
Seerah Discourses in Medieval Christian Polemic Disputation “Ibrahim al-Tabrani”

A Research Study

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Abstract:

The discussion or debate for polemic reasons, equipped with certain arguments, held to counter religious rivals is called disputation. In the early Islamic (or Medieval) era, this tradition was not as prominent as it was in the Umayyad or Abbasid times, hence it flourished among the non-Muslims due to expansion of Islamic rule, and conversion of great numbers of non-Muslims to Islam. During this period, many polemic writings against Islam floated at the surface of literary milieu. Among them is “Ibrahim al-Tabrani”, which intended to provide a polemic strategy to counter Islam intellectually.. The scope of this article is to take a glance of arguments and major polemic points of the said “disputation”, for which verses from the Bible, and the Holy Qur’an, along with narrations from Ahadith and Seerah literature have been taken as data along with the said disputation and studied using an elaborative research methodology. The statements regarding the Seerah of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) have been analyzed in the light of classical Seerah sources, to search and elaborate the authenticity and validity of the said polemic writing. The article ends with the conclusion that the statements and discourses about the Seerah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) described in the said writing are neither befitting t the Seerah, nor is the authenticity of it to rely upon solely. While it has been recommended for further research, that, not only similar studies be conducted analyzing other medieval writings, containing statements and discourses about Seerah of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), but also, the methodology, motives and impacts of these writings be elaborated, so that it may be helpful to understand the whole scenario which gave rise to this polemic genre, to implement its outcome in present day dialogue with non-Muslims of the world, introducing the Seerah of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) to the respective religious communities in an academic way.

Key words: Seerah, discourses, Ibrahim al-Tabrani, medieval, Christian, polemic, Disputation.

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Introduction:

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) is very distinctive personality because of His marvelous qualities and traits, being a bliss for all the world, and also being one among the mankind who is not only showered with peace and blessings by Allah

Almighty (S.W.T.) and His angels, but Allah Almighty (S.W.T.) has commanded the Muslims to do so as well.¹ Because the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) is the center of faith, love, obedience and submission for all believers.

That is why, from the time of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) and onwards, the Companions (R.A.) and all the believers who came after them, have made special arrangements to collect and preserve every word, deed and situation related to the Blessed Prophet (P.B.U.H.). Resulting in on the one hand, a great collection of traditions (*Ahadith*) of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), and on the other hand, the events of the blessed life of the Holy Prophet came to the fore in the form of books of biography aka “*Seerat al-Nabi*”(S.A.W.). And traditionally, this collection is the primary source for studying the biography or “*Seerah*” of the Holy Prophet(P.B.U.H.).

However, it is worth mentioning that not only the Muslims have written about the *Seerah* of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), but also the contemporary non-Muslims of the medieval times have expressed their ideas and thoughts in this regard in their various writings which can be termed as “Extra-Islamic *Seerah*” writings, usually considered less than worthy enough to be consulted for *Seerah* Study. Though in modern times, Western scholars and Orientalists have paid close attention to these writings, in an attempt to portray the biography of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) on the basis of them alone, insisting on their results and outcomes to be accepted as correct. Which makes it necessary to get acquainted with the discourses and statements stated in them, along with analyzing their authenticity, so that the validity of the Orientalist methodology (stated above), be elucidated. Also, the consistency or inconsistency of the discourses stated in these writings with traditional Islamic *Seerah* sources be demonstrated and verified as well.

Research Methodology:

The qualitative approach is adopted in this analytical and historical study. The Holy Qur’an, The Bible, the books of Ahadith and Seerah have been used, along with Medieval Christian disputation account. Moreover, some secondary sources were also used where necessary, after careful evaluation and assurance of their validity and reliability, and were referred to them by using “W.R.T.”(i.e.with reference to).While “f/n” is used where a “footnote” is referred to. Arabic words are transliterated, where required. It is essential to elaborate that to comply with the limits of an article, brief references have been quoted, avoiding lengthy discourses. In addition, the academic discussion and consultation with senior scholars and researchers of that specific area were also involved in this study. The case was compared in Islamic and Christian context, and then recommendations were given for its contemporary application, and further research.

Background:

While the Roman Empire of the Middle Ages is important and noteworthy due to many other incidents and events, yet, the introduction of Islam and the Holy Prophet of Islam (P.B.U.H.) reaching to the Roman emperor Heraclius by a letter in his name,¹ from the Holy Prophet

¹ Al-Ahzab, 33:56

(P.B.U.H.) in the 7th century C.E. was not only a significant affair, but changed the history afterwards forever.

