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A Study of the Inter-Religious Dialogue through Syed Ahmad's Reconciliatory Approaches in Tabyīīn-ul-Kalām

Farman Ali[*]

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Abstract

Syed Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) was a 19th century Muslim scholar, theologian, educationist, apologist, reformist and the founder of Muslim modernism in the subcontinent. He is considered to be the first Muslim scholar to write a commentary on the Bible entitled Tabyīīn-ul-Kalām, and also the first to make a systematic effort toward inter-religious dialogue in the subcontinent. Before Vatican II (1962 to 1965), Syed's commentary could not attract the attention of western scholars. However, the spirit of Vatican II to engage in the study of Muslim cultures and inter-religious dialogue made it possible to study Muslim efforts towards inter-religious dialogue. That is why Syed Ahmad is highly regarded in both Christian and Muslim circles for his reconciliatory approach. Much has been written in terms of exploring the Muslim-Christian hermeneutical sources and theology of pluralism in his Bible commentary but little attention has been paid towards exploring his reconciliatory approach in Christian-Muslim polemical debates and his hermeneutical method in Tabyīīn-ul-Kalām. This article will explore the importance of the hermeneutical method in the modern age of inter-religious dialogue.

Keywords: *Tabyīīn-ul-Kalām*, Christian-Muslim Polemical Debates, Syed Ahmad Khan, Bible Commentary.

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Introduction

Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) wrote his first Muslim Bible commentary entitled *Tabyīīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-al-Tawrāt wā'l Injīl 'alā Mīllāt-il-Islam*[1] during 1862 to 1865. The commentary consists of three volumes. The first volume contained ten discourses and two appendixes. Most of the content of this article is based upon this volume as it deals with Christian-Muslim polemical themes in the latter half of the 19th century of the Indian subcontinent. The second volume is the commentary of the first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis. It consists of interlinear Urdu translation along with the original Hebrew language. Both volumes were printed in parallel columns of Urdu and English. The English column is not word to word translation of the original Urdu; however, it is a communicative translation[2] as the basic aim of the commentary was to communicate to both European Christian and Indian Muslim audiences.[3] The last volume is the commentary of the Gospel of Mathew[4] which was published in Urdu language only.[5] In 2017, Christian W. Troll (b. 1937), Charles M. Ramsey[6] and Basharat Mughal (b. 1971) rendered it into English with a comprehensive introduction and annotations.[7]

Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) is widely known as an educational reformer and the founder of Aligarh Movement, but he was also a significant religious thinker. He enjoyed a privileged Mughal upbringing in the home of his maternal grandfather

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[1] M. Ikram Chagatai, ed., *Aspects of Religious Thought in Modern Muslim India* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2015), vii.

[2] Syed Ahmad Khan, *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wā Injīl 'lā mīllāt-il-Islam,* Vol., 1 (Lahore: Maktābā-e-Akhūwwāt, 2006), 8. Here in this article, the analysis is based upon the Urdu column.

[3] Alan M. Guenther, "Christian Responses to Ahmad Khan's Commentary on the Bible," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1-2 (2010): 68. Accessed at:https://www.academia.edu/5598966/Christian_Responses_to_Ahmad_Khan_s_Commentary_on_the_Bible. Retrieved on April 1, 2019.

[4] Syed Ahmad Khan, *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wā Injīl 'lā mīllat-il-Islam,* Vol., 1, 5-8.

[5] Syed Ahmad Khan, *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wā Injīl 'lā mīllāt-il-Islam,* Vol., 2-3 (Lahore: Maktābā-e-Akhūwwāt, 2006).

[6] He Worked in Forman Christian College, Lahore Pakistan between 2012-2017 as an Assistant Professor of Religion and Public Policy. For detail see: http://www.baylorisr.org/scholars/r/ramsey-charles-m/. Retrieved on April 1, 2019.

[7] Syed Ahmad Khān, *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wā Injīl 'lā mīllāt-il-Islam,* trans., Christian W. Troll, Basharat Mughal & Charles M. Ramsey (Lahore: Maktābā-e-Jadīd, 2017).

Khwājāh Farīd-ul-Din Khan (d.1828), the great mathematician and statesman. In 1837, at the age of 19, Syed Ahmad entered the service of the East India Company, where he was to rise, in the course of his thirty-eight years of service, to the highest rank open to Indians. Syed Ahmad Khan lived and reasoned in close contact with the Hindu and Muslim members of high class. In addition, his work increasingly brought him into regular contact with Christian administrators and missionaries such as, William Muir (d. 1905), Colonel G.F Graham, who was his first biographer and the Reverend J.J. Moore whom his noted was instrumental in stimulating his interest in the new sciences.[8]

Syed Ahmad's commentary could not attract the attention of the Christian clergy until Vatican II (1962-1965).[9] Early attention to his work was paid by academic researchers or from the officials of the English government in India. In 1885, a biography of Syed Ahmad was written by an official named G.F.I Graham[10] and Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000), a great scholar of comparative religion, who mentioned him in his *Modern Islam in India* with high regard.[11] Muḥammad 'Ali Faruq quoted Garcin de Tassy (1794-1878), a French orientalist, about the disinterest in Syed Ahmad's thought presented in *Tabyiīn-ul-Kalām* by the early Christians writers. He said "I am afraid…the Christian will not accept his claim about Qur'ān as a divine book…and Christian writers will not agree with his reconciliatory views."

The Vatican II which produces *Nostra Aetate*, the declaration of Catholic Church to non-Christian religions, opened a gateway towards the positive and sympathetic attitudes of Christianity to the non-Christian religions.[12] In response to this church document the missionaries and church leaders-initiated dialogue movements with other religion across the world. The name of Christian W. Troll, Fr. James Chanan, and Robert

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[8] Ibid., iii-v.

[9] The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, commonly known as the Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II, addressed relations between the Catholic Church and the modern world. The council was held between 11 October 1962 –8 December 1965.

[10] G. F. I. Graham, *The Life and Work of Syed Ahmed Khan* (London: William Blackwood and Sons,); Accessed at: https://archive.org/details/lifeworkofsyedah00grah/page/n5.

