



# Punishment of Apostacy in Islam





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## **Punishment of Apostacy in Islam**

Written by Muhammad Zafrulla Khan

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## Foreword

The most precious freedom of man, which is vital for the purpose of enabling him to achieve the object of his life on earth, is the freedom of conscience, which includes freedom to profess, practise, propagate and, should his conscience so impel him, to change his religion. Islam is the one religion whose scripture guarantees freedom of conscience and belief in express and emphatic terms. This freedom is so repeatedly affirmed in the Holy Quran, with such a wealth of illustration and exposition, that it does not leave the slightest room for any doubt on the matter. This is one of the many outstanding proofs of the truth of Islam. Unfortunately, a section of the so-called Orthodox Muslim divines have progressively adopted the position that though Islam does not permit any kind of pressure or coercion in its propagation, and that no one can under any circumstances be forced or compelled to profess Islam, yet a professing Muslim, should he cease to have faith in Islam, would not be free to affirm that he no longer believes in Islam. Should he do so, he would forfeit his life. This is a notion which is utterly abhorrent to Islam, and indeed to human conscience. Also it renders altogether nugatory the freedom of conscience and belief that is so emphatically guaranteed by Islam, and is contradictory of it. If the



position on this question were that which these misguided divines seek to uphold, Islam would be guilty of promoting hypocrisy and would not be a true religion.

This small booklet endeavours to carry out an examination of this question from every possible angle within a brief compass, so as to set at rest any doubt or suspicion on the teaching of Islam in this respect. Unless otherwise specified all references are to the Holy Quran.



# The Holy Quran on Freedom of Conscience

From one point of view the universe created by God Almighty is divided into two portions. A large portion does that which it is commanded by God Almighty to do, and thus carries out the will of God. The other portion has been given the choice to carry out God's behest or to ignore it. This second portion is man upon whom God Almighty has conferred freedom of action.

Everything besides man carries out that which God Almighty desires it to do. For instance, the Holy Quran says concerning the angels: They do that which they are commanded (66:7). From this point of view everything besides man is an angel, as it does that which it is commanded to do. The winds carry out whatever they are commanded. During a particular season the trees are commanded to shed their leaves and they do so. The fields are sometimes commanded to produce good harvests and they do so. Sometimes God commands them: I am wroth with a certain region of the earth, so let it bring about conditions of famine, and the same region which has previously produced the means of nourishment for the people, thereupon brings about conditions of famine.

Islam is the religion of nature. So far as man is concerned the notion of compulsion in human life is inconsistent with the

divine project of the universe, inasmuch as if God Almighty had imposed His will upon man there would have been no difference between man and an animal, or a tree or a stone. Islam being in accord with human nature sets forth a teaching, concerning the freedom of conscience and the freedom of belief, which establishes an ideal for the world. It is not only certain religions that have permitted compulsion in matters of faith, but several philosophic conceptions are also opposed to freedom of conscience and regard compulsion as permissible. Islam does not permit anything of the kind. Islam has established an ideal standard in respect of freedom of conscience. God Almighty has said in effect: This is the religion of nature which comprises perfect guidance. A perfect Book has been revealed. No other teaching fulfils human needs to a greater degree, nor provides greater beneficence for man, nor discloses to man more clearly the ways that bring man nearer to God. It is Islam alone which has thrown open to man all the gates of approach to God. It imposes no compulsion nor does it permit any. In Islam God says: I account compulsion as evil. I proclaim freedom of conscience and guarantee freedom of belief.

Reflection upon the Holy Quran reveals several aspects of this teaching. For instance, it is said: Proclaim, O Prophet, O mankind the Truth has indeed come to you from your Lord. Then whoso follows the guidance, follows it only for the good of his own self, and whoso errs does so only to his own detriment. I am not appointed a keeper over you (10:109).

Here the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, has been commanded to proclaim to mankind that perfect truth has been

presented to them in the Holy Quran in the form of the teachings of Islam. He who accepts it does so only to his own good” and he who goes astray does so only to his own loss. The Holy Prophet is commanded to proclaim that he is not responsible for the people. They themselves have to provide for their own good, or to earn the wrath of God Almighty. This is not his business. Every soul must bear this responsibility for itself.

It is pointed out that every path that guides to the gardens of the pleasure of God Almighty has been described in the Holy Quran. It is the business of man to tread along them of his own free will, or to turn away from them of his own will. The Holy Prophet, peace be on him, bears no responsibility in that behalf, nor would he exercise any compulsion in respect of it.

Again it is said: Proclaim O Prophet: This is the truth from your Lord; then let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve. We have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire which covers them like a canopy (18:30).

### *Freedom to Accept or Reject the Truth*

Here also it is put beyond doubt that the perfect truth has been revealed by God and that man is free to accept it or to reject it. But the warning is added that those who wrong themselves and do not carry out the true demands of their nature and adopt the ways that obstruct their progress and lead them away from God, would deprive themselves of God’s love and of the gardens of God’s pleasure. For them a fire has been prepared within which they are confined.

These two verses have been addressed to people to whom Islam was presented for the first time. Those to whom the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, brought the message of Islam were not Muslims. They were told: This is the truth; this is the right guidance. These are the ways of approaching God Almighty. These are the ways of the fulfillment of your natural demands. Treading along them you will become the true servants of God. I invite you to them. It is for you to enter within the circle of Islam or to keep out of it. If you enter it with faith and sincerity of heart and act in accordance with it, it would be to your own good. If you do not adopt these ways and will not tread along them, the loss would be yours. The ways that you adopt, other than these, would lead you away from God and will bring you to hell.

Thus everyone has been told that all the doors for entering the circle of Islam are open to him. There is no one who would obstruct his entry through those doors. The decision must be his and once he has decided he can enter freely. There is no power which would compel anyone by force, or threat of force, to enter that circle. God does not permit it. If anyone desires to enter the circle of Islam, to accept it and to make it obligatory upon himself, no one can stop him. If someone does not desire to accept it, no one can force him. No one can make anyone a Muslim by force. This is the teaching of Islam. The guidance that God has set forth in the Holy Quran is clear that no power can make a person a Muslim by force.

The purpose of the creation of the universe would be frustrated if man were not to be bestowed the freedom that distinguishes him from the angels. These verses indicate that

there is no power that can obstruct anyone from entering into the circle of Islam and there is no power that can block the door of entry forbidding ingress to it. Thus it is not permissible that anyone should arrogate to himself the authority to exclude by force from the circle of Islam anyone who affirms that he is a Muslim and sincerely acts according to the teachings of Islam. God Almighty has not bestowed this power upon anyone. According to Islamic teaching and the law of the Holy Quran, God . Almighty regards any such action as vicious and contrary to His will. These verses have clearly pro- claimed that everyone is free to affirm his faith voluntarily. or to proclaim his denial without restraint. No compulsion is permissible in either case. No non-Muslim can be forcibly converted to Islam, nor can any Muslim be forcibly declared a non-Muslim.

Is it open to a person who has become a Muslim to abjure Islam after having declared his faith in it? Or, will he be subject to compulsion that having once recognized the Truth and the light that is contained in the Holy Quran, he is no longer at liberty to depart from Islam? Does Islam leave the door of egress open, or does it close it altogether? The Holy Quran says: Many of the people of the Book, after the Truth has become manifest to them, would desire, out of sheer envy generated by their minds, that after you have believed, they could turn you into disbelievers. But do forgive them and forbear till Allah sends down His decree. Surely, Allah has full power to do all that He wills (2:100).

*The Doors of Egress are Always Open*

Here it is predicated that when Islam spreads far and wide, it would happen at various times and in diverse regions, that a group out of the people of the Book would strive that you should emerge from the circle of Islam, and despite having recognized the Truth and the light you should deny them after having believed. In the text it is not expressly stated what your reaction would be or should be. But the latter portion of the verse indicates that they would make their utmost efforts and would employ force to pull you out of the fold of Islam and you would resist them. Nevertheless you must not use any kind of force or compulsion against them. You should forgive them and forbear. Surely Allah has full power to do all that He wills. He will bring about a change in the juxtaposition between you.

**Permission to Fight for Freedom of Conscience**

In the beginning of Islam the Muslims were commanded that if the enemies of Islam sought, as they in fact did, to wipe out Islam, by force, they were not to take up the sword in opposition to them. But then a time came when it was announced: Permission to fight is granted to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged and Allah indeed has the power to help them (22:40). This meant that the wrongdoing of the enemies having reached its extreme limit, the Muslims were permitted, for the safeguarding of the freedom of conscience and freedom of belief, to take up the sword against the sword of the enemy and to continue to wield it till freedom of conscience and freedom of



belief were firmly re-established in human society according to God's design.

In another verse it is said: They will not stop fighting you until they turn you back from your faith, if they can. The works of those from among you who turn back from their faith and die in a state of disbelief shall be vain in this world and the next. These are the inmates of the fire, therein shall they abide (2:218).

### *Definition of Apostate*

This means that whoever turns back from his faith, that is to say, whoever, out of fear of the sword or being unsettled by opposition, announces that he abjures Islam, is an apostate. In the idiom of Islam an apostate is not one concerning whom someone else says that he has abjured Islam. There is no mention of any such person in the Holy Quran. It says that if a person announces voluntarily that he has abjured Islam and thereafter dies in his state of disbelief, the works of such a one will be vain in this world and the next and he will be an inmate of the fire wherein he shall abide. Thus the punishment of a person who voluntarily abjures Islam after having believed, is the same as that of a disbeliever who voluntarily abstains from accepting Islam. There is no mention here, or anywhere else, of any punishment for an apostate in this world which may be inflicted by human hands, politically or administratively.

The Holy Quran says: Surely, those who have turned away after guidance has been made manifest to them have been deceived by Satan who has beguiled them with false hopes

(47:26). This means that a person who, out of weakness or misfortune, voluntarily proclaims that he abjures Islam and departs from it and thus, having entered the circle of Islam, goes out of it after having fully understood it, does so because of his having been beguiled by Satan with false hopes. He who abjures Islam relying on the false hopes held out to him by Satan and makes those hopes the basis of his conduct, cannot look forward to any good from God Almighty.

Then it is said: O ye who believe, whoso from among you turns back from his religion should remember that in his stead Allah will soon bring a people whom He will love and who will love Him, who will be kind and considerate towards the believers and firm and unyielding towards the disbelievers. They will strive hard in the cause of Allah, and striving against their own selves they will seek to mould their natures according to the pleasure of God in the light of the guidance of Islam. They will not at all take to heart the reproaches of the fault-finders. Their hearts will be filled only with the fear of God. This is Allah's grace. He bestows it upon whosoever He pleases. Allah is the Lord of vast bounty, All-knowing (5:55).

Again it is said: Allah will not guide those who do not believe in the Signs of Allah, and they shall have a grievous punishment; this is followed by: Whoso disbelieves in Allah after he has believed, excepting the case of one who is forced to make a declaration of disbelief while his heart rests securely in faith, but one who opens his mind wide to disbelief, on him is Allah's wrath and he shall have a grievous punishment (16:105, 107). Here it is affirmed that faith is related to the heart and mind, for it is said:

But one who opens his mind wide to disbelief. That which is related to the heart cannot be affected or changed by any material power or physical force. It is impossible that such power or force should be able to modify the conditions, feelings or emotions of the heart. The verse mentions the case of a person who denies God after having believed. A person believes in God Almighty, having comprehended the reasons in support of the truth of Islam and having observed the divine Signs which establish the truth and greatness of Muhammad, peace be on him, and yet he voluntarily affirms that he denies Muhammad, he is not one who makes such an affirmation under compulsion in consequence of some weakness. With regard to such a one who opens his mind wide to disbelief voluntarily after having believed and affirms that he denies God, the One and Unique, Who had sent Muhammad, peace be on him, and that he does not believe that Islam is a true religion, God Almighty says that on him will be His wrath and he shall have a grievous punishment. Such a punishment might overtake him in this life also, but the true recompense of conduct in this life is related to the hereafter.

Then it is said: Whoso seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the life to come he shall be among the losers. How shall Allah guide a people who have disbelieved after having believed and who had borne witness that the Messenger is true and to whom clear proofs had come? Allah guides not the wrongdoers. Of such the punishment is that on them shall be the curse of Allah and of angels and of men, all together; there under shall they abide. Their punishment shall not be lightened nor shall they be granted respite; except those

who repent thereafter and amend. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful (3:86-90).

