



## HERMENEUTICS OF APOSTASY: FAZLUR RAHMAN AND ABDULLAH SAEED ON RECONCILING ISLAMIC TRADITION WITH MODERN HUMAN RIGHTS

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### Abstract

This study examines the concept of riddah (apostasy) in Islam through the hermeneutical perspectives of Fazlur Rahman and Abdullah Saeed, responding to contemporary challenges regarding religious freedom and human rights. Fazlur Rahman's double movement theory emphasizes the necessity of reconstructing the historical context of Qur'anic revelation while synthesizing its ethical principles with modernity. Meanwhile, Abdullah Saeed's contextual approach argues for the reinterpretation of riddah within the framework of religious pluralism, advocating for an inclusive understanding aligned with human rights principles. Using a qualitative methodology, this research analyzes primary texts from both scholars, Qur'anic verses, and relevant literature on Islamic legal thought. The findings reveal that while both scholars reject the application of capital punishment for apostasy, their approaches diverge: Rahman employs historical-contextual reconstruction to extract universal ethical values, whereas Saeed emphasizes the prioritization of individual rights and legal flexibility. This study contributes to the discourse on Islamic hermeneutics and legal reform, highlighting the necessity of reconciling scriptural fidelity with the ethical imperatives of pluralistic societies. By bridging the gap between classical jurisprudence and contemporary human rights frameworks, this research underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of Islamic legal thought.

**Keywords:** Abdullah Saeed; Apostasy; Fazlur Rahman; and Hermeneutics.

### Abstrak

*Studi ini mengkaji konsep riddah (kemurtadan) dalam Islam melalui perspektif hermeneutika Fazlur Rahman dan Abdullah Saeed, dalam rangka merespons tantangan kontemporer terkait kebebasan beragama dan hak asasi manusia. Teori double movement yang dikembangkan oleh Fazlur Rahman menekankan pentingnya memahami kembali konteks historis wahyu Al-Qur'an serta menyelaraskan prinsip-prinsip etisnya dengan realitas modern. Sementara itu, pendekatan kontekstual Abdullah Saeed menyoroti perlunya reinterpretasi riddah dalam kerangka pluralisme agama, dengan menekankan pemahaman yang lebih inklusif dan selaras dengan prinsip-prinsip hak asasi manusia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan menganalisis teks-teks utama dari kedua sarjana, ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an, serta literatur yang relevan dalam pemikiran hukum Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun Fazlur Rahman dan Abdullah Saeed*

sama-sama menolak hukuman mati bagi pelaku riddah, pendekatan mereka berbeda. Rahman menggunakan rekonstruksi historis-kontekstual untuk menggali nilai-nilai etis universal dalam Al-Qur'an, sedangkan Saeed lebih menekankan pada perlindungan hak individu dan fleksibilitas hukum Islam dalam masyarakat modern. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi bagi wacana hermeneutika Islam dan reformasi hukum dengan menekankan pentingnya menyeimbangkan kesetiaan terhadap teks suci dengan tuntutan etika dalam masyarakat plural. Dengan menjembatani kesenjangan antara yurisprudensi klasik dan prinsip-prinsip hak asasi manusia kontemporer, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pemikiran hukum Islam bersifat dinamis dan terus berkembang sesuai dengan perubahan zaman.

**Kata Kunci:** Abdullah Saeed; Fazlur Rahman; Hermeneutika; dan riddah.

## Introduction

The modern world currently faces increasingly complex challenges of religious pluralism, driven by heightened cross-cultural and interfaith interactions.<sup>1</sup> Within this context, sensitive issues such as *riddah* (apostasy) have become critical subjects for re-examination, particularly in relation to universal values like religious freedom and human rights (HAM).<sup>2</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) explicitly recognizes freedom of religion as a fundamental right inherent to every individual. However, within Islamic interpretative traditions, *riddah* has often been interpreted literally as an act carrying severe legal consequences, such as capital punishment, without sufficient consideration of the historical and social contexts of the relevant Quranic verses.<sup>3</sup> This has sparked significant debate, especially when classical interpretations clash with human rights principles and the dynamics of contemporary societies.<sup>4</sup>

In addressing these challenges, hermeneutical approaches serve as essential tools for reconstructing the understanding of *riddah* (apostasy) to remain relevant to contemporary demands.<sup>5</sup> The methodologies introduced by Fazlur Rahman, through his *double movement* framework, and Abdullah Saeed, with his contextualization method, offer novel perspectives for interpreting Qur'anic verses on *riddah*. Fazlur Rahman emphasizes the necessity of excavating the historical context of Qur'anic revelations while synthesizing them with universal moral principles applicable today. Meanwhile, Abdullah Saeed focuses on the contextualization of interpretation to ensure that Islamic law can be applied flexibly without compromising its ethical essence. Through these approaches, hermeneutics not only creates opportunities to

<sup>1</sup> Roro Fatikhin, "Riddah Dalam Perspektif Bahasa, Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis (Studi Tentang Konsekuensi Hukum Riddah)," *Lisyabab: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Sosial* 1, no. 2 (2020): 179–94, <https://doi.org/10.58326/jurnallisyabab.v1i2.48>.

<sup>2</sup> Achmad Suhaili, "Hak Asasi Manusia (HAM) Dalam Penerapan Hukum Islam Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmu Al Qur'an Dan Hadist* 2, no. 2 (2019): 176–93.

<sup>3</sup> Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues over Apostasy (Riddah)," ed. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Crime and Punishment in Islamic Law: A Fresh Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, August 22, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190910648.003.0008>.

<sup>4</sup> Iain Cameron, "Freedom of Religion and Competing Human Rights System," in *Freedom Of Religion in the 21st Century (A Human Rights Perspective on the Relation between Politics and Religion)*, ed. Hans Georg Ziebertz and Ernst Hirsch Ballin (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 26.

