

# **Cooperation among Preachers and its Effect on Society**

Written by His Eminence Shaykh, the erudite scholar

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May Allah forgive him, his parents, and all Muslims

## Introduction

All praise is due to Allah, we praise Him, seek His help and forgiveness, and repent to Him. We seek refuge with Allah from the evil of our souls and from our bad deeds. Whoever Allah guides, none can lead astray, and whoever He leads astray none can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, Who has no partner and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and messenger. Allah sent him with guidance and the religion of truth. He delivered the message, fulfilled the trust, advised the community, and duly strove for the sake of Allah. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, his family, his Companions, and those who follow them with good conduct until the Day of Judgment. To proceed, dear brothers; on this Tuesday night, second of Rabi' al-Thāni, 1410 H, it is my pleasure to come to this place, the hall of the faculty of Usūl al-Dīn at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh. I ask Allah Almighty to bless this gathering and to make it beneficial. Dear brothers, the topic of this lecture is 'Cooperation among Preachers and its Effect on Society'. Preaching has, without doubt, a great status in the Shariah of Allah. Allah, Exalted and Glorified, mentioned in His Book a statement that He commanded His Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) to convey to the community in the form of a personal order. He said: {Say, "This is my way; I invite to Allah with insight, I and those who follow me."} [Yusuf: 108] The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) is commanded to speak out the entire Qur'an and convey the speech of Allah to the slaves of Allah. However, if something holds special significance, Allah Almighty gives a personal order to His Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) to convey it to the community. There are relevant examples in the Book of Allah similar to the verse mentioned above, such as Allah's saying: {Tell the believing men to lower their gaze} and: {And tell the believing women to lower their gaze} [Al-Nūr: 30-31] And such as Allah's saying: {Say, [O Muhammad], "I do not tell you that I have the depositories [containing the provision] of Allah or that I know the unseen"} [Al-An'ām: 50] There are many other verses in this regard,

but it is important to learn that if Allah commenced an order to His Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) with "Say", then this requires special attention to the content of this order.

Allah Almighty says to His Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him): {Say, "This is my way..."} [Yusuf: 108] What is referred to here is inferred from the rest of the verse: {I invite to Allah with insight, I and those who follow me} [Yusuf: 108] The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), just like all his fellow prophets and messengers, assumed this lofty status; the status of calling to Allah. But their preaching involved insight into the content of what they were preaching to people, the state of their target audience, and the approach they adopted. It is a must to possess these three types of insight:

1. Insight into the content of their preaching;
2. Insight into the state of their target audience;
3. Insight into the approach they use in preaching.

Once these three elements are achieved, their efforts in calling to Allah will be consistent with those of Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). In contrast, if there is an inadequacy with regard to any of them, their efforts will be inadequate in proportion to the extent of this inadequacy.

Allah Almighty stated in this verse:

{with insight, I and those who follow me} [Yusuf: 108].

Anyone who follows the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) should not suffice himself with observing personal acts of worship, such as prayer, Zakah, fasting, Hajj, dutifulness to parents, and retaining kinship ties. Rather, one must be a caller to Allah, Exalted and Glorified, by his words and deeds.

He must also be a caller to Allah while having insight into the state of his target audience, because the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said to Mu'ādh when he dispatched him to

Yemen: "You will come upon people of the Book..." and he told him about their state of affairs so that he would be prepared to meet them and to treat people in accordance with their respective status.

There is no doubt that any rational person knows the difference between calling an ignorant person and one who is stubborn and arrogant.

For this reason, Allah Almighty said: {And do not argue with the People of the Book except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them} [Al-'Ankabūt: 46]

Hence, we do not argue with those who commit injustice in a way that is best; rather, we argue with them in a way that is appropriate with their state of affairs and their injustice.

The preacher who calls to Allah must be well aware of the approach to use in preaching people. This is an essential matter for callers to Allah; knowing how to preach.

Should they preach using violence, harshness, slandering people's beliefs, and blaspheming their ideology?

Or should they preach with gentleness, kindness, and refining what they call people to without condemning their ideology and behavior?

Allah Almighty said to all of His servants:

{And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge.} [Al-An'ām: 108]

We all know that blaspheming the idols that polytheists worship is required because those idols are false,

as in the statement of Allah Almighty: {That is because Allah is the Truth, and that which they call upon other than Him is falsehood.} [Al-Hajj: 62]

Blaspheming falsehood and exposing it to the people is an absolute must, but if it causes a greater harm while it is still possible to remove it without causing such harm,

then Allah says: {And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge}

It is known that when they insult Allah, they do so in enmity without knowledge, as we know that Allah, Exalted and Glorified, is far from any fault. When we insult their deities, however, we do so rightfully.

Nevertheless, Allah, Exalted and Glorified, forbade us from this out of fear of this hostile falsehood, because it is evil.

Accordingly, if a preacher believes that a person is engaged in falsehood while that person perceives it to be the truth, then following the approach of calling to the truth which Allah guided His Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) entails that the preacher does not condemn the ideology or beliefs of that person as this would turn him away.

It may even prompt him to insult the truth that you are following because you insulted the falsehood that he believes to be the truth.

Instead, the appropriate approach is to clarify the truth and explain it to him, because many people – particularly the imitators – are liable to lose sight of the truth due to the influence of following desires and imitation.

I, therefore, say: The truth is to be clarified and explicated; and it would certainly be accepted by those of sound nature because it is the [core] of the religion of Allah. This truth must have an impact on its recipient.

I am not saying that it would have an immediate impact since this might be difficult. However, it might have an impact after a while, as that recipient might reconsider it again and again until he sees the truth.

The important thing is that the preacher must be armed with insight into his approach with the people whom he is addressing, because it is a key factor propelling his preaching efforts either towards acceptance or rejection.

