

WESTERN SCHOLARSHIP ON THE SEERAH OF THE PROPHET (SAW): A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS



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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
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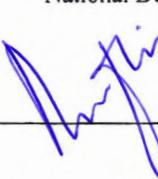
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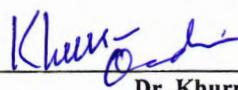
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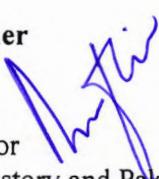
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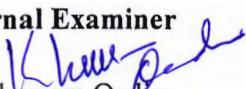
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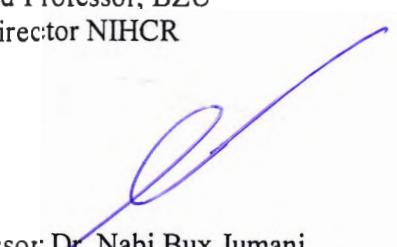
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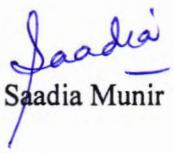
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GLOSSARY

Apocryphal Gospel	Writings by the early Christians about Jesus
Budhist	Nontheistic religion based on the teachings of Budha
Crusades	Wars between Christians and the Muslim world 1096-1291
Gospels	An account describing the life, death and resurrection of Jesus
Occident	British, French and Americans
Okaz	Largest open market in Hijaz in pre-Islamic days
Surah	A chapter from the Holy Quran
Zorastrian	Ancient Iranian religion based on the teaching of Zoraster

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my individual research and that it has not been submitted concurrently for any other degree.



Saadia
Saadia Munir

TO

MY HUSBAND AND CHILDREN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, Alhamdulilah, all praise and thanks to Allah Almighty- the most beneficent and the most Merciful, for the strength that kept me standing and for the hope that kept me strong to complete my work on this topic.

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Finally, I owe my heart felt gratitude to my parents who inspired, encouraged and fully supported me in every trial that came my way.

At the end I would like to express appreciation to my husband and children whose encouragement remained with me during the entire span of work and who were always my support in the moments when there was no one to answer my queries.

Saadia Munir

ABSTRACT

Western scholarship on the Seerah of the Prophet (SAW) has its roots deeply embedded in trends and circumstances of time. Originating from the first encounter of Christianity with Islam, a perception developed by the initial Christians was reinforced overtime. With the military conquests of Islam the Christians embarked upon the task of protecting Christianity and humiliating Islam. The two facet strategy resulted in writings on Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) with the objective to defame him and malign his personality. Orientalism thus developed came to focus on Islam only. However all possible care and attention was given to the scrutiny of the sources used criticizing them [the sources] thoroughly to finally separate the historical Jesus from the Christ of faith. Historical scholarship as developed by the west was rigorously followed in deciphering the events of the life of Jesus.

Nineteenth century saw the rise of Imperialism, making British the leaders of the world. They focused on propagating Christian views and the natives of the colonized areas were encouraged to accept Christianity. Orientalism and Imperialism started their work hand in hand to degrade the personality of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) by writing extensively on Seerah ignoring the Muslim sources.

The selected writers present the nineteenth century paradigm of the western writers in general and British in particular. The style of writing, the choice of similar events to be highlighted and same line of argument throughout the studies points to the continuity of thought process from the medieval times. The objectives of writings emphasize the broader perspective of political and economic advantages on one hand and a sub conscious desire to damage the reputation of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) on the other. This was done ignoring the western scholarly criteria of objectivity, contemporarity and historicity. This also indicates certain well-defined imperialist objectives in the backdrop of orientalism.

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INTRODUCTION

An event is not an isolated instance in time and space which could be comprehended solely ignoring the preceding circumstances and the political, economic, religious factors working together to give a particular shape to the event as it appears on the scene. Thus while historically analysing any event, all the factors that led to the development of that particular event have to be acknowledged and the interplay, dependencies and relation between different variables have to be taken into consideration in order to get a broader perspective of the said event. Same is the case with the historical writings on the Seerah of the Prophet (SAW)¹ during the nineteenth century.

To understand the reasons that resulted in arousing the interest of the Western (in this case British) writers to write on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), one has to take the variety of factors into account. Furthermore the objectives aimed and gained through such writings, the style of writing, the choice of certain events to be emphasized and the similarity of this choice among different western (British) writers need probing. The selection of certain sources over others, reasons for neglecting the Muslim sources and the conclusions derived from the work show similarity of thought and refer to a broader political, economic and religious perspective which again is a question to be addressed.

¹ SAW, Sal lal la hu alaihe wassalum (peace be upon Him)

Statement of the Problem

Western interest in the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) dates back to the initial encounter of Christianity with Islam. Western authors, travellers, politicians, bureaucrats and scholars produced reading material on Islam over the centuries to elevate Christianity which they feared was getting dormant with the spread of Islam. Their focus on Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) therefore represented their conscious desire to promote Christianity and unparalleled eminence of Jesus Christ. Looking at the question methodologically, the western scholarship laid more than enough emphasis on originality, contemporaneity and objectivity in the study of Jesus Christ but they rarely used this yardstick in their work on the Prophet of Islam (SAW). Different schools of thought developed about the personality of Jesus over time and efforts were made to separate the Jesus of History from the Christ of faith², sources were identified and re-identified to find truth about Jesus Christ. No such elaborate research was conducted on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) by the western writers, rather each new generation of writers followed the old ones; writers have traced the ideas used in nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the study of Seerah to those used in medieval times³.

Quite often, no endeavour was made to probe the Muslim sources readily available to most western writers. It seems that a self-created image of the Prophet of Islam was generated and propagated to denounce and malign Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW). For that matter

² James Peter, *Finding Historical Jesus: A statement of the Principles Involved* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965)

³ Jabal Muhammad Baaben, *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West: A Study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt* (British: The Islamic Foundation. Cornwell Press LTD. 1996)

certain events were chosen from the Seerah of the Prophet (SAW) and quoted out of reference, sometimes events and facts were moulded in a manner that befit their understanding and purpose. A historiographical probe hints at the effort by a group of western in general and British writers in particular to lower the image of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) by passing value judgements. They took Islam as a religion “founded” by the Prophet indicating at their disbelief at the divine nature of Islam again referring to the Christian belief that truth lies within the premises of Christianity only and anything lying beyond these limits lack credibility.

All this when seen from a broader perspective involves two major thought processes of nineteenth century, Orientalism, as developed through centuries and its impact on the nineteenth century writers and Imperialism as the major trend of the nineteenth century and its relevance and impact on writings in general and the writings on Seerah in particular.

The polemic writings of this particular group of Western/British writers were guided by some or the other needs of the time. A sense of racial arrogance and religious superiority made them to ridicule Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW) in several ways. However, the criterion of objectivity in western scholarship as applied to the writings of Jesus Christ was never applied to the life of the Prophet of Islam (SAW).

Line of Argument

The origination of western scholarship on the Seerah of the Prophet (SAW) can be traced to the changing scenarios and developments over time. Initially the Christians developed a perception about Islam after their early encounter with it. The Christians felt a need of protecting Christianity and degrading Islam after the military conquests of Islam in the 10th century. A strategy was formed to defame and malign the personality of the Prophet of Islam

(SAW) by producing writings on him. With the passage of time Orientalism came to revolve around Islam only. The western scholars while writing on Jesus took every possible care in the examination of sources, critically analysing them to ultimately separate the historical Jesus from the Christ of faith.

Imperialism emerged as the leading thought of the nineteenth century and British as the leading nation, colonizing a large part of the world. Their belief of racial superiority based on Christianity as borrowed from the Jews forced them to favour the missionary activities and the natives were urged to accept Christianity. Orientalism and Imperialism joined efforts to damage the personality of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), by producing extensive writings on him.

The present work focuses on the works of two British writers⁴ on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) providing a historiographical analysis of both books examining the objectives of writing on Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), the sources used by both writers and the evaluation of the facts and their interpretations. The two writers have been selected for the present work represents the nineteenth century world view of the western writers especially the British. The similar approach adopted by both writers in the style of writing, choice of events and the same research questions refers to the continuity of medieval thought in their writings. The aims of their research as maintained by both writers in the preface of their work highlight the imperial economic motives on one hand and a religious fervour to degrade the stature of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) on the other. The criteria of western historical scholarship were totally ignored. This refers to distinct imperialist motives in the background of Orientalism.

⁴ P. De Lacy Johnstone, *Muhammad and His Power* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901), J. W. H. Stobart, *Islam and its Founder* (New York: Pott. Young & Co., 1876)

The study likewise involves the development of the Christian understanding of the life of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) over the centuries along with the reasons of the particular direction this development has taken. It also examines the methodology of writing on Jesus Christ by the Christians. Finally the study traces the linkage of the Seerah writings to the concepts of Orientalism and Imperialism as prevalent in the nineteenth century.

The justification of choice of these two writers lies in the impact of their writings on their readership. Stobart remained as the principal of the L.A. Martiniere College, Lucknow. His position emphasizes the influence he must have had on the staff and students of the college. His book was published in 1876, after the publication of Muir's extensive works and greatly depended on it for information along with other western sources. One can assume the impact of power he held in his hands on those who were the subjects. This is also reinforced by his aspiration declared in the preface of his work of making his work a popular elucidation on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW).

Johnstone's work was also a continuation of the series originated by the nineteenth century writers. His work was included among the best after Muir by Arthur Jeffrey⁵. He was considered among the pioneers of criticism on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) and oriental studies in nineteenth century⁶. Instead of providing extensive details and using difficult words /terms, he confined himself to the narration of events in the form of a story, remarking here and there leading the reader to the conclusions he intended thus making his work a popular exposition on the subject.

No attempt has been made to analyse the works of these two influential writers. The present work thus aims at filling the gap of a comprehensive study involving not only a

⁵ Arthur Jeffrey, "The Quest of the Historical Muhammad" in *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad* edited and translated by Ibne Warraq (New York: Prometheus Books, 2000), 345.

⁶ Ibid.

biographical analysis of the selected works, a brief discussion on the methodology followed by the Christians to write on Jesus Christ but also the impact of imperialism and orientalism on these writings.

Review of Literature

Although Seerah of the Prophet of Islam remained an enthralling topic for the Non-Muslim Western/British writers and they produced bulk of material on the life and personality of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), but very little information is available on the historiography of these western writers generally and nothing is written on the two selected writers and their works. No attempt has been made to place these works in their historical setting and trace the impact of political, religious and economic conditions along with the historical development of the mind make up behind these writings. Yet various works are available dealing with different aspects of western writings separately, focussing on one aspect at a time.

Among them, Aslam Syed⁷ in his book *Muslim Response to West: Muslim Historiography in India 1857-1914* traced the British writings to be based on their intentions to convince the majority of Indians that their dominance was benevolent and in that manner minimize the potential threat to their raj. Moreover they portrayed their victory over the Muslims as a triumph of Christianity over Islam. The British writers presented Muslim history as a series of concurrent plundering, killings and forcible conversions, while took their own victory as a

⁷ Aslam Syed, *Muslim Response to the West: Muslim Historiography in India 1857-1914* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1988)

scheme of Divine providence. Aslam Syed is of the view that British historical writings on Muslim rule in India can be traced to the major intellectual movements in Britain as well as to the underlying assumptions of the individual writers. He quoted many British historians who had almost the same ideas and a deep rooted bias against Islam. Yet his focus is on late nineteenth century and early twentieth century's political aspect only.

Muhammad Shafique Bhatti⁸ in his article "Historiography and Identity: A Mid-Nineteenth century Colonial Perspective for Modern South Asia" dwelt on questions including, whether the British Historiography was an imperially motivated and politics centred exercise to build an Indian identity neglecting the socio-cultural identity. He believed that British administrative intellectual understanding of South Asian identities were reflected in the British historiography. He talked about the nature of British rule with the intention of creating a rationale for making the British rule permanent. Again the main field of interest lies in political perspective and its relation with imperialism.

Muhammad Shafique Bhatti⁹ in his Ph. D thesis "British Historiography of Muslim India 1800-1857" traced the trends of British historiography and analysed how the different schools of thought prevalent at that time affected the writings of British historiographers. For that matter he chose certain representative writers and discussed the style of their writings in detail. He concluded that the aim of the British historiography was to strengthen the British rule in India. But his focus was on the European and British intellectual tradition and its response to the Indian situation and, as such the study does not deal with the Seerah of the Prophet (SAW).

⁸ Muhammad Shafique Bhatti, "Historiography and Identity: A Mid-Nineteenth Century Perspective for Modern South Asia" in *Pakistan Vision*. Vol. 9 No. 1 June 2008.

⁹ Muhammad Shafique, "British Historiography of Muslim India 1800-1857" (Ph. D Thesis. Department of History, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan. 2005)

Jabal Muhammad Buaben's¹⁰ *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West: A study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt* focussed on the biographical analysis of the selected books on Seerah and traced the thought processes to the medieval times. It provides valuable information on the development of the western image of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) over centuries but lacks the political and economic aspects of these writings.

Zafar Ali Qureshi¹¹ in his book *Prophet Muhammad and His Western Critics: A Critique of W. Montgomery Watt and Others* has by and large concentrated on W. Montgomery Watt and briefly touched the other writers. Yet it provided an extensive preface and introduction dealing with the approach of western writers towards the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW). (The selected writers of the present study are not mentioned by Zafar Ali Qureshi.)

Maulana Muhammad Hanif Yazdani¹² in his Urdu book *Muhammad Rasul-Ullah: Ghair Muslimon ki Nazar main*, while discussing different aspects of the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) included the views of many non-Muslims for example, Stanley Lane Poole, Barsor Smith, Bernard Shaw, Sarojini Naidu, Edward Gibbon and many more but from a favourable perspective only. He has not criticized their writings instead his focus was to provide evidence and appreciation from these writers without focussing on any one of them.

Professor Sharif Baqa¹³ in his Urdu book *Rasul-e-Akram Maghrabi Ahle Danish ki Nazar Main* have worked on fifty five different non-Muslim writers on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) and given a brief overview of their works. No detailed discussion or analysis is

¹⁰ Jabal Muhammad Buaben, *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West: A Study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt*. (Britian: The Islamic Foundation, Cornwell Press LTD. 1996)

¹¹ Zafar Ali Qureshi, *Prophet Muhammad and His Western Critics: A Critique of W. Montgomery Watt and Others* (Lahore: Idara Maarif Islami, 1992)

¹² Muhammad Hanif Yazdani, *Muhammad Rasul Ullah : Ghair Muslimon ki Nazar Main* (Lahore: Subhan Publications, 2011)

¹³ Sharif Baqa, *Rasul-e-Akram Maghrabi Ahle Danish ki Nazar Main* (Lahore: Maktaba Tameer-e-Insaniat, 1995)

conducted; moreover, the list of selected writers does not mention the two important writers, the major focus of the present study.

Mustafa k. Khattak's¹⁴ book *Islam, The Holy Prophet and The Non-Muslim World* tried to find the positive aspects of the apparently hostile writers in their writings on Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW). He selected twenty three western writers who have written the biographies of Muhammad (SAW) and only focussed on one aspect completely ignoring the other side which dominated their writings. The entire work consisted of quotations taken from the selected works proving his point. The work provides merely information lacking any discussion on the methodology of writing or the motives behind such writings.