<sup>5</sup> Abd Aziz Faiz, "Epistemologi Tafsir Al-Qur'an Kontekstual Abdullah Saeed Dalam Arus Perubahan Sosial-Budaya Masyarakat Kontemporer.," *Empirisma: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Kebudayaan Islam*, 2024, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30762/empirisma.v33i2.2019>.

comprehend *riddah* within its original framework but also establishes a renewed relevance, harmoniously aligned with modern principles of religious freedom. This analytical reorientation bridges the gap between scriptural fidelity and the evolving ethical imperatives of pluralistic societies.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the concept of *riddah* as the material object by utilizing the distinct hermeneutical methodologies of Fazlur Rahman and Abdullah Saeed as formal objects. Through Rahman's *double movement*, which synthesizes historical contextualization with overarching ethical principles and Saeed's contextual approach, which emphasizes individual rights and religious liberty, this research aims to explore how these interpretive frameworks engage with classical Qur'anic discourse in relation to contemporary sociopolitical contexts.

This comparative study of Fazlur Rahman and Abdullah Saeed is highly relevant due to their substantial contributions to contemporary Islamic hermeneutics. Their intellectual frameworks present progressive alternatives for reconciling tensions between Islamic tradition and modern imperatives. This research addresses a gap in existing scholarship, particularly the limited comparative studies on hermeneutical approaches to *riddah* (apostasy) from the perspectives of Fazlur Rahman and Abdullah Saeed. While both scholars offer distinct methodologies for interpreting sacred texts, their works have yet to be thoroughly examined in the context of modern religious freedom.

In many Muslim-majority nations, laws concerning *riddah* continue to be applied literally, disregarding shifts in sociopolitical contexts. This perpetuates tensions between traditionally understood religious obligations and universally recognized individual rights. Hermeneutical approaches can help differentiate between permanent Islamic legal injunctions (*qath'i*) and contextually contingent rulings (*zhanni*), fostering interpretations that are more inclusive, equitable, and aligned with the needs of a globalized society.

Focusing on Fazlur Rahman and Abdullah Saeed, this study aims to critically analyze their hermeneutical methodologies, particularly in addressing *riddah* in the Qur'an. It seeks to identify both convergences and divergences in their interpretive frameworks and assess the legal implications arising from their methodologies. By doing so, the research underscores the relevance of their ideas to Islamic legal reform and contemporary debates on religious freedom. Ultimately, this analysis contributes to bridging the gap between classical jurisprudence and the ethical demands of pluralistic modernity, advocating for interpretations of Islamic law that uphold both textual fidelity and universal human rights principles.

## Research Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach utilizing hermeneutical methodology to analyze Fazlur Rahman's and Abdullah Saeed's perspectives on the concept of *riddah* (apostasy) within the framework of modernity. The primary sources include the Qur'an, as the foundational text for understanding both scholars' interpretations, and key scholarly works such as Fazlur Rahman's *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of Intellectual Tradition*—which elucidates his *double movement theory* as a hermeneutical framework for Qur'anic exegesis—and Abdullah Saeed's *Freedom of Religion, Apostasy, and Islam*, which provides critical insights into his views on religious freedom, apostasy, and modernity. The qualitative data comprises textual materials

from the Qur'an, the writings of Rahman and Saeed, and supplementary literature addressing apostasy in Islamic discourse.

The primary instrument of analysis is textual examination, involving a critical interpretation of Qur'anic verses and the seminal works of both scholars. This process entails an engagement with the foundational principles of Rahman's hermeneutics, particularly his *double movement theory*, which underscores the necessity of understanding both the historical context of Qur'anic revelations and their contemporary ethical applications. Similarly, Saeed's works are analyzed to explore his emphasis on religious freedom and the reinterpretation of *riddah* in modern Muslim societies.

Data collection is conducted through a literature review, synthesizing primary texts, peer-reviewed articles, and relevant academic journals. The analysis adopts a hermeneutical lens, prioritizing historical-contextual interpretation of the Qur'an and the scholars' ideas to uncover their stances on religious freedom, apostasy, and their relevance to modern challenges such as religious pluralism and human rights. The study further contextualizes their views within contemporary sociopolitical realities and contrasts them with classical juristic interpretations of *riddah*.

The research procedure follows four stages: (1) systematic data collection, (2) textual analysis and hermeneutical interpretation, (3) comparative evaluation of Rahman's and Saeed's methodologies and their legal implications, and (4) synthesis of findings into a cohesive report. This structured approach aims to generate novel insights into modern Islamic thought, particularly regarding the interplay between religious freedom, apostasy laws, and the ethical demands of pluralistic societies. By bridging classical hermeneutics with contemporary challenges, this methodology seeks to advance discourse on Islamic legal reform and the harmonization of scriptural fidelity with universal human rights principles.

### Conceptual Analysis of *Riddah*

The term *riddah* (Arabic: رَدَّة), derived from the root *radda* ("to turn back" or "to revert"), refers to the act of abandoning Islam after embracing it or rejecting core tenets of the faith.<sup>6</sup> In classical Islamic legal perspectives, *riddah* is framed as a repudiation of religious commitment, often categorized as a grave offense warranting severe legal consequences, including capital punishment.

The debate concerning apostasy (*riddah*) sanctions has persisted since the early Islamic era, specifically during the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*Khulafā' al-Rāshidīn*).<sup>7</sup> This discourse emerged in response to cases of apostasy following the death of Prophet Muhammad SAW, such as the rebellion led by groups rejecting the obligation of *zakāt*. Caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, for instance, took decisive action by waging war against these groups, known as the Riddah Wars.<sup>8</sup> However, this measure was not solely motivated by apostasy in belief but rather by their

<sup>6</sup> Jamaluddin Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisan Al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'arif, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Elias Shoufani, *AL-RIDDAH AND THE MUSLIM CONQUEST OF ARABIA* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018). 10.

<sup>8</sup> Shoufani.48.



political rebellion against the Islamic state's authority.<sup>9</sup> From this period onward, scholars diverged in their interpretations of whether *riddah* should be viewed strictly as a matter of individual belief or as encompassing political and social dimensions, leading to varied juristic approaches in sanctioning apostasy including the controversy over capital punishment..<sup>10</sup>

During subsequent caliphates, particularly under the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, apostasy laws evolved. Many scholars argued that apostates (*murtaddūn*) should face capital punishment as a deterrent against the spread of disbelief (*kufr*), while more moderate views emphasized the necessity of clear evidence and overt rejection of Islamic tenets before imposing such penalties. As religious pluralism and interfaith interactions expanded, debates over apostasy sanctions persisted.<sup>11</sup> By the 19th and 20th centuries, modernist Islamic thinkers such as Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā critically reassessed the application of capital punishment for apostasy, advocating for religious freedom within increasingly open and pluralistic societies.<sup>12</sup>

Contemporary perspectives on *riddah* remain polarized. Conservative factions uphold apostasy punishments as integral to enforcing Islamic orthodoxy, while progressive groups assert that religious freedom is an inviolable individual right, rendering apostasy sanctions incompatible with modern sociolegal contexts. This debate reflects the ongoing tension between religious doctrine, state authority, and human rights in the Muslim world. Thus, *riddah* transcends theological discourse, emerging as a dynamic sociopolitical issue shaped by evolving Islamic civilizational frameworks.