[11] Johannes Marinus Simon Baljon, *The Reforms and Religious Ideas of Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan* (Lahore: Orientalia Publishers, 1958), iv, Accessed at:https://ia801908.us.archive.org/24/items/TheReforms/The-Reforms.pdf.

[12] Farman Ali, "Contemporizing Christian Theological Trends in Pakistan: An Analytical Critique of Christian Discourses Since 1970" (Unpublished PhD diss., University of Management and Technology, Lahore, 2020), 78.

A. Butler (d. 1996) are important to name. As this article deals with the reconciliatory approaches of Syed Ahmad Khan, so only the work of those missionaries is mentioned who paid attention to Syed Ahmad's work. Troll was a Jesuit Missionary in Pakistan and India, who wrote a book entitled *Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898): A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* to explore his distinctive status in Muslim theology.

Charles M. Ramsey who also rendered *Tabyiīn-ul-Kalām's* third volume into English, paid attention to his pluralist views on religion.[13] Alen M. Guenther who worked as a missionary in Pakistan and is currently working as Assistant Professor of History at Briercrest College and Seminary, Canada, wrote Christian responses to Syed Ahmad's commentary.[14] The growing interest among Christian theologians in the study of Syed Ahmad's religious thoughts compelled the Muslims to revive his work. In 2004, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India, reprinted *Tabyīn al-Kalām.*[15] In 2006, *Maktābā-e-Akhūwwāt*, Lahore, Pakistan, also reprinted it into two volumes.

This short introduction would suffice to review the major work on the life, religious thought and bible commentary of Syed Ahmad. The aim of this article is not to present a review of literature on *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām* but to explore the reconciliatory approach of Syed Ahmad in his commentary. Following is a brief analysis of his reconciliatory approach in Christian-Muslim polemical debates and hermeneutical model.

Literature Review: Christian-Muslim Polemical Themes in Colonial India

The tradition of Muslim studies of Christianity is as old as the religion of Islam. As Qur'ān refuted the fundamental Christian beliefs like trinity, crucifixion, atonement and alteration in divine scriptures, muslin scholars and theologians engaged themselves in the study of Christianity. Christian missionaries came to India with strong missionary

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[13] Charles M. Ramsey, "Sir Sayyed and the Religious Foundations for a Pluralist Society," online available at: http://www.baylorisr.org/wp-content/uploads/Religious-Pluralism-in-Islam-red.pdf. Accessed at: April 1, 2019.

[14] Alan M. Guenther, "Christian Responses to Ahmad Khan's Commentary on the Bible," 67-100.

[15] Syed Ahmad Khan, *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wā Injīl 'lā mīllāt-il-Islam* (Aligarh, India: Aligarh Muslim University, 2004); until 2004 Muslim did not pay attention to this valuable work and it is also evident form the bibliography prepared by Nasim 'Abbas. He enlisted one hundred and twenty-five books; however, he did not mention any single work devoted to his bible commentary. For details see: Nasim 'Abbas Ahmar, *Sir Syed Shanāsī kay Chānd Ehām Zāvīye* (Lahore: Idarā-e-Sāqafāt-e-Islāmīyyāh, 2011), 130-142.

convictions, and they set up a new literary apologetic trend in the religious history of the subcontinent in order to prove the superiority of Christianity over Islam, and to trivialize its norms, values, religious figures and traditions.[16] Apologetic writings dominated the 19th and first half of the 20th century. During this era, a bulk of Christian-Muslim literature was brought into fore about each other's religion. The first Christian-Muslim encounter heralded at the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556-1605). Jesuit missionaries were welcomed by the emperor in the court and indulged in dialogue with the Muslims to prove the superiority of Jesus over Muhammad (PBUH), Bible over Qur'ān, and Christianity over Islam.[17] They learnt both the mass and official language of the time, Hindustani (Urdu) and Persian respectively. So, a plethora of literature was produced by both foreigner and indigenous writers to prove the validity and superiority of one's own religion over the other. Consequently, Christian-Muslim interest in each other's literature mostly remained apologetic or polemical rather than academic and historic.

The German missionary Pfander (1803–1865) has marked great influence on the literary history of polemics. His *Mīzān-ul-Ḥāq* (Balance of Truth)[18] has been considered as a *magnum opus* in this field. In his study, he concluded that old and new testaments are the revealed word of God and they are not abrogated by the Qur'ān; Muhammad (PBUH) is not a prophet or even a holy man; Islam has no divine origin and its teachings are merely a corruption of Judaism and Christianity; Islam is a religion bounded to law and has no place for grace, fall and sinful nature of humanity.[19] His findings left lasting influence upon both Christian and Muslim theologians; however, in a contrary way. For Christian missionaries and evangelists, it became a reference textbook. Subsequent Christian missionaries and indigenous Christian writers like Aloys Sprenger[20] (1813-

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[16] Farman 'Ali and Humaira Ahmad, "Early Christian Sīrah Writings of Subcontinent: A Comparative Study of their Methods, Impact and Cogitating on New Contemporizing Methodology," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 8, no. 1 (2018): 129-143.

[17] *Interfaith Dialogue: Christianity and other Religions* (Studia Missionalia Roma: Editrice Pontificia Univertia Gregoriana, 1994), 160.

[18] C. G. Pfander, *Mīzān-ul-Ḥaq* (London: The Religious Tract Soc., 1835 and 1910).

[19] Ibid., 334-492.

[20] Aloys Sprenger, *Life of Muhammad from Original Sources* (Allahabad: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1851).