Kh. Jamil Ahmad¹⁵, in his book *Mohammad in Non-Muslim's Eyes*, also searched the admiration done by the non-Muslim writers about the Prophet of Islam over centuries with an intention of persuading the westernized Muslims and non-Muslims both of the magnificence of the Prophet of Islam (SAW). He selected topics and added the related statements of different non-Muslim writers to support his argument. The book lacks any analysis of the selected writers and their respective works.

Ziauddin Sardar's¹⁶ *Orientalism* provides the basis of orientalism in a very interesting way, its detailed history starting from the very conception of the term, its evolution, different forms it acquired over time along with its relation with imperialism. He develops this thesis in his study that Orientalism and imperialism seem to reinforce each other. People with the imperial minds found full support from orientalists who wrote extensively to further the imperialist ideas. But the book focuses on the concept of Orientalism only.

¹⁴ Mustafa K. Khattak, *Islam, The Holy Prophet and The Non-Muslim World* (Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy, 1976)

¹⁵ Kh. Jamil Ahmad, *Mohammad in non-Muslim Eyes* (Lahore: feroz sons LTD, 1978)

¹⁶ Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism* (New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited,2002)

In nut-shell the above mentioned books either focus on one aspect or the other but none presented a comprehensive study involving a detailed biographical analysis of the selected works along with the impact of forces like orientalism and imperialism on history writing which is the aim of the present study.

Scope and Significance

The time frame of the study basically involves nineteenth century as the both selected works represents the cognitive development of the nineteenth century, focussing on political and economic condition and its impact on history writing. In addition the work also provides the historical development of the style of writing on Jesus and the emergence of different schools of thought on the historical writings of the life and work of Jesus Christ. The spatial scope of the study is also quite vast including Britain as both writers were British, India as both remained in India for some time, as well as the west in general as the intellectual development influenced the British thought.

The selected works on Seerah lack originality, are unhistorical and fiction oriented in the absence of evidence but also demolish the image of Islam in general and that of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) in particular. The hallmark of it remains that it is not satisfying the modern western historiographical scholarship with a dominating stress on originality and contemporarity. Hence its historiographical review is essential. It is one of the least researched areas and therefore it remains neglected. The present study intends to fill this gap in knowledge.

Aims and Objectives

The present study intends to explain the reasons behind the polemic writings by a group of writers within the ruling British class (the imperialists) during the time of their stay in India, the methodology adopted by the western writers in writing on Jesus Christ and on the Prophet of Islam (SAW). The reason for this difference is traced not only to their imperialist minds, but also to the concept of Orientalism as prevalent at that time. No such study is available which encompasses all three, i.e., political, economic and religious factors behind western writings along with analyses of the subject material. This work will provide an opportunity to analyse historiographically the two selected works namely P. Dc Lacy Johnstone's *Muhammad and His Power* and J. W. H. Stobart's *Islam and its Founder* from both internal and external dimensions. The study aims at reviewing the above accounts of the western/British scholars in the light of the Islamic primary source material such as Holy Quran, Hadith and accredited historical accounts of Muslim writers. It will help in better understanding of, western/British scholarship as developed by a particular group in the backdrop of their criticism of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) on the one hand and enlighten the Muslim scholars and the Muslims at large on the personality of the Prophet of Islam (SAW).

Methodology and Sources

A historical descriptive-analytical approach has been used for the present study. The study relies largely on published sources for gathering historical information and data available

in IIUI Library, Islamic Research Institute Library, Dr. Razi-ud-Din Sidique Memorial Library in QAU. National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research (NIHCR), National Library and Seminar Library Department of History QAU Islamabad, Christian Study Centre Rawalpindi, Personal library of Mr. Muhammad Ashraf Cheena and a lot of other sources.

Organization

The study has been divided into four chapters apart from introduction and conclusion. Chapter one discusses the methodology of writing on Jesus Christ and the development of western views about Islam. Second chapter deals with two selected works and analyses the objectives as they were declared in the preface of their respective works and sources utilized during the course of their research. Chapter three involves a detailed discussion and criticism of certain selected events/themes from the two respective works. Chapter four focuses on explaining the approach the two authors adopted. This is done with reference to the thoughts prevailing in the nineteenth century namely Orientalism and Imperialism , focussing on their inter relation and their impact on history writing by the British writers in general and on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) in particular. Conclusion relates the arguments of the whole thesis together to sum up the discussion and to derive final finding.

Chapter 1

An Over view of the Methodology in writing On Jesus Christ

The present chapter basically deals with the methodology of writing on Jesus Christ as developed by the Christian writers after the disappearance of Jesus from the world scene. The chapter is further divided into three parts. First, providing a background of Islam's encounter with Christianity starting from the time of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), the immediate reaction of the Christians in general, the beginning of their hostility towards Muslims, Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW) and finally the initiation of their literary struggle against Islam in the form of their writings, biographies etc. The second part discusses in detail the development of the Christian views about Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW), focusing on the reasons that aroused a particular approach and also including the response of the later Christian writers about their methodology and style of writing. The third part involves a detailed discussion of the methodology of the Christian writers on Jesus, starting from their beliefs about such writings, the issues involved in finding truth about him, different schools of thought as developed and discarded in their search for truth. The chapter narrates the evolution of Christian approach towards Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW) along with their approach in writing on their own Prophet. The purpose is to highlight the difference between the two and to provide a framework for the discussion in the oncoming chapters.

Background:

The emergence of Islam caused great socio political and economic changes in the world affecting the authority of the Christians and the Jews, who claimed to be the sole bearers of religion before the advent of Islam. Islam's encounter with Christianity started very early in the days of the Prophet (SAW) as Christians were living in vicinity of Madina. The Prophet of Islam had quite friendly relations with the Christians living in peninsula (people of Najran) and in Abyssinia¹⁷. According to Sweetman the "streams of thought in Islam and Christianity have been geographically dispersed"¹⁸ and for a long period of time they had no connection whatsoever with each other. Then came the period of Muslim-Christian encounter in Asia and Africa, which resulted in the success of Muslims militarily. It also led to almost complete elimination of Christianity from these areas. The hostility between the two started after the conquest of Spain where Muslims initially failed to completely eliminate Christianity and thus the Christian counter attack began. This led to the eviction of Islam from these regions. From here the main front of Christian animosity with Islam began. With the rise of Muslim political rule and regular conquests¹⁹, the Christians felt a danger to not only their political power²⁰ but to the religious authority also. Some Christian scholars, fully aware of the lack of authenticity of their religious

¹⁷ Ibne Saad, *Tabaqat-e-Ibne Saad*, vol.2 (Karachi:Nafees Academy,1944), 133-135, 303.

¹⁸ J.Windrow Sweetman, *Islam and the Christian Theology: A study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions*, Part Two (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), 1.

¹⁹ Yahiya Emerick, "Muhammad in Western Literature" Appendix to *The Life and Work of Muhammad*, (Alpha: Penguin group, USA, Inc, 2002), 299.

²⁰ J.Windrow Sweetman, *Islam and the Christian Theology: A study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions*, Part Two (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), 1-5.

books²¹ and recognizing the strong authentic arguments given in the Holy Quran, felt the need to defend Christianity and point out the weaknesses of Islam in order to negate its teachings and its Prophet (SAW).

Later writings inspired by the encounter of European Christianity with Islam also followed the lead of their predecessors. The development of Islam as a religion and a philosophical system having its own paradigm posed a serious threat to the western/Christian philosophers/thinkers/religious scholars. The increasing military power and the expansion of Muslim rule caused waves of fear among the rulers of the Christian / western powers also²². The threat was felt at three levels. First, the religious class of Europe felt threatened because of the authenticity and logical base of the new religion and because they were aware of its divine nature, immediately after the establishment of a state in Madina²³. They anticipated that it might lead to the decline of their power and control. Secondly the rulers, as discussed earlier, were uncomfortable if not threatened at the beginning, from the successful military adventures of the Muslims²⁴. Thirdly, this impact was shifted to the level of common people, whose cultural identity and style of living were the target areas besides religion²⁵. The perceived impacts were countered at different levels too. A group of Christian philosophers, writers, authors started writing about Islam and the prophet of Islam, with the basic purpose of educating / informing

²¹ James Peter, *Finding Historical Jesus: A statement of the Principles Involved* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 20-40.

²² Zafar Ali Qureshi, Introduction to *Prophet Muhammad and His Western Critics: A critique of W. Montgomery Watt and Others*, Vol. 1 (Lahore: Idara Maarif Islami, 1992), 2. Jabal Muhammad Buaben, Forward to *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West: A study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt* (Great Britain: Cromwell Press Ltd), xiii.

²³ Muhammad bin Saad, *Tabaqat-I-Ibne Saad Akhbar-un-Nabi* (Karachi: Nafees Academy, 1944), 160, 184, 229, 236, 240, 242, 246-260. Ziauddin Sardar, *Concepts in the Social Sciences: Orientalism* (New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited, 2002), 17.

²⁴ W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam and Christianity Today: A Contribution to Dialouge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul plc), 3.

²⁵ Ibid., 4.

their own people. This was done to shift their own concerns to the common people, an attempt to elevate Christianity and as a counter strategy against the impact of Islam.

There were two types of responses owing to the gradual increase in hatred of the Christians towards Muslims because of the political encounter and military conquests. One, of the group of Christians who considered Islam as a source of modernity and to become close to the ruling Muslim class, they learned Arabic and other Islamic subjects. The others, who also learned Arabic but the purpose was to find the reasons and causes of Muslim power and because of hatred and anger they felt against Muslims and the Prophet of Islam (SAW). The latter group considered anything outside Christianity to be evil. Their goals improved and changed with the passage of time but the hatred and opposition remained as a hallmark of their activities.

Another major concern was the increasing popularity of the Prophet of Islam (SAW). This particular group of Christians feared that this would reduce the stature of Jesus, therefore they intentionally or unintentionally decided to ridicule or humiliate the prophet of Islam (SAW), so to reduce his popularity, malign his character and to stop people from converting by creating doubts and confusions in people's minds²⁶ or, as Watt put it

“In deadly fear Christendom had to bolster confidence by placing the enemy in the most unfavorable light”²⁷.

In order to do the intended work, the Christian authors wrote extensively on the Prophet of Islam (SAW). Interestingly, while writing on Jesus, they took into consideration the yardsticks of historiography but when compared with the biographies written on the life of the Prophet of

²⁶ Jabal Bauben, Forward to *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West A study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt* (Great Britain: Cromwell Press Ltd, 1996), xiv.

²⁷ W. Montgomery Watt, *What is Islam?* (London: Longman, 1979), 1-2.

Islam (SAW), a drastic difference of approach and methodology is apparent. The standards used while deciphering the life history of Jesus Christ and the process of picking facts out of an enormous mass of knowledge available also varies.

The historical method developed by the west consisted of four major aspects. The most prominent feature was the critical examination of sources. John Tosh²⁸ explained the methodology of selecting the sources out of a large quantity of primary sources and criticizing them internally and externally to testify their authenticity (as given by Ranke²⁹). External criticism involves tracing the authorship of the sources, comparing the content of the sources with other already established facts and analyzing the form of the document, style of writing and language. Internal criticism refers to the understanding the substance of the document. It is necessary that the historian should have linguistic fluency and an expertise on the historical context to decipher the text. Reliability of the sources again involves criticizing the intentions of the historian for any biases and prejudices. Biases also refer to some significant historical fact therefore it is obligatory to detect them.

Historicity is the second important aspect of historical scholarship. Richard J Evans³⁰ in his book quoted Ranke saying that to analyze the past, it's essential to look at it from the eyes of past. The events of the past cannot be deciphered by the canons of the present. To Collingwood, history is the "re-enactment of past thought in the historians own mind"³¹. The historian has to comprehend the past in the way the people of the past understood it. Thus it's essential to gather

²⁸ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (Edinburgh: Longman, 1991), 48-62.

²⁹ Leopold Von Ranke (1795-1886), a German historian who for the first time set the standards of history writing in the nineteenth century and introduced critical examination of sources. He is known as the inventor of Modern history.

³⁰ Richard J Evans, *In Defence Of History*, (Granta Books: London, 1997)

³¹ Mark T. Gilderhus, *History and Historians: A Historiographical Introduction* (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2003), 79.

as much knowledge as possible, not only of the event/fact and its actors but also the historian must comprehend the social and cultural environment at the time an event occurred. He has to understand the prominent thoughts of the relevant past to develop his own understanding of the event/fact.

Contemporaneity stood as the next important pillar of historical scholarship. Croce claimed that all history is contemporary history³² as the mind of the historian is the place where history takes shape. The time and space of the historian, his understanding and beliefs affect the questions that arise in his mind. He bases his research questions on the current knowledge and search for the answers in the past. The conclusions deduced by the historian depict his understanding of the past based on the knowledge of present.

Objectivity is the most crucial aspect of historical scholarship. The historian has to disengage himself and his emotions to develop an independent comprehension of another person's stance. He has to be ever ready to criticize his own motives and intentions. Evans³³ is of the view that objectivity includes a faith in the authenticity of the past. The purpose of the historian should be to discover the connections of facts and not to invent them. Though it involves creative imagination on part of the writer, but the duty of the history is to recreate the past as it was.

However objectivity is a relative term owing to the selection of facts by the historian that could be influenced by biases, his mental framework etc. Therefore there can be limitations in historical writings and there can be different approaches but a certain level/ limit of objectivity had to be maintained by the historian while following the above rules.

³² Benedetto Croce, *History: Its Theory and Practice* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1980)

³³ Richard J Evans, *In Defence Of History*, (Granta Books: London, 1997), 224-253.

According to the historians, the issue with biased writing is, that the writer establishes certain views as facts in his mind and then tries to establish them as truth by creating links among the other facts available or by developing a 'thought', thus his evolutionary process leads him to the same conclusion that he wanted to establish in the beginning³⁴. The writer ignores the basic rule of historiography that the 'facts' are hard, established statements accepted by everyone beyond doubt or as E. H. Carr quotes C. P. Scott saying that "facts are sacred, opinion is free"³⁵. In this process, the criteria of believing or the choice of the facts considered as truth should be unbiased or unprejudiced. Although this choice is affected by the researcher's knowledge, the time in which he lives, the sources available to him and his mental make-up. The paradigm he follows also helps to develop his world view about the topic. Therefore there is always a chance that the research is biased or prejudiced although it is not necessary that this prejudice is intentional³⁶. A. K. Brohi is of the view that a non-Muslim writer cannot be a "detached observer" as his association with his own religion will hinder his objectivity³⁷.

In case of the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), this prejudice seems to be intentional as the western writers of the 19th century failed to consult the original and relevant Muslim sources readily available to them either because of their incompetency to understand Arabic and other Muslim languages or their indifference to apply even their own yard sticks of historiography on the subject³⁸. Even though the work on the translations of the Muslim historical sources was going on and book of Al Waqidi, Ibne Hisham and Ibne Saad were being

³⁴ Khurram Qadir, *Tarikh Nigari Nazariat o Irtiqa* (Lahore: Nizami Press, 1994), 46.

³⁵ E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Hong Kong: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1986), 4.

³⁶ Ibid., 21, Khurram Qadir, *Tarikh Nigari Nazariat o Irtiqa* (Lahore: Nizami Press, 1994), 47.

³⁷ A. K. Brohi, Introduction to *Mohammad in Non-Muslim Eyes* by Kh. Jamil Ahmad (Lahore: Ferozsons LTD, 1978), v.

