

## Religious Orientalism: Its Roots and Prominent Founders

Rajih Ibrahim M. Al- Sabateen\*

### Abstract

This research paper comprising three parts aimed to investigate the issue of religious orientalism as far its emergence and development is concerned and the extent of influence this type of orientalism has on the image of Islam, the Glorious Quran, and prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) in the European continent.

The paper also dealt with the religious and political milieu that influenced the emergence of that type of orientalism in the middle Ages which witnessed violent military confrontations between the Muslim world and Christian Europe during the crusades and the radical changes undergone in the type of clashes that shifted from military to doctrinal. Additionally, the paper examined the role of the European church in enhancing this sort of doctrinal confrontation at both individual as well as collective levels with special reference to the role of prominent clergymen in doing so.

**Keywords,** Orientalis, confrontations, Crusades, Islam, orient, Europe, Clergymen

---

• كلية الشريعة، الجامعة الأردنية.

تاريخ قبول البحث: 2016/10/11م.

تاريخ تقديم البحث: 2016/3/7م.

© جميع حقوق النشر محفوظة لجامعة مؤتة، الكرك، المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية، 2018.

## دور التعامل الديني في نشأة الاستشراق

راجح السباتين

### ملخص

يتناولُ هذا البحثُ، والذي يقعُ في ثلاثة مطالب، مسألة الاستشراق الديني من حيثُ النشأة والتطور، ومدى تأثير هذا النوع من الاستشراق على صورة الإسلام والقرآن الكريم والنبى محمد - صلى الله عليه وسلم - في القارة الأوروبية.

ويناقش هذا البحث الظروف الدينية والسياسية التي رافقت ولادة هذا الاستشراق في العصور الوسطى والتي شهدت صدماتٍ عسكريةً عنيفةً بين العالم الإسلامي وأوروبا المسيحية في ظلّ الحروب الصليبية وما تلا ذلك من تحولاتٍ جذريةٍ في نوع هذه الصدمات وانتقالها من "العسكرية" إلى "العقدية". كما يناقشُ البحثُ كذلك مساهمة الكنيسة الأوروبية في دعم هذا النوع من "الصدام العقدي" على المستويين الفردي والجماعي وجهود بعض كبار الرهبان في ذلك.

**الكلمات الدالة:** الاستشراق، الحروب الصليبية، العصور الوسطى، أوروبا الغربية، الرهبان

## **Introduction:**

The Muslim-Christian relationships have, no doubt, witnessed a clear tension right from the beginning. This tension ranged from a severe armed military confrontation to political struggle. However, it sometimes shifted to doctrinal confrontation and dialogue in the shape of debates, dialogues and criticism rather than aimed military clashes.

It should not be maintained, however, that this type of confrontation is less painful and cruel than military conflict or that both types of confrontation are not closely related as the former (doctrinal) is only an introduction to the latter, especially when the former involves provocation, distortion, and demonisation of the other's faith and creed.

That sort of confrontation is but a fast means and an active factor in agitating followers of a certain faith and motivating them to confrontation and defending their faith no matter what it may cost.

## **Research Problem and Significance**

This study basically investigates the position of clergy founders of orientalism studies and some of their controversial books against Islam. The study, then, sheds light on the most prominent methods adopted by such orientalists to accomplish their doctrinal aims mainly concerned with targeting the sources of Islam claiming that such sources are but merely Christian heresies.

## **Significance of the study**

The significance of this study stems from a careful examination of the way the clergy orientalists managed to instill a fabricated, distorted, frightening and detested image of Islam in the minds of Europeans.

## **Research Objectives and justifications**

The paper aimed to prove that orientalists who have undertaken to distort the image of Islam and combat it, undoubtedly, had a religious background. Combating Islam and Islamophobia in every possible way, including military confrontation, was exclusively a monastic idea especially after the crusaders' machine had utterly failed in encountering the growing Muslim forces then. As stated in this study, the clergy have translated the meanings of the Glorious Qur'an into Latin in an attempt to refute it and reveal its so-called demerits and claiming that it is but a mixture of Judeo-Christian heresies.

## **Related Literature**

The study includes just few related studies because the central role played by the religious factor in the emergence of orientalism is crystal clear.

## **Research Methodology**

The researcher here adopts an analytical deductive approach by means of examining some texts quoted from religious orientalists relating to Islam in view of unveiling their genuine explication and not simply through their narration at random.

## **Part One**

### **1. Religious orientalism**

During the middle Ages, Europe has witnessed an armed war, propaganda and doctrinal or creedal war against Islam and Muslims aiming at distorting the image of Islam, intimidating people, and curbing its spread.

The armed war waged is called 'the crusades'. The doctrinal war was another facet of confronting Islam waged by Christian clergy which was primarily doctrinally and intellectually motivated. Such war was sometimes waged at the individual level as well as the official level. The confrontation under study is orientalism with special reference to religious orientalism.

