

DESCRIPTION OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS AND WORSHIP CEREMONIES IN THE WORKS OF ABU RAYHAN BERUNI

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Abstract:

As an encyclopedic scholar, Beruni wrote many works. In his works on the history of religions, he covered the emergence of Christianity, its councils (cathedrals), worship ceremonies, holy books, and conflicts between Christian movements. He also has thoughts about Saint Paul, who inherited the Christian traditions that emerged thousands of years ago. The article analyzes Beruni's views on Christianity.

Keywords: Abu Raykhan Beruni, Christianity, synod, worship, Bible, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Christian, history of religions.

Introduction

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, who laid the foundation for the study of the history of religions other than Islam in the Muslim world, was born Abu Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni al-Khwarizmi. Al-Biruni was born on the 3rd day of the month of Dhul-Hijjah in 362 AH (4 September 973 CE) in the city of Kat, the ancient capital of Khorezm. He died in Ghazni in December 443/1048 [13:180-190].

Al-Biruni worked in various fields of science. For example, astronomy, geography, history, mathematics, and geometry. In addition, Al-Biruni was one of the first Muslim scholars to lay the foundation for the study of religions other than Islam.

Although Al-Biruni did not have a separate book on Christianity, he provided sufficient information about this religion in his works. For example, in the works "Al-Asar al-baqiyya al-qurun al-holiya" (Monuments of the Ancient Peoples) and "Qanuni Mas'udi" he devoted separate chapters to Christianity and provided extensive information on this subject. In the work "At-Tafhim liawaili sinaat at-tanjim" (Basic Concepts of the Art of Astrology), only Christian rituals were included.

The word Christianity is derived from the Greek word "christos". "Christos" is a synonym for the Hebrew word "mesiah" and expresses the quality of "Messiah" (anointed) applied to Jesus. Therefore, the believers of this religion are called Christians and the name of the religion is Christianity.

According to al-Biruni, before the word Christian, the word "nasara" was used to refer to those who followed Jesus. The word "Nazarene" is a name used for the village of Nazareth, near

Jerusalem, where Jesus was born. Therefore, Jesus was called “a Nazarene” throughout his life [8:1577]. (See Matthew 26:71, Mark 1:24, 10:47, Luke 4:33, 18:37, John 1:45, 18:5).

The word “Nazarene” is also used in the sense of a Nazarene or a Nazarene. In this sense, a person or a community that follows Jesus is called a Christian. Al-Biruni explains this as follows: “He (Jesus) came into the world in a village called Nazareth near Jerusalem. People always addressed him as Jesus of Nazareth. Because of this connection, his people are known by the name of Christians” [3:179].

The word “Christian” or “Christian” is used in the Holy Quran to refer to Christians. “And they say, “None will enter Paradise except Jews and Christians.”...” [9:17]; “They say, “Be Jews or Christians, that you may be guided.”...” [9:8]; “And We took their covenant from those who said, “We are Christians.”...” [9:110]. According to al-Biruni, the word “Christian” referring to Christianity or Christians is a general term used for all those who followed Jesus...” [3:179]. The Greek word “christianos” (Christian) appears in three places in the New Testament (the Holy Book of today’s Christians). In the Acts of the Apostles, “The disciples were first called ‘Christians’ in Antioch” [8:1793], “Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You are almost persuading me to become a Christian’” [8:1823]. And, in the first epistle of Peter, “But if you suffer for being a Christian, do not be ashamed” [8:1981]. This shows that the term Christianity was not coined in the time of Jesus, but rather later by Saint Paul. In fact, the name Christian (Christian) was first given to those who followed Jesus by the local pagans in Antioch between 40 and 44 AD [8:1793] and began to be widely used after the 60s [5:3].