1897) William Muir[21] (1819-1905), G. L. Thakur Das (1852-1910), ‘Imād-ad-Dīn Lāhīz’s (1856-1899), etc. reiterated these themes.[22]

Consequently, Christian-Muslim relationships in the second half of the 18th and 19th century were formulated in the context of the polemical debates that emerged in the writings of the above-mentioned figures. Al-e-Hassan[23] wrote the first Muslim apology in Urdu language entitled *Kītāb al-Istīfsār* (Book of Questions). He also wrote another book entitled *al-Istībshār* (Good News) in response of Pfander’s *Ḥāl-ul-Ashkāl* (Solution of Problems).[24] Raḥmatūllāh Kīrānvī’s[25] *Iẓhār-ul-Ḥāq* (Truth Revealed), an important discourse, was written as a result of the topics of the great debate of Agra held in 1954 between Kīrānvī and Pfander.[26] It was originally written in Persian and later translated into Urdu, English and other languages. Syed Nāṣir-ul-Dīn Muḥammad Abu‘l Manṣūr Delhvī (1823-1903)—known as *Imām-e-fan-e-Mūnāẓarā Ahl-e-Kītāb* (the leader of the art of polemics with the people of the book)—wrote extensively in the refutation of Christian teachings and in defence of Islam. Akhtar Rāhī enlisted twenty five books to his credit and all of them were written in the polemical context; *In‘ām-e-‘Aām fī rad-e-‘Ala Aaīnā-e-Islam li Rajāb*[27], *Mīzān-ul-Mīzān fī rad-e-‘ala mīzān-ul-Ḥāq lī pfander*[28], *Navīd-*

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[21] William Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, 1st edit., 1861 (London: Smith, Elder and co., 1931).

[22] For detail see: Farman Ali and Humaira Ahmad, “Early Christian Sīrah Writings of Subcontinent: A Comparative Study of their Methods, Impact and Cogitating on New Contemporizing Methodology,” 129-143.

[23] Al-e-Ḥasan Muhānī, *Kītāb al-Istīfsār* (Lahore: Dār-ul-Ma‘ārīf, n.d.).

[24] Ibid., 36.

[25] Taqi ‘Uthmani, *Bible se Qur’ān tak* (Karachi: Dār-ul-Ishā‘āt, 2010).

[26] Farman ‘Ali and Humaira Ahmad, “Early Christian Sīrah Writings of Subcontinent: A Comparative Study of their Methods, Impact and Cogitating on New Contemporizing Methodology,” *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 8, no. 1 (2018), 129-43.

[27] Syed Nasir-ul-Din Muhammad Abulmanṣūr Delhvi. *In ‘ām-e-‘Aām fī rād-e-Alā Aīnā-e-Islam li Rajāb* (Delhi: Matba‘-e-Faruqi, 1290 AH/1873 CE).

[28] Syed Naṣir-ul-Din Muḥammad Abulmanṣūr Delhvi, *Mīzān-ul-Mīzān fi rād-e-alā mīzān-ul-Hāq Li Pfander*. (Delhi: Matbū‘āNusrāt-ul-Matābī‘, 1882).

e-Jāvīd,[29] *Namūnāh-e-Taḥrīf,*[30] and *Taṣḥīḥ al-tāwīl fī Rād-e-'Alā tafsīr al-Mūkāshfā*[31] are considered the best among them.[32]

Pfander and Al-e-Hasan's legacy produced a bulk of Christian-Muslim apologetic literature in the Subcontinent. The polemics of William Muir (1819–1905)[33], 'Imād al-Dīn (1830−1900)[34], G L. Ṭhākur Dāss[35], 'Allāma Barkatūllāh[36] Pīr Bakhsh Ṭayyīb Salīm[37], Barakāt A. Khān[38] and last, but not the least, Wickliffe A. Singh, are famous in both Christian-Muslim religious academic circles. Moreover, Muslims took those critiques seriously and responded not only at individual but also at official levels as well. For example, a publication institute was established at official level in Lahore and was named *Islamī Mission Sannāt Nagār.*[39] A large proportion of the publications of this institute was devoted to the defence of Islamic beliefs and teachings, and strongly

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[29] Syed Naṣir-ul-Din Muhammad Abulmanṣūr Delhvi, *Navīd-e-Jāved* (Delhi: Noor Muhammad Malik Kakhana Tijarat Kūtūb, 1929).

[30] Naṣir-ul-Din Abulmanṣūr Dehlvi, *Namūnā-e-Taḥrīf* (Delhi: Nusrat-ul-Matābī, n.d).

[31] Syed Naṣir-ul-Din Muhammad Abulmanṣūr Delhvi, *Taṣḥīḥ al-tāwīl fī Rād-e-Alā tafsīr al-Mukāshfā* (Delhi: Nusatul Matābī', n.d).

[32] Akhtar Rāhī, "Syed Naṣir-ul-Din Muḥammad Abulmanṣūr Delhvi aur Masīḥī-Muslim Munāẓratī Adab," *Alām-e-Islam aur Isaīyyāt* 2, no. 7 (1992): 5-14.

[33] He raises numerous questions upon the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In response of Muir's book Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) wrote *Khūbāt-e-Ahmādīyyāh*; for detail see: William Muir, *The Life of Mahomet* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1861).

[34] In his book *Hidāyāt-ul-Muslimīn* he answered the questions raised in Raḥmāt-ul-Allāh Kīrānvī's (1818-91) book *I'jāz-e-'Īsavī* published in 1854. Moreover, he also wrote *Tanqīd-ul-Khayālāt* in response of Sayyed Ahmed Khan's thoughts about human intellect. For further details see: Imad al-Din Lahiz, *Tanqīd-ul-Khayālāt* (Allahabad: Punjab Religious Book Society, 1882).

[35] He wrote a book *Zaunūb-e-Mūḥammadīyyāh* (1905) as a response Gulam Ahmed Qadiyyani's (1835-1908) interpretation of Qur'anic verse 9 of Surah Muhammad (47:09).

[36] He wrote numerous apologies in Urdu language. Barkat-ul-Allah's *Eli, Eli, Lima Sabachthani* (1957), *Cana-e-Galilee kā Mū'jīzāh* are the replies to the objections raised by Molāna Sana'ullāh Amartasrī in his book entitled *Islam awr Masīḥiyyāt*. For further detail see: *Galilee kā Mū'jīzāh* (Lahore: Punjab Religious Book Society, 1951).

[37] Pir Bukhsh Tayyib Salim, *Matīle-e Mūsā* (Karachi: Author, Akhtar Colony, 1990).

[38] Barakat A. Khan, *Janab-e-'Īsā Miṣdāq-e-Mūsā* (Sialkot: Zamzama Printing Press, 1988).

