

Case Study Article for Common Mistakes in Critical Writings: The UIUK Response

Note by Dr. Farhad Shafti (May 2017):

The following is an article that is written and published in first person and is signed by two individuals and on behalf of the Understanding Islam charity organisation (UIUK). This article is in response to the first edition of my article on [Universality of the Qur'an](#) (the second edition is now available [here](#)). I have added my detailed comments on this article by the UIUK on the margins of the document. This is only for students of Islam who would like to spend time studying arguments in detail. For this purpose I have provided my comments in detail in order to turn this document to an educational material, no matter which side the reader favours. Not everyone has time to go through all these details. For the purpose of a quick read on what not to do in a critical writing I have written an article titled [Twenty Common Mistakes in Critical Writings](#).

My overall evaluation of this case study article is that the authors have not paid enough attention to the theme of the Qur'an and explicit verses of the Qur'an about the scope of the book and acceptance of variations in the path of God. They argue for the reason for revelation of some of the verses of the Qur'an but this seems to distract them from seeing the explicit and definite messages of these verses. They do not seem to pay enough attention to the obvious rules of languages like Arabic where a literally general expression finds a very specific meaning within the scope of the text. With regard to my article, there is not enough attention to some of my main arguments and they seem to have misunderstood some of my views. The authors have repeated the traditional view with some angles borrowed from Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, therefore at least for me there were no new arguments or reasons in their writing. The authors can hugely benefit from the writings of some of the contemporary scholars like Khalid abu al-Fadl, Abdullah Saeed, Tariq Ramadan, Ebrahim Moosa, Abdulkarim Soroush, Mujtahid Shabestari, Abulqasim Fanayi, etc. There are a number of personal attacks and false judgements in the article that have polluted the whole tone of this writing. The article would have been in a much higher level of rational dialogue if these statements were not included.

A few points:

1. This is the exact article that the UIUK have sent to me and is at the time of this writing (29th May 2017) published on their website.
2. The only change that I have applied in the document is that I have expanded its length with blank spaces to be able to accommodate my comments in the margins.
3. In my comments I have made a number of references to Javed Ahmad Ghamidi and Amin Ahsan Islahi. This is not because I consider these great scholars to be my point of reference. This is simply because the authors have frequently referred to these scholars as their point of reference in this article.
4. Most of the added comments have a title in Bold, blue. These titles refer to that common mistake in criticism that this comment refers to and is explained more generally in my article [Twenty Common Mistakes in Critical Writings](#).
5. Where in my comments I write 'my article', this refers to the first edition of my article on Universality of the Qur'an.

From the next page on, the UIUK article is provided with my comments on the margins:

ISLAM-A RELIGION OF MANKIND OR THE RELIGION FOR MANKIND

INTRODUCTION:

This long article has been written in order to demonstrate that God's religion has always been one. It is mortal humans who have been going astray and creating divisions in God's religion while God has been repeatedly restoring his religion back to its original form. Ultimately He completed His religion and preserved it for humanity for all times to come by sending His final Messenger Holy Prophet Muhammed (salawato wa salam abbreviated as sws). This is called Islam which has in fact always been its name. The article consists of four major parts and a number of sections and subsections which become clear as the reader goes along in his reading. I have made every effort to appeal to common sense, keep my arguments simple and based on facts. The readers would find it helpful if they could keep the Quran or its easy translation at hand while reading this article. The inspiration to write this article has been a treatise by a UK based Muslim scholar Dr Farhad Shafti, 'The true meaning of universality of the Quran' which is available on his website: www.exploring-islam.com. The readers can appreciate the content of the article better if this treatise is in sight.

A) THE RELIGION IN PERSPECTIVE:

Humanity can be seen divided into a plethora of ideologies and religions, each with its own understanding of human origin, its current existence on earth and its fate with variable emphasis on these aspects of humanity. This article is based on teachings of the Quran and human history and deals with these questions particularly from the point of view of human existence on this earth, humanity's journey in this life, its common goal, the responsibility of humans to recognise this goal and help each other in achieving this goal.

A:1: THE HUMAN EXISTENCE

The existence of human being on this planet Earth, with all its complicated nature, fascinating faculties and abilities and striking weaknesses raise some important questions. Has this existence come into being on its own through the spin of wheel of evolution over millions of years or is it a manifestation of a design? Has this human existence any purpose or is it without any purpose? Has this existence any time bound logical end or is it going to last for ever?

Let us set aside the viewpoint of people who do not believe in God or Allah (as referred in the Quran and subsequently in this article) and for the time being, accept as a starting point, the viewpoint of those who affirm the existence of an omnipotent Allah (subhana'hu wa ta'la or abbreviated as swt in this article) and that the human existence is a manifestation of a design, that it has some purpose and that it has a logical conclusion. Briefly this viewpoint states that Allah (swt) created this universe, defined and decreed laws which govern it and at one point in the history of this universe created human being. He adorned humans with fascinating faculties, peculiar abilities and a complicated nature. He gave him a limited autonomy and placed him on this earth with a clear purpose which is to see who amongst human race surrender this limited autonomy and horn their nature, faculties and abilities to the will of their Creator God or Allah (swt). According to this viewpoint, this worldly human life is hence a test (the Quran 67:2) and the purpose of this test is to lead humans to another life i.e to

inhabit another abode called paradise, with those amongst human race who are successful in this test.

Now, is this test easy? The summary answer is that this test is by no means easy. Firstly because the Creator Allah (swt) has hidden Himself from human faculties and cannot be seen and touched like humans perceive the existence of physical objects. Secondly human existence is marred by so many barriers and limitations which become a hindrance and make it difficult for him to navigate his way to success.

A:2: THE PROBLEMS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE:

Human life has been brought into existence with innumerable problems and limitations which become tools of this test it is subjected to on this planet. These can be divided into:

A:2:1 Physical or manifest:

- a) **Limitations of choice:** Human existence is marred by limitations of choice. These limitations can be absolute like place and time of birth, choice of parents, choice of abilities or can be relative like where to live, what to do in life etc.
- b) **Preservation of self:** Human existence in this life is based on deep love for this worldly existence which leads to the principle of preservation of self. It in turn results in passions like greed for power and resources, jealousy, prejudice, pride, anger, competitiveness, combativeness, seeking of pleasure and comfort and avoidance of pain.
- c) **Limitations of faculties:** Human being, in addition to basic sensations of vision, hearing, smell, touch and taste like other animals, is adorned with advanced abilities like consciousness, memory, intelligence, language, analysis, predictability, foresight and creativity. However all these not only have limitations but at times are prone to failure as well.
- d) **Variations in existence:** Human life and its environment is characterised by variations. The human characteristics mentioned above and many others which have not been mentioned, come in continua from one end of the scale to the other. In addition to the aforementioned, just note characters like height, weight, intelligence, beauty and many others.
- e) **Vulnerabilities to forces of nature:** Human existence is subjected to countless challenges from its environment (the Quran 74-31). Extremes of climate, accidents like earthquakes, excessive rains causing floods, droughts resulting in famines, epidemics and diseases are just a few examples. These make humans vulnerable and make an important part of the test the human life is subjected to.
- f) **Death:** And then is the ultimate malady which chases human life all the time, called death. If we pause for a moment and think about this monstrous reality it leaves us in sheer awe.

All these problems and limitations should raise questions in human mind. Any intelligent mind, if it ponders over these questions, can easily make out that human life is full of unanswered questions. It can also easily and logically make connections in this jigsaw puzzle and understand that human life is designed in a particularly way, that there is a purpose in this design and that there is a Designer behind all this. As a famous philosopher once said that in God everything is explained while without God

nothing could be explained. Allah's guidance through revelation affirms all this premise and also the second type of test which is metaphysical or hidden.

A:2:2 Metaphysical or hidden:

These problems of existence are those relating to areas which are beyond the reach of human senses and humans have no means to precisely understand and describe. These are part of the test humans are subjected to but humans have no direct access to these. However these can be understood to be logical and to be completing the missing links of human existence. These become sure knowledge for humans through revelation from the Creator Allah (swt). These are mainly two:

- a) **Metaphysical:** The existence of Allah (swt), Angels, heaven and hell and the form of human existence before or after this worldly existence. Humans cannot have physical experience of any of these by any means.
- b) **The challenge of Iblees:** Allah (swt) has revealed to mankind that his test in this worldly life will be complicated by Satan who challenged to covertly work against humanity to fail them in this test. The knowledge about Iblees, his arrogance and his challenge for mankind has been transmitted to humanity only by revelation and humans have no other means of knowing about it.

A:3 THE HUMANITY AND ITS COMMON GOAL:

If we carefully go through the Quran it becomes clear that it is 'the test made easy' manual for mankind from the Lord (swt) of the universe. It makes clear that Allah (swt) is dealing with humanity with utmost mercy as a unit and a family. This family has a common goal and it is facing a common challenge. The Quran describes the test the humanity is subjected to and how to be successful in this test. It describes the resources the humans are equipped with to face this test. It identifies their common enemy which is Iblees and describes his challenge. It describes how by exploiting their weaknesses he is going to prop them up with arrogance against their creator Allah (swt) and also play up against each other causing disunity, corruption and bloodshed amongst them. It warns those who, despite this clear guidance, fall in this trap and start working against humanity. Through His sheer mercy, Allah (swt) on the other hand also advises them against disunity, corruption and bloodshed. He advocates and promotes brotherhood, unity and cooperativeness amongst humans (4:1) in order to succeed in the test they are subjected to. **An important part of this cooperativeness is to invite fellow humans to the way and guidance of their Lord so they can avoid the wrath and punishment of their Lord and gain success in the life hereafter. Hence inviting humanity to the correct ways of their Lord is the greatest service a human being can render to humanity.**

A:4 THE RESOURCES OF HUMANITY:

In order to succeed in the test of life, human beings have been equipped with proper tools and resources. This is the guidance of our Creator Lord or Allah (swt). It has taken two forms:

A:4:1 Deen-e-fitrat (guidance in human nature):

This is the main, primary and innate guidance with which the humans have been adorned with by their Lord (the Quran 91:8). The core of this guidance is inherent knowledge of right (or good) from wrong (or bad) which is common heritage of humanity and is known to humans irrespective of race, colour, language, ideologies and religions. Every human being knows by

Commented [S1]: There are three premises here and in an earlier reference to the so called test that I disagree with but do not argue in detail about them in this writing:

-The authors have translated ibtila as Test. I disagree with this translation and its implications. To see my explanation of this word please read: <http://www.exploring-islam.com/test-of-challenge.html>

- The authors earlier argued that this 'test' is by no means easy because God "hide himself":

- o I do not believe that God has hidden Himself
- o I do not believe that ibtila (what the authors have translated as test) has anything to do with God being visible or not
- o I do not believe that the so called test is "by no means easy"

- The authors then formulate their main argument that since the "test" is not at all easy, God has sent the Qur'an that is the manual to make the "test" easy and then naturally conclude that therefore it is the duty of all Muslims to convince all human beings to follow this "manual". I do not believe that the Qur'an is manual for making the "test" easy. I believe, in Its general message, the Qur'an is a reminder and guidance to take benefit of manuals that God has already given to every human beings, that is Rationality and Morality. I therefore do not agree that without the Qur'an the human being is lost.

his very nature that truth, honesty, justice, fulfilments of promises, kindness, mercy and forgiveness are righteous or good and the opposite of all these are wrong or bad. It forms the basis of human relations, lays the foundation of human society and promotes 'family-hood' in humanity. Allah has enjoined upon humans to practice everything what is 'right' (called Ma'roof in the Quran) in this guidance and shun everything what is known as 'wrong' (called Munkar in the Quran) in this guidance. This guidance is essential for human existence on this planet and is also essential to succeed in the test of life and earn reward of paradise in the next life however it is not the only requirement for the later.

A:4:2 Deen-e-wahi (guidance of revelation):

The human intellect, if it works correctly, can make out on its own that human existence on this planet is by design, that there is a Designer (called God or Allah (swt)) behind this and that the injustices and imperfections of this human existence should be complimented by another existence, more perfect and more just. However due to risk of faulty working of human intellect under the influence of demands of preservation of self, the challenge of Iblees and to precisely lay out for mankind the liking and disliking of his Creator, Allah (swt) through his sheer mercy helped humanity right from its inception with guidance of revelation (Deen-e-wahi) (the Quran 2:38). To keep the nature of the test intact the methodology adopted was to choose from amongst humans certain individuals, make them perfect examples of Deen-e-fitrat, equip them with revelation and appoint them to guide mankind. The guidance brought by these noblest of humans from Allah (swt) is Deen-e-wahi.

A:5 THE UNITY OF RELIGION:

These individuals are called prophets of Allah (swt) and the guidance they brought from Allah was declared by Allah (swt) to be **the religion of mankind called Islam** (the Quran 3:19 and 3:84-85). Hence Islam, as understood from the Quran, could be defined as:

'The religion of voluntary and total submission to Allah (sws) according to His guidance'.

The very first human being Adam (sws) was fully equipped with both the types of guidance. In other words humanity started its journey under the clear guidance of Allah (swt). However gradually the humans started differing amongst themselves about the guidance under the influence of main weapon of Iblees, arrogance, thereby tainting and corrupting this guidance. Hence Allah (swt) then started sending prophets who would restore the guidance as has been clarified in the Quran:

'Mankind was [of] one religion [before their deviation]; then Allah sent the prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed. And none differed over the Scripture except those who were given it - after the clear proofs came to them - out of jealous animosity among themselves. And Allah guided those who believed to the truth concerning that over which they had differed, by His permission. And Allah guides whom He wills to a straight path' (the Quran 2: 213).

Hence it becomes clear from the above and several other places in the Quran that Allah's chosen religion for humanity has always been one and that is Islam.

Hence it is completely wrong to say that all religions are true and different forms of ways to the Lord. The Quran does not buy this theory at all (3:19, 23:51-54). It does not accept that certain ancient prophets brought Hinduism in India or Moses (sws) brought Judaism or Jesus

(sws) brought Christianity and that it is acceptable to practice these as valid religions of Allah (swt). The Quranic concept of religion is that the guidance of Allah (swt) for mankind has always been one and it has always meant voluntary and total submission to Allah (swt) according to His guidance which has been named Islam.

A:6 A CONCISE HISTORY OF RELIGION:

A:6:1 An outline of human societal development:

If we look at human history we can see progressive development of humanity's resources and society. At one point he was just a hunter-gatherer with rudimentary tools at his disposal and no art of reading and writing. The demand for search for food started the process of dispersal and development of separate communities laying the foundation of tribal societies. The process of variation and then of separation of languages started. Gradually domestication of animals and agriculture started. The inevitable result was certain inventions and the development of skills. Complex interdependent communities with division of labour started developing. With it developed the need for record keeping, some form of currency to exchange labour and some form of collective order. The art of reading and writing started developing in some of these more complex communities and developed at variable pace in different communities. With it developed the different writing materials until paper was invented in China in second century CE. Under the dictates of climate, geography and pattern of resources certain communities remained stuck in tribal mode while in certain other areas civilizations started developing. In these civilizations first city states and then empires developed.

A:6:2 Parallel development of Divine guidance:

Humanity and its resources have evolved within the framework of physical laws by which Allah (sws) has dictated this universe. Similarly the Divine guidance for mankind has also developed within this framework and in accordance with the resources of humanity. Hence we can see that Allah (swt)'s guidance has three phases.

Phase 1: As clarified above the Divine guidance has remained the same throughout its history although its form and shape developed according to development of human society and its resources. As mentioned earlier, to maintain the nature of test, Allah (swt)'s guidance took the form of revelation which was bestowed upon certain individuals called prophets who were appointed as guides (or Haad in Quranic terms, the Quran 13:7). In the initial stages when human population was not very large, language was the only means of communication and humanity lacked reliable resources to preserve and transfer Allah (swt)'s guidance, the prophets were sent separately to different societies or nations in their own languages (the Quran 13:7 and 14:4).

Phase 2: At a point in history, about 3700 years ago, Allah (swt) changed the methodology of sending guidance to mankind. He confined prophethood to Prophet's Ibrahim's (sws) progeny. As we know he had two sons Ismael (or Ishmael) and Is'haq (or Isaac) who were both prophets of Allah (swt). Prophet Ibrahim (sws) inhabited his older son Ismael in Arabian Peninsula and

Commented [S2]: I almost fully agree with this section. The only thing is that to me, what today we know as Islam, and what Christians and Jews know as Christianity or Judaism, and what Hindus know as Hinduism are all paths that were originally that Islam that the Qur'an has referred to and I wrote it as islam (low case) in my article.

This by no means implies that every or anything that a Muslim, a Christians a Jew or a Hindu believes in is part of the correct religion of God. Only those things can be considered as correct that are not against the teachings of the Qur'an. Please refer to sections 2.3 and 2.4 in my article.

Commented [S3]: Generalisation + Ignoring an Argument:

I disagree with the premises detailed here. The authors refer to phases 1 and 2 here and later in their writing as if these are obvious and agreed upon view of Muslims. This is simply a theory developed by two scholars of Islam, Amin Ahsan Islahi and Javed Ahmad Ghamidi. This theory needs to be assessed and evaluated against other theories, based on the Qur'an. I do not find this theory to be inline with the Qur'an as I have explained in my article (p.9) and here: <http://www.exploring-islam.com/questions-on-your-revised-view-3.html>

The authors have not addressed my objections to this theory.

younger son Is'haq in Palestine. The prophethood was then firstly confined in younger son Is'haq's lineage in Palestine, an area which was at the crossroads of all three known continents at that time (while there were no further prophets for about 23 centuries in the older son's lineage). Then the scope to spread the divine guidance was further widened as a result of increase in human population and increased communication amongst societies of more civilized parts of the World. After Prophet Moses (sws), the whole progeny of Is'haq's son Jacob (sws) called Bani Israel, after their exodus from Egypt and resettlement in Palestine, were raised in status amongst all nations about 3300 years ago to become helpers of prophets to spread and carry forward the message of guidance of Allah (swt). Humanity was in the meantime gradually developing its resources. Hence Bani Israel started persevering this guidance in some oral but mostly in written form. However it could not be preserved accurately in its original form due to a number of reasons which included, as a few examples the loss of material, mixture of divine and secular material, textual problems, in some cases absence of use of original languages, repetitions and translations. After prophethood ended in Is'haq's lineage with Prophet Isaa (Jesus Christ) (sws), all this religious record got preserved within a few centuries as a mixture of history and Scripture, in the form of what we know today as the Bible. Ironically the books in the Bible got preserved only when human resources to preserve records achieved a certain state of maturity however what wrong had earlier been done could not be undone. However this was the time when humanity had developed resources to accurately preserve the records.

Phase 3: Hence at a point in history when humanity's resources had sufficiently developed to the extent that these could accurately preserve divine guidance, Allah (swt) sent Holy Prophet Mohammad (sws) in lineage of Abraham's older son Ismael in Arabia. It appears (and Allah (swt) knows best) that Allah (swt) balanced the honour of sending a number of prophets in Is'haq's lineage (while no prophets were sent in older son Ismael's progeny during this whole period) by ending prophethood in Ismael's progeny and giving the following honour to Ismael's lineage:

- The institution of prophethood was culminated hence ending all forms of direct revelation to mankind and in its place:
- The final revelation to the last Prophet Muhammed (sws) was precisely preserved in its original language in the form of the Quran.
- The Shari'ah was completed and preserved after subtracting certain things which were local and temporary and adding certain items although the core of Sharia remained the same as is confirmed in the Quran (42:13). This final sharia was fully preserved and enshrined in the form of the Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammed (sws).
- The final guidance brought by Holy Prophet (sws) also became the final form of guidance of Allah (swt) for the whole of humanity to follow until the day of judgement.

Hence this is the final phase, which started with the advent of Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws), which we are all now living in and which will last until the day of judgement.

A:7: THE WIDENING RESPONSIBILITY:

If we study the history of mankind from the perspective of responsibility of calling to Allah (swt)'s guidance which has always been Islam, in the initial phase it primarily rested with the

prophets and their close followers. In the second phase it initially was upon Holy Prophet Ibrahim's family (immediate progeny) and those of his descendants who were prophets and their followers. However then the whole nation of Bani Israel were given this responsibility. It can be seen that the scope of responsibility of calling to Allah (swt)'s guidance has been widening over the history. In the final phase which started with the advent of Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws) and will last until the day of judgement, the responsibility of calling to Islam has been further widened and now the responsibility of calling to Allah (swt)'s guidance lies upon everybody who accepts this guidance and calls himself to be a Muslim.

Commented [S4]: Refer to my above comment.

It is important to understand that after Holy Prophet (sws) it was **not only** Bani Ismael who were raised to the responsibility of calling to Allah's guidance i.e Islam, as previously **only** Bani Israel were raised. Rather it was the Ummah of Holy Prophet (sws) as a whole which were raised to this status and given responsibility of calling the rest of mankind to Islam, the only authentic source of which is now Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws) and the Quran until the day of judgement. Hence while Bani Israel were chosen exclusively however Bani Ismael were not chosen exclusively rather whole of the Muslim Ummah were chosen for this responsibility (the Quran 22:77-78). This can be understood from the following evidence from the Quran:

Commented [S5]: Inconsistent Basis:

The authors borrow a theory from Amin Ahsan Islahi and Javed Ahmad Ghamidi without remaining loyal to the mechanism of the theory.

The implication of what the authors say is that (according to them) it was only people who were known as Bani Israel who were supposed to make the rest of the world guided. People who would join them would not carry the same responsibility. It does not take much deliberation in terms of available number of Bani Israel compared to the population of the world, to see if this scheme was feasible at all. Such assumptions can question the justice and wisdom of the Almighty.

-Bani Israel have been addressed in Quran in the 'first person' as 'Ya Bani Israel' at 4 places (the Quran 2: 40, 2:47, 2:122 and 20:80) while they have been referred to as a nation at 37 different places in the Quran while **Bani Ismael have neither been addressed to in the first person nor referred to as a nation even once in the Quran.** This difference is too striking to be ignored.

Commented [S6]: Inconsistent Basis + Illogical Deduction:

Again, borrowing a theory without fully observing its details. The authors are implying that the term Bani Ishmael has not been used in the Qur'an because the whole Muslims are addressed not just Bani Ishmael.

The authors are using the term Bani Ishmael because this is the term that Amin Ahsan Islahi and Javed Ahmad Ghamidi are using in their writings. There is no evidence that the Arabs who were addressed by the prophet (pbuh) were all Bani Ishmael (and Ghamidi does not believe in this either). It was therefore not correct if the Qur'an would use this term. Instead the Qur'an has used a term that all Arabs were known by it (when compared to the people of the book) and that was Ummi'in. This too has been addressed in the writings of Islahi and Ghamidi.

-In the Quran the responsibility of calling to the guidance has been assigned to Muslim Ummah as a whole as per the following dictate of the Quran:

'And thus We have made you a just community (ummah) that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. And We did not make the qiblah which you used to face except that We might make evident who would follow the Messenger from who would turn back on his heels. And indeed, it is difficult except for those whom Allah (swt) has guided. And never would Allah (swt) have caused you to lose your faith. Indeed Allah (swt) is, to the people, Kind and Merciful' (the Quran 2:143).

Commented [S7]: Please see the explanation of this verse and verse 22:77-78 in section 3.3 of my article.

Commented [S8]: As I have explained in my article, it is among the obvious principles of any language, that words and addressing that are literally general, are limited to the scope of the theme of the narration.

One can appreciate that in this verse the community of believers which included Ismaeli and non Ismaeli Muslims has been addressed collectively rather than Bani Ismael only.

-In the Quran the Muslims have been collectively addressed to as 'Ya ayyuhalla zina a'amanu' at numerous places which included all the Muslims rather than only the Bani Ismael.

When I say O people please start eating, I am only talking to my guests, and not the whole world. The Qur'an is revealed with the standard of communication and language of the human beings. It is therefore not correct to argue that because the expression ya ayyuhallahazina amanu is used therefore the Qur'an is addressing all people. The main target were the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula in these verses. Of course many of these verses (not all) also apply to anyone (from any nations) who would become Muslim.

Hence we can easily appreciate that the scope of responsibility of inviting to Allah's guidance has been progressively widening and after Holy Prophet (sws) it rests with each and every person of the Muslim Ummah.

A:8 THE COMPLETION OF RELIGION:

Allah (swt) perfected, completed and finalised its guidance for mankind in the form of finality of prophethood of Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws). The belief system, the morals and ethics and the divine law have all been completed. The Quran and the person of Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws) have been established as reference for everything pertaining to Allah (swt)'s guidance. To accept Islam as one's religion and follow the complete guidance as enshrined in this religion has become a binding on each and every human being since the advent of his prophethood and will remain a binding on each and every human being until the day of judgement. All humans are required to profess faith in all the prophets of Allah but must only follow Islam as presented by the last prophet Muhammed (sws). Similarly the institution of prophethood has been ended and any claim to divine appointment or any form of direct access to guidance from Allah after Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws) must be rejected without even considering it.

Commented [S9]: Actually there is very little and limited explanation of morals and ethics in the Qur'an. This is because these are already known by the human beings and they do not need a revelation to know them.

Commented [S10]: If Islam here means surrendering to God then I fully agree. If it means doing the above by converting to become Muslim and following the shari'ah, then I fully disagree because this is not in line with the Qur'an, as I have explained in my article.

Commented [S11]: I agree with this of course.

B: A STUDY OF SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS:

This large section deals with ideas which have been put forward in a detailed article titled **'THE TRUE MEANING OF UNIVERSALITY OF THE QURAN'** by Dr Farhad Shafti, a UK based Muslim scholar (throughout this section he will be referred to as 'the Author'). To fully appreciate this section it would be worthwhile to read his full article and then keep the article in sight while reading this section. While writing this section I want to highlight a couple of points:

-I have discussed his views mostly in the same sequence as these appear in his article. If the sequence is changed at some point it has been properly mentioned. Also certain points are covered in other areas.

-Throughout this section I will quote only briefly or partially from his original article and the reader would be requested to read the full para/concept from the Author's original article to fully understanding the viewpoint of the Author.

-All quotations from the Author's article (like here) *will be in oblique font*.

B:1 TWO TERMS OR ONE TERM:

The Author has, in his own words, 'invented' two terms to refer to two concepts '*General universality of the Quran*' and '*Specific universality of the Quran*'. In my opinion there is no real basis of these two concepts in the Quran as we will see while sifting views of the Author in this section. The Quran came with a message for all of mankind, which is uniform and universal for every human being. Hence there is only

Commented [S12]: Technical Ethics of Criticism
As explained in the introduction to this writing, this is where the authors have broken one of the most important rules of criticism and as the result have made their response to my article vague and confusing for a reader. The rule is "working with the terminology of the author who is criticised". Due to not following this rule, many of the arguments in their response to my article can be seen as not accurately addressing my views. As the result I can easily say that I agree with many of what they have written and then again from another perspective I can say that I disagree with most!

one universality in the Quran and that it (which the Author calls specific universality of the Quran) should be called 'General universality of the Quran' in its simple literal meaning and not as defined by the Author. If we have to describe this '**General universality of the Quran**', it will be as follows:

'The human life on this planet is a test (67:2). Allah (swt), through his sheer mercy, has helped humanity in this test by providing guidance to mankind (2:38) through His appointed guides (called haads including prophets (Ambia) and messengers (Rusul)).The mankind has in its history repeatedly corrupted this guidance in one form or the other and Allah (swt) has repeatedly restored this guidance (2:213). Ultimately Allah (swt) completed His guidance and preserved it through Prophet Muhammed (sws) who became the last and final prophet of Allah (swt). With this, Allah (swt) announced completion of his religion and favours for mankind (5:3), guaranteed preservation of this guidance in the form of the Quran and Sunnah (15:9) and announced the culmination of his direct guidance to mankind (finality of prophethood) (33:40). This is called Islam. Now the Holy Prophet (sws) and the Quran are the only authentic source and criterion of Allah's guidance and it is a binding on every human being to follow this guidance called Islam until the day of judgement'.