By the time of passing away of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), the whole of Arabia had entered the Islamic realm, after which, during the caliphate of Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq and Umar Farooq (R.A.) the regions of the Roman Empire became part of the Islamic State.² As a result of these conquests, the non-Muslims residing in these areas interacted with Muslims directly. In such a situation, the dominance of Islam and Muslims initially created feelings of dislike and hatred among the conquered people, but later on, due to liberal contact with Muslims, their rate of reverting to Islam also augmented.³

No doubt, the attainment of inner solace (or peace of mind) played an important role in this development.⁴ Because Islam being a complete code of life, undoubtedly played an important role in attracting people to it.⁵ As for them, Islam was a religion that was directly related to the routines of daily life. And this is probably the reason why the rate of conversion to Islam, especially among young Christian men, was very high.⁶ One of the effects of the Muslims settling in these areas was that the non-Muslims who lived close to them, attracted to their way of life, culture and manners, used to convert to Islam.⁷ In addition, in the nascent Muslim state, the conquered nations have been granted freedom of action in exchange for *jizya* and loyalty,⁸ and, the identical treatment of new Muslims as same as the earlier ones, by the Muslim authorities, had also Played an important role for local population to embrace Islam.⁹

But, on the other hand, Islam also raised questions about the beliefs of religions followed in conquered populace, which compelled their leaders and followers to adopt a defensive stance, giving rise to a situation where Muslims were arguing for the veracity of their position, but in response, these non-Muslim classes not only refused to

¹ Bukhari, Muhammad bin Ismael bin Ibrahim, *al- Jami al-Musnado al- Sahih al- Mukhtasaro min Umooor e Rasulullahi (P.B.U.H.) Sunanihi wa Ayyamihi*, ed.: Zuhair bin Nasir, Dar Towq al-Najah, Beirut, ed.: 1st, 1422 A.H., *Kitab al-Wahi, Bab: Swal Harqal an al-Wahi*, Hadith: 6

² Sarwat Solat, *Millat e Islamia ki Mukhtasar Tareekh*, Pan-Islamic Publications, Shah Alam Market, Lahore, March 1970, ed.: 2nd, Part I, pp. 48, 55-50

Seeing Islam as Others Saw it, Darwin Press, Inc., Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A., 1997, 2nd printing, 2001, p:11

Ranking of The Influential Persons in History, Citadel Press Book, 1992, p:7

⁴ Coop, Jessica A., *Religious And Cultural Conversion to Islam in Ninth-Century Umayyad Cordoba*, Journal of World History, University of Hawaii Press, Vol.: 4, No: 1, 1993, p:48

⁵ Ibid, p: 50

⁶ Ibid, pp: 59-60

⁷ Ibid, p: 49-50

⁸ Hitti, Philip K., *Syria A Short History*, The MacMillan Company, New York, U.S.A., 1959, p: 113

⁹ Griffith, Sidney H., *The Church in The Shadow of The Mosque*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A., 2008, p:15

acknowledge these facts, but were also quite resistant.¹ Despite the anti-Muslim hatred, the tendency of ordinary Christians to embrace Islamic domination has not diminished. Because, on the one hand, their followers were displeased with the exploitation at the hands of their religious leaders,² and secondly, the church's full "rational defense" of their beliefs did not dispel the perception about Muslims, that by abandoning idolatry and polytheism, they have become the favored people of God.³ So to say that, Islam unexpectedly not only rose religiously and politically, but also gained the impression that it was God's chosen religion. An situation which has been described as:

"...a new religio-political entity had unexpectedly arisen, achieved dazzling military success and promoted itself as favored by God and in possession of His last dispensation".⁴

The reformist and direct critique of Christian beliefs by Islamic teachings invoke conversion to Islam in the conquered settlements just like a true depiction of this Qur'anic verse:

﴿وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا﴾⁵

"And you see people entering Allah's (approved) religion in multitudes"

Whose testimony is found in the words of another medieval period writer as:

"For without blows or torture they slid down in great eagerness ..., forming groups of twenty, thirty and a hundred of men, two and three hundred, without any kind of compulsion to this, they ... became Muslims."⁶

Against this background, in response to the arrival of Muslims and their dominion, certain writings were surfaced that clearly aimed to respond not only to the growing social and intellectual influence of Islam, but also to protect their vanishing religion.⁷

In this context, a brief overview of the characteristics of Christian polemic disputations is presented in the following lines.

