

RETALIATION AND PARDON AS EXPRESSED IN SURAH 5:45 WITH REFERENCE TO MATTHEW 5:38–42

M. A. E. (Ashraf) Dockrat

University of Johannesburg
E-mail: molvi@mandla.co.za

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ABSTRACT

In Surah 5:45 retaliation and expiation are mentioned in close relation to one another. This leads to the question of the relation of the retribution clause to the forgiveness clause. Aspects such as the following come to the fore:

- the comparative authority of the two statements;
- the addressees of the retaliation and expiation clause; and
- the contents and meaning of the two clauses.

Qur'an 5:45 reminds one of Matthew 5:38-42. As in the case of the Qur'anic verse, Matthew 5:38-42 juxtaposes retaliation with non-retaliation, leading to questions such as the authority, addressees, and context of the respective statements. In this paper the surmised Jewish relationship of the Qur'anic and New Testament verses will be investigated. It will be argued that the Qur'anic focus on retaliation does not exclude pardoning and in the same vein the New Testament accent on expiation does not deny the validity of retaliation, accepting it as part of a common legal heritage. However the two traditions have contextualised retaliation and expiation in varying ways which can be expressed here in terms of the contents, the addressees, and authority.

INTRODUCTION

Surah Mā'idah 5:45 of the Qur'an is part of a complex of verses (42–50) referring to the application of judgement. However, verse 45 is of particular importance and interest because it deals with two seemingly contrasting dimensions of Islam, namely pursuing retaliation or waiving or forgoing the right to retaliation; in other words, revenging or forgiving. The question is how these two aspects can be, and are, related to each other.

This verse in the Qur'an also reminds us of a similar set of verses in the Bible, viz. Matthew 5:38–42, that touch upon the question of retaliation and non-retaliation from a Christian point of view.

Both texts (Qur'an and New Testament) provide unique examples of a contextually determined response to the ancient Jewish law of retaliation and its relationship to the aspect of forgiveness.

This paper focusses primarily on the Qur'an but also undertakes a brief excursus to examine the NT passage in order to show similarities and differences in nuances.

There are several studies of the Sermon of the Mount showing how it has been received and commented on from a Muslim point of view (e.g., Malik 2013:47). However, the focus of this article is not to look at retaliation and non-retaliation from the viewpoint of another paradigm and to contextualise or compare them accordingly.

To facilitate discussion the chosen Qur'anic and New Testament verses will be scrutinised from three perspectives. They are authority, addressees, and contents. Authority refers to the relative status of the seemingly paradoxical statements, addressees has in mind the intended audience, and contents pertains to a contextual understanding of the meaning of what is said. The chosen model is an adaptation on a typical communicative approach, viz. sender, message and receiver (Narula 2006). For the purpose of the article the concept "sender" will be altered, referring rather to "authority" instead of sender. Authority in this case would pertain to the ascribed ultimate origin of the message.

SURAH AL-MĀ'IDAH 5:45 AND SURROUNDING VERSES

The interpretation of the chosen Qur'anic verse is rendered as follows in English by the *Saḥeḥ International* translation:

–And We ordained for them therein a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds is legal retribution.

–But whoever gives [up his right as] charity, it is an expiation for him.¹

¹ Imam M. A. Baker's (1961) Afrikaans has it as: "Maar wie van hierdie reg van hom afstand doen, vir hom sal dit 'n versoening wees." Bewley (2012) translates it as: "But if anyone forgoes that as a sadaqa, it will act as expiation for him."

And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed – then it is those who are the wrongdoers [i.e. the unjust].

Retaliation

Retaliation is first mentioned, followed by a reference to forgiveness, and finally an admonition as regards judgement is expressed. The aspect of judgement also features in the preceding verse Q. 5:44, and is in fact the dominant theme in the whole of Q. 5:42–50.

Authority

The introductory words of the verse are, “And We ordained for them therein”; literally “We wrote for them in it”. Allah speaks in the first person (“we”), introducing him as initiator or author of the Torah (“[We] wrote/ordained in it”). Retaliation in kind (“an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose ...” etc.) is thus presented as divine revelation. In other words the specifications relating to revenge thus carry the highest imaginable authority, namely that of God (Allah). Allah himself had formulated the legislation found in the Jewish Torah.

