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***Polemic Views about the Source of Qur'ān in Medieval Christian Writings
with a Reflection upon Contemporary Orientalists: A Critical Review***

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Abstract

Before the advent of Islam, there was a strong tradition of polemic writings both among the Jews and the Christians to prove the errors of adversary. But, after the advent of Islam in general, and the conquering of Roman / Byzantine empire by the Muslims in the era of Righteous Califate in specific, due to embracing Islam by a large number of local populace, the flux of Christian polemic writing was directed towards Islam. A number of polemic writings surfaced as a resort to keep their religion alive. These writings tried to belittle all basic concepts, beliefs, and creeds of Islam, and even the personality of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the Holy Qur'ān. The contemporary orientalist polemic writers have claimed that there are several accounts originating from Jewish and Christian sources which tried to allegedly prove that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was instructed by Jewish or Christian scholars in the composition of Holy Qur'ān, and to support this claim, they not only point out to certain Jewish or Christian sources, but have parroted their arguments as well, with the similar motives. With this, they have attempted to discredit Islam by raising doubts about the origin of Qur'ān. But despite of their efforts the fact remains firm that the Qur'ān has a Divine origin and was revealed by Allah Ta'ālā unto Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In this regard, the purpose of this article is to analyze the medieval polemic writings, their motives, and their rumination by the orientalist of the contemporary age. A critical approach is adopted in this analytical, and historical study, using published authentic data and literature including academic books, research papers, periodicals, dictionaries and reliable web sites also.

Keywords: Polemic, Sources, Qur'ān, Medieval, Christian writings, Reflection, Contemporary, Orientalists

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Introduction

Polemic is defined as, a speech or writing that argues very strongly for or against an opinion, or the practice and skill of arguing strongly for or against the opinion of other.¹ Borrowed into English from French *polemique* in the mid-17th century, it is referred (as it still can) to a type of hostile attack on someone's ideas. The word traces back to Greek *polemikos* which means "warlike" or "hostile" and in turn comes from the Greek noun *polemos*, meaning "war." Other, considerably less common descendants of *polemos* in English include *polemarch* ("a chieftain or military commander in ancient Greece"), and *polemology* ("the study of war"),² also means, "defense of a particular belief or opinion."³ While the Cambridge dictionary defines polemic as, "a piece of writing or a speech in which a person strongly attacks or defends a particular opinion, person, idea, or set of beliefs."⁴

Due to the advent of Islam in general, the conquering of Roman / Byzantine Empire by the Muslims in the era of Righteous Caliphate (*Khilāfat-i Rāshidah*) in specific, and by embracing Islam by a large number of local populace, the flux of Christian polemic writing was directed towards Islam. The contemporary orientalist polemic writers have claimed that there are several accounts originating from Jewish and Christian sources which tried to prove that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was instructed by Jewish or Christian scholars in the composition of the Holy Qur'ān, and to support this claim, they not only point out to certain Jewish or Christian alleged sources, but have parroted their arguments as well, with the similar motives. With this, they have attempted to discredit Islam by raising doubts and questions about the origin of the Qur'ān, i.e. did it originate from Christian or Jewish source, or has a Divine source? Leading to the question, if orientalist's arguments are valid or void? Moreover, while responding, the link between the Medieval polemic literature and contemporary orientalist usually remains unexplored, resulting in failure to grasp the whole situation making the response ineffective. The studies like this article can introduce a new methodology to see a holistic picture of polemicism, be it Medieval or contemporary. In

¹ *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1131.

² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/polemic>, accessed on 14 November 2019.

³ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/polemic>, accessed on 14 November 2019.

⁴ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/polemic>, accessed on 14 November 2019.

this way a solid and unapologetic response can be given against any argument, forwarded to vilify Islam and its fundamentals.

Literature Review

Although some writers have pointed out about few polemic writings, written by various orientalists. Like, Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī, in his book *Islām, Paḡhambr-i-Islām aur Mustashriqīn-i-Maḡhrib kā Andāz-i-Fikr*, has given a brief introduction of those orientalists who wrote/raised objections against the Qur'ān, but did not describe, or elaborate their notions or examples.⁵ In the same fashion, Muhammad Shamīm Akhtar Qāsmī in his contribution entitled as, *Sīrat-i-Nabwī par A'itrādāt kā Jā'izah*, has also discussed the arguments presented by some orientalists, about the source of the Qur'ān, but remained brief about the orientalists' viewpoint, giving very little space to it.⁶ Similarly, Muhammad Shehbāz Manj, in his book *Fikr-i-Istishrāq aur 'Ālam-i-Islām Men Is kā Athr-o-Nufū*, has dedicated many pages to elaborate the orientalists' viewpoint about the source of the Qur'ān, and presented a valuable discussion about the said subject. In which, he also described the notion of orientalists' regarding the Qur'ān having a Jewish or Christian origin.⁷ Few other works could also be a part of this list, but one thing is common between all these efforts, neither they discussed and pointed out the Medieval Christian polemic literature, nor they described any link between the two, being the real source of information (or inspiration) of those orientalists, whom they discussed. On the other hand, the author of this article has presented a detailed introduction of the Christian account of the Monk *Buḡīrah*, describing the Medieval argument about the source of the Qur'ān, with an analytical refutation, both about the story, and the arguments described in it.⁸ But it is needed to study such more Medieval Christian polemic writings describing the source of the Qur'ān, to comprehend their

⁵ Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī, *Islām, Paḡhambr-i-Islām awr Mustashriqīn-e-Maḡhrib kā Andāz-i-Fikr* (Lahore: Kitāb Sarāe, 2010), 210-11.