In Islamic tradition, *riddah* refers to the act of abandoning Islam after embracing it. This issue is extensively addressed in normative sources, including the Qur'an and ḥadīth, which classical scholars later interpreted within jurisprudential (*fiqh*) and theological (*kalām*) frameworks. The Qur'an touches on apostasy in several verses, such as Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:217), For those who commit apostasy, their works both in this life and in the life to come are rendered worthless.<sup>13</sup> which states:

*They ask you (O Prophet Muhammad) about fighting in the sacred months. Say, "Fighting during them is a grave transgression. Yet, obstructing (people) from the path of Allah, rejecting faith in Him, preventing access to the Sacred Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Haram), and expelling its neighboring communities are far more grievous in the sight of Allah. Persecution (through polytheism and oppression) is worse than killing." They will not cease fighting you until they compel you to abandon your faith, should they prevail. Whoever among you renounces their religion and dies in disbelief—their deeds will be rendered void in this world and the Hereafter.*

<sup>9</sup> Zulhamdani, "Kebebasan Beragama Dan Murtad Dalam Islam : Aplikasi Teori Kontekstual Terhadap Ayat-Ayat Riddah Dalam Al- Qur'an," *Alif Lam: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 2, no. 2 (2021): 138–56, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.51700/aliflam.v2i2>.

<sup>10</sup> Zakaria Syafe'i, "KONTEKSTUALISASI HUKUM ISLAM TENTANG KONVERSI AGAMA (RIDDAH) DI INDONESIA," *ALQALAM* 33, no. 1 (2016): 160–91.

<sup>11</sup> Ali Akbar, "Punishment for Apostasy: Arguments from Two Traditionally Trained Muslim Scholars in Favor of Its Abolition," *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* 10, no. 1 (February 1, 2021): 71–90, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ojlr/rwab005>.

<sup>12</sup> Oaima Abou Bakr, "Freedom of Religion in Qur'anic Exegesis," in *FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN ISLAM (Challenging Apostasy and Blasphemy Laws)*, ed. Muhammad Khalid Masud et al. (Britain: I B Tauris, 2021). 41-47.

<sup>13</sup> Taha Jabir Al-Alwani, *APOSTASY in ISLAM (A Historical & Scriptural Analysis)*, trans. Nancy Roberts (London: THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT, 2011). 25

*Such individuals are the inhabitants of the Hellfire, wherein they shall abide eternally.* (Al-Baqarah 2:217)

*“How would God bestow His guidance upon people who have resolved to deny the truth after having attained to faith, and having borne witness that this Apostle is true, and [after] all evidence of the truth has come unto them? For, God does not guide such evildoing folk”* (Al-Imran 3:86). Apostasy entails the negation of right guidance and the willingness to receive it.<sup>14</sup>

Repeated apostasy prevents one's repentance from being accepted<sup>15</sup>: *“Verily, as for those who are bent on denying the truth after having attained to faith, and then grow [ever more stubborn] in their refusal to acknowledge the truth, their repentance shall not be accepted”* (Al-Imran 3:90)

*“Verily, as for those who are bent on denying the truth and die as deniers of the truth - not all the gold on earth could ever be their ransom. It is they for whom grievous suffering is in store; and they shall have none to succor them”* (Al-Imran 3:91). The divine punishment for dying in a state of unbelief will not be rescinded by virtue of any (good) work one has performed in this earthly life, nor by any ransom one might offer in return for one's redemption.<sup>16</sup>

*“O you who have attained to faith! If you pay heed to some of those to whom revelation was vouchsafed aforetime, they might cause you to renounce the truth after you have come to believe [in it]”* (Al-Imran 3:98). There are those who would induce the weak to commit apostasy.<sup>17</sup>

*“...on the Day [of Judgment] when some faces will shine [with happiness] and some faces will be dark [with grief]. And as for those with faces darkened, [they shall be told]: ‘Did you deny the truth after having attained to faith? Taste, then, this suffering for having denied the truth!’* (Al-Imran 3:106). This verse describes some of the grievous chastisement that awaits those who turn away from their faith.<sup>18</sup>

*“Verily, they who have bought a denial of the truth at the price of faith can in no wise harm God, whereas grievous suffering awaits them”* (Al-Imran 3:177). The person who commits apostasy hurts only himself.<sup>19</sup>

*“O you who have attained to faith! If you ever abandon your faith, God will in time bring forth [in your stead] people whom He loves and who love Him”* (Al-Ma'idah 5:54). The person who turns away from faith does not love God, but will not be able to bring Him harm in any way; rather, God will replace him with those who are better than he is.<sup>20</sup>

*“Behold, as for those who come to believe, and then deny the truth, and again come to believe, and again deny the truth, and thereafter grow stubborn in their denial of the truth God will not forgive them, nor will He guide them in any way”* (An-Nisa' 4:137). Those who turn away from their faith repeatedly will not be able to attain to God's forgiveness no matter what they do.

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<sup>14</sup> Al-Alwani. 25

<sup>15</sup> Al-Alwani.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Alwani. 26

<sup>17</sup> Al-Alwani.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Alwani.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Alwani.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Alwani.

