

**Playing God:
Misreading a Divine Practice**

Shehzad Saleem

Al-Mawrid

A Foundation for Islamic Research and Education

51-K Model Town Lahore, Pakistan

Email: info@al-mawrid.org

Contents

1. Introduction **1**
2. Statement of the Divine Practice **4**
3. Realization of the Divine Practice in the Preaching of Messengers **7**
 - i. The Propagation Phase **8**
 - ii. The Acquittal Phase **10**
 - iii. The Judgement Phase **13**
4. Realization of the Divine Practice in the Preaching of Muḥammad (sws) **20**
 - i. The Propagation Phase **21**
 - ii. The Acquittal Phase **27**
 - iii. The Judgement Phase **28**
 - (1) The Reward **28**
 - (2) The Punishment **30**
 - (i) For the Idolaters **31**
 - (ii) For the People of the Book **33**
 - (iii) For the Hypocrites **37**
5. Misplaced Directives **41**
 - i. The Punishment of Apostasy **42**
 - ii. Waging War against Non-Muslims **46**
 - iii. The *Dhimmī* Status of Non-Muslim Minorities **48**
 - iv. Prohibition of Friendship with Non-Muslims **49**
 - v. The Superiority of Muslim Blood **51**
 - vi. Greeting Non-Muslims in an Inferior Way **52**
 - vii. Non-Muslims will be Doomed in the Hereafter **53**

- viii. Assassination of Non-Muslims **54**
 - ix. Prohibition of asking for Forgiveness for Non-Muslims **55**
 - x. Prohibition of Inheritance between Muslims and Non-Muslims **56**
 - xi. Prohibition of Testimony of Non-Muslims **57**
 - xii. Prohibition of Imitating Non-Muslims **57**
 - xiii. Struggle for the Supremacy of Islam **60**
6. Conclusion: Relations with the Non-Muslims **63**

Appendix: Brief Biographical Notes

- i. Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī (1863-1930) **69**
- ii. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī (1904-1997) **72**
- iii. Jāved Aḥmad Ghāmidī (b. 1951) **75**

Playing God: Misreading a Divine Practice

1. Introduction

In order to understand divine religions, it is essential to comprehend a certain unalterable practice of God. This practice is nothing but a divine scheme devised and executed by God either through natural disasters or through His messengers¹ and their followers and as such does not relate to the *sharī'ah* (divine law) revealed by Him. Simply put, it is: God, through natural disasters or through His messengers, punishes and humiliates in this very world their foremost and direct addressees who deliberately deny the truth communicated to them by their respective messenger,² and rewards in this very world those among them who adhere to the truth. In the case when this humiliation takes place through the messengers and their followers, they act as nothing but divine weapons. As such, this divine practice must not be undertaken by human beings on their own. It is God's

1. A messenger (*rasūl*) is a special cadre among the prophets of God.

2. The truth here means that one day each and every person will be held accountable on the basis of his deeds before the Almighty and rewarded or punished accordingly.

retribution carried out by God Himself. The purpose of this worldly retribution is to make mankind mindful of the most important reality that it tends to forget: reward and punishment in the Hereafter on the basis of a person's deeds. This reward and punishment which is to take place in the Hereafter is substantiated visually by the Almighty through the agency of His messengers so that mankind may always remain heedful to this reality. The court of justice which will be set up for every person on the Day of Judgement was set up for the nations of messengers in this world so that the latter could become a visual testimony to the former. To put it another way: before the advent of the greater Day of Judgement, several lesser days of Judgement were brought about in this world in which people were rewarded and punished on the basis of their deeds so that they could become a visual evidence to the judgement that will take place in the Hereafter. The Qur'ānic words used are: *لَأَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ* (٤:١٦٥) (so that mankind after the coming of these messengers is left with no excuse against the Almighty, (4:165)).

The details of this practice abound in the Qur'ān. Although faint references to this divine practice can be found in the works of our previous scholars, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī (1863-1930) was the first person to concretely point out this divine practice. Later, his pupil Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī (1904-1997) consolidated the views of his mentor by providing copious references from the Qur'ān in his *tafsīr Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*. Javed Aḥmad Ghāmidī (b. 1951) a pupil of Iṣlāhī, has developed the views of his two illustrious predecessors and has

enunciated precise details of this divine practice.³

However, many scholars have misread this practice of God; they have regarded it to be a part of the *sharī'ah*, and as a result think that after the departure of the Prophet (sws), later Muslims too have the right to punish and subjugate people who deny the truth. As a consequence of this misreading, many other erroneous inferences have also resulted. Matters which were to be left to God have been taken up by human beings. In this manner, they are now guilty of inadvertently playing God.

In this short treatise, a study of this divine practice will be conducted in the light of the researches of the above-mentioned scholars.

First, the details of how this divine practice pervaded the preaching missions of the messengers of God shall be put forth.

Second, the details of the last manifestation of this divine practice in the time of Muḥammad (sws) shall be presented.

Third, it shall be shown how some directives have been erroneously made part of the Islamic *sharī'ah* and have in

3. Those who want to be aware of this historical development are advised to look up the following works of these authors: Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, *Majmū'ah tafāsīr*, 1st ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1991), 465-477; Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān*, 3rd ed., vol. 8 (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1985), 273; Javed Aḥmad Ghāmīdī, *Mīzān*, 4th ed. (Lahore: Al-Mawrid, 2009), 48-49; *Ibid.*, 165-174; *Ibid.*, 534-544; *Ibid.*, 594-601. For brief biographical notes on these scholars, see the Appendix at the end of the book.

fact resulted from misreading this divine practice of God.

Fourth, relations with non-Muslims shall be explored as a result of the foregoing analysis.

However, before this study is conducted, here are precise statements of this divine practice from the Qur'ān.

2. Statement of the Divine Practice

According to the Qur'ān, God decides the fate of the nation⁴ of every messenger in this world:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٤٧:١٠)

And for each community, there is a messenger. Then when their messenger comes, their fate is decided with justice and they are not wronged. (10:47)

While explaining the details of how this fate is decided, the Qur'ān says:

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّهُ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرَدُّوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فِي أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَقَالُوا إِنَّا كَفَرْنَا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَنَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُخَرِّجَكُم إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ

4. Here the nation of a messenger refers to his direct and foremost addressees.

مُسَمَّى قَالُوا إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَصُدُّونَا عَمَّا كَانَ
 يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا فَآتُونَا بِسُلْطَانٍ مُبِينٍ قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِنْ نَحْنُ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ
 مِثْلُكُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَمُنُّ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ
 نَأْتِيَكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ... وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِرُسُلِهِمْ
 لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُمْ مِّنْ أَرْضِنَا أَوْ لَتَعُوذُنَّ فِي مِلَّتِنَا فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ
 لَنُهْلِكَنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ وَلَنُسَكِّنَنَّكُمْ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ
 خَافَ مَقَامِي وَخَافَ وَعِيدِ (١٤ : ٩-١٤)

Have you not heard what befell those that have gone before you? The accounts of the people of Noah, ‘Ād, and Thamūd, and those who came after them whom only God knows? Their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they placed their hands on their mouths [–the mouths of messengers–] and said: “We will not accept the message with which you have been sent and have baffling doubts about that which you call us to.” Their messengers said: “Do you have doubts about God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth? He calls you to Him that He may forgive you your sins and give you respite till an appointed time.” They said: “You are but a human being like ourselves. You wish to stop us from worshipping the deities our fathers worshipped then bring us a clear miracle.” Their messengers replied: “We are indeed but mortals like yourselves. Yet God bestows His grace on such of His servants as He chooses and we do not have any authority of our own to present a miracle except by God’s permission” At last,

these rejecters told their messengers: “Return to our ways or we will banish you from our land.” Then their Lord revealed to them, saying: “We shall kill these wrongdoers and then give you this land to dwell after them. [These are glad tidings for] those who are fearful of standing before me [one day] and those who fear My threats.” (14:9-14)

It has been ordained that the Almighty and His messengers will always prevail:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادُّونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ فِي الْأَذْلَىٰ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ
لِأَعْلَىٰ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٥٨: ٢٠-٢١)

Indeed those who are opposing Allah and His Messenger are bound to be humiliated. The Almighty has ordained: “I and My messengers shall always prevail.” Indeed Allah is Mighty and Powerful. (58:20-21)

As a result, the Almighty will bless His messengers and their companions with success and help both in this world and in the Hereafter:

إِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْأَشْهَادُ
(٥١:٤٠)

We will surely help Our messengers and the believers both in this world and on the day when the witnesses rise to testify. (40:51)

3. Realization of the Divine Practice in the Preaching of Messengers

While describing the medium and methodology of this divine practice, Ghāmidī writes:

The way this established practice about *risālah* manifests itself is that the Almighty selects His messengers so that reward and punishment can be meted out in this world through them before the actual Day of Judgement. It becomes a miniature rehearsal of what is going to take place on that Day. These messengers are told that if they honour their covenant with God, they will be rewarded in this very world and if they do not do so, they will be punished in this very world. The result is that the very existence of these messengers becomes a sign of God, and it is as if their people can observe God walking on earth with these messengers and delivering His verdicts. On the basis of the signs of truth that they have directly observed, they are directed to propagate the truth and present to the people with full certainty the very guidance of God the way they have received it from Him. In the terminology of the Qur'ān, this is called *shahādah*. Once this is established, it becomes a basis of the judgement of the Almighty both in this world and in that to come. Consequently, the Almighty grants dominance to these messengers, and punishes those who reject the message presented by these messengers.⁵

5. Ghāmidī, *Mīzān*, 70.

In other words, the truth is made irrefutably evident before the addressees of a messenger. The process which is primarily adopted in this regard is that the person of a messenger is made a symbol of God's justice. If he adheres to the truth, the Almighty rewards him and if he deviates from the truth, he is checked immediately by the Almighty. In this manner, it is as if people can observe God around His messenger. Moreover, a messenger is shown various signs of truth from God. On the basis of these signs, he communicates the truth to his people. His preaching mission after passing through various phases culminates in achieving the above mentioned objective of deciding the fate of his nation in this very world. Once this is achieved, it in itself becomes a means of irrefutably conveying the truth to all people who happen to observe this phenomenon.

The preaching mission of a messenger can be broadly categorized in the following three phases:

- i. The Propagation Phase
- ii. The Acquittal Phase
- iii. The Judgement Phase

In the following paragraphs, we will take a look at some of the important features of these phases.

i. The Propagation Phase

With this phase begins the mission of the messengers. During this phase, with the special help and assistance of the Almighty, the messengers remove misconceptions which may surround the truth⁶ and vehemently say that

6. As specified earlier, the truth refers to the fact that a

if people do not accept the truth, they shall be doomed in this world and in the Hereafter. In this phase, the messengers of Allah never use force or retaliate against any oppression or persecution encountered. They spend all their time and energy in earnestly urging people to mend their ways.