By such type of orientalism is meant orientalists' attempts that came into existence through official immediate support by the Christian clergy at that time to study Islam in such a way as to find out the so-called demerits, failures and contradictions. Historians are divided as to the exact beginning of orientalism both temporally and spatially.

Some maintain that it was all initiated by European students who came to Arab Andalusia to gain knowledge and transfer it to Europe since the second century A.H corresponding to the eighth century A.D. Others, however, believe that it began from Byzantium conquered by Muslim Arabs. Yet there are still some who argue that that type of orientalism was only an offshoot of the crusades and the direct contact between Western Europeans and the Arabs. It is also held that the actual Western interest in Islam and Muslims arose on the eve of confronting the Ottoman danger

which made incursions in Europe, conquered some kingdoms and toppled some rulers and thus became one of the facts of the European policy (Al Mulla Jasem, 2004, p. 14: Zaquz, 1997, p.18). What seems to be common among these varying views mentioned above is that that type of study of the heritage of the orient, its Islamic faith and civilization all emerged from the West. The main reason and motive for such type of study are the Islamic faith and conquests then. It is beyond doubt that the emergence of orientalism is religiously motivated and is attributed, according to some views, to the great failure of European crusades. Such crusades failed to accomplish Western ambitions, help conquer the Arab peoples and conquer Jerusalem ruled by the Arabs then. After the crusades, confrontation techniques between the Muslim world and the West had changed. Instead, dialogue and adopting the scientific methodology were given priority. Consequently the psychology of the orient was examined to find out the most suitable technique of confrontation as an alternative to the military confrontation (Al Jolind,1991, p.12,13). Such a new technique required the investigation of the orient in terms of language, religion, civilization, history, philosophy, sciences, creed and its fundamentals. It also required the development of the appropriate methodologies to discover the merits of the solid Muslim power which managed to defeat the frequent crusades launched. As the people in charge of the crusades were the clergy, they were the vanguards of studying the orient. As such, the majority of orientalist were bishops and Christian clergy.

Thus, religious orientalism was the ideal solution and alternative to military confrontation with Islam, a fact emphasised often by the historian, Richard Southern. The staunch European enemies of Islam quite realised that military confrontation alone was not sufficient to defeat it. It was also necessary to study its spirit profoundly so as to refute its basics. Their justification of such a profound study was to curb the enemy's resistance will by shaking the foundations of his faith and overexaggerating the military power of Islam to get European forces to be more powerful and disciplined. It goes without saying that it can be concluded that those who objected to the use of military action against Islam were more inclined to adopting intellectual confrontation because of losing faith in military confrontation (Sothren, 1984, p.86).

To achieve the doctrinal goal of orientalism, the early Catholic orientalist adopted the following four techniques: (Erfan, 1969, p. 10).

1. Making sure not to unveil the facts and noble goals of Islam to the European Christian public by distorting its facts and highlighting the

- so- called demerits and contradictions of Islam. This was done through rumours and apocalyptic thought, prodigic fabricated works written by monks for that purpose, especially through fake distorted Quranic translations and through distorting the image of the Noble biography of prophet Muhammad (Pbuh).
2. Perpetual distortion of the image of Muslims by the church and the monks by using dirty language that depicts Muslims as fierce callous Muhammadan fighters, backward saracens who know but fighting with the sword and murdering others. Besides, they are described as uncivilized nomads in a continuous state of fraternal fighting
  3. Such monks spent their lives and wasted their time searching for faults in Islam but in vain. For example, they racked their brains to discover any said contradictions or prove that Islam is plagiarised from Judaism, Christianity and other sources that abound in heresies and blasphemy.
  4. Planning to launch vicious campaigns aiming to convert Muslims to Christianity officially endorsed at ecclesiastical conferences held for that purpose.

The above- mentioned techniques were, no doubt, motivated by the culture of hate to Islam and Islamophobia because of its fast spread in whatever area that came to know Islam and Muslims. One of the most prominent objectives of such orientalists was to stop the spread of Islam in Europe and other countries in order to preserve the authority and concepts of the church. The enemies of Islam felt comfortable while trying to stop the spread of Islam which, undoubtedly, caused the clergy anxiety in more than one way for it was geographically and cultural bordering Europe. Since the end of the seventeenth century, Islam in its Ottoman Arab form or in North Africa posed an active serious threat to the European Christianity. Both in the past and present, Europeans bear in mind that Islam surpassed Rome in civilization (Sa'eed, 1981, p. 101).

From what has previously been stated it becomes clear that the emergence of orientalism was religiously motivated in the first place supported by Catholic monks as part of the declared war against Islam and Muslims, a misleading propaganda the church opted for after being militarily defeated by the Muslim army in the middle Ages. Thus, to claim that orientalism was motivated by religion and the crusaders is well-

substantiated and never haphazard. The following facts support the argument that orientalism is religiously motivated:

1. At the individual level, the real beginning of orientalism started at the hands of the French Catholic monks (Gerbert of Aurillac) (Al Aqeeqi, 1964, p.1, Al Jolind, 1991, p.11, Oraibi, 1991, p.137, Zaquzuq, 1997, p.18). Oliak" who was elected in the year 999 as the high priest of Rome church and was granted the title Sylvster the second. He was the first to study oriental sciences and the beginning of orientalism is attributed to him. He migrated from France to Spain, the cradle of the Islamic civilization then.

