

# MORALITY BASED ON FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE A STUDY OF DAMASCUS SERMON OF BEDIÜZZAMAN SAİD NURSİ AND NUR AL- BAB OF SHAYKH UTHMAN IBN FODIYO

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## **Abstract**

The religion of Islam aims at reforming the behaviour of every Muslim individual so as to provide a sanitized society. The Prophet (S.A.W) as the final messenger confirmed that he was sent to accomplish the best of morality to humanity through the Qur'anic revelation. After him come many righteous people in the name of revivalists/reformers who revive the spirit of Islam and ensure the moral rehabilitation of the society. Such revivalists appeared in different parts of the Muslim world from the earliest centuries to date. In the 19th Century, a part of Africa Continent known as Hausaland witnessed the revivalist activities of Shaykh Uthman Ibn Fodiyo who wrote many treatises in a bid to reform the society. Among these treatises are Nur al-Bab. And in the 20th Century there appeared a righteous person in one part of Europe, Turkey in particular, known as Badiuzzaman Said Nursi who among numerous of his publications wrote "The Damascus Sermon" also in a bid to reform the society. This paper intends to make a careful assessment of the efforts made by these two revivalists on the morality of their respective societies based on faith and knowledge. The two treatises under study appear to be closely related in the teachings of morality. This is why they are selected for a review to bring out ideas of these great men in relation to their moral teachings. The researchers would adopt critical analytical methods to meet the goals of the research.

**Keywords:** *Morality, Faith, Knowledge, Damascus Sermon, Nur al-Bab.*

## **İman ve İlim Temelli Ahlak Bediüzzaman Said Nursi'nin Hutbe-i Şamiye ile Şeyh Osman İbn Fodiyo'nun Nurul Bab'ının Karşılaştırılması**

### **Öz**

İslam dini birey olarak her Müslüman'ın davranışlarını değiştirerek temiz bir toplum oluşturmayı hedefler. Son nebi olarak Peygamber (ASM) Kur'an'ın vahyi vasıtasıyla insanlık için en iyi ahlakı gerçekleştirmek için gönderildiğini tasdik etmiştir. O'ndan sonra müceddid ve muslih denilen pek çok salih kimse gelmiş ve İslam'ın ruhunu canlandırmış ve toplumun ahlaki tamerini sağlamışlardır. Bu müceddidler İslam aleminin farklı kısımlarında ilk asırlardan günümüze ortaya çıkmıştır. 19. yüzyılda Hausaland olarak bilinen Afrika kıtasının bir kısmı, toplumun ıslahı için pek çok risaleler yazan Şeyh Osman İbn Fodiyo'nun tecdid faaliyetlerine mazhar olmuştur. Bu risaleler arasında Nurul Bab vardır. 20. yüzyılda Avrupa'nın bir yerinde, Türkiye'de Bediüzzaman Said Nursi olarak bilinen bir salih zat ortaya çıkmış ve yine toplumun ıslahı için pek çok neşriyatı içinde Hutbe-i Şamiye'yi yazmıştır. Bu makale bu iki müceddidin kendi toplumlarının ahlakı üzerine iman ve ilim temelli çabalarının dikkatli bir incelemesini yapmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmadaki bu iki risale ahlak dersleriyle yakından alakalı görünmektedir. Bu nedenle bu iki büyük şahsın ahlaki dersleri açısından bir değerlendirmesi amacıyla seçilmişlerdir. Araştırmacılar araştırmanın amacı için eleştirel analiz yöntemleri kullanacaklardır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ahlak, İman, İlim, Hutbe-i Şamiye, Nurul Bab

### **Introduction**

Obviously, the topic of morality and its connection with knowledge is one of the most significant topic that is often discussed among the Muslim scholars in the past and the contemporary times. It is a topic which is concerned with the rules of proper conduct. therefore, it is not concerned with how people act, but how they should act in society. Besides, morality and knowledge aim at elaborating a principal account of how a person should act and live consciously. What values he or she should accept and what types of goals that are worth getting and how to utilize them?

