




Theological progression in Muhammad's preachings in Mecca and Medina

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Abstract

Using Haleem's hypothesis on the context of revelation and Wright's progressive revelation theory as theoretical frameworks, this paper examines the theological differences in Muhammad's messages in Mecca and Medina and argues that the theological progression shows how context influences Muhammad's reception, understanding and application of revelations. Also, the paper examined the implications of Muhammad's theological advancements for some contemporary conversations in Islam's scholarship. These discussions show the significance of Muhammad's prophetic ministry to his context and suggest how his theological emphasis is significant to contemporary contexts.

Keywords: theological dynamics, theological progression, Muhammad, historical context, Hijrah

Introduction

Like in many other monotheistic religions, the Islamic prophet Muhammad's revelational experience did not occur at once. It took place over 23 years, covering his early ministry in Mecca and later ministry in Medina. Contemporary studies on the nature and development of Muhammad's message preached in the early days of Islam have identified significant differences between his messages in Mecca and Medinah (Pfeifer, 2024; Ahmed & Malik, 2022; Kara, 2024; Abdallah, 2024; Power, 1914; Ahmed, 2017; Naqvi, 1981; Siddiqi, 1980; Hames, 2013; Ibrahim, 2013; Yaman, 2011; Haleem, 2010; 2017, Zebiri, 2003; Rahman, 1980, Mohagheghi, 2004; Mir, 1992). However, the specific social and historical contexts and factors that occasioned specific theological progression and its theological implications have not been given adequate scholarly attention. The theological progression in Muhammad's messages in Mecca and Medina can only come to light when the cultural and socio-historical contexts that occasioned it are adequately examined.



Recent conversations on the formation of Muhammad's theological thinking

To a certain extent, scholarly perspectives on Muhammad's theological formation can be seen in three perspectives. First, some scholars have divided Muhammad's messages into four distinct phases. For example, Pfeifer (2024), Abdallah (2024), Noldeke (1992), Siddiqi (1980), Naqvi (1981), and Ahmed (2017) proposed that there are four distinct periods in Muhammad's theological development: the first Meccan period, the second Meccan period, the third Meccan period and the Medina period. This paper follows the four divisions of Muhammad's theological development eras because it allows a broad analysis of contexts with critical specificity. Secondly, some scholarly perspectives have focused on Muhammad's interactions with people of other religions in Mecca and Medina as a lens to trace the stages of his theological development. For example, Yaman (2011), Arjomand (2009), and Muir (1923) analysed the *Muhajirun's* (those who followed Muhammad from Mecca to Medina during the hijrah) relationship with the *Ansars* (those who became Muslim from Medina context and became helpers for Muhammad) and non-Muslims in the early day of Muhammad in Medina. Yaman (2011) and Arjomand's (2009) arguments showed the processes of development of Muhammad's inter-religious interaction model.

Finally, some scholars such as Shoemaker (2014; 2022), Donner (1991), Power (1914) and Bell (1926) have focused on certain theological themes of Muhammad's preaching to trace the stages of his theological stance. This content-oriented perspective suggests that the early eschatological warnings made by Muhammad were all part of his early pragmatic approach in his Meccan period. Despite apparent different approaches, the possibility of Muhammad's interpretation of "revealed revelation being influenced by his immediate context is suggested in these four perspectives on Muhammad's prophetic ministry in Mecca and Medina. However, giving closer attention to how varied social, and historical contexts impacted certain engagement of specific theological issues in Muhammad's preaching in different contexts will further clarify the theological dynamics. It is with such clarity that contemporary implications of theological dynamics in Muhammad's preaching in Mecca and Medina can be itemised. This is the purpose of this paper.

