89671 - Effect of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah on the da’wah of Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab

the question

Is there any connection between Shaykh Ibn Taymiyah, the Shaykh al-Islam, and the Wahhaabi movement?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

First of all it must be noted that the label “Wahhaabi” was first given to the call of Imam Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab by the enemies of this call, with the aim of putting people off and warning people against it. They try to present it as an odd call with weird ideas, which is extreme in following the ideas of its imam and goes against the way of ahl al-sunnah wa’l-jamaa’ah.

It says in Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa’imah (2/255):

Wahhaabism is a name given by the opponents of Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab (may Allaah have mercy on him) to his call to cleanse Tawheed of all elements of shirk and to abolish all ways except the way of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd-Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). What they intend thereby is to put people off his call and block them from what he promoted. But it was not harmed by that, rather it caused it to spread even further and caused more people to come to it whom Allaah guided to look into what the da’wah was all about and what evidence it had from the Qur’aan and Sunnah. So they adhered to it, clung firmly to it and started calling other people to it, praise be to Allaah. End quote.

Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan (may Allaah preserve him) said in al-Bayaan li Akhta’ Ba’d al-Kuttaab (70):

This label is wrong with regard to wording, and with regard to the meaning.

With regard to wording, that is because the da'wah is not being attributed to the one who started it, namely Shaykh Muhammad, rather it is being attributed to 'Abd al-Wahhaab, who had nothing to do with it. The proper name for it would be al-Da'wah al-Muhammadiyyah ("the Muhammadan call").

But these opponents realized that this would be a good name that would not put anyone off, so they changed it to this distorted name.

With regard to the meaning, that is because this da'wah did not drift away from the way of the righteous salaf, namely the Sahaabah, Taabi'een and their followers. So it should rightly be called the Salafi da'wah, because the one who founded it did not introduce any innovation in that which was named after him, as the promoters of misguided sects such as the Ismailis and Qarmatiyyah introduced innovations. If those misguided sects had called themselves salafis, the people and the historical record would have rejected this name, because they are outside the path of the salaf and were introduced by their founders.

The correct name, both in wording and meaning, for the call of Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab is the Muhammadan da'wah or the Salafi da'wah.

But because this name annoys the enemies, they used an incorrect name. Therefore the word Wahhaabi was not known among the followers of the Shaykh, and it is their opponents who gave them this offensive nickname. Indeed, they gave this name to everyone who follows the way of the salaf, even in India, Egypt, Africa and elsewhere. By giving it this label, its opponents wanted to isolate the da'wah from the right path. So they excluded it from the four madhhabs and counted it as a fifth madhhab, "out of envy from their ownselves, even after the truth has become manifest unto them" (al-Baqarah 2:109). End quote.

Secondly:

The call of Imam Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab in the twelfth century AH was a continuation of

the call of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah which appeared in the seventh and eighth centuries AH.

The Imam was influenced by it because it was in agreement with the basic principles of Islam with regard to beliefs and rulings. These principles included the following:

1-Relying on the Holy Qur'aan and the saheeh Sunnah as the primary sources of legislation

2-Keenness to adhere to the way of the righteous salaf, namely the Sahaabah, Taabi'een, the four imams and those who followed them.

3-Calling people to Tawheed and rejection of shirk.

4-Affirming that which Allaah has affirmed for Himself and denying that which He has denied for Himself with regard to the divine names and attributes.

5-Rejection of fanaticism in following imams and calling for adherence to the truth based on evidence.

6-Promotion of the Sunnah and fighting innovation.

The book was the link between the two imams. Imam Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab paid a great deal of attention to the books of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah and his student Ibn al-Qayyim.

'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn 'Abd al-Lateef Aal al-Shaykh said in Mashaaheer 'Ulama' Najd wa Ghayrihim (18):

He wrote out with his own hand many of the books of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Tayimiyah, and some of them are still extant in the British Museum in London. End quote.

Muslim writers and others, such as some of the Orientalists, have pointed in their books to the link between Imam Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab and the da'wah of Shaykh al-Islam.

The great scholar Shaykh Ahmad ibn Hajar Aal Bootaami mentioned many statements in his book

al-Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab, such as the following:

‘Abd al-Muta’aal al-Sa’eedi said in his book al-Mujaddidoon fi’l-Islam:

He started to promote the same message as Ibn Taymiyah before him, of Tawheed and worship of Allaah alone.