Here it is affirmed that those who disbelieve after having believed, and having observed signs and evidence that the Messenger of God is true, and who announce that they have discarded faith and have adopted the ways of disbelief, would be punished by God Almighty in the hereafter; except such of them who repent and amend their ways in this very life. If after the affirmation of their apostacy their punishment, according to the Holy Quran, had been death, they would have had no time for repentance and amendment and this portion of the verse would have been meaningless. This verse shows that such people ought to be afforded the opportunity to repent and amend at any time before their death and to accept Islam and to come back into its fold and seek the forgiveness of God Almighty. If they are granted forgiveness, God, Who is Most Forgiving and Ever Merciful, would cover up their sins and, forgiving them, would bestow His mercy upon them and would admit them to the gardens of His pleasure. But if a person after having believed adopts the way of disbelief and is not granted any opportunity of repentance and amendment, that is to say, is not permitted to live out his natural life but is put to death and is deprived of the opportunity of repentance and amendment, the divine attributes of forgiveness and mercy that are mentioned in the verse would not come into play, in his case, and he would not be able to derive any benefit from them.

### *Freedom of Belief*

Then it is said: Those who believe, then disbelieve, then again believe, then disbelieve and thereafter go on increasing in disbelief, Allah will never forgive them, nor guide them to any way of deliverance (4:138).

This verse proclaims that everyone has been given the choice to accept Islam of his own free will. Every door for entry into the circle of Islam is open for every person. It has also been proclaimed that it is possible for everyone to depart from Islam by any of the doors that provide entry into Islam and to proclaim his disbelief and his apostacy. Thus as the doors of entry into the circle of Islam are open for everyone, the doors of egress from Islam are also open. After a person departs from Islam the question arises, is it possible for him, under the teachings of Islam, to repent and to return to Islam? This verse lays down that if a person who has believed in Islam announces that he has turned away from Islam and denies God and the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, and thereafter God Almighty provides him with the opportunity to believe once more, and having believed again he re-enters the circle of Islam there is nothing to stop him from doing so. The doors of his entry into the circle of Islam are open to him as they were open to him the first time. He becomes a Muslim again. Thereafter if he is again overtaken by misfortune and announces that he has turned away from Islam and denies God Almighty and the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, he is free to do so a second time, and is not subject to any restriction, for there is no compulsion; there is freedom of conscience and

freedom of belief. If he disbelieves again and goes on advancing in disbelief and does not repent, Allah would not forgive such a one, nor would guide him to any way of deliverance. He would achieve no spiritual success.

Again it is said: Those who disbelieve after having believed and continue to advance in disbelief, their repentance would not be accepted. Those are they who have gone utterly astray (3:91).

The immediately following verse clears up that which has not been expressly set out in this verse. It says: From anyone of those who have disbelieved, and die while they are disbelievers, there shall not be accepted even an earthful of gold, though he offer it in ransom. For them there shall be a grievous punishment, and they shall have no helpers (3:92). This makes it clear that repentance and the opening of the door of God's mercy in this context mean repentance in this life.

All this makes it quite clear that Islam has guaranteed freedom of conscience and freedom of belief, and has announced in the plainest terms that so far as faith is concerned everyone is answerable to God Almighty alone. The Holy Prophet, peace be on him, was commanded to proclaim that he had not been appointed a keeper over the people, nor had he been made responsible for them. No one has been made responsible for another's faith. Everyone is responsible for himself. No one can be compelled to become a Muslim, nor can anyone be expelled from Islam by compulsion.

There is no compulsion whatever in Islam. So far as the Holy Quran is concerned there is no text, no verse, not a single word that prescribes any worldly, political or administrative

punishment for apostacy. There have been cases in Muslim history in which a person became an apostate, murdered Muslims and was guilty of armed rebellion. Allover the world a murderer forfeits his life, and armed rebellion is put down with the use of force. If a person is guilty of apostacy, that is to say, voluntarily announces his repudiation of Islam and takes up the sword to kill Muslims, murders them and is punished with death or is suppressed by the sword, it does not at all mean that he is put to death because of his repudiation of Islam. The penalty for the offences committed by such people, irrespective of their apostacy, is death. In such a case it cannot be said that they are punished for their apostacy. Their punishment would have been the same even if there had been no question of apostacy.

### *Holy Quran Comprehensive Guide*

It is a clear and acknowledged verity that the Holy Quran is a complete and perfect Book. There is no shortcoming in it for the making up of which we have to have recourse to some historical event or to some uncertain hadees. Therefore, we believe that all the directions and admonitions of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, are illustrative of some direction of the Holy Quran and that there is no direction of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, which is inconsistent with the Holy Quran or which adds to it or makes up any shortcoming in it. There can be no greater offence than to charge the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, with having failed to act in accordance with some directive of the Holy Quran or having urged others to refrain from acting upon it. Muhammad,

peace be on him, was a true lover of his Lord. So much did he love his Lord that he lost himself wholly in Him and that is why we believe that Muhammad, peace be on him, was a perfect manifestation of divine attributes. His life illustrates the degree of majesty and glory that he attributed to the Holy Quran. There is no direction of the Holy Quran that he did not illustrate in action and there is no prohibition which he contravened. He was a perfect exemplar, a pure and holy personage who illustrated every direction of the Holy Quran in action. It cannot be imagined for a moment that he may have said something inconsistent with the Holy Quran, or something that is not founded upon it. The Holy Quran has provided us with such ideal teachings on the freedom of conscience and the freedom of belief as furnish an example for all other religions and for all the thinkers who have invented all sorts of isms.

Freedom of conscience and freedom of belief are the fundamental rights of man. His very creation is for that purpose. If man is not free in respect of these matters, if people are to be driven forcibly into Islam, then there can be no recompense by God for any human action. Can anyone be forced to declare himself a Muslim and be assured that though his heart is not convinced of the truth of Islam, yet if he performs the salat for show, God would reward him for it and would not be aware of his hypocrisy and the true condition of his heart? God affirms that He is fully aware of the innermost secrets of a person's heart, then how would He be unaware of his hypocrisy? If He is aware of it, how would He reward such hypocritical action beneficently? On the other hand, if a person's heart is filled with sincere faith and



devotion and with perfect understanding of God and His attributes and loves Muhammad, peace be on him, and out of that love obeys God Almighty and worships Him, and all the powers of the world combine in the declaration that he is expelled from Islam and that God would not deal with him out of love, and would not bestow upon him the best recompense for his righteous actions, would God be compelled to accept and act upon their verdict? Indeed not. Those who submit to Him sincerely with perfect faith shall continue to win His love, let the world say what it will and think what it will.

The Holy Prophet, peace be on him, occupies the highest station in both worlds. Concerning him, God said: Had it not been for thee, I would not have created the universe. The law that was revealed to him is complete and perfect. That law sets out human rights clearly and also safeguards them. The goal of human life is to win the love of God by treading along the path pointed out by God Almighty. The purpose of all the commandments of the Holy Quran is to win the pleasure of God. The Holy Quran affirms that the true station of man is established by his being bestowed perfect freedom of faith and perfect freedom of conscience by God Almighty.

*The Holy Quran on the Function and Authority  
of the Holy Prophet*

The Holy Prophet, peace be on him, was raised so that man's freedom of faith and freedom of conscience may be guaranteed, and man, by carrying out divine commandments in freedom, of

his own will and volition, and being surcharged by the love of God Almighty, should devote himself to, and offer himself as a sacrifice in, the cause of Allah.

God has said: Thy people have rejected the message that We have sent through thee, though it is the Truth. Tell them: I am not appointed a guardian over you (6:67). The Arabic expression *vakil*, employed in this verse, means guardian, watchman, one with authority to restrain from vice forcibly. Thus this verse sets forth: I am not your guardian, in the sense that I have not been authorized to force you to accept the message that I have brought, and that you should proclaim your faith in it. I am only a warner. Having conveyed the message to you clearly I have discharged my responsibility. If you deny the message, God will be wroth with you and you would witness that of which I am warning you. God will call you to account for your denial (Tafseer Ruhul Bayan Vol. III p. 48).

Another eminent commentator has said: The verse means: I have not been appointed a guardian over you so that I should punish you or call you to account for your rejection of the message I have brought you, and your turning away from the reasons that have been clearly expounded to you. It is not my function to punish you and to chastise you. I am but a warner. It is Allah Who will call you to account and punish you. That is not my function (Tafseer Kabir of Iman Razi, Vol. IV p.65).

In another commentary the verse has been interpreted as meaning: I have not been appointed that I should perform your duty in your place. It is your business to listen to the reasons, to reflect upon them and to accept them and to partake of their

blessings. I have not been authorized to force you to do this. It is your business and you have to do it; I have not been appointed to supervise your conduct so that I may punish you. I am but a warner and I have left out nothing in warning you. To Allah pertains calling you to account. My function is only to convey the message and to warn you (Tafseer Ruhul Maani, Voll11 Part VII, p. 182).

In the commentary Al-Manar of Muhammad Abduhu, published in 1928 by Muhammad Rasheed Raza, the verse is interpreted as meaning: Tell them, O Prophet; I have not been appointed a guardian (an authoritative officer) over you. I have been sent only as a Messenger.

He observes: Vakil means one who is placed in charge of the affairs of another. Such appointment carries authority and force with it. Thus if a ruler appoints someone as his representative or as governor of a province, or as manager of an estate, he would have authority from the ruler to exercise compulsion over the people in respect of their mistakes and defaults, but a Messenger is not appointed by God to punish. God has reserved that for Himself. A Messenger is charged with conveying the message which God Almighty sends down to him for the people. He admonishes the people and teaches them and gives them glad tidings that if they would follow the guidance they would become the recipients of God's bounty, and warns them that if they would turn away God would be wroth with them and they would be called to account by Him. He establishes the religion of Allah among the people through his admonitions and teachings and glad tidings and warnings. This is his function. He is not a

representative of his Lord Who sends him, in the sense that he is authorised to reward or punish on behalf of God. This is not the function of the Messenger, nor is he bestowed such power by God Almighty. Had he been authorised to punish or to discipline, God Almighty would have bestowed upon him the power to do so, whereas we know that he passed the whole period of his prophethood in Mecca as an oppressed person.

He adds that the Holy Prophet had not been bestowed power by his Lord to rule over his people like God, and to compel them to believe, that is to say, to believe and to continue to believe and to act in accordance with their belief. Thus there is neither permission to compel nor the power to do so. He cannot force people to act contrary to their inclinations.

He has cited several verses in support of his thesis. He construes: There shall be no compulsion in religion (2:257); as both laying down a principle and as a command addressed to the Holy Prophet, peace be on him. Thus the Holy Prophet was directed that he was not to exercise compulsion in matters of religion; he was to admonish, for he was but an admonisher (88:20) and had no authority to compel people (88:23). This has been interpreted as meaning that the Holy Prophet had not been set in authority over people to compel them to carry out his will and to accept that which he believed to be the truth. He then cites: We know well what they say, and thou hast not been appointed a despot over them. So admonish, by means of the Quran, him who fears the warning (50:46). The Holy Prophet had no responsibility in respect of those who did not fear God's warning. God well knew all that they said in refutation. Then it is

said: Thou art not charged with guiding them to the right path; it is Allah who guides whomsoever He pleases (2:273). He then says that wakil connotes a guardian to whom God may have committed authority to punish creatures for their sins.

So that the purport of the verse is that God Almighty had not committed to the Holy Prophet the divine authority whereby God rewards the doers of good and punishes the doers of evil. The Holy Prophet's function is to convey to the people God's message, His teaching and His perfect law which are comprised in the Holy Quran and have been communicated to man through him.

### *Responsibility of Holy Prophet*

At another place it is said: Had Allah so willed, they would not have set up partners with Him. We have not appointed thee a keeper over them, nor art thou their guardian (6:108). This verse is preceded by: Proofs have indeed come to you from your Lord; so he who comprehends them it is for his own benefit, and he who ignores them, does so to his own loss. Tell them: I am not appointed a guardian over you (6:105). This is followed by: Follow that which has been revealed to thee from thy Lord; there is no god but He; and turn aside from those who set up partners with Allah (6:107). Part of that which had been revealed to the Holy Prophet was that his responsibility was to convey to mankind that with which he had been entrusted, and that it was not open to him to take upon himself that which belonged to God. He was to turn away from those who persisted in associating

partners with God. Thus a tremendous truth was set forth, strong proofs of the Unity of God were furnished, man was shown the way whereby he could establish a living relationship with God, and recognize his Lord through his experience. Despite all this, concerning him who persists in associating partners with Allah it is only said: Turn away from him. Then it is said: Had Allah so willed, they would not have set up partners with Him. We have not appointed thee a keeper over them, nor art thou their guardian.