⁶ Muḡammad Shamīm Akhtar Qāsmī, *Sīrat-i-Nabwī par A'itrādāt kā Jā'izah* (Lahore: Dār al-Nawādir, 2014), 105-06.

⁷ Muḡammad Shahbāz Manj, *Fikr-i-Istishrāq awr 'Ālam-i-Islām Men Is kā Athr-o- Nufūz* (Lahore: Al-Qamar Publications), 116-121

⁸ For details and complete analyses about the story of *Buḡīrah* see, Muhammad Hafeez ur Rahman, "The Christian Legends of the Monk Buḡīrah: A Research Study," *Peshawar Islamicus* 9, no. 1 (2018): 37-54.

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arguments, with reflections upon the notions, promulgated by the contemporary orientalist.

Research Methodology

The critical approach is adopted in this analytical, and historical study. The published authentic data and literature including, academic books, research papers, periodicals, dictionaries, have been thoroughly reviewed. Moreover, some e-Research sources were also used where necessary in form of websites, blogs and important search engines after careful evaluation and assurance of their validity and reliability. In addition, the academic discussion and consultation with senior scholars and researchers of that specific area were also involved in this study. The case has also been compared in Islamic and Christian context in addition to recommendations for its contemporary application. For references taken from the websites, complete URL, date and time of access is mentioned, while “f/n” is used to describe a reference taken from a “foot note”, and “W.R.T” (with reference to) is used for the elaboration of secondary sources. For the Medieval texts and writings, their English translation is used.

Background

During the period of Righteous Califate and the Umayyad, the unprecedented conquering of the Muslims and the astounding conversions of the local populace towards Islam due to positive encounter between the Muslims and non-Muslims, compelled the religious leaders of the defeated/ overcome nations to take some measures for the survival and preservation of their respective religions.

In the same scenario, there was another group, which neither accepted Islam, nor its hegemony, tried to rebut this “wrath”, equipped with arguments to prove the truth of the Christianity, developed a whole new genre of polemic writings against Islam, usually incorporating and ascribing to those characters, who never existed.⁹ These writings comprised of various topics such as, Islam (as a religion), Qur’ān, Holy Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and his *Sīrah*, etc. A brief selection of those writings is given in the

⁹ Timothy I, *Woodbrooke Studies: Christian documents in Syriac, Arabic, and Garshuni*, trans. A. Mingana (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd., 1928), 2:5.
http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/timothy_i_apology_00_intro.htm, accessed on 23 April, 2017.

lines to follow, in which polemic arguments regarding the source of Qur'ān was discussed and described.

Views about Qur'ān in Medieval Christian Writings

The Ten Wise Jews

In Islamic literature there is found an incident about few certain Jews, who apparently embraced Islam hypocritically, out of wish to prove the fallacy of Islam.¹⁰ Later, some Jewish writers presented these narrations in such a twisted and distorted way to show that it was these Jews who taught Holy Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) all the religious teachings, including the Qur'ān. The sole aim of this activity was to vilify Islam's divine origin, in a derogatory manner.¹¹

Thus, in this regard, a story of "Ten Wise Jews" was surfaced considering as one of the effective designs, who are described not only to embraced Islam, but also, took part in the compilation and editing of the Qur'ān.¹² This notion was first coined in *The Chronicles of Theophanes*¹³, stating:

At the beginning of his advent the misguided Jews thought that he was the Messiah who is awaited by them, so that some of their leaders joined him and accepted his religion ...These who did so were ten in number and they

¹⁰ Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it* (Princeton: Darwin Press, Inc., 2001), 505. This seems to be pointing towards the incident described in the Holy Qur'ān as: "And a group from the people of the Book said (to their people), Believe in what has been revealed to the believers in the early part of the day, and disbelieve at the end of it, so that they may turn back" (Al-Qur'ān 3:72). It is interpreted that this was a group of few Jews. (Abū al-Hajjāj bin Jābar Mujāhid, *Tafsīr Mujāhid*, ed. Muḥammad Abd al-Slām Abū Al-Neil (Egypt: Dār al-Fikr al-Islāmī al-Ḥadīthah, 1989), 253. Muḥammad bin Jarīr bin Yazīd bin Kathīr al-Ṭabrī (d. 310 A.D.) described the number as "twelve" instead of "ten". See, Muḥammad bin Jarīr bin Yazīd bin Kathīr al-Ṭabrī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tā'wīl al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr (Beruit: Mu'assisah al-Risālah, 2000), 6:507.

¹¹ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it*, f/n: 182.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Theophanes was born at some time in the period 752-760 A.D. (p: viii), he wrote his chronicle comprising the period of 284-813 A.D. (p: xi) (*Theophanes, The Chronicle of Theophanes, "Anni Mundi"*, trans. Harry Turtledove (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982).).

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remained with him ...these wretched men taught him illicit things directed against us Christians and remained with him.¹⁴

When he Muḥammad (PBUH)] first appeared, Hebrews were misled and thought that he was the anointed one they expected, so that some of their leaders came to him, accepted his religion, and gave up of that of Moses, who had looked on God. Those who did this were ten in number, and they stayed with Muḥammad (PBUH) until his death.¹⁵

In the Jewish sources, this story is found in late ninth, or the early tenth century A.D. anti- Karaite¹⁶ Hebrew writing, which has been published by Jacob Mann, along with its commentary. And ascribed it to the early tenth century period.¹⁷ But according to another publisher, J. Leevan, it belongs to the Twelfth century A.D.¹⁸ which says;

This is the book of the story of Muḥammad who dwelt in the sheep-pasturing place¹⁹, and how he fared until he went up to Sana and to Hijaz by reason of monk...And [it also tells of how] those rabbis, who had joined him, came and reminded him of his affair and fabricated (handaza) for him a book. They inserted at the beginning of a chapter from his Qur'ān their names and they inserted the words: 'thus did the wise men of Israel advise the wicked Alm', [making it] hidden and distorted so that it would not be understood. And cursed would be he, as these rabbis said, who explained that to one of the nations of the world, and the monk called *Buḥīrah* should not be mentioned. Now these are the rabbis who came to him: *Ka'b al-Aḥbār*, Absalom named 'Abd al-

¹⁴ Theophanes,333(tr.: Mango, AM6122)-except translating "murder" not "sacrifice"; W.R.T., Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 506.