In verse 44 there is a similar statement put in different phraseology: “Indeed We sent down the Torah in which was guidance and light.” This Jewish Torah as perceived by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions has also become part of Muslim tradition. Surah 5:48 for example states:

We have revealed to you [Muhammad] the Book [namely the Qur’an] in truth, confirming (*muṣaddiqan*) that which preceded it of the Scripture and as a criterion (*muhaiminan*) over it.

One may thus venture to say that judicial statements from the Torah have accentuated authority within Muslim legislation (see Goitein 1980:61–77 and Nyazee 2000:255–256 for authority of Torah in Islam). They were initially proclaimed by Allah, and once again endorsed through Qur’anic revelation.

Addressees

God's words are always communicated to people, but who were the addressees?

Verse 45 states: "We have ordained/written for them in it [i.e., the Torah]". Mention is made of the original communication of the retaliation statute to Moses and the Jews, calling to mind the Old Testament tradition. Furthermore, after the initial revelation followed an intermediate period to which reference is made in verse 44, namely a period during which prophets, rabbis and scholars were the custodians of the law.

However, the question remains as to whom Surah al-Mā'idah 5:45 was addressed. Al-Ṭabarī (224–310/839–923), in his Qur'anic commentary (1988/6:258), mentions as occasion for revelation (*sabab al-nuzūl*) an inter-tribal dispute regarding the application of retaliation between a stronger and a weaker tribe in a just way. A more immediate context is nonetheless suggested by verse 44 where the Prophet is ordered by Allah, "Do not fear the people, but fear me and do not exchange my verses for a small price". This statement calls to mind an original setting in life (*Sitz im Leben*) of judges or authorities applying judgement with a greater regard to people than to the law. These people were now reminded of the revealed law.

Contents

Retaliation is stipulated regarding a range of matters in Surah 5:45, referring to "a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds [of any kind] is legal retribution".

The contents remind one of similar phraseology found in Deuteronomy 19:21 that stipulates as punishment for a false witness "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot".

The way the said retaliation had become imbedded in penal law and was applied in the sixth and seventh century in northern Arabia is not clear. Surah 5:45 gives the impression that God through the Prophet insisted on a literal application, warning, "And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed – then it is those who are

the wrongdoers [i.e. the unjust].” Those executing judgement therefore had guidelines to which adherence was an absolute necessity.

Expiation

The retribution clause in 5:45 is, however, followed by what seems to be an unexpected announcement of an option of non-retaliation. It is rendered the *Saḥeeḥ International* (1997) translation in a rather literal way as

–But whoever gives [up his legal right] as charity, it is an expiation for him ...

and by Abdul Haleem (2004) more dynamically as

–...: [I]f anyone forgoes this out of charity, it will serve as atonement for his bad deeds.

Both interpretations are based upon the Arabic text of Surah 5:45:

fa-man taṣaddaqa bi-hi fa-huwa kaffāratun la-hu

Formally the forgiveness clause is connected to the statement of the retaliation by the conjunction *fa* (and/thus) which is translated by *Saḥeeḥ International* (cf. Pickthall [1930]1969, and Daryābādī 2001) as “but”, and rendered by means of a colon (:) by Abdul Haleem. Their renderings present two approaches as regards the relationship of the retaliation and non-retaliation clauses. By interpreting the conjunction *fa-* as “but”, *Saḥeeḥ International* contrasts the two clauses. Abdul Haleem, on the other hand, views the non-retaliation clause as a continuation of the retaliation clause. Both options are attested in the dictionary of Wehr-Cowen (1971), although a non-contrasting rendering of *fa-* seems to be favoured. In support of Abdul Haleem’s contextual interpretation of *fa-* as colon, suggesting a translation such as “similarly”, reference may be made to the grammar of Wright ([1896] 2005/1:290 D and 1:330 A) in which it is stated that *fa-* can have a general connective function, e.g., based on internally defined correlations between preceding and following clause.