The Author has raised 8 queries to set the scene to develop his point of view. Out of these point 1, 5, 6 and 7 are related with the language and style of the Quran hence these will be dealt with together here.

B:2 LANGUAGE AND STYLE OF THE QURAN:

The Author raises the question in point 1, '.....why it (the Quran) is relying on a very complex style of Arabic language.....?'

Now the Quran is refuting this claim in clear terms:

'All praise is due to Allah who has sent down upon his servant the book and has not made therein any deviance' (18:1).

And

'An Arabic Quran, without any deviance that they might become righteous' (39:28).

Then Allah (swt) has clarified at a number of places in the Quran that it has been sent in clear Arabic or it has been made clear (5:15, 12:1, 15:1, 26:2, 26:195, 28:2, 36:69, 43:2-3 and 44:2 are just a few references). With such clear statements of the Quran, a question about the style of the Quran should not even arise in the mind of a Muslim. However here are a few points which could clarify this misunderstanding further:

-The Quran was sent in the dialect of its direct addressees that is the people of Makkah and its surroundings (Hijaz) which was quite natural. There is no evidence at all from within the Quran and history that **these people (the direct addressees) ever said that its style of language is complex or they cannot understand it. They understood and appreciated its language very well.**

Commented [S13]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting: I wrote "Understandably the Qur'an needed to be in the language of its direct addressees however no intentions can be seen in the Qur'an to make the style of its narration less complex, in order to make it less difficult for the other and the future residence of the world."

As it is clear, I never argued that the Qur'an was difficult for its direct addressees. My argument was that its style was not made in a way that it would be easier for people other than the Arabs of the time of revelation to understand it.

One of the important and central aspects of style in the Qur'an is the coherence of the Qur'an. Amin Ahsan Islahi in his introduction to Tadabbur-i-Quran (p. 22) has a section titled: "Nahm Ka Ishkal" (the difficulty of coherence). There he writes: "One may legitimately ask, if coherence is so essential to the understanding of the Qur'an, why is it then so obscure and difficult to comprehend that even eminent scholars like Imam Razi and others could not successfully unravel its mysteries?" (p. 35). Of course Imam Islahi then argues that this does not mean that the Qur'an itself is difficult rather it reflect one's own inability or difficulty. I however argue that it is the difficulty of the text that then demands more skills and abilities for the reader. I encourage the authors to look at other books in which the coherence of the Qur'an has been studied in order to see in how many different and contradictory ways sincere students of the Qur'an have seen coherence in the Qur'an. I am not denying the coherence of the Qur'an, but I am arguing that this essential style of the Qur'an is not easy to understand. I remind the authors to consider the difference between Imam Farahi's grouping of the Qur'anic chapters and that of Imam Islahi. I encourage the authors to think why student of Islahi, Javed Ahmad Ghamidi found it necessary to interpret the Qur'an again (Bayan) despite the existence of the nine volume tafsir of his teacher. As his student I can assure them that the reason was not just to make it briefer.

-The Quran's language and style is majestic, to the point and a masterpiece of literary Arabic of the time but not complex. Again being a divine book these are very befitting attributes of its language and style.

-The Quran deals with a vast variety of subjects like creation of universe and mankind, human nature and behaviour, human history, history of Allah's guidance for mankind, laws working in nature and physical phenomena, belief system, Shari'ah law, morals, life after death, details about the day of judgement, heaven and hell, reward and punishment and many others. Then being a Book which was revealed piecemeal, parallel to and supervising the mission of Holy Prophet (sww), it dealt with issues and questions which cropped up on the spot during that mission. Then all the above varied subjects were being dealt with side by side and then rearranged in a peculiar manner in the Quran. **To deal with all these subjects in a descriptive and detailed style, probably volumes which would fill a library, would have been required.** In this case the divine literature would become unmanageable for common man and religion, a prerogative of a select learned religious class only (as had happened previously in history). However in the case of the Quran the total size of the Book was meant to be small enough so that it could be memorised completely by a common man (and mind you, memorising which was established as a tradition in the Muslim society was an important medium of preserving the Quran) and Allah's guidance embodied in a reasonable sized book, would remain accessible to an ordinary human being. Hence it is wrong to say that the language or style of language of the Quran is complex rather it is the complex and varied nature of subject matters being dealt with in tandem in a very concise book which gives this impression. Even then all these assortment of subjects have been dealt with in such a masterly simple and clear manner that it has, in its own right, become a miracle and proof of its divine origin.

-As far as the differences of opinion amongst the Muslim scholars is concerned, as pointed out by the Author, these are nothing but a natural manifestation of humans differences which can be seen in every field of knowledge. These differences are more common in matters of religion (and can be observed in all religious traditions); first because religion deals with certain matters which are not verifiable by objective scientific evidence and are open to conjecture and opinions; and second due to passion and prejudice which become involved in religious affairs. The Quran, in addition is dealing with a vast variety of subjects as mentioned above hence differences of opinion are but natural. However if we look at the Muslim Ummah's history, the difference of opinions are mainly due to sources external to the Quran like

Commented [S14]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting: The issue that I raised had nothing to do with dealing with all these subjects in a detailed way. It was simply about the complex style of the Qur'an.

Commented [S15]: Perhaps the authors have a scholarly experience beyond my access that have proved to them that the style of the Qur'an is not at all complex and that everything is made simple and clear in the Qur'an. I have not seen any writings by the authors about the Qur'an except this one. Anyway, if this is the experience that the authors had then I respect it. However I leave it to the readers to refer to their own personal experience to see whether they too have the same experience. The authors themselves are quoting from scholars who argue that the Qur'an was not properly understood by majority of our scholars in the past centuries and that after more than 1400 years of Islamic scholarship, they are now the ones that have properly understood the Qur'an and its style and coherence.

Commented [S16]: This is of course true. However the more complex a text, the more disagreement will emerge due to this 'natural manifestation of humans differences'.

Hadith and History and people have been projecting those on to the Quran due to sectarian behaviour. If the Quran is made the primary source of knowledge and the focus of 'taddabur' as the Quran repeatedly encourages, the differences become minimal.

Commented [S17]: This is not true. The authors are encouraged to compare the books of tafsir that have attempted to rely less on external sources like Tafsir Kabir of Imam Razi, Al-Mizan by Tabatabayee, Kashshaf by Zamakhshari, etc. to see the vast range of interpretations. It is a mistake to think that only the followers of Hamiduddin Farahi tried to interpret the Qur'an based on the Qur'an. In fact, in some cases relying on hadith has led to less disagreements. For instance all those mufasssirs who rely on hadith agree that the Qur'an says that Jesus – pbuh – did not die, or that covering head is obligatory for women. However Islahi and Ghamidi disagree on both points despite their attempt to rely on the Qur'an only. This is a major difference between a teacher and his immediate student. This is only an example. One can only imagine the scale of possible differences that can be between different scholars who are trying to rely on the Qur'an only. Also note that the form of the coherence of the Qur'an itself is not an agreed upon form. Every scholar in the history of Muslim scholarship has seen the coherence of the Qur'an in a different way. Even among the scholars of the Farahi approach, one can see that while the premises are the same, conclusions are different. The grouping of the chapters of the Qur'an by Imam Farahi is structurally different from that of Islahi and this can have huge effect on interpretation. I should also make it clear that I do believe that the Qur'an is the primary source of understanding the Qur'an. By pointing out the possible differences I am not criticising this approach.

-It is not correct to say that 'no attempts can be seen in the Quran to make the style of its language clear enough.....'. In my opinion it is a judgemental statement without any evidence. As has been clarified above, the Quran's style of language is simple and clear and has been set in the vernacular of the Hijaz of the time. Additionally it has its own noble characteristics.

However to be best guided by the Quran, with its peculiar and unique style which is the result of above features, the Quran itself has repeatedly stressed upon the need to use intellect (taddabur, taffakur and Ta'aqul) to understand the Quran. It means the Book is itself guiding human beings how to best make use of this guidance.

Summary: To deal with the immediate and local issues and the vast variety of subjects (which were required to be dealt with to make it a guidance for the whole of mankind) and to keep the size of the Book reasonable (both to preserve it for future humanity by committing to memory and to keep it within the reach of ordinary human beings of future generations) Allah (swt) chose the style of language and organisation which best suited the immediate local needs and for all times to come. Its language is clear and literary while the style is simple, noble, majestic, precise, repetitive, rhythmic and a music to the ears on recitation.

The Author states in point (5), 'how are non-Arabs supposed to be guided by the Quran when they cannot even understand the Arabic...'. And in point (6) 'Where in the Qur'an God has made it the duty of non-Arab Muslims to learn Arabic, or where has it instructed Arab Muslims to translate the Qur'an for non-Arabs? Where in the Qur'an any mechanism is illustrated to guide the Arabs of the time on how to preach Islam to non-Arabs at that time and in the future'? Why there is not a single verse in the Qur'an to instruct the Arabs to go beyond Arabia in order to preach Islam to non-Arabs?'

Commented [S18]: Denying Instead of Rejecting: Evidences are explained, The author may disagree with them.

The above arguments given by the Author carry no substance. Here are a few points which would clarify this:

-The language is an innate human trait which manifests in social context as the brain matures. Similarly human brain has an in-built capacity for second language acquisition. Learning of new languages and translations are automatic mechanisms of human civilization which unfold and become operational when the need arises. These are natural processes which had manifested previously in human history as well. The history of Biblical literature and its translations is a clear example of these in-built social mechanisms. There are no directives in the Old or the New Testament to translate these but people just did as the need arose. The same phenomenon manifested in the history of Muslims as well. Allah (swt), the all-Knowing and all-Wise, did not have to give specific directives to non-Arabs to learn Arabic or translate the Quran. These mechanisms just unfolded in Muslim civilization under the dictates of mechanisms in-built in human nature as Islam spread far and wide.

-The issue can be clarified by giving an example from the Quran and Islamic history i.e determining the direction of Qibla. Allah (swt) clearly directed faithful to face Masjid al Haram during their prayers (2:150). If this directive was considered local (as the Author would like to conclude from the words '....from where ever 'you' go out (for prayer).....' and only for direct addressees of the Quran, this directive would be followed accurately only by people who lived in the vicinity of the Kaaba and would be hard to follow even in the whole of Arabia. However the believers understood the directive correctly and followed it wherever they went in the whole World. Now Allah (swt) did not tell them in the Quran how to navigate the direction of Qibla in various parts of the World. The Muslims just learned it by making appropriate inventions as the need arose. Similarly Allah (swt) did not need to give any directive related to the points put forward by the Author as Muslims just recognised the need and followed common sense inculcated in every human being by the Creator in finding solutions to the challenges faced by them. Another glaring example is that of memorising the Quran. Where in the Quran Allah (swt) asked believers to memorise and preserve it? However they started doing it under the guidance of Holy Prophet (sws) and it in fact is another evidence that the earliest Muslims, whose language was Arabic, understood clearly that the Book's message is universal and was to be transmitted to the posterity.

So it is quite clear from the above that things like creating instruments to find direction of Qibla, writing the Quran or printing it, translation of Quran in other languages, learning Arabic language and many other similar things are just technical and operational in nature which are left to human intellect and common sense. These did not need any divine directives. In fact, I dare say that giving such instructions would have been against Allah's all-encompassing Divine Knowledge and Wisdom.

Commented [S19]: Refer to [Technical Ethics of Criticism](#) in my article [Twenty Common Mistakes in Critical Writings](#).

Commented [S20]: Missing the point:
The point here is not that Muslims needed an instruction from the Qur'an to initiate spreading the message of Islam. They did it in any way that they thought it had to be done. The point is that lack of such instructions and associated specifications in the Qur'an does not fit with the understanding that the Book was supposed to become the book for religious guidance for all human beings.

Commented [S21]: Illogical Deduction:
1. Finding the direction of the Qiblah is an issue related to practicing one of the rulings of Islam. Preaching the message of Islam with the ultimate goal of converting people to Islam is an issue related to the guidance of the Almighty.
2. Finding the direction of Qiblah is a scientific task and it can easily reach to an agreed upon decision. Preaching the message of the Qur'an is a socio-cultural-political-religious task and (as we can see among Muslims) people will disagree on how to do it.
The comparison therefore is not logical as two entirely different objects are compared.

Commented [S22]: Confusion between Evidence and Associating Facts:
Firstly, I too believe that the message of the Qur'an is universal and this is what I referred to as General Universality of the Qur'an. Disregard this, there is a logical flaw here. Memorising the Qur'an and preserving it does not prove that early Muslims understood that the message of the Qur'an is universal. The reverse logic will be, if early Muslims knew that the message of the Qur'an was only for them and not for all human beings then they would have not memorised and preserved it!

A few facts from history would illustrate the point further:

-The non-Arabs who accepted Islam in millions over the generations learned the Quran's language with love, reverence and dedication. Interestingly apart from initial 200 years of Muslim history, non-Arab Muslims have always been in majority and currently the non-Arab Muslims form about 85 percent of the World Muslim population and nobody can say that the non-Arab Muslims have been less guided than Arab Muslims despite the Arabic not being their first language. The non-Arab Muslims have made hundreds of institutions of religious learning over the centuries with Arabic language as their foundation stone. The list of non-Arab Muslim scholars who have been an authority on Arabic language is too long and in no way shorter than that of Arab scholars. Ironically most of the scholars the Author has referred to in his article are non-Arabs (including the likes of Tabari, Razi, Zamakhshary, Hameed Uddin Farahi, Amin Ahsan Islahi and Javed Gamidi) whose first language has not been Arabic however all of these have contributed immensely to the understanding of the Quran's Arabic and its exegesis. The scholars, preachers and teachers have left no stone unturned to convey the message of Islam and the Quran to Muslim masses over the centuries. Similarly the Quran has been memorised and adorned with beautiful recitations in equal proportions by the Arab and non-Arab Muslims. It is true that Muslims are clear that the translation of the Quran is not Quran but it does not mean that one cannot understand the meanings of the Quran with translations. I have partly sifted seven English translations of the Quran and hardly found any differences in meanings. The perceived differences in meanings and interpretations can be easily resolved by keeping the language of the Quran, the context and arrangement of the verses in view. It means that translation can fairly accurately convey the meanings of the Quran.

-Non-Arab Muslims have never objected to or complained as to why the Quran is in Arabic (simply because the objection does not make sense). **In fact the view that translation of the Quran is not Quran is held with equal clarity by non-Arab Muslims as well.**

Commented [S23]: Confusion between Evidence and Associating Facts

To prove something exists we need to look for evidences not for incidents that can be associated with that thing. Example: Javed Ahmad Ghamidi argues based on the Qur'an that hijab (covering head) is not obligatory. He does this based on evidences that he finds or does not find in the Qur'an. Is it logical to argue that he is wrong because vast majority of the Muslim women, proudly and convincingly have worn hijab throughout the history of Muslims. In a logical argument a factual incident does not replace an evidence. Similarly the fact that many non-Arabs accepted Islam willingly and learned the Qur'an and love it and reasonably understand it is not a replacement for lack of evidence of Specific Universality of the Qur'an (i.e. instruction in the Qur'an that every human being has to convert and follow the shari'ah of Islam).

-Anybody who reads the Quran even superficially would be convinced that the Book is generic in its message and addresses the whole of mankind. So it is not a matter of citing one verse which instructs Arabs to preach it to non-Arabs rather the whole Book is loud and clear in this regard. It was but natural for the direct first addressees of the Quran to take it beyond Arabian Peninsula to non-Arabs as they were instinctively convinced by the Book that it is for all mankind. In fact it is the first addressees of this book (companions of Holy Prophet whose language was the same as that of the Quran) who did the job of taking it out of the Arabian Peninsula and preach it. How come they did not ask these questions which the Author is asking now? Is the Author trying to say that Khulafa e Rashidon, thousands of companions of the Holy Prophet (sws) and thousands of Ummah's best people whose language was Arabic and who spread the Quran and the message of Islam far and wide outside Arabian peninsula within a hundred years did not understand the message of Quran that the Book is not for non-Arabs?

Commented [S24]: Unverifiable Statement:

Since there is no reasoning or evidence here, I cannot argue for or against this statement. Anybody means the whole population of the Earth. I am not sure on the basis of which scientific survey the authors came to this conclusion. I know numerous people (Muslim and Non-Muslim) who have a different experience.

On the other hand, if this is what the authors really believe in, then why did they even took trouble to write a detailed response to my article?

Commented [S25]: 1. the same scholars who the authors have referred to a lot in their article (i.e. Amin Ahsan Islahi and Javed Ahmad Ghamidi) argue that we first need to understand Islam from the Qur'an, and only then we should try to interpret and where needed validate the actions and understandings of the companions.

2. The authors simply assume that the reason for attacking Persia was to invite Persians to Islam. I encourage them to look at the sources of history to see exactly which reliable part of the historical records are telling us that the companions took the Qur'an out of the Arabian Peninsula and preached it. I encourage them to read the works of the Muslim and non-Muslim scholars and historians who have counted a variety of theories about why the Arabs at the time of the prophet (pbuh) invaded Persia.

3. Since the authors have named Hamiduddin Farahi, I have to quote again what I quoted from him in my original article, about this very issue:

"So fighting became obligatory not for defence but 1. to free Ka'bah, then 2. to bring the Abrahamic religion (hanifiyya) of Abraham to the generation of Ishmael (pbuh), as for other than the generation of Ishmael (pbuh), 3. for establishing justice and removing anarchy (mischief) from the land. So there is no compulsion in religion for the People of the Book, and for anyone who is not from among the generation of Ishmael, and they should pay tax (jaziya). (Tafsir Nidham al-Qur'an, 54-5)

Imam Farahi clearly states in the above quote that movements like that of invading Persia was not to bring the Abrahamic religion to Persians, but was to establish justice and remove anarchy. I am not in agreement with this view but thought reminding this to the authors who appear to make many references to the students of Farahi.

-Surprisingly the Author is convinced that other religions are also 'islam' as he says 'This is the message of Monotheism (tauhid), being mindful about the hereafter and doing righteous things. This is a message that is in common between almost all religions that exist on the face of earth'. **The Author finds it perfectly acceptable to follow these other religious traditions however he is not willing to apply the same yardstick of language to all these religion.** Let me quote the example of Christianity. Jesus's first language was Aramaic which is now not a spoken language in any part of the World. The Gospels were written decades after Jesus (sws) and out of the four accepted Gospels, Matthew was either written in Hebrew or Greek (there is a difference of opinion) while the other three (Mark, Luke and John) were written in

Greek. Still, going by the author's wider views expressed in his article, Christianity (which has no linguistic connection with mother tongue of Jesus Christ (sws) at all) will be a valid religion from Allah (sws) for millions of people over the globe to follow but the Quran (which was preserved exactly in its original language which is itself one of the major living languages of the World today) was only meant for local Arabs.

Commented [S26]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting + Missing the point:

It seems like the authors are presenting my views as follows:

1. That I consider all religions and all beliefs in all religions to be correct. Refer to Principle 7 in Section 2.4. of my article to see my opposite view on this.
2. That my argument on language only applies to the Qur'an. This is not true. Look at section 2.2.2. Having said that, I do argue that the style of the Qur'an is more complex than the style of what we know today as the Bible.
3. That the argument of language has been initiated by me. This is not correct. It has been initiated by the Almighty in the Qur'an as I have quoted numerous times. It is the Almighty that has given so much importance to the relationship between the language of His Book and His guidance. Look at section 2.2.2.
4. That I consider it invalid for people who are not from Bani Ishmael to be Muslim! I have no idea from where the authors have taken this! In my article I referred to non Bani Ishmaelies becoming Muslims in the history of Islam "a great advantage that the Almighty gave to Ummi'in" and I also wrote under Principle Three in section 2.4. "if a non-Muslim wishes to convert to Islam there is no problem with this and a Muslim should help him/her to do that."

What I do consider invalid in both Muslims and Christian understandings is that every human being on the face of earth is expected to accept their respective religious path and laws and to convert to it.

I am sure if the Author fairly applies the language criterion to other religions, even then he would be convinced that **Islam as presented by Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws) is the only religion which mankind should follow.**

Commented [S27]: Unverifiable Statement:

It is always safer not to make such predictions about others. I am convinced that Islam is the only religion which mankind should follow and that Islam is one of the paths of Islam.

B:3 THE UNIVERSAL NATURE OF THE QURAN:

In order to reduce Allah (swt)'s final, complete and fully preserved guidance for mankind to a mere local religion of Arabs, the second tool the Author has attempted to use, after the language tool, is to give the impression that the Quran is heavily culture bound and tied to local issues.

In his point 2 the Author notes, '*...why the vast majority (if not all) of the issues that the Book addresses are local issues? Why the addressees of almost all verses are the local addressees? Why (as Amin Ahsan Islahi rightly noted), even the apparently general titles like Mushrikin, Ahl Al-Kitab and Alladhina Amanu are in most cases referring to the Mushrikin, Ahl al-Kitab and believers at the time in Arabia? Why there are not much guidance for those who were not and are not among the primary addressees of the Qur'an? Why the other nations and faiths are almost completely ignored? How a book that only covered the local issues of a limited group of people at*

Commented [S28]: Refer to [Moral Ethics of Criticism](#) in my article Twenty Common Mistakes in Critical Writings.

The authors are not just arguing that my conclusions (in their understanding) reduce God's religion to a local religion. They are arguing that I present my reasons "in order" to do this. One of the guidances of the Qur'an that can be helpful here is in verse 49:12. Spreading false accusations is a grave sin and is not befitting a religious organisation, in particular one that advocates dialogue, tolerance and respect.

a certain point of history can be said to be sent as 'the' guide for all the nations of all time?'

These statements are based on misunderstandings which can be easily cleared through the following explanations:

While it is true that a large number of verses directly address the people amongst whom the Holy Prophet (sws) was sent (people of the Arabia in seventh century including polytheists and the people of the Book) but claiming that the addressees of almost all verses are local is a gross overstatement. There are equally large number of verses which do not specifically address local people and are generic in style (here are 'just a few random' examples: Sura Fateha, then see 2:38, 2:255-257, 21: 92-93, 22:75-76, 24:35-40, 28:70, 31:1-20, 50:8-10, 55:1-12, 59:20-24, and then see complete Surahs 76, 91, 99, 101, 103, 107, 112). The Holy Prophet (sws) was sent as a Rasul to a particular people at a particular time in history and he had to directly complete Itmam-e-hujjah (completion of Allah's evidence to the extent that no excuse is left for the addressees to deny the truth) on these people. Hence addressing these people directly was but natural. However the important point is that any human being of any period and of any linguistic and cultural background can easily relate to the message of the Quran and in fact can easily understand himself to be the addressee of the Quran.

The claim that the Book covers only local issues has no bases at all. Here are a number of points which will amply correct this notion.

Commented [S29]: Refer to [Technical Ethics of Criticism](#) in my article [Twenty Common Mistakes in Critical Writings](#).

Commented [S30]: [Missing the point:](#)

Before I address what the missed point is, an observation: It is interesting that the authors include some of the short chapters of the Qur'an at the end of this list (like 103, 107). I do agree that some – not all – of these chapters are addressing the whole human beings, however interestingly enough, Ghamidi, who appears to be a point of reference for the authors, consider most of these chapters to be specifically about Quraysh. For instance in explaining the word Insan in chapter 103 he writes: "The word **الإنسان** is not generic in nature. The alif lam affixed to it defines it and the reference is to the addressees of Muhammad (sws) to whom the truth was conclusively communicated and in spite of this they persisted in their arrogance."

The missed point is as follows:

It seems like the authors have the view that if an oration is addressed specifically to a group of people, then no general words or statements should be in that oration. This is not how the language works. I may address only people from Manchester in the UK but in my speech I may say things about the whole human beings. This does not mean that I am addressing the whole human beings.

What determines whether an oration is specific to a particular group and agenda or general, is the theme and the objective of that oration not the words of that oration. I say 'O people think' and I may be addressing the whole human beings or I may be addressing only my family.

I encourage the authors to look at the book of Mizan by Ghamidi, section on Arrangement of the Qur'an, in the chapter Fundamental Principles. There the author specifies what the theme of each group of the chapters of the Qur'an are. Among these themes, can the authors find one that is not local and specific to the primary addressees of the Qur'an?

Ghamidi writes in Mizan (translation): "The theme of the Qur'an is Muhammad's indhar. Every page of the Qur'an speaks of this reality." He further explains: "the theme of the Qur'an is the account of his indhar which passed through various phases referred to above and culminated in the worldly reward and retribution of his addressees. Each of its surahs has been revealed in this background, and each of its groups have been arranged keeping it in view."

Therefore the issue is not about counting verses that sound specific or those that sound general. The issue is about the whole theme of the Qur'an, as correctly illustrated by Ghamidi. His description of the Qur'an is famous among his students and audience: "The Qur'an is 'sargozashte rasul' (biography of the prophet)?"

-Anybody who reads the Quran (or its translation) even superficially, can understand that it is deeply connected with the actual mission of Holy Prophet (saws) and hence some very local issues are expected to be found in the Quran. However these are, as a matter of reality, very few. To be precise, the total number of verses which deal with purely local-cultural issues is 32 (2:158, 2:189, 2:194, 2:196-199, 2:203, 2:217, 2:226, 2:233, 2:282, 4:22, 4:176, 5:2, 5:95-97, 5:103, 9:19, 9:36-37, 33:4, 37:158, 53:19-20, 58:1-3, 65:6, 81:8-9). Now if the Book's message was really local, one could expect a much greater number of such verses in a book which has more than 6200 verses. In fact having such a small number (32) in a book, which was primarily revealed to do *Itmam e hujjah* on a particular people (i.e. of Arabia), is itself a proof that its message is not local. I remember clearly that many years ago when I started to study the Quran as a student I used to be amazed about the fact that despite being sent to a particular people at a particular point in history, how generic and general the message of the Quran was and how subtly its message had been made universal. It is in fact another beautiful and miraculous aspect of the Quran.

-These verses which deal with purely local issues and are listed above (32 in total) are either related with Hajj rituals or sacred months or these are correctional and interventional in nature, meaning that there was some gross social-moral anomaly in the society and the Quran mentioned it to correct the anomaly. Any book which was being sent for the guidance of a local people as well as future humanity cannot after all ignore any existing social malady in the local community.

-It is a blatant distrust in human intellect and common sense that the human mind cannot understand that these (32) verses have pure local character, that it cannot put these verses in proper perspective, decipher and pick up what is the lesson for general humanity even in these very local-culture oriented verses.

-There are even larger number of verses in the Quran which deal with the family life of Holy Prophet (and not including those which are related to the Prophet (saws) in person). The number of such verses is 34 (24:11-20, 24:62-63, 33:4-6, 33:28-34, 33:37, 33:50-51, 33:53, 33:59, 49:4, 65:1, 66:1-5). Now is this possible for anybody to argue on the basis of these verses that the Quran was revealed only for the family of the Prophet (saws)? I am sure the answer will be in the negative. Similarly, on the basis of some verses which deal with purely local issues it is not correct to claim that the Quran was revealed only for local Arabs.