To answer to these questions, the paper attempts to underline some important issues of Nursi's and Shaykh Usman Ibn Fodiyo's views on morality and knowledge through their two books; Damascus sermon and *Nur Al-bab*. The paper therefore tries to give a brief on the personalities of the two authors and their books before making a general assessment on the contents of their works:-

### **Brief on Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and Damascus Sermon**

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was born in eastern Turkey in 1877 and died in 1960 at the age of 83 after a life of exemplary struggle and self-sacrifice in the cause of Islam. He was a scholar of the highest standing having studied not only all the traditional religious sciences but also modern science and had earned the name Bediuzzaman, (Wonder of the Age), in his youth as a result of his outstanding ability and learning.<sup>1</sup>

Bediuzzaman's life-time spanned the final decades of the Caliphate and Ottoman Empire, its collapse and dismemberment after the First World War. His life witnessed the aftermath of formation in 1923, the first thirty-seven years of the Republic, of which the years up to 1950 are famous for the government's repressive anti-religious policies.

Until the years following the First World War, Bediuzzaman's struggles in the cause of Islam were active and in the public domain. He not only taught many students and engaged in debates and discussions with leading scholars from all over the Islamic world, but he had also commanded and led in person a volunteer regiment against the invading Russians in eastern Turkey in 1914 for nearly two years until he was taken prisoner. Furthermore, up to that time he sought to further the interests of Islam by actively engaging in public life. However, the years that saw the transition from empire to republic also saw the transition from the 'Old Said' to the 'New Said'. The 'New Said' was characterized by his withdrawal from public life and concentration on study, prayer and thought for what was required now was a struggle of a different sort.<sup>2</sup>

After a period of some two years, in 1925, Bediuzzaman was sent into exile in western Anatolia and for the next twenty-five years, and to a lesser extent for the last ten years of his life, he suffered nothing but exile, imprisonment, harassment and persecution by the authorities. But these years of exile and isolation saw the writing of the *Risale-i Nur*, (the Treatise of Light), and its dissemination throughout Turkey. Bediuzzaman was quoted to have said: "Now I see clearly that most of my life has

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1 See Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon*, Sozler Publications, Reprinted 2012, Istanbul, p. 7.

2 The sources of this information can be seen in Sukran Wahid, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, edited with an introduction by Ibrahim M. Abu Rabi, State University of New York Press, USA, p. 3-48. See again Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Damascus Sermon*, *ibid*, p. 8. Read more in "on the life and thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Istanbul, the Istanbul Foundation for science and Culture – Istanbul – Turkey *Ibid*, p. 3-53.

been directed in such a way, outside my own free-will, ability, comprehension and foresight, that it might produce these treatises to serve the cause of the Qur'an. It is as if all my life as a scholar has been spent in preliminaries to these writings, which demonstrate the miraculousness of the Qur'an."<sup>3</sup>

Bediuzzaman understood an essential cause of the decline of the Islamic world to be weakening of the very foundations of belief. This weakening, together with the unprecedented attacks on those foundations in the 19th and 20th centuries carried out by materialists, atheists and others in the name of science and progress, led him to realize that the urgent and over-riding need was to strengthen, and even to save, belief. What was needed was to expend all efforts to reconstruct the edifice of Islam from its foundations, belief, and to answer at that level those attacks with a 'manevi jihad' or 'jihad of the word.'<sup>4</sup>

Thus, in exile, Bediuzzaman wrote a body of work, the Risale-i Nur, that would explain and expound the basic tenets of belief and the truths of the Qur'an, to modern man. His method was to analyse both belief and unbelief and to demonstrate through clearly reasoned arguments, that it is possible, by following the method of the Qur'an, to prove rationally all the truths that concerning the existence, man and the universe.<sup>5</sup>

Bediuzzaman thus demonstrated in the form of easily understood stories, comparisons, explanations, and reasoned proofs that, rather than the truth of religion being incompatible with the findings of modern science, the materialist interpretation of those findings is irrational and absurd. Indeed, Bediuzzaman proved in the Risale-i Nur that science's breathtaking discoveries of the universe's functioning corroborate and reinforce the truths of religion.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of the Risale-i Nur cannot be overestimated, for through it Bediuzzaman Said Nursi played a major role in preserving and revitalizing the Islamic faith in Turkey in the very darkest days of her history. And indeed its role has continued to increase in importance to the present day. But further to this, the Risale-i Nur is uniquely fitted to address not only all Muslims but indeed all mankind for several reasons. First it is written in accordance with modern man's mentality, a mentality

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3 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Ibid, p. 8.

