

## DAVID SAMUEL MARGOLIOUTH ON PROPHET'S MONOTHEISM: EVALUATION OF HIS IMAGINATION

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### Abstract

Prophet Muhammad's monotheistic nature has been among the most debated issues in Muslim-Christian relation. Muslims in general believe that he was monotheist before, during and after he was sent as a Prophet. To support this claim, they provide some historical accounts which were found in his annals describing him as monotheist. On their side, the critics, more specially, the christian apologists hold the opinion that he was not monotheist before his mission. Some of them have added that he was not monotheist even during and after his mission. They asserted that he adopted and continued to perform some rituals which were nothing more than idolatry during his mission and died an idolater without any hope for salvation. In their efforts to substantiate this claim, they cite some historical accounts which, they argue, depict him as idolater. This research therefore, attempts to analyse and evaluate the views of a Christian scholar, David Samuel Margoliouth, on this issue. Studies on his views regarding it seem to be more descriptive than analytical and evaluative. That probably happened because the researchers have not singled him out as a case study. Thus, their studies, although are vital, imperative and relevant appear to be laconic and sketchy as a result of which they have left lots of loopholes. This research, therefore, aims to carry out a wider analysis and evaluation of his views on this issue. However, this is a library based study. It is, therefore, a qualitative research. Thus, the principal approaches namely historical, analytical, evaluative and comparative have been widely used. Historical approach has been used in deliberation on the Prophet's monotheistic nature before and during his mission. Textual as well as analytical approaches have been adopted in exploring his views on the Prophet's monotheism. Evaluative and comparative approaches have been adopted in assessing his views from the Islamic and realistic viewpoints. However, the significance of this study may be seen in its attempt to develop a peaceful dialogue between Muslims and others on issues related to Islam and its various teachings.

**Keywords:** idolatory, Islam, Margoliouth, monotheism, Muhammad.

### Introduction

Before the coming of Islam, Arabs were idol-worshippers. Many idols were regarded as deities throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Some of those idols were mentioned in the *Qur'an*.<sup>1</sup> It was Islam that emptied that Peninsula from worshipping other than Allah. Hence, *tawhid* defeated polytheism and penetrated into its every nooks and corners. *Tawhid* or the unity of Allah as contrary to *shirk* or polytheism, is considered the core of Islamic teachings. The very confession of Islamic faith, *kalimat al-shahadah*, conveys this notion. This concept occupies the central position of Muslim's place, thought and action.<sup>2</sup> According to Islamic teachings, unto every nation a messenger was sent to teach them this very concept.<sup>3</sup> Muslim theologians and philosophers produced various works pointing out how Islam is very much concerned with it.

Moreover, annals of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) are full of various accounts on how he battled to instil the concept of *tawhid* in the minds of his companions. However, some historical accounts found in the Muslim sources tend to depict him as idolater before he was sent as a Prophet. For example, the tradition recorded by Hisham al-Kalbi in his *Kitab al-Asnam* portrays him as having sacrificed a grey sheep to al-Uzza. It also mentions that he confirmed to be on the religion of his people.<sup>4</sup> Another narration in which the Prophet was said to have named some of his children as Abd al-Uzza and Abd Manaf<sup>5</sup> is seen by the critics as a clear indication that he was not monotheist.

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<sup>1</sup> *Quran*, (52: 19-20)

<sup>2</sup> Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (1995), *Al-Tawhid: Its Implication for Thought and Life*, Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Quran*, (16:36)

<sup>4</sup> Hisham ibn Muhammad al-Kalbi (2000), *Kitab al-Asnam*, Al-Qahirah: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, p.19.

<sup>5</sup> Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn Asakir (2001), *Tarikh Dimashq*, Beyrut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, p. 172.

Some other traditions which mention that he ate the meat of what was sacrificed to idols were taken to be the ground for the assertion that he was idolater.<sup>6</sup> In this research, these and some other evidence have been critically analysed, investigated and evaluated. To finally conclude the discussion, the researcher has clearly stated his position based on his findings.

