

THE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF KITABUL-AMRI BIL MA'ARUFI WAN-NAHYI ANIL MUNKARI

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ABSTRACT

Shaykh Uthman bin Foduye was a great revivalist whose reputation needs not to be elaborated, not only in Africa but other parts of the world. He was the founder of the famous Sokoto Caliphate and a prolific writer. Among his many books is the Kitabul Amri bil-Ma'aruf wan-Nahyi anil-Munkari in which he discussed issues concerning enjoining good deeds and forbidding bad deeds under Islamic Law. Therefore, this paper attempt to analyze the content of this book based on the following points: that enjoining good deeds and prohibiting bad deeds is mandatory in Qur'an, Sunnah and Ijma; that enjoining good deeds and forbidding bad deeds is not limited to leaders only but general responsibility of every Muslim that has the capacity to do it. That it is not allowed to condemn something that is based on different opinion of the scholars. In a situation whereby enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong requires the use of power then the task is limited to the authority. Lastly, recommendations and conclusion are provided.

INTRODUCTION

Shaykh Uthman bin Foduye was a famous revivalist whose impact was felt not only in Africa but many places in the world. He was the founder of the Sokoto Caliphate and a prolific writer on different aspects of Islamic sciences. Initially, he used the method of teaching and preaching to fight religious ignorance, social vices and corruption which were seriously prevalent in Hausa Land before the Jihad.¹

Shaykh Uthman visited many parts of Hausa land in the course of preaching and the popular areas he visited were Kebbi and Zamfara and among those who attended his sermons were a good number of women.² The method and style of the Shaykh in preaching were very appealing in such a way that many people are willing and eager to listening to his sermon. Hence, many people were transformed educationally, religiously, socially, and morally. It is in view of this that the Shaykh wrote a book called 'Kitabul Amri bil ma'aruf wan- nahyi anil munkari', that is the book of 'preaching on doing what is right and forbidding what is wrong'. The book serves as a guide or handbook for anybody who intends to preach or enjoin people to what is good and forbidding what is wrong among Muslims. Allah (SW) said:

“Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity.”³

The verse clearly denotes the command of Allah that a group of people among Muslims should take responsibility of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. The Messenger of Allah (SAW) in one of his traditions which was reported by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (R.A) said:

“Any one of you who sees an abomination let him change it with his hand, if he cannot then with his tongue, if he cannot then with his heart and that is the weakest faith”⁴

The content of this book is not arranged in chapters as it used to be in most of the works of the Shaykh but his style of starting with Basmalah (in the name of Allah) followed by salutation to the Messenger of Allah(SAW) and praise to Allah (SW) is maintained. He outlined the content of the book on the following points:

- That enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is mandatory act in Qur'an, Sunnah and Ijma'.
- That enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is not limited to leaders alone but general responsibility of every Muslim who has the capacity to do it.
- That it is not allowed to condemn something that is based on different opinions of the scholars.
- In a situation whereby enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong requires the use of power or military action then the task is limited to the authority.

He concluded the book by mentioning the qualities of a good preacher under Islamic Law. Thus, the points above are going to be analyzed one after the other based on the explanations supplied by the author. However, additional explanations may be provided from other sources to supplement the content of the book.

THE CONTENT ANALYSIS: ENJOINING WHAT IS RIGHT AND FORBIDDING WHAT IS WRONG IS AN OBLIGATORY ACT IN QUR'AN, SUNNAH AND IJMA'

This is the first point the Shaykh begins in this book and the aim is to make it clear that, the act of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is an act that was made obligatory by Allah (SW) in the Glorious and by the Messenger of Allah (SAW) in his traditions and by the consensus of Muslim scholars (Ijma'). To confirm this from the main sources of Shari'ah, the Shaykh quoted from the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith as follows:

“Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, they are the ones to attain felicity”. (Al-Imran: 104)

He also quoted a Hadith in which the Messenger of Allah said:

“By He whom my life is in his hand; you should either enjoin what is right and forbidden what is wrong or that Allah sent on to you a punishment to the extent that you pray to Him (Allah) but (your prayer) would not be accepted” (reported by Tirmidhi)

The Shaykh made it clear from the above Qur’anic verse and the Hadith of the Messenger of Allah that enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is obligatory. He concluded that unanimously, the scholars consented on it. The Shaykh quoted Shaykh al-Sanusi in his commentary to the book ‘al-wusta’ that:

He who sees an abomination shall try to stop it even if he commits such an abomination. Because both avoidance of abomination and warning against it are mandatory. Thus, there is no room for anyone to abandon either of the two simply because of his involvement in one of the two.

