issuing orders for doing good and for forbidding evil. He paid no heed to blame in matters of truth. He would implement the truth even if it concerned his relatives and family members. If a mighty person were found guilty of oppression, the Emir would not spare him and never hesitated in implementing what was right. He would not sit in peace unless the right of a weak person was restored from the hands of any oppressor, even if the sufferer was away from his country. He was not very careful about his dresses and personal weaponry. He was not the person to build houses of gold and silver for his sons and grandsons. It was hard to find such things on his shelf."⁵⁷

Berkhardet said; "Najd was divided into regions, cities and villages. Each area was independent, a rival to another and fighting one another. "Might is right" was the rule governing the cities and their surrounding areas. A weak person had to surrender rights to the mightier. Anarchy prevailed in nomad life. There was no end to battles. Their

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

skirmishes were aimed at booty and plundering. Najd states were plunged into river of blood because of these strifes.

This was the state of affairs that Abdulaziz faced. After a long and arduous struggle, Abdulaziz was able to succeed in spreading the call of pristine Islam in Najd. His authority was established as supreme. He, thus, rose from the chief of his family to the chief of a state.

Abdulaziz did not try to subdue and conquer his countrymen by force, snatching all freedom, as is the custom of despots. He let the Arabs enjoy freedom in their families and cities. He however forced them to live in peace and with a proper regard for the country, the rights of the king and submission to the rules of the Shariah in all aspects. He held sway over the fragmented, split up, tottering Arabian Peninsula through political diplomacy, through wisdom and without disturbing the noble freedom. The Arab, save the one Allah had saved, was devoid of any rule. Lust and desire ruled him. But now, it was incumbent to submit to the laws of Shariah, pay the poor payment to the ruler and participate in the battle against the atheists and polytheists when required. An Arab could no longer turn to sword to settle differences. Courts of justice were established to decide disputes. It was necessary for him to submit his case to courts of justice and accept court's decisions."

Koransiz said, "Abdulaziz lived an ascetic life like most of his subjects. Maybe this was the cause of his great success. He was upright and honest. He never made the call

as a pretext to collect wealth. He collected wealth to serve the call. He was a brave man sans pride. He was never rash. He was kind and merciful but called transgression and breaching the peace to book. He stood for severe punishment to those who attempted anarchy.”⁵⁸

These were some of the personal qualities of Imam Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud, the second founder of the first phase of the Saudi dynasty. He ruled for over forty years, busy with battles and skirmishes. He used to send delegations to preach and propagate the call of monotheism to near and far-off places. He was murdered in the year 1218H. The Saudi regime swayed from one end of the Euphrates to the borders of Oman and from the Arabian Gulf to the Hijaz and Asir.

⁵⁸ Al-'Ajlani, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 29-30.

Chapter II

The True Facts about the Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb

Introduction

All intelligent, unprejudiced, just and conscious scholars, aware of the fundamentals of Islam and the objectives thereof know that the reform call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was the call to return to the fundamentals and pristine pure teachings of Islam, free from all flaws and any resemblance to polytheism and paganism.

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb never called to anything new, let alone a new religion. There is nothing new about Islam. It is the way of life revealed by Allah, the Exalted, the All-High to Muhammad (PBUH) (May peace and blessings be upon him). There is nothing left to be added after his demise. The only way left to his followers, his community, is to tread on the tracks left by him, follow him and cling to the clear and bright goal with which the last Prophet left his community.

The essence of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb is monotheism, the oneness of Allah, free from any shadow of polytheism, apparent or disguised. His call is to sincerity to the religion of Allah alone. His call is to cast off and discard religious innovations. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb (May Allah bless him with mercy) called to the

doctrines of the pious predecessors in totality. All his books and treatises, his life, his activities, his behaviour point to the same call, to his strong desire to adhere to the path of the pious predecessors.

His disciples have plainly, clearly and descriptively written about the essence of his call. All the writings are eloquent about his strict and planned adherence to the path of the *Ahlu's-Sunnati wa'l-Jamā'a*. The bulk of the majority are treading the path and traditions of the last Prophet. They are the successful group that always sincerely clings to the true doctrines and the straight path in their words and deeds.

Unprejudiced writers from the East and the West, of different times, belonging to various religions corroborate that the Sheikh called people to Islam as it existed during the time of its first appearance. It was pure and very clear, free from contamination of philosophy, stain and dirt of polytheism, myth of mysticism and ever-new innovations.⁵⁹ In order to elucidate the facts about the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, we will soon discuss them in detail under four sub-headings in this chapter namely:

1. The real objectives of opponents behind naming the call of the Sheikh as Wahhabism – Distorting its reality and history.
2. A description of the doctrines of the Sheikh.

⁵⁹ Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad al Abdullatif, *Da'awi'l-Munâwi'in li-Da'wati'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb* (The opponents' claims to Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb call) (Riyadh: Daru'l-Watan, 1412).

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3. A description of the fundamentals of the call of the Sheikh.
 4. A description of the essence of the call of the Sheikh and its general targets.

One. The Real Objectives of Opponents behind Naming the Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb as Wahhabism: Distorting its Reality and History.

The disciples of the call of Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb never adopted the name of Wahhabism for themselves. Opponents gave this name to them. The real purpose behind it was to create hatred among the people against the call. It was a deceptive measure. The opponents wanted to inculcate in the mind of the people that this call was something new, that this was the fifth school of thought in opposition to the four established schools of thoughts in Islam – the Hanafî, the Maliki, the Shafii and the Hanbali. But the real name for the call of the Sheikh should be “The Call of the Predecessors.’

Dr. Abdullah al Othaimin said, “It is a known fact that the real objective behind the creation of this name by opponents happened to be to create hatred against the call among the general Muslims. They alleged that the Sheikh was calling to a new religion, or, as they occasionally claim, that it was the fifth school of thought. Many people on the earth, in the East or in the West, are now fully acquainted with the real call of the Sheikh. Yet there are still, in various

places, a number of writers who use the name, Wahhabism, to malign the characteristics of the call in accordance with the views of its opponents.⁶⁰ Very few scholars and supporters of the call have not minded using the term Wahhabism in their works lately. They used it when they were fully convinced that the reality of the call of the Sheikh and his disciples had become very clear to great many people. This term, they thought, no more carried the alleged concept attributed to it by its opponents.

Ahmad ibn Hajer Al Tami in his book on Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb writes, "The opponents [of the call] are responsible to Allah for their dealings with the call. They aimed at maligning the call by giving it the name Wahhabism. They contrived it. They do not love the Messenger as they claim to. Nowadays this name has become the title for all those who call people to the Book of Allah and the ways of His Messenger. They are cited as proof for practicing pristine Islam, preaching for the good and forbidding evil, fighting against innovation and myth. They are the example of those who follow the path of the pious predecessors."⁶¹

Dr. Muhammad ibn Sa'ad al-Shuwai'r said, "The call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was the call of the pious predecessors for reformation. It sprang from the Arabian Peninsula to purge the Islamic teachings from all the

⁶⁰ Abdullah ibn Saleh al Uthaymin, *Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, Hayatuhu wa Fikruhu (Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, his life and his thoughts)* (Riyadh: Daru'l-'Ulûm, 1412), p. 114.

⁶¹ Muhammad ibn Hajir Âl Tâmi, *Al-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb* (Al-Kuwait: Maktabatu's-Sandas, 1409H) p. 120.

dust and mud that surrounded it. It aimed at cleaning the impurity that had made inroads into the concept of monotheism, especially in *tawhîdu 'l-ulûhiya*, the oneness of divinity, and *tawhîdu 'l-asmâ'i wa's-sifât*, the oneness of nomenclature and attributes. It stood to eliminate the concept of association of such attributes to creatures. These attributes belong exclusively to Allah, the Exalted, the All-High. The opponents called it Wahhabism to create hatred in the masses. Some of the mystic schools also joined the camp to misguide the people to serve their own misguided ends.”⁶²

Masoud al-Nadvi writes, “The greatest of the lies is to name the call of the Sheikhu’l-Islam, Wahhabism. People of a vested interest have used this name in order to prove that the call was out of the pale of Islam. The British, the secular forces and or vested interests in Turkey and Egypt have been successful in their attempt. They and the Europeans have been afraid of Islamic revivalism. They have branded any such movement as Wahhabism, aligning it with the Najdi revival movement in the last two centuries. Anyway, their attempt to prove that Wahhabism was a misguided and erroneous movement must be severely criticised. However I do not see a difficulty in using the name Wahhabism.”⁶³

Ahmad al-Qattan, in his book, *Imâmu 't-Tawhîd: Ash-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb*, writes, “Whatever may

⁶² Muhammad ibn Sa'd ash-Sharwa'ier, in the magazine *Al-Ba'thu 'l-Islâmi*, no.18, vol.28 (1404H) p. 52.

⁶³ Masoud al-Nadwi, *Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab/ Muslihun Madhiûmun wa Muftara 'Alayh* (Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb a wronged reformative and calumniated upon) (Riyadh: Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, 1404H), p. 165.

be the case there is no harm in naming the call as the Wahhabi movement. It is now the name of a number of specific principles and goals among many people. It is all the same to name it the Wahhabi movement or Salafism, the way of the pious predecessors, as its path is the path of the pious predecessors. This is the essence of the call and what practically it stands for.”⁶⁴

Sheikh Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Al Sheikh said, “The term, Wahhabism, in our age does not create any problem for us. In this age of speed, new inventions have narrowed the distance. Contacts with people of various areas have increased. People now observe things that happened to be very difficult in the past. They now know for themselves what they used to know through such means that altered reality. With their naked eyes, they now see things that used to reach them in a garbled and deceptive manner with the passage of time. Truth is now manifest and evident to persons of vision. People now know that Wahhabism only means the people of the Sunna, the Sunnites, clinging to the doctrines of the pious predecessors and defending them against all kinds of inroads. The ‘Wahhabis’ are implementing Islamic Shariah and adopting the Book of Allah and the traditions of His Messenger as a constitution for their Islamic state. Their rulers feel honored to adopt the title ‘Custodian of the two holy Mosques’ to

⁶⁴ Ahmad al-Qattan, *et. al.*, *Imam al Monotheism al Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab* (Kuwait: Maktabatu's-Sandas, 1409H), p. 29.

serve the Holy Mosque of Makkah and the Holy Mosque of Madinah. The Custodian feels honored to serve pilgrims, the guests of the All-Compassionate. His service is unparalleled in history and is on the lips of everybody.

These and many other services for Islam and the Muslims in the various parts of the earth in general is the characteristic of the people that are termed as Wahhabis. All these services are for the cause of the doctrine of the pious predecessors. Originally the opponents concocted this term for malicious designs. But now it only means the people who cling to the doctrine of the pious predecessors, sticking up for the services of Islam and implementing its laws. Thus there is no harm in using this term now whether its use is by our writers, research workers and historians or by our opponents.⁶⁵

What preceded makes it clear that some of our contemporary writers do not mind using the term Wahhabism while others take strong exception to it.⁶⁶

Perpetration of the Term “Wahhabism” in History

The perpetration of the term Wahhabism for the reform call is not only against the history but also against the essence

⁶⁵ Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Aal Sheikh, adopted from the magazine *al Manar* Vol.2, 1412H P.4-5.

⁶⁶ For further details see the review by Sheikh Saleh al Fauzan on the book *Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab* by Abdul Karim al Khateeb in the magazine *Kulliah Usoul al Deen*, No.1 P.68 Also Sheikh Abdullah al Jibreel in the magazine *al Buhouth al Islamiyah* No.9 P.129

and reality of the call. This led some historians to ascribed this call to the father of Muhammad, Abdulwahhâb. Masoud an-Nadwi has pointed out that probably the reason for this common error is the European tourist Beguise. He narrated that Sheikh Husain ibn Sheikh Muhammad was the grandson of the man calling for the reform. The traveller Burgardt states the same thing. He said, there is a son of the man calling for the reform named Muhammad. While talking about Wahhabism in his book, History of the Arab World, French historian Sidieu? said, "the man who established the call and stood for it was Abdulwahhâb at-Tamîmî."

The same mistake is found in the American Encyclopaedia, known as the 'World Book.' All the contributors of this encyclopaedia have Ph.D.'s in History, Literature and Philosophy. The famous historian, Dr. Hitti, is among them. Under the word, Al-Ikhwan, the book says, "The name is often applied to the Wahhabis, a Muslim group that follows the teachings of Abdulwahhâb. This man founded the Wahhabi sect in 1745G."

Farid Wajdi in his encyclopaedia, vol. 10, under the word "Al-Wahhabia" writes, "This is a group of Muslims, followers of a Sheikh who is called Abdulwahhâb in Arabia."

All these mistakes are due to historical error and against historical fact.

Second. Description of the believe of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb

The letters sent by the Sheikh to different people describe his belief and doctrines very clearly. The following is one of such letters sent to the people of Qassim in response to their questions concerning his belief. It is important, and thus we reproduce it verbatim.

When the people of Qassim asked about the beliefs of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, the Sheikh responded:⁶⁷

In the name of Allah, The most Compassionate, The most Merciful

The beliefs of *Ahlu's-Sunnati wa'l-Jamâ'a* – The Sunnites

I witness Allah, and witness His angels, that I believe what the saved group, *Ahlu's-Sunnati wa'l-Jamâ'a* believes, i.e. I believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, life after death and belief in the predestination – good and/or bad.

⁶⁷ *al Durar al Sanniah* (The Sunnah's Jewels) Vol.1 P.28-31

The Attributes of Allah

I believe in Allah as He has described Himself in His book through His Messenger (PBUH) (Peace and blessings be upon him) without any change, without any embodiment and suspension. I believe that Allah is Exalted, All-High. There is nothing like Him. He is the Listener, the Onlooker. I add nothing to what He had attributed to Himself, nor do I change words from their proper place. I do not belie any of His attributes and signs. I neither turn back nor do I set any resemblance to anyone in His attributes of His creatures. There is none like Him. He has no associate. He can never be thought of like any of His creatures. He is free from any kind of fault. He is Exalted. He knows Himself. He is the All-Truthful and the Best of Speech. He is above the attributes and qualities some people tried to give as an example to prove His attributes. He is above all that the people of deviations, embodiment and suspension say. Allah is as He said:

Glorified be your Lord, the Lord of Honor and Power! (He is free) from what they attribute unto Him! And peace be on the Messengers! And all the praise and thanks be to Allah, Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinns and all that exists)

(Qur'an 37:180-182)

***Ahlu's-Sunnah* are the people of the Middle path.**

The saved group is on the Middle path. These people are on the middle path with regard to the actions of Allah: between the Predestinarians and the people of free will. They are in the middle path also regarding threat of Allah, i.e. between the Murjiah and the Waeediah. They are in the middle concerning faith and religion, i.e. between the Hurairiah and the M'utizilah, between the Murjiah and Jahmiah. They are in the middle concerning the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, i.e. between the *Rawafidh* (Shiites) and the Kharijites.

The Qur'an

I believe that the Qur'an is the revealed word of Allah. It is not created. It begins with Him and returns to Him. Whatever He has said in it is fact. He revealed it to His slave and Messenger, His trustee about the Revelation. Our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Peace and blessings be upon him) is the ambassador between Him and His slaves.

Al-Qadar – Destiny.

I believe that Allah does whatever He wishes to do. Nothing happens without His will. I believe that nothing goes out of His command. I believe that there is nothing that comes out of His own desire. I believe that nothing happens without His control. I believe that nothing can supercede His prescribed limit or

transgress whatever has been written on the preserved Tablet.

Life after Death and the Accounting

I have firm faith and belief in each and everything that the Prophet (PBUH) (Peace and blessings be upon him) has told us, about things that will happen after death. I believe in the trial and blessings in the grave. I believe in the return of the soul to the bodies. I believe that people will be raised from their graves barefooted and naked. The sun will be brought near them and the scale will be fixed to measure the deeds of the slaves.

Then those whose scales (of good deeds) are heavy, – these, they are the successful. And those whose scales (of good deeds) are light, – they are those who lose their own selves, in Hell will they abide.

(Qur'an 23:102-103)

Records will be opened and the people will receive their 'books', some in their right hands and some in their left hands.

The Pond of the Prophet and His Intercession

I do believe in the pond of our Prophet (PBUH) on the Day of Resurrection. Its water is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey. The number of cups and glasses there will be like the stars in the sky. Whoever will drink from the pond will never feel thirsty

thereafter. I believe in the intercession of the Prophet (PBUH). He will be the first intercessor and the first one whose intercession will be accepted. His intercession will never be rejected save in the case of the people of innovations and misguided ones. I believe that the intercession will be made with the permission of Allah and by His will as the Exalted has said:

And they cannot intercede except for him with whom He is pleased. And they stand in awe for fear of Him.

(Qur'an 21:28)

Who is he that can intercede with Him except with His permission?

(Qur'an 2:255)

And there are many angels in the heaven, whose intercession will avail nothing except after Allah has given leave for whom He wills and pleases.

(Qur'an 53:26)

He accepts monotheism only. He permits intercession only for the deserving. There is no intercession for the polytheists, as is clear from the verse:

So no intercession of intercessors will be of any use to them.

(Qur'an 74:48)

The Path, Paradise, Hell and the Vision of Allah

I believe in the existence of the Path, bridge-like, which will pass over Hell. People will pass through it according to their deeds. I believe that Paradise and Hell are creations of Allah and that they are present now, and that there is no end to them. I believe that the believers will see their Lord with their eyes on the day of Judgement as they see the moon on the fourteenth day. There will be no doubt about seeing the Lord.

The Prophet (PBUH) and His Companions

I believe that our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the last of the prophets and messengers. I firmly believe that belief in His messengerhood and witnessing His Prophethood is an inseparable and essential part of faith.

The best of men among the community of the Prophet is Abu Bakr. The second best is Umar al-Farûq, then Uthman Thul Nûrain, then Ali and then the rest of the ten prophesied to be the men of Paradise. Thereafter comes, the people of Badr, then the people who took oath of allegiance under the tree near Makkah and then the rest of the Companions, May Allah be pleased with them all.

I admire and adhere to the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, remember them, talk about them,

and I am fully contented and pleased with them. I seek Allah's forgiveness for them, abstain from comparing them to one another and avoid talking about the fighting and quarrels among them. I believe in their excellence and act according to the verse:

And those who come after them say: "our Lord! Forgive us and our brethren who have preceded us in Faith, and put not in our hearts any hatred against those who have believed. Our Lord! You are indeed full of Kindness, Most Merciful. (Qur'an 59:10)

The Miracles of pious Muslims

I ask the pleasure of Allah for the chaste, pure and clean mothers of the faithful and can never think ill of them. I acknowledge the miracles of the pious Muslims. Whatever comes out of them as miracles is not because of their rights and self-power. It is a kind of temporary favor from Allah, the Exalted. Nothing should be demanded of them that they cannot do save by the grace of Allah.

I Do Not Call a Muslim a Nonbeliever Because of Sin.

I never testify that any Muslim is a man of Paradise or a man of Hell. I call those people to be of paradise who were certified by the Messenger of Allah

as such. I am however hopeful for the people of good deeds and fearful of the people of bad deeds. I never call anybody a nonbeliever because of sin nor consider them out of the pale of Islam.

The Continuity of Jihad

I see that Jihad can be fought along with the Muslim rulers of the time, whether they are noble and pious or impious. Congregational prayer behind them is legal and valid. Jihad began from the time Allah sent and appointed Muhammad (PBUH) as His Messenger. It will continue to the last man who will fight the pseudo Messiah. It is not invalidated because of a ruler's oppression or suspended because of a ruler's justice.

The Obedience of Rulers

I find the obedience of the rulers of the Muslims obligatory, whether they are pious or otherwise, until they command doing things forbidden by Allah. Obedience is obligatory to whoever undertakes the responsibility of the Caliphate and about whom people rally and with whom they are pleased, or to whoever is victorious with his sword and becomes caliph. Rebellion against him is illegal.

People of religious innovations

I am of the opinion that there should be separation and severance from the people of innovation in religious matters and their supporters until they

repent and do away with such things. The verdict will be on what is apparent. Inner or hidden things are left to be dealt with by Allah. I believe that every addition in religion is innovation.

Kinds of Belief and Its Branches

I believe that Belief includes declaration by tongue, actions according to its teachings and faith by heart. Faith increases with obedience and decreases with disobedience. There are over ninety branches of Belief, of which the supreme in importance is the declaration that there is no god except Allah. The minimum is to remove a disturbing thing that causes harm from the way of a passerby.

Ordaining Good

I consider it obligatory to ordain and command good and forbid evil. This has been made compulsory by the pure Shariah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

This is in brief what I believe and stand for, I wrote to acquaint you of myself. Allah stands witness to whatever I stated.⁶⁸

This is the Belief that was part of faith of the Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb (May Allah bless him with mercy) which he himself described in clear and unambiguous language for the people of Qassim.

⁶⁸ Husain ibn Ghannam, *Tarikh Najd*, P.215.

The following are some more statements from the writings of the Sheikh and some of his disciples describing the belief he preached and stood for.

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb while describing the fact about his call said:

“Truely my Lord has guided me to a Straight Path, a right religion, the religion of Ibrahim (Abraham), Hanifa [i.e. the true Islamic Monotheism – to believe in one God (Allah i.e. to worship none but Allah, Alone)] and he was not of Al-Mushrikun – the polytheists. (Qur’an 6:161)

By the grace of Allah I do not call to any of the schools of mysticism, to a jurist, a scholastic or to any of the great and celebrated imams like Ibn al Qayyim, Dhahabi, Ibn Kathir or others. I call to Allah, the one and only. There is none with whom to associate, and I call to the way of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH).”

He further said,

“Our way about the rules and fundamentals of religion is the way of *Ahl al Sunnah wal Jama'ah* – the followers of the way of the Messenger of Allah -, our path is the path of the pious predecessors. This is the right, peaceful, most knowledgeable, authentic and perfect way rather than the way after people who claim they know better than the pious predecessors.”