### **Biographical Sketch of Margoliouth**

Margoliouth was born on 17th October 1858 in London. He was said to be the only son to his parents, Ezekiel Margoliouth and Sarah Iglitzki. His father and father's uncle, Moses Margoliouth (1818-81) were said to have converted from Judaism to Anglicanism.<sup>7</sup> The former was said to have worked in Bethnal Green as a missionary to Jews<sup>8</sup> while the latter was said to be a renowned scholar in Biblical Studies who published *The Fundamental Principles of Modern Judaism* (1843) and many other works, and between 1877 and 1881 served as vicar in Little Linford, in Buckinghamshire.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, David Samuel Margoliouth could be said to be a Jew by origin and the product of Jewish converts to Christianity. His family was incredible in England not only for converting to Christianity but for the leaders it provided for the missionary movement in that community.<sup>10</sup> However, Margoliouth was ordained to the Anglican ministry as deacon and priest in 1899 in Liverpool Cathedral.<sup>11</sup> He worked as an examining chaplain to the bishop of Liverpool for the period of four years after his ordination. He used to deliver sermons which were said to be grounded in the evangelistic tendencies, and this attracted many audiences to his preaching.<sup>12</sup>

In the early years of his life, Margoliouth attended Hackney collegiate school and won a scholarship to Winchester collegiate in 1872.<sup>13</sup> In 1877 he got another scholarship and joined New College, Oxford. Margoliouth was talented during his studies and he was said to be the first class student. He won many awards and scholarships. He got Hertford and Ireland awards in 1878. In 1879 he got Gaisford prize for Greek prose, and in the same year he got a senior Kennecott award. In 1880 he got the Houghton Syriac prize. Meanwhile, in 1881 he got Crave award, and in the same year the Boden Sanskrit scholarship was granted to him. In 1882 he got Derby awards, and in the same year the Kennicott Hebrew scholarship was given to him. About a year after his graduation, Margoliouth's educational talent enabled him to become a fellow in the college from which he graduated, New College, Oxford.<sup>14</sup> In 1889 he was assigned the Laudian professor of Arabic and maintained the chair until 1937 when he became extremely sick.<sup>15</sup> Margoliouth specialized in Arabic studies, commentary on Aristotle's works and Islamic history.<sup>16</sup> He was seen as a polymath whose scholarship in oriental studies was incomparable in his generation within the British orientalism.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout his academic journey, Margoliouth was associated with the Royal Asiatic Society. He became its director in the year 1924, and from 1934-1937 he served as its President. He was awarded the society's Gold Medal in the year 1928 in honour of and respect for his scholarship and enormous contributions to the society. In addition, Margoliouth served as a corresponding member of many societies. His proficient scholarship enabled him to be given fellowship of the British academy for a long time under whose sponsorship he delivered Schweich Lectures on *The Relations between Arabs and Israelites Prior to the Rise of Islam* in the year 1921.<sup>18</sup> In 1934 he became an honorary member of the German Oriental Society. He was also made an honorary member of the American Oriental Society in the year 1937.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibn Hanbal, *Al-Musnad*, hadith no. 17947, and *Fal'hail al-Sahabah, I'adith* no. 1578.

<sup>7</sup> H. C. G. Matthew & Brian Harrison edit. (2004), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 36, p. 658.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *The Concise Dictionary of National Biography from Earliest Time to 1885*, Vol. 11, (1997), p. 1947.

<sup>10</sup> Stefan C. Reif (2000), *A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo: The History of Cambridge University's Genizah Collection*, New York: Routledge, p. 96.

<sup>11</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, p. 661.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 658.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 659.

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Jeffery (1940), "David Samuel Margoliouth," *The Muslim World*, Vol. 30, no. 3, p. 295.

<sup>16</sup> *Webster's New Biographical Dictionary*, (1988), "Margoliouth, David Samuel," p. 653.