<sup>21</sup> Al-Alwani. 27

*“As for anyone who denies God after having once attained to faith - and this, to be sure, does not apply to one who does it under duress, the while his heart remains true to his faith, but [only to] him who willingly opens up his heart to a denial of the truth - : upon all such [falls] God’s condemnation, and tremendous suffering awaits them”* (An-Nahl 16:106). Apostasy committed by someone who has done so under duress, and who therefore had no other choice, does not affect his actual faith. The only way in which apostasy can affect one’s actual faith is for one to open his or her heart consciously and willingly to a denial of the truth.<sup>22</sup>

*“And there is, too, among men many a one who worships God on the border-line(of faith); thus, if good befalls him, he is satisfied with Him; but if a trial assails him, he turns away utterly, losing [thereby both] this world and the life to come: (and) this, indeed, is a loss beyond compare!”* (Al-Hajj 22:11). Weak faith, lack of certainty and failure to worship God with a pure heart are among the most important entry points for apostasy.<sup>23</sup>

*“Verily, they who are bent on denying the truth and on barring [others] from the path of God, and [who thus] cut themselves off from the Apostle after guidance has been vouchsafed to them, can in no wise harm God; but He will cause all their deeds to come to nought”* (Muhammad 47:32). Unbelief cannot harm God in any way; rather, whatever works are performed by the person who denies the truth will come to nothing, and this is the outcome he or she must expect.<sup>24</sup>

The socio-historical analysis of the hadiths on *riddah* reveals that their punitive measures, such as execution, were contextually tied to specific threats against the early Muslim community rather than mere religious apostasy. For instance, the hadiths cited in the journal such as the instruction to *"kill whoever changes their religion"*. This hadith serves as the primary basis for many classical scholars in establishing the death penalty for apostates,<sup>25</sup> were interpreted by scholars as addressing acts of political rebellion or hostility, not personal faith abandonment. The Prophet Muhammad and his companions often distinguished between apostasy accompanied by treason, warfare, or public incitement against Islam and private disbelief. Hadiths mentioning punishment were contextualized within scenarios where apostates actively endangered the Muslim polity, such as the case of the tribe of who apostatized, murdered a shepherd, and stole property, thereby triggering a collective response. This analysis underscores that the hadith’s punitive directives were contingent on socio political contexts, aiming to preserve communal unity and security rather than suppress individual belief.<sup>26</sup>

In classical fiqh scholarship, scholarly opinions on *riddah* (apostasy) vary across legal schools (*madhāhib*). The Ḥanafī school, for instance, mandates a grace period (*muddat al-istitābah*) for apostates to repent. Failure to repent within this period renders the individual liable to capital punishment. Conversely, the *Mālikī* and *Shāfiʿī* schools adopt a stricter stance, prescribing unconditional execution for apostasy, viewing it as an offense warranting immediate

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<sup>22</sup> Al-Alwani.

<sup>23</sup> Al-Alwani.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Alwani.

<sup>25</sup> Muhammadun, Oman Fathurrohman, and Idris Ahmad Rifai, “Death Penalty for Apostasy : The Perspective of Hadith and Positive Law,” *JURNAL INDO-ISLAMIKA* 11, no. 1 (2021): 1–20, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15408/jii.v11i1.20360>.

<sup>26</sup> Zulhamdani, “Kebebasan Beragama Dan Murtad Dalam Islam : Aplikasi Teori Kontekstual Terhadap Ayat-Ayat Riddah Dalam Al- Qur'an.”

punitive action.<sup>27</sup> Theological frameworks, such as those articulated by *al-Ash 'arī* and *al-Māturīdī*, similarly regard apostasy as a grave threat to the Muslim community's cohesion, necessitating severe penalties to safeguard religious and social integrity.<sup>28</sup>

### **Fazlur Rahman's Hermeneutics of *Riddah***

Fazlur Rahman (1919–1988), a prominent Pakistani Muslim scholar, is celebrated as one of the 20th century's most influential thinkers in Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic philosophy, and contemporary Islamic thought. His innovative approach emphasizes contextualizing the Qur'an's teachings while addressing modernity's challenges.<sup>29</sup> Born in Amritsar, India (1919), into an educated and devout family, Rahman was shaped by a multireligious milieu that informed his commitment to pluralism and interfaith dialogue.<sup>30</sup>

Rahman's initial education and training commenced at Aligarh Muslim University in India, a preeminent higher education institution renowned among Muslim intellectuals across the Indian subcontinent. There, he engaged in multidisciplinary studies encompassing philosophy, history, and religious sciences, which profoundly shaped his epistemological perspectives on Islam and modernity. Rahman's intellectual formation was further molded by Western philosophical traditions, particularly rationalist discourse and scientific methodology, which he systematically synthesized with his hermeneutical engagement with Islamic textual sources.<sup>31</sup>

Following the completion of his studies at Aligarh, Rahman pursued advanced academic training at the University of Oxford, where he obtained a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. His immersion in Occidental philosophical paradigms—most notably empiricist and rationalist traditions—provided the epistemological foundation for his subsequent endeavors to integrate these frameworks into his analytical approach to the Qur'an and Islamic thought. This intellectual openness to Western epistemes engendered a distinctive hermeneutic orientation, enabling him to reconceptualize Islamic discourse within a global framework and advance a contextual understanding of its theological tenets.<sup>32</sup>

Rahman further pursued his academic formation at the University of Lahore and the University of Chicago, where he spent the greater portion of his scholarly career. At the University of Chicago, he held a professorship in Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic thought, emerging as a pivotal faculty member within the institution. This tenure afforded him the intellectual milieu to refine his hermeneutic theory, which emphasized a contextualist epistemology of the Qur'an that transcended rigid traditionalist frameworks.<sup>33</sup>

Fazlur Rahman commenced his academic career as a lecturer at the University of Lahore, Pakistan, during the 1940s and 1950s, prior to transitioning to a globally oriented position at the University of Chicago in the 1960s. As a scholar, Rahman remained steadfastly committed to

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<sup>27</sup> Al-Alwani, *APOSTASY in ISLAM (A Historical & Scriptural Analysis)*.

<sup>28</sup> Ja'afar Agaji Abdullahi, "Riddah (Apostasy) in Islamic Jurisprudence: The Views of The Jurists," *SOUTH ASIAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES* 2, no. 3 (2021): 96–104, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.48165/sajssh.2021.2306>.

<sup>29</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *A STUDY OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM (Revival and Reform In Islam)*, ed. Ebrahim Moosa (England: ONEWORLD OXFORD, 2003). 1.

<sup>30</sup> Rahman. 2

<sup>31</sup> Rahman.