Al-Ameer Shakeeb Arsalaan said in Part Four of Haadir al-‘Aalim al-Islaami, under the tile Tareekh Najd al-Hadeeth (the history of modern Najd):

He had imbibed the principles of al-Haafiz Hujjat al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah … and he started to think of restoring Islam to its former purity. I do not think that he come up with any ideas different from the ideas of Ibn Taymiyah. End quote.

Al-Haafiz Wahbah said in his book Jazeerat al-‘Arab:

Their teachings are identical to that which was written by Ibn Taymiyah and his student in their books, although they differed with them concerning a few minor issues. End quote.

Manhaj Haroon said, refuting the English writer Count Wales:

Everything that Shaykh Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab said has been said by others who came before him of imams and scholars, and the noble Sahaabah. He did not go beyond anything that Imam Ahmad and Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on them) had said. End quote.

Muhammad Diya’ al-Deen al-Rayyis said:

… Ibn Taymiyah is the direct teacher of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab, even though there were four centuries between them. He read his books and was completely influenced by his teachings. End quote.

Brockelmann said in History of the Islamic Peoples:

In Baghdad, Muhammad studied the fiqh of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, then he studied the writings of

Ahmad ibn Taymiyah who had revived the teachings of Ibn Hanbal in the fourteenth century (CE). In fact his study of the views of these two imams led him to the conclusion that Islam, in the form that was prevalent during his time, especially among the Turks, was mixed with a great deal of incorrect ideas that had nothing to so with the sound Islamic teachings. End quote.

Ahmad Ameen said:

… In his da'wah and teachings, he followed the example of a great scholar and teacher who had appeared in the seventh century AH at the time of the Sultan al-Naasir, namely Ibn Taymiyah, who believed in ijtihaad and was a free thinker within the limits set by the Qur'aan and Sunnah. It seems that Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab knew of Ibn Taymiyah, who was his imam and leader, and his example, the one who inspired him with regard to ijtihaad and calling for reform. End quote.

See: Athar Da'wat Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah fi'l-Harakaat al-Islamiyyah al-Mu'aasirah (1/136-138) by Salaah al-Deen Maqbool.

Thirdly:

But despite this strong link between the two imams, Imam Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab was a follower of evidence and was not a blind follower of personalities. He understood that Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah was one of the great imams of Islam, but that all humans are prone to error. He understood that Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) was not an innovator who introduced a new message that was alien to Islam, rather he was following the way of the righteous salaf and following should be based on evidence and consensus among the imams. But no imam should be followed blindly no matter how great his level of knowledge, rather anyone's opinion may be accepted or rejected except the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

Shaykh al-Fawzaan (may Allaah preserve him) said in al-Bayaan bi'l-Daleel (150), refuting the claim that Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab was nothing but a carbon-copy of Ibn Taymiyah:

This is what he said about the academic level of Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab: He did not study anything but the writing of Ibn Taymiyah! It is as if he had not read the biography of the Shaykh and did not know anything about his level of knowledge, or he did know it but he concealed it in order to demean him and to deceive those who knew nothing about the Shaykh.

But this does not conceal the truth. Writers have written many books about the Shaykh (may Allaah have mercy on him) that have been published throughout the world and which are known to the elite and common folk alike. He (may Allaah have mercy on him) studied fiqh, hadeeth and usool in depth, including the books of ‘aqeedah that were compiled and written by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah and his student Ibn al-Qayyim. He graduated at the hands of great scholars and imams in various fields in Najd, the Hijaaz, al-Ihsa’ and Basrah. He was granted ijaazahs to narrate from them and convey their knowledge. He studied, issued fatwas and wrote books about fiqh, hadeeth and ‘aqeedah until he earned the admiration of those who gathered around him or listened to his lessons and debates, or who read any of his writings. His writings point to the vastness of his knowledge of Islamic sciences and the depth of his understanding. What he spoke of in those writings was not limited only to the books of Ibn Taymiyah – as those who are ignorant or who pretend to be ignorant think – rather he also quoted the views of prominent imams on fiqh, tafseer and hadeeth, which is indicative of the depth of his knowledge and understanding, and his keen insight. His books that have been printed and are in circulation bear witness to that, praise be to Allaah. He did not quote only the words of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah and ignore the opinions of others, unless he believed Ibn Taymiyah’s view to be stronger on the basis of evidence. In fact, he disagreed with Ibn Taymiyah on some matters of fiqh. End quote.

For more information please see the answers to questions no. 36616, 10867 and 12203.