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Introduction

SOMETIME IN THE middle of 1155/1742, an epistle by Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb arrived in the city of Basra in southern Iraq. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, a preacher from the central Arabian region of Najd, had recently launched an Islamic reformist movement in his home region predicated on a doctrine of strict monotheism (*tawḥīd*). Rumbings about his controversial movement had already reached Basra, some four hundred miles away from Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s location in Najd, but this was the first piece of writing by him to arrive in the city. In the epistle, cast as an explication of the confession that “there is no god but God” and of *tawḥīd*, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb warns that polytheism (*shirk*) has spread far and wide in the Islamic world, primarily in the form of the supplication (*du‘ā*) of saints and prophets during the visitation of graves, meaning appealing to them for earthly gain or heavenly reward. For Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, such practices, while at the time a widespread feature of Islamic ritual in the Arab Middle East as elsewhere, were unambiguously *shirk*, and those participating in them were to be regarded as polytheists (*mushrikūn*). It was incumbent on those seeking to profess Islam, he wrote, to abandon these practices and to direct all forms of worship to God alone. Only then would they satisfy the conditions of the confession that “there is no god but God” and of *tawḥīd*. This, however, was not the only thing required of them. It was also necessary, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb continued in the epistle, that they show hatred and enmity to the polytheists and the false gods that they worship. After setting out the requirement of directing all worship to God, he goes on to explain the second requirement:

Do not think if you say, “This is the truth. I follow it and I abjure all that is against it, but I will not confront them [i.e., the saints being worshipped] and I will say nothing concerning them,” do not think that that will profit

you. Rather, it is necessary to hate them, to hate those who love them, to revile them, and to show them enmity.¹

Here, then, was the true test of faith. The complete Muslim was one who not only worshipped God exclusively but exhibited hatred and enmity to perceived idols and polytheists, the polytheists in this case being professed Muslims seen as engaged in tomb-centered rituals.

The epistle that arrived in Basra in 1155/1742, known as the *Kalimāt fi bayān shahādat an lā ilāha illā 'llāh* (Words in Explication of the Confession that There Is No God but God), is one of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's earliest known writings.² It was circulating several years before the historic alliance he would strike with the Āl Su'ūd (i.e., the family of Su'ūd), in approximately 1157/1744f, and the subsequent rise of the Saudi state, which would spread Wahhābism across the Arabian Peninsula by force of arms. Despite its early date, however, the message that the epistle contained was illustrative of the doctrinal thrust of the Wahhābī movement for generations to come. This was a message of theological exclusivism combined with militant activism, of directing all worship to God alone and showing hatred and enmity to polytheism and polytheists. In many other letters and epistles, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb would elaborate this same message with similar wording, and as before it was the second part of his formulation, the requirement of confrontation, that he presented as the true test of faith. Adherence to *tawhīd* had to be accompanied by a profession of hatred and enmity, by a demonstration of unfriendliness and hostility, before one could be considered a true Muslim. In another epistle, for instance, he writes: "Islam is not sound without showing enmity to the polytheists; if one does not show them enmity, then he is one of them, even if he has not committed it [i.e., *shirk*]."³ And in another epistle he makes the point again, writing that "a person's religion and Islam are not sound, even if he professes *tawhīd* and eschews *shirk*, unless he shows enmity to the polytheists and openly professes enmity and hatred of them."⁴

In Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's writings, the required confrontation with alleged polytheists was most commonly expressed in the language of hatred (*bughā*) and enmity (*adāwa*), together with the related notion of dissociation (*barā'a*). The phraseology of these three elements derives from the Qur'ān, and specifi-

1. al-Qabbānī, *Faṣl al-khiṭāb*, f. 65a.

2. For more on this source and the embedded epistle, see chapter 1.

3. *al-Durar al-saniyya*, 10:107.

4. *Ibid.*, 8:113.

cally Q 60:4, in which the Prophet Abraham declares his separation from the polytheists around him. In the verse, Abraham and his followers are seen declaring to their polytheist community: “We dissociate [*innā bura`ā`*] from you and that which you worship apart from God. We reject you, and between us and you enmity and hatred [*al-`adāwa wa`l-baghḍā`*] have shown themselves forever, until you believe in God alone.” In the Wahhābī doctrine, unsurprisingly, Abraham is considered the exemplar par excellence of the duty of confronting polytheists, but so is the Prophet Muḥammad. The latter, in Ibn `Abd al-Wahhāb’s telling, was uncompromising in exhibiting hatred and enmity to the polytheist Quraysh, even during the period of his preaching in Mecca, often seen as the peaceful phase of his career.

In addition to *bughḍ*, *adāwa*, and *barā`a*, Ibn `Abd al-Wahhāb invoked *takfīr*, or publicly charging with unbelief, in the context of the duty of confrontation. He thus deemed it obligatory for Muslims to pronounce *takfīr* on those he considered polytheists—that is, to condemn them as unbelievers or excommunicate them. *Jihād*, in the sense of warfare against unbelievers, was another element in this mix. As Wahhābism grew in tandem with the rise of the first Saudi state, the obligatory confrontation with polytheists expanded to include not just verbal but armed confrontation as well. Ibn `Abd al-Wahhāb thus wrote in one of his later epistles: “If a person wishes to be a follower of the Messenger [i.e., Muḥammad], then it is incumbent on him to dissociate from this [i.e., *shirk*], to direct worship exclusively to God, to reject it and those who commit it, to condemn those who practice it, to show them hatred and enmity, and to wage *jihād* against them until the religion becomes God’s entirely.”⁵

Ibn `Abd al-Wahhāb died in 1206/1792, but his teachings would be preserved by generations of Wahhābī scholars after him. Some of the most important of these scholars were his direct descendants, known by the patronymic “Āl al-Shaykh,” or “family of the shaykh.” While occasionally these men refined and reformulated certain Wahhābī doctrinal principles, their main task, as they saw it, was to safeguard and perpetuate the doctrine of Ibn `Abd al-Wahhāb, who in their view had rediscovered the true and original message of Islam.

Like Ibn `Abd al-Wahhāb, these scholars perceived *shirk*, in the form of the supplication of saints and prophets, as having spread far and wide in the Islamic world, and they called on people to worship God as one and to confront polytheists with hatred and enmity. Sulaymān ibn `Abdallāh Āl al-Shaykh (d. 1233/1818), for example, a grandson of Ibn `Abd al-Wahhāb’s, underscored

5. Ibid., 1:146.

“the command to show enmity to the polytheists, to hate them, to wage *jihād* against them, and to separate from them.”⁶ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥasan Āl al-Shaykh (d. 1285/1869), another grandson, wrote that “God has made it obligatory to dissociate from polytheism and polytheists, to reject them, to show them enmity and hatred, and to wage *jihād* against them.”⁷ His son ‘Abd al-Laṭīf ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Āl al-Shaykh (d. 1293/1876), a great-grandson of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s, proclaimed that “it is inconceivable that a person could know and practice *tawḥīd* yet not show enmity to the polytheists. It cannot be said of one who fails to show enmity to the polytheists that he knows and practices *tawḥīd*.”⁸ Another important Wahhābī scholar, Ḥamad ibn ‘Atīq (d. 1301/1884), argued that hatred of polytheists borne in the heart is insufficient and that believers must *manifest* their hatred of polytheists. Hatred, he wrote, “is of no benefit until its signs are manifested and its effects are made clear. . . . [A person] has not met his obligation until enmity and hatred are demonstrated by him, and the enmity and hatred must be evident, manifest, and clear.”⁹ Likewise, Iṣḥāq ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Āl al-Shaykh (d. 1319/1901), a great-grandson of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s, maintained that “hating them in the heart is not enough; it is necessary to manifest enmity and hatred. . . . This is manifesting the religion. It is necessary to express enmity openly and to pronounce *takfīr* on them publicly.”¹⁰ The Wahhābī scholar Sulaymān ibn Siḥmān (d. 1349/1930) put this idea into verse:

Manifesting this religion is clearly pronouncing to them
that they are unbelievers, for indeed they are an unbelieving people,
And evident enmity and manifest hatred,
this is manifesting [the religion] and [proper] condemnation.
By God, such is not what is apparent among you.
O those with understanding, have you no notice?
This, and not enough is bearing hatred in the heart
and love in it—this is not the measure.
Rather the measure is to bear it
openly and clearly, for they have gone astray.¹¹

6. Āl al-Shaykh, *Majmū‘ al-rasā‘il*, 56.

7. *al-Durar al-saniyya*, 8:190.

8. *Ibid.*, 8:359.