4 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Ibid, p. 9.

5 Ibid.

6 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Ibid, p. 10.

that, whether Muslim or not, has been deeply imbued by materialist philosophy: it specifically answers all the questions that confuse the mind of modern man.<sup>7</sup>

In the cause of his struggle, Bediuzzaman was invited to deliver a sermon in the famous Umayyah mosque in Damascus. This sermon was later collected and published as it is appealing to the life of Muslims. The sermon addressed among many important issues, the knowledge and morality as could be assessed below:

### **The Damascus Sermon**

Damascus Sermon is a published book containing a sermon which was delivered by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi in early 1911, at Umayyad Mosque in Damascus Syria. The sermon was delivered for a congregation of Muslims reaching closer to ten thousand. In this sermon, Nursi gave certain news that in the future Islam and the truths of the Qur'an would prevail with clear proofs that would occur.

With extraordinary foresight, Nursi predicted that, as all the evidences suggested, Islam would in the near future gain ascendancy. He further asserted that since Islam relies on knowledge and proofs, it is the religion of the present and future, for this is the age of science, technology and reason. This fact is being understood by many who realize that they cannot live without a true and complete religion. The causes for the decline of the Islamic World and its material backwardness in comparison to the west should be sought in the failure of Muslims to adhere to the teachings of the noble Qur'an and the truth Islam as Divinely revealed religion. Just as Islam provides for the material progress of man and indeed urges him towards it, so also in moral and spiritual matters. This combination forms the basis of true civilization.

On the moral basis, Bediuzzaman describes a number of positive aspects of Islam which form the cure for grievous sickness besetting the Muslim community. These includes amongst others, Hope, courage, honesty, love and brotherhood, self sacrifice, awareness of the luminous bonds uniting the believers, mutual consultation. All these moralities form the very foundation of Muslim society.<sup>8</sup>

As the truths of the Qur'an and Islam become increasingly apparent in this age of scientific discovery and technological advancement, the lessons of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Sermon of 1911 increase in significance.<sup>9</sup> The civilization of the future

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7 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi; The Damascus Sermon, Ibid, p. 13.

8 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Ibid, p. 14-15.

9 Ibid, p. 15.

according to him is the civilization of Islam it will be achieved through Muslims heeding these lessons and rebuilding their society on the foundations of belief and on the morality of Islam.

### **Importance of Knowledge in Damascus Sermon**

As Bediüzzaman said Nursi demonstrates, since Islam relies on reason and reasoned proof, it is the religion of the present and the future, for this fact is being understood now by many who realize that they cannot live without a trace and complete religion. Moreover, the courses for the decline of the Islamic world and its material backwardness in comparison to the west should be sought in the failure of Muslims to adhere to the teachings and truths of the noble Qur'an. Just as Islam provides for the material progress of man, and indeed urges him towards it, so does it provides for man's true progress and development in moral and spiritual matters. This combination forms the basis of true civilization.<sup>10</sup>

The Values of reason and reflection in relation to knowledge have been emphasized in Damascus Sermon in which Nursi's discussion on knowledge was explained by his faith in the Qur'an.

The Quran refers man to use his intellect to reflect over Allah's creatures saying:

“Do they not look at the camels – how they are created? And at the sky – how it is raised? And at the mountains – how they are erected? And at the earth – how it is spreadout”.<sup>11</sup>

Nursi explains this saying:

“Use your intelligence! Think! Consult your mind and your heart! Confer with them so that you might know this fact!”<sup>12</sup>

Look at the beginnings and ends of verses such as those, they say: “Why do you not look? Why do you not take warnings? Look so that you may know the truth” Take note of the way “know!” is used. Many verses contain surfaces that have the meaning of “Why do men not know, why do they fall into compounded ignorance? Why do they not look! Have they become blind so that they cannot see the truth? Why do men not call to mind and ponder over their own lives and to events in the world so

