# SIR WILLIAM MUIR'S DISCOURSE ON THE PROPHETHOOD OF MUḤAMMAD (PBUH): A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

BY

### **ALIYU KABIR**

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master in Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (Uṣūl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion)

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Prophethood of Muḥammad (PBUH) has been a controversial discourse in the history of Christian-Muslim relations. Sir William Muir (1819-1905) was among prominent Christian scholars who wrote extensively on this subject. The primary aim of this research is to examine and evaluate the issue as reflected in Muir's compendium *The Life of Muḥammad from Original Sources* (1923). By adopting descriptive, historical, analytical and comparative methods, the research exhibits the fact that polemics were the hallmark of many Christian attitudes to historical Islam from its early relationship with Islam until the modern era. Although there were some positive outlooks with regard to the Christian attitudes towards Islam in general and Prophet Muḥammad in particular in the modern era, the works of Muir, however, continue to echo remnants of early Christian apprehension towards the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) based on hatred and prejudice. Muir's three important discourses namely: revelation, character and polygamy of the Prophet, once scrutinised are proven to be totally and completely at loggerheads with the Islamic viewpoint.

# ملخص البحث

إن نبوة نبينا محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم ثار حولها جدل عنيف عبر تاريخ العلاقة بين المسيحيين والمسلمين. وقد اعتبر وليم موير (1819-1905) من طلائع هؤلاء الذين كتبوا عن الموضوع وحللوه بصورة مكثفة. تحدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف وتحليل ما عرضه وليم موير عن الموضوع من خلال كتابه القيم "The Life of Muḥammad from Original Sources (1923)" (حياة محمد من مصادرها الأصلية). وهذه الدراسة التي تبنت المنهج الوصفي، والتاريخي، والتحليلي والمقارن، توصلت إلى أن التعصب ذاته والعداء للأغيار المخالفين سمة بارزة لمواقف المسيحيين من الإسلام منذ بدايات علاقتهم بالإسلام حتى العصر الحديث. وعلى الرغم من وجود بعض التحولات في مواقف المسيحيين في العصر الحديث تحاه الإسلام بشكل عام، وتحاه نبوة محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم على وجه الخصوص، غير أن المتفحص لأعمال موير تحمله إلى قبول تسلط أفكار المسيحين التقليدية ومازالت متأخري الباحثين المسيحيين. فمن خلال تمحيص الباحث آراء موير وخاصة عند استعراضه لقضايا ثلاث وهي : الوحي، وسلوك محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم، وتعدد الزوجات، تحقق له أن مجمل أفكار موير وانطباعاته الذاتية تتعارض تماما مع وجهة النظر الإسلامية.

## APPROVAL PAGE

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|  | Head, Department of <i>Usul al-Din</i> and Comparative Religion |
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## **DECLARATION**

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#### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The discourse on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) has stepped into the limelight of Christian attention since the beginning of the encounter between Christianity and Islam. It is widely acknowledged that Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) has brought about massive transformations to the entire spectrum of life; religious, political, social, economic, intellectual and spiritual realms. Christianity, as a religion, preceded Islam for about 600 years, and its position as an established political power was threatened with the advent of this new religion. The arrival of Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) and the prominent role played by him as a Messenger of God and the leader of all mankind can no longer be undermined in the Christian's eyes.

Survey of the earliest Christian discourses on the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) demonstrated that polemics were the hallmark of many Christian attitudes to historical Islam. To the early Christian people, Islam was a new phenomenon – first political then religious that had to be explained and, moreover discredited in order for Christians to bolster confidence and justify their longstanding role in the religious scene. Prophet Muḥammad's (pbuh) significance, therefore, in the light of Christian's obsession for power and prominence, had to be portrayed in the most inimical image<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Jessica Ferrree, "The Approaches of Christian Polemicists against Islam", in: *Macalester Islam Journal*, vol 1, Issue 1, Article 5, spring 2006. http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/islam/vol1/iss1/5 <sup>2</sup> For example: A Greek Church Father John of Damascus (d. 749) in his magnum opus: The Fount of Knowledge, included a section on Islam in the second part: "On Heresies". Father John deliberated aspects of Islam under the category of Christian "heresy" and expounded the fact that the teachings of Islam are lack of originality and deviant from Christian orthodoxy. Muhammad (PBUH) he concluded must have been infected by the teaching of an Arian monk who allegedly tutored him in what John termed 'the deceptive superstition of the Ishmaelite. See: D. Dahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: The Heresy of the Ishmaelites* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972).

Even character assassination became upright as long as it was against Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh).