¹⁵ Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, "Anni Mundi", 34.

¹⁶ "Karaism" is a Jewish movement which takes "Tanakh" as an authority, which is said to be a part of the Old Testament comprising of "Nevim" and "Ketuvim" writings. And Karites do not believe in the Talmud to be the part of Jewish religion. (Oxford Dictionary)

¹⁷ Jacob Mann, "An Early Theological-Polemical Work," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, xii, no. xiii (1937-38): 411-59; Jacob Mann, "A Polemical Work Against Karaite and Other Sectaries," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* xii(1921-22): 123-50.; W.R.T., Saifullah, M.S.M., and, Muhammad Ghoniem, *The Ten Wise Jews: The Source of Quran?* , <http://Islamic-awareness.org/Quran/Sources/BBwise.html>, accessed on 09 May, 16.

¹⁸ J. Leevan, "Muhhamd and His Jewish Contemporaries," *ibid.*xvi(1925-26): 399.

¹⁹ The text reads as "*mouda swra al-gusi*", while the Hebrew text describes only that a shepherd who lived at "The New Mountain". So the words are read as, '*mouda mara al-ghanam*'. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it*, 189.

Salam ...these are ten who came to him and converted to Islam at his hand so that he might not harm Israel at all. They made for him a Qur'ān and each one of them inserted their names in a chapter, without incurring suspicion. And they wrote in the middle chapter:²⁰ Thus did the wise men of Israel advised the wicked Alm.²¹

It is depicted that the said Jews embraced Islam (hypocritically) to protect Jews from any (assumed) harmful actions taken by Holy Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), but the whole story seems to be historically baseless due to mendacities described about the Jews of Madinah, which solidifies the view that the whole story was fabricated at some later period.²² And stories like these are reflections of those murky notions which comprised of the stories regarding the so-called contribution of Jews in the evolution of a new religion, Islam.²³ So, Leevan has opined that:

...our fragment not only gives us the full number but also produces the alleged verses of those companions of Muhammad [i.e. the 'Ten Wise Jews']. There is one disappointment to the record, the quotations that are alleged to come from the Koran are not actually to be found there...the whole style of the Arabic, so awkward and cumbrous and ungrammatical, is against it [i.e. Qur'ān]. The objections of the style also meditate against the probability that these verses are derived from Hadith literature. I may also add that I have not been able to trace any of these verses in the Ḥadīths. The evidence points strongly to the fabrication of these verses by the author, or to so gross a distortion of the original sources that it may be considered to amount to fabrication.²⁴

There is a possibility that this story could have been fabricated to falsify those Aḥādīth, in which it is narrated that: "If Ten of the Jews had believed in Me, (all) the

²⁰ Seems to be pointing towards *Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl*, because it is in the middle of the Qur'ān, but fact of the matter is that, the said *Sūrah* is at the 17th number in the "*Muṣḥaf*", and as the total number of the Qur'ān is 114, so it is *Sūrah al-Ḥadīd*, which comes at the "middle" of *Sūrah* numbers. Moreover, the order of existing Pārās (Chapters) was not practiced during the period of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), leaving this point to absurdity.

²¹ Ten Wise Jews (Judaean-Arabic), 402; W.R.T. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it*, 507-08.

²² Jacob Mann, *An Early Theological-Polemical Work* (Hebrew Union College Annual, 1937-38), xii-xiii/432.

²³ Jacob Mann, "An Early Theological-Polemical Work", 421.

²⁴ Leevan, "Muḥammad and His Jewish Contemporaries.", 399.

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Jews would have believed in Me (as the Prophet).”²⁵ and, “If Ten of the Jews had followed Me (as the Prophet), no Jew would have left on the face of the earth, but embraced Islam.”²⁶ Also, “i.e. if Ten of the *Aḥbār* of Jews had believed in Me (as the Prophet), all the Jews on the face of earth would have believed in Me (as the Prophet).”²⁷

It seems obvious that the said story was fabricated only to show hatred against the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which can be seen in the word of “Alm”, used for the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), that means “false prophet”, derived from the biblical writing (the Bible²⁸) word “Illemim”,²⁹ meaning “dumb dogs”.³⁰ Nevertheless the “raw material” for such a story could have been collected from the Islamic Literature, using it just to vilify Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).³¹ Hence, the whole story is self-explanatory in this regard.

The Legend of the Monk Buḥīrah

Although the said legend is found in both Muslim and Christian literature, but historically this story was introduced much earlier in the Christian circles than the Muslims.³² It was first surfaced in the 8th century A.D. by some Christian writers.³³ Until the 9th century A.D., it had been circling in various Christian circles only,³⁴ and not a single sign of this story is traced in Muslim literature or tradition before the 9th century.³⁵ But, later on, in the early decades of the 9th century, this story began to get attention in

²⁵ Muḥammad bin Ismā’īl bin Ibrāhīm al-Bukhārī. *Al-Jāmi’ al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Mukhtaṣar Min Umūr-i-Rasūlillah (PBUH) Sunanihī wa Ayyāmihī* (Beirut: Al-Yamāmah Dār-e-Ibn e Kathir ,1987), 3647.