-Then there are a very large number of verses which are 'addressing directly' to the local people and talk about their daily lives, things happening around them and their common observations however their message is completely universal. It means that anybody from any cultural background in any part of the World and in any era can

Commented [S31]: Missing the point:

This is a complete misunderstanding of what I have written. As I wrote above, it is not about counting verses, it is about the whole theme of the Qur'an. Beside this, I have no idea why only these 32 verses were referred to as local ones. It seems like to the authors, if a verse refers to a local item or object then it is specific and otherwise it is general. So for instance because Masjid al-Haram is mentioned in verse 9:19 the authors consider it to be a specific and local verse. The first question is why then verse 9:3 is not mentioned which is a purely historical verse. Note, the argument starts with "to be precise". The bigger question is, does this mean that the authors believe verses like 9:14 and 9:29 are general instructions, meaning, we are instructed in general to kill polytheists and people of the book? I repeat my understanding again, not just 32 verses, but the entire Qur'an is dealing with 'local-cultural issues' as the authors put it. This however does not mean that the Qur'an has no use or no message for the entire human beings. That message is what I referred to as General Universality of the Qur'an in my article.

Commented [S32]: Missing the point

See my comment above.

understand and relate with these verses without even slightest of difficulty. These deal with a vast variety of subjects like the skies and celestial bodies like Sun, Moon and stars; the oceans, rivers, clouds, rain, water cycle; the mountains, valleys, plantations; the reproduction, variations in human existence, human behaviour and morals; the animals and benefits accrued from them; then death, resurrection and a large number of other subjects. The number of such verses easily run into hundreds and are far too many to give a complete list (however as 'just a few random' examples please see 2:21-29, 6:2-3, 6:60, 14:33-34, 16:65-72, 21:35, 22:5 and 65-66, 24:41-43, 28:71-73, 30:20-25, 31: 10 & 28-29, 40:61-64 and 79-80, 41:39, 42:11, 45:12-13, 77:7-28, 78:6-16, 79:27-33, Sura 102). None of these are specific to any nation and culture. Existence of such a large number of verses dealing with such a large variety of subjects common to all mankind is a testimony to the universal nature of the message of the Quran.

-Similarly there are hundreds of verses in Quran which are of the nature of reminder to mankind and are an invitation for mankind to the ways of their Lord. These include those which deal with life stories and missions of previous prophets, details of the day of judgement and details of reward and punishment in the next life. Then there are a large number of verses which describe Allah (swt)'s Exalted Holiness and His attributes. All these hundreds and possibly thousands of verses are not specific to Arabs, have nothing to do with Arab culture and are common for all of the mankind.

Hence the message of the Quran is completely generalisable and people of any era can extract comprehensive guidance from it. If we look at the human history, the mankind's relationship with their Creator (swt) takes only a few broad patterns; correct monotheism and following proper guidance of Allah (for example Islam and to a limited extent Judaism), professing faith in Allah (swt) but indulging in various forms of polytheism and following corrupted guidance and innovations (bida'at) (for example Hinduism, Christianity and a variety of cults), being ignorant of proper religion, indulging too much in Worldly life and leading a life of Godlessness (for example the common trend in modern society in both the East and the West) and finally denying the existence of Creator, purpose of life and accountability altogether (for example Bhudhism in classical religious traditions and all forms and variations of atheism). Another pattern used to emerge when messengers (Rusul) used to be sent to nations and that is, that of rejecting the messenger, challenging the guidance due to arrogance and insisting on the ways of forefathers. Different human societies vary as to which pattern is predominant at any one point however all human societies can be classified to predominantly follow one of these patterns or a mixture of these patterns. Although Holy Prophet's (sws) direct mission was to do Itmam e hujjah on all the direct addressees of his message, the Quran has amply addressed all the above patterns, elaborated correct behaviour for humans and societies and hence provides complete guidance for every human being of every society and every era.

Summary: Hence the claim that Quran mainly addresses local issues or is time bound is completely baseless. Similarly the claim that the Quran does not contain guidance for other nations and other faiths also does not carry any substance. Any human being

Commented [S33]: Problem of clarity due to not following [Technical Ethics of Criticism](#)
I have no objection to this. This is what I refer to as General Universality of the Qur'an in my article.

of any cultural, religious and linguistic background can clearly understand what the book is saying. It subtly awakens human intellect by asking basic questions, kindles the dormant divine instinct, nurtures the spark of love for the Creator (swt) (24:35) and guides one who is willing to become serious, is not arrogant and is willing to challenge his prejudices (2:257). If we read or listen to testimonies of thousands of people from all backgrounds who have reverted to Islam, one can easily understand how human nature relates to the Quran. In fact any human being who reads it can relate with its message without even a slightest of difficulty.

In points 3 and 4 of his article the Author has raised certain questions about Islamic Shar'iah. Then later in his article he has inserted a supplementary note on Shar'iah and still later he has included issues related with Shar'iah in his seven principles. These issues on Shar'iah will be dealt with later under one umbrella title 'The Nature, the History and importance of Shari'ah' in Section C.

After pointing out the weaknesses in Author's claim that the Quran has, 'local and culturally specific tone and references', we will now proceed to examine **Section 2** of the author which he has used to prove his claims and has titled it '**Reasoning from the Quran**'. The Author has further sub-divided this section into four subsections 2:1, 2:2 (further subdivided into 2:2:1, 2:2:2, 2:2:3 and 2:2:4), 2:3 and 2:4. I have adopted the same titles as those of the author to make it easier for the readers to identify the part being discussed.

ANSWER TO 2.1. Evidences related to the style of the Qur'an and its content:

In this sub-section the Author has once again presented in some condensed form, more or less the same (8) points already discussed above. However contrary to the claim of the title he has not given any evidence at all in this section. His assertions are mere claims and judgements without any back up of evidence. Then he has given a highly judgemental commentary assuming that whatever he has claimed is a proven fact. The Author is then making some sweeping statements e.g

'The overall localised and specific tone and arguments of the Qur'an are so dominating in the book that relating the Qur'an to nations other than the Arabs of the time (Ummi'in) and time other than 1400 years ago, is today one of the challenges of the scholars of Islam'.

I am not sure which scholars are finding it as a challenge. The Muslim scholars and ordinary people have always and are still presenting the same Quran to rest of humanity without any qualms, explanations or apologies. Their efforts might have been inadequate or misdirected but they have always been fully convinced that the Quran is relevant to every human being and every nation.

Commented [S34]: Problem of clarity due to not following **Technical Ethics of Criticism**
I fully agree with this.

Commented [S35]: Denying Instead of Rejecting:
I have listed the evidence. I can fully appreciate that the evidence that I provided may not be valid to others. However to say that I have not listed any evidences is simply not factual.
I have not found a single satisfactory answer by the authors in responding to the evidences that I have provided in this section, yet I am fair enough to not deny that they have provided answers. This is how we can earn the trust of our readers and encourage their intellectual thinking.

Commented [S36]: Basic vs. Rich Criticism:
As far as I know, many of those scholars who have found this task very straightforward and not challenging are those who simply consider all verses of the Qur'an to be equally applicable at our time. The offshoot of these people are now known as Muslim extremists and terrorists.
Those like Ghamidi who disagree with this generalisation have spent a life time to put together their arguments and to explain it to the rest of the Muslims. Many of them are still referred to as fitna (deception) by many Muslims.
In terms of challenges of relating the Qur'an to our time, I suggest looking at the writings of some of the contemporary scholars like Tariq Ramadan, Khalid Abu al-Fadl, Abdullah Saeed and Ebrahim Moosa.

Then the Author states:

'It is important to notice that the arguments such as 'the Qur'an focused on its primary addressees so that they then become capable of focusing on the world' is a justification that holds little practical validity'.

Again this is just a presumption on the part of the Author and is not the argument of Islam or Muslims. This whole presumption is incorrect. The correct paradigm of Islam and the understanding of Muslims is that the mission of Holy Prophet (sws) was two-fold which has been mentioned in a hadith of Holy Prophet as well. One was his 'in-person' direct mission (which included his companions as well) as Rasul to people of Arabia (including polytheists, the people of the Book and others). These were subject to divine punishment in case of rejecting the Rasul. Then was his indirect mission for all mankind until the day of judgement. This mission was to be fulfilled by his companions and future Muslims through proselytising the religion of Allah (swt) using the Quran (which had been rearranged and preserved in its original language for the future mankind precisely for this purpose).

As already mentioned above the relationship of human societies to their Creator can be classified into a few categories or patterns. All human societies of all times broadly fall into those categories which are amply discussed in the Quran which means that despite directly addressing the Arabs, all other societies' beliefs and ailments have been fully discussed in the Quran. The Author or anybody else should give example of any society and their beliefs which they think has not been covered by the Quran and Inshallah these will be explained from the Quran.

The author then concludes this section by saying *'the Qur'an is the word of God, immune of any defects. However the nation who accepted the Qur'an were only human beings, therefore fallible. In delivering a universal and single system of guidance to the mankind, a fallible mechanism cannot replace an infallible one. The history of both Christianity and Muslims has illustrated what happens when this takes place'.*

Here the Author has put forward something which is apparently a very logical argument however its fallacy becomes clear when we put it to the test of history and facts. No doubt the Quran was infallible and Bani Ismael (and others of the time) who received the Quran were fallible. However Allah (swt) employed an infallible strategy to deliver the Quran to mankind. To understand it, one should first appreciate that Allah (swt) has historically dealt with humanity according to their circumstances. In previous times human resources were not developed enough for guidance to be accurately preserved. Hence in previous times the guidance of Allah (swt) could be completely lost (as it happened with Suhuf e Ibrahim which are mentioned both in the Bible and the Quran) or corrupted in a number of ways as it happened with Biblical books. At the time of the Quranic revelation human resources had developed enough to accurately preserve the guidance. As Allah (swt) had promised to preserve the

Commented [S37]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting + Assuming the Role of Representative:

First, I remind the authors that the approach that they believe in (and I to much extent agree with) is by no means representative of the approach of the vast majority of Muslims and Muslim scholars. Like myself, they are in no way representing the mainstream scholarship of Islam. Second, I did not write that the above argument is what Muslims say. I simply addressed a potential argument which I have heard from many. Third, please read what the authors refer to as 'The correct paradigm' and see if it is actually significantly different from what they quoted from me!

Commented [S38]: Confusion of Specifics and Generics:

I quote from one of the students of Ghamidi, Khalid Zaheer: "The Jews and Nasarah (Christians settled in the then Arabia) have been talked of in detail in it because these two religious communities were directly confronted by the Prophet (sws). We don't find mention in the Qur'an of the beliefs that were not held by the Christians of Arabia, even though they were very much found in other Christians of the world. For instance, we don't find in the Qur'an the mention of the belief that Jesus (sws) died at the cross for the sins of mankind. Likewise, the polytheists of the Arabian Peninsula have been directly addressed in the Qur'an, while Hindus, Buddhists and other religious groups have not been directly addressed for the same reason." <http://monthly-renaissance.com/issue/query.aspx?id=27> (I do appreciate that Khalid Zaheer then goes on to justify this. Obviously I do not agree with his justification). The problem is the issue of confusion between demand for specifics and offering generics instead. The authors have very broadly classified the patterns of relationship between human societies and God (which itself is questionable) and then they argue that the Qur'an has addressed all these patterns. This is a generic take to an inquiry that asks for specifics. Specifics here does not mean addressing each and every group of faiths in detail. It means a simple reference to some of the main ones that the Muslims were going to face at least in the first century after the demise of the prophet (pbuh). The argument that Arabs of the time did not know them is in fact an argument that reinforces the demand for referring to some of these groups, IF the intention was to convert all human beings to Islam.

Quran, He used sufficiently developed human resources, kept the size of the book reasonable (so it could be memorised) and guided the Prophet (sws) to adopt methods which would be suitable to preserve this guidance. Hence although Bani Ismael were fallible however Allah (swt) guaranteed the Quran's preservation by adopting infallible methods. So Allah (swt) used an infallible system to deliver a universal and single system of guidance to mankind. Hence it was not a case of fallible mechanism replacing an infallible one, rather it was a case of an infallible mechanism preserving the infallible Quran. The comparison between history of Islam and Christianity is entirely out of place here.

Commented [S39]: This is a side issue. I am not questioning the preservation of the Qur'an, however it is not correct to say with such confidence that God promised this. This is simply an interpretation of two verses of the Qur'an and these verses can and have been interpreted differently as well.

ANSWER TO: 2.2. Verses of the Qur'an that determine which scenario is correct:

Before dealing with the 4 sections of the Quranic verses which the Author has used to prove his point of view I would request the careful attention of readers to the following points:

-Muslims do not say that the Quran was not sent for its direct addressees i.e polytheists and people of book of the Arabian Peninsula. There is no disagreement that the Holy Prophet's (sws) direct (in-person) mission was to do Itmam e hujjah on these direct addressees. We, the Muslims, say that his indirect (not in person) mission was for the rest of mankind until the day of judgement. If the Quran says that it is sent to guide the people of Makkah and its surroundings how does it preclude it and the Holy Prophet (sws) from being guides for the rest of mankind particularly when there is ample evidence to support this role. As a very simple example a teacher delivers a lesson in a classroom in person but the same lesson, in accurately recorded form, can benefit a number of other classes using audio-visual equipment without the teacher going to different classes in person.

Commented [S40]: I suggest the authors revisit the Global Message of Ghamidi to the Muslims where he basically argues that for centuries vast majority of Muslims misunderstood and miscommunicated Islam. Preserving the holy text of the Qur'an was by no means enough to avoid the misguidance that would naturally emerge by the shortcomings of a fallible ummah. What the authors do not appreciate is that the book of the Qur'an does not talk. Therefore different interpretations can happen. Many of the atrocities that are happening in the hand of Muslim extremists at our time are partially due to the misinterpretation of the Qur'an. The authors and myself strongly believe that this is a huge misinterpretation however the fact remains that a fallible ummah needs more than just a preserved holy book, IF they are supposed to deliver the message of Islam to the mankind with the hope of converting them to Islam. Comparison with Christianity is very logical in my view because in none of the books of Gospel Jesus (pbuh) is introduced as God or a divine entity. In that sense and on this very particular point, the Gospel was in fact preserved for them. Yet, due to other factors (including additional biblical literature, that is equivalent to addition of hadith or scholarly views to the sources of Islam) almost all Christians today believe that Jesus (pbuh) is divine.

-The Quran claims that it is free of contradictions (4:82). Now anybody who believes it to be the word of Allah (swt) must have unwavering believe that the Quran is in fact free of contradictions. Hence he should always try his best to establish the correct meaning and settle down for the meaning of some Verse or portion of the Quran which does not carry any contradiction with any other statement in the Quran. Still if he is unable to resolve what appears to him to be a contradiction due to his own limitations, he must pause and keep looking for better meaning until, what appears to him a contradiction, is removed.

Commented [S41]: Moral Ethics of Criticism + Assuming the Role of Representative: This is not an academic way of putting forward an argument. Firstly the authors consider themselves to be the representative of Muslims. Secondly they are indirectly announcing any one whose view is not like them (including me) as non-Muslim! How will the authors feel if they read statements like "we, the Muslims, believe that hijab is obligatory, that Jesus will return and that stoning is punishment for zina"?

-To establish meaning and develop proper understanding one should not ignore the authentic narrations from Holy Prophet (sws) which could explain something the Quran has stated.

-The Quran was revealed to mankind, and for the guidance of the mankind. Hence it should not be against known human history. Also it should be interpreted in the frame work of human history. Any interpretation which does not fit in with generally known human history will be faulty.

-The Author has (most likely unknowingly) used what is called selective bias to build his arguments. In this process, certain aspects which favour a particular point of view are made prominent, exaggerated and strung into a particular pattern which appear to prove a person's point of view while certain other aspects which go against are ignored, suppressed, diminished or given new meanings. All the so called evidence the author has collected from the Quran to build up his argument is a clear example of selective bias.

-To understand and establish correct meaning, the context of a particular statement or verse should always be kept in sight. The context includes a number of things: the Sura in which the verse has come, the tone of that Sura and its relationship with the rest of the Quran, relationship of the verse with time and place in the mission of the Holy Prophet (sws), the verses before and after the particular statement in the Surah etc.

ANSWER TO: 2:2:1 Verses that limit the scope of the prophetic mission by explaining the reason that the Qur'an was revealed

The author has quoted the following verses in this section to prove that the Quran was indeed revealed for Arabia: 42:7, 6:92, 43:44, 28:46, 36:6, 32:3, 6:155-157. Now firstly, as mentioned, nobody is denying the fact that the direct and specific mission of Holy Prophet (sws) was to do Itmam e hujjah on the Arabs.

However if we carefully look at this group of verses which the author has quoted, one can see that there is hint about general mission of Holy Prophet even in these verses. The verse 42:7 ends: '.....A party shall be in the garden and a party in the burning fire'. Now we know that this description of some people being in paradise and some in hell has also been mentioned for the people of book and for humanity at large at numerous other places in the Quran (e.g 80:38-42, 101:6-11) which means that the fate described for mankind in general will be accorded to the Arabs as well and similarly the message being given to Arabs could be extrapolated to the rest of mankind. So in a very subtle manner it has been clarified that although at this point the direct addressees are being warned here however nobody should try to limit the scope of the Quran.

Commented [S42]: Moral Ethics of Criticism:

The expression "most likely unknowingly" suggests that the authors believe it is likely that I knowingly misrepresented the Qur'an to make my point. I again refer them to verse 49:12. In my understanding I have not adopted selective bias at all. To me every verse of the Qur'an and the whole Qur'an is a proof for the view that I presented in my article.

Commented [S43]: The Delicate Matter of Context:

This is correct but not complete. The most important aspects of Context is missing from this list. That is, the overall theme of the Qur'an and the theme of the group of the Suras that the particular Sura belongs to. The scholars who the authors refer to in this document have written in detail about these themes, and they are all local themes.

Commented [S44]: Illogical Deduction

The authors argument is as follows:

A. Fate described for mankind in general will be accorded to the Arabs as well

B. Therefore the scope of the warning of the Qur'an is not limited to its direct addressees (i.e. the Qur'an was sent for the whole human beings to follow it).

I do not see how A has resulted in B.

Any student who does not prepare for his exam will fail.

Does this then mean that the lessons, text books and exams for all students in the world are the same or that the students all students are registered for all classes? The authors have carried out an illogical deduction, refer to it as "subtle" and then conclude that nobody should try to limit the scope of the Qur'an, giving little attention to the fact that the One who sent the Qur'an, God the Almighty, have limited this scope in very explicit (not just subtle) manner: 6:92, 42:7.

Then if we see the verses 42:7 and 6: 92, the people of Makkah and its surroundings also include the Ahl e Kitab of Arabia as well, as the author would agree. However in verses 6:155-157 the specific revelation of the Quran to the polytheists of Arabia is being mentioned exclusive of the people of the Book (so will that mean on the basis of 6:155-157 that the Quran was not for people of the Book of the Arabia). It shows that in verses 6:155-157 its revelation to the polytheist of Arabia is mentioned while in 42:7 and 6:92 its revelation to both the polytheists of Arabia and the people of Book combined is mentioned.

Similarly at other places its revelation to all mankind has also been mentioned or hinted at (just two example 2:2-5, 45:20-22). The verses 43:44, 28:46, 36:6 and 32:3 can be seen in the same light.

So plucking isolated verses (and sometimes even small parts of verses), stringing them together to build up a logic while ignoring the rest of the Quran is an unfair approach which is typically used by proponents of almost all the sects to promote their sects and sectarianism.

Interestingly by using isolated verses in a cut and paste style I have seen Christian missionaries even trying to extract Trinity from the Quran. Ironically I read an article many years ago from an Indian Muslim professor who 'proved' from the Quran that actually vegetarianism is the way prescribed by Islam. Sadly the Author's approach is no different.

ANSWER TO: 2:2:2 Verses that associate diversity of nations with the need to have separate guides for each nation:

The Author has quoted the following verses to substantiate his view point mentioned in the title of this sub-section, 13:7, 35:24, 10:47, 16:36, 12:2, 44:58, 19:97, 14:4 and 41:44. A few points need careful consideration before looking at these verses quoted by the Author.

-When a Rasul is sent to a nation he establishes something akin to the day of judgement for the people he is sent to. He does it mame hujjah on his people and in this process every effort is made that the message is fully conveyed so that no excuse is left for them. All this is ensured because in case they reject the message, the rejecters are punished in this World which is not a small matter at all. Hence sending the message in exactly the same original language and through a person who knows

Commented [S45]: Ignoring an Argument:
The authors have not paid enough attention to the important point that I made about verses 42:7 and 6:92. I can only repeat that here to show why their argument about 6:155-157 is not correct:
It is important to note that the above two verses are not just limiting the scope of the prophet's (pbuh) mission. These two verses are in fact explaining why the Qur'an was revealed: 'To warning people in Arabia'. Note that 'ل' in لتنذر is for علة (cause). Therefore the argument that the above only covers the function of the Qur'an during the lifetime of the prophet (pbuh) does not hold.
If the Qur'an was revealed to warn or to guide the whole world, then the above wording would have been inappropriate and wrong. (p. 7, 8)
Accordingly while 42:7 and 6:92 are referring to the 'reason' for which the Qur'an was revealed. Verses like 6:155-157 refer to only some of the functions within that reason.

Commented [S46]: Ignoring an Argument + Technical Ethics of Criticism
As I have mentioned in my writings including questions and answers on my revised view which is published, existence of literally general statements in an oration that is meant specific does not make that oration general. This is a simple and obvious rule of communication and language.
On the other hand, I have no doubt that the Qur'an can be guide for every human being. Due to the authors not following technical ethics of criticism the clear line between their views and mine is not clear in such statements.

Commented [S47]: The Delicate Matter of Context
I fully agree, and this is not what I have done! Any author (including those that the authors of this article have referred to) has to remain brief in his writing by quoting only the verse that relates to his point or sometimes even part of that verse. This does not mean that the author is trying to ignore other verses of the Qur'an. It is simply what in practice is feasible. By showing the coherent link between around the many verses that I presented, and by discussing the local theme of the Qur'an, at least in my view I have in deed presented the entire Book as the evidence and not just isolated verses. With this in perspective, I argue that any verse of the Qur'an is an evidence for the view that I explained in my article.
It is in fact the authors who have totally ignored the general theme of the Qur'an and its chapters and try to deduct their views from the verses of the Qur'an in isolation of the above themes.

Commented [S48]: Populism:
Please refer to my article on Twenty Common Mistakes in Critical Writing.

the nation and its culture fully well is important to do Itmam e hujjah otherwise it will appear unfair. Take the example of Holy Prophet Ibrahim (sws). He was Rasul for his own people in Iraq as he was of the same origin and had the same language. However after migrating to Palestine he had a role change and he was not Rasul in that sense for the people of Palestine due to language difference however he was still a prophet to the people of his newly adopted home, Palestine. On the other hand his nephew Prophet Lut (sws) who was quite young, had migrated with him out of Iraq (21:71) and settled in South Western parts of what is Jordan today. He had thoroughly acculturated himself into the language and culture of the new land and thence was appointed Rasul for his local people. The Holy Prophet Ibrahim (sws) then established his progeny at different places as he was to come become the Imam of guidance for the whole of mankind (2:124). Interestingly Allah (swt) fulfilled his promise with him and established him on such an exalted position of 'patriarch of guidance' for the whole of mankind however the Suhuf e Ibrahim did not get preserved because those were subject to another reality of incapacity of humanity to preserve such a material in that age. Allah (swt) has dealt with humanity within the framework of His laws and Sunnan.

-Hence it would make perfect sense if Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws) also had different roles. He was Rasul for his people (polytheists and the people of the Book of Arabia) for whom he had come to establish 'The day of judgment in this World' and **his rejecters were subject to punishment in this world hence his language and origin had to be the same**. However his role did not end there. He was also Rasul, nabi, Haad or guide for the rest of mankind until the day of judgement. This second role was different in the sense that it was indirect (not in person), was to be performed by his Ummah and **the rejecters now were not punishable in this world however will be answerable on the day of judgement**. This role was made clear by a number of things; preservation of the language of the Quran so that it is still an established international language, a new arrangement of the Quran, the preservation of the Quran, the proselytising and spreading the guidance to other nations by his immediate followers and by the general and universal nature of the message of the Quran.

-In this connection he also had a unique role of being Khatam al Nabi'yin, the last and final messenger for mankind (33:40). It meant that the door of direct revelation and guidance from Allah (swt) to mankind closed for all times to come. It was also clarified that Allah (swt) completed his religion and his favours for mankind and chose Islam as His religion for mankind (5:3). If language was to be such a primary criteria for the validity of divine guidance, the finality of prophethood will become meaningless. Prophethood ended about 1500 hundred years ago and literally thousands of languages have existed during this period. Even new languages have developed and later got withered away during this period. **So who have been messengers or divine guides for all the people between the last Prophet and today. If Holy Prophet (sws) and the Quran could not be guides for these people, how come some even more**

Commented [S49]: Confusion between Evidence and Associating Facts

While I appreciate the general and universal nature of the message of the Qur'an and refer to it as General Universality of the Qur'an, none of the items mentioned in this paragraph logically proves that the part of the mission of the prophet (pbuh) was to indirectly guide the whole mankind to convert to Islam and follow the shari'ah of Islam. It is very helpful in evaluation of reasoning to do a reverse reasoning test, to see whether it holds. The reverse logic of what the authors are suggesting is that if God sends a prophet only for his local addressees then the language of his book has to be perished and the book should not be rearranged or preserved for their future generation and community! Also note that this is inconsistent with the authors argument that Bible too was meant to be for all human beings. If this is so then why (according to the authors) it was significantly corrupted and why its language was not preserved?

ancient prophets whose languages have not even been preserved (probably not even known) could be guides for them.

-The role of language (along with a number of other things) is of primary importance only when a messenger (Rasul) is sent to a nation as it would be unfair to punish a people 'in this World' without the message having been made fully clear. Otherwise the transferability of language (by second language acquisition and translations) has been accepted as valid medium to transmit the guidance.

-The Quran was revealed in the vernacular of Hijaz. The Arabian Peninsula is a large of mass of land which had very thinly spread tribal population distributed across the region. As is normally the case with any language the Arabic language also had many variations and local dialects. If the Author's claim of the Quran's language and style to be complex has any value, it would simply mean that the Quran could not 'fully' reach even the whole of Arabia according to the stringent language criterion the Author wants to set up for transmission of the Quran because of variations and dialects across the Peninsula.

-The Author has described two absolute positions '*sending a guide for all nations*' and '*sending a guide for each nation*' and favoured the later position. In my opinion this position cannot be taken. The correct position which can be easily understood from the Quran (hence it is not correct to say that it is heavily opinion based interpretation as the Author has claimed) and corroborated with human history is that the strategy of guidance from Allah has evolved; initially guides were sent to nations separately, then Holy Prophet Ibrahim (sws) was made Imam of guidance for mankind and prophethood was confined to his progeny, then a nation (Bani Israel) from his progeny was chosen to help the prophets and lastly a final messenger and a Glowing Sun of guidance ('sirajjan muneera' 33:45-46), Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws), again from his progeny, was sent for all of the mankind, the guidance was completed and fully preserved in the form of the Quran and the Sunnah and after his departure, the responsibility of carrying the message of Islam transferred to all his followers as explained above in the section 'The widening responsibility'. If the position 'sending a guide for each nation' is accepted a number of questions arise. The Holy Prophet (sws) was sent for Arabs but which other prophets were sent to other major nations in the World like Greeks, Persians, Chinese, Romans and Indians (and whose ancient history has some record) at the same time or since the time of Prophet Ibrahim (sws) and was their guidance available in uncorrupted form? So why only a small group of people living in a desert, the Arabs, were chosen for this favour? In last 1500 years new religious communities have emerged e.g Sikhs (whose numbers are more than Jews in the World). Which messenger has been sent for them? Then a large number of tribes in Africa, Americas, India, Australia and other parts of the World have existed in last 1500 years with as many diverse languages and religious cults as we can imagine. True their ancient history is not recorded and we cannot ask about any messengers sent to them between Holy Prophets Ibrahim and Muhammed (sws) but who have been divine guides for these people in the last 1500 years?