Again it is said: Your Lord knows you best. If he pleases He will have mercy on you, and if He pleases He will chastise you. We have not sent thee to be a keeper over them (17:55). Whether a person truly loves God is known only to God. No one else can disclose it. Your Lord knows you best. If He pleases He will have mercy on you, that is to say, He will have mercy on him concerning whom He judges that he deserves mercy, and if He so wills He will chastise you. The Holy Prophet is told: We have not appointed you a keeper over them.

At another place it is said: Say to them: O my people, carry on, on your side; I shall carry on, on my side; when God manifests His design and you are called to account, and the believers are bestowed favors, you will realize which side is afflicted with a degrading and abiding punishment. We have revealed to thee the Book, comprising truth and wisdom for the benefit of mankind. Then whoever follows the guidance truly does so to his own good ; and whoever goes astray does so to his own loss. Thou art not appointed a guardian over them (39:30-42). If the Holy Prophet himself is not a keeper or a guardian over the people, it would be

the height of stupidity for anyone else to claim that he has been appointed a guardian over the people and God has bestowed upon him authority to compel people to accept Islam and to continue to adhere to it.

Again it is said: Allah will keep a record of the doings of those who have taken protectors besides Him. Thou hast not been appointed a guardian over them (42:7). This means that it is for God Almighty to safeguard their actions and to call them to account if He so wills. This is followed by the verse: Thus have We revealed the Quran to thee in Arabic, that thou mayest warn the people of the central township of the land and those around it, and that thou mayest warn them of the Day of Gathering, concerning which there is no doubt, when God will judge between the people out of His majesty and glory and everyone will realize whether he is among those for whom the gates of the Garden have been opened, or is of those who will be driven to the blazing fire (42:8).

Again it is said: Those who disbelieve in the Truth make fun of thee and say: Is this the one whom Allah has chosen as His Messenger out of all others? He had well nigh beguiled us away from our gods, had we not adhered to them steadily. When they behold the punishment they will realize who was most astray from the right path (25:42-43). This is followed by: Hast thou considered the case of one who has made his own evil inclination his god? Canst thou be a guardian over him to force him into ways of righteousness (25:44)? Today it has become a fashion throughout the world that people's own inclinations have become their gods. Some of them have proclaimed that their

public is their god. God Almighty has here said that He has not bestowed upon anyone the authority to force people away from their inclinations.

In the commentary *Ruhul Bayan* this verse is interpreted as meaning that God has not appointed the Holy Prophet a guardian who should hold back people from polytheism and from sins. God has here told the Holy Prophet: I have not committed to thee the function of safeguarding people against paganism and sins. They are free to act as they wish; thy business is only to warn. It is for them to accept or to reject. Thy business is to tell them that the Unity of God is the foundation of the universe and to furnish them with reasons and signs. It is not thy business to safeguard them against polytheism. Thus it was not the responsibility of the Holy Prophet that people should not set up partners with Allah and should not commit sins.

Imam Razi in his *Tafseer Kabir* has said that this verse means: Thou hast not been appointed a guardian over such a person to prevent him from following his inclinations. We have not so directed thee, nor have We given thee the power or the authority or made thee a guardian over them, so that thou mayest safeguard them against following their evil desires. This is the same as has been said at another place: Thou art not appointed a guardian over them, that is to say, thou hast not been appointed to force them to conform to what thou mayest will, namely, to accept the Light and the Truth that thou hast seen. Thou art not appointed to compel anyone to believe, as God has said: Thou art not appointed a despot over them; and has said: There is no compulsion in religion; meaning: Muhammad, you are not at



liberty to compel anyone to follow the Truth (Tafseer Kabir of Imam Razi Vol VI p.478).

God Almighty has used the expression keeper or guardian negatively with reference to the Holy Prophet, peace be on him; that is to say, the Holy Prophet was not appointed a keeper or a guardian over people to compel them to believe. It may be asked then what was the function of the Holy Prophet? God says: I have made thee My Messenger, a bearer of glad tidings so that those who believe and work righteousness and win the love of God may be bestowed great bounties, and a warner so that those who rouse the wrath of God may burn in the fire of His wrath.

I have made thee My Messenger; means that the Holy Prophet's responsibility was to convey to people the teaching that God had revealed to him for the benefit of man.

The Holy Quran says: If they should dispute with thee, tell them: I have submitted myself wholly to Allah, and also those who follow me. Ask those who have been given the Book and those to whom no revelation has been vouchsafed: Do you submit yourselves to Allah also? Then if they also submit to the Lord of the worlds, they will surely be rightly guided; but if they turn away, thy duty is only to convey the message. Allah is Watchful over His servants (3:21). Nothing is hidden from Him. He would deal with them and would chastise them when He wills.

At another place it is said: O ye who believe, liquor gambling, idols and divining arrows are but abominations a satanic devices. So turn wholly away from each one of them so that you may prosper. Satan desires only to create enmity and hatred between you by means of liquor and gambling, and to keep you back from

the remembrance of Allah and from Prayer. Will you, then desist? Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and be ever on your guard; but if you turn away then remember the duty of Our Messenger is only to convey Our message clearly (5:91-93). These verses are obviously addressed to the Muslims. In this context turning away has two connotations. One turning away is to adopt the ways of hypocrisy, disobedience and misconduct instead of the ways of faith and sincerity; and another turning away to declare unwillingness and refusal to carry out these injunctions and to repudiate Islam, as a great part of the Arabs of the desert after the death of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, repudiated Islam on account of their unwillingness to pay the Zakat. In the verse turning away comprises both hypocrisy and disobedience and an open declaration of departure from Islam. The verse affirms that in both cases the Holy Prophet has no authority to compel anyone to continue within the fold of Islam or to conform to its injunctions and to act righteously. His only responsibility to expound God's message clearly, and that responsibility he was carrying out.

Imam Razi has commented on this verse that it contains great warning and a severe admonition from God Almighty. It is out that if you turn away, then remember that the Messenger has fulfilled his responsibility by conveying the message to you plainly and clearly. To act according to it or to ignore it is your responsibility and not his. The Messenger has carried out the responsibility laid upon him that he should warn you, and should convey glad tidings to you, and should expound divine verities you, and he has thereby discharged the duty laid upon him and

has been freed from his obligation. Thereafter he is not to be blamed in any way. Anything beyond it, that is to say, the chastisement of people who fail to discharge their responsibilities after this warning and these glad tidings, and offer opposition and repudiate Islam, belongs to God Almighty. This is not the function of the Messenger. Having expounded everything clearly he has fulfilled the purpose for which he was sent. It is not his business to compel anyone to believe and to work righteousness, and to keep anyone within the circle of the faith and to forbid him repudiating Islam.

Ibn Jarir has commented on this verse: Understand well that the responsibility of the one whom We have sent to you as a Messenger for the purpose of warning you, is confined to conveying to you the teaching that is revealed to him. That teaching expounds to you the way of truth and righteousness, the way that you are commanded to follow. That is the way by following which you will find God. By pointing out that way the Messenger has discharged his responsibility. The Holy Quran is revealed to him. He has conveyed it to you clearly. He has shown you great signs in support of his truth which extend unto the Day of Judgment. He has clearly indicated to you the straight path which you have been commanded to follow. So far as the chastisement for turning away and departing from Islam and sinfulness is concerned it rests with Him Who sent the Messenger, and not with the Messenger. This is a severe admonition for him who turns away from His commandments and disregards His prohibitions.

Then it is said: Remember that Allah is Severe in punishment

and that He is Most-Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. The Messenger's duty is only to convey the Message; and Allah knows your overt actions, as well as your secret designs (5:99-100). Thus the duty of the Messenger is only to convey the message. Allah knows well that which you do and that which you design but which you have not yet done; so far as recompense or chastisement is concerned He will deal with you Himself. The Messenger has no responsibility beyond conveying the truth plainly and expounding it clearly.

Imam Razi interprets these verses as follows: Allah begins by warning that He is Severe in punishment, and by cheering that He is also Most-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful, and then follows up with setting out the responsibility of the Messenger, namely, that his duty is only to convey the message plainly. When he expounds the truth plainly to everyone, he thereby fulfils his responsibility and is not open to any blame. The rest is your responsibility. God says: I am well aware of all your overt acts and covert designs. If you oppose the truth in your heart or by your tongue or your conduct, then remember that though you are free to do so God's seizure is severe, but if you follow the truth that is expounded to you and tread along the paths of winning the love of God which have been pointed out to you and obey Him, then know that He is Most-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

In the Holy Quran it is expounded that God Almighty created man, bestowed upon him ears with which to hear, eyes with which to observe miracles and signs, mind with which to reflect and ponder, and sent down numberless bounties upon him from heaven and thus demonstrated His greatness so that man

should become obedient to Him. This is followed up with: Yet, if they turn away, thy duty is only to convey the message clearly (16:83). If having ears and eyes and heart, and enjoying numberless bounties, people should yet turn away, there would be no blame upon the Holy Prophet, for his responsibility is only to convey the message clearly.

Again it is said: Tell them: Obey Allah and obey the Messenger. If you turn away, then he is responsible for that with which he is charged, and you are responsible for that with which you are charged. If you obey him, you will be rightly guided. The Messenger is responsible only for conveying the message clearly (24:55). In this verse the weak Muslims and the hypocrites are addressed and turning-away comprehends both disobedience and apostacy. The responsibility of the Messenger is only to convey the message clearly. The responsibility of those addressed is to believe, to declare their faith by word, to confirm it by the heart and to illustrate it by their actions and conduct. If they obey and become true Muslims they would be rightly guided and would prosper both in this world and in the hereafter. The duty of the Messenger is only to convey the message clearly.

Again it is said: If you reject that which the Messenger urges upon you, that is nothing new, for people before you also rejected the truth. The Messenger's responsibility is only to convey the message clearly (29:19). It is not his duty to compel you to believe.

At another place it is said: Hearken to the truth which the Prophet has brought to you in the form of God's Words and God's Law, for it is God's design that you should believe and make progress and achieve the purpose of life. Then if they should turn

away, We have not sent thee as a guardian over them. Thy duty is only to convey the message and no more (42:48-49).

Then it is said: Believe in Allah and His Messenger and in the Light that We have sent down...Allah will remove the ills of those who believe in Allah and work righteousness, and will admit them to the gardens of His love, but those who disbelieve will be driven into the fire...Allah will guide aright the heart of whoever truly believes in Him, that is to say, He will bestow upon him true faith which will enter into his heart and bring about a pure revolution in his life. You can be bestowed this bounty only if you obey Allah and His Messenger and offer Him all that belongs to you, but if you turn away (whether on account of hypocrisy or disobedience, or by way of apostacy) then remember that the Messenger has no responsibility for your misconduct, nor does any blame rest upon him, or his followers, for your apostacy. The only responsibility of Our Messenger is to convey the message clearly (64:9-13).

Again it is said: Whether We bring to pass during thy lifetime some of the chastisement that We have designed for them, or whether We cause thee to die before that happens, it will all be fulfilled. Thy duty is only to convey Our Message. It is for Us to call them to account (13:41). Here it is clearly affirmed that the responsibility of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, is only to convey the message; the reckoning rests with God. Then who can claim that he has the authority to call anyone to account?

Imam Razi has commented on this verse as follows: God says it is all the same whether the promise of chastisement is fulfilled in thy lifetime or after thy death. It was not the Holy Prophet who prophesied the doom of the disbelievers, nor did he prophesy the

reward of the believers. Both pertain to God Almighty. It is not the function of the Holy Prophet to affirm that a sincere and devoted believer would be favored by God, nor to affirm that he who disbelieves and opposes and associates others with God and is disobedient and turns away from God and makes Him wroth, would be afflicted with torment. This pertains only to God and not to any human being. God Almighty says: We prophesied and We shall fulfill our prophecy at its due time. Thou art not responsible for it. Thy responsibility is only to convey the commands of God Almighty and His Message, and to discharge His trust. The Holy Prophet is the Chief of Prophets and his function is only to convey and propagate the message that has been entrusted to him. It is for God to call people to account.