There he learnt Arabic and Muslim sciences such as mathematics medicine, astronomy, alchemy and philosophy. He also studied religious sciences. He was thought to be the most knowledgeable of his contemporaries in the area of Islamic sciences especially mathematics and astronomy. Then he left for Rome, the Papacy headquarters, where he was elected as the high priest under the title sylvster the second (999\_1003). As such he was the first French citizen to be assigned that post.

Due to his new post, Oliak managed to start two schools for teaching Arabic and it's sciences, the first in Rome while the second in his birth place,Daimas. Later on a third school (named Charter) was built . This monk has also translated Some Arabic books on mathematics and astronomy. The spread of Arabic numerals in Europe including the zero was attributed to him. Europe was unaware of the zero till it was introduced by Oliak from Arabic to Latin. The zero helped solve a lot of problems in arithmetic

2. Orientalism shifted from individual to collective and became institutionalised at the hands of the French monk reverend Peter who was Abbot of the famous Cluny Abbey in southern France It was he who ordered the first Latin translation of the Glorious Quran under his patronage and it was sponsored by him. In so doing his aim was to find out the said deficiencies and contradictions of the Quran. He also thought that the clash between Christianity and Islam was inevitable albeit through dialogue rather than military confrontation. Having held the view that Muslims were heretics, he thought it was possible to convert them to Christianity only if Christian theologians and missionaries could convince them of the shortcomings of their faith.

Reverend peter's intentions are manifested in his message addressing Arabs where he says, ' from Peter the Christian French, servant of the church, from those called monks ... to the Arabs, children of Ishmail, followers of pseudo-religion of Muhammad., (Georavsky, 2005, p.79). Peter the Reverend is described by Georavsky as being the founder of Islamic studies in Christian Medieval Ages (Georavsky, 2005, p.80).

3. Upon issuing the resolution by Vienna ecclesiastical Assembly held in the year 1312, orientalism became formal. As such it was cherished by the European churches and a number of professorship chairs in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Syriac were created at the Universities of Paris, Oxford, Polonia, Avignon, and Salamanca. The Arabic Language chair established in Rome was sponsored by the Vatican. Those established in Paris and Oxford were sponsored by the kings of France and England respectively. Many historians argue that this conference was the starting point for organised semi- official formal orientalism. Prior to that, all attempts were just harbingers to the emergence of this movement. This was followed by the spread of orientalist schools and institutions concerned with the study of the orient particularly the Islamic sciences (Abdul Mohsen, 2000, p.41, Saeed, 1981, p.80, Zaqzuk, 1997, p.18).

The Catholic church has in no way denied the goals of starting orientalism institution to pave the way for Christianizing Arabs. So, the resolution to establish the Arabic language chair at Cambridge University in the year 1636 stated that its objective was to expand the borders of the church and spread Christianity among Muslims who live in the dark. As such the monks were the vanguards of orientalism whose role was obvious in both organization and practice (Abdul Mohsen, 2000, p.41).

The above-mentioned exposition clearly illustrates the intimate relationship between orientalists and missionaries' tasks. This reinforces the argument about the religious nature of orientalism and its doctrinal motive. That relationship at the same time reflects lack of objectivity of religious orientalism, especially when one takes into account the fact that the Popes had been monitoring the spread of the Islamic doctrine and thought in Europe and had looked at that with fear and anxiety. Perhaps those reasons made orientalists feel biased, furious and fanatic when it came to Islam and Muslims. Otherwise how would one justify the fact that religions such as Buddhism, Shintoism or Hinduism are not treated similarly. No doubt, the



church initiated orientalism and sponsored it so as to combat Islam and distort its image through such an institution. Orientalist Islamic studies were initiated by the Catholic church only to undermine the teachings of Islam in an attempt to save the Catholic doctrine and to compensate for the series of defeats of the crusaders to rescue Jerusalem from the Muslims. Such studies moved to the Western Universities themselves at a later stage by western colonisation (Al Bahi, 1991, pp 9-10).

The above argument is in line with the view held by Aishah Abdurrahman, Known as bint Al-Shati, who answered the questions about the emergence of orientalism by confirming that it was all started by the Catholic church and that it was run immediately and directly by its senior clergy (Arab institute,1968, p.52).