Theoretical framework: Context of the revelation and progressive revelation theory

The paper's arguments follow Haleem's (2018) *maqam* and *siyaq al-mawqif* (context of revelation). Halim believes that circumstances surrounding Qur'an and hadith's revelations play essential roles in the reception and interpretation of revelations by the early Muslim communities (Haleem, 2018:47). One of the three branches of *maqam* in Islamic rhetoric (*'Ilm al-ma'ani*) deals with *rutabagas al-kalam li-muqtada al-hal* (conformity of the message to the request of the situation). Specifically, Halim's understanding suggests that socio-historical context is essential in understanding Islam as its Quran and hadith. He further contends that the Quran and hadith may not explain everything fully because they were speaking to a community already familiar with the events or ideas they refer to (Haleem, 2018:48). In addition, George Wright conceptualised that spiritual concepts in religious scriptures are not at one level complete but are in a developmental progression from ideas that are crude and primitive to mature and advanced levels (Wright, 1956). This paper adopted these theories to study the changing contexts behind Muhammad's theological progression in the Meccan and Medina periods and to understand the implications of paradigmatic shifts identifiable in this theological progression.



The social-cultural context of Muhammad's message

In relating to the context of Muhammad's message, it is good to briefly allude to a few background insights. Muhammad was a posthumous son of Abdallah, the youngest son of Abd-al-Muttalib of the tribe of Quraysh. His mother, Amina, who died while he was very young, was from the Meccan tribe of Banu Zuhra (Power, 1914:143-144). While some scholars believe that Muhammad came from a noble family since he was from the Hashim clan (Siddiqi, 1980), the depiction of Muhammad in the Qur'an (53:131) and his early employment with Khadijah provide a valid premise to think that while Muhammad may not have come from an impoverished family, his background could not be of a wealthy family. Besides, his association with farming and nomadic activities in such a malaria-perilous environment conflicts with the tradition that Muhammad had a wealthy family background (Rahim, 2001; Riddell & Cotterell, 2003; Reily, 2015). These few examples of conflicting arguments show how nuanced is the scholarly assessment of the account of Muhammad's early life in their bid to objectively reconstruct the actual events surrounding his message.

In addition, a short overview of Quraysh in *jahiliyyah*¹ is significant to the context of Muhammad's message. Quraysh people were idolatrous (Ahmed 2017). It was a context faced with a confusing mixture of religions and pseudo-religious philosophies. It was disintegrated, disorganised, and filled with blood feuds, perpetual wars, superstition, and adultery. It comprised doctrinally divided Christianity, paganism's polytheism, Jews' demoralised Judaism and Zoroastrian dualistic vagueness (Power, 1914:142). However, some members of Quraysh (the Hanifa) sought something better than sheer religious exhibitionism that could not satisfy their religious and spiritual needs. The presence of the Hanifa suggests that, despite the "ignorance" associated with *jahiliyyah*, there was some kind of religious or spiritual awakening that appeared before the emergence of Muhammad's prophetic ministry in Arabia. This suggests, therefore, that the Arabians were not unprepared for a religious reformer and religious reformation (Riddell & Cotterell, 2003:13; Dharmaraj & Dharmaraj, 1998:6; Rahim, 2001:6).

Similarly, while Muhammad's preaching was largely "revealed," he may have been introduced to certain elements of Christian, Jewish and Persian traditions in his pre-prophetic life experiences (Rahim, 2001:10; Kara, 2024:104). Therefore, the presence and yearning of the Hanifa and Muhammad's encounter with Jews, Persians and some Christians suggest that contrary to the view that the birth of Islam was a 'Bing Bang', evidence shows that some Meccans' (Hanifa) religious expectation, Jewish and Christian materials and Persian traditions may have (to some extent) played a significant role in the formation of Muhammad's preaching and revelations in the first Meccan period (Shoemaker, 2022:248). This is partly because many trading routes in Mecca allowed Muhammad's exposure to different theological traditions of the time, which may have influenced his message (Watt, 1961). Moreover, some scholars, such as Fauzan Pepen and Fata Ahmad (2018:407), argue that a significant portion of early Muslims may have been philosophically influenced by Greek concepts as early as the 7th century because Greece played a key role in the transmission of classical knowledge to the Islamic world.