The commentary on this verse in *Ruhul Bayan* is even more explicit. It says: The Holy Prophet's duty is only to convey the message, to discharge his trust and nothing more. He has discharged his trust, that is to say, the conveying of the Holy Quran in its entirety without the slightest change, so perfectly that there can be no addition to it or detraction from it till the Day of Judgment. It is a Book completely safeguarded. God Almighty had made a promise through the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, and made him the means of fulfilling His promise. His duty is only to convey the message and to discharge the trust and nothing more. God Almighty says that calling people to account and to chastise them for their sins on the Day of Judgment rests with Him and not with the Holy Prophet or anyone else. If anyone turns away, this should not trouble the Holy Prophet nor should he desire to hasten the chastisement of the disobedient

ones. God would inflict the chastisement at its due time according to His perfect Wisdom (Ruhul Bayan Vol. VI p.338).

In the commentary Ruhul Maani this verse is interpreted as follows: Thy duty is to convey the commandments that We have sent down to thee with promises of reward and warnings of chastisement. It is for Us to call them to account for their evil conduct and to punish them for it, without forcing them into thy obedience or by exhibiting the signs which they demand from thee (Ruhul Maani Part XIII p.172).

Thus even God Almighty would not force anyone to follow Muhammad, peace be on him, inasmuch as that which is done under compulsion merits neither reward nor punishment. That is why birds and animals and stones and diamonds and jewels are neither rewarded nor punished. The occasion for reward and punishment arises only where there is freedom of conscience and belief. It stands to reason that if God's Messenger points out that a certain course of conduct is good in the estimation of God, a person would be entitled to ask what would he gain if he acts in conformity to it; or if a course of action is evil in the estimation of God what retribution should he fear in case of indulgence in it. God Almighty says that He too would not force anyone to believe in the Holy Prophet, but would call them to account and punish them for their denial. He would also not exhibit such miracles as they demand. He is God and is not subordinate to anyone, nor does He compel anyone. The basis of the whole project of creation of man is freedom of conscience and freedom of belief. That is why it is said: I have created men, high and low, that they may worship Me (51:57); that is to say, man has been created so



that through his voluntary efforts he should become a manifestation of divine attributes and thus become a true servant of God. It would be contrary to the purport of this verse to designate as God's servants those who by their very nature are bound to carry out whatever they are commanded. For instance, angels carry out all God's commands and yet they are not in any way rewarded for doing so. It is their nature to obey, and, therefore, there is no occasion for reward or punishment for them. Reward and punishment are related to perfect freedom of conscience and freedom of belief.

## Punishment for Apostacy: Holy Quran

One of the foremost advocates of death as the penalty for apostacy in Islam, in his desperate search for at least one verse in the Holy Quran which might lend support to his misguided point of view, has had recourse to violating the context and meaning of one verse of the Holy Quran and to deduce from it his horrible doctrine. He has not a word to offer in explanation of the numerous verses of the Holy Quran that form the basis of the above exposition, which is proof enough that he has deliberately misinterpreted the particular verse from which he seeks to draw support. He also appears to be unconscious of the emphatic affirmation made in the Holy Quran, that there is no contradiction in it. Had there been any contradiction in the Quran, it would not be the Word of God, as is said: Will they not meditate upon the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah they would surely have found therein much contradiction (4:83).

Let us now examine the verse upon which this particular divine bases his whole thesis. It is verse 12 of Chapter 9. The context of the verse is that after the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, had migrated from Mecca to Medina, Quraish of Mecca had embarked upon hostilities against him and the Muslims for the

purpose of wiping out Islam by force. Then after a period of repeated aggression on their part, God of His mercy and grace, established the supremacy of Islam in Arabia, but those who were still disaffected, and entertained hostile designs against the Muslims, and had not laid down their arms, were granted a period of four months within which to make their peace with the Muslims, failing which, the hostilities which they themselves had started, would be resumed against them. In this context it was pointed out that such of them as sincerely accepted Islam would form part of the Islamic brotherhood and there would be no question of any action being taken against them. That had been the situation all through. Those who, continuing disbelievers, concluded a treaty of peace with the Muslims, must carry out the obligations of the treaty strictly. If they failed to do so hostilities would be resumed against them. Verse 11 of Chapter 9 is to the following effect: If they repent and observe Prayer and pay the Zakat, then they are your brethren-in-faith. We expound Our commandments for a people who possess knowledge. This is followed by verse 12 which lays down: If those who break their pledge after making a covenant and ridicule your religion, in such case fight these leaders of disbelief that they may desist, for they have no regard for their pledged word. This divine construes this verse as meaning that if those who are referred to in the previous verse as having become Muslims, should repudiate Islam, they should be fought against and subdued.

Assuming that those who repudiated Islam after having expressed their belief in it, reverted to hostilities, they would, of course, be fought against, not because of their apostacy but

because of their reversion to enemy status. The issue that this divine has to face is that Islam prescribes no penalty for a simple change of faith, which involves no treason or rebellion or hostility against the Islamic State. The verse under consideration relates to the breaking of a pledge to live at peace with the Islamic State. Those who are guilty of such breach are to be fought against, as rebels or enemy aliens, and not to be caught and executed for apostacy.

This is made abundantly clear by the immediately following verses which say: Will you not fight a people who have violated their oaths, who plotted to turn out the Messenger from his home and who were the first to start hostilities against you? Do you fear them? It is Allah Who is Most Worthy that you should fear Him, if you are believers. Fight them; Allah will punish them at your hands and will humiliate them, and will help you to overcome them, and will relieve the minds of the believers of fear and distress and will remove their feeling of resentment (9:13-14).

It is thus clear that these verses have reference to the disbelievers who have no regard for their pledged word, and who should be guilty of breach of treaties and should be bent upon armed hostilities.

### *Propagation of Other Faiths*

In consequence of his misguided notion, the divine referred to above is compelled to take up the position that propagation of non-Islamic beliefs must be prohibited by law in an Islamic State, which again is an utter negation of freedom of conscience and

belief. Islam is a missionary religion and claims that in all countries and among all peoples there should be complete freedom of conscience and belief, including the freedom to change one's religion. If the view propounded by this particular divine were to be accepted, all the persecution to which the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, and the early Muslims were subjected in Mecca during thirteen years of his ministry, would be deemed to have been fully justified, as Islam was a menace to the beliefs of Quraish and to their very mode of life.

Finding nothing in the Holy Quran to support his thesis, and having no answer to the clear and repeated affirmations of the Holy Quran in support of complete freedom of conscience and belief, this divine seeks to make Hadees and the alleged policy of the Successors of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, the principal prop of his outrageous theory. If the instances cited by him are carefully examined, it will be found that in everyone of them the apostate or apostates concerned had been guilty of rebellion or murder, or armed support of the enemies of Islam. These cases shall be dealt with later in the course of this exposition.

In truth for a person of average intelligence only a portion of a single verse of the Holy Quran should be conclusive that Islam does not permit any type of compulsion in matters of faith, whether it should be the case of presenting Islam to a non-Muslim and inviting him to accept it, or it should be the case of persuading one who has abjured Islam to revert to it. The direction of the Holy Quran in this respect is imperative: There shall be no compulsion in matters of faith (2:257). Matters of faith surely

comprise change of religion. It is characteristic of the Holy Quran that whenever it propounds a principle it also sets forth the reason on which it is based. The portion of the verse here cited comprises both a direction and the reason for the direction. It may be interpreted as: There shall be no compulsion in matters of faith, inasmuch as faith is a matter of conscience and by its very nature conscience cannot be compelled. It may be possible to force a person to say that he believes but no one can be forced to believe. Therefore an attempt to force a person to believe is futile. If a person yielding to force, or a threat of force, or some kind of temptation, says he believes, while his mind is not convinced of the truth of that which he is compelled to acknowledge as true, he would not be a believer but only a hypocrite.

The verse just cited does not leave the matter merely at the stage of an implied reason as the basis of the directive set out in the verse. It goes further and affirms that guidance having been clearly distinguished from error, sane reason would naturally be inclined to accept the guidance and to reject the error. This is a grand principle which has been set out imperatively in the Holy Quran, and is not set out with such emphasis in the scriptures of any other faith. Yet unfortunately a body of Muslim divines continues to adhere to the utterly false notion that a Muslim who abjures Islam must be put to death. Human nature revolts against such a doctrine and there is no support whatsoever for it either in the Holy Quran or in the practice of the Holy Prophet or of his immediate successors.

### **Method of Propagation of Islam**

Islam is a religion the followers of which are under obligation to constantly invite non-Muslims to its acceptance. The manner of such invitation is also set out clearly in the Holy Quran. It is said: Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and contend with them on the basis of that which is best. Thy Lord knows best those who have strayed away from His path, and He knows best those who are rightly guided (16:126). Indeed guidance is bestowed by God and the business of a believer is only to present Islam to non-Muslims wisely and with kindly reasoning. It is for God Almighty to bring about a change of heart. For instance, it is said: Whomsoever Allah wills to guide, He opens his mind to the acceptance of Islam (6:126) ; and it is said: Surely, thou canst not guide whomsoever thou pleasest; but Allah guides whomsoever He pleases, and He knows well those who would be guided (28:57).

### *Freedom of Change of Faith*

As Islam constantly invites non-Muslims to enter its fold, every non-Muslim who accepts that invitation necessarily repudiates his original doctrine to the extent to which it is inconsistent with Islam and wholeheartedly subscribes to Islam. Thus he becomes an apostate in the eyes of his original co-religionists. If the penalty of apostacy from Islam is death, would it be unreasonable for other faiths also to impose the penalty of death for apostacy from those faiths? This would mean that no change of faith would be permissible under any circumstances and that everyone must

continue to adhere to the doctrines and teachings of the faith into which he may be born. The accident of birth would determine everyone's belief and freedom of conscience would become a myth.

Also, in such a state of affairs, if a follower of one faith became convinced of the truth of another faith he would be under compulsion to continue to give lip service to the doctrines of the faith into which he was born, though he would have ceased to believe in them. In other words he would be a hypocrite. The Holy Quran condemns hypocrisy in the strongest terms. For instance, it is said: Convey to the hypocrites that for them there is a painful torment (4:139); and again: The hypocrites shall surely be in the lowest region of the fire, and thou shalt not find that they have any helper (4:146).

Again, it is pointed out that if force or pressure had been permissible in matters of faith God Almighty, Who can force a person to believe, would have compelled the whole of mankind to become believers, but He leaves everyone the choice to believe or to disbelieve. How can it, therefore, be permissible for any human being to exercise compulsion in matters of conscience when any compulsion exercised by a human being cannot even be effective? For instance, it is said: If thy Lord had enforced His will surely all those on the earth would have believed, without exception, wilt thou, then, take it upon thyself to force people to become believers? Except by Allah's leave no one can believe; and He will afflict with His wrath those who will not use their understanding (10:100-101).

One Muslim divine, who has a considerable following, has



coined the cliché that the door of Islam opens only inwards and does not open outwards, and that, therefore, whoever attempts to emerge from Islam forfeits his life. It is a stupid utterance which has neither rhyme nor reason to support it.

*Compulsion: Sign of Falsehood*

The Holy Quran has set out several instances which show that the exercise of compulsion or force in the matter of religion is the practice of those who are committed to falsehood. For instance, the opponents of Noah said to him: If you do not desist you shall certainly be stoned to death (26:117). Abraham's father said to him: Is it that thou art turning away from my gods, Abraham? If thou desist not, I shall surely cause thee to be stoned to death (19:47).

Moses and Aaron were commanded: Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has transgressed grievously; but speak gently to him, perchance he may take heed or be humble (20:44-45). In contrast, the treatment accorded to Moses by Pharaoh and his people was: When he came to them with Truth from Us, they said: Slay the male children of those who have believed with him and spare their female children...Pharaoh announced: Hinder me not in putting Moses to death; and let him call on his Lord to save him. I fear lest he should change your religion or cause disturbance in the land (40:26-27).

