

JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION AS A SOURCE OF THE *QUR'ĒN*: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF MARGOLIOUTH'S ASSERTION[♾]

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ABSTRACT

The assertion that Prophet Muġammad (p.b.u.h) sourced the *Qur'Ēn* from Judeo-Christian tradition is one of the oldest claims promoted by the medieval Christian missionaries. Although there are no concrete, conclusive and irrefutable proofs on such a claim, almost all Christian scholars even the most learned ones subscribed to it and held it to be true. The claim also gets back up in Margoliouth's treatises on the sources of the *Qur'Ēn*. Its reproduction in the work of such an able contemporary Christian scholar may confirm the assertion that the claim still has relevance in the contemporary Christians' works on Islam. Thus, this research attempts to critically analyse and evaluate Margoliouth's deliberation on this issue. In an effort to carry out this task, the research attempts to answer some questions such as: did the Prophet (p.b.u.h) really copy or pick up from Biblical traditions? What were the possible avenues through which he might have picked up such traditions? Based on these questions, the researchers, while applying historical, analytical, evaluative and comparative approaches attempt to critically analyse and investigate Margoliouth's claim that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) copied from Biblical traditions and the possible chances through which he might have come into contact with those traditions.

Keywords: *Judeo-Christian tradition, Margoliouth, Prophet Muġammad (p.b.u.h), the Qur'Ēn.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In dealing with Margoliouth's discourse on the sources of the *Qur'Ēn*, the researchers have discovered that he mentioned his sources on some claims, while on others he kept mute. However, the views which he declined to tell his sources have been given assumed references which are usually used by orientalists on the same assertions. Those assumed sources, as we may call them, and the cited ones have been traced back to their original places in order to discover their accuracy or otherwise. In addition to that, the grades (weakness or authenticity) of traditions which were used by Margoliouth have also been investigated. In order to make Margoliouth's point clear, assumptions which might have been the reason for his reliance on some particular narrations have also been suggested. To finally assess or evaluate those views, the researchers, to some extent, have passed judgement based on accuracy or inaccuracy of Margoliouth's evidence and assertions.

2 AVENUES THROUGH WHICH THE PROPHET (P.B.U.H) MIGHT HAVE COME INTO CONTACT WITH JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS

Critical review of Margoliouth's works reveals that he uncompromisingly believes that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) sourced the largest portion of the *Qur'Ēn* from Judeo-Christian traditions. To support this claim, he brought many possible avenues through which the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) might have come into contact with those traditions, namely by having access to Waraqah's translated copy of the Gospel, listening to Quss ibn SĒŃidah al-ŃIyĒdĒ at ŃUKĒĐ market, his interaction with Arabian Christians and Jews and during his various travels to the Christian lands. Thus, in this research, those opportunities pointed out by Margoliouth will be analysed and evaluated.

2.1 WARAQAH'S TRANSLATED COPY OF THE BIBLE

2.1.1 ANALYSIS

Although Margoliouth claimed that "there is no evidence that any parts of the Christian Bible had been translated into the dialect of Quraysh or those Arabic dialects of which we have monuments in pre-Islamic inscriptions",¹ he appeared

¹ Margoliouth, (1939). *Mohammed*. London: Blackie & Son Limited, p. 19.

to contradict this claim. In his book *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*, he openly argued that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) used the translated version of the Bible in his composition of the *Qur'Ēn*.¹ He further contended that Waraqah ibn Nawfal, one of the Meccan inquirers who also had much to do with the beginnings of Islam, was credited with the translation of the Bible into Arabic language. It was through that translated version of the Bible that Muġammad came into contact with the Bible and subsequently used it in his composition of the *Qur'Ēn*.²

2.1.2 EVALUATION

Margoliouth's Evidence

Although Margoliouth declined to provide any evidence to support this assertion, it may be assumed that he was referring to some traditions recorded in *ŌaġĒĪ al-BukĤĒrĒ*, in which ŃŌishah, while giving an account on Prophet's first experience with revelation, said, "...Then (KhadĤjah) took him to Waraqah ibn Nawfal. He (Waraqah) was a man who converted to Christianity (and therefore) used to read Gospel in Arabic..."³ In another narration she said, "...He (Waraqah) was a man who converted to Christianity during the pre-Islamic period. He was able to write the Arabic writing, and therefore he used to write from Gospel in Arabic what Allah wished him to write..."⁴

Assertion

It may be inferred that Margoliouth held the phrase '*wakĤna yaktub al-kitĤb al-ŃarabĤ wa yaktub min al-inĤĒl bi al-Ńarabiyyah mĤ shĤ AllĤh an yaktub*' to mean that Waraqah translated the Gospel or portion of it. If waraqah was credited with such a work according to the Islamic sources, then Muġammad probably got

¹ Some people may argue that, Margoliouth retired from that claim since his book *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam* is earlier and older than his book *Mohammed*. Therefore, he probably changed his perception. But, however, the issue here is that, nowhere he clearly pointed out any shift or development of his perception towards this issue. Hence, the reason for selecting this theme in this research is to call the attention of those who are quoting Margoliouth as regard to this issue, and to argue that the claim is wrong and even Margoliouth contradicted himself or declined to confess his earlier misconception.