Christian Disputation Tradition:

In Latin, the term "Disputatio" (Eng. Disputation) is commonly used for this purpose, meaning "discussion, debate, dispute, argument."¹ While in religious terms, it is

¹ Hoyland, Seeing Islam, p:19

² Ibid, pp: 23-24

³ Timothy I, Syriac Apology, p: 59,131; W.R.T., Hoyland, Ibid, p: 24

⁴ Hoyland, Ibid, p: 523

⁵ Al-Nasr, 110: 2

⁶ Chronicle Zuqin, p: 385; W.R.T. Hoyland, Seeing Islam, p: 343

⁷ Griffith, Sidney H., *Melkites, Jecobites and The Christological Controversies in Arabic in Ninth-Century Syria*, in, *Syrian Christians Under Islam The First Thousand Years*, ed.: David Thomas, Brill, Leiden, 2001, p: 4

defined as, debating an issue with those who hold opposing religious beliefs, or exchanging verbal or written arguments with them is called a disputation.²

In Christian circle, Apology, or the defense of religion, can be said to be its fundamental heritage, because it was supposed to be their basic duty to defend their religion and openly express their faith whenever needed.³ They were taught a broad defensive and progressive apologetic strategy, that, as circumstances and opponents change, so do the defensive "arguments".⁴ It is also worth mentioning that the conflicts between three major religions (i.e. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) also gave rise to disputative literature. For example, both Muslims and Jews were against Christians for amalgamating polytheism with monotheism, declaring Prophet Jesus (A.S.) the son of God.⁵ On the other hand, both Christians and Muslims had complained against the Jews because they suspended the laws, and had corrupted the Holy Scriptures. While both Jews and Christians had a common approach to the denial of the prophet-hood of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.),⁶ making them villains in Muslims prospect. Since the Christians had first rivaled with the Jews, the focus of defensive "arguments" had also been against them. Therefore, it is not possible to understand the Christian disputation tradition outside the scope of Judeo-Christian relations.⁷

Pseudo-disputation:

Although, neither the tradition, nor any campaign of non-Muslims disputations with Muslims is noticeable in the early Islamic period, but the extraordinary victories of Muslims in the reign of the Righteous Caliphate, the unshakable arguments against the religion of the conquered nations, and the acceptance of Islam by a large number of their followers, left no choice for those religious leaders to take various measures for the survival of their faith and dogma.

¹ <http://www.latin-dictionary.net/definition/18140/disputatio-disputatiois>, accessed: 16-09-2017, 12: 49PM

² Loughlin, James Francis , Religious Discussions, Catholic Encyclopedia, 1913, Volume 5

³ Timothy I, Apology for Christianity, Woodbrook Studies, Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic and Garshuni, Tr.: A. Mingana, Reprinted from the "Bulletin of the John Rylands Library," Volume 12, 1928, vol.: 2, Cambridge W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd., 1928, pp: 3-4 http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/timothy_i_apology_00_intro.htm , accessed online: 08-05-2017, 5:13PM (See: Mathew, 10: 17-20)

⁴ Timothy I, Apology for Christianity, Tr.: A. Mingana, *ibid*, p: 4

⁵ Casper, et.al., "Bibliographia du dialogue islamo-chrestien", 1975, pp: 142-152;And, Stroumsa, Jewish Polemics Against Islam and Christianity, section:III; W.R.T. Hoyland, Seeing Islam, p: 458

⁶ Hoyland, *ibid*. p: 458

⁷ Timothy I, Apology for Christianity, Tr.: A. Mingana, p: 4

In this situation, a group of philosophers "armed" with defense emerged proving the authenticity of Christianity, by making a full use of available polemic literature, and put into regular book form everything they wanted to say. It is also worth noting that the narrated dialogues in some of the disputations are shown to be taking place between real people, but neither of these debates actually ever took place, nor the "debating" characters ever existed, but it was nothing but a common practice of pseudepigraphical activity with spurious writings and false ascriptions.¹

Disputation subjects:

Various motives were involved in writing such disputations, and following points were discussed most often:

- A. *No prophecies of the previous prophets about the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) are found in their scriptures.*
- B. *There is neither any mention of the miracles of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), nor of any prophecy about Him is described in the Holy Qur'an.*
- C. *Jesus Christ (A.S.) had not told about any prophet coming after Him.²*

This disputation literature contains different statements and discourses about Islam and the *Seerah* of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.). Out of them, one such writing is *Ibrahim al-Tabarani*, whose statements about the *Seerah* of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) are presented and analyzed below.

Ibrahim Al-Tabrani:

It is suggested that this work probably dates to the time of Caliph Mamun al-Rashid in the third century A.H. / early ninth century C.E.,³ but any other information about him is unavailable altogether. The debate is said to have been allegedly taken place with some anonymous Muslim, stating about the prophet-hood of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) that:

"واما قولك في نبيك انه خاتم الانبياء فليس هو نبياً"⁴

¹ Timothy I, *Apology for Christianity*, Tr.: A. Mingana, p: 5

² Tabri, Ibn –e-Rabban abo al-Hassan Ali bin Suhail (D:247 AH), *The Book of Religion and Empire*, (كتاب الدين والدولة), Tr.: A. Mingana, D.D., The University Press Longman Green & Company, Manchester, Bernard Quaritch Limited, London, 1922, p: 15

³ Marcuzzo, *Dialogue*, nos.: 124-5, pp: 328-29; W.R.T. Samir, Samir Khalil, "The Prophet Muhammad as seen by Timothy I and other Arab Christians Authors", in, *Syrian Christians Under Islam The First Thousand Years*, ed.: David Thomas, Brill, Leiden, 2001, p: 77

⁴ Marcuzzo, *Dialogue*, no.: 110, p: 321; W.R.T. Samir, *ibid*, p: 77

"As far as your (the anonymous Muslim) statement about your prophet that He is the Seal of the prophets, but He is not a prophet (God forbid)."