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10 Bediuzaman said Nursi, Ibid, p. 14

11 Qur'an, 88: 17-20.

12 Bediuzaman Said Nursi, Damascus Sermon, Ibid, p. 31.

that they might find the straight path?<sup>13</sup>

Why do they not think, deliberate and reason with the mind, and so all into misguidance? O men! Take a lesson! Take a warning from past ages and try to be saved from the moral and spiritual calamities of the future! According to Nursi, these verses in the Qur'an on meditation, thinking or reflection refer man to make use of his intellect, they enjoin him to consult with his reason.<sup>14</sup>

Nursi says "We Muslims, who are students of the Qur'an, follow proof, we approach the truths of belief through reason, thought, and our hearts. We do not abandon proof in favour of blind obedience and initiative of the clergy like some adherents of their religions. Therefore in the future when reason, science and technology prevail, of a certainty, that will be the time the Quran will gain ascendancy, which relies on rational proof and invites the reader to confirm its pronouncements."<sup>15</sup>

### **Basis of Morality in Damascus Sermon**

In reading Damascus sermon, a reader will discover that Beduiz zaman Said Nursi discusses a lot of issues that are related to morality. He stresses that "if we were to display through our actions, the perfections of the morality of Islam and the truths of belief, without doubt the followers of other religions would accept Islam in whole communities, some entire regions and states, even would take refuge in Islam."<sup>16</sup> However, Nursi, point out that "if the true religion is not presented in the shell of the heart, material, moral and spiritual calamities of untold magnitude will break loose over humanity and man will become the most unhappy and the most wretched of animals."<sup>17</sup>

Without any shadow of a doubt, man cannot live without religion, aimlessly, he cannot. Even the most irreligious person is compelled to take refuge in religion. For the only point of support for impotent man in the face of the innumerable disasters and external and internal enemies that plague him, and the only point from which he will seek help and assistance in the face of the innumerable needs with which he is afflicted, and his desires that stretch to eternity, despite his utter want and poverty

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13 Ibid, p. 31.

14 Ibid p. 31.

15 Ibid, p. 32.

16 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, the Damascus Sermon, Sozler publications, 2012, p. 29.

17 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Damascus Sermon, p. 30.

is in recognizing the maker of the world, in faith, and in believing and affirming the hereafter. There is no help for awakened mankind apart from this.<sup>18</sup>

Bediuzzaman describes a number of positive truths of Islam, which form the care for the grievous sicknesses besetting the Muslim community. Hope, courage honesty, love and brotherhood, self sacrifice awareness of the luminous bonds unity the believers, and mutual consultation. According to him, these qualities of morality could form a very foundation of Muslim society.<sup>19</sup>

As the truths of the Qur'an and Islam become increasing by apparent in this age of scientific discovery and technological advancement, the lessons of Behuzzaman Said Nursi's Sermon of 1911 increase in significance.

The civilization of the future is Islam. Because it will be achieved through Muslims heeding these lessons from the Qur'an, and rebuilding their society on the foundations of belief, and on the morality of Islam.<sup>20</sup>

### **Said Nursi's Concept of Science and Faith On Science**

Said Nursi used religious and scientific terminologies together as indicated by his usage of *Ulum-Umusbat* (positive science). This together with his emphasis on contemporary scientific achievements, we can say that he accepted the existence of positive and metaphysical scientific method and thus addresses the human mind convincingly. He argues that all phenomena in the universe give as much certainty for the truths of beliefs as science give for any establish fact. He accepted and then tried to modify the prevalent concept of science by joining religious and modern scientific knowledge and then justifying this theoretically: He says:

“The light of the conscience is religious sciences (*Ulum-u-al Diniyyah*). The light of the mind is modern science (*al-funun al-madaniyyat*). Combining both manifest the truth, and make the student's skills develop further with these two (sciences). When they are separated, the former breed superstition and the later breeds corruption and skepticism.<sup>21</sup>

### **Shaykh Usman Bin Fodio and Nur Al-Bab**

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18 Ibid p. 29-30.