² Margoliouth, (2001). *Muhammad and the Rise of Islam*. New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, p. 42.

³ Muġammad ibn IsmĤŃĒĪ. (2001). *Al-JĤmiŃ al-Musnad al-ŌaġĒĪ al-Mukhtaġar Min UmuĤR RasĤĪ AllĤh ŌallĤ AllĤh ŃAlayh Wa sallam Wa Sunanih Wa AyyĤmih*. DĤR Ūawq al-NajĤh, *ĪadĤth* no. 3392.

⁴ Ibid. *ĪadĤth* no. 4953, 6982, Muslim, *ŌaġĒĪ...*, *ĪadĤth* no. 202.

access to that work and benefited from it in his composition of the *Qur'Ēn*. Hence, his *Qur'Ēn* could not be a divine composition.

Refutation

Margoliouth's assertion that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) probably used the translated version of the Bible which was translated by Waraqah ibn Naufal is unfounded. As may be inferred, there is no mention of translation in both the traditions above. The phrases '*yaqra' al-injĒl bi al-Ńarabiyyah*' meaning (he used to read the Gospel in Arabic) and '*yaktub min al-injĒl bi al-Ńarabiyyah mĒ shĒ AllĒh an yaktub*' meaning (he used to write from the Gospel in Arabic what Allah wished him to write) do not convey the notion that he translated the Gospel, nor any part of it into Arabic. All what they convey is that he used to read and write the Gospel or part of it in Arabic. In other words, what the above traditions refer to is just transcription or conversion of Gospel's characters from Hebrew to those of Arabic, or simply transliteration, not translation.

Moreover, a tradition recorded by al-BukhĒrĒ in his *ŒalĒĒl* may nullify Margoliouth's assertion. ŃŌishah was reported to have said, "...He (Waraqah) was a man who converted to Christianity during the pre-Islamic period. He was able to write the Hebrew writing, and therefore he used to write from Gospel in Hebrew what Allah wished him to write...".¹ If the phrases '*yaktub*' or '*yaqra*' are taken to mean translation, what will then be the use of translating the Gospel from Arabic to Hebrew in the Arabian society?

Moreover, it is found in the same tradition that Waraqah assured Prophet MuĒammad (p.b.u.h) of becoming a true Prophet from God, and prophesied that he would be driven out by his people; promising him that if he lived long he would render him a strong support. Thus, if the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was alleged to have benefited from Waraqah's translation of the Bible, how could it be possible for him to make Waraqah convinced and contented with his vision to the extent that he compared it with that of Moses? Was Waraqah so ignorant of the Bible to the extent that he could not recognize MuĒammad's lies and art of picking up information from his own translated version of the Bible? If the Prophet (p.b.u.h) had picked up some biblical information from Waraqah's translated version of the Bible, why when he claimed to be a Prophet from God Waraqah did not

¹ Al-BukhĒrĒ, *Al-JĒmiŃ al-Musnad al-ŒalĒĒl*, ĪadĒth no. 3.

publicize him as a great liar? Nonetheless, another great difficulty which Margoliouth left unsolved is his inability to point out the exact portions and specific amount of biblical information taken by Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h) from Waraqah. However, the most unfortunate thing about this theory is that, Waraqah had died shortly after this event in which case only a few verses of *sĒrah al-NĀlaq* were revealed. He did not live long to teach the Prophet (p.b.u.h) anything while the revelation continued to be revealed for a period of twenty three years.

