

# An Analysis of the Contents of Section Ten (On The Issues of Reminding and Exhortations) from The Manuscript Titled "Unveiling The Standard Practice From What It is Not (Among The Views of Scholars) On Ten Important Issues." By Shaykh Uthman bn Foduye

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**Abstract:**-This article is an analysis of the contents of section ten (on the issues of reminding and exhortations) from the manuscript titled "Unveiling the standard practice from what it is not (among the views of scholars) on ten important issues," written by Shaykh Uthman bn Foduye. The manuscript was written in Arabic language in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by a well known reformer of Hausa land. We therefore intend to highlight a section from its contents in English language for the benefit of English readers who may find Arabic language difficult to understand and also to the contemporary Da'wah scholars who do not know much about Shaykh Uthman bn Foduye and his writings. The manuscript is also useful for teachers and students of Islamic studies. The manuscript is divided into ten sections as follows: First issue: on aspect of belief both hidden and manifest. Second issue: On the authenticity of devotion without knowing what is obligatory from what is not (i.e. *mandub*, *mubah*, Sunnan and recommended acts) Third issue: On the exegesis of the Qur'an. Fourth issue: On the narration of Hadith. Fifth issue: On issues of publishing. Sixth issue: On the command to write down Hadith and other sciences. Seventh issue: On the issue of learning what exceed personal obligations. Eighth issue: On legal verdict. Ninth issue: On debate. Tenth issue: On reminding and exhortation. This article contained an analysis of what is contained in the tenth issue on reminding and exhortations. It is a very good work for all da'wah scholars and workers.

**Keywords** — Analysis, Manuscript, Reminding, Exhortations, Sokoto Caliphate.

Shaykh Uthman started the section by highlighting what was pointed out by Nasr bn Muhammad bn Ibrahim and others when he said: some people (scholars) have disliked taking a seat of preaching. Their reason is on what was reported that the Prophet peace be upon him have said, storyteller is waiting for disgust and one who listens to him is waiting for mercy.<sup>1</sup>

And also from what was reported in a hadith that, Allah the most High have revealed to Isa, peace be upon him; Admonish yourself, if you take a lesson from that, then admonish the people, otherwise be shy. And also from what was reported that a man seek the permission of Umar may Allah be pleased with him to admonish people after the early morning prayers, but he prevented him saying: I am in a company of one who exhort the people, for I'm afraid to open the gate and it reached Pleiades. (to became arrogant)

And also from what was reported from Ibrahim al-Nakha'i who said: I dislike admonition for three (verses):

Do you order righteousness of the people and forget yourselves... (Q2:44)

... Why do you say what you do not do? (Q61:2)

And I do not intend to differ from you in that which I have forbidden you... (Q11:88)

The Shaykh explained that the above views are not the acceptable view among the scholars and that the established practice of the Ummah is that reminding people with the book of Allah and hadith of the Messenger of Allah peace be upon him is enjoined and is an act with which to seek with it the pleasure of Allah, it is in fact, one of the best pious act of devotion and exalted position as stated by Shihāb al-Din Ahmad bn Hajar al-Haitamiy in his book *Kitāb al-Zawājir*<sup>2</sup> citing the following evidences:

And remind, for indeed, the reminder benefits the believers. (Q51:55)

But remind by the Qur'an whoever fears My threat. (Q50:45)

So remind, [O Muhammad]; you are only a reminder. (Q88:21)

... Admonish them and speak to them a far-reaching word. (Q4:63)

Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good admonition (Q16:125)

...and warn their people when they return to them that they might be cautious. (Q9:22)

And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah... (Q41:33)

But if they had done what they were instructed, it would have been better for them... (Q4:66)

Also from what was reported in Sahih al-Bukhari from Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: The Prophet peace be upon him used to take care of us in preaching by selecting a suitable time.<sup>3</sup>

And also from what was reported in Sahih al-Bukhari, Abu Said Al-Khudri said, Some women said to the Prophet, peace be upon him: men have dominated us from you (by taking all his time), Therefore fix a day for us. On that he promised them one day to meet with them in which he admonish and commands them.