Not only was certain religious awakening in *Jahiliyyah* but there was also some kind of intellectual development. There were literary, poetic, and philosophical geniuses such as Imrul Qays, Jassas,

¹ The term *Jahiliyyah* is used here to refer to the period before the emergence of Islam in Meccan history.



Antarah and Hajib (Riddell & Cotterel, 2003:1; Rahim, 2001:6; Kara 2024). The combination of these provides a valid ground to raise some critical questions: In what sense was *jahiliyyah* (age of ignorance) indeed an age of ignorance and to whom was *Jahiliyyah* the age of ignorance? These questions confirm that certain kinds of religious awakening and intellectual attainment in *Jahiliyyah* provide a kind of pre-Islamic and early Islamic social and religious contexts, which must be clarified to clearly understand how Muhammad's prophetic ministry responded to and impacted his social context. This provides the need to adequately commodify the religious, historical, and social contexts in understanding theological dynamics in Muhammad's preaching in Mecca and Medina periods of his prophetic ministry.

The theological content of Muhammad's preachings in Mecca

A central theological theme of Muhammad's message in the early Meccan period is his invitation and call to repentance and spiritual reformation done with wisdom and peace (Qur'an 16:125; Ahmed, 2017:56). To some extent, his tone in the early part of the Meccan period was tolerant towards some groups of non-Muslims (Christians and Jews). It was in this period that Muhammad preached certain "inclusive" messages from revelations of what can be termed "verses of peace" (Qur'an 16:125, 2:256, 2:62). Rather than conflicting with non-Muslims, he confronted moral and spiritual issues such as human sacrifice, unlimited polygamy, and murdering of female infants in his first Meccan period. (Siddiqi, 2018; Haleem, 2010). The social and moral needs of his context were of major relevance in his early Meccan sermons.

In addition, Muhammad primarily set out with preachings that were socially relevant. He attempted to create social ethics for the community (Shoemaker, 2014:515). He preached a new social security system, family social structure and exhortations on justice and social equality (Naqvi, 1981; Power, 1914; Rahim, 2001). Disturbed by the ills of corrupt polytheistic Meccan society, Muhammad denounced the wide gap between the rich and the poor, the tyranny of the rich and the suffering of the poor. The socioeconomic characteristic of familiar Arabs in *Jahiliyyah* is best understood to appreciate the nature of Muhammad's message to the Meccans. An ordinary Meccan was a petty trader, a farmer in a desert filled with conditions that prospered anopheles mosquitos and its painful malaria sickness. The destiny of people with low incomes and enslaved people was devastating. A master can kill his slave if he wants (Rahim, 2001; Reily, 2015). Pre-Islamic Arabs practised human slavery and considered slaves a sub-class, mainly obtained through raiding. Muhammad's message addressed slavery as part of social injustice. However, slavery was not limited to the pre-Islamic Arabs. It was a global issue with moral, economic, religious, political, and social implications (Abdallah, 2024:148).

It was a context in which, according to Riddell and Cotterell, "beggars roamed in the streets, orphans looked for help, and the aged looked for care" (Riddell & Cotterell, 2003: 15). Muhammad's early preaching confronted these social and moral needs. This suggests how context, to some extent, informed Muhammad's application and interpretation of the revelations that he received (Power, 1914:26; Naqvi, 1981:139; Rahim, 2001: 13). However, while enslaved people and economic minorities were given a significant place in Muhammad's early message, many Muslims believe that it was not this social condition that entirely gave birth to his revelations. His source of revelation must be distinguished from his occasion of revelation (*asbab an-nuzul*). His interpretation and application of divine revelation can be understood as context-sensitive while



the spiritual origin of his revelation cannot be also overemphasised. This will be given more attention later.