The spirit of early Christian polemic and defamation campaign against Islam and Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) continued and gained its supremacy with the medieval Christians. Groundless allegations against Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) were well formed, and became a "communal opinion" during the period, and their discourses on Islam were apparently detached from any authentic sources in Arabic language. Reeves pointed out that;

Medieval scholars and churchmen preferred to give the easy answer of what was Islam. That it was the work of one man, Muḥammad and that he was inspired by Satan. There was thus no need to answer awkward questions about religion, defame its founder and you could forget the rest.<sup>3</sup>

Similar echoes of hatred remained intact in the Western psyche and embedded in their literature until the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century, where a new paradigm in studying Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) began to take place.

The beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century marked a substantial shift in the Western discourse on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) as described previously. It was due to the extensive encounters between Muslims and Christians in the West and the East that contributed to the emergence of an objective study on Islam which is free from any theological affiliations. *Mohammed der Prophet* (1843) by Gustav Weil, *Chroniken der Stadt Mekka* (1861) by Wustenfeld, and *Das Leben Muḥammads nach den Quellen popular dargestellt* (1863) by Noldeke are among the list of texts that demonstrated these new paradigm shift. <sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Jabal Muhammad Buaben, *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West: A Study of Muir, Morgoliuth and Watt* (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1996), p. 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Minou Reeves, *Muhammad in Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), p. 1

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Christian scholars were numbered among those Western orientalists who have tried, with varying degrees of success, to liberate Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) from the cocoon of long standing polemical towards a more objective and careful analysis of him. Preeminent in this effort stands William Muir (1819-1905). His work *The Life of Muḥammad from Original Sources* published in 1923 represents an important work on Islam and Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh). The work as asserted by Muir, is primarily based on original Arabic and Islamic sources. This two volumes of work comprises, among others, the discussion on the history of Arabia, the youth of Muḥammad, Muḥammad's belief in his own inspiration, the early converts, the first migration to Abyssinia, the midnight journey to Jerusalem, Muḥammad's arrival at Medina, first hostilities with Quraysh, Divine command to fight, Muḥammad's marriage, religious institution and Muhammad's farewell pilgrimage.

Although Muir's deliberation is perceived by later Christian scholars as novel and a new insight into studying Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) in the Western scholarship, yet due to certain controversies, Muir's framework on the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh), requires further characterization. Hence, this research is to examine Muir's discourse on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) and to assess his framework within the parameters of authentic sources of Islam. The study will also examine whether remnants of medieval outlook on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) are still prevail in his work.

#### 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Muir deliberated on the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) in his magnum opus "The Life of Muḥammad from Original Source." Unlike the medieval and pre modern treatments

on Islam and Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) that evidently promulgated baseless allegations on the religion and its Prophet and aloof from its authentic references, Muir ventured into the new dimension of studying Muḥammad (pbuh) by looking at Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) within the framework of original sources of Islamic history written in Arabic.

However, Muir's appraisal on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) remained to be fully characterised due to several controversies addressed by him in many contexts. In terms of Muḥammad's Prophethood, Muir emphasised on a psychological interpretation of Muḥammad (pbuh) stating that the revelation received by the Prophet was not from outside himself but it was his subconscious which was at work. Muḥammad's character was also attacked by Muir, associating him with a figure of moral failure who faked revelations to justify evil acts, such as violence and aggression. The event of *Mi'raj* (heavenly ascension) experienced by the Prophet also been ridiculed by Muir who stated that it was a fanciful story. Moreover, the Prophet's practice of polygamy also showed his sexual obsession in Muir's viewpoint, overlooking various other reasons, pertaining such a practice.

As far as the Islamic point of view is concerned, those views are completely incompatible with Islamic teachings with regard to the Prophethood of Muḥammad (pbuh). Thus, understanding Muir's framework and evaluating them within an Islamic perspective are of paramount importance.

#### 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How did the Christian's apprehension on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) develop?

- 2. What is the position of Muir in the Christian scholarship and how he presented Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) in his work?
- 3. To what extent Muir's portrayal of Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) is contrary to the Islamic teachings?

#### 1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To investigate and analyse the developments of Christians' views on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh).
- 2. To highlight Muir's position in the Christian scholarship and analyse his views on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh).
- 3. To evaluate Muir's views on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) from the Islamic perspective.

#### 1.5 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

This research will be an evaluative and analytical study of William Muir's discourse on the Prophethood of Muḥammad (pbuh), based on his prominent work: *The Life of Muḥammad from Original Source*. Due to vast spectrums of Muir's account of the Prophet, the research will mainly focus on the analysis and evaluation of three selected important areas of his deliberations, namely revelation, attributes of the Prophet and the practice of polygamy.