Shaykh Uthman said, "if you are familiar with this you will understand that reminding (preaching) is commendable by the book (of Allah), Sunnah (of the Prophet peace be upon him) and *Ijma'* (a consensus of opinion)." However, the reminding which is blameworthy as explained by Ahmad bn Hajar al-Haitami in *Kitāb al-Zawājir* is that of reminding people with the heresy fabricated by ignorant storytellers, by mentioning lies and fabricated hadith.<sup>4</sup>

Ahmad bn Hajar al-Haytami said: "We never command anyone against preaching, if he/she knows that he/she does not have defect for it. And this defect must be that which can deny him from engaging in it. Yet, this cannot alone prevent him from it, if he/she is feeling religiously bound to carry it and even if such feeling is accompanied with show-off among other religious inequities".<sup>5</sup>

Then Shaykh Uthman said: Whoever come across preaching of the pious predecessors, as accounted by scholars (may Allah be pleased with them), will know that they used to remind people about the Book of Allah and the *Sunnah* of His Messenger, coupled with their emphasis on teaching people the rudiments of their religion and their detailed explanations. They did these in order to teach them their religious obligation pertaining one's belief, dietary, purification, how he/she can perform his/her (ritual) bath, how to perform ablution, dry ablution, how to know the timing for prayers, how to pray, how to fast, how to give out alms, how to perform pilgrimage, when is his/her alms be valid, his marriage, and his contract among other things discussed under the book of Islamic jurisprudence. And to teach them how a servant can be saved

from the inequities of the mind such as arrogance, pride, envy, anger, miserliness, lust, and wrong impression to Muslims, and how a servant can acquire righteous traits such as repentance, humility, submissiveness, contentedness, sincerity among other praise worthy attributes of the mind. It is on these that all those who emulated preaching of the pious predecessors have conducted themselves from among the famous admonishers of the *Ummah* such as Al-Hassan al-Basri, Mansur bn Ammar, Yahya bn Muhammad, Ibn Al-Sammak, Abd-Qadir Jaylani, Al-Shabali, Al-Junaid, Ibn al-Fadl al-Jawhari, Imam al-Tartushi among many.

Shaykh Uthman continued by explaining what Ibn Shihab al-Din Ahmad bn Hajar al-Haytami said in his famous book *Al-Zawajir*: that it is authentically reported from the authority of Ibn Mas'ud that he once listened a preaching by a Storyteller and he said to him: "You have invented a wrong innovations or you are the most guided person than the Prophet (SAW) and his Companions (RA)", with this statement, people dispersed away from him and no one of them stayed. Then Ahmad bn Hajar al-Haytami said: "This may means that he was narrating from his report what he was invented unknowingly, therefore, a storyteller is one who is reporting unauthentic or fabricated *Ahadith*"<sup>6</sup> But the stories that are necessary or important to know them are of the best and better to be listened and reported upon.

In the book *Al-Madkhal*, it is reported that when Ali (RA) entered Basrah *Masjid*, he removed from it all the storytellers. And he said: Nobody should relate any story in this *Masjid*, until he reaches where Al-Hassan was discussing on Sciences of Actions, he listened and then he left.

In an addendum in the book of *Al-Ihyā'*,<sup>7</sup> it says that when he listened to the discussions of Al-Hassan al-Basri, he did not eject him from the *Masjid* because he was talking about events of the Hereafter, reminding people about death and warning them against the inequities of the mind, wrong doings and the influence of the *Shaytan* and more importantly on how to be saved from all of it. He (a preacher) should be reminding people about the favors of Allah and His blessings and the short falls of mankind in praising Him. He should also teach them the inferiority of the world, about its uncertainty, its shortness and the dangers of the Hereafter and its difficulties.