Conjunctions, however, do not determine the meaning of clauses. An analysis of the forgiveness clause is necessary in order to determine the essence of the statement made in it. For this purpose the focus will once again be placed on the facets of authority, addressees, and contents. However, in the present instance it will be necessary to focus on contents first, because the expiation clause comprises some problematic aspects which first have to be given attention.

Contents

The segment of the verse, “–But whoever gives [up his legal right] as charity, it is an expiation for him ...”, consists of two statements: *fa-man taṣaddaqa bi-hi* and *fa-huwa kaffāratun la-hu*. The first statement may be translated literally as

and/but (*fa-*) whoever (*man*) gives charity/alms (*taṣaddaqa*) as regards it
(*bi-hi*)

and the second as

and/then (*fa-*) it (*huwa*) [is] an expiation (*kaffāratun*) for him (*la-hu*).

Both statements consist of a conjunction, a pronoun, a predicative and a prepositional phrase. Pronouns in particular abound in the two statements of the expiation. However, to identify the referents an analysis of the contents is necessary.

Statement 1

The first statement commences with the pronoun *man* (“whoever”). This is followed by the expression *taṣaddaqa* which is often used in the sense of giving charity. Third, there is a preposition plus pronominal suffix: *bi-hi* (“in it” or “with regard to it”). Rendered as a whole the first statement may be translated in English as “whosoever gives charity with regard to it”. “Whosoever” (*man*) is an indefinite pronoun, but would within context refer to the person who has the right to retaliation.

In the retaliation statement (e.g., a life for a life and an eye for an eye ...) the focus is alternatively on retaliation (e.g., life or eye) and aggression (for a life ... for an eye). The implied sequence in focus is thus on the retaliator followed by the aggressor.

A predicative *taṣaddaqa* (ṣ-d-q V perfect) takes up the second slot in the first statement. Within context the expression has metaphoric meaning. It has a figurative sense indicating a non-compulsory choice by the harmed person of the family.

“Giving alms” in the sense of waiving or forgoing the right to retaliation is also mentioned elsewhere in the Qur’an. In 2:80 the expression refers to the total writing off of debt as a recommended but voluntary act by a creditor to a person who owes money but finds it difficult to pay. In 4:92 “giving alms” is used to state the option of the family of a “believer” who had been killed by mistake (*khata’an*), rather than insisting on the payment of compensation money (*diyah*).

Statement 2

The second statement of the expiation clause *fa-huwa kaffāratun la-hu* is rendered by *Ṣaḥeeḥ International* (1997) as

[I]t is an expiation for him

and dynamically by Abdul Haleem (2004) as

[I]t will serve as atonement for his bad deeds.

A literal rendering (as suggested above) would be

and/then (*fa-*) it (*huwa*) [is] an expiation (*kaffāratun*) for him (*la-hu*)

Neither of the two English versions translates the conjunction *fa-*.

Following statement 1, *fa-huwa kaffāratun la-hu* in statement 2 functions as the apodosis of a conditional sentence, which formally necessitates the conjunction *fa-* if it is a nominal clause (Haywood and Nahmad 1965:297).

The predicative *kaffāratun* is rendered as “atonement” and “expiation” respectively by *Ṣaḥeeḥ International* (1997) and Abdul Haleem (2004). However, the said translations differ as regards the prepositional phrase *la-hu*. *Ṣaḥeeḥ International*’s interpretation, “for him”, agrees with the suggested literal rendering. Abdul Haleem views the prepositional phrase in a functional way and translates it as “for his bad deeds”. An amplified rendering of *la-hu* would be “for him [for his sins]” (cf. Paret 1962:93). However, even when rendered in a paraphrased way, the meaning of *kaffāratun la-hu* remains vague. The meaning is seemingly not the voluntary non-retaliation of all sins. Caution in this regard is expressed by *Tafsir al-Muyassar* (2009:115) stating that atonement applies to some (*ba’d*) of the sins a person committed. The kind of sins that pertain remains an open issue. All the focus is simply on the Heaven’s sanctioning of the act of non-retaliation.