<sup>17</sup> Edward Ullendorff (2001), "Alfred Felix London Beeston" in C. Edmund Bosworth (ed.), *A Century of British Orientalists 1902-2001*, New York: Oxford University Press, p.55.

<sup>18</sup> Arthur Jeffery (1940), "David Samuel Margoliouth," p. 297.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

Moreover, like most of the orientalist scholars, Margoliouth also traveled widely for teaching and intellectual purposes. He was said to have traveled to Cairo and Baghdad and delivered some very wonderful and successful lectures in Arabic language. He also visited India twice and delivered lectures on Islam at the University of Panjab (former name of Punjab) in 1916-1917, and also at the Universities of Bombay (former name of Mumbai) and Calcutta (former name of Kolkata) in 1929.<sup>20</sup>

### **Analysis of Margoliouth's Views on Prophet's Monotheism**

Margoliouth's argument over the Prophet's idolatry started from his perception towards the names of the Prophet's children. He contended that "the names of some of his children show that the parents when they named them were idolaters."<sup>21</sup> However, he did not mention which names of the prophet's children that imply idolatry. He maintained that before the Prophet's mission there was no indication that he was on the monotheistic path, instead; it was found that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his wife, Khadija, used to perform some domestic ritual in devotion to a goddess each night before going to bed. Margoliouth further contended that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) "confessed to having at one time sacrificed a grey sheep to Al-Uzza."<sup>22</sup> He claimed that the Prophet's sacrifice to idol was not only once; he probably did more than one time since after his claim of the Prophethood he used to slaughter sheep with his own hands.<sup>23</sup> Margoliouth brought a story in which the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his stepson, Zayd ibn Harithah, were said to have invited Zayd ibn Amr to eat with them of meat which was offered to idols but he refused and also inspired the Prophet (p.b.u.h) to refuse it too.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, Margoliouth continued to argue that although the Prophet (p.b.u.h) criticized idolatry, he did not evidently have physical hatred to it. Otherwise he would have not made the kissing of the Black Stone as a ceremony which he yearned for when denied of it and which continues to be within the teachings of Islam. He claimed that Prophet's physical repugnance appeared to be not against the idols themselves but against the representations which he found disquieting and disturbing. On the whole, according to Margoliouth, "Mohammed (Muhammad) seems to have abhorred the Meccan beliefs more than the Meccan practices,"<sup>25</sup> and "it is a physical puzzle that this destroyer of idols maintained the ceremony of kissing the Black Stone, which at any rate bears a close resemblance to idolatry."<sup>26</sup> Hence, "his identification of the god (God) Allah with the God of the Jews and Christians was in a manner accidental."<sup>27</sup>

Margoliouth further argued that the Prophet's retention of the sacrifice at the pilgrimage which signifies the preservation of ancient ritual "is comparable with the kissing of the Black Stone". He added that some of the Prophet's followers were said to have disliked it because "it certainly has the appearance of being a relic of stone worship which seems to have played a considerable part in pre-Islamic system."<sup>28</sup>

### **Evaluation of Margoliouth's Views on Prophet's Monotheism**

The reasons upon which Margoliouth based his assertions as regards to the Prophet's idolatry will be investigated and examined to see whether those claims are acceptable. Further, in the effort to make this discussion clear, those reasons will be taken one after the other and examined.

#### ***His First Evidence***

Margoliouth's first evidence gyrates around the Prophet's children's names where he argued that some of those names indicate that the parents when they named them were idolaters. Unfortunately, he declined to mention them to allow his reader to assess this assertion. Investigation shows that he relied on a tradition in which the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was said to have named two of his children borne by Khadijah as Abd al-Uzza and Abd Manaf. Therefore, since Manaf and al-Uzza were idols, then there is an indication that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his wife, Khadijah, were idolaters.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> David Samuel Margoliouth (2001), *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*, New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, pp. 69-70.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.70.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.47.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