He also quoted ibnul-Hajj in his book al-Madkhal saying that one of his teachers requested him to compile a book for him on how he could know about his interactions and intentions, worship (in terms of rituals) and how to acquire knowledge. However, ibnul Hajj refused for the fear that a number of authentic traditions of the Messenger of Allah (SAW) shows that some people are going to be cast into the Hell fire in the Day of judgment because they enjoins to what is right and forbids what is wrong while they themselves did not abide by what they enjoined or forbidden. Among those traditions is that which was reported by ibn Majah which shows that in the Day of Judgment, the first person to be snatched by the Hell fire is a learned person who is going to revolve in the fire like a donkey revolving round his yardstick. The people of fire will gather around him saying ‘O you! Were you not the one who used to enjoin us to what is right and forbidden what is wrong? He will say I used to enjoin you to what is right, but I did not practice it and I used to forbid what is wrong and I practiced it. It is based on this tradition and th:e like that ibnul Hajj refused to compile the book for his master, but later, when he took into consideration some traditions of the Messenger of Allah (SAW) which shows that any person who is bestowed with knowledge and refused to impart it to others Allah will cast him into the Hell fire. Therefore, ibnul Hajj see no reason for his refusal to compile the book.

Moreover, ibnul Hajj expressed that being in a state of committing abomination will not prevent someone from fighting against it. Because committing abomination is a sin and to keep away from fighting against it is another sin. Thus, it is less harm to commit one sin than to commit two. He further quoted Ibrahim an-Nakha’I saying that he hates telling stories for three verses as follows:

1 “Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people and forget (To practice) it yourselves, and ye study the scripture? Will ye not understand? (Baqrah: 44)

2 “O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not? (Saffi: 3)

3 “He said: “O my people! See ye whether I have a clear (sign) from my lord, and He hath given me sustenance (pure and) good as from Himself? I wish not, in opposition to you, to do that which I forbid you to do. I only desire (your) betterment to the best of my power (Hud: 88)

Hence, from explanation above it was made clear that enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is a duty that is not limited to authorities, scholars, pious people alone but on every Muslim who the capacity to do it and even the wrong doers among Muslims are mandated to enjoin to what is right and forbid what is wrong

IT IS NOT ALLOWED TO CONDEMN SOMETHING WHICH IS BASED ON DIFFERENT OPINION OF THE SCHOLARS

Under this point the shaykh is trying to make it clear that it is not allowed for anyone to condemn anything pertaining to religious practices that someone has done based on reasons obtain from different opinion of scholars. Because condemning issues of that nature is a kind of wrongdoing. But if it goes contrary to the content of the Glorious Qur’an, Sunnah, or the consensus of scholars then it is layable to condemnation. To support this, the Shaykh quoted from various sources as follows:

That Abdulwahhab as-Sha’arani in a book called ‘Ar-Risalatul mubarakah said: While listing the duties of every matured Muslim that he should not engage in condemning the practices of faithful Muslims concerning their beliefs, rituals and interactions. Based on opinion of a scholar that is not obtained in the Qur’an and Sunnah. Provided that they imitate any of the orthodox scholars in their practices there is no room for condemnation except that they go contrary to the Sunnah or consensus of scholars.

He quoted from the book Takhlisul Ikhwan that: people should try to differentiate between condemnable and uncondemnable issues so that they might find peace before their lord. Because he who condemn that which is not supposed to be condemned, then it is as if he commits an abomination. Furthermore, it is not allowed to condemn on any person unless he does something that goes contrary to the consensus of scholars.

He also quoted Shaykh Izzudeen ibn Abdussalam making a lengthy explanation about the matter saying that the issue of condemning an act relates to what is made obligatory or what is made prohibited by consensus of scholars. Thus, if someone abandoned something upon which scholars disagree in opinion on its position as being obligatory or prohibited, if he reasoned with the opinion of some scholars then there is no room for condemning his action. Except that he imitates those scholars on matters that has not ground in the main sources of shari’ah.

He also quoted Ibnul Hindi saying that: “Do not condemn any matter concerning Jurisprudence even if it contradicts the book of al-Mudawwanah and the like unless you know that the matter contradicts Qur’an and Sunnah”.