However, even if it is assumed, for the sake of argument, that Waraqah translated the Bible into Arabic, Margoliouth's argument could not survive on the ground that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was illiterate.¹ If he was indeed illiterate, how then would he be able to benefit from the translated Bible? On this basis, this assertion must be viewed as inaccurate which might be the reason why Thomas Patrick concluded that, "We have no evidence that Muḥammad had access to the Christian scriptures".² Moreover, it was asserted that there is no vibrant reason for asserting that the Arabic version of either Old or New Testaments was in existence prior to the time of Prophet (p.b.u.h). The first Arabic version of the Old Testament was that of R. Sadias Gaon which came into emergence in the year 900 C.E., some hundreds of years after the death of the Prophet (p.b.u.h), and the first Arabic version of the New Testament was that which was published by Erpenius in the year 1616 C.E., almost a thousand years after the death of the Prophet (p.b.u.h).³ The discourse in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* concludes that, "there is no evidence of any parts of the Bible having been translated into Arabic before Islam".⁴

Paul Wegner also illustrated that, "The Scriptures do not seem to have been extant in an Arabic version before the time of Muhammad, who knew the gospel story only in oral form and mainly from Syriac sources".⁵ Moreover, Hans Kung argued that the *Qur'Ēn* also has at least one historical fact behind it. Muslim scholars

¹ The common opinion that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was illiterate who never knew how to read and write was confirmed by even some non-Muslim scholars. Margoliouth himself subscribed to this view. See Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise...*, 59.

² Thomas Patrick Hughes. (2003). *Dictionary of Islam*. New Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, Second Edition, p. 515.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Hastings James (Ed). (1911). *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. New York: Charles Scribner's sons, Vol. X, p. 540.

⁵ Wegner Paul D. (1999). *The Journey from Texts to Translations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, p. 250

argue that Muġammad was illiterate, he could not read the Bible nor had it been read to him, and at his time there was no Arabic translation of the Bible.¹

Ultimately, since there is no historical evidence that the Bible, in whatsoever sense, was translated into Arabic, Margoliouth's assertion that Waraqah was credited with having translated it into Arabic is just an assertion which has no basis. And since the Arabic version of the Bible was not in existence before the rise of Islam, Prophet Muġammad (p.b.u.h) could not have benefited from non-existing material. Hence, Margoliouth's claims were based on mere conjecture.

2.2 LISTENING TO QUSS IBN SĒNIDAH AT THE ŃUKÓÚ MARKET

2.2.1 ANALYSIS

Margoliouth further argued that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) might have come into contact with the Biblical traditions through listening to the address delivered by Quss ibn SĒ'idah. He argued that Quss, whose name is likely to be traced to the Syrian mispronounced *Kasha* "priest", was held to be the Bishop of NajrĒn. Quss delivered an address at the ŃUKĒĐ Market in the presence of the Prophet. The address, he asserted, resembled the early verses of the *Qur'Ēn*, and this clearly shows that it contributed something to the *Qur'Ēn*.²

2.2.2 EVALUATION

Margoliouth's Evidence

Margoliouth based his assertion on a tradition which mentions that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) asked about Quss, and when he was told that he (Quss) had already died, he then said, "I cannot forget him at the ŃUKĒĐ market, in the Sacred Month, on a red camel preaching to people..."³

Assertion

Margoliouth might have assumed that since the Prophet (p.b.u.h) listened to a Christian preacher, Quss ibn SĒ'Ēidah al-IyĒdĒ, at the ŃUKĒĐ Market, he might have benefited from him since his *Qur'Ēn* contains some teachings which

¹ Hans Kung. (1987). "Christianity and World Religions: The Dialogue with Islam as One Model" *The Muslim World*, vol. LXXVII, no. 2, p. 33.

² Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise...*, 43.

³ Al-BazzĒr, *Musnad*, 5347. Al-ŪabarĒnĒ, *Al-MuŃjam al-KabĒr*, 12561.

are parallel to the address delivered by Quss at the NŪKĒD Market. On this basis, the *Qur'Ēn* is not a truly divine revealed book.

Refutation

Even though the above tradition seems to be historically famous, but critical analysis reveals the fact that it is not only weak but fabricated. Therefore, relying on it to conclude that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) listened to Quss and picked up some information from him is unsatisfying. Al-AlbanĒ in his *Silsilah* critically traced the various ways of this tradition and concluded that it is a fabricated tradition.¹ In his *Al-MauĒĒĒĒt*, Ibn al-JawzĒ also mentioned the tradition and concluded that “This tradition, from all its ways, is a fabricated (tradition) and AbĒ al-FatĒ al-AzdĒ (also) said that “It is a fabricated tradition and has no origin (from the Prophet (p.b.u.h))”.² This same conclusion was made by Ibn xajar who said “All the ways of this tradition are weak”.³ Al-ShawkĒnĒ also mentioned it among the fabricated traditions.⁴

From the above discussion it may be clear that, the traditions giving an account on Quss' legend are fabricated traditions, and therefore can never stand as evidence. Moreover, some scholars argued that, despite the famous assertion that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) saw Quss and even listened to him during the annual fair at NŪKĒZ, the fact is that, Quss died over a century before the birth of the Prophet (p.b.u.h),⁵ and therefore, there is not any possibility that he (the Prophet (p.b.u.h)) met him. Can it therefore be concluded that the legend of Quss was just a fiction and the Prophet (p.b.u.h) never met him?