The question that arises here is that if the early Catholic monks deliberately attacked Islam in search of its so –called shortcomings, deficiencies and contradictions, what aspects of Islam and its tenets did they target? The answer for his question is rather long and complicated which is compatible with the many details and complications related to it. However, briefly speaking, the Catholic religious orientalism campaign against Islam concentrated on suspecting that Islam is a Divine religion, the Prophet's Sunnah and person. Such carefully selected aspects were not targeted at random but for good reasons summarized as follows:

1. The aim of criticising Allah's messenger (Pbuh) was to utterly undermine the ideal image of his person and acts in the heart and mind of every Muslim and making confidence in him quite shaky as he is the ideal model for those who believe in Allah and the Hereafter.
2. The attack against the Glorious Quran aimed to misrepresent it as a pseudo- Book rather than Divine and that its sources are sheer human varied and conflicting or contradictory. It was also claimed that all its doctrines and legislations were just plagiarised from the religious and doctrines prevalent in the Arabian Peninsula especially the perished Christian doctrines such as Alabionah, Docetism, and Agnosticism that prevailed in some parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

It is worth concluding the targeting of the Glorious Quran by the orientalist monks with the following famous quotation by John Tackil, ' We must use their book, the strongest weapon in Islam, to combat Islam itself in order to undermine it. People must be convinced that what is true in the Quran is never new and that what is new therein is never true! (Abdul Mohsen, 2000, p. 18).

Finally, in tackling the orientalist monks' campaign launched against the sources of Islam, we may conclude that their aim was to cause a schism in Islam between the Quran, the Noble Messenger and revelation in an attempt to gradually weaken faith in the doctrine of Islam as Divine religion and the consequences of such degradation and decline. Such an act would lead eventually to the very decline of the religious spirit (Abdul Mohsen, 2000, p. 18).

Such were the very roots of orientalism. We noticed the pivotal role played by religion in the emergence of orientalism. First, orientalism attempted to prevent Christians from embracing Islam and to stop its spread in the European continent. Then it tried to make Muslims doubt their religion, the Divine nature of their Glorious Quran and the pure Sunnah and finally raise questions about the character, manners and acts of the beloved selected prophet in an attempt to distort his image worldwide.

## **Part Two**

### **Saint John the Damascene author of the first book on orientalism.**

We may well begin this part by shedding light on this Christian Saint's biography due to his great enmity of Islam and the great impact his views had on the Catholic monks' thought regarding religious orientalism and the monks' contribution in forming an opposing position towards Islam and Allah's Messenger (Pbuh). Besides, he was the first to write a whole book against Islam and Allah's messenger's character entitled 'De Haere Sbius' or Heresies where he accused the Messenger of using religion for his own interest. He also claimed that the Nestorian monk, Bahira, helped Muhammad author the Quran and that he quoted some of the writings of Waraqa bin Nawfal who, according to the Damascene Saint, was a Nestorian bishop who had translated some forged Gospels into Arabic (Wikipedia,n.d.para4).

The real name of John the Damascene is Mansour bin Sarjoun bin Mansour who was born in Damascus around the year 676. His Christian father was influential during the Umayyad reign where he held a high rank at the Finance Office of the Umayyad caliphate during the rule of Abdulmalik bin Marwan. John the Damascene's father managed to find a teacher to teach his son the basics of the Christian faith. So, he accidentally chose one of the war prisoners arrested during the Islamic expansion on the European coasts. Selecting that particular person was out of compassion.

John the Damascene's father used his influence to release that prisoner whose name is Cosmas discovered later to be a famous bishop from Sicily. It was that bishop who taught John the Damascene the basics of the Christian faith (St- takla, n. d. para1).

After the death of his father, John the Damascene took over his father's post in the state treasury. During that time one of the patriarchs of the Constantinople Church issued a decree that prevented Christians from taking holy the images of Christ and Mary the Virgin. John the Damascene just disliked such views and began to write treaties and manuscripts against that decree. As a result the Byzantian emperor lodged a complaint to the Umayyad caliph in which he claimed that John the Damascene was provoking people to revolt against the empire. So, he was sacked from his post and his hands were both cut. Some narraters, however, maintain that only one of his hands was cut (ST-takla, n. d. para3). Following that event, John the Damascene secluded in his synagogue in Mar Saba abbey and got wedded to writing and authoring books. Most of his books tackled Christian theology. The most well – Known and dangerous book was entitled "Heresies which was a part and chapter of the book" Knowledge Spring", A Debate between a Muslim and a Christian' or A Debate between a Saracen and a Christian''. His first book, Heresies' comprised a chapter on Islam entitled, Ishmaelites Heresies'. Where Ishmaelites refers to the Arabs descendents of Ishmael, Son of Abraham peace be upon both of them .This chapter involves severe criticism of Islam where the Arabs are accused of being heretic, misguided and believing in legends. In his opinion, the Arabs were considered as a heretic Christian sect and he claimed that Muhammad was a false messenger, an impostor who claimed himself to be a prophet at the time of Hercules after reading the Old Testament and the New Testament and being taught by an Arian monk. It was also claimed that Muhammad feigned piety so as to appeal to the Arabs and preached that he received a Divine Book comprising ridiculous legislations called Islam. To distort the image of the prophet, that chapter comprised a claim that upon entering the house of Zainab bint Jahsh while her husband was away, he was taken by her and left her house saying glory be to God (Allah) who changes the hearts of people till the end of the story which has, unfortunately, infiltrated into some exegeses. Ibn Kathir, however, quite realised that it was sheer fabrication and was thus not comprised in his exegesis and pointed out that it was but false (Awdeh, 2015, pp 3-4).