An explanation of his belief and his call emerges from he added,

“We read the verses of the Quran and the sayings of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) concerning attributes [of Allah] and understand it as they are. We refer to Allah, the Exalted, to find out their meanings with the firm faith in Allah for He is the final authority. Malik ibn Annas is among the reputed scholars from among the pious predecessors who answers question about istawâ’, (rose over) in the verse: *The Most Gracious (Allah) astawâ (rose over, firmly established) the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty)* (Qur’an 20:5) replied, Istawâ’ (i.e rose over), is known, its nature is unknown. To believe in it is obligatory and questioning about it is innovation.”

We believe that good and evil emanates out of the will and wisdom of Allah. Nothing happens in His kingdom without His will. A slave has no power to create actions. A slave can only adopt it and can get reward for the good and be punished for an evil deed.

In applied jurisprudence, we follow the school of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal. We do not oppose anyone, following any of the four celebrated schools. Of others, we do not approve because they have not been compiled or corroborated.

We neither question any school of jurisprudence nor object to it. However if we find somebody acting

against the apparent teachings of the respective imam we take notice of it.⁶⁹

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrhâb while writing to Abdulrahman ibn Abdullah al Suwaidi, a scholar from Iraq, explains the facts about his call. He wrote,

“I would like to inform you that, by the grace of Allah, I am an obedient follower. I am not an innovator. My belief and my religion is the one with which Allah guided the followers of the path of the Prophet. I follow the path of the celebrated leaders of the Muslims like the four imams and their followers till the time of the day of Judgement. I, however, explained and asked people to be sincere to the religion of Allah. I forbid them to call on living or dead, pious people or others for supernatural help. I forbid them to associate anyone in the worship of Allah such as, slaughtering, votive offering, entrusting with, prostrating, etc. That is the sole right of Allah and Allah alone. Associating such deeds is not valid even for the celebrated and respected angels, His messengers and prophets. This is what all the messengers, right from the first to the last, have called for. The Sunnites are on the same path.⁷⁰

The above are some excerpts from the writings of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrhâb, written by him in explanation of his call.

⁶⁹ Sulaimân ibn Sahmân, *Al-Hadiyatu's-Saniyati wa 't-Tuhfatu 'l-Wahrhâbiyati 'n-Najdiyya*, p. 38.

⁷⁰ *Ar-Risâ 'ilu 'sh-Shakhshiya*, a collection of treatises of the Sheikh, vol. 5, p. 36.

Like the Sheikh his pupils and disciples also explained the call. His grandson Sheikh Abdullatif ibn Abdurrahman ibn Hasan (May Allah bless him with mercy), while explaining the call wrote, "Sheikhu'l-Islâm Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb (May Allah bless him with mercy) called on people to worship Allah alone, Who has no associate whatsoever. Associate nothing with Him. There is no doubt for a Muslim in the call. This is the religion of Allah. Allah sent His messengers and revealed His books with this message."

Muhammad ibn Abdullatif ibn Hasan in a letter that he sent to the Hijaz explained what they believed and what they called people to. He said, "You should know what we believe in and follow. It is the religion of Allah we call people to and fighting them for. We call people to Islam, which Allah made obligatory to his slaves. It is His right over them. He has created them for this purpose. Allah has created them to worship Him and associate nothing with Him, be they the angels close to Allah, the holy messengers or others. We ask people to demolish tombs erected over graves. We ask them not to raise a grave over a span with mud or any thing else. We ask people to establish congregational prayer in mosques. We educate people and punish them for laziness or for not attending the mosques. Similarly we try to implement other pillars of Islam like obligatory alms, fasting and the greater pilgrimage for the ones who can afford it. We ask for good and forbid evil. We forbid usury and interest, adultery, alcohol and tobacco. We forbid men wearing silk. We forbid

disobedience to parents and severing relations with kith and kin.

In brief we ask people to do what Allah has ordained in His Book and what His Messenger (PBUH) commanded us to do. We forbid things that Allah and His Messenger forbade us. We declare things unlawful that Allah has prescribed, and we declare only those things lawful that Allah has permitted us. This is what we call for. Whoever desires good destination, wishes real welfare and would like to join us should commit himself to what we mentioned and act on what we have resolved. Then he will have what we have, and he will bear what we bear.”

One of the disciples of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb has summarized his teachings in the following words. “Whatever is established as the Islamic Shariah, revealed by Allah and taught by His Messenger (PBUH) is our religion, our belief and our creed whether or not we have mentioned or announced it or not. This is what we aspire to and want to establish. Whatever we ask for, whatever we talk about is but the Islamic Shariah. We forbid what Islam forbids and we command what Islam commands. Thus whoever receives any news or statement about us should weigh it in the scale of the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger. If it is in accordance with the Qur’an and the Sunnah, he should confirm it as our opinion and our religion.

If it is otherwise he should confirm that we are opposed to it.”⁷¹

The excerpts from the writings of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and his disciples clearly explain his belief and creed wherewith his call emerged. This was the call he clung to with all his force. He was dedicated to the pious predecessors in matters of belief, conduct and rules. The fountain and the source of the call is the book of Allah and the teachings of His Messenger (PBUH) (Peace and blessings be upon him). The caller was an obedient follower of the Qur’an and the Sunnah and was never an innovator.

Three. A Description of the General Foundations of the Reform Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb

The call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was based on a number of basic principles. Following are some of the important ones:

First. *Tawhîd*, Islamic monotheism, is the real base of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. The concept of *tawhîd* according to the Sheikh is, “Allah, the Exalted and All-High, alone is to be worshipped. This is and

⁷¹ - From the newspaper, *Ummu 'l-Qurâ*, No.130.

was the religion of all the Messengers of Allah that He sent to His slaves.”⁷²

In other words, monotheism is the basis of and the most important point for the call of the Sheikh and his disciples. He and his companions struggled hard to propagate, to make the concept clear and tried to establish it. He wanted and tried to correct the Islamic belief from and clear it of any resemblance to polytheistic traits, *shirk*, that shrouded the concept of monotheism. In short, it was an effort to return the Muslims to the true belief of monotheism as expressed in the Qur’an and the Sunnah, free from any resemblance, embodiment, suspension or interpretation when dealing with the nature of the Creator. This concept received the greatest attention from the Sheikh, and he stood for the revival of it. He stood to correct the concept and fight all and any manifestation of polytheism in all of his books, speeches and treatises. It was this creed of monotheism that attained the focal point, the center and the nucleus of the call of the Sheikh. His book *Kitābu’t-Tawhīd* contains sixty-six chapters. The Sheikh has closed all the doors of polytheism in this book. In addition, there are treatises like *Kashfu’sh-Shubuhāt*, *Thalāthatu’l-Usūl*, *Al-Qawā’idu’l Arba’a*, and books like *Fadhlu’l-Islām*, *Aslu’l-Īmān* and a collection of thirteen letters on monotheism. Again there is *Kitabu’l-Kabā’ir*. Ibn Ghannam al-Ahsā’ has listed fifty-one treatises in his *Tā’rīkhush-Sheikh*. The book, *Ad-Duraru’l-Sannīyati*

⁷² Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhāb, *Kashf al Shubhat* (from the collection of *Monotheism at Najdiah*), P.69

fi'l-Ajûbati'n-Najdiyya contains five treatises. All of them discuss different aspects of this creed, like kinds of Islamic monotheism, the meaning of *La ilaha illa'llâh*, how the polytheistic concept contradicts it and what the things and deeds that put a man out of the pale of Islam are.⁷³

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb thought that there were ten matters wherein great contradictions to the Islamic teachings and the concept of monotheism are apparent. They are:

1. Association in the worship of Allah, who is alone and without any associates.
2. Placing intercessors between Allah and oneself and calling on them for mediation is unanimously infidelity, *kufr*.
3. Abstaining from calling polytheists infidel, or doubting their unbelief or validating their religion and deeds is unanimously infidelity and unbelief.
4. Believing the teachings of other than those of the Prophet (PBUH) (Peace and blessings be upon him) to be better and more complete, like preferring the rules of the *taghut*, i.e. the non-Islamic and anti-Islamic, is unbelief.
5. Hating any thing that the Messenger (PBUH) brought is infidelity.

⁷³ 'Abdu'l-halîm 'Owais, *Atharu'd-Da'wati'l-Imam Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâbi fi'l-Fikri'l-Islâmi'l-Islâhi fi'l-Jazâ'ir* (Cairo: Daru's-Sahwa, 1405H), p. 7.

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6. Ridiculing any teaching of the religion of Allah or the concept of reward or punishment is infidelity.
 7. Sorcery and magic or supporting them, or accepting them, is infidelity.
 8. Imitating the Polytheists and supporting them against the Muslims is infidelity.
 9. Believing that there are people who are free and exempt from following the Prophet (PBUH) or exempted from obeying the Shariah like Khidhr was free from observing the Shariah of Moses (May peace be upon him) is infidelity.
 10. Abstaining from the religion of Allah, neither learning about it nor acting accordingly is infidelity.

There is no difference between the people who adhere to this contradictions, be they funny, serious, or fearful. All of them are dangerous, and a Muslim ought to guard himself against them all. We seek refuge in Allah from the consequential anger and from the painful punishment.⁷⁴

In short the core of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb is *tawhîd*, Islamic monotheism, '*Ulûhiyya*, divinity, and fidelity of worship to Allah and Allah alone. The Sheikh paid very special attention to the concept of monotheism in all his books and treatises. His call was the

⁷⁴ Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, *Mu'allifât Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, pt. V: *Ar-Rasd 'ilu 'sh-Shakhsîyya*, *Ar-Risâla* 32, pp. 212-214.

call of monotheism. His password and logo was the declaration, *La ilaha illa'llâh. Muhammadun rasûlu'llâh* – there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger. He elucidated the meaning of this declaration in almost all of his writings and tried to implant its real impact on every mind.

Second. Fighting against Innovations and Myths⁷⁵

Fighting against innovations and myths was the second basis of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. In fact, this is only a corollary of the first basis.

The Sheikh found widespread manifestation of the non-Islamic tendencies in the Islamic world. All of them were against the pure monotheistic teachings of Islam. Ultra innovations and dangerous deviations were rampant. For example constructing tombs on graves, plastering and decorating them and putting green coverings and turbans over them, erecting buildings over the graves and adopting them as mosques had become common. There were votive offerings for the saints and people in the grave. Sometimes people even made circumambulation of the graves or round the holy stone at Jerusalem. People called on saints, the pious among them, and sought their help in getting their troubles removed. People rubbed their hands on the bars of the tombs

⁷⁵ Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, *Buĥĥ usbu' u al Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb*, Vol.2 P313

of their saints, expecting rewards and blessings. Devotion to pilgrimages to particular saints, visiting graves of the pious people to get worries eliminated or to call on them for worldly benefits became part of their religious life. Talismans, charms, amulets and magic were common as precautionary measures against misfortunes. Birthday celebrations of the saints were a regular feature. In Egypt, the birthdays of Husain and Badavi were celebrated with devotions. Abominable funeral ceremonies were common. Thursdays were specified for alms and charities and Thursday nights for religious gatherings. Commemorating the fortieth day of the death and death anniversary celebrations had become part of life. Arrangements were made for paid Qur'an recitation for the souls of dead people. This was regarded as something rewarding and was an important religious custom. There were circles of *dhikr* – remembrance of Allah – associated with drum beating and dances. In short, all and everything unknown to the early Islamic period and thought prohibited by Islam took the shape of religious customs and activities and was a part of the socio-religious life of the Muslims. Innovations of various mystical cults and schools had their inroads into the society. The rings of supernatural, mystical, miraculous stories were woven and peculiar interpretations were presented to support all such non-Islamic activities.

The superstitious, innovative and myth-oriented Muslim society of the time had alarmed Sheikh Muhammad

ibn Abdulwahhâb. All these customs and activities were in contradiction to the pristine tenet of Islam, *tawhîd*, the Islamic concept of monotheism. Thus we notice that the Sheikh concentrated his fight against such innovations and myths and made this the prime motive of his reform call.

Third. Revival of the Obligatory Duty of Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil

One of the focal and basic tenets of the reform call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was the revival of the obligatory command of enjoining good and forbidding evil. "It is known that enjoining good and forbidding evil is a very important obligation for the Islamic community. It is also known that fulfillment of this obligation is one of the basic qualities and traits of the Islamic society. This community has been termed as the 'best of the nations raised for the people' because of this basic trait. Scholars of the Islamic community have paid great attention to this command and have elucidated its place, importance and demands of its implementation. Imam Ibn Taymîya is one among them who has discussed this issue in detail in his celebrated book, *al Hasbatu fi'l-Islâm*. Ibn Taymîya writes therein that the religion of Islam is based on two basic teachings: 1) Enjoining good and 2) Forbidding evil. This is obligatory on Muslims in general and on each individual capable of

implementing it in particular.⁷⁶ But the implementation should be in a useful and wise manner and not in the way that leads to harmful consequences. The *Sheikhu'l-Islâm* has stipulated three conditions to be fulfilled by a person who tries to implement this teaching:

1. He should clearly know what *ma'rûf*, good, is, and what *munkar*, evil, is. He should also know the condition of the person who is being enjoined to do good or forbidden from doing evil.
2. He should be kind and gentle in dealing with people.
3. He should be patient enough to bear the consequences of the implementation of the obligation.”

It is very clear that Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and his disciples were complying to the conditions laid down by Imam Ibn Taymîya for the implementation of the obligatory duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil. Sheikh Muhammad in his letters to Ahmad ibn Suwailem and Saud ibn Thaniyân said, “It is not correct for a person to deny a thing without proper knowledge. The first step in denying and refusing is that you know for certain that this particular thing is against the commands of Allah.”⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Adapted from Abdullah as-Sâlih al-Uthaimîn, *Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, Hayatuhu wa Fikrah* (Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, His life and his thoughts) Riyadh: Daru'l-'Ulûm, 1412), pp. 154-155.

⁷⁷ *Rawdhatu'l-Ijhm*, vol.1, p. 158.

In another letter written to one of his supporters in Sudair, he said, "Scholars say that a person implementing the duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil needs to know and learn what he is enjoining and what he is forbidding. He should be kind and gentle in enjoining and forbidding and, again, he should be patient and ready to face the resulting difficulties."⁷⁸ However the Sheikh and his disciples were not contented with stating their opinion on the issue of enjoining good and forbidding evil. They stood also for implementing it themselves.

Enjoining good and forbidding evil was practiced from the very first day of the blessed reform call. This was one of the leading reasons of opposition and antagonism to the call in Riyadh and other areas. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb has stated that this was the fundamental cause for the opposition. The Sheikh had to leave Huraimilâ' because of his performing this duty, i.e. enjoining good and forbidding evil.

The Sheikh has stated the cause of differences with his opponents, in a letter to one of the scholars of Madinah. He wrote, "You ask me about the reason for differences between me and others. There is no difference between us about Islamic pillars like prayer, alms, fasting, pilgrimage and the

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 171.

rest. Similarly, there is no difference about things forbidden in Islam. What is good for them is good for us, and what is evil for us is evil in their eyes, too. But we act and practice what is good, abstain from evil ourselves, prohibit others and teach people not to act evilly. The reason that turned the heart of people against us is the same reason that turned the hearts against our Prophet, peace be upon him.”⁷⁹

Sheikh Abdullah ibn Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb wrote a letter to the people of Makkah after the army of the call entered Hijaz in the year 1218H. He stated therein that Emir Saud the great, had made it clear to the scholars of Makkah that the differences between him and the scholars there were based on three things:

The First: Sincerity to *tawhîd*, Islamic monotheism, of Allah the Exalted

The Second: Enjoining good and forbidding evil exists only in name with them. Its practice and effects have not been apparent.

The Sheikh further stated that the scholars of Makkah agreed with Emir Saud about it and appreciated his opinion without the least argument.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-‘Ajlân, *Harakatu ‘l-Tajdîdi wa ‘l-Islâhi fi Najd fi ‘l-‘Asri ‘l-Hadîth*, (The restoration and reformative movement of Najd in modern time) (1409H), p. 156.

⁸⁰ *Da‘watu ‘sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb wa Atharuha fi ‘l-‘Alami ‘l-Islâmi*, (Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb call and its impact on the Islamic world) p. 59.

The fact is that the call of the predecessors happened to be most particular about the application of this obligatory duty, enjoining good and forbidding evil. It yielded the desired result in all the three periods of the Saudi dynasty. This was first of all because of the grace of Allah, the Exalted and then because of the continuous struggle of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. The leaders of the Saudi dynasty provided every means for the establishment of this duty. The establishment of the institution of enjoining good and forbidding evil in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was for this purpose and in accordance with the commandments of the Book of Allah and the precepts of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH).

The Third. The Obligation of the Command that Allah Revealed (The Shariah):

One of the important foundations of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was the implementation of the command revealed by Allah and to earn His pleasure thereby. The Sheikh repeated that the legislation is the most specific right of divinity. There is no possibility of any escape from the commands of Allah and that of His Messenger (PBUH). It is never correct to prefer the commands and rulings of the *taghut*, anti-Islamic forces and the customs of the *Jahiliyya*, the Time of Ignorance. The Sheikh, therefore, stressed with full force, the application of the commands of Allah and His

Messenger (PBUH) and the referral to these two sources in case of any difference of opinion concerning any particular matter.⁸¹ He was a harsh critic to those who deviated from the laws of Allah and acceded to the rules of the contemporary un-Islamic sources and anti-Islamic forces. He was a bitter critic of the un-Islamic customs of the Time of Ignorance and the way of living the people had adopted in the days when the reform call began. The Sheikh said, "Whoever denies the life after death or doubts it, uses abusive language for Islamic laws, uses bad words for the call to prayer when he hears it, prefers the rules and orders of the un-Islamic forces over the commands of Allah is a non-believer and an apostate."⁸² He considered the one ruling against what Allah revealed is one of the most important of the five *tawāghit*, un- and anti-Islamic forces, i.e.:

1. Iblīs, the one cursed by Allah, Satan
2. The one who accepts to be worshiped instead of Allah
3. The one calling people to worship himself
4. Who claims to know the hidden things
5. Who rules in contradiction to the revealed laws of Allah

⁸¹ *Harakatu 'l-Tajdidi wa 'l-Islāhi fi Najd fi 'l-'Asri 'l-Hadith*, (The restoration and reformative movement of Najd in modern time) p. 69.

⁸² *Mu'alliyātu 'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhāb*, (Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhāb publications) pt. 5, Ar-Rasā'ilu'sh-Shakhsiya, No. 24, pp. 234 & 236.

The Sheikh set the principles and fundamentals of his call. He calls a non-believer whoever insists on ruling beyond the revealed laws of Allah and prefers human orders to those of the Creator, Allah, even after learning them, and after the matters are made crystal clear to him with valid proofs and arguments. He also considers out of the pale of Islam whoever transgresses the divinity of Allah in its specific domain, and makes gods besides Allah. He was of the opinion that the one who follows the person who denied this fundamental principle or the one who defended the person involved in forbidden things, followed him and helped him against Muslims is a non-believer.

The grandson of the Sheikh, Sheikh Sulaiman ibn Abdullah while explaining the verse:

Have you seen those (hypocrites) who claim that they believe in that which has been sent down to you, and that which was sent down before you, and they wish to go for judgement (in their disputes) to the taghut (false judges, etc.) while they have been ordered to reject them. But Shaitan (Satan) wished to lead them far astray.
(Qur'an 4:60)

said, "Monotheism meant declaring and witnessing *La ilaha illa'llah* – there is no god but Allah. Believing in the messengers of Allah is an integral part of this declaration. That is, it entails two affirmations, that Allah is one and alone, and that He sent messengers to guide His slaves.

That is why the Prophet (PBUH) made it as one pillar. He warned that *tawhîd*, Islamic monotheism, entails that the Messenger (PBUH) is the final judge and arbiter in matters of any dispute. Thus this is the prerequisite of the witness of *La ilaha illa'llâh* for any believer. Therefore whosoever has learned and uttered *La ilaha illa'llâh* is obliged to comply with an unconditional surrender to the commands of Allah and to judge everything in accordance with His orders, which came down to us through His Messenger (PBUH). Whoever witnesses that there is no god but Allah and goes to seek judgement from others rather than the Messenger (PBUH) in matters of any dispute belies his witness.⁸³

The Fourth. Reliance of the Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb on the Qur'an and the Sunnah⁸⁴

The foundation of the call of Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was the Qur'an and the Sunnah of His Messenger (PBUH). The Sheikh did not institute any new religion or a new school of thought or jurisprudence. He only struggled to bring the people back to the Islamic Shariah, to the original sources: the noble Qur'an and the pure Sunnah of His Messenger (PBUH).

⁸³ Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, *Bahâthu Usbu' l'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb*, (Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb week's research) vol.1, p. 203.

⁸⁴ Ibid P218,129

The Qur'an is the word of Allah revealed to Muhammad (PBUH). This is the base and foundation of the religion of Islam, the source of governing one's life and of making laws. This is the major document from Allah for all times and for all places. This grand document is in the language of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) for his community for the application of and obedience to the ordinance of Allah. His Companions received it from the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), recited, memorized, learned the meaning from the Messenger (PBUH) and practiced it. Muslims have continued to memorize the Qur'an in all times. The community inherited copies of it in written and memorized form, generation after generation, without the least addition, subtraction or change. This testifies the prophecy of the Exalted:

Verily We: It is We Who have sent down the Dhikr (i.e. the Qur'an) and surely, We will guard it (from corruption).
(Qur'an 15:9)

The Qur'an consists of the principles of Shariah and fundamentals about the legal, the lawful and the unlawful matters.

The Sunnah, the examples, the practice, and the precincts of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), is the second source for the formulation of Islamic law. Imam ash-Shafi'i (May Allah bless him with mercy) has expressed and

elucidated this in his famous book, *Ar-Risāla*. He said Allah never sent any religion without a revelation, a book, an example, proof and evidence in support thereof to guide people on the right path.