²⁶ Abū al-Ḥassan Muslim Ibn al-Hajjāj al-Qushayrī, *Al-Jāmi’ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl wa Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, n.d), 5001.

²⁷ Abū Abdullah Aḥmad Ibn-e-Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Beirut: Mu’assisah al-Risālah, 4121 A.H.), 8199, 9019.

²⁸ *The Holy Bible* (New International Version. English). Michigan: Zondervan, Biblica Inc., International Bible Society, 2011.

²⁹ Isaiah 56:10

³⁰ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it*, f/n: 190.

³¹ Saifullah, M.S.M., and, Muhammad Ghoniem, *The Ten Wise Jews: The Source of Quran?* , <http://Islamic-awareness.org/Quran/Sources/BBwise.html>, accessed on 09 May, 16.

³² Abjar Bahkou, *The Christian Legend of Monk Buḥīrah The Syriac Manuscript of Mardin 259/2, Study and English Translation* (Texas: Fortworth 2006), 16.

³³ Like John of Damascus, discussed here in the same article.

³⁴ Bahkou, *The Christian Legend of Monk Buḥīrah The Syriac Manuscript of Mardin 259/2, Study and English Translation*, 14,15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

Muslim literature,³⁶ proclaiming of some certain monk *Buḥīrah*, who had (allegedly) met the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), prophesizing about his prophethood.³⁷ It is also opined that it was written somewhere in the period of the Caliph *Māmūn al-Rashīd* (813-830 A.D.)³⁸

Till the 9th century, the tension between the Muslims and the Christians had been strained to an extent, and during this scenario, some disputatious Christians started to use this story for polemic purposes, due to its prevalence in both the Muslims and the Christian traditions.³⁹ Gradually both of the parties started using it for their desired polemic purposes,⁴⁰ especially, the Christians promulgated the “mentoring” character of *Buḥīrah*.⁴¹ But fact of the matter is, with a number of variations,⁴² and no sound historical basis,⁴³ this story kept on propagated in Christian readers, to attain desired fallouts.⁴⁴

Although this story is found in both Syriac and Arabic languages, but facts point out towards the antiquity of the Syriac version.⁴⁵ A certain polemic literature was founded with its help, intended to show that there was no originality in the teachings of

³⁶ Muḥammad Ibn-i-Ishāq, *Al-Siyar wa al-Maghāzī* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978), 1:73-75; Muḥammad bin Jarīr al-Ṭabrī, *Tārīkh-ur-Rusul wal-Mulūk* (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth, 1387 A.H), 2:277-79.

³⁷ Bahkou, *The Christian Legend of Monk Buḥīrah The Syriac Manuscript of Mardin 259/2, Study and English Translation*, 14.

³⁸ A. Abel, “L’ apocalypse de Buḥīrah et la notion islamique de Mahdi”, (Annuaire de l’ Institute de l’ Philologies et d’ Histoire Orientales,1953), 3/ 1-12; and, A. Abel, “Changements Politiques et literature eschatologique dans le Monde Musulman”, (studies Islamica, 1954), 2/23-34; W.R.T.,ibid., 14,15.

³⁹ Ibid., 15-16.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 14.

⁴¹ Sidney Griffith, “Muhammad and The Monk Buhira; Reflection on a Syriac and Arabic Text from Early Abbasid Times”, (Oriens Christianus, 1955) 79/155,172.W.R.T. Ibid., 15-16.

⁴² Barbara Rogemma, "A Christian Reading of the Qur’ān. The Legend of Sergius-Buḥīrah and its Use of Qur’ān and Sira," in *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 58.

⁴³ Bahkou, *The Christian Legend of Monk Buḥīrah The Syriac Manuscript of Mardin 259/2, Study and English Translation*, 3.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁵ Abdul-Masih Saadi, *The Story of Monk Sargis Buhira* (Karmo: Abuja, 1999), 1/3, 4,225.

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the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), only that he tried to deceive his fellow ignorant Arabs, to introduce them with One God.⁴⁶

The medieval Christians of the Middle East presented this story to allegedly prove that neither the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) was a Prophet of God, nor the Qur'ān⁴⁷ was a revelation, but it sourced only in the teachings of the said monk *Buḥīrah*.⁴⁸ The Christian notion comprised of three different, yet loosely intertwined parts, originating from different time periods, was claimed to be narrated by some mobile narrator “Ish'yhab” (Syriac pronunciation), or “Murhib”(Arabic pronunciation), who is said to reside with Buḥīrah for eight days, before *Buḥīrah*'s death.⁴⁹ But interestingly, “Ish'yhab” did not listen this story directly from Buḥīrah, but after his death⁵⁰ one of his disciple “Hakim” narrated it to “Ish'yhab”, as a prime source of the said story.⁵¹

The Arabic version of said story is produced as a self-narration by *Buḥīrah* himself,⁵² in which a “confession” is presented about Forty or so verses which are allegedly composed by *Buḥīrah*.⁵³ But out of these “verses,” some are created by mixing up the various parts of the Qur'ānic verses, while some of the sentences are not even Qur'ānic,⁵⁴ proving the fabrication of this story.

⁴⁶ Richard Gotteil, *A Christian Buḥīrah Legend* (Zeitschrift fur Assyriologie, 1998), 13/189; Saadi, *The Story of Monk Sargis Buḥīrah*, 4.