We all know how the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) called to Allah in the best of ways. One famous example is the story of the bedouin who came and urinated inside the masjid. The people reprimanded him and condemned his action, but the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) told them: "Leave him and do not interrupt him." He forbade them from interrupting his urination. After the bedouin finished, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) ordered removal of the impurity by pouring a bucket of water over it. Then he called the bedouin and said to him: "Masjids are not meant for such urine and filth. Rather, they are meant for the remembrance of Allah, Exalted and Glorified, prayer, and recitation of the Qur'an." Or exactly as he (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said. Reflect upon this approach to calling to the truth! What do you imagine would be the reaction of this bedouin whom the Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) called to venerating masjids in such a gentle and lenient approach? It is only natural to assume that this bedouin would accept and be at ease. He would feel the difference between the scolding done by the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) and the gentle, heart-comforting teaching given by the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). The preacher must also be the first to practice what he preaches, because if he is preaching the truth, then it would be utter foolishness to go against that truth. And if he is preaching falsehood and evil, then this is even worse. If his behavior contradicts what he preaches, then there is no doubt that it affects the chances of acceptance of his call, because people view preachers differently than they view other people. When they see a preacher calling them to something then not practicing it, they will definitely entertain doubts about what he preaches as to whether it is true or false. The recipient of the preaching will say: if it is true, why is he not practicing it? Thereupon, people lose trust in him, not to mention the great sin he incurs for preaching without practicing what he preaches. Allah Almighty denounced what the children of Israel did: {Do you order people with righteousness and forget yourselves while you recite the Scripture? Then will you not reason?} [Al-Baqarah: 44]

Hence, it is unreasonable that a person enjoins another to do good and does not do it himself; because if what he preaches is indeed good, then he should be the first to preach it and the first to act upon it so as to become a caller to Allah in both word and deed.

One of the obligations upon the preacher is to have insight into what he is calling to, so he does not say except what he knows to be the truth or predominantly assumes to be the truth if the issue in question is open for assumption.

As for being ignorant of what he calls people to, then this brings more harm than benefit, in addition to being a great sin. Allah, Exalted and Glorified, said: {And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - of all those [one] will be questioned.} [Al-Isrā': 36] Do not pursue something you have no knowledge of because you will be held accountable. Allah, Exalted and Glorified, also said: {Say, "My Lord has only forbidden immoralities – what is apparent of them and what is concealed – and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allah that which you do not know."} [Al-A'rāf: 33]

We hear about some preachers who preach something in which they are wrong. We also know – or assume – that they did not preach that thing based on knowledge and conscious choice; rather, it was based on ignorance. This incurs two serious harms:

The first harm is the acceptance of the falsehood promoted by that preacher without knowledge.

The second harm is the rejection of the truth that is based on knowledge, just as we see or hear about some people who prohibit things without evidence that Allah prohibited them or enjoin things without evidence that Allah enjoined them. So if the laymen who think well of this preacher hear him preach the above, they reject the truth that others preach and accept this falsehood. To name one of many examples, we hear some people say that using recording devices is impermissible because it did not exist during the time of the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him)! Is such proof based on valid inference? The answer is negative, simply because this is not a worship-related issue

to justify its rejection on the basis that it does not exist in Shariah. Rather, it belongs to the category of the means that are permissible in principle, because permissibility is the principle ruling in any matter other than acts of worship.

In principle, things are permissible, but forbid

any worship except by permission of the Legislator <sup>1</sup>

Apart from acts of worship, the principle ruling is permissibility. Furthermore, this issue which we ruled as permissible may be a means to something required, thus rendering it required as well. It may also be a means to an evil matter, thus rendering it evil. Recording devices, for example, are definitely beneficial if they record what is good. At the time of the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), they used to record the Qur'an in writing, which is a means. Now, however, we record in writing and in audio, which is also a means that Allah blessed us with –I believe it to be so; how much knowledge has been stored in audio form? And how much benefit has it given the listeners? So, how could a preacher stand up and tell people this is something evil and a [religious] innovation because it did not exist during the time of the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him)! If we were to follow down this path, we would reject many of the things that accrue visible benefits for Muslims. There are many similar examples but I prefer not to dwell on this.

However, what I wish to emphasize is that the preacher must have insight into the religion of Allah, Exalted and Glorified, in order to avoid calling to an evil unknowingly or to warn against an act of goodness unknowingly.

It is better not to call for something today and to delay it to tomorrow until you reflect on the relevant textual evidence than to rush and speak about what you have no knowledge.

These are general requirements for any preacher; that he has insight into the content of his call, the state of the target audience, and the approaches that he uses in calling them.

Moreover, a preacher must be patient in the face of any verbal or physical harassment, because whoever calls to goodness must necessarily have enemies who hate what he preaches, just as Allah Almighty said: {And thus have We made for every prophet an enemy from among the wrongdoers. But sufficient is your Lord as a guide and a helper.} [Al-Furqān: 31] Any prophet has an enemy from the wrongdoers by virtue of his prophethood, not his person. For this reason, before the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) was assigned with the mission, he was known in (the tribe of) Quraysh for his truthfulness and trustworthiness. But as soon as he was missioned with the Shariah of Allah, they called him a liar, witch, poet, sorcerer, madman, and many other abusive designations. Allah, Exalted and Glorified, said: {And thus have We made for every prophet an enemy from among the wrongdoers} [Al-Furqān: 31] Why? Is it for his person or his prophethood? It is for his prophethood. Anyone who follows the methodology of the Prophet must have an enemy from the wrongdoers, who decidedly strives to harass him by all means possible to him, words or actions. But the preacher must exercise patience, await Allah's reward, and hope for the conferral of victory by Allah, Exalted and Glorified, and the pleasant end. On another note, the intention of the preacher must not be to call to his personal interests, but, rather, to call to Allah. In other words, he should not care to secure a win or that his preaching be accepted during his life or after his death. What matters is that the truth he preaches resonates with people, whether during his life or after his death. It is true that the individual feels pleased and invigorated when people accept the truth he is preaching during his life, but if Allah, Exalted and Glorified, put him through the trial of direct or swift rejection of his Dawah to test his patience, he should remain patient and await the reward of Allah. As long as he knows he is on the side of truth, he should stand firm in order to secure the pleasant end. The opposite are some preachers who, if they are verbally or physically harassed, withdraw their efforts or doubt their beliefs; Allah Almighty said to His Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him): {So if you are in doubt, [O Muhammad], about that which We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so never be among the doubters.} [Yunus: 94] The preacher, if he is not met with immediate