Commented [S50]: Basic vs. Rich Criticism:

This statement is based on the assumption that human beings necessarily need a direct guide from God in the form of a prophet (pbuh) in order to be guided. I do not agree with this assumption and do not find any basis for this in the Qur'an and established history either. As far as I see (and I am more than happy to elaborate on this very strongly), many of the nations who are still claiming following their prophet are much more astray from the path of the Almighty compared to many who do not have such claim. I do not blame the authors for not knowing that I do not hold this assumption, since I have not written about this point in my article. Though if they wanted to save time and provide a richer criticism to my views they could read it here: <http://www.exploring-islam.com/questions-on-your-revised-view-2.html>

Commented [S51]: Missing the Point:

Firstly I have not set up any stringent language criterion. As I wrote in my article the Qur'an has made this a criterion (14:4).
Second, the Qur'an itself clarifies that the language that it was sent with was suitable for its addressees (16:103, 26:195, 39:28). This tells me that the different dialects across Arabia at the time were not a significant hindrance to delivering the message of the Qur'an to its addressees. Another important point is that these people were living at the same era and overall the same socio cultural circumstances. Therefore even with some challenges to understand all the Qur'an, still the socio cultural framework of the Book was matching them. This is nowhere near considering the language of the Qur'an to be suitable for all human beings and all time!

Commented [S52]: Generalisation:

This 'easily to be understood from the Qur'an' that the authors conveniently refer to it as "the correct position", is simply a theory by Amin Ahsan Islahi and Javed Ahmad Ghamidi that was formulated just a few decades ago. Neither the Qur'an nor the history proves this. I can only repeat the argument that I put in my article since the authors have not addressed that:
"The prophet (pbuh) was sent more than 2000 years after this alleged significant change of the divine policy in sending messengers. Referring the prophet (pbuh) and the addressees of the Qur'an to a practice that was abrogated more than two millenniums ago seems pointless." (p. 9)
I can also briefly elaborate here why such theory was made in my opinion. It is because the Qur'an mentions that every community had a rasul. Then the above mentioned respectful scholars appreciate that history does not show this. The solution that they arrived at was this 'evolution in the guidance of God' and the closets verses that they could find to back up this theory were verses (2:124, 2:143 and 22:78). I have already discussed the latter two verses in my article and I have discussed 2:124 in a follow up writing: <http://www.exploring-islam.com/questions-on-your-revised-view-3.html>
The above apparent inconsistency could easily be resolved by appreciating that when the Qur'an says every community had a rasul, it simply refers to those communities that were chosen by God and not all communities on the face of the earth.

-There has been exponential rise in human population in last 1500 years and particularly in the last 200 years. Such a vast ocean of human population could not be left to their ways as Allah (swt) had sent so many messengers (some named but most of them not named in the Quran) before Holy Prophets Jesus (sws) and Muhammed (sws). There were only two ways to guide humanity in last 1500 years. The first was a continued series of Prophets in different parts of the World on national basis with different languages and cultural tones (according to the Author's approach) in which case there would be even more sectarianism and strife among the nations. The second was to give a universal guidance which is preserved as a reference for all mankind, is uniform for all mankind, cuts across all racial and national boundaries, promotes unity and reduces sectarianism. That could logically have only been achieved through the finality of prophethood with preservation of the guidance in its original language (along with the preservation of that language itself) and giving the responsibility of guidance to those who accept this guidance. Allah (swt) in his divine wisdom chose the second strategy and closed the institution of prophethood at the right time in human history.

-Please keep the above points in view as we now turn to the verses the author has quoted. The verse 13:7 is only referring to Allah's historical Sunnah (usual method) regarding Rusul that before punishing a people Allah sends a warner as had been happening with all the nations previously and has nothing to suggest that all those 'Haads' are to be followed permanently (particularly when their teachings have not survived or have been thoroughly corrupted). Verse 35:24 is saying that Holy Prophet (sws) has been sent according to previous sunnah but it does not preclude his future role. Verse 10:47 is even more clearly mentioning that whenever a messenger (rasul) came the fate of his people was sealed. The verse 16:36 is clear as to be a warning from the history of rusul. If we look at all these 4 verses carefully, the crux of the message is not to tell that there is guide for all the nations rather it is that all the nations who were sent rusul met with same fate

(please see Islahi and Ghamidi's views on these verses which clear the subject in a convincing manner).

If we believe the Author's point of view then where are the names of Rusul (messengers) or Haads of all the nations who have no recorded history of (messengers) rusul.

The verses 12:2, 44:58, 19:97 and 14:4 are again related with direct Itmam e hujjah on the Arabs so as to make things fully clear before their time is up and they become liable to punishment. The proper context of these verses can be understood from another verse (20:113) which states that the Quran has been sent in the Arabic language and Allah's warning has been clarified in different ways for the direct addressees.

The verse 41:44 is indeed very interesting if we read it in full within its context. The translation of the full verse 41:44 is as follows:

Commented [S53]: Basic vs. Rich Criticism:

As mentioned in my earlier comments, this is based on an assumption that I do not hold.

As a side note, in my opinion, at our time, Muslims are among those communities who are in need of more divine guidance than any other communities.

Commented [S54]: Ignoring a Fact due to It being Mentioned for a Particular Reason:

There is a confusion here between 'reason' for stating a fact and 'the fact' itself. Reason for stating a fact does not cancel out what the fact is referring to.

Yes, the reason these verses were revealed overall was to justify the position of the prophet (pbuh) but this does not mean that the fact they are referring to should be ignored or dismissed, and the fact is, every nation has its own guide.

Commented [S55]: Technical Ethics of Criticism

Beside the fact that what these scholars have written about these verses are not necessarily in disagreement with what I wrote, use of the expressions like this in my view belittles the intellect of the reader who should be left free to decide on his/her own what is and what is not convincing.

Commented [S56]: Basic vs. Simple Criticism:

See the comment above. I do not hold the assumption that every nation had a rasul.

'had we sent this Quran in a foreign language they would have objected why its verses have not been clarified (in our own language); strange! A foreign (speech) and Arabic (addressees)! Say, it is for those who believe in guidance and a cure, and those who do not believe-on their ears it is a burden and it is upon them a barrier. Those are the ones who will be called upon from a distance (on the day of judgement)'.

If we look at this verse it is actually answering one of the objections of non-believers. The verse is in fact giving a message exactly opposite to 'the language argument' of the Author. It is saying that people who want to believe, language is not a problem for them (as is testified by millions of non-Arabs who have accepted Islam over the centuries and loved the Quran more than anything else) while for those who do not want to believe their faculties won't work even if it is (and as it indeed is) in their own language. Regarding the verses 26:198-199, again if we look at the context it is in fact against the 'language argument' of the Author. In this Surah (26 Shu'ara) prior to verses 195-200 there is a long series of stories of Iltmam e hujjah of different messengers (Rusul) on their nations. The verses 195-200 are clarifying that the rejecters will not accept this Quran despite the fact that it has been sent in their own language, it has been mentioned in the earlier revelations and then scholars of Bani Israel clearly recognise it to be guidance from Allah (swt). Hence again the implication here is that the language cannot be a barrier and it is the rejecters' attitude who have distorted their nature to the extent that they are not able to understand the clear message of the Quran. The commentary of Islahi and Ghamidi on these verses would make an interesting reading to show that the Author is not making correct inference here.

The verses 2:151 and 9:128 can also be similarly explained.

The Author then states, *'One may argue that while prophet Muhammad (pbuh) on the basis of the verses that were mentioned earlier was only warner for Arabia, the guidance that he brought was for the entire mankind-----'* (please see his full para). I dare say that this is not the correct position of Islam. The correct position is that the Holy Prophet (sws) was a Rasul, guide, warner and bringer of glad tidings for both his direct addressees as well as the rest of mankind until the day of judgement. However, the difference is that as he did Iltmam e hujjah on his direct addressees in person, therefore they had no excuse left and were subject to punishment in this World while the rest of mankind, on whom he did not do Iltmam-e-hujjah directly, will be answerable on the day of judgement. If somebody is able to produce a genuine excuse on that day for not accepting and following the final and completed form of Islam (and 'islam') presented to mankind by the last and final messenger Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws), then Allah (swt) is the best of judges and most merciful.

Commented [S57]: This is not what the verse is saying and since the authors refer the readers to the tafsir of Islahi, I also do the same, and ask interested readers to read his interpretation of this verse that is in line with mine.

The authors are giving an impression that Arabs were expected to believe in the Qur'an even if they could not understand it due to being in a different language! They are giving an impression that if the Qur'an was sent in Chinese for instance and then Arabs would (naturally) not believe in it, then this was due to their own fault! This is not what the verse says, it is not inline with other verses of the Qur'an that I quoted where language is referred to as a central tool for guidance and such idea is contradictory with the wisdom of the Almighty.

Yes of course Arabs at the time were looking for baseless excuses. However the reason this excuse was baseless is the exact point that the Qur'an also refers to, that God uses the language of the same people who He wants to guide through His prophet.

Commented [S58]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting:

Misrepresenting this time is not about my writing but about Islahi and Ghamidi's writing!

These scholars too have interpreted these verses in the same way, in terms of importance of language. Yes they do argue correctly that these verses are saying that Arabs did not have any excuse. However none of them have then concluded that therefore the language is not important and that if Arabs wanted to believe they would have believed disregard of what language the Qur'an was revealed in! Readers do not need to look at Islahi's writing on 26:198, 199. I have already quoted this in my article, p. 11 in support of my argument!

Commented [S59]: Ignoring an Argument:

These verses (2:151 and 9:128) are not about language and therefore deserve a separate attention. I refer the readers to what the teacher of Islahi and Ghamidi, i.e. Imam Farahi, writes in his book Tafsir Nidham al-Quran. I have quoted this in page 12 and another part of it in page 24 in my article. I did not find any comments to these quotes in the writing of the authors.

Commented [S60]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting:

As it is clear from the wording that is quoted, I did not intend to say what Islam says here. I only addressed a potential counter argument.

ANSWER TO: 2:2:3 Verses that inform about accepting the diversity of paths towards God

The Author has quoted the following verses in this sub-section to prove his point of view as enshrined in the title: 22:67, 2:148, 45:18, 5:43, 5:47, 5:48, 2:62, 16:89, 45:28, 17:71. However before we discuss these verses a few points should be kept in sight.

-At the time of Holy Prophet (sws) the Arabian Peninsula had three main religious followings: polytheist, Jews and Christians and these are extensively discussed in the Quran. The main focus of these addresses was to ask them to relinquish their wrong beliefs, stop their undue animosity towards the Holy Prophet (sws) and his mission, to profess faith in what he had brought, to follow him and the consequences of not following him. Here are some of the verses which clearly indicate that Jews and Christian were invited to Islam and they were supposed to, not only profess faith in the Holy Prophet (sws) and the Quran, but also follow the Shari'ah brought by him in contrast to the Author's claim that the Ahl e kitab were not invited to accept Islam. They were, at many places, warned of serious punishment in case of rejecting the Prophet (sws). Some examples of such verses are:

2:41, 2:75, 2:89-91, 2:97-101, 2:103, 2:120-121, 2:136-137, 2-146, 3:20, 3:61, 3:67-72, 3:183-184, 4:41-42, 4:47, 4:51-57, 9:29, 17:2-8, 32:23-26, 41:45 and 98:6.

-When a Rasul is sent to a group of people, they must profess faith in him, follow him wholeheartedly and join his party to help him in his mission (4:64, 4:69, 4:115). There is no such thing as professing a nominal faith in Allah's messenger and yet keep following unfounded believes.

-Allah (swt) has set out laws which govern this World. Allah (swt) allows so many things in this world and attributes their existence to Himself although He forbids those things for his servants as those are harmful for them. For example alcohol is produced as a result of chemical reactions in according with physical laws of nature and Allah (swt) will attribute its creation to Himself however He has made it haram to consume it. Similarly in matters of religion Allah (swt) has given his standard guidance which is Islam and wants humanity to follow that religion so that they deservedly get reward from Him. However He has allowed so many religions and ideologies to exist as He has given autonomy to mankind (2: 256, 76:3, 90:10). Hence He allows diversity which is a by-product of the design of Allah (swt) which He has decreed for mankind and attributes it Himself however allowing diversity does not mean he endorses the following of these religious paths as well. Now, let us review the verses referred to by the author.

In Verse 22:67 it is being said that there have been some differences in apparent structure of Shari'ah. It is now a test of rejecters of people of the Book whether they want to accept Allah's guidance irrespective of the form it has come in or they want to keep quarrelling. In the same verse the Holy Prophet (sws) is being reassured that in fact you are on the straight path and you should keep calling people (polytheists, Jews and Christians) to this path. Hence the verse is not endorsing that these groups

Commented [S61]: Ignoring an Argument:

None of these verses ask the people of the book to follow the shari'ah of Islam, if they had then this was in contradiction to the other verses of the Qur'an that have allowed them to follow their own shari'ah, as quoted in my article.

The authors have simply assumed that any verse that has criticised the people of the book, or have asked them to accept the prophet (pbuh) and his message are also asking them to convert to Islam and follow the shari'ah of Islam. I have already discussed at the end of section 2.2.4 of my article that what the Qur'an meant by these verses.

Commented [S62]: By accepting the message of the prophet (pbuh) the people of the book would have put themselves in the path to correct any false beliefs. This is major and by no means nominal. The authors include following a specific shai'ah in the corpus of faith, therefore they consider accepting faith without converting to a specific shari'ah to be a nominal faith. The Qur'an says otherwise: 2:62. 5:69.

Commented [S63]: According to the verses of the Qur'an that I quoted in sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 of my article, in fact God does endorse following other religious paths that are not fundamentally false.

Commented [S64]: This is not what the verse says. The verse says (literal translation): "For every community We established a path [ritual] that they follow so they should not argue with you about this matter and invite to your Lord you are verily on the straight path."

should keep following what they had been, rather that they should not get entangled in superficial differences of Shari'ah and follow what the Holy Prophet (sww) had brought. In verse 2:148, when read in conjunction with the preceding verses (142-147), it is being said that Jews and Christians had appointed directions for themselves (not that Allah (swt) had appointed those, as is clarified in word 'ahwa'hum' in verse 145) and that Allah (swt) has now identified the real Qibla for you, so now you (the Muslims) should leave them alone and strive 'amongst yourself' in righteousness. Hence the verse is not saying at all what the Author is deriving here (please read the enlightening commentaries of Islahi and Ghamidi on these two verses).

Commented [S65]: Ignoring an Argument:

I appreciate that this interpretation can be deduced from this verse. However, as I have pointed out the reasons in my article, I am convinced that this interpretation is not correct. The expression 'fastabiqu al-khayrat' in 2:148 is also used in 5:48, and any student of the Qur'an knows that recruiting same expressions in the verses of the Qur'an are clues to the similar message of those verses. Verse 2:148 refers to different shari'ah of God's communities, as the authors would agree. Then it says 'fastabiqu al-khayrat'. Using this verse in 2:148 indicates that here too God is referring to different religious rituals (here qiblah) given to or accepted by God for His communities.

The authors have not addressed this point.

The word 'ahwa'hum' in my understanding does not refer to the desire of the people of the book to keep their qiblah, but is referring to their desire that the prophet (pbuh) also keep following their qiblah and does not change it to Mecca. This is clear by noticing the phrase 'wa ma anta bitabi'in qiblatahum' in the same verse.

For the information of the readers, there is no reliable evidence to show that Jews and Christians were originally supposed to face Mecca as their qiblah.

The verse 45:18, when read in conjunction with preceding two verses 16 and 17, is saying that Bani Israel were given the book, authority, prophethood and a clear path however they created irreconcilable differences through their rebellious behaviour which cannot be resolved until the day of judgement. Now Allah (swt) has once again established you on clear path, so follow this and do not follow bid'at (ahwa'hum) of these people (of the Book). Hence the verse 45:18 is not saying at all what the Author is implying here (please see the commentary of Islahi and Ghamidi on these verses).

Commented [S66]: Ignoring an Argument:

Referring to the tafsir of Islahi and Ghamidi without addressing the argument that is put forward is not a response to my argument. The point I had about this verse in my article was as follows:

"Here, shari'ah is in a nakarah form, meaning, 'a shari'ah', implying that the shari'ah of Muhammad (pbuh) is one of the possible sets of shari'ah for God's religion." I elaborate:

The authors have interpreted verse 45:18 as follows:

"Now Allah (swt) has once again established you on clear path".

It is not clear if they mean "the clear path" or "a clear path" however knowing their stance, I am sure they mean "the clear path".

"The clear path" in Arabic will be: Al-Shari'ah (where Al indicates The, and Shari'ah means Clear Path).

Verse 45:18 however says: "Shari'ah" which means "a clear path". It then further reinforces this by the end rest of the words that are used:

"Shari'atin min al-Amr": A clear path of the Affair (of religion)". Those who know Arabic of the Qur'an appreciate the function of 'Min' here as 'min' of 'Tab'iz' (that makes something part of a bigger thing). It is then in the same style that the word shir'ah is used in verse 5:48.

Regarding the verses 5:43, 5:45 and 5:48 the Author has rightly pointed out that Surah Maidah was one of the last chapters revealed and the people of the Book have been severely criticised in this Surah (also the completion of religion has been declared in this Surah 5:3). Now the people of the Book were in fact the claimants that they were already following the prophets and Allah's Shari'ah and that was, one of their main arguments and an excuse for not professing faith in Holy Prophet (sww) and not following what he had brought. Now if we study the Surah from the beginning, the main focus is the Shar'iah directives and behaviour of people of the book. Such a heavy critical discussion of people of the Book along with Shari'ah directives indicates that their actual ailment was to avoid Allah's Shar'iah and which was once again being perfected as could be easily understood by reading the Surah. In verse 5:12 the covenant about following the Shar'iah and professing faith in Allah's messengers is

being mentioned. The next verse, 5:13 tells that they broke the covenant which resulted in two consequences; one, they forgot part of what they were given and second, they use to alter meanings of the book. The next verse 5:14 tells us that Nasara (Christians) also broke the covenant and had forgotten part of what they were given (and as a result both the groups did not have perfect shar'iah with them). In next verses, 5:15 and 16, both the groups of people of the Book are being told that Allah's messenger, Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws) has 'come to you' who is once again clarifying with this Quran what 'you' had been hiding (by textual and meanings alterations, selectively suppressing Shari'ah etc) from Allah's religion. In verses 5:17 and 18 their wrong beliefs and self-righteous claims are criticised and then in verse 5:19 they are being told that Allah's messenger has come after a long interval and now they will have no excuse on the day of judgement that no 'basheer' and 'nazeer' (warner) had come to them.

Commented [S67]: Verse 5:13 says that the Jews misinterpreted and misplaced words of guidance. Verses 5:13 and 5:14 say that the Jews and Christians forgotten some of the benefits of what they were reminded of. The authors have concluded: "as a result both the groups did not have perfect shar'iah with them". Firstly, I am not sure how they have concluded this. Secondly, I do not share the assumption of the authors about the function of shari'ah therefore the expression 'perfect shari'ah' has a different meaning for me. In any case I do not believe that these verses indicate that Jews and Christians could not follow the path of religion due to not having 'perfect shari'ah'. If this was the case then in verses 5:43 and 5:47 the Qur'an would have not instructed the Jews and the Christians of the time to follow their own shari'ah.

This verse subtly indicates that the warning includes following whatever the messenger is presenting as Allah's religion both in terms of belief system and directives in letter and spirit.

(It also indicates that Holy Prophet (sws) will be witness on the people of the Book on day of judgement and not the previous messengers). Verses 5:20-26 are reminding Bani Israel from their own history about their behaviour and disobedience to their own messenger Holy Prophet Moses (sws) and the consequence of their behaviour. Then verses 5:27-32 are highlighting to the people of the Book, the story of two sons of Adam (sws) that how arrogance and jealousy can lead to sinful act of bloodshed which resulted in Shari'ah directive about Qisas. These also are alerting them about their own arrogance and jealousy which was causing Bani Israel to reject Allah's Messenger sent amongst their brothers Bani Ismael. Verse 33-34 gives Shari'ah directives about people who cause anarchy and bloodshed when Allah's and Rasul has established justice and peace in a land. Then in verses 5:36-37 it is declared that the fate of rejecters of the Rasul'Allah (sws) will be hellfire (polytheists, Jews and Christians and whoever else) from which they will have no respite whatever they do.

Commented [S68]: I do have some reservation about arguments that are based on "subtle indication" in the Qur'an, as I often find that these arguments are very subjective and opinion based. Anyway, the warning included following the Qur'an, and the Qur'an has directed them to follow their own shari'ah, as verses 5:43 and 5:47 have said.

Now this is the context in which verses 5:41-49 have followed (which include the three verses 43, 47 and 48 which the Author has quoted). If one carefully ponders on this set of verses from 5:41-49, it is being described that the people of the Book had been doing all sorts of mischief in matters of Allah's shar'iah which they did not want to follow. Now they wanted to use the good offices of Allah's Messenger (sws) with similar ill designs particularly to avoid Hadud directives of Torah as the reference in 5:45 shows. Allah is asking his Messenger (sws) that if you want to adjudicate for them, do it with justice according to Allah's shar'iah and do not follow their desires.

Commented [S69]: This is true, but people of the book here are only those who lived at the time of the prophet (pbuh) in Arabia. No prophet can be witness to people who he has not directly been addressing (look at verses 5:109 and 5:116).

Now let us see the verses 5:43, 5:47 and 5:48 individually but please keep the context described in above two paragraphs in sight.

Commented [S70]: The Delicate Matter of Context + Circular Argument:

There is a confusion between what the authors refer to as Context of the verses and what is actually the context of an Assumption. The assumption that the authors hold (as they have explained it many times in their article arguing that this is what 'Muslims' say), is that the people of the book at the time of the prophet and in Arabia and at any time and any place are expected to convert to Islam and follow the shari'ah of Islam.

The authors then review the verses in the sura of Ma'idah with this assumption in mind. From here they derive what they call the Context, which is actually not the context of these verses but the context of their assumptions. Then they visit the verses that I referred to in my article with this assumed context in mind. The result is only obvious.

I argue that the context of the Qur'an is very obvious and clear in showing its local and specific agenda (as explained in my article). Accordingly interpretation of any verse to mean anything beyond this local and specific agenda will be against the context of the Qur'an.

In other words, the whole argument put forward by the authors is a circular one. They first express their view point and hold it as the truth. Then they interpret the verses of the Qur'an according to this view point to prove the view point.

The verse 5:43 is commenting on behaviour of Jews that they do not want to accept Holy Prophet (sws) as their Rasul but still they come to him for adjudication to avoid Allah's decree which is clearly mentioned in Torah and then they do not accept Holy Prophet's decision (which will be according to Shar'iah of the Torah and the Quran) if it is against their wishes and all this behaviour is because they want to run away from Allah's shar'iah. Hence the verse is clearly highlighting the treacherous behaviour of Jews and does not mean at all what the Author is implying (that they should not go to Holy Prophet (sws) for adjudication and just follow Torah). The verse 5:36 had already clarified the severe punishment in case they rejected Rasul'Allah and the Quran. Verse 5:47 when read in conjunction with preceding verse 5:46 is saying that Jesus Christ (sws) was sent testifying the Torah and was given Injeel which carried light and guidance so that (5:47) its followers upheld what was ordained upon them in it (that they will follow the shar'iah of Torah because the Injeel did not bring a new Shar'iah and Jesus and his followers followed the shari'ah of Holy Prophet Moses (sws)) and if

Commented [S71]: Ignoring a Fact due to It being Mentioned for a Particular Reason:

Again the authors have used the argument on why a verse is revealed to and then ignore what the verse actually says. No amount of argument on the basis of context or reason for revelation can change what the wording of a verse actually says. I can only put the verse in Arabic and its literal translation here and don't think any further explanation is required:

وَ كَيْفَ يُحْكُمُونَكَ وَعِنْدَهُمُ التَّوْرَةُ فِيهَا حُكْمُ اللَّهِ ...

"and how do they ask for you to make a ruling while they have Torah in which is the ruling of God ..."

This verse also shows that unlike what the authors argue, the version of Torah that was with the Jews at the time of the prophet (pbuh) was good enough for them to follow in terms of rulings.

they did not they will be 'faasiq'. Hence the verse 5:47 is just describing a historical fact and not saying what the Author is implying. Verse 5:48 starts by saying that Allah has sent the Quran in accordance with the glad tiding of the previous book and as guardian on it (with all its correcting, highlighting and clarifying roles for the previous book). Then a covenant is being taken from the Messenger (and through him from the Muslims) that they will judge according to the shar'iah of Allah (swt) and not according to the whims of people. Then it is being mentioned that had Allah (swt) wished He would have dictated all people to be on one path but He had given different structures of Shar'iah so that he could test who in fact rises above the superficial structure, surpasses his prejudice and shows obedience by accepting Allah's new guidance when it comes (because at the beginning of verse the coming of the Quran is mentioned). Then Muslims are encouraged to enhance themselves in piety in accordance with Allah's guidance which has now been sent. The verse ends with the message that the people have the liberty of choice and can follow whatever they want in this life (and hence this diversity of ideologies and religions) but their end is going to be with their Lord and He will inform them about what they differed in. Once again the verse is not saying what the Author is claiming.

Commented [S72]: Ignoring a Fact due to It being Mentioned for a Particular Reason:

I think the Arabic of the verse is very clear and I really do not know what other argument I can bring to show that the verse is not about a historical fact but is about a present issue. Since the authors have extensively referred to Islahi and Ghamidi's interpretations, I simply quote translation of Ghamidi (as translated into English) for the readers to see whether he translated this as a historical account or something related to the time of revelation:
 "let those who follow the Gospel judge according to what God has revealed therein"
<http://monthly-renaissance.com/issue/content.aspx?id=1339>

Commented [S73]: I have explained this verse but will elaborate on a more technical level here:
 At the start of the verse 5:48 It says that the Book has been revealed to the prophet (pbuh) so he should rule among them with it (Fahkum Baynahum). 'Them' here cannot include people of the book because then this will be in contradiction with verses 5:43 and 5:47 where they are advised to use their own Books for ruling (note the similar word حكم) in these three verses. Therefore the reference to the Qur'an at the start of the verse does not mean that the Challenge (ibtla) that the verse is referring to is in accepting the new ruling. The authors agree that Kum in لكل جعلنا منكم and ليجعلكم refer to Muslims and people of the book together. This can only mean that Kum in ليبلوكم too is referring to the same mega group. Therefore the challenge is not for the people of the book to accept the ruling of the Qur'an (despite the Qur'an itself advising them to follow the rulings of their own books in 5:43 and 5:47). The challenge is for each group (Muslims, Jews and Christians) to excel in what they have been given as the guidance.

Please read the very detailed and enlightening commentary of Islahi and Ghamidi on these verses which clearly show the mistake of the Author.