Thus, the term Christian came into widespread use by the second half of the first century AD. Thus, the terms Christian and Nazarene, while fundamentally different, represent different aspects of the same religion. According to the early Christian historian Epiphanius, the Jews later called the community that followed Jesus “Yeshuas” (followers), which means “Christians” [12:25]. Al-Biruni was also one of the first Muslim scholars to note that the meetings of high-ranking Christian clergy, where they made decisions, were called synods (i.e., councils or councils). He provides information about the time and place of these councils, which were called to resolve disputes between Christian sects and to determine the number of Holy Books [4:348]. “Its meaning (synod) is a meeting of priests, bishops, and other senior scholars on important matters related to newly emerging events” [1:294]. It can be said that the above description of Beruni is consistent with the general concept of Christian cathedrals.

Such councils numbered eight before Biruni. “Such meetings were held only at certain times. The times that had passed were recorded. Sometimes these meetings were held for the purpose of blessing Jesus and submitting to him” [1:294]. The councils before Biruni’s time are as follows: the Council of Nicaea (325), the First Council of Constantinople (381), the Council of Ephesus (431), the Council of Chalcedon (451), the Second Council of Constantinople (553), the Third Council of Constantinople (680), the Second Council of Nicaea (787), and the Fourth Council of Constantinople (869) [14].

Biruni also describes the ranks of the clergy in Christianity. He states that they number nine from the lowest to the highest, but that the first three ranks are in danger of disappearing. “The first of the great Christian priestly ranks is Tasulta, the second is Qaruna, the third is

Hiwufdiaqta (Hebukdeacon), the fourth is Shamma, the sixth is Qiss, the sixth is Usqf, the seventh is Mitron (Metropolitan), the eighth is Jasliq (Catholic) and the ninth is Batruk (Patriarch). I have found that the first three of them are little remembered by their people” [2:250]. To this day, the priestly ranks differ in each Christian sect. Biruni also studied the Gospels, the canonical Gospels of Christians. In his book “al-Asar al-Baqiyya an al-Qurun al-Kholiya”, he expresses his views on the New Testament part of the Holy Bible, the Four Canonical Gospels. Regarding the four Gospels, Al-Biruni says: “The Gospel is undoubtedly a manuscript in the eyes of Christians, consisting of four copies. The first belongs to Matthew, the second to Mark, the third to Luke, and the fourth to John. In fact, these four authors wrote the Gospel at the request of the people of their city. Each of them contains the qualities, the callings, and the prophetic deeds of Christ” [1:22]. According to Al-Biruni, the Gospel is a text that contains the messages of Jesus from his birth to his death. Muslims understand the Gospel in two ways. According to the first, the Gospel is a holy book described in the Quran, which was brought to Jesus by the angel Gabriel. The Quran contains several verses about the Gospel. In verse 46 of Surah Al-Ma'idah, it is said, "And We sent Jesus, son of Mary, in their footsteps, confirming the Torah that came before him, and We gave him the Gospel, confirming the Torah that came before him, with guidance and light, a guidance and an admonition for the righteous." [9:116] In addition, there are verses about the Gospel in Surahs Aal-e-Imran, Al-A'raf, At-Tawbah, Al-Fath and Al-Hadid of the Holy Quran. The second aspect is that, according to the views of Al-Biruni, the book consists of four Gospels. Combining these two views, it can be said that initially the Gospel was a holy book revealed to Jesus through Gabriel. However, over time, this book underwent major changes. The original was completely changed or completely lost. After that, the authors of today's canonical Gospels wrote Gospels that narrate the life of Jesus. As a religious scholar, Al-Biruni emphasizes the second view, namely that the New Testament is essentially a collection of four Gospels (because at that time there was no real Gospel, and there were almost no believers left).

Al-Biruni states that these four Gospels are collectively called the Gospel, and gives the following information about its formation and the authors of the Gospel: “It (the Gospel) was written by four people of different places and languages: Matthew in Hebrew in Palestine, Mark in Roman (Latin) in Rome (Anatolia), Luke in Greek in Alexandria, and John in Greek in Ephesus. Later, these four Gospels, which differ in terms of words and meanings, were combined in two covers, and all of them were called the Gospel by one name” [2:54].

Even today, when talking about the Gospel, Al-Biruni’s information is accepted. However, it is worth noting that today’s Christians include 23 more books in the New Testament in addition to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Following this information, we will study the views of Al-Biruni on the authors of the four Gospels, based on the sources.