#### 1.6 METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The research will be qualitative study in nature. It involves mainly textual analysis.

The main approaches, namely historical, and analytical will be widely used in this

research. The historical approach will be used in tracing the development of Christian views on of Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh). Analytical as well as comparative approach will be used to deliberate Muir's views on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) and evaluation of his views in Islamic viewpoint.

The research will be divided into three parts. The first part will emphasise on the historical development of Christian views on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh). The second part will be an analysis of Muir's views on the Prophet. In the third part, a critical evaluation of Muir's views on selected issues related to the subject of study will be carry out. Available literatures written by scholars, Muslims and Christians scholars will be widely consulted in order to ensure reliability and objectivity of the study.

#### 1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

The discourse on the Prophethood of Muḥammad (pbuh) is regarded as the most central theme in Muslim-Christian engagement. Vast numbers of studies have been conducted by Muslim and Christian scholars on this subject. However, evaluation of Muir's views on Prophethood of Muḥammad (pbuh) still remains unabridged.

Richard Bell's work *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment: The Gunning Lectures*<sup>5</sup> comprised seven lectures on Christian-Muslim's relationship. Bell remarked that the aim of those lectures is to present the origin of Islam against a background of surrounding Christianity. The discussion on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) became the central part of his lectures. Bell dedicated his three lectures (III,IV and V) out of seven lectures to focus on the position of the Prophet, from the beginning of the Prophet's activity, the moulding of the Prophet and the attitude of

<sup>5</sup> Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, (London, Frank, Cass & Company Ltd, 1968)

the Prophet towards Christianity . Bell criticized some of Muḥammad's attitudes towards Banī al-Nadhir, Banī Quraydha and Banī Qaynuqā'. He also discussed the Prophet's political and general attitudes towards unbelievers and Christians. Even though Muir's description on the Prophet remains absent in his discussion. The work will help the researcher in understanding the background of Christian's portrayal on Muḥammad.

Kenneth Cragg's work *Muḥammad and the Christian: A Question of Response*<sup>6</sup> examined the different aspects of Prophethood of Muḥammad, namely Muḥammad and *tasliyah* (divine salutation) Muḥammad and the *Qur'an* and Muḥammad and *qital* (war). The uniqueness, and to some extent controversial of Cragg's work laid in his attempt to reconcile the importance of Muḥammad (pbuh) in Islam with the very nature of the Christian faith. Although, the work did not provide any discussion on Muir's views on the Prophethood of Muḥammad, yet the discussion on the Prophet is helpful indeed in understanding the new outlook on the Prophet of Islam in modern era.

Norman Leo Geisler *et.al* in his book *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*<sup>7</sup> highlights the basic doctrines of Orthodox Islam, a Christian response to basic Muslim Beliefs, a positive defence of the Christian perspective, Muslim sects and movements, Muslim religious practices and others. The uniqueness of the work laid the author's effort on the evaluation of the Qur'an and Prophethood of Muḥammad (pbuh) from a Christian perspective, which will be valuable in understanding modern Christian trends in dealing with Islam.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Kenneth Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian : A Question of Response*. (Dauton,Longman and Todd 1984)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Norman L. Geisler, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*, (Michigan Baker Books House, 1993).

Islam and the West: The Making of An Image <sup>8</sup> written by Norman Daniel is another important literature in the field of Christian-Muslim engagement. Norman describes the formation of Western attitudes towards Islam by tracing the development of Christian-Muslim interactions from medieval times to the present. The author examines the religious and political considerations behind distorted Western views of Islam. He explored issues such as Revelation, Prophethood and incarnation, the life of Muḥammad (pbuh), the authenticity of the Qur'an as well as presented Western views on violence, morality and religious practices in Islam. The author's exploration offers a vital insight into the relationship between two of the world's greatest religions which lay the strong foundation for the research undertaken. Daniel's insight is helpful in tracing the development of Christian scholarship on Islam and Prophet Muḥammad throughout history, although his coverage on Muir was not thoroughly discussed.

The Truth about Muḥammad: Founder of the World's Intolerant Religion <sup>9</sup> written by Robert Spencer is another study on Prophethood of Muḥammad (pbuh). The author emphasises on the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) found in the works of early Muslim biographers such as Ibn Sa'd al-Baghdadi, Muḥammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari as well as the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. The work will assist us in discussing the contemporary Christian views on the authenticity of Prophethood of Muḥammad (pbuh).