<sup>32</sup> Rahman.

<sup>33</sup> Rahman.



reconstructing an Islamic intellectual framework that simultaneously preserved classical theological traditions and responded to modernity's epistemic challenges.<sup>34</sup>

Rahman's seminal scholarly oeuvre reflects a rigorous synthesis of modern critical inquiry and Islamic intellectual heritage. His notable works include *Islamic Methodology in History* (1965), *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (1982), and *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (1980). Through these works, he systematically advanced an exegetical methodology that eschewed literalism in favor of a historically grounded hermeneutics, integrating sociocultural contexts pertinent to the Qur'an's revelatory milieu.<sup>35</sup> He maintained that a faithful comprehension of the Qur'anic text necessitated rigorous engagement with the historical circumstances and sociocultural matrices within which divine revelation was articulated.<sup>36</sup>

Fazlur Rahman's intellectual trajectory was profoundly shaped by modern philosophical currents, particularly rationalist and empiricist traditions, which he critically synthesized with the hermeneutics of religious texts. His scholarly critique targeted conventional exegetical methodologies that privileged textual literalism in Qur'anic interpretation, advocating instead for a dynamic, context-sensitive hermeneutic framework. Among his seminal contributions is the *double movement* theory in Qur'anic hermeneutics a dialectical model designed to mediate between textual comprehension anchored in historical particularities and the exigencies of contemporary sociopolitical realities.

Rahman's scholarship transcended academic discourse, significantly influencing Islamic intellectual reform movements. His work sought to bridge the epistemic divide between Islamic tradition and modernity's imperatives, addressing issues such as religious pluralism, freedom of conscience, and evolving sociomoral paradigms.<sup>37</sup> This framework operates through two interdependent hermeneutic trajectories: first, a rigorous reconstruction of the sociohistorical context (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) underpinning Qur'anic revelation,<sup>38</sup> and the systematic extrapolation of universal ethical principles for application within contemporary sociopolitical realities.<sup>39</sup>

Applied to verses concerning *riddah*, the *double movement* necessitates interpreting such injunctions not solely as juridical responses to early Islamic communal politics but as vessels of transhistorical ethical imperatives. By foregrounding the Qur'an's moral intentionality, this methodology accommodates pluralistic reinterpretations of apostasy-related rulings in modern contexts.<sup>40</sup> It thereby enables a flexible engagement with issues like religious freedom and

<sup>34</sup> Rahman. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Maraimbang, Syahrin Harahap, and Amroeni Drajat, "Ethics of Religion According to Fazlur Rahman," *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* 24, no. 1 (2019): 73–80, <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.9790/0837-2402017380>.

<sup>36</sup> Rudy Irawan, "Metode Kontekstual Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Perspektif Fazlur Rahman," *Al- Dzikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Al-Hadits* 13, no. 2 (2019): 171–94, <https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.24042/al-dzikra.v13i2.4164>.

<sup>37</sup> Mohamad Yufidz Anwar Ibrohim and Nur Muhammad, "Hermeneutika Double Movement Fazlur Rahman: Mewujudkan Hukum Islam Yang Lebih Eksistensial," *El-BANAT: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 1 (2022): 104–20, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54180/elbanat.2022.12.1.104-120>.

<sup>38</sup> Irma Riyani and Yeni Huriani, "Reinterpretasi Asbāb Al-Nuzūl Bagi Penafsiran Alquran," *Wawasan: JURNAL ILMIAH AGAMA DAN SOSIAL BUDAYA* 2, no. 1 (2017): 113–30, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15575/jw.v2i1.863>.

<sup>39</sup> Febri Hijroh Mukhlis, "Reposisi Kaidah Asbab Al-Nuzul Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur'an," *AL-AQWAM: Jurnal Studi Al-Quran Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (2023): 46–69, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.58194/alaqwam.v2i1.806>.

<sup>40</sup> Femy Putri Nursyifa et al., "Criticism of Fazlur Rahman's Al-Qur'an Hermeneutics," *Journal of 'Ulūm Al-Qur'ān and Tafsīr Studies* 2, no. 1 (2023): 4–10, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54801/juquts.v2i1.170>.

doctrinal pluralism, while safeguarding the scripture's core ethical vision. Such an approach reorients exegesis toward discerning the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (higher objectives of Islamic law) embedded within historically contingent rulings, ensuring their relevance to evolving civilizational paradigms.

Fazlur Rahman emphatically underscores the hermeneutic necessity of reconstructing the historical context (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) in Qur'anic exegesis. This historical contextualization refers to the sociopolitical milieu that precipitated the revelation of specific Qur'anic injunctions.<sup>41</sup> For verses addressing *riddah* (apostasy), Rahman insists on situating their interpretation within the sociohistorical framework of 7th-century Arabia, where the nascent Muslim community faced existential threats to its communal cohesion amid protracted conflicts with non-Muslim factions.

A comprehensive understanding of these Qur'anic injunctions necessitates not only an engagement with their historical revelatory context (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) but also a rigorous excavation of the universal ethical principles embedded within the scripture.<sup>42</sup> Within Rahman's hermeneutic paradigm, acts of *riddah* (apostasy) cannot be reductively interpreted as mere theological betrayal; rather, they must be reconceptualized as phenomena of individual conscience, demanding nuanced consideration within the pluralistic social frameworks of modernity.

Rahman's hermeneutics posits that such verses simultaneously encode both historically contingent directives and transhistorical moral intentionality.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, apostasy-related rulings must be critically re-evaluated to disentangle their situational juridical dimensions (rooted in the preservation of a nascent religious community) from the Qur'an's overarching ethical commitments to human dignity and moral agency. This dual hermeneutic operation enables a discursive shift from viewing *riddah* solely as a juridical transgression to acknowledging its implications for contemporary debates on freedom of belief and doctrinal pluralism. By foregrounding the Qur'an's ethical universals, Rahman's framework advocates for a calibrated equilibrium between scriptural ethics and evolving civilizational imperatives.

Rahman's hermeneutics prevents us from adopting an overly rigid or literalist approach to Qur'anic verses that threaten individuals who renounce Islam.<sup>44</sup> This hermeneutical method emphasizes religious freedom as a paramount value, asserting that Islam should not mandate its adherents to resort to violence or punitive measures against those who choose to convert from the faith. In this context, Rahman's hermeneutics prioritizes the application of the Qur'an's universal ethics, which uphold individual autonomy and the right to religious self-determination.