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<sup>1</sup> This line of poetry is from "Mandhūmat Usūl al-Fiqh wa Qawa'idih" by the author (may Allah have mercy upon him), p. 80.

acceptance of his efforts, might hold back or hesitate and doubt whether or not he is on the side of the truth, but Allah, Exalted and Glorified, has clarified the truth and made it distinguishable. If you know that you are advocating the truth, then stand firm even if you hear or see what displeases you, for the best outcome is for the righteous. One of the etiquettes preachers must abide by is to cooperate with one another. They should not be concerned with competing against each other to secure people's acceptance and gain preference over others. Rather, they must concern themselves with the acceptance of their message regardless of who initiated it. As long as your intent is that the Word of Allah be the uppermost, it should not matter to you whether it was spoken by you or by someone else. It is true that any individual loves to be the one serving goodness, but he should not hate that other than him serve it. Rather, he must love for the Word of Allah to be the uppermost whether at his hands or others. If this is the basis of his approach, he would help others in calling to Allah regardless of who receives people's acceptance first. It is imperative upon preachers to join forces, helping, cooperating, consulting one another, and to stand for Allah in pairs and in groups: {Say, "I only advise you of one [thing] - that you stand for Allah, [seeking truth] in pairs and individually} [Saba': 46]

And since we see the callers to evil in league with one another to scheme, why would the callers to Allah not do the same to guide each other to the shortcomings related to knowledge or to the approach they use, etc. ?

If we consider the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, we will find that Allah Almighty described believers with unity and cooperation. Allah Almighty said: {The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give Zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those - Allah will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.} [At-Tawbah: 71] He also said: {And let there be arising from you a community inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful. And do not be like the ones who became divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them. And those will have a great punishment.} [Āl-'Imrān: 104-105] Satan casts in the heart of the preacher some dislike of a fellow preacher if the latter achieved success in his preaching. The former does not wish to be as successful as the latter; rather, he dislikes that the latter achieves more success than him and enjoys people's acceptance. For this particular reason, Shykh al-Islam (may Allah have mercy upon him) explained envy as: "to hate that others receive the blessings of Allah." Although many scholars define envy as wishing that others lose the blessings of Allah upon them; we say that envy is to dislike it when others receive blessings from Allah whether or not you wish that they lose them. So you must help your fellow preacher in his efforts, even if he strides ahead of you and succeeds, as long as you wish the Word of Allah to be uppermost. Brothers, you should know that the advocates of evil love to see the advocates of good disunited, because they know that their unity and cooperation lead to their success and that their disunity leads to their failure. Allah Almighty said: {and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.} [Al-Anfāl: 46] There is no doubt that any one of us is liable to make mistakes, which is all the more reason we need to cooperate with one another to rectify the mistake if we see one of us making it, by contacting him and clarifying to him the mistake. Also, we may think it is a mistake while, in fact, it is not; but we will only know so if we take this step. But to exploit his mistake to slander him and drive people away from him, this is not among the characteristics of believers, let alone callers to Allah, Exalted and Glorified. In recent years, the youth – praise be to Allah – have started to take the sound course of calling to Allah, Exalted and Glorified, but some of them committed the error of treading alone the path of calling to Allah without heeding the opinion of others; rather, they are conceited with the knowledge and thought they have. Despite their serious lack of knowledge and misguided thought, they despise others and refuse to submit to the truth others preach, even if they quote to them some of the renowned, trustworthy, and acknowledged Muslim scholars; they reply: and who is that? Isn't he a man, just like me. Take in consideration that the opinion such a preacher claims to make him who he is reflects his lack of insight and knowledge. For example, he may ignore other relevant textual proofs and follow a certain text, particularly if that text indicates an uncommon ruling, while discarding other texts. He neither cares nor listens when he is advised to give deliberate thought to the matter in question, consider all proofs, and study the difference among scholars. He also treats his fellow preachers in the same manner; if anyone goes against him then that person is calling to falsehood while it is he who calls to the truth, as if he is receiving divine revelation. This is obviously an inappropriate approach because it is impermissible for the individual to believe he is right while others are wrong about issues open for interpretation.