[39] Mission society was established in 1965 CE to circumscribe the missionaries' impact upon Muslims. It was a govt. funded institution whose solely aim was to publish Muslim literature in both English and Urdu languages. The writings of individual, collective authors and correspondences with different churches of Pakistan with the aims of preaching are published. For further detail see: *Ta'ārūf: Islāmī Mission Sunnāt Nagar Lahore* (Lahore: Islami Mission, n.d)

criticized Christian beliefs, like atonement[40] divinity of Jesus,[41] logos,[42] trinity, etc. Moreover, the history and *taḥrīf* (editing and alteration) of the Bible[43], the refutation of Christian objections regarding the preservation of Islamic text and teachings[44], foretold narratives about Muhammad (PBUH) in the Bible, and the critical objection on the biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) have been major issues in the publications of this institute. Muslim individual writers also contributed to this literature. Most famous among them are Raḥmāt-ul-Allah Kīrānvī (1818-91),[45] Mawlāna Mawdūdī (1903-1979),[46] ʿAbdūl Laṭīf Masʿūd,[47] Taqī ʿUsmānī (b. 1943),[48] Sajid Mīr[49] Idrīs Khāndhalvī (1899-1974)[50], Matīn Khālid,[51] ʿAbdūl Ḥamīd,[52] and Bashīr Aḥmed.[53]

During the 19th and early 20th century Christian-Muslim movement of apologetic writings, Syed Ahmad's approach stood out to be altogether different; instead of engaging in polemical debates, he studied controversial themes to reconcile the

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[40] For further detail see: Muhammad Amin, *Rād-e-Kaffarāh*, (Lahore: Islami Mission, n.d.).

[41] Muhammad Aslam, *Alwhīyyāt-e-Masīḥ awr Tathlīth* (Lahore: Islami Mission, n.d.).

[42] Gulam Nabi, *Kalīmāt-ul-Allah aur Haḍrāt-e-Masīḥ* ((Lahore: Islami Mission, n.d.).

[43] Muhammad Aslam, *Bible maiṇ Rāddo Badāl* (Lahore: Islami Mission, n.d.).

[44] For full detail see: *Manzoor Ahsan Abbasi Qurʾān ki Lazāwāl* Asliyyāt (Lahore: Islami Mission, n.d.).

[45] He produces a monumental work in the refutation of Christian beliefs and their text. Originally written in Persian language and till now has been translated into numerous languages: to see the contents of the book in detail please see Raḥmat-ul-Allāh Kīrānvī, *Izhār-ul-Ḥāq*, (abr.) By Abdul Qadir Malkavi (Saudi Arabia)

[46] For further detail see: Abūl Aʿlā Mowdūdī, *Nuṣrānīyyat Qurʾān kī Rowshnī maiṇ* (Lahore: Tarjūmān al-Qurʾān, 2008).

[47] He extensively wrote about the issue of the alterations in the Bible. For full detail see: ʿAbd-ul-Latif Masʿud, *Taḥrīf-e-Bible Bazūbān-e-Bible Ḥiṣṣa Engīl Mattī* (Daska: ʿAlmī Majlīs-e-Taḥaffūz Khatm-e-Nabūwwāt, n.d) and *Taḥrīf-e-Bible Bazūbān-e-Bible* (Multan: ʿAlmī Majlīs-e-Taḥaffūz Khatm-e-Nabūwwāt, 1997) respectively.

[48] He wrote a short booklet entitled *ʿĪsāʾīyyāt Kiya ha?* in the refutation of Christian beliefs. Originally it was a detailed introduction to the three-volume editing translation of *Izhār-ul-Ḥāq*, in the Urdu Language by the translator. Later, the need to publish it separate volume in academic circles was strongly felt. For further detail see: Taqi ʿUsmani, *hat is Christianity* (Karachi: Dār-ul-Ishaʿāt, 1995).

[49] In his book *ʿĪsāʾīyyāt: Tajzīyā wā Mūṭlīʿā* the author disproves the Christian tenets from their own textual and historical narratives. The book is widely known in Urdu language and also has been translated into Arabic language as well. For detail see: Sajid Mir, *ʿĪsāʾīyyāt: Tajzīyā wā Mūṭlīʿ* (Lahore: Dār-ul-sālām, 2001).

[50] Idrīs Kāndhalvī, *Islam aur Nuṣrānīyyāt* (Lahore: Kūtāb Khana Jamili, n.d).

[51] Matin Khalid, ed., *ʿĪsāʾīyyāt key Taʿāqūb maiṇ* (Lahore: ʿIlm-o-ʿIrfan Publishers, 2003).

[52] ʿAbdul Ḥamid, *Masīḥīyyāt Magrābī Mufākirīn kī Nazar maiṇ* (n.d.).

[53] Bashīr Ahmad, *Bible kā Taḥqīqī Jāʾizā* (Rawalpindi: Islamic Studies Forum, 2003).

differences between Christianity and Islam. Asghar Abbas, the director of Sir Syed Academy, Aligarh Muslim University, wrote that this book does not fall under the theme of polemics. In this book, Syed Ahmad did not reprimand any sect and his style of writing is purely academic and scholarly…revealed books became the victim of alteration, and the alteration changed the nature and objectives of these books.[54]

Research Methodology

This study has been done using descriptive and analytical approaches. Descriptive or exploratory research attempts to determine, describe, or identify the state of affairs, as it exists at present, while analytical research attempts to establish why the state of affairs is that way or how it came to be like that. Analytical research studies are used to describe associations and analyse them for possible cause and effect. In analytical research, the researcher has to use information already available or generated and analyse these critically to provide answers.[55] Consequently, using theses method of research, the work of Syed Ahmad entitled *Tabyiīn-ul-Kalām* is analysed to explore the author's reconciliatory approach and why he adopted it in the second half of 19th century.
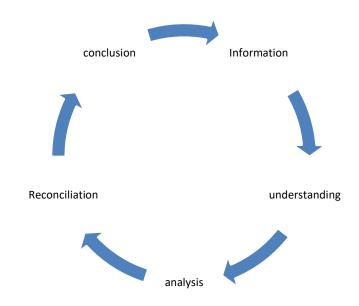
The apologetic themes are those which were the topics of hot-debates among the Christian-Muslim writings in the 19th century and a brief introduction has been given in literature review section. Descriptive approach has been adopted to keep aside personal bias and to attain the goals of objective research. The flow chart of circular analysis is as

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[54] Asghar Abbas, "Shurū' ki Bat", in *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wā Injīl 'lā mīllāt-il-Islam,* Vol., 1 (Lahore: Maktābā-e-Akhūwwāt, 2006), 7.