³⁸ Zafar Ali Qureshi, Preface to *Prophet Muhammad and His Western Critics: A critique of W. Montgomery Watt and Others*, Vol. 1 (Lahore: Idara Maarif Islami, 1992), xi.

translated³⁹. Modern writers like Norman Daniel alleges this fact that a group of earlier Christian authors “deliberately misinterpreted” the basic tenets of Islam although majority of them were well aware of them⁴⁰. Ziauddin Sardar has called it “willful misunderstanding and knowledgeable ignorance” that gradually led to the formation of the Christian view about Islam⁴¹. Their writing thus became unhistorical and completely against objectivity.

One major reason for neglecting /ignoring the Muslim sources could be the criticism done by famous western scholars like William Muir, who in his extensive work rejected important Muslim sources like Al-Waqidi, Ibne- Hisham, Ibne- Ishaq etc as well as the system of hadith , which he considered as erroneous. He advised the western readers to be wary as the methodology is not credible and by it, “The floodgates of error, extravagance, fiction are thrown wide open”⁴².

Therefore in rejecting a major part of Ahadith and in accepting many unfavorable ones, Muir and his followers had followed a tradition set by their predecessors who set the criteria to be of dual nature⁴³. Some favorable Ahadith can be wrong and at the same time unfavorable ones can be true. In other words, western writers developed a thesis about the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), that,

³⁹ Arthur Jeffery, “The Quest of the Historical Muhammad” in *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad* edited and translated by Ibne Warraq (New York: Prometheus Books, 2000), 341., Sayid Sulaiman Nadwi, *The Life and Message of the Holy Prophet Muhammad* translated by Mohiuddin Ahmad (Karachi: Idaratul Quran, N.D), 40.

⁴⁰ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications Ltd,1960), 35.

⁴¹ Ziauddin Sardar, 19.

⁴² William Muir, *The Life of Mohamet and History of Islam: To the Era of the Hegira* (London: Smith Elder and Co., 1875), xlxi.

⁴³ Jabal Bauben, *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West: A study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt* (Great Britain: Cromwell Press Ltd), 24.

"any story which puts Muhammad in a bad light must be true and that which shows him in a good light is false"⁴⁴.

This issue was of great concern for the Islamic scholars, as put by Muhammad Asad,

"The fact that there were numberless spurious ahadith did not in the least escape the attention of the Muhaddithun, as European critics naively seem to suppose. On the contrary, the critical science of Hadith was initiated by the necessity of discerning between authentic and spurious..... The existence, therefore, of false Ahadith does not prove anything against the system of Hadith as a whole...."⁴⁵.

These western writers ignored and deliberately avoided to evaluate the Muslim sources and gave their verdicts on the basis of the incomplete information available to them⁴⁶. Muhammad Asad was of the view that the criticism on Hadith done by a group of Muslim critics provided them an opportunity to interpret Quran in any way they wanted. According to him this was done under the western influence to "suit the spirit of western civilization" ignoring the strict criteria developed and applied by the Muhaddiseen⁴⁷. Unfortunately western/British writers like Muir took it as an opportunity to ignore the second largest source of information. It seems that by doing this he and others like him set aside sources that could negate their detrimental treatment of Islam and Muhammad (SAW). This western thesis was accepted without questioning the criteria of its formation, totally ignoring the yardsticks of western historical scholarship i.e., objectivity, historicity and contemporaneity.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Asad, *Islam at the Crossroads* (1975), 127-8.

⁴⁶ For detailed discussion on the authenticity of Muslim Sources See Sayid Sulaiman Nadwi, *The Life and Message of the Holy Prophet Muhammad* translated by Mohiuddin Ahmad (Karachi: Idaratul Quran, N. D)

⁴⁷ Muhammad Asad, 129-130.

Development of the Christian views about Islam and the Prophet of Islam:

History writing has often been used in history to attain specific purposes, at times religious or political. The history of historiography reveals that for different regions and people these goals varied depending upon their particular needs and requirements. Initially Church occupied focal position in Christian historiography, and guided people in all matters including history writing. As a consequence a group of writers emerged who were religiously and politically steered to obtain specific objectives. This gave rise to Orientalism studying the civilizations of the East including Islam, China, India and Japan. It was “their intellectual and military power, economic and cultural wealth” that attracted west towards them⁴⁸. Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW) posed a serious threat to the leaders of Christianity because of their military conquests thus becoming a major attraction for Christianity and later the West⁴⁹. Therefore the Christians involved in studying Islam came to be commonly known as Orientalists⁵⁰. The roots of orientalism can be traced back to the medieval Christianity, and in the words of Nadwi,

“Their vindictive, partisan and squint-eyed approach becomes particularly visible while dealing with the life of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him)”⁵¹.

Satish Chandra has given just one purpose of the nineteenth century interpretation of History, “to justify and rationalize the European domination of the world” by highlighting particular inherent outstanding virtues of the west and the absence of these abilities in the Afro-Asian

⁴⁸ Ziauddin Sardar, 2.

⁴⁹ A detailed discussion on orientalism and its relation with Imperialism is in chapter 4 of the present study.

⁵⁰ The term was coined to describe the scholars who learnt Arabic to uncover the secrets of the Orient. By Yahiya Emerick, “Muhammad in Western Literature” Appendix to *The Life and Work of Muhammad*, 301.

⁵¹ S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, Forward to *Prophet Muhammad and His Western Critics: A critique of W. Montgomery Watt and Others* by Zafar Ali Qureshi Vol. 1 (Lahore: Idara Maarif Islami, 1992), vii.

states⁵². These orientalists cloaked their hidden aims under the slogan of objective historical research by simply distorting facts and events and by applying their own self-created hypotheses and postulations. Zafar Ali Qureshi writes that,

"The orientalists, specializing in the study of the life of the Prophet Muhammad and allied subjects masquerade as professors and scholars, but in reality are most ordained Christian priests,"⁵³

Professor Khaleeq Ahmad Nizami in his article explained the activities of Christian writers (Orientalist) in five stages.

1. First stage encompassed the time when Spain was the pivot for knowledge and culture and west was turning towards it either to take advantage or to extinguish that flame.
2. Second stage covers the time after the Crusades, therefore focusing on the reaction of the Christian world on Muslim conquests against them.
3. Third stage coincides with the time of Western glory and Muslim decline, thus with the rise of Colonization.
4. Fourth stage comprised of the liberation movements in the colonized Muslim countries against the Imperialism.
5. Fifth and the last stage and the most crucial stage covers the time when Muslim world became the hub of economic activity due to the abundance of natural resources (oil etc.)⁵⁴.

⁵² Satish Chandra, *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India* (New Dehli: Har-Anand Publications, 1996), 85.

⁵³ Zafar Ali Qureshi, Preface to *Prophet Muhammad and His Western Critics: A critique of W. Montgomery Watt and Others*, Vol. 1 (Lahore: Idara Maarif Islami, 1992), xi.

Initially when Muslims made Spain the center of excellence for knowledge and culture, the west readily learned Arabic and other Muslim fields of knowledge either to take benefit from them or to use that knowledge against Muslims⁵⁵. Yahia Emerick believed that some early Christian writers had inadequate Muslim sources yet they portrayed Islam “as a barbaric religion of cannibals, heathens, and the drunkenness whose founder was a camel rustler, sorcerer and liar”⁵⁶. Zafar Ali Qureshi supports this view and calls it “stupendous ignorance” about Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW) which resulted in creating “most fantastic, puerile and absurd notions about the Prophet” and all this was done in the name of “the great glory of Christendom”⁵⁷. Watt, declared it to be their defense against Islam when for example after the initial Muslim conquests they had become a minority⁵⁸.

During the Crusades, fanciful images were added to the picture of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) to keep the crusading spirit alive⁵⁹. After the crusades a particular group of Christian writers, furious and filled with rage, started doing whatever they could to destroy Islam and the image of the Prophet of Islam (SAW). For that purpose they only relied on their imagination to fabricate stories instead of the knowledge that was easily available to them. The personality of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) was considered to be the source of all evils, therefore it was considered legitimate to write whatever they could about him (SAW).

⁵⁴ Khaleeq Ahmad Nizami, “Mustashriqeen kay Afkar-o- Nazaryat kay Mukhtalif Dor, Mashmola Islam aur Mustashreqeen” in *Zia un Nabi*, Vol. 6 by Muhammad Karam Shah Al Azhari (Lahore: Zia-ul-Quran Publications, 1418 h), 130-180.

⁵⁵ Yahia Emerick, “Muhammad in Western Literature” Appendix to *The Life and Work of Muhammad*, (Alpha: Penguin group, USA, Inc, 2002), 297.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 299.

⁵⁷ Zafar ali Qureshi ,Introduction to *Prophet Muhammad and His Western Critics: A critique of W. Montgomery Watt and Others*, Vol. 1 (Lahore: Idara Maarif Islami, 1992),2.

⁵⁸ W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam and Christianity Today : A Contribution to Dialouge* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul plc,), 3.

⁵⁹ Ziauddin Sardar, 19.

Even the twentieth century writers recognized this fact that the understanding of these western writers of the last centuries was incorrect and their approach in explaining the life of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) was lopsided thus maligning the personality of the Prophet.

As Montgomery Watt claimed,

“Of all the world’s great men, none has been so much maligned as Muhammad..... for centuries, Islam was the great enemy of Christendom, since Christendom was in direct contact with no other organized states comparable in power to the Muslims. The Byzantine Empire, after losing some of its best provinces to the Arabs, was being attacked in Asia Minor, while Western Europe was threatened through Spain and Sicily. Even before the crusades....., medieval Europe was building up a conception of a great enemy. At a point Muhammad was transformed into Mahound, the Prince of Darkness”⁶⁰.

P. K. Hitti while discussing the development of the western view of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) over time stated that the first image of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) in west was that of a Pseudo Prophet which very soon got converted into an Anti-Christ. This view was extended by a contemporary of Dante, who gave the theory that,

“Satan, unable himself to arrest Christianity’s progress in the east, invented a scripture- a sort of mean between the Old and the New Testaments-and used a man of diabolical nature as his tool. The scripture was the Koran, the tool Muhammad”⁶¹.

While commenting on the way the Prophet of Islam was perceived and presented, Hitti said:

“Western fablers used ‘Maumet’, one of the forty one variants of Muhammad’s name listed in the Oxford Dictionary in the sense of Idol. It came to mean “puppet” or “idol”. Another variant of the same name Mahoun, was

⁶⁰ W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam and Christianity Today: A Contribution to Dialouge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul plc), 4. W. Montgomery watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman* (London: Oxford Press, 1978), 231.

⁶¹ P. K. Hitti, *Islam And The West: A Historical Cultural Survey* (Princeton, New Jersey:D. Van Nostrand Company, INC, 1962), 50.

used in English medieval encyclical plays as an object of worship. Ironically the greatest iconoclast and the leading champion of the oneness of God in History was metamorphosed into as object of worship”⁶².

Norman Daniel also believed that the image of the Prophet was deformed in some earlier Christian writings and justified it by saying that it was the result of “the pressure of their sense of danger” and was done “in good faith”⁶³.

For P. K. Hitti, fear, hostility and prejudice combined to form Islam’s image in the eyes of the west. Islam was declared as enemy and enemy’s beliefs were considered as suspicious or totally false⁶⁴.

Muhammad Karam Shah Al Azhari quotes Guibert de Nogent, who accepted that while writing on Islam, he does not rely on written sources and has no criteria of judging the right from wrong. He justifies his unscholarly writing by saying that one can write anything about a person whose evil exceeds any other thing⁶⁵. While explaining the reasons of deforming the image of Islam, Watt has given many reasons to provide justification for their action, including, Islam to be a religion of violence, self-indulgence etc. and concluded that “since Muhammad was the author of a false religion, he must be a tool or agent of the devil”⁶⁶. He quotes numerous instances showing the hatred, biasness and prejudice of this particular group of Christians and the extent of it, in the background of the political losses they had.

⁶² P. K .Hitti, *Islam: A Way of Life* (Chicago: Regenry Gateway,1970), 22-23

⁶³ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications Ltd,1960), 12.

⁶⁴ P. K. Hitti, *Islam And The West: A Historical Cultural Survey* (Princeton, New Jersey:D. Van Nostrand Company, INC, 1962), 49.

⁶⁵ Muhammad Karam Shah Al Azhari, *Zia un Nabi*, Vol. 6 (Lahore: Zia-ul-Quran Publications, 1418 h), 152.

⁶⁶ W.Montgomery Watt, *Islam and Christianity Today: A Contribution to Dialogue* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul plc), 4

Emile Dermenghem holds that the misunderstanding between Islam and Christianity was the result of centuries old wars but she accepts that “the most serious ones were at first on the side of the occidentals”⁶⁷. In nut shell, a group of western writers was “engaged in slander or misinterpretation to make Islam appear illogical or sinful as opposed to Christianity, which was portrayed as civilizing and noble”⁶⁸.

With the passage of time when west became politically powerful and the Muslim world lost its glory, west started to occupy and colonize the Muslim countries. Thus the intention involved two aspects, religious as well as political imperial interests⁶⁹. For that matter they planned extensively. They realized that to control the Muslim countries and to keep their rule for a long time, it’s essential to study the political, social, religious, moral and economic way of Muslims in detail, in order to be aware of their (Muslims) positive and negative aspects. Thus, to use their drawbacks, to defeat them and to keep them slaves for a long time, the first pre-requisite was to have people in west that can read, write and understand Arabic. Therefore they took number of steps such as:

1. Publishing books written by Muslims
2. Collecting and shifting Islamic rare and precious books and manuscripts
3. Forming centers for understanding Arabic and eastern culture⁷⁰
4. Sending educational trips to the Muslim countries
5. Forming chairs in universities to teach Arabic and eastern languages⁷¹

⁶⁷ Emile Dermenghem, *The Life of Mahomet*, translated by Arabella Yorke (London: George Routledge & Sons, LTD.,1930), 119.

⁶⁸ Yahiya Emerick, 301.

⁶⁹ Zafar ali Qureshi, Introduction, 3.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ P.K. Hitti, *Islam And The West: A Historical Cultural Survey* (Princeton, New Jersey:D. Van Nostrand Company, INC, 1962), 54.

6. Arranging conferences to organize their efforts⁷²

The military accomplishments of the west were attributed to “Europe’s allegiance to Christianity and Muslim subjugation was a result of their backward and fatalistic religion”⁷³. In particular British imperialism was based on the belief that British are a superior race. Imperialism was considered as a gift of God along with the responsibility to take the civilization to the remote and backward areas of the world. The attraction of the orient with its riches forced them to conquer and get whatever bounties these areas offered cloaking it as a moral and religious duty⁷⁴.

The twentieth century saw a change when the people of the colonized countries stood against the western imperialism and began their efforts to get emancipation from the colonial powers. The western world had two options, either to crush these movements with force or to give them freedom; they were not ready to fight with them. Therefore they reluctantly decided to let go. This decision required, to change their strategy towards Muslims, who, till then, were rated second rate citizens and slaves. Their position altered and they apparently became friends and well-wishers. For this it was essential to reduce the impact of all that had been done by their writers and authors that incited hatred among Muslims towards Christians. These writings now became a potential threat for the retreating Christians. Consequently, most writers of the twentieth century emerged who criticized their predecessors extensively and praised certain parts of Islam⁷⁵. Apparently these writings favor Islam and the Muslims, balanced and exhaustive as they acknowledge the contributions made by Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW) towards

⁷² Khaleeq Ahmad Nizami, "Mustashriqeen kay Afkar-o- Nazaryat kay Mukhtalif Dor, Mashmola Islam aur Mustashreqeen" in *Zia un Nabi*, Vol. 6 by Muhammad Karam Shah Al Azhari (Lahore: Zia-ul-Quran Publications, 1418 h), 130-180.