Verse 2:62 (and 5:69, a similar verse with minor changes in wording) is just saying that the success in the hereafter is not dependant on being attached to a particular group but on having true faith in Allah (swt), the day of judgement and doing good deeds. To understand the point being made in this verse fully, one should first appreciate that the meaning of a statement should be understood in its context. The context at both the places (2:62 and 5:69) is to correct the false notion of the people of the book that the salvation is dependent on being part of a particular group (as was the claim of Jews or Christians, for example see 2:111-112).

These verses (2:62 and 5:69) are not meant to give, and are not giving, any exhaustive criteria of success in the hereafter. As an example 2:256 mentions about belief in Allah (swt) only and does not even mention faith in the hereafter and doing good deeds. So will that mean that the latter two are not criterion of success in the hereafter as per 2:256?

Another example is 16:106 where faith in summery form is mentioned and would not mean that one should not forsake faith in Allah (sws) but it would be fine to do that in case of the Hereafter and other elements of the faith. Interestingly the verses before and after verse 5:69 are severely criticising the behaviour and wrong beliefs of Jews and Christians, warning them about the dire consequences of their behaviour and asking them to profess faith in Holy Prophet (sws) and the Quran. It means that the Author has missed the basic point and is giving a wrong meaning to the verse ignoring other areas of the Quran. The verse 2:62 and 5:69 are just mentioning a general 'positive' criterion of success in a summary form and not the negative criterion which could equally jeopardize that success (e.g committing shirk, not believing in any true prophet of Allah (swt) through prejudice, arrogance or neglect, committing major sins etc).

The Author has then quoted three verses (45:28, 16:89 and 17:71) in support of his treatise that every nation has its own guide, scripture and path to follow and that Holy Prophet (sws) and the Quran are only for the Arabs of his time (or at the most for later

Commented [S74]: Basic vs. Rich Criticism + Technical Ethics of Criticism

Such propaganda type statements can only reduce readers to mindless entities that are supposed to be fed with enlightening commentaries of a scholar. Please refer to the Basic vs. Rich Criticism title in the my article Twenty Common Mistakes in Critical Writings.

Commented [S75]: Ignoring a Fact due to It being Mentioned for a Particular Reason:

There is again confusion between Reason for revelation and Fact. Again, reason for revelation does not negate the fact that the verse says. These verses are in full harmony with the other verses of the Qur'an where glad tidings are given to the righteous among people of the book (who are not Muslims), as listed in my article, section 2.2.4.

Commented [S76]: Verses 2:62 and 5:69 are indeed exhaustive and by considering them non-exhaustive we are making the Qur'an practically a vague and illogical book (God forbidden).

As chapter 23 makes it clear, a true belief in God does include belief in the hereafter and doing righteous deeds. Referring to belief in the hereafter and doing righteous deeds after believing in God is simply to re-emphasise on the true belief. Therefore it is not necessary to mention these in every instance. This is why in 2:256 only believing is mentioned.

Commented [S77]: Verse 16:106 is referring to apostasy and is therefore about a totally different subject. It is about a person who does believe in God and the hereafter but then rejects this.

Commented [S78]: Ignoring an argument:

Rather, I think this means that the authors did not pay enough attention to what I wrote in pages 21-23 of my article, about what 'believing in prophet' meant for the people of the book.

Arabs and somebody who accepts Islam). In Verse 45:28 the word 'kitaab' is not used for the Scripture (like the Torah, the Injeel or the Quran) and is used as 'register of deeds' of people as the next verse 45:29 clarifies and hence is not relevant to the discussion and the Author should not have used it as a reference.

Commented [S79]: Generalisation:

The authors follow the view of the scholars that have interpreted Book in this verse to mean book of deeds. They then conclude that since they are following those scholars, I should have not used this verse as a reference!
I agree that Book in verse 45:28 in most tafasir is interpreted to be the book of deeds. I however agree with those minority scholars who have interpreted this to mean their holy books (e.g. Zuhaily in tafsir Munir and Shukani in Fath al-Qadir). According to my current understanding this interpretation is more in line with the wording of the verse and similar verses. I will however remove this verse from the next version of the article to avoid unnecessary further discussions. Since this is only a verse among many that I have referred to in my article and removing it does not affect the body of reasoning and evidences that I have provided.

According to Verse 16:89 the messengers (Rusul) will be witness over their respective nations amongst whom they were raised and similarly Holy Prophet (sws) will be a witness on people of Arabs of his time. However it does not preclude him to be witness (through his Ummah) on all of the mankind until the day of judgement as firstly he is the last and final Messenger (33:40), secondly Islam was completed and preserved (in the form of the Quran and Sunnah) on him (5:3) and thirdly his Ummah has been raised to the status of witness on rest of mankind (2:143). Hence he will indirectly be witness on rest of mankind as Holy Prophet (sws) himself said that he had two ministries (be'sat).

Commented [S80]: There is no concept of Indirect (nominal) witnessing in the Qur'an for a person who was not living at the era of those who are brought witness. If this was the case then in 5:117 Jesus (pbuh) would not say that when he was not among his ummah, God knew about them. Likewise in 5:109 the prophets would have not said that they did not know how their ummah did after them. The word هُوَ لَاءِ (these) makes it clear who the prophet (pbuh) will be witness for and nowhere in the Qur'an It says that the prophet (pbuh) will be witness of anyone else other than his direct addressees.

In fact the third verse (17:71) which the Author has quoted, supports this point. It is saying that righteous people will be with their righteous leaders while rebellious people will be with their rebellious leaders. Due to the general nature of the verse, one can in fact conclude that Holy Prophet (sws) will be the leader of all the community of people who will be given their 'result cards' in their right hands after him until the day of judgement as he is the only divinely appointed imam of righteousness since the start of his prophethood until the day of judgement.

Commented [S81]: I am sure that the authors have not heard this from the prophet (pbuh) themselves. It is always closer to cautious to write "it is narrated that ...".

ANSWER TO 2.2.4. Verses that gave glad tidings to the righteous among the people of the book despite them not being Muslims:

In this sub-section the Author has used the following verses to prove his point that as Allah (sws) gave glad tidings in these verses to the righteous among the people of the book which would mean that they could legitimately follow their own paths: (3:113-114, 3:199, 3:110, 5:82-85, 5:19, 5:68, 5:66, 5:48 (54:5). Once again the author's view point is not correct as we will see below. Here are a few points to keep in sight before discussing these verses:

Commented [S82]: Circular Argument:

This is not reasoning. Basically the argument of the authors goes like this: "The prophet – pbuh – is the only source of guidance for the human kind after his time" therefore "in verse 17:71 Imam means the prophet (pbuh)"; and how do we know that "the prophet (pbuh) is the only source of guidance for the mankind after his time"? Because "in verse 17:71 Imam means the prophet (pbuh)"!
There is no evidence in verse 17:71 to indicate that Imam in this verse means the prophet (pbuh). In fact if this was the case then it was more inline with the terminologies of the Qur'an to have al-rasul (the prophet – pbuh) in this verse rather than the 'nakarah' (undefined) Imam.

-The process of relinquishing a set of beliefs and accepting a new set of beliefs is a slow process. The process of adopting new practices under change of religion is even more difficult and slower. It is not always wise to quickly demand the practice of each and every directive of Shari'ah from a new revert. Rather they are given time to let faith take root and flourish until there is inner yearning, as a manifestation of love and submission to Allah (swt) that practice of Shari'ah starts appearing.

-Referring to the believers from amongst Jews and Christians as people of the book, is simply to highlight that there were people from amongst these groups to profess faith in what Holy Prophet (sws) had presented and does not necessarily mean they were still Jews and Christians. For example in 4:136 people who were already Muslims had been asked to profess faith. Here it is a style of emphasis to stress that they should acquire faith in the real sense.

-Allah has only praised those Jews and Christians who also professed faith in Holy Prophet (sws) and what he had brought in the form of the Quran and Sunnah (and ultimately followed him). It is responsibility of the Author to show a single verse which shows that there were Jews and Christians who rejected Holy Prophet (sws), did not testify the prophethood of Holy Prophet (sws) and were still praised. In my understanding after professing faith in his Risalat it was enjoined upon them to practice the shari'ah he had brought which they sooner or later did. Hence it is the responsibility of the Author to show a single verse which gives exemption to Jews and Christians (and for that matter any group) from following Shar'iah.

-There were a few people of the Book who were sincere in their faith, honestly practiced whatever shari'ah they had inherited and knew that a prophet would be

Commented [S83]: If this means that according to the authors, a Muslim who were a Christian or Jew before converting to Islam, is still called Ahl al-Kitab in the Qur'an, then this is simply an unheard claim that has no backup in the scholarship of Islam and none of the scholars who the authors have adored their writings in their article would agree with this. Based on this claim, Salamn al-Farsi can be called Ahl al-Kitab! Since no concrete evidence is provided to back this up, I cannot even start arguing against this! Verse 4:136 has absolutely nothing to do with the above claim.

Besides the wording of the verses that I quoted in this section do not support the above claim. I encourage the readers to look again at verses 3:110; 3:113, 114; 3:199 and to judge themselves whether Ahl al-Kitab in these verses can mean Muslims who were Christian or Jew before converting to Islam! The glad tidings to the people of the book in these verses are inline with verses 2:62 and 5:69.

Commented [S84]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting: Rather, it is the responsibility of the authors to show where in my article I have made this statement!

Commented [S85]: Proof for Existence, No Proof for Non-Existence:

I have brought a number of verses of the Qur'an in my article that in my understanding have explicitly stated otherwise (see section 2.2.3).

However, what the authors demand is not logical. Basically the authors (or whoever My refers to in this statement) argue that because their understanding is such and such therefore it is my responsibility to provide proof otherwise! It is simple rule of logic that we need evidence to prove something exists, rather than evidence to prove something does not exist. This is like I say "In my understanding there is a dragon living in Thames in London", then I write: "It is the responsibility of those opposed me to prove there is no dragon there!".

The authors argue that something exists, that is: "requirement for Jews and Christians to follow the shari'ah of the prophet – pbuh". It is them who now have responsibility to bring a verse of the Qur'an that explicitly says that.

coming. These ultimately professed faith in Holy Prophet (sws) as well (7:159, 28:52-54 and 57:27-29) and hence were promised double reward. **However there was no example of not professing faith in Holy Prophet (sws) and not ultimately following shari'ah he had brought and still be promised reward.** We review here two verses to clarify this point. Please read Surah Bayyannah and focus on Verse 98:6 which clearly states that whoever amongst the people of the book did not profess faith in the Quran will go to hellfire. Then also see verse 9:29. Now we know that Sura Tauba (9th Surah) was revealed towards the last part of the mission of Holy Prophet (sws) and is describing the fate of different groups after Itmam e hujjah of Rasul'Allah (sws).

Commented [S86]: Rather, the Qur'an is very clear about those who professed faith in the prophet (pbuh) while remaining with their own shari'ah and being promised reward: 3:110; 3:113, 114; 3:199, 5:82-85.

Verse 9:29 is describing punishment for the people of Book if they did not accept faith and did not follow the shari'ah brought by Holy Prophet (sws). This verse is in fact also an answer to the Author's challenge which he has thrown later in this section that *'there is not even a single verse in the Qur'an in which people of the book are told to follow the shari'ah of the Qur'an'*.

Commented [S87]: The verse is not even close to an answer to my challenge. The verse actually further backs up my argument that the people of the book were not asked to follow the shari'ah of Islam.

The first thing that is important to know is that the interpretation of verse 9:29 is not as straightforward as the authors are presenting. There are differences of views about whether Rasul here means the prophet (pbuh), or a past prophet or any prophet of God. There are also different views on what Haram means in this verse, whether it refers to haram items in the shari'ah or if it means more major things like murder and deception. For the sake of discussion, I go with the authors' assumption that Rasul here means the prophet (pbuh) and Haram refers to haram items in the shari'ah.

Judaism is overall much stricter in what is haram, comparing to Islam (and we believe that Christians too were supposed to follow the shari'ah of Judaism, with some minor adjustments). A Jew would be very happy to be allowed to cut short his long list of haram items to the very few that is in the haram list in Islam!

Accordingly, assuming that Rasul means the prophet (pbuh) and Haram means items of haram within shari'ah, the following interpretation in my understanding will be correct: The verse does not ask the people of the book to change their shari'ah or to consider haram something that they already do not see as haram in their own shari'ah. The verse simply asks them to be mindful about what is haram for any follower of Abrahamic religions and the emphasis on the prophet of Islam (pbuh) is due to his role in clarifying and emphasising this. In this way, by appreciating the common message ground between the prophets of God, the question of people of the book converting to the shari'ah of Islam is void. Let us also not forget that shari'ah (as the authors refer to) is not just a set of haram things.

It is also interesting to read what Islahi has written about this verse, which in principle corresponds to what I wrote above. Part of his explanation is as follows: "By inventing polytheist beliefs they had negated God, by calling themselves the beloved and forgiven nation they had nullified Hereafter and by making permissible those things that God and his prophet had declared haram they had made shariah null and void. Furthermore, tragedy upon tragedy, when God sent, through His last messenger, in accordance with his promise, the True religion, they not only denied it, but in addition, used every effort to oppose it and vehemently conspired against it." (tadabbur-i-Qur'an, 3: 559-61) Although Islahi has not explicitly mentioned it, but from the above quote (particularly underlined) it seems clear that he considered Rasul to mean a prophet of Bani Israel rather than the prophet of Islam (pbuh).

- Injeel does not carry any shar'iah and even today there is no independent sharia in Christian religion. Jesus Christ (sws) followed shar'iah of Torah as did his followers.

After the above points I do not think any need is left to comment further however we will review the verses the Author has quoted. The verse 3:110 states that now the Muslims were the best of Ummah (because of the characteristics mentioned in the verse) and had the people of the Book also professed faith it would have been better for them. There are few (who have fulfilled the covenant of accepting and supporting Allah's Rasul) and professed faith but the majority are 'faasiq' (as they have not fulfilled the covenant). Verses 3:113-114 state that there were some righteous people amongst the people of book however these were actually the ones who had professed faith in the Quran as has been mentioned in similar verses elsewhere, otherwise they would have been dealt with under 9:29 and 98:6. Also referring to them 'min ahlal kitaab' shows their origin to highlight a point and does not mean they were still 'ahlal kitaab' as has been explained above. For example a family migrates from Medina to Makkah and years later, if their friends in the area call them 'ahlal Medina' it would mean the family who came from Medina as a mark of identify and not that they are still living in Medina (and Allah (swt) knows best).

The verses 5:82-85 have similar explanation.

Hence I do maintain that it is not possible for any non-Muslim (of Holy Prophet's time or afterwards) to enter paradise until and unless they accept faith in Holy Prophet (sws) and The Quran and follow their teachings. It is not matter of choice or preference it is a must unless somebody has a genuine excuse about their failure to do so.

The Author writes later in the section '*.....The assumption is that believing in the prophet (pbuh) and accepting his message necessarily entails converting to Islam and following the shari'ah. This comes from a very limited and ritualistic view about religion. Our traditional mind does not appreciate the objectivity of religious values and the subjectivity of religious law and rituals as part of one system*'.

I would say that by taking this position the Author is ignoring a few basic facts of history and is also making an assumption. The assumption is that the previous religious traditions were fully intact as these had been presented by their respective prophets and hence were still valid religions. This assumption is not correct at all.

Commented [S88]: As mentioned earlier, this is a totally new claim in the scholarship of Islam. A claim needs to be substantiated with proof. Especially if no scholar of Islam, not even Islahi or Ghamidi that the authors keep referring to, have made such claim.

Commented [S89]: Ignoring an Argument:
The authors very conveniently skip these verses and argue that their above claim also applies to these verses, without paying any attention to the word Nasara (not ahl al-kitab) and expression (we are Nasara) in these verses. Are the authors argue that Muslims who were originally Nasara were still called Nasara by the Qur'an?! Do they argue that this verse is actually saying that Muslims (not Christians) will show more friendship to Muslims?!

Commented [S90]: And this is view is against the Qur'an: 2:62, 5:69, 3:113- 114, 3:199, 3:110, 5:82-85)

Commented [S91]: I do not hold this assumption. Rather, the assumption that the authors have is that the possible errors in the shari'ah of Jews makes it impossible for them to be in the path of God. Please read my supplementary note on page 17 onwards, in my article.

The previous scriptures had either been lost (e.g suhuf e Ibrahim) or corrupted. At the level of belief system they had lost true monotheism (particularly the polytheists and Christians). At the level of content of religion and shar'iah they had either forsaken shar'iah (like Christians), damaged the content of religion beyond repair (like Polytheists) or had made the shari'ah too ritualistic and burdensome (like the Jews). Then historically the shar'iah and rituals always carry the spirit and deep colour of belief systems. If the belief system is corrupted it is bound to manifest in laws, practices and rituals as well. As an example, one can see how much beliefs like Trinity, Son of God and redemption have infused in the practices, rituals and culture of Christianity. We need to appreciate that the addressees of Holy Prophet (sws) had lost the objectivity of religious values and that was their basic problem. They were not willing to see that the religion in its true form (both in letter and spirit) was being revived by Holy Prophet (sws). They were the victim of prejudice, arrogance, self-righteousness and sectarian attitude which was preventing them from seeing the truth. Please go through all the discussions about the people of the book in the Quran particularly Sura Baqara (chapter 2) and one can easily appreciate this. The author has mentioned 7 points (numbered 'a' to 'g') which are in fact indicative of (although I strongly disagree with point 'a' as I have already discussed above) the ailments mentioned above. A very small proportion of righteous amongst them who had the spirit of truth and honesty left intact within them, appreciated and broke down the boundaries of prejudice and accepted the message of Holy Prophets (sws).

The author has then quoted verse 5:19 which is very interesting in that it is giving almost the same meaning as the verses 32:3, 36:6 and 28:46 which the author quoted in 2:2:1. These later three verses are saying that the Messenger (sws) has been sent to these 'Ummi'in' people who had not been warned before. In the same way verse 5:19 is saying that this Messenger (sws) had come after a long interval so that these people of the book cannot table an excuse that no 'nazir' and 'bashir' had come to them.

If we carefully ponder on these 4 verses, these indicate that firstly as Ummi'in had lost all meaningful contact with Holy Prophets Ibrahim (sws) and Ismael (sws), the same way these people of the book had lost all meaningful contact with their prophets Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws) and secondly that the Holy Prophet (sws) will be the sole witness on the day of judgement on these people of the book as he will be on the Ummi'in of the Arabs and not Ibrahim (on Ummi'n), Moses (on Jews) and Jesus (on Christians). Hence the verse 5:19 is giving entirely different message from what the Author is deriving. Verse 5:48 has already been discussed before.

Then the Author has quoted verse 5:68 to prove his point of view. However once again the verse is not saying what the Author has derived from the verse. While I tend to agree with the author that 'ma unzila alaykum min rabbikum' most likely means other

Commented [S92]: No amount of losing of the past scriptures has resulted in the Jews or Christians not being able to understand from their scriptures (Old Testament – Gospels) what monotheism is. I suggest the authors read the book: "Is Jesus God? The Bible Says No" by Shabir Ally. Interestingly enough, it was in the presence of one of the authors that in a debate with a Christian panel in a church in Halifax I demanded the panel to provide me one verse from Gospels about trinity and they failed. The amount of corruption that the authors (so generously) associate with Jews and Christians at our time, equally (if not more) exists among Muslims as well. All groups have the chance to refer back to their scriptures to learn what might be corrupted in their beliefs. The books of Christians and Jews are not that much lost that this cannot be done otherwise the Qur'an would have not invested so much on what was remained of these books. On the other hand, the interpretation of the Qur'an is not that straightforward to make this any easier for Muslims, comparing to Jews or Christians.

Commented [S93]: Ignoring and Argument:
The verse 5:19 does not give the same meaning as verses 32:3, 36:6 and 28:46. The authors do not pay any attention to the implication of word 'Li' (indicating the reason for sending a prophet to Arabia) in 32:3, 36:6, 28:46 and lack of this in 5:19, as I explained in my article.
A. The latter verses are saying that Ummi'in never had a warner and this is The Reason that the prophet was sent to them.
B. Verse 5:19 says that a prophet is coming to them after many years from the last warner, so they cannot say that they never had a warner.
A is explaining the reason for revelation of the Qur'an, while B is explaining one of the functions of this revelation. Beside the above, even if the authors see all these verses to be the same, it still does not prove that the people of the book were demanded to follow the shari'ah. As explained in my article and in my comments earlier, they were demanded to follow their own shari'ah and this diversity of shari'ah at the same era was approved.
A bigger question is, if the people of the book, as the authors have put it, were in such miserable situation that they had lost all connection with their prophets, then why the Wise God would send an Arabic prophet with an Arabic book to Arabia rather than sending a prophet with their own language to their own lands?

books sent to people of the Book (e.g Psalms) however his overall interpretation is completely out of place. Injeel did not carry any Shar'iah hence the meaning here of 'tuqeemu' to uphold Shar'iah is ruled out anyway. Also to uphold core of religion which is the Author's interpretation does not fit in with further statement 'wa la'yazidanna kaseerrum minhum ma unzil alayka.....'. The correct interpretation of the verse hence would be that the people of the book had no basis until they upheld what was foretold in their scriptures (the Torah, the Injeel and Psalms) and taken covenant about (professing faith and supporting) the Final Messenger however the Quran's revelation from your Lord has only increased their 'kufur' and rebelliousness.

The author also quoted 5:66 to substantiate his view point but somehow has omitted the middle verse (5:67) which is a bit surprising. The middle verse 5:67 is asking the Holy Prophet (sws) in strongest terms to convey the message of the Quran to the people of the Book whom Allah (swt) is calling 'kafir' in the verse. Please deliberate on the verses carefully to grasp the point. There meaning is not anywhere near what the Author is trying to prove.

I have analysed all the verses the Author mentioned in the 4 groups of his sub-section 2:2 '*Verses of the Qur'an that determine which scenario is correct*' and clearly demonstrated that the Author has either misquoted, quoted out of context or derived wrong conclusions while citing these verses and hence his point of view cannot be established from these 30 plus verses. After the four groups of verses (which have been explained in detail above) the author's subsections 2:3 and 2:4 ('*Summary of the analysis of the verses of the Quran*') and under this title the 7 principles he has outlined) will be analysed and discussed after his Section 3.

ANSWER TO: 3 Verses used in the traditional understanding.

In this Section the Author says that there are only three verses which are generally brought up to justify the traditional understanding. As a quick reference the author has quoted 25:1, 6:19, 2:143 (a similar verse 22:78). Before we discuss these verses the attention of the reader is drawn to a number of points:

-Certain words are used in different meanings at different places. The context (which could be Quranic and historic) generally establishes which meaning would be appropriate at a particular place. Sometimes a word is used in general meaning while at others in limited or local meanings while still at places both the local and general meanings could be taken depending on the context. Words like 'man' (meaning whoever), 'Naas' and 'Insaan', are examples of words which have been very commonly used in either general or limited and local context. Here are a few examples: 2:124 (Naas here means all of mankind), 3:9 ('Naas' here means all of mankind) 22:75 ('Naas' here means all of mankind), 5:32 (despite the context being Bani Israel 'Naas' here means all of mankind), 76:1 ('Insaan' here means mankind in general). Similarly Arabic pronouns 'ka/kum' and 'anta/antum' can also give different meanings at different places. For example in 69:11-12 see the use of 'kum' (meaning you) in front of direct addressees (Arabs) while they were not there. These two verses are classical example

Commented [S94]: I provide answer to this from the writing of the authors in this very article, page 27: "... Jesus Christ (sws) was sent testifying the Torah and was given Injeel which carried light and guidance so that (5:47) its followers upheld what was ordained upon them in it (that they will follow the shar'iah of Torah because the Injeel did not bring a new Shar'iah and Jesus and his followers followed the shari'ah of Holy Prophet Moses (sws))"

Commented [S95]: The wording of the verse is very clear, especially now that the authors agree that "ma unzila alaykum min rabbikum" most likely means other books (rather than the Qur'an). I simply translate the first part of the verse word by word: "Say O People of the Book, you have no basis, unless you adhere to the Torah and the Injil and what has been sent to you from your Lord". This clear wording does not need insertion of such interpretive statement.

Commented [S96]: Moral Ethics of Criticism: We can call something omitting when the author deletes something in the middle of a quote. I did not do that. I quoted each verse in turn to follow the flow of my discussion. The only surprising matter here is the use of the word 'omitting' by the authors. Having said that, 5:67 further substantiates my argument. What is it that 5:67 demands the prophet (pbuh) to say? It is the verse that follows it, 5:68, and I have already discussed this verse in my article. I will certainly add 5:67 to the next version of the article.

Commented [S97]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting: Since the authors referred to misquoting just a few lines above, thought making it clear that I never wrote only 3 verses were brought up to justify the traditional understanding. What I wrote was as follows: "Throughout my discussions and studies of this particular subject I have seen three verses that are often brought up to justify the traditional understanding," For the interest of the readers, these three verses are in fact the ones that Ghamidi invested on when I was discussing my views with him.

that while addressing local people some other people might be meant. In 56:7, the pronoun 'tum' does not only mean local addressees but the whole of humanity as the rest of the Surah shows. The examples of using ka/kum and anta/antum for local addressees but carrying generalised meanings are too many in the Quran.

-However the Author's general tendency, to prove his point, is to use limited or local meaning or choose examples which give limited or local meaning and to avoid examples of general meaning (while general meaning will make perfect sense).

-Then certain words also carry different meanings at different places and the context determines the correct meaning e.g kufr, aya, book, rasul, islam, imaan are some of the words which have been very frequently used in different meanings at different places and sometimes even in the same set of verses. As an example please see 49:14-17, the word imaan is repeated in this set of verses but used in different meanings.

-Then there is always an issue about literal and term meaning. Here again the Author has clear tendency to use meanings which suit him while the other meaning will be more appropriate.

For example in verses where the people of the book are asked to accept faith in Holy Prophet (sws) or the Quran he will reinterpret the meaning of imaan to say that it means they should stop animosity against the Prophet or it means only nominal faith.

Similarly for the word Islam he will take literal meaning (submission) in the sense he has used the word 'islam' at most places and not Islam as the complete and final form of religion of Allah (swt) as presented by the last and final Messenger of Allah (swt).

After these few points we will study the 3 verses quoted by the Author in this section (25:1, 6:19 and 2:143).

ANSWER TO: 3.1 The word 'Alamin in the Qur'an (25:1)

First of all 25:1 is not the only verse where Holy Prophet (sws) and the Quran are mentioned as being sent for the 'alamin'. Here are other verses 6:90, 12:104, 21:107, 38:87, 68:52 and 81:27. The actual issue is what will be the meaning of this word 'alamin' in this context for the Prophet (sws) and the Quran. The author has rightly pointed out that it would carry different meanings in different contexts. However looking at various uses in the Quran it becomes clear that it always gives a meaning of expansiveness, vastness, grandeur, undetermined and unknown. Please see all the 73 uses of this word in the Quran to feel the different flavours of this word. In fact the most frequent use in the Quran is in relation to Allah (swt) and as we all know 'Rabbul'alamin' is a very well-known phrase of the Quran. However the author has tried very hard to limit its meaning so that the 'fazeallah' (exalted status) of the Holy Prophet (sws) and the Quran could be diminished. In this attempt he has also misinterpreted some of the other verses which he has quoted.