It is also said in *Al-Ihyā'*<sup>8</sup> that if you are asked to mention a way or method that a preacher should adopt for his preaching. It is interesting to know that it is near impossible. But, we can point areas where one can use to admonish people on how to repent from committing sins. This can be in the following four ways:

1. That he should preach from the Qur'an with verses that are frightening and *Ahadith* of the Messenger of Allah.
2. That he should be recounting for people the difficulties encountered by the Prophets of Allah (RA) so that people can know the greatness of indispensability of the Almighty Allah.

3. He should inform them that the coming of punishment in this world is inevitable by wrong doings of the people.
4. He should frequently mention the *Hadd* punishments of the most heinous acts in Islam such as *Zina* (adultery and fornication), theft among others.

In *Al-Ihya'* again: If you said, if an admonisher is preaching in the day of *Jumu'ah*, congregation, or in a public gatherings, or someone whom he never knows his situation asked him to preach for him, how is he going to do it? Note that, his situation here is to preach on those issues commonly practiced by all people or what the general public dearly needs to know about.

In *Risalah* of Imam Al-Ghazali: The meaning of remembrance is that a servant should always remember the Hell fire, and his shortfalls in serving his Lord. He should also reflect over the life he spent in the past upon what is not necessary upon him, as he should also remember what will come of him of punishments, his reward from his sincere belief at the time of his death, and his condition upon arrival of the Angel of death to take his soul. He should ask himself whether is he able to answer the questions put forward to him by Munkar and Nakir? He should concerned himself with the hereafter, and its long standing, also is he going to pass through the *Sirat* (the bridge)? or is he going to fall into the *Hawiyah* (Hellfire)? He should continue to remember Hellfire, and how he is going to face these calamities. i.e., what was mentioned above, remembrance upon himself and should continue to warn people on them and informing them about it, and remind them about their shortcomings, their negligence towards their Lord until those with him can feel the burning flames of these fires about to engulf them, so that they can fear and remember what they lost in their previous lives and lament upon that time which they lost by not serving their Lord. Whoever is in this condition or in this path is called a *Wa'iz* (preacher or admonisher).

Thereafter he said: It is paramount that your (that is, the preacher) aim and purpose is calling people towards their Lord from this world towards the next life, and (changing people) from wrong doings to righteous deeds, from lust to renunciation, from miserliness to generosity, and from vanity to piety. He should also make them love the next world and dislike this world, and to combine that by teaching them the knowledge required to worship Allah (knowledge of jurisprudence) and renunciation. This is because majority of people do incline to deviating from the rules of *Shari'ah* and doing what do not pleased Allah (the Almighty), and being preoccupied with immoral behaviors. Thus, he should frighten and cautioned them on those things that they would face (in the Day of Reckoning) with these they might change and refine their inner disposition and apparent actions and they manifest adherences to the obedience of Allah and repentance from wrong doings. This is the way of conducting preaching and admonishment, and any preaching which does not

conform to this is harm and evil to those who preached and listened to it respectively.

In the book *Al-Ihya'*: Most discussions of Al-Hassan al-Basri are on evil intensions of the mind and on things that are obscure to desires. Once it was said to him: "Oh Aba Sa'id; you often discussed issues that are not discussed by anyone other than you, from where you are getting them?" He said: "From Huzaifah al-Yamani, for many people today after the Companions do not inclined unless upon what is simple and easy to their nature, for truth is bitter, standing by it is difficult, very hard to comprehend and its path is very exhaustive, particularly knowing the desires of mind and exposing distasteful behavior. This is separating soul from living in sin, and the person with similar heart is a similitude of a person taking drugs despite its bitterness for his hope in getting better, or that who chose to fast throughout his lifetime despite its difficulty, so that he can break it during his death." And when will motivation be upon along this road. In this vein, it was said that in Basrah there were one hundred and twenty eloquent preachers and admonishers, and none of them speaks on certainty of knowledge and conditions of the heart and innate qualities of intrinsic nature except six (scholars). And many people used to gather around the majority of them but only few used to sit with these (six scholars). This is because precious and valuable (things) are only befitting the special few (of the society), and what is for the general (public) is very common.