More importantly, eschatological elements were evident in Muhammad's preaching in the Meccan period (Qur'an 101:1-11). He was salient on the certainty of resurrection, terrors of judgement, pains of hell, and the joy of paradise. The unique theological feature in the first Meccan Muhammad's preaching was his mandate as a "warner" who was called to warn the people against the imminent eschatological punishment (Shoemaker, 2014: 516). However, unlike some scholars' views (Power, 2014), Muhammad's interest in impending judgment (eschatological themes) should not be seen as contradicting his stance on earthly empire and political relevance. Rather, the combination of his stance on earthly relevance with eschatological themes suggests, to some extent, something more significant to understand how context informed and shaped theological dynamics in Muhammad's messages. For example, the combination of the two apparent contradicting themes may suggest an admixture of influence: Jewish (territory/land-seeking) and Christian (spiritual) eschatological notions in Muhammad's early orientation. This argument is at least valid due to the close similarity between Judeo-Christian and Muhammad's early eschatology (Kara, 2024; Power, 1914; Nodelke, 1992; Sookhdeo, 2013).

Another central theme in Muhammad's preaching in the first, second, and third Meccan periods is his monotheistic emphasis. Building on what some scholars have argued (Power, 2014; Sookhdeo, 2013), Muhammad did not develop his detailed monotheism in the early Meccan period. This is, probably, why he initially recognised Ka'ba as a house of God and mentioned Al-Lat, Al-Uzza and Mant, the three Meccan greatest goddesses, as exalted *binta Allah* (daughters of God – Qur'an Sura 3) (Sookhdeo, 2013:83; Kara, 2024). However, in the later Meccan period, he was more confrontational to the Meccan polytheists by pronouncing Allah as the only worthy God in his "*Tawhid*" sura (112) and others. This threatened their (some Meccans) material advantages connected to polytheism; hence, the beginning of Meccan animosity toward Muhammad's mission. The animosity later grew and caused Muhammad's move to Medina. This movement, termed "*hijrah*," became a significant turning point in Muhammad's prophetic ministry. The interpretation of *hijrah* has varied, with some (Ibn Hisham d. 833, al-Bukhari 810-870, Ramadan al-Buti 1929-2013) arguing it was driven by divine guidance to safeguard Islam's monotheism, an invitation (pledge of Aqabah) from disunited Aws and Khazraj tribes to establish justice and unity in Medina, and attempt to establish promote Islam beyond Mecca. Contemporary scholars, such as Abdul Majid al-Najjer b. 1945; Taher Jabir al-Alwani 1935-2016; and Youssof al-Qaradhawi 1926-2022, have shifted from traditional *fiqh hijrah* to *fiqh al-muwatana*, focusing on Muslims as active citizens in diverse societies, promoting coexistence and maintaining their Islamic identity (Ahmad & Malik, 2022: 108-112; Kara, 2024:105). What has not been itemized is the fact that Muhammad's *hijrah* from Mecca to Medina is not only politically significant but also theologically important in Islamic history.

The theological significance becomes clear when we compare the content of Muhammad's preachings in Mecca to that of Medina. Before we attempt this comparison, a better path will be to first discuss the theological content of his Medinan messages.



The theological content of Muhammad's preachings in Medina

Muhammad's message in Medina is largely foregrounded on Medina's multi-tribal composition (Yaman, 2011:189). Medina city had been used for division and battles but experienced what Arjomand called "*Pax Islamica*" (peace that came with Islam) with the emergence of Muhammad in Medina (Arjomand, 2009:571-572). This may suggest the reason Medina is referred to as *Mediant al Rasool* (the city of Muhammad). Muhammad was rejected by the Meccans and rudely expelled by the Taif (Meccans) but was accepted warmly by the Yathrib (Medinans). What could have made the Medinan experience different?