In this phase, the addressees of a messenger are the influential people of the society. Their political and social leaders and their intellectuals are earnestly called upon. While explaining this aspect, Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, writes:

... Abraham (sws) at the very outset called to the truth his family and clan who held the reins of religious leadership. He then called to the truth the king who had the reins of political authority and who thought that he had power over the life and death of his people ... The Almighty had directed Moses (sws) to first of all address the Pharaoh ... Jesus (sws) first called upon the scholars of the Jews. Similarly, the preaching endeavours of the Prophets Noah (sws), Hūd (sws) and Ṣāliḥ (sws) are all mentioned in the Qur'ān. All these prophets began their preaching by calling upon the people who were in authority in their times. They tried to wake up those in authority and the arrogant people of their times from their deep slumber and vehemently criticized their views. Finally, Muḥammad (sws) was sent and asked to warn his

person will one day be held accountable before God on the basis of his deeds.

immediate relatives. These relatives were the religious and political leaders of the patriarchal polity of Arabia and with this reference morally and politically guided all the people of Arabia.⁷

In the second stage of the Propagation Phase, the messengers of God augment their preaching efforts and increase their sphere. When the leaders of their people see that their efforts are bearing fruit, they try to stop these messengers by hook or by crook.

This Propagation Phase finally culminates in the communication of the truth in a conclusive manner to the addressees. Such is the conclusive nature of this communication that they are left with no excuse to deny the truth.

ii. The Acquittal Phase

At the end of the Propagation Phase – which is signalled by the Almighty since only He knows when enough time has been given to people to reflect and accept the truth – a messenger disassociates himself from his people by announcing his acquittal and migrating from them so that the Almighty can pronounce His judgement both upon the followers of the messenger and his adversaries.

Two important things must be noted about the migration of a messenger which takes place in this acquittal phase.

Firstly, it signals the end of his nation. It means that

7. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Da‘wat-i dīn awr us ka ṭarīqah kār*, 2nd ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1989), 50.

all that could have been done to call them to accept faith has been done. Before migration, as long as a messenger remains among his people, they are protected from any punishment and given respite due to his presence. So, when the pagan Arabs demanded from Muhammad (sws) to bring the punishment he had been threatening them with, they were told:

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنْتَ فِيهِمْ (٨: ٣٣)

But God was not going to send them a punishment whilst you are amongst them. (8:33)

Secondly, a messenger is not authorized to make the decision of migration for himself since only the Almighty knows when a particular people has been given enough time to accept the truth. A messenger must keep to his task of warning his people, in spite of bitter opposition, until he is informed by the Almighty that the time for warning them is over. The Prophet Jonah (sws) was reprimanded by the Almighty when he on his own decided to migrate from his people:

وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ
أَنْ لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢١: ٨٧)

And remember *dhū al-nūn*, when he departed in wrath thinking that We will not hold him responsible! So he cried through the depths of darkness: “There is no god but You. Glory be to You. I was indeed wrong!” (21:87)

The Prophet Muhammad (sws) was told to exercise patience and not be like Jonah (sws) until the decree of Allah arrived:

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ إِذْ نَادَى وَهُوَ
مَكْتُومٌ (٦٨: ٤٨)

So wait with patience for the Command of your Lord, and be not like the Companion of the Fish, -- when he cried out in agony. (68:48)

On the other hand, when Abraham (sws) argued with the Almighty that the nation of his nephew, the Prophet Lot (sws), be given more respite, he was told that none among the righteous were left in it. While the Qur’ān (11:74) makes a passing reference to this, the Bible gives the following details:

Then Abraham approached Him and said: “Will You sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare that place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing – to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” The Lord said: “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.” Then Abraham spoke up again: “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the

Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?" "If I find forty-five there," He said: "I will not destroy it." Once again he spoke to him: "What if only forty are found there?" He said: "For the sake of forty, I will not do it." Then he said: "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?" He answered: "I will not do it if I find thirty there." Abraham said: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?" He said: "For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it." Then he said: "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?" He answered: "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it." (Genesis, 18:23-32)

iii. The Judgement Phase

This phase is the culmination of a messenger's preaching mission. By now, the believers have become discreet and distinct from the disbelievers and organized as a separate unit. It is in this phase that the messenger decides the fate of his nation. It is in reality the Almighty who undertakes this task as pointed out before.

It is evident from the Qur'ān that in the Judgement phase, the punishment of the Disbelievers normally takes two forms depending upon the situation that arises.

If a messenger has very few companions and he has no place to migrate from his people and attain political power, then the messenger and his companions are sifted

out from their nation by the Almighty and made to migrate to a safe place. Their nation is then destroyed through various natural calamities like earthquakes, typhoons and cyclones. The Qur'ān says:

فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذَنْبِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَخَذَتْهُ
الصَّيْحَةُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ خَسَفْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَغْرَقْنَا (٤٠: ٢٩)

So each one of them We seized for their crime: of them, against some We sent a violent tornado with showers of stones; some were caught by a mighty blast; some We sunk in the earth; and some We drowned in the waters. (29:40)

The 'Ād, nation of Hūd (sws), the Thamūd nation of Sāliḥ (sws) as well as the nations of Noah (sws), Lot (sws) and Shu'ayb (sws) were destroyed through such natural disasters when they denied their respective messengers as is mentioned in the various *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān.⁸ In the case of Moses (sws), the Israelites never denied him. The Pharaoh and his followers however did. Therefore, they were destroyed.

The Prophet Jonah's people accepted faith and were saved from punishment:

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةً آمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمٌ يُونُسَ لَمَّا آمَنُوا كَشَفْنَا
عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ (١٠: ٩٨)

8. In particular, a graphic summary of the fate of these nations is found in *Sūrah Qamar*, the fifty fourth *sūrah* of the Qur'ān.

So why was there not a single settlement which professed faith so that its faith should have profited it, – except the people of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the penalty of ignominy in the life of the present, and permitted them to enjoy their life for a while. (10:98)

In the second case, a messenger is able to win a fair amount of companions and is also able to migrate to a place where he is able to acquire the reins of political power through divine help. In this case, a messenger and his companions subdue their nation by force, and execute them if they do not accept faith. The nation of a messenger is then given further respite during which the messenger starts to purge and cleanse the people who accept faith and organizes them for a final onslaught upon the forces of evil. He also strengthens his hold and authority in the land. Once his companions are ready for an armed conflict, these addressees are given a final ultimatum and then attacked. The forces of a messenger are destined to triumph and humiliate his enemies. The punishment, which in the previous case descended from the heavens, in this case emanates from the swords of the believers. It was this situation which arose in the case of Muhammad (sws). His opponents were destroyed by the swords of the Muslim believers until at the conquest of Makkah, the remaining accepted faith. (Details follow in the next section).

Referring to this form of divine punishment, the Qur’ān asserts:

قَاتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ وَيُخْزِهِمْ وَيَنْصُرْكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ (٩: ١٤)

Fight them and God will punish them with your hands and humiliate them and help you to victory over them. (9:14)

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ (٨: ١٧)

[Believers!] It is not you who slew them; it was [in fact] God who slew them. (8:17)

In other words, as pointed out earlier, it is the Almighty Himself who punishes the immediate and direct addressees of messengers if they deny their respective messengers; the messengers and their companions are no more than a means to carry out this Divine plan.

The punishment and humiliation of nations towards whom messengers were sent generally took place in two ways: Nations who subscribed to monotheism were spared if they accepted the supremacy of their respective messenger, while nations who subscribed to polytheism were destroyed. The latter fate is in accordance with the fact that polytheism is something that the Almighty never forgives:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا (٤: ٤٨)

God never forgives those guilty of polytheism though He may forgive other sins to whom He pleases. Those who commit polytheism devise a heinous sin. (4:48)

For similar reasons, in the Judaic law, perpetrators of polytheism were to be punished with death in this world:

If a man or woman living among you in one of the towns the Lord gives you is found doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God in violation of his covenant, and contrary to my command has worshipped other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars of the sky, and this has been brought to your attention, then you must investigate it thoroughly. If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death. (Deuteronomy 17:2-5)

Consequently, the Israelites were told that they should put to death all the polytheist nations and not to spare them in any way:

When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations – the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you – and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn

your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. (Deuteronomy 7:1-5)

The Old Testament also mentions that there were certain nations that were to be spared if they were prepared to live a life of subjugation. In the light of the Qur'ān, it can be adduced that such nations were those who did not subscribe to polytheism. They were not put to death and were given the option to live if they accepted the supremacy of the Mosaic law:

When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labour and shall work for you. If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. As for the women, and children, the livestock and everything else in the city you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the Lord your God gives you from your enemies. This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby. (Deuteronomy, 20:10-15)

Consequently, the Israelites were not wiped out as a

nation because, being the People of the Book, they were basically adherents to monotheism. Their humiliation took the form of constant subjugation to the followers of Jesus (sws) till the day of Judgement as referred to by the following verse:

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ إِنِّي فَتَوَّافِكُ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ
(٥٥ : ٣)

Remember when God said: “O Jesus! I will give death to you and raise you to Myself and cleanse you from those who have denied; I will make those who follow you superior to those who reject faith till the Day of Resurrection.” (3:55)

Here one might ask: Why were the People of the Book in particular the Christians regarded to be monotheists when they ascribed to trinity – which apparently is a polytheistic doctrine? The answer to this question is that Christians are basically followers of monotheism. The Bible is very explicit about it:

The most important one, answered Jesus, is this:
“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”
(Mark, 12:29)

Christians never admit to polytheism, though they are involved in certain polytheistic practices. A person becomes a polytheist when he openly admits that he is a polytheist. A person who claims to be a monotheist in

spite of being involved in polytheistic practices, cannot be regarded as a polytheist. The reason is that a person might be doing something wrong without realizing that what he is doing; all Christians whether of today or from the period of Jesus (sws) never admit to polytheism; trinity to them is in accordance with monotheism. Of course Muslims do not agree with them but unless they claim polytheism, it can only be said that in spite of claiming to be monotheists they are involved in polytheism. Their case is the case of a Muslim who goes to the grave of a saint to ask him to grant a wish; such a Muslim cannot be called a polytheist; he shall be told that what he is doing is something which is against monotheism to which he himself strongly claims adherence. Similarly, Christians cannot be called polytheists; however, they will be told that what they are doing is not in accordance with monotheism.

It is precisely for this reason that the Qur'ān never called the People of the Book as polytheists though they subscribed to certain blatant forms of polytheism. The Qur'ān only called the Ishmaelites as polytheists because they admittedly subscribed and testified to the creed of polytheism. They strongly advocated that polytheism was the very religion the Almighty had revealed and claimed that they were strong adherents to this religion. Because of this very reason, they were called the *mushrikūn* (the adherents to the creed of *shirk*) by the Qur'ān.

4. Realization of the Divine Practice in the Preaching of Muḥammad (sws)

We shall now examine the details of the punishment that the Almighty administered to the disbelievers in the

era of Muhammad (sws) in the overall perspective of the various phases of his preaching mission.

i. The Propagation Phase

In the fortieth year of his life, Muhammad (sws) was summoned by the Almighty to serve Him. Makkah at the time was the social and cultural centre of Arabia. It was its central city. So, in accordance with the Almighty's established practice of sending a messenger to the central city of a land, Muhammad (sws) was called upon to begin his endeavour in this city:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنذِرَ
يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ (٧: ٤٢)

And thus have We sent by inspiration to you an Arabic Qur'ān that you may warn the Mother of Cities and all around her; – and warn [them] of the Day of Assembly of which there is no doubt [when] some will be in the Garden, and some in the Blazing Fire. (42:7)

In Makkah, where Muhammad (sws) spent about thirteen years of his preaching endeavour, his addressees were basically the Idolaters – the descendants of the Prophet's great ancestor: the Prophet Ishmael (sws). However, the People of the Book were also addressed at various instances. Besides these two distinct pockets of opponents, there were the *munāfiqūn* (the Hypocrites) of whom only a few were in Makkah and who emerged as a sizeable faction in Madīnah as the Islamic message started

to gain momentum.