When he was (allegedly) asked (by that anonymous Muslim):

" اراك تُجادئني بقرآني أفقتقر أن هذا القرآن وحى من الله انزلهُ على نبيه محمد [ﷺ]"¹

"Do you argue with me about my Qur'an? Don't you confess that this Qur'an is a revelation from Allah which He revealed to His Prophet Muhammad [P.B.U.H.]?"

Ibrahim responded to that as:

" لا لعمرى ما افرشيناً من هذا ولا أقرآن نبيك نبي"²

"No, I swear by my age, neither do I acknowledge to any of that, nor do I admit that your prophet is a prophet (*God forbid*)."

Rather (Ibrahim wrote):

" و انما هو ملك ارتضيه الله"³ or " الا ملك ارتضيه الله"⁴

"He was just a king (*God forbid*) whom Allah liked."

Then he reaffirmed his stance as:

" لا والله ما له ذكر في شيء من الكتب ولا لأخذ من زريته ولا وهبه الله له غير الملك والسلطان"⁵

"No, by Allah, there is nothing in the (previous) books about Him or any of His descendants, and Allah has not given Him anything but government and kingdom (*God forbid*)."

In the above quotation, Ibrahim denied the prophet-hood of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) and declared Him only such a political leader who had the support of Allah (S.W.T), with no special relationship between them (*God forbid*), trying to make a point that God Almighty (S.W.T) has given kingdoms and empires to people other than the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), even infidels and polytheists as well,⁶ as if making it an insignificant affair. Whereas, it is clear from the *Seerah* of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) that He was neither a king nor a descendant of any king.⁷ And His life style was definitely not like that of any king, neither would He sit on a throne like any king, nor would He live a life of any kind of luxury, as is also stated in some *Ahadith* as:

" كان فراش رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من آدم وحشوه من ليف"⁸

"The Prophet's (P.B.U.H.) bed was made of leather, which was filled with palm bark."

And;

¹ Marcuzzo, Dialogue, nos.: 466-7, p: 485, W.R.T. Samir, The Prophet Muhammad as seen, p: 77

² Samir, ibid, p: 77

³ Marcuzzo, Dialogue, no.: 110, p: 321; W.R.T. Samir, ibid, p: 78

⁴ Marcuzzo, Dialogue, no.: 486, p: 485; W.R.T. Samir, ibid.

⁵ Marcuzzo, Dialogue, no.: 162, p: 347; W.R.T. Samir, ibid.

⁶ Samir, ibid.

⁷ Bukhari, *Kitab al-Wahi, Bab: Kaifa kana bad'ul Wahi ila Rasulullahi* (S.A.W.), Hadith:

⁸ Bukhari, *Kitab al-Riqaq, Bab: Kaifa kana 'aish al-Nabi* (S.A.W.) *wa Ashaabih wa Takhlhim*, Hadith: 5975

"كَانَ وَسَادَةُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الَّتِي يَتَكئُ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ أَدَمِ حَشْوُهَا لَيْفٌ"¹

"The bed of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H) on which He used to rest was made of leather and it was filled with palm bark."

Even the non-Muslims who met with the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) in person, knew that though His grandeur was many times greater than that of the kings, yet He was not a king.² For example, while being a Christian, when Hazrat 'Adi bin Hatim (R.A.) saw the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) with all His decorous manners, couldn't think other than that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was not a king but a prophet and messenger of God Almighty (S.W.T.).³

And he said:

"فَعَرَفْتُ أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ مُلْكُ كِسْرَى وَلَا قَيْصَرَ"⁴

"I conceded that He is not like kings as of Caesar or Khosrow".