⁴⁷ *Al-Quran English Translation and Commentary*, trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Islamabad: Da'wah Academy, International Islamic University, 2004).

⁴⁸ Barbara Rogemma, *A Christian Reading of The Qur'ān*, 57-58.

⁴⁹ Bahkou, *The Christian Legend of Monk Buḥīrah The Syriac Manuscript of Mardin 259/2, Study and English Translation*, 5.

⁵⁰ It is also notable that in the Arabic version of the said story, instead of Buḥīrah's death, he himself has been described as narrating the story, claiming to write the Qur'ān to Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH). (Rogemma, *A Christian Reading of The Qur'ān*, p: 58, f/n: 4)

⁵¹ Abjar Bahkou, *The Christian Legend of Monk*, 5 .

⁵² Barbara Rogemma, *A Christian Reading of The Qur'ān*, 58.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid, f/n: 5(For details and complete analyses about the story of Buḥīrah, See Article, Hafeez ur Rahman, Rahman, "The Christian Legends of the Monk Buḥīrah: A Research Study," 37-54.

Apocalypse of Peter

The other name for this writing is “*Kitāb al Magāll*”, or “Book of Rolls”,⁵⁵ which belonged to those “Miaphysite”⁵⁶ Christians who encountered the Islamic hegemony in medieval period.⁵⁷ The objective of this writing is to keep common Christians to remain attached with the Christianity.⁵⁸

The “Book of Rolls” is a comprehensive collection of stories of the Old Testament.⁵⁹ It is claimed as to be a revelation of Jesus Christ upon Peter the Apostle, who dictated it to some disciple named Clement. Therefore, it is also attributed to “Pseudo-Clementine literature”.⁶⁰

It is also notable that there used to circulate another “Apocalypse of Peter” in Greek or Ethiopian language,⁶¹ but the writing being discussed here is written by some Arab Christian writers in 800 A.D.,⁶² Due to its popularity, this writing was also named after the said Greek “Apocalypse of Peter”.⁶³ According to some critiques, with the passage of time new sentences were interpolated in it.⁶⁴ While other names for this writing are described as “*The Apocalypse of Simon, Clement, the Testament of Our*

⁵⁵ Michal Donald, Gibson, *Apocrypha Arabica*, Studia Sinatica 8, London, 1901, based in: MS Sir. Ar. 508. Also see, Barbara Rogemma, “Biblical Exegesis and Interreligious Polemics In The Arabic Apocalypse of Peter The Book of Rolls,” in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), f/n: 15, 135.

⁵⁶ Miaphysites were the followers of St. Cyril (D: 444 A.D.), who believed in Prophet Jesus to be god in human form. (John McGuckin, https://ortodoksistenpappienliitto.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/ortodoksia_53_mcguckin.pdf, 33-51, accessed on 02 February 2020.)

⁵⁷ Rogemma, “Biblical Exegesis and Interreligious Polemics In The Arabic Apocalypse of Peter The Book of Rolls,” 131.

⁵⁸ Emmanouela Grypeo, “The Re-Written Bible in Arabic: The Paradise story and its Exegesis in the Arabic Apocalypse of Peter”; in, *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, 126.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Rogemma, “Biblical Exegesis and Interreligious Polemics In The Arabic Apocalypse of Peter The Book of Rolls,” 133.; and, <http://www.apocryphicity.ca/2012/03/29/neglected-apocrypha-the-book-of-the-rolls/>, updated 29 March, 2012, accessed on 11 November, 2016.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Rogemma, “Biblical Exegesis and Interreligious Polemics In The Arabic Apocalypse of Peter The Book of Rolls,” 134.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

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Lord, or the Testament of Our Savior.”⁶⁵ While the writing itself bears the name of “*Kitāb al Magāll*”, or “Book of Rolls”.⁶⁶

It is stated in the said writing that:

A good number of Jews will follow ...imparting erroneous doctrines to him [Him]. After the death of the sheep who strayed from my fold and became his [His] mentor in his early days,⁶⁷ two men from the Jewish people will befriend him [Him]. The first letter of the name of the first one of them is ‘Keif’... The first letter of the name of the second one is Sin ...The above two men will write ...a book⁶⁸ compiled from all books.⁶⁹

It is also worth mentioning that out of three Jews, one is described whose name starts with the letter” K”, which can be pointing towards *Ka‘b al-Aḥbār*. But the fact of the matter is that, *Ka‘b al-Aḥbār* never met the Holy Prophet Muḥammad(PBUH), as he was a “Tābi‘ī”,⁷⁰ not a Companion (*Ṣaḥābī*) of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad(PBUH), making it unlikely and impossible to meet or even see the Holy Prophet(PBUH). This fact falsifies the so-called argument presented by the Peter in the said writing.

John of Damascus

John of Damascus is described to be a renowned writer and a clergy man in the reign of the caliph Abd al-Malik (d. 86A.H.),⁷¹ while his father Sergius son of Manṣūr is said to be serving the Islamic state from the reign of Amīr Mu‘āwīyah, till the caliph Abd al-Malik.⁷² The information about John’s life is very scarce, even the writings attributed

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Alphonse Mingana, "Apocalypse of Peter," in *Wood brooke Studies, Christian Documents In Syriac, Arabic, And Garshuni, Edited And Translated With A Critical Apparatus* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd, 1931), 93.

⁶⁷ Points to “Sergius Buḥīrah”. (Mingana, Apocalypse of Peter, f/n: 5, 252.

⁶⁸ A probable point towards the Qur’ān, (Mingana, ibid, f/n: 7).

⁶⁹ Mingana, Apocalypse of Peter, 251-253.