2.3 INTERACTION WITH ARABIAN CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

2.3.1 ANALYSIS

Another possible chance through which, as Margoliouth claimed, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) came to grasp some information from Biblical traditions, was his social intercourse with Arabian Jews and Christians. Margoliouth argued that, it was

¹ A-AlbĒnĒ, *Silsilah* Ahadith al-sahihah, vol. 12, pp. 833-35.

² NAbd al-RaĒmĒn ibn NĒIĒ Ibn al-JawzĒ. (1966). *Al-MauĒĒĒĒt* (n. p.) vol. 1, pp. 213-214.

³ AĒmad ibn NĒIĒ ibn xajar. (1992). *Al-IĒĒbah fĒ TamyĒz al-ŌĒĒbah*. BeyrĒt: DĒr al-JĒl, 1st edition, vol. 5, p. 552.

⁴ MuĒammad ibn NĒIĒ al-ShawkĒnĒ. (1987). *Al-FawĒid al-MajmĒNah fĒ al-AĒĒdĒth al-MawĒĒNah*. BeyrĒt: Al-Maktab al-IslĒmĒ, 2nd edition, pp. 499-501.

⁵ Goudah as-SĒĒĒr, quoted from Mohammad Khalifa. (1989). *The Sublime Qur'Ēn and Orientalism*, Karachi: International Islamic Publishers (Pvt.) Ltd., second edition, p.14.

through such associations he derived some sort of Biblical “phraseology”. Although the Prophet, he said, was denied the arts of reading and writing and even learning by heart, “his power of picking up information did not altogether fail”¹ and was able to collect most of his information from conversation.² In order to support this argument, he brought some examples of phrases which, as he argued, evidently indicate that the *Qur’Ēn* was composed from Biblical traditions. He argued that phrases like “tasting death”, “to bring from darkness to light”, “to pervert the straightway of God”, “the trumpet shall be blown”, “to roll up the heavens as a scroll is rolled up”, “they have weights in their ears”, “the first and second death”, “that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hath entered into the heart of man”, “a camel entering a needle’s eye” and “as far as East is from the West” were not originally revealed to the Prophet (p.b.u.h) from God and that a biblical scholar can easily tell their sources. Muġammad, as he argued, heard them from pious Christians through his interaction with them and automatically adopted them. Margoliouth claimed that this shows the Prophet’s commitment to the habit of picking up information and consequently using them.³

Moreover, Margoliouth continued to explain how the Prophet (p.b.u.h) used such a medium to grasp information from pious Christians, and brought the story of Jabr and YasĒr who, as he argued, were both Jews. In the story, Margoliouth pointed out that Jabr and YasĒr used to sit together in their trade to read out their sacred book and meanwhile the Prophet would pass by and listen to them.⁴ Another person who Margoliouth suspected to have contributed to the composition of the *Qur’Ēn* was Ōuhayb. He argued that Ōuhayb was a Greek and an early follower from Mosul. From this person, some of the Christian matter in the *Qur’Ēn* might have been learned.⁵ He pointed out that many people suspected by Meccans to have taught the Prophet (p.b.u.h) were found in the traditions. He added that even the *Qur’Ēn* disproves such charge, but the reply “is unconvincing”⁶ and “the impression which the Koran (*Qur’Ēn*) leaves is that of information picked up casually rather than acquired by any sort of methodical study”.⁷

¹ Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise...*, 59.

² *Ibid.*, 58-59.

³ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

2.3.2 EVALUATION

Margoliouth's Evidence

Margoliouth relied on some historical accounts which give the inference that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) came into contact with some Christians who had the knowledge of the Bible, namely Jabr, Yas'Er and Suhayb. He referred to a tradition narrated by ŅUbayd All'Éh ibn Muslim who said, "We had two servants from Najr'Én. One of them was called Yas'Er, and the other Jabr. They used to read their books in their language, and the Prophet (p.b.u.h) would pass by them and hear their recitation. (Hence) the polytheists asserted that he was just learning from them".¹

Assertion

According to Margoliouth, since the Prophet (p.b.u.h) came into contact with these pious Christians and even used to listen to what they were reading from their books, it is possible that he picked up some Biblical information from them and inserted them in his *Qur'Én*. Therefore, on this ground, his source of the *Qur'Én* is not revelation, but rather the Biblical traditions.