When the magicians whom Pharaoh had summoned to contend against Moses were frustrated and they realized that Moses was righteous and declared their belief in him, Pharaoh was

greatly incensed at their apostacy and exploded: What! You have believed in him even before I gave you leave! Surely, this is a plot that you have hatched together in the city, that you may turn out therefrom its people, but you shall soon know the consequences. Most surely will I cut off your hands and feet on alternate sides, then will I crucify you all together. They answered: What then? In any case, to our Lord shall we return. Thou art incensed with us only because we have believed in the Signs of our Lord when they came to us. We pray to our Lord: Send down on us steadfastness and cause us to die in a state of submission to Thee (7:124-127). Again it is said: Pharaoh stormed: What! Do you believe in him before I give you leave? He must be your chief who has taught you magic. Therefore, I will certainly cut off your hands and your feet on alternate sides, and I will surely crucify you on the trunks of palm trees. Then shall you know which of us can inflict severer and more lasting punishment. They retorted: We cannot prefer thee to the manifest signs that have come to us, nor to Him Who created us. So decree what thou wilt decree, thou canst but terminate this present life. We have believed in our Lord that He may forgive us our sin and forgive us the deceit that thou hast forced us to practise. Allah is the Best and Most-Abiding (20:72-74).

Those who contend the punishment of an apostate is instant death, identify themselves with the opponents of truth in all ages. In the case of Pharaoh and the magicians who announced their faith in Moses, the magicians were clearly apostates in the estimation of Pharaoh who himself claimed to be their god and could, therefore, not tolerate their believing in any other god.

According to those Muslim divines who advocate death for an apostate he was in the right in threatening them with instant execution, but the Holy Quran clearly condemns Pharaoh's attitude as cruel and tyrannical. How would the advocates of death for apostacy resolve this difficulty?

Another absolutely conclusive verse of the Holy Quran on this subject is: A section of the people of the Book urge some from among themselves: Why not affirm, in the early part of the day, belief in that which has been revealed unto the believers and repudiate it in the latter part of the day, perchance they may turn away from their faith (3:73). This was a Jewish device whereby they hoped to create doubt and confusion among the Muslims in the hope that some of them might thereby be beguiled into repudiating Islam. If that was the purpose of their device the verse is conclusive proof that there was no punishment prescribed for apostacy. In the first place, those of the Jews who, according to this device, would announce their belief in Islam during the early part of the day, and then would repudiate Islam in the latter part, would render themselves liable to execution if the Holy Quran had prescribed death as the penalty for apostacy; and in the second place, their execution would have operated as a deterrent in the case of those who might otherwise have been tempted to follow their example and thus the design would have been frustrated both ways.

The advocates of the death penalty for apostacy urge that this verse merely mentions this design of the Jews which remained part of their thinking and was never put into practice and that, therefore, this verse cannot be relied upon in support of the thesis

that the Holy Quran does not prescribe any penalty for apostacy. This argument is devoid altogether of any validity. Even if it sets out only a hypothetical case which was only contemplated but was never put into practice, the verse would still be conclusive proof that the Holy Quran had prescribed no penalty for apostacy. If the extreme penalty had been prescribed the Jews would never have contemplated any such device as is mentioned in the verse. But in fact it was not a merely hypothetical case. This is clear from the following extract taken from page 493 of Vol. II of the commentary Bahral Muheet: Hasan and Sady relate that twelve Jewish divines of Khaibar and Urainah agreed among themselves that they should declare belief verbally in Islam during the early part of the day, without any conviction in their hearts, and that in the latter part of the day they should repudiate Islam on the ground that they had again studied their books and had discussed the matter with other divines and had come to know that Muhammad was not a true prophet and that his falsehood and that of his religion had become patent to them. When they would do that, the companions of Muhammad would fall into doubt and thinking that as they were the people of the Book and knew these matters better than themselves, they would be disgusted with their own religion (Islam) and would turn to their religion (Judaism).

This incident is mentioned in several other commentaries, in some of which the names of the divines who had so agreed are also mentioned.

Another verse of the Holy Quran also indicates that some such incidents actually took place. That verse is as follows: When

the people of the Book come to you, they say: We believe; but they come in disbelieving and go out disbelieving and Allah knows best that which they seek to hide (5:62).

Another relevant verse is: He who turns back on his heels shall not harm Allah a whit (3:145). In this verse, turning back on his heels obviously means repudiation of Islam and apostacy, and no punishment for apostacy is mentioned. Also, the affirmation that such a one shall not be able to harm the Muslims at all also indicates that there was no such punishment for apostacy as is now alleged, for if such a one was to be executed immediately, there could have been no apprehension of his doing any harm to anyone.

Another verse to the same effect is: Whoever takes disbelief in exchange for belief has undoubtedly gone astray from the right path (2:109). This also indicates that there was no worldly punishment for apostacy. All that is mentioned is that an apostate goes far astray from the right path.

Thus there is nothing whatsoever in the Holy Quran from which any inference might be drawn that apostacy is punishable with death or indeed with any worldly penalty. It must, however, be clearly understood that we are concerned with plain and simple repudiation of Islam without any complication, such as an apostate joining the enemies of Islam and fighting along with them against the Muslims, or committing any other offence.

### *Apostacy and Rebellion*

The advocates of apostacy being treated as a capital offence, or at

least a serious offence, have recourse to all sorts of arguments which merely emphasize their helplessness and frustration. For instance, they argue that even simple apostacy amounts to rebellion and is thus a capital offence. But they fail to explain against whom is apostacy a rebellion. Is it rebellion against the state within whose jurisdiction the apostate resides, or is it rebellion against God? If it is rebellion against God, He would deal with it at His own time and in His own way. No one else has the authority to deal with such a case. If it is rebellion against the state in which the apostate resides, then how would it be dealt with if that state should not be a Muslim state? Is it meant that Islam prescribes a penalty for simple apostacy in the case of an unfortunate one who resides within the jurisdiction of a Muslim state, but does not prescribe any penalty for apostacy in a case where the apostate resides within the jurisdiction of a non-Muslim state? The absurdity of the argument is patent. In any case, what is the authority for affirming that simple apostacy from Islam is rebellion, or is any other punishable offence?

## Punishment of Apostacy: Hadees

Another complication which is sought to be introduced into the discussion of this subject is that though there is no clear authority in the Holy Quran that apostacy is punishable as an offence, yet there is evidence in the hadees that it was so treated by the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, and by his immediate successors. Any such affirmation amounts to an enormity. It is well understood that no action of the Holy Prophet or any of his immediate successors could possibly be in conflict with the Holy Quran. All that the Holy Prophet did or said was illustrative of some direction or injunction of the Holy Quran. He himself warned that if anything was attributed to him which was in conflict with the Holy Quran, it must be rejected as false.

It is well known that the integrity of the Holy Quran is guaranteed by God Almighty, as is said: Surely, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and We will, most certainly, safeguard it (15:10). The safeguarding of the Holy Quran which is here guaranteed is absolute and has many aspects. One of them is that the text of the Holy Quran would always be preserved intact. There is no such guarantee with regard to hadees. Whatever else may be said about hadees, it must be acknowledged that if a hadees is irreconcilable with the Holy Quran, it must be rejected altogether.

Therefore, in the face of the emphatic and repeated

affirmations of the Holy Quran which we have cited, it is not necessary to pay any attention to the suggestion that any hadees is susceptible of the interpretation that someone was condemned to death on account of apostacy. Nevertheless, in view of the insistence of some of the divines who affirm that the punishment for apostacy is death, we might briefly examine the question on the basis of hadees also.

Bokhari relates, on the authority of Jabir bin Abdullah, that a desert Arab took the pledge of Islam at the hand of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, and a little later he suffered from fever while he was still in Medina. He came to the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, and said: Messenger of Allah, do release me from my pledge. But the Holy Prophet paid no attention to him. He came a second time and made the same request, and the Holy Prophet refused to comply with his request. He then departed from Medina, whereupon the Holy Prophet observed: Medina is like a furnace which destroys the dross and purifies the rest (Fathul Bari, Vol. XXIII, p.173).

This incident is most instructive. The man's repeated request to the Holy Prophet that he might be released from his pledge is conclusive proof that apostacy was not a punishable offence. Had it been punishable, as is affirmed by some of the misguided divines, with death, this man would never have approached the Holy Prophet with the request that he might be released from his pledge. He would have slipped away from Medina secretly, lest he should be apprehended and put to death.

Again, if the penalty of apostacy had been death, why did the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, not warn him that as he had



ceased to believe in Islam, he was liable to be executed?! As he persisted in his request to be released from his pledge, why was he not executed after his second request? Why did not the Companions of the Holy Prophet, who were present on each occasion, warn him that as he had ceased to believe in Islam, he had incurred the penalty of death?

Further, the Holy Prophet appears to have been pleased that the man had departed from Medina. The observation that the Holy Prophet made is an indication that the Holy Prophet considered the man's departure from Medina a good riddance, as his continued presence in Medina would not have been desirable.

### *Treaty of Hudaibiyyah*

Bokhari has related, on the authority of Braa bin Aazib, that in the treaty of Hudaibiyyah, the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, agreed with the pagans of Mecca that if anyone of them became a Muslim and came to Medina, he would be returned to the Meccans, but that if a Muslim departed from Medina and joined the Meccans, they would not be under obligation to return him to the Holy Prophet (Bokhari, Egyptians edition, Vol. II, p. 76).

The obligation undertaken by the Holy Prophet in the treaty that a Muslim who departed from Medina and joined the Meccans, which means that if he repudiated Islam and went and identified himself with the Meccans, he would not be restored to the Holy Prophet, also establishes that apostacy was not punishable as an offence. Had it been punishable as an offence, the Holy Prophet would not have accepted this term of the treaty.

He would have told the Meccan envoy, who represented the Meccans at Hudaibiyyah, that he could not agree to a term which was contrary to the divine command that an apostate was punishable with death. Nor did any of the Companions of the Holy Prophet protest against this term of the treaty that it was inconsistent with a Divine commandment.

### *Testimony of Abu Sufyan*

The dialogue between the Byzantine Emperor Hircilius and Abu Sufyan took place after the treaty of Hudaibiyyah. Abu Sufyan has related: When the Emperor summoned me to his presence, he placed my companions behind me and told them that he was about to question me concerning the person who claimed to be a prophet in our country, and that if in my answers I said anything which was not true, they should immediately contradict me. Therefore, had I not been afraid that if I said anything that was untrue my companions would contradict me and I would be humiliated before the Emperor, I would have had recourse to falsehood in my replies. I tried hard to add something to my replies that might go against the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, but I found no opportunity of doing so, except in one respect, and that was when the Emperor asked me: How does he carry out his covenants? I replied: So far, he has not contravened any of his covenants with us. We have just entered into a new treaty with him and we shall see how he behaves in respect of it, whether he carries it out or not. This was all that I was able to introduce into my replies that could raise a doubt with regard to

the truth of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him.

One of the questions that the Emperor had put to Abu Sufyan was: Has any of those who have accepted him, repudiated him? To which Abu Sufyan replied in the negative. Had Islam imposed the penalty of death upon an apostate, Abu Sufyan would certainly have taken advantage of it and told the Emperor that none of the followers of the Holy Prophet resiled from his faith because if he did so, he would be put to death. This also is strong evidence that Islam had not imposed any penalty for apostacy.

### *Apostate Pardoned by Holy Prophet*

Abdullah bin Abi Sarah was one of the scribes of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, in Medina. He became an apostate and went and joined the Meccans and identified himself with them. On the fall of Mecca, he was among those few persons who were condemned to death by the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, on account of their misdeeds. He was a foster brother of Hazrat Usman bin Affan, who gave him shelter in his house where he remained hidden for some days. When order was restored in Mecca, Hazrat Usman interceded with the Holy Prophet on his behalf, who remained silent for a while and then signified his forgiveness of Abdullah. This incident is mentioned both in the Tafseer Kabeer of Imam Razi (Vol. V, p.527), and in the commentary Ruhul Maani (Vol. IV, p.484).

This incident also furnishes clear proof that there was no penalty for apostacy in Islam. Abdullah bin Abi Sarah had been

condemned on account of his political offences and not on account of his apostacy. Had the punishment for apostacy been death, Hazrat Usman would never have given him shelter, and the Holy Prophet would never have accepted Hazrat Usman's intercession on his behalf.

It is well known that the Holy Prophet never accepted any intercession in respect of the prescribed punishment for an offence. If anyone attempted intercession in such a case, the Holy Prophet rejected it and was gravely displeased with the intercessor. This is well illustrated by the case of a woman of the Makhzoom who had been found guilty of theft. Bokhari has related on the authority of Aisha: The Quraish were much disturbed on account of a Makhzoomi woman who had committed theft. They consulted together and wondered who could approach the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, on her behalf, except Usamah bin Zaid, whom the Holy Prophet held dear. They persuaded Usamah to approach the Holy Prophet, and intercede on behalf of the woman. When he did so, the Holy Prophet rebuked him: Do you intercede in respect of a penalty prescribed by Allah? Then he stood up and, addressing his companions, said: Many people before you went astray because they overlooked the offence of a person belonging to a good family and imposed the prescribed penalty upon a common thief. I call God to witness that if Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad, were to be guilty of theft, I would certainly cut off her hand (Bokhari, Indian edition, p.1003).