When the Holy Prophet started writing letters to foreign rulers, it was engraved "Muhammad Rasoolullah" on the ring which He used as an official seal.⁵

Even after when the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) had passed away, the "government" did not pass to his family.⁶ Therefore, it is clear from the above narrations that the statement of

¹ Muslim, Abu al-Hassan bin al-Hajjaj al-Qushairi, Al-Jami' al-Sahih, Dar al-Jil, wa Dar al-Afaq al-Jadeedah, Beirut, *Kitab al-Libas wa Zeenat, Bab: al-Tawadu' fi al-Libas wa al-Iqtisar 'alal Ghaliz Minhu wa al-Siyer*, Hadith: 3883; **And**; Abu Daud, Sulaiman bin Ash'as al-Sijistani, al-Sunan, ed.: Shu'aib al-Arnaut wa Muhammad Kamil Qurrah, Dar al-Risalah al-Alamiah, ed.: 1st, 1430A.H., *Kitab al-Libas, Bab: Fi al-Farsh*, Hadith: 3617; **And**; Al-Tirmizi, Abu Isa Muhammad bin Isa, Sunan, ed.: Ahmad Muhammad Shakir, Dare Ahya al-turath, Beirut, *Kitab Sifatul Qiyamah wa al-Raqaiq wa al-Wara' an Rasulillahi (S.A.W.)*, Bab: Minhu, Hadith: 2393

² Bukhari, *Kitab al-Shurut, Bab: al-Shurut fi al-Jihad wa al-Musalihah ma'a ahl-al-Harbi wa Kitabat al-Shurut*, Hadith: 2529

³ Tabri, Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jareer bin Kathir (D: 310 A.H.) *Tareekh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk*, Dar al-Turath Beirut, ed.: 2nd, 1387 A.H., vol.: 3, p: 112

⁴ Ahmad, Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Hanbal, Musnad, ed.: Shu'aib al-Arnaut wa 'Adil Murshid, Mu'assat al-Risalah, ed.: 1st, 1421 A.H., *Musnadul kufiyyin, Baqiyah Hadithi 'Adi bin Hatim (R.A.)*, Hadith: 18572

⁵ Bukhari, *Kitab al-Jihad wa al-Siyer, Bab: Da'watul Yahudu wa al-Nasara wa 'ala ma Yuqatilun 'alaihi*, Hadith: 2721; *Kitab al-Libas, Bab: Naqsh al-Khatim*, Hadith: 5423; **And**; Muslim, *Kitab al-Libas wa al-Zeenah, Bab: Fi Ittikhaza al-Nabi (S.A.W.) Khatiman lamma Arada*, Hadith: 3902.

⁶ After the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), the Emirate of the Muslims was handed over to Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq (R.A.) by the Muslims themselves, while he belonged to the *Bani Taym* instead of the *Bani Hashim*, while the Holy Prophet was a Hashemite. Although at that moment, the Holy Prophet's (P.B.U.H.) cousin and son-in-law Hazrat Ali (R.A.), His uncle Hazrat Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib (R.A.) and His (another) Son-in-law Hazrat Usman Ghani (R.A.) were also present. But perhaps it was the wisdom and expediency of Allah Almighty (S.W.T.) that the Emirate was not handed over to none of them,

the so-called "kingdom" of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) in the text under review, is based on mere falsehood and imagination, and it is evident from His *Seerah* that Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) was indeed none but a Prophet and a Messenger of Allah Almighty (S.W.T.).

In another place, Ibrahim wrote:

"وأوفى به وعلى يده وعده لإبراهيم في اسمعيل"¹

"وتم به وعد إبراهيم في اسمعيل"² ،Or

"God fulfilled the promise made to Abraham about Ishmael (A.S.) through Him (P.B.U.H.)."

This in fact refers to the promise that God Almighty (S.W.T.) made to Prophet Abraham (A.S.), mentioned in the Bible as follows:

*"And I will give unto thee, and thy seed after thee, the land of Canaan; and I will be their God."*³

*"This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised."*⁴

*"And the uncircumcised man child...that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."*⁵

So, after this promise had been fulfilled, Prophet Abraham's (A.S.) act was as follows:

"And Abraham took Ismail his son,...and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame

*day, as God had said unto him."*⁶

*"In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son."*⁷

So by the guidance of God, Abraham (A.S.) took his son Ishmael (A.S.) with Him, and on the same day they were both circumcised marking the fulfillment of God's promise. And it is clear from the above verses that when God promised Abraham (peace be upon him) to have children and to give the land of Canaan (present-day Palestine) permanently, only Ishmael (peace be upon him) was his only child. In order to fulfill the aforesaid promise of Allah, he circumcised himself on the same day that Allah had

otherwise the enemies of Islam would certainly have gotten an issue in any case by which they could find a way to prove the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) to be a king. Although this issue has been a matter of controversy in the Muslim Ummah for the last fourteen centuries, but if short-sightedness and unjustified prejudice is set aside, and the infinite wisdom and expediency of God Almighty is taken into consideration, it becomes clear that God Almighty allowed this to happen, only to prevent any slightest stain of kingship on the prophet-hood of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.).