Division of the Ordinances into Sections

1. Allah revealed the text to His creature for the completion of the duties of prayer, obligatory alms, fasting and the Greater Pilgrimage, the prohibition of obscenity – apparent or hidden – the prohibition of adultery, and the eating of carrion and pork.
2. The divine orders revealed in the Qur'an in a concise form, were explained by the Messenger (PBUH) in his words and deeds. The details concerning prayer timings, the number of units and the rest of the details, similarly quantity of obligatory alms, its time and the wealth that the alms are levied on, etc., was given by the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). The rules of fasting, rituals of the Pilgrimage, slaughter, festival, what is to be eaten and what is not to be eaten, details about marriage, sales, impurity and the rest were expounded, explained and pointed out by the Messenger of Allah according to the verse:

And We have also sent down unto you (O Muhammad) the reminder and the advice (the

Qur'an), that you may explain clearly to men what is sent down to them, and that they may give thought.

(Qur'an 16:44)

3. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) enacted the rules concerning things about which the Qur'anic text was silent. Allah has made the obedience of the Messenger obligatory as per the verse:

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad).

(Qur'an 4:59)

Whoever accepts this Sunnah, the way of the Messenger (PBUH), obeys the commands of Allah. Allah commands us to obey Him and His Messenger in the verse:

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad) and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination.

(Qur'an 4:59)

This verse implies that there is a possibility of disputes between the believers concerning certain rulings and directives. It is therefore necessary and incumbent to refer the same to Allah and His Messenger. Referring to Allah means to refer to His book and referring to the Messenger (PBUH)

means to refer to him personally during his lifetime and to the examples set by him, after his demise. The command of referring the disputes to the Book and the Sunnah includes everything. The words, *“if you have any differ in anything amongst yourselves”* refers to a conditional context. It generalises all kinds of differences and disputes among the believers concerning religious issues.⁸⁵

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb had this approach as the basis of his call in all aspects. The Sheikh stressed the necessity of referring all disputes concerning religion to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger in all his books, treatises and fatwas, (religious verdicts). Whoever follows the sayings and religious verdict of the Sheikh finds the stress on and the obligation of following Allah and His Messenger and referring all disputes to His book and the Sunnah, sometimes in brief and sometimes in detail. He has described this in the treatise named, *“Islamic verdicts revolve around four rules”*. We would like to quote some of the important notions of these rules below:

The First Rule is the prohibition of saying something concerning the verdict of Allah without proper knowledge. As the Exalted said:

⁸⁵ *Buhâthu Usbûl'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, (Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb weck's research) vol.1, p. 22.

Say (O Muhammad): (But) the things that my Lord has indeed forbidden are Al-Fawahish (great evil sins, every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse, etc.) whether committed openly or secretly, sins (of all kinds), unrighteous oppression, joining partners (in worship) with Allah for which He has given no authority, and saying things about Allah of which you have no knowledge. (Qur'an 7:33)

The Second Rule. Where the Lawgiver (Allah or His Messenger) is silent, none is entitled to forbid it or make it compulsory or declare it disgusting as the verse below is explicit:

O you who believe! Ask not about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble.

(Qur'an 5:101)

The Third Rule. To leave the clear evidence and argue with ambiguous or analogous word is the way of the deviated people like the Shiites and the Kharijites.

So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation (from the truth) they follow that which is not entirely clear.

(Qur'an 3:7)

It is incumbent on the Muslim to follow a clear command. In case one understood the meaning of a non-clear

word that does not contradict the clear command, it is preferable he say like people who have deep knowledge, “We believe in everything that reached us by our Lord.”

The Fourth Rule. The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said, “The things that are permissible are clear and the things that are forbidden are clear and there are things between them that are ambiguous.”

And if you involve yourself in talking about religious matters without taking this saying into consideration you might go astray. Three of the above rules are derived from the book of Allah, and the fourth one is derived from the Prophet (PBUH). You should know that, in brief, these are the four fundamental rules around which the religion of Islam revolves. These rules cover all aspects: the science of *tafsîr* (commentary on the Qur’an), the science of *Usûl* (fundamentals), the science of *sulouk* and behaviour, the science of hadith, the science of the halâl and the *hâram* (the lawful and the unlawful), the science of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) or the science of *wa’d* and *wa’id* (promises and warnings) or other such religious sciences.

The Sheikh then, with due regard to the scholars, stated that obedience to the texts, *nusûs* is obligatory. After a long discussion he said, “In short, when you notice a dispute or difference refer to Allah and the Messenger. When the right and correct step is clear to you, follow it and if things are not

clear to you to act upon them, refer to the statement of the scholar or scholars whose learning and piety with which you are satisfied.”

To sum up, anybody aware of the writings of the Sheikh will notice his concern and great reverence for the book of Allah, the Exalted, by way of quoting verses from the noble Qur'an⁸⁶ in support of his opinions. Some of his writings appear to be an anthology of texts be they from the noble Qur'an or from the Sunnah of the prophet, like in his book *Usûlu'l-Îmân*, in the chapter entitled, “*Al-wasîyatu bi-kitabi'llâh.*”

The writings of the Sheikh and his disciples of the call are full of quotations from the noble Qur'an and the hadith. The above mentioned book *Usûlu'l-Îmân* (The Fundamentals of Faith) has a chapter entitled *Tahrîdhahu 'alâ luzumi's-Sunnah* ([the Prophet's(PBUH)] recommendation for the implication of the Sunnah) demonstrates in his call, the interest and concern about the Sunnah of the Prophet. His compilations of summaries of Bukhari and the life of the Messenger (PBUH) exhibit the same desire to make it easy for people to refer to them with ease. The scholars of the call resolved and advised the same as Imam Malik, who said that

⁸⁶ *D'awat al Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb, wa atharuha fil 'Alam al Islami*, (Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb call and its impact on the Islamic world) P34, 35.

his words were to be taken and adopted only if it were in consonance with the sayings of the Prophet (*PBUH*).

Sixth. Reopening the Door of *Ijtihad* (interpretive judgement)

One of the foundations of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb is the reopening of the way for *Ijtihad* according to the availability of resources. The call was not limited to any particular school of thought or jurisprudence. There was no prejudice against any one. The call was to remind people of the necessity to return and have direct links to the Book, the Qur'an, and the Sunnah.

The opponents of the Sheikh had charged him, from the very beginning of the call, that he had called for *ijtihad* (interpretive judgement) and rejected *taqlid* (following Imams of the celebrated four schools of *fiqh*) and that he had forbidden the books of the four celebrated Imams.

The fact is that the Sheikh and his disciples never denied or forbade following any of the four schools of Islamic thought. He only asked not to be prejudiced or fanatic. Whereas they did not oppose the obedience and following the celebrated four schools, they opposed any other alleged school for the simple reason that none of the others are established schools with necessary compilation or documentation of principles, etc. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb said, "we ourselves are the followers of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in matters of details. We never deny or

oppose anyone who follows any of the four Imams. But we oppose the followers of other schools than the celebrated four because of non-establishment and non-compilation of fixed, augmented, authentic rules like the Shiites, the Zaidi's, Imami's and the like. We do not approve any such school and compel them to follow any of the four Imams. We do not claim the right of Ijtihad for ourselves. Nevertheless we leave our own 'school' on certain issues, when it becomes clear from the Qur'an and the Sunnah that some other Imam is closer to the right judgement.⁸⁷

Thus it is clear that the Sheikh and his disciples are not against following any particular Imam of the celebrated four schools of *fiqh* as they are based on truth. The Sheikh and his disciples oppose and deny prejudice, fanaticism and the blind following which leads to the division of the Islamic community. "It is incumbent, therefore, to deny, oppose and criticise the one who abandons textual proof for a statement of any scholar, whosoever he may be. The same rule applies to the texts of the celebrated Imams. *Taqlid* (unquestioning following, usually of some Imam or other authority) is there only on the issues where there is no direct teaching or directive in the Qur'an or the Sunnah. This is the meaning of the statements of some scholars that there is no denial (of following certain Imam) on the issues involving *ijtihad*. But for whoever differs with or opposes the Book (the Qur'an) and the Sunnah, rejection is obligatory." "There is no harm in *taqlid* with the non-availability of any clear evidence from

⁸⁷ *Al-Ajüba*, vol. 1, p. 126.

the Qur'an or the Sunnah. But whoever sides and prefers the statement of an Imam even after clear evidence from text (the Qur'an or the Sunnah) must be opposed. This amounts to avoiding study and research of the issue in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and accepting books because of falling behind and being content."⁸⁸ It is obligatory for the one who is sincere to himself that, when he reads the books of scholars, he compare their statements with those of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. A *mujtahid* (interpretive jurist) of the scholars, his followers and those aligned with his school must mention the evidence for his or their opinion. All the Imams are equal in their efforts to find the solution. A just man will look into their statements. He will contemplate to understand the problems. He will keep them in mind and will scrutinise their arguments and evidence to distinguish the right from the wrong. He will thereby find and follow the best of them. The arguments should be scrutinised in the light of the book of Allah and then of the Sunnah.⁸⁹

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb has divided *ijtihâd* into two kinds: (1) *ijtihâdun mutlaqun*, absolute *ijtihâd* and (2) *ijtihâdun mahdûdun*, partial or limited *ijtihâd*. Similarly the *mujtahid*, the one who does *ijtihâd* is of two kinds (1) *mujtahidun mutlaqun*, a free, independent and full jurist and (2) *mujtahidun muqayyidun*, a restricted jurist, i.e. restricted to particular issues. The first is the one who is

⁸⁸ *Fathu 'l-Majid*, pp. 139 & 395.

⁸⁹ Abdulrahman ibn Hasan, *Fathu 'l-Majid: Sharhu Kitabi 't-Tawhid*, (The glorious genesis in explaining the book of monotheism), p. 398.

properly qualified in religious matters and is really capable of giving an authorised opinion as the celebrated four Imams did. The second one is not like the previous one. Still he has a deep knowledge of the problems on which he wants to give his final judgment.⁹⁰

Thus, it is clear that one of the important bases of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was the reopening of the door of *ijtihad* on issues where *ijtihad* is permissible. The door of *ijtihad* is reopened for the scholars where it is so required. This door was practically closed and non-existent till those days.

In the end, I would like to refer to the fact that there is a minimum of example of *ijtihad* by Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb himself. More and more attention was paid to the confirmation and establishment of the great call towards perfect monotheism, for Allah, the Exalted and elimination of all kinds of Shirk, polytheistic deviations. All efforts were taken to put an end to whatever was against perfect monotheism in the Muslim society.⁹¹ The issue of monotheism received the maximum attention of the Sheikh. He had little time for such issues that needed *ijtihad*.

⁹⁰ Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, *Hayatuhu wa Fikrahu*, (Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, his life and his intellect) p. 150.

⁹¹ For further information see, Da 'watu'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb wa Atharuhâ fi'l-'Âlamî'l-Islâmî, (Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb call and its impact on the Islamic world) p. 71.

Fourth. The Prime Goal of the Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and Its Objectives.

The prime goal of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb can be summed up in the following: He stood for the affirmation of all kinds of worship to Almighty Allah and fighting all kinds of *shirk*. The Sheikh said, "What we call the people to is monotheism, the same that Allah told His Prophet (PBUH):

Say (O Muhammad) this is my way; I invite unto Allah (i.e. to the oneness of Allah – Islamic monotheism) with sure knowledge, I and whosoever follows me (also must invite others to Allah with sure knowledge. And Glorified and Exalted be Allah (above all that they associate as partners with Him). And I am not of the Mushrikeen (polytheists, pagans, idolaters and disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah; those who worship others along with Allah or set up rivals or partners to Allah). (Qur'an 12:108)

And the mosques are for Allah (alone), so invoke not anyone along with Allah. (Qur'an 72:18)

We forbid people from what Allah forbids. We forbid them from *shirk*, any kind of polytheism.⁹² As Allah said:

Verily whosoever sets up partners in worship with Allah, then Allah has forbidden Paradise for him, and the Fire will be his abode. (Qur'an 5:72)

The Sheikh wrote to Abdullah as-San'ânî, a letter in which he said, "We call for worship of Allah alone, who is free from any partner, and we prohibit and forbid worshipping anything else."⁹³

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb pursued to establish this aim. This was his goal and this was his call. He adopted all means to achieve it. He stressed this in all his lectures, writings and advice throughout the peninsula. The same thing we find in his letters written in response to queries he received from all over. The Sheikh concentrated on stating the truth about monotheism, acquainting people with their real Lord, and giving Him due glorification. The Sheikh stated the rights of Allah over His slaves. Allah alone deserves all kinds of worship without the least association and partnership of any kind. He is the only appropriate being for worship. He is to be obeyed in what he ordained. Creation and command are His rights. In order to establish monotheism and preserving and defending it from *shirk*, any

⁹² Imam Muhammad Islamic University, *Mu'allifat al Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, al Rasail al Shakhshiya*, (Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb's personal letters) Vol.5 *al Risalah* 14 P.101

⁹³ *al Rasail al Shakhshiya*, (personal letters) Ibid, *al Risalah* 15, P.101

partnership, he vehemently attacked the Sufis, Islamic mystics, and what surrounded them, i.e. the deviant beliefs and customs. Beliefs like predestinarism, unification and merger with Allah, etc. were severely attacked. The Sheikh declared that there was no mediation and invocation to beings other than Allah. In a letter sent to Morocco the Sheikh wrote, "There is no greater calamity than *shirk*, associating partners with Allah, which the Islamic community is facing. Paying attention to and calling dead people for help against enemies, for fulfillment of their needs and removal of their troubles is a kind of polytheism. Dead persons have no authority and power to do any such thing. Allah, the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth alone has such powers. Similarly trying to seek the help of the dead, get their attention through votive offerings and sacrifices and calling on them to eliminate harm is a catastrophe we must try to ward off. Such things are appropriate for Allah alone. Allah is free from such partners anyway. The Exalted does not accept any worship and prayer which is not exclusive and sincerely for him."⁹⁴

This was the goal that Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb tried to focus and achieve, the pure and exclusive worship of Allah, the All-High, the Exalted. Some other important objectives of the call are derived from the overall goal. They are the following:

1. Fighting innovations and myths and make people conscious of them and hate them.
2. Purifying articles of faith from the shades of Jahiliya (Ignorance).

⁹⁴ *Ar-Rasâ' ilu 'sh-Shakhsīyaia*, Treatise No. 17, p. 111.

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3. Clarification of Islamic concepts surrounded by confusion, prejudice, slant and distortions.
 4. Establishment of Islamic obligations, Islamic rules and rules of justice in various fields of life.
 5. Description of the permitted and prohibited in worship, social dealings, personal matters and the like.
 6. Description of the lawful and the unlawful.
 7. Illuminating ignorance and correcting the wrong perceptions. The Sheikh, in a letter addressed to Abdullah ibn Abdullatif, wrote, "All thanks and praise belong to Allah. I call not to the religion of a mystic, jurist, scholastic or the great imams like Ibn al-Qayyim, Dhahabi, Ibn Kathir and the like, but rather I call to Allah, the One without any partner. I call to the way of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). I hope and believe that I do not reject the truth, right when it reaches me. I make Allah and His angels and all His creatures witness that if any correct thing comes from you, I will accept it wholeheartedly, and I will reject the sayings of my Imams except the Messenger of Allah. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) tells only what is right...."⁹⁵

The Sheikh, in a letter addressed to as-Suwaidi, the scholar of Iraq, writes to correct the misunderstanding about him and clear the

⁹⁵ *Ar-Rasd 'ilu 'sh-Shakhsiya*, (personnal letters) Treatise No. 37, p. 152.

unfounded doubts, "I would like to inform you that, by the grace of Allah, I am a follower and not an innovator. My belief and religion is the religion of Allah. I have the faith of the *Ahlu's-Sunnati wa'l-Jamâ'a*, the Sunnites, the way of the imams of the Muslims, like the celebrated four Imams and their followers, until the day of Judgement. I, however, bring to light to the people, the sincerity and purity of the religion of Allah. I forbid them to call on living or dead pious people or others (for supernatural help), or and associate them in matters that are part of the worship of Allah, His exclusive right, like slaughter, votive offerings, trust, prostration and the like. Even the close angels, the prophets and the messengers have no part in it. I call to what the messengers of Allah, from the first to the last, called to. It is the path and religion of *Ahlu's-Sunnati wa'l-Jamâ'a*."⁹⁶

8. Establishment of the Religion of Allah among His slaves (mankind) conducive to its way important among them is the *hudûdu'sh-sharia* (the Islamic penal code). Ibn Ghannam wrote, "The Sheikh in 'Oyayneh continued with whatever was possible for him, the Islamic command enjoining good and forbidding evil, teaching the people their religion and to eliminate innovations, trying to establish the

⁹⁶ Husain ibn Ghannâm, *Tâ'rikh Najd, (The History of Najd)* edited by Nasseruddin al-Asad, p. 359.

Islamic penal code and asking the rulers to implement them.”⁹⁷

9. Elevating the Flag of Jihad to make the Word of Allah Supreme. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, in a letter addressed to Abdullah ibn Suwailim⁹⁸ said, “I do not know anything that can bring a man closer to Allah better than the application and implementation of the way of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). If jihad with the non-believers and the hypocrites is added to keep the Word of Allah supreme, thus one completes his faith.” He further added, “The best of jihad in the time of not applying Islam fully in life is the jihad of the hypocrites.”⁹⁹
10. Establishment of a complete Islamic society with its belief, worship, rules and regulations in all aspects of life.
11. Establishment of the rightly guided inmate (leadership) that looks after the affairs of the believers with truth and justice: Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb called the Muslims to hold the banner of the Islamic call. He called for a positive Islamic movement to restore active Muslim leadership and hand it over to the one that would

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol.1. p. 79.

⁹⁸ *Ar-Rasâ'ilu 'sh-Shakhsiya*, (personal letters) Treatise No. 42, p. 288.

⁹⁹ *Unwânu 'l-Majdi fi Tâ'rikhi Najd*, (Title of glory in the history of Najd) vol.1, p. 45.

support it in the right direction. Similarly the Sheikh censured Muslims for a lack of mutual cooperation and their negative attitude. He reminded them that everybody is responsible before Allah for the establishment of virtuous, capable Muslim leadership in the world. He is responsible for upholding and helping the faith of monotheism, the Oneness of Allah, and for the elimination of every form of paganism and ignorance from the life of Muslims. The Sheikh used to ask for assistance from princes and governors in holding the banner of the call to pure Islamic monotheism. The main turning point of the call was a resort to jihad when the Emir of Dira'iyah Muhammad ibn Saud responded to the call and applied the call to monotheism under the guidance of the Imam Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. The Imam collaborated, helped and stood by the Emir for the cause of the call.

Chapter III

A Refutation of the Doubts Raised against Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb's Call

In the previous chapter, we explained the principles of the Call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb. On the basis of his letter addressed to the people of Qassim, one can conclude that his call does not amount to a new faith. It is rather a call to return to pristine, pure Islam, free from all the stains of paganism, idolatry and heresy. We have elucidated that the core of this *Salafi*, fundamentalist, puritanical, program is the call to return to pure and unblemished monotheism and to purify worship for Allah the Almighty.

But despite the lucidity and the noble objectives behind it the call was confronted with strong opposition from certain quarters, and its opponents not only raised doubts about it but also fabricated lies and calumnies.

In the following pages, we shall briefly review the opposition mounted against this call and the motives behind the opposition.

Internal opposition: A researcher will notice that the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb met with strong opposition in the region. It started in Riyadh itself and then

spread to other areas of Najd with the spread of the call itself, until it covered outlying areas like Kharj, Hurmah, Huraimilâ' and Tharmada and reached as far as the towns of Sudair, Washam and Qassim. The opposition was of political color like that mounted by rulers or had an academic nature like the opposition from scholars. In some cases, the two joined hands with one another, as is evident from the stiff and prolonged opposition of Duham ibn Dawwas, the ruler of Riyadh. He had on his side, the archenemy of this call, Sulaiman ibn Suhaim, the religious head of Riyadh.

Another example of this cooperation is the support of Muhammad ibn Afaliq, a scholar of Ahsa, to Sulaiman ibn Urai'ir, the Emir of Ahsa. When Uthman ibn Muanawar, the Emir of Oyayneh lent his support to the Imam in the early stages of his call, and the ruler of Ahsa threatened him with stopping his financial aid, Muhammad ibn Afaliq wrote to 'Uthman two successive letters inciting him against this call. In these letters, he raised doubts against the call and tried to convince the Emir to desist from supporting it.¹⁰⁰ Dr. Abdullah al-Uthaimin says that more than twenty scholars and students were opposed to the call of the Sheikh. It is evident from the letters of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb that his call met strong opposition from the scholars of Najd. An observer of the event will notice that more than twenty scholars and students stood in opposition to him at one time or another.

¹⁰⁰ *Da'awi'l-Munâwi 'in li-Da'wati'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb, (The opponents' claims to Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb call). p. 30.*

Among the chief adversaries of the call were Abdullah al-Muwayyis of Hurma and Sulaiman ibn Suhaim of Riyadh. It can be deduced from these letters that the adversaries of the Sheikh had different positions. Some of them, like Al-Muwayyis, opposed him and continued their opposition. Some others, in the beginning, admitted that the call or a part of it raised by the Sheikh was correct, but changed their stance with the passage of time. An example of such opponents was Ibn Suhaim. However, there were some, like Abdullah ibn Isa, who remained wavering between supporting and opposing this call.¹⁰¹ Dr. Uthameen sheds light on the aspects of this opposition.¹⁰²

Personal correspondence of the Sheikh shows that the opposition to his call had different modes, the chief among them being the writing against it. A perusal of these letters shows that the writings were abundant, although most of them were not lengthy.

The second mode of the opposition was the dispute of Ibn Ismail with the Sheikh's group in Tharmada and the wrangle between Sulaiman ibn Suhaim and Ibn Salih in Riyadh.