9. Ibn ‘Atīq, *Sabil al-najāt wa’l-fikāk*, 44–45.

10. *al-Durar al-saniyya*, 8:305.

11. Ibn Siḥmān, *‘Uqūd al-jawāhir* (al-Rushd ed.), 1:321 (meter = *rajaz*).

Many of these Wāhhābī scholars were writing at a time when the Wāhhābī movement was weak and insecure. By emphasizing the duty of hatred and enmity, they sought to ensure that Wāhhābism would remain distinct and separate from the larger Islamic world, a world they perceived to be dominated by the forces of *shirk*. Of crucial importance to them was maintaining the antagonistic posture toward the polytheist other that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wāhhāb had made central to his doctrinal program. Whether opposing polytheists by means of verbal denunciation or armed confrontation, or merely dissociating from them and keeping them at a distance, the Wāhhābī scholars from the mid-eighteenth to the early twentieth century were committed to upholding the original Wāhhābī message of theological exclusivism and militant activism, a message already on display in the epistle that reached Basra in 1155/1742.

Wāhhābism and the Three Saudi States

The term *Wāhhābism* (*al-Wāhhābiyya*) refers to the predicatory movement (*da‘wa*) launched by Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wāhhāb in the mid-eighteenth century. It may also refer to the distinctive doctrinal content of that movement. The subject of this book is Wāhhābism as it was from the mid-eighteenth to the early twentieth century, a period when, far from being the quietest version of Islam that it would later become, Wāhhābism was a provocative and activist faith, one that encouraged and even demanded confrontation with those Muslims seen as polytheists. Given its militant character, this form of Wāhhābism will occasionally be referred to here as *militant* Wāhhābism to distinguish it from the less aggressive, though still highly intolerant, form that would become the standard in Saudi Arabia beginning in the early twentieth century.

In doctrinal terms, Wāhhābism is a Sunnī Islamic movement, meaning that it situates itself within the legal and theological tradition of Sunnī Islam. More specifically, it appeals to the tradition of the Ḥanbalī *madhhab*, or school of law, the smallest of the four law schools in Sunnī Islam; and even more specifically, it appeals to the authority of a small number of mostly Ḥanbalī scholars from the fourteenth century, in particular Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), who lived most of their lives in Damascus under the Mamlūk Sultanate. Like the Wāhhābīs, these fourteenth-century Ḥanbalī scholars were extremely hostile to what Western academic literature has called the “cult of saints,” a term denoting the ritual practices

associated with visiting the burial sites of saints and prophets, including asking them for worldly favors and pleading with them for divine intercession.¹² In Arabic these practices are captured by the term *ziyāra* (visitation), or *ziyārat al-qubūr* (visitation of graves).¹³ When Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb began his movement in central Arabia in the mid–eighteenth century, it was the practitioners of the cult of saints, or *ziyāra*—that is, Muslims who worshipped at graves and appealed to the dead—who were the principal targets of his wrath. By engaging in such practices, he believed, they were associating others in God’s oneness and so committing *shirk*. In justifying this belief, he appealed specifically to the ideas of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim, quoting both their words and the scriptural evidence that they cited. This is not to say, however, that the Wahhābī and Taymiyyan versions of Islam were identical; much of this book is in fact concerned with examining the differences between Wahhābī and Taymiyyan thought, in addition to their similarities.

The term *Wahhābī* is in origin a pejorative coined by the enemies of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb to stigmatize his movement as deviant and heretical. For most of Wahhābism’s history, its adherents have rejected the label as offensive, preferring to call themselves Muslims (*Muslimūn*) or monotheists (*muwahhīdūn*), their view being that the Wahhābī form of Islam is nothing but a revival of the pure and uncorrupted version.¹⁴ Even so, the Wahhābīs have long recognized that theirs is a distinct movement in Islam, one captured by the term “the Najdī mission” (*al-da‘wa al-Najdiyya*). The latter term, which goes back to at least the mid–nineteenth century,¹⁵ may be understood as synonymous with the Wahhābī movement. The argument sometimes made by Saudi royals and officials that Wahhābism does not exist—an argument based on the idea that Wahhābī teachings reflect nothing but true Islam—is thus misleading.¹⁶ The term *Wahhābism* is used here not in any derogatory sense but only as a neutral descriptor, in keeping with Western academic convention.¹⁷

12. See, e.g., Goldziher, “Cult of Saints in Islam.”

13. *EI*³, s.v. “Grave Visitation/Worship” (Richard McGregor).

14. For a period of some fifty years, however, beginning in the 1300s/1880s, some of the leading Wahhābī scholars embraced the “Wahhābī” epithet as a point of pride, as will be seen below.

15. See, e.g., *al-Durar al-saniyya*, 9:258, 10:466, 14:409.

16. For this argument, see, for instance, Mahdi, “There Is No Such Thing as Wahhabism.”

17. In the 1940s, the scholar George Rentz sought to introduce the term *Unitarianism* as a more neutral alternative to *Wahhābism*, but this did not catch on. See Rentz, *Birth of the Islamic Reform Movement in Saudi Arabia*.

In more recent decades, the Wahhābīs have seized on another term as an appropriate label for their distinctive version of Islam: Salafism (*al-Salafiyya*). The Salafi label, to be sure, is not inappropriate for Wahhābism. The term *Salafism* comes from the name for the first three generations of Muslims, *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (the pious ancestors), whom Salafīs purport to emulate in belief and practice. The Wahhābīs certainly fit the popular conception of Salafism today as a purist religious orientation in Sunnī Islam, one that combines a fundamentalist hermeneutics (that is, direct engagement with the source texts of revelation) with a commitment to the doctrinal tenets of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim.¹⁸ However, while Wahhābī scholars did occasionally use the “Salafī” epithet before the modern era,¹⁹ Salafism was not a popular name for Wahhābism before the mid-twentieth century, when the Wahhābīs embraced it as part of an attempt to improve their image.²⁰ Wahhābism is better understood as a subset of the broader Salafi movement rather than as the embodiment of Salafism itself, particularly since, as will be seen, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb departed from Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim in significant ways.

As noted above, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his followers believed that *shirk* was pervasive in the Islamic world on account of the prevalence of the cult of saints. The proper response, in their view, was a renewed commitment to the principle of *tawḥīd*, understood as worshipping God as one and directing all forms of worship to Him alone, combined with an insistence on manifesting hatred and enmity to *shirk* and those seen as practicing it. What manifesting hatred and enmity to polytheists meant in practice is not usually spelled out by the Wahhābī scholars, but the general idea was clear enough: Muslims must actively oppose and antagonize those perceived as committing *shirk*. In Wahhābī Islam as originally conceived, true Muslims are expected to be spirited antagonists, not passive believers. They are impelled by their monotheistic doctrine to show hostility to those who violate their strict understanding of *tawḥīd*. The obligatory confrontation with polytheists also included the ideas of dissociation (*barā’ a*) and excommunication (*takfīr*), and when the Wahhābī movement became enveloped in the

18. For this understanding of Salafism, see Haykel, “On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action.” On contending views of Salafism in the modern period, see Lauzière, *Making of Salafism*.

19. See, for instance, *al-Durar al-saniyya*, 12:367, 504.

20. Commins, “From Wahhabi to Salafi.”

expansionary warfare of the first Saudi state, the idea of *jihād* against polytheists was included as well.

The success of Wahhābism owed to a large extent to its association with the Āl Su‘ūd dynasty, or what is sometimes referred to as the House of Saud. After launching his mission in the Najdī town of Ḥuraymilā’ in 1153/1741, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb moved shortly thereafter to al-‘Uyayna, another town in Najd, where his movement continued to spread. In approximately 1157/1744f, he made the fateful decision to relocate to the nearby town of al-Dir‘iyya, whose ruler was a certain Muḥammad ibn Su‘ūd (r. 1139–79/1726f–65). The latter pledged his support for Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, who in turn pledged his support for the Saudi ruler. The small emirate of al-Dir‘iyya, which embraced Wahhābism as its official religious ideology, grew over a period of decades into what would be known as the first Saudi state (ca. 1157–1233/1744f–1818), which at its height encompassed most of the Arabian Peninsula and threatened to conquer Iraq and Syria. The state’s conquests were undertaken in the name of extending the ambit of true Islam (i.e., Wahhābism), and Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb justified the state’s expansion as legitimate *jihād* for the sake of eradicating *shirk*. The first Saudi state would be destroyed in 1233/1818 by an invading army sent from Muḥammad ‘Alī’s Egypt, but the alliance between the Saudi dynasty and the Wahhābī scholars survived, having become an alliance between the Āl Su‘ūd (the descendants of Ibn Su‘ūd) and the Āl al-Shaykh (the descendants of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb).