Believing so is akin to assuming the status of prophethood, messengerhood, and infallibility. If others are liable to err, so are you. Others can claim to be right just as you do, and it is possible that they are the ones who are right and you are wrong. Therefore, some young people have become affiliated to a specific group or a specific scholar whom they support and follow their opinion whether it is right or wrong. In reality, this sows disunity and weakens the resolve of the Muslim nation, not to mention exposing the religiously-committed youth to the ridicule of wicked and evil people. Hence, we must be the kind of nation that Allah described: {Surely this community of yours is one community} [Al-Mu'minūn: 52] Our word must be united. I do not mean to say that we must have an identical opinion in the sense that we stop differing over legitimately debatable issues, which is impossible. Rather, I mean to say: If we differ over legitimately debatable issues, it must not lead to discord. Instead, we must be united at heart with loyalty and love established among us even if we disagree over debatable issues. Let me give you an example whose importance is considered minor if compared to major issues in Islam; it is the issue of the brief sitting in prayer before getting up to do the second or the fourth Rak'ah. Some scholars held that it is Sunnah (the practice of the Prophet), others held that it is not Sunnah, while other scholars offer a more detailed ruling. The difference in opinion on this issue is well-known. If, for example, a fellow preacher holds the opinion that sitting is Sunnah while I believe that it is not, does this disagreement justify that we dislike, defame, or slander one another? No, by Allah, it does not justify any of it. The Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) differed over a matter much more greater and critical than this, yet they did not dislike one another or feel aversion towards one another. So, why do we dislike one another over relatively minor issues of religion? Are not many of us aware that when Gabriel came to the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) after his return from the battle of the Trench to command him to fight the tribe of Qurayzha because they breached their covenant, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) instructed his Companions to join him in this battle, saying: "None should offer the 'Asr prayer except at Bani Qurayzha." So they left Madinah, but 'Asr prayer became due while they were still on the way. Some of them said: "We will not pray until we reach [the land of] Bani Qurayzha," thus delaying the prayer beyond its designated time. Others said: "We will pray 'Asr at its designated time even if we have not reached Bani Qurayzha." The news of this difference reached the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) but he scolded neither of the two groups. And they themselves held no hard feelings or animosity towards one another although this disagreement is much more significant than that over sitting before getting up to do the second or the fourth Rak'ah; as this is a disagreement over praying on time or delaying prayer beyond its due time. So what I hope my fellow preachers would do is to avoid centralizing such legitimately debatable issues to the point of making them causes of disunity, partisanship, and accusing one another of misguidance, because this weakens their position before their enemies. You know well that there are enemies who lie in wait for those who preach goodness; but it is the ones who follow the path of Allah who will reap the pleasant fruits at the end and shall be made triumphant in this life and the Hereafter, as Allah Almighty said: {Indeed, We will make victorious Our messengers and those who believe during the life of this world and on the Day when the witnesses will stand.} [Ghāfir: 51]

I ask Allah, Exalted and Glorified, to make me and you among those who support His religion and call to it with insight, and to confer upon us a mercy from Him, for He is the Bestower of bounties. I ask Allah Almighty to reward our brothers who made this meeting possible and to make them from the preachers to goodness.

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## Questions

Question (1): One of the issues of disagreement among preachers is the means they use in calling to Allah. Some believe that only the means used by the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) should be used, thereby criticizing those who hold various cultural, sporting, or theatrical activities as means to attract the youth to the message they preach. Others believe that means are renewable over time and that the preacher may use any permissible means to call people to Allah, Exalted and Glorified. We ask Your Eminence to illustrate the correct stance in this regard; and may Allah preserve you! Answer: All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. There is no doubt that preaching is an act of worship as mandated by Allah in His saying: {Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best.} [An-Nahl: 125] The preacher

who calls to Allah feels that he is complying thereby with the commands of Allah and hoping to draw closer to Him. There is also no doubt that the best means of preaching is the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), as the Book of Allah, Exalted and Glorified, is the greatest preacher for mankind; Allah said: {O mankind, there has come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts and guidance and mercy for the believers.} [Yunus: 57] The statements of the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) provides great admonition. He used to preach his Companions with statements that, according to them, made their hearts fearful and their eyes tearful. So, if a preacher can master this means – the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) – then there is no doubt that this is the best means of preaching.

And if he thinks he can complement this with other permissible means of preaching, there is no harm in doing so but on one condition: that these means do not include anything impermissible such as lying or impersonating the role of a disbeliever, for instance – as in TV shows – or impersonating the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) or the leading Muslim scholars succeeding the Companions, or any other similar roles that may belittle those virtuous Imams.

Also, TV shows must not feature a man impersonating a woman or vice versa, because there is an authentic report wherein the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) stated that Allah curses women who imitate men and men who imitate women. What matters is that if the preacher used any of those means for the purpose of attracting people without incorporating anything impermissible, then I do not see any harm in doing so. As for overusing them to the extent that they become the sole means of preaching while disregarding the use of the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) so much so that the recipients are not influenced except with such means, then I'm against that and I, rather, believe that it is impermissible. The reason is that turning people to other than the Book and the Sunnah with regards to preaching is denounced conduct. However, I do not see any harm in the occasional use of such means as long as they do not feature anything prohibited.

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Question (2): Is preaching obligatory upon every Muslim, male and female, or is it restricted to scholars and students of knowledge alone? Answer: If the individual has insight into what he is preaching, then there is no difference whether he is a renowned scholar, a diligent seeker of knowledge, or a layman as long as he has well-grounded knowledge of the issue in question. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Convey from me, even if it is a single verse." It is not a stipulated condition that the preacher be a senior scholar, but it is a must that he has knowledge of what he is preaching; but to preach based on ignorance and personal emotions, this is impermissible. That is why we see some preachers who call to Allah without sufficient knowledge prohibiting – due to their overwhelming emotions – what Allah has not prohibited and making obligatory what Allah has not made obligatory upon his servants; which is a very serious matter, because prohibiting what Allah made permissible is as serious as permitting what Allah prohibited. If they, for example, criticize others for permitting something, others criticize them as well for prohibiting it, because Allah made both actions equal. Allah said: {And do not say about what your tongues assert of untruth, "This is lawful and this is unlawful," to invent falsehood about Allah. Indeed, those who invent falsehood about Allah will not succeed. It is but a brief enjoyment, and they will have a painful punishment.} [An-Nahl: 116-117]