Muhammad (sws) bore witness to the truth before all these three groups and refuted their evil beliefs. In the terminology of the Qur'ān (33:44-45), this is called *shahādah*. He revived various Abrahamic practices and rituals, cleansing them of various interpolations added by the polytheists, and delineating the basic truth of accountability in the Hereafter before God on the basis of a person's deeds.

The real debate with the Idolaters concerned their polytheistic beliefs and religious innovations (*bid'āt*). They were repeatedly asked to give up their religion of Idolatry since it had no grounds. It was only the Almighty who could have told them that He had associated with Him certain other deities. Without the sanction of the Almighty, they had no means to know about such details for themselves. Consequently, when they claimed that polytheism was revealed to them by the Almighty Himself, the Qur'ān called this a vicious lie:

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ
سُلْطَانٍ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ
رَبِّهِمُ الْهُدَىٰ (٥٣: ٢٣)

These are nothing but names which you have devised – you and your fathers – for which Allah has sent down no authority [whatsoever]. They follow nothing but conjecture and what their own souls desire! – even though there has already come to them guidance from their Lord! (53:23)

It is precisely for this reason that their denial of monotheism amounted to a deliberate rejection of the truth, as a result of which they would have to face the punishment of Hell in the Hereafter:

بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَاءَٰكَ آيَاتِي فَكَذَّبْتَ بِهَا وَاسْتَكْبَرْتَ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ
الْكَافِرِينَ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَى الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ وُجُوهُهُمُ
مُسْوَدَّةٌ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٣٩ : ٥٩-٦٠)

Nay there came to you My signs and you rejected them and showed haughtiness and as a result became from among the disbelievers. On the Day of Judgement, you will see that faces of those who told lies against God will turn black. Is not in Hell an abode for the haughty? (39:59-60)

Similarly, the People of the Book were asked to desist from their attitude of hostility and antagonism and to honour the covenant they had made of professing belief in the final Messenger – someone whose name was mentioned in their very books:

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا وَقَدْ
جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ
نَفَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ أَنْكَاثًا تَتَّخِذُونَ أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ أَنْ
تَكُونَ أُمَّةٌ هِيَ أَرْبَىٰ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِنَّمَا يُلُوكُمُ اللَّهُ بِهِ وَلَيَبْيِّنَنَّ لَكُمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ مَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (١٦ : ٩١-٩٢)

And fulfil the covenant of Allah when you have entered into it, and break not your oaths after you have confirmed them: indeed you have made Allah your witness; for Allah knows all that you do. And be not like a woman who breaks into untwisted strands the yarn she has spun after it has become strong. Nor take your oaths to practice deception between yourselves, lest one party should be more numerous than another: for Allah will test you by this; and on the Day of Judgement He will certainly make clear to you [the truth of] that wherein you disagree. (16:91-92)

قَالَ عَذَابِي أُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ أَشَاءُ وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ
فَسَأَلْتُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي
التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ
الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي
كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي
أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٧: ١٥٦-١٥٧)

He [-the Almighty-] said: “With My punishment I visit whom I will; but My Mercy extends to all things. That [mercy] I shall ordain for those who do right, and practice regular charity, and those who believe in Our Signs – those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own [Scriptures] in the Torah and in the Injīl –

for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good [and pure] and prohibits them from what is bad [and impure]; he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that were upon them. So those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the Light which is sent down with him – it is they who shall prosper.” (7:156-157)

Like the Idolaters also, their real crime, according to the Qur’ān, was deliberate denial:

أَفَعَيَّرَ اللَّهُ أَتَّبِعِي حَكَمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا وَالَّذِينَ
آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ
الْمُتَّعِبِينَ (١١٤:٦)

Should I seek a judge other than God when it is He who has revealed the Book for you with all its precepts? Those to whom We gave the Book know that the Qur’ān has been revealed by your Lord with truth. Therefore have no doubts. (6:114)

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٢: ٨٩)

So when there came to them that which they recognized, they disbelieved in it. So let the curse of Allah be on the disbelievers. (2:89)

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا
حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ (٢: ١٠٩)

Many of the people of the Book wish that if they could turn you away as disbelievers after you have believed out of envy from their own selves even after the truth has become manifest to them. (2:109)

كَيْفَ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ وَشَهِدُوا أَنَّ الرَّسُولَ حَقٌّ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٣: ٨٦)

How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their belief and after they bore witness that the Messenger [Muhammad (sws)] is true and after clear proofs had come unto them? And Allah guides not the people who are wrong-doers. (3:86)

Initially, Muhammad (sws) could muster very little support from his tribe in favour of his message. Most people of Makkah rejected his call and only a few youth of the city accepted it. The hostility shown by the chiefs of Makkah was so severe that most people reckoned that it would only be a matter of days before this newly founded faith would reach a disastrous end. Muhammad (sws) and his Companions (rta) were put through severe physical torture and mental affliction. Such was the extent of the persecution suffered by the Prophet (sws) that for many years he had to confine his endeavour to his near relatives. However, after many years of persistent struggle, when it became evident that the people of Makkah were denying the Prophet (sws) due to sheer obstinacy, the Almighty asked him to dissociate himself from these people.

ii. The Acquittal Phase

After thirteen long years of calling people to the truth, the Almighty told Muhammad (sws) that the truth had been unveiled to the Idolaters of Makkah. They had deliberately denied it, and therefore were now prone to punishment. In the meantime, the city of Madīnah had come under the influence of the Divine message and its chiefs readily accepted Islam. Muhammad (sws) was directed to migrate to Madīnah and leave his people. Sūrah Kāfirūn records this declaration of acquittal in the following words:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ
وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ

دِينٍ (١٠٩: ١-٦)

Declare [O Prophet!]: “O you Disbelievers! I shall worship not that which you worship. Nor will you ever worship [alone] that which I worship. Nor ever before this was I prepared to worship that which you worshipped. Nor were you ever prepared to worship that which I have been worshipping. [So, now] to you your religion and to me mine.” (109:1-6)

These words, it needs to be appreciated, are not meant to condemn or chide them; they actually convey their true behaviour. After thirteen long years of propagation and exhortation, the leaders of the Quraysh had refused the calls of sense and reason. Their denial was based on nothing but stubbornness in spite of the fact that the truth had been revealed to them in its purest form. The last

verse of the *sūrah*, it must be appreciated, is not an expression of tolerance; it expresses renunciation on the part of the Prophet (sws) and a warning to the disbelievers that they must now get ready to face the consequences of their obdurate denial.

As far as the People of the Book were concerned, the migration did not end the propagation phase for them since many of them were based in Madīnah. They were given more time to contemplate the consequences of denial until at a certain point in time in Madīnah, their time for accepting faith expired too. In other words, the *shahādah* (bearing conclusive evidence to the truth) reached its completion for them in the Madīnan period after which Judgement was pronounced upon them together with the Hypocrites and the Idolaters of Arabia.

iii. The Judgement Phase

Following are the details of the Judgement when it finally took place:

(1) The Reward

After Muhammad (sws) migrated to Madīnah, the people of Arabia to whom the truth had already been unveiled were given a further chance to contemplate upon the consequences of their denial. Here in Madīnah, the believers were prepared to launch a final assault on the disbelievers. They were told that their opponents would never be able to triumph over them:

وَلَوْ قَاتَلَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوَلَّوْا الْأَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُونَ وِلِيًّا وَلَا
نَصِيرًا سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا

(٤٨: ٢٢-٢٣)

And if the disbelievers should fight you, they would certainly turn their backs; then would they find neither protector nor helper. Such has been the practice approved of God already in the past: no change will you find in the practice approved of God. (48:22-23)

They are given glad tidings of success in the following words:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي
ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ
بِي شَيْئًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٥٥:٢٤)

God has promised to those among you who professed belief and did righteous deeds that He will of surety grant you political authority in this land as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish their religion – the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change [their state] after the fear in which they [lived] to one of security and peace: “They will worship Me [alone] and not associate anyone with Me.” If any do reject faith after this, they are rebellious and wicked. (24:55)

The sincere among them who were guilty of some blemishes were forgiven after some punishment:

وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خُلِفُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَنْ لَا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (١١٨: ٩)

And [He turned in mercy also] to the three whose matter was deferred to such a degree that the earth seemed constrained to them for all its spaciousness, and their souls seemed straitened to them – and they perceived that there is no fleeing from Allah but to Him. Then, He turned to them that they might repent: for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most-Merciful. (9:118)

The weak among them were told that if they repented and mended their ways and remained steadfast, then hopefully the Almighty would also forgive them:

وَأَخْرُونَ اعْتَرَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَآخَرَ سَيِّئًا عَسَىٰ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (١٠٢: ٩)

And there are others who have acknowledged their wrong-doings: they have mixed an act that was good with another that was evil. Perhaps, God will turn unto them [in mercy]: for God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (9:102)

(2) The Punishment

It should be remembered that as per the divine practice discussed in the previous pages, after intentionally denying the truth, the Idolaters and the People of the Book

had become worthy of death. However, the Almighty selectively awarded death to them. While the active adversaries of both denominations were put to death, the People of the Book were spared if they lived in subjugation to the Muslims, and the Idolaters were not given this option: they had to accept Islam or face death. The reason for this, as pointed out earlier, was that the People of the Book were primarily monotheists even though they were incriminated with certain blatant forms of polytheism and the Idolaters were avowed polytheists.

(i) For the Idolaters

Initially, the Idolaters were given an ultimatum of four months after which their humiliation would start:

بَرَاءَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ فَسِيحُوا فِي
الْأَرْضِ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُحْزِي
الْكَافِرِينَ (٩: ١-٢)

This is a declaration of acquittal from Allah and His Messenger from these Idolaters with whom you had made contracts. So move about in the land for four months but you should know that you are not beyond the grasp of Allah and Allah shall indeed humiliate those who reject Him. (9:1-2)

Tribes who had honoured their contracts were provided immunity during the period of the contract. However, once the contract period ended, they would also be treated similarly:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا فَأَتِمُوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَىٰ مُدَّتِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٩ : ٤)

But this action shall not be taken against those Idolaters with whom you have entered into alliance and who did not breach the contract nor aided anyone against you. So fulfil your engagements with them to the end of their term: for Allah loves the pious. (9:4)

Later, this announcement was repeated for those people among these Idolaters who had not accepted faith until the day of *hajj-i akbar* (9th *hijra*). They were given a final extension by a proclamation made in the field of ‘Arafāt on that day. According to the proclamation, this final extension would end with the last day of the month of Muḥarram. Before this period, they had to accept faith and demonstrate this acceptance by offering prayers and paying *zakāh*; otherwise they would face execution at the end of that period. The Qur’ān says:

فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرْمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخَذُوهُمْ وَاحْصُرُوهُمْ وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ إِنَّا تَأْبُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٩ : ٥)

So when the forbidden months are over, slay the Idolaters wherever you find them. Seize them, surround them and everywhere lie in ambush for them. But if they repent from their wrong beliefs and diligently adhere to the prayer and pay *zakāh*,

then spare their lives. God is Oft-Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. (9:5)

However, if a person asked for asylum to understand the teachings of Islam, he was to be given this asylum and no action was to be taken against him until this period was over.