Within five years of the first Saudi state’s destruction, the Saudi-Wahhābī partnership reemerged in a second Saudi state, which had its capital in Riyadh. The second Saudi state (1238–1305/1823–87) extended its sway across central and eastern Arabia but never managed to reconstitute the full territorial expanse of the first. It came to an end in 1305/1887 following a long civil war. The third and final Saudi state, also with its capital in Riyadh, was launched in 1319/1902 by a young member of the Saudi family named ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Āl Su‘ūd (r. 1319–73/1902–53). Over the next twenty-five years, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz succeeded in recovering most of the territory of the original Saudi state and in 1351/1932 gave his expanded realm the title of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which it retains to this day. Like the first Saudi state, the second and the third Saudi states also justified their expansionary warfare as *jihād* for the sake of eradicating *shirk*, and in this they enjoyed the support of the Wahhābī scholarly establishment, led by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s descendants.

Throughout this period, the Wahhābī scholars continued to promote Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s original religious message centering on the proper worship of God in accordance with *tawhīd* and the necessary display of hatred and enmity. Even when the Wahhābī movement was on the defensive, as it was during the latter part of the second Saudi state and prior to the founding of the third, the scholars refused to adopt a more accommodationist stance, devoting their energies to opposing any kind of harmonious coexistence with non-Wahhābī Muslims. Any attempt to dilute Wahhābism, to tamp down its exclusivism and militancy, was vigorously opposed. Yet, during the third Saudi state, and especially after 1351/1932, the militancy at the heart of the Wahhābī movement began to ebb. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl Su‘ūd, the Saudi ruler, prevailed upon the Wahhābī scholars to tone down Wahhābism’s more extremist tendencies that had kept it a sect apart for almost two hundred years. At the beginning of his reign, Wahhābism was still seen as a dreadful heresy by the majority of the Islamic world. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz sought to change this perception as he made his country into a modern state, and to a large extent he would succeed. At his direction, the scholars gradually relaxed their adversarial posture toward the larger Islamic world. The general principles of Wahhābism were in theory left unchanged, but in practice they were not adhered to with the same intensity as before. Neighboring Muslim countries such as Egypt and Iraq were no longer viewed as lands of *shirk* to be either conquered or avoided. Over time, Wahhābism was domesticated, developing into a quietest form of Islam that taught proper worship, policed Saudi society, and emphasized obedience to the ruler.

This book is not about this later Wahhābism but, rather, about Wahhābism as it was before its taming and co-optation by the modern Saudi state. It aims to show that Wahhābism, from its emergence in 1153/1741 to approximately 1351/1932, was a distinctly militant form of Islam, one founded in a radical spirit of exclusion and confrontation that would persist for nearly two hundred years. The leading Wahhābī scholars during this period never ceased to emphasize the duty of showing hatred and enmity to those Muslims they deemed polytheists. Their insistence on this duty was of central concern, and so it will be of central concern to this book.

This is not the first study to posit such a distinction between an earlier era of militant Wahhābism and a later one defined by a less militant form. David Commins, for instance, has written of the “taming of Wahhabi zeal” under ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and his “calculat[ing] that survival in the international arena

required that he curb Wahhabism's xenophobic impulses."²¹ Similarly, Guido Steinberg has described how "the puritanical character of the Wahhabi community . . . gradually had to give way to external influences" as 'Abd al-'Azīz pursued the modernization of his kingdom.²² "Wahhabism as a religious movement," he writes, "underwent a process of change between 1925 and 1953 that makes plausible the distinction made by Werner Ende between old Wahhabism and Wahhabism."²³ Abdulaziz Al-Fahad has written of the "slow and painful process that transformed Wahhabism from a puritanical, exclusivist, and uncompromising movement into a more docile and accommodationist ideology that is more concerned with practical politics than ideological rigor."²⁴ Similarly, Nabil Mouline has described early Wahhābism in terms of a "counterreligion." A counterreligion is an exclusivist and militant form of monotheism, one that approaches the outside world with an "antagonistic character" and "rejects and repudiates everything that went before and what is outside itself as 'paganism.'"²⁵ In Mouline's view, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb was the founder of just such a counterreligion, one that "refus[es] all compromise" and in which "exclusion is the golden rule and interaction with other groups is possible only in the framework of conversion or confrontation."²⁶ The history of later Wahhābism, by contrast, is that of Wahhābism's "transformation from a counterreligion into a religion that interacts more openly with the Other."²⁷

Yet while the idea that Wahhābism began as something aggressive and uncompromising and later developed (or degenerated) into something more complaisant and docile is generally well recognized, the more precise nature of the Wahhābī doctrine in the militant era remains to be examined and explored. The idea of Wahhābism as a counterreligion fits well with the idea of

21. Commins, *Wahhabi Mission*, 71–72.

22. Steinberg, *Religion und Staat in Saudi-Arabien*, 609.

23. *Ibid.*, 610. The year 1925 marked the consolidation of Saudi rule over the Hijāz, while 1953 was the year of 'Abd al-'Azīz's death. As alluded to here, in a series of articles the German scholar Werner Ende discussed the relationship between modernist Islam and what he called the "old Wahhabism" (*Alt-Wahhabiya*) of conservative Wahhābī scholars. See Ende, "Religion, Politik und Literatur in Saudi-Arabien."

24. Al-Fahad, "From Exclusivism to Accommodation," 516–17.

25. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 63, 3.

26. Mouline, *Clerics of Islam*, 58, 14.

27. *Ibid.*, 264.

militant Wahhābism developed in this book, though here the Wahhābī counterreligion is defined by its specific doctrinal tenets, including a particular conception of *tawhīd* and the requirement to show hatred and enmity to polytheists. This book explores the origins and content of the Wahhābī doctrine in exhaustive detail, and it examines the persistence of that doctrine in the century and a half after Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s death in 1206/1792.

About a half century after his death, in the mid–nineteenth century, the Wahhābī scholars introduced a distinction between hatred (*bughḍ*), on the one hand, and enmity (*‘adāwa*), on the other. The pioneer of this development was Ḥamad ibn ‘Atīq (d. 1301/1884), who theorized that hatred was to be understood as something internal, a feeling, while enmity was something external, hatred made manifest. It was not enough, Ibn ‘Atīq wrote, for Muslims to hate polytheists; they had to show them enmity as well, in the sense of openly condemning and confronting them. The display of enmity was more important than the hatred harbored in one’s heart. In his words, “Hatred that is not accompanied by manifest enmity is profitless.”²⁸ The spirit of Wahhābism, to borrow his phrase, from the mid–eighteenth to the early twentieth century, was one of “manifest enmity” (*al-‘adāwa al-zāhira*), a visible and unremitting hostility toward the vast majority of the Islamic world seen as having fallen into *shirk*.

Yet while the idea of manifest enmity pervades this book, this is not its sole focus. The book aims to provide a comprehensive treatment of the religious thought of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his successors, as well as a full account of the history of the movement that he began, from its origins to the early twentieth century. Drawing on an array of original primary sources in Arabic, including rare manuscripts that have yet to be examined before, it reconstructs the polemics between Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his scholarly enemies; examines the content of his religious thought, including its origins in the ideas of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya; charts the rise of the first Saudi state from a minor political entity to an expansive empire; and traces the persistence of militant Wahhābism through several generations of Wahhābī scholars who, after the collapse of the first Saudi state, sought to preserve the spirit of manifest enmity at all costs. While the book draws on a growing secondary literature on Wahhābism, and on an even more promising literature on the theological and legal thought of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn

28. Ibn ‘Atīq, *al-Difā’ ‘an ahl al-sunna*, 30–31.

Qayyim al-Jawziyya, it is primarily the product of my own reading and interpretation of primary sources in Arabic. If “[a]rchaeology is the methodology of history,” as R. G. Collingwood has observed, then this is a work of both excavation and reconstruction, of the discovery and synthesis of a wide range of materials with a view to reconstituting something of the history and doctrine of this historical movement.²⁹

Before turning to an overview of the chapters that follow, it will be necessary to lay some of the groundwork for what is to come. A working knowledge of three subjects in particular is essential for following this book’s discussion of the history and doctrine of Wahhābism. These subjects are the geography and demography of central Arabia, the field of Wahhābī studies, and the sources available for the study of Wahhābism.