The third mode was the contact made with scholars and influential personalities outside Najd who were provoked against the Sheikh and his call. For instance, some emissaries

¹⁰¹ Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, *Bahāthu Usbū'i'sh-Sheikh* (Research Papers of the Sheikh's Week) vol. 2 (1403H), pp 108-109.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 111-113.

were sent to the people of Kuwaz and Qubbat Rajab to inform them of the Sheikh's denunciation of their practices, with a view to inciting them against him. Similarly, Ruwais, along with Ibn Rabiah and Ibn Ismail, went to the people of Qubbat Abi Talib and tried to incite them against the Sheikh. However, it is clear that the efforts to seek outside help reflected the fact that the opponents of the Sheikh in Najd were fully aware of their weakness vis-à-vis his call.

The fourth aspect of this opposition was that the scholars of Najd circulated the books written by non-Najdi authors against the call. Muwwais and Ibn Ubaid circulated the books of Al-Qubbani, Al-Basri and Muwais, and Ibn Ismail tried to popularize the book of Ibn Afaliq.¹⁰³

Besides this, some other tactics were employed to oppose the call of the Sheikh.¹⁰⁴

1. The opponents of the call jeered and ridiculed the call and the followers of the Sheikh.
2. Propaganda based on lies and falsities was let loose against the Sheikh in circles of scholars.
3. Books and treatises were written against the call and missions were sent to emirs and scholars of various towns, villages and bedouin settlements, which targeted this call and its adherents.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 113

¹⁰⁴*Harakatu 't-Tajdid wa'l-Islahi fi Najd fi'l-'Asri'l-Hadith*, (The restoration and reformative movement of Najd in modern time) p. 127.

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4. Practical embargo was imposed against the champions of this call by cutting aids and supplies to them.
 5. Arms were raised against the adherents of this call and an economic embargo was imposed against them.
 6. Efforts were made to incite the Ottoman caliphate, the Turkish rulers of Hijaz and Ottoman governors of Syria, Iraq, Yemen, etc., and doubts were created about this call, with a view to eliminating it.

The Motives behind the Opposition

Many scholars have spoken about the causes that led to the opposition of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. Sheikh Abdulaziz ibn Baz divides the opponents of the call into three categories.¹⁰⁵ The first category was perverted scholars who viewed truth as evil and evil as truth. Such scholars considered the construction of domes on the graves of the pious people, or the taking of these sites as mosques and supplicating there, acts of piety. They believed that anyone who refused these actions was inviting the wrath of pious people, that he was the enemy of Islam, and that was a believer's duty to wage jihad against him.

¹⁰⁵ Sheikh Abdulaziz ibn Baz, *Al-Imâm Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb: Da'watuhu wa Stratuhu* (Imam Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb: His call and bibliography). (1403H), pp. 27-28.

Another category was scholars who were ignorant of the reality of the Sheikh. They were not aware of his real message and repeated what was attributed to him by heretics. They believed in the propaganda made against the Sheikh that he disbelieved in some prophets and pious people and the miracles attributed to them. They, consequently, denounced the Sheikh.

The third category of the opponents of the call was the people holding high positions. They opposed the call fearing that champions of this call, if successful, would usurp their positions and occupy their lands.

The dispute between the Sheikh and the masses was on the following as Sheikh Abdulaziz ibn Baz explained:

First: Rejection of paganism and preaching of pure monotheism

Second: Rejection of heresies, like constructions on graves, making them places of worship or other practices introduced by Sufis

Third: He enjoined good and forbade evil. This he did forcibly. Whosoever refused to obey the command of the Almighty, he punished him. He prevented people from committing evil deeds and carried out mandatory punishments.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

The so-called scholars, the masses and the local riffraff denounced his call as it was against their heretical and polytheistic customs. In addition to these reasons, there was another that led to the enmity and hatred for the call. From the very outset of this call, false allegations were leveled against its exponents. A smear campaign was launched against them and the so-called scholars ascribed to them what they had never said. For instance, they were presented as the fifth school of Islamic law. It was also claimed that they were Kharijites and did not hold the lives and properties of Muslims inviolable. Further, it was said that the originator of this call claimed Prophethood and had disparaged the Prophet (Peace be upon him).

Besides these internal causes, there was a political reason behind opposition from abroad. The major cause of this opposition was the dispute between the followers of this call and the Turks, on the one hand, and between the exponents of this call and the sheriffs on the other. Prompted by political interests the adversaries created confusion about this call and incited the masses against it. Many researchers have dwelt on the point.

Muhibbuddin Al-Khatib says, "Muhammad Abduh would seek refuge in Allah from politics and all that emanated from it. If politics required changing facts and presenting something against reality, a politician would employ all means at his command to hide the facts in pursuit

of his personal interests. An example of this is the campaign underway, for the last hundred years, against the reform movement of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. This movement has been named "Wahhabism" to give an impression that it is a new school."

Muhammad ibn Abdullah Madi says, "That there was a political motive behind the campaign reviling the *Salafi* movement which emanated from the dispute between the Wahhabi Saud dynasty and the Ottoman State. This dispute culminated in a war between Wahhabis and Muhammad Ali of Egypt. False propaganda against the Wahhabis accompanied this war. As a part of this propaganda campaign, the Wahhabis were presented as rebels against Islamic teachings. This smear campaign was carried on to pave the way for their elimination. Of a similar nature, was the political dispute between the Wahhabi Saud dynasty and the sheriffs of Makkah, as well as the one between them and the Muslim leaders of Najd."¹⁰⁷

Sheikh Muhammad Rashid Reda has brought to light some of the activities of the sheriffs of Makkah against the *Salafi* call. He says, "The newspaper *Al-Qibla*, the organ of the then King Hussain, heaped allegations and false accusations on the *Salafi* call. King Hussain brought out several issues of this paper, in 1336 and 1337, in which he charged the Wahhabis with unbelief and accused them of making Sunni Muslims out as unbelievers and speaking evil

¹⁰⁷ *Da'âwi 'l-Munâwi 'in li-da'wati 'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, p. 74.

of the Prophet (Peace be upon him). Some people of Damascus and Beirut, in order to gain favour of the sheriffs, published letters charging the Wahhabis with unbelief and leveling false accusations against them. Then this trend reached Egypt and found expression in some papers there.”¹⁰⁸ “Slandering the Wahhabis and accusing them of heresy and unbelief was motivated by political objectives alone. The motive was to alienate them from the Muslim masses in order to keep control over the Hijaz. The Turks feared that they would establish an Arab State. The people raged against them because the state was angry with them, and they became silent when the political wind calmed.”¹⁰⁹

“The rulers of Makkah resisted the reform movement from the very outset. Throughout the entire Islamic world, they spread propaganda that it was a call for unbelief and heresy based on enmity for Islam and Muslims. Their seat at Makkah facilitated their task, and the masses, who are credulous in general, believed them. They called upon the Ottoman State to wage war against them, and it [in turn] sought the help of Egypt for this purpose.”¹¹⁰

One of the reasons of the opposition of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb’s call was that the adversaries of this call were keen on defending their evil beliefs. Heretical and polytheistic trends were popular among the Muslim masses. They revered the dead, sought help from

¹⁰⁸ *Al-Mukhtar min majallat al-manar*, (Selections from al Manar Magazine) p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

them, built tombs on graves and spent huge amounts of money on these graves. The Sufis who patronized these sites had rich ground on which to spread their venomous ideas and beliefs. When, as a result of the call, the polytheistic practices were laid bare and the people came to recognize monotheism in its pristine purity, the adversaries of this call saw an end to their false beliefs. They all gathered and mobilized all their resources and energies to revile the call and its exponents. In course of their campaign they presented their own beliefs in an embellished form.

We notice that, while opposing the *Salafi* call, the Sufis boasted about their cult and took pride in their affiliation to Sufi orders like the Naqshbandi, the Qadri or the Tījānī.¹¹¹

A cause of strong opposition of the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was the incitement against it by the imperialist powers of the time, i.e. Britain, France, Holland and Italy. These powers saw the *Salafi* call with alarm because it had spread outside the Arabian Peninsula and had found supporters in other Islamic countries as well as in the countries where the Muslims were in minority. The Muslims impressed by this call had held the banner of resistance against the colonial powers. Therefore, these powers had no option but to incite the people against this

¹¹¹ *Da'wat 'l-Munâwi 'in li-da'wat 'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb, (The Opposition's Claims to Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb Call) pp. 74-75.*

movement, creating doubts about its fundamentals and objectives in order to sow the seeds of dissension in Muslim ranks. Their aim was to continue their domination over these countries and to loot the rich resources there. We shall review the subject in somewhat greater detail later, when refuting the allegation that the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was an extension of the call of Abdulwahhâb Rustam, which came from abroad.

We can conclude this subject with the opinion of Sheikh Ahmad ibn Hajar ibn Muhammad at-Tâmî, who has shed light on the causes putting the Muslim masses against this call. At-Tâmî specifies three causes responsible for the situation:

- 1- The masses in all Muslim countries held the view that the Turkish State was the Caliphate and that it was fighting the unbelievers and supporting the sharia of the Prophet (Peace be upon him). They saw the Caliphate fighting the Najdi forces, and they themselves sent troops to fight the Saud dynasty and crush them.
- 2- They heard, from their scholars, the denunciation of this call. They followed these scholars who had taken upon themselves the task of waging war against this call and carrying on a propaganda campaign against it.
- 3- The pilgrims coming to Makkah heard, from the sheriffs as well as from some scholars of Makkah and

Madina, allegations that Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab and his followers did not respect the pious people of the past, demolished the domes of their graves and prevented from visiting their graves. They were also told that these people did not love the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and did not allow visiting his grave. These allegations created a bad impression in Muslim masses who believed that the Sheikh and his followers were not on the right path.¹¹²

Main Opponents of the Call:

A number of rulers, scholars and students stood in opposition to the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. We have already indicated that their opposition was either political or academic. On political level the opposition was launched by the rulers of Najd while beyond the frontiers of the Saudi State, by the Turkish State, the sheriff governments of the Hejaz and the imperialist powers of the time, which incited the masses against the call. Here we shall not discuss the opposition to the Sheikh on a political plane, because the opponents in the political sphere were only defending their political interests. They feared the expansion of this call to their lands would jeopardize their political positions. Here we are concerned only with the stance of the scholars and students to this *Salafi* call. This call

¹¹² Sheikh Ahmad ibn Hajar At-Tâmi, *Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb* (Kuwait: Ad-Dâru's-Salafiya, 1403H), pp. 67-68.

was resisted by scholars such as the ones about whom Allah the Almighty says:

(And remember) when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture (Jews and Christians) to make it (the news of the coming of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the religious knowledge) known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it, but they threw it away behind their backs, and purchased with it some miserable gain! And indeed worst is that which they bought.

(Qur'an 3:187)

Scholars, who were expected to reform the people and keep them on the right path, embarked on pushing them further into the darkness of ignorance and misguidance. These traders of religion made the masses believe that their ways and views were right, and so the people followed them. These scholars came forward with false accusations against the champions of this call. These scholars leveled, against the Sheikh and his followers, charges of apostasy, of inventing a new religion to replace Islam and of denigration of the Prophet (Peace be upon him and the pious ancestors). They spread the word that the followers of the Sheikh deemed unbelievers, those who visited the graves of pious people and sought help from them. Employing these tactics, they incited the masses against the call and its standard bearers.¹¹³

¹¹³ Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, *Bahithu Usul'ih-Sheikh* (Research Papers of the Sheikh's Week), vol. 2 (1413H), p. 160.

In order to make the picture of these scholars clearer and shed further light on their machinations against the call, we quote from the letters of the Sheikh, which lay bare the hurdles that came in the way of the Sheikh's spreading his message.¹¹⁴

In a letter in which he replied to the query of the people of Qassim about his faith, the Sheikh, referring to his arch rival, Ibn Suhaim, said, "I came to know about the letter of Ibn Suhaim, which has been accepted and approved by some scholars on your side. Allah the Almighty knows that this man attributed to me many things that I never said and that never occurred to me."¹¹⁵

The Sheikh, in a letter addressed to Ibn Abbad, a religious personality of Tharmada, refers to some activities of the opponents of the *Salafi* call, "Similarly, Ahmad ibn Yahya has nurtured his desire to oppose monotheism. He sometimes shows his explicit enmity. Also Ibn Ismail opposed the concept of monotheism we had agreed on mutually. You know that he has, with him, a book written by a man from Basra, which, from the beginning to the end, is full of statements rejecting the monotheism of divinity. This

¹¹⁴ *Da 'awi 'l-Mundwi 'n li-Da 'wati 'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhab*, (The Opposition's Claims to Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhab Call) p. 33.

¹¹⁵ *Mu'allafati 'sh-Sheikh*, vol. 5, p. 11.

book is with Muwais, and his followers like Ibn Suhaim and Ibn Obaid are using it in their arguments against us.”¹¹⁶

The Sheikh, in a letter to Abdurahman ibn Rabie, religious head of Thadiq, describes the activities of opponents who were busy keeping the people from this call. He says, “Muwais, Ibn Ismail and Ahmed ibn Yahya among us are rejecting this religion, and they are now busy keeping the people from this. If you adhere to monotheism, call the people to it and express your enmity to its opponents, particularly to Ibn Yahya, the most filthy among of them. You are our brother and are dear to us.”¹¹⁷

Despite the efforts of the opponents of the call and its adherents, to raise doubts against it, the Sheikh spared no effort to guide these opponents to the right path. He treated them with the utmost kindness as is evident from his letter to Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Abdullatif, a scholar of Ahsa. He says, “I love you and pray for you in my prayers. I wish that Allah may guide you to His religion.”¹¹⁸

This provides a glimpse of some scholars who opposed the *Salafi* call. A large number of scholars opposed this call, and it is difficult here to give an exhaustive description of all of them. However, we may mention some scholars who vehemently opposed the call.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

¹¹⁸ *Ad-Duraru's-Sunniya*, vol. 1, p. 32.

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- 1- Sulaiman ibn Muhammad ibn Suhaim (d. 1181H) was one of the scholars of Riyadh. He, after the fall of Riyadh to the first Saudi State left for Ahsa. He was an arch enemy of the *Salafi* call, and he was the first to attribute false statements to Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. His letter, which was full of lies and false allegations, was one of the most severe letters used by the opponents of the call for distorting the message. He sent this letter to all Islamic countries, to incite the people there against the Sheikh and his call. This, in fact, had bad effects on the call. We shall quote it while discussing the doubts raised against the call.

 - 2- Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Fairuz an-Najdi was of an Ahsa origin. He was one of those who declared enmity for Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and carried out machinations against him and his call. One of his works against the call is his book entitled "*Ar-Risâlatu 'l-Murdhîyati fi 'r-Raddi 'alâ 'l-Wahhâbiyya*", i.e. "A Satisfactory Treatise Against Wahhabism."¹¹⁹

 - 3- Muhammad ibn Abdul Rahman ibn Afaliq had a scholarly status in Al-Ahsa and had many students.¹²⁰ He witnessed the movement of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab at its outset as he died in 1163H. He opposed it vehemently and wrote a treatise entitled "*Tahakkumu 'l-Muqallidîn min Mudda'î Tajdidi'd-Dîn*," (i.e. Annoyance with

¹¹⁹For more information on Muhammad ibn Fairuz and his book, refer to *Da'awi al-Munâwi'în li-Da'wâti-sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, (The Opposition's Claims to Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb Call) p. 41. Also see Ibn Bassam, *Ulamâ'î Najd*, vol. 3, pp. 882-886.

¹²⁰For more information on Ibn Afaliq and his letters refer to *Da'awi 'l-Munâwi'în li-Da'wâti-sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, p. 42. Also see *Tashîhu Khatâ' Tâ'rikhi hawla 'l-Wahhâbiyya*, (Historical error about Wahhabism) p. 70.

Imitators among Those Claiming to Renew the Religion). The treatise is full of challenging remarks and is derogatory in style. The objective of the book was clearly to ridicule and denounce the Sheikh.

Ibn Afaliq also wrote a letter to Uthman Ibn Mummar, the Emir of Oyayneh in which he raised doubts against the Sheikh. Apparently the letter aimed at turning the Emir against the movement. Ibn Afaliq claimed, in this letter, that Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab opposed Ibn Timiyya and Ibn Qayyim in issues concerning monotheism. When Uthman did not respond to the letter, Ibn Afaliq wrote a treatise denouncing Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Abdulwahhab and Ibn Muammar and accused them of holding the Muslims a unbelievers and misguided.

4- Abdullah ibn Isa al-Muwais, the Judge of Hurma (d.1175H) was an avowed enemy of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb and his call. The Sheikh warned against him and his letters indicate that he considered Al-Muwais one of the most dangerous enemies of the movement. However the Sheikh tried to win him over to the movement, arguing with him in a calm style. He did not respond however.¹²¹

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb, explaining the behavior of Al-Muwais about his message, says, "We received the writings of Ibn Ismail and Al-Muwais, which

¹²¹ *Raudatu 'l-Ishâm*, (The garden of understanding) vol. 1, p. 172.

show their rejection of Islam. We wrote to them, quoted many passages and put forward the best possible arguments, but to no avail." About Abdullah ibn Issa al-Muwais, he says, "I invited him politely and endured many things from him."¹²²

5- Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Humayyid (d.1295H) was one of the scholars who wrote against the call. Ibn Bassam says, "He, in his capacity as the Mufti of the Hanbali School, was a functionary of the Ottoman State, which fought against this creed. He was in that country after the reverses the *Salafi* movement met in its country. He ruled against the call, a result of which was that the adversaries of the call increased. Also he had studied outside Najd with scholars who had devoted themselves to fighting this call. All these factors had their effect on him, and he became an opponent of this message and allied himself to its adversaries."¹²³

6- Ahmed ibn Zaini Dahlan (d.1304H) lived in Makkah and was the Mufti of Shafiite school in the city. He was able to wield influence on many students who came to study in that city. He spread hunting nets disguised as knowledge and these students would fall into them. Ahmad Dahlan took recourse to spreading rumors and false accusations against the *Salafi* call, and these falsehoods had their

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹²³ *Ulamā' i Najd*, (Najd Scholars) pp. 865-866.

effect on the pilgrims coming from all parts of the Muslim world: Among the books he wrote against the *Salafi* call was a treatise entitled “*Ad-Duraru 's-Sunnīyati fi 'r-raddi 'alā 'l-Wahhābiya*”¹²⁴ (i.e. Pearls from the Sunnah of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) in refutation of Wahhabism).” This treatise is full of nonsensical ideas and lies he quoted from the books of Sufis. He puts forward this mixture shamelessly to fight the call for monotheism.¹²⁵

These are some scholars who opposed the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. The scholars on the side of this call answered these opponents and wrote books in refutation of the lies spread by them. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb himself was the first to write against the books of his opponents. His personal letters contain many an answer to the objections and claims of his opponents. Similarly the treatise of Sheikh Hamad ibn Nasir ibn Mummar provides answers to the writings of these opponents,¹²⁶ “*An-Nubdhatu 'sh-Sharīfatu 'n-Nafīsati fi 'l-raddi 'alā 'l-Qubūriyīn*,” (A Noble, Valuable Brief against the Grave Worshippers). Similarly he wrote “*Al-Fawākihu 'l-Udhdhābu fi 'l Raddi 'alā Man Lam Yuhakkimu 's-Sunnata wa 'l-Kitāb* (Sweet Fruits in Refutation of Those Who Do Not Resort to the Book and the Sunnah).

¹²⁴ *Da 'āwī 'l-Munāwī 'in li-Da 'wātī 'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, p. 51.

¹²⁵ Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, *Bahāthu Ushū 'i 'sh-Sheikh* (Research Papers of the Sheikh's Week), vol. 2, p. 183.

¹²⁶ *Da 'āwī 'l-Munāwī 'in li-Da 'wātī 'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, pp. 59-70.

Sheikh Abdullah ibn Abdurrahman Abu Batin (1282H), the Mufti of Najd, wrote a book entitled "*Ta'sîsu't-Taqdîsi fî'r-raddi 'alâ Dawud ibn Jarjis*" (Establishment of Sanctity in Refutation of Dawud ibn Jarjis).

Also Sheikh Abdullatif ibn Abdurrahman ibn Hasan (d.1292H) wrote a book entitled "*Minhâju't-Ta'sîsi wa't-Taqdîsi fî'l-raddi 'alâ Dawud ibn Jarjis*," (Methodology of Foundation and Sanctification in Refutation of Dawud ibn Jarjis).

He also wrote many treatises full of arguments against the opponents of the *Salafi* call.

Also among those who wrote against the opponents of this call was Sheikh Sulaiman ibn Salman (d.1349H). His books, which received wide acclaim, include *Kashfu Ghayâhibi'dh-Dhullâm 'an Jalâ'i'l-Awhâm*, (Removing the Darkness of Gloom from the Shine of Delusions) and *As-Sawâ'iqu'l-Mursalatu'sh-Shihâbiyatu fî'r-raddi 'alâ'sh-Shubhati'sh-Shamîya* (Loosed Thunderbolts in Rejection of Syrian Skepticism).

These examples show that the *Ulema* on the side of the *Salafi* call exerted laudable efforts in laying bare the wrong doings of the adversaries of this call.

Doubts Raised against the Call:

Despite its firm foundations and the nobility of its purpose, the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb met with strong opposition from adversaries who raised many doubts about it. These doubts were based on lies and fabrications that knew no bounds and had no ends.

The first opponent of the call, Sulaiman ibn Suhaim sent a letter to the people of Basra, Ahsa and other places in which he criticized Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and attributed many false statements to him. Since this letter contain many doubts raised against this call, we shall quote from it and quote from the writings of the Sheikh in reply to this letter. We shall also quote the answer of Sheikh Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb on the doubts raised against the call. Sulaiman ibn Muhammad ibn Suhaim wrote:¹²⁷

From Sulaiman ibn Muhammad ibn Suhaim to the Muslim scholars and the servants of the Sharia of the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon you.