The objective of that distorted image of prophet Muhammad by John the Damascene was to fortify the Christians living in Laventine under the Islamic rule against embracing Islam especially when he noticed how tolerant Muslims were towards the people of the book and that a large number of Christians retroverted to Islam. The only way, he thought, to make Christians adhere to their faith was to misrepresent Islam in such away as to make it look horrible in their eyes. That book was very popular in the Roman empire territories and was widely used by Byzantine writers in their polemic against Islam. The book was then translated into Latin and contributed to the formulation of a western ideology to words Islam and Muslim throughout the Middle Ages till today (Awdeh, 2015,pp3-4).

Concerning the second book of John the Damascene, ‘Muslim-Christian Polemic’, it mainly deals with how to defend the doctrine of incarnation and the Islamic conception of predestination.

As to the third book, ‘Knowledge Spring’, it was a theological encyclopedia in the late days of his life. As mentioned earlier, this book included a chapter on heresies (or The Ishmaelite Heresys). Other parts of the book tackle some philosophical definitions and discussion of the Orthodox Christian faith.

Back to the so –called heresies, John the Damascene allotted one part of his book to refute the Islamic faith. His follower simply parroted some or all stereotypes propagated by him. The way John the Damascene misconceived Islam, its prophet and book may be summarized as follows: (Abdul Mohsen, 2000, pp 20-27).

1. Raising doubts about the fact that Islam is a continuity of the Abrahamic prestine faith. As such he describes Muslims cunningly as Saracens and is regarded as the first Christian writer to adopt the distortion of the image of Islam for the purpose of polemics. Moreover, Muslims are described by him as corrupters a term frequently used in polemic after his death.
2. Islam is examined as a Christian heresy.
3. Presenting Islam as a sign of the advent of the false Messiah.
4. Considering the Messenger (Pbuh) to be one of the followers of Arius believing in the Nestorian denomination because he always emphasized the fact that Christ was created and is, therefore, no more than a mere human being which complies with the views of Arius and Nestor.

5. The message conveyed by the prophet may be summarized in two points, i.e his shallow knowledge of what is considered as insignificant chapters of the Old Testament and the New Testament that the prophet happened to come across and what he learnt from Bahira, the Arian monk.
6. Quran is just a product of daydreams because the messenger (Pbuh) received it while sleeping.

A simple comparison between the works of John the Damascene on Islam and those done by many historians working in the field of religious orientalism reveals clearly the obvious similarity of such works. This leads to the assumption that they have been influenced by him in all their works on Islam and Allah's messenger (Pbuh)...

Such was the reaction of John the Damascene to Muslims' hospitality who took good care of him, his father and grandfather and assigned him a senior post in one of the key institutions at the time of the Umayyad caliphate.

This saint initiated the orientalist's fabrications campaigns against Islam and its Messenger. Such campaigns had not been launched after the Crusades, but ages before that. So, he was one of the pioneers, if not the pioneer of such campaigns.

### **Part Three**

#### **Peter the reverend and Clony Abbey Group: The First Religious Orientalism Battalion**

It has already been stated that the emergence of orientalism was religious in nature and that orientalism institution was established and fully sponsored by the church just to be used as one of its tools to combat Islam both as a doctrine and a thought to stop the spread of Islam in the European continent. This goal was achieved through the monks dedicated to the study of Islam and its sources, especially the Glorious Quran in an attempt to find out the so-called contradictions, shortcomings and deficiencies to establish that Islam is a man-made rather than Divine religion. The most prominent figure to do so was Peter the reverend who presented the Christian world then with two vital projects that exerted tremendous effects on the establishment of religious orientalism and creating violent polemic against

Islam and distorting the image of Islam and Islamic beliefs in the eyes of its future scholars. These two projects are:

1. The first Quranic translation into Latin.
2. Translating the message of Islam along with the Christian response.

Peter the reverend started these two projects under his sponsorship after becoming the high priest of Clony Abbey, one of the most prominent and influential abbeys in Europe.

The idea of holding intellectual dialogue on Islam occurred to Peter the reverend very often, but he got ready to do so during an inspection tour on the Benedictine abbeys run by Clony Abbey in Spain in the year 1142.

What incited him more to undertake that dialogue was meeting with Catholic monks who were well – versed in the Arabic language (the language of the Quran and Muhammad Pbu). He thought that it would be easier to argue with Muslims once the Quran and its legislations were translated into the language the monks spoke then.