Geography and Demography of Central Arabia

The Arabian Peninsula, also known as Arabia, is the landmass in the southern Middle East bounded by the Red Sea to the west, the Persian Gulf to the east, the Arabian Sea to the south, and the lands of the Fertile Crescent to the north.³⁰ Known in Arabic as “the island of the Arabs” (*jazīrat al-‘arab*), it is characterized by meager rainfall and desert conditions, the main exceptions being the historical Yemen and Ḥaḍramawt in the southwest and the fertile coastlands along the Persian Gulf, including Oman in the southeast and the cluster of oases known as al-Aḥsā’ in the northeast. Al-Aḥsā’, often pronounced al-Ḥasā, corresponds to what is now the Eastern Province of modern Saudi Arabia. In the far west of the Arabian Peninsula is the region of the Ḥijāz, home to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and south of there lie the regions of ‘Asīr and Jizān. All three belong to a long coastal plain known as the Tihāma. The center of the Arabian Peninsula is defined by a great plateau stretching hundreds of miles north to south and east to west and set off on three sides by vast, sandy deserts—the Great Nafūd to the north, the Dahnā’ to the east, and the Empty Quarter (*al-Rub‘ al-Khālī*) to the south. In Arabic this plateau area is known as Najd, meaning “upland,” and it is here where Wahhābism arose.

Historically, Najd was isolated and desolate, seen by the surrounding areas as being of little importance either politically, culturally, or economically. Given

29. Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 491.

30. See *EI*³, s.v. “Arabian Peninsula” (Robert Hoyland).

its relative remoteness and harsh living conditions, the great Islamic empires, including the Ottomans, paid it little heed and did not attempt to rule it directly. Najd was not so remote as to be entirely ignored by those in its vicinity, lying as it did along the trade and pilgrimage routes connecting the holy cities of the Ḥijāz to Iraq and eastern Arabia, but no one would have expected that a religious or political movement of any significance was poised to arise there.

At the time of Wahhābism's emergence, the people of Najd were predominantly Sunnī Muslims belonging to the Ḥanbalī *madhhab*. For reasons that remain unclear, Ḥanbalism had become the dominant *madhhab* in Najd sometime around the fourteenth century.³¹ While there was also a Ḥanbalī presence in the predominantly Shī'ī region of al-Aḥsā' in eastern Arabia, as well as in parts of Syria, including Damascus, Ḥanbalism was otherwise marginal in the world of Sunnī Islam at this time. The dominance of Ḥanbalism in Najd goes some way in explaining the rise of Wahhābism in the eighteenth century, given that the Ḥanbalī tradition preserved the ideas and writings of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim. However, many of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's early opponents, as will be seen, were themselves devout Ḥanbalis, and they contested his use of these fourteenth-century Ḥanbalī authorities.

In terms of social classifications, Najdis generally fell into the categories of settled peoples (*ḥaḍar*) and nomads (*badw*, i.e., bedouin).³² The *ḥaḍar* resided in towns and made their livelihood in agriculture, crafts, and trade, while the *badw* moved from place to place practicing animal husbandry and engaging in raiding and extortion. The *badw* were defined by strong tribal affiliations, the dominant tribes in the early Wahhābī period being the 'Anaza, the Zafir, the Muṭayr, the Qaḥṭān, and the 'Utayba. The *ḥaḍar*, for their part, were essentially detribalized, meaning that they no longer organized according to tribal identity—though most maintained an ancestral tribal affiliation. While it is often said that Wahhābism emerged in the desert, in reality it was the product of townspeople, the *ḥaḍar*, who maintained the culture of religious learning. As will be seen, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb had no love for the *badw*, condemning them as polytheists.

The region of Najd was divided into a number of districts or subregions, most of which lay along Jabal Ṭuwayq, a long mountain range extending some five hundred miles north to south and rising to about eight hundred feet at its

31. al-Shuqayr, "al-Madhhab al-Ḥanbalī fi Najd," esp. 92–93.

32. For a good introduction to *ḥaḍar-badw* dynamics, see Al-Fahad, "Raiders and Traders," 237–41.

highest point.³³ In the eighteenth century, these districts were, from north to south, al-Qaṣīm, Sudayr, al-Washm, Thādiq, al-Miḥmal, al-Sha‘īb, al-‘Āriḍ, al-Kharj, al-Fura‘, and al-Aflāj. Each was host to a number of towns or settlements (*qurā*; sing. *qarya*) where settled life was made possible by the presence of oases and *wādīs* (i.e., dry river valleys beneath which groundwater is sometimes accessible). Wahhābism took root in the district of al-‘Āriḍ, sometimes known as Wādi Ḥanīfa, after the *wādī* on which it is situated. Al-‘Āriḍ was home to the towns of al-‘Uyayna, al-Dir‘iyya, al-Riyāḍ (i.e., Riyadh), Manfūḥa, and al-‘Ammāriyya. Al-‘Uyayna, the birthplace of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, had the distinction of being the dominant town in al-‘Āriḍ, as well as the most populous and most politically powerful town in all of Najd. Each of the other districts likewise had a dominant town. These were ‘Unayza in al-Qaṣīm, Julājil in Sudayr, Tharmadā’ in al-Washm, Thādiq in al-Miḥmal, Ḥuraymilā’ in al-Sha‘īb, and al-Dilam in al-Kharj. Farther to the north lay the elevated region of Jabal Shammar, with its principal town of Ḥā’il. Jabal Shammar is sometimes regarded as separate from Najd, sometimes as an extension of it.

The political scene in Najd at this time was fractious and undeveloped. The region had not seen significant state formation in centuries, the most recent case being that of the Banū ‘I-Ukhayḍir, an ‘Alid dynasty that ruled from southern Najd in the ninth to eleventh centuries.³⁴ Indeed, the basic patterns of social, political, and economic life had not undergone significant change in centuries, at least none that can be reliably detected,³⁵ a fact that makes the rise of Wahhābism and the first Saudi state all the more intriguing.

Wahhābī Studies

Unlike some other movements in Islamic history, Wahhābism has not received a great deal of attention from Western scholars of Islam. From the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, there were hardly any studies of the movement by Western academics and none that could be considered well informed. In one sense this lack of attention was understandable, as the Wahhābīs were throughout this period a minority sect in Islam, viewed by the great majority of the Islamic world as dreadful heretics. They were located in

33. On the geography of Najd, see Al Juhany, *Najd Before the Salafi Reform Movement*, 23–37, 149–52.

34. *Ibid.*, 45–47.

35. For more on this point, which is contested, see chapter 4.

a remote area of Arabia to which few had access, and apart from the short-lived occupation of the holy cities in the early 1200s/early 1800s, they were not a particularly significant force in political or military terms. The lack of scholarly attention to Wahhābism may also have been related to what George Makdisi identified as the relative neglect of Ḥanbalism among Islamicists. As Makdisi wrote, “[T]he nineteenth century [was] the great enemy of Hanbalite studies,” and “[h]ad it not been for the interest shown by the Salafi movement in Egypt and the Wahhābis of Saudi Arabia in the Hanbalites, Hanbalism might well have remained even longer, perhaps forever, among the ‘insignificant’ schools in the mind of Islamists [i.e., Islamicists].”³⁶

The pioneers of Wahhābī studies in the West were European travelers to Arabia who wrote accounts of their journeys, beginning with the German Carsten Niebuhr’s *Beschreibung von Arabien*, published in 1772.³⁷ Though few of these men (and in a few cases women) penetrated the Wahhābī heartland of Najd, they nonetheless sought to learn all they could about the controversial movement capturing the attention of so many inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula. Influenced by their anti-Wahhābī informants, as well as by their own prejudices, such early travelers helped to spread many false and misleading reports about what the Wahhābīs believed. These included the idea that the Wahhābīs rejected the authority of the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth* and the related idea that Wahhābism was analogous to Deism in Europe. Such misapprehensions found their way into early Orientalist scholarship. What appears to be the earliest Western scholarly treatment of Wahhābism, a short article published in 1805 by the French Orientalist Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (d. 1838), took its cues from Niebuhr and an anonymous traveler. Building on their misunderstandings, Sacy speculated that the Wahhābīs derived from the tenth-century Ismā‘īlī movement known as the Qarmaṭians, who seized the Black Stone from the Ka‘ba in Mecca in 317/930.³⁸

Over time, the information conveyed by travelers improved. Considerable progress was made with the publication in 1829–30 of two posthumous works by the Swiss traveler Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, *Travels in Arabia and Notes on the Bedouins and Wahābys*. Burckhardt, who traveled through western Arabia in 1814–15, rejected the prevailing view in Europe that Wahhābism was a kind of Deist movement, seeing it as very much within the parameters of

36. Makdisi, “Hanbalite Islam,” 219.

37. On the travelers and their views, see Bonacina, *Wahhabis Seen Through European Eyes*.

38. Sacy, “Observations sur les Wahhabites.”

orthodox Sunnī Islam. Relying on the accounts of well-informed sources in the Ḥijāz, which had recently been occupied by the Wahhābīs, as well as some former adherents of the movement, he portrayed Wahhābism as reformist and puritan. “I think myself authorised to state,” he wrote, “from the result of my inquiries among the Arabs, and the Wahabys themselves, that the religion of the Wahabys may be called the Protestantism or even Puritanism of the Mohammedans.”³⁹ In saying this, he rightly emphasized the Wahhābīs’ hostility to saint veneration, comparing the cult of saints in Islam with hagiolatry in Catholicism (“Mohammedan saints are venerated as highly as those in the Catholic church, and are said to perform as many miracles as the latter”).⁴⁰ The analogy with Protestantism may have been flawed, but it was certainly an improvement on the analogy with Deism. Burckhardt, however, though better informed than his predecessors, still wrongly claimed that the Wahhābīs rejected the authority of the *ḥadīth*,⁴¹ and he never ventured into Najd.