The analysis of *riddah* (apostasy) verses through Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics can be observed via the application of his "double movement" concept, which integrates two critical stages of Qur'anic interpretation. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:217), addressing those "killed in the path of God," is often interpreted as affirming the dignity of martyrs.

<sup>41</sup> Abd.Rozq, "Qur'anic Hermeneutics and Its Applications by Fazlur Rahman," *IJISS: International Journal of Islamic Social Studies* 1, no. 2 (2023): 121–31, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.62039/ijiss.v1i2.27>.

<sup>42</sup> Wardani Wardani and Wardatun Nadhiroh, "Menemukan Universalitas Pesan Alquran Sebagai Keniscayaan Dalam Penafsiran Multi-Interdisipliner," *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 8, no. 1 (2018): 93–123, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2018.8.1.93-123>.

<sup>43</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *ISLAMIC METHODOLOGY IN HISTORY*, ed. A.S. Bazmee Ansari, 2nd ed. (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute Islamabad Pakistan, 1995). 158.

<sup>44</sup> Vicky Izza El Rahma, "DOUBLE MOVEMENT : HERMENEUTIKA ALQURAN FAZLUR RAHMAN," *Jurnal Keislaman* 4, no. 2 (2021): 127–43, <https://doi.org/DOI: https://doi.org/10.54298/jk.v4i2.3314>.

within the context of apostasy, this verse may be understood as a cautionary warning against abandoning Islam during wartime, where apostasy was perceived as an act of betrayal toward the Muslim community engaged in defending its identity. This aligns with the socio-political framework of the Prophet Muhammad's era, wherein the nascent Muslim community faced existential threats and vulnerability to external hostilities. Apostasy at that time posed a direct challenge to the community's survival.

By applying Rahman's hermeneutics, the focus shifts toward emphasizing the universal moral values inherent in the verse, such as the sanctity of human life and respect for human dignity. Within this framework, the verse transcends its historical specificity to advocate for individual freedom a pivotal concern in modern societal contexts. Thus, although revealed within a wartime milieu, the verse's ethical principles remain relevant in negotiating the balance between social stability and personal liberty in contemporary societies.

Surah At-Tawbah (9:74) admonishes the severe consequences for those who apostatize from Islam, correlating renunciation of faith with grave eschatological retribution. Historically contextualized, this verse may be interpreted as a response to existential threats confronting the nascent Muslim community, wherein apostasy was perceived as a betrayal of the sociopolitical struggle of the ummah striving to preserve its integrity. During that period, apostasy was regarded as a violation of the emergent Muslim communal solidarity. However, through Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutical framework, this verse necessitates a dual-axis interpretation. First, within the sociopolitical milieu of Prophet Muhammad's era, *riddah* (apostasy) may have constituted a destabilizing threat to communal cohesion. Second, in applying the Qur'an's universal ethical principles, Rahman emphasizes the imperative of upholding religious autonomy and individual agency in matters of belief.

Surah Al-Imran (3:90) addresses those who renounce faith and revert to disbelief after professing Islam, declaring their deeds void and condemning them to eternal damnation. Historically, this verse references apostates in early Islam, whose defection was perceived as a critical threat to the Muslim community during its formative and consolidatory phase. Apostasy during this era was framed as treason against the fledgling community and its sociopolitical struggle. Through Rahman's analytical lens, however, this injunction must be situated within a broader sociomoral framework. Employing his *double movement* hermeneutic, Rahman argues that while *riddah* was deemed a breach of communal solidarity in the Prophetic context, contemporary exegesis necessitates ethical reflection on religious liberty. Apostasy should thus be reconceptualized not merely as a communal threat but as an expression of individual autonomy one warranting recognition within an expanded moral and social paradigm that safeguards the right to religious self-determination, free from societal or state-sanctioned reprisal.

### **Abdullah Saeed's Hermeneutics of *Riddah***

Abdullah Saeed is a contemporary Muslim intellectual renowned for his expertise in Islamic studies, particularly in the fields of *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and Islam's engagement with modernity.<sup>45</sup> Born in Sri Lanka, Saeed has spent much of his life abroad, including in Australia, where he pursued advanced education and established his academic career.

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<sup>45</sup> Ach.Musif, "PEMIKIRAN ISLAM KONTEMPORER ABDULLAH SAEED DAN IMPLEMENTASINYA DALAM KASUS RIDDAH," *Ulumuna: Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 1 (2015): 79–92.

His lived experiences within multicultural and religiously pluralistic contexts have profoundly shaped his intellectual trajectory.

Raised within a Muslim community in Sri Lanka, Saeed later migrated internationally to further his scholarly pursuits. His immersion in multicultural societies, such as Australia, informed his perspectives on Islam's role in religious plurality and intercultural dynamics. These environments furnished him with a broader framework for conceptualizing Islam's adaptability within increasingly pluralistic modern contexts.

Saeed completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, before undertaking postgraduate training at the University of Melbourne, Australia, where he earned a Ph.D. in Islamic studies. His rigorous academic formation across classical Islamic disciplines, including *tafsir* and *fiqh*, equipped him with the analytical tools to re-examine traditional texts through the lens of contemporary socio-political challenges.

Saeed's scholarship is deeply informed by the imperative to reconcile Islamic tradition with the exigencies of modernity. His seminal work, *Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam* (2004), interrogates issues of religious liberty, apostasy (*riddah*), and the reinterpretation of Islamic jurisprudence to address the needs of modern pluralistic societies. Saeed contends that Islamic legal hermeneutics must account for broader socio-political frameworks and prioritize individual agency in matters of faith, free from state-sanctioned or communal penalties. This stance diverges sharply from traditionalist interpretations that deem apostasy a capital offense.