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ
ثُمَّ أَبْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٩ : ٦)

And if anyone among the Idolaters asks you for asylum, grant it to him so that he may hear the Word of Allah and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge. (9:6)

(ii) For the People of the Book

A final charge sheet of the crimes of the People of the Book was presented to them in the following words:

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عِزَّىرُ بْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ
قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ يُضَاهَتُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ
أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَابَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ
سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٩ : ٣٠-٣١)

And the Jews [of Arabia] call 'Uzayr the son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God.

That is a saying from their mouth; [In this] they but imitate what the disbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth. They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of Allah, and [they take as their Lord] Christ, the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One God: there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: [far is He] from having the partners they associate [with Him]. (9:30-31)

While delineating their fate, Ghāmidī writes:⁹

After *itmām al-ḥujjah*,¹⁰ it was the Jews who were subdued first. They had been granted amnesty because of various pacts. Those among them who violated these pacts were given the punishment of denying a *rasūl* (messenger) of God. The Prophet (sws) exiled the tribe of Banū Qaynuqa' to Khaybar and that of Banū Naḍīr to Syria.¹¹ The power they wielded at Khaybar was crushed by an attack at their strongholds.¹² Prior to this, Abū Rāfi' and Ka'b ibn Ashraf were put to death in their houses.¹³ The tribe

9. Ghāmidī, *Mīzān*, 598-599.

10. Communication of the truth in such a conclusive manner that no one is left with any excuse to deny it.

11. Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mālik ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyyah*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-khayr, 1995), 40-42; *Ibid.* vol. 3, 151-160.

12. *Ibid.*, 255-277.

13. *Ibid.*, 43-48, 215-217; Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn

of Banū Qurayzah was guilty of treachery and disloyalty in the battle of Aḥzāb.¹⁴ When the clouds of war dispersed and the chances of an external attack no longer remained, the Prophet (sws) laid siege around them. When no hope remained, they asked the Prophet (sws) to appoint Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh (rta) as an arbitrator to decide their fate. Their request was accepted. Since, at that time, no specific punishment had been revealed in the Qur'ān about the fate of the Jews, Sa'd announced his verdict in accordance with the Torah. As per the Torah, the punishment for treason was that all men should be put to death; the women and children should be enslaved and the wealth of the whole nation should be distributed among the conquerors.¹⁵ In accordance with this verdict pronounced, all men were executed.¹⁶ No other incident worthy of note took place regarding the Jews until in Sūrah Tawbah the final judgement was declared against them:

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ

Sa'd al-Zuhrī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 1960), 28.

14. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawīyyah*, vol. 3, 180-182.

15. Deuteronomy, 20:10-14

16. Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 3rd ed., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1987), 1511, (nos. 3895, 3896); Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, n.d.), 1388, (nos. 1768, 1769).

اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّى
يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ (٢٩ : ٩)

Fight those from among the People of the Book who believe not in Allah and the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor adopt the Religion of Truth as their own religion. [Fight them] until they pay the *jizyah* with willing submission and are subdued. (9:29)

This directive related to both the Jews and the Christians. The punishment mentioned in these verses was in fact a show of great lenience to them because of the fact that they were originally adherents to monotheism. In reality, they had become worthy of death and destruction after deliberately denying Muhammad (sws). However, they did not benefit from this lenience because after the death of the Prophet (sws) they once again resorted to fraud and treachery.¹⁷ Consequently, the Jews of Khaybar and the Christians of Najrān were exiled once and for all from the Arabian peninsula by the Caliph ‘Umar (rta). This exile in fact thus fulfilled the following declaration of the Qur’ān

17. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 2, 973, (no. 2580); Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb ibn Ibrāhīm, *Kitāb al-khirāj*, *Faṣl fi al-fay wa al-khirāj*, (n.p.: 1302 AH), 42; Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Jābir al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* (Qum: Manshūrāt al-arummiyyah, 1404 AH), 73; Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Izz al-Dīn ibn Athīr al-Jazarī, *Al-Kāmil fi al-tārīkh*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar Beirut, 1965), 112.

about them:

وَلَوْلَا أَنْ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجَلَاءَ لَعَذَّبَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِي
الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابُ النَّارِ (٣:٥٩)

And had it not been that Allah had decreed exile for them, He would certainly have punished them in this world; and in the Hereafter theirs shall be the torment of the Fire. (59:3)

(iii) For the Hypocrites

In the third section of Sūrah Tawbah, the Hypocrites are taken to task and told that if they do not desist from this behaviour, they would meet their fate also:

يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ مَا قَالُوا وَلَقَدْ قَالُوا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوا بَعْدَ
إِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهَمُّوا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوا وَمَا نَعَمُوا إِلَّا أَنْ أَغْنَاهُمُ اللَّهُ
وَرَسُولُهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ فَإِنْ يَتُوبُوا يَكُ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَإِنْ يَتَوَلَّوْا يُعَذِّبُهُمُ
اللَّهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ
وَلَا نَصِيرٍ (٧٤: ٩)

They swear by Allah that they said nothing [evil], but indeed they uttered blasphemy, and they did it after accepting Islam; and they hatched a plot which they were unable to carry out: this revenge of theirs was only because of the blessings with which Allah and His Messenger had enriched the Muslims. If they repent, it will be best for them; but if they turn back [to their evil ways], Allah will punish them

with a grievous penalty in this life and in the Hereafter: they shall have none on earth to protect or help them. (9:74)

وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُم مِّنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مُنَافِقُونَ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ مَرَدُوا عَلَيَّ
النِّفَاقِ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَيَّ عَذَابٍ
عَظِيمٍ (٩: ١٠١)

And there are Hypocrites among the desert Arabs around you as well as among the Madīnah folk: they are obstinate in hypocrisy: you do not know them: We know them: twice shall We punish them: and in addition shall they be sent to a grievous penalty. (9:101)

Ghāmidī goes on to write:¹⁸

During this period [in Madīnah], the Prophet (sws) presented his message to all the nearby nations outside Arabia.¹⁹ By writing letters to the rulers of the nations,²⁰ he made it clear upon them that now Islam

18. Ghāmidī, *Mīzān*, 601.

19. This happened after the truce of Ḥudaybiyah, when after this pact of peace with the Quraysh, the situation arose in which the Prophet (sws) could extend his preaching endeavours.

20. The names of these heads of states are: 1. Negus of Abyssinia, 2. Maqawqas of Egypt, 3. Khusro Parvez of Persia, 4. Qayṣar of Rome, 5. Mundhir ibn Sāwī of Bahrain, 6. Hūdḥah ibn ‘Alī of Yamāmah, 7. Ḥārith ibn Abī Shamr of Damascus, 8. Jayfar of Amman. For details, see for example:

alone can guarantee existence for them.²¹ This meant that just as the truth had been conclusively communicated through the Prophet (sws) to the Idolaters and the People of the Book of Arabia, it shall also be conclusively communicated before his death to these nations. The obvious outcome of this was that these nations also shall be punished in this world as per the divine law relating to deliberate rejection of the truth communicated to people by their respective messengers. Consequently, this is what happened also and after consolidating their rule in the Arabian peninsula, the Companions (rta) launched attacks against these countries giving them two options if they wanted to remain alive: to accept faith or to accept a life of subjugation by paying *jizyah*. None of these nations was an adherent to polytheism in the real sense; otherwise they would have been treated in the same way as the Idolaters of Arabia.

It is evident from these details that all these armed campaigns and offensives were not merely *qitāl* (war), they were in reality a punishment of the Almighty. This punishment, which is meted out to those who deliberately deny the truth is an established practice of Allah. As a Divine scheme, it descended first upon the Idolaters and the People of the Book of

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī bakr ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Zād al-ma'ād fī hadyi khayr al-'ibād*, 14th ed. vol. 1 (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-risālah, 1986), 120-123.

21. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1074-1076, (no. 2782); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1393-1396, (no. 1773).

Arabia and then to certain other nations outside it. Consequently, this is absolutely certain that fighting those who have deliberately rejected the truth and forcing the vanquished to lead a life of subjugation by imposing *jizyah* on them is no longer allowed.

In other words, the mere happening of *shahādah* by the Almighty through Prophet Muḥammad (sws) in Arabia was enough to conclusively convey the truth to the rulers of neighbouring countries to whom the Prophet (sws) wrote these letters. Any evasion on their part was tantamount to a deliberate denial of the truth. As a result, they had to face the wrath of God in the form of attacks launched by the Companions (rta) after the departure of the Prophet (sws). The common masses of these countries were also observers of the divine judgement which took place in Arabia, and hence to them also the truth was conclusively conveyed. Any individual inquiry from them about the truth would of course have been treated in the same manner as it was in the case of Idolaters of Arabia.²²

It is thus obvious that these attacks launched by the Companions (rta) were part of this divine scheme and

22. The words of the Qur'ān, as quoted earlier, are:

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ ابْلِغْهُ
مَأْمَنَهُ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٩: ٦)

And if anyone among the Idolaters asks you for asylum, grant it to him so that he may hear the Word of Allah and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge. (9:6)

after their departure, Muslims cannot wage war to punish people for not accepting Islam.²³

5. Misplaced Directives

It shall now be shown on the basis of the above discussion that there are some directives of Islam which are solely related to the divine practice discussed in this article. They relate to the direct addressees of Muḥammad (sww) who had deliberately denied the truth: they do not relate to other non-Muslims. These directives are nothing but various forms of humiliation and punishments meted out to these people for their crime of intentionally denying the truth. They do not relate to non-Muslims who cannot be identified in this capacity. This identification can only be made by God. In the times of His messengers, He communicated this fact through these messengers. However, with the departure of these messengers, no communication can be established with the Almighty and even though non-Muslims who have deliberately denied the truth may exist today, they cannot be humanly identified.

Hence these directives cannot be related to non-Muslims of today.

Here, is a summary of these directives:

i. The Punishment of Apostasy

23. In this regard, it needs to be understood that, apart from self-defence, the only legitimate reason for an Islamic state to undertake *jihād* today is to curb oppression and persecution in some other state whether Muslim or Non-Muslim. The Qur'ān (4:75) explicitly refers to this.

- ii. Waging War against Non-Muslims
- iii. *Dhimmī* Status of Non-Muslim Minorities
- iv. Prohibition of Friendship with Non-Muslims
- v. The Superiority of Muslim Blood
- vi. Greeting Non-Muslims in an Inferior Way
- vii. Non-Muslims will be Doomed in the Hereafter
- viii. Assassination of Non-Muslims
- ix. Prohibition of asking for Forgiveness for Non-Muslims
- x. Prohibition of Inheritance between Muslims and Non-Muslims
- xi. Prohibition of Testimony of Non-Muslims
- xii. Prohibition of Imitating Non-Muslims
- xiii. Struggle for the Supremacy of Islam

I will now elaborate upon each of these:

i. The Punishment of Apostasy

According to almost all Muslim jurists,²⁴ a Muslim who leaves the folds of Islam is punishable by death. They base their verdict on the following Ḥadīth as narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās (rta) in the following way:

قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم مَنْ بَدَّلَ دِينَهُ فَاقْتُلُوهُ

24. See, for example: Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Rushd, *Bidāyah al-mujtahid wa nihāyah al-muqtaṣid*, 1st ed., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-ma‘rifah, 1997), 304; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jazīrī, *Kitāb al-fiqh ‘alā madhāhib al-arba‘ah*, 7th ed., vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār ihya’ al-turāth al-‘arabī, 1980), 422-425; Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Fiqh al-islāmī wa adillatuhu*, 1st ed. vol. 6 (Damascus: Dār al-fikr), 186.