Expiation of sins is also mentioned elsewhere in Surah al-Ma’idah (5). In verse 89 reference is made to the feeding of ten needy people as expiation for the breaking of what a person intended of oaths. Furthermore, in verse 95 the feeding of needy people is also mentioned as one of the options of atonement for the killing of wild animals when a person is in the state of *iḥrām*. Powers (2007), in his study of Islamic homicide law, has explored the various ways in which the term “expiation” (*kaffarah*) has been used in this surah and in the Qur’an.

Addressees

Having briefly analysed the contents of verse 45, two aspects remain, namely addressees and authority.

As regards addressees, it should be borne in mind that the expiation clauses are statements, referring to the person concerned (i.e., “whosoever”) but not directly addressing him or her or even them.

Addressees are the same as the retaliation clause or phrase. The concern of the verse as a whole is the authority that has to pass judgement, mentioned in the third part of verse 45:

And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed – then it is those who are the wrongdoers [i.e. the unjust].

Judges have no option but to apply retaliation in the strictest sense, i.e., “a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose,” et cetera. However, they need to pay heed to the wish of person or family that had been harmed, be it to proceed with retaliation or to close the case. Those people that waive their rights would not have the satisfaction of revenge, but have the divine promise of expiation of sins.

Authority

The question of authority is linked to presuppositions about the connection of the expiation to the retaliation clause. This leads to the question whether *katabna* (“We wrote/ordained”), introducing the retaliation verse, was deemed to apply to the retaliation verse as well. It may be that the expiation sentence simply reflects existing Arab custom that was acknowledged in verse 45 as an alternative to retaliation. Seen from a traditional Muslim point of view, the judicial origin of the expiation clauses, however, do not alter their status. Having been revealed by God to the Prophet, they are of equal standing as the retaliation clause.

MATTHEW 5:39–42 (CF. LUKE 6:29–30)

Verse 45 in the Qur’an states that Allah sent Jesus, son of Mary, with the Gospel “confirming (*muṣaddiqan*) that which came before him in the Torah”. Qur’anic revelation and Christian tradition, in its presumed authentic version, are thus regarded to be without contradiction.

The intention of the present paper is not to comment, per se, on this Qur’anic view, but to reflect on a New Testament parallel to the Qur’anic view of retaliation and non-retaliation, found in the Sermon of the Mount, Matthew 5:38–42. In order to facilitate comparison with the Surah 5:45, the text of Matthew will be viewed from the same perspectives as those that featured in the case of the Qur’anic verse. They are authority, addressees and contents.

Matthew 5:38–42 states that Jesus said:

³⁸You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’

³⁹But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

⁴⁰And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

⁴¹If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

As in the case of the Qur'an, both retaliation and non-retaliation are referred to, first retaliation then non-retaliation. And as in the case of the Qur'an the relationship between the two announcements are important.

Retaliation

Information regarding retaliation comes to the fore in verse 38:

You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'

The introductory clause, "You have heard", provides information regarding the "addressees"; the object clause, "it was said", hints at the "authority" of the retaliation sentence; and the incomplete clause "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth" represents the actual contents of the retaliation sentence.

Addressees

Verse 38 commences with a stereotyped clause, "You [plural] have heard". The same clause is used in the Sermon on the Mount to introduce Jesus' elucidation of other legal matters, namely murder (Matthew 5:21), adultery (5:27), divorce (5:31), oaths (5:33), and love for enemies (5:43).

The relevant clause, "You have heard", identifies the addressees by means of the second person plural, but provides no further information about them. Matthew 5:1 refers to the "crowds" along the mountainside. It can, however, be reasonably accepted that a theme such as that found in Matthew 5:38–42 was expressed at another or other occasions as well. It can also be assumed that the author of the Sermon on the

Mount also had in mind his targeted audience namely a Greek Jewish Christian audience.

Within the immediate context of verse 38, the “addressees” can therefore be defined as a targeted group of adherents to the teaching of Jesus, who have in common at least one feature. They are those who are aware of the tradition “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth”.