Contrary to the views held by many monks then, Peter the reverend called for a peaceful intellectual doctrinal front based on dialogue with Islam away from military confrontation which proved to be complete failure. He has always called for confronting Islam as a heresy to be refuted. His approach differed from those adopted by others in that it was peaceful. That idea, however, did not appeal to the Catholic church and the French and Spanish monks at that time. So, he had to justify carrying out such a project and stated, if this kind of project seems to be unnecessary at the time being, because the enemy will not be affected by it, I hold the view that some actions or measures taken by His Majesty the king are only for defence purposes. Other actions and measures are taken not necessarily for the present but for the future. Solomon, the peace – loving, manufactured weapons not to be used during his time and David ordered the making of the temple decorations although his contemporaries thought that it was all done in vain. This surely applies to the work undertaken by me here. If it is not possible to convince Muslims to embrace true Christianity this way, then Christian Scholars would benefit from our Project in reinforcing naïve Christians' faith whose creed may be slightly affected by such minor threats (Sothren, 1984, pp 81-82).

Peter considered Islam as the last and most dangerous Christian heresy. He thought that the Islamic challenge at that time was yet to find a proper Christian answer. He, therefore, thought that it was necessary to confront that (heresy) claimed to be the source of all heresies invading traditional European Christianity then. Although Islam posed no immediate military threat, it was, no doubt, intellectually quite dangerous. Hence it was necessary to study it in order to be confronted. It is obvious from the aforementioned that he wished to bring Muslims (said to be heretics) to true Christianity. This translation, it was thought, would serve to safeguard Christianity against the dangerous Islamic beliefs which may badly affect naive Christians whose faith may be shaky.

Peter the monk went a head in implementing his project despite all objections by the monks to bring such a translation into existence. In Spain he met two visitor monk, i.e Robert of Ketton, an English national, and Hermann of Dalmatia. Both monks were searching for texts or manuscripts on mathematics and astronomy. But they were convinced by Peter to collaborate in translating the most significant Islamic manuscripts. So Robert and Hermann worked with a Spanish Christian called Peter of Toledo and a Muslim called Muhammad the saraceni. The outcome of such joint work was a series of documents that remained of paramount importance at the level of understanding of Islam in the west till the sixteenth century. So, they made available a Quranic translation, a world history from the Islamic perspective, an exposition of Muhammadan teachings, a collection of Islamic fables, and an early polemic theological work against Islam called "Kindi Apology". We are mainly concerned here with the translation of the Glorious Quran into Latin, the translation of the Islamic message and Its Christian Response called by Armstrong "Kindi Apology" (Armstrong, 1989, p.283, Georavsky, 2005, pp 80-81, Fok, 1996, pp15-16, Oraibi, 1991, pp144-145). As Robert of ketton was quite aware of the intentions of Peter the Reverend in carrying out his project, he mistranslated the meanings of the Glorious Quran unobjectively which had a badly negative effect on the formation of the vicious Western ideology towards Islam and its Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) (Oraibi, 1991, p. 144-145).

Honestly speaking, Robert of Ketton's translation of the Glorious Quran upon the directives of Peter the Reverend met with the resentment of most contemporary Christian historians who wrote about the history of Europe in the Middle Ages. So they tackled its shortcomings in their works. Despite the numerous sources used by such historians, they seem to be unanimous in

their remarks which confirms the view that Peter the reverend and Robert of Ketton certainly meant to produce a distorted misleading translation. The facts stated below support the view that the late historians were right in criticising that translation and Robert of Kettons distortions of the Quran: :(Abdul Mohsen, 2000, pp. 48-50, Armstrong, 1989, pp285-286, Awded, 2015, pp6-7, Fok, 1996, pp17-18 Georavsky, 2005, pp81-82, Hugman, 2005, pp. 64-69).

1. The order of the Quranic surahs was changed and some of the long surahs were divided into short surahs. So the number of Quranic surahs was made 120 instead of 114.
2. The ‘Fatihah’ surah was excluded as a Quranic surah and was considered as a mere prelude read before reciting the Quran being influenced by the Biblical tradition (Our Father who art in heaven...)
3. The word ‘wajihan’ (Al- Imran:45) was mistranslated as ‘Facies’ instead of ‘held in honour’ by Robert of Ketton. The meaning of the ayah, however, should be rendered as follows: ‘ When the angels said: O Mary! God is giving you glad tidings of a word from him: his name will be Jesus Christ the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter.
4. In translating some ayahs lack of academic objectivity is clearly seen as illustrated by the rendering of (Al- Imran:14): ‘Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and sons’, where it was mistranslated as (making love and sex feeling)!!
5. In translating Al-humaza Surah, he dropped the word 'yahsabu' ‘ He thinks that his wealth will make him last forever!’(ayah3), giving thus the exact opposite of the ayah.
6. Having translated the two ayah of AlGhashiyah Surah (21-22)'So remind them – you are only one who reminds. You are not a dictator over them, Robert launched a sudden and surprising attack against Prophet Muhammad stating: 'Why do you then preach that your religion should be spread by the sword? If you are simply a reminder rather than a dictator why do you subjugate people by force as if they were beasts? Why do not you try to convince them to do so instead? You are a liar contradicting the truth in every sense of the word.