Socio-politically, some scholars suggest that the Yathrib had the highest political anarchy and internal tribal wars of all the Arabian tribes. The city had two major southern Arabian tribes: Aus and Khazraj, who had always had conflicts and controversies (Arjomand, 2009:558). Many Medinans had been seeking ways possible to mitigate the perpetual wars for a long time. This fear of intertribal conflict, wars and division may have influenced Yathrib's acceptance of Muhammad's leadership. Also, to some extent, the Yathrib have interacted with the Jews and their absolute versions of monotheism and have been more theologically enlightened than the Meccans (Rahim, 2001:27). Meanwhile, while there are traces of Judaism and Christianity in Islam, the view that Islam is totally moulded on Christianity and Judaism is not founded. This is because, from its outset, Islam has pronounced some peculiarities. For example, the Friday prayer and Islam's call to prayer did not have a Judaic formula from the outset (Rahim, 2001). Also, Muhammad's main understanding was that he was preaching a religion that was different to Christianity and Judaism, especially, in his Medinan periods.

In addition, in Medina, Muhammad preached a commonwealth of Islam. Like a constructive genius, he formed a charter called the Constitution of Medina that established him as the city's religio-political leader which expressed equality of rights and the nature of the relationship between *Muhajirun* (Meccan Muslims who followed him to Medina), *Ansar* (Medina Muslims), pagans and Jews and united several tribal inhabitants of Medina (Pfeifer, 2024:168; Rahim, 2001:27; Arjomand, 2009:558). Due to this, some, like Power (2014) and Sidiqqi (2018), have suggested that Muhammad seems to have compromised his religious programme in Mecca by being involved in the 'black pot of politics' in Medina and that his *hijra* to Medina is political rather than a spiritual move to establish Islam (Siddiqi, 2018:151; Amaechi, 2017:62). While this argument represents a critical expectation of a historical study, it ignores the progressive nature of Islam's revelation and multi-dimensional nature through which Islam has historically manifested itself in different contexts (Power, 1914:150). Again, a comprehensive look suggests that Muhammad did not become less spiritual by being involved in Medinan politics. In Medina, Muhammad codified many spiritual doctrines, such as creeds of prayer and fasting. This shows that the political opportunity opened for Muhammad in Medina did not tamper with the spiritual disposition and tenacity for which Muhammad has been known since his early prophetic career in Mecca (Ahmad & Malik, 2022; Rahim, 2001).

Similarly, jihad and inter-religious confrontation formed a theme in Muhammad's emphasis in Medina. Up to seventy-five per cent of Muhammad's messages were related to confrontation and hostility towards non-Muslims in Medina (Ahmed 2017: Sookhdeo 2015). In his response to the Pagans' anarchy during Tabuk's expedition, he preached some so-called Jihad verses such as Quran 47:4, 2:190-195, 8:65, and 3:121. Compared to his early Meccan disposition, he seems to be less inclusive to the Jews of the Banu Quainuqa, Banu Nadhir, and Banu Quruiza. (Ahmed,



2017:62). Some factors identified for such disposition include the fact that some who identified themselves with the early Muslim community in Medina lacked the genuineness and commitment required of true Muslims. For instance, he ordered Zayd (one of his leading followers) to attack non-Muslims who resided where his father was killed in the battle of Muta in 629 and pronounced curses of Allah on Jews and Christians for making their prophets' tombs a place of worship. He reversed Islamic Qiblah which he had earlier directed his followers to face Jerusalem during prayers in the Meccan period (Siddiqi, 2018:159; Arjoman, 2009:558; Kara, 2024). While this change should not be entirely interpreted as if Muhammad was breaking away from the Abrahamic traditions, it shows how the context of the prophecy occasioned a shift and progression in the content and nature of the prophecy and theology (Rahim 2001). Muhammad was involved in certain theological issues in Medina in some way far different than the way he engaged those issues in his early Meccan ministry. To have a closer understanding of this, we compare Muhammad's message as delivered in Mecca and Medina.