The first to make the journey was an Irish captain in the army of the East India Company, George Forster Sadleir, who attempted to intercept the retreating Egyptian army in 1819. His account, however, says little about Wahhābism.⁴² After Burckhardt’s, the most thoroughgoing treatment of the movement by a nineteenth-century European traveler was written by the Englishman William Palgrave, who also made it to Najd during his journeys in Arabia in 1862–63.⁴³ Having read a number of Wahhābī doctrinal texts, and having conversed with Wahhābī scholars in Riyadh, Palgrave came to the conclusion that Wahhābism was an authentic expression of original Islam—pure and unadulterated. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was to be praised for having “learned to distinguish clearly between the essential elements of Islam and its accidental or recent admixtures.” He had “discovered amid the ruins of the Islamitic pile its neglected keystone”—namely, monotheism—and having done so “dared to form the project to replace it, and with it and by it reconstruct the broken fabric.” “The Wahhabee reformer,” Palgrave wrote, “formed the design of putting back the hour-hand of Islam to its starting-point; and so far he did well, for that hand was from the first meant to be fixed.” Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb

39. Burckhardt, *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahābys*, 1:102. Also quoted in Bonacina, *Wahhabis Seen Through European Eyes*, 6n7.

40. Burckhardt, *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahābys*, 2:108.

41. *Ibid.*, 1:102.

42. Sadleir, *Diary of a Journey Across Arabia*.

43. Palgrave, *Narrative of a Year’s Journey*, esp. 1:363–79.

had looked upon the “corruptions and overlaying of later times,” including the supplication of “intercessors and mediators, living or dead,” and the “honouring [of] saints or tombs,” as “innovations, corruptions, and distortions,” and he had “resolved to consecrate the remainder of his life to the restoration of this primaeval image of Islam . . . the authentic religion of Mahomet.” Yet while Palgrave saw much in Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb to admire, believing the reformer’s conclusions to have been just and logical, he was nonetheless no admirer of Islam. For this reason he objected to Burckhardt’s view that Wahhābism was analogous to Protestantism. The analogy was flawed, he wrote, because Islam, unlike Christianity—“a religion of vitality, of progress, of advancement”—was “stationary,” “[s]terile,” and “lifeless” and thus “justly repudiates all change, all advance, all development.” Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was to be commended for having sought to return Islam to “its primal simplicity,” but the Islamic religion was simply unworthy of comparison to its Christian counterpart.⁴⁴ Palgrave’s portrayal of Wahhābism was thus not an entirely flattering one; nonetheless, he did well to highlight the atavism at the heart of the Wahhābī project and its hostility to perceived innovations such as the cult of saints.

In the twentieth century, the European travelers who touched on Wahhābism would be even more accurate in their depictions and in some cases, though not all, even more sympathetic. The most prolific and influential of the European travelers in the twentieth century was Harry St. John Philby, a British civil servant and explorer who later settled in Arabia, where he converted to Islam and became a close adviser to the Saudi leader. Philby was also a scholar who was the first to make extensive use of Wahhābī primary sources in narrating the history of Saudi Arabia. His many books, none of them specifically devoted to Wahhābism, were for decades an indispensable source for anyone working on the Arabian Peninsula.⁴⁵

In the early twentieth century, European Orientalists were finally beginning to show interest in Wahhābism. Perhaps the earliest was the great Hungarian Orientalist Ignaz Goldziher, who devoted several pages of his 1910 *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (Lectures on Islam) to a description of the Wahhābī movement. The description, while not very detailed, holds up quite well. Goldziher emphasized the Wahhābīs’ fierce opposition to the cult of saints and the unmistakable influence of Ibn Taymiyya.⁴⁶ In 1927, the Dutch scholar Roelof Willem

44. *Ibid.*, 1:364–65, 370–73.

45. See, among other titles, Philby, *Arabia*; Philby, *Sa’udi Arabia*.

46. Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, 241–45.

van Diffelen published a doctoral thesis on the Wahhābī doctrine, presenting a more detailed analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's influence that also holds up quite well.⁴⁷ Diffelen's study would be cited by David Margoliouth, the Laudian Professor of Arabic at the University of Oxford, in his 1934 entry on Wahhābism in the first *Encyclopedia of Islam*.⁴⁸ The state of knowledge of Wahhābism in Europe had thus improved dramatically since Sacy's 1805 article. Yet Margoliouth's entry also showed how little scholarly work had been done on the subject to this point. His main sources were European travelogues and several manuscripts in the British Library, including one that presents an unreliable account of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's life.⁴⁹ The French Orientalist Henri Laoust provided a more extensive treatment of Wahhābism in his 1939 study of Ibn Taymiyya, in which he devoted a chapter to Wahhābism.⁵⁰ This was to remain the authoritative account of the Wahhābī doctrine for decades to come, though its focus was the reception of Ibn Taymiyya more than Wahhābism itself. In the later twentieth century, the historian Michael Cook was one of few scholars to give the movement significant attention, examining its origins and the rise of the first Saudi state in two seminal articles.⁵¹ However, the field still awaited a fuller and more comprehensive account of Wahhābism's origins and history.

Much greater attention would be paid to Wahhābism following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which brought newfound scrutiny on Saudi Arabia and its associated religious doctrine. The head of al-Qā'ida, Osama bin Ladin, was a Saudi national, as were fifteen of the nineteen hijackers who murdered nearly three thousand people in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. Rightly or wrongly, Wahhābism was seen as providing part of the

47. Diffelen, *De leer der Wahhabieten*. I am grateful to Daniel Lav for bringing this book to my attention.

48. *EI*¹, s.v. "Wahhābiyya" (David Margoliouth).

49. On this source, which was likely written at the request of a British official in the Gulf in 1233/1817, see Cook, "Provenance of the *Lam' al-shihāb*."

50. Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taqī-d-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taimiyya*, 506–40.

51. Cook, "Expansion of the First Saudi State"; Cook, "On the Origins of Wahhābism." See further his *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, 165–92. Other significant contributions to the field of Wahhābī studies in the twentieth century were made by Richard Hartmann, Werner Ende, George Rentz, Esther Peskes, 'Abdallāh al-'Uthaymīn, and Alexei Vassiliev, whose works are cited where appropriate. Vassiliev's *The History of Saudi Arabia* (2000), translated from the Russian, is the best available general history of Saudi Arabia in English.

ideological motivation for the attacks. The body of Wahhābism-focused scholarship thus grew rapidly. Key contributions included David Commins's general history of the movement, Michael Crawford's biography of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Abdulaziz Al-Fahad's articles on the evolution of the Wahhābī doctrine and Najdī society, and Guido Steinberg's and Nabil Mouline's respective studies of the Wahhābī scholarly class.⁵² Unfortunately, the post-9/11 period brought forth a number of polemical and apologetic studies as well. Some scholars would seek to vilify Wahhābism as the source of all Islam's modern ills, while others would go in the opposite direction, presenting so rosy a picture of Wahhābism as for it to be unrecognizable.⁵³ Yet despite these kinds of contributions, in general the new scholarship on Wahhābism over the past two decades has vastly improved the state of the field, even if there remains much more to be done.