¹ Marcuzzo, Dialogue, nos.: 122-3, p: 329; W.R.T. Samir, The Prophet Muhammad As Seen, p: 78

² Marcuzzo, Dialogue, no.: 468, p: 485; W.R.T. Samir, ibid, p: 78

³ Genesis, 17: 7

⁴ Genesis, 17: 10

⁵ Ibid, 17: 14

⁶ Ibid, 17: 23

⁷ Ibid, 17: 26

promised him, even though Ibrahim (as) was 99 years old and Ishmael (as) was 13 years old.¹

In this regard, Ibrahim Tabarani also admits that the promise made to Prophet Abraham (P.B.U.H.) was fulfilled only through Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.), when Palestine was conquered at the hands of companions of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) in the reign of Hazrat Umar (R.A.) in 637 C.E. Moreover, regarding the relationship between the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) and the Qur'an, Ibrahim said:

"واما قولك في القرآن فإني أخبرك أن هذا القرآن جاء به محمد وكتبه اصحابه بعد موته واسمأء بعضهم ابوبكر

عثمان وعلى وعبدالله بن العباس ومعاوية بن ابي سفيان كاتب الوحي والحجاج بن يوسف بعد هؤلاء الفه ورتبه"²

"And as far as your opinion regarding the Qur'an is concerned, I will tell you that this Qur'an which Muhammad [P.B.U.H.] brought, and after His death, His companions wrote it, some of whose names are as follows: It was compiled by Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali, Abdullah bin Abbas, Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan [may Allah be pleased with them all] the scribe of revelation, and after all, Hajjaj bin Yusuf."

It is as if this quote is an attempt to say that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was the author of the Qur'an, which was written at the hands of certain companions mentioned above (God forbid). In this regard, the Qur'an itself categorically refutes this absurd claim as:

﴿وَلَوْ نَقُولُ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ﴾³

"Had he (the prophet) forged some statements in Our name, We would have certainly seized him by the right hand, and then severed his life-artery, and none of you could have saved him from it."

This statement has been repeated in the following verse as:

﴿أَمْ يَقُولُونَ نَقُولُهُ: بَلْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾⁴

"Do they rather say, He has forged it (the Qur'an.)? No, but they do not believe."

However, it should also be noted that the compilation of the Holy Qur'an by the Companions (R.A.), is in fact,

the compilation in the form of a *Mushaf* (binded book) during the period of Hazrat Abu Bakr (R.A.) and Later, in the time of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (for the convenience of non-Arabs), marks of movements were applied to the Qur'anic letters.⁵

In the same debate, comparing the superiority between Jesus (A.S.) and the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Ibrahim, writes that,

"فلما ظهر (عيسى) واظهر الآيات وتم كتب الانبياء وحق قولهم كفرتم به ولم ترضوا حتى تقاوموا جميع

المؤمنين وتزعمون ان محمداً اعزوا اكرم عند الله منه"¹

¹ Ibid, 17: 24, 25

² Marcuzzo, Dialogue, no.: 126, p:331; W.R.T. Samir, The Prophet Muhammad As Seen, p: 79

³ Al-Haqqah, 69: 44-47

⁴ Al-Tur, 52: 33

⁵ Ghazi, Mahmood Ahmad, Muhadhirat e Qur'ani, al-Faisal Publishers, Urdu Bazar, Lahore, May 2007 C.E., pp: 121-151

“When Isa (A.S.) appeared and He showed signs (miracles) and fulfilled the books of the prophets and fulfilled their words, you denied Him, and did not accept (Him) until all the believers (of Christ) acknowledged Him. And you claim that Muhammad [P.B.U.H.] is honorable in the sight of Allah more than him (the Christ).”

At this, It was said to him:

"ويحك يا راهب أو ما تعلم ان محمداً اعزواكرم عندالله من المسيح ومن آدم وذريته كلها"²

“Woe to you, O monk! Do you not know that Muhammad [P.B.U.H.] is more honorable in the sight of Allah than Christ, Adam [A.S.] and his descendant?”

Which he responded as:

" لا والله ما اعلم ذلك ولكنى اعلم أن السماء اشرف واكرم عندالله من الارض وسكان السماء اشرف واكرم عندالله من سكان الارض واعلم أن المسيح في السماء العلياء⁴ وأن³ جميع الانبياء تحت الثرى. وأن السماء كرسى الله وعرشه. وأن المسيح جالس على الكرسى العزة عن يمين الاب فوق الملائك والعباد. فكيف يكون من تحت الثرى اكرم عندالله من من هو في السماء على الكرسى العزة"⁵

“No, by Allah, I do not know, but I know that the heavens and the dwellers of the heavens are more honorable in the sight of Allah [S.W.T.], than the earth and the dwellers of the earth. And behold that Messiah [A.S.] is in high heavens.⁶ And that Muhammad [P.B.U.H.] and all the prophets are under the earth. And that the heaven is the Seat of Allah and His throne, and that Christ [A.S.] is above all the angels and the people. He is sitting on the throne of honor at the right hand of his father. So how can he, who is under the earth, be more honorable in the sight of Allah [S.W.T.], than him, who is seated on the throne of honor in heaven?