Theological development and progression

A key progression in Muhammad's ideological orientations in the Mecca and Medina periods concerns his monopolization of Abraham's personality (Kara, 2024). In Mecca, Muhammad's sermons tended towards the fact that every nation has its prophet and believed that Abraham was a predecessor to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. However, in Medina, Muhammad preached that Abraham was neither a Judaizer nor a Christian but only a model of Islam and the father of the Arabs (Qur'an 3:60; Siddiqi, 2018:156; Arjomand, 2009:560; Pfeifer, 2024). However, this does not support the view that Muhammad had no peaceful relations with the people of the book (Jews and Christians) during his entire Medinan ministry (Yaman, 2011:193). A careful analysis shows that his relationship with them was more contextual than "essential" (Khattab, 1988; Yaman, 2011). Therefore, the progression in Muhammad's message is not to be understood totally as an expression of theological instability (Rahman, 1980; Zebiri, 2003) or as a theological construct justifying violence (Mohagheghi, 2004; Abdoul-Enein & Zuhur, 2004) but as a form of his creative interface and engagement with situations in his changing contexts. Some Meccan verses are mixed with Medina suras, and vice versa, in such a way that identifying them uniquely may be difficult for non-Islamic experts; for example, Surat seven (*al- A'raf*) has both Meccan and Medinan verses (Hames, 2013:235).

Furthermore, comparing Muhammad's emphasis in Mecca and Medina suggests that the Meccan Muhammad was more doctrinal, while the Medinan Muhammad was more pragmatic and engaging (Shoemaker, 2014:515). Due to this, some have argued that Muhammad's theological stance in Medina was just a pragmatic instrument to establish Islam (Bell, 1926:105), but the compelling evidence with which Muhammad and his early followers expressed their eschatological convictions cannot be quickly shoved aside as a sheer cover-up (Shoemaker, 2014:524). It can only be said that Muhammad shifted his apocalyptic method from a pure Meccan spirituality to a more socio-political emphasis in Medina because of the changing contexts and the uniqueness of Medina's society.

Furthermore, Muhammad progressed from his Meccan passivity and tolerance to a more exclusive, jihadic posture and military conquests in Medina (Heck, 2004; Haleem, 2017; Ibrahim, 2013; Crone, 1983). The word *jihad* occurred only in fifteen suras in the entire Quran. Only four of these fifteen times appeared in the Mecca verse, while the remaining eleven are Medinan suras (Haleem, 2010:147). While this is not a theological justification for Islamic militancy (Yaman, 2011; Haleem, 2010; Heck, 2004; Ibrahim, 2013), it represents a conceptual and theological progression in Muhammad's homiletical and theological methodology, which must not be ignored



for one to adequately appreciate the historical evolution of Islamic theology and its present modern expressions.

Lastly, unlike in the Meccan period, Muhammad's monotheistic notion seems to have a far more detailed codification in Medina. Although Muhammad seemed to drift away sometimes in theological compromise with the Christians (Arjomand, 2009:571), his theological monotheism became more uniquely codified during his Medina pronouncements than in his Meccan messages. We can continue the count by referring to more differences but what will be ultimately more productive is an interrogation of the theological implications of the dynamics.

Implications

The theological dynamic in Muhammad's messages in Mecca and Medina implies that context is a significant factor in interpreting and applying revelations. At least, it plays a crucial role in its reception, interpretation, and application. Two examples from the timing of Muhammad's messages are enough to substantiate this perspective. First, on the arrival of Muhammad in Medina, the *muhajirun*² had to do some work to sustain themselves, as they could not remain a burden to the *Ansars*.³ Therefore, they began the then-popular Arabian enterprise, raiding caravans. They had tried up to four times without good results from their raiding, but with the intervention of Abdallah Jash (one of those who followed Muhammad from Mecca), they successfully raided a rich caravan near Nakhla in the month of Regeb (Power, 1914). While this success was good for the *muhajirun*, it raised some theological concerns because the raiding was done before the end of the holy month, which made it unlawful. It was in this context that Muhammed permitted that "those who have been expelled from their homes, may involve in raiding with certain regulations" (Surah 22:39-40). Part of the regulation set by Muhammad included fighting in a holy month as a good thing provided it is done to keep the people faithful to the true religion (Ibn Ishaq, 1955). Our attention here is not to prove or disprove the narratives, but rather, to demonstrate that to some extent, Muhammad's message was a response to the need of his social and historical context and that this must be understood to unpack Muhammad's different theological dispositions.