7. He mistranslated the phrase 'Ahlu Alkitab as 'people of the Book and interpreted it as referring to Muslims.
8. He interpreted all ayahs related to marriage and divorce sexually so that it would sound disgusting to the Western reader, especially monks. For example, see the translation of ayah 220 of Al Baqarah Surah where the ayah, he claims, refers to preaching homosexuality. The same applies to ayah 223 of the same Surah. Furthermore, he misinterprets the meaning of ayah (50) of AlAhzab, O Prophet! Verily, We have made lawful to you your wives,.....` in that the prophet may well make love to whomever he wishes even if she was not his wife and that he could do that with any faithful woman willing to do so.

Robert of Ketten, then, intentionally manipulated the Quranic text by dropping some words interpreting ayahs out of the Quranic context and by totally ignoring the peculiarities of the Quranic style. Additionally, he did his best, despite in vain, to misinterpret the Quranic text to make it suit his whims. His model in doing so was Peter the reverend who paid him generously to do that sort of work. It is worth noting that whenever Peter wanted to severely criticise the Quran, he would interpret the ayah out of context in order to mislead the Christian clergy and public in general. In this context, reference may be made to his misinterpretation of ayah 20 of Al-Imran where he claims that Muhammad was just an impostor and that the religion he Preaches is but man- made (Armstrong, 1989, p. 287).

What is, in my opinion, catastrophic is that this translation with all its ills has remained prevalent for five centuries and that the oldest Quranic translations into Italian, German and Dutch were all based on it. It was only totally replaced by the translation of the Italian Maracci in the year 1698 which was better and more accurate compared to the Latin translation (Hugman, 2005, p. 69). What is paradoxical is that that distorted translation was considered by the Catholic church as presenting some facts about Islam. This prompted Pope Alexander VII to issue a decree prohibiting the translation and publishing of the Quran and burning its copies (Oraibi, 1991, p.145). Accordingly, Peter the reverend's translation was released by Clony Abbot after four centuries (Fok, 1996, p.98).

It is worth noting here that the role of the co-translator, Hermann Delm was confined to the translation of some anti-Islamic articles which were comprised therein in addition to more than forty five pages aimed at undermining the very basics of Islam, Prophet Muhammad's biography and the history of Islam described as ridiculous. In so doing, he relied on the fabricated fake dialogue between the Jewish rabbis and the prophet (Pbuh)

published under the title (*Doctrina Mahumet*), which are well –known by Muslims as the "Issues of Abdullah bin Salam" The views of Hermann Delmata may be summarised as follows: (Abdul Mohsen, 2000, p. 52, Georavsky, 2005, p. 81, Oraibi, 1991, p. 145).

1. Muhammadan teachings
2. Muslim’s illusionary ridiculous history
3. Muhammadan nation and its deviance.

Peter the reverend classified his polemic works against Islam based on these works and translations chief among which is (*Liber contra Sectam Sive Haeresim Saracenorum*). Ali bin Muhammad Odah, however, shouldered the responsibility of reviewing this book and its major themes and made some quotations. However, before discussing such quotations, it should be stated that the above-mentioned book consists of six chapters as illustrated below:

1. The Lord, Christ, and the Dooms-Day
2. The Quran and Its sources
3. The Spread of Islam
4. Prophet Muhammad
5. Paradise and Hell- Fire and Moral Teachings
6. Islam As A Christian heresy (Awdeh, 2015, pp.10-12).

To quote some of what is stated in Odah’s review, he says, ‘ After his cynical exposition of the scenes of the Dooms-day confined to Quran and not addressed by the Christian Scriptures, Peter the reverend states ,‘To this extent has Muhammad the dirty wicked taught his companions to deny all the mysteries of the Christian Faith, and deprived about three quarters of mankind of disbelieving in the Dooms–Day through crazy fables never heard of carrying out diabolic desires and eternal destruction.

Then a brief distorted image of the Prophet’s biography is given and it is stated by Peter the reverend,‘ Thus was Mahumet so active in the world affairs and extremely intelligent. He came from a poor family only to get so rich and popular. He attacked his neighbours, and convinced his relatives deceptively and through invasions and robbery to side with him. Not only that, but he would assassinate any person if he could. People got more

terrified by his name and managed to reach the peak through conflicts. Then he aspired to become the monarch of his people. As he was quite aware that he belonged to a low class and as such could not do so, he decided to become a king by force, in the name of religion and by claiming that he was God's Messenger. Then he tackles the issue of the Quran, strongly denies that Muhammad was a prophet and claims that the Quran had three sources: Satan, Sergius (the Nestorian) and Bahira. He adds that Muhammad was taught by the most prominent theologians and heretics who authored his Quran and together they manufactured a non-standard Satanic Scripture consisting of Jewish legends and heretics songs.