We wish to inform you that a heretic and misguided person has appeared in our area. He is devoid of knowledge and piety and is committing some heinous acts. Some of these acts are known to all and some could not yet cross the boundaries of our land. So

¹²⁷ *Husain ibn Ghannâm, Tâ'rikhu Najd (The History of Najd) (Rawdhu'l-Afkar) (Egypt: Matba'atu'l-Madani), edited by Nasiruddin al-Asad, pp. 293-294.*

we wish to bring them to the notice of scholars who are the heirs to the legacy of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) so that they may hunt him as a hawk hunts small birds, and put an end to his heresies, misguided acts and sins.

The purpose behind this is the support of the Religion. May Allah include you and us among those who help one another in the acts of piety.

One of his heresies is that he came to the Companions of the Prophet, in Jubaila, Zaid ibn Al-Khattab and others and demolished their graves and destroyed them. They were lying in stony ground where it was difficult to dig graves, so a foot high platform was raised on their graves to prevent bad smell and keep the beasts away. The buried are Companions of the Prophet (Peace be upon him).

He also demolished a mosque there without any reason, arguing on the grounds of the Sharia. He had no reason except his base desires.

Another heretic act is that he burnt the book *Dalâ'ilu'l-Khairât*, only because its author calls the Prophet *Sayyidana wa Mawlâna* (our chief and our master). He also burnt *Rawdhu'r-Rayâhîn* (Meadow of Scents) and says it is *Raudhu'sh-Shayâtîn* (Meadow of Devils). He also says, "Were I able, I would have demolished the grave of the Prophet (Peace be upon

him) and had I power over the House of Allah, I would have taken away the drain and would have replaced it with a wooden drain pipe. Didn't he hear the saying of Allah:

Thus it is (is an obligation that mankind owes to Allah) and whosoever honors the Symbols of Allah, then it is truly from the piety of the hearts.

(Qur'an, 22:32)

It is his assertion that the people have been astray for the last six hundred years. He sent me a letter in which he says, "You should realize that you, before me, were ignorant and astray."

If one does not agree with him in whatever he says and does not testify that it is the Truth, he holds him an unbeliever. On the contrary, whoever agrees with him and testifies to all his assertions says, "You are a monotheist," even if he is a sinner. This shows that he is inviting the people to the "Oneness" of himself and not the "Oneness" of Allah the Almighty.

He sent a letter, written in his own hand, to our area, through some preacher. In the letter, he swears by Allah and says that his knowledge was not the lot of his teachers at whose hands he claims to have studied. Nor did his father have this knowledge nor the people of Arid. If he did not learn from his teachers and if his

father or the people of his region did not know it, then from where did his knowledge come? Did any revelation come down to him? Has he been bestowed this in a dream? Or did Satan teach him? He swore on this in the presence of all the people of Arid.

He holds Ibn Farid and Ibn Arabi unbelievers. He avers that our chiefs from the family of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) are unbelievers because they accept *Nadhr* (religious gifts). He also asserts that any one who does not affirm their unbelief is himself an unbeliever. When he was told "the difference (of opinion) among the Imams is a blessing, he said, "the difference is a curse." He avers that establishment of endowments is evil and belies the report from the Prophet and his Companions that they had made endowments.

He calls for abolition of the Pilgrimage. He has stopped extolling the Sultan in sermons. He says that the Sultan is a sinner, and that it is not lawful to praise him. He says that invoking the blessings of Allah on the Prophet on Friday and Friday night is a heresy and will take the one who practices it to Hell. He says that the money charged by the judges today and in the old days amounts to bribery even if they make correct judgments between two parties, there is no public treasury and they are not paid salaries. This view runs contrary to the opinions of all the imams that only something accepted for establishing an unjust claim and disallowing a just claim amounts to bribery, and

that a judge is allowed to ask remuneration from the two parties to decide a case between them.

He also affirms the unbelief of one who slaughters for Allah and mentions His name while slaughtering. He includes, in this category, burying evil jinn. He says that it is unbelief and that the meat is forbidden while scholars only say that this kind of act is not recommended (mentioned it in the margin of *Al-Muntahi*).¹²⁸

The Sheikh sent the following reply:

From Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb to Abdullah ibn Suhaim

We received your letter and learnt about the matters that reached you. You know well that the issues dealt with in the letter are twenty-four in number. Some are correct and some have been falsely attributed to me.

Before addressing the issues, it is pertinent to review the core of the issue. When the scholars differ, or when the ignorant people dispute with one another, what course should be followed? Should we follow the commands of Allah and His Prophet and the opinions of the people of knowledge or should we follow the customs we found people clinging to, even if these

¹²⁸*Rawdhatu 'l-Afkar*, p. 259.

customs are against the views scholars express in all their books.

I assert this although it is very clear because some of my views are in conformity with the opinions of the scholars, Hanbalites and others, expressed in their own books. However, they are in contrast to the customs which people have been indoctrinated not to question. They reject them because they are against the popular custom. Otherwise, they themselves see these opinions in books and admit that my views are correct. But they are the victims of their notions, like those about whom Allah says:

Then when there came to them that which they had recognised, they disbelieved in it. So let the Curse of Allah be on the disbelievers.” (Qur’an 2:89)

This is what we believe in. The one who has written to you is the enemy of Allah, Ibn Suhaim. I explained to him, and he admitted it. I have a number of letters in his handwriting, which establish it. He kept up this position for years, but finally turned against it, for reasons, the biggest probably being his whim.

...grudging that Allah should reveal of His Grace unto whom He wills of His slaves (Qur’an 2:90)

The public asks Ibn Suhaim and the people like him, "If this is the Truth, then why did you not forbid us from worshipping "*Shamsân*" and others." When it was said to them, "Did you ask us?" they answered, "Even if we did not ask you, how did it happen that we worshipped some besides Allah in your presence and you did not prevent us? They thought that it was a disgrace for them and an honor for others. When we disapproved the taking of illegal possessions and bribes, they approached you with false allegations against us.

Allah is the supporter of His religion, even though the unbelievers dislike it.

You do not accept the fact that scholars do not tolerate the opposition of customs, let alone the masses. I give you an example with one issue. Obtaining ceremonial purity with any solid thing except a bone or dried dung, with the availability of water, is permissible according to each of the four imams. It is thus the consensus of the Islamic community, and there is no disagreement on the issue. Despite this consensus, if somebody practiced it, the people would raise strong objections and would refuse to pray behind him. This is an example of the strong influence of customs.

The issues about which he criticizes me are merely falsehoods attributed to me. Some of his

charges are plain fabrications, like his charge that I reject the books of the school of jurisprudence, or his ascription to me that people have been astray for the last six hundred years. Some other charges of this nature are that I claim *ijtihād* (independent interpretive judgement), that I have renounced *taqlīd* (imitation), that I say that differing among the imams is a curse, that I affirm as an unbeliever, one who seeks the intercession of pious people, that I hold Al-Busiri as unbeliever for his saying “O the noblest of all creatures”, that I say, “Had I had power, I would have demolished the abode of the Prophet (Peace be upon him), that, had I had power over *Ka’ba*, I would have taken away the drain from it and would have replaced it with a wooden drain”, that I disapprove of visiting the grave of the Prophet (Peace be upon him), that I disapprove of visiting the graves of parents or others, or that I affirm the unbelief of one who swears by someone other than Allah. These are twelve issues in all. My answer to them is:

Glory is to You (O Allah)! This is a great lie.

(Qur’an 24:16)

But before him are those who alleged that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) abused *Isa ibn Maryam* (Jesus) and abused pious people :

Their hearts are alike.

(Qur’an 2:118)

They alleged the Prophet to have said that the angels, Jesus and Ezra were in Hell. Allah, thereupon said:

Verily those for whom the good has preceded from Us, they will be removed far therefrom (Hell) [e.g. 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary); 'Uzair (Ezra)].

(Qur'an (21:101))

As for other issues, they include my assertion that the Islam [i.e. surrender to God] of a person is not complete unless he understands the meaning of لا إله إلا الله (There is no god but Allah). Another issue is that I say, "I know what it means." Also I say that a Allah is that in which there is a secret. It is also attributed to me that I affirm the unbelief of one who has made a vow *Nadhr* if he intends to gain the favor of anyone other than Allah. It is said that I hold a slaughter for jinn an act of unbelief and say that the animal so slaughtered is forbidden even if the name of Allah is recited at the time of slaughter.

These are five assertions attributed to me. In fact they are my assertions and they are right.

Let us discuss these issues as they are the main ones. But before embarking on detailed discussion, let me explain the meaning of (لا إله إلا الله) (There is no god but Allah). Oneness is of two kinds. First, oneness with respect to Sustenance. It signifies that Allah Alone is the Creator and Sustainer of angels, Prophets

and all other creatures. This is an inevitable truth. But a person does not enter Islam by merely believing in this, because the majority of people admit this. Allah says:

Say (O Muhammad): "Who provides for you from the sky and the earth? Or who owns hearing and sight? And who brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living? And who disposes the affairs?" They will say: "Allah." Say: "Will you not then be afraid of Allah's punishment (for setting up rivals in worship with Allah)?"

(Qur'an 10:31)

What brings one into the fold of Islam is the belief in the oneness of divinity. It means that one should not worship any besides Allah, be it an angel or a Prophet. When the Prophet was charged with his mission, the people of his time were worshipping different beings. Some were worshipping idols, some were the worshippers of Jesus while some others were the devotees of angels. Allah sent the Prophet to preach the Oneness of Allah and to forbid the worship of any other being, be it Jesus or an angle.

From amongst his audience, some accepted his call and bore witness that there is no god except Allah. On the contrary, whoever disobeyed him and prayed to Jesus and angles, or sought their help or refuge, rejected the faith that there is no god but Allah, despite their admission that Allah is the Creator and He is the

Provider of Sustenance. This can be elaborated further, but it is not needed as the scholars are in consensus on it.

However, in later times the Islamic community went astray, and the Prophet's prediction came true that, "You will follow the ways of the people before you. If they entered a pit of lizard, you will also enter it. And what did the people of earlier times do? In Allah's words:

They (Jews and Christians) took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allah (by obeying them in things which they made lawful or unlawful according to their own desires without being ordered by Allah). (Qur'an 9:31)

In the Muslim community also, misguided people began praying to the pious people like Abdul Qadir Jilani, Ahmed Al-Badawi, and Adi ibn Musfir, etc. The scholars of the community from all the four schools disapproved of this and prevented them from doing it. But the people did not desist. Rather they persisted in their practice. The scholars have explained that such actions amount to the major [sin of] polytheism. You say in your letter that you would not accept an argument except one based on the opinions of knowledgeable people.

I quote from the scholars. Ponder over it, and ask yourself and others. You will definitely realize that

I am right and you will find that Islam, in its pure form, without the stains of polytheism and heresies, has become the most strange thing today.

Sheikh Taqîyu'd-dîn says that certain groups of thinkers and worshippers made mistakes in determining the meaning of monotheism. A group thought that monotheism was the denial of attributes while another group thought that it was the admission of the monotheism of sustenance. Some other people went on putting off a determination in this matter. They thought that divinity was the power to create or bring into existence. They did not realize that the polytheists of Arabia had recognized this monotheism. Allah says:

Say: "Whose is the earth and whosoever is therein? If you know! (Qur'an 23:84)

This is true. But this would not be considered purification of religion from polytheism, which Allah never forgives. It is inevitable that religion be devoted to Allah exclusively.

Also in a treatise entitled *As-Sunniya* and sent to a group from the people of worship, i.e. devotees of some pious people, he mentioned the Kharijites. Referring to them, he said that even in the days of the Prophet and the right-guided Caliphs, there were people who were related to Islam, and yet despite their

great acts of worship, they had deviated from the right course in certain matters.

An example of such matters is exaggeration like love for Adi ibn Musfir, and even love for Ali ibn Abi Talib or Jesus Christ. Anyone who has exaggerated love for a Prophet, Companion or a pious man and attributes to him any kind of divinity, is an unbeliever. Anyone who says to some pious person, "Rescue me," or "You are enough for me," is an unbeliever. He must be asked to repent. If he does not repent, he will be killed.

Allah sent His Messengers for the sole purpose that He alone be worshipped and no one be associated with Him. Those who worshipped other gods besides Allah, like the sun, the moon, pious people or their statues, never thought that these gods performed acts like sending down rain or growing vegetation. They worshipped the pious people and the angles only claiming that they "are our intercessors to Allah."

Allah sent His Messengers and His Book to forbid praying to anyone besides Him. He forbids any prayer to anyone besides him whether it is for worship or to seek his help. He also says that one commits an act of unbelief if he says that one has a way to Allah other than following Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Or he says that one is not obliged to follow the Prophet or one may be exempted from the

following of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Similar is the case who says, "I need him for knowledge of the apparent, not for knowledge of the Sharia and not for knowledge of reality. In the same manner will one be treated, who claims that certain scholars may withdraw from the Sharia of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) as Khidhr withdrew from the sharia of the Prophet Moses.

He adds that one who abuses the Companions and joins this abuse with the claim that Ali was god or a Prophet and Gabriel was wrong in bringing the Revelation to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is an unbeliever. There is no doubt in his unbelief or the unbelief of one who hesitates in affirming him as unbeliever. Think this matter over. This is the case of one who says this about Ali. What if one says that Ibn Arabi or Abdul Qadir was god? Then ponder over the definition of a god given by the Sheikh, i.e. a god is one who attracts the heart of a people and enjoys a high holy status.

The associating polytheists of our times have exceeded the unbelievers of the Prophet's time. They pray to the pious people in prosperity and adversity and invoke their mercy to remove grief and misery. On the other hand, the associaters of the Prophet's time, despite their prayer to the angels and pious people, merely sought their intercession. They affirmed that all the affairs are in the Hands of Allah and would pray to

other deities only in prosperity. If adversities befell them, they would purify their prayer to Allah.

And when harm touches you upon the sea, those that you call upon vanish from you except Him (Allah Alone). But when He brings you safe to land, you turn away (from Him). (Qur'an 17:67)

In his book *Al-Iqna*, he forbids learning, teaching and practicing magic, by way of trying knots, incantation, speaking, writing something or doing an act which may influence the body, mind or heart of the subject. Magic also includes the acts that may kill somebody, make him ill or makes a husband unable to have sex with his wife. Also falling under this forbidden craft is an action that causes enmity between two people or makes one person love another. He holds learning and practicing such acts as unbelief, whether the performer deems them forbidden or permissible.

As for the Hanafi school, Sheikh Qasim, in his commentary on *Duraru'l-Bihar*, defines *Nadhr* or vow, which is practiced by many people, as coming to the grave of a pious person and saying, "O master, if I regain the loss, or my patient is cured or my need is fulfilled, such and such thing will be for you." This is unlawful according to consensus for the following reasons:

a- A vow for a creation is not lawful.

b- It is based on the belief that the dead can exercise sacerdotal functions.

He further says that taking money, wax and oil to the graves of the pious people is unlawful according to the consensus of Muslims. People indulge in such practices, particularly on the eve of the birth anniversary of Ahmed Al-Badawi.

Ponder his view. He expressed this opinion while he was in Egypt, the center of scholars, and think how these practices became popular in Egypt while scholars had no power to prevent them. Do you think the times have improved since him?

As for Maliki school, Tartushi, in his book *Al-Hawâdithu wa'l-Bida'* (Incidents and Innovation) says, "Bukhari reports from Abu Waqid Al-Lithi who said, "We set out with the Prophet (Peace be upon him) for Hunain, while we were new entrants into Islam. The polytheists had a jujube tree on which they would hang their arms, which was called 'Hanging Place.' We passed by such a jujube and asked the Prophet, "O Prophet of Allah, appoint us also a hanging place as they have." The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, "*Allahu Akbar!* It is as the tribe of Israil said:

Make for us an ilah (a god) as they have âlihah (gods). (Qur'an 7:138)

You will follow the ways of those who preceded you.”

I appeal to you, may Allah bless you, if you have a jujube tree that the people are visiting and from which are expecting miracles, do cut it down.

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, “Islam began as something strange and it will revert to its beginning.” It means that at the outset of Islam, when a man embraced it, he was like a stranger in his tribe and would hide his faith because he feared tyranny and oppression from his fellows.

Islam will revert to its earlier position. It means that Islam will again becomes a strange thing in the midst of stray desires and various cults, and the adherents to true Islam will become strangers and fear for their lives.

Bukhari reports from Umm Darda the statement of her husband Abu Darda, “By Allah, I do not see in them (the Muslim) any of the ways of Muhammad (Peace be upon him), except that they all pray.”

A wise man should ponder over these statements and think at what time and place they were said. Did any of the scholars deny them? There are some people among those whom Allah had chosen for His Prophet

(Peace be upon him) who say, "Make us a god." If there were such people among them, how can it be denied that man in a later generation may commit the mistake of saying, 'O the noblest of creation.'

But you have no knowledge of these matters. You think that under the definition of Association or unbelief comes only the great unbelief that expels one from the faith. Remember your letter to me accepting the truth about the matter and apologizing for not being able to deny it.

I only wish to draw your attention to the statement of *Tartushi* and the phenomena of Associationism that appeared in his days, the days marked with the presence of *Qadi Abu Ya'la*.

As for the Shafiite school, the Syrian scholar, Imam Abu Shama, said in his book, *Al-Bâ'ithu 'alâ Inkâri'l-Bida'i wa'l-Hawâdith*, his was the case of a group from amongst those who discarded the Islamic Sharia, and joined a mendicant order, which, in fact, represents a lack of belief. They believe in the sanctity of their Sheikhs, who in fact come under:

Or have they partners with Allah (false gods) who have instituted for them a religion which Allah has not ordained?
(Qur'an 42:21)

In this way did idol worship and other forms of unbelief began. From this beginning, Satan embellished the creation of certain walls, and columns and lighting lamps at certain places in every city and town. About such places somebody would say that he saw in his dream so and so, famous for his piety doing this. They, as a result, indulge in such acts and feel that they are thus getting near Allah. Then they go further and these places become sacred and revered to them. They pray there for recovery of their patients and fulfillment of their needs by way of a vow. Damascus (May Allah Protect it) has many such places like Uwainatu'l-Hummâ and the cursed tree outside An-Nasr Gate. May Allah facilitate the cutting of this tree and destruction of such places.

I Pray to Allah to protect us from whatever is against His will and may He not let us stray to follow our base desires.

He says that such acts are tantamount to discarding the Islamic Sharia. Then he says that this tribulation is very common in Syria.

These scholars who are the followers of the four imams said that a large part of the world was afflicted with polytheism. They said that religion had again become a strange phenomenon.

In this situation, only two things can be said: Either all these scholars were ignorant and astray or the age of your fellow has become better than the times of those scholars.

Thus the matter is settled about the two issues raised. I answered in the light of the opinions of the scholars belonging to four schools. However, I add another issue, i.e. the unbelief of Shamsan and his ilk who call people to their worship besides Allah. This worship is very grave and more alarming than the worship of idols like Lat and Uzza. The idolaters of the Time of Ignorance worshipped their idols only in times of ease and comfort and would turn to the pure worship of Allah in adversities. On the contrary, these people tend to worship their idols (Shamsan) both in ease and hardship.

If Allah inspires you to accept the Truth, discard false gods and rid yourself of any opponent of the true religion, whether he is your father or brother, write me to break the good news. This is not a matter of an error in secondary issues or cardinal sins like adultery or theft. This matter is more serious. If you have any doubt in your heart, then I would advise you to pray to the One who changes hearts that He may guide you to His religion, the religion preached by His Prophet (Peace be upon him).

As for other questions, I can answer them when we settle the matter of the (oneness of Allah) "There is no god but Allah." In this matter, the views of knowledgeable people can bring us together. I, however, wonder about your charge that I have demolished the graves of the Companions. According to '*Iqna*' it is obligatory to demolish domes built on graves, because they have been founded on disobedience of the Prophet (Peace be upon him). It has been authentically reported that the Prophet (Peace be upon) commissioned Ali to demolish domes erected on graves.¹²⁹

These are the excerpts from an exhaustive treatise in which Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb answered the doubts against his call, raised by Sulaiman ibn Suhaim in a letter sent to the people of Basra and Ahsa, etc.

Similarly, Sheikh Abdullah Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb dispelled the doubts raised by Sulaiman ibn Suhaim, etc., against the *Salafi* call.¹³⁰

False accusations leveled against us include that:

a- We comment on the Qur'an with our opinion and that we accept only such traditions as comply to our understanding

¹²⁹ Ibn Ghannâm, *Tâ'rikhu Najd*, (The History of Najd) pp. 375-386.

¹³⁰ *Ad-Durar-us-Sunniya*, vol. 1. Pp. 127-129.

of the Qur'an, without referring to any commentary or to any Sheikh.

- b- We denigrate the Prophet (Peace be upon him) by saying that he is a corps lying in his grave
- c- We say that the stick of anyone of us is more beneficial than him and that he shall not have the power of intercession
- d- We claim that visiting his grave is not commendable
- e- We assert that the Prophet did not know the meaning of *La ilaha illâ'llâh* until the verse:

So know (O Muhammad (PBUH)) that, La ilaha illâ'llâh (none has the right to be worshipped but Allah).

(Qur'an 47:19)

before it was revealed to him and the verse was revealed in Madina;

- f- We do not trust the views of scholars, and we destroy the books of all schools on the plea that they contain both right and wrong,
- g- We affirm the unbelief of people in general, of the people of our times and the people of the period after six hundred years from the outset of Islam, except those who hold the same views as ours,
- h- We do not accept the oath of allegiance from anybody, unless he admits that he was an polytheist earlier and that his parents died in the state of polytheism,

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-
- i- We forbid invoking blessings on the Prophet (Peace be upon him),
 - j- We forbid visiting graves in general,
 - k- We say that whosoever believes as we believe, will be discharged of all burdens and even debts will be dropped from him,
 - l- We do not recognize the rights of the descendents of the Prophet (Peace be upon him), and we force them to marry an unequal,
 - m- We force an old man to leave his young wife to allow her to marry a young man if a dispute comes to us,

These are all false accusations leveled against us. When we were asked about them by the scholars of *Makkah*, our answer was:

Glory is to You (O Allah)! This is a great lie.