Authority

The authority of the retaliation tradition is only vaguely elucidated with the words “that it was said”.

Taken at face value, the words (“that it was said”) simply implies a commonly acknowledged legal tradition. Alternatively, the words “that it was said” may refer to a moment of revelation. In such a case the passive mode, “it was said”, may indicate divine communication. In other words the retaliation tradition, “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth”, being part of the law of Israel, is acknowledged as having God as the promulgator. Acknowledging the divine origin of a legal custom did however not mean that the human element was denied, or the judicial tradition was regarded as being immutable or as having only a single interpretation.

It may be presumed that “It was said”, for all practical purposes refers to a tradition (“Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth”) that had authoritative status within the focused community as part of the transmitted and inherited law that was ultimately associated with God.

Contents

The retaliation aspect proper is conveyed by means of two nominal phrases, “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth”. According to Betz (1995:278), “The quotation is not concerned with a specific Old Testament context but with the legal principal of the Torah as it is exemplified by ‘eye for eye, and tooth for tooth’”.

Old Testament parallels can, however, be drawn. The two foci “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth” echo similar expressions referred to in Exodus 21:23f. (in the case of

serious injuries to a pregnant woman) and Deuteronomy 19:21 (in retaliation to a person for giving false witness).

However, both Exodus 21:23f. and Deuteronomy 19:21 have more extended lists of specified bodily parts and injuries. Both the Old Testament passages, for example, refer to “life for life”, a retaliation feature that is not mentioned in Matthew 5:38. Those features that are referred to by Matthew give an indication of the focus of Jesus, namely personal injuries. These selected items of the *lex talionis* (i.e., law of retaliation) function as an introduction to the non-retaliation statements that follow.

Expiation

Jesus responds to the retaliation by prescribing an alternative behaviour, non-retaliation, which has surprising contents.

Contents

First, a general principle is stated, not augmented by any example:

Do not resist an evil person (literally “the evil”)

The preferred response to personal injury is not to put into motion any process of retaliation. The statement is phrased in the negative, in other word as prohibition, “Do not resist ...”.

An immediate impression is that the expression “resist” is not the automatic antonym or opposite of “retaliate”. Betz (1995:280) thus suggests that the underlying Greek expression (*anti-histynai*) should be rendered within context as “do not retaliate”.

However, retaliation need not only refer to physical retribution in kind. According to Davis (2005:140), who studied Matthew 5:38–42 in the light of early Judaism, the Greek expression rendered by “resist” is “appropriate for resisting or opposing in the context of court, resisting in the context of Roman rulership, and in general resisting the evil man”.

Whatever, the original connotation may be, it is clear that (according to Jesus) the preferable response to personal injury is not to put into motion any process of

retaliation. The alternative, stated as a prohibition is “Do not resist an evil person (literally “the evil”)”.

The preferable behaviour is augmented by means of four examples that may be rendered in a rather literal way as:

³⁹ Whosoever strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

⁴⁰ And to the [person] wanting to sue you and take your [inner] tunic, let him have your [outer] cloak as well.

⁴¹ Whosoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

⁴² And to the [person] asking you, give; and to the [person] wanting to borrow from you, do not turn away.

Stylistically, examples one and three (each commencing with an indefinite pronoun), and two and four (commencing with a conjunction and prepositional phrase) relate. In terms of contents, however, examples one to three are of the same kind, and example four a different category. Example one refers to a person having been struck on the right cheek, example two to a person being sued with a view to confiscate his tunic, and example three to a person forced to go one mile. In each case the focused person is one who endures suffering of some kind. Example four, on the other hand, has in mind a person who is in the position to show charity, although the presumed context of being constantly the object of begging does imply a form of suffering.

Viewed objectively, the four quoted instances of commendable behaviour represent more or less ultimate examples of active non-retaliatory lifestyle. As a matter of fact, turning the other cheek invites continuous abuse; a person without an inner and outer garment would have to move about practically naked; total exhaustion would be the consequence of travelling (particularly with a burden) mile after mile; and giving without any restriction would cause even the wealthiest person to become poor in next to no time.