Sources for the Study of Wahhābism

For most of the period covered in this book, Arabia was a manuscript culture, meaning that the printed word was a rare sight. The Wahhābīs would begin printing their works in India and Egypt in the late nineteenth century, though the printing press did not arrive in Arabia until the early twentieth century. When the Wahhābīs started to make use of these presses, some of the first works they printed were compendia of Wahhābī texts. The most comprehensive of these was *al-Durar al-saniyya fī 'l-ajwiba al-Najdiyya* (The Splendid Pearls of Najdī Responsa), which was arranged and edited by the Wahhābī scholar 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Qāsim (d. 1392/1972) and published for the first time in Mecca between 1352/1933f and 1356/1937f.⁵⁴ This remains, in updated form, the most

52. See Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission* (2006); Crawford, *Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab* (2014); Al-Fahad, "From Exclusivism to Accommodation" (2004); Al-Fahad, "The 'Imama vs. the 'Iqal" (2004); Steinberg, *Religion und Staat in Saudi-Arabien* (2002) (researched before 9/11); and Mouline, *The Clerics of Islam* (2014).

53. See, for example, the anti-Wahhābī polemic by Hamid Algar (*Wahhabism: A Critical Essay*) and the philo-Wahhābī book by Natana DeLong-Bas (*Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*). The latter, which has drawn fierce criticism from scholars of Islam, portrays Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb as a protofeminist averse to *jihād*. For some of this criticism, see Kearney, "Real Wahhab"; and see the review by Laurent Bonnefoy in *The Journal of Islamic Studies* 17 (2006): 371–72.

54. A more complete edition was published in Riyadh between 1385/1965 and 1388/1968f, followed by a new and updated edition published between 1402/1981f and 1417/1996. All

complete collection of Wahhābī texts and is frequently cited in this book. A much smaller collection is the one-volume *Majmūʿat al-tawhīd* (The Compendium of *Tawhīd*), which was printed in Mecca in 1343/1925 following the publication of several Indian lithograph editions.⁵⁵ Another collection, similar in scope to *al-Durar al-saniyya*, is *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil waʾl-masāʾil al-Najdiyya* (The Compendium of Najdī Epistles and Responsa), which was published in Cairo between 1344/1925f and 1349/1930f.⁵⁶ This book was the product of a collaboration between the Wahhābī scholars in Najd and the Islamic modernist scholar Rashīd Riḍā in Egypt. A much shorter compendium of Wahhābī texts, titled *al-Hadiyya al-saniyya waʾl-tuhfa al-Wahhābiyya al-Najdiyya* (The Splendid Gift and the Wahhābī Najdī Present), was published in Egypt before this, in 1342/1923f, also with the assistance of Riḍā.⁵⁷ Much later, in 1398/1977f, a multivolume book consisting of all the works of Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb was published in Riyadh, though most of these texts had appeared earlier in one form or another.⁵⁸ Many more works by Wahhābī scholars have been published as stand-alone texts, some of them in critical editions. Others still remain in manuscript form in various libraries in Saudi Arabia.

Another important source for the study of Wahhābism is the Najdī historiographical tradition. Before the rise of Wahhābism, it is fair to say, Najdī historiography was generally undeveloped and unsophisticated. Such histories as there were were threadbare in character, merely recording important events in annalistic fashion with little or no detail.⁵⁹ Wahhābism wrought massive change in this regard, as its adherents produced historical works of far greater depth and detail, probably because they saw themselves as writing the story of a great and important Islamic movement.⁶⁰ By far the two most important

subsequent versions are reprints of this third edition, including the one used here: Ibn Qāsim, ed., *al-Durar al-saniyya fī ʾl-ajwiba al-Najdiyya*, new ed., 16 vols. (Riyadh: Warathat al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Qāsim, 1433/2012). While the third edition appeared following the editor’s death, all the changes and additions were made by the editor himself. Some of the content of the original was rearranged, but none was removed. See al-Qāsim, *al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Qāsim*, 85.

55. Yāsīn, ed., *al-Kitāb al-mufīd fī maʾrifat haqq Allāh ʿalā ʾl-ʿabīd al-musammā Majmūʿat al-tawhīd*.

56. Riḍā, ed., *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil waʾl-masāʾil al-Najdiyya*.

57. Ibn Siḥmān, ed., *al-Hadiyya al-saniyya*.

58. Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Muʾallafāt al-shaykh*.

59. Cook, “Historians of Pre-Wahhābī Najd.”

60. al-Jāsir, “Muʾarrikhū Najd min ahlihā (1)”; al-Jāsir, “Muʾarrikhū Najd min ahlihā (2).”

histories for the early period of Wahhābism are those by Ḥusayn ibn Ghannām (d. 1225/1810f) and ‘Uthmān ibn Bishr (d. 1290/1873), and since these books will be cited frequently in this study, it is worth saying more about them and their respective authors here.

Born in eastern Arabia, in al-Aḥsā’, in 1152/1739f, Ibn Ghannām was a scholar known for his specialization in the sciences of the Arabic language, a fact that goes some way in explaining his predilection for flowery rhymed prose and obscure vocabulary.⁶¹ When Ibn Ghannām embraced Wahhābism is unclear, but we know that he moved to al-Dir‘iyya from al-Aḥsā’ in the years preceding the Wahhābī conquest of his home region in 1210/1796. He appears to have belonged to the Māliki *madhhab*, which had some adherents in al-Aḥsā’. (Wahhābism, as shall be seen, was primarily credal in emphasis, and thus one’s legal affiliation was not necessarily an impediment to conversion.) In al-Dir‘iyya Ibn Ghannām worked as a language teacher instructing a generation of Wahhābī students in Arabic, including the sons and grandsons of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, and he also served as something of a court scholar. He is known to have composed at least two works at the behest of the Saudi ruler ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Muḥammad Āl Su‘ūd (r. 1179–1218/1765–1803), the successor to the first Saudi ruler, one of which was his history. Titled *Rawḍat al-afkār wa ‘l-afhām li-murtād ḥāl al-imām wa-ta ‘dād ghazawāt dhawī ‘l-Islām* (The Garden of Thoughts and Reflections for the Inquirer into the Condition of the *Imām* and the Enumeration of the Raids of the Muslims), where the *imām* refers to Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, the book is divided into two volumes. The first consists of a biography of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and an account of the rise of his movement, complete with many of his letters, epistles, *fatwās* (legal responsa), and writings of Qur’ānic exegesis. The second volume, which bears the secondary title *Kitāb al-ghazawāt al-bayāniyya wa ‘l-futūḥāt al-rabbāniyya* (The Book of the Exemplary Raids and Lordly Conquests), is a chronicle of the period 1157–1212/1747–97f, with some discussion of the years immediately prior.⁶² While neither volume is dated, one can be sure that the project was

61. For his biography, see Ibn Bishr, *‘Unwān al-majd*, 1:299; Āl al-Shaykh, *Mashāḥir*, 185–201; Āl Bassām, *‘Ulamā ‘ Najd*, 2:56–58; al-Qāḍī, *Rawḍat al-nāzirīn*, 1:104–5. For his birth year, see Jaḥḥāf, *Durar nuḥūr al-ḥūr al- ‘in*, 1045–46.

62. The edition of *Rawḍat al-afkār wa ‘l-afhām* used here is *Tārīkh Ibn Ghannām al-musammā Rawḍat al-afkār wa ‘l-afhām*, 2 vols., ed. Sulaymān al-Kharāshī (Riyadh: Dār al-Thulūthiyya, 1431/2010). The only other serviceable editions are that published by Maṭba ‘at Muṣṭafā ‘l-Bābī al-Ḥalabī in Riyadh in 1368/1949 and that published by al-Maṭba ‘a al-Muṣṭafawiyya in Bombay in 1337/1918. The latter, however, is missing the larger part of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s *fatwās* and

completed no later than 1216/1801, as in this year Ibn Ghannām finished a second book that refers to *Rawḍat al-afkār wa 'l-afhām*.⁶³ An important feature of Ibn Ghannām's history, in addition to its elaborate prose, is its stark portrayal of non-Wahhābī Muslims as polytheists and unbelievers. The Wahhābīs are made out to be the revivers of true Islam who are waging *jihād* against their heathen enemies, and their conquests are presented in terms of the early Islamic conquests.