Second, Tu'mah Ibn Ubayriq, a member of Ansar, stole a set of armour (*dir*) from al-Nu'men. Tu'mah, manipulated the evidence and even kept the armour in the house of Zayd, a Jew. The owner tracked his property and found it in Zayd's house. The matter was taken to Muhammad, and when he would have been misled in his judgement, he instantly preached and related to a revelation (recorded in Quran 4:105) which guided the early Muslim communities against social and morality of deception. This dynamic relates significantly to the *asbab al-nuzul* (the occasion of revelation) in Qurans' rhetoric studies (Haleem, 2010).

In addition, Muhammad's theological progression alerts our understanding of the historical development of Islam's engaging framework which seeks to impact social and political issues with religious values. For example, his progression from eschatological emphasis to a more socio-political mandate is the beginning of Islam's confluence of theological framework with social concerns. It depicts the historical evolution of Islam's Meccan concept of personal, spiritual

² This word refers to the converts to Islam as well as those who emigrated from Mecca to Medina, especially his advisors and relatives.

³ the Ansars where the inhabitants of Medina who took in Muhammad and gave him aid and protection.



salvation to Medinan emphasis on collective salvation and community mobilisation to the true God (Rahim, 2001:26; Haleem, 2010:150; Shoemaker, 2014:529). This provides the historical background for the formation of the Ummah (Muslim community). Therefore, rather than seeing only the contradiction between Meccan Muhammad and Medinan Muhammad, understanding how changing social contexts impacted Muhammad's ministry provides us with a framework to unpack developmental stages in early Islamic history. For example, it was in Medina that three (Ramadan, Hajj, zakat) out of the five pillars of Islam were codified. To a certain extent, one could be right to assume that the five pillars would not have been completed if Muhammad had not progressed to the Medinan context (Haleem, 2010; Rahim, 2001). Therefore, Muhammad's Medinan experience and message provide a resource for culminating Islamic theological formation and ritual definitions.

Similarly, the diffusion of Meccan apocalypticism with Medinan pragmatism educates us on the two inseparable dimensional expressions of Islam's eschatology. It shows us that from its formative years, Islam has always seen the eschatological rule of God as starting with the rule of God's pious men on earth. Therefore, as Shoemaker puts it, Muhammad's political mandate in Medina represents the "beginning of the end" (Shoemaker, 2014: 530; Haleem, 2010).

Furthermore, Muhammad's theological progression has insightful implications for contemporary scholarly conversations on the doctrine of abrogation. Abrogation is a hermeneutic view that verses of the Qur'an preached in Medina contexts are valid above the verses preached in Mecca. Abrogation thus places Medina above Mecca, based on a diachronic model of the Qur'an's analysis. Many Islamic revival movements have all centred on restoring medina-modelled Muhammad's disposition toward religious minorities (Sookhdeo, 2013; Ilesanmi, 2015: 274). Also, this has made many Islamic thinkers such as Ibn Diamah, al-Basri and Sayyid Qutb use the theological dynamic in Muhammad's message in Medina to argue for the abrogation of more peaceful Meccan verses. (Sookdheo, 2013:23). However, many scholars such as Haleem, Ibrahim, Ibn Arabi, and al-Tabari have criticised abrogation, arguing that it has been 'over-flogged' (Ibrahim 2013, Haleem, 2010; Heck, 2004; Halimi, 2017). The implication of placing Medinan verses above Meccan verses is that some Muslims may follow the more exclusive verses in Medina. This results in some practical implications for Muslim-non-Muslim relationships such as possible non-tolerance and peaceful co-existence between Muslims and adherents of other religions. Amid these ongoing arguments, we believe that the best argument against the overt, over-flogged doctrine of abrogation is an adequate understanding of the contextual exchanges, changes and realities that birthed Muhammad's theological shift (Zebiri, 2003).