(Qur'an 24:16)

Whoever attributes any such thing to us, imputes a falsehood.

Anyone who attends our meetings, will know full well that these charges have been leveled against us by the enemies of the Religion and the disciples of Devil. They have the aim of driving away the people from believing in the true Oneness of Allah in their worship and discarding all kinds of paganism, which Allah shall never forgive.

But He forgives whom He wills sins other than that.

(Qur'an 4:116)

We believe that a perpetrator of cardinal sins like murder of a Muslim, adultery, fornication or wine drinking, even if he commits it repeatedly, will not be thrown into Hell for eternity, if he dies in the state of belief in the Oneness of Allah in all his acts of worship.

We believe that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is superior in rank to all creatures without exception. He is alive in his grave (*Barzakhiah Life*), and he is enjoying a life better than that of martyrs that the Revelation establishes because he is undoubtedly superior to them.

We affirm that he hears the peace and blessings invoked on him by anyone. It is lawful to visit him. However a journey cannot be undertaken except for visiting his mosque and offering prayers therein. If one intended to visit him also along with visiting his mosque it is permissible. If one spent his time in invoking blessings on him, he would attain the blessings of this world and the Hereafter.

We do not reject the miracles of the pious people. We recognize them and we believe that they are on the right path as long as they adhere to the Shariah. However they do not deserve worship, neither in their lifetime nor after their death. In their lifetime, they may be asked to pray for someone, as any other Muslim can be asked. This is in the light of the

hadith, "The prayer of a Muslim for his brother is granted."¹³¹

Power of intercession will be granted to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) so it will be accorded to all the Prophets, pious people and children, as authentic traditions establish. However, we should ask the Master of Intercession, Who only has the power to permit anyone to intercede. As prescribed by the Prophet, one should pray, "O Allah grant us the intercession of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) on the Day of Judgement, or grant us the intercession of your pious bondsmen or your angels. However, it should be borne in mind that prayer should be made to Allah and not to the people whose intercession is being sought. For instance one cannot say, "O Prophet of Allah," or "O Friend of Allah, I beseech you to intercede for me" or something like, "Rescue me, help me, restore me to health or grant me victory over my enemy." In these things, no one besides Allah has power. If one asks such things from any being other than Allah, it is polytheism and paganism, i.e. associating partners with Allah. The Qur'an, the Sunnah and the pious predecessors are in consensus that it is a major sin of polytheism, and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) fought against it.

¹³¹Narrated by *Muslim*.

These were the main doubts raised against the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrhâb. The Sheikh himself undertook to settle these issues, and after him, his sons and followers continued to end these doubts and elucidate the reality of these false allegations.

We feel no need for dealing with more answers to these doubts. However, there are two issues requiring further treatment as the adversaries of the call use them to malign the call and tarnish the image of its standard bearers.

First: An accusation is leveled against Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab that he was a Kharijite and his call is an extension of the call of Abdulwahhab Rustam, a Kharijite who founded the Rustami State in Morocco.

Second: Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrhâb and his followers are accused that they hold the Muslims unbelievers. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab and his followers have often been accused of being Kharijites. Similarly, their adversaries say that his call is an extension of the call of Abdulwahhab Rustam ar-Rasibi Al-Khariji, the founder of the Rustami State in Tahirt, Morocco in 171H.

To refute this charge, it is enough to give a brief description of the origin of the Kharijites and their incorrect beliefs. Then we shall give a brief account of Abdulwahhab Rustam and explain the goal behind this false allegation.

The Kharijites

The Kharijites are the oldest sect of Islam. Their first movement was in the month of Safar 37 AH, when Muawiya, seeing the signs of defeat in the battle of Siffin, asked Amr ibn As to raise the Qur'an, calling to make the Qur'an the judge. As a result, most of the fighters on Ali's side demanded to stop fighting. They said to Ali, "These people are inviting us to refer to the Book of Allah and you are calling us to fight." Ali ibn Abi Talib explained to them that it was a trick to deceive them, but they insisted on stopping the fight and threatened to withdraw from the battlefield if he did not stop the lightning attack that Ashtar was going to launch. Fearful that discord might creep in his ranks, Ali ordered Ashtar to retreat. The remaining part of the story is well known, how two arbitrators were appointed and what took place between Abu Musa Ashari and Amr ibn Al-As.

Then a group of people from Ali's camp who were not pleased with arbitration accord withdrew to Harura and selected one of themselves named Abdullah ibn Wahhab Al-Rasibi as their Emir or leader. Ali ibn Abi Talib exhorted them and tried to bring them back, but they did not respond. He then attacked them, and it is said that they all were killed except nine people, whom later scattered into different countries.

Then their number gradually increased as they were joined by those who subscribed to their views. They

continued in their extreme views and beliefs. They went on criticizing the behavior of the Caliph Uthman, denouncing the avenge of his murder and expressing their view that Ali was not entitled to Caliphate. Later, they were divided into various sects as has been detailed in books on creeds and sects.¹³²

This, in summary, is the origin of the Kharijites and their belief of whose allegiance Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and his followers have been accused by their adversaries.

The opponents of the *Salafi* call have often said that the Sheikh and his followers are the followers of the Kharijites. Ibn Afaliq¹³³ was the first to spread this notion, saying that the home of the Sheikh and his followers was Najd, Qarnu'sh-Shaitan (the horn of the Devil), and that they were the remains of intrigue of Musailima al-Kadhhab.

Ibn Afaliq, in his letter to Ibn Muammar, said that everyone with the slightest knowledge of hadith knows the superiority of the people of Syria, Yemen, Makkah, Madinah and Persia. However, "O you people of Yamamah, according to an authentic tradition, the horn of Satan will appear in your region, and you will keep indulging in the evil of your

¹³²Abdurrahman ibn Ahmad al-Bahkali, *Nafkhu 'l-'Ûdi fi strati 'sh-Sharif Humûd* (The incense of aloes in the bibliography of Sharif Humûd) (Riyadh: Darat al-Malik Abdulaziz, 1402H), edited by Muhammad Al-Uqaibi, p.124.

¹³³*Da'âwi 'l-Munâwi 'in li-Da'wati 'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdiwahhâb*, p. 178.

fabricator (the false claimant of Prophethood) until the Day of Judgment.”¹³⁴

Alawi Haddad mentions some characteristics of the Kharijites and claims that these qualities are found in Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and his followers. He says, “More significant than of all of them are the traditions in which the Prophet (Peace be upon him) has described the characteristics of the Kharijites, and which show that Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and his followers belong to this sect.”¹³⁵

Sawi claims, in a lie and canard, that the scholars of the call and their followers are Kharijites.¹³⁶ Ibn Abidin, in his marginalia, repeats this lie and says that the term Kharijites applies to the Sheikh and his followers.¹³⁷ Similarly, Muhsin ibn Abdulkarim asserts that the followers of the *Salafi* call are Kharijites and describes them as renegades.¹³⁸

Al-Kanhuri describes the Kharijites as the ancestors of Wahhabis, saying, “Their model are their ancestors, the Kharijites who affirmed the unbelief of the Commander of

¹³⁴ *Risalatun ibn Afâliq li-Ibn Muammar*, p. 49.

¹³⁵ Ali ibn al-Haddad, *Misbâhu'l-Anâmi wa Jal'â' T'âh-Dhalâm* (Cairo: Al-Amira Press), p. 25.

¹³⁶ *Da'âwi'l-Mundâwi'in li-Da'wâ'th-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, p. 180.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

the Faithful, Ali, his companions and supporters, employing fibs like the assertions of these Wahhabis. If you follow their history scrupulously, you will find that the Wahhabis are following in their footsteps. Then if you think further you will find that the leaders of those Kharijites were from Najd.¹³⁹

Jamil az-Zahawi claims that one of the signs of the Prophethood of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is his predictions about these Kharijites, meaning the followers of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab.¹⁴⁰

Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah says that Wahhabism is in conformity with the Kharijites in levelling charge of unbelief.

These are few examples of the assertions of some adversaries of the Sheikh who claim that he and his followers are *Kharijites*.

The opponents of the call levelled false allegations against the Sheikh when they said that he deemed Muslims unbelievers for sins, as the Kharijites did. The Sheikh explains his view on sinners, in a letter sent to the people of Qassim. He says, "I do not consider any Muslim an

¹³⁹Ali Naqi al-Lakanhuri, *Kashfu 'n-Niqābi 'an 'Aqā'idī ibn Abdulwahhāb* (Najaf: Al-Matba'ati'l-Haidariya, 1345), p. 77.

¹⁴⁰For more information on the views of Al-Zahawi see *Al-Fajru 's-Sādiq*, p. 20.

unbeliever for a sin, nor do I oust him from the fold of Islam.”¹⁴¹

Sheikh Hamad ibn Nasir ibn Muammar asked the Sheikh if he deemed Muslims unbelievers for their sins. He replied, “This is not our view. It is the view of the Kharijites who deemed Muslims unbelievers for their sins. We did not affirm unbelief of any one for his sins. We only hold some one an unbeliever, if he indulges in acts like polytheism warranting the charge of unbelief, that is to say if he worships, along with Allah, some other being or prays to someone other than Allah.”¹⁴²

As Sheikh Abdurrahman ibn Hasan explains, the views of the Sheikh on the Kharijites are exactly the view of the Companions of the Prophet about them.¹⁴³

It would be a lengthy process to quote all writings of the followers of the call in refutation of the charge that the Sheikh and his followers were Kharijites. However, it would not be out of place to quote Dr. Abdullah al-Uthaimin, who refuted this charge and explained the vast difference between the beliefs of the Kharijites and those of the Sheikh.

¹⁴¹ *Majmū'atu Mu'allafāti 'sh-Sheikh*, vol. 1, p. 11.

¹⁴² *Ad-Duraru 's-Sunniya*, vol. 8, p. 208.

¹⁴³ Abdullah ibn Salih al-Uthaimin, *Al-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab: Hayatuhu wa Fikruhu* (Riyadh: Daru'l-Ulûm, 1412H), p. 118.

“In addition to calling the Sheikh and his followers Wahhabis, their adversaries have applied to them, other epithets like heretics, atheists and Kharijites. However the last mentioned epithet has, more often, been hurled at them by their enemies. Apparently the underlying reason is the assumption that the Sheikh and his followers, like the Kharijites regard themselves alone as Muslims and they fight anyone who does not agree with their views. The assumption has also been that they strictly observe religious obligations, but at the same time they are intolerant of other people’s views. Added to this is their action to rise against a recognized Islamic state.”

He further adds, “Even the modern writer Emir Ali writes that the Wahhabis are the direct descendants of the Kharijites, who took refuge in the Arabian desert after their defeat at the hands of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. He claims that their beliefs are similar to the views of the followers of Nafi ibn al-Azraq.”¹⁴⁴

The assumption held by the opponents of the Sheikh is not consistent with real facts. The Sheikh and his followers are different from the Kharijites in essential features, particularly in belief. They are different from the Kharijites in respecting all the Companions; they slander neither Uthman nor Ali and give both of them their due. Their stance on the issue of imamate is generally in conformity with the *Ahlu’s-Sunnati wa’l-Jamâ’a*, the Sunnis.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

The leadership issue was one of the fundamental issues for the Kharijites, whereas in the writings of the Sheikh it occupies a very small place. Whenever they took up this issue, they said that it was obligatory to obey the ruler, even if he were a black slave or a tyrant, as long as he did not order an act of disobedience to Allah.

It is a well-known fact that Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb appeared in the Najd region, which, at that time, was not under the big Islamic state or under the Ottoman sultan.¹⁴⁵ The whole area was divided in small states whose leaders did not recognize the authority of Constantinople over them. Hence, it is wrong to say that the Sheikh and his supporters rose against the higher Islamic authority. On the contrary, till the beginning of the thirteenth Hijri Century, they had been defending themselves and fighting for their existence. And their attacks on Ahsa, which was not under the Ottomans at that time, as well as on Iraq and the Hejaz came only after the rulers of those regions attacked them.

One of the major points of difference between the followers of the Sheikh and the Kharijites is the stance of the two on the perpetrators of cardinal sins, except association of partners with Allah. The Kharijites regard them as unbelievers while the followers of the Sheikh have the same

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.

view as that of the Sunnis regarding them. They consider them sinners, but do not exclude them from the Muslim fold.

Some adversaries of the Sheikh tried to benefit from the fact that the Sheikh arose in a region that had once been the center of Musailima and his supporters. Utilizing this sheer chance they started quoting the traditions that denounced Najd. They said that the Sheikh was from the race of Dhu'l Khawaisara At-Tamimi about whom the Prophet had predicted that, from his race would emerge some people who would renege on the true faith as an arrow passes through a game animal.

It was easy for the Sheikh and his followers, to successfully refute the charges of their enemies. Therefore they said that the place should not be taken as a barometer for judging views and beliefs. There has been no prophet in whose birthplace Associationism, atheism and unbelief had not been rampant at any given time. A glaring example is Makkah where idol worship was widespread and where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent.

They said that the Najd denounced in the traditions is the Najd of Iraq, and the sect that had been predicted to emerge from the race of Dhul Khuwaisarah was the Harouri Kharijite sect, which rose against Ali ibn Abi Talib.

The Sheikh and his supporters say that his call was the revival of monotheism and the Sunnah at a time when

nothing was left from Islam except its name. They asserted that they were following the way of the pious ancestors of this Islamic community as they affirmed they were holding fast to the view of the Sunnis in the fundamentals of the religion and following the school of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal.¹⁴⁶

As for the claim of the adversaries of the call that it was the extension of the cult of Abdulwahhab ibn Rustam, the Kharijite, it is against the facts.

It is a well-known fact that the cult of the Kharijites is in total conflict with the beliefs of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. Some details about Abdulwahâb Rustam will bring to light the real purpose behind the claim that the call of the Sheikh is an extension of his views and beliefs.¹⁴⁷

Ibn Rustam, the founder of the Rustami state in Tahirt, Morocco, when he felt that his end was near, named seven persons, decreeing by will that one of them would rule after him. Among these seven were his son Abdulwahhâb and Yazid ibn Fandik. Abdulwahhâb was acclaimed as ruler and this gave rise to differences between him and Ibn Fandik. This led to a division in the *Ibâdhiya*, the cult of Ibn Rustam, into two sects, viz. the *Wahhâbiya*, referring to Abdulwahhâb

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-120.

¹⁴⁷ The allegation has been refuted by Dr. Muhammad ibn Sa'ad al-Shuwai'ir in his article, "*Tashihu Khatai Tâ'riki*" (Correction of historical error) published in *Al-Ba'thu 'l-Islâmi*, (Islamic rival) vol. 28 (1404H), pp. 52-62.

ibn Abdurrahman ibn Rustam and the Nakârîya. Many battles were fought between the two sects in which the Nakârîya were defeated and their leader Ibn Fandik was killed.

Abdulwahhâb intended to perform the Pilgrimage in the last days of his life. However, his followers advised him against it for fear of the Abbasid rulers. Later Abdulwahhâb, who is regarded the founder of the Rustami state, died in 211H in North Africa.¹⁴⁸

The French author Charles Andrew, in his book on the history of North Africa, wrote about the kingdoms of the Kharijites, one of which was the kingdom of Tahirt, the Rustami State. In his description of their beliefs he says that they were against the Sunnis.¹⁴⁹

Alfred Bell, in his book on the Islamic sects in North Africa since the Arab conquest until today spoke about the Kharijite Wahhabis. About the followers of Abdulwahhab Rustam, he says that they were most ardent Ibadis and that they disliked the Shiites and the Sunnis alike.¹⁵⁰

This summary is sufficient to prove that these sects invented new things. Abdulwahhâb Rustam made Tahirt an ideological base and opened disputes with Sunni scholars. These debates not only brought to light their views but the

¹⁴⁸For more information see Abd al-aziz Salim, et. al., *Al-Maghribu'l-Kabir*, (The Large West) vol. 2 (Beirut: Daru'n-Nahdati'l-'Arabiya), p. 5, p. 557.

¹⁴⁹For more information see Charles Andre, *History of North Africa*

¹⁵⁰For more information see Alfred Bell, *Islamic Sects in North Africa*

scholars put forward their opinions, which refuted their views. This dialogue also shed light on their views about this sect and its beliefs as it showed deep-rooted enmity between the Sunnis and this sect.

The imperialist and colonial powers exploited this enmity to sow the seeds of dissension between Muslims. They presented the new call launched for the reform of the faith as emerging from the old creed that was full of defects and blemishes.

The British, for instance, felt with alarm the spread of the *Salafi* call to the biggest place they were proud of ruling, when the Muslims of India began embracing it at the hands of Seyyid Ahmed Shahid and his followers.¹⁵¹ This call offered resistance to the Qâdyânîya, which the British were promoting to pursue their own objectives. They spent enormous amount of money to quell the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab, which was creating a new awakening among the Muslims.

This is evident from the journey that Saddler, the Vice-Governor General of the British East India Company, undertook to reach Riyadh and see, with his own eyes, the ruins of Dariyyah which was destroyed by Ibrahim Pasha in

¹⁵¹For more information see Muhammad Kamal Jum'a, *Intishâru Da'wati 'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahrâbi Khârijî 'l-Jaziratu 'l-Arabiya*, (the victory of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahrâbi call out side the Arabian Peninsula) pp. 62-87.

an agreement with the British. After being satisfied, he followed Ibrahim Pasha, whom he met at Abar Ali near Madina, and offered his congratulations.

Similarly, the French perceived the interest of the Moroccans in the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, as Sidi Muhammad ibn Abdullah Al-Alawi, the Sultan of Morocco was fighting the heresies and the Sufi orders and calling for a return to *ijtihad*, i.e. interpretive judgements, and the Sunna.¹⁵² The French historian Charles Julian said that the Sultan, who was a pious person, became aware of the Wahhabi movement in the Arabian Peninsula, and the support of the Saud family it received, through Moroccan pilgrims who returned from the Pilgrimage. He is reported to have said, "I am Maliki in jurisprudence and Wahhabi in faith." He, in his religious ambition, went as far as to permit destruction of books that showed laxity in religion and legalized the *Ash'ari* school. He also demolished some monasteries.¹⁵³

The spread of this call in Italy was also of concern to the Italians. Muhammad Ali Al-Sannusi, who was impressed by the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab, was calling the Libyans to return to pristine pure Islam and withstand the Italians, whose only concern was to exploit the resources of the land and cause dissension between Muslims.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵²For more information, cf. Muhammad Kamal Jum'a, *op.cit.*, p. 235.

¹⁵³For more information see *The History of North Africa*, vol. 2, p. 311.

¹⁵⁴For more information see *The History of North Africa, op. cit.*, p. 220.

The Dutch faced the some problem in Sumatra, Jawa and Solo, where they noticed a strong interest of Indonesians in the call for a return to Islam in its purity. The Indonesian pilgrims, having been deeply impressed by the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, were returning home and were calling their compatriots to this reform. As a result several organizations were formed, like Muhammadiyah Association in Jakarta, which took up the cause of the movement to renounce the heresies.

Besides this, some Europeans also came under the influence of this call as well as some Turks and Africans and some Muslims in Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The colonial powers cooperated with some elements in the Ottoman leadership to divide Muslims to achieve their own objectives by weakening Muslims. To this end, the Europeans began digging the past and raising things that would satisfy vested interests. Therefore they made the masses and half literates believe that the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was but the extension of the Wahhabi Rustami Kharijite movement, which opposed the faith and creed of the Muslims.

The Europeans picked on the faults and defects of the call of Abdulwahhab Rustam and, exploiting the resemblance in name, applied them all to this new call for reform. With this they intended to malign the Sheikh and his call in order

to drive away Muslims because they feared that Muslims would return to their religion in its pure form.

One of the charges leveled against the Sheikh and his followers is that they regard the Muslims as unbelievers and permit their killing. This charge has repeatedly been leveled by the adversaries of the call in their writings.

In fact, the issue of declaring somebody an unbeliever is one of the most dangerous issues pertaining to faith. That is why we see that the Sheikh and his followers after him as well as his supporters gave the utmost importance to this issue. In view of this charge against the Sheikh, they treated the matter in great detail.¹⁵⁵

The accusation was made public in the lifetime of the Sheikh, and he repeatedly denied it. Despite his repeated denial of this false accusation, it has been spread out by the opponents of the call.

It would not be out of place to give some examples of the falsehoods and fibs spread by the adversaries of the movement about the issue in question. Then we shall quote the answers given by the Sheikh and some other scholars in refutation of these charges.

¹⁵⁵For more information see *Da'āwi'l-Munāwi'in li-Da'wati'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhāb*, p. 158, *Buhūthu Usbū'i'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhāb*, vol. 2 p. 66, and Masud an-Nadawi, *Muhammad ibn Abdūlwahhab: Muslihun Mazlumun wa Muftaran 'alaih*, p. 174

Ibn Afaliq was one of the earliest persons who fabricated lies against the Sheikh and accused him of affirming the unbelief of Muslims in general. In a letter to Ibn Muammar he says, "This man deemed the Muslim community unbelievers, even held the Prophets unbelievers and pronounced a verdict of association of partners with Allah against them and against their peoples."¹⁵⁶

Addressing Uthman ibn Muammar, he also says, "You have made the affirmation of unbelief of the Prophet's clan and made abusing as well as cursing them one of the principles of your religion."¹⁵⁷

In his effort to drive Ibn Muammar away from this call, Ibn Afaliq says that the Sheikh, on a false oath, said that the Jews and polytheists were in better conditions than this community.¹⁵⁸

Al-Qubbani, carrying on this calumny, says that the Sheikh held the whole Muslim community as unbelievers and held as unbelievers all those who did not agree with him on this affirmation of unbelief.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ A manuscript in State Library in Berlin, Quoted by *Abdul Aziz ibn Muhammad* in *Da'awi al-Munawi 'in li-da'wati al Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab*, p. 58

¹⁵⁷ Op. Cit. p. 63

¹⁵⁸ Op. Cit. p. 66

¹⁵⁹ *Ahmad ibn Ali al-Basari, fasl al-Khitab fi radd-i dalalat Ibn Abdulwahhab*, (The decisive words in countering the refutes of ibn Abdulwahhab) p. 165. A manuscript of the book is in the library of *Imam Muhammad ibn Saud University*, Riyadh.