The Gospel of Matthew (Matvey). The Holy Book of Christianity consists of the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament consists of four Gospels. “The first of them was written by Matthew, and it is called the Gospel of Matthew after his name. Matthew wrote this Gospel in

Palestine. The Gospel of Matthew was written in Hebrew, because it is known from the place where it was written that it was written in Hebrew” [2:252].

Although the oldest Bible in existence today is in Greek, some of the Gospels were written in Hebrew. Muhammad Abu Zahra, in his book “Mukhadarat fi an-nasraniya”, supports Al-Biruni’s view, saying, “The Gospel of Matthew was written in Hebrew in Jerusalem” [7:50]. Al-Hindi (1306/1889) also states in his Izhar al-Haqq: “The original copy of the Gospel of Matthew was written in Hebrew. But it has been lost. It is not clear when and by whom the current Greek translation was made.” [10:74]

Although al-Biruni states that the place of writing of the Gospel of Matthew is Palestine, there are also researchers who say that the Gospel of Matthew was written in Greece or Syria [11:178].

The Gospel of Mark. Al-Biruni states that Mark was the second author of the Gospel of Mark. However, the Turkish researcher Dr. Akram Sarikcioğlu states in his History of Religions from Genesis to the Present Day that “the Gospel of Mark was written before the Gospel of Matthew, and is the first Gospel” [6:313].

Al-Biruni states in his Qanun al-Mas'udi that the Gospel of Mark was written in Rome in the Roman (Latin) language [2:252]. However, Muhammad Abu Zahra states, “The Gospel of Mark was written in Greek. We have not witnessed any conflicting opinions among Christian scholars on this matter. Mark wrote the Gospel in Greek at the request of the Roman believers. However, there are opinions that it was written in Latin” [7:51].

To summarize these two ideas, during the time of Al-Biruni, the Greek language was divided into two dialects. The first, the dialect spoken in Palestine, was called Greek, and the second, the dialect spoken in Rome (Asia Minor or Anatolia), was called Roman.

The Gospel of Luke. Al-Biruni states that the third of the New Testament Gospels is the Gospel of Luke [1:22]. The third of today’s Canonical Gospels is also the Gospel of Luke. Luke wrote his Gospel in Alexandria. Saint Paul called him a physician. Al-Biruni states that Luke wrote his Gospel in Greek [2:252]. Even today, Christian scholars maintain that Luke’s Gospel was written in Greek [6:314]. However, there is some speculation that Luke’s Gospel was written in Latin.

The Gospel of John. The author of the last Gospel of the New Testament is John. Al-Biruni states that John wrote his Gospel in Ephesus [2:264]. Muhammad Abu Zahraesa states that John’s Gospel was written in Rome [7:51]. According to historical sources, when the Romans captured Jerusalem, John left Palestine and went to Ephesus. It was during this period that he wrote his Gospel [6:314]. It is generally accepted that John’s Gospel was written in Greek. Because its style of writing is, unlike the previous three Gospels, written in the style of Hellenistic philosophy [11:178]. The controversy about the Gospel of John is not about its language, but rather about its author. This is because there are two Johns in the New Testament. The first John was an apostle. He spoke in Hebrew. The second John lived two centuries after the apostle John and wrote a Gospel in Greek. To this day, many believe that the Gospel of John is attributed to the apostle John. This is a mistake [6:314].

In conclusion, it can be said that the works of Al-Biruni on the emergence of Christianity, its traditions, the ranks of the clergy and important councils are important. The activities of the priests who lead worship and rituals in Christianity are important. Al-Biruni provided extensive information on the historical and regional description of the emergence of Christian worship, the chronology of Christian rituals in his works “al-Asar al-Baqiyya an-qurun al-khaliya”, “Qanuni Mas’udi” and “At-Tafhim liawaili sinaat at-tanjim”. In addition, the language of the Holy Bible of Christianity, the regions where it was written, and the method of explaining the differences in the Gospels, which he covered in the above three works, are still widely used by the Christian world today.

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