⁷⁰ Abū ‘Amr Taqīuddīn Uthmān bin Abd ur Raḥmān Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (D: 643 A.H.), *Ma‘rifah al-Anwa’ ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1423 A.H./2002 C.E.), 412 : also see, Abū Zakriya Muḥayuddīn Yahyā bin Sharf al-Nawawī, *Al-Taqrīb wa al-Taisīr lima‘rifah al-Sunan al-Bashīr al-Nazīr fī Usūl-i-Taqdīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Arabī, 1985), 96.

⁷¹ Sidney H. Griffith, “Melkites, Jacobites and the Christiological Controversies in Arabic in Third Ninth-Century Syria”, in, *Syrian Christians under Islam*, 18.

⁷² Sidney H. Griffith, ‘Melkites’, ‘Jacobites’ and Christiological Controversies, 15.

to him are not clean of suspicion.⁷³ Although his death is attributed to the year 754A.D, yet his year of birth is not mentioned in any of the sources.⁷⁴

In his times he engaged himself to elaborate Melkite creeds,⁷⁵ yet Muslims were not his basic or major concern.⁷⁶ Neither he wrote any polemic writing against Islam directly, nor stressed any attention towards them.⁷⁷ As a theologian,⁷⁸ his most important writing is said to be the “Font of Knowledge”, about whom, John himself described as to be a collection of those dogmas and creeds admitted by the elders of the Church.⁷⁹ The *Font* is said to be written somewhere in the period after the year 743 A.D.,⁸⁰ and it was basically a theological book,⁸¹ comprising of three parts viz:

1. Capita Philosophica, or Dialectica (or philosophical chapters)
2. De Haeresibus (Compendium unde ortae sint et quomodo prodierunt)
3. Expositio accurata fidei orthodoxae, or De fide orthodoxa.⁸²

The first part is dedicated to the philosophical interpretations and elaborations of the dogmas and creeds, while the second part deals with the heresies, and the third describes the real and true belief and creed.⁸³

The second part consists of about one hundred “heresies”, including Islam in the end, as a “heresy” of the Christianity.⁸⁴ But the authenticity of this very last portion of the said chapter has been much debated, as its style and length varies so much from the rest of the book, making it probable that it was written by someone else instead of John.⁸⁵

Even though John has mentioned about “*De Haeresibus*” in the preface of the *Font*, with the same order stated above, yet in many manuscripts, “*De Haeresibus*” has been

⁷³ Concilia Sacra, 13, 356C-D, Theophanes, 417; W.R.T. Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 480.

⁷⁴ Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it*, 482.

⁷⁵ Sidney H. Griffith, ‘Melkites’, ‘Jacobites’ and Christological Controversies, 18.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 24.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 37.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 37.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 30

⁸⁰ Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam, The Heresy of Ishmaelites* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 54.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, f/n: 4.

⁸² MPG, XCIV, 529-676;677-780;789-1228; W.R.T, *ibid.*, 54.,*ibid.*, 57-58, f/n: 5.

⁸³ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it*, 484.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 485.

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included after “*De fide Orthodoxa*”,⁸⁶ indicating that initially “*De Haeresibus*” was not included in the *Font*, until later. And many primary manuscripts do not even contain “*De Haeresibus*”.

It is also worth noting that the first eighty chapters of “*De Haeresibus*” are a word by word copy of eighty “heresies” described by Epiphanius of Salamis⁸⁷ in his book “*Panarion*”,⁸⁸ while the rest of twenty chapters have also been borrowed from some earlier writers like Theodoret, Timothy of Constantinople, Sophronius of Jerusalem, Leontius of Byzantium.⁸⁹

The last chapter of “*De Haeresibus*” ends with the sentence stating that this book is comprised of one hundred “heresies”,⁹⁰ but then, there is found an additional chapter about the “*Heresy of Ishmaelites*” with a different writing style and length from the rest of the book.⁹¹ It is assumed that this very chapter was written by some other writer, and then was ascribed to John as an interpolation.⁹² While some scholars say that this chapter was written by a 12th/13th century A.D. writer Nicetas Acominatus, in his book “*Thesaurus Orthodoxae Fidei*”, from which it was copied word by word into the “*Heresy of Ishmaelites*”.⁹³ Consequently, it is a possibility that these discourses from the *Thesaurus* were added as an interpolation in to the *Heresy*.⁹⁴ Hence, it can be fairly concluded that the ascription of the said chapter “*Heresy of Ishmaelites*” to John is unauthentic and problematic.⁹⁵ The oldest manuscript of the *Heresy* is “PG 94”,⁹⁶ and it is described in its chapter 100/101,⁹⁷ that:

⁸⁶ Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam, The Heresy of Ishmaelites*, 55.

⁸⁷ Epiphanius (315-403A.D.) was born in Eleuthropolis, near Gaza, and was appointed as metropolitan of Constantia (old Salamis) in 367A.D.

⁸⁸ Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam, The Heresy of Ishmaelites*, 56, f/n:2.

⁸⁹ Lequien, *Opera*, 74f, in, MPG, XCIV, 677-678; Altaner, *Patrology*, 636; Jugie, *DTC VIII*, 1924, 697; But despite of it, Sahas still insists it to be John’s own writing *ibid.*, 58.

⁹⁰ MPG, XCIV, 777B, *ibid.*, 57-58, f/n: 5.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 58, 59.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 61.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 61.

⁹⁶ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it*, 484, f/n: 103.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 485.