The Prophet said: “Execute the people who change their faith.”²⁵

In their opinion, the ruling pronounced in this Ḥadīth is regarded to have a general application for all times upon every Muslim who renounces his faith from the times of the Prophet (sws) to the Day of Judgement.

It has been shown in the previous sections that once the Idolaters of Arabia had deliberately denied the message of Muhammad (sws), they were sentenced to death because of this denial:

فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرْمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ
وَخَذُوهُمْ وَأَحْصُرُوهُمْ وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٩: ٥)

So when the forbidden months are over, slay the Idolaters wherever you find them. Seize them, surround them and everywhere lie in ambush for them. But if they repent from their wrong beliefs and are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, then spare their lives. God is Oft-Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. (9:5)

The above quoted Ḥadīth is merely a statement of this law for the Arab Idolaters of the Prophet’s times. It has no application to any other people or nation. It does not even relate to the People of the Book of the Prophet’s times. For reasons already explained, the law for these

25. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*. vol. 3, 1098, (no. 2854).

Idolaters was to either accept faith or face death. Hence, it follows that if a person among the Idolaters after accepting faith reverted to his original state of disbelief, he had to face the same penalty. The following Ḥadīth is of similar meaning also:

عن عبد الله بن عمر قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم
أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أُقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَشْهَدُوا أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِذَا فَعَلُوا ذَلِكَ عَصَمُوا
مَنِّي دِمَاءَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَّا بِحَقِّ الْإِسْلَامِ وَحَسَابُهُمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar reports from the Prophet: “I have been directed to fight against these people until they testify to the oneness of God and to the prophethood, of Muḥammad, are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*. If they accept these terms, their lives will be spared except if they commit some other violation that entails their execution by Islamic law and [in the Hereafter] their account rests with God.”²⁶

The following text of this Ḥadīth clearly shows that by the word *الناس* (*al-nās*), the people implied are the *mushrikīn* (the Idolaters of Arabia):

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ أُمِرْتُ أَنْ
أُقَاتِلَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّى يَشْهَدُوا أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ

26. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, 53, (no. 22).

وَرَسُولُهُ فَإِذَا شَهِدُوا أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ
وَصَلَّوْا صَلَاتَنَا وَاسْتَقْبَلُوا قِبَلَتَنَا وَأَكَلُوا ذَبَائِحَنَا فَقَدْ حَرُمَتْ عَلَيْنَا
دِمَاؤُهُمْ وَأَمْوَالُهُمْ إِلَّا بِحَفْهَآ

Anas ibn Mālik reports from the Prophet: “I have been directed to fight against these Idolaters until they testify to the oneness of God and to the fact that Muhammad is His servant and messenger. If they testify to the oneness of God and to the fact that Muhammad is His servant and prophet, are diligent in our prayer and face our *qiblah* [while praying], and eat our slaughtered animals, their life and wealth we shall hold sacred except if they commit some violation.”²⁷

The onslaught launched by the first caliph Abū Bakr (rta) against those who had desisted to pay *zakāh* in his times should also be understood in this perspective. Since, according to Islam, a person who refuses to pay *zakāh* does not legally remain a Muslim, those who had evaded *zakāh* from among the Idolaters had actually reverted to their state of disbelief. About them, the directive was either to accept faith or face death. So, the caliph Abū Bakr (rta) was merely administering the punishment of death upon them.

Consequently, apart from the Idolaters of Arabia of the Prophet’s times, it has no bearing upon any other

27. Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān Aḥmad ibn Shu‘ayb al-Nasā‘ī, *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*. 1st ed, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 1991), 279, (no. 3428).

person or nation.²⁸

ii. Waging War against Non-Muslims

Authorities are of the opinion that Muslims must fight the polytheist nations as well as the Jews and Christians of today until they subdue them. It is further held that while the polytheist nations must be put to death if they do not accept faith, the Jews and Christians can be allowed to live on their religions if they submit to Muslim authority by paying *jizyah*.²⁹

The following verses are generally presented in support of this view:

28. The original research that forms the basis of this inference has been conducted by Javed Ahmad Ghāmīdī. For details, see: Javed Aḥmad Ghāmīdī, *Burhān*, 6th ed. (Lahore: Al-Mawrid, 2009), 139-143.

29. This is the view of Aḥmad, Shāfi‘ī and Ibn Ḥazm. For details see: Muwaffaq al-Din ‘Abdullāh ibn Ahmad ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī al-Ḥanbalī, *Al-Mughnī*, vol. 8 (Riyāḍ: Maktabah al-riyāḍ al-ḥadīthah, 1981), 500-501; Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī, *Kitāb al-umm*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-ma‘rifah, 1393 AH), 174-175; Abū Muḥammad ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Sa‘īd ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Muḥallā bi al-āthār*, 1st ed., vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, n.d.), 413-414. In this regard, the Hanafite jurists are however of the view that death was only prescribed for the Idolaters of Arabia of the Prophet’s times. As far as polytheists of other times and lands are concerned, they cannot be put to death if they do not accept Islam. Like the People of the Book, they too can be allowed to remain on their faith if they accept the superiority of Islam and pay *jizyah*. For details, see: Shams al-Dīn al-Sarakhsī, *Kitāb al-mabsūt*, 2nd ed., vol. 10 (Beirut: Dār al-ma‘rifah, 1978), 7.

فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرْمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ
 وَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَحْصُرُوهُمْ وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا
 الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٩: ٥)

So when the forbidden months are over, slay the Idolaters wherever you find them. Seize them, surround them and everywhere lie in ambush for them. But if they repent from their wrong beliefs and are diligent in the prayers and pay *zakāh*, then spare their lives. God is Oft-Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. (9:5)

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ
 اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّى
 يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ (٩: ٢٩)

Fight those who believe not in Allah or the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the People of the Book, until they pay the *jizyah* after being subdued and live a life of submission. (9:29)

It has been shown in the previous sections that these verses and other verses of similar meaning specifically pertain to the Idolaters, the Jews and the Christians of the Prophet Muhammad's times. They delineate a divine practice which relates only to the immediate addressees of a messenger of God. The onslaught they mention, as

has been discussed earlier, was specific in nature and cannot be extended to people after them. Consequently, the age old debate about whether Islam was spread through the sword or not should also be understood in this perspective. The Companions (rta) of Muhammad (sws) in their collective capacity were only completing a divine scheme of God initiated by Muḥammad (sws): in reality, they were not spreading Islam; they were punishing people who had deliberately denied the truth.

Consequently, after them, as has been stated earlier, Muslims have no right to subdue nations and countries in the name of Islam or impose *jizyah* upon them.

iii. The *Dhimmī* Status of Non-Muslim Minorities

It is held by Muslim authorities that the non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state are of two categories³⁰ regarding their citizenship in a state:

(i) *Dhimmīs*, viz. those who have come under an Islamic State on account of being subdued in a battle.

(ii) *Musta'mins*, viz. non-Muslim residents of *Dār al-ḥarb* (abode of war) who temporarily reside in *Dār al-islām* (abode of Islam).

It has been explained in the previous sections that subduing non-Muslims by force is no longer permitted today; waging war against them to punish them for deliberately denying the truth relates to a divine practice pertaining to the immediate and foremost addressees of Muḥammad (sws), hence *dhimmīs* and *musta'mins* are

30. 'Abd al-Karīm Zaydān, *Aḥkām al-dhimiyyīn wa al-musta'minīn fī dār al-islām*, 1st ed. (Baghdad: Maktabah al-Quds, 1982), 22-60.

categories of non-Muslims specific to the age of the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta). The directives of *fiqh* related to *dhimmīs* and *musta'mins* consequently cannot be related to the non-Muslims of today.

The non-Muslim minorities of today living in Muslim countries can only be classified as *mu'āhids* (citizenship by contract).³¹ Keeping in view the general welfare of the state, through mutual consent, any contract can be made with non-Muslims of today regarding their rights. As such, all dealings with them should be according to the terms of the treaty concluded with them.

iv. Prohibition of Friendship with Non-Muslims

On the basis of the following verse of the Qur'ān, some Muslim scholars³² are of the view that Muslims should never make friends with non-Muslims; in fact, they should show hostility and venom towards them:

لَا يَتَّخِذُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣: ٢٨)

Believers should not make friends with the disbelievers leaving aside the believers. (3:28)

Similar verses read:

31. The *mūthāq* (treaty) of Madīnah made with Jewish tribes by the Prophet (sws) is an example of this type of citizenship.

32. Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, 1405 AH), 288; Abū al-Fadā' Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-'Azīm*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Lahore: Amjad Academy, 1982), 68.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
أَتُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا مُبِينًا (٤: ١٤٤)

Believers! Do not make friends with the disbelievers leaving aside the believers. Do you wish to offer God an open argument against yourselves? (4:144)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَى أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ
أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ (٥: ٥١)

Believers! Take not these Jews and the Christians for your friends. They are but friends to each other. And he amongst you who turns to them [for friendship] is of them. (5:51)

A deliberation at the context of these verses, will show that they were revealed in Madīnah in that phase of the Prophetic mission in which the Muslims were being told to separate themselves as a collectivity from the non-Muslims. This was because the latter could be identified as a collectivity that was soon to be visited by divine punishment if they continued to deliberately deny the truth. In other words, if these verses are interpreted in the light of the divine practice discussed in the previous pages, it becomes evident that the *alif lām* (al-) on *al-kāfirīn* (these disbelievers), on *al-yahūd* (these Jews) and on *al-naṣārā* (these Christians) refers to the Jews and Christians who were the direct and immediate addressees of Muḥammad (sws) and had deliberately denied the truth communicated to them by him.

Consequently, none of these verses relates to the non-Muslims of today.

v. The Superiority of Muslim Blood

The following Ḥādīth is presented as evidence to support the view that a Muslim will not be killed if he is guilty of killing a non-Muslim³³ whereas the reverse will be carried out:

عن عَمْرٍو بن شُعَيْبٍ عن أبيه عن جَدِّهِ عن النبي لَأُيَقْتَلُ مُؤْمِنٌ بِكَافِرٍ
Shu‘ayb ibn Muḥammad narrated from his father,
‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ who reported from
the Prophet: “No Believer will be killed in *qiṣāṣ* of a
Disbeliever.”³⁴

It is evident from another narrative attributed to ‘Alī (rta) that here the word “Disbeliever” signifies an Idolater:

لَأُيَقْتَلُ مُسْلِمٌ بِمُشْرِكٍ
No Muslim will be killed in *qiṣāṣ* of an Idolater.³⁵

It essential to relate this Ḥādīth to its basis in the Qur’ān

33. This is the opinion of Shāfi‘ī and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. For details, see: Ibn Qudāmah, *Al-Mughnī*, vol. 7, 652-653; Shāfi‘ī, *Kitāb al-umm*, vol. 6, 38.