Ibn Bishr's history was written much later than Ibn Ghannām's, in the 1250s–70s/1830s–50s. Born in Sudayr in 1210/1795f, Ibn Bishr, unlike Ibn Ghannām, had little experience of the first Saudi state, though he had studied in al-Dir' iyya in the years just before its destruction in 1233/1818.⁶⁴ The author of several other books on various subjects, Ibn Bishr is said to have been close to the rulers of the second Saudi state, though we know little in detail about his life and career. His history, *'Unwān al-majd fī tārikh Najd* (The Sign of Glory in the History of Najd), consists of two volumes, the first completed in 1251/1835 and the second in 1270/1854.⁶⁵ The first volume includes a biography

the beginning of his Qur'ānic exegesis (the elision occurs in vol. 1, p. 232, l. 4, between the words *'Abd al-Dīnār* and *wa-qāla*; the missing text is supplied in al-Kharāshī's edition at 1:452–535). In all three of these editions, the second volume ends abruptly, mid-poem, in the section devoted to the year 1212/1797f. This has led to speculation that the remainder of the book is missing. At least three manuscript copies I have examined, however, show the complete section for 1212/1797f, after which the book ends. One of these states that this was the final year that Ibn Ghannām chronicled (*wa-hādihā ākhir mā arrakhahu 'l-shaykh Husayn ibn Ghannām*). See Ibn Ghannām, *Rawḍat al-afkār wa 'l-afhām*, ms. Lucknow, f. 232a. For the other two complete manuscripts, held at the British Library, see Cureton and Rieu, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum orientalium*, 436 (nos. 953–54), 576 (nos. 1260–61). The edition by Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Asad, published by Maṭba'at al-Madani in Cairo in 1381/1961, was an attempt to render Ibn Ghannām's rhyming prose in a modern idiom; in the process the content was supplemented, rearranged, and bowdlerized. While some scholars continue to cite it, it should be avoided.

63. Ibn Ghannām, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn*, 28. For the completion date (Ṣafar 1216/June 1801), see 251. *Al-'Iqd al-thamīn* is a *ḥadīth*-based creedal work that includes a synopsis of Wahhābī history.

64. On him, see Āl Bassām, *'Ulamā' Najd*, 5:115–26; al-Qāḍī, *Rawḍat al-nāzīrīn*, 2:120–22.

65. Ibn Bishr, *'Unwān al-majd*, 1:417, 2:236. There have been many editions, but the one used here (edited by Muḥammad al-Shathrī, 1433/2012) is the most reliable, as it is based on a rare manuscript of Ibn Bishr's final and updated version of the book. In addition to numerous small changes, in this version the *sawābiq* (the entries for years prior to the rise of Wahhābism) are not peppered throughout the book but, rather, arranged chronologically. The complete manuscript of this version has been printed in full as Ibn Bishr, *'Unwān al-majd fī tārikh Najd* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Malik 'Abd al-'Azīz al-'Āmma, 1423/2002).

of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and treats the years 850–1237/1446f–1821f; the second covers the period 1238–67/1822–50f. As will be noticed, Ibn Bishr begins his history much earlier than Ibn Ghannām, in 850/1446f as opposed to 1157/1744f. The reason for this is that he situated his work within the larger Najdī historiographical tradition, which often starts with the events of that early year. Perhaps related to this is the fact that Ibn Bishr’s work tends to be less extreme in its portrayal of non-Wahhābī Muslims, even though Ibn Bishr was still by all accounts a committed Wahhābī. His work is highly valuable for the later years of the first Saudi state and for the years of the second Saudi state through 1267/1850f. Ibn Ghannām’s is more reliable for the earliest years of the Wahhābī movement.⁶⁶

While the histories of Ibn Ghannām and Ibn Bishr are the most important sources for Wahhābī history between the 1150s/1740s and 1260s/1850s, they are not the only Wahhābī chronicles produced during that period. Three contemporaries of Ibn Bishr authored important chronicles as well: Ḥamad ibn La ‘būn (d. ca. 1277/1860), Muḥammad al-Fākhiri (d. 1277/1860), and ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Turki (fl. 1257/1841f). Ibn La ‘būn’s history, which covers the years 800–1257/1397f–1841f, is the fullest account of the three, and Ibn Bishr actually borrows from it frequently.⁶⁷ Also of some value are two Wahhābī chronicles that survive only in French translation. The first of these is an abridgment of the work of a certain “Suléiman il Nedjedi,” which relates Wahhābī history through the year 1224/1809f.⁶⁸ The other was written by a

66. A helpful introduction to these texts is George Rentz’s 1947 dissertation for the University of California, Berkeley, titled *Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1703/4–1792) and the Beginnings of Unitarian Empire in Arabia*. Rentz’s study consists of a straightforward narrative of early Wahhābī history based on the two chronicles, pointing out where they sometimes disagree. It was finally published as *The Birth of the Islamic Reform Movement in Saudi Arabia* in 2004.

67. See Ibn La ‘būn, *Tārīkh*; on his use of Ibn Bishr, see ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn La ‘būn, *Nuqūlāt ‘Unwān al-majd min tārīkh Ibn La ‘būn*. Al-Fākhiri’s book, which spans the years 850/1446f to 1277/1860f (brought through to 1288/1871f by his son), is quite meager by comparison. See al-Fākhiri, *Tārīkh*. Ibn Turki’s book, like Ibn La ‘būn’s, covers the years 850/1446f to 1257/1841f but is much spottier in its coverage. Noteworthy is that its author was a fierce opponent of Wahhābism living in Iraq. See Ibn Turki, *Tārīkh Najd*. One may also mention here the chronicles of Ibn Yūsuf (fl. 1207/1792f) and Ibn ‘Abbād (d. 1175/1761f), which treat Najdī history through the beginning of the Wahhābī period (1173/1759f and 1175/1761f, respectively). See Ibn Yūsuf, *Tārīkh*; Ibn ‘Abbād, *Tārīkh*. The chronicle of a slightly earlier scholar, Ibn Rabi‘a (d. 1158/1745f), misses the Wahhābī period by just ten years. See Ibn Rabi‘a, *Tārīkh*.

68. The text was translated and abridged in 1818 by Jean Baptiste Louis Rousseau; see Rousseau, *Mémoire sur les trois plus fameuses sectes du Musulmanisme*, 27–35.

certain “cheykh Abderrahman el-Oguyeh,” whom we can likely identify as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥasan Āl al-Shaykh (d. 1285/1869), a grandson of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s who was taken to Egypt in 1233/1818. His chronicle covers the history of Wahhābism through the year 1225/1810f.⁶⁹

As for the period that followed, the most valuable histories were written by the scholars Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Īsā (d. 1343/1925), from Ushayqir in al-Washm, and ‘Abdallāh al-Bassām (d. 1346/1927), from ‘Unayza in al-Qaṣīm. Ibn ‘Īsā’s chronicle is presented as an extension (*dhayl*) of Ibn Bishr’s *‘Unwān al-majd*, bringing the chronology forward to 1340/1921f.⁷⁰ Al-Bassām’s work starts in the ninth/fifteenth century and ends in 1344/1925f.⁷¹ The chronicles of Ibn ‘Īsā and al-Bassām were some of the last contributions to traditional Najdī-Wahhābī historiography, as the mid–twentieth century saw the emergence of a new Saudi historiography centered on Saudi nationalism.⁷² An important exception to this pattern was the extensive chronicle of Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Ubayd Āl ‘Abd al-Muḥsin (d. 1425/2004), from Burayda in al-Qaṣīm. His multivolume chronicle, titled *Tadhkirat uli’ l-nuhā wa’ l-irfān bi-ayyām Allāh al-wāḥid al-dayyān* (Reminding the Wise and Perceptive of the Days of God, the One, the Requirer), was written over a period of decades and was published in full only in 1428/2007. Its eight volumes cover the years 1268–1421/1851f–2000f in traditional annalistic fashion.⁷³ Āl ‘Abd al-Muḥsin’s work is rich in historical detail for the period before and during the rise of the third Saudi state.

Another kind of source is the Wahhābī biographical dictionaries, though these, it must be acknowledged, are a rather late source. The Wahhābīs only took to the genre of the biographical dictionary in the mid–twentieth century, before which time it was the histories that were the principal source for biographical information on scholars and other notables. Nonetheless, while these more modern works should be treated with caution, many of them preserve unique documents and collate otherwise disparate information. The standard Wahhābī biographical dictionaries today are three: *Mashāhīr ‘ulamā’ Najd wa-ghayrihim* (The Famous Scholars of Najd and Others) by

69. See Mengin, *Histoire de l’Égypte*, 2:449–544. For the author’s identification as the “petit-fils du célèbre ebn-Abdul-Wahab,” see 1:vi.

70. Ibn ‘Īsā, *Iqd al-durar*. He also wrote a more comprehensive, though less detailed, chronicle covering the period from the eighth/fourteenth century to 1339/1920f. See Ibn ‘Īsā, *Tārikh ba’d al-ḥawādith*.

71. al-Bassām, *Tuḥfat al-mushtāq*.