Thus it can be seen what was the attitude of the Holy Prophet in respect of prescribed penalties. Had Abdullah bin Abi Sarah

been liable to the penalty of death on account of his apostacy, the Holy Prophet would never have accepted Hazrat Usman's intercession on his behalf and would have responded to Hazrat Usman in the same way as he had responded to Usamah.

### *Examination of Ahadees*

Some comment may be offered on the ahadees that are set forth in support of their position by those who contend that apostacy is punishable with death. Abi Qalabah reports on the authority of Anas: Some people of Akal or Urainah came to Medina and found that its climate disagreed with them. The Holy Prophet told them to go and stay among his she-camels outside Medina and drink their milk. They followed his instructions, and when they were fully restored they killed the Holy Prophet's keeper of the camels and drove away the camels. When the Holy Prophet was informed of this incident, he sent some men after them who caught them and brought them to the Holy Prophet. He directed that they should be tortured in the same way as they had tortured his keeper of the camels.

Now, it is true that those people had become apostates, but it is quite clear that the penalty imposed upon them was not in respect of their apostacy, but on account of the offences which they had committed on the person of the Holy Prophet's keeper of his camels. This hadees, therefore, does not in any manner lend support to the thesis that apostacy is punishable with death.

Another instance that is cited in support of the thesis that apostacy is punishable with death is the case of Ibn Khatal who

was one of the four people who were executed on the occasion of the fall of Mecca. It is true that he was an apostate, but it is not a fact that he was executed on account of his apostacy. His case is set out in Mawahibal Ludunniyyah where it is stated: The Holy Prophet directed the execution of Ibn Khatal. He had been a Muslim and the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, had sent him to collect the zakat. He was accompanied by an Ansari and a freed man of his who served him and who was a Muslim. They arrived at a place where they were to spend the night and he directed the freed man to slaughter a goat and to prepare dinner. Having given this direction, he went to sleep and when he woke up, he found that the freed man had done nothing for the preparation of dinner. He was intensely annoyed and set upon the freed man and despatched him. He then repudiated Islam and reverted to paganism, and went to Mecca and settled down there.

This recital makes it quite clear tha Ibn Khatal was not executed as a punishment for his apostacy, but on account of his murder of the Muslim freed man. Our thesis is not that no apostate has ever been punished. We concede that there are several instances of the execution of apostates, but in each case the execution was for some offence committed by the apostate and not on account of his apostacy. We repeat that there has not been a single case in which the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, directed the execution of an apostate whose only default was that he had repudiated Islam and who had not been guilty of any offence attracting the penalty of death.

The third case which is cited in support of the advocates of the penalty of death for apostacy is that of Maqees bin Sababah

who was also executed on the occasion of the fall of Mecca. Concerning him Zarqani has recorded in his commentary on Mawahibal Ludunniyyah: Maqees bin Sababah had become a Muslim and thereafter he killed an Ansari who had killed his brother Hisham during the campaign of Zeeqard, mistakenly thinking that he was one of the enemy. After that incident Maqees had accepted blood money in respect of his brother from the Ansari, and yet, he killed the Ansari. He then repudiated Islam and went to Mecca and joined the Quraish. This again is a case where an apostate was executed on account of a treacherous murder that he had committed.

Having met nothing but frustration in their search for a genuine case of execution on account of simple apostacy, those who differ with us on this question have been driven to rely upon two utterly unreliable ahadees, each of which mentions the execution of a woman on account of her apostacy. These two ahadees are false on the face of them as there is good authority affirming that the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, never directed the execution of a woman for apostacy.

In certain ahadees it is merely mentioned as a hypothesis that an apostate deserves to be executed, but in every one of those ahadees, a qualification is added which requires that the apostate should have fought the Muslims or should have committed some other offence. It is not necessary, therefore, to examine those ahadees in detail.

*Punishment of Apostacy by Companions of Holy Prophet*

We now proceed to the examination of instances which are cited to establish that the Companions of the Holy Prophet imposed the penalty of death upon apostates. Before examining those instances we would observe that we are not bound by the action of any companion of the Holy Prophet. We are bound only by the Holy Quran and the practice of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him. Syed Sharif al Jarjani has stated in his Mukhtasar: The word or action of a companion, however reliably stated, is not binding. In *Kashful Asrar*, which is a commentary on *Al-Manar*, it is stated at p.99 of Vol. II: We follow the Prophets, peace be on them, as we have been assured through the signs exhibited by them that they have been safeguarded against falsehood and mistake, and we follow them on account of their sinlessness. This quality is not guaranteed in respect of others. Therefore we are not bound to follow any of them. That is why Imam Shafai has said that the word of a companion is not binding. Had it been binding, people would have been called to obey it as they are called to obey the Holy Prophet, peace be on him.

At page 100 of the same book it is recorded: It is related of Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, that he wrote to Shuraih, directing him to decide in accordance with the Holy Quran, and failing that, according to the practice of the Holy Prophet, and in default of that, according to his own judgment. He did not direct him to follow any dictum of Umar himself.



### **Hazrat Abu Bakr and Apostates**

Nevertheless, the cases cited by those who differ with us, do not uphold their thesis. The first case cited is that of the widespread apostacy which followed upon the death of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him. It is argued that Hazrat Abu Bakr's fighting the apostates is conclusive proof that simple apostacy is punishable with death.

Our naive divines who cite this instance assume that those apostates were "harmless people" whose only fault was that they did not consider themselves bound to pay the zakat to the Khalifa and had given up salat. It is imagined that they had committed no wrong beyond this and that they did not fight the Muslims, nor hurt anyone. It is supposed that they had no quarrel with the Islamic state, that indeed they were obedient to the Khalifa and supported him and were eager to live peacefully, and obediently under the authority of the Islamic state. Had that been so, then it would be doubtful whether they were apostates at all. But the case was not as our divines imagine. Those apostates had repudiated their allegiance to the Islamic state and had taken up arms against it. Those of them who continued to adhere to Islam were killed, and forces were got ready to wage war with the Islamic state. In fact, they advanced upon Medina and laid siege to it in their effort to destroy the Muslims altogether. Therefore, Abu Bakr took up the sword against them and defeated and subdued them. This lends no support to the thesis that the punishment of simple apostacy is death. If the apostates had no rebellious designs, then why is it that leading Refugees and Helpers urged Hazrat Abu Bakr that he should detain the force which was ready to march

north under the command of Usamah bin Zaid, as the security of Medina was threatened by the apostates? Also, why had Usamah begged Hazrat Umar , may Allah be pleased with him, to go to Hazrat Abu Bakr and to persuade him to permit Usamah to return to Medina? The reason given by Usamah for his request was that the force under his command contained all the leading Muslims and he had serious apprehensions that the Khalifa and the wives of the Holy Prophet and the Muslims in Medina might find their security in danger from the apostates.

Tabari has recorded: Abs and Zeeban were the tribes Who were the first to attack Medina and Hazrat Abu Bakr fought them before the return of Usamah (Tabari, V 01. IV, p.1873).

Ibn Khalladun has recorded: Abs and Zeeban were the first to attack Hazrat Abu Bakr and the others collected together at Zil Qassah (Ibn Khalladun, Vol. II, p.65).

Khamees has recorded: Kharajah bin Hasan, who was one of the apostates, advanced upon Medina with some mounted men of his tribe so as to deliver his attack unexpectedly before the Muslims emerged from Medina to oppose him. Thus he attacked Abu Bakr and those Muslims who had been left in Medina and took them unawares (Khamees, Vol.II, p.237).

Some of the apostates sent delegations to Medina begging the Khalifa to release them from the obligation to pay the zakat and to observe salat. When Hazrat Abu Bakr rejected their request categorically , they went back to prepare their people for an attack on Medina. After they left, Hazrat Abu Bakr called the Muslims of Medina together and addressed them as follows: The whole country has reverted to disbelief. Their delegation has observed

the smallness of your numbers in Medina. You do not know whether they might attack you by night or by day. Their vanguard is only at the distance of one stage from Medina. They had desired that we should accept their proposals and make an agreement with them, but we have rejected their request. So, make ready to defend yourselves against their attack. Within three days they attacked Medina at night, having left some forces at Zil Hussay as their support (Tabari, Vol. IV, p.1875).

Thus it is clear that the apostates were the first to advance against the Muslims of Medina and they conceived that they would occupy Medina as the number of Muslims in it was small and they were weak. But God Almighty, according to His promise, supported the Khalifa and frustrated the designs of his enemies.

The apostates had not only made preparations to advance upon Medina, they had, immediately after the death of the Holy Prophet, slaughtered the sincere Muslims among them who persisted in their adherence to Islam. Ibn Khalladun has said that on receiving the intimation of the death of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, Banu Zeeban and Abs attacked those among themselves who were Muslims and the same was done by the other tribes who had become apostates (Ibn Khalladun, Vol. II, p.66).

Tabari has said: As soon as intimation was received of the death of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, Banu Zeeban and Abs attacked those who still adhered to Islam and slaughtered them in diverse manners and so did the other tribes around them (Tabari, Vol. IV, p.1817).

Thus it is clear that those tribes had rebelled openly against the authority of the Islamic state, they slaughtered the Muslims and were determined to wipe them out and to destroy the Islamic state and Islam itself. The advocates of the penalty of death for simple apostacy can derive no support from such instances. Their recourse to these instances shows that they can find nothing relevant in support of their thesis.

There were two considerations that held back the greater part of the apostates from advancing upon Medina. One was that Hazrat Abu Bakr and his companions had, with great courage and bravery, repelled those who had attacked Medina and this discouraged the rest. Secondly, the departure of the force under the command of Usamah for the north created an impression among the disaffected Arab tribes that the Muslims were very strong in Medina inasmuch as, despite the revolt of the tribes, they had been able to dispatch a large army to the north.

The author of *Tarikh al Kamil* has observed: The dispatch of the army under the command of Usamah was an event which proved of the greatest benefit for the Muslims, inasmuch as the apostate tribes imagined that if the Muslims had not been in a position of great strength, they would not have dispatched the army to the north in the situation with which they were faced. Under this impression, they held back from putting their evil designs into effect (*Tarikh al Kamil*, V 01. II, p.139).

This also shows that all the apostate tribes had designs against Medina but they held back under the impression that the dispatch of the army under Usamah was an indication of the strong position of the Muslims in Medina. A study of the

situation with which Hazrat Abu Bakr was confronted at the time makes it clear that the Arab tribes had not only repudiated Islam, but they had all rebelled against the Islamic state and they were determined to wipe out the Muslims altogether. Their design was frustrated only by the timely and courageous action of Hazrat Abu Bakr. Had he not moved quickly against the first batch of rebels, who were advancing upon Medina, the position of the apostate tribes would have grown stronger, they would have slaughtered all the Muslims in their respective localities and would then have attacked Medina. It was, therefore, necessary that the Muslims should have acted quickly to break up their ranks and to put out the fire that was spreading in all directions and spelt danger to the very existence of the Muslims. Had Hazrat Abu Bakr not used force against the apostate tribes, there would have survived no Muslim and no Islam. As Aini has observed: Hazrat Abu Bakr fought those who had refused to pay the zakat because they had taken up the sword and had started hostilities against the Muslims (Aini, Vol. XI, p.236). This shows clearly that the apostates were the aggressors. They not only refused to pay the zakat, but took up the sword against the Muslims and thus commenced hostilities.

### *Rebellion against Authority of State*

The apostacy of the tribes was not confined to a difference of doctrine. They had taken up the sword in rebellion against the Islamic state, they slaughtered the Muslims among them, they burnt some alive and mutilated those they killed and then

advanced Upon Medina. Tabari has observed: When the Bani Asad, Ghatafan, Hawazan, Bani Sulaim and Bani Tai were finally vanquished, the Muslim commander, Khalid bin Waleed, refused to grant them an amnesty till they would produce before him those Who, after their apostacy, had burned the Muslims alive, had mutilated them and had otherwise tortured them (Tabari, V 01. IV, p.1900).