Shaykh Uthman also noted someof the qualities of an admonisher as stated by Nasr bn Muhammad bn Ibrahim, these include:

1. That he (the admonisher) should be pious in himself, for if he is not pious, people of understanding will run away from him, and will be imitated by the foolish. And his speeches will not produce desired results in the hearts of the people.
2. He should be knowledgeable in exegesis of the Qur'an, history, and should have various opinions of jurists.
3. He should not be arrogant and hard heartedness, for the Almighty Allah says:

So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disserted away from you"( Q3: 159)

4. If he talk to people, he should not face a particular person in the public, but he should face all the people. It is narrated from Habib bn Abi Thabit, who said: "What is confirmed by the tradition is that an admonisher should not face a single person, but he should face all the people".
5. He should not be a greedy, for being covetous to people's wealth brings down a person's integrity and

leads to loss of charisma. But if he is offered any gift without begging for it, then there is no harm to accept it.

6. He should make his speeches between warning and glad tidings, he should not make all of it a warning or glad tidings, and this is because of the prohibition against that.
7. He should be conducting his preaching with earnestness as in what follows from the preaching of the Prophet (SAW). In *Alfiyati Sayr* it was stated:

He should preach in earnestness whenever he is admonishing... As if he is a commander commanding an army...

The sayings 'in earnestness' means *Ijtihad* (exerting one's effort). And his sayings 'whenever he is admonishing' '*dhikran*' with double 'K', means if he is reminding them with the verses and warning them from his punishment, for if he (the Prophet (SAW)) was preaching, his eyes used to become red, his voice risen, and his furiousness deepens, as was explained by the commentator and others.

8. He should not prolong the preaching so that the people may not become bored. It was reported from Zuhri, that the Prophet (SAW) said: "You should ease the minds from time to time". It was also reported from 'Abdullah bn Mas'ud (RA), who said: "In the hearts there are vigorousness and attentiveness (things that are cheerful and acceptable to mind), and also are (things that) takes over and turned away, therefore, preach to the people whenever they turn to you".

If an admonisher needs to prolong his speech, it is important for him to do his best to make them excited So that they cannot get bored, that will increase their vigor and attentiveness (in what he is saying).

It is reported from Umar bn Al-Khatib (RA) that whenever he was preaching, he used to remind them about the pleasures of the Day of Judgment, and make them to renounce the world. If he sees that they are interested in his speech, he then emphasize on life of the Hereafter. And if an admonisher wishes to remind people about any issue concerning the *Salah* (prayer), *Sawm* (fasting), *Sadaqah* (Alms) or on any matter of meritorious benefits, it is very important for him to first put that into practice so that he will not be among those addressed in this verse, where Allah says:

Are you enjoining *al-Birr* (piety and righteousness) on the people and you forget (to practice it) yourselves (Q2:44)

On this note Shaykh Uthman said: it is not known that commanding good and forbidding evil is incumbent only upon the one who is humble and piety. *Shaykh* Sunusi said in the commentary of his *Wustā*: "Commanding good and

forbidding evil does not confine only to one who is humble and piety, or one who does not commit similar offence, rather seeing evil, even if one is committing it, is binding upon him to forbid it, because his not committing an offence and forbidding it are two separate obligations, refusing to do one will not deny the other.

Ibn al-Hajj, at the beginning of *Al-Madkhal*, said: "It is reported from Malik from Rabi'ah bn 'Abd al-Rahman that he heard Sa'id bn Jubair saying: Had it been that one is not commanding what is good and is not forbidding what is evil so that nothing of such (doing what he commands and refraining from what he forbids) will be binding upon him, then none will command what is good and forbids what is evil. Malik said: " he told the truth, whom is this that did not commit any offence?" Then Ibn al-Hajj said: " upon this situation is the standard practice and issuing legal verdict, because committing one sin is lesser than committing two sins".