Some historians recorded that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) named two of his children as Abd Manaf and Abd al-Uzza. Al-Haytham narrated from Hisham ibn Urwah who said, “She (Khadijah) gave birth to Abd al-Uzza, Abd Manaf and al-Qasim for him (the Prophet). I asked Hisham, where is al-Tahir and al-Tayyib? He replied, “O you people of Iraq! This is your forgery, but our scholars said, “(she gave birth to) Abd al-Uzza, Abd Manaf and al-Qasim.”<sup>29</sup> The orientalist, despite their extreme application of historical criticism in their study of Islam, attached a great value to this tradition. However, investigation shows that this particular tradition is not only weak but also fake which, we believe, is not possible to have come from original source especially because the narrator was said to be a great liar. Al-Nasa’i argued that “Al-Haytham’s narration is not acceptable. His narration about the Prophet’s children’s naming is impossible to have come from the Messenger of Allah.”<sup>30</sup> Ibn Hajar argued that “this (narration) is one of the fabrications of al-Haytham which he attributed to Hisham.”<sup>31</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi also argued that “Al-Haytham is a great liar, and his narration is not acceptable.”<sup>32</sup> He added that “our great scholar ibn Nasir said, “the Apostle of Allah never named (any of his children) Abd Manaf nor Abd al-Uzza.”<sup>33</sup>

Upon this, it may be concluded that the claim that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) named some of his children after some idols cannot be regarded as accurate since the tradition on which the proponents of this claim rely is fabricated.

### ***His Second Evidence***

Margoliouth’s second evidence revolves around the assertion that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and Khadijah used to perform some domestic rituals in devotion to a goddess each night before going to bed. In order to substantiate this assertion, he quoted a tradition reported by Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad* and his *Fada’il al-Sahabah* as follows:

Narrated from Abu Usamah, Hammad ibn Usamah, narrated from Hisham ibn Urwah, from his father who said, “a servant of Khadijah bint Khuwaylid informed me that he heard the Prophet (p.b.u.h) saying to Khadijah, “O Khadijah! By God I do not worship al-Lat! By God I do not worship al-Uzza”, and Khadijah replied, “Abstain from al-Lat and abstain from al-Uzza”. He said, “it was their idol which they used to worship after which they would retire to the bed.”<sup>34</sup>

With this, Margoliouth might have considered the saying “this was their idol which they used to worship after which they would retire to the bed” was with reference to the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his wife, Khadijah. If this assumption is considered to be true, then the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and Khadijah were idolaters since they used to make such a devotion. But a critical analysis reveals that the aforementioned *hadith* does not indicate that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his wife used to perform what Margoliouth asserted. Instead, the *hadith* shows that they uncompromisingly abhorred the worship of idols. When the Prophet (p.b.u.h) swore by God and confirmed that he worshiped neither al-Lat nor al-Uzza, it clearly shows his abhorrence and condemnation of idolatry. Also, the saying of Khadijah, “*khalli al-Lat, khalli al-Uzza*” which means “abstain from al-Lat and abstain from al-Uzza” clearly shows her confirmation of what the Prophet (p.b.u.h) had said.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the saying, “this was their idol which they used to worship after which they would retire to the bed” was uttered by Khadijah’s slave with reference to the Quraysh who were then worshipping those idols, not the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his wife, Khadijah.<sup>36</sup>

### ***His Third Evidence***

The third evidence which Margoliouth relied on is an assertion made by Julius Wellhausen in his book *Reste Arabischen Heidentums* that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) himself confessed to having at one time sacrificed a grey sheep to al-Uzza. However, after investigating the available sources, it has been found that Wellhausen, from whom Margoliouth picked up this idea, was probably referring to what was mentioned by Hisham al-Kalbi in his *Kitab al-Asnam*. The statement reads as: “We have been informed that one day the Messenger of Allah mentioned it (al-Uzza)

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Asakir, 3:172.

<sup>30</sup> Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (2002), *Lisan al-Mizan*, n.p: Dar al-Bashair al-Islamiyyah, pp. 8: 361.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Abd al-Ra’man ibn al-Jawzi (1997), *Talqih Fuhum Ahl al-Athar fi Uyun al-Tarikh wa al-Athar*, Beirut: Sharikat Dar al-Arqam ibn Abi al-Arqam, p. 30.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Hanbal, *Al-Musnad*, hadith no. 17947, and *Fadhail al-Sahabah*, hadith no. 1578.