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Question (3): Is it permissible for the preacher to talk to people while they are engaged in wrongdoing such as approaching them in the streets while they are playing music and having fun? And is it permissible to visit the homes of sinners for the purpose of preaching? What is the most suitable manner to approach them? Answer: Preaching must be done wisely as Allah, Exalted and Glorified, commanded. If the preacher believes that talking to people at this particular place or time is suitable and fruitful, he should proceed with it even if he approaches sinners at their dwellings. Historians related that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) used to approach people during the season of Hajj at their dwellings to invite them to believe in Allah, Exalted and Glorified. Likewise, the preacher may approach them in the streets while they are engaged in their



amusement if he thinks it is advantageous. If he believes that approaching them as a group is not advantageous, he can approach them individually and should be keen on talking to their leaders and seniors, because if they are guided, their followers will follow their lead. So, if he cannot approach people as a group or finds that to be of no benefit, he should be keen on approaching their leaders and seniors. He can approach them either at their homes or any other more suitable location. In short, if the individual adheres to the wisdom that Allah commanded and guided to, he will lead a prosperous life; Allah said: {He gives wisdom to whom He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given much good.} [Al-Baqarah: 269]

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Question (4): What is your opinion regarding some youth, including even some students of knowledge, who have become in the habit of disparaging each other, driving people away from each other, and warning against each other? Is this a rewardable or a punishable act? Answer: I believe that this is prohibited. Given that it is impermissible for a believer to backbite his fellow believer – even if the latter is not a scholar – how then could he be justified in backbiting his fellow believing scholars? It is imperative upon the believer to hold his tongue from backbiting his fellow believers; Allah Almighty said: {O you who believe, avoid much negative assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would detest it. And fear Allah} [Al-Hujurat: 12] Let him know who is afflicted with committing this sin that his disparagement of a scholar will cause rejection of the truth spoken by that scholar. Accordingly, the evil consequences of rejecting the truth and the sin incurred thereby will be upon that individual who disparaged the scholar, because disparaging a scholar is not personal, rather, disparagement of the heritage of Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), since the scholars are the heirs of the prophets. If scholars are disparaged and slandered, people will lose trust in the knowledge they have, which is inherited from the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), thereby losing trust in any shred of Shariah provided by this disparaged scholar. I, by no means, imply that all scholars are infallible, because every human being is liable to make mistakes. Should you notice what you believe to be a mistake made by a scholar, contact him and try to reach an understanding. If it became clear to you that the truth is on his side, you must follow him. If it did not become clear to you but you realized there is justification for his position, you must cease disparaging him. If you found no justification for his position, then you should warn against it, because condoning a mistake is impermissible. Still, do not disparage him, especially if he is a reputable, well-intentioned scholar, because disparaging well-intentioned scholars for any mistake they commit will lead us to disparage prestigious scholars. What you must do is as I mentioned above: if you see a scholar making a mistake, discuss it with him; and you will either follow him if he is correct or he follows you if you are correct. If the issue remains unsettled while disagreement regarding it is tolerable, then you must stop speaking ill of him and let him say what he says and you say what you say. Praise be to Allah that disagreements did not exist only in this age; rather, they started from the time of the Companions until this present day. However, if his mistake was made clear but he persisted on it, you must expose the mistake for what it is without intending any slander or retaliation against that individual, because he might say the truth elsewhere beyond the subject of your argument with him.

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My advice to my brothers is to keep at a distance from this plight and sickness. I ask Allah to heal me and them from what harms or faults our religion and our lives.

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Question (5): In your book *Zād ad-Dā'iyyah ila Allah 'Azza wa Jall*, you said the following: "Disunity and partisanship please none but someone who is an enemy to Islam and Muslims." The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "The difference of opinion in my community is a mercy." So, what is meant by this difference that is a mercy? And what is the meaning of disunity in your statement? May Allah preserve you. Answer: The Hadith quoted by the questioner is weak and inauthentic, because Allah said: {but they will not cease to differ, except whom your Lord has given

mercy, and for that He created them} [Hūd: 118-119]Allah Almighty made difference an attribute of those deprived of His mercy. Hence, the community cannot differ;rather, it is an aspect of Allah's mercy upon it that it does not differ. I am not saying that their opinions do not differ because opinions may differ. What I mean is that their hearts do not differ.Assuming that the Hadith is authentic or a proof, it would mean that the difference of opinion in the community is shaded under the mercy of Allah. In other words, Allah Almighty bestows His mercy upon the diligent among them even if a difference took place in the outcome of their diligence.In other words, Allah does not punish the mistaken who has exerted due diligence in finding the truth. It was authentically reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said:"If a judge passes judgment after due diligence and his judgment is correct, he will receive double reward, and if he is incorrect, he will receive one reward."This is how to understand the Hadith [quoted by the questioner] assuming it is a valid proof; otherwise, the correct standing is that the Hadith is weak and inauthentic.On account of this, there would be no contradiction between what is mentioned in Zād ad-Dā'iyah and this so-called Hadith.