There is also the...cult...of Ishmaelites, ...appeared among them, surnamed Muḥammad[(PBUH)] (Mamed)⁹⁸, who, having happened upon The Old and the New Testament and apparently having conversed in like manner, with an Arian monk, put together his own heresy.⁹⁹

This quotation also ascribes the “Arian Monk” (*Buḥīrah*) as the author or source of the Qur’ān. But this argument is false, as explained above.

Views about Qur’ān in Contemporary Orientalist writings

The contemporary Orientalists, while trying to deny the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), try to describe the Qur’ān as a human presentation, or a book involving human element, instead of the revelation in a disguise of research. Few of the views are listed in the following lines as an example to elaborate this point.

Humphry Prideaux¹⁰⁰

Prideaux has claimed that Holy Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) met with various Jewish and Christian religious scholars during his commercial voyages towards Syria and Iraq. And these meetings instigated him to launch a new religion. Although Prideaux produced no names of any of these alleged scholars, yet he tried to create doubts regarding the source of the Qur’ān.¹⁰¹

Thomas Herbert¹⁰²

Herbert has alleged that an Italian monk and a Nestorian heretic Sergius (*Buḥīrah*) instigated the Holy Prophet Muḥammad(PBUH) to become a prophet, and he also wrote him the Qur’ān.¹⁰³

Ignác (Yitzhaq Yehuda) Goldziher¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Sahas added, “the founder of Islam” after the name of prophet Muḥammad (PBUH). (765A; W.R.T. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam, The Heresy of Ishmaelites*, 73.

⁹⁹ John of Damascus, *De haeribus C/CI*,60-61(=PG 94,764A-765A) ;also see , W.R.T. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it*, 485-86.

¹⁰⁰ Born: 3 May 1648 C.E. in Padstow, Cornwall, –died: 1 November 1724 C.E., was an English churchman and orientalist, Dean of Norwich from 1702.

¹⁰¹ Humphrey Prideaux, *The True Nature of Imposter Fully Displayed in The Life of Mahomet* (London: E. Curll, J. Hook & T Caldecott, 1716), 10-11.

¹⁰² 1st Baronet, born: 1606 C.E. in Yorkshire U.K. –died: 1st March, 1682 C.E.in London, was an English traveller and historian.

¹⁰³ Thomas Herbert, *Some Years Travels into Divers Parts of Africa and Asia The Great* (London: R. Everingham, 1677), 321.

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Like others, Goldziher also claimed that the Holy Prophet's message was an eclectic composite of religious ideas, which he gained by the contacts with Jews, Christians, and even some other foreign sources (which Goldziher did not bother to name). And all this culminated in him to think that it was a divine revelation of which he was to be the instrument.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, like Prideaux, he repeated the notion that, the business in the almost first half of the Holy Prophet's life brought him into the various contacts, from which he acquired the idea of the Qur'ān.¹⁰⁶

Maxim Rodinson¹⁰⁷

Maxime Rodinson has tried to put an impression that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) presented the Qur'ān after learning it from the Jews and the Christians.¹⁰⁸

Theodore Noldeke¹⁰⁹

Noldeke has tried to stress that the principal source of the revelations was undoubtedly Jewish scripture.¹¹⁰ Yet he described the Christian influence was slighter than the Jews,¹¹¹ but after a few lines, he contradicts himself by saying:

We must therefore recognize that apart from Jewish influence on the prophet there was also a Christian counterpart. In view of much evidence, it must remain to be seen from which source it reached him. In some instances, the Christian origin is beyond doubt.¹¹²

¹⁰⁴ Born in Székesfehérvár of Jewish heritage at 22 June 1850 – died:13 November 1921. Often credited as Ignaz Goldziher, was a Hungarian scholar of Islam. Along with others, he is considered the founder of modern Islamic studies in Europe.

¹⁰⁵ Ignaz Goldziher, *Vorlesungen Uber den islam* [Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law], trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 5.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Born: 26 January 1915 in Paris – died: 23 May 2004 in Marseilles, was a French Marxist historian, sociologist and orientalist.

¹⁰⁸ Maxime Rodinson, *Muḥammad* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2002), 61-64.

¹⁰⁹ Born: March 2, 1836 in Harburg, (Hamburg today), died: December 25, 1930 in Karlsruhe) was a German orientalist and scholar.

¹¹⁰ Theodor Nöldeke et al., *The History of The Quran*, ed. Wolfgang H. Behn (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 5.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 5-6.

These “facts” lead Noldeke to conclude that “Islam is basically a religion following in the footsteps of Christianity... And whose Prophet “received the greater part of his dogma by way of oral transmission from Jews and Christians.”¹¹³ But, surprisingly, he again contradicts himself by saying:

Even if there is a kernel of truth in the legend that associates Muḥammad [(PBUH)] with a Syrian monk Buḥīrah or Nestorians, such encounters can hardly have been of importance for his prophetic mission. And no matter how often Muḥammad [(PBUH)] might have gone to Syria...it was hardly necessary for a pagan Meccan to go to Syria or Abyssinia...to gain acquaintance with revealed religions...numerous Jews and Christians were living not far away. There must have been abundant and multifaceted channels through which religious knowledge reached Muḥammad [(PBUH)].¹¹⁴

It is easy to deduce that Noldeke seems to be confused between the “Jewish and Christian sources,” and feels difficult to decide.¹¹⁵

Samuel Green¹¹⁶

Samuel Green criticized the story of Buḥīrah, but abstained to deny it altogether.¹¹⁷ Yet after a few lines he categorically described it fake, being fabricated out of prejudice against Islam.¹¹⁸

Qur’ānic viewpoint about its Source

In the above lines, the Christian polemic notion about the source of the Qur’ān has been described, which has tried to prove that the Qur’ān has a human origin instead of Divine. But it is significant to note what Qur’ān itself says about its source as stated: Do they not ponder about the Qur’ān? Had it been from any other than Allah, they would surely have found in it much inconsistency.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Ibid., 13.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 12-16.