⁷³ Yahiya Emerick, 301.

⁷⁴ K. K. Aziz, *The British in India: A Study in Imperialism* (Islamabad: National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, 1976), 16-17.

⁷⁵ Khaleeq Ahmad Nizami, in *Zia un Nabi*. 130-180.

“world civilization and culture”⁷⁶, but in effect their purpose generally was not to provide justice to Muslims or Islam or the Prophet of Islam (SAW), nonetheless, only to get their support⁷⁷. To Zafar Ali Qureshi, in spite of their claim of Objective scholarship the western writers/ orientalists/ priests of the twentieth century,

“failed to judge, evaluate and praise the Prophet of Islam objectively, impartially and realistically, free from their pre-conceived, pre-determined, and pre-meditated bias, prejudice and obsession”⁷⁸.

These writers became the right hand of their rulers and formulated such policies, grounded on their knowledge and experiences that Muslims even after obtaining freedom continued looking towards west for support chiefly in the field of economics through carefully monitored fiscal policies and loans on high interest rates⁷⁹. A major change occurred with the discovery of oil in the Muslim countries which urged the western powers to change their strategy targeting the oil producing countries. The result was obvious, the west promotes democracy in the entire world but in these countries kingship is accepted because democracy could weaken their control⁸⁰.

To claim that the orientalists are unbiased, un-prejudiced people, who adopt objective historical scholarship in their writings, does not, seems to be true as they have always helped the imperial powers to achieve their goals by providing them with the necessary knowledge. One can

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⁷⁶ Yahiya Emerick, 302.

⁷⁷ Khaleeq Ahmad Nizami, 130-180.

⁷⁸ Zafar Ali Qureshi, *Introduction to Prophet Muhammad and His Western Critics: A critique of W. Montgomery Watt and Others*, Vol. 1 (Lahore: Idara Maarif Islami, 1992), 2-3.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁸⁰ Khaleeq Ahmad Nizami, 130-180.

deduce that these orientalists are torch bearers of imperialism and provided the cognitive support to them.

Methodology of writing on Jesus:

Christianity is believed to be a historical religion based on “concrete events, actual historical happenings”⁸¹ whose major actor was Jesus - a man who left everlasting imprints on the history of mankind. The believers of Christ faced a problem regarding his life and personality that is the absence of information about him as the first Gospel⁸² appeared some thirty years after the death of Jesus Christ⁸³. The Christian writers on Jesus accept that the lives of people who are different from common people, like Prophets, cannot be explained as that of common people. They also believe that religion cannot be subjected to critical enquiry similar to that of other topics/subjects; neither can it be exposed to the “intellectual integrity” of human mind⁸⁴. Therefore their writers and scholars developed certain criteria to decipher the life and personality of Jesus. The efforts of the nineteenth century writers made them to conclude that the only

⁸¹ Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1958), 266-267.

⁸² The word Gospel mean the books in which the principal features of the Apostolic preaching were gathered. These are four books namely Mathew, Mark, Luke and John. They are basically biographies of Jesus. (Taken from M.H. Durrani and Mohammad Hafiz Sheikh, *The Gospels vs The Gospels* (Lewisville: The Islamic Mission), 1.

⁸³ Stephen Neill, *What We Know About Jesus* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 9.

⁸⁴ James Peter, *Finding Historical Jesus: A statement of the Principles Involved* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 12, 15.

method to reach truth about Jesus is to follow the historiographical method⁸⁵. Thus they noticed flaws in their own interpretations of the personality of Jesus finally leading to the recent realization that there is a difference between Jesus represented by History and the one represented by faith. In other words, faith and history are in clash with each other as far as the person of Jesus Christ is concerned. For the Biblical writers, History is like a "great drama"⁸⁶ with God as the major performer, playing to achieve a particular goal/purpose that is a "Kingdom of David, ruled by a 'son of David'-Messiah, Christ"⁸⁷.

There is a conflict going on among Christian scholars for centuries regarding the nature of Jesus personality. Often they drew lines of discrimination to separate the historical Jesus from the Jesus of faith and then these lines were re-drawn, over and over again to create overlapping circles, with no definite answers in hand. Still if one look at the writings dealing with the life of Jesus Christ over the years, one can see a quest for historical Jesus based on their western scholarship, applying its rules to produce the "truth". For that matter they studied Gospels - the major source of information about Jesus, understanding and acknowledging that, firstly, the authorship of Gospels is not confirmed⁸⁸, secondly, what the Gospels say is not entirely what Jesus said. Therefore they repeatedly took help of the historical methods to, establish the authorship of Gospels and to separate what Jesus said from what the writers of Gospels said finally to find the true picture of Jesus objectively putting aside all presuppositions⁸⁹. James Peter explained the methodology adopted by a historian to reach truth as:

⁸⁵ Ibid., 60.

⁸⁶ Gabriel Hebert, *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962), 15.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Shaikh Muhammad Hafeez, "Jesus" The Search For Truth (Islamabad: An Inter Faith Publication), 19-25.

⁸⁹ Michael Grant, *Introduction to Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 1-2.

“by considering it [fact] along with other statements which purport to describe the same reality, and accepting as true which of them he sees to conform to the evidence”⁹⁰.

This methodology as developed by the west was applied to History writing of Jesus Christ. The role of the historian seems to be clear as he has to convert a simple fact into a historical fact by giving color to it as facts do not speak for themselves; they are dependent on the interpretation of the historian. Carr argues that historian only presents those facts which he considers as worth preserving⁹¹. Thus history is a series of accepted judgments. Same happened with the initial writings on Jesus. The writers of the Gospels accepted certain facts as truth about him (Jesus) and the later writers accepted them as universal facts without ever bothering to check the authenticity and credibility of the writers of the Gospel.

While explaining the role of a historian James Peter traces the relationship of a ‘fact’ and an ‘event’, saying that a historian selects the facts of his choice and sees only what he wants to see. He deciphers facts according to the presumptions he formed in the beginning. Same happened in their writings on Jesus and on the Prophet of Islam (SAW). The difference lies in the approach only. While writing on Jesus, those events were converted into facts which are favorable to their stance and presented a positive picture of Jesus. On the other hand while writing on the life of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) only those events were highlighted which presented him (SAW) in a negative character. In fact James Peter’s stance about something declared as historical is, “Things in the past which have been established by objective scholarship”⁹² although Carl Becker emphatically declared that, “the facts of history do not exist

⁹⁰ James Peter, *Finding Historical Jesus: A statement of the Principles Involved* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 19.

⁹¹ E. H. Carr, *What is History?* 3-7.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 21.

for any historian till he creates them”⁹³. Thus western scholars created their own history of Jesus and Muhammad (SAW).

Stephen Neill recognizing the issues involved in writing about Jesus acknowledged that during the process the historian has to “make use of all the evidence that there is, keep [ones] prejudices and preferences under control, must not try to invalidate that does not fit in with [ones] preconceptions” and finally “must not be disturbed, if.... no reliable answers can be given”⁹⁴ . Thus it was deduced that by following the objective historical scholarship, one could arrive at reality/truth. But interestingly this approach is nowhere to be seen in majority of their writings on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW).

Related with the historiography of Jesus Christ was the issue of sources. Gabriel Hebert Quotes Dr. Micklem who unequivocally declares that it is not possible to write a biography of Jesus Christ as “we have not the materials”⁹⁵. Same view was held by many other writers like Huston Smith⁹⁶ and Stephen Neill⁹⁷. Over the hundred years following the disappearance of Jesus from the world, different sources kept on emerging about the life, time and personality of Jesus Christ and with each emerging source the Christian writers modified their approach as the new information provided them with “important insights”⁹⁸. This led to the development of various views about the personality of Jesus Christ, starting with the view that Jesus did not even exist⁹⁹. The Christian scholars analyzed the issue and found the causes to be:

⁹³ Ibid., 15.

⁹⁴ Stephen Neill, *What We Know About Jesus* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 11.

⁹⁵ Gabriel Hebert, *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962), 13.

⁹⁶ Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1958), 267.

⁹⁷ Stephen Neill, 9.

⁹⁸ Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, Forward to *The Historical Jesus A Comprehensive Guide* (London: SCM Press, 1998), vii.

⁹⁹ James Peter, *Finding Historical Jesus: A statement of the Principles Involved* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 23-24. Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1958), 267.

1. Inability of the holders of this view to properly concentrate on the available data
2. Conservative approach hindering the process of critical inquiry
3. Negative criticism creating and spreading suspicion¹⁰⁰
4. A belief on part of the religious people that God has intervened to save the world¹⁰¹

An emphasis was made on the four Gospels, writings of some pre-Christian writers along with writings of Muslim writers and a whole bunch of arguments were created to negate this view and to prove that Jesus was a living reality¹⁰² not only a myth¹⁰³ or fruit of wishful imagination of initial believers. Although a bulk of legendary tales were fabricated around his personality but Michael Grant argues that this was also done with pagan leaders/ figures like Alexander the Great, therefore must not result in the non-historicity of Jesus¹⁰⁴.

The way in which these Gospels were selected to become a part of the New- Testament also undermined their authenticity¹⁰⁵. The biblical criticism done by the Christians accept that the New Testament writings are biased and partial¹⁰⁶ thus focus on portraying a specific picture of Jesus and distorted the historical facts. Shaikh Muhammad Hafeez quoted Dr. W. G. Scroggie in his book *Is the Bible the Word of God?* Who declared that Bible is not divine.

¹⁰⁰ James Peter, 23-24.

¹⁰¹ Stephen Neill, 7.

¹⁰² Ibid., 8.

¹⁰³ James Peter, 204.

¹⁰⁴ Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 200.

¹⁰⁵ At the council of Nicaea, under emperor Constantine, some 350 years after the time of Christ, a congregation of bishops voted to select which books will become the part of New-Testament. (Taken from M.H. Durrani and Mohammad Hafiz Sheikh, *The Gospels vs The Gospels* (Lewisville: The Islamic Mission), 1-2.

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Neill, 9.

“The Bible is human..... Those books have passed through the minds of men, are written in the language of men, were penned by the hands of men, and bear in their style the characteristics of men”¹⁰⁷.

The liberal view created out of the blind love declaring Jesus to be a Devine Being, Son of God¹⁰⁸ - not truly a man¹⁰⁹, was later discarded because of its lack of following the principles of historiography. Next important view was of Consistent Eschatology, which claimed that Jesus had no interest in his worldly life and sacrificed himself to form a kingdom of God¹¹⁰. This view forced Christian theologians to place his life, events and teachings against the background of first century Palestine living among the Jews¹¹¹ and decided that the, “true views of the Gospel will be that which explains the course of events in the first and second century”¹¹².

With the passage of time, view that came next was “Form-Criticism”¹¹³, holding that the New Testament has very little knowledge of Historical Jesus as interpretations were mixed¹¹⁴ with the facts since two generations separated Jesus and the making of Marks. These people tried to differentiate and recover the original form of the material and separate it from the changes that occurred during the subsequent years¹¹⁵ as this remained the core of their research on Jesus that is, delineating his personality and sayings from the assumptions of the Gospel writers¹¹⁶.

Thus the sources to write on Jesus were never universally accepted and identified by the Christian writers. The authenticity and historicity of these sources also remained an issue of great

¹⁰⁷ Shaikh Muhammad Hafeez, “Jesus” *The Search For Truth* (Islamabad: An Inter Faith Publication), 54.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 346-347, 351-356.

¹⁰⁹ Gabriel Hebert, 18.

¹¹⁰ Shaikh Muhammad Hafeez, 54.

¹¹¹ Stephen Neill, 18.

¹¹² James Peter, 23-46.

¹¹³ Gabriel Hebert, 33.

¹¹⁴ Stephen Neill, 64.

¹¹⁵ James Peter, 51.

¹¹⁶ Michael Grant, 202-203

concern for the Christian writers. The Gospels were compiled within hundred years of the disappearance of Jesus and Christian scholars later analyzed them to be a combination of some earlier documents and based mostly on oral tradition¹¹⁷. In fact the writers of the twentieth century have criticized and objected the authorship of the earlier Gospels which remained as the major primary source for writing on Jesus.

Similar stages were developed by other writers like Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz in an attempt to create a systematic approach and formulate a proper procedure to reach the truth about the life and personality of Jesus Christ¹¹⁸. Yet these stages and their claims were thoroughly criticized and analyzed to fulfill the criteria's of Historiography as explained in detail by Edward Schillebeeckx in his book *Jesus: An experiment in Christology*. He has discussed in detail such problems of Modern Historiography and Jesus of Nazareth¹¹⁹.

In nut-shell the efforts to understand Jesus and find “truth” about him led the Christian writers to purely follow the historiographical method. In doing so they took all the sources into consideration i.e., the Gospels, the Christian sources and the non-Christian sources to reach at a conclusion which they accept is not final but a stage in research, that they have arrived at by following a particular method of research which is much more important to them then the result itself¹²⁰. An issue of enormous concern for the writers of Jesus was to detach the faith from the historical research since this can mar objectivity nonetheless some find it impossible to be

¹¹⁷ James Peter, 26-30.

¹¹⁸ Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus A Comprehensive Guide* (London: SCM Press, 1998), 1-11.

¹¹⁹ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus An experiment in Christology*, translated by Hubert Hoskins (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, 1979), 67-71.

¹²⁰ Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Forward* vii-viii.

objective as faith hinders the progress yet others continue with the critical approach of criticizing and analyzing without involving faith in it¹²¹.

In case of the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), no such research was done by the western writers though they wrote extensively on the topic. To find the “truth” about Him (SAW), narrating and re-explaining the already present material in their language was considered satisfactory. The so called methodology of arriving at truth in case of Jesus is totally absent here. References are always taken from the western sources, thus evidence is traced and confirmed in the absence of Muslim sources. The criteria of objective historical scholarship for declaring a fact as historical cannot be seen in their writings on Seerah either. While studying and understanding Jesus they try to put him in his environment where he lived and worked but in case of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), they isolated him from his surroundings and evaluated him according to the western thoughts. As discussed earlier, to get a complete picture of Jesus, they went through the Christian and non-Christian sources both but in case of the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) Muslim sources are nowhere to be seen¹²². The above discussion refers to the belief system of the Christians for they are bound to recognize Jesus as a Prophet but this does not apply in case of the Prophet of Islam (SAW). Christians are not bound to accept or even recognize Muhammad (SAW) as a Prophet. Muslims on the other hand are bound by faith to accept both as Prophets without any discrimination. The Quran has given clear verdict on this issue in Surah Al Baqarah “.....We make no distinction between one and another of His Messengers”¹²³. Thus the difference lies in the faith of both Muslims and the Christian.

¹²¹ Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 199.

¹²² Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, 63-89.

¹²³ Al Quran, Al Baqarah, Verse no. 285.

As mentioned earlier that Christians consider that religion cannot be subjected to critical enquiry like other subjects, neither can it be left to the limited capacity of the human mind but while writing on the Prophet of Islam (SAW), some of them negated this belief and openly gave hard statements using whatever information they had. While talking about the criticism on Biblical teachings they denote it to the ignorance of "Bible's teachings"¹²⁴, whereas this issue is never taken into account and value judgments are passed without any sound knowledge of Muslim primary sources in case of Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW).