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Answer:

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because Allah said: {but they will not cease to differ, except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He created them} [Hūd: 118-119]

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Question (6):Cooperation among preachers is definitely a must for the overall success and acceptance of their efforts. My question is: There are many preachers in the Islamic arena, each with his own style and approach. There may also be differences among them in important issues such as creed; what guidelines do you perceive to forge cooperation with those and others? Preachers need your instructions in this regard. May Allah grant you success.Answer:There is no doubt that the guideline regarding such difference is the statement of Allah Almighty:{"O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result."} [An-Nisā': 59]And in His statement: {And in anything over which you disagree - its ruling is [to be referred] to Allah} [Ash-Shūra: 10]It is obligatory regarding anyone whose

creed or actions are incorrect to show him the truth and explain it to him. If he abandons his error, then this is Allah's favor upon him; otherwise, it is a trial from Allah for him. We must explain the error he is committing and warn against it as much as we can. Meanwhile, we should not despair, as Allah has guided many people who were involved in major religious innovations to the path of Ahl-us-Sunnah. Many of us know that Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ary was a member of the Mu'tazilites sect for forty years of his life; then he became a moderate for some time, and eventually Allah, Exalted and Glorified, guided him to the straight path followed by Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (may Allah have mercy upon him), which is the ideology of Ahl-us-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah. In a nutshell, issues of creed are important, and an exchange of advice must be carried out with regards to them as well as in issues related to actions, though the scholarly difference of opinion in relation to actions is greater and wider. The reason is that the major issues of creed are agreed upon, notwithstanding the difference over some of them such as the impermanence of Hellfire, punishment in the grave, Scales of deeds, the nature of what is weighed, etc. But if they are compared with the difference over actions, you will notice they are within a narrow circle; praise be to Allah. Nevertheless, it is our duty to offer advice and show the truth to anyone who disagrees with us over any scholarly issue, whether related to creed or to actions.

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Answer:

There is no doubt that the guideline regarding such difference is the statement of Allah Almighty:

{“O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result.”} [An-Nisā': 59]

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Nevertheless, it is our duty to offer advice and show the truth to anyone who disagrees with us over any scholarly issue, whether related to creed or to actions.

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Question (7):Allah Almighty said: {And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge} [Al-An'ām: 108] Can we deduce from this verse that the preacher must cease doing an act of Sunnah if it results in having it insulted, such as shortening one's garments or otherwise? May Allah reward you.  
Answer:Abandoning an act of Sunnah does not involve insulting others, so the verse is inapplicable to it. However, there is another Hadith that may prove the permissibility of abandoning an act of Sunnah, where the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) relinquished building the Ka'ba (Holy House in Makkah) on the foundations laid by Abraham out of fear of the reversion of the people, as they were recent converts to Islam.

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For example, if one of the acts of Sunnah is uncommon among laymen who would wrongly accuse anyone who does it, it is better for the individual to pave the way first for this act of Sunnah before taking any action by means of explaining it to people in gatherings, at masjids, or at any favorable opportunity such that they would understand and be at ease when he actually does it.

I'm certain that laymen may dislike an act of Sunnah just because a specific individual does it, but they would not dislike it if someone else does it. If one of the scholars respected by laymen shortens his garment, they would not be as critical of him as they would be of someone whom they do not consider to be a scholar nor trust him. This is a fact.

Based on this, it is more adequate to deal with laymen in a gradual manner such that you give them prior knowledge of the action they are likely to be critical of so that when you actually do that action, they would not be totally ignorant of it.

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Question (8):Some preachers adopt the approach of educating and teaching their target recipients while others prefer the approach of preaching in public places where people gather; what is Your Eminence's opinion in this regard? Which approach do you think is more effective?  
Answer:I believe that this is one of Allah's favors upon His servants to make them diverse in their approaches to calling to Allah. A man may be a preacher whom Allah, Exalted and Glorified, blessed with good public speaking skills and a charisma to leave a good impression on the audience.For this person, we believe preaching to be his best approach. As for another person whom Allah Almighty blessed with gentleness and kindness to educate people and approach them in this manner, this is better for him than the former approach, particularly if he is not a good speaker,because some preachers have knowledge yet are unable to communicate their message effectively. Allah, Exalted and Glorified, has distributed His favors among His servants and elevated some of them in rank above others.

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because some preachers have knowledge yet are unable to communicate their message effectively. Allah, Exalted and Glorified, has distributed His favors among His servants and elevated some of them in rank above others.

Accordingly, I believe that the individual should use the approach he feels is more effective and suitable for his personality without venturing into something he cannot handle. Rather, he must have confidence in himself whilst seeking the assistance of Allah, Exalted and Glorified, in order to overcome the obstacles that may arise before him.

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Question (9):What is Your Eminence's opinion regarding individuals who drive people away from reading the books of contemporary preachers as they believe one should restrict himself to the books of the righteous Salaf (predecessors) and learn methodology from them? What is the correct or comprehensive perspective regarding the books of the Salaf (may Allah have mercy upon them) and the books of contemporary preachers and thinkers? May Allah grant you success. Answer:I believe that learning how to preach from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) is above anything else, which is the opinion of us all without a doubt.Next in line are the reports of the rightly-guided caliphs, the rest of the Companions, and the leading scholars of Islam following them.As for topics addressed by contemporary authors, there has been new issues and they are better-suited to know them. If the individual learns from them what is related to those new issues, this is very advantageous for him.We know that the contemporary preachers have learned their knowledge from the Salaf, and we should learn from the same source they learned from. However, new issues have arisen and they are better aware of them than we are, and these issues in their current form were not known to the Salaf.So, my opinion is to benefit of the two best things; first by relying on the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) then secondly by relying on the statements of the righteous Salaf (i.e. the rightly-guided caliphs, the Companions, and the leading scholars of Muslims);and thirdly by relying on the writings of contemporary preachers in whose time new issues arose that were not known in their current form to the Salaf.

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statements of the righteous Salaf (i.e. the rightly-guided caliphs, the Companions, and the leading scholars of Muslims);

and thirdly by relying on the writings of contemporary preachers in whose time new issues arose that were not known in their current form to the Salaf.