72. Determann, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia*, 50ff.

73. See Āl ‘Abd al-Muḥsin, *Tadhkirat uli’ l-nuhā*.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Āl al-Shaykh (d. 1406/1986), from Riyadh;⁷⁴ ‘*Ulamā’ Najd khilāl thamāniyat qurūn* (The Scholars of Najd Through Eight Centuries) by ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Āl Bassām (d. 1423/2003), from ‘Unayza;⁷⁵ and *Rawḍat al-nāzirīn ‘an ma’āthir ‘ulamā’ Najd wa-hawādith al-sinīn* (The Spectators’ Garden of the Achievements of the Najdī Scholars and the Yearly Events), by Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān al-Qāḍī, also from ‘Unayza.⁷⁶ Āl al-Shaykh’s book is devoted exclusively to Wahhābī scholars, while Āl Bassām’s and al-Qāḍī’s works cover Najdī scholars in both the Wahhābī and pre-Wahhābī eras. Several more Wahhābī biographical dictionaries treat the scholars of particular subregions or cities in central Arabia.⁷⁷

Beyond the Wahhābī tradition, there are numerous other sources of value for the study of Wahhābism that tend to be underexploited. One kind of source is the early refutations of the movement, which will be examined in detail in chapter 1. Another is the historical works of non-Wahhābī scholars who paid attention to Najd, such as the Egyptian ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī (d. 1240/1825), the Najdī Iraqi ‘Uthmān ibn Sanad (d. 1242/1827), the Yemeni Luṭf Allāh ibn Aḥmad Jaḥḥāf (d. 1243/1827f), the Iraqi Kurd Rasūl Ḥāwī al-Karkūklī (d. 1243/1827f), and the Hijāzī Aḥmad ibn Zaynī Daḥlān (d. 1304/1886).⁷⁸ While these men were generally hostile to Wahhābism, some of them, including al-Jabartī and Jaḥḥāf, were fairly nuanced in their views. The non-Wahhābī biographical tradition is also of value, especially the Ḥanbalī biographical dictionary *al-Suḥub al-wābila* by the anti-Wahhābī Muḥammad ibn Ḥumayd (d. 1295/1878), the ‘Unayza-born Ḥanbalī *muftī* of Mecca.⁷⁹

74. Āl al-Shaykh, *Mashāhīr*. The first edition appeared in 1392/1972f; it built on the author’s earlier ‘*Ulamā’ al-da’wa*, published in 1386/1966.

75. Āl Bassām, ‘*Ulamā’ Najd*. The first version of the book, ‘*Ulamā’ Najd khilāl sittat qurūn*, appeared in 1397/1976f in three volumes. The updated version was published in 1419/1998f in six volumes.

76. al-Qāḍī, *Rawḍat al-nāzirīn*. The first edition appeared in two volumes in 1400/1980. For a short collection of later Wahhābī biographies, see Ibn Ḥamdān, *Tarājim li-muta’akḥkhirī l-Ḥanābila*.

77. These include Šāliḥ al-‘Umarī’s work on the scholars of al-Qaṣīm and ‘Alī al-Hindī’s (d. 1419/1998) on the scholars of Ḥā’il. See al-‘Umarī, ‘*Ulamā’ Āl Salīm*; al-Hindī, *Zahr al-khamā’il*. A newer and more comprehensive dictionary of the scholars of Ḥā’il is al-Ruday‘ān, *Manba’ al-karam*.

78. al-Jabartī, ‘*Ajā’ib al-āthār*; Ibn Sanad, *Maṭāli’ al-su’ūd*; Ibn Sanad, *Sabā’ik al-‘asjad*; Jaḥḥāf, *Durar nuḥūr al-ḥūr al-‘īn*; al-Karkūklī, *Dawḥat al-wuzarā’*; Daḥlān, *Khulāṣat al-kalām*.

79. Ibn Ḥumayd, *al-Suḥub al-wābila*. The book largely omits the Wahhābīs but is valuable for the information it provides on their Ḥanbalī opponents in Najd and elsewhere. For more

This Book

The book consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 sets the scene by examining the life and early career of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and the numerous refutations of him by his scholarly opponents. The refutations are drawn from all over the globe, many of them surviving only in unique manuscripts. As will be seen, they are an extraordinary untapped source for the study of early Wahhābism, helping us to reconstruct the polemics between Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his enemies and to follow the trajectory of his movement. The refutations are helpful in giving both a sense of what the debate over Wahhābism was all about and a sense of the tenor of that debate. Wahhābism’s opponents did not confront it politely; many people wanted Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb dead, even before his movement had adopted violence. Further, the refutations are helpful in allowing us to date some of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s letters and epistles, given that many of the refutations are dated and quote Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s writings.

The next two chapters are concerned with Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s doctrine and its relation to the religious thought of Ibn Taymiyya and his disciple Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s teachings, it is argued here, cannot be understood without reference to their Taymiyyan underpinnings. While Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s reliance on these scholars has been widely acknowledged, the relationship between Taymiyyan and Wahhābī thought has yet to be rigorously studied. Chapter 2 focuses on the Taymiyyan background of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s doctrine, examining some of the distinctive features of the religious thought of Ibn Taymiyya and his pupils that would come to play a role in Wahhābism. Chapter 3 examines the key components of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s doctrine, which I identify as fourfold: (1) the division of *tawhīd* into two kinds, (2) *takfīr*, (3) *al-walā’ wa’l-barā’* (association and dissociation, particularly its negative aspect), and (4) *jihād*. The chapter shows how Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, for each of these components, borrowed from the ideas of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim while also modifying them substantially, generally taking their ideas in a more radical direction.

Chapter 4 concerns the development of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s movement from its precarious beginnings as a mere predatory movement to its lofty heights as the religious engine of the first Saudi state (ca. 1157–1233/1744f–1818). While it has been argued that Wahhābism was in essence apolitical in

on this book and its author, see Commins, “Traditional Anti-Wahhabi Hanbalism in Nineteenth-Century Arabia.”

character, this chapter shows that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was by no means indifferent to politics and indeed played an active role in the political realm. His movement’s development followed a pattern analogous to the development of early Islam, which began without any discernible political objective but gradually transformed into a movement combining both religion and politics. At the height of the first Saudi state, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s heirs invoked another legacy of the early Islamic polity, quoting the Prophet Muḥammad’s menacing letter to the king of Byzantium while they threatened to invade Iraq and Syria. The chapter seeks to establish that the state’s ambitions went beyond Arabia and that if not for external intervention, the first Saudi state may well have expanded further northward.

The next three chapters are about the reassertion, persistence, and decline of militant Wahhābism following the demise of the first Saudi state in 1233/1818. Throughout this period, the Wahhābī scholars, from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥasan Āl al-Shaykh to Sulaymān ibn Siḥmān, worked to safeguard their doctrine from internal corruption and external attack. They were often on the defensive, given the political environment in which they were operating, and their principal concern was staving off normalization with non-Wahhābī Muslims. They repeatedly forbade travel to non-Wahhābī lands by emphasizing the duty of showing hatred and enmity to polytheists. The chapters examine these scholars’ lives, their environments, and their literary exploits. Chapter 5 takes up the scholars’ efforts to revive the spirit of militant Wahhābism during the second Saudi state (1238–1305/1823–87), focusing in particular on the period known as the second Egyptian occupation (1253–59/1837–43) and the period of the Saudi civil war (1282–1305/1865–87). Chapter 6 looks at the scholars’ travails during the political ascendancy of the Āl Rashīd (1305–19/1887–1902), a dynasty that ruled from Ḥā’il in northern Arabia. This was a period when a revisionist form of Wahhābism, one that played down the idea of *takfīr* and of showing hatred and enmity, was on the rise in the al-Qaṣīm region of Najd. Chapter 7 tracks the activities of the scholars during the rise of the third Saudi state (1319/1902–present), focusing on their approach to the zealous Wahhābī fighters known as the *lkhwān* and their acrimonious relationship with Rashīd Riḍā, a modernist Muslim scholar in Egypt who advocated an “enlightened” form of Wahhābism. At the beginning of this period, these scholars envisioned the new Saudi polity as one that would never fly foreign flags or host foreign embassies, let alone form alliances with Christian powers. That was not to be the nature of the state that came to be known, in 1351/1932, as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The book's conclusion considers the further decline of militant Wahhābism in Saudi Arabia over the succeeding decades and its subsequent revival, in modified form, by the ideologues of Jihādī Salafism, the radical Sunnī Islamic movement that considers itself the true and rightful heir of the Wahhābī tradition. The *jihādīs* regard militant Wahhābism as an inspiring example of a fiercely puritanical and uncompromising movement that approached its polytheist enemies with hostility and *jihād*, and they regard later Wahhābism as a perversion and betrayal of the original.

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