Christian scholars / priests / writers are divided on different issues related to the life of Jesus and over the centuries held different opinions, for example his crucifixion and his resurrection etc. On the other hand no confusion, clash or ambiguity is present among the Muslim scholars regarding the life or sayings of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), as a thorough and authentic record of the entire life of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) is available for the scrutiny and criticism of scholars. In fact, the criterion of authenticity among the scholars of Hadith is too strict¹²⁵ to allow any objection, even by the western standards.

Thus it can be concluded that the views developed by a group of Christian writers about Islam were not based on their social encounter with Islam but on supposed threats they perceived and mistaken judgments they made declaring Islam as their enemy. The self-created image of Christianity as being the sole savior of humanity and Christ as the sole representative of God's faith experienced a big blow with the appearance of another Prophet. Leaving aside the prophesies about a new Prophet available in Christianity¹²⁶, the mere presence of a new faith

¹²⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹²⁵ Zain-ud-Din Ahmad bin Abdul Latif Al- Zubaidi, *Muqaddima to Mukhtasir Sahih Bukhari*, Translated by, Abu Muhammad Hafiz Abdus Sattar Hammad, 58-59.

¹²⁶ Ahmad Deedat, *What the Bible says about Muhammad (Peace be upon him)* (Lahore: Kazi Publications), 1982.

which they recognized as similar to their own, instead of strengthening their belief and cause, seems to shatter the pseudo kingdom of God they intended to construct.

Reinforced by the political and military conquests of Muslims reaching their door step in no time and subjugating a considerable area once acclaimed by Christians, a number of Christian writers embarked upon a new course to ridicule the new faith and it's so called founder as a way to counter its impact upon Christians in general. It also provided them with an opportunity to prepare their own public opinion in favor of the continued military encounters as once, Crusades and later to invade and colonize other continents, principally the Indo Pak, to prove their superiority.

Chapter Two

The Nineteenth Century Writers on The Prophet of Islam (SAW)

1. P. De Lacy Johnstone *Muhammad and His Power*

2. J. W. H. Stobart *Islam and its Founder*

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) has been an alluring topic for the historians, writers, travelers, politicians, bureaucrats and scholars of the west. Their interest in the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) is as old as Islam's encounter with Christianity. Because of the fear in the minds of the Christian world, while observing the conquests of Islam, the thinking of the majority of them was set to work by portraying the enemy in most unfavorable, indeed malicious character. In their attempt to negate the rising political and religious power, they developed a general consensus of accepting those facts as truth, which supported their judgments.

There were certain assumptions made by the west especially the church, declaring such assumptions to be based on logic and facts. These assumptions, though erroneous, played a key role in making the mind-set of the western writers/ historiographers as well as the common

people. These include first of all, that, "there is no truth outside Church". Christianity is the "truth" and truth is "God", therefore "no truth" and hence "no God", lay outside Christianity¹²⁷. Consequently, they deduced, as Muhammad (SAW), the Prophet of Islam is outside Christianity, therefore he is inspired by evil, hence there is no reason to accept him even as a Prophet. In the words of Edward Said, the Europeans consider their civilization as modern, advanced and superior whereas the non-Europeans as inferior, backward and outdated¹²⁸.

In nut-shell a mind-set developed against Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW), which grew and intensified with the passage of time. The extent of this behavior could be observed in the instances quoted by Norman Daniel, in which he concludes that west aroused questions about Quran based on their own knowledge and then expected Muslims to answer on the basis of Christian scriptures or even to quote Gospels for that matter¹²⁹. This medieval world view developed, based on political, religious, social and cultural encounter between Islam and Christianity. It's not, that knowledge was not present, just nobody was interested in sorting the available mass of information available. As a consequence, "nonsense was accepted" leaving the meaningful aside¹³⁰. Christian faith was given prime importance and every attempt was made to conserve the declining faith. Logic was discarded and was only used in writings on Jesus.

The decline of a nation is caused by lack of creative thinking, absence of positive approach and a static, rigid and illogical mind in deciphering facts. The declining nations lose their touch with reality hence try to preserve whatever is left. Same applied to the Christian/western world - surrendering before Islam. In an attempt to save their precious

¹²⁷ Jabal Muhammad Bauben, *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West A study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt* (Great Britain: Cromwell Press Ltd), 17.

¹²⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 7.

¹²⁹ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications Ltd, 1993), 14.

¹³⁰ Ibid. 302.

knowledge and to counter Islam, several unwarranted stories were developed and propagated, which were far away and sometimes opposite to the reality¹³¹. This was a perceived fight for survival on part of the some Christian writers; therefore Christian sources were used to explain Muslim / Arab History. The terms used were not familiar to the Muslim reader. This indicates that these books were targeting the Christian readers only, although some of them like Theophil Menzel who in his ‘translators preface’ to Tor Andrae’s work included the “adherents of Islam” along with the “students of history of religion [and] lovers of biography”¹³².

The nineteenth century writings have to be studied from this perspective. The medieval philosophy and historiography kept its status in nineteenth century writings. There is a constant interplay of past and the present giving birth to numerous questions, including foremost

- The reason of writing on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) as discussed by our both writers
- Resemblance of the selection of source material from the available information
- Similarity in the choice of certain topics/ events to be focused in their study
- Comparison of the methodology in writing, including language and style of writing

E. H. Carr¹³³ claims that facts are available to a historian in documents and other related material and they are same for all the historians. A historian converts a simple fact into a historical fact or event by giving it color, as facts do not speak for themselves. They become

¹³¹ P. K. Hitti, *Islam and the west, A Historical Cultural Survey* (New Jersey:D. Van Nostrand Company, INC, 1962), 55.

¹³² Tor Andrae, *Mohammed: The Man And His Faith*, translated by Theophil Menzel (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1936), 5.

¹³³ E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Hong Kong: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1986), 1-10.

alive with the interpretation of the historian who in the due process, give life to certain facts and in the same way takes life of certain facts. This process of scrutiny depends on the understanding of the historian. Therefore this selection could be intentional or unintentional. In other words the history we see is not based on real, hard facts but on judgments made by the historian. In nutshell one can say, to write unbiased history, historian's mind have to be a clean sheet, in Carr's words, "he must cultivate the necessary ignorance for himself."

In case of the majority of the 19th century writers on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), one can say that they failed to create that essential ignorance, and based their interpretations on the previously present biased and prejudicial material. Even the selection of facts and sources could not escape that impact and it seems that their choice is not unintentional. As historians are part of a society, the dominant trends of the society affect them; same is true for our two representative British writers whose writings clearly manifest the prevalent trends of British society in particular and western society in general. .

Stobart's¹³⁴ *Islam and its founder*, published in 1876, by the society for promoting Christian knowledge under the direction of the Committee of general Education. A fact that catches one's attention at the onset is that if a book is published under a society for promoting Christian knowledge how it can be unbiased and based on un-prejudiced research, although the book appeared under the title of non-Christian religious systems. A historian's identity affects his research, however unintentional it might be. Nevertheless, this fact was established in the previous chapter that the approach of some western writers in writing on the Prophet of Islam (SAW) was a conscious activity. Stobart remained as the Principle of L.A. Martiniere College, Lucknow, which shows his presence in India for a considerable time and his closeness to the

¹³⁴J. W. H. Stobart, *Islam & Its Founder* (New York: Pott, Young, & Co., 1876)

original Muslim sources and also suggests that the reasons of writing on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) were both religious and political.

Johnstone's¹³⁵ book *Muhammad and His Power* though published in 1901 is a clear depiction of the nineteenth century thought process, published in the series of biographical studies dealing with Prominent Epochs in theology, philosophy and the History of intellectual development, known as the World's Epoch-Makers, including writings on Buddha, Socrates, Plato, Augustine etc.

Objectives of the Books:

Johnstone in the preface of the book made an unequivocal declaration of the objective of writing the book. He made an acknowledgement in the first sentence of his preface that a lot has been written on the subject, hence for a new writer the only option is to "sift and select" from the works of "those who have gone before him"¹³⁶ - that is, those who have already worked on the topic in the western world. A mere look at the references of the book shows this fact as very few foot notes were given and the ones given were taken from the western sources only¹³⁷. Therefore the choice of the topic depicts his personal involvement in the subject instead of a scholarly position / stance in research. Instead of finding the already present research as incomplete or

¹³⁵ P. De. Lacy Johnstone, *Muhammad and his power* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901)

¹³⁶ Johnstone, preface.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 12-14.

insufficient or lacking organization (as ideally required by a researcher¹³⁸), he claimed, that although there is a bulk of material available on the subject, but much has been written on the “strength” of the system and the scholars of the west have either neglected or given less importance to the “weaknesses of the founder of the system”¹³⁹. This shows a clear and somewhat intentional deviation from the methodology of historical research.

Keeping in view the medieval writings on the Prophet of Islam (SAW) and their unhistorical and biased approach, one can easily predict the methodology of Johnstone as he rated the previous work favorable towards Islam. Therefore his purpose of writing the book was to find and portray the weaknesses of the “founder” and of the “system he founded” i.e. Islam. Taking into cognizance the language and choice of words such as “founder”, “system he founded”, “religious and political power which he founded”, it is quite obvious that his mind was already set before writing the book and work on the lines already set instead of trying to sift through the sources to find truth as mentioned above. Even if one accepts the reasons for writing on the Prophet of Islam (SAW) as appropriate from research point of view, the fact remains that their dependence for information was only on Christian sources completely putting a blind eye on the Islamic sources and compromising objectivity. . .

He (SAW) was not the founder of Islam but a Messenger of Allah, preaching what was sent to him (SAW) by Allah. This fact was accepted by the Christian monks / priests of the Prophet’s time. There is an incident that occurred in the childhood of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), in which a Christian monk, Bahira, recognized him as the Last Prophet through his (SAW) physical appearance and traits which he (Bahira) knew were written in their holy book. This incident is

¹³⁸ Khurram Qadir, *Tarikh Nigari: Nazariyat o Irtiqa* (Lahore: Maktaba Fikro Danish, 1994), 66.

¹³⁹ Johnstone, vii.

quoted in almost all Muslim historical sources with different narrators. Ibn-e-Saad quotes Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Aqeel¹⁴⁰ and Muhammad bin Saleh bin Dinar, Abdullah bin Jafar Azahri and Daud bin Al Haseen¹⁴¹ in two different narrations explaining the same incident. Same incident is quoted by Ibn-e-Ishaq as translated by Guillaume¹⁴². Therefore it seems obvious that Johnstone was not attempting to find “truth” which is the purpose of every research in History; neither is he aiming to remove any “doubt” and he is either not well versed in Arabic to consult the Muslim sources or he was not willing to do so¹⁴³.

The basic yardstick of western historiography, that is, Objectivity is jeopardized when he made clear judgments negating the basic fact of Islam - being a religion established worldwide. He declared Islam to be a religious and political power founded by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and which according to him “now, after thirteen centuries, seems - as a religion”,¹⁴⁴. Again a trend established by the medieval writers who repeatedly called Muhammad (SAW) a heretic and treated Islam as a heresy instead of a religion.

The only gap in knowledge or the only field needing further research in Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), according to Johnstone is the “relation of Islam to Judaism” which he hoped will be done by someone on the pattern set by the Jewish researchers¹⁴⁵. He seemed not interested in working on the topic which needed research instead he confined himself to the topics already covered by the previous writers. Notably, no references of any Muslim research is given, again indicating the lack of knowledge of the Muslim sources on the part of the writer or

¹⁴⁰ Ibn-e-Saad, *Tabaqat-e-Ibne Saad*, vol.2 (Karachi:Nafees Academy,1944),235.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 237.

¹⁴² Ibne Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah* translated by A. Guillaume as *The life of Muhammad* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 79-81.

¹⁴³ Khurram Qadir, 66.

¹⁴⁴ Johnstone, viii.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

lack of interest in studying and finding the Muslim sources as mentioned by Norman Daniel, who in the introduction of his book accepts that "sound information was available and -----easy means existed to obtain better"¹⁴⁶, yet Christian Writers failed to take benefit from them.

Johnstone also included a portrait of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) which he claimed, was gathered from the Tradition and taken from the Deutsch's essay on Islam¹⁴⁷. Interestingly, no portrait of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) can be found anywhere in the Muslim sources, including the books of Hadith or books of Seerah, only written traditions explaining his physical characteristics are present and frequently quoted¹⁴⁸. On the contrary any such effort was and is considered as a big sin. To intentionally add something in his work which is forbidden among Muslims suggests that the purpose is not positive. Perhaps he wanted to ignite the anger of the Muslims, another attempt to ridicule and humiliate the Prophet of Islam (SAW) and play with the emotions of his (SAW) followers. It also hints that the writer is trying to analyze Islam on the criteria of Christianity as Christians felt no hesitation in making the pictures of Jesus Christ. This issue has no emotional implications as far as Christians are concerned thus he ignored the view point of Muslims on this issue. One can also deduce that his readership consists of only Christian masses that had no worthwhile knowledge of Muslim religious norms. Interestingly Stobart has not included anything of the sort in his work though he was also using the same sources.

¹⁴⁶ Norman Daniel, 24.

¹⁴⁷ Johnstone, ix. Though the photocopy of the book available in IRI Library and the book later published in India does not contain a copy of the portrait.

¹⁴⁸ Ibne Saad,331. Narrated by Umme Maabad., Al Tabri,*Tarikh-e-Tabri*, vol ii (Karachi: Nafees Academy,2004), 390. Narrated by Ali Ibne Abi Talib, Anas Bin Malik and Jareeri.,

Stobart while providing the Objective of writing the book states in his preface, that he has only stated "facts and results" avoiding and ignoring "motives" behind them¹⁴⁹. He claimed that his purpose is to find truth and avoid "partisanship and prejudice"¹⁵⁰, but has failed to mention the procedure he is opting for finding the truth neither has he given the tools for analyzing the available material which is essential part of every research¹⁵¹. He has not even referred to the western scholarship of reaching truth and not declared his hypothesis clearly. He has not mentioned any gap in the knowledge or mentioned any new thought or idea he is going to float in his work. Still he wanted his work to become a "popular exposition" of the subject¹⁵² a hope shared by William Muir also¹⁵³.

His biasness is obvious as he ensures the reader that he has not forgotten the "golden rule of Christian Charity" while discussing the "antagonistic creed"¹⁵⁴. Three objections can be raised on his claim. First by declaring Islam a hostile creed, he himself destroyed the yardstick of western historiography, namely Objectivity. Secondly, his mind-set is apparent following the medieval thought, thus refuting Islam's claim to be a religion, by calling it a creed. Thirdly, it also throws light on the readership of the book - the book was written for the western masses only, not for the academic people and especially not for the Muslims.

One can deduce from the above discussion that both writers had no intention to conduct a historical research as done by various western writers while writing on the life and personality of Jesus or to follow the western scholarship of historiography. Secondly their hatred towards Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW) is apparent from the choice of words. They never bothered to

¹⁴⁹ Stobart, preface 2.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Khurram Qadir, 66.

¹⁵² Stobart, preface, 2.

¹⁵³ William Muir, vol. 1. iii.

¹⁵⁴ Stobart, preface, 2.

hide their malice which was quite obvious in the preface of their works. This was not unusual for the imperialist ruling class whose very purpose of writing was to prove inferiority of Islam, the Prophet of Islam and who equated the native people with animals.

Source Material:

Johnstone based his book on the information he gathered from sources like Gibbon, Carlyle, Edward Lane, William Muir, a few German and French books and Hughes's Dictionary of Islam. Completely ignoring the Muslim sources and the key of historiographical research, historicity. Contrarily, while writing on Jesus the issue of historicity is of immense importance for the Christian writers like Gabriel Hebert¹⁵⁵ who assigned a separate chapter to this issue and traced it through the parables of Jesus. Nonetheless in case of Muhammad (SAW) - The Prophet of Islam, no such attempt was made to follow the lead of western history.