34. Abū Dā‘ūd Sulymān ibn al-Ash‘ath, *Sunan*, vol. 4 (n.p.: Dār al-fikr, n.d.) 173, (no. 4506).

35. Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī, *Sunan*, 1st ed, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-‘arabī, 1407 AH), 249, (no. 2356).

since a Ḥadīth cannot give an independent directive. Thus in accordance with the divine practice mentioned in the Qur’ān as discussed in this treatise, after Muhammad’s migration to Madīnah, the Idolaters had lost their right to live after having intentionally denied the truth. As a result, this Ḥadīth and other Aḥādīth of similar meaning are solely related to the Idolaters of the Prophet’s times.³⁶ This directive has no bearing on the non-Muslims of today.

Consequently, today if a Muslim is guilty of murdering a non-Muslim, he shall certainly be sent to the gallows if he is not forgiven by the family of the slain.

vi. Greeting Non-Muslims in an Inferior Way

It is held by many Muslims that one should not initiate salutations with non-Muslims because this would be showing respect to them. In all probability, their view is based on the following narrative:

عن أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا تَبْدَعُوا
الْيَهُودَ وَلَا النَّصَارَى بِالسَّلَامِ

Abū Hurayrah reported from the Prophet: “Don’t initiate salutations to the Jews or the Christians.”³⁷

If this narrative is understood in the light of the divine practice discussed in this article, one can conclude that

36. Since the word *mushrik* is used in this Ḥadīth, the directive it mentions does not even pertain to the People of the Book of the Prophet’s times.

37. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4, 1707, (no. 2167).

this was a form of humiliation for the Jews and Christians of the Prophet's times who had deliberately denied the truth. This attitude of course cannot be adopted with other non-Muslims.

Even in the time of the Prophet (sww), before the non-Muslims had deliberately rejected the truth, they too were greeted by taking the initiative. In this period, the Prophet (sww) himself said *al-salāmu* 'alaykum to the non-Muslims of his times. Usāmah ibn Zayd reports:

عَنْ عُرْوَةَ أَنَّ أُسَامَةَ بْنَ زَيْدٍ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
مَرَّ بِمَجْلِسٍ وَفِيهِ أَخْلَاطٌ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْيَهُودِ فَسَلَّمَ عَلَيْهِمْ

'Urwah reports that Usāmah ibn Zayd informed him that the Prophet (sww) [once] passed by a mixed gathering of Muslims and Jews and said *al-salāmu* 'alaykum to them.³⁸

vii. Non-Muslims will be Doomed in the Hereafter

It is generally held that all non-Muslims will necessarily go to Hell. Verses like the following usually form the basis of this view:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أُولَئِكَ هُمْ شَرُّ الْبَرِيَّةِ (٩٨: ٦)

These Disbelievers among the People of the Book and the Idolaters shall burn for ever in the fire of

38. Abū 'Īsā Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, vol 5 (Beirut: Dār ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, n.d.), 61, (no. 2702).

Hell. They are the vilest of all creatures. (98:6)³⁹

Once again, it must be appreciated that these verses speak of the Jews and Christians and the Idolaters of the Prophet Muhammad's (sws) times, who had knowingly denied the truth. According to the divine practice discussed in the previous pages, such non-Muslims were condemned to this fate. As far as the non-Muslims of later times are concerned, they will meet this fate only if they are not sincere seekers of the truth and also deny the truth in spite of being convinced about it.

viii. Assassination of Non-Muslims

One of the arguments on the basis of which it is held that blasphemy is punishable by death is the assassination of certain non-Muslims of the Prophet's times who had allegedly blasphemed against Allah and the Prophet (sws).⁴⁰ Thus, for example, Abū Rāfi' and Ka'b ibn Ashraf were put to death in their houses.⁴¹

If all these cases are analyzed, it comes to light that this conclusion is incorrect.

Once again we are faced with a situation in which the people assassinated are those who, as per the divine practice discussed in this treatise, had already become

39. For verses of similar meaning, see: 3:10, 63, 131; 4:56, 115; 7:41; 8:50; 9:63.

40. Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyah, *Al-Ṣārim al-maslūl 'alā shātim al-rasūl*, 1st ed., (Multan: Nashr al-sunnah, n.d.), 61-180.

41. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawīyyah*, vol. 3, 43-48; *Ibid.*, 215-217; Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 2, 28.

worthy of death once they had intentionally denied the truth after the Prophet's migration to Madīnah. While most of them were given more time and respite to contemplate on the consequences of their denial, those among them who assumed the role of active adversaries and were spreading disorder and anarchy in the society were punished by death after they were repeatedly warned of their highly antagonizing behaviour.

ix. Prohibition of asking for Forgiveness for Non-Muslims

A common perception among Muslims is that the following verse of the Qur'ān has stopped them from asking the Almighty for forgiveness of non-Muslims:

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا أَوْلِيَا
قُرْبَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ (١١٣: ٩)

It is not proper for the Prophet and those who believe to ask Allah's Forgiveness for the *mushrikūn*, even though they be of kin, after it has become clear to them that they are the dwellers of the Fire. (9:113)

Again, it needs to be appreciated, as the verse itself clarifies, that the Idolaters of Arabia of the Prophet's times were condemned to Hell because of their persistence in denying the truth in spite of being convinced about it. It was such people about whom, as per the divine practice discussed earlier, the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims were stopped from praying and asking forgiveness. Hence, this verse does not relate to non-Muslims of times after the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta).

x. Prohibition of Inheritance between Muslims and Non-Muslims

On the basis of the following narrative, there are scholars who are of the view that Muslims and non-Muslims cannot mutually inherit from one another:⁴²

عن أُسَامَةَ بْنِ زَيْدٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
قَالَ لَا يَرِثُ الْمُسْلِمُ الْكَافِرَ وَلَا الْكَافِرُ الْمُسْلِمَ

Usāmah ibn Zayd reported that the Prophet said: “A Muslim cannot be an heir to a Disbeliever nor can a Disbeliever be a Muslim’s.”⁴³

Today with numerous conversions taking place all over the world, this issue has become very relevant as often a family ends up in a situation in which one blood relative has entered the folds of Islam.

If this Ḥadīth is understood in the light of the divine practice discussed in foregoing pages, one can see that the article *alif lām* appended to the word *al-kāfir*. Giving due consideration to this, an accurate translation of this word would be “such a Disbeliever”. This, in other words, would refer to the Disbelievers of the times of Muḥammad (sws) who had deliberately denied the truth.⁴⁴ Now, according to the Qur’ān (4:12), the basis of inheritance between relatives is “benefit of kinship”. If a lack of this benefit is diagnosed in some relations, then the matter of inheritance will be severed between them.

42. See, for example: Al-Sarakhsī. *Kitāb al-mabsūt*, vol. 30, 30.

43. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 6, 2484, (no. 6383).

44. Adapted from: Ghāmīdī, *Mīzān*, 39.

After a deliberate denial of the truth by the Quraysh and the People of the Book, this “benefit of kinship” no longer existed between them and the Muslims. Hence, they could not inherit from one another.

In other words, this directive is only related to the direct addressees of the Prophet (sww), and has no bearing on later non-Muslims.

xi. Prohibition of Testimony of Non-Muslims

There is a consensus among Muslim scholars that the testimony of non-Muslims is inadmissible except in cases of will testaments. The reason for this is that the Qur’ān (2:281) has asked Muslims to make only those people as witnesses who are their favoured ones, and surely the disbelievers cannot be regarded in this category.⁴⁵

Here again the disbelievers under discussion are the ones who as per the divine practice discussed in this treatise are those who had denied the truth in spite of being convinced about and who as a result had earned the wrath of God. Non-Muslims who were not a party to this divine practice are not implied here.

xii. Prohibition of Imitating Non-Muslims

On the basis of the following narrative, scholars opine that Muslims should not adopt the ways and mannerisms of non-Muslims in any way.⁴⁶ Thus, for example, they

45. See: Abū Ja‘far Nahhās, *Ma‘āna al-Qur’ān*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Makkah: Jāmi‘ah Umm al-Qurā, 1409 AH), 377.

46. See, for example: Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyah, *Majmū‘ah al-fatāwā*, 2nd ed., vol. 22 (n.p.: Maktabah Ibn Taymiyah, n.d.), 154.

should neither wear their dress nor attend or celebrate their festivals. The following narrative is generally presented in support of this view:

عَنْ بِنِ عُمَرَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ تَشَبَّهَ
بِقَوْمٍ فَهُوَ مِنْهُمْ

Ibn ‘Umar said that the Prophet said: “He who imitates a nation is from among them.”⁴⁷

An important principle in understanding a Ḥadīth is to collect all its variant texts and then evaluate them. In this regard, if all the variants of this narrative are collated and analyzed, a very different picture emerges. A variant reads:

عَنْ بِنِ عُمَرَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بُعِثْتُ بِالسَّيْفِ
حَتَّى يُعْبَدَ اللَّهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَجُعِلَ رِزْقِي تَحْتَ ظِلِّ رَمْحِي وَجُعِلَ الدَّلَّةُ
وَالصَّعَارُ عَلَى مَنْ خَالَفَ أَمْرِي وَمَنْ تَشَبَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ فَهُوَ مِنْهُمْ

Ibn ‘Umar said that the Prophet said: “I have been sent with the sword until God alone is worshipped and my livelihood has been placed under the shade of my spear and there is humiliation and subjugation for those who disobey me and he who imitates a nation will be regarded from among them.”⁴⁸

47. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 44, (no. 4031).

48. Abū ‘Abdullāh Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Mu’assasah al-Qurṭubah, n.d.), 50, (no. 5114).

A simple analysis of this detailed narrative shows that its last sentence has been quoted out of context, and thereby taken to mean an absolute directive which prohibits Muslims from adopting the mannerisms of other nations. If the complete narrative is analyzed, it comes to light that it is nothing but an explanation of the divine practice of God mentioned in the Qur'ān, as discussed in detail in this article. As per this practice, those who had disobeyed the Prophet (sws) were destined to be doomed and humiliated. They would be subjugated by the swords of his Companions (rta). Now this subjugation has been discussed in the Qur'ān in detail. At times, these subjugation campaigns were directed to areas in which Muslims and non-Muslims were living together and there was no distinction between the two, neither in dress nor in places of residence. On the one hand, the attacking Muslim armies were told by the Qur'ān that if someone whom they attacked said the ceremonial salutation (*al-ṣalāmu 'alaykum*) to them, then they should not say anything to him and regard him as a Muslim; they should not tell him that he is not a Muslim simply to loot his wealth:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا وَلَا تَقُولُوا
لِمَنْ أَلْقَى إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَغَانِمٌ كَثِيرَةٌ كَذَلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِّن قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ
فَتَبَيَّنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (٩٤:٤)

Believers! Investigate when you go to fight for the cause of God, and do not say to those that offer you

peace: “You are not believers,” – seeking the booty of this world; for with God has a lot of booty. Previously you were also like this. The Almighty then bestowed on you His grace. Therefore investigate; God is cognizant of all your actions. (4:94)

What is evident from this narrative is that on the other hand, the attacked Muslim inhabitants in such mixed localities must have been told to distinguish themselves from non-Muslim neighbours in some form or the other lest the attacking Muslim army attacks them too since they outwardly resemble the non-Muslims. This is what is meant by the last part of the narrative. If all the suppressed and implied portions are unfolded in the light of the Qur’ān, the last part of the narrative would be something like this: “Humiliation and subjugation is destined for those who disobey me. So O you Muslims who live in the areas of non-Muslims! In order to make your selves known to the attacking Muslim army that you are Muslims, make some distinguishing mark that makes you distinct from non-Muslims; If you do not distinguish yourself and [as a result] resemble the non-Muslims, then he who resembles an enemy nation, will be regarded among them by the attacking Muslim army.”