<sup>35</sup> See the footnote of *Musnad* (2001), n. p: Mu’assasat al-Risalah, pp. 29:467.

<sup>36</sup> The phrase ‘*qala*’ in the Arabic text of the tradition indicates that the saying, “*this was their idol which they used to worship after which they would retire to the bed*” was uttered by Khadijah’s servant. Any person with deep understanding of Arabic language will arrive at this conclusion.

and said, "I have offered a white<sup>37</sup> sheep to al-Uzza, while I was a follower of the religion of my people".<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, it is assumed that another narration which Margoliouth and Wellhausen were proposing is a tradition in *Ibn Ishaq's Sirah* which reads as:

Ibn Ishaq says, "I was informed that the Messenger of Allah while talking about Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl said, "He was, indeed, the first (person) to criticize the idols and deterred or hindered me from them. When I was coming back from al-Ta'if with Zayd ibn Harithah I came across Zayd ibn Amr on the upper part of Mecca, (he went there) because the Quraysh had publicized him of rejecting their religion, so he left them for the hill. I, therefore, sat with him, and with me there was a container of *meat from our sacrifices to our idols* which Zayd ibn Harithah was carrying, and I then presented it to him..."<sup>39</sup>

According to Margoliouth, the tradition mentioned in *Kitab al-Ansab* justifies that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was idolater since he confessed to have sacrificed to al-Uzza. The second narration which was reported by Ibn Ishaq may also confirm the Prophet's confession of his sacrifice to idols. These traditions, therefore, indicate that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was idolater, and hence his Prophethood can be rejected on this ground. Margoliouth's reliance on this saying, despite his acknowledgment of *hadith* criticism, is unfortunate. Even the one with little knowledge of the science of *hadith* may judge it as only forged or fabricated. In the science of *hadith*, a tradition whose reporter omits the whole chain of narration and quotes the Prophet (p.b.u.h) directly is called '*muallaq*', the hanging. According to the scholars of *hadith*, this kind of *hadith* is not acceptable.

However, the above tradition which was reported by Hisham al-Kalbi is also such a tradition whose chain of narration is omitted completely. In fact, this reporter is the only source of this tradition, and whosoever records it, he takes it from him or from someone who took it from him. Further, even if Ibn al-Kalbi is considered as trustworthy, this particular narration cannot be accepted because it is a hanging tradition (*muallaq*). But there are many allegations against his trustworthiness. For example, al-Albani argued that Ibn al-Kalbi whose name is Hisham ibn Muhammad ibn al-Sa'ib is well-known and he, like his father, was accused of forgery.<sup>40</sup> Al-Dhahabi also argued that "Hisham ibn al-Kalbi is among the rejected narrators, and he is not trustworthy..."<sup>41</sup> Ultimately, since this tradition has no chain of narration, and it was only recorded by someone whose trustworthiness is questionable and even accused of forgery, it cannot, in any case, be accepted as evidence. Therefore, Margoliouth's reliance on this saying to claim that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) confessed to have sacrificed to idol is just like building a castle on air and cannot be accepted. However, the second narration is also treated as the previous one because it also lacks the chain of narration.

#### **His Fourth Evidence**

Margoliouth's fourth evidence is a story in which the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was said to have offered Zayd ibn Amr some meat of what was sacrificed to idols. He made reference to the following tradition which was reported by Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad*:

Narrated by Yazid, narrated by Al-Mas'udi, from Nufayl ibn Hisham ibn Sa'id ibn Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl, from his father, from his grandfather who related that the Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h) was in Mecca with Zayd ibn Harithah. Then Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl passed by them, so they invited him to (partake of) a table they had, and he replied, "O my nephew (my brother's son)! I do not eat what was sacrificed on or to '*nusub*'".<sup>42</sup> Then he said, "The Prophet (p.b.u.h) was never seen thereafter eating from what was sacrificed on or to '*nusub*'..."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Margoliouth preferred to translate the word *afra* (sheep) as grey but after searching some original Arabic dictionaries especially *Lisan al-Arab*, it has been found that the word *afra* especially when referred to a sheep means 'crystal white'. Hence, we prefer to translate it as white, and when referring to or analysing his view on this issue we use the word grey so as to maintain originality. For details see *Lisan al-Arab*, 4:583.