It also indicates his incompetence to understand the Muslim languages, thus putting his entire work in doubt and give rise to a major question, as to why a person chooses a subject to work on when he is unable to understand the original sources¹⁵⁶.

This can also be put in another way, whether he was interested, in the first place, to ponder on the original sources or he felt confident that his predecessors have produced enough authentic knowledge which surpasses the importance of original sources. In the words of

¹⁵⁵ Gabriel Hebert, *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History*, 39-48.

¹⁵⁶ This question is already discussed in chapter one in detail.

Norman Daniel, "lack of interest rather than ignorance characterized the catholic European stance"¹⁵⁷. R. W Southern, accordingly, called this the age of ignorance, criticizing the behavior of west in general. The information was dispersed, but nobody cared to collect and sift it¹⁵⁸.

It similarly makes the reader curious of the intensions of the writer who fails to see or find the point of view of the person he is discussing, hence compromising on Objectivity. Stanely Lane Poole claims:

"Things are constantly being said, written and preached about the Arab Prophet and the religion he taught, of which an elementary acquaintance with him would show the absurdity. No one would dare to treat the ordinary classics of European literature in this fashion; or, if he did, his exposure would immediately ensue"¹⁵⁹.

The book is a narrative lacking proper evidence and references which the writer felt "will burden my pages"¹⁶⁰ thus he made a general acknowledgement in his preface to the books he consulted in writing his book. The citation of books lack proper methodology, the year of publication of the books are not mentioned that creates a problem of contemporarity. It is not possible to know when these books were published and whether they covered the information available in the nineteenth century. It can be inferred that the writer wanted to conceal his weakness of not consulting the relevant, contemporary sources. It can also be assessed that the author presumed that his readers are well aware of these sources and he felt no need to give complete references. Again indicating that the book was not intended for the Muslim readers and either he was unaware of the historical scholarship or he felt no need to implement it.

¹⁵⁷ Norman Daniel, 16

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Stanely Lane Poole, introduction v

¹⁶⁰ Johnstone, preface, viii.

As a result, in the first chapter, only two references are given. First one is an explanation of Buddhism¹⁶¹, without mentioning the source - in other words, a reference without a reference. The second one is taken from Burton's Pilgrimage, an incomplete reference, as no bibliography is given at the end of the book. In the same reference he mentioned Palgrave without any further information - no mention of the book or the full name of the writer¹⁶². The second chapter contains only three references, following the same pattern. First one is about a tradition that lacks mentioning the source¹⁶³. The second one is his personal comment while criticizing the Prophet of Islam's (SAW) dislike for music and poetry. He gave examples of two poets to elaborate his point, one of Swinburne, who was "dead to music" and Robert Browning who loved music¹⁶⁴. The third reference is again a comment devoid of source, where while discussing poetry, he rated the old poetry of Arabia as best of its kind and commented that this kind of poetry was not "suspended" in Kaaba anymore¹⁶⁵.

Stobart on the other hand, started his preface by citing the names of all the writers and books that he consulted in the course of writing his book. He particularly referred to William Muir and declared his book as "the best on the subject" and regarded it as a "guide"¹⁶⁶ while writing on the subject. The same William Muir who called the Christian yardstick a "purer morality"¹⁶⁷ and stated that he is going to apply "cannons of Christian criticism" in explaining the traditions and Seerah of Muhammad (SAW) The Prophet of Islam¹⁶⁸. Bauben after examining Muir's work concluded that he furthered the medieval opinions and compromised on

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁶² Ibid., 12.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Stobart, preface.

¹⁶⁷ William Muir, Introduction, lxv.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pli.

objectivity¹⁶⁹. Even after having full access to the Muslim sources, being an administrator in the sub-continent, he failed to give a realistic picture that was supposed to be the duty of a biographer/historian¹⁷⁰. He professed that Muir's attitude is "confrontational" towards the Muslims¹⁷¹.

For the translation of the Holy Quran, Stobart relied on Sale's translation¹⁷². Johnstone also not only used it but pronounced that this is "in many respects unsurpassed"¹⁷³. George Sale, translated the Holy Quran in 1734 and his translation was considered as the first English translation from the original Arabic. Sale properly studied Arabic and was serving in the society for the promotion of Christian knowledge in London. His translation remained dominant in western world for almost a century and a half. Yet his translation contained condemnatory statements, thus he was accused by the Egyptian government as having included "objectionable comments in his preliminary discourse" and copies of his Koran were withdrawn from the Library of the American University at Cairo¹⁷⁴.

Even Stanely Lane Poole criticized George Sale's translation of the Holy Quran accusing him of presenting Quran in "tangled English and heavy quart". He said,

"...his version then appeared in a clumsy octavo, with most undesirable type and paper; finally it has come out in a cheap edition, of which it need only be said that utility rather than taste has been consulted. One can hardly

¹⁶⁹ Bauben, 309,311.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 308. This pattern was followed by the next generation of writers too. Entire chapters were written with scanty references by Tor Andrae and Emile Dermenghem both.

¹⁷² Stobart, preface, 2.

¹⁷³ Johnstone, preface, viv.

¹⁷⁴ P. K. Hitti, *Islam and the West*, 54.

blame anyone for refusing to look even at the outsides of these volumes. And the inside..... the matter itself, is by no means calculated to tempt a reluctant reader¹⁷⁵.

It also shows the incompetence of Stobart and Johnstone to understand Arabic and places their entire work below standard compromising on Objectivity and Authenticity, when they were unable to consult any Muslim source leaving aside the primary sources, namely Quran and Hadith.

Beside Muir, Stobart also cited the names of many western authors and their books (without giving the year of their publications or place of publication), which proved to be vital in his work and provided “valuable aid” to him¹⁷⁶. The book has more references /footnotes as compared to Johnstone, but all of them are western sources. Even for history and geography of Arabia, he urged the reader to study “The geography of Arabia” by Rev. Mr. Forster¹⁷⁷. He called the Arabian historical record as “manufactured, contradictory and foolish”, thus trusted on the information he gathered from the books of the Old Testament¹⁷⁸.

Stobart gave a genealogical table of the family of Coreish (Quraish) and the ancestors of Mahomet¹⁷⁹. He adapted the spellings from the traditional Christian approach of deforming the original name “Muhammad”¹⁸⁰. They developed different versions of the word Muhammad with the intention of giving it wrong or devilish meaning¹⁸¹. For the table he advised the reader to consult Sale, Muir and Prideaux, Muslim sources are nowhere to be seen. Although Muhammad

¹⁷⁵ Stanely Lane Poole, introduction, vi.

¹⁷⁶ Stobart, preface 2

¹⁷⁷ Ibid 14

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 14-17. Tor Andrae, 18, Tor Andrae followed the similar mind set and quoted “Church father Nilus” while explaining the Arab history.

¹⁷⁹ Stobart, 27.

¹⁸⁰ Yahiya Emerick, “Muhammad in Western Literature”, Appendix to *The Life and Work of Muhammad*, (Alpha: Penguin group, USA, Inc, 2002) ,299.

¹⁸¹ P. k. Hitti, *Islam and the West*, 54-55

(SAW)'s genealogical table is given in almost every Muslim source such as Ibne Saad¹⁸² , Tabri¹⁸³ and Ibne Ishaq¹⁸⁴. To provide logical base to his argument, he heavily quoted from the Christian sources, within the text, for example, book of Job, Herodotus etc.¹⁸⁵. At places, he gave explanations or commented without producing a source, for example, while talking about the idol of Taif¹⁸⁶, he suggested that, "They [people of Taif] were jealous of the superior fame of the Meccan shrine" but gave no proof of his claim¹⁸⁷.

He has also given the detail of the Prophet's time that he spent in the custody of Halima - his nurse, along with the incident of opening of his heart by the Angels to purify him and gift him with Prophetic life. But after this detail, in a foot note, he declared it lacking the historical proof¹⁸⁸. He claimed that only Quran can be consulted to find the truth about Him and there is no mention of such a story in Quran directly. He then mentions Surah Al- Insharah claiming that some present this Surah as a proof of this incident but in his opinion, this was other way round, i.e., the Surah incited people to weave such a story. In saying so he again neglected the Muslim historical sources, which presents a detailed account of the incident.

This incident is narrated by Muhammad bin Umar in detail in Tabaqat-e Ibne-Saad¹⁸⁹, as well as in Ibne ishaq¹⁹⁰ who cited two narrators, Jahm b. Abu Jahm the client of al- Harith b. Hatib al-Jumahi on the authority of Abdullah b. Jafar b. Abu Talib and Thaur b. Yazid from

¹⁸² Ibne Saad, vol I, 84-88.

¹⁸³ Al Tabri, vol ii, 23, 43-46.

¹⁸⁴ Ibne Ishaq, 3-4.

¹⁸⁵ Stobart, 31.

¹⁸⁶ A place near Makkah.

¹⁸⁷ Stobart 31.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 47.

¹⁸⁹ Ibne Saad, 170-172.

¹⁹⁰ Ibne Ishaq, 71-72.

Khalid b. Madan al-Kalai. The latter narrated the incident from The Prophet of Islam (Saw) himself. The same incident is quoted by Tabri, narrated by Abu Zar Ghaffari¹⁹¹.

As mentioned earlier both books are devoid of any bibliography. Johnstone, in the preface of the book provided a short list of books which he claimed were easily accessible in English for the students and could perform two functions:

- Give a sound knowledge of the whole subject
- Guide to the best original authorities¹⁹²

The first book he referred to was of William Muir's *Life of Mahomet and the Early Caliphate* (Smith & Elder), then *Hughes Dictionary of Islam* (Allen)..... W. G. Palgrave's *Central and Eastern Arabia* (Macmillan); *Palmer's Quran* (Clarendon Press), *Sale's Koran* and a few more. Altogether only twelve books are named; none of them is a Muslim source¹⁹³.

Stobart, also, followed the same pattern. His first preference was also William Muir, besides him *Sale's Quran* and his *Preliminary Discourse* and Notes, Freeman - *The Saracens*, Forster- *Geography of Arabia*, Kasimirski - *Koran*, Irving - *Life of Mahomet*..... Kennedy, The Rev. J. - *Christianity and the religions of India*, Hughes, The Rev. T. P. - *Notes on Muhammadanism*, altogether eighteen books are given in the preface only¹⁹⁴. Interestingly, both writers failed to mention the year of publication of any book, neither have they followed the proper methodology of writing the names of the book. Still both have given indices at the end of

¹⁹¹ Al Tabri, vol. 2, 62.

¹⁹² Johnstone, preface, viii.

¹⁹³ Ibid., ix.

¹⁹⁴ Stobart, preface.

their respective books. One must say, Stobart index¹⁹⁵ is much extensive as compared to Johnstone's¹⁹⁶.

This seemed as a trend deeply embedded in the minds of the Christian writers and transmitted to the next generation of writers as Tor Andrae¹⁹⁷ and Emile Dermenghem¹⁹⁸ have also not given any bibliographies but both have provided indices.

On the other hand Johnstone included three Appendices, which are lacking in Stobart's work. First one, appendix A¹⁹⁹ is about "Women and the future life" trying to prove that Muslim women neither have a soul nor they have any life after death. For that he quoted an incomplete tradition of the Holy Prophet (SAW) saying

"Hell was for the most part peopled with women"²⁰⁰

This tradition continues to tell the reason for the above - as they are not thankful to their husbands and complain a lot²⁰¹, which Johnstone forgot to state. He fails to understand the strategy of negative reinforcement²⁰² where the mention of punishment refrains (a person) from committing the undesired act.

To prove his point he quoted an Egyptian scholar Tewfik Pasha's (who according to him is quite esteemed) saying about his wives,

¹⁹⁵ Stobart, 239-254.

¹⁹⁶ Johnstone, 235-238.

¹⁹⁷ Tor Andrae, 192-196.

¹⁹⁸ Emile Dermenghem, 341-353.

¹⁹⁹ Johnstone, 231.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Mukhtasir Sahih Bukhari, 91.

²⁰² Negative reinforcement means that a response or behavior is strengthened by avoiding a negative outcome. For example a child is informed by his mother that in case he does something unacceptable he will have to receive punishment. The fear of punishment stops the child from performing the undesirable acts.

“for them, you know, existence ends absolutely with death”²⁰³

There is no proof of such a thing in Quran or Hadith, as Johnstone himself acknowledges in the first line of his appendix, quoting a reference of a verse of the Holy Quran and not the verse or translation itself. The Surah is Al-Ahzab, verse number 35, pronouncing,

“Verily, the Muslims men and women, the believers men and women, the men and women who are obedient, the men and women who are truthful, the men and women who are patient, the men and women who are humble, the men and women who give sadaqat, the men and women who observe saum, the men and women who guard their chastity and the men and women who remember Allah with their hearts and tongues, Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward”²⁰⁴

Imam Bukhari narrated a Hadith from Abu Hurairah stating, that one day [Hazrat] Jabrail (AS) came to the Holy Prophet (SAW) and said that [Hazrat] Khadijah is bringing food and water for you, when she comes, give her salam from me and Allah and congratulate her of a palace in Jannah (Heaven) made of pearls....²⁰⁵.

Both the verse of the Holy Quran and the Hadith verify that the initial thesis of this appendix is incorrect. As said earlier, Johnstone cited the verse number but instead of establishing the truth on the basis of the Original sources of Islam he totally negated it on the basis of a statement of a person who is honorable from Christian standards.

The second appendix dealt with the issue of “The Mussalman Calendar”²⁰⁶ as he put it. It discusses the start of the Muhammadan era from the First of Muharram in the year of Hijra instead of, from the flight of the Prophet from Makkah, but failed to produce any reference to

²⁰³ Johnstone 232.

²⁰⁴ Surah Al Ahzab, xxxiii, verse 35, translated by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al- Hilali. Al Harmain Islamic Foundation(Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers, 2001)

²⁰⁵ Mukhtasir Sahih Bukhari, 91.

²⁰⁶ Johnstone 232

prove his argument. He has given the procedure of converting the Hijri year(A.H) into Christian year (A.D) and left the vice versa declaring it to be “even more complicated”²⁰⁷, he took it from H.H. Wilson but no further details were given regarding the name of the book etc. It seems that he took it for granted that his readers know these writers well and he considered it sufficient to mention the name of the writer only. It again gives a hint to the expected readership of the book - it was meant for the Christians only.

Next he talked about the change of system of calendar for the Muslims. He, following the precedent, that is, without giving a reference stated that the old Arab calendar was Luni-Solar like the Greeks and taken from the Jews²⁰⁸, adding intercalary months²⁰⁹ but The Prophet of Islam (SAW) changed it in his Farewell pilgrimage. As a source he cited the verse number 38 of Surah ix [the name of the surah is absent]. The verse number 38 of Surah ix that is Surah Al-Tauba does not deal with this issue, it is verse number36, stating,

“verily, the number of months with Allah is twelve months, so was it ordained by Allah on the day when He created the Heavens and the earth;.....”

Same issue is discussed in Tabaqat-e-Ibne Saad²¹⁰only reiterating the claim of the Quran and also by Ibne Ishaq²¹¹ while explaining the farewell pilgrimage. Johnstone recorded that Islam retained the old Arab names of the months which were so named after the seasons. He blamed that owing

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Insertion of a leap day, week or month into some calendar years to make the calendar follow the seasons or moon phases. Reference taken from Wikipedia.