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Question (10):Some people advance the idea that Allah, Exalted and Glorified, has guaranteed the preservation of this religion, which renders the efforts of preachers in the service of Islam useless and unnecessary; how do we refute this claim?Answer:Refuting this claim is easy since those people are driven by denial of legitimate causes, which is undoubtedly a form of misguidance and irrationality.Allah, Exalted and Glorified, has guaranteed the preservation of this religion but through causes such as the efforts exerted by the preachers to spread and explain the religion to people.This statement is similar to saying: Do not get married and, if you are destined to have a child, it will come to you anyway; or another statement that advises against striving to earn a living because, if you are destined to have provision, it will come to you anyway.We know that Allah, Exalted and Glorified, said:{Indeed, it is We who sent down the message and, indeed, We will be its guardian.} [Al-Hijr: 9]Allah said so given His wisdom that mandates the necessity of causes for anything to happen. In this manner, Allah destined certain causes for the preservation of this religion in order for it to take place.Hence, the scholars of the Salaf left a legacy by which Allah preserved His religion against innovations in creed and actions. We must do our duty that Allah obligated upon us to defend, preserve, and spread this religion among people. This is how the preservation of religion is achieved.

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Allah said so given His wisdom that mandates the necessity of causes for anything to happen. In this manner, Allah destined certain causes for the preservation of this religion in order for it to take place.

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Question (11):Some people are not deterred except through violence; how should they be handled?Answer:Undoubtedly, there are people who are deterred only through violence. However, the violence that works against the intended interest and causes greater harm is impermissible to be used, because wisdom must be followed. The type of violence that requires beating, disciplining, or detention is limited to the discretion of the state rulers.As for others, they have the duty of showing the truth and denouncing wrongdoing. As to changing wrongdoing, especially by hand, it is left to the discretion of the rulers, who are required to change it to the best of their ability because it is their responsibility.

Some people are not deterred except through violence; how should they be handled?

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As for others, they have the duty of showing the truth and denouncing wrongdoing. As to changing wrongdoing, especially by hand, it is left to the discretion of the rulers, who are required to change it to the best of their ability because it is their responsibility.

If an individual wishes to change the wrongdoing by hand every time he sees one, it would cause a harm that is potentially greater than the original wrongdoing he wishes to change in the first place. Therefore, wisdom must be adhered to in this regard.

If you are the head of a household, then you have the authority to change a wrongdoing in that household by your hand, so change it. But if you want to change a wrongdoing in the market by your hand, the outcome might be worse than letting that wrongdoing be. However, your duty is to inform the person responsible for changing this wrongdoing in the market.

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Question (12): You mentioned in the course of the lecture that the preacher must not preach something until he practices it himself. The question is: If the preacher is calling for something he could not practice after attempts to do that but he thinks that the recipient of his preaching is capable of practicing it, should he still call to it? Answer: Yes, if the preacher inviting people to do good cannot do it himself, he should still invite others to it. Let us assume that a man is calling others to observe the night prayer while he cannot observe it, we should not say: do not call others to the night prayer if you cannot observe it. If a man is incapable of giving in charity, he should still invite others to give in charity. However, in case someone is inviting people to do something that he can do but does not, this is definitely foolishness and misguidance.

You mentioned in the course of the lecture that the preacher must not preach something until he practices it himself. The question is: If the preacher is calling for something he could not practice after attempts to do that but he thinks that the recipient of his preaching is capable of practicing it, should he still call to it?

Answer:

Yes, if the preacher inviting people to do good cannot do it himself, he should still invite others to it. Let us assume that a man is calling others to observe the night prayer while he cannot observe it,

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Question (13): Why should not the issues of disagreement be settled so that the preacher adopts the correct stance regarding them as a means to unite the community? Answer: The question of settling issues of disagreement is problematic because any individual who chooses an opinion believes it to be the correct one. Assuming we want all the scholars of a given country to adopt a single opinion, they will most likely disagree. There will be differences of opinion even if we attempt to verify the issues. Generally speaking, those unable to know the truth by themselves are obliged to fear Allah to the best of their ability such that their choice to accept an opposing opinion is not driven by desire but rather by seeking guidance.

Why should not the issues of disagreement be settled so that the preacher adopts the correct stance regarding them as a means to unite the community?

Answer:

The question of settling issues of disagreement is problematic because any individual who chooses an opinion believes it to be the correct one. Assuming we want all the scholars of a given country to adopt a single opinion, they will most likely disagree. There will be differences of opinion even if we attempt to verify the issues.

Generally speaking, those unable to know the truth by themselves are obliged to fear Allah to the best of their ability such that their choice to accept an opposing opinion is not driven by desire but rather by seeking guidance.

Hence, in the case of disagreement among scholars, the individual should follow whom they believe to be closest to the truth by virtue of their knowledge, religiosity, and trustworthiness. But to commit people to one opinion is difficult and cannot be done.

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Question (14): I'm a young man who wants to be a preacher but I do not have a suitable approach. Is it sufficient for me to publish or distribute beneficial Islamic tapes and books? May Allah reward you. Answer: Yes, there is no doubt that an individual may be unable to preach himself, but he may be capable of preaching through publishing beneficial books and tapes. Still, given his inability to preach himself, he should not publish those books and tapes unless after consulting with a student of knowledge who would be capable of assessing any incorrect content in them so that he would not distribute such content without realizing it.

I'm a young man who wants to be a preacher but I do not have a suitable approach. Is it sufficient for me to publish or distribute beneficial Islamic tapes and books? May Allah reward you.

Answer:

Yes, there is no doubt that an individual may be unable to preach himself, but he may be capable of preaching through publishing beneficial books and tapes.

Still, given his inability to preach himself, he should not publish those books and tapes unless after consulting with a student of knowledge who would be capable of assessing any incorrect content in them so that he would not distribute such content without realizing it.

Another means of preaching is to agree with a student of knowledge to write preaching material to be funded by that person who is unable to preach himself.

