9243 - Did Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab rebel against the Ottoman Caliphate and what was the reason for its fall?

the question

Some people talk very bad about Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab (rh). They accuse him, that he fought against the ottoman islamic empire and against the caliph , so he was an enemy of the muslims. This is their argument. Is this right? How could one fought against the amir of the muslims, even if the caliph prayed, gave his zakah and so on? They say also that he made an contract with the english army and fought with them against the muslims.
Can you give me a detailed answere to this historical event and show me the truth? Whom should we believe?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There is never a man who brings some goodness to this world but he has enemies among mankind and the jinn. Even the Prophets of Allaah were not safe from that.

The enmity of people was directed against the scholars in the past, especially the proponents of the true call (of Islam). They were met with intense hostility from the people. An example of that is Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him); some of those who were jealous of him regarded it as permissible to shed his blood, others accused him of being misguided and of going beyond the pale of Islam and becoming an apostate.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab was simply another of these wronged scholars who were falsely accused by people, in an attempt to cause trouble (fitnah). People’s only motives for doing that were jealousy and hatred, along with the fact that bid’ah was so firmly entrenched in their hearts, or they were ignorant and were blindly imitating the people of whims and desires.

We will mention some of the false accusations that were made against the Shaykh, and will refute

them.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez al-‘Abd al-‘Lateef said:

Some opponents of the salafi da’wah claim that Imam Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab rebelled against the Ottoman Caliphate, thus splitting the jamaa’ah (main body of the Muslims) and refusing to hear and obey (the ruler).

Da’aawa al-Munaawi’een li Da’wat al-Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahaab, p. 233

He said:

‘Abd al-Qadeem Zalloom claims that the emergence of the Wahhaabis and their call was a cause of the fall of the Caliphate. It was said that the Wahhaabis formed a state within the Islamic state, under the leadership of Muhammad ibn Sa’ood and subsequently his son ‘Abd al-‘Azeez, which was supplied with weapons and money by the British, and they set out to gain control of other lands that were under the rule of Caliphate, motivated by the urge to spread their beliefs, i.e., they raised their swords against the Caliph and fought the Muslim army, the army of the Ameer al-Mu’mineen, with the encouragement and support of the British.

Kayfa hudimat al-Khilaafah, p. 10.

Before we respond to the false accusation that Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab rebelled against the Caliphate, we should mention the fact that the Shaykh believed that hearing and obeying the imams (leaders) of the Muslims was obligatory, whether they are righteous or immoral, so long as they did not enjoin disobedience towards Allaah, because obedience is only with regard to what is right and proper.

The Shaykh said in his letter to the people of al-Qaseem: “I believe that it is obligatory to hear and obey the leaders of the Muslims, whether they are righteous or immoral, so long as they do not enjoin disobedience towards Allaah. Whoever has become Caliph and the people have given him their support and accepted him, even if he has gained the position of caliph by force, is to be obeyed and it is haraam to rebel against him.”

Majmoo’at Mu’allafaat al-Shaykh, 5/11

And he also said:

One of the main principles of unity is to hear and obey whoever is appointed over us even if he is an Abyssinian slave…”

Majmoo’ah Mu’allafaat al-Shaykh, 1/394; quoted in Da’aawa al-Munaawi’een, 233-234.

And Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez al-‘Abd al-Lateef said:

After stating these facts which explain that the Shaykh believed it was obligatory to hear and obey the leaders of the Muslims, whether they are righteous or immoral, so long as they do not enjoin disobedience towards Allaah, we may refer to an important issue in response to that false accusation. There is an important question which is: was Najd, where this call originated and first developed, under the sovereignty of the Ottoman state?

Dr Saalih al-‘Abood answered this by saying:

Najd never came under Ottoman rule, because the rule of the Ottoman state never reached that far, no Ottoman governor was appointed over that region and the Turkish soldiers never marched through its land during the period that preceded the emergence of the call of Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab (may Allaah have mercy on him). This fact is indicated by the fact that the Ottoman state was divided into administrative provinces. This is known from a Turkish document entitled Qawaaneen Aal ‘Uthmaan Mudaameen Daftar al-Deewaan (Laws of the Ottomans concerning what is contained in the Legislation), which was written by Yameen ‘Ali Effendi who was in charge of the Constitution in 1018 AH/1609 CE. This document indicates that from the beginning of the eleventh century AH the Ottoman state was divided into 23 provinces, of which 14 were Arabic provinces, and the land of Najd was not one of them, with the except of al-Ihsa’, if we count al-Ihsa’ as part of Najd.