Now, when this word 'alamin' is used in relation to Allah (swt) it will carry meaning of maximum, infinity, universe or all of the known and unknown Worlds depending upon

Commented [S98]: Technical Ethics of Criticism:

Actually what suits me (in the level of suitability that the authors imply) is to have the same view as the traditional scholars and therefore being able to keep my links and my audience and reputation, rather than honestly following my understanding of the truth and being subjected to accusations like the ones in this writing.

Commented [S99]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting:

This is not what I have written (i.e. nominal faith). Rather, it is the authors who reinterpret faith to include following the shari'ah.

Commented [S100]: The word Islam in the Qur'an has in deed used as 'submission' and I do not believe that the Islam that the prophet (pbuh) brought was in essence different from the Islam that other prophets brought. What was different was only in the matters of the form of the shari'ah to suit the time and the culture and location of the addressees. This is why the Qur'an refers to previous prophets as Muslims (2:132-136).

Commented [S101]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting:

And I have also referred to these verses in my article, page 34. When I was discussing my views with Ghamidi he only referred to 25:1 among these verses. This was because he was knowledgeable enough to appreciate that no matter what Alamin means, it is only in 25:1 that it may imply what I refer to as Specific Universality of the Qur'an.

Commented [S102]: Moral Ethics of Criticism:

I think what the authors really mean by "the author has tried very hard" is "the author has provided many evidences". The authors again assume that I have an agenda that I want to fulfil with my reasons. They find it hard to believe that I am simply presenting my honest findings. I encourage the authors to remain loyal to the motto of their organisation where it says: "Our teachers and trustees actively encourage plurality of opinion and aim to build a community space where tolerant exchange of views can take place ...", "We promote a platform for learning together, in a tolerant, respectful and friendly atmosphere ..." (<http://uiuk.org>) Please see my comments in my article Twenty Common Mistakes in Critical Writing to see an explanation of the roots of this attitude in criticism.

the context. **However in all other cases the context will determine the limit and the meaning will be established by excluding what will not be applicable within a particular context.** It is a fairly common sense process and did not require such a long complicated discussion and references of great scholars.

-In relation to Bani Israel (2:47) it will mean they were chosen amongst all the nations of the World at that time and it was something which was not bestowed upon any nation before that. This meaning becomes clear when we see verse 5:20. Hence the meaning of 'alamin' in this verse will be all the nations of the time of Moses (sws).

-6:83-86, after mentioning a few prophets (sws) it is being said that they were given 'fazeallah' over the mankind (hence 'alamin' here means all of mankind). **It is not a comparison of these prophets with the other prophets rather, it is a comparison of these prophets with the rest of mankind which the Author has misinterpreted.**

-21:91, here the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ (sws) is being referred to and due to this unique incident being a well-known history of all of mankind, there is no scope to limit the meaning of 'alamin' to their time. Hence the correct interpretation would be that Allah (swt) made Maryum and her son Jesus (sws) a sign of His authority for the people of their time and all mankind until the day of judgement. If one wants to limit the meaning of 'alamin' to their time only, the scope will be just a few villages of Palestine of the time which would be against the majestic way the incident is being described. Hence the meaning of 'alamin' in this verses will be people of Palestine of the time and rest of mankind afterwards until the day of judgement.

-21:71, here the land being pointed out is certainly Shaam however 'alamin' here means that due to its suitable climate and rich soil it had bounties (Baraka) for all kinds of life like plantation, birds, animals, humans etc. Even if it means people, the sense one gets is that of human species as the land was bountiful for 'human kind' and that is what will be the meaning of 'alamin' that is mankind as a species.

There is another verse (15:70) which could give impression that 'alamin' can be something limited. However in this verse, the sense is foreigners, outsiders, unknown, undetermined.

In other words the word 'alamin' even used in relation to situations or people other than Allah (swt), always give a meaning of 'expanse and vastness'.

Now let us turn to the verse 25:1. The Author states that if the literal meaning of 'alamin' is taken *'the prophet (or the Qur'an) is a warner for the whole world and everything in it, including animals, plants, mountains, etc.'* and I agree that this is not the correct interpretation. However his completely opposite and restrictive interpretation that 'alamin' here means entire population of the Arabia is also not correct at all. The evidence he has presented is as follows:

a. *The Qur'an being in Arabic*

Commented [S103]: Missing the Point:

I think the authors have completely missed the point here. I have not offered any interpretation for these verses. I can only quote what the authors did not pay enough attention to:

"It is important to note that the intention of the above explanation is not to convince the reader about the views of Razi, Tabari, Zamakhshari and other scholars on these particular verses. The intention is merely to show that some of the most creditable scholars of the Qur'an never hesitated to interpret the word 'Alamin within a limited scope. In other words, arguing that 'Alamin, based on the context can mean a limited number of people, is not an alien or rare argument in the scholarship of Islam." (p. 30)

Commented [S104]: I thank the authors for reminding me about this verse as well. Yes, here too Alamin does not mean the mankind. I will add this to the next version of my article.

b. Explicit verses of the Qur'an (like 42:7, 6:92 and also 28:46, 32:3 and 36:6) that limit the mission of the Qur'an and the prophet (pbuh) to the Arabia

c. The main addressees of the Qur'an being local groups

d. The theme of the Qur'an being a local theme, i.e. warning the polytheists and the people of the book in Arabia.

Now it has been fully explained in the preceding sections that none of these points can be held as a valid argument against the Quran being a book of guidance for all mankind and the Holy Prophet (sws) being a Messenger (Rasul) until the day of judgement. The Author has then raised another discussion on the basis of verses mentioned in point (b) 42:7, 6:92, 28:46, 32:3, 36:6. As these have already been discussed and proven not to validate the Author's point of view, I do not need to comment on this discussion.

The Author has then quoted 81:27-28 but is needlessly limiting the meaning to the local Arabs. True the verse 81:28 is addressing the local people to say that whoever amongst you wishes to, can get the straight path from this zikr (the Quran) which is in fact (according to 81:27) for 'alamin'. Hence verse 81:28 would not affect the universal meaning of 'alamin' in 81:27.

On the contrary the meaning of 'alamin' in 25:1 and the other verses 6:90, 12:104, 21:107, 38:87, 68:52, 81: 27 cannot be confined to local Arabs for the following reasons.

Commented [S105]: Missing the point:

The very fact that the authors have not noticed that while I listed these verses, my discussion was in particular on verses 42:7 and 6:92, implies that (as I stated earlier) the authors did not notice the main difference between these two verses and other verses that are listed. I quote from my article: "It is important to note that the above two verses are not just limiting the scope of the prophet's (pbuh) mission. These two verses are in fact explaining why the Qur'an was revealed: 'To warning people in Arabia'. Note that 'لِالنَّاسِ' is for 'علة' (cause). Therefore the argument that the above only covers the function of the Qur'an during the lifetime of the prophet (pbuh) does not hold. If the Qur'an was revealed to warn or to guide the whole world, then the above wording would have been inappropriate and wrong." (p. 7, 8). Accordingly, in my understanding, the authors have not resolved the contradiction if they interpret Alamin as all mankind in 25:1. To avoid contradiction, Alamin here has to mean All in the Arabia.

Commented [S106]: I quote my analysis here with some additional deliberation and leave it to the readers to judge: "It is worth noting that how in verse 81:27 where it says that the Qur'an is a reminder for 'Alamin, the verse after (81:28) immediately clarifies the scope of 'Alamin to be the primary addressees of the Qur'an, i.e. the limits of Arabia:

ان هو الا ذكر للعالمين لمن شاء منكم ان يستقيم

This is a reminder for 'Alamin, for those among you who want to go straight (81:27, 28)

In verse 81:27, if 'Alamin meant the entire mankind, then the pronoun Kum (you) should have been eliminated or replaced with Hum (them, i.e. the mankind)." (p. 33)

I can add: Note the expression Li Man Sha'a Minkum (for those among you). This expression does not allow the interpretation that the authors are suggesting as the expression Li Man (for those) implies the intention of revelation rather than those (among many) who could benefit from revelation. Note in comparison how when it comes to Ahl Al-Kitab, instead of 'Li' other expressions are used to make it clear that the book was not revealed FOR them although It has a function for them (e.g. 5:19).

-Almost all the uses of the word 'alamin' in the Quran give meaning of greatness, vastness, expanse and unknown.

Commented [S107]: Missing the Point:

And this is also what I wrote: "The word certainly denotes a mass, however the extent of this mass seems to be subjective to the context." (p. 28)

However, as I explained in the article, greatness and vastness is different from All human beings. One may invite 10 people at his house and then say give All People food. He means All People in his house (this is the amount of vastness) rather than all human beings. The word Alamin is the same.

-As shown above, in situations where the word 'alamin' is used for people and situations other than Allah (swt), it gives the meaning of the World and all of mankind. Hence the common sense says that in case of Holy Prophet (sws) and the Quran, the meaning would be all of mankind from his time onwards to the day of judgement. The common sense would also say that in case of Holy Prophet (sws) it should not include animals, plants and mountains as he was the 'Guide' 'Messenger', 'Bashir' and 'Nazir' for the 'accountable creations' i.e primarily mankind and secondarily Jinn.

-The Quran was rearranged in an entirely new manner, was accurately preserved in its original language and its language was also kept alive to the point that today it is one of the major languages of the World. It would not be wrong to say that the Arabic language is one of the most sought after and learned languages by non-Arab people in the World and this is mainly due to interest in the Quran. All of this indicates that the Holy Prophet (sws) and the Quran were meant to be 'the Guidance' for rest of the mankind and for all times to come.

-None of the previous scriptures had been preserved free of changes and in their original forms and languages. Then the belief systems and culture of every religious tradition had developed serious problems which required large corrections and rehabilitation as the Author agrees.

-Most importantly the Holy Prophet (sws) was the last and final messenger for mankind and the Quran the last revelation for mankind until the day of judgement.

On the basis of these points we can easily conclude with full certainty that 'alamin' used for the Holy Prophet (sws) and the Quran will mean all of mankind until the day of judgement.

ANSWER TO 3.2. The verse of Man Balagh (6:19)

The author does admit that the Quran can effectively reach non-Arabs so I don't think there was any need for spending time on dictionary meaning of the word 'balagh'. It is in fact quite commonly used word in the Quran in its various linguistic forms, verb, noun, adjective and active/passive participles. If we look at these various uses it simply gives the meaning of reaching, arriving, attaining or maturing at various places and

Commented [S108]: Confusion between Evidence and Associating Facts

I think this is the third time in this writing that the authors are using such argument. I can only copy and paste my earlier comment about the fallacy of this type of argument: ... none of the items mentioned in this paragraph logically proves that the part of the mission of the prophet (pbuh) was to indirectly guide the whole mankind to convert to Islam and follow the shari'ah of Islam. It is very helpful in evaluation of reasoning to do a reverse reasoning test, to see whether it holds. The reverse logic of what the authors are suggesting is that if God sends a prophet only for his local addressees then the language of his book has to be perished and the book should not be rearranged or preserved for their future generations and community!

Commented [S109]: This is again with the assumption that first, past scriptures too were for all mankind, and second, human being needs originally preserved scriptures in order to be successful in the hereafter. As stated before, I disagree with both assumptions.

Commented [S110]: Circular Argument:

"The Qur'an was for all mankind because 25:1 says so. Alamin in 25:1 should be interpreted to refer to mankind because the Qur'an was for all mankind!"

Commented [S111]: Missing the point:

The authors would have appreciated the need for looking up the word if they had noticed the difference between A. "The Qur'an can reach non-Arabs" and B. "The Qur'an was revealed to reach (Arabs and) non-Arabs". In this whole section the author is trying to prove A, while I agree with A and have argued about B. The second proves the first. The first does not prove the second.

Also, I did not look at 'dictionary'. I looked at one of the most in-depth and rich books written by a great scholar of Islam to explain the meaning of the words of the Qur'an. The name of the book, as quoted in my article, is: التحقيق في كلمات القرآن الكريم

the author has gone out of the way to give a peculiar angle to it. If we try to understand the 'Iblagh' (transmission) of the Quran it did not simply mean its relationship with Arabic language. For 'Iblagh' there were other factors which were also equally important. As far as the 'Iblagh' of the Quran to Arabs of the time or other people (whether Arabs or others) of all later times is concerned please consider the following two scenarios which would clarify this point:

- a) 'Polytheists of the time of Holy Prophet (sws) had no previous experience of divine revelation in their culture. They were listening to the Quran suddenly and for the first time. Also everybody was not always in the company of the Prophet (sws), particularly the rejecters who tended to stay away from the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims. Then they heard it only piecemeal from the Prophet (sws) according to whatever portion was revealed. Then non-Muslims had less chances of rehearsing or listening to it again and again in order for its message to really gain grounds in hearts and souls rather they were erecting all sorts of barriers in its free 'Iblagh'. Then no multiple printed copies were available at the time of the Prophet (sws). Then Arabic was not a one uniform language across all of the Arabia as it had its dialects and variations across the vast stretches of Arabian Peninsula'.
- b) 'During later generations Muslims enjoyed political authority over vast lands (including and) outside of the Arabian Peninsula. Islam became a well-known religion with huge following which directly or indirectly effected political, social and religious life of vast masses all over the known World. The Quran's copies in its final form were abundantly available. It's learning and memorising was part of everyday Muslim life. It was integral part of educational, legal, social and political life of all of the Muslim World. Despite changes in political fortunes the above scenario has never changed over the centuries. In modern ages the Quran has been even more easily available all over the World. The quality of translations have progressively improved in last 100 years and its translation is available in hundreds of languages of the World in addition to tens of millions of copies in its original language. It is a button click away for an average house hold all over the world. Then Muslims have a presence in each and every country of the World'.

Now, please see the above two scenarios and one can easily grasp that 'Iblagh' had constraints even in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (sws) and secondly the language is not the only criterion for 'Iblagh' rather there are so many other factors which play vital role in 'Iblagh'. If we try to apply the harsh criterion which the author is applying, one can (Ma'az'Allah) claim that the Quran did not even fully reach all the people of the entire Arabian Peninsula during the lifetime of Holy Prophet (sws).

The Author has again tried to take restrictive meaning of 'man balagh' in 6:19 on the basis of a few verses which have already been explained as not proving his viewpoint. After this discussion it becomes very clear that the verse 6:19 carries universal meaning and the Quran is as relevant for salvation of every human being on the face of this planet as it was for Arabs of the seventh century.

Commented [S112]: If looking up an Arabic word of the Qur'an in the books of Lughat means going out of the way, then all true scholars of the Qur'an, including Ghamidi and Islahi, have gone out of the way. Having said that, the meaning of the word according to the books of Lughat corresponds to its usage in the Qur'an and is by no means a peculiar angle. In fact the authors themselves have adopted the same meaning by offering to explain what the mechanism of this iblagh was.

Commented [S113]: The judge for 'very clear' are not the authors or me, they are unbiased readers of this argument. I did not find any relevance between the above explanations and the argument about the verse under discussion. The authors are trying to explain that the Qur'an can reach non-Arabs. I never questioned this. The point is whether the Qur'an was sent in order to reach non-Arabs. Here I would like to take the opportunity to add another point about this verse that I did not mention in my article: The verse 6:19 first says لا تذركم. This inzar (warning) led to itmam al-hujjah (finishing of reasoning) and reward and punishment for those who were the subject of this inzar (Kum). With this in mind, then it is only logical to conclude that the Inzar for بلغ من too will result in the same outcome, since one word of Inzar is being used for both subjects (Kum – Man Balagh). If we believe that Man Balagh means the rest of the mankind, then this logical outcome will be negated, because we know (and the authors agree) that itmam al-hujjah has not been done on all the mankind who came to know the Qur'an and Islam. However if we go with the translation that I provided (where Kum is Quraysh and Man Balagh is the rest of the Arabia), then this issue will not rise since we believe itmam al-hujjah was made on all the Arabia.

ANSWER TO 3.3. *The verses of shuhada (2:143, 22:78)*

Before reviewing the author's viewpoint, please read both the verses in full. The verse 22:78 particularly makes an interesting reading. In this verse Allah (swt) is asking the Muslim community (see the start of earlier verse 22:77 with *ya'ayyuhalla'zina'*) to strive hard in the way of Allah (swt) and then by pointing out that, 'so you could be 'Shuhada' on people till the day of judgement', the nature of striving has been made clear and that is, to call people to the ways of their Lord. Then very subtly it has been clarified that you had been named Muslim previously and in this Quran as well. Now naming the followers of Holy Prophet (sws) Muslim here (although derived from literal spirit) is not in its literal sense (of submitter) rather it is used as a noun in legal sense which will be the legal status of all the followers of this religion until the day of judgement. So by reading these two verses the following conclusions could be easily drawn:

-The Muslim community has been raised to a responsibility (*ajtaba'akum*).

-The name Muslim is a legal identity of every follower of this religion presented by Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws). This was name given to his followers by Ibrahim (sws) as well.

-The Muslim community is asked to strive hard in the way of Allah (swt) by calling people to Allah (swt) which hence becomes responsibility of every Muslim until the day of judgement.

-It also means that Islam was religion of all the prophets and their followers and Muslim (both literally as well as legally) was their name and Islam was their religion. The Jews, Christians and others had lost this identity and taken up new identities which was not given to them by Allah (swt) or their prophets. They have forgotten this identity to the extent that if they are now pointed out about it on the authority of the Quran they will be extremely surprised and will probably laugh you away. Now calling all of them to Islam and (and encouraging them to be called Muslims) is in fact reviving their lost identity and reconnecting their link to their actual religion which is Islam the core of which 'islam'.

-Sadly the Author has referred to this noble duty of the Muslim Ummah to call their lost fellow human brothers and sisters to submission to their Lord (Islam) and His ways (Shari'ah) in a demeaning manner as is from his overall tone and statements at a number of places like '*Muslims having to preach Islam to all mankind to convert them to Islam*' and '*The history caused some of the other nations to embrace Islam and to enthusiastically or forcefully follow the same shari'ah and become Muslims. This was of course a great advantage that the Almighty gave to Ummi'in and in no way this article tries to deny this advantage or to argue that such joining of other nations to Ummi'in should have not happened (except the ones that were forced to do so)*'.

Now coming back to the contents of this sub-section 3:3

Commented [S114]: Populism:

There is no value in such statements in an article that is supposed to be a response to an analytical article.

-Once again the Author is exaggerating some differences in the scholarly opinions to blame the style of the Quran. The meaning of both the verses (2:143 and 22:78) is fairly clear that the Muslims have to fulfil their responsibility in this World so that they can give testimony on the day of judgement about having done their job, as the Prophet (sws) will be witness upon them of having done his job of doing Itmam e hujjah and conveying Allah's religion to his addressees.

-The Author has used verse 16:89 to limit the meaning of verses 2:143. The verse 16:89 says that on the day of judgement a witness will be raised on every 'Ummah' from amongst themselves and the Holy Prophet (sws) will be a witness on his addressees. So this means Holy Prophet Moses (sws) will be witness only on Bani Israel of his time amongst whom he was raised (not Bani Isarel and Jews of all times). Similarly Jesus (sws) will be witness on Bani Israel of his time (and not Christian of all times) as is clear from verse (61:6 '...oh Bani Israel I am a Rasul on to you....'). Similarly Holy Prophet (sws) will be witness on to his direct addressees. Now, because the institution of Prophethood ended with him, the question arises who will be the witness on the people until the day of judgement. As the verse 16:89 requires that the witnesses have to be from people amongst themselves, the verses 2:143 and 22:78 clarified that it will be Muslim Ummah of every age for their respective generations and as they will be doing this job with what Holy Prophet (sws) brought hence actually the Holy Prophet (sws) will indirectly be witness on all mankind until the day of judgement and this is what Holy Prophet (sws) has himself clarified as recorded in traditions (Ahadith).

-A fine point here. By quoting 5:117 in 2:2:3 the Author admitted that Jesus will not be witness on Christians of later generations. Similarly Holy Prophet (sws) will not be the direct witness on Muslims and others peoples of later generations however he will be indirect witness (and this is the claim of Muslim Ummah) as what he gave to mankind (the Quran and Sunnah) was preserved with deliberation for all times to come and his Muslim Ummah has been chosen to act as witness on rest of mankind (see 'ajtaba'akum' in 22:78).

-The Author has quoted from the Bible as follows:

'I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles (Isiah: 42:6)'... 'I will also make you a light for the Gentiles that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth (Isiah: 49:6)'.

First of all Isaiah is not part of the New Testament rather it is Book No: 23 of the Old Testament. Then these verses are in fact quite clear on what the Bani Israel were chosen for and that was to carry the guidance of Allah to all corners of the World so that the rest of mankind could follow their Lord's guidance and win reward in the hereafter. The author says that *'no Jewish scholars have ever concluded from the above verses that therefore all gentiles need to become Jew!'*

Commented [S115]: Moral Ethics of Criticism + Generalisation:

I have never blamed the style of the Qur'an. To say that the style of the Qur'an is complex and difficult to understand (which is the view of many scholars) is not blaming the Qur'an.

The authors write that I exaggerate when I wrote there were differences of views about the meaning of this verse. Since the authors follow Islahi's translation of the verse, therefore they think this is the fairly clear translation. Islahi himself writes in tadabbur-i-Qur'an: "The majority of interpreters have taken this testimony to be related to the hereafter. ... There is no justification in our view ..." (tadabbur, translation of Kayani, p. 378).

Any basic reading of the books of tafsir, or even translations of the Qur'an shows that there are different views about: the way 'kazalika' links this verse to the verses before; the exact meaning of ummatan wasata; the addressees of the verse (whether they are companions or the whole ummah of Islam); the exact meaning of the act of Witnessing by the prophet (pbuh) and by the ummah; whether the act of Witnessing is only in the hereafter or in the world as well. I fully agree with Moiz Amjad's writing where he argues that the addressees of this verse are the companion and not the whole ummah of Islam: <http://www.understanding-islam.com/the-meaning-of-al-baqarah-2-143-and-al-hajj-22-78-and-their-implication-for-the-law-of-ijhaad/>

Commented [S116]: I was not able to fully understand what the authors are saying here. They seem to agree with two statements: "Witness is with regard to the direct addressees", "Witness needs to be from the same community". I am not sure how they match these statements with their view that "Muslims will be witnesses for the rest of the world".

In my view:

1. That absolutely every community needs a witness in the hereafter, needs to be studied in more detail. Note, in the Qur'an, and inline with common principles of most languages, Kullu Ummatin (All Communities) does not necessarily mean all communities in the world. It can simply mean all communities that were chosen by God for being guided by a messenger. I emphasise, I am not making absolute conclusions now, but this points deserves more deliberation.

2. There are always righteous people among any community at any time (not necessarily prophets or followers of a prophet) and these can serve as witnesses to their community in the hereafter.

Commented [S117]: This is correct. There was a typo in my article that will be corrected in the next version. As the authors surely noticed, I actually meant Old Testament because after this quote I wrote: "Throughout the history, as far as I know, no Jewish scholars ..." (p. 37)

However in my humble opinion it was a clear mistake which happened because they saw their 'chosen status' in racial terms, forgot the responsibility attached to this status, made Judaism a racial-cultural tradition and did not preach to mankind what Allah (swt) had asked for. **It was in fact the greatest historical mistake they committed which had disastrous consequences for Judaism.**

Commented [S118]: There is no point discussing about the correct interpretation of a verse of the Old Testament when we do not even agree on the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an, so let us get back to the Qur'an: There is not even a single verse in the Qur'an referring to this "greatest historical mistake of the Jews" (that they thought they were not responsible to convert people to Judaism). Yes they are blamed for being sectarian, but they are not blamed for not attempting to convert the mankind to Judaism.

OTHER EVIDENCE FROM THE QURAN:

The author has given the impression that there are only three verses (25:1, 6:19 and 2:143) which suggest that the Holy Prophet (sws) and the Quran had universal mission as he writes, 'Throughout my discussions and studies of this particular subject I have seen three verses that are often brought up to justify the traditional understanding' although he has then himself mentioned 6 verses (21:107, 6:90, 12:104, 38:87, 68:52 and 81:27) in connection with 25:1 and another verse (22:78) in connection with 2:143. **Out of these 21:107 and 22:78 are particularly important in their universal message, however, the author has not paid attention to these.**

-Another Verse 34:28 is absolutely clear where Allah (swt) is saying to Holy Prophet (sws) that he has been sent as a 'Bashir' and 'Nazir' for 'all of mankind'.

-Verses 7:155-158 need a careful reading. In these Holy Prophet's advent is being mentioned with such deliberation to Moses (sws) and his companions at the time of their great summoning at the mountain of Tur hundreds of years ago and the Bani Israel's salvation was made contingent upon professing faith and following him when he came. **The verses have nothing which should limit it to people of the book of**

Commented [S119]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting:
I think the authors have made it clear through the rest of this very paragraph that this is not true!

Commented [S120]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting:
Verse 21:107 is discussed briefly in my article on page 34.
Verse 22:78 is discussed along verse 2:143 in section 3.3. of my article.

Commented [S121]: Ignoring an Argument:
The explanation about the word Nas that I gave in page 30 of my article should suffice and the authors have not commented on that. I elaborate specifically on this verse: Firstly the authors have translated Kaffah as "all". Second they have interpreted "Nas" to mean "mankind". The first is only one possible interpretation. There is another interpretation mentioned by some of the scholars that I prefer, that is Kaffah means Protector, and it refers to the prophet (pbuh). This sounds better because as Tabatabayee says in Mizan, it is not allowed in Arabic to have the feature of the subject (Kaffah) preceding that subject (Nas), in particular if that subject is majrur (ends with E). Kaffah with the meaning of protector also matches better with the adjectives bashir and nazir.
The second is the main problem of the authors interpretation in my understanding. The authors assume that Nas means mankind, while it needs to be interpreted within the limits of the theme of the Qur'an.
Therefore even if Kaffah means All here, the verse means All people in Arabia, to be inline with the rest of the Qur'an, as discussed in my article. The two verses after 34:28 also conform this.

Prophet's time only. Also these also indicate they were obliged to follow his Shari'ah as well.

Actually the end of the verse makes it :[Commented [S122] very clear that the verse refers to the people of the book in
"فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ" Arabia: "
Respecting and Helping the prophet (pbuh) can only happen by those who lived with him at the same place.

Commented [S123]: Nothing in the verse indicates this. Note that the verse does not instruct the people of the book to do anything in terms of shari'ah. Once they accept to follow the Qur'an they will read in the Qur'an that they need to follow their own shari'ah (5:43, 48). Yes, the prophet (pbuh) could clarify some of their misunderstandings for them and could explain these for them and could even relieve them from some of their difficult duties that were the result of the shortcoming of their ancestors.

-Verse 4:115 is also worth mentioning. In this verse it has been clarified that after guidance has been revealed, anybody who tries to follow path other than that of the faithful will be a loser. Although the verse has come in a particular context as is clear from preceding verses however it contains this general principle as well. It is in accordance with the usual style of the Quran that something is revealed in a particular context but the meaning and guidance is general. If we read the subsequent verses up to 126, the general nature of the message becomes clear.

Commented [S124]: I refer the authors to the interpretation of Ishlahi and Ghamidi for this verse. The verse is only generalizable within the community of Muslims as the verse refers to the hypocrites at the time of the prophet (pbuh). Also, "following the path of believers" does not necessarily mean following the shari'ah of Islam. Note the word used is not Minhaj or Shir'ah, it is Sabil. Sabil is a more general and less technical word compared to Minhaj and Shir'ah. This is why here we have Sabil while in 5:43, 48 we have Minhaj and shir'ah.

