

An Analysis of the Contents of "The Provisions of Preachers' Towards Allah's Religion" By Shaykh Uthman BN Foduye

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Abstract: This article is an Analysis of the contents of a manuscript titled Udad al-Da'i ila din Allah, translated as "The provisions of preachers' towards Allah's religion" of Shaykh Uthman bn Foduye. The manuscript was written in Arabic language in the 17th century by a well known reformer of Hausa land. We therefore intend to highlight its contents in English language for the benefit of English readers who may find Arabic language difficult to understand and also to the contemporary readers who do not know much about Shaykh Uthman bn Foduye and his works. The manuscript is also useful for preachers and students of Islamic studies. The manuscript is divided into seven sections as follows: The first section deal with obligation of admonition to do good and warning against evil deed. Section two is on what should be taught by a preacher on the oneness of Allah. Section three includes what a preacher should teach on jurisprudence. Section four deals with what a preacher should teach on Sufism. Section five explains what a preacher should teach on verses of warning. Section six is on what a preacher should teach on verses of glad tidings and the last section is on the ethics of a preacher. In presenting all these sections, an analysis of what is contained in them was provided and finally the conclusion and references follow.

Keywords: Analysis, Manuscript, Da'wah, Allah's religion, Sokoto Caliphate.

INTRODUCTION

According to Bugaje, Shaykh Uthman a great scholar had contributed an astonishing total of 114 works in Islamic sciences [1]. The book "Provisions of preachers towards Allah's religion" is among the works written by the Shaykh on Da'wah. Due to the importance of the manuscript to the contemporary Muslims, we decided to highlight its contents from its original Arabic language into English for the benefit of contemporary non Arabic speaking people who understand English language. It was divided into seven sections as follows: The first section deal with obligation of admonition to do good and warning against evil. Section two is on what should be taught by a preacher on the oneness of Allah. Section three includes what a preacher should teach on jurisprudence. Section four deals with what a preacher should teach on Sufism. Section five explains what a preacher should teach on verses of warning. Section six is on what a preacher should teach on verses of glad tidings and the last section is on the ethics of a preacher.

On obligation of admonition to do good and warning against evil the Shaykh stated that, there is no doubt, that commanding what is good and forbidding

what is wrong as described as obligatory [2]. This was established in the Qur'an, Hadith and Ijma'. As for to the Qur'an, is the statement of the most High:

"Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good (Islam). Enjoin Al-ma'aruf (i.e. Islamic monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do) and forbidden Al-munkari (Polytheism and disbelieve and all that Islam has forbidden). And it is they who are successful" (3:104).

And from the Sunnah, the prophet (peace be upon him) says:

He who amongst you sees something abominable should modify it with the help of his hand. If he has no strength enough to do it, then he should do it with his tongue. And if he has no strength enough to do it, (even) then he should (abhor it) from his heart and that is the least of faith [3].

As for the Ijma', (there is no disagreement) that the first Muslim Ummah and those who came after them, had been advising each other on this good habit [4].

The right guided ulama have said: "it is permissible to preach for doing good and warning against evil deeds even if one fears to be killed". However, he is permitted to remain silent on that stage. But some scholars are of the view that somebody should preach for the doing good and avoidance of evil even if he is to be killed, whereas some say that one can refrain from preaching if it appears to him that he is going to be killed. The first view is the Malik's opinion [5].

In the contemporary time where reprehensible act is spread openly and few scholars exist the Shaykh opined that: it is obligatory on any one having some knowledge (of religion) to convey it to others. One of you should not be silent in this period of time whereby evil deed and prohibitions are widely spreading everywhere. He quoted a hadith in which the prophet (S.A.W) was reported to have said: "Any scholar that witnesses evil deeds and tumult in the society and he kept silent, the curse of Allah be upon him" [6].

He also cited the book "Ihya'u Ulum al-Din" that he who sits (in a community witnessing prohibitions and social evils happening) in this period, he should preach and admonish people to stop it, because majority of people are not knowledgeable about the Shari'ah [7].

He concluded by saying that, it is compulsory in every society to get scholars to preach in every town, every area and in Mosques in order to educate people about the religion. When he decides to take a trip for his duty (preaching) he should be self sufficient in order to avoid relying on people, majority of whom acquire their wealth illegally. When one takes this duty there is no sin upon others. But if everybody neglect it the whole community will be responsible. From this it became clear that a scholar in the society must convey all what he acquired (through learning the books) from the prophet to his people. This is because scholars in the society are like prophets among their people. Any person in the society who is able to change things from bad to good must not stay idle, he must stand firmly and put things in good order. With this it is compulsory for any Muslim to implement and put into practice the knowledge he learned/studied and lead by example before preaching to others. He should start with his family, his blood relatives then his nearest neighbors and people of his area and all the people in his town, neighboring town and surrounding villages up to the far distant areas [8].