Furthermore, Abdullah Saeed has been instrumental in advancing contemporary hermeneutical discourse on *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), advocating for an epistemologically open approach to scriptural engagement.<sup>46</sup> His scholarship promotes the application of adaptable and context-sensitive exegetical principles, emphasizing the Qur'an's universal ethical-moral imperatives as foundational to its interpretative framework.<sup>47</sup> He further interrogates the necessity of reconstructing Islamic intellectual traditions to address the complexities of globalization, religious pluralism, and pressing contemporary issues such as human rights frameworks and the ethics of religious self-determination.<sup>48</sup>

Abdullah Saeed has had an outstanding academic career, teaching at various prestigious universities, including the University of Melbourne, where he serves as a professor in Islamic Studies. As a scholar, Saeed has authored numerous books and articles focusing on exegesis, religious freedom, apostasy, and the relationship between Islam and the modern world. In addition to *Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam*, one of his renowned works is *Islamic Thought: An Introduction* (2006), which provides insights into both classical and modern Islamic thought.

Saeed is also widely recognized for his contributions to fostering dialogue between Islam and the Western world. His work emphasizes an inclusive and adaptive approach to Islamic

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<sup>46</sup> Ahmad Syarif Mas'ud, "Metode Sosio-Historis Abdullah Saeed Dalam Penafsiran Ayat Waris: Studi Kritis The Socio-Historical Method of Abdullah Saeed in Interpreting the Verse of Inheritance: A Critical Study," *Journal Of Islamic And Occidental Studies* 2, no. 1 (2024): 107–19.

<sup>47</sup> Ahmad Asroni, "PENAFSIRAN KONTEKSTUAL AL-QUR'AN: TELAAH ATAS PEMIKIRAN ABDULLAH SAEED," *Living Islam: Journal Of Islamic Discourse* 4, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/lijid.v4i1.2782>.

<sup>48</sup> Muhammad Hatta, "Abdullah Saeed's Contextual Restructures of The Qur'an," *IJITH: International Journal of Islamic Thought and Humanities* 2, no. 1 (2023): 47–55, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54298/ijith.v2i1.56>.



teachings and underscores the importance of contextualizing Islamic teachings within an increasingly complex and pluralistic contemporary world.<sup>49</sup>

In his book *Apostasy in Islam* (2004), Abdullah Saeed develops a more open and progressive understanding of *riddah* (apostasy), aiming to introduce a more contextual approach that upholds religious freedom within Islam. This book presents a critical analysis of traditional perspectives on *riddah* and the punishments associated with apostasy throughout Islamic history.<sup>50</sup>

One of the fundamental principles emphasized by Saeed is that freedom, including religious freedom, is a fundamental right of every individual.<sup>51</sup> Saeed highlights that Islamic law possesses theocentric, absolute, and eternal characteristics, yet it is also human-oriented, making it open to various interpretations in accordance with human needs amid the evolving times.<sup>52</sup> He asserts that universal Islamic values such as justice, benevolence, and beauty should form the core of every legal provision.<sup>53</sup>

In the context of emphasizing freedom, Saeed argues that progressive *ijtihad* is a crucial tool for reinterpreting religious foundations to accommodate the demands of contemporary life. Regarding the interpretation of Qur'anic verses, Saeed cites various references from the Qur'an that demonstrate Islam grants individuals the freedom to choose their religion.<sup>54</sup> He maintains that religion should not be imposed and that individuals should not be punished solely for choosing to leave Islam. In this regard, Saeed underscores that apostasy-related punishments should not be enforced by the state or society, as religious freedom is an integral part of universally recognized human rights.<sup>55</sup>

Saeed argues that many verses addressing *riddah* (apostasy) in the Qur'an and Hadith must be understood within the historical and social contexts in which they were revealed. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the nascent Muslim community faced significant challenges, including acts of betrayal by individuals who left Islam or aligned themselves with its adversaries. In this context, *riddah* could be interpreted as an act of treason against the socio-political struggle of the Muslim community. Therefore, Saeed contends that verses discussing *riddah* should be contextualized within this historical background and cannot be directly applied to modern socio-political circumstances.<sup>56</sup>

Saeed asserts that apostasy should be regarded primarily as a social and personal matter rather than a legal or religious offense warranting punitive measures through violence. He explains that during the Prophet Muhammad's era, apostasy was often perceived as a threat to the stability

<sup>49</sup> Barsihannor et al., "Abdullah Saeed's Construction of the Hierarchy of Values in the Qur'an: A Philosophical Hermeneutic Perspective," *JITC: Journal Of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13, no. 1 (2023): 119–32, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.131.09>.

<sup>50</sup> Abdullah Saeed and Hassan Saeed, *FREEDOM OF RELIGION, APOSTASY AND ISLAM* (England: Ashgate Publishing, 2004). 9.

<sup>51</sup> Abdullah Saeed, *HUMAN RIGHTS AND ISLAM (An Introduction to Key Debates between Islamic Law and International Human Rights Law)* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781784716585>. 175.

<sup>52</sup> Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an (Towards a Contemporary Approach)* (New York: Routledge, 2006). 76.

<sup>53</sup> Ach. Musif, "PEMIKIRAN ISLAM KONTEMPORER ABDULLAH SAEED DAN IMPLEMENTASINYA DALAM KASUS RIDDHAH."

<sup>54</sup> Saeed, *HUMAN RIGHTS AND ISLAM (An Introduction to Key Debates between Islamic Law and International Human Rights Law)*. 192.

<sup>55</sup> Saeed and Saeed, *FREEDOM OF RELIGION, APOSTASY AND ISLAM*. 170.

<sup>56</sup> Abdullah Saeed, *The Qur'an (An Introduction)* (London: Routledge, 2008).



of the Muslim community. However, in contemporary societies that uphold pluralism and individual freedoms, Saeed argues that *riddah* should no longer be seen as an act warranting punishment by the state or religious community.

Saeed also advocates for a more flexible interpretation of Islamic legal provisions,<sup>57</sup> particularly in addressing issues that were not encountered during the Prophet's time. Regarding *riddah*, he emphasizes that the Qur'an does not prescribe an explicit punishment for apostasy. Therefore, Islamic law should be interpreted contextually, incorporating universal ethical values while prioritizing justice, tolerance, and respect for individual rights.

Saeed also connects the understanding of *riddah* (apostasy) with broader ethical and moral values that are deeply embedded in Islamic teachings. He argues that the Qur'an upholds a hierarchical structure of principles, in which justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity including religious freedom hold the highest positions.<sup>58</sup> Saeed emphasizes that Islamic law should prioritize these values over the enforcement of harsh punishments against individuals who choose to leave Islam.