-Verses 33:45-46 indicate that Holy Prophet (sws) had been sent as 'Sirajjan Muneera'. Now the Sun has also been called Siraj at another place (25:61). In these verses (33:45-46) Holy Prophet (sws) has been called the glowing light in the way of Allah (sws). **As the Sun is shining on all of mankind until the day of judgement hence this Sun of guidance (the Holy Prophet (sws)) will also be shining on all of mankind until the day of judgement.**

Commented [S125]: I really do not think that this argument needs any responses from me!

-Verses 9:33, 48:28 and 61:9 are explaining the purpose of sending Holy Prophet (sws) and that is to dominate Allah's religion on all other religious paths. His direct mission was to dominate all those religious paths within the Arabian Peninsula both through preaching and use of force (after Itmam – hujjah) while indirectly, on his behalf, it is enjoined upon his Ummah (as being 'Ummat e wasat') to complete that mission through tireless dawah efforts only (and not by force as using force to subdue was prerogative of only Rusul himself and his companions who were part of this divine mission) which must continue until the day of judgement.

Commented [S126]: I think the authors here are arguing against their own argument. Again, no need for my response.

-Verses 61:6 in which Holy Prophet Jesus (sws) gave glad tiding of a Rasul to Bani Israel 600 years ago in Palestine. Earlier Holy Prophets Ibrahim and Musa (sws) had also foretold the coming of Holy Prophet (sws). Now why would 3 of the greatest messengers of all times would be prophesying about the coming of a prophet with such a deliberation whose (according to the Author) mission was only for Arabs (who were in fact only a small scattered insignificant tribal nation in 7th century)? It does not make sense.

Commented [S127]: I think any other scenario would have not made sense. I copy a note that I sent to a friend about this subject:
"It is totally irrational to think that since the prophet was sent to Arabs, therefore the people of the book in Arabia could just ignore him (or people of the book today should just ignore his message). Of course they were expected to use this opportunity to correct any mistakes. Imagine God send a prophet to Americans today and only for them. Would you not want to go and visit him and ask all your religious questions from him?"

Then there are numerous other verses from which the universal mission of Holy Prophet (sws) and the Quran could be easily inferred.

Commented [S128]: I am more than happy to look at any other verses. However the following statement will be the crux of my answer to any other arguments based on other verses of the Qur'an:
The theme of the Qur'an is a local theme and explicit verses of the Qur'an have clarify the originally intended scope of the guidance of the Qur'an. Other explicit verses of the Qur'an have recognised and credited diversity of righteous paths towards God.
Any other verse of the Qur'an should be seen and interpreted in the light of the above.

ANSWER TO: Summary of analysis of the verses of the Quran

Under this title the Author has summarised his analysis as seven principles which I see are in fact clear misunderstandings. Let us analyse these:

Commented [S129]: In this section the authors have mainly repeated their views to question what I have written as Principles. Since I have already addressed these in my earlier comments, I will not repeat them, unless a new comment is needed.

ANSWER TO Principle one: Islam vs islam

'there is only and there has been only one religion that God has given to mankind. That is the religion of submission to truth (islam). The conventional Islam is in fact a version or form of islam that was brought by Prophet Muhammed (pbuh).

Commented [S130]: Basic vs. Rich Criticism
Please refer to the Basic vs. Rich Criticism title in the my article Twenty Common Mistakes in Critical Writings.

On a careful review of this statement one can easily appreciate that it is a complete misunderstanding. There is no doubt that Allah's religion has always been one and that is called Islam. The earlier nations who were given Islam could not preserve it in its original shape and form. They either lost original texts or corrupted these to the point that these could no longer be the source of pure guidance of Allah (swt). Then these nations developed belief systems which were in complete contrast to the belief system enshrined in original religion of Allah i.e Islam. For example descendants of Ibrahim (sws) in Arabia and Hinduism (which in my understanding was originally a pre-Ibrahamic ancient prophets' religion or was the heritage of some unknown prophet from the progeny of Ibrahim (sws)) in India, degenerated completely into idol worshipping, and polytheism became their actual declared religion. Judaism became a racial tradition and Old Testament became devoid of belief in the hereafter while Christianity damaged monotheism by developing a system which revolved around the divinity of Jesus and which, in fact, had been the basis of belief system of vast majority of Christendom throughout its history. Then If we look at the two earlier established religious traditions which are well known to have descended from Prophet Ibrahim (sws) these had even lost their identity as 'Islam' and 'Muslim' although Allah (swt) has made it clear in the Quran that they were named Muslim (22:78) (please note that Muslim here was not in its literal 'the one who submits' rather they were actually named Muslim) and adopted different names i.e Judaism/Jew and Christianity/Christian. These names were not given to them at all by Allah (swt) and their prophets. **Then Allah has not recognised Judaism (Yahudiyyat) and Christianity (masihiyyat) as valid terms or forms of Islam and there is not even a single reference to this effect in the Quran (the Quran recognises these as 'de facto' religious groups but does not recognise these as 'de jure' valid religions).** Then Allah (swt) made it obligatory upon the followers of Prophet Muhammed (sws) to profess faith in all earlier prophets of Allah. How then was it possible that followers of these religious traditions and other people afterwards were made exempt from professing faith and following the last and final Prophet (sws) for mankind. The Quran has made it clear at several places that people of

Commented [S131]: Basic vs. Rich Criticism
Please refer to the Basic vs. Rich Criticism title in the my article Twenty Common Mistakes in Critical Writings.

Commented [S132]: It seems like the authors have forgotten that Christianity and Judaism are English words. The Qur'an has referred to the Christians and Jews of the time in Arabia as Hood and Nasara and (as explained in my article) have not only recognised them but have also given the righteous among them the promise of heaven. The fact that we call our religion Islam does not make us any closer to that pure religion that God wanted for us, compared to Jews or Christians.

the book (Jews and Christians) must profess faith in Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws) and warned them of dire consequences if they did not do so, as has been referenced above. Hence it is a completely false claim that the 'Islam' presented to mankind by Holy Prophet (sws) was just another version of 'Islam' and that the previous versions are still valid. Islam presented by Holy Prophet (sws) is in fact the complete and final version of Islam which has superseded all the previous versions and is now the only reliable version of Islam. This fact could be understood by a very simple example. Oxford text book of Medicine has many editions and in the presence of latest 2017 edition one cannot insist on reading its previous editions to acquire proper and up to date knowledge of Medicine.

ANSWER TO Principle two: Variation within unification

'Every nation has its own guide that would provide his people with an illustration of Islam that best suits them. While the form and the path may be different, the core concepts and values are the same. The main concepts are belief in one God, belief in the hereafter (no matter how different the description of it might be in different faiths) and doing righteous deeds. This is not exclusive to Abrahamic religions. Abrahamic religions are in fact one mega category of illustration of Islam'.

The concept outlined here carries many misunderstandings. Firstly it is not correct to say that every nation has its own guide rather the correct Quranic teaching is that Allah sent guides to every nation prior to Prophet Abraham (sws) while after him divine guides (prophets) have been confined only to his progeny. After finality of prophethood the only guide for all of mankind is the last and final Messenger of Allah (swt), Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws).

Also it is not correct to say that the form and paths may be different, the core concepts and values are same. Now the basic concepts of Islam have always been belief in oneness of Allah (swt) with all His attributes, total submission to Him, belief in the life hereafter and day of judgement and acquiring Tazkia within the framework of guidance brought by Allah's messengers. I am not sure how belief in trinity, divinity of Jesus and salvation without acquiring tazkia within the framework of Shari'ah (which are basic concepts of religion in Christianity) or concept of pantheism, deity worship, superstitions, endless cycle of reincarnation and pandemic polytheistic practices (which are basic concepts and practices of all forms of Hinduism) or muddled concept of life hereafter (as in Judaism) or denial of the existence of the Divine (as in Buddhism) could be taken as the core concepts and values of Islam.

We should not ignore two important aspects of human existence in this discussion i.e human weaknesses and the challenge of Satan (Quran 7:17). Human society has been corrupting the guidance of Allah (swt) due to interplay of these two factors. As an example nobody can say that trinity or divinity of Jesus were taught by Allah (swt) or Jesus Christ. These beliefs were developed later by certain personalities as a complex interplay of corrupted sources, personality weaknesses and influences of Satan who is following every human being to corrupt his life journey. A large number of similar examples could be cited from every religious tradition to clarify that erroneous beliefs and practices have entered as later corruptions in Allah's religion i.e Islam.

Commented [S133]: Generalisation + Basic vs. Rich Criticism:

As discussed before, the authors have taken a theory developed by two scholars as a matter of fact. In my view this theory is not in line with the Qur'an.

Please refer to the Basic vs. Rich Criticism title in my article Twenty Common Mistakes in Critical Writings.

Commented [S134]: Populism:

The authors have simply listed a few things that often Muslims are sensitive about. Each of these need its own discussion as I do not have a same view for all. The core concept in my understanding is 1. belief in God (which may also has the form of belief in a form of an ultimate truth, like in Buddhism). 2. Belief in the hereafter. 3. Trying to be a righteous person. I have listed these in my article very clearly.

Among what the authors have listed here, whatever negates the above will be among those things that are wrong and need to be corrected, as I mentioned in Principle three in my article.

The Author is then making a very tall but bizarre claim that Abrahamic religions are one mega category of illustration of 'islam' without even slightest of support from the Quran and history.

Commented [S135]: The authors wrote in the previous page: "Hinduism (which in my understanding was originally a pre-Ibrahamic ancient prophets' religion or was the heritage of some unknown prophet from the progeny of Ibrahim (sws))".

If the authors can agree that Hinduism is coming from genuine prophets who were before Ibrahim (pbuh) then what is bizarre in saying that Abrahamic religions are one mega category of illustration of islam?

The Qur'an is totally silent about non-Abrahamic religions (there is only a very slight and passing reference to Saba'in and Majus that maybe considered as a reference to them). Therefore any concluding remarks about them has to be by means of rational deduction, within the frame of understanding that we have from the Qur'an. We therefore end up with three options:

1. To believe that God does not care about non-Abrahamic communities
2. To believe that God expects them to join the Abrahamic communities in terms of religion
3. To believe that many of them too, like the followers of Abrahamic religions, were originally guided by God, even though later, like many of the followers of Abrahamic religions, many corrupted this guidance.

The authors and myself certainly disagree with 1. The authors will agree with 2 because this is based on the general scheme of God's guidance that they have derived from the Qur'an. I agree with 3 because this is based on the general scheme of God's guidance that I have derived from the Qur'an.

Also, in terms of observation, when it comes to tazkiyah (that the authors would agree is the main goal of an Abrahamic religion), I really do not see much difference between followers of some of the non-Abrahamic religions and followers of the Abrahamic ones. If we are arguing that tazkiyah is the core and goal of religion, and if we then argue that this is only possible by following an Abrahamic religion, and then we further argue that among Abrahamic religions it is only the followers of Islam that can achieve this because the others one have corrupted their religion, then only one outcome is expected: "To see a huge positive gap overall, between Muslims and followers of the other Abrahamic religions, and between them and followers of other religions."

In the real world, I do not see that gap, and on individual level sometimes I see that gap to be negative. This is not something that can be explained merely by saying "well Muslims need to be better in following their religion". The correct explanation in my view is as follows:

"We have got it wrong. We are confusing form with content. Discussion on whether a religion is Abrahamic one or not, is discussion on form."

That claim in fact declares every tradition which has ever existed in the name of religion to be valid form of 'islam' and one is left wondering why would then the Quran say that if anybody wants religion other than Islam it will not be accepted and will be doomed in the hereafter (3:85).

ANSWER TO Principle Three: Correcting than Converting

'Therefore if there is an opportunity for preaching, it should not be aimed at converting people to Islam. Rather it should be aimed at correcting people's false beliefs. Of course if a non-Muslim wishes to convert to Islam there is no problem with this and a Muslim should help him/her to do that'.

If we carefully ponder on these assertions in the background of overall view being presented, it seems to imply that 'islam' in the universal sense means submission to Allah (swt) but it is practically confined to saying that God is one, be good human being and then remain Jew, Christian, Hindu, Parsi, Buddhist, Sikh or whatever you want to be. In terms of believe systems this viewpoint also means that it is okay if you do not want to profess faith in Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws) (like every non-Muslim) or for that matter any prophet (like Hindus, Buddhists or Sikhs) or you do not want to believe in the day of judgement or life hereafter (like Hindus or Buddhists and many other religions) and it is also okay if you want to believe in Trinity or reincarnation. In terms of worship you should believe in one God (swt) but then it is perfectly okay if you want to bow in front of idols or you want to pray to Jesus or Mary. In terms of practice you can marry whoever you want to, you can eat whatever you want to and so on. This is an extremely dangerous territory the Author is leading people to. Please, bear in mind that the rejecters from amongst the people of the book and polytheists of the time of Holy Prophet (sws) did want to negotiate similar deals with the Holy Prophet (sws) and wanted to agree on some 'give and take for the peaceful co-existence' however Allah (swt) completely rejected it in unambiguous terms. The most disappointing part of this view point is that the same deal is now being offered 'whole sale' to all non-Muslims in the World by the Author.

Commented [S136]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting:

I never wrote that. This is simply the authors exaggerating deduction from my writing. Not all existing religions are originally a form of islam and not all of them that are originally a form of islam have remained uncorrupted.

Commented [S137]: If the authors replace 'Islam' with 'islam' in this sentence then there won't be any wonders.

Commented [S138]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting + Moral Ethics + Populism:

Again the authors are listing things that are sensitive issues for Muslims and they falsely attribute all of it to me. This is not the territory that I am leading people to, this is the territory that the authors are leading my views to. This is not what I say as the wording of principle three is clear. I cannot understand for instance how the authors can say that I am fine with trinity and idol worshiping when what they themselves have quoted from me says: "(preaching) should be aimed at correcting people's false beliefs".

Yes, I do not believe that for non-Muslims at our time professing faith in the prophet (pbuh) is necessary. Each other statements in this disfigured representation of my views needs a separate attention and explanation that is beyond this writing.

The authors write that this is an extremely dangerous territory that I am leading people to. First, I am not leading anyone. As a student of the Qur'an I am sharing my honest understanding with people. Second, the dangerous territory is what the authors are leading the readers to, where they use expressions that are sensitive to Muslims and attribute them to me. This is not in line with clear basics of akhlaq.

Commented [S139]: Moral Ethics of Criticism + Populism:

Two things also feel disappointing for me:

1. From ethical point of view: That the authors so conveniently attribute wrong views to me, despite the clear wording of principle three, and conveniently attribute similarities between a Muslim and the polytheists of the time of the prophet (pbuh)!

2. From academic point of view: That the authors, do not appreciate the difference between non-Muslims in Arabia at the time of the prophet (pbuh) and non-Muslims elsewhere and at any other time.

-This point of view is also too simplistic and naïve. It completely ignores human nature, its prejudice and also human history. It is based on very simplistic presumption that you can go to a non-Muslim and explain the universal 'islam' to him and he is going to gleefully accept it and leave all the beliefs and practices which have been so deeply rooted in his life. I can say with confidence that if a person can travel that distance so easily, he can also convert and accept 'Islam'. I have no hesitation in saying that Islam is Allah's prescribed guidance (both in form and structure) for mankind and it cannot be accepted piecemeal. The requirement of submission is to leave behind all preferences, attachments, prejudice and acquire the complete colour of Allah's guidance down to its minutest details (2:138). **Hence converting and accepting Islam in its entirety is a manifestation of submission and a token of love and gratefulness to Allah (swt), of course, after the truth of Islam has fully dawned upon a person.** We Muslims however can never be sure that it has happened to a person beyond doubt (which is the prerogative of Prophets on knowledge from Allah (swt) only).

-The heart of the misunderstanding expressed in the above principle is in the terms 'islam' and 'Islam'. **The former term is just a theoretical paradigm. The very nature of the paradigm 'total submission to one God' carries the implication that the same God is going to give guidance and directives (Quran 2-38). When these take the form of comprehensive system of believes and practices it becomes 'Islam' and accepting it fully is a manifestation of submission. Allah (swt) always gave 'Islam' to mankind through his prophets, the core of which was always 'islam' and hence 'islam' and 'Islam' are like soul and body to each other and are inseparable. However, the humans have been corrupting Islam (both in theory and practice). Hence Allah (swt) once again gave Islam through Prophet Muhammed (sws) in its complete and final form, the soul of which is 'islam'. It is now the only form which has correct 'islam' and no other religious tradition has true and correct 'islam'.**

ANSWER TO Principle Four: The Chosen Nations

The two communities of Bani Israel and Ummi'in (otherwise known as Bani Ishmael) have been particularly blessed by the Almighty. Bani Israel were privileged by being given a specific shari'ah and by having numerous prophets. Ummi'in were privileged as well by being given a specific shrai'ah, quite similar to that of Bani Israel and by having the last prophet of God.

While I agree with the overall statement however there are a few observations. While the Bani Ismael were part of the Ummi'yin, the later is a broader term generally used for Arabs of Hijaz, something which is indicated by the fact that **certain Jews have also been called Ummi'yin in the Quran (2:78).** Then the blessed communities were Bani Israel and **all the Muslims** and not only Bani Ismael or Ummi'yin as has been explained before in this article and is also clear from **22:77-78**.

Commented [S140]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting:

The point seems simplistic to the authors because they load it to a simplistic assumption. I never said that one should go and approach any individual to correct him. Firstly, one should make sure that himself does not need correction. Second, as I wrote in my article: "if there is an opportunity for preaching". The problem is that the authors are reading my sentences with their traditional proactive 'dawa' mind-set. I do not believe in such proactive approach to preaching at all, whether it is for islam or Islam. Also I never said we should explain 'unniversal islam' so that people leave all the beliefs and practices in their life! This is again due to the traditional mind-set of the authors that see the duty of Muslims to be inviting people to 'leave' something and 'join' something else. If I have an opportunity to correct some one (other than myself) all that will matter for me will be those beliefs or deeds of that person that puts him out of the path of islam (submission to one God). I will elaborate on this in another writing,

Commented [S141]: It is not a theoretical paradigm. By islam I mean that religion that God gave to all prophets. This is clearly referred to in the Qur'an (2:132-136). By Islam I refer to that version of islam that was brought by the prophet (pbuh). This too is referred to in the Qur'an (45:18). And the fact that these different versions of islam can coexist is also referred to in the Qur'an: 5:48.

Commented [S142]: What a wonderful statement and I fully agree with this. However I add, as the Qur'an also indicates in various places including 2:62, 5:48 and 22:67, this soul can be in many forms of body, and not just one form.

Commented [S143]: Firstly Ummi'in was used as a term that was known for the Arabs of the time who were not among ahl al-kitab so it had both literal and conventional connotations. In 2:78 the word is used in its literal meaning, that is, people with no or little knowledge of book.

Second, the authors first agree that Ummiin was used for the Arabs of Hijaz, then they write these are All Muslims!

Commented [S144]: The addressees of this verse, as it is clear from the context, are Ummi'in in general, and more specifically the companions of the prophet (pbuh).

This difference is extremely important as it pre-empts any possibility of making Islam into a racial-cultural tradition (as unfortunately the Author has tried to do in his article), enables any human being of any background and era to become equal part of this noble blessing and it makes Islam a universal religion of mankind to follow for all times to come. The final observation is that while Shari'ah given to both the people was similar however the later Shari'ah was complete and final after every correction, addition and subtraction which Allah (swt) in His Divine Wisdom wanted to do.

ANSWER TO Principle Five: Specific and General Rules

'The communities of God who entered a covenant with the Almighty are privileged by being given a shari'ah. This is to maintain their position of the chosen nations and remain practical illustrations of monotheist God aware communities. Any other people who by choice or by birth have entered the same covenant will also enjoy the same privilege. All other people are expected to follow the obvious rules of morality, often referred to as Noahic rules in the Biblical literature. These are also referred to with minor differences with the Quran, 17:22-39. Believing in One God is included in these rules'.

Again the above assertion carries misunderstandings. Firstly there is a factual inaccuracy in this statement and that is the Genesis 9:8-17 does not carry any Noahic rules (reference here is to an earlier formulation of this principle which the Author has now modified) rather it refers to Noahic covenant which is a different thing. The Noahic rules (properly called laws) are not mentioned in the Bible and not at all in the Quran. These are mentioned in Talmud which is not a divine book in Judaism but is only a book of Fiqh (jurisprudence). Then attribution of these rules to Prophet Noah (sws) is very doubtful. The assertion that these are referred to with more or less the same detail in both the Quran and the Torah is also not correct. Particularly these are quite different from the Quranic principles (17:22-39) which are very comprehensive, vastly more sophisticated and morally superior. Then these inauthentic Noahic rules were in fact used by Judaism as a means of religious discrimination to affirm their 'chosen people of God' status and had possibly been promulgated just for this purpose. According to Judaism, a Gentile did not have to follow the Mosaic Law but could earn a reward in the life hereafter if they followed the Noahic laws which they thought were a universal law and a binding on all mankind. Similarly these were referred to (in other words abused) when St Paul did away with Shari'ah for early Church. The most important point to be noted is that these were put forward by Jews to exalt their position compared to other nations (gentiles) as a chosen people but by doing so they absolved themselves of their primary responsibility to mankind, that is, to invite nations to the guidance of Allah (swt). Hence Judaism became a racial, non-proselytizing religion and the result is that the Christian population is about 2000 million and the Muslim population is about 1500 million in the World today while the Jew population, despite being the oldest religious tradition in Abrahamic line, is a meagre 15 million.

Hence the idea of Noahic rules being sufficient for rest of mankind is Jewish in origin and has no basis whatsoever in Islam. Islam as presented to mankind by Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws) and Quran is the final and universal edition of Allah's guidance to mankind and is for all

Commented [S145]: To say that the religion of Islam finds different forms and paths based on different cultures is not making Islam into a racial-cultural tradition. Rather, to completely ignore the effects of culture of Arabs on the form of Islam and to argue that all human kind has to accept this Arabic form of religion is making Islam into a racial-cultural tradition.

Commented [S146]: The authors believe that God decided to choose the middle east as the centre of His attention, then He revealed a book in Arabic to the Arabs in the middle east. Then He requires all mankind to accept this book and to be guided by it. I do not see what part of this scheme can be seen as 'equal blessing'.

Commented [S147]: Technical Ethics of Criticism: I am not sure what the point is here. The authors try to correct an error that does not exist in any of my publicly published writings! The authors write about "factual inaccuracy"! One of the most obvious facts in writing a criticism is to use that writing of the authors that is actually published!

Commented [S148]: Missing the Point: It seems like the authors have missed the point here. The main point that I wrote was this: "All other people are expected to follow the obvious rules of morality" Note the word 'obvious'. My reference to the Biblical literature and the Qur'an was just to show that these Books too have referred to this category of values (i.e. obvious rules of morality). The source of recognising Morals (akhlaq) is not revelation, it is the God given conscious and intellect of the human beings.

Commented [S149]: I do agree with this view of Judaism and I believe the same about Islam.

Commented [S150]: This is not a logical comparison. What in Christianity happened was that people start to argue that believing in Jesus (pbuh) makes one free from any religious law. Unlike this, Jews believe very strictly that believe in Moses (pbuh) for a Jew in fact binds him to religious law.

Commented [S151]: Nowhere in the Qur'an Jews are blamed for not converting others to their religion or for thinking that only they are bound by the Mosaic religious law. The racial issue that the Qur'an complains about is that Jews (and Christians) thought that being Jew (or Christian) means to be on the guided path (2:135).

mankind irrespective of colour, race, language, era and geography. It treats mankind as one family and all humanity being equal in front of their exalted Lord Allah (swt). Introduction of the idea that Noahic rules are sufficient for the rest of mankind in Muslims is extremely dangerous and totally against the spirit of Islam.

The views expressed in this principle are in fact against human equality and fraternity. Allah (swt) had chosen these two nations not to give them 'blue eyed boy' or some 'priestly class' status. Rather it was a responsibility which was to assist the prophets (in case of Bani Israel) and to do the job of prophets (in case of Muslims) and that was to carry Allah (swt) guidance to the rest of mankind and their reward both in this World and in the hereafter had been made contingent upon fulfilling that Job.

Commented [S152]: Please see my comment about "equal blessing" that I made in the previous page.

ANSWER TO Principle Six: Eternal Shari'ah with a Subjective Form

Shari'ah has an eternal wisdom but its form is temporary and evolves or changes as the societies evolve or change. This mostly applies to non-worship shari'ah.

As the view expressed under this principle is related with Shari'ah the answer will be included in the section on Shari'ah to follow later.

ANSWER TO Principle Seven: The Advantage of the Qur'an:

The message of monotheism, hereafter and righteousness in the Qur'an is universal. This includes the wisdom behind its form of the shari'ah. For a Muslim and for anyone who believes in the Qur'an, the authenticity of the Book makes the Qur'an a criteria for recognising truth and false in other religions and ideologies.

The view point is primarily correct however the Quran is equally important for non-Muslims as well in that they are also able to see weaknesses in their religions and ideologies and rediscover and establish themselves on the true path of Allah (swt). However for this process to take place there has first to be the process of contact of followers of other religions and ideologies with the Quran. Now this is the job of Muslims for which they have been raised as a community that they 'actively' reach out to the rest of humanity with the message of Islam. Seeing humanity in error in their relationship with their Lord and still not doing anything is a callous behaviour. In the last 3 to 4 centuries, with the age of reasoning and evolution of rational thought and scientific knowledge, the other religious traditions have been crumbling down as these found it hard to stand the pressure of the test of rational thought. The result has been widespread atheism and its sister ideologies, nominal religious allegiance and thinning out of Godliness. Moreover, as the divine instinct is part of human nature and does not die, it has manifested in other deviant forms and resulted in mushrooming of cults like Satanism, Paganism, Scientology and numerous others. If the Muslims Ummah in modern times had understood their job properly and had genuinely felt their responsibility for the fellow humanity they could have filled the spiritual void and re-established humanity's relationship with their Lord through the Quran and Sunnah of Holy Prophet (sws). They did not do their job and then there have been recurrent attempts from within their ranks and files in last 200 years to confuse them and these attempts have achieved nothing but further subdivisions and sectarianism. I see the Author's views as expressed in this article in the same light. **Ironically the Author has tried to present 'dawah' and preaching of Allah's religion, Islam, to mankind as something loathsome and conversion to Islam as something**

Commented [S153]: Agree, and this is why I added "for anyone who believes in the Qur'an".

Commented [S154]: Please see [Moral Ethics of Criticism](#) in my writing *Twenty Common Mistakes in Critical Writing*. My article was not an attempt to confuse Muslims. My article was a simple sharing of my research and findings with Muslims. I appreciate that it can confuse some Muslims, but this is the effect of any view point that is different from the popular one. One of the authors references, Ghamidi, too has been criticised for viewpoints that confuse Muslims. However these revised viewpoints often eventually serve to clarify lots of traditionally accumulated confusions from the mind of many Muslims as well.

stigmatising which is only going to negatively affect their inadequate and disjointed efforts in this cause.

C) THE NATURE, HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE OF SHARIA:

The nature of Allah (swt)'s guidance has been to help mankind to succeed in the test of life. Hence Allah (swt)'s guidance has been a sheer mercy for mankind. The main guidance has been enshrined in human nature called Deen e Fitrah. The basic elements of Deen e fitrah has been:

C:1 The survival instinct:

The human being is strongly driven by perseverance of self which manifests as preservation of both physical and psychological self. The survival instinct is essential for human existence however by nature it does not recognise limits and cannot strike balance. Greed, pride, lust, jealousy, anger are some of the elements of survival instinct. The uncontrolled expression of these lead to self-destruction and anarchy in human society.