"In the above quotations, comparing the superiority between Christ (A.S.) and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), it is stated that since the sky is the seat of God and His throne,⁷ and Christ, (A.S.) as sitting on the right hand of God, is superior. It should be noted that the phrase "sitting on the right hand" is mentioned in the Bible,⁸ whose own authenticity is suspicious as stated:

¹ Marcuzzo, Dialogue, no.: 305f, p: 403; W.R.T. Samir, The Prophet Muhammad As Seen, p: 80

² Marcuzzo, Dialogue, no.: 307, p: 405; W.R.T. Samir, ibid.

³ In some versions, it is "from the people" (Samir, The Prophet Muhammad As Seen, p: 80, f/n:33)

⁴ Marcuzzo, loc.cit., nos.: 308-9a, p: 405; W.R.T. Samir, The Prophet Muhammad As Seen, p: 80

⁵ Marcuzzo, Dialogue, nos.: 309b- 10, pp: 405-407; W.R.T. Samir, ibid.

⁶ According to samir K. samir (Ibid, p: 80) This is clearly a replica of the verse that says:

“When Allah said: O Isa, I am to take you in full and to raise you towards Myself (Aal e Imran, 3: 55)

⁷ It seems to be derived from the following verses:

“His Kursiyy (Chair) extends to the Heavens and to the Earth.” (al-Baqarah, 2: 255); And;

“The Lord of the Great Throne.” (al-Mu’minun, 23:86)

⁸ Mark, 12:36; 16:19; Luke, 22:69; Acts, 2:25, 33-34; 7:56; Romans, 8:34; Ephesians, 1:20; Colossians, 3:1; Hebrews, 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter, 3:22 etc.

“It is simply an invented history with only a few referents to things that really happened or existed.”¹

Moreover, critics have called biblical authors as “historians”, calling the Bible a collection of such histories, the timeline of whose statements cannot be determined by its historical sources, as is stated in the following passage:

“...these historiographers found historical information about the past within their own tradition, but were not able to localize it historically. They were also able to create history out of scratch... They...fit a tradition of the past to the version of the history of Israel they offered their audience... It is obvious that the historical truth was not a criterion employed by historiographers of the ancient world who constructed a past this way...Because of such standards for dealing with the past, it is unlikely that we can date a biblical narrative by its historical referent.”²

So, it can be said that it's just an invented history in which there are very few references to things or events that would have existed. These historians have found information about the past in their traditions, but have not been able to locate them historically. Rather they were able to compile a history out of scratch. On the other hand, if the Nicene faith is seen in Arabic, it is also found as "وجالس عن يمين الله الاب"³ i.e. the (Christ) sat on the right hand of the Father God. However, it is mentioned that in the night of Ascension (*Lailatul Isra*) Prophet Jesus (A.S.) met with the Holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) in the second heaven.⁴ However, as far as the comparison of virtue between Prophet Isa (A.S.) and the Holy Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (PBUH) is concerned, the Qur'an Al-Hakim states that:

﴿تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ﴾⁵

“Those are the messengers some of whom We have given excellence over some others.”

However, in principle, the teaching of the Qur'an al-Hakim is that:

﴿لَا نَفْرَقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّن رُّسُلِهِ﴾⁶

"We make no distinction between one another of His Messengers"

In this regard, Allamah Shibli Nomani has elaborated this point as:

There is also a slight difference in the pecking order of the Prophets (A.S), although they were equally exalted in all the perfections, virtues and morals of Prophet-hood, but the

¹ Lemche, Niels Peter, *Biblical Studies and The Failure of History: Changing Perspectives 3*, Routledge, New York U.S.A., 2014, p:288

² Lemche, *Biblical Studies*, p: 290

³ Samir, *The Prophet Muhammad As Seen*, p: 81, f/n: 38

⁴ Bukhari, *Kitab Ahadith al-Anbia, Bab: Qwol Allahi T'ala Zikru Rahmati Rabbika 'Abdaho Zakariyya iz Naadaa*, Hadith: 3176; And; Muslim, *Kitab al-Iman, Bab: al-Isra Birasulillahi ila al-Samawat*, Hadith: 238