Refutation

Margoliouth's suggestion that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) picked up information through interactions with the Arabian Jews and Christians could also be viewed as just a mere assertion. The story of Jabr and Yas'Er which he brought to support this claim does not embody such a notion. Certainly, there is no doubt that what they were reading was either *Tawr'Éh*, the Old Testament,² or both the Old and New Testaments³ according to the available materials, but in their language, not in Arabic, because they were not Arabs.⁴ Although a narration in *al-IĪ'Ébah* referred them to Najr'Én,⁵ another narration revealed that they were originally

¹ Ibn xajar al-ŅAsqal'Én'É, *Al-IĪ'Ébah...*, vol. 4, p. 418.

² MuĪammad ibn Jar'Er al-Ūabar'É. (2000). *J'ÉmiŅ al-Bay'Én Ņan Ta'w'Él Óy al-Qur'Én*. Mu'assasah al-Ris'Élah, vol. 17, p. 300.

³ Al-QurĪub'É, MuĪammad ibn AĪmad. (1964). *Al-J'ÉmiŅ li AĪk'Ém al-Qur'Én*. D'Er al-Kutub al-MiĪriyyah, vol. 10, p. 178.

⁴ ŅIy'Él ibn M'És'É. (1991). *Al-Shif'É bi TaŅr'Éf Huq'Éq al-MusĪaf'É*. Granada: Madinah Press, p. 359.

⁵ Ibn xajar al-ŅAsqal'Én'É, *Al-IĪ'Ébah...*, vol. 4, p. 418.

from Rome.¹ The phrase ‘*kĒnĒ yaqra’Ēni kutuban² lahumĒ bi lisĒnihimĒ*’ which means “they used to read their books in their tongue (language³)” which is found in the story, may also confirm this assertion.⁴ Therefore, if what they were reading was not in Arabic and the Prophet (p.b.u.h) could only speak and understand Arabic, how would it be possible for him to benefit from what they were reading? Hence, unless Margoliouth clarified where and when the Prophet (p.b.u.h) learned their language, this claim will remain inconclusive.

Moreover, the Muslim datum shows that Jabr denied this charge. He would say, “I swear by Allah, he instead teaches and guides me”⁵ whenever his master beat and accused him of teaching the Prophet (p.b.u.h). It is, however, surprising that Margoliouth favoured the opinion of Jabr’s master despite that the accuser was proven wrong by the accused. Another reality found in the Muslim datum may also repudiate Margoliouth’s assertion. A tradition informs that when Jabr, a former Jew, heard the Prophet (p.b.u.h) reciting the Chapter of YĒsuf, before the Hijrah, he recognized the person whom was mentioned (in the Chapter) and therefore became a Muslim.⁶ If the Prophet (p.b.u.h), therefore, benefited from what they used to read, Jabr would have never become convinced of Prophet’s truthfulness and his sincerity in the revelation he claimed.

Furthermore, the third person brought by Margoliouth to substantiate the theory of Judeo-Christian origin of the *Qur’Ēn* was Suhayb. This assertion also seems to be inaccurate. Suhayb was said to be originally Arabian. He got the nickname ‘al-RĒmĒ’ because he was kidnapped during his childhood and, therefore, lived in Rome and became a lisper (someone who has speech defect). He was later on brought to Mecca and sold to ŅAbd AllĒh ibn JudŅĒn who eventually freed him.⁷ He subsequently became one of the earliest Prophet’s

¹ IsmĒŅĒl ibn KathĒr. (1999). *TafsĒr al-Qur’Ēn al-ŅADĒm. TaĒĒq: SĒmĒ ibn MuĒammad SalĒmah DĒr Ūaybah li al-Nashr wa al-TawzĒŅ, 2nd edition, vol. 4, p. 604.*

² In another narration, the word ‘*kitĒban*’ instead of ‘*kutuban*’ was used. See MuĒammad ibn AĒmad al-QurĒubĒ, *Al-JĒmiŅ li AĒkĒm al-Qur’Ēn, TaĒĒq: AĒmad al-BardĒnĒ and IbrĒhĒm AĒfĒsh, (Al-QĒhirah: DĒr al-Kutub al-MĒriyyah, 1964), vol. 10, p. 178.*

³ Wahbah ibn MuĒĒafĒ al-ZuĒaylĒ. (1998). *Al-TafsĒr al-MunĒr fĒ al-ŅAqĒdah wa al-SharĒŅah wa al-Manhaj* Dimashq: DĒr al-Fikr al-MuŅĒĒir, vol.14, p. 231.

⁴ Ibn xajar al-ŅAsqalĒnĒ, *Al-ĪĒbah...*, vol. 4, p. 418.

⁵ Al-QurĒubĒ, vol. 10, p. 177.