¹¹⁶ Born at Boston, on 3rd march, 1792. A tutor in Bowdoin College, Maine.

¹¹⁷ Samuel Green, *The Life of Mahomet, Founder of the Religion of Islam and of the Empire of the Saracens* (London: J.Haddon Printer, 1840), 48-50.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 69.

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And this Qur'ān is such that it could not be composed by any unless it be revealed from Allah.¹²⁰

Say: 'Surely, if men and jinn were to get together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they will never be able to produce the like of it, howsoever they might help one another.¹²¹

And (O Muhammad (PBUH)), you are most surely receiving this Qur'ān from the One, who is All Wise, All-Knowing.¹²²

And thus, have We revealed to you, O Prophet, this Arabic Qur'ān.¹²³

O Prophet, it is We Our Self Who have sent down this Qur'ān piecemeal to you.¹²⁴

But despite of all these arguments, if someone still has any doubts regarding the real source of the Qur'ān, or of it being the True Word of God, then he is bound to respond to this challenge posed by none other by the Qur'ān itself, which says: "And if you be in doubt whether the Book We have sent down to Our Servant is from Us or not, then produce, at least, one *Sūrah* like this. You may call all your associates to assist you and avail yourselves of the help of anyone other than Allah. If you are genuine in your doubt, do this."¹²⁵

But if still someone insists to accept the polemic notion presented by Christians, Jews, or anyone else, and refutes the arguments regarding the true source of Qur'ān, then he/she must dare to accept the Qur'ānic challenge stated above, and sure enough, if the Jewish and Christian "scholars" were wise and ingenious enough to do it 1400 years ago,

¹¹⁹ Al-Qur'ān 4: 82

¹²⁰ Al-Qur'ān 10: 37 (Qur'ānic verse (10:15) predicts psychological response in this regard, as chapter 10 (*Sūrah Yūnus*) from very beginning after highlighting the remarks and antagonistic behaviour of Prophet's enemies, Qur'ān addressed them with scientific signs. One may visit verses 3, 5 and 6 of chapter 10 considering contextual domain of that time which is an evidence of Divine origin Qur'ān. However, verse 10 is very significant where the claim of critics that "*bring us a Qur'ān different from this one or modify and change it*" is an apparent evidence to the mentality and psyche of true revelation opponents. Whereas Prophet [P.B.U.H] replied that, "*I have no right to change it (Qur'ān) at the extent of my own*" then how a Prophet [P.B.U.H] can insert anything from human sources or any assumed story fabricated as a biased statements projecting prejudice.

¹²¹ Al-Qur'ān 17: 88

¹²² Al-Qur'ān 27:6.

¹²³ Al-Qur'ān 42: 7

¹²⁴ Al-Qur'ān 76: 23

¹²⁵ Al-Qur'ān 2: 23

they must be genius enough to do it again, while the Qur'ānic challenge remains intact till the dawn of the Judgement Day.

Conclusion

A slight critical review about the notion of alleged sources of Qur'ān was presented in the light of various writings from Medieval era and then contemporary orientalist showing that these writers have parroted a similar notion repeatedly to prove that Qur'ān is not a Word of God, but a mere collection of Jewish or Christian teachings, and the repeated stress over this notion is in fact motivated to show that Holy Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) was not the Prophet of Allah, but just a Disciple of some Christian or Jewish religious scholar or monk . Interestingly these writers seem to be dilemmic as some say that it was Jews who taught it to Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), while others stress, that it was Christians, who should be given the “credit”. But almost all of them relied upon the sole fabricated story of a never-existed *Buḥīrah*.

Ironically, these writers stress at one hand that, Qur'ān has a Jewish or Christian source, simultaneously allege it to be erroneous and full of false teachings. Does not it mean that if Qur'ān contains any errors, it straight away puts a huge question mark over the truth, validity, reliability, sanity, and authenticity of the so-called sources (be it Jews or Christians) itself? This leads to conclude that those who are venerated as elders of these religions, were erroneous, deceitful, and less than sane, putting the whole tradition inherited from them into the darkness of error.

The contemporary orientalist often raise questions, or objections against Qur'ān, Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), and other various Islamic Fundamentals, masking their so-called findings with some research and deep analyses, pretending as “eureka”, they have unearthed some great mystery, which can uproot Islam once and for all. But despite of their proclamations and pretense, they do nothing but to mimic, with the same motivations, what their elders wrote out of rage against Islam.

The notion presented by Qur'ān itself is not only unambiguous, but also self-evident that it is the Word of Allah Almighty. So, it would be good enough to accept the argument about the “real source” of the Qur'ān, presented by the Qur'ān itself; that is none other than a Divine one.

Recommendations

1. There is found a large amount of Medieval polemic literature containing malicious notions against Islam, which needs to be explored and analysed, and equally responded.
2. There should be a systematic method to coup the orientalists' literature, without being apologetic. A profound organization, or institution should be constituted to harbor all such scholarly activities, specifically elaborating the link between the Medieval polemic literature and contemporary orientalists.
3. The “West” always tends to uphold its own “arguments” and sources trying to obtain its desired objectives out of it. So, it is a must for Muslim scholars and researchers to not only to get acquainted with these “arguments”, but also with their real sources too. And the reply should be equipped with a deep analysis of the contents, and the truth about their authenticity.
4. A serious discourse of Orientalism should be incorporated in the curriculum of Islamic Studies to train students to respond the views of orientalists.

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