The avowed enemy of the call, Ibn Suhaim, in a letter sent to the scholars around the world said, "He says that the people for the last six hundred years have not been on the right course". Then he adds to his false allegation, "If someone does not agree with his view and does not testify that it was Truth, he affirms his unbelief, but if some one agrees with him, follows him and accepts as true all that he says, he says, 'You are a monotheist,' even if he is a sinner."¹⁶⁰

Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Qadiri, when he received a letter from Imam Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud, addressed him, "Had you thought wisely, you would not have accused the community of Muhammad of association of partners with Allah, without a prove. This is only a mischief and depravity."¹⁶¹

Haddad says about the Sheikh, "When a person wants to enter his religion, he asks him, "Testify that you were an unbeliever, testify that your parents died as unbelievers and testify that such and such scholars are unbelievers. If he so testifies, he is accepted in the fold. Otherwise he is slain."¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰Op.Cit. p. 165

¹⁶¹Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Qadiri, *Risālatun fi'r-Raddi 'alā'l-Wahhābiya*, (A letter in response to the Wahhabism) a manuscript in Imam Muhammad ibn Saud University Library.

¹⁶²Allawi Ahmad Al-Haddad, *Misbāhu'l-Anāmi wa jalā'ih-Dhalām fi Reddi Shubahi Bida'i'n-Najdi Allati Adalla biha'l-Anām* (The public light and the darkness departure in response to the Najdi innovator which he wrongly lead the public with) (Cairo: Matba'atu'l-Amira, 1335H), p. 5.

Hasan ibn Umar Ash-Shatti says that one of the characteristics of the Sheikh is that he holds the Muslims unbelievers and considers it lawful to shed their blood, plunder their property and enslave their children.”¹⁶³

Al-Kanhuri alleges that the Sheikh holds the Muslims unbelievers and says, “It is well known that his belief is that all Muslims, with the exception of the people of his creed, are unbelievers and polytheists, and that it is lawful to plunder their wealth, shed their blood and take them as slaves. He argues for this with unfounded fabrications.”¹⁶⁴

Uthman ibn Mansour accuses the Sheikh of holding the Muslims unbelievers and says, “Allah has afflicted the people of Najd, rather the people of the whole Arabian peninsula through a person who rose against them, affirmed the unbelief of the Muslim community and on this point, fights all, barring those who agree with him, as in them he finds his supporters.”¹⁶⁵

Dahlan’s falsehood with the Sheikh and his followers is manifest in his statement, “They have regarded the Muslims of the last six hundred years unbelievers. The first one to do this was Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, whom they

¹⁶³ Hasan ibn Umar ash-Shatti, *Risalat al-Ithbâti’s-Sifât*, (letter in proof of character s) p. 164.

¹⁶⁴ Ali Naqi al-Lakanhuri, *Kashfu’l-Niqabi’an ‘Aqd’idi ibn Abdulwahhab* (Unveiling the Veil off of ibn Abdulwahhab) (Najaf: Al-Matba’atu’l-Haidarâya, 1345), p. 52.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted from *Misbahu’dh-Dhalâm* (Lantern of Darkness) by Sheikh Abdullatif ibn Abdurrahman ibn Hasan, p. 16.

followed. If a person entered his religion he would ask him to perform the Pilgrimage even if he had already performed this duty, saying, “You performed your Pilgrimage while you were a polytheist and the duty of the Pilgrimage remains.”¹⁶⁶

Al-Zahawi leveled a false accusation to the Sheik, “Then for Ibn Saud, he wrote a treatise entitled *Kashfu 'sh-Shubahâti 'an Khâliqi 'l-'Ardhi wa 's-Samawât* (The Clearing of Doubts on the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth). In it he affirmed the unbelief of all Muslims and said that all the people had been unbelievers for the last six hundred years.”¹⁶⁷ He added, “One of the mistaken beliefs and practices of this misguided sect, the Wahhabis, is that they regard all Muslims not agreeing with them as unbelievers.”¹⁶⁸

The innovator, Ahmed Rada Khan, giving a description of the Sheikh, said: “He is one who is pleased to affirm the unbelief of his forefathers. He does not stop here only, he holds all the Muslims, including the Imams, unbelievers. Ibn Abdulwahhâb, after the emergence of his new religion, declared that the Muslim community had been wandering astray in the darkness of polytheism for the last six hundred years. The Wahhabis, later, went on repeating the assertion of their leader.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ *Ad-Duraru 's-Sunnîya*, (The Sunnah's jewels) p. 5.

¹⁶⁷ Jamil Sidqi az-Zahawi, *Al-Fajru 's-Sâdiq fi 'r-raddi 'alâ Munkiri 't-Tawassuli wa 'l-Karâmâti wa 'l-Khawâriq* (The true dawn in confronting the deniers of seeking pious, high celebrity and anomalous things), (Cairo: Maktabatu'l-Maliji, 1323H, p. 19.

¹⁶⁸ *Op. Cit.* p. 27

¹⁶⁹ Taken from *Da 'âwi 'l-Munâwi 'in li-Da 'wati 'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb*, p. 168.

Muhammad ibn Najib Suqiya says this about Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâh and his followers, “Their creed is to affirm the unbelief of the dead and accuse living monotheists of polytheism. If one asked me from whom I learnt about the unbelief and polytheism of all Muslims by the Wahhabis, I would say, ‘It is clearly mentioned in their letters and books.’”¹⁷⁰

Muhammad ibn Jawad Mugniya, who is an arch enemy of the call at present, says, “No doubt by the term Wahhabi monotheists they mean themselves and by the term ‘polytheist, they mean all other Muslims without exception.”¹⁷¹

These are few examples of the allegations that Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab and his followers consider Muslims as unbelievers. These fibs reached the Sheikh in his lifetime. He refuted them just as they were refuted later by his followers.

Below we quote some of the numerous answers in view of the fact that the false accusations were widespread in most of the Muslim countries. The Sheikh was keen to

¹⁷⁰ Muhammad Tawfiq, *Tabyînu 'l-Haqqi wa's-Sawâbu bi'r-Raddi 'alâ Atbâ'i ibn Abdilwahhâb*, (Stating the truth and rightness in response to ibn Abdulwahhâb followers) (Syria: Matba'atu'l-Faiha), p. 8.

¹⁷¹ Jawâd Mughniya, *Hadhihi Hiya 'l-Wahhâbiya* (This is the Wahhabism) (1964), p. 111.

emphasize his answers and pronounce his innocence. He sent these answers to various countries.

In a letter sent to the people of Riyadh and Manfouha, he said, "As for your assertion that we hold Muslims to be unbelievers and your question as to how we do this and how we do that, I would simply say that we never held the Muslims to be unbelievers. Rather we never held anyone except polytheists to be unbelievers."¹⁷²

In a letter to Muhammad ibn Eed, one of the religious personalities of Tharmada, he wrote, "As for the assertion of enemies that I hold them to be unbelievers only by conjecture, or I hold an ignorant person against whom no argument has been established to unbeliever, it is a sheer lie and false accusation, levelled by those who intend to drive the people away from the Religion of Allah and His Messenger."¹⁷³

In a letter to the people of Qassim, the Sheikh refers to the fabrications of his avowed enemy, Ibn Suhaim, and exonerates himself from the false charge of affirming the unbelief of the Muslims and the allowance of killing them. He says, "Allah knows that the man ascribed to me what I never said and did not even occur to me. One such ascription is that 'the people, for the last six hundred years had not been on the right course and that I hold anyone who seeks the

¹⁷² Adapted from *Majmu'atu Mu'allafati 'sh-Sheikh*, (A group of the sheikh's literatures) 5/189.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5/25.

intercession of pious people to be an unbeliever, and that I hold Al-Busiri unbeliever. My answer to all these is “This is nothing more than a false accusation.”¹⁷⁴

In a letter to the Sherif of Makkah in reply to his letter on this issue, the Sheikh says, “As for falsehoods and accusations, their example is the assertion that we hold the people to be unbelievers in general, that we hold moving to us obligatory on anyone who wants to express his religion, and that we affirm the unbelief of a person who does not hold whom we do and does not fight to be unbelievers. This and other such assertions are totally false accusations leveled against us in order to drive the people away from the Religion of Allah and His Messenger.”¹⁷⁵

The Sheikh writes to Ismail al-Jarai of Yemen refuting this allegation, “As for the assertion that we hold the people, in general, unbelievers, it is a false allegation made public by enemies to drive people away from this Religion. We can only emphatically say that it is a naked lie.”¹⁷⁶

In a letter addressed to Abdurrahman As-Suwaidi, he says, “They spread false allegations. A wise man would be shy to mention them, let alone fabricate them. One such allegation, as you mentioned, is that I hold all people to be

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 5/11, 12 & 62.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 3/11.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 5/100.

unbelievers, except those who follow me, and tell them that their marriage bonds are not valid. I wonder how can such things enter the mind of a wise man. Are these the assertions of a Muslim or an unbeliever? Are these the assertions of a man of sound mind or of a lunatic?"¹⁷⁷

His son Abdullah also refutes this charge saying, "Allegations have been leveled against us by concealing the truth and deceiving the people, that we affirm the unbelief of the people of this age and the people after the sixth century after the Hejira, except those who are in agreement with us. Also, it is said that we do not accept the oath of allegiance of anyone unless he admits that he, earlier, was a polytheist and that his parents died in the state of polytheism. All these assertions are fabrications and lies. Whenever we were asked, our answer was "This is a great accusation." Whosoever attributed to us any such thing invented a fib. But whoever observed us and attended our meetings knew fully that all these allegations are false. The enemies of the True Religion and the brothers of Satan have fabricated them to drive the people away from believing in the Oneness of Allah in its pure form and from discarding all kinds of polytheism. It is claimed that we say "Allah shall never forgive" while He will forgive lesser sins for whomsoever He wishes. We believe that anyone who commits cardinal sins like the murder of a Muslim, adultery, usury and drinking wine will

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 5/36.

not go out of the fold of Islam and will not be thrown into hell for ever if he dies in the state of monotheism in all acts of worship.¹⁷⁸

When Sheikh Abdulaziz ibn Hamad, the grandson of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was asked about this fabrication, his answer was, "As for your question about one who does not come under our leadership and does not fall under our state, whether his home will be regarded as the Home of Disbelief and the Home of War, our answer is that we believe that whoever takes Islam as his religion, obeys Allah's commands and desists from what He has forbidden, is a Muslim whose blood and property is inviolable, according to the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the consensus of the Muslim community. We have never held anyone who takes Islam as his religion because he does not come under our leadership or does not fall under our state to be an unbeliever. We affirm the unbelief of only those whom Allah and His Messenger have held to be unbelievers. Whosoever says that we hold the people in general to be unbelievers or regard moving to us an obligation on one who can profess his religion in his country, is a liar."¹⁷⁹

Describing the cautiousness of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab in matters of holding people to be unbelievers, his grand son Sheikh Abdullatif says, "Sheikh Muhammad was most cautious and always hesitant in passing the verdict

¹⁷⁸Sulaiman ibn Sahman, *Al-Hadiyatu's-Sunniyati wa't-Tuhfatu'n-Najdiyya* (The Sunnah's present and the masterpiece of Najd's whhabism): *Majmû'atu Rasâ'ili li-Kibâri A'imatu Najd*, (Ar-Ri'âsatu'l-'Ammatu li-Idârâti'l-Bahûthi'l-'Alamiyati wa'l-Ifâhi wa'd-Da'wati wa'l-Irshâd, 1403), p.49.

¹⁷⁹*Majmû'atu'r-Rasâ'ili wa'l-Masâ'il*, (The group of letters and inquiries) vol. 4, p. 574.

of unbelief. So much so that he never passed a judgement of unbelief against an ignorant person, from among the worshippers of graves, who worshipped someone other than Allah if there was nobody to exhort him and convey to him his wrongdoing. But if he is told the Truth then his rejection would render him an unbeliever.”¹⁸⁰

Sheikh Abdullatif describes the stance of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb on this issue, “He did not pass the verdict of unbelief except on matters of manifest polytheism or disbelieving the verses of Allah and His Prophet, about which all the Muslims have a consensus and only when he was sure about the information reaching him. Under this category come the acts like the worship of pious people and praying to them besides Allah or holding them to be Allah’s partners in worship.”¹⁸¹

Sheikh Abdullatif emphasized that whosoever knew the life of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, would certainly absolve him from these false accusations. He says, “Any person who is endowed with wisdom and knows about the life of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb would realize that he held scholars in high esteem and he always desisted from holding them to be unbelievers or from hurting them.

¹⁸⁰ Abdullatif ibn Abdurrahman ibn Hasan Ash-Sheikh, *Minhajju 't-Ta'sisi wa 't-Taqdisi fi Kashfi Shubhâti Daud ibn Jarjis* (Bombay, 1309H), pp. 65-66.

¹⁸¹ *Majmâ' âtu 'r-Rasâ'ili wa 'l-Masâ'il*, (letters and inquiries) 3/5.

He believed in their respect and in defending them. The Sheikh never passed the verdict of unbelief against any one except those who had been held unbelievers by Allah, His Messenger and by the Muslim community through consensus, like those who took gods and held them to partners with Allah, the Lord of the Universe.¹⁸²

Muhammad Bashir As-Sahaswani refutes the allegation made against the Sheikh and his followers by Dahlan and others, that he held the Muslims to be unbelievers. He says that the Sheikh and his followers never held anyone to be an unbeliever and never believed that they themselves were Muslims and whoever was opposed to them, not. Neither did they hold permissible the murder of Sunnis or the enslavement of their women. I met many scholars from amongst the followers of the Sheikh, and I read many books written by them, but I never found a base for such an allegation. All this is mere fabrication.”¹⁸³

Rashid Rada emphasized the refutation of Al-Sahaswani, “The books of the Sheikh contain what is contrary to these allegations. These books tell us that they do not pass the verdict of unbelief except against those who commit acts that are the acts of unbelief according to a consensus of the Muslims.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 3/449.

¹⁸³ *Op. Cit.* 3/449

¹⁸⁴ *Muhammad Bashir al-Sahaswani, Siyanat-ul Insan min Wasawis-i Dahlan.* (protection against Dahlan's scruple) *Najd Press, Riyadh, 1395, p. 485*

Defending Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, Sheikh Sulaiman ibn Salman says, “ His way was in conformity with the way of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) his Companions and the pious ancestors of the Muslim community. He never held anyone to be an unbeliever except one whose unbelief has been affirmed by Allah and His Messenger or on whose unbelief the Muslim community has consensus of opinion. He was a friend and protector of all the people of Islam and the scholars in particular. He believed in what the Book said and the hadith narrated. The blood, property and honor of the Muslims were declared inviolable. He did not allow otherwise except what had been allowed by the Sharia. Whosoever ascribes to him anything contrary to the view of imams and the pious ancestors of the *Ahlu's-Sunnati wa'l-Jamâ'a* (the Sunnis), simply fabricates a lie.”¹⁸⁵

The above quotations are enough to establish the clarity of the views of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and his followers on the issue of passing the verdict of unbelief. Their stance is in conformity with the views of the pious ancestors of the Muslim community, and they do not affirm the unbelief of anyone unless he or she deserves that in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

¹⁸⁵ Sulaiman ibn Salman, *Al-Aṣinatu'l-Hiddâ fi Raddi Shubhâti Alawfi'l-Haddâd*, (The Sharp tungs in respons to Alawfi'l-Haddâd 's refutes) 2nd Edition (Matâbi'ir-Riyadh, 1376), pp. 56-57.

CHAPTER IV

The results and impact of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb Salafi call and a sample of Ulema defending and describing the true call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb

Preface

An unbiased researcher who has studied the life of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and his call objectively and the efforts exerted by Saud family to establish this call cannot deny the fact that this call was the religious side of an intellectual renaissance. Then this intellectual activity influenced the entire Muslim society in all its political, economic and social spheres and many right directional calls in the Islamic world were influenced by this *call*.

The call launched by Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb undoubtedly met with success because it achieved the noble objectives it strove for. It created in the Muslim society, an awakening and revived a feeling that had died down. The call also enabled the Muslims to change the currents of thought and revert to the legacy of the pious ancestors of the Muslim community.

As a result, the Muslims, in most countries, returned to the pristine, pure Islam of its early period. It is a fact the call

owes its success to many factors, and it would be pertinent to review some most important of them before speaking about the results of the call.

Main Causes and Factors of Success:

- 1-The Nature of the Call:** The call stood on a firm foundation of monotheism and strove for the purification of worship for Allah on the principle of Oneness.
- 2-The Strong Belief and Sincerity of the Flag-Bearer of the Call:** Sheikh Muhammad ibn · Abdulwahhab championed the cause of the call wholeheartedly. He breathed in it the strength of belief and gathered around it, supporters endowed with firm belief and strong conviction. This firm belief was the chief characteristic of the Sheikh. He was firm in his belief that Islamic society was eaten up by corruption in all aspects of its life, the more so in matters pertaining to faith. He had a view that Islam in its pure form had become something alien to the world of Islam. Therefore, it was necessary to exert all efforts, with patience and perseverance, in order to restore health to the Islamic society through exhortation and guidance.

The Sheikh believed that Muslims had reached the nadir of their existence and were soon to perish if reformers did not rise to ward off this distress and bring back the community to the right course of the True Religion. He was equally convinced that reform was not impossible and that it only needed some people of firm

conviction ready to exert all their effort. With this strong conviction and firm belief, the Sheikh was able to win supporters who backed him up in his lifetime and carried on his mission after his death.

- 3- The supporters of this *Salafi* call exerted their utmost efforts to make a success of it and spread it to the length and breadth of the globe. Had there been no help from Allah and had there been no supporter like them, the Sheikh would not have been able to stand firm for long. These supporters held up the banner of this mission in the lifetime of the Sheikh and after him. They sacrificed their wealth and souls and did not waver. The history bears witness that the supporters of this mission from the House of Saud and the people of Najd did all they could in support of this *Salafi* call and stabilized it.

4- The Environments of the Beginning of the Call:

In the beginning, the *Salafi* call appeared in Najd, which was the most suitable soil for this mission because the people here were simple, endowed with qualities of manliness and bravery and able to shoulder heavy responsibilities. Besides this, the region was far from Ottoman authority,¹⁸⁶ away from the influence of religious people of Sufi orders and the judicial scholars of four schools who held high offices in government and

¹⁸⁶ *Da'watu 'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahháb wa Atharuha fi 'l-Álami 'l-Islámi*, (Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahháb call and its impact on the Islamic world) p. 77.

who were opposed to any reform movement for fear of losing their positions.

5- Time of the Call:

The time when the mission started was the most suitable time for any reform movement. At that time, the corruption of the faith had reached its nadir, and the Muslims were in dire need of reform and restructuring of the Islamic society on correct principles.

These are the main factors that gave great success to the mission of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab.

Second: Results of the all in Najd and the Entire Arabian Peninsula.

The aims and objects Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and Imam Muhammad ibn Saud had in mind in initiating the mission were fully realized. In fact, the results were not confined to rectification of the faith but covered all aspects of life. The call shook Najd society and left a strong influence on it. It eliminated all the heretical practices that were widespread in Najd and revived the Islamic Sharia by bringing the people of the region back to pure monotheism, free from all vestiges of paganism and idolatry.

Let us review the most important results of the mission launched by Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahâb and later carried on by his followers.

a- The call fully eliminated the heresies and the glorification of graves, making vows for them and belief in holiness of certain trees. It reviewed the distinguished features of the Islamic Sharia that had disappeared. This was not confined to Najd alone but Allah, through this mission, purified, from Associationism and heresies, the whole peninsula.

b- The *Salafi* call launched by Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab and supported by the Saud dynasty, established a perfect Islamic society that believed in Islam as a faith, a law and a system of life, with its people observing religious rites like the five daily prayers as well Friday and holiday prayers in congregation. Not only prayer, but the collection and distribution of obligatory alms was also regulated and alms collectors were appointed. Similarly, judges were appointed to settle disputes between people and their salaries were paid from the state treasury. These judges were to decide cases in accordance with the Sharia. Earlier the people, particularly the Bedouin, used to refer to their customs. In implementing the Islamic rules, special emphasis was given to the establishment of Islamic penal law, which ensured peace and security in the land. The new government also revived the system of the control of weights and measures and appointed staff to enjoin good,

forbid evil and urge the people to observe Islamic behavior. This department also inspected the markets to control prices and to check fraudulent practices in the markets. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb also founded a state treasury and framed regulations for tax collection as well as spending from it.¹⁸⁷

- c- In political field also, the call had its effects. It eliminated the small states scattered all over the region and unified the major part of the Peninsula. It is common knowledge that Najd, before the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, was only a historical and geographical entity. It had no existence as a unified region under a single rule. It was composed of small emirates and sheikhdoms at war with one another. As a result the whole region was in the grip of constant fear. City dwellers had no courage to venture out of the city walls at night because the roads were full of highwaymen.

This was the condition of Najd. It was like the kings of small kingdoms whom Tabari portrays, "The kingdom of each of them was very small, composed of some palaces and houses surrounded by a trench. Each had an enemy with the same size of kingdom. One would attack the other and would retreat like a streak of lightning."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Dr. Abdullah ibn Yusuf al-Shibil, *Ash-Sheikh al-Imâm Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb: Hayâtuhu wa Da'watuh (Imâm Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb, his life and his call)* Riyadh: Matâbi'u Imam Muhammad ibn Saud University), pp. 612-620.