Saeed views religious pluralism and tolerance as fundamental values in modern society.<sup>59</sup> In his works, he argues that neither the state nor society should interfere in an individual's personal religious affairs, including in matters of *riddah*. He advocates for Islam to adapt to the principles of pluralism and religious freedom recognized in international law, which grants individuals the right to choose their faith without fear of punishment or persecution.

Saeed asserts that *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) is essential in responding to contemporary challenges. He encourages Muslims to continuously engage in *ijtihad* to address modern issues, including *riddah*. Through *ijtihad*, Saeed believes that Muslims can develop a more relevant and contextual understanding of Islamic teachings, aligning them with contemporary social, political, and cultural realities.<sup>60</sup>

Abdullah Saeed places religious freedom as a fundamental value in Islam, grounding his argument in the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law). In his view, Qur'anic verses such as Surah Al-Baqarah (2:256) "*There is no compulsion in religion*" serve as a strong basis for rejecting a literalist approach to capital punishment for *riddah*. Saeed strongly criticizes the literalist perspective that classifies *riddah* as a *hadd* offense with a fixed punishment. Instead, he argues that the legal interpretation of *riddah* must be understood within its socio-historical context and in alignment with Islam's universal values, such as justice and freedom. For Saeed, laws concerning *riddah* should be reinterpreted to remain relevant to contemporary societies that prioritize human rights. He also contends that the punishment for apostasy is not absolute but rather contextual, historically tied to political and social stability in early Islam rather than merely an issue of individual belief. Therefore, he rejects the notion that *riddah* should automatically warrant the death penalty in the contemporary world.

Saeed's hermeneutical approach to *riddah* is contextual, progressive, and deeply rooted in respect for individual freedom. He argues that the understanding of *riddah* must consider its

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<sup>57</sup> Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an (Towards a Contemporary Approach)*. 76.

<sup>58</sup> Saeed.

<sup>59</sup> Saeed, *HUMAN RIGHTS AND ISLAM (An Introduction to Key Debates between Islamic Law and International Human Rights Law)*.

<sup>60</sup> Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an (Towards a Contemporary Approach)*.

specific historical context while also allowing room for broader ethical and moral values, such as religious freedom and human rights. Through this approach, Saeed offers a reinterpretation of *riddah* that is more inclusive and relevant to the needs of the modern era, in which religious freedom is both valued and upheld.

### Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis of Fazlur Rahman's and Abdullah Saeed's hermeneutical approaches to interpreting the concept of *riddah* (apostasy) reveals significant methodological divergences and their legal implications. Fazlur Rahman emphasizes a hermeneutic framework that integrates the historical context of Quranic verses with universal ethical principles, concluding that the threats associated with apostasy in the textual sources are primarily political rather than purely theological. He argues that apostasy in early Islam was linked to resistance against the Medinan state's authority, rendering physical punishments prescribed in classical jurisprudence irrelevant in modern pluralistic societies. Consequently, the legal implication of his interpretation rejects the application of the death penalty for apostasy, as it conflicts with principles of justice and equality in heterogeneous societies.

In contrast, Abdullah Saeed adopts a hermeneutic model centered on contextualization and the prioritization of individual rights, advocating for a clear separation of religious authority from state power. His analysis posits that apostasy constitutes a fundamental human right tied to freedom of belief, thereby placing it beyond the punitive jurisdiction of the state. The legal implication of this approach demands the abolition of capital punishment for apostasy, asserting that coercive enforcement of faith through violence contradicts the Quranic ethos of human dignity and social justice.

While both scholars agree on rejecting physical punishment for apostasy, Rahman grounds his argument in a reconstruction of historical-ethical meaning, whereas Saeed emphasizes the reinforcement of individual rights within modern legal frameworks. This analysis highlights how distinct hermeneutical orientations—one oriented toward universal ethics and historical contextualization, the other toward human rights and limiting state authority—can yield parallel conclusions regarding the relevance of contemporary Islamic law, albeit through divergent argumentative foundations. These findings underscore the critical role of responsive interpretative methodologies in addressing modern societal complexities, thereby advancing the formulation of inclusive and equitable Islamic legal principles.

### Conclusion

The conclusions of this study can be distilled into several key points. First, the hermeneutical frameworks of both Fazlur Rahman and Abdullah Saeed offer significant contributions to understanding *riddah* (apostasy) verses with greater contemporary relevance. Both approaches concur that interpreting texts addressing *riddah* necessitates a rigorous consideration of the historical context (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) underpinning the revelation. Second, Fazlur Rahman's *double movement* theory proposes a methodology that synthesizes historical contextualization with the application of universal moral values to modern sociopolitical realities. From Rahman's perspective, while *riddah* was perceived as a destabilizing threat in early Islamic communal contexts, contemporary interpretations must foreground individual autonomy and human rights as ethical imperatives derived from the Qur'anic worldview. Conversely, Abdullah Saeed prioritizes

religious freedom and individual agency within pluralistic societies, explicitly critiquing the enforcement of punitive measures for apostasy in modern contexts. He posits that religious liberty constitutes an inviolable human right (*ḥaqq al-insān*), transcending the authority of state or societal institutions, and aligns with the paramount *maqāṣid* (higher objectives) of Islamic ethics.

The comparative analysis reveals that while both scholars emphasize the necessity of understanding historical and social contexts, their methodologies diverge in application: Rahman advocates for deriving timeless ethical values to adapt *riddah* interpretations to pluralistic societies, whereas Saeed explicitly centers individual autonomy, arguing that apostasy laws must yield to modern human rights norms. Key findings demonstrate that Rahman's method preserves textual fidelity through ethical universalism, while Saeed's progressive hermeneutics prioritizes legal flexibility and state-religion separation. Ultimately, the study highlights how diverse hermeneutical approaches rooted in shared respect for context can generate distinct yet complementary solutions, underscoring the adaptability of Qur'anic interpretation in addressing contemporary challenges like religious freedom and pluralism. This underscores the richness of hermeneutical diversity in Islamic scholarship, affirming that methodological plurality fosters inclusive, context-sensitive readings of sacred texts.

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