It is therefore clear that, although structured in a legal way by Matthew and as an alternative response to “eye for eye, and tooth for tooth”, the four illustrations could only be regarded as theoretical guidelines. They could barely be regarded as articles of law. In this regard it may be noted that Luke, in his gospel (Luke 6:27f.), cites

examples one, two and four in a non-legal context and as elucidations of statement “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those that ill-treat you”. The elucidations concerned in Matthew are therefore rather to be interpreted as expressions of a specific attitude also reflected in Jesus’ own life (cf. Matthew 26) and in New Testament literature (cf. Romans 12:17).

Addressees

The addressees are the same as those referred to in the retaliation clause. Jesus says, “I tell you [plural] ...”, referring to those who are familiar with the retaliation tradition. However, in the examples cited in Matthew 5:39–42, the second person singular is used without exception as a way of address. Perhaps Matthew had in mind a relatively small Christian community, possibly persecuted but not necessarily (cf. example four). He presents prescriptions (ascribed to Jesus) of the way the community should deal with one another and with other people directly in contact with them.

Authority

Contrary to the retaliation examples (“eye for eye, and tooth for tooth”) that are introduced by means of the formula “it was said”, the non-retaliation statements commence (according to the Sermon on the Mount’s author) with an explicit “But I [Jesus] tell you”. This has led scholars to opine that Jesus in fact abrogated retaliation as a judicial principle. A list of New Testament commentators to whom this view is ascribed is furnished by J. Daryl Charles (2004:55). They include Davies (1957), Schnackenburg (1965), Banks (1974), Suggs (1970), Meier (1976), Plummer (1982), and Guelich (1982).

Deciding between the pros and cons of the said point of view it is important to pay attention to the status allocated to the retaliation (“eye for eye, and tooth for tooth”) by Jesus himself.

As pointed out above when discussing the authority of the retaliation clause customary Jewish legal tradition is quoted by means of the introductory clause “You have heard that it was said” (Matthew 5:38). The same formula and response (“But I

[Jesus] tell you”) is used in Jesus’ comments upon murder (5:21, 22), adultery (5:27, 28), divorce (5:31, 32), oaths (5:33, 34) and love for enemies (5:43, 44). In each case a vague reference to a certain legal point of view (“You have heard that it was said”) is followed by a first person response (“But I [Jesus] tell you”). It may thus be surmised that the standing legal stipulation is introduced, on face level, as common law presently applied.

Furthermore, the preface (5:17–20) to the judicial aspects (5:21–48; thus including Matthew 5:38f.), ascribed to Jesus, commences (5:17) with the statement:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.

Available evidence in Matthew 5:38–42 creates the impression that Jesus juxtaposes personal authority alongside that stereotyped as customary law. The focus is on application on personal level. In the domain of “eye for eye, and tooth for tooth” Jesus insists on a general approach of non-resistance illustrated by means of four examples (verses 39–42) in the Matthew version of the Sermon on the Mount. Whether this means that he in theory abrogated, i.e., repealed vindication as legal principle is open to debate. Cousland (2010:1754) opines that “Jesus qualifies the law of retaliation, the ‘lex talionis’ ... by advocating the return of good for evil”. Within the context of Matthew 5:38–42 “good for evil” translates into an attitude of acceptance under various situations.

Betz (1995:284) argues that the “Golden Rule” or *leitmotiv* present in the Sermon on the Mount is the principle “Do to others what you would have them do to you”. Interpreted within context of Matthew 5:38–42 this would require (according to Betz) “that one take positive action to interrupt a vicious cycle of revenge”.

SURAH MA’IDAH 5:45 COMPARED WITH MATTHEW 5:38–42

Both Christian and Muslim tradition reflects Jewish tradition. Both give attention to retaliation as well as the option of non-retaliation, giving them relatively equal

standing. It is not so that the Qur'an only speaks of retaliation and the NT only of expiation.