¹⁸⁸ *Tarikhul-Bilâdil-'Arabiyati's-Sa'udîya* (the history of Saudi Arabia's lands) vol. 1, pp. 3-4.

This condition totally changed after the *Salafi* call. This call unified the most parts of the Arabian Peninsula under the First Saudi State whose boundaries extended from Syria in north to Yemen in south and from Red Sea in west to the Gulf in east.¹⁸⁹

It was the outcome of this call that an “Islamic state, i.e. the state of the Saud dynasty, was established. It is still ruling in accordance with the Islamic Sharia, serving the Two Holy Mosques and supporting the Muslims in all parts of the world by building mosques, establishing Islamic religious and educational centers and preaching Islam.¹⁹⁰

The followers of this *Salafi* mission brought back peace, security and stability to the people of the Peninsula by implementing the Islamic penal code in the Kingdom. They prevented the Bedouin Arabs from harassing the pilgrims who came to Makkah and Madina for the Hajj as they prevented them from extorting money from them.¹⁹¹

In general, the Saudi state, which was established in accordance with the *Salafi* call, is the best state in implementing the Islamic Sharia, establishing security and

¹⁸⁹ *Abdullah ibn Yusuf Ash-Shibil, op. cit., p. 64*

¹⁹⁰ From the article of Sheikh Dr. Fawzan al-Fawzan, published in *Majallatu'l-Buhāthi'l-Islāmiya*, (Islamic researches) issue 16

¹⁹¹ Ahmad al-Qattan, *Imamu'd-Da'wa: Ash-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhāb* (Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhāb's call) (Kuwait: Maktabatu's-Sundus, 1409), p. 102.

justice, fighting heretics and dealing with criminals and law breakers with an iron hand.”¹⁹²

d- Also the effect of the *Salafi* call on the academic and literary renaissance is manifest. The call awakened the Muslim community from deep slumber and encouraged in the people, research work and free discussion on the basis of arguments. It also urged people to study the Qur’an and memorize its verses and the sayings of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) as these two sources of Islamic and Arabic sciences are the models of eloquence and good style in Arabic. The sciences of Arabic language cannot be separated from religious science. Both are integral because the Arabic language is meant to serve the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (Peace be upon him). Therefore it was necessary to launch a comprehensive intellectual movement.

The call raised by Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was the main cause behind the awakening in the political field. This served as the first spark that ignited and set in motion the intellectual movement after a long stagnation and backwardness. Consequently, the spread of this call generated strong reactions from its opponents in Arabia as well as outside the Peninsula, which led its exponents to explain it and dispel the doubts raised by its adversaries.

¹⁹² Ahmad ibn Hajar, *Ash-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, p. 102.

On the other end of the spectrum were its adversaries, who spared no effort to refute the arguments of the champions of the call. This required the holding of debates, and these sessions, in their turn, made it necessary for both sides to equip themselves academically. This generated an Islamic intellectual awakening of which the Muslims were in dire need. This intellectual leap forward manifested itself in the production of Islamic literature in various branches of Islamic sciences.¹⁹³

Sheikh Ahmed al-Qattan says, "The movement of the monotheists was able to spread knowledge in various classes of the society as it was able to form a distinguished class of scholars of religion. It popularized, among the people, the sciences of the Sharia like exegesis, hadith, monotheism, jurisprudence, the life of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and history, etc. Thus Dira'iyah became the center of knowledge and different sciences, where students thronged from all parts of the country. Knowledge was common among all classes. The historians said, "A shepherd was grazing his herd in pastures and the slates of education were hanging on his neck."¹⁹⁴

Sheikh Abdulaziz ibn Baz sums up the contribution of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahrâb in the field of the *Salafî* call and the efforts made by Saud dynasty in

¹⁹³Abdulah ibn Yusuf al-Shibil, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 64.

supporting it. "In short, Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb came forward to guide the people to the religion of Allah and to prevent them from inventions and heresies. He enjoined good and forbade evil. In his faith, he was in total conformity with the faith of the pious predecessors. Like them, he believed in Allah with His names and attributes and believed in His Messengers, His Books, the Day of Judgement and predestiny, both good and bad. He was on the way of the Imams in his belief in Oneness of Allah and in the purification of worship for Allah the Almighty. Like them he believed that the attributes of Allah are never suspended and that He cannot be likened to His creations. He followed in their footsteps in his belief in resurrection, reward, accountability, Paradise, Hell, etc. Like them, his view about faith was that it is a composition of belief and practice which increases and decreases. It increases with acts of obedience and decreases with sinful acts. He scrupulously followed their ways. He had no school of his own.

He expressed his views in *Najd* and the surrounding area. Then he preached his message and fought for it, until the Religion of Allah emerged victorious. His stance is like that of Muslims in general in the call to Allah, denying the wrong, enjoining good and forbidding evil. But the Sheikh and his supporters went a step ahead in forcefully enjoining good and forbidding evil. Similarly, he exerted his efforts in

belying heresies till Allah eliminated them through his preaching.

Thus, it becomes clear that the points of dispute between him and common folk were three.¹⁹⁵

First: He denied polytheism and preached the undiluted Oneness of Allah.

Second: He denied innovations like building structures on graves and taking them as places of worship.

Third: He enjoined good and forced people to abide by it. Whosoever refused to abide by it, was punished. Similarly, he forbade evil and forced people to desist from it. As a result the people became good in all aspects of their life—in their homes, mosques and markets. Innovations were eliminated from the society and no vestiges of paganism remained. Whosoever witnessed them was reminded of the pious ancestors of the Muslim community in the days of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and in the age of his companions.

The people remained committed to this way of life. But when their conditions changed later, after the death of the Sheikh and the death of most of his sons and his supporters, they were subjected to affliction at the hands of the Turkish state and Egyptian forces. They proved true what Allah says:

¹⁹⁵Sheikh Abdul Aziz ibn Baz, *Muhammad ibn Abdilwahháb* (Riyadh: 1403), pp. 34-38.

Verily! Allah will not change the (good) condition of a people as long as they do not change their state (of goodness) themselves (by committing sins and by being ungrateful and disobedient to Allah) (Quran 13:11)

We pray to Allah the Almighty that He may make these afflictions, the expiation of their sins and make their death, the death of martyrdom.

Their call is existing till today and spreading further. After the havoc wrought by the Egyptian forces and after all the ruins and destruction caused by them, the call bounced back and spread with an even stronger force. Five years after the tribulation, Imam Turki ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Saud rose and expelled the Turks and Egyptians from all villages and towns of Najd.

Dira'iyah was devastated and the Saudi state vanquished in 1233H. For five years, the people live in a state of anarchy. Then in 1240, the Muslims of Najd rallied around Imam Turki ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Saud and the Truth began to prevail.

After that, the people busied themselves with education, guidance and preaching and the process is continuing even today. The people returned to the old conditions, which were prevalent in the days of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb, his sons and his disciples. The Ulema are succeeding one another and the imams of the

house of Saud are succeeding one another in leadership, guidance and jihad on the way of Allah.

Thirdly: The call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb spread outside Najd when the Saudi State conquered Makkah in 1219, and pilgrims on the way to Makkah had a chance to see the ulema and listen to their sermons and exhortations. They also observed the condition of the Saudi state embodied in holding fast to the rope of Allah. Some pilgrims were influenced by the call and returned to their lands with a zeal to fight against the innovations and superstitions rampant in their countries.

The spread of the Islamic call in the Islamic world had many effects, for instance:

1. The call led to an Islamic intellectual renaissance of which the Muslims all over the world were in dire need.
2. The call was an important factor in creating a nationalistic awakening in most of the Islamic countries under colonial rule.
3. As a result of this *Salafi* call in most of the Islamic countries, views inimical to this call weakened.
4. Islamic scholars all over the Islamic world supported this reform movement, which became a source of strength for Muslim reformers in other countries.

Aqqad says, "The call of Ibn Abdulwahhâb did not go in vain in the Arabian Peninsula, nor in the Islamic world from East to West. It was followed by large numbers of pilgrims, and it reached India, Iraq, the Sudan, and other far flung areas. Muslims realized that the cause of their successive problems was the renunciation of religion – not the religion itself, and it is only natural for them to regain their lost strength by giving up innovations and returning to the way of their pious ancestors in its essence and core."¹⁹⁶

He also says, "No sooner was the call of Ibn Abdulwahhâb raised in the Arabian Peninsula than its echo was heard in Bengal in 1804, and the *Farâ'idh* Group followed it literally. It declared that India was to be regarded as *Daru'l-Harb* (Land of War) until it returned to the rule of the Sharia. Then it was echoed in the Wahhabi call raised by Seyyid Ahmad Bâraillî in Punjab, who held it obligatory for his followers to bear arms to fight the Sikhs. He continued fighting them until he was martyred."¹⁹⁷

And in Bengal, the Wahhabi call was active in the nineteenth century, because of which many of the people in Bengal entered into Islam.

Arnold says in his book, *The Call to Islam* 198 "In the nineteenth century, the movement of the call of Sheikh

¹⁹⁶ Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, *Al-Islâm fi'l-Qarni'l-'Ashrin*, (Islam in the twentieth century) p. 86.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁹⁸ Thomas Arnold, *Call to Islam*, p. 239.

Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb was very active in Bengal and sent many groups whose members had joined the reforming Wahhabi call movement. It did not remain confined to the Indian subcontinent, but beyond its boundaries, the call reached Jawa and the East Indies, known today as Indonesia. There, despite the tough resistance by the Dutch imperialism, it spread far and wide.¹⁹⁹ 200

Sir Arnold says, "By the end of the Eighteenth Century, the known Islamic preacher Al-Haj Uthman Danfodia appeared. During his stay in Makkah he was impressed by the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and, upon his return, he launched a campaign against heresies and preached Islam in its purity at a broad scale."²⁰¹

In Yemen Sheikh Muhammad ibn Ali Al-Shaukani (d. 1250) launched a call similar to that of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab. He called to Monotheism, *ijtiâd* and fighting innovations and blind imitation. He wrote a treatise entitled, *Al-Qawlu 'l-Mufidu fi Hukmu 't-Taqlid* (A Beneficial Word on Imitation). Like Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab, Shaukani was also influenced by Ibn Taimîya, so much so that he wrote a commentary on *Muntaqâ 'l-Âkhâr* of Ibn Taimîya. The effect of the *Salafi* call on Shawkani can

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

²⁰⁰ Ahmad Abdulghafur al-Attar, *Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, p. 213.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

be seen from the fact that he composed an elegy when the news of the Sheikh's death reached him.

One of the most famous scholars of Yemen was Emir Muhammad ibn Ismail al-San'ani, the author of *Subulu's-Salâm*, a commentary on *Bulûghu'l-Marâm*. Sheikh Al-Sanani called the people of Yemen to pure monotheism and urged them to refrain from seeking the intercession at the graves of pious people, a practice which was then, widespread in Yemen.

That he was impressed with Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab can be judged by the ode he composed, which is a panegyric on him.

In Iraq, the family of Sheikh Alusi wrote about the Sheikh and his call and defended it.²⁰² In Algeria, the first to raise the banner of the *Salafi* call was the historian Abu Ruwas Al-Nasiri, who happened to meet with the students of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab in the Hajj. He discussed with them certain issues and became convinced of the direction of the call. It happened in the presence of the Crown Prince of Morocco, who was leading the Hajj delegation.²⁰³

In his travelogue, which he wrote after his return from the Hajj, he spoke in glowing terms of the Sheikh and his

²⁰² *Da'âwi'l-Munâwi 'in li-Da'wati'sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, p. 83.

²⁰³ Abdulhalim Uwais, et. al., *Al-Imam Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb fi'l Fikri'l-Islâmi wa'l-Islâhu fi'l-Jazâ'ir* (Egypt: Dar al-Sahwah, 1405), p. 13.

call. The Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars represented the *Salafi* face of the call. Its leader Abdul Hamid ibn Badis (1305 – 1359) became aware of this call when he came to Makkah to perform the Hajj and had a chance to meet with the ulema of the call there. On his return, he founded the association with the explicit aim of reforming the faith of the Algerian Muslims. He preached for renouncing the innovations as he urged adoption of *ijtihad*, a fight against blind imitation and passivity in studying the *Qur'an* and the Sunna.²⁰⁴

In Egypt, Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Rashid Ridha adopted the principles of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb and defended them in their writings. One of those who were impressed the most by the *call* was the Arab historian Abdul Rahman Al-Jabrati. He expressed the view that the Turks committed a big mistake by fighting the call and its supporters. This led to his murder at the hands of Muhammad Ali Pasha.²⁰⁵

In Morocco, the call laid effect on Sidi Muhammad ibn Abdullah who, impressed by the books of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab, fought Sufism. Similarly it influenced Mawlai Sulaiman who stood against monasteries and called for pure monotheism.

²⁰⁴ Muhammad al-Salman, *Da'watuh-Sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, p. 95.

²⁰⁵For more information see "*Buhûthuh-Sh-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdilwahhâb*, vol. 2, pp. 320-337.

These are a few examples showing the spread of the *Salafi* call for reform in the Islamic world. "It can be noted that wherever the call reached, it led to a reform movement that aimed at spreading the message of Islam, at the purification of the faith from innovations and other un-Islamic acts, at rectifying the general conditions of life and at paving the way for establishing an Islamic state and government believing in Islam as faith, law, and a method and system of life. The present government implements the Sharia, which consequently brings about peace, prosperity and stability to the people."²⁰⁶

In brief, the call of the Sheikh influenced many Islamic countries in Asia and Africa, aroused Arab and Islamic feelings and motivated the Muslim people to work seriously. For it instilled in them, a consciousness of the real Islam that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

Now we quote some opinions of Muslim and non-Muslim writers about the *Salafi* call and the men who initialed it.

The Opinion of Muhammad Kurd: The noted scholar of Syria Muhammad Kurd Ali writing on the origin of the Wahhabism, concludes his research thus: "Ibn Abdulwahhab is but a preacher who guided them from

²⁰⁶For more information on the spread of the call of the Sheikh, see the article of Dr. Abdullah Yusuf ash-Shibil in *Majallu 'd-Dara*, issue 4 (1399 H), pp 32-34.

erroneous ways to the pure religion. If some sections showed vehemence and violence they were the young bedouin. We rarely see, among the adherents of Islam, any group as exceedingly sincere and truthful as the followers of this call. We observed them for many years but did not see them deviating from Islam.²⁰⁷

The Opinion of Taha Hussain: Describing the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab, he says, "This creed is new and old simultaneously. It is new in view of the contemporary world. It is old in reality because it is a strong call to pure Islam free from the stains of paganism and idolatry. It calls to Islam as it was brought by the Prophet (Peace be upon him). It nullifies all the intermediaries between Allah and the people."

The Opinion of Hafiz Wahbah: He describes Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb in his book *Jazîratu'l-'Arab* (The Arabian Peninsula), "He was a reformer, revivalist and a preacher who called for returning to the True Religion. He does not have his own special teachings, nor does he have any views of his own. He implemented Hanbali jurisprudence in Najd. As for faith, he and his followers are following the pious ancestors of the Muslim community and are opposing other ways.

The Opinion of Az-Zarkali: He says in his book *Al-'Alâm* (Part 7) about Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb,

²⁰⁷ Muhammad Kurd Ali, *Al-Qadîmu wa'l-Hadîth*, p. 120.

“His call was the first spark of the renaissance in the Islamic world. It influenced reformers in India, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, etc.”

The Opinion of Muhammad Rashid Rida: “He rose to call for freeing monotheism from all stains and for purifying worship for Allah alone, as Allah has commanded through His Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). He also called for renouncing innovations, reviving forgotten Islamic rites and glorifying the sanctities that were being violated.”

The Opinion of Abdul Muta'al Al-Saiedi: He said about Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb; “He started calling, as Ibn Timîya had called before him, to monotheism purified from all stains, for a rejection of turning toward graves and domes and for a denial of intercession of the pious dead with Allah for a fulfillment of needs. He started his work in his area with softness and kindness, then spread the message to the Hejaz and other regions.”

The Opinion of Dr. Muhammad Id Madhi: In his book, *Hâdiru'l-'Âlami'l-Islâmî*, Dr. Madhi says, “The religious reformer and Islamic leader, Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb began in mid twelfth century of Hijira to call

Najdis to a rectification of the faith and to a return to the principles of Islam.

The Opinion of Muhammad Dhiauddin Arra'is, Professor of History in the University of Cairo: Dr. Arra'is said the following about Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab and his call. "The basic principles of the Wahhabi call emanate from monotheism purged from hidden and apparent aspects of paganism and from a purification of worship for Allah. [This is] not seeking refuge in any being other than Allah and not exaggerating the glorification of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) in a way that may preclude his human nature.

The Opinion of Aqqad: In his book "*Al-Islâmu fi'l-Qarni'l-'Ashrîn*", Abbas al-Aqqad says, "It is evident from the life history of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb that he, in preaching his message, faced hardships. He become harsh like someone who calls to a deaf person. "He was resisted by people living under thick layers of ignorance. They sought the intercession of those who had no power of doing any good or harm. The bedouins had passed through a long time when they were led astray by conjurers and astrologers. They were fed a reliance on talismans and amulets for curing diseases or even warding off epidemics. In those circumstances, it was the duty of the preachers to turn the people away from these practices. The call turned them away from these innovations and un-Islamic acts."

The Opinion of Al-Jabrati: He says, “The people are clamorous about Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb. Some call him a Kharijite and others give him other names. Then he quoted a letter from the Sheikh or one of his sons explaining his beliefs.

He concludes his statement saying. “If this was the case it is what we believe in and it is the essence of monotheism.²⁰⁸

The Opinion of Ahmad Amin: Ahmad Amin says, “It looks that Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb became familiar with Ibn Taimîya through his *Salafi* studies. He was impressed by him and devoted himself to his books and treatises, which he copied. In the British Museum, there are some manuscripts of Ibn Taimîya in Ibn Abdulwahhâb’s hand. Like him, Ibn Abdulwahhâb called for renouncing innovations and purifying worship for Allah, neither worshipping sheikhs, pious people or their graves, nor seeking their intercession. Visiting graves should be for taking lessons and not for seeking intercession. Thus, the call of Ibn Abdulwahhâb was a war waged against the acts invented, and customs and traditions brought about after the early Islam. There is no room for recitation on the anniversary of the birthday of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) nor for celebrations on graves. No women should be allowed to walk behind the funeral procession, nor should there be sermons to the accompaniment of music and dance.

²⁰⁸ *Ajâ'ibu'l-Āthâr*, vol. 3, p. 372.

There should be no litter to be touched and kissed because it is composed of wood that can do neither benefit nor harm. All these practices are against Islam and must be eliminated. We must revert to Islam with its simplicity, purity and belief in oneness, calling the Lord without a mediation of a creation. This is the essence of *La ilaha illa 'llâh*.²⁰⁹

The Opinion of Stoddard: As Arab thinkers took up the call of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab, some western orientalist of the Arabs also dealt with him and expressed their wonder and admiration for him.

They were highly impressed by the call. Luther Stoddard in his book *The Islamic World Today*, said, "The Islamic world had reached the lowest point of its decline in the twelfth century of the Hegira. The deterioration was all encompassing. The milieu had clouded, the decay had engulfed all the regions and areas of the Muslim world. The Islamic world was in a deep sleep. When darkness was deepening all over, there was a call from the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, the cradle of Islam. The call was to the believers to rise, to reform, to return to the right path, the straight path. The startling voice that was heard on the scene was that of the famous reformer Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb who lit the torch of Wahhabism and it glowed. The reformer urged the Muslims to put themselves on the right path and inspired them to return to the right and real glory of Islam."²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Ahmad Amin, *Zu 'amâ'u 'l-Islâh*, p. 17.

²¹⁰ *The Islamic World Today*, vol. 1.

The renowned orientalist Brockelmann said, “When Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb returned to his first country, he tried to revive the beliefs and the life of the Muslims in accordance with the teachings of pure and original Islam.”²¹¹

Wilfred Cantwell Smith said, “I heard from the professors of McGill University in Canada” that there was Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb who called people to order their lives in accordance with the Islamic Sharia. This meant asking their countrymen to become [real] Muslims and free themselves from the glittering fervor of the mystics – the Sufis. He said that the basis of Islam was the Sharia. “If you wish to be [real] Muslims, it is incumbent to follow Islamic laws.”²¹²

The writers of the book *The Phase of Islam* said, “Islam passed through the ages dormant, without any movement, till the rise of the Wahhabis in the eighteenth century, the later reformers with a magnitude and a wide banner in the present age.”²¹³

Bernard Lewis said, “Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhâb called people to the pristine Islam, the Islam empty from stain and impurity, the real Islam that dominated the first century. He called people to be away from all innovative additions to the original beliefs and prayers. He asked people to ward off

²¹¹ *Tâ'rikhu 'sh-Shu'ûbi'l-Islâmiya* (The History of the Islamic Peoples), translated by Dr. Nabih Amin and Munir al-Baalbaki.

²¹² *Al-Islâm fi Nadhri'l-Gharb* (Islam in the West vision) for *Jamâ'ati mina'l-Mustashriqîn*, translated into Arabic version by Ishaq al-Husaini.

²¹³ Quoted from the book, *Âl Saud* by Ahmad Ali, p. 210.

all innovations and the western impact from the pure Islam.”²¹⁴

Goldzhir in his book ‘Beliefs and Sharia’ said, one who likes to judge the Islamic events should consider the Wahhabis as helpers and advocates of the Islamic religion in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet and the Companions. The aims of the Wahhabis are to revive Islam as it was [in the time of the Prophet].”

²¹⁴ *Al-‘Arabu fi’l-Tā’rikh* (The Arabs in History) translated by Nabih Amin and Muhammad Saif Zā’id.

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