[55] C. George Thomas, *Research Methodology and Scientific Writing* (Switzerland: Springer, 2015, 2nd edition 2020,) 59.

follows:

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                          conclusion        Information

              Reconciliation                        understanding

                              analysis
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As it become evident from the above-mentioned floe chat that the basic information of this article is driven from the core text of this study, *Tabyiīn-ul-kalām* and this information is understood and analysed in the context of the major theme of this study, reconciliation.

Christian-Muslim Polemical Themes and the Context of *Tabyiīn-ul-Kalām*

It is really hard to understand Syed Ahmad's reconciliatory approach until we know the context and major issues in religious debates among the Christians and Muslims of the subcontinent in the middle of the 19th century. The 19th century witnessed an influx of Christian missionaries in India under the patronage of colonial rulers. These missionaries started to convert the people of other faiths to Christianity, and public denunciation of native cultures and traditions became their daily routine. This situation led to public debates. *Mīzān-ul-Ḥāq* (Balance of Truth) by Karl G. Pfander (1803–1865) who was a German missionary, [56] became the *magnum opus* in missionary circles and it was publicly announced that the objection it has raised cannot be answered by the

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[56] C. G. Pfander, *Mīzān-ul-Ḥāq* (London: The Religious Tract Soc., 1835 and 1910).

Muslims. Different Muslim scholars responded to Pfander's objections like Āl-e-Ḥasan's[57] *Kītāb al-Istīfsār* (Book of Questions) and *al-Istībshār* (Good News).[58] However, the most well-known response was given by Raḥmāt-ul-Allāh Kīrānwī (1818-1891) in his *Izhār-ul-Ḥāq* (Truth Revealed), originally written in Persian and later translated into Urdu language by Akbar 'Ali and published in three volumes.[59]

The major themes in Christian-Muslim polemical debates were: are the books of the OT (Old Testament) and NT (New Testament) revealed? Has the message of previous revelations been abrogated? Is there any original sin? Is trinity right or wrong? Is Islam the last religion? Is Muhammad (PBUH) foretold in the Bible? Is Qur'ān a miracle? Does Muhammad (PBUH) fulfil the criteria of Prophet-hood?[60] Both Christians and Muslims, in their religious debates, were trying to falsify each other's religions. In this polemical context, Syed Ahmad took a reconciliatory approach and instead of attacking the opponent's religion, he tried to reconcile each other's doctrines. However, it is important to note that even in his reconciliatory approach he did not compromise upon traditional doctrines of Islam. Following is a brief analysis of his reconciliatory approach.

Polemical Themes and Reconciliatory Approach

Christian-Muslim polemical themes are fundamentally of two types; (a) common themes, which contained the issues of prophet-hood, revelation, *taḥrīf* (alteration) in the scriptures and abrogation; (b) specific themes which related to particular doctrines of both religions, like trinity, atonement, divinity of Christ, crucifixion and last but not the least, the original sin. The first volume of *Tabyiīn-ul-Kalām* deals with the common themes and the third volume deals with the specific themes.

Prophets and Revelation

Christians and Muslims have a very different understanding of the prophets and revelation. The Muslims believe that there are two major types of revelation—Waḥī (revelation) and *Ilhām* (Inspiration). The earlier is superior as it is free from the mistakes or errors. However, the earlier may contain errors. The first volume of *Tabyiīn* consists of ten discourses in which he deals with the above-mentioned polemical questions. The very

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[57] Al-e-Ḥasan Muhani, *Kītāb al-Istīfsār* (Lahore: Dār-ul-Ma'ārīf, n.d.).
[58] Ibid., 36.
[59] Taqi 'Uthmani, *Bible se Qur'ān tak,* 3 Volumes, (Karachi: Dār-ul-Ishā'āt, 2010).
[60] C. G. Pfander, *Mīzān-ul-Ḥāq or Balance of Truth*, trans., R. H. Weakley (London: Church Missionary House, Salisbury Square, 1866), 1-151.

first discourse is his declaration of faith, in which he strongly upholds the authentic Muslim beliefs—the articles of faith. He denied the Christian claim that prophets could commit sin and they are not saved from sinful activities. However, Syed emphasized that all the prophets are chosen by Allah and they are saved from major and minor sins.[61] In response to the question of Adam's sin of eating from the prohibited tree, Prophet Younus *('alāyhī s-salām)* leaving the county and his people without God's commandment, etc., Syed Ahmad divided the nature of sins into two categories; first, sins against the law and secondly, sins arising from an absence of a proper and right minded feeling of veneration for God or deep rooted sense of his Divine majesty. None in the world, nay not even the Prophets, are free from falling into the latter kind of sins. Thus, they were not guilty of any violation of law.[62]

The second discourse is about the nature of revelation and the word of God. He divided *waḥī* into six categories and argued that *waḥī* can be revealed to the saints. This particular discourse has been brought to reconcile the Muslim and Christian views of revelation. Christians believe that God not only reveals His message to the prophets but He had revealed his message through women—Mothers of Moses *('alāyhīs-salām)* and Jesus— *('alāyhī s-salām)* and through the saints.[63] The New Testament has 23 books other than the Gospels which were considered revealed.