Both give clear recognition to the two options, but in different ways. These differences within similarity have been an object of the present study. The three focus points were the authority, contents, and addressees. They were used as guideline in the analysis of both the retaliation and non-retaliation clauses in Q. 5:45 and Matt 5:38–42.

As far as the retaliation clause is concerned, “authority” is specified by the Qur'an as being of divine origin, while the NT mentions retaliation as a commonly acknowledged legal tradition. Pertaining to “contents” the Qur'an mentions six retributive aspects (including “life for life”), while the NT formally draws attention to only two aspects (excluding “life for life”). Concerning “addressees” Q. 5:45 (read in conjunction with 5:44) seemingly had as original target audience judges or authorities applying the law, while Matt 5:38 is non-specific. Presented as a single sermon, the redactor of Matt 5:1 and 7:28 refers to crowds who had gathered to listen to Jesus. Regarded as a compendium of isolated utterances, however, the addressees can be defined as a targeted group of adherents (or “would-be” adherents) to the teaching of Jesus.

Crux of the respective interpretations of Q. 5:45 and Matt 5:38–42, however, lies in their comparative expressions of the aspects of “authority”, “contents” and “addressees” within the non-retaliation clause.

Stated in terms of expiation the “authority” underlying Q. 5:45b has to be assumed. To a certain extent it depends upon the interpretation (“and” or “but”) of the conjunction, *fa-*, between Q. 5:45a (retaliation) and 5:45b (expiation). Accentuating the link between Q. 5:45a and b, Q. 5:45b may be seen as a continuation of the presumed written Torah of which the divine authority, based upon its having been revealed by Allah (cf. Q. 5:44a), is predetermined.

Alternatively Q. 5:45b may be understood as an exception to the rule, added by the Prophet. Even in the latter case, however, it remains part of divine revelation, and thus clad with the highest authority. Authority within the context of Matt 5:38–42 is linked

to the proclaimed status of Jesus as lawgiver. The introductory formula, “But I [Jesus] tell you”, nevertheless leads to the question whether the expiation statements (Matt 5:38b-) are to be regarded as abrogation of retaliation measures, or as an alternative. The NT itself does not forge an opposition between expiation and retaliation by not explicitly referring to the authority of the latter. Within the present article the point of view that was argued is that the objective of the expiation statements was not per se to challenge or annul the principle of retaliation, but to propagate an attitude of acceptance of persecution and wrong doing instead of retribution in kind.

The “contents” of Q. 5:45 is stated by means of a conditional clause stating an exception to the prescribed application of retribution. Structurally the condition refers to the option of waving the prescribed retaliation, and the consequence part promises heavenly forgiveness of sins. A strong legal tenor is evident. As regards Matthew 5:39–42, the expiation statement is stated as a complete alternative to retaliation. Structurally the expiation consists of a negative imperative (prohibition) elucidated by means of four examples. The first three examples are conditional clauses referring to oppressive experiences (protasis) and suggested acceptance (apodosis), while the fourth example consists of two imperative clauses asking for humanitarian behaviour. No mention is made of immediate heavenly positive retribution (cf. however allusions in Matthew 5:3–10, 14 and 24–25).

The format is legal, but the tenor of Matthew 5:39–42 rather creates the impression of being loose examples illustrating situations of the application of expiation in various ways.

The presumed “addressees” of Q. 5:45 are judges and authorities responsible for the implementation of prescribed retaliation, although the person concerned (i.e., focused upon) is the recipient of abuse entitled to revenge. Matthew 5:39–42 in turn has within its scope the immediate audience of the Sermon on the Mount, but by implication the early community of newly converted Christians.

Summarised in a nutshell, Surah Mā'idah 5:45 of the Qur'an refers to *retaliation* in a general sense within a strict judicial context, and *pardon* as non-compulsory but preferable elective leading in an immediate way to expiation (i.e., remittance of own

sins). Matthew 5:38–42, in turn, refers to narrowly defined *retaliation* within the context of interpersonal relations domains, and *pardon* as essential elective leading to the fulfilment of the requisites of the new [Christian] demeanour (or law) which eventually is sanctioned by heaven.

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