Shaykh Uthman went ahead saying that one should not see it as a reason to abandon enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong because people refused to accept or practice what he preached to them. Because Ibnul Hajj in his book al-Madkhal said that: it is not necessary that people must comply when someone enjoin them to what is right or forbid them what is wrong. But his duty is to preach if they accept or put it into practice that is fine and good while if they refused then he fulfilled the command of Allah. Shaykh Uthman also expressed that: for someone who has the fear that he might get killed in the cause of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong that Shaykh Sanusi in his commentary to al- wusta said that it is allowed for someone to preach even if he think that he might get killed. But he concluded that if the preacher is amid of non-Muslims and he think that he is going to be killed then he has the choice to migrate to another place.

IN A SITUATION WHEREBY ENJOINING WHAT IS RIGHT AND FORBIDDING WHAT IS WRONG REQUIRES THE USE OF POWER OR MILITARY ACTION THEN THE TASK IS LIMITED TO THE AUTHORITIES

Under this point the Shaykh is trying to make it clear that in a situation where by the task of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong requires the use of power or forces then the task is limited to authority in order to avoid unnecessary violence among the community. He quoted Shaykh Ahmad Zarruq in his book Umdatul Muridis- Sadiq trying to describe the situation in their time pertaining to preaching. He said now that disputes, rebellion and violence prevails in the society, there is no room for an individual to interfere into affair of any Republic in the name of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, because it could lead to violence and War. He also quoted al-Imam al-Hassan bin Mas'ud al-Yusi in his lectures that today who ever engages himself in the task of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong without mandate from the authority he may end up falling into problems and may not likely succeed in his mission. He further said that they engage themselves into that because of what they heard about the reward and benefits that will be given to those who engage into the task of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, as a result, they forced themselves into what they are not mandated by the law and may be a kind of deception by Satan. He enumerated a number of people who forced themselves individually into the task of enjoining or forbidding without mandate from the authority and without taking into consideration the situation, hence, they could not succeed in their mission, not only that but many people were killed. Among those people was Ahmad bin Abdullah bin Abi Mahla who considered himself as Imam Mahdi al-Muntazir. He was able to convince his followers and declared an Islamic Jihad on the people of Sajalmasat and consequently many of his followers were killed and he himself was killed. Another person who ended up the same way with Ahmad bin Abdullah was Abu Abdullah bin Taumarata as-Susi who was killed in the battle between him and Murabitun.

He concluded that interference into the affair of any country or nation in the name of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong or establishing justice and equity among the

citizens without mandate by the authorities cause nothing but violence and killing of innocent Muslims for nothing.

Shaykh Uthman in his conclusion remark quoting shaykh Sanusi, expressed that enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is a communal obligatory that if it is performed by some individuals in the community, the rest are no more liable for it.⁵ He added that in addition to being communal obligatory it is one of the important issues in Islam which requires expertise.

He enumerated certain characters that a preacher should possess as follows:

- 1- He should be a Muslim
- 2- He should be a Male
- 3- He should be sane
- 4- He should be Just and trustworthy
- 5- He should be courageous and have good opinion
- 6- He should have knowledge of the science of jurisprudence
- 7- He should be pious, generous, and friendly

Lastly, he emphasized that Muslims should make sure that person of this character is always in charge with the task of preaching.

SUMMARY

The paper can be summarized on the following points, that the act of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is mandatory in Qur'an, Sunnah and Ijma'. That enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is not limited to leaders alone but general responsibility of every Muslim who has the capacity to do it. That it is not allowed to condemn something which is based on different opinion of the scholars. That in a situation where by enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong requires the use of power or military action then the task is limited to the authority.

RECOMMENDATION

The paper recommends the following:

- 1- The task of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong should not be left in the hands of unqualified individuals.
- 2- Preachers should avoid vulgar statements, extremism, and tribalism.
- 3- Authorities at all levels should take the responsibility of coordinating the task of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.

CONCLUSION

The papers focused on what is needed for someone who attempt at enjoining people to what is right and forbidden what is wrong. It also highlighted that the issue of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong stands as a means of guiding one another to the right path and warning against the path of the Devil. That it is communal obligatory act, and that situation may warrant its limitation to the authorities when it requires the use of power or force.

END NOTES:

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