The Issue of *Taḥrīf*

No issue is as important in the Christian-Muslim theological debates as the issue of *taḥrīf* /interpolation and the main point of contention among them.[64] The Muslims accuse the Jews and Christians of *tahrīf*. Syed stressed that before we analyse the question of *taḥrīf* in the Bible, we must understand the question: what is the meaning of the term in the Qur'ān? Muslim theologians have two different opinions on this issue based upon *Taḥrīf-e-Lafẓī* (interpolation of words) and *Taḥrīf-e-Maʿānwī* (interpolation of in the meaning of the words). One group of scholars is of the view that Jews and Christians deliberately changed, added and deleted different words from their respective

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[61] Syed Ahmad Khan, *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wā Injīl ʿlā mīllāt-il-Islam,* Vol., 1, 18.
[62] *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām* vol. II, 162-163.
[63] Syed Ahmad Khan, *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wā Injīl ʿlā mīllāt-il-Islam,* Vol., I, 65.
[64] Christian W. Troll, *Sayyed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898): A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1978), 65.

scriptures. They make literal interpretation of the Qur'ānic passages in which the Qur'ān accuses the Jews and Christians of *taḥrīf*. Two classical texts are important in the formulation of this traditional Muslim view of *taḥrīf*. First, Ibn Ḥazam's (994-1064) book *al-faṣāl fī al-Mīlāl wā al-Ahwā' wā al-Naḥal* (the Decisive Word on Sects, Heterodoxies, and Denominations) and Ibn Taymīya's (1263-1328) *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (The Correct Response).[65] In India, Raḥmāt-ul-Allāh Kīrānwī promulgated this view in his famous book *I'jāz-e-'iĪsawī*.[66] The second group of scholars are of the view that *taḥrīf* is not in the words but in the misinterpretation of the meaning of the subject. Syed Ahmad states that Abdullah b. 'Abbās (619-687), Imām Ismā'īl Būkhārī (810-870), Fakhr-ul-Dīn Razī (1150-1210), and Shāh Walī-ul-Allah (1703-1762) are advocates of the second view and he also adopted the second opinion. Responding to the arguments of the first group of scholars Syed Ahmad noted:

> those learned doctors of our faith, who have spoken of first three kinds of corruption (*Taḥrīf-e-Lafẓī*) as having been practiced in scripture, did not correctly understand the meaning of the word *taḥrīf* and hence other more learned doctors of our faith have stated their deliberate conviction, that no such corruption took place in the scriptures.[67]

He further added that the major reason behind the misunderstanding in the meaning of *taḥrīf* was to include such books as *taḥrīf* being written by the individuals and falsely published under the names of Prophets or Apostles.[68] This is what the Qur'ān states in the second surah *al-Bāqrhāh* verse 89. It states "*and woe unto them who transcribe corruptly the book of law with their hands and then say this is from God*".[69] Hence, wherever the Qur'ān talks about *taḥrīf*, it talks about *taḥrīf-e-Ma'nāwī* and pseudonymous writings under the names of prophets and imminent persons.

In light of the above-mentioned definition of *taḥrīf*, the question is not whether the writings were preserved in the original form as they were revealed upon the messengers, but are the books which compose the Bible today identical with the original writings of

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[65] Ibn Taymiyah, *The Correct Response to those who have Corrupted the Religion of the Messiah* (Umm al-Qur'ān, n.d.).
[66] Raḥmat-ul-Allāh Kīrānwī, *I'jāz-e-'iĪsawī,* Revised edition (Karachi: dār-ul-Ishā'at, n.d.).
[67] Syed Ahmad Khān, *Tabīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wa Injīl 'lā millat-il-Islām,* Vol., 1, 69.
[68] Ibid., 68.
[69] Ibid.

the inspired authors to whom they are associated. As far as the question of *Torah/Tawrāt*, the first five books of the Bible revealed to Moses, he took an entirely different position from Raḥmāt-ul-Allāh Kīrānwī and those who questioned the genuineness of Torah. He wrote that these scholars objected upon Moses authorship of Torah on two grounds. Firstly, they found various incidents and events in the Torah which did not in fact happen till long after the death of Moses; for instance, '*Hebron*', the name of a village mentioned in Genesis XIII: 18, Israelites named it after they had conquered Palestine. Secondly, majority of the text is written in the *third person* rather in the *first person.*[70] Syed Ahmad argued that the authorship of the Pentateuch cannot be called into question on the basis of these arguments. He wrote that as it is a historically admitted fact that the *Tawrāt* was destroyed a number of times and later recorded and compiled by Prophet 'Uzair[71] (Ezra), so it is natural for him to include the incidents which happened after the death of Moses and to write it in a third person narrative.[72] Consequently, the current *Tawrāt* is the same as it was revealed on Prophet 'Uzair. Responding to the errors identified by textual criticism in the 17th century, Syed is of the view that they are the result of the long process of compilation and multiplicity of copies transcribed in different ages of time. The transcribers transcribed the copies as honestly as they could. Christian scholars tried their best to remove such unintentional errors in order to restore the text in conformity with original…but we Muhammadan hold there may still be some passages that may not correspond with the original manuscripts written by the apostles themselves…and it is really hard to know and distinguish the original and the transcribed text.[73] But it does not mean that such errors make the entire Bible text doubtful. It is just an admission of the fact that there are still some passages and may be some more unknown to us that are not in exact agreement with their original.[74]

The possibility of errors in the current text of the Bible led Syed Ahmad to question how Muslims can get guidance form such an error-filled text. Hence, he prescribed two rules—firstly, 'an inquiry after the genuineness of the word' to be congruent with its

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[70] *Tabīn-ul-Kalām,* Vol., II, 16-20; to know the complete detail of these objections see: Raḥmat-ul-Allāh Kīrānwī, *I'jāz-e-'iĪsawī,* Revised edition (Karachi: dār-ul-Ishā'at, n.d), 165-188.

[71] Ibn-e-'Abbas states, when Ezra recorder whole Torah or Pentateuch form his memory, the Jews called him as son of God. See: *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām, Vol.,* II, 14-15.

[72] Syed Ahmad Khan, *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wā Injīl 'lā mīllāt-il-Islam,* Vol., II, 20.

[73] Syed Ahmad Khan, *Tabīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wā Injīl 'lā mīllāt-il-Islam,* Vol., 1, 148.

[74] Ibid., 150.

general guidance and secondly 'use of the correct interpretation of the sense of those words' consistent with the general connected scope and design of holy writ.[75] From this discussion, it is clear that his concept of *taḥrīf* is totally different from majority of the Muslim scholars of the Bible. Syed Ahmad's positive attitude towards the Bible led Christian writers to think that he considered the Bible as reliable as the Christians think. However, if we closely analyse his view regarding Christian scripture, we find that he accepted 'conditional reliability' of the Bible and tried to reconcile the traditional Muslim beliefs; this is what distinguished him from the rest of the Muslim scholars who categorically rejected authenticity of the Bible.