19 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Damascus sermon, p. 14-15.

20 Ibid. p.15.

21 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Munazarat (The Discussions) New edition Istanbul: 1977.



Shaykh Uthman Bin Fodiyo was born in Marata, in the land of Gobir which falls between the borders of Nigeria and Niger, in 1754 A.D. He was a child born into a family respected for their piety, religiosity, and total submission to the will of Allah. His father, Muharnmadu Fodiyo<sup>22</sup> and his mother were his first teachers.

By the time he reached the age of twenty, the man that is revered as Shehu<sup>23</sup> among the Hausas, had virtually studied many literary works on Islam, in addition to learning the Qur'an by heart. At his tender age, he studied almost every book on Islamic Jurisprudence, Islamic Sciences, Islamic History etc. available in Hausaland. At the age of twenty, he wrote his first book *In Praise of the Prophet (saw)*. He wrote over one hundred and fifteen books on almost every subject or issue that had relevance, importance and meaning in the life of the Islamic community.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout his life, the Shaykh was motivated by the desire and ambition to create an Islamic Ummah (Community) based on the teachings of the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet (saw) as explained by several Islamic scholars before him. A voracious reader and writer, the Shaykh's commitment, dedication to situating Islam by interpreting several aspects of its teaching within the paradigm of Hausa society is well noted and respected. He was not only a writer, but travelled across the land to preach, to listen to complains and to answer questions. Indeed, most of his books, poems and phamplets were in response to the situation he found *insutu*; to questions asked by his students; criticisms of his activities by his opponents; criticism of his views by those opposed to comments he made on issues.<sup>25</sup>

The Shaykh always believed that, the truth shall conquer and defeat falsehood. He was always available to his students, critics, enemies, etc. He always preached presented intellectual discussions to, and prepared his students to discuss rather than fight. This legacy he left for succeeding scholars in the Caliphate as is evident in the writings of Sheikh Abdullahi bin Fodiyo<sup>26</sup> and Sultan Muhammad Bello.<sup>27</sup>

His style of writing was simple, easy to read, easy to understand and easy to com-

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22 Fodiyo is used among the Fulani's to refer to a highly respected knowledgeable jurist.

23 Shehu is a Hausa word borrowed from the Arabic word Shaykh which means a scholar.

24 Shaykh Othman Bn Fodiyo, selected writings, vol. 1 Published by IQRA' publishing House, Gusau, 2013, p. xvi.

25 Ibid.

26 Abdullahi Ibn Fodiyo is Shaykh Uthman's brother who assisted him greatly in his revivalist activities which led to the establishment of Sokoto Caliphate. He is considered to be the first Prime Minister (Wazir al-Akbar) for the Caliphate.

27 Muhammad Bello is the Son of Shaykh Uthman who also offered great assistance for the revivalist activities and was able to succeed his father to Amirul Muminin for the established Caliphate.

prehend. He reflected the organic relationship between all aspects of life, which Islam discusses from a holistic point of view. This explains why it is very difficult to compartmentalize his writings. A book may discuss several issues. The present arrangement of the books into volumes reflects this assertion.<sup>28</sup>

Scholars and students who have studied Shaykh Uthman bin Fodiyo's writings, explained that the humility and humbleness of the Sheikh is very evident in his writings, so also his piety, the love of the Prophet (saw) and respect and admiration of the contribution of Islamic scholars before him. For example: Even when he had intellectual disagreement with his teachers, he was always pray to Allah to forgive them. He never criticised or condemn them publically or in his writings. His sincerity, honesty and dedication are completely poles apart with the present crop of Islamic scholars, who consider condemnation and vituperations against fellow scholars as a license to popularity.<sup>29</sup>

The Shaykh in almost all his written treaties defined himself as a "desperate poor servant" of Allah. He always opens his books with Basmallah "In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful." He would praise Allah generously, pray for the Prophet (saw), his Sahabas, members of his household, the righteous scholars, the founders of the four Islamic schools of thought and those who followed them.