²¹⁰ Ibne Saad, 520

²¹¹ Ibne Ishaq, 651

to the “lunar computation” the months kept changing their position and “the names were often absurdly at variance with the reality of the season”²¹².

The third appendix comprised of “An Original Despatch of Muhammad”²¹³[SAW]. It discusses the different summons the Prophet of Islam (SAW) sent to different states, hoping and quoting William Muir, that they will recover the original dispatches to the Christian chiefs. He professed that the original letter sent to Heraclius, the King of Persia by the Prophet of Islam (SAW) was discovered by some French travelers at a convent in Upper Egypt and Dr. P. Badger declared it to be genuine. He thus included the translation of the said letter, done by Dr. P. Badger²¹⁴. Although he acknowledged that the original text is preserved in the Muslim sources yet he just mentioned the name of the narrator-Ibne Abbas, excluding any proper Muslim source and reference. Interestingly these letters are present in many Muslim sources, for example Ibne Saad²¹⁵ have given these letters in detail on the authority of Ibne Abbas. Ibne Ishaq²¹⁶ has also given these letters from the same narrator. Tabri on the other hand quoted Ibne Ishaq²¹⁷ while narrating the letters.

One can conclude that these dynamic personalities that leave unchangeable imprints on the course of history deserve to be studied and pondered over repeatedly. It is not enough to develop a stereotype based on prejudices and biases and then follow it blindly over the centuries ignoring the availability of new sources or methodological changes that could alter the very way of looking at the personality. Said has argued that if Shakespeare can be re discovered in every

²¹² Johnstone, 233

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 234.

²¹⁵ Ibne Saad, vol. 2, 29-64

²¹⁶ Ibne Ishaq ,652-659.

²¹⁷ Al Tabri, 263-272.

new century with a new vigor and dimension then why this right has been denied to the Prophet of Islam (SAW)²¹⁸.

²¹⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism reconsidered*, 348.

Chapter 3

Analysis of the facts and interpretations

Throughout the books the prominent thoughts focused by both writers include:

- Muhammad (SAW) lacked originality
- He (SAW) most probably had access to Biblical sources and was continuously reading the Old and New Testament²¹⁹
- There were people who provided him with inside information regarding Christianity²²⁰
- He combined the information along with his imagination to form a new religion²²¹.

Both the books under consideration are basically dealing with the life of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) but both authors extended the scope of the books till later times in the history of Muslims and Islam. Johnstone started his work from the pre Islamic Arabia and widened it till the event of Karbala way after the death of the Prophet of Islam (SAW). Whereas, Stobart though also commenced his work with the history and geography of Arabia stretched it till Muslim rule in India. Therefore for the sake of argument and for comparison, this study will focus on certain events similar in both accounts confining to the Prophet's life time only. It is quite intriguing to note that the focus of these writings is on the choice of events from the entire life history of the

²¹⁹ Stobart, 136,141.

²²⁰ Emile Dermenghem, 103-105.

²²¹ Norman Daniel, 14.

Prophet of Islam (SAW) and time and energies were spent on "microscopic examination of different incidents.....with the object of stretching insignificant events for casting a shade on the Prophet"²²² (SAW).

Norman Daniel believes that Christian polemics became specialized in their critique of Islam with the increasing power of Muslims and decreasing authority of Christians²²³. Therefore the choice of certain events and focus on them while totally ignoring others throw lights on the mental make-up of the writers. It also strengthens the belief that these writings followed a similar pattern. Norman Daniel is also of the opinion that the sole purpose of the popular authors of the west was to "amuse" their reader than to produce any academic quality work, therefore their approach and style in writing is unhistorical and not based on research²²⁴.

1- Conditions before Islam

Johnstone in the very beginning of his work while talking about the dormant Arabia and the political powers around it regrettably admits that by the end of the sixth century "Christianity itself was, alas! torn by bitter strife and faction"²²⁵ though he also mentions the decline of Persia but the style of writing and the choice of words bring into light his biasness at the onset of his work. For example Stobart also laments that Arabs were resistant to Christianity and in this reference quoted William Muir (to support his argument) who was of the same

²²² S. Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi, forward in Zafar Ali Qureshi, *Prophet Muhammad and His Western Critics: A Critique of W. Montgomery Watt and Others* vol I (Lahore: Idara Maarif Islami, 1992), viii.

²²³ Norman Daniel, 14.

²²⁴ ibid, 37.

²²⁵ Johnstone, 1.

opinion, considering Arabs “hostile to the humble and forgiving precepts of Christian morality”,²²⁶

The language hints to the prejudiced approach of the writer who could not hide his attachment and appreciation of his own religious faith and his defiance of the Arab faith. This approach is again apparent as Johnstone talks about the “Muslims before Islam” while presenting four Arabs²²⁷ who were in search of “God” and quite proudly deduced that three of them found Him[God] in Christ whereas the fourth one died searching for it. The entire incident is reported without mentioning the source although the incident is narrated by Ibne Khuldun²²⁸.

Johnstone coins the idea that the time was already ripe for the appearance of a new race and a new Prophet²²⁹. A confusion arises as in the preface of the book he refrained from accepting Muhammad (SAW) as a Prophet and Islam as a religion, but in the very first chapter of the book called him the “Prophet of Arabia”²³⁰. Nevertheless he also provided the reason for the emergence of a new prophet to be the downfall of the great Roman Empire. William Muir is of the same view as he claimed “the material for a great change was here. But it required to be wrought; and Muhammad was the workman”,²³¹ Stanley Lane – Poole has similar opinion as he said, “....a general feeling that a change was at hand; a prophet was expected”,²³² in other words undermining the immensity of the work done by the Prophet of Islam (SAW) and making him an opportunist who took benefit of the situation and used the circumstances at hand to fill the vacuum of religion.

²²⁶ Stobart, 24.

²²⁷ Johnstone, 41. Four men included Warqa, Ubaid Ullah, Uthman and Zaid. The latter died before finding God.

²²⁸ Ibne Khuldun, *Tareekh – I – Ibne Khuldoon vol I, Rasool aur Khulqa e Rasool*, translated by Allama Hakim Ahmad Hussain Allahabadi (Karachi: Nafees Academy, 1981), 29.

²²⁹ Johnstone, 1.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ William Muir, xcix.

²³² Stanley Lane – Poole, xxiv.

It also negates the Muslim claim that whatever the Prophet of Islam (SAW) said was revealed as authenticated by the Holy Quran, "He has never said a word of his own choice. Whatever he (Muhammad) said was revealed"²³³. In chapter III of his book Johnstone seemed perturbed while observing that "there was no decline of paganism or idol-worship at Mecca"²³⁴, instead it was on its peak. The political and economic benefits related with Kaaba and its worship rituals promoted and strengthened the desire to keep the status quo thus making the "work of revolution" a very difficult job²³⁵. Still he failed to give credit to Muhammad (SAW) for the great transformation he achieved.

Stobart while explaining the geography of Arabia and the nature of Arabs identifies five sources²³⁶. Among them the foremost is "the Scripture record of the Old Testament" which he declared as the "only sure guide to penetrate the darkness of their early history"²³⁷. He treated the Arabian History from the Christian perspective. Anything or any piece of knowledge which supported the information provided by the Old Testament was highly appreciated²³⁸. On the other hand Arabian sources were of least importance to him. Although the Muslim sources have abundant information regarding the pre - Islamic Arabia such as Ibn - e - Saad in the beginning of Tabaqat has narrated the religious, social and political conditions of Arabs in detail²³⁹. While Tabri has an entire chapter on this topic²⁴⁰, Ibn-e-Ishaq also commenced his work with a background of Arab history²⁴¹.

²³³ Al Quran., Al Najam, Verse no. 3,4.

²³⁴ Johnstone., 40.

²³⁵ Ibid., 41.

²³⁶ Sources being: Old Testament, Greek and Roman record, Present names of places, regions and tribes, information gathered by modern travelers, Arab traditions and historians.

²³⁷ Stobart, 13, 14.

²³⁸ Ibid., 15.

²³⁹ Ibne Saad vol i,97-145.

²⁴⁰ Al Tabri vol ii, Bab I, 23-43.

²⁴¹ Ibne Ishaq 3-70.

Johnstone while commenting on the nature of the Arabs has used very harsh words calling them “cunning, revengeful, faithless guides, superstitious, treacherous”²⁴². In support of his argument he has given references of Burton and Palgrave. The former is quoted without following the methodology of giving references, saying’ “the baser sort of badawi is never to be trusted: he is a traitor born”²⁴³. This view is supported by information present in Muslim sources such as Ibne Khuldun in the very beginning of *Tarikhe Ibne Khuldun* gave the conditions of Arabs before Islam but he suggested that their condition was gradually improving²⁴⁴. Interestingly in the next chapter while criticizing the Prophet of Islam (SAW) Johnstone accused him (SAW) of destroying the Arab for creating Muslims²⁴⁵. He moved on and proved his point by saying that Muslims deliberately painted the pagan Arabs in worst form to highlight the importance of Muhammad the Prophet of Islam (SAW). In saying so it seems that he had forgotten what he previously claimed about the Arabs before Islam. He argued that the Arabs were sophisticated people, admirers of poetry, eloquent and tolerant.

Stanley Lane – Poole also supported this argument by providing a description of the qualities of pagan Arabs. He considers them to be fierce in war, hospitable even to the enemies when time comes, brave, friendly, generous and proud²⁴⁶ while at the same time he pointed the worst attributes of the city Arabs being dicing and drinking owing to the abundant money they used to earn through trade²⁴⁷. The choice of words and phrases are of extreme importance as they indicate the biasness and extreme hatred for Islam and Prophet of Islam (SAW) as he alleged him (SAW) of using his expertise of language in crushing his enemies

²⁴² Johnstone, 10.

²⁴³ Ibid., 12.

²⁴⁴ Ibne Khuldun, 28-29.

²⁴⁵ Johnstone, 13

²⁴⁶ Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Speeches & Statements of the Prophet Muhammad*, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1905), Introduction xiv-xv.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., xx.

through Quran which according to him, "he boasted" and which was, "forged and perfected under the black tenets of Bedouins"²⁴⁸. He denunciated Muhammad (SAW) of being dull to music²⁴⁹ and compared music with the prayer call (Azan), covertly criticizing Bilal's²⁵⁰ voice and style of calling people for the prayers. Stobart has similar views about Arabs calling them "addicted to revenge, careless of human life, bigoted, selfish and filthy" haughty tempered and revengeful against the "humble and forgiving precepts of Christian morality"²⁵¹. The above mentioned views are in accordance with the nineteenth century western thought common in the writings of western writers and easily traceable to the medieval times.

The incidence of the attack of Abraha on Kaaba was greatly undermined by Johnstone, no details given of the war and its result. The whole incident is summarized in a few lines²⁵² initially, then re-disused in the next chapter briefly saying that the entire army "perished under a mysterious pestilence" with only one survivor who died after narrating the story²⁵³. The sentence ends with an exclamation mark showing his disbelief in the entire incident. Emile Dermenghem could not believe the coming of birds and referred to it as a legend but commented that the entire army returned without even entering Makkah because of "an epidemic of small pox"²⁵⁴. Quran tells the story of this attack in Surah Al Feel²⁵⁵.

"Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the owners of the Elephant? Did He not make their plot go astray? And He sent against them birds, in flocks, striking them with stones of baked clay. And He made them like stalks".

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 15.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 16.

²⁵⁰ First person (a freed slave) appointed for Azan (call for prayer) by the Prophet (SAW) himself.

²⁵¹ Stobart, 13, 24.

²⁵² Johnstone, 29

²⁵³ Ibid., 40

²⁵⁴ Emile Dermenghem, 21.

²⁵⁵ Al Quran, Al Feel, Surah 105.

Later he acknowledged the “supernatural aid” Quraish received and deduced that it helped in securing Kaaba from any further foreign attacks²⁵⁶. On the other hand Muslim sources offer a thorough description of the incident including the construction of the new Kaaba in Yemen by Abraha, reason of his attack on Kaaba and the treatment he received from the birds (Ababeel). Ibn - e - Saad²⁵⁷ and Ibn - e - Ishaq²⁵⁸ both can be quoted in this reference. Stobart on the other hand totally ignored this incident and not even mentioned it. Instead his focus in the initial chapter is on finding the Arab History from Christian sources, freely quoting from Muir, Gibbon, Forster, Pliny and the Gospels etc. He found the early religion of the Arabs to be worshipping the stars, planets, angels and their images. The source of this information is “the book of Job and Herodotus”²⁵⁹. The seven circuits around Kaaba were found similar to the movement of heavenly bodies²⁶⁰. Lane – Poole has also mentioned this in reference to the religious practices of Arabs²⁶¹. He found it strange that the religious practices of Arabs were consistent with the biblical information and he traced it to the presence of Jews and Christians in the vicinity²⁶².

The above discussion is consistent with the argument provided in the beginning that the western/British writers developed the practice of judging Islam from a Christian perspective and anything deviating from it was treated as abnormal.

²⁵⁶ Johnstone, 44.

²⁵⁷ Ibne Saad,141-145

²⁵⁸ Ibn Ishaq,20-30.

²⁵⁹ Stobart, 31.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.,32.

²⁶¹ Stanley Lane – Poole, xx.

²⁶² Ibid., 39-40.

2- Birth And Early Life Of The Prophet Of Islam (SAW)

Stobart mockingly talks about the “wonderful stories” related with the “gestation and birth” of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) entirely dismissing the proofs available in Muslim sources²⁶³. For Tor Andrae a German writer whose book although published in 1932, yet is a clear indication of the continuation of the thought processes of the 19th century, these stories were “miraculous things” associated with many religious leaders including Jesus²⁶⁴. In fact Stobart accuses that many of them were borrowed from Christianity as in his words these are similar to “many legendary tales which resemble those told of our Blessed Saviour in the apocryphal Gospels”²⁶⁵. Tor Andrae is of the view that the Prophet’s (SAW) life in Makkah lacks any authenticity as no historical record is available for it. The available information is based on legends only having no historical value²⁶⁶.

Johnstone on the other hand, not even made a single reference to this issue while he talks about the time when he (SAW) was sent with Halima – his foster mother. He briefly mentions the miracles related with his stay with Banu Saad and focuses on the incident of “Shaqq -e- Saddar” – Opening of heart. He attributed it to “some mysterious ailment” which resulted in “occasional fits”, may be caused by being possessed by a Jinn – which he explained as’ “spirits formed of fire”²⁶⁷. Tor Andrae compared this incident with the Australian Sorcerers who claimed that “a spirit seizes them, cuts open their hearts, and places

²⁶³ Stobart, 45.

²⁶⁴ Tor Andrae, 35.

²⁶⁵ Stobart, 45.

²⁶⁶ Tor Andrae, 23,31.

²⁶⁷ Johnstone, 46.

a rock-crystal inside, which gives them the faculty of clairvoyance"²⁶⁸. In other words calling Muhammad (SAW) a sorcerer as the pagan Arabs used to call him (SAW). The idea could be found in William Muir's work which is repeatedly referred to. Muir presented this incident as a proof that Muhammad (SAW) the Prophet of Islam suffered from Epilepsy²⁶⁹. Emile Dermenghem quite contrarily after studying the entire life of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) concluded that "one finds no traces, as it seems, of this pathological state in Mahomet" but also compared the black stain removed by the angels from the heart of Muhammad (SAW) with the "original sin from which only Mary and Jesus were free"²⁷⁰. Bauben after thorough discussion proved that Muir conceived this idea from "Greek superstition"²⁷¹, he also states,

"The symptoms of epilepsy which medical evidence gives and the historical testimony of robust health of Muhammad [Saw] stand in sharp contradiction and disprove the theory"²⁷².