The Issue of *Nāskh* (abrogation)

The issue of *Naskh* is also an important one in Christian-Muslim debates. In Muslim terminology, it means the expiration of the period of the validity of a practical injunction.[76] After discussing the issue of *taḥrīf,* Pfander discusses it in the second chapter. Similarly, Kīrānvī in his *Iẓhār-ul-Ḥāq*, which was the answer to Pfander's *Mīzān-ul-Ḥāq,* shed light upon this issue in chapter three. Pfander accused the Muslims of holding the view that all the previous *sharī'āh* (the laws of Torah), moral laws (ethical teachings of Jesus) and devotional prayers (the psalms) have been abrogated by the Qur'ān.[77] On the other hand, Kīrānvī responded that the author of *Mīzān-ul-Ḥāq* had made a false allegation against the Muslims and they did not hold this view of abrogation about the scriptures. He wrote "we never claim, however, that the law of Torah and Evangel have been abrogated by the Qur'ān as a whole…there are certain injunctions of Torah that certainly have not been abrogated by the Holy Qur'ān; for example, false witness, murder, adultery, sodomy, theft and perjury, are all prohibited in Islam as they are in the law of Moses."[78] Kīrānvī categorized abrogation into two categories. Firstly, injunction enjoined by the early prophets and abrogated by the laws of succeeding Prophets; for example, marriage between brothers and sisters was permissible in Abrahamic *sharī'āh* (Gen., 20:12) but later abrogated (Leviticus 18:9). Secondly,

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[75] Ibid., 151-152.
[76] Raḥmat-ul-Allāh Kīrānvī, *Izahār-l-Ḥāq: Distortion and Abrogation in the Bible*, Part 3, Translated in English by Muhammad Walī Razi (London: TaHa Publishers, 1990), 193.
[77] C. G. Pfander, *Mīzān-ul-Ḥāq or Balance of Truth*, translated and abridged by R. H. Weakley (London: Church Missionary House, Salisbury Square, 1866), 5.
[78] Raḥmat-ul-Allāh Kīrānvī, *Izahār-l-Ḥāq: Distortion and Abrogation in the Bible*, Part 3, 195.

abrogation in the laws of the same prophet; for example, God asked Abraham to slay his son and offer him as sacrifice to the Lord, but this injunction was abrogated before being practiced (Genesis Ch., 22).[79] The Muslim view upon abrogation was stronger and well prepared as Alan M. Guenther wrote "In the 1854 encounter in Agra, the subjects of debate had included the abrogation and corruption of the Scriptures; and in the ensuing discussion it became clear that the missionaries were unprepared for this informed attack and were disconcerted as a result."[80]

Syed Ahmad's view about abrogation was congruent with the traditional Muslim belief. He adopted Kirānwī's definition. He wrote "by cancelling we understand simply expiration of the period."[81] He categorically rejected missionaries' view that *nāskh* happened because of change in God's will or because of the weakness in His knowledge. He also refuted Pfander's argument that *nāskh-e-shar'ī* is not possible. On the contrary he upheld the view that *naskh* is a prerequisite in sacred scriptural.[82] However, to reconcile the theme of abrogation to Christian faith, he wrote "those who imagine it to be part of the Muhammadan creed that one law has totally repealed another, are utterly mistaken, and we do not believe that the *Zabūr* abrogated the Torah; that the Torah in turn gave way to the Gospel; and New Testament was suppressed by the Holy Qur'ān".[83] He is also of the view that *nāskh* is not everlasting, if in future similar situation happened; the cancelled commandment may be still readopted.[84]

The Issue of Trinity and Incarnation

The Christian doctrine of trinity, one God in three persons, is strongly criticized by the Qur'ān. It powerfully asserted that God is absolutely one and rules out any notion that another being could share his sovereignty.[85] Qur'anic criticism of the trinity led the Christian-Muslim theologians to engage in debates about the nature of God and His attributes. The Muslims never accepted that the nature of God can be divided into

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[79] For more examples see: ibid., 196-221.
[80] Alan M. Guenther, "Christian responses to Ahmad Khan's Commentary on the Bible," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1-2 (2010), 69.
[81] *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wā Injīl 'lā mīllāt-il-Islam,* Vol., 1, 265.
[82] Ibid., 263.
[83] Ibid., 268.
[84] Ibid., 266.
[85] David Thomas, *Encyclopedia of Qur'ān*, "Trinity," (Brill, Laden: Brill Academic Publisher, 2006), 368-372.

different persons. Syed Ahmad also engaged in this debate and throughout his second and third volume of *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām,* he criticized Christian theologians for the references they brought from the Book of Genesis and the Gospels in order to prove their claim. Syed Ahmad used the criteria of 'general guidance' i.e., God is One, Him alone we worship and serve—found throughout the Bible to judge the doctrines of trinity and incarnation. He wrote "we Muhammadan can arrive at no other conclusion but the sole and indivisible unity of God from the content of all the scriptures."[86] He adds "in whatever way you want, you can revere the Jesus but do not consider him worthy to be worshiped…the early Christians were Unitarian and the doctrine of trinity was later developed in the third or fourth century."[87] He also described an extensive survey of the early Christian sects and the nature of differences among the Christian theologians from the first century to the advent of the last prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He categorically named those Christians groups who denied the virgin birth of Christ as nonbelievers (*Kāfīr*) and is of the view that Christian historians made a grave mistake to call them as heretics.[88] He summed up early Christological controversies in the following words:

> And, when a person saw the working of [Jesus'] miraculous power that raised the dead—which is the work of God—they called him God, and God's true son. So, the person who regards his external form would know him merely as human. And, one who ponders the source of his human form recognizes him as Allah and *Ibn-ullāh*. And, the one who looks upon them all recognizes him as the messenger of God, word of God, and Spirit of God, and know that all these things come from the one God.[89]

After summing up the early Christian Christological controversies, he is of the view that the only disagreement in Islamic and Christian Jesus is that whilst maintaining the distinction between son and the father they worship him and it is not permissible as Jesus