⁶ MuĒammad ibn ŅUmar al-WĒqidĒ. (n.d). *Al-MaghĒzĒ. BeyrĒt: ŅŌlam al-Kutub. vol. 2, p. 865.*

⁷ Ibn xajar, *Al-ĪĒbah...*, vol. 3, p. 449.

followers who accepted Islam in the House of Arqam.¹ His early conversion to Islam is confirmed even by Margoliouth.² However, the fact that he had a defective tongue and lack of command in Arabic language, may lead to the conclusion that his alleged contribution to the *Qur'Ēn* is extremely inaccurate. Moreover, his conversion to Islam and believing the Prophet (p.b.u.h) in whatever he claimed to be a revelation from Allah, may also make us unconvinced with and sceptical about Margoliouth's assertion.

Ultimately, after examining Margoliouth's claim that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) picked up information from his interactions with the Arabian Christians and Jews, it makes the claims seen as illogical and inconsistent with the available Islamic data, and therefore, the reader's mind would never be contented with it.

2.4 DURING HIS VARIOUS TRAVELS

2.4.1 ANALYSIS

Another possible avenue, as pointed out by Margoliouth, through which the Prophet (p.b.u.h) picked up some of the Biblical information, was during his various travels. Margoliouth argued that it can be gathered from the *Qur'Ēn* that the Judeo-Christian scriptures and their systems were entirely unknown to the Prophet's fellow-citizens. If, however, the *Qur'Ēn* is not accepted as a divine communication to the Prophet, then it can be supposed that his exposure to the Christian systems and scriptures was during his various travels.³ Margoliouth argued that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) used to follow the Meccan caravans to their different destinations and the *Qur'Ēn* itself describes him to be familiar with traveling by land and sea. He further claimed that it was during his journeys that he came into contact with Jewish dealers of clothes, and when he interacted with them, he derived many Biblical information "and his sacred book afterwards contained a number of phrases which even his intimate associates at Mecca did not understand".⁴ However, during all those journeys, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) "would appear to have picked up information".⁵

¹ Ibid.

² Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise...*, p. 106.

³ Ibid., 18.

⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁵ Ibid., 58.

2.4.2 EVALUATION

Margoliouth's Evidence

When Margoliouth's claim is critically observed, it may be clear that he only relied on the journeys carried out by the Prophet (p.b.u.h) to substantiate it. According to him, even the Islamic sources made it clear that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was familiar with journeys. It was also found that he traveled to the Christian lands where he met some Christians.

Assertion

If it is true, according to the Islamic sources, that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) traveled to the Christian lands like Syria, and he met Christians there, it is possible that he picked up information from them. Based on this fact therefore, his travels were just like a clue through which he came into contact with the Christian traditions, picked them up and inserted them in his *Qur'Ēn*. If this is critically taken into consideration, it may be clear that the source of his *Qur'Ēn* was not revelation.

Refutation

Unlike Margoliouth and many other Christian missionaries, there was not a single unbeliever during the lifetime of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) that raised an allegation that he was taught by any Christian or any Monk during his journeys.¹ Hence, it may be fancied that the assumption that he sourced the Judeo-Christian traditions during his various travels and inserted them in his *Qur'Ēn* was first introduced by the Christian missionaries to discredit the *Qur'Ēn*.

However, the first impression or feeling that someone may have when coming across such an assertion is that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) made several trips to the Christian lands, and as a result, became acquainted with Judeo-Christian traditions. The recurrence of this assertion gives us the inference that the orientalist and the Christian missionaries have not yet made an in-depth or rather a sincere research on the Prophet's travels and the phenomena associated with them. It also implies that this assertion, as groundless as it is, continues to be an inherited Judeo-Christian polemic.

¹ Muhittin Akgul. (2009). *The Qur'Ēn in 99 Questions*, translated by Abdullah Erdemli. New Jersey: Thugra Books, pp. 20-21.

Furthermore, the Islamic data inform us that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) made only three trips before his mission. The first trip was when he was at the age of six. In that trip, he was said to have accompanied his mother to Medina in order to visit his paternal uncles, BanĒ al-NajjĒr.¹ As young as he was at that time, it would be rather irrational to suggest that he met the Christians or Jews of Medina and therefore became acquainted with Judeo-Christian traditions.

The Prophet's second trip was to Syria at the age of nine² or twelve.³ He was said to have accompanied his uncle AbĒ ŪĒlib in the company of some other Quraysh caravan. When they arrived at BaĒrĒ, a place in Syria, they met a Monk called BaĒĒrĒ who predicted that MuĒammad would be the Prophet of Allah.⁴ The tradition also recorded that BaĒĒrah advised AbĒ ŪĒlib to quickly take the Prophet (p.b.u.h) back home⁵ for fear that if the Jews noticed him, they would plot against him. Hence, as soon as AbĒ ŪĒlib ended his business in Syria, he quickly took the Prophet (p.b.u.h) back to Mecca.⁶ How many days they spent in Syria? The tradition did not mention, but it may be inferred that they did not spend many days and the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was always on the watch of his uncle.