Hence this narrative has no bearing on wearing the dress or adopting the ways of non-Muslims. In other words, Muslims are not bound in any way in this regard by their religion. Adopting the ways and mannerisms of other nations has been left to their discretion.

xiii. Struggle for the Supremacy of Islam

It is held by some Muslim scholars of contemporary

times that it is the religious obligation of Muslims to strive for the supremacy of Islam. If a Muslim country is not following Islam, Muslims must organize an effort to topple its rulers and enforce Islam. An obvious corollary of this view point is that if they are living as minorities in some non-Muslim country, here also they should strive to achieve the supremacy of Islam. They term this struggle an “Islamic Revolution” and present the following verse in support of this view:⁴⁹

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ
كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ (٩: ٦١)

It is He Who has sent His *rasūl* with guidance and the religion of truth that he may proclaim it over all religions, even though the Idolaters may detest [this]. (61:9)

On the basis of the phrase “all religions”, it is understood that the followers of Islam must struggle for its dominance in their respective countries and territories.

An analysis of the context of this verse shows that it also belongs to the divine practice discussed in detail in this article. Thus it is to be noted that the word *al-mushrikīn* (the Idolaters) is used in this verse. The Qur’ān uses this word specifically for the Idolaters of Arabia of the Prophet’s times. As a result, “all the

49. See for example Abū al-A‘lā al-Mawdūdī, *Shahādat-i ḥaq*, 10th ed., Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1961; YY Haddad, *The Qur’ānic Justification of an Islamic Revolution: The View of Syed Qutb*, *The Middle East Journal*, 37 (1), 1983, pp. 17-20.

religions” in the conjugate clause can only mean all the religions of Arabia at that time.⁵⁰ Therefore, the verse has no bearing on Muslims after the times of the Prophet Muhammad (sws).

It has already been shown in an earlier section that the Companions (rta) of Muhammad (sws) were promised sovereignty in the land of Arabia after the Idolaters of Arabia had knowingly denied the message of Muhammad (sws).

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي
ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ (٥٥: ٢٤)

God has promised those among you who professed belief and did righteous deeds that He will surely grant them political authority in this land as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish their religion – the one which He has chosen for them. (24:55)

Consequently, striving to achieve the political supremacy of Islam is no religious obligation of a Muslim. The verses from which this obligation has been construed are specifically linked to a divine practice related to Muhammad (sws) and his Companions (rta).⁵¹

50. The original research that leads to this conclusion has been carried out by Javed Ahmad Ghāmīdī. For details see: Ghāmīdī, *Burhān*, 169-172.

51. This of course does not mean that Muslims should not

6. Conclusion: Relations with Non-Muslims

It is evident from the forgoing discussion that in order to make the reward and punishment that is going to take place in the Hereafter an observable reality in this world, the Almighty selects certain personalities called messengers. Their own person becomes a means to communicate the truth to their addressees in a conclusive manner. Besides this powerful and observable means, these messengers also elucidate and explain the truth to their respective peoples. As indicated earlier, this truth is that a person shall one day be held accountable before the Almighty on basis of his deeds and then be rewarded and punished accordingly. With the special help and assistance of the Almighty, these messengers remove misconceptions that surround this truth, and vehemently remind people that if they do not accept it they shall be doomed in this world and in the Hereafter. Messengers give glad tidings of success both in this world and in the next to those who profess faith in them. People who deliberately deny the truth are punished in various degrees so that this whole episode can substantiate the reward and punishment that is to take place on similar grounds in the Hereafter.

As a consequence of this fundamental premise, what needs to be understood is that some directives of Islam are specific to this divine practice which relates to the age of the Prophet Muhammad (sws) and his Companions (rta) and cannot be extended to later

strive for this cause. It only means that this is not their religious responsibility.

periods. The reason for this, as pointed out many times before, is that as per the divine practice discussed in the previous sections, these directives relate to non-Muslims who intentionally deny the truth. After the termination of the institution of revelation, no one can know whether a non-Muslim is deliberately denying the truth or not. Only the Almighty knows this. In the age of messengers, He chose to reveal this judgement through His appointees, while after them He has not chosen to do so. Consequently, it is imperative that Muslims study the Qur'ān and the life of the Prophet (sws), which are replete with the details of this divine practice in the proper perspective.

If all these premises are true, then the attitude of Muslims towards non-Muslims should drastically change. Instead of showing an antagonistic behaviour towards them by threatening to subdue them, they should try to present the teachings of Islam in a lucid and articulate manner. They should think of ways and means to communicate the true message of Islam and refrain from policing and threatening non-Muslims. Like true preachers, they should invest their time in thinking of ways and means to earnestly call people to the truth. Their preaching should have a humble tone in it and they should deal very affectionately and amicably with non-Muslims. Muslims should consider them as their potential addressees to whom they can present the teachings of Islam through character and good deeds. Being antagonistic and hostile to them is a totally uncalled for attitude.

Moreover, all Muslim revivalist movements should

keep in mind the fact that nowhere has their religion directed Muslims to struggle for the supremacy of Islam as an obligation. It is obvious that wherever they are in majority, Islam should be implemented and where they are not they should convince and educate people to win majority. The Prophet (sww) and his Companions (rta) never launched a struggle to establish an Islamic state. It was as per the divine practice discussed in this article that they were granted the rulership of a state. Hence, struggling to establish an Islamic state is not a directive of the *sharī'ah*.

Here it would be worthwhile to mention that if Muslims want to bring about any change like implementing *sharī'ah* laws in their own country or in the country they live as a minority, Islam has bound them to adopt democratic means. They must educate and convince people in its favour until they enjoy the confidence of the majority. A minority group has not been given the right to impose its views on the majority. In this regard, it needs to be appreciated that the Qur'ān is absolutely clear:

أَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ (٤٢: ٣٨)

The affairs of state of the believers are run by their mutual consultation. (42:38)

Keeping in view linguistic considerations, it is evident that a consensus or majority opinion of the Muslims can in no way be overruled. The Qur'ān has not said: “the believers are consulted in their affairs”; it has, on the contrary, declared: “their affairs of state are run by their

mutual consultation.” The style and pattern of the verse demands that an Islamic government should be established through the consultation of the believers, continue to exist on this basis and should cease to exist without it. It should conduct its affairs, in all cases, on the basis of a consensus or majority opinion of the citizens.

Muslims must therefore adopt democratic means to bring a change in the country – whether Muslim or non-Muslim – they are living in. They must also remember that as citizens of non-Muslim countries they are bound in a contract with that country. They must follow the laws of the country – whose citizens they have become by their own free choice – in letter and in spirit. Abiding by laws is their religious duty. They must remember that people who break their promises are disliked by the Almighty. Moreover, if they feel that it is not possible for them to practice their religion because of some hindrance created by a law or ruling of that country, even then they should not disobey the law and cause any disruption. No doubt this is persecution and such a condemnable act; however, the correct attitude in such circumstances would be to migrate from that country, if every peaceful effort to achieve religious freedom fails.

Today, the non-Muslim world has severe apprehensions about the Muslim bloc. To them Muslims pose a great threat to their freedom and liberty. Muslims should come forward and put an end to the threat non-Muslims feel from them. The highly talked of “Clash of Civilizations” should be converted into a “Dialogue between Civilizations”.

Moreover, if the issues discussed in this article are

found convincing, then the real threat to non-Muslims lies elsewhere: They must calmly contemplate on the fate of deliberately denying the last Messenger of God. They must keep in mind the fate of their ancestors in the Prophetic times – a fate which they met by intentionally denying him. However, the sword of Democles does not hang over them in this world at least. Whether they knowingly deny may or may not be known in this world, but surely in the Hereafter this reality shall be unveiled. Such an attitude would lead them to the gravest of penalties. Similarly, they should also consider how a careless attitude in this regard may prove disastrous for them in the Hereafter for according to the Qur’ān the Almighty has sent His messengers and prophets so that man is left with no excuse to deny the truth:

رُسُلًا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِأَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ
الرُّسُلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (٤: ١٦٥)

[We sent] messengers who gave glad tidings as well as warnings so that mankind after the coming of these messengers are left with no plea against the Almighty [regarding the basic truths]. For God is exalted in Power, Wise. (4:165)

Thus Muhammad (sws) and his preaching mission must always continue to be thought-provoking to non-Muslims since it poses a threat to them in the Hereafter if they deny him in spite of being convinced of his prophethood. They must keep in mind that as per the Qur’ān, the Almighty has played His role in elucidating

this fact. Only a legitimate excuse on their part can now save them on the Day of Judgement from His wrath.

Appendix: Brief Biographical Notes

i. Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī⁵²

Al-Farāhī was born in 1863⁵³ in Phriha (hence the name Farāhī), a small village in Azamgarh district (Uttar Pardesh, India). He was a cousin of the famous theologian-historian Shiblī Nu‘mānī (d. 1914), from whom he learnt Arabic. He studied Arabic literature with Fayḍ al-Ḥasan Sahāranpūrī (d. 1887), who was considered a master in this field at that time. At the age of twenty one, he took admission in the Aligarh Muslim College to study modern disciplines of knowledge. Here he also learnt Hebrew from the German Orientalist Josef Horovitz (d. 1931). After his graduation from the Allahbad university, he taught at various institutions including Aligarh and Dār al-‘ulūm, Hyderabad.

Whilst teaching at the Dār al-‘ulūm, al-Farahī proposed the setting up of a university where all

52. Expanded from: Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur’ān, A Study of Nazm in Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, 1st ed. (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986), 6-9.

53. Sharf al-Dīn Iṣlāhī, *Dhikr-i Farāhī*, 1st ed. (Lahore: Dār al-tadhkīr, 2002), 68.

religious and modern sciences would be taught in Urdu. Later in 1919, his vision materialized in the form of Jāmi‘ah ‘Uthmāniyyah, Hyderabad. In 1925, he returned to his home town Azamgarh and took charge of the Madrasah al-Iṣlāḥ. Here, besides managing the affairs of the Madrasah, al-Farāhī devoted most of his time in training a few students. Among them, was Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, who was destined to become the greatest exponent of his thought after him. Farāhī died on 11th November 1930 in Mithra, where he had gone for treatment.

For almost fifty years, al-Farāhī reflected over the Qur’an, which remained his chief interest and the focal point of all his writings. His greatest contribution is to re-direct the attention of Muslim scholars to the Qur’ān as the basis and ultimate authority in all matters of religion. He stressed that the Qur’ān should be practically regarded as the *mīzān* (the scale that weighs the truth) and the *furqān* (the distinguisher between good and evil), a status which it invests on itself. Thus Aḥādīth cannot change or modify the Qur’ān in any way. They should be interpreted in the light shed by this divine book and not vice versa. It was as result of this status of the Qur’ān that he insisted on the univocity of the Qur’ānic text and rejected that variant readings be regarded as the Qur’ān per se.