There are, however, three stages in the writings of Shehu. The Pre-Jihad, Jihad Period and Post Jihad Period. In the first stage, most of Shehu's books were on *Tauhid* and *Fiqh*. He wrote about 50 books on these topics. In the second stage, which is the Jihad period, discusses and legitimize their actions of taking arms because it was imposed on them. Here, the concern was on leadership, the characteristics of leader, the qualities and education of leaders. In the final stage, the books were on law, jurisprudence, rituals, administration of justice, Sufism among others.<sup>30</sup>

According to the Shehu, a scholar is supposed to be the light of his community. By his training, he is more conversant with their needs and in a better position to interpret situations and serve as a guide that benefit people. One of such inspiring treatises by Shaykh Uthman is the book under study which is *Nur Albab*, an analysis of which is presented below:

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28 Shaykh Othman Bn Fodiyo, Selected Wiritngs, Ibid, p. xvii.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid, p. xviii.

### **Brief on the book, *Nur al 'Albab***

The book of *Nur al 'Albab*, translated into English as *Enlightening the Minds*<sup>31</sup>, is one of the manuscripts of the Sokoto *Jihad* leaders, authored by Shaykh 'Uthman Bn Foduye in the late eighteenth century. It is one of his early efforts in the course of his revivalist movement in West Africa, particularly in Western Sudan and specifically in Hausaland. The work is a morally inspired attempt as it centers on the purification of soul, and is principally intended to reform some practices, identified as innovations and deeds that are un-Islamic according to the teachings of the Glorious Qur'an and *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W).

The book is divided into two broad segments as categorized by the author. The first part discusses the community or inhabitants in Hausaland. In this section of the work, the author identified the inhabitants of the land according to their religious background, and or their practices. Thus, the book classified them as follows:

The first category are the Muslims who practice the religion of Islam according to its teachings both in theory and practice; the other category is the syncretic category, who though professed the religion of Islam and practice some aspects of it, yet engaged in some acts contrary to the teachings of the religion of Islam; the said acts according to the author, could lead to unbelief in both their utterances and actions. The last category are the unbelievers who never accepted Islam, both in theory and practice.

The second part of the book (*Nur al 'Albab*), deals with some innovated customs and practices that were introduced to Islam, in Hausaland in different aspects of its practices. Such innovations include but not restricted to the bastardization of the womenfolk, denying them their rights and or duties; lot casting and star gazing; divination; soothsaying; reverence of tombs and observance of prayer on it; participating in non-Muslim festivals; observance of special days; the pursuit of supererogatory act and the negligence of obligatory acts; preference of worthless tales and the negligence of sound Islamic knowledge; the un-Islamic customs; dishonest sales of commodities, un-Islamic custom of inheritance, un-Islamic custom of greeting; on circumcision; child-naming; wedding; funeral ceremonies as well as the mingling of men and women.<sup>32</sup>

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31 It was also translated into English as *The Lantern of Intellect*, See, Musen S. A. *Biographical Guide to Sokoto Caliphate Sources*, Centre for Intellectual Services on Sokoto Caliphate, 2004, p. 45.

See again the book selected writing on Sheikh Othman Bn Fodiyo published by IQRA' Publishing House Gusau, 2013, vol. 3. The Cover Page.

32 S. Musen, *A Bibliographical Guide to Sokoto Caliphate Sources*, Centre for Intellectual Services on

## **Moral Issues**

Among the societal evil that people in Hausaland face according to Shaykh Uthman, in *Nur al-Bab*, is that some people describe some days as good and others as evil.<sup>33</sup> Such insinuations are lies and innovations that are against the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and other Prophets and messengers of Allah (May Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon them). All the past and present scholars of Islam condemned such beliefs. Amongst the scholars that condemn these are Imam Malik, Iman Shafii, Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and those that followed their foots steps past and present.