However, there is nowhere, in the whole story, in which the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was said to have held a private discussion with either BaĒĒrĒ, the monk, or any other Christian or Jew on this trip. If BaĒĒrĒ is alleged to have taught the Prophet (p.b.u.h) some Biblical information, such a teaching must have taken place in front of his uncle AbĒ ŪĒlib as well as the rest of the business men who were with them on that trip. If BaĒĒrĒ had taught the Prophet (p.b.u.h) in front of them, they would have told the Quraysh that MuĒammad (p.b.u.h) was taught this and that by BaĒĒrĒ. But certainly, there was nothing like this recorded in the Prophet's history. Moreover, as it may be inferred from the tradition, the period of their stay in Syria was very short. Was it then enough for the Prophet (p.b.u.h) to learn what he brought within a period of twenty three years? Moreover, the

¹ Al-xasan ibn ŒUmar ibn xabĒb. (1996). *Al-MuqtafĒ min SĒrah al-MuĒĒfĒĒ, TaĒqĒq: MuĒĒfĒĒ MuĒammad xusayn al-DhahabĒ. Al-QĒhirah: DĒr al-xadĒth, first edition, p. 6.*

² MuĒammad ibn JarĒr al-ŪabarĒ. (1986). *TĒrĒkh al-Umam wa al-MulĒk. BeyrĒt: DĒr al-Kutub al-ŒIlmiyyah, first edition, vol. 1, p. 519.*

³ IsmĒŒĒl ibn KathĒr, *Al-BidĒyah...*, vol. 2, p. 348.

⁴ ŒAbd al-Malik ibn HishĒm al-MuŒĒfirĒ. (1991). *Al-SĒrah al-Nabawiyyah, TaĒqĒq: ŒAbd al-RaĒf SaŒd (BeyrĒt: DĒr al-JĒl, 1411), vol.1, p. 320.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 322.

⁶ Ibn KathĒr, *Al-BidĒyah...*, vol. 2, p. 346.

Prophet (p.b.u.h), as we were informed, was either nine or twelve years old. That was thirty one or twenty eight years before his mission ever began. How would it then be possible for such a little and inexperienced boy to learn what he later on incorporated into the sublime *Qur'Ēn* and claimed it to be from God?

Furthermore, Margoliouth and the rest of the orientalisists may think that the discussion which took place between BaĪĒrĒ and some three other people of the book who bore the names ZirĒr, TamĒm and DarĒs¹ gave the Prophet (p.b.u.h) an opportunity to grasp some Biblical information. The tradition recorded that, these three people came to harm the Prophet (p.b.u.h) when they recognized what BaĪĒrĒ recognized in him. But BaĪĒrĒ stopped them and kept on reminding them about Allah and what they found in their book about the Prophet (p.b.u.h). So, when they recognized that what BaĪĒrĒ told them was true, they left the Prophet (p.b.u.h).² As it may be viewed, their discussion, even if it is considered to be open, was carried out in front of the entire merchants who went together with the Prophet (p.b.u.h). The fact that none of them afterward charged him of getting so-and-so information from those personalities revealed that he never took any Biblical information from them. On the other hand, was this tradition not in favour of the Prophethood of MuĪammad (p.b.u.h)? If this travel was held by the Christians to be true, why would BaĪĒrĒ's prediction not also be considered true?

The Prophet's third trip was also to Syria at the age of twenty five. The Muslim data inform us that his second trip to Syria was for KhadĒjah's trade. KhadĒjah was a wealthy and successful trader in Mecca who used to send people to trade for her. When she was informed of the Prophet's truthfulness, virtues and trustworthiness, she requested him to go to Syria and trade for her; promising to give him a huge capital which she never gave any person before. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) accepted her request and made a trip with her slave, Maysarah. When they arrived in Syria, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) sat under the shed of a tree near a Monk's shrine.³ "Who is that person sitting under that tree?", the monk asked

¹ Ibn HishĒm, vol. 1, p. 322.

² Ibid.

³ This monk is not BaĪĒrĒ the monk who met the Prophet (p.b.u.h) on his trip with AbĒ ŪĒlib. He is a different monk, and his name is NasĪĒrĒ. See *NŪyĒn al-Athar fĒ FunĒn al-MaghĒzĒ wa al-ShamĒil wa al-Siyar*, MuĪammad ibn Abd AllĒh ibn Sayyid al-NĒs, (BeyrĒt: Mu'assasah NĪzz al-DĒn li al-ŪibĒNah wa al-Nashr, 1986), vol. 1, p. 87.