In Muslim scholarship on Islam and Prophet Muḥammad in particular, extensive works have been published. *Islamic Concept of Prophethood*<sup>10</sup> authored by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Norman Daniel. *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image (USA: One world Publications, 1993)* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Robert Spencer, *The Truth about Muhammad: Founder of the World's Iintolerans Religion*, (USA: Regnery Publishing, 2007)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Islamic Concept of Prophethood*:(Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publication, 1995).

Sayyed Abu al-Hasan al-Nadwi is one of the most widely used literature, particularly by Muslim on the status of Prophet in Islam. The author deliberated various dimensions of Prophethood, beginning with highlights on the need of Prophethood for humanity and civilization and distinctive characteristics of the Prophets. Nadwi dedicated his specific deliberation on prophet Muḥammad in chapter V, VI, VII and VIII, which are valuable for our evaluation of Muir's views on Prophet Muḥammad in Islamic perspective. However, the orientation of the work is too monologue, and not presented in a way clarifying any Western allegations or misconceptions on the Prophet.

On the other hand, there are vast literatures available in Arabic language, which may help in providing relevant data in conducting this research. Al-Qādi 'Iyad in his book *Al-Shifā bi Ta'rīf Huqūq al-Musṭafa 11* discusses almost every aspects of the Prophethood of Muḥammad (pbuh). The author deliberates Prophet's qualities, life, miracles and the necessity to love him. This book will also be helpful in giving facts on the position of Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) from the Islamic viewpoint.

Jabal Muḥammad Buaben's *Image of the Prophet Muḥammad in the West* <sup>12</sup>, presents the general nature of Western scholarship on the life and achievements of Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh). He traces remnants of the negative portrayal of Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) in medieval polemical works to 20th century. The author discusses lots of issues that were found in the contemporary Christian writings with special reference to Muir, Margoliouth and Watt. However, Buaben's work is description on Muir, Margoliouth and Watt, without further evaluating their views base on Islamic perspectives.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Al-Qadi 'Iyad, *Al-Shifa bi Ta'rif Huquq al-Mustafa* (Granada, Madinah Press, 1991).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Jabal Muhammad Buaben .Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West: A Study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt, (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1996)

Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥiḥ Liman Baddala Din al-Masiḥ <sup>13</sup> by Ibn Taymiyyah is another important work which is also beneficial for this research, particularly in evaluating Muir's views from Islamic perspective. It is a comprehensive study in which the author not only refutes the Christians' allegations about Islam but also raises the contradictions of some Christian beliefs and even refutes their creedal principles. Originally the work is a theological response of Ibn Taymiyyah to a treatise entitled *Letter to a Muslim* from Cyprus written by Paul of Antioch which contains all excuses and pleas that Christian scholars use to defend their religion.

Mahmut Aydin in his book *Modern Western Christian Theological Understandings of Muslim since the Second Vatican Council*<sup>14</sup>examines the contemporary Christian perception of Islam and the Prophethood of Muḥammad. The author deliberates views of William Montgomery Watt, Kenneth Cragg, Hans Kung and David Keer regarding the Prophethood of Muḥammad. However, he did not highlight Muir's views on the Prophethood of Muḥammad as such.

To conclude, available literatures on the Prophethood of Muḥammad (pbuh) indicate the significance of the discourse in Christian-Muslim engagement. However, the deliberation on Muir and his views remained unabridged. This study, in fact, aims at further enriching the available literatures on Muir's apprehension on Muḥammad (pbuh), bridging the research lacuna on those areas in concern, as well as evaluating his thoughts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>IbnTaimiyyah, *al-Jawab al-Sahih Liman Baddala Din al-Masih*, (Saudi Arabia, Dar al-Asimah, 1999)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Mahmut Aydin , *Modern Western Christian Theological Understandings of Muslims Since the Second Vatican Council*, (USA: Council for research in values and philosophy, 2002)

#### 1.8 JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH

Muir's views on the Prophethood of Muḥammad (pbuh) remains controversial in the landscape of Islamic thought. After conducting a comprehensive literature review, the researcher concludes that none has made a critical examination and evaluation of the views promulgated by Muir pertaining to the Prophethood of Muḥammad based on Islamic point of view in the widest sense and in its truest meaning. The research envisages filling in the intellectual gap and contributing to increase new knowledge on Christian perceptions on the Prophethood of Muḥammad (pbuh) in the medieval and modern period. The study itself will expose Muslims to different paradigms of the understanding of Islam by 'others' and how those paradigms did influence Muslim-Christian relationships. The study undertaken will also become avenues towards building peaceful relationship between religions.