The prominent bone of contention on the doctrine of abrogation is 'Which verse abrogates which verse of the Qur'an?' But looking at how contextual and historical shifts from Mecca to Medina bring out dynamics in Muhammad's theology not only helps to clarify this but also shows that there may not be "intentional" differences between Meccan and Medina verse beyond the contextual changes which informed Muhammed's engagements. In effect, it can be suggested that no verse of the Quran is to be read, abrogated, interpreted and applied without keen consideration of its context because every Qur'an's verse responded to a specific, (sometimes, unique) historical context. Although, some Qur'an verses are taken by Muslims as the final ruling, that is, their dictates are absolutely relevant in any context. However, examining the social and historical contexts of each Qur'an verse would be helpful to reflect on Islam's contemporary significance. Therefore, the application of Muhammad's messages to contemporary contexts must be predicated not only on how context shaped Muhammad but also on how Muhammad's message shaped his context. This round-table technique will be relevant to understanding Muhammad's message for the contemporary varying contexts. Furthermore, the growth of



Muhammad's theology from a mere spirituality in Mecca to an imperial dimension in Medina exemplifies Ninian Smart's multiple-dimensional nature of religion. According to Smart, religion must be understood from seven dimensions for an adequate, in-depth understanding. In the same way, Muhammad's integration of contextual issues in his theological development shows that it is a mistaken opinion to understand Islam as a separate entity detached from its phenomenological, anthropological, sociological, historical, and textual dimensions (Shoemaker, 2014; Crone, 1983).

Finally, Muhammad's theological progression demonstrates a better hermeneutical methodology that can be used to apply the Quran and hadith to contemporary situations. It implies that there were specific historical contexts to which Muhammad responded and suggests that Muhammad's religious preachings were largely contextual, and not essentially 'rigid.' The familiarity with those historical contexts shows that just like Muhammad's reception and interpretation of revelation were context-sensitive, the application of his message in the contemporary modern time could also be relevant to modern contexts (Haleem, 2010:148; Ibrahim, 2013:93). This can be achieved with moderate hermeneutical creativity which is proposed by progressive Islamic traditions (Ulph & Sookhdeo, 2014).

Conclusion

Historical events in Islamic history are not synonyms to Islamic legal rulings and the application of Islamic historical values must be undertaken with the right historical understandings. The paper shows how the contextual differences between Mecca and Medina were engaged and impacted by Muhammad's preachings. The paper also suggests that not only was the context impacted by Muhammad's preaching but the preachings were also impacted by the context. This is a rounded dialogue of revelation and context is a factor to be considered in understanding religious phenomena both historically and in a contemporary context. The theological progression has been x-rayed concerning its theological, hermeneutical, and socio-historical implications. These are important to the ongoing thesis of progressive reformers and the Quran's contextualists in contemporary Islamic discourse. The contextualists and progressive scholars have all agreed that the significant challenge facing Islam is the absence of historical understanding that can allow Muslims to adapt and keep pace with the changes of modern times (Ulph & Sookhdeo, 2014; Haleem, 2018; 2017). This paper suggests that more scholarly insight into the significance of social and political factors and differences in Mecca and Medina can be a useful hint for progressive traditions in Islam. In the next few years, contemporary academia will be fascinated to see this dynamic in the arguments of contextualists and progressive reformers and their significance for inter-religious relations in different contemporary contexts.

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