Maysarah when he saw him.¹ “This is one of the Qurashites, the people of *xaram*” Maysarah replied. “None ever sat under this tree except a Prophet”, the Monk prefigured. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) then sold the goods he brought and bought what he wanted to buy, and returned to Medina. When Maysarah gave KhadĒjah the account of what happened, she sent for the Prophet (p.b.u.h) informing him of her desire to marry him. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) agreed and the marriage took place.²

As it may be gathered from the above story, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) never talked to NasĒrĒ the monk. The conversation took place only between the monk and Maysarah. Moreover, no record was found on any religious discourse between the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and NasĒra the monk or any other Christian in Syria. There is no such a record at all! Had there been any, it would have, surely, been narrated. This is because even the misunderstanding which arose between the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and another trader over some merchandise in that trip was recorded. The historians highlighted that when the man (with whom the Prophet (p.b.u.h) had a misunderstanding) asked the Prophet (p.b.u.h) to swear by al-LĒt and al-NĒzzĒ, he replied “I never ever swore by them!”. Then the man said, “the claim is yours”, and he then held a private discussion with Maysarah and revealed to him that “I swear by the one in whose hand my soul is, this is a Prophet...”.³

Certainly, there is no indication that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) used that opportunity to grasp Biblical information, especially because he was busy with his trade. It would be an extreme fantasy and illusory to suggest or think that Prophet MuĒammad (p.b.u.h), through such a brief and ephemeral contact with the Jewish and Christian traders, came to learn all what the *Qur’Ēn* mentions about both religions. Furthermore, some difficulties with that allegation such as: who were those mysterious Jewish and Christian dealers from whom the Prophet (p.b.u.h) learned what he composed in the *Qur’Ēn*? What did he exactly take from them? And who amongst the merchants in the Quraysh caravan raised such an allegation? Should have been solved by Margoliouth; and his decline to do so

¹ The monk knew Maysarah before, and probably because he used to go to Syria on KhadĒjah’s trade. *Ibid.*, 70.

² Ibn HishĒm, vol. 2, pp. 5-8.

³ MuĒammad ibn Abd AllĒh ibn Sayyid al-NĒs. (1986). *NĒuyĒn al-Athar fĒ FunĒn al-MaghĒzĒ wa al-ShamĒil wa al-Siyar* (BeyrĒt: Mu’assasah NĒzz al-DĒn li al- ŪibĒnah wa al-Nashr, vol. 2, p. 71.

would, implicitly and explicitly, make his reader fancy that he was just a sheer conjecturer.

Moreover, there is no record which informs that he carried out another business trip to Syria after his marriage to KhadĒjah, neither for her nor for himself. Hence, it may be inferred that the Prophet's travels to Christian lands were very limited, not more than two times. His contacts with the Jews and Christians there were very rare in which his conversations with them were only on business-related matters, and there is no record informing that he conversed with BaĒrĒ or NasĒrĒ the Monks during both the trips. Based on these clear facts, our minds would never be contented with the assertion that he grasped some Biblical information during those travels.

3 CONCLUSION

Upon the foregoing discussion, it may be argued that the theory of Judeo-Christian origin of the *Qur'Ēn* cannot, in any case, be rational and accurate. This is because all the possible avenues of Prophet MuĒammad's coming into contact with Judeo-Christian traditions, as have been examined, cannot withstand examination. They have, indeed, been proven wrong from all angles. That might be the reason why Richard Bell, despite that he deeply instilled in his mind the idea of borrowing,¹ was forced by the agents of truth to confess that

It is however, an error to attribute to Muhammad (MuĒammad) a too direct acquaintance with Christianity or Judaism or with the Bible at the outset of his career. We do find all sorts of reminiscences of Biblical phrases even in the earliest portions of the *Qur'Ēn*, but of any intimate knowledge of either of these two religions or of the Bible itself, there is no convincing evidence. Passages and phrases which have been adduced as implying knowledge of Christianity do not stand examination.²

¹ Richard Bell. (1968). *The Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environments*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 66-69.

² Richard Bell is one of those Christian scholars who, despite their much knowledge about Islam, held the opinion that Prophet MuĒammad (p.b.u.h) borrowed from or influenced by the Christian traditions. Bell argued that MuĒammad was influenced by Christianity and Judaism and that the *Qur'Ēn* is directly dependent upon the Bible and the stories associated with it. *Ibid.*, 100.

Can it then be concluded that Margoliouth's long discussion on the theory of Judeo-Christian origin of the *Qur'Ēn* has just ended up in futility since all his proofs were inaccurate and never withstood examination?

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