It was his deep deliberation on the Qur’ān that led him to unfold its *naẓm* (coherence) in a unique way. By taking into consideration, the three constituents of *naẓm*: order (*tartīb*), proportion (*tanāsub*) and unity (*waḥdāniyyah*), he proved that a single interpretation of

the Qur'ān was possible. This alone was a far reaching consequence of the principle of Qur'ānic *naẓm*. Serious differences in the interpretation of the Qur'ān which have given rise to the menace of religious sectarianism are actually the result of disregarding thematic and structural coherence in the arrangement and mutual relationship of various Qur'ānic verses and paragraphs. Each sect has adopted its interpretation because isolating a verse from its context can associate multiple meanings to it. It is only the coherence of the Qur'ān, which if considered leads to a definite and integrated understanding of the Divine Message.

Al-Farāhī also made another significant contribution by rewriting and reconstructing most sub-disciplines of the Arabic language needed to study the Qur'ān.

Almost all of al-Farāhī's works are in Arabic. Except for a few, most of them are in the form of notes and unfinished books. He could only complete a few of them. Foremost among them is a collection of his interpretation of fourteen *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān by the name *Majmū'ah tafāsīr-i Farāhī*. In his *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*, he explained some difficult words and constructions of the Qur'ān. He elucidated the nature of oaths and adjurations in the Qur'ān in his book entitled *Al-Im'ān fī aqsām al-Qur'ān*. In his book, *Al-Rā'y al-ṣahīḥ fī man huwa al-dhabīḥ*, he elaborated upon the philosophy of sacrifice and by furnishing evidences from the Qur'ān and the Torah convincingly refuted the claim of the Jews that it was Isaac (sws) not Ishmael (sws) whom Abraham (sws) had intended to sacrifice. He re-laid the principles of rhetoric needed to study the Qur'ān in *Jamhurah al-balāghah* and outlined some

special Qur'ānic styles and constructions in *Asālīb al-Qur'ān*. The arguments he presented to verify the principle of coherence are soundly enlisted in *Dalā'il al-niẓām*. His complete mastery of Arabic and Persian can be seen from his poetical works in both these languages.

Besides these scholarly dissertations, there are at least twenty other unfinished works which need to be completed and developed further.

ii. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī

Iṣlāḥī was born in 1904 at Bamhūr, a small village in Azamgarh (U.P.), India. He passed out from the Madrasah al-Iṣlāḥ around 1922. The teacher which influenced him the most during his student life at the Madrasah was 'Abd al-Raḥmān Nigrāmī (d. 1928?), himself a versatile genius. Nigrāmī's attention helped him in developing a profound inclination towards Arabic literature. After graduating from the Madrasah, he entered the field of journalism. For a while, he edited a newspaper *Madīnah* at *Bijnawr* and also remained associated with *Sach*, a newspaper edited by the luminary 'Abd al-Mājid Daryābādī (d. 1977).

From 1925-1930, he remained with al-Farāhī like his shadow. It was in this forming period of his life in which he developed a deep understanding of the Qur'ān and learnt from al-Farāhī the principles of direct deliberation on the Book of Allah. After al-Farāhī's death, Iṣlāḥī studied Ḥadīth from a celebrated scholar of this discipline, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥaddith Mubārakpurī (d. 1935). In 1936, he founded the Dā'irah-i Ḥamidiyyah, a small institute to disseminate the Qur'ānic thought of al-Farāhī. Under the auspices of this institute, he brought

out a monthly journal, *al-Iṣlāḥ*, in which he translated many portions of al-Farāḥī's treatises written in Arabic.

Iṣlāḥī was among the founder members of the *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*, a religious party founded by the eminent Islamic scholar, Abū al-A'ālā Mawdūdī (d. 1979), in 1941. In 1958, he abandoned the *Jamā'at*, after serious differences arose between him and Mawdūdī on the nature of the constitution of the *Jamā'at*.

After leaving the *Jamā'at*, he finally got the chance to fulfil his cherished goal of writing a commentary on the Qur'ān. He also launched a monthly journal *Mithāq* in which portions of this commentary, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, were published. In 1961, he established a small study circle *Ḥalqah Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* for college students to whom he taught Arabic language and literature, the Holy Qur'ān and the *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ* of Imām Muslim. He also taught Shāh Walī Ullāh's *Hujjatullāh al-bālighah* and Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah* to some pupils.

It was on the 29th of Ramaḍān 1400/ 12th August 1980 when the great day arrived – the day when a monumental effort reached its culmination: the *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* had taken twenty-two long years to complete. In the *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, he produced a masterpiece of *tafsīr* which does not simply reflect the principles of his illustrious mentor, al-Farāḥī: it also bears the stamp of originality. It is indeed a unique work that has ushered in a new era in the field of scriptural interpretation. Iṣlāḥī proved from a Qur'ānic verse that the Almighty has divided the Qur'ān in seven discrete groups keeping in view the preaching mission of the Prophet Muhammad (sws). Each of these groups has a theme and *sūrah*s are

arranged in a group keeping in view this theme. Within a group, the *sūrahs* themselves generally occur in pairs with regard to the subject discussed in them. Each *sūrah* also has a specific theme which is the most comprehensive statement of its contents.

In 1981, Iṣlāhī founded the *Idarah Tadabbur-i Qur'ān-o Hadith*, which remained until his death (15th December 1997) the centre of his intellectual activities. A quarterly journal *Tadabbur* was taken out in 1981 as its organ. He gave weekly lectures on the text of the Qur'ān. Later, he took up deep study on the principles of Ḥadīth and began teaching *al-Mu'aṭṭā'* of Imām Mālik in weekly sittings to a close circle of students and associates. After completing *al-Mu'aṭṭā'*, he also taught some portions of Imām al-Bukhārī's *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

Besides the *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, Iṣlāhī authored a number of books in Urdu on various topics of Islam. They include *Tazkiyah-i nafs* (Purification of the Soul), *Ḥaqīqat-i shirk-o tawḥīd* (The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism), *Da'wat-i dīn awr us ka ṭarīqah-i kār* (Islamic Message and the Mode of its Preaching), *Islāmī riyāsat* (The Islamic State), *Mabādī tadabbur-i Qur'ān* (Principles of Understanding the Qur'ān), *Mabādī tadabbur-i Ḥadīth* (Principles of Understanding the Ḥadīth), *Islāmī riyāsat mayn fiqhī ikhtilāfāt kā hal* (Solution of Juristic Differences in an Islamic State) and *Islāmī qānūn kī tadwīn* (Codification of Islamic Law).

Iṣlāhī also translated al-Fārahī's commentary consisting of fourteen *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān, as well as his following books from Arabic: *Fī man huwa al-dhabīh* (Which of Abraham's son was Sacrificed?) and

Aqsām al-Qur’ān (Oaths of the Qur’ān).

www.amin-ahsan-islahi.com is a resource site on his life and works.

iii. Jāved Aḥmad Ghāmidī

Jāved Aḥmad Ghāmidī was born in 1951 in a village of Sāhīwāl, a district of the Punjab province. After matriculating from a local school, he came to Lahore in 1967 where he is settled eversince. He did his BA honours (part I) in English Literature from the Government College, Lahore in 1972 and studied Islamic disciplines in the traditional manner from various teachers and scholars throughout his early years. In 1973, he came under the tutelage of Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī (d. 1997), who was destined to who have a deep impact on him. He was also associated with the famous scholar and revivalist Abū al-A‘lā Mawdūdī (d. 1979) for several years. He taught Islamic studies at the Civil Services Academy for more than a decade from 1979 to 1991.

Ghāmidī has written and lectured widely on the Qur’ān, Islamic law and various other aspects of Islam. He is the founder-president of Al-Mawrid Institute of Islamic Sciences (www.al-mawrid.org) and is the chief editor of the Urdu Monthly “Ishraq” (www.ghamidi.net/Ishraq.html) and the English Monthly “Renaissance” (www.monthly-renaissance.com). He is also the founder of the Mus‘ab School System (www.musab.edu.pk). He appears regularly on various tv channels to discuss Islam and some contemporary issues as a part of his campaign to educate people about Islam. His talks and lectures can be accessed online from www.tv-almawrid.org.

Ghāmidī has drawn heavily from the Qur'ānic thought of his two illustrious predecessors, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī presenting many of their views in a more precise manner. However, many of his contributions to the Islamic thought are original.

Both these features can be witnessed in his ongoing annotated translation of the Qur'ān, *al-Bayān*. It takes the reader close to the classical Arabic of the Qur'ān in which ideas are conveyed with brevity and terseness. Words and concepts which are understood are suppressed and left to the perspicacity of the reader. To achieve this brevity, various devices are employed in classical Arabic which are not found in most other languages. Ghāmidī has tried to unfold the meaning of the divine message by taking into consideration these devices within the text of the translation.

Another original contribution of Ghāmidī is his categorization of the contents of religion. According to him, the Qur'ān itself divides the contents of Islam in two categories: *al-Hikmah* and *al-Sharī'ah*. Whilst the former refers to topics related to the philosophy of religion, the latter to those that relate to law. Ghāmidī further classifies these two categories into sub-categories. The former comprises two sub-categories: Faith and Ethics and the latter comprises ten sub-categories: The *Sharī'ah* of Worship Rituals, The Social *Sharī'ah*, The Political *Sharī'ah*, The Economic *Sharī'ah*, The *Sharī'ah* of Preaching, The *Sharī'ah* of *Jihād*, The Penal *Sharī'ah*, The Dietary *Sharī'ah*, Islamic Customs and Etiquette, Oaths and their Atonement. In each of these categories, Ghāmidī has

made unique contributions in interpreting the directives of the Qur'ān. Examples include his views on the specific nature of the preaching mission of Abraham's progeny, the punishment of apostasy, the testimony and *diyāt* of women, the etiquette of gender interaction, slavery in Islam, the requisites of citizenship, inheritance laws and the general and specific directives of *jihād*.

Ghāmidī has also contributed to the science of hermeneutics. He has enunciated foundational principles of understanding Islam in his essay, *Uṣūl-o mabādī* (Fundamental Principles). These principles take into account the specific nature of the texts of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. One distinctive feature of the approach that pervades these principles is what can be summed up in the form of a dictum: the Ḥadīth should be interpreted in the light shed by the Qur'ān and not vice versa.

An important contribution of Ghāmidī is the distinction he has made between *sharī'ah* and *fiqh*. They are generally rather loosely regarded as synonymous. Whilst the former is divine, the latter is a human endeavour and thus the two must be distinguished from one another. In his seminal work on Islam, *Mīzān*, he has attempted to decipher the *sharī'ah* from the sources of Islam.

Another prominent contribution of Ghāmidī is his concept and definition of the word Sunnah. Whilst categorizing it to be distinct from Ḥadīth, he has laid down certain principles to precisely determine its corpus. By applying these principles, he has actually come up with a list of contents of the Sunnah.

Ghāmidī has also presented an integrated framework

of the concepts and terms of Islam in his essay *Ḥaqīqat-i dīn* (The Essence of Religion). This framework in itself is a representative of a complete interpretation of Islam in contrast with the two other prevailing interpretations of Islam in the Muslim *ummah*: the *taṣawwuf*-based interpretation and the *jihād*-based interpretation.

Burhān and *Maqāmāt* are two of Ghāmidī's other books. The former is a treatise in which contemporary religious thoughts have been critically analyzed, while the latter is a collection of religious and literary essays.

www.ghamidi.net is a resource site on his life and works.