### **Vices/ Immoral Acts in *Nur al-Bab***

Shaykh Uthman identified the following vices as immoral acts in *Nur al-Bab* saying:

Among the societal ills that we face today in our land is the slaughtering of oxen, and slaughtering of cows and sheeps, based on baseless beliefs.<sup>34</sup>

Another illegality is also the illegal training of youths in the desert by lighting fires, which result in their disobeying their parents. The acts that are illegal in Islam are particularly practiced by the Fulani's.<sup>35</sup>

The word societal ill in our land is the act of deceit in business e.g. the mixing milk with water and the trickish behaviours of intermediaries in business who deceive commodityowners.<sup>36</sup>

It is not uncommon to see traders defrauding in measure, which is illegal in the Qur'an, Sunnah and Ijma' of scholars. In Islam Muslims are not allow to defraud through tricks in measure and weight.<sup>37</sup>

### **Faith in *Nur al-Bab***

Shaykh in Uthman admonishes people to have faith in Allah by through this

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Sokoto Caliphate, 2004. p. 45.

33 Shaykh Usman Bin Fodiyo, Enlightening Minds, Ibid, p. 9.

34 Ibid, p. 11.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid, p. 12.

37 Ibid.

challenge on some of the people who consider some days more important than others by saying:

“How could someone prefer some days over others? The days only carry the activities that occur in them, e.g. eating, drinking, among others, based on the persons’ inward conviction. Such beliefs can only be described as ignorant, foolish, lost and illegal innovation. It is not befitting for anyone who believes in Allah and the last day to run into such ignorant conclusions which cannot be found either in the Qur’an or in the books of the people of the Book who had tempered with their scriptures.<sup>38</sup>

### **Importance of Knowledge in Nur al-albab**

Knowledge is important for human life, therefore, Shaykh Uthman criticized a great number of scholars who neglected their wives not allowing them to learn. He considers this as a calamity by saying “these calamities are not only widespread in Hausaland but globally. Amongst the calamities are how some of our scholars neglect their wives, daughters and treat them like beasts without teaching them about the Islamic creed and the rulings of how to perform ablution, prayer, fasting among others. Such scholars also refuse to enlighten their wives and daughters on issues related to Islamic rulings on trade and commerce. This is very wrong and can be described as an unlawful innovation in Islam.<sup>39</sup>

Important Points of consideration between Bediuzzaman and Shaykh Uthman following could be considered as points of consideration between the two scholars and their revivalist efforts:

**Personality:** Both Bediuzzaman and Shaykh Uthman are considered to be reformers to their respective societies. They studied Islam and the Muslims of their times and considered that there was the need to reform the Unislamic practices prevalent among the Muslims.

**Environment:** The environments of the scholars differ in many respect. While Bediuzzaman hailed from Turkey which is part of the Middle East and Europe, Shaykh Uthman came from part of West African Sub-region.

**Condition of People:** The people of the two areas differ in certain aspects but however, they share common thing in their religious life for being Muslims.

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38 Ibid, p. 10.

39 Shaykh Usman Bin Fodio, Enlghthening Minds, in Selected writings of Sheikh Othman Bn Fodiyo, vol. 3, p. 8.

**Objective of Writing the two books:** The main objective of writing both Damascus Sermon and Nur al-Bab is to reform the Muslim behavior by inculcating good morality and emphasizing the pursuit and importance of knowledge which foster faith in all aspects of Muslim life.

**Impact:** The contents of Damascus Sermon and that of Nur al-Bab have reawaken the thinking of Muslim societies of both Turkey and West Africa to a larger extent. This had impacted greatly in the reformation of socio-cultural, religious, educational political, economic and moral life of the Muslims of the two areas.

**Conclusion:** A study of the two personalities coming from different continents of the world, could be a good inspiration to the Muslim world today. This indicates how Muslims in the Middle East and those in Africa share common things in their interest to the study of Islam and their love to disseminate its tradition of learning so as to ensure the reformation of the society. The effort of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi in producing Risail Nur and the Damascus Sermon is inspiring to Muslims not only in Turkey but throughout the Middle West and of course parts of Europe. On the other hand, the effort of Shaykh Uthman in producing many literary works on different aspects of Islam, including Nur al-Bab, is no doubt a good effort to reform the Muslim society, not only in Hausaland but in a larger society of East Africa. A brief assessment made on the two treatises of these great men and scholars shows their zeal in bringing sanity to the life of people, particularly in their emphasis to the morality based on faith and knowledge.

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