<sup>38</sup> Hisham al-Kalbi (2000), *Kitab al-Asnam*, Al-Qahirah: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, p.19.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn Ishaq, p.37.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Albani, M. N (1992), *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Oaifah wa al-Mawluhuah wa Atharuha al-Sayyi' fi al-Ummah*, Al-Riyal: Dar al-Ma'arif, 12:134.

<sup>41</sup> Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Dhahabi (1998), *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1:250.

<sup>42</sup> The word *nulub* was interpreted by some scholars as idols while others interpreted it as boulders or stones around the house (of Allah) on which animals were being slaughtered and dried. See Ibn Battal, *Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, quoted from Zamakhshari (n.d), Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, 21:113.

<sup>43</sup> Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, hadith no. 1248, Abu Nu'aym, *Ma'rifah al-Sahabah*, hadith no. 568.

According to Margoliouth, the above narration confirms that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) used to eat and give to others from the meat of what was sacrificed to idols and that he only discontinued this act when he was inspired by Amr ibn Zayd. Based on this, therefore, his Prophethood may be invalidated.

Thorough investigation discovers that there are many narrations on this issue. Some of them are weak while others are authentic. Even those which are said to be authentic cannot stand as evidence that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) ate from what was sacrificed to idols. They do not explicitly show that he sacrificed or ate from what was sacrificed to idols. Therefore, considering them as evidence is just a futile attempt.

However, in the above *hadith*, there is no explicit statement which indicates that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and Zayd invited Amr when they were eating from that meat. All that it shows is that “they invited him”. In other narrations, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was identified as the one who offered the meat to Amr “. . . then the Messenger of Allah presented to him a container in which there was meat. . .”;<sup>44</sup> but in another tradition which was reported by al-Bukhari the passive voice “*quddimat ila al-Nabiyyi...sufratun*” meaning “then a container was presented to the Prophet. . .” was used, which shows that, the Prophet himself received such a container from someone or some people who were unspecified. This might be the ground for Ibn Battal’s assertion that the container was given to the Prophet (p.b.u.h) by the Quraysh who refused to eat and then presented it to Amr who also rejected the offer. If the container was then given to the Prophet (p.b.u.h) by the Quraysh and he passed it to Amr then the Amr’s statement “I do not eat from what you sacrificed to your idols” was actually directed to the Quraysh, not to the Prophet (p.b.u.h).<sup>45</sup>

Thus, based on the foregoing discussion, it is now clear that the meat was presented to the Prophet (p.b.u.h) who also presented it to Amr but refused to eat. However, even if it is accepted, for the sake of argument, that the meat presented to Amr was from the Prophet’s bag, there is no indication that it was from what was sacrificed to idols, because the abstinence of Zayd was just due to his scepticism about whatever meat came from the Quraysh, and that is why he immediately rejected it for fear that it might be from what was sacrificed to idols,<sup>46</sup> not because he was sure that it was from that source.