It is also established that the apostates had expelled from their respective areas the functionaries who had been appointed by the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, and in some places set up their own government or attempted to do so. Ibn Khalladun has written: The Banu Rabia became apostates and appointed Munzar bin Numan as their ruler (Ibn Khalladun, Vol. II, p.76).

It is, therefore, utterly untrue that the fighting of the apostates by the Muslims in the time of Abu Bakr lends any support to the thesis that simple apostacy is punishable with death in Islam. Those who make such a claim are either ignorant of the early history of Islam or they deliberately seek to mislead.

### **Musailamah Political Rebel**

The advocates of the penalty of death for apostacy also rely in support of their thesis on the case of Musailamah Kazzab. They pose the question: If there is no penalty for apostacy, why was Musailamah Kazzab not left alone and why was he fought against? The reply is that if he had confined himself to his claim of prophethood and had not entered into any political activity in opposition to the Muslim state, there would have been something which those who differ with us could have relied upon. But the

facts refute them. The object of the activities of Musailamah Kazzab was to obtain political power and his false claim of prophethood was only a means towards that end. During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, he had come to Medina with a delegation of Banu Haneefah and had proposed to the Holy Prophet that he would submit to him in case he was nominated the successor of the Holy Prophet. He was told by the Holy Prophet that he would not yield him even a twig of a date palm tree. When he went back he claimed to be a prophet and announced that half the country belonged to him and half belonged to the Quraish. He sent the following letter to the Holy Prophet: From Musailamah, Messenger of Allah, to Muhammad, Messenger of Allah. Peace be on you. I have been appointed your partner in authority. Half the country belongs to us and half belongs to the Quraish, but the Quraish are a people who transgress (Tabari, V 01. IV, p.1849).

The Holy Prophet replied to him: The earth belongs to Allah; He bestows it as heritage on whomsoever He pleases of His servants, and the pleasing end is that of the righteous (7:129). Thereafter, Musailamah established his authority in Hajar and Yamamah and expelled therefrom the functionaries who had been appointed by the Holy Prophet (Khamees, Vol.II, p.177). He made a junction with Sajah, the female rebel, who had intended to fight the Muslims and assured her: I shall establish my authority over the whole of Arabia with the help of my people and thy people (Tabari, Vol. IV, p.1918). After his claim of prophethood, he encountered Habeeb bin Zaid and Abdullah bin Wahb Aslami, two of the Companions of the Holy Prophet, and

having captured them, he asked them to acknowledge his prophethood. Abdullah yielded to his persuasion and became an apostate, but Habeeb stoutly resisted and Musailamah had him cut up limb by limb and then burned him (Khamees, Vol. II, p.641).

In the face of all this, can the advocates of the penalty of death for apostacy still contend that Musailamah was fought only on account of his apostacy and that his case lends any support to the thesis that simple apostacy is punishable with death? Musailamah had become so strong that when he fought Khalid bin Waleed in Yamamah, he had under his command 40,000 warriors of the Banu Haneefah alone. The fighting was so severe as the Muslims had not experienced before. Yet those who differ with us represent Musailamah as a harmless apostate and contend that if simple apostacy was not punishable, he should have been left alone.

### **Apostate and Rebel**

Another instance which is cited by our opponents in support of their thesis is that of Tulaiha, another claimant to prophethood. This shows again that the divines who rely upon the cases of Musailamah and Tulaiha in support of their thesis are either ignorant or dishonest. They were not only apostates, but took up the sword against Islam and sought to dominate Arabia after destroying the Muslims.

Tulaiha bin Khawailad Asadi had become an apostate in the life of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him. He settled down at Sumaira and gathered a force around him. After the death of the



Holy Prophet, he became stronger and Ghatafan, Hawazan and Tai rallied to his cause. After Abs and Zeeban had been vanquished by Hazrat Abu Bakr, they too joined Tulaiha. All these people persecuted the Muslims, tortured them, mutilated them and burned some of them alive (Tareekhal Kamel, V 01. II, p.149).

When Ukasha bin Mohsin and Thabit bin Aqram Ansari were out on a reconnaissance, they were overtaken by Tulaiha and his brother and were put to death. The Muslims subsequently discovered their dead bodies which had apparently been trampled underfoot.

It will thus be seen that Tulaiha was not only an apostate, he was a rebel and gave shelter to other rebels. He himself and his people slaughtered Muslims and it had become necessary to put him down. Khalid bin Waleed was sent against him, but before starting action, he sent an emissary to try to persuade him to come to terms so that bloodshed could be avoided. But he proved obdurate and there was no choice left to Khalid except to start fighting.

Musailamah and Tulaiha were not the only ones who made a false claim of prophethood towards the latter part of the life of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him. There were several other such claimants and all of them aimed at acquiring political authority over some part of Arabia. One of them was Aswad Ansi who raised the standard of rebellion simultaneously with his apostacy. He commanded the functionaries of the Holy Prophet in the Yemen to restore to him the taxes which they had collected. They put him off and he proceeded to subdue the Yemen with the help

of the tribes of Mazhaj and Najran. He killed the Muslim governor of the Yemen, Shahr bin Bazan, and forcibly married his widow and made himself the ruler of the whole of the Yemen. On being apprised of the rebellion of Aswad, the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, sent a letter to Muaz bin Jabal and the Muslims to oppose Aswad Ansi, who was killed by them and the news of his death arrived in Medina one day after the death of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him.

One Laqet bin Malik Azdi of Oman became an apostate and claimed to be a prophet. He collected together a force and established his authority over Oman, whence he expelled Jaafar and Abad who had been appointed functionaries in Oman (Tabari, Vol. IV, p.1977).

These claimants of prophethood had no concern with religion. Their only purpose was political domination and they were all rebels against the Islamic state. That was the only reason for fighting them. Their cases lend no support to the thesis that apostacy is punishable with death in Islam. They, like the other apostates, had raised the standard of rebellion against the Islamic state. They slaughtered Muslims, expelled the functionaries of the state from the regions over which they established their authority, assumed and exercised the powers of government, raised forces for fighting the Islamic state and some of them moved against Medina and laid siege to it. These were the reasons that they had to be fought.

### **Obligation to Pay Zakat**

Even if these apostates and claimants had not been guilty of the

crimes which they committed after their apostacy, which necessitated their suppression by force for the sake of the security of the Islamic state, and had confined themselves only to refusing to pay the zakat while still claiming to be Muslims, that alone would have been a sufficient cause for fighting them. Hazrat Abu Bakr was perfectly right in declaring that he would fight those who refused to pay the zakat even if their refusal did not go beyond holding back from him one nose string of a camel which they used to render to the Holy Prophet, or holding back a single lamb that they used to surrender as zakat to the Holy Prophet. He was not only the spiritual Successor of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, but also his political Successor. The Islamic state had been established all over Arabia during the life-time of the Holy Prophet and it was the primary duty of his Successors to maintain the Islamic state, and to safeguard it and to arrange to recover the financial dues that were owed to the state treasury. The Holy Prophet, peace be on him, had organised the revenue system of the Islamic state which was based on the zakat, and the zakat was recognised as an obligatory tax due to the state. The Islamic state made provision for its diverse activities from the proceeds of the zakat. The military requirements of the state were met out of the zakat and all aspects of social welfare were provided out of the proceeds of the zakat. For instance, it is the duty of an Islamic state to provide for the maintenance of the unemployed and of the disabled; to provide capital for those who have been trained for a profession or an occupation or other beneficent activity, but lack the means of carrying it on; to promote industry and commerce; to provide facilities for transportation and for the

comfort of travelers etc. It may sometimes be necessary for the state to help those who are indebted and cannot find the means to discharge their debts, or those against whom an award has been made which they have not the capacity to fulfill. All this has to be provided for out of the proceeds of the zakat. As the Islamic state is not a purely secular state, it is under obligation to provide for the propagation of Islam and to help those who accept Islam and are in need of assistance. This is also one of the purposes which have to be met out of the proceeds of the zakat, as is said in the Holy Quran: The proceeds of the zakat are for the poor and the needy, and for those employed in connection with their collection and distribution, for those whose hearts are to be comforted, and for the freeing of slaves, and for those burdened with debt, and for those striving in the cause of Allah, and for the comfort of the wayfarers. This is an ordinance from Allah. Allah is All Knowing, Wise. (9:60).

The difference between the obligation of paying the zakat and the obligation of observing salat is that the latter pertains wholly to the individual and the former pertains not only to the individual but also to the state, and it is the duty of the state to arrange for its recovery. The verse just cited requires the state to establish a department for the recovery and dispensation of the zakat. The Holy Prophet, peace be on him, said about the zakat: It is a levy that is imposed upon the well-to-do and is restored to those who are in need. The expressions levied and restored indicate that it is the duty of the state to recover the zakat and to employ its proceeds for the purposes which are set out in the verse just cited. The direction in the Holy Quran "Take a portion of

their wealth as zakat” (9:103); requires the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, and his Successors and all Islamic states to recover the zakat. In accordance with it, the Holy Prophet made arrangements for its recovery and appointed functionaries to assess and collect it. In his time, the zakat was collected in the same way as government revenues are collected in our time.

As Hazrat Abu Bakr was the Successor of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, it was his obligation to collect the zakat in the way as the Holy Prophet himself collected it. That is why he affirmed that if any Muslim who paid zakat to the Holy Prophet, would withhold from him as little as the nose-string of a camel that he used to render to the Holy Prophet, he would require it from him by the sword. Thus the recovery of the zakat would be enforced in the same manner in which governments recover their dues from their subjects. If anyone should refuse to pay such dues, the state is entitled to recover them by force. Those who refused to pay the zakat in the time of Hazrat Abu Bakr were in the same situation as those who might refuse to pay government taxes today. It was the duty of Hazrat Abu Bakr to recover the zakat by force from those who refused to render it. Those people were rebels against the state like those who might refuse to pay government taxes today. Thus, if Hazrat Abu Bakr fought those Muslims who were not guilty of any offence other than refusal to pay the zakat, those who differ with us on the question of the punishment of apostacy can derive no support or comfort from his action, as he had fought those who had rebelled against the authority of the state.

The Holy Prophet, peace be on him, had to deal with enemies

who would not leave the Muslims at peace. They persecuted them and sought to wipe out Islam with the sword. He stood up against them and having established peace and security in the land, laid the foundations of an Islamic state and put the Islamic law in force. Among other laws he imposed the zakat on those upon whom it had been made obligatory and arranged for its recovery. During his time, no section of the Muslims refused to pay the zakat. He was, therefore, under no necessity to fight anyone on that score. This necessity arose in the case of Hazrat Abu Bakr who was refused the dues that the Holy Prophet had imposed, the recovery of which he arranged for and out of the proceeds of which he fulfilled the requirements of the state. Therefore, it became the duty of Hazrat Abu Bakr to recover those dues by force from the subjects of the Islamic state who refused to render them voluntarily.

History does not mention any case of a people whose default in the time of Hazrat Abu Bakr was confined merely to the non-payment of zakat and whom he fought. So far as we have been able to discover, those whom he fought had rebelled openly against the Islamic state. They had expelled from the territories under their control the functionaries who had been appointed by the Holy Prophet, peace be on him; those among them who adhered to Islam were massacred and they had raised forces for the purpose of fighting the Islamic state. Some of them advanced against Medina. Hazrat Abu Bakr had been left no choice but to fight them. Even if there had been any tribes whose default was limited to refusal to pay the zakat, and who called themselves Muslims, it had become necessary to fight them also as they withheld

government revenues and refused to pay them.

### **Umm Qarfah**

Our opponents cite the case of a woman apostate, Umm Qarfah, who was put to death under the authority of Hazrat Abu Bakr. In her case also, it was not a simple case of apostacy. It is recorded in Masboot, Vol. X, p110: Umm Qarfah had as many as thirty sons, whom she constantly exhorted to fight the Muslims. Thus she paid the penalty of treason against the state and was not punished on account of her apostacy.

### *Hazrat Ali and Khawaraj*

Our opponents also try to take undue advantage of Hazrat Ali's fighting the Khawaraj; but that does not help them either. To begin with, the preponderant opinion of the divines has been that the Khawaraj were not apostates, but were a Muslim sect who had raised the standard of rebellion against Hazrat Ali. It is recorded in Fatehal Bari, Vol. XII, p.267: Khattabi states that the Muslim divines are agreed that the Khawaraj, despite their error, are one of the sects of Islam. Inter-marriage is lawful with them and they cannot be held to be disbelievers so long as they adhere basically to Islam. At page 268 of the same book it is recorded: Ibn Batal has said that a consensus of the divines holds that the Khawaraj are not outside Islam.