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[86] *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām*, vol. II, 43, 165.
[87] *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām*, vol. III, 7-8.
[88] Ibid., 3.
[89] Syed Ahmad, *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām fī tafsīr-ul-Taurāt wā Injīl 'lā mīll't-il-Islam* (Trans., in English by Christian W. Troll, Basharat Mughal and Charles M. Rasmsey (Lahore: Maktābā-e-Jadīd Press, 2017), 4.

himself stated in the gospel of Mathew verse 10 chapter 4 'Worship the God your Lord and serve Him alone.[90]

Atonement and Original Sin

Though the fall of Adam and Eve from heaven is a common theme in both the Qur'ān and the Bible, however the Qur'ān does not associate it in any way to the original sin.[91] In Christian theology, though some modern interpreters found no bases for this in scriptures,[92] it is a state of sin in which mankind has been held captive since the fall.[93] Christians believe that there is no cure for it until a pure soul is sacrificed in order to maintain man's fallen relationship with God. Consequently, man's reconciliation with God happened through the sacrificial death of Christ.[94] Syed Ahmad wrote "this opinion is open to one grave question; forasmuch as it would seem to imply a reproach upon the perfect justice of God that the son cannot be made responsible of the guilt of his father. This question is only for Christians. The Muslims thought that the prohibition was not a legal ruling from God, it was merely a caution prompted for man's well-being and the result of the fall is clear evidence for it.[95]

Conclusion

Syed Ahmad's Bible commentary is an important monograph in the study of religion; however, its significance has been overlooked among the Muslims. His reconciliatory approach to Christian doctrines can be a way forward for those Muslim scholars who want to engage themselves especially in the academic study of Christianity and Judaism and in general the non-Muslim religions. The period of the compilation of the *Tabyiīn-ul-Kalām* between 1862 and 1865 is also thoughtful for the Muslims because approximately a century later, in the period of Vatican II (1962 and 1965), the world witnessed a paradigm shift in the relationships of the Catholic Church to other religions.

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[90] Ibid., 6-7.

[91] Anthony Hearle Johns, *Encyclopedia of Quran*, "Fall of Man," (Brill, Laden: Brill Academic Publisher, 2006), 173.

[92] See: Henri A. G. Blocher, *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, "Original Sin," edited by Kevin J. Vanhoozer, (Michigan, USA: Baker Academic, 2005), 553-554.

[93] F. L. Cross, and E. A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, "Original Sin," (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1195.

[94] Ibid., 122.

[95] *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām*, vol. II, 159-160.

Vatican II produced *Nostra Atete*, a Catholic declaration of non-Christian religions which changed the direction of the Catholic Church about the other religions; Muslims must consider *Tabyiīn's* compilation period as a change in the Muslims relationship to other religions. It can be a basic text for Muslims to engage themselves in dialogue with the other religions without compromising the traditional doctrines of Islam as Syed Ahmad did in his reconciliatory approach in *Tabyiīn-ul-Kalām.*

To reconcile the debated themes in the Christian Muslim theology, Syed Ahmad sometime agrees and disagree to the common beliefs, the adherents of both faiths normally hold. He denied the Christian claim that prophets could commit sin and they are not saved from sinful activities and emphasized upon the Muslim belief that all the prophets are chosen by Allah and they are saved from major and minor sins. He disagrees with Raḥmātūllāh Kīrāṇwī's view of alteration in the Christian scriptures which latter adopted by the common Muslims, and emphasized that the authorship of the Pentateuch cannot be called into question on the basis of those events which occurred after the time of Moses because it is an historically admitted fact that the *Tawrāt* was destroyed a number of times and later recorded and compiled by Prophet 'Uzair[96] (Ezra), so it is natural for him to include the incidents which happened after the death of Moses and to write it in a third person narrative. Moreover, He categorically rejected the missionaries' view that *nāskh* happened because of change in God's will or because of the weakness in His knowledge and argued that *nāskh* is a prerequisite in sacred scriptures. Last but not least, he denied the Christian claim of Jesus' divinity and argued that early Christian were monotheist and they did not believe upon the divinity of Jesus.

Recommendations

The preceding discussion leaves ample room for recommendations, further thought and scholarly research. The academic and scholarly approach adopted by Syed Ahmed towards the study of religion is indeed remarkable. In hindsight, it can be viewed as being much ahead of its time. In an era in which the fight for religious superiority was deemed important and often coincided with political and imperial might, the approach adopted by Syed Ahmad was both visionary and courageous. It was also an attempt to reframe the narrative; in doing so he was not leaving the basic tenets of Islam; he was

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[96] Ibn-e-'Abbas states, when Ezra recorder whole Torah or Pentateuch form his memory, the Jews called him as son of God. See: *Tabyīn-ul-Kalām, Vol.,* II, 14-15.

merely trying to say, look, there have been earlier prophets – Let's explore what their teachings have in common with the succeeding generations and find a way out of the polemical abyss.

In the light of Syed Ahmad Khan's *Tabyiīn-ul-Kalām* and his reconciliatory approach in the Christian-Muslim polemical themes, following recommendations are given for further research.

1. One should not denounce polemical writings altogether. They can be useful to answer the illogical, non-academic and defamatory writings by biased thinkers whose writings have somehow impacted those who followed them. However, writings to denounce other religions cannot be useful for the academic study of religions.

2. While appreciating the scholarly and academic approach adopted by Syed Ahmad towards the study of Christianity, it is equally imperative to resume the method of academic study of religion earlier adopted by Al-Bīrunī (d. 1048), the author of *Daibstān-e-Mazāhīb* and may others.

3. Studying Christianity using the historical, sociological and phenomenological method can become an appropriate starting point.

4. One of the great paradoxes of our times is how to reconcile religious perspectives at a moment in history where religious leaders have reclaimed significance and followers across the world. The academic and scholarly approach adopted by Syed Ahmad can pave the way, or at least train the mind of aspiring researchers to look beyond the obvious differences and seek rapprochement where possible. Such an approach makes it prudent to move beyond past grievances and mistakes. However, it is not an easy path to forge; conflicting points of view cause friction and the sparks that fly threaten to consume everyone, especially if religion is involved. Humankind's connection with God is deeply personal, sacred and passionately held. And each one of us defends it vigorously. A reconciliatory approach towards the study of inter-religious dialogue is as difficult today as it was a century ago but it is a path worth exploring.

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