C:2 The social instinct:

The human being is a social being. He understands by his very nature that he can survive and flourish only in a society. He understands that investing in others returns in the form of cooperation, praise, approval and protection. The social instinct works in various dimensions. Here **the first and most basic dimension** is the gender relationship which is the basis of human procreation. It is most fundamental for survival of human species but not for an individual per se, hence Allah (swt) has riddled it with most compelling passions of attraction, love and lust so that humans surrender to it in order to ensure sustained procreation. **The second dimension** is that based on 'relatedness' which is quite manifestly based on survival instinct. It works on the principal of nearness i.e the closer is the dearer. Human beings identify and relate themselves through ties of blood, kinship, colour, language, tribe, religion and nationality. **The third and the more universal and deeply ingrained dimension** is the dimension of human interactions. It is again a manifestation of survival instinct although in a more subtle and refined way. The human beings by their very nature know that their interactions should be based on truth, honesty, justice, trust, kindness and respect. Ironically human society does not always function to the ideal norms of these dimensions which result in exploitation, strife, warfare and bloodshed.

C:3 The divine instinct:

The human being is an intellectual being. He analyses and arrives at conclusions. He observes that he is just there on this planet without his choice and will have to leave it without his choice. Then he sees his very complex life which ends in death and wonders what it is all about. Then he sees chance and luck as inevitable part of his life and injustice as part of his social existence. He wants that there should be justice but is unable to strike perfect justice in his society. These and many other observations of his life and the universe around him take him to the conclusion that his life is not without purpose. The jigsaw puzzles gets solved and he is easily able to identify with and affirm what has been revealed to him through the prophets of God that he has a Creator Who has created this life and Who has put him on this planet as a test and Who will inhabit another abode, paradise, with those who are successful in the test of life. The flower of faith blossoms and love of God with intellectual satisfaction, passion, reverence and submission cultivates.

Commented [S155]: In this section and section D on duty of Dawah the authors have repeated their stance on these subjects.

Since I have already addressed their earlier arguments about these matters and since my understanding of these matters are fundamentally different from them, I will only make comments on some of the points in these two sections that need further comments.

My hope is that if the readers thought any of the arguments or statements in these two sections require further response from me, they will let me know.

I would only like to clarify that what the authors are referring to as shari'ah in this writing, is what I referred to as "form of the shari'ah" in my article. Again, there is a lack of observing **Technical Ethics of Criticism** by the authors which can confuse the reader.

Humans have always felt the need to regulate its members so that the human life can be protected and every member of society can have reasonable degree of security, dignity and opportunity to flourish. The tribal societies have customs and traditions according for this purpose while empires and states, in addition, makes laws and rules to achieve these goals. Hence traditions, customs, rules and laws have always been part and parcel of the human society.

We can easily understand by a careful deliberation on the above instincts that humans need guidance in all these three areas as human intellect cannot on its own strike the balance in any area. It sometimes falls prey to human weaknesses like arrogance, greed, prejudice, and lust. At other times it lacks knowledge or has poor knowledge to strike balance. An example is what would be all the factors to take into account while making family laws. Another example is how much of his earnings a man should surrender to his society for the common good. Yet another example is once he recognises his Creator how he should express his gratitude or pay homage to his Creator which would be befitting for His Holiness, in other words how should he worship his Creator. Due to human limitations in finding 'the balance and the optimum' in all these areas **Allah (sws) has always chosen to give guidance to mankind in the form of certain rules so that humanity can stand on justice in all spheres of life and accepting and following these rules is an integral part of submission to the Creator which is required from the humans. This is called Islamic Shari'ah.**

C:4 Principles of Shari'ah:

Shari'ah is the term used in religious scriptures for the collection of those divine rules which cover all aspects of human life that is personal, family, social and political. A little deliberation on human nature and human history as described in Holy Scriptures and the way Allah's guidance has unfolded in history can lead to some understanding of underlying principles of Shari'ah. Here are some of these principles:

-Allah (sws) is most merciful and benevolent. He (swt) does not burden his servants beyond their capacity. In all Shari'ah directives he has in-built systems of exemptions and concessions. The obligatory element in Shari'ah is always small while voluntary sphere is generally large and open.

-Allah's Shari'ah has taken human nature into account. It promotes 'ma'roof' (goodness) and curbs 'munkar' (evil) which are part of human nature. It takes accounts of aesthetics however disciplines it.

-The Shari'ah directives have some basic purposes: establishing justice and promoting cooperativeness in society; protecting society from wild passions, bloodshed and anarchy; protecting the weak and needy; self-discipline and spiritual growth.

-Allah has trusted human intellect and hence has given only limited directives as his Shari'ah while vast areas have been left to human intellect. These directives given by Allah (swt) cannot be changed. The society can make rules and regulations where no directives have been given based on these directives and on principles of justice and common good.

- The core of Shari'ah has always been the same. Anything clearly forbidden has never been permitted at some future point e.g committing shirk (assigning partners with Allah), adultery, intoxication, gambling have always been forbidden.

-The Sharia directives have mainly been given where human intellect could not, on its own, decide about certain matters due to **lack of knowledge and inadequate wisdom** e.g keeping faith in the existence of angels and the fact that despite executing Allah (swt)'s directives, Angels cannot be worshipped or **inadequate knowledge** e.g how should one worship Allah or being unable to find the balance as to how much should be obligatory worship or **where the matter could be doubtful** e.g consuming blood and eating flesh of swine.

-Some of the directives have been local and temporary e.g Sabbath was only part of shari'ah directives given to Prophet Moses (sws) as is clarified by the Quran (16:124) and was part of the Ten Commandments of Torah. It was abrogated in the final and completed form of the Shari'ah given to Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws).

-The directives regarding punishment for wrong deeds have not been meant to be a full penal code. The punishment for a few wrong deeds are of the nature of divine punishment with provisions about situations where the punishment could be relaxed. The collective order of society (state) can make a penal code to deal with wrong deeds of its members however it has no authority to change or abrogate those punishments which Allah (swt) has decreed. These must remain part of penal system of a Muslim state keeping strictly in view the circumstances in which these punishments can be given.

-As prophethood ended with Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws), in the same way Allah's Shari'ah was perfected and finalised by retaining certain directives, changing or abrogating certain others and adding some new ones. Allah's shari'ah is comprehensive but not exhaustive. It is comprehensive in the sense that it contains directives in all spheres of human life however it is not exhaustive which means it gives only a few laws in each sphere and not the lengthy details which is the domain of fiqh.

-The Sharia, as finalised and perfected in final prophethood is permanent for all times to come and a binding on all humanity to follow.

The Author has raised a number of points in his supplementary note on Sharia to discredit Allah's Shari'ah and to propagate that most of the Shari'ah is redundant. I have presented a gist of his claims and commented on these

Commented [S156]: I fully agree with this. The point of difference between the authors and me on this is that the authors imply that human intellect is static and does not advance. I consider it to be dynamic and in progress. The shari'ah that was given to Arabs 1400 years ago was inline with their intellect. In the era where we have expertise in almost every subject, it does not make sense to me to assume that our intellect is in the same level as in 1400 years ago in Arabia. The most significant implication of this is on that part of the law that relates to collective rules (like social and penal law).

Commented [S157]: This is correct only if one assumes two things:
1. That God wants every community to follow His divinely revealed shari'ah.
2. That the only divinely revealed shari'ah that is acceptable is the one that is in Islam.
I consider both the above points to be assumptions that are not based on rationality or the Qur'an. Point 2 in particular is against explicit verses of the Qur'an, as I have discussed in my article and here.

Commented [S158]: Moral Ethics of Criticism
Firstly to argue that the form of the shari'ah (not the shari'ah itself) can evolve with time is not discrediting the shari'ah, it is actually preserving the credit of the shari'ah. By saying that this is discrediting the shari'ah the authors are condemning many of the great scholars of our time, including Tariq Ramadan who appears as one of their sources of reference in their website at the time of this writing.
Second, the authors again are not just arguing that in their view my findings discredit the shari'ah. They are arguing that I am making my points to discredit the shari'ah.
I remind the authors who appear to be so sensitive about shari'ah that accusing a fellow Muslim (or human being) is a grave sin according to the shari'ah. Again, I remind them of verse 49:12 in the Qur'an.

'..... a quick look at the social history of the Arabs just before the emergence of Islam reveals that the vast majority of the form of the shari'ah of Islam was already in practice in the Arab society.....'.

This statement gives the impression that the directives of Shari'ah were based on Arab culture and were suitable only for them. The directives of Shari'ah were in fact based on established Abrahamic religious tradition.

Some of these were present in Arabs but these were not secular-cultural Arab traditions rather these had come down as Abrahamic religious traditions. Holy Prophet (sws) continued these as part of Islamic Shari'ah, unchanged if no change was required or after necessary changes if these were required.

Most of these were also present in Bani Israel of Palestine, Arabia and elsewhere, again as established Abrahamic religious tradition which refutes the author's scepticism about their attribution to Prophet Ibrahim (sws). Also these being mostly similar to Shari'ah of Moses (sws) refutes the Author's claim that these were just existing Arab cultural traditions.

Regarding the specific examples quoted, halal meat (Tazkia of animals) was practiced by Bani Israel as well while the directive of marriage with non-Muslim was a new directive and was based on requirements of purity of faith and Tazkia and had nothing to do with Arab culture. Obligatory Zakah and prohibition of Riba again had nothing to do with Arab culture and were part of Abrahamic religious tradition. All the other directives of Shari'ah could similarly be viewed.

Sadly the Author is mixing culture and Ma'roofat of the society with law (or Shari'ah). Allah's Shari'ah does not normally interfere with Ma'roofat of society until there is something morally objectionable. Whatever Islamic Shari'ah adapted from Arab society were religious practices which were deeply rooted in Abrahamic religious tradition and were practiced by Bani Israel as well and these were not cultural practices or M'roofat of the society.

A scenario could clarify the difference: A Muslim from Punjab will have a lot more in common with a Sikh from Punjab in terms of style of dress, household lay out, cooking style, cuisine, musical notes, day to day instruments, sports, transport, local festivals than with a Muslim from Bengal, Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia however as soon as the question of Azan, Wudhu, prayers, Ramadhan and fasting, Haj, Zakat, marriage, divorce, Eids, Halal foods, burial of deceased, importance of moon sighting will arise, all these Muslims from different parts of the World (who might not even understand each other's languages) will exactly understand

Commented [S159]: Missing the Point:

I copy what the point was from my article:

"Some scholars are of the opinion that the Arabs had inherited the sunnah of Abraham (pbuh). Whether this can be established with any degree of certainty is another subject. However whether this is a reliable assumption or not, it does not change the fact that the form of the shari'ah of Islam was mostly the adjusted version of the Arabs civil law at the time."

It seems like the authors have forgotten that Ibrahim was not the citizen of the world, he too was living in a particular culture and a particular era and a particular land. I believe that the form of the shari'ah given to Ibrahim (pbuh) was also based on the structures, norms and the culture of his time and his area of dominance (which was part of what we know today as the middle east).

It is impossible and against God's Justice and Wisdom to impose a set of rules to a community disregard to the social and cultural norms of that community. As I quoted from Ghamidi in my article and in here, "shari'ah has remained different due to evolution and change in human civilizations and societies". Accordingly what the authors are implying is that the civilisation and society of the Arabs in 1400 years ago had the same features that civilisations and societies of the rest of the world has today and will be having in future. This is far from any sense of rationality and appreciation of reality.

Therefore whether the form of the shari'ah of islam was partially or wholly coming from the form of the shari'ah of Ibrahim (pbuh) does not have any bearing in my argument here.

Commented [S160]: Missing the Point:

It seems like the authors have misunderstood me about zakah, riba, halal meat and interfaith marriage. I never argued that these were not part of the Abrahamic religions traditions. I wrote that paying attention to the local conditions where these ahkam were given leads us to a different understanding of them and their implications.

what all these terms mean and will fall in line in the practice of these religious directives while the Sikh will be a complete outsider.

Commented [S161]: Absolutely correct. The reason is that they all converted to the religion of Islam that was revealed for Arabs of the time!

-The very claim that due to change in civilisation there were changes in Shari'ah between the periods of Holy Prophets Jesus (sws) and Muhammad (sws) is baseless. Jesus (sws) did not bring any new Shari'ah and followed the Mosaic Shari'ah. It was not a question of changes in Shari'ah rather it was more a question of completion of Shari'ah which included cleansing of Shari'ah of human interpolations, abrogation of certain elements and addition of certain elements.

Commented [S162]: Inconsistent Basis:
Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, who seems to be the main reference point of the authors, writes in Mizan (translation): *al-Hikmah has always remained the same in all revealed religions; however, the shari'ah has remained different due to evolution and change in human civilizations and societies*" (Mizan, p. 72)

The Author writes:

On what basis then we can argue that the form of the shari'ah that was given 1400 years ago and was based on the norms and regulations of a particular society at that time is going to stay as the best system of rule forever? Evolvement of the form of the shari'ah has happened even while the form of the shari'ah was revealed at the time of the prophet (pbuh). This refers to the concept of abrogation. This evolvement or change of the form of the shari'ah kept happening at the time of the first four Caliphs of Islam.

I have already shown above that it is a complete misunderstanding to think that Shari'ah was based on norms and regulations of Arab society.

Commented [S163]: Ignoring an Argument:
The authors have skipped my above question that is based on the above quote by Ghamidi who is a reference point for them in their writing. My question above therefore remains unanswered.
This is unless they openly argue that on this point they disagree with Ghamidi. There if of course nothing wrong with this, except that then they will be facing even tougher questions.

Then Arabia of Holy Prophet's time was a tribal society and lacked a collective political order in the form of a government. Talking of a 'civil law' in that society was meaningless anyway as such societies do not have collective political order or civil laws. When a tribal society is organised into a collective political order and a state is established, laws start evolving. We can see this process taking place in all societies in history. Islam transformed Arabia into collective political order and a state was established. Allah (swt) started giving its law as this state evolved which covered all the basic aspects of human life including personal, family, social and collective spheres in both worship and secular affairs. All this law (personal, family, social and collective, the latter being the basis of any Muslim state) was completed within the lifetime of Holy Prophet (sws).

Commented [S164]: I did not refer to Civil Law in its modern term. By Civil Law I simply meant the regulations and norms that the Arabs used to observe. I however appreciate that the misunderstanding may happen and will replace this word in the second version of the article.

This is divine in origin, is enshrined in the Quran and Sunnah and is completely immune from any human change for all times to come and is called Islamic Shari'ah. It is all based on justice, compassion and collective benefit of human society. It carries the flavour of Godliness, aims at Tazkia and covers secular spheres of life as well. Muslims evolved this law in the form of Fiqh with the passage of time as the society became more complex keeping the original law intact. All this additional law (which included new laws as well as the detailed application of original law) which was the effort of Muslim jurists, was subject to further review and development, a process which should be on going. Hence Islamic fiqh evolved and new

additions came in however the actual Shari'ah given by Holy Prophet (sws) in the form of the Quran and Sunnah remained completely unchanged. The process of abrogation was only limited to the life time of the Prophet (sws).

Hence the claim that Shari'ah kept evolving during the time of 4 caliphs is completely baseless and the author cannot give a single example that the Quran or Holy Prophet (sws) established something as Shari'ah and any of the 4 Caliphs abrogated it or added something to make it part of the Shari'ah.

As mentioned the Shari'ah law is not extensive and vast spheres of civilisation were left to human intellect to make rules and laws in according with the changing needs. I do not see where and how the question of belittling human intellect (aql) arises. I do not have slightest doubt that whatever Allah (sws) has given as his Shari'ah has complete relevance to our time

Commented [S165]: There are two assumptions here:
1. If a divine source reveals an instruction that instructions has to be disregard of the norms and the regulations of that society.
2. If an instruction is divine then that means it should not be changed with time, even if the conditions and norms have completely changed.

I do not agree with the above two assumptions. Not only they both show a complete isolation of the source of divine with realities of the world, they also mean that it is fine to beat wives and to have slaves today. (I am fully aware of the argument of Ghamidi where he considers the first to be not part of the shari'ah and the second to be a temporary shari'ah. While I disagree with his argument – for the reasons that are beyond this writing – the very argument that some instructions of the Qur'an can be excluded from the shari'ah or from the permanent shari'ah in fact works in favour of my view.)

Commented [S166]: All the changes in the form of the shari'ah that took place at the time of the first Caliphs of Islam are documented in books, most of which are titled Ta'ilil al'Ahkam (like those of Adel al-Shuwaikh; Ziyad Ibrahim Miqdad and Muhammad Mustafa Shalbi.). One may also look at the writing of some of the contemporary authors about this, like Abdullah Saeed's book "Reading the Qur'am in the Twenty-First Century", chapter three, The Early Form of Contextualism: Umar and Interpretation. There is no point listing them here.

I do appreciate that these changes or additions may be seen as minor and may not be categorised as adding to or removing anything from the shari'ah. I do appreciate that all or many of them can be categorised as a ruling by the head of the state rather than changing any form of the shari'ah. However they happened only a few years after the demise of the prophet (pbuh) and in my view they are showing the direction of the thinking of the first generation of Muslims and their flexible view on shari'ah. In that short time no further changes were required. I argue that with the same fixed mind-set about the shari'ah that the authors are presenting, even these minor changes or state led instructions at the time could have been frowned upon. In fact history tells out that even at that time some of the companions were objecting to some of these instructions (as explained in detail in the books mentioned above).

Note that I did not use this statement as a proof for my view. I was only giving an example. If one does not agree with these examples it does not change anything about my main reasoning on evolving of the form of the shari'ah, as discussed in the article. For more on this I suggest reading the book "Reasoning with God" by Khalid Abu El-Fadhl.

Commented [S167]: A form of the shari'ah was given to the tribal society of Arabs 1400 years ago to help them where their intellect could not help. To say that this form of the shari'ah is equally applicable for all nations and forever means to considering the human intellect today and in future to be nothing more advanced of that of the Arabos society 1400 years ago. This to me is belittling intellect, that is one of the greatest inbuilt guides given to the human beings by the Almighty.

and nobody has the right to change even an iota in Allah's Shari'ah, provided any instruction or directive has been incorrectly understood to be part of Islamic Shari'ah.

The author needs to show which directives of Shari'ah are not relevant in this age or how technological advances and rapid change in civilisation are making the Shari'ah given by Allah not practical or relevant.

Commented [S168]: Populism + Missing the Point:

First, by the phrase "giving by Allah" the authors are expressing a sensible phrase that can easily block the mind of a less educated reader.

The authors are missing the point here. I can only quote myself: "It is important here to appreciate that I am not trying to convince the readers that any part of the form of the shari'ah of the Qur'an may need a change at our time.

The point of this writing is to argue that such need is indeed possible and that if this is so, then our scholars should not hesitate to act on it. The problem is, the assumption that the form of the shari'ah of the Qur'an is universally and indefinitely applicable, clouds the mind of a scholar when he/she tries to judge whether any modifications are needed. After lifting this assumption, the decision as to whether any part of the form of the shari'ah needs change or not is to be taken by the consensus of a council of local scholars in each Muslim country and is not the job of one individual, and certainly not my job."

Parts of the form of the shari'ah are already declared to be Not Part of the form of the Shari'ah by more moderate scholars due to them not befitting our time (slavery, beating wives). This is while more traditional scholars still consider these as part of the shari'ah.

I would also like to narrate a discussion with Ghamidi. When we were discussing the verse of Men being qawwamun to women (4:34) when I argued that today there are families in which women are mentally stronger than their husband and they are also the source of finance for the family, he replied that in that case he would argue that for those family it is the women who are qawwamun to men. While I disagree with the whole premise of finding a person as qawwam in a family and consider this to be the need of the time, I think this is a very clear example of a change in the form of the shari'ah due to the change in society that is suggested by Ghamidi.

Then the author is readjusting his view point by saying that non-worship Shari'ah is the one which should be changeable. What is the basis of making such distinctions and from where the Author is deriving this authority.

Commented [S169]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting:

I am not sure why the authors think that I am readjusting my view point. My view point in the article is consistent. There are three points here that I would like to bring to the attention of the authors:

1. It seems to me that the authors have not studied the extensive and ever increasing line of scholarship that has similar views on shari'ah. I encourage them to expand their scope of studies to the works of scholars like Tariq Ramadan, Khalid Abu al-Fadl, Abdullah Saeed, Ebrahim Moosa, Ziba Mir Hoseini, Fatima Mernsi, Abulqasim Fanayi, Mohsen Kadivar, Ahmad Qabil and many other great scholars of our time. This can help them to appreciate that what I am writing about shari'ah is by no means a sudden isolated line of thinking but is one that already has a strong scholarly basis among non-traditional scholars.

2. It seems like the authors are not aware of some of the vastly agreed upon principles in our traditional scholarship of ahkam. It has been widely accepted by the scholars of shia and sunni that while the wisdom behind the non-worship ahkam can be deducted, when it comes to worship ahkam the default should be strict obedience, because their wisdom is not as clear (look at the book Falsafa al-Tashri' fi al-Islam, by Subhi Mamhasani, p. 160). This of course is not exactly what I say, but is based on the same understanding.

We do not need authority to decide what part of the shari'ah may or may not need evolving. What we need is our intellect. My intellect (and the intellect of many scholars as above) tells me that those parts of the shari'ah that are associated with social sphere can and should be evolved in their form, as societies evolve. On the other hand those parts of the shari'ah that are about individuals and about individuals and their relationship with God, are not depending on any social conditions and therefore are less likely to need adjustment and evolvement.

Tomorrow another scholar may rise to say that 'no in fact the worship Shari'ah should be changed'.

Commented [S170]: Populism:

This sentence is very interesting: "Tomorrow another scholar may rise to say that 'no in fact the worship Shari'ah should be changed". What is wrong with this? What are we afraid of? Are we trying to explore arguments in order to understand the truth better or have we already decided that we know the whole truth and that anyone whose understanding is different from us is on fault? If it is the first, then we should be keen to see someone coming with such argument.

Also according to the Author, if only the spirit of Shari'ah has to be maintained then the shari'ah of worship should be changed as well (God forbid) and instead of the established salat

Commented [S171]: Misquoting/Misrepresenting:

I never wrote only spirit of shari'ah has to be maintained. The rest of the argument therefore does not need my answer.

rituals (the main purpose of which is to remember Allah 20:14) one should just remember God in a chair or bed instead of making wuzu and going through the whole motions of Salat.

D) THE NATURE, IMPORTANCE AND DUTY OF DAWAH:

-As discussed above this earthly human life is a test from the Quranic perspective. However due to a number of limitations humans have and the impediments which are part of this life, this test has not been easy. Allah (swt) through His sheer mercy recognised these and arranged clear guidance for mankind. He chose certain individuals from amongst humans and provided them with His guidance for mankind. These sacred beings were prophets of Allah (swt) and Allah (swt) provided the guidance to them through direct revelation.

-Allah (swt) has dealt with humanity as a unit and a family and has made mutual cooperativeness as one of the basic organising principles of human society. The principle of cooperativeness has been so pervasive and deeply ingrained that no human being can survive without this cooperativeness. Even a cursory view of human life makes it clear that every human being is completely dependent on other humans for all his basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, transportation and countless others. That is why service to mankind is recognised by Allah (swt) as well as humanity (on the basis of Deen e Fitrah) as a primary virtue. Farmers, artisans, masons, drivers, tailors, teachers, scientists, doctors, engineers all perform this service. In fact the very livelihood of every human has been made dependent on providing some sort of service to fellow humans. All these services are related with this worldly life.

-However, as this life is a test, so the actual aim of humanity should be to be successful in this test so that they can get reward from Allah (swt) of entering His paradise. Humanity also needs cooperation in this all important eternal life as they need for this worldly life. Allah (swt) has enjoined upon humans to perform the service of helping fellow beings to gain success in this test as well. This duty was firstly given to prophets whose lives were completely dedicated to providing this service of calling to the way of Lord and purifying human life so that the humans can pass the test and enter paradise after death. Initially, in history this duty was performed by prophets and their companions. Later the scope of this responsibility was widened and a whole nation (Bani Israel) were chosen for this purpose as has been described earlier in this article. Still later when the institution of prophethood ended with Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws), the responsibility transferred to the whole of Muslim Ummah.

-Dawah to mankind is a service (and would be entitled to a wage or reward like a farmer, artisan, doctor, teacher, driver gets the wage or reward) as is indicated by the fact that Allah's prophets used to mention about this wage or reward (Quran 6:90, 25:57, 26:109, 26:127, 26:145, 26:180, 36:21, 38:86 and other places) although the difference is that they would not ask for this wage or reward for their service from the fellow human beings like humans do for their worldly services. This service is now to be performed by each and every individual of Muslim Ummah.

-After the finality of prophethood the noble service of Dawah automatically shifted to all the followers of Holy Prophet Muhammed (sws). The responsibility is full time for Ulema (religious scholars) of this Ummah while for others it is based on capacity although nobody is exempt. As Islam is now the only true form of guidance from Allah (swt) (the soul of which is 'islam'

Commented [S172]: This part is a repetition of what the authors have already written. I do not see what the authors refer to as Dawah to be in line with the Qur'an, rationality or even practically. I do not repeat my reasons again and only comment on a couple of points in this section.

and the body of which is Shari'ah enshrined in the Quran and Sunnah) all its followers have primary responsibility of providing this service to mankind in the form of Dawah to non-Muslims irrespective of race, language and belief systems.

-Unfortunately this noble duty of Dawah has come to be misunderstood by terms like 'conversion' and also due to struggle for political dominance which has become so ubiquitous amongst the nations of the world. If it is understood in its proper perspective and spirit every sensible person would acknowledge its necessity. Would not a doctor alert a person who is risking his health by smoking excessively or by poor lifestyle choices. Would a person not alert his brother who is risking his life by irresponsible driving. **Similarly teaching fellow human beings about the purpose of life and guidance from Allah, giving them glad tidings on following this guidance and alerting them to the possible consequences of rejecting this guidance should be but a natural duty of every Muslim.**

-However it is of paramount importance that those values are upheld which are befitting for this noble duty.

*The foremost of these is that the Quran should be the primary medium of Dawah.

*Dawah should be based on genuine love, kindness and sense of fraternity for fellow beings taking humanity as a unit and a family.

*It should not be based on any ulterior motives like political gains or dominance for Muslim Ummah.

*The reward of paradise is for those who willingly and completely submit themselves to their Lord and purify in the light of His guidance (now enshrined only in the Quran and Sunnah) unless somebody has genuine excuse for not accepting it. Hence dawah should give free choice and should not carry any element of compulsion, coercion, imposition or undue enticement.

*It should appeal to common sense and intellect. The mistakes of already held views and beliefs should be gently and intellectually dealt with and cursing, belittling and undue criticism should be avoided. It should be acknowledged that beliefs systems and prejudice are deep rooted and take long to get corrected and hence would require patience and perseverance.

*It is of paramount importance that very organised and dedicated efforts are made to carry out this important duty effectively. There should be well organised Muslim organisations in every society which are completely committed to perform this duty. Each and every Muslim should not only be alert to every dawah opportunity but also dedicate some of his time, skills and resources for those organisations who have taken up this task.

WRITERS:

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Commented [S173]: I fully agree with this. This is also what I wrote as Principle Three in my article. The point of difference however is that the authors believe that following a specific form of the shari'ah is a necessary part of God's guidance for all human beings.

Commented [S174]: Looking at the amount of personal attack and accusations and judgements that the authors have made in this article, I do not see such attitude reflecting in this very article.

May God guide us on to the path of the truth.
Farhad Shafti