#### **CHAPTER TWO**

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANS' DISCOURSE ON THE PROPHETHOOD OF MUḤAMMAD (PBUH)

#### INTRODUCTION

It is inappropriate to grasp Muir's views on Muhammad (pbuh) by accentuating his ideas and thoughts and analysing them in detachment with all historical hallmarks of Christian's treatment of the Prophet (pbuh). The constant interplay of the past and the present is worthwhile and indeed necessary if we are to comprehend and make constructive evaluation of Christian scholarship on Islam in general and Prophet Muhammad in particular. Hence, this chapter attempts to present a survey on the development of Christian writings on Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) since medieval to the modern period. The medieval periods also known as Middle Ages, is the period roughly extending from the fall of the Western Empire in the 5th century to the Renaissance in the 16th century. Modern period, on the other hand is referred to the period endured from the 16th century up to the 18th century when the West underwent major political, cultural, economic, social and demographic changes. This chapter will be dedicated to examine the development of Christian apprehension on Muhammad (pbuh) through these two important periods, to identify factors underneath such a development, and finally to explore the extent of influence of the earlier apprehension on Muhammad to the latter. The understanding of the development, is indeed of paramount importance, as it will serve as an essential backdrop towards identification of the views and positions of Muir on Muhammad (pbuh) in greater details.

#### 2.1 MEDIEVAL CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES

The Prophethood of Muḥammad (pbuh) has attracted great interest among the medieval Christian scholars in their writings on Islam. Despite abundant literatures on the Prophet (pbuh) written by those scholars, and original sources of early Muslim scholars were easily accessible among them, yet positive portrayal of the Prophet remains hardly found. Information about the Prophet from Muslim sources used to be twisted, obliterated from any genuine history. They also put those historical facts aside and instilled their own legends and myths about Islam and the Prophet.<sup>1</sup> The prevalent discourse, accordingly portrayed Muḥammad in a negative way. The Prophet was denigrated, his figure was deformed, and he was given insolent names like Mahound. He was accused of being imposter, a Christian heretic, and an epileptic.<sup>2</sup>

David Burr considered the intention of bringing an end the influence of Islam as the main reason why the medieval Christians adopt such a negative portrayal and different attack against the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh).<sup>3</sup> Buaben identified that attitudes founded on the principles of extra *ecclesiam nulla salus* "there was no truth outside the church" led the Christians to deny any truth lay outside Christianity. The only thing outside Christianity was the devil (the Anti-God) and therefore Islam was the work of the devil and Muḥammad was inspired by him. With this line of thinking there was nothing about Islam to be accepted. To them, Muḥammad was a false prophet.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Minou Reeves, *Muhammad in Europe: A Thousand Years of Western Myth-Making* (New York: New York University Press, 2003) p. 80

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Muhammad Benaboud, "Orientalism on the Revelation of the Prophet: the Cases of W.Montgomery Watt, Maxime Rodinson, and Duncan Black MacDonald", in: The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, vol. 3, No.9, 1986, pp. 309-310

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> David Burr, "Antichrist and Islam in Medieval Franciscan Exegesis (New York: Garland publishing INC, 1996), p. 134.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Jabal Muhammad Buaben. op. cit. p 7

Gunny, on the other hand tried to link the medieval thinking on the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) with the circumstances of the Crusades. Islam and Muslim as the 'other' had to be painted as an enemy, to be dominated, whilst Christian is to be ensured maintaining its supremacy. As a result Muḥammad according to Gunny was mainly created as an "imposter" a "charlatan" who "imposed his religion with sword" and a "sexual pervert".<sup>5</sup>

A survey on the historical development of medieval Christian writings on Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) demonstrates that the earliest figure who started a campaign of defamation against Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) was the Greek Church father John of Damascus (d.749). In his major theological compendium, *The Fount of Knowledge*, John included a section on Islam in the second part of his work, *De Haeresibus* "On Heresies", in the sense of its teachings not only being derivative but deviant from Christian orthodoxy. John alleged Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) as a person who came across the Old and New Testaments by chance, and with the help of Arian monk, constructed a heresy of his own. John finally concluded Muḥammad (pbuh) as a fake Prophet, who deceived people around him using Christian treatises. He described the Prophet as the "fore-runner of the Antichrist", and Islam carried by him was a "deceptive superstition of the Ishmaelites".6

Again, in the ninth century, during the time of al-Ma'mun (786-833) similar prototype of Christian appraisal of Muḥammad emerged, embodied in the correspondence between 'Abd Allāh al-Hāshimī and al-Kindī a Nestorian Christian of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Gunny, A. *The Prophet Mohammed in French and English Literature, 1650 to the present*, (United Kingdom: The Islamic Foundation 2010), p. 26

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> See: Danial J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: "The Heresy of the Ishmaelites"* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972)