Attached to the above, the Shaykh also draws the attention of the preachers to conduct Da'wah according to priorities and give more concentration in summary on firm belief and what they should know and believe in the creation of the universe. He is also to explain to them what they are supposed to know and believe in about the attributes of Allah as well as those

attributes which are not supposed to be applied to Him. There are also some attributes which are Ja'iz (permissible) to Allah. He should also explain to them to believe in the invisible (unseen) issues like existence of Angels of Allah and the last day in the hereafter [9].

He also draws the attention of preachers to teach in a summarized form on the issues of jurisprudence so that the subjects would know about the devotional practices of Islam. These include explanations on the type of purified water and how one should perform purification and ritual bath after having sexual intercourse (Janaba) and how he should perform ablution and dry ablution. He should also teach and explain to the subjects the correct and exact time of each prayers and how to perform it. Again, he should also teach them how to correct mistakes which occurred during prayers and how to make up the missed prayers. He should teach them how to handle the dead body of a Muslim when dies. He should also teach them how to distribute alms-giving of wealth as well as how to perform pilgrimage. Similarly, he should explain to them how and when they are due for. He should teach them how to legalize marriages and explain to them how to deal with issues of buying and selling and other normal business which are available in books of jurisprudence. He should explain to them in detailed form the obligatory issues (wajib), those that are supererogatory (sunna) and those that are recommended (mustahab) [10].

On the issue of mysticism, a preacher is supposed to teach the subjects that will save a person and refrain him from the dangerous attributes of the heart. These include proud, jealousy, anger and arrogance. And he should try to avoid being misery, greedy and being suspicious of the Muslims. He should teach them how a person should be acquainted with attributes which save from attributes of heart; such as zuhd (renunciation) and seeking Allah's forgiveness and total reliance and submission to Almighty Allah. And also total submission to Allah's decision in everything and purification and good intension in doing everything, and many other related issues that are explained in detail in many works of Islamic renunciation [11].

In order to warn people from the lust of the world, the preacher should preach according to verses of warning like the sayings of the Most High:
O my slaves therefore fear me (39:16).

And Allah says:
Did you think that we had created you in vain? (23:115).

And also He said:
Does man think that he will be left neglected? (75:36).

And many similar verses of warning like the ones cited above.

He should also preach with the verses of glad tidings like what the most high says:
Despair not of the mercy of Allah (39:53).

And also most high says:
And none can forgive sins but Allah (3:135).

And also the Almighty Allah says:
And He it is who accepts repentance from His slaves, and forgives sins (42:25)

And also most high says:
When those who believe in our Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) came to you, say: your lord has written (prescribed) mercy for Himself (6:54).

And also the Almighty Allah says:
Those (Angels) who bear the throne (of Allah) and those around it glorify the praises of their lord, and believe to Him, and ask forgiveness for those who believe (in oneness of Allah) "Our lord! You comprehend all things in mercy and knowledge" (40:7).

And also the statement of Allah:
Declare (O Muhammad S.A.W) unto my slaves, that truly, I am the oft forgiving, the most Merciful (15:49).

And finally the preacher should enjoin good deeds and warns against evils.

Allah, the most High says:
And by the mercy of Allah, you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have deserted away from you (3:159).

Among the ethics of preaching is a good style for of not facing only one person or one direction. He is rather to face each and everywhere and every side in the gathering. It is reported from Shaykh Habib son of Abu Sabit saying: "It is an established tradition that a preacher should always face each and every side and direction during his preaching". Among the good character of a preacher is avoidance of greediness, because a greedy person will not always be honoured and respected and he has no regard among the people. But if a preacher is offered a free gift without demanding, he is free to take the offer. It is worth mentioning that in his preaching session the contents of his preaching should deal with warning and glad tidings. But he should not turn his preaching completely on only warning or glad tidings, but it should contain both. He should always be very serious in his preaching emulating the same manner of the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) in his preaching. He should not spend too long time during his preaching so that people will not feed

up and became tired and desperate. Al- Zuhri reported that Prophet Muhammad said: "You (preachers) should provide rest of mind from time to time" [12]. It had been reported from Abdullah bn Mas'ud may Allah please with him said: "It is worthy of mention that the heart (mind of people) needs rest from time to time and sometime receives and some time it reject and neglect. Therefore preach to people when they face you" [13]. Shaykh Uthman bn Fodiyo concluded the work by praising Allah the Most High and salutations upon our Messenger (SAW) and all those who follow his way to the end of the world.

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