⁵ al-Baqarah, 2: 253

⁶ al-Baqarah, 2: 285

practical manifestation of all these perfections and virtues on the basis of time and environment did not become the same. As the certain perfections of some, and then of others, became more prominent differently, i.e. the virtue that needed to be expressed in terms of the circumstances of the time was fully manifested, while other, that were not needed at that time, did not appear for the sake of expediency. So to conclude that, for the manifestation of every perfection and virtue, there is a need for a suitable occasion and place. Therefore, if some of the virtues of the Prophets (A.S) did not appear at any time due to unnecessary circumstances, then it does not mean that these prophets (A.S) were not endowed with these perfections and virtues.¹

But it should also be noted that there are some traits that are unique only to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.). For example, it was only Him who has been sent as a mercy for all the worlds.² Only He has been sent to the whole mankind.³ It was only by Him the “*Deen*” got completed and perfected.⁴ Only that Book revealed unto Him by Allah Almighty (S.W.T.) was presented as a challenge in front of the non-believers.⁵ The Book revealed unto Him alone has been guaranteed an everlasting Security.⁶ Only He will be awarded with “*Kawthar*”.⁷ On the Day of Judgment, only He will be made a witness over all the previous Messengers.⁸ Only He has been dignified with the “*Maqam Mahmood*”,⁹ which is the position of intercession.¹⁰ And on the Day of Resurrection, only He will be holding the banner of praise “*Liwa al-Hamd*”.¹¹ Allah and His angels send blessings to Him alone, and same has been ordered to all the Muslims also.¹² He is the only one who has been called as “Seal” of the Prophets.¹³ He is the only one who has been blessed by Allah Almighty (S.W.T.) with such qualities which have not been bestowed on any other prophet.¹⁴ And this is only His distinction that Allah Almighty (S.W.T.) has blessed Him with a community (*Ummah*) which has shown such an unparalleled activity in preserving

¹ Shibli Numani, Allamah, *Seerat al-Nabi (S.A.W.)*, Maktabah Ta’meere Insaniat, Urdu Bazar, Lahore, 1975 C.E., pp: 33-34, f/n: 1

² al-Anbiya, 21: 107

³ Saba, 34: 28

⁴ al-Maidah, 5: 3

⁵ al-Baqarah, 2: 23

⁶ al-Hijr, 15: 9

⁷ Kawthar, 108: 1

⁸ al-Nisa, 4: 41

⁹ Bani Israel, 17: 79

¹⁰ al-Tirmizi, *Kitab al-Tafsir, Bab: wa Min Surat Bani Israel*, Hadith: 3430, 3441

¹¹ “*Liwa al-Hamdu Bi yadayya*”, ‘Ayaz, al-Qadi Abu al-Fadal bin Musa bin ‘Ayaz al-Maliki, *Mashariqul Anwar ‘Ala Sihahil Aathar*, Dar al-Nashar al-Maktabah al-‘Atiqiyati wa Dar –al-Turath, vol.: 1, p: 391

¹² al-Ahzab, 33: 52

¹³ al-Ahzab, 33: 40

¹⁴ Bukhari, *Kitab al-Salat, Bab: Qawl al-Nabi (S.A.W.) Ju’ilat li al-Ardu Masjidan*, Hadith: 419; And; Muslim, *Kitabul Masajid wa Mwadi’u al-Salat, Bab: Ayyu Masjidin Wudi’a fi al-Ard*, Hadith: 810

the sayings and relics of its Prophet (P.B.U.H.), that it has preserved even the details of seemingly insignificant and trivial information.¹ It is also a miracle that such narrators were born exclusively in His *Ummah*, that the whole history of Jews and Christians could not give such an example put together.² Therefore, it is not surprising, if the Jews or the Christians produce and invent such polemic writings equipped with absurd and wacky arguments out of envy against the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.).

Conclusion:

A study of the Christian Debate Writings discussed above, makes it clear that the authenticity of the said text is unreliable because the author and the time of authorship of this text is either unknown, or pseudonyms. This is an expression of the reaction of the medieval Christians to Islam and Muslims in the political and religious scenarios of that time. Of course, this and other such writings familiarize us with the Christian debates, their arguments, motives and methods. But compiling any literature of the “*Seerah*” only by relying on this and other similar writings can never be an appropriate methodology in any case. So, it becomes inevitable to consult the Islamic sources of “*Seerah*” to get acquainted with the true persona of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.).

Recommendations:

A large collection of medieval writings is preserved in the manuscripts of that time, which can be accessed and read directly, but it is necessary to get acquainted with those languages, which hold these relics, in order to avoid getting them from Orientalists second handed. As mentioned above, by studying other medieval and post-medieval Christian and Jewish debates, their discourses, motives, methods and arguments, and comparing them with the style of contemporary non-Muslim debates, is essential to form a Unified Muslim Disputation Literature. In which, keeping in view the debating method and style of non-Muslims, the goal should be to convey a true and real introduction of the “*Seerah*” of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) to every non-Muslim in an academic way.

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