He was also an impostor claiming that his Scripture was revealed to him surah by surah by Gabriel whose name he came to know from the Holy Bible at that time. It was Muhammad who poisoned the thought of that nation who are yet to know the Lord. Alas he poisoned the honey and corrupted that hopeless desperate nation both spiritually and physically. That man spoke highly of the Judaeo- Christian law. Although that wicked quoted that law he, at the same time, rejects it (Awdeh 2015, P. 13).

Next Peter the reverend tackles the issues of Paradise, Hell-fire and moral teachings criticising severely the Quranic conception of Paradise and Hell-fire by stating, Muhammad describes Hell torture as if he was pleased to do so and as if it is suitable for an impostor to invent such descriptions. Moreover, he describes a Paradise that is not angelic, not reflecting Divine manifestation, and not as absolute goodness. He describes it as a place furnished with what has never been seen, heard or thought of by man as to suit his desires just meant for him and his companions or followers. He promises his followers there to eat meat, all sorts of fruit and to have rivers of milk, honey and flowing water. There they can embrace, satisfy their lust with strikingly beautiful virgin women. His paradise is all real, not figurative which abounds in many Luxuries. According to Peter the reverend polygamy is regarded as an act of adultery from a monastic perspective.

Once again Peter the reverend uses an obscene language to describe the Prophet, Besides, he was able to a rouse the sex drive of men where they felt free to do that promiscuously and greedily. He himself had at the same time sixteen wives, thus committing adultery by a Divine command. Thus he added a huge number of followers deemed to be destroyed entirely.

By concluding with the above paragraph by the malicious so-called reverend Peter it can be clearly understood that his team of translators suffered moral and psychological problems due to their anxiety, pressure, and fear of Islam both by them and the Catholic church that sponsored them. Consequently they gathered all their fabrications, forgeries and mistranslations in what is called (Toledo Collection) or (Clony Battalion), which has unfortunately, become the major source of information and givings on the religion of Islam over about five hundred years.

## References

- Abdul Al Mohsen, A. (2000). *The Preaching Raid Against the Uniqueness of Quran Kareem*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. King Fahed Construction for Quran Printing. Saudi Arabia.
- Al Aqeeqi, N. (1964). *Orientalists, Volume 12*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Cairo: Dar Alma'aref.
- Al Bahi, M. (1991). *The Modern Islamic Thought and its Relation With Western Colonization*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Egypt: Al Ma`aref.
- Al Jolind, M. (1991). *Orientalism and Preaching Brief Historical Reading*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Cairo: Dar Qoba'a.
- Al Molla Jasem, A. (2004). *Islam and the West Studies in Critique the Orientalism*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Amman: Dar Al Manahej.
- Armstrong, K. (1989). *The Biography of Prophet Mohammad, Translated by Fatema Naser and Mohammad Anani*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Cairo: Dar Al Kitab Alarabi.
- Awdeh, A. (2015). *Jhon Of Damascus the Pioneer of Western Intellectual Aggression Against Islam*. Vol.3.1<sup>st</sup> ed. Saudi Arabia.
- Erfan, A. (1969). *Orientalists And Islam*.1<sup>st</sup> ed. Baghdad: Al Ershad printing.
- Fok, J. (1996). *The History of Orientalism Movement Studies Arabic Islamic In Europe Until the Beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Translated By Omar Lotfi Al Alem*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Damascus: Dar Kotaibah.
- Georavsky, A. (2005). *Islam and Christianity From Competition And Collision Into Dialogue and Understanding, Translated by Khalaf Mohammad Al Jarad*. 1<sup>st</sup>. Beirut: Dar Al Fekr .
- Hugman, L. (2005). *Christianity Against Islam Dialogue Ended in Failure, Translated By Mohmmad Jadeed*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Syria: Dar Qudmus .
- Institute Of Arab Heritage. (1968). *Our Heritage between Past And Present*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Beirut: Arabic Institute For Studies And Research Publications.
- Oraibi, M. (1991). *Orientalism And Westernization of the Historical Arab Mind*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Cairo: the National Council for Arab Culture publications.

- Sa'eed, E. (1981). *Orientalism*, Translated By Kamal Abu Deeb. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Beirut: Arab Researches Institute Publications.
- Sothren, R. (1984). *The Islam Image In Europe in the Middle Ages*, Translated by Radwan al Sayed .1<sup>st</sup> ed. Beirut: Arabic developing institute publications.
- St-takla. (n. d). *The Biography of Saint John of Damascus*. Retrieved from: <http://st-takla.org>
- Wikipedia. (n.d). *The Offense to the character of Mohammad Bin Abdullah*. Retrieved from <http://www.wikipedia.org>
- Zaazuq, M. (1997). *Orientalism and Tahe Intellectual Background for Clash of Civilization*.1<sup>st</sup> ed. Cairo: Dar Al Ma`aref.