Shaykh Uthman also said: it is not a valid reason for people not to command even if they do not acted upon it (commanding what is good and is not forbidding what is evil). Ibn al-Hajj also said in *Madkhal*, in another place, that it is not binding upon him to change what he is commanding to be changed, but he is only to preach on that by explaining the legal position of such act, if they hears from him and come back to (what is desirous), then the goal has been achieved. If they refuse (to abide by that which is good), then he has excuses to give before Allah and has done what is obligatory upon him and it will not be binding on his neck. For it has been narrated that in the Day of Judgment a man will hold fast to another man whom he had not known before, then Allah will ask him whether he had known him before? The man will reply: "yes" and said: "he has seen me committing wrong one day and he refused to correct it for me". This indeed is precarious and very hard to be free from it except by even a speech, verily, making a speech is not that difficult. Almost all the wrong doings committed today are not difficult for a scholar to preach against, nor does he fears to talk about them, but he choose to remain silent on it despite witnessing it, just to pleased someone for bad return which they witnessed their forefathers on it and this was the reason for the destruction of the people of the past.

Shaykh Uthman again said: It is generally accepted that commanding what is good and forbidding what is evil are two (religious) obligations that do not require prior permission of a leader before conducting them. *Shaykh* Sunusi in his commentary to *Al-Wusta* said: What is meant by *al-Ma'ruf* is obligatory, and *al-Munkar* means prohibited, therefore, there is no doubt that commanding what is good and forbidding what is evil according to the above meaning are two obligatory acts unconditional of the appearance of the (*Imam*) leader as was emphasized by the Rawafidh. And the reason for their obligation is the Qur'an, *Sunnah* and the general consensus of scholars.



As for the Qur'an is the statement of Allah (SWT):

Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good (Islam), (Q3:104.)

As for the *Sunnah* is the saying of the Prophet (SAW):

Whoever sees an evil (or wrongdoing) should correct it with his hand, if he is unable, then with his tongue, if he is unable, then with his heart, and that is the weakest of *Iman* (faith).<sup>9</sup>

As for the *Ijma* (Consensus of opinion) is that Muslims since the inception of Islam and thereafter exhort one another with it (the truth) to the extent that scholars have said that commanding what is good and forbidding what is evil is authorized even if (the admonisher) is afraid he may be killed, however, some scholars have permitted him to be quite in such a situation.

Scholars have divergent opinions concerning what is best between preaching and keeping mute in such a situation (where one is afraid of being killed). The former is the opinion of the *Maliki* School, also commanding what is good and forbidding what is evil is not restricted to the leaders alone, however it is only upon the leader's permission when it can lead to war or drawing out swords for fear of unrest (so that it cannot escalate to a civil strife) as opined by Imam of the *Haramayn* (the two venerated Mosques). He also said: "the rule of law concerning commanding what is good and forbidding what is evil is that it is for both knowledgeable and ignorant on issues which they both can perceived. But, where its perception is only for specific (knowledgeable) people through exerting one's understanding (*Ijtihad*), here it is not upon the common people commanding what is good and forbidding what is evil, but only for *Mujtahidun* (those with ability to exert their understanding on issues of Shari'ah). It is with this, the summary of discussions of *Shaykh Al-Sunusi* ended from his commentary of *Al-Wusta*.

## CONCLUSION

Shaykh Uthman conclude the work by calling on all Muslim brothers saying; O! You my brothers know that it is incumbent upon every scholar not to keep silent at the contemporary period as stated by many scholars. This is because of the spread of many innovations. In the *Hadith* it is said that:

If tribulations (innovation) become apparent, and a scholar keeps quite, the wrath and curse of Allah will be upon him.