Furthermore, another difficulty which will also not be left untended is the tradition which explicitly shows that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and Zayd ate from that bag ‘*sufrah*’. Even if it is assumed that the narration is authentic, it does not, in anyway, identify what exactly the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and Zayd were eating from that container. The tradition with all its ways states that, “*wa huma ya’kulani min sufratin lahuma*” meaning “they were eating from their bag”. What were they eating? The *hadith* does not specify. Set this aside, investigation reveals that this particular tradition is extremely weak and therefore, cannot stand as an unshakable reason. Shu’ayb al-Arna’ut, for example, traced this *hadith* to all those who reported it and concluded that it is weak because of the confusion ‘*ikhtilat*’ of al-Mas’udi on one hand and unreliability ‘*adam al-thiqah*’ of Nufayl ibn Hisham and his father on the other. None considered them reliable other than the writer (Ibn Hibban).<sup>47</sup>

Ultimately, upon the foregoing discussion, it is now clear that the traditions quoted by Margoliouth to support his assertion that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) made sacrifice and ate from what was sacrificed to idols were either weak or misused and manipulated to embody and imply notions which are outside their contents. Hence, the Muslim scholars’ argument that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) neither ate nor sacrificed to idols is still valid unless when the contrary is accurately proven.

## **Conclusion**

In the foregoing discussion, Margoliouth has been found claiming that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was idolater. His first evidence, as has been discussed, revolves on some names of the Prophet’s children which he did not clearly specify. Evaluation of this assertion has led to the conclusion that none among the names of the Prophet’s children implied idolatry. If he was referring to a tradition in which the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was said to have named some of his children

<sup>44</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, *hadith* no. 5499, Al-Tabarani, *Al-Mu’jam al-Kabir*, *hadith* no. 13169, Ahmad, *Musnad*, *hadith*, 5631, 5369, 5371, 5631, 6110, Al-Bazzar, *Musnad*, 6057, Al-Nasai, *Sunan*, 8133.

<sup>45</sup> Ali ibn Khalaf ibn Battal (2003), *Sharf Sahih al-Bukhari*, Al-Riyad: Makatabat al-Rushd, 5:408.

<sup>46</sup> For detailed discussion on why Zayd refused to eat from what was presented to him by the Prophet (p.b.u.h) see Mahmud ibn Ahmad al-Ayni (n.d), *Umdat al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, Beirut: Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al-Arabî, 21:113.

<sup>47</sup> Ali ibn Balban al-Farisi (1988), *Al-Ihsan fi Taqrib ibn Hibban*, Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risalah, 12: 47.

as Abd al-Uzza and Abd Manaf, a critical investigation has shown that this particular tradition is fabricated, and it is not possible that it came from the Prophet (p.b.u.h) especially because its narrator, Al-Haytham, was said to be a great liar. On that basis, Margoliouth's argument is unconditionally invalid.

His second evidence is a tradition which was recorded by Ahmad in his *Musnad* and *Fada'il al-Sahabah*. In the tradition, a servant of Aishah informed that he heard the Prophet (p.b.u.h) saying to Khadijah, "O Khadijah! By God I do not worship al-Lat! By God I do not worship al-Uzza", and Khadijah replies, "abstain from al-Lat and abstain from al-Uzza". And in the last part of this tradition, he said, "it was their idol which they used to worship after which they would retire to the bed". As has been pointed out, Margoliouth perhaps considered this saying to be with reference to the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his wife, Khadijah. However, an analysis has shown that the above phrase was uttered by Khadijah's slave with reference to the Quraysh who were then worshipping those idols, not to the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his wife, Khadijah.

His third evidence is a tradition in which the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was said to have confessed that he sacrificed a grey sheep to al-Uzza. However, evaluation of this assertion has revealed that this tradition has no chain of narration, and it was only recorded by someone whose trustworthiness was questionable and even accused of forgery, and therefore it cannot, in any way, be accepted as evidence. Margoliouth's reliance on it is not valid and cannot be accepted.

His fourth evidence is also a tradition in which the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was said to have offered Amr some meat of what was sacrificed to idols. However, in an attempt to evaluate this claim, some other related traditions have been brought to help in analyzing the one quoted by Margoliouth. The evaluation has finally led to the conclusion that the traditions giving an account on this issue are either weak or manipulated to embody and imply notions which are outside their contents. Ultimately, the views and evidence presented by Margoliouth to confirm that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was idolater are flawed and defective. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h), according to our investigation of his annals, has never been found to have performed or committed idolatory, neither before nor after his mission.

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