The Tafsir Kabeer of Imam Razi records at page 614 of Vol. III: An apostate is one who repudiates the Islamic law. People who opposed Hazrat Ali had not given up following the Islamic law. No one has said that Hazrat Ali fought them because they

had repudiated Islam, nor did Hazrat Ali call them apostates.

At pages 61 and 62 of Vol. II of Minhajus Sunnah, one of the books of Sheikh Ibn Taimiyyah, it is recorded: Ashari has said that though the Khawaraj were all agreed that Hazrat Ali was a disbeliever, yet Hazrat Ali declared clearly that they were Muslims and not disbelievers or hypocrites...One reason for holding that the Companions did not consider the Khawaraj disbelievers is that they joined them in the salat and met them and mingled with them and addressed them as Muslims...The Muslims also treated them in the same way and did not consider them apostates as those against whom Hazrat Abu Bakr had fought...The Companions and those who followed them did not consider them apostates nor transgressed against them in any way by word or deed, but treated them righteously with justice.

It is well established that Hazrat Ali's fighting the Khawaraj was for the purpose of suppressing rebellion and disorder and not on account of any difference of doctrine. This is clear from the following:

Hazrat Ali spoke to the leaders of the Khawaraj and undertook that the Khawaraj would not be denied admission to mosques, would be given their share out of war booty and would not be fought against unless they started disorders. They left him in parties and held a caucus at Madaen. Hazrat Ali sent an emissary to them asking them to return, but they declined and they said they would not return unless he confessed that having agreed to arbitration he had become a disbeliever, and unless he repented. Thereupon Hazrat Ali sent to them a second time but they persisted in their refusal to return and were at one time



inclined to put his emissary to death. In the end, they declared that whoever differed from their doctrine was a disbeliever and that it was lawful to kill him and the members of his family and to take possession of his property. They began to act in accordance with their declarations and stopped people who passed near them and put them to death. It so happened that Abdullah bin Khabab, who was Hazrat Ali's governor in their region, who was accompanied by a female slave who was pregnant, came upon them. They killed both of them. When Hazrat Ali was apprised of this atrocity, he advanced upon them in force and attacked them at Nahrawan (Fatehal Bari, Vol. XII, p.251).

Another account says: The Khawaraj made Abdullah bin Khabab lie down and slaughtered him, and his blood flowed into the water. Then they turned to the woman who accompanied him, and she said to them: I am but a woman. Will you not fear God? Yet they cut her open and also killed three women of Bani Tai. They also killed Umm Sanan Saidaviah. When Hazrat Ali heard that they had killed Abdullah bin Khabab and that they stopped people and killed them, he sent Alharath bin Marrah Abadi to them to investigate and report back to him how far the report that had reached him was true. But they killed him also. When Hazrat Ali arrived at the head of his forces he demanded that they should surrender to him those who had been guilty of killing his people, but they refused and said they had all been guilty of their slaughter and that they considered it lawful to kill them and to kill Hazrat Ali and those who supported him (Tarikh al Kamel, Vol.111, p.148).

These accounts leave no doubt that Hazrat Ali did not fight

the Khawaraj on account of any doctrinal difference, but because they created disorder in the land and killed Muslim men and women and they killed the governor appointed by him and his female slave and also Hazrat Ali's emissary. When he called upon them to surrender those who had been responsible for these atrocities, they replied that they were all responsible for the killings as they considered it lawful to kill Hazrat Ali and all those who supported him.

### **Hazrat Ali and Zindeeqs**

Our opponents also cite a case that Hazrat Ali had directed the burning alive of some of the Zindeeqs who called him god, but their authority for this statement is utterly unreliable and the horror attributed by them to Hazrat Ali cannot possibly be accepted as a fact. It is well known that the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, had forbidden anyone being tormented by fire. It is, therefore, impossible to give credence to the allegation that Hazrat Ali resorted to this horror in contravention of the express direction of the Holy Prophet. The narrator of this alleged occurrence has been condemned by everyone as utterly unreliable and given to imposture, so much so that when he died no one said funeral prayers over his dead body.

The people who called Ali god were the followers of one Abdullah bin Sabah who had been a Jew. He was the one who was at the back of the group who subsequently murdered Hazrat Usman, the fourth Khalifa. Hazrat Ali had exiled him to Madaen, but he and his followers continued their nefarious activities.

Thus, there is not a single instance that the immediate

Successors of the Holy Prophet put anyone to death on account of simple apostacy or on account of doctrinal differences.

## Conclusion

Before concluding this review of events during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, and the time of his immediate Successors, it is necessary to examine one narrative that our opponents put forward in support of their thesis that apostacy is punishable with death. It is related that the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, appointed Muaz bin Jabal and Abu Musa Ashari governors of a part of the Yemen each. When they were about to leave him, he admonished them: Make things easy for people and do not put them to difficulty; talk to them cheerfully and not in a manner that might repel them. When either of them happened to be near the other during their tours of their respective territories, they would meet each other and spend some time together. On one occasion, when Hazrat Muaz came to meet Hazrat Abu Musa Ashari, he noticed a person sitting near the latter who had been secured with a rope. Hazrat Muaz inquired, who was this person. He was told that he was a Jew who had become a Muslim and had then become an apostate, whereupon Hazrat Muaz declared that he would not dismount till the person had been dispatched and observed that this was the judgment of God and His Messenger.

It is obvious, however, that it has been assumed in this narrative that the man had been guilty of fighting against the Muslims along with their enemies. There are several indications

in the narrative in support of this assumption. For instance, Hazrat Muaz observed that his execution was in accordance with the judgment of God Almighty and His Messenger. We have already made it quite clear that according to the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, a person can be executed only for murder or for creating disorder in the land as is said in the Holy Quran: Whoso kills a person, except for killing another or for creating disorder in the land, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind (5:33). Waging war against Allah and His Messenger is one species of disorder which attracts the penalty of death (5:34).

The practice of the Holy Prophet has also established that only such apostates were executed who had fought against the Muslims after their apostacy. Even some of them were forgiven on the intercession of some Companion of the Holy Prophet.

It is a matter of history that the wave of apostacy that followed the death of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, had already started in the Yemen in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet when Muaz bin Jabal was governor of a part of the Yemen. There is thus every reason for assuming that the person whose execution is mentioned in this narrative had been guilty of taking up arms against the Muslims.

Then the admonition of the Holy Prophet to Hazrat Muaz and Hazrat Abu Musa at the time of their departure for the Yemen also makes it quite clear that the person mentioned in the narrative could not have been executed for simple apostacy, for such an event would be sure to repel people and to make them look upon Islam as a cruel religion.

*Opinion of Jurists*

Our thesis that Islam imposes no secular penalty for simple apostacy having been conclusively established on the basis of the Holy Quran and the practice of the Holy Prophet, it is not necessary to have recourse to any juristic opinion on the subject. We are aware that a misunderstanding on this question arose in the midst of a certain section of the jurists on this subject. Yet it is of interest that the Hanafi jurists at the very start were firmly of the view that simple apostacy was not subject to any secular penalty.

The well known compilation Hedayah sets out: The Holy Prophet forbade the killing of women for apostacy, because the principle of punitive regulations is that in such cases the penalty should be left for the hereafter, as a penalty imposed in this life would contravene the purpose of apostacy being a trial the calling to account for which pertains to God alone. This can be departed from only when the object in view is to restrain the person concerned from continuing hostilities. As women, by their very nature, are not capable of fighting, a woman apostate cannot be punished in any case.

Another well known authority on Hanafi jurisprudence sets out: The execution of an apostate is permissible only when it is designed to restrain the apostate from continuing his aggression; it is not permissible merely on account of his reversion to disbelief, for the punishment of disbelief is severer than execution and can be imposed only by God Almighty (Fatehal Kadeer, Vol. IV, p.389).

Another authority states: There is no penalty for disbelief, because the penalty for it is severer than execution and can be imposed only by God Almighty (Chalpi's Commentary on Fatehal Kadeer, p.388).

Again, it is said: There is no execution except in the case of fighting, for it is not permissible to execute anyone merely on the ground of disbelief (Inayah, p.390).

The direction attributed to the Holy Prophet: Execute him who changes his faith; has been interpreted as meaning the execution of a combatant disbeliever (Fatehal Kadeer, Vol. II, p.580).

The advocates of the death penalty for apostacy claim that their thesis is supported by a unanimous consensus of the believers and that no one has ever questioned it. Their claim is utterly untrue. We have just shown that leading jurists of the Hanafi school held to the position to which we adhere, that simple apostacy is not punishable with death. It is only a fighting apostate who is subject to that penalty on account of his rebellion or treason and not on account of his apostacy. In addition there have been outstanding scholars in Islam who have upheld the view that we maintain, among them are the great figures of Hafiz Ibn Qayyam, Ibrahim Nakhai and Sufyan Thauri, the last one a great Imam of hadees.

### *Cause of Error*

It is asked that if we are right in our thinking, what led some of the past divines to proclaim that mere apostacy was punishable with death? This mistake arose in the same way as the mistaken view that Islam directs the assassination of every pagan and idol-

worshipper. As some people misconstrued some verse of the Holy Quran, without regard to its context, and assumed that it had reference to all pagans, and in consequence declared as many as four hundred verses of the Holy Quran as abrogated; in the same way, some divines were misled by such narratives as mentioned the execution of an apostate or some apostates, and applied them erroneously to the case of every apostate and ignored the fact that the narratives relied upon by them related to apostates who had taken up arms against the Muslims. They also ignored the fact that in earlier times an apostate immediately went and joined the enemies of the Muslims and fought along with them against the Muslims. Such a person spelt even greater danger to the Muslims than their declared enemies as he was aware of the condition and circumstances of the Muslims and could prove of great assistance to the enemy. Whenever such divines read about the execution of an apostate, they immediately concluded therefrom that apostacy was punishable with death, without inquiring into the circumstances under which, and on account of which, the apostate had been executed.

They discovered that the apostates had been fought against in the time of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Ali, may Allah be pleased with them, and without inquiring into the circumstances which had necessitated the fighting, erroneously concluded that every apostate was punishable with death. It is, however, fortunate that though some divines proclaimed that simple apostacy was punishable with death, several divines refused to subscribe to this view, and stated plainly that Islam had not appointed any punishment for simple apostacy or for simple



disbelief and that both will be accounted for in the hereafter. In this life, according to them, an apostate is liable to execution only on account of fighting against the Muslims or of creating such disorder as is punishable with death.

**To sum up: Apostacy means a plain and clear repudiation of Islam by a professing Muslim. It is only the profession or clear conduct of a person himself that makes him an apostate. Doctrinal differences, however grave, cannot be declared by anyone as constituting apostacy.**

**Simple apostacy, which is not aggravated by rebellion, treason or grave disorderliness, is not punishable in any manner in this life. Islam guarantees complete freedom of conscience and of belief. A disbeliever and a simple apostate stand in the same category; neither of them is liable to any penalty in this life. Were it otherwise, Islam would be accounted a faith that seeks to compel conscience, a vain and futile purpose which is impossible of achievement. Compulsion and force might make people hypocrites, but cannot make them believers.**

**Islam possesses the great distinction and the high merit that its scripture plainly, clearly and emphatically affirms full freedom of conscience and belief. The writer recalls that a quarter of a century ago a very learned and highly intelligent Dutch professor who taught at the University of Amsterdam told him that he had been convinced of the truth of Islam on reading in the Holy Quran: There shall be no compulsion in religion, for**

**guidance and error have been clearly distinguished (2:257). Since then, he had continued a sincere professing and practicing Muslim.**

**Those who, on account of their own mistaken interpretation of certain situations in the early history of Islam, fly in the face of the clear and emphatic affirmations of the Holy Quran, and the practice of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, in effect repel people from Islam and by their erroneous affirmations, quite unconsciously, hold Islam up to ridicule and invite the charge that Islam cannot be a true faith. By adhering to their preposterous view they render no service to Islam, but are guilty of grave disservice to the greatest of all faiths. May Allah, of His grace and mercy, enlighten their minds and rescue them from persisting in the support of a false and harmful fallacy.**