‘Aqeedat al-Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab wa atharuha fi’l-‘Aalam al-Islami (unpublished), 1/27

And Dr ‘Abd-Allaah al-‘Uthaymeen said:

Whatever the case, Najd never experienced direct Ottoman rule before the call of Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab emerged, just as it never experienced any strong influence that could have an impact on events inside Najd. No one had any such influence, and the influence of Bani Jabr or Bani Khaalid in some parts, or the Ashraaf in other parts, was limited. None of them were able to bring about political stability, so wars between the various regions of Najd continued and there were ongoing violent conflicts between its various tribes.

Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab Hayaatuhu wa Fikruhu, p. 11; quoted in Da’aawa al-Munaawi’een, 234-235.

We will complete this discussion by quoting what Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn ‘Abd-Allaah ibn Baaz said in response to this false accusation. He said (may Allaah have mercy on him):

Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab did not rebel against the Ottoman Caliphate as far as I know, because there was no area in Najd that was under Turkish rule. Rather Najd consisted of small emirates and scattered villages, and each town or village, no matter how small, was ruled by an independent emir. These were emirates between which there were fighting, wars and disputes. So Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab did not rebel against the Ottoman state, rather he rebelled against the corrupt situation in his own land, and he strove in jihad for the sake of Allaah and persisted until the light of this call spread to other lands…

Conversation recorded on tape; quoted in Da’aawa al-Munaawi’een, p. 237

Dr. ‘Ajeel al-Nashmi said: … The Caliphate did not react in any way and did not show any discontent or resentment during the life of the Shaykh, even though there were four Ottoman sultans during his lifetime…

Majallat al-Mujtama’, issue # 510.

If the above is a reflection of the Shaykh’s attitude towards the Caliphate, how did the Caliphate view the call of Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab?

Dr. al-Nashmi said, answering this question:

The view that the Caliphate had of the movement of Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab was very distorted and confused, because the Caliphate only listened to those who were hostile towards the movement of Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab, whether that was via reports sent by their governors in the Hijaaz, Baghdad and elsewhere, or via some individuals who reached Istanbul bearing news.

Al-Mujtama’, issue #504; quoted in Da’aawa al-Munaawi’een, p. 238-239.

With regard to Zalloum’s claims that the Shaykh’s call was one of the reasons for the fall of the Caliphate and that the English helped the Wahhaabis to topple it, Mahmoud Mahdi al-Istanbuli says concerning this ridiculous claim:

This writer should be expected to produce proof and evidence for his opinion. Long ago the poet said:

If claims are not supported by proof, they are used only by the fools as evidence.

We should also note that history tells us that the English were opposed to this call from the outset, fearing that it might wake the Muslim world up.

Al-Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab fi Mar’aat al-Sharq wa’l-Gharb, p. 240

And he says:

The ironic fact is that this professor accuses the movement of Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab of being one of the factors that led to the destruction of the Ottoman Caliphate, even though this movement began in 1811 CE and the Caliphate was abolished in 1922 CE.

Op. cit., p. 64

What indicates that the English were opposed to the Wahhabi movement is the fact that they sent Captain Foster Sadler to congratulate Ibrahim Pasha on his success against the Wahhabis – during

the war of Ibrahim Pasha in Dar'iyyah – and also to find out to what extent he was prepared to cooperate with the British authorities to reduce what they called Wahhabi piracy in the Arabian Gulf.

Indeed, this letter clearly expressed a desire to establish an agreement between the British government and Ibrahim Pasha with the aim of destroying the Wahhabis completely.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Manzoor al-Nu'maani said:

The English made the most of the hostility that existed in India towards Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab and they accused everyone who opposed them and stood in their way, or whom they regarded as dangerous, of being Wahhabis… Similarly the English called the scholars of Deoband – in India – Wahhaabis, because of their blunt opposition to the English and their putting pressure on them.

Di'aaya Mukaththafah Didd al- Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab, p. 105-106

From these various quotations we can see the falseness of these flawed arguments when compared to the clear academic proofs in the essays and books of the Shaykh; that falseness is also obvious when compared to the historical facts are recorded by fair-minded writers.

Da'aawa al-Munaawi'een, 239, 240.

Finally, we advise everyone who has slandered the Shaykh to restrain his tongue and to fear Allaah with regard to him. Perhaps Allaah will accept their repentance and guide them to the straight path.

And Allaah knows best.