Ahmad al-zaruq have reported it in *Umdat al-murid as-Sadiq*. In *Ihya'*: Wherever one may reside today, his house will not be free from evil, in that he might sit without guiding people and teaching them and taking them along what is good because many people are ignorant of *Shari'ah*; therefore it is mandatory that there will be in every mosque or area of every town a scholar who will be teaching people their religion, so

also in every village. It is also mandatory upon every jurist (a scholar) after finishing his individual and communal obligations to be going to the nearest town to his town for teaching people their religion and their religious obligations, and should also carry along with him what he will required to eat not from their (peoples') food to feed him, for most of it is questionable. If one person performs commanding what is good and forbidding what is evil, the sin is lifted upon all, however if none of the people carried it over, they all share in blame for neglecting it. For the scholar, he is blamed for not going out (to perform commanding what is good and forbidding what is evil,) while for the simple commoner he is blamed for not going out to seek for knowledge. Whoever among the common people knows the conditions of prayer, he is required to educate another, otherwise he share in sin (wrongdoing). It is generally known that no one gives birth to a scholar (jurist), but he is only required to submit him (that is his child) to those who are knowledgeable for training. Whoever learnt something on an issue, he is among those who have knowledge of that, and he must therefore teach it to others, even if it pertains individual obligation, if he refuses then he will share in sin, however, the sins of jurists is greater. This is because they demonstrate ability in disseminating knowledge and befitting industry. This is because if professionals relinquish their professions livelihood will become futile (people will suffer). This is because they have assumed a responsibility which is inevitable in reforming people. Therefore, the duty and responsibility of any is to convey what comes to his knowledge from the Prophet (SAW) for the scholars are the heirs of Messengers.

Furthermore, anyone who has the ability to change any wrongdoing among the people, he is not allowed to abandon it and stayed behind at home, it is incumbent upon him to go out (and preach). When one is not capable of changing some wrongdoings and he was cautious in witnessing it, but has the ability to change another (wrongdoing), it became incumbent upon him to go out and change it, this is because, if his going out is for the purpose of changing what he can afford, in this respect, he will then not to be blamed for seeing what he cannot afford to change. It is only prohibited to watch abominable act without good intention (of changing it). Therefore, it is incumbent upon every Muslim is to start with himself and prevent himself (from wrongdoings) by observing his religious obligations and avoiding proscribed acts, he should then teach that to his family members and his relatives. And after them his neighbors and close associates, then people of his quarters (area), then people of his town, then the masses surrounding his town and in that manner up to the distant land of the world. If someone near can performs it, those faraway are exempted, otherwise all those who have the ability to do it (preach) share in sins, whether they are near or faraway. This should be the chief concern (preoccupation) of everyone whose religious duties is very much imperative to him.

END NOTES

- [1]. The hadith is fabricated as stated in al-dhaifah of al-Bani: No 3069.
- [2]. See, Ahmad bn Muhammad al-Haytamiy, al-Zawājir an iqtiraf al-kaba'ir, Dar al-fikr, Lebanon, 1987/1407
- [3]. M. M. Khan, The Translation of the meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari, Dar Al-Arabia, Lebanon, Vol. 1. Hadith No. 68. P. 130 .
- [4]. See, Ahmad bn Muhammad al-Haytamiy, al-Zawājir an iqtiraf al-kaba'ir, Dar al-fikr, Lebanon, 1987/1407
- [5]. See, Ahmad bn Muhammad al-Haytamiy, al-Zawājir an iqtiraf al-kaba'ir, Dar al-fikr, Lebanon, 1987/1407
- [6]. See, Ahmad bn Muhammad al-Haytamiy, al-Zawājir an Iqtiraf al-kaba'ir, Dar al-fikr, Lebanon, 1987/1407
- [7]. See, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Ihya' Ulum al-Din, Beirut: Dar al-Marifah
- [8]. See, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Ihya' Ulum al-Din, Beirut: Dar al-Marifah
- [9]. Imam Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Trans. by Abdul-Hamid Siddiqi, Dar Al-Arabia publishers, Beirut, Lebanon, Vol. 1, Hadith No. 79, p. 81.