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Question (15): Are we – as Muslims – not responsible before Allah, Exalted and Glorified, for the fate of non-Muslims around the world, as we are responsible for calling them to the religion of Allah and showing them the straight path pertaining to Allah's wisdom in creation? What is our position when they say on the Day of Judgment that no one called them to Allah or preached them? Answer: There is no doubt that Muslims are obliged to convey the religion of Allah to all people, but who exactly is responsible for doing so? There must be the capability to do so, because all obligations prescribed by Allah upon His servants are contingent on having the capability to do them. Allah Almighty said: {So fear Allah as much as you are able} [At-Taghābun: 16] The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "If I command you to do something, then you should fulfill it to the best of your ability." So as Muslims, we must convey the religion and Shariah of Allah to all people, but according to our ability; who is capable of conveying the Shariah of Allah to all people? Only those who are capable are obligated to do so. As to those who are incapable, then Allah does not burden a person beyond his capacity.

Are we – as Muslims – not responsible before Allah, Exalted and Glorified, for the fate of non-Muslims around the world, as we are responsible for calling them to the religion of Allah and showing them the



straight path pertaining to Allah's wisdom in creation? What is our position when they say on the Day of Judgment that no one called them to Allah or preached them?

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There must be the capability to do so, because all obligations prescribed by Allah upon His servants are contingent on having the capability to do them. Allah Almighty said:

{So fear Allah as much as you are able} [At-Taghābun: 16]

The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "If I command you to do something, then you should fulfill it to the best of your ability."

So as Muslims, we must convey the religion and Shariah of Allah to all people, but according to our ability; who is capable of conveying the Shariah of Allah to all people?

Only those who are capable are obligated to do so. As to those who are incapable, then Allah does not burden a person beyond his capacity.

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Question (16):What you said about cooperation among preachers, does it mean that they should adopt a unified preaching methodology and approach, or just general cooperation in their general work among the public?Answer:I meant cooperation in a general framework, because particular frameworks or special approaches are left to the discretion of the individual preacher.One preacher may choose a specific approach at a given time in a given place because it is more effective than elsewhere. It is inconceivable to have unanimous agreement on a one-fits-all approach for all situations, times, and places.However, the general framework is the one within which preachers must cooperate.

What you said about cooperation among preachers, does it mean that they should adopt a unified preaching methodology and approach, or just general cooperation in their general work among the public?

Answer:

I meant cooperation in a general framework, because particular frameworks or special approaches are left to the discretion of the individual preacher.

One preacher may choose a specific approach at a given time in a given place because it is more effective than elsewhere. It is inconceivable to have unanimous agreement on a one-fits-all approach for all situations, times, and places.

However, the general framework is the one within which preachers must cooperate.

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Question (17):You said that the school of thought of Ahl-us-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah is that of Imam Ahmad; so, what is your assessment of the remaining three schools of thought?Answer:I do not think I implied that the three schools of thought do not follow the methodology of Ahl-us-Sunnah, but Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) is known to be the Imam of Ahl-us-Sunnah. He defended the Sunnah in a manner like no one else as far as we know; his persecution at the hands of Al-Ma'moun and his successors is well-known. Apart from this, the rest of the Imams of Islam are all – praise be to Allah – without a doubt upon goodness and upon the truth.This does not mean, however, that we consider them to be free of error, because any one of them is liable to make mistakes,even Imam Ahmad himself admitted retracting his earlier position regarding some issues.An example is his opinion regarding the validity of a drunk man's pronouncement of divorce [for the third time]. He stated: I held that the divorce pronounced by a drunk man is valid until the matter became clear to me.He meant that it became clear to him that it is invalid, because if he held it to be valid, it results in two outcomes: the wife in question cannot remain married to this man who divorced her and it becomes

permissible for her to marry another man. If he held that it is invalid, it results in one outcome only: that she remains married to that man whose irrevocable divorce was not verified.

You said that the school of thought of Ahl-us-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah is that of Imam Ahmad; so, what is your assessment of the remaining three schools of thought?

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Question (18): Many preachers refrain from cooperating with media organizations despite their visible influence on societies. What is Your Eminence's opinion regarding the role of preachers towards those organizations and the people who work in them? Answer: I believe that if an individual is asked to call to Allah, Exalted and Glorified, on a platform offering greater and more effective outreach, he should not refrain from it; rather, he should proceed and consider this a blessing of Allah upon him even if he cites as an excuse that those media outlets may broadcast some evil content. I do not consider this an excuse, because if these media are not filled with good, they will be filled with its opposite. And if they are filled with good, then being tainted with some evil should not harm anyone who used them to do good. So I believe that out of cooperation and mutual giving of advice, the individual should accept the invitation if he is asked to take part in such matters.

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Question (19): Some preachers and some youth who are assigned to lead prayer in a masjid may leave their posts there to preach in neighboring areas, thus leaving the masjid without an imam. What

is your instruction in this regard? May Allah reward you. Answer: I advise my brothers, the imams, to stay put at their posts leading the Muslims [in prayer] and carrying out their duties instead of going out to preach outside their respective masjids. It is even better than going to Makkah to observe Ramadan fasting there or to pray the night prayer of the last ten nights [of Ramadan] there, because doing their job is a fulfillment of their duty while going elsewhere is an act of Sunnah (i.e. recommended). It was authentically reported in the Qudsi Hadith that Allah, Exalted and Glorified, said: "My servant does not draw near to Me with anything dearer to Me than what I have made obligatory on him."

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But in the case where he is the assigned preacher to the destination he went to, and no one else fulfilled this duty, then he should report his situation to the responsible authorities so that they give him permission to leave and assign someone else in his original post.

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