Johnstone found a resemblance between the first verse of the Surah 94 [Al Insharah]²⁷³ saying' "Have We not opened thy breast?" with the Psalmists's prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord"²⁷⁴. Stobart has also talked about the "strange stories" related with the early childhood of Muhammad (SAW) the Prophet of Islam including the above incident of opening of the heart, and in the foot note made two observations, firstly considering these stories to be the work of later faithful followers whose imagination wove

²⁶⁸ Tor Andrae, 36.

²⁶⁹ William Muir, vol.1. 21.

²⁷⁰ Emile Dermenghem, 33.

²⁷¹ Bauben, 27

²⁷² Ibid., 28

²⁷³ Name of the Surah is not mentioned by Johnstone.

²⁷⁴ Johnstone 47.

them, secondly, he argued that these stories were fabricated as an aftermath of the above mentioned verse of the Holy Quran²⁷⁵. Although the instance of Shaqq-e-Saddar is present in all Muslim sources including Ibne Khuldun²⁷⁶, Tabri²⁷⁷ and Ibne Saad²⁷⁸. Stobart continued this theory till later time in his life when he used to go to the cave Hira for meditation and infers that his "nightly wanderings were followed by ecstasies and trances and convulsive fits"²⁷⁹, thus pronouncing the entire basis of Islam as vulnerable. It seems apparent that miracles related with the life of Jesus are acceptable to them beyond doubt but extraordinary events in the life of Muhammad (SAW) were not tolerable to them. The choice of words and the style of writing not only depict their hatred but also indicate that the writings were not a result of original research, but a conscious effort to prove the thesis they developed and believed as a religious community.

3- Christianity, Judaism and Islam

An idea greatly focused and patronized by the Christian writers is, that Muhammad (SAW), the Prophet of Islam borrowed the basic ideas of Islam from Christianity and Judaism. They resentfully accept that Christianity at that time was not in a condition to attract new converts because of internal strife and factions and because Arabs were quite resistant to change as far as religion was concerned. But its mere presence in the vicinity of

²⁷⁵ Stobart, 46,47.

²⁷⁶ Ibne Khuldun,34.

²⁷⁷ Al Tabri, 62.

²⁷⁸ Ibne Saad, 170-172.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.,62.

Arabia along with Jews residing near Madina influenced the local people including Muhammad (SAW) the Prophet of Islam. As Johnstone acknowledged the fact that Christianity and Judaism, “none of these had had power to move deeply the Arab soul” but Muhammad (SAW) the Prophet of Islam “succeeded with a strange mixture of both, compounded by the alchemy of his own genius”²⁸⁰. This also justifies his claim in the preface of his book when he called Islam a “religious and political power which he [Muhammad (SAW)] founded” and which “after thirteen centuries, seems - as a religion”²⁸¹. He propounded the idea that Muhammad (SAW) while traveling with his uncles learnt a lot about Christianity and Judaism and this knowledge was later reflected in the verses of Quran²⁸². Stanley Lane – Poole felt impelled to comment that “without the influence of other religionshe could never have come forward as the preacher of Islam”²⁸³.

Emile Dermenghem later seems to profess the same views confirming the continuity of thought²⁸⁴. Not only denying Muslim claim that Quran was revealed, supported by many verses of the Quran such as, “It is for us to collect it and to give you the ability to recite it”²⁸⁵ but also negating the claim of Originality by Islam. Interestingly S. M. Hafeez proved through argument that Christianity started as an off shoot of Judaism and initially they used Old Testament as they had none of their own thus ruining the claim of Christianity to be Original²⁸⁶. Instead of identifying the truth in Islam and recognizing the similarities between Christianity, Judaism and Islam, their entire effort appears to be focused on finding differences and drawbacks in Islam.

²⁸⁰ Johnstone, 36.

²⁸¹ Ibid., preface ,vii.

²⁸² Ibid.,50

²⁸³ Stanley Lane – Poole, xxvi.

²⁸⁴ Emile Dermenghem, 38.

²⁸⁵ Al Quran, Al Qiyamah,17.

²⁸⁶ S. M. Hafeez, 15.

Stobart is similarly of the opinion that during his (SAW) journeys to different areas Muhammad (SAW) must have come in contact with the Christians thus gathering information and observing their religious ceremonies, symbols etc. which developed his (SAW) understanding of Christianity. He is further “assured” that the Prophet (SAW) had very close relations with Christians and Jews; therefore he acquired the concept of Oneness of God and other related concepts by reading their books and by listening to the eloquent speeches of “bishop of Najran” in the annual fair of Ocatz and must have deduced that as both Christians and Jews talk about the Oneness of God so there must be some truth in both these religions²⁸⁷. Johnstone likewise cited the influence of the speeches of the bishop of Najran on the mind of Muhammad (SAW) in the annual fair of Uqaz and highlighted it²⁸⁸.

Dermenghem similarly cited the market of Okadh, emphasized the presence of Christian priests and traced the impact of these speeches on Muhammad (SAW). She moved one step ahead and traced similarity in these speeches and the verses of the Quran²⁸⁹. She quoted a few lines of the priest’s speech but failed to state the verse of the Quran. Furthermore she continued that his (SAW) associations with Warqa bin Naufal a cousin of Khaijah (RA)²⁹⁰ who was a convert to Christianity, his foster son Zaid who was from a tribe rapidly converting to Christianity and finally Uthman ibne Huweirith – another convert to Christianity, guided him and gave valuable information about a “better faith”²⁹¹. Therefore he formed a new religion combining both and taking guidelines from both²⁹².

²⁸⁷ Stobart, 54-55.

²⁸⁸ Johnstone, 51

²⁸⁹ Emile Dermenghem, 39-40.

²⁹⁰ RA, Razi Allah u Taala (May Allah be happy with Him/Her

²⁹¹ Ibid., 62.

²⁹² Ibid., 56.

. Tor Andrae also share this view that Muhammad (SAW) had worthwhile knowledge of Christianity but he found differences between the prevalent Christianity and the one presented and mentioned by him (SAW), thus he concluded that he (SAW) had not visited any Christian country neither observed their rituals, in fact his (SAW) knowledge was based on secondary sources only²⁹³. The above mentioned statements and arguments are based on hypothetical information, lacking any base in either Christian or Muslim sources, thus undermining the authenticity and objectivity of their work. Quran has clearly established this fact that Muhammad (SAW) was an illiterate person who could not read or write²⁹⁴, thus refuting the above claim that he (SAW) was taught or he (SAW) read books of Christianity. There is more than one verse in the Quran regarding this topic²⁹⁵.

Johnstone could not hide his animosity and one can find bitterness in his language when he gave two reasons of Muhammad's (SAW) not accepting Christianity being "his stubborn family pride" and "the corruption" within Christianity²⁹⁶. His comment throws light on his mind make up as he lamented, "Had he embraced Christianity, the world would have had one religion less, and the calendar of Saints might have one name more!"²⁹⁷

Muir is of the same opinion as he stated that Muhammad (SAW) could not become a Christian because he (SAW) was unable to find pure Christianity²⁹⁸. Stobart also yearned that if he (SAW) would have found "some Philip"²⁹⁹ he might have been a "bright

²⁹³ Tor Andrae, 38

²⁹⁴ Al Quran, Al Ankabut, verse 5.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, Al Jumma, 1, Al Shura, 5, Younas, 27, Al Nahal, 14, Al Furqan, 1.

²⁹⁶ Johnstone, 51.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ William Muir, vol. I. 33-34.

²⁹⁹ Stobart, 66

herald of the cross”³⁰⁰. Fredk. A. Tatford claims that, “had the teachings of the scriptures been presented to Muhammad [SAW] in their purity, it is at least possible.....that Islam would never have developed”³⁰¹. These statements obviously indicate the bias and prejudice these writers had against Islam, the fear they had that the popularity of Muhammad (SAW) had undermined the eminence of Jesus. These writers seem to ignore or refuse to accept the universality of Islam. Islam came to prevail over all religions of the world as it was and is the final and unalterable revelation of Allah which accepted the previous revelations instead of denying them. In repudiating originality and divinity to Islam they followed the medieval thought as followed by Muir too, that Islam was the subconscious activity of Muhammad (SAW) the Prophet of Islam and he was not receiving any messages from outside³⁰². In other words one can say that these writers considered the emergence of Islam as a failure of Christianity and Judaism and owed it to the internal strife and presence of factions among these two prevalent religions of the time.

All incidents of his (SAW) life were illustrated to amount for the occurrence and emergence of a new religion such as Stobart after narrating the “story” of the rebuilding of Kaaba and the part played by the Prophet of Islam (SAW) construed that this occurrence and his role made deep imprints on his mind and in later life “served to confirm his own belief in the divineness of his mission”³⁰³.

Stobart though professed in the preface of his work that his purpose was to “state facts and results, rather than to attribute motives”³⁰⁴, yet in the third chapter commented that the Prophet of Islam (SAW) “at first [was] honestly searching for the light” and then

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Fredk. A. Tatford, Litt. D., *That the World May Know: The Muslim World* volume 4 (Avon: Echoes of Service, 1983), 25.

³⁰² Ibid.,

³⁰³ Stobart, 59-60.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.,preface 2.

“unconsciously..... the demon of spiritual pride and ambitionbegin its subtle work”³⁰⁵. The choice of words and language openly negate his earlier claim of not talking about motives as he continued to lament with “regret the melancholy result of his aspirations”³⁰⁶. He doubts the sincerity of Muhammad (SAW) by saying that if he has been true with his (SAW) search of truth he (SAW) might have found it within Christianity thus supporting the view that truth lies only within Christianity. Contrarily William Muir initially admits his (SAW) sincerity basing his judgment on the reaction of people near him (SAW). He is of the view that relatives could have easily detected deception and forgery as they were the closest and had day to day link with him (SAW) including Abu Talib who presented his unfaltering support to him (SAW) till his death³⁰⁷. But later refuted his initial stance and alleged him (SAW) of “Blasphemy of forging the name of God”³⁰⁸. Johnstone followed the lead of Muir and accepted the sincerity of Muhammad (SAW) because the earlier converts were all close relatives and “whose eyes no weakness of character could escape, nor cloak of hypocrisy hide his true nature”³⁰⁹.

Even after doubting the motives of Muhammad (SAW), Stobart find it difficult to enlist any reason of forming a new religion for whatever possible reasons could there be were analyzed and rejected owing to lack of proof. He is forced to accept that the only possible reason and cause of Islam was to “re – establish in the world what he considered the original simple faith”³¹⁰. A logical argument in this reference could be presented by asking these writers to go through the Muslim sources to find any occasion besides the journey to Syria when he (SAW)

³⁰⁵ Ibid.,65, 66.

³⁰⁶ Stobart, 66

³⁰⁷ William Muir, vol. 1, 32.

³⁰⁸ Ibid,

³⁰⁹ Johnstone, 60.

³¹⁰ Stobart,68.

came in contact with Christians, even when Muhammad (SAW) met Bahira he (SAW) was a young boy.

If we accept that he (SAW) learnt Christian doctrines from Bahira, it's not possible for a young boy to understand and remember everything he heard and then reproduce it in his later life, secondly his encounter with Bahira was very brief, how much can he(SAW) learn in that limited time is also a question. As far as the Christian slave is concerned, his language was not Arabic and Muhammad (SAW) knew no other language. And if he was teaching Muhammad (SAW) new religion, it was very easy for the Quraish to separate him from Muhammad (SAW) keeping in mind the position of slaves in Arab society³¹¹. There was another person in Madina who was specially prepared by the Quraish to accept Islam for a short while and then reaccept Christianity to malign Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW), as mentioned in the Quran³¹².

In fact Quran is not in variance with Biblical or Jewish traditions in general owing to the divine nature of these teachings. This rather strengthen Islam's claim of being a Divine religion. The issue was for the Christians and the Jews who refused to accept Islam's divinity and persisted on proving that Muhammmad (SAW) was a fake Prophet. Thus in order to establish their claims and at the same time addressing the issue of similarity found in the teachings of Islam and Christianity they tried to locate instances in the life of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) when he came in contact with any Christian or Jew and presented them as a prove that he (SAW) borrowed ideas from them.

³¹¹ Shibli Naumani, Syed Suleman Nadwi, *Seerat un Nabi*, vol. 3 (Lahore: Al Misbah,.....), 288- 294.

³¹² Al Quran, Ale Imran, Verse,8.

4- Marriage with Hazrat Khadijah (RT)

Prophet Muhammad's marriage with Hazrat Khadijah (RT) proved to be of quite interest to both writers in particular and western writers in general. The incident is quoted by each with variations lacking references. Stobart confined himself in just giving a brief mention of the marriage restricting to a mere explanation of the incident³¹³ whereas Johnstone moves on to relate another incident in which Hazrat Khadijah "plied him [her father] with wine till he yielded"³¹⁴. Tor Andrae seems to follow the lead and narrated the incident in the same manner³¹⁵. Among the Muslim sources this incident is quoted only by Waqidi whereas both Tabri³¹⁶ and Ibne- Saad³¹⁷ clearly refuted the authenticity of this incident and criticized Waqidi for quoting it. It is quite interesting to note that Muir and others uncritically relied on Waqidi and quoted frequently from it although Bauben quoted Barakat Ahmad and Syed Ahmad, who criticized this and deduced that this "uncritical reliance on al – Waqidi's material reduces the status of the work"³¹⁸. Tabri has emphatically affirmed through references that Hazrat Khadijah's father died well before her marriage with Muhammad (SAW) and it was her uncle who patronized her at the time of her marriage.

Johnstone sarcastically alleged the Prophet (SAW) of denouncing wine "considering how much he thus owed to the fruit of vine"³¹⁹ again repudiating the facts available

³¹³ Stobart, 57.

³¹⁴ Johnstone, 52.

³¹⁵ Tor Andrae, 41.

³¹⁶ Al Tabri, 49-50.

³¹⁷ Ibne Saad, 203-206.

³¹⁸ Bauben, 42.

³¹⁹ Johnstone, 52.

in Muslim sources. To base an allegation of this sort on Muhammad (SAW) on the basis of unreliable information is positively against the criteria of objectivity.

Still later writers like Dermenghem painted a dramatic effect by coloring the picture with her imagination providing a dialogue between first Maiseerah [slave of Khadijah (RT) and Hazrat Khadijah (RT) and later between Muhammad (SAW) and Khadijah (RT). She also supported Johnstone's description of the marriage and tried to justify it by reasoning that as Muhammad was poor and belonged to a "less esteemed clan"³²⁰, her father and tribe were resisting to the marriage therefore she forced him by plying him wine. Tor Andrae contradict her opinion by saying that Muhammad, "came from a family of very high rank", he also admitted that when Allah decides to choose a Prophet, "He chooses first the best tribe, and then the best man"³²¹. Dermenghem also provided with a detailed account of the marriage with minute details without mentioning the source³²². One can easily detect the animosity hidden behind the style of writing and the choice of words and their attempt to see everything related with the Prophet (SAW) from a negative perspective.

³²⁰ Dermenghem, 45-46.

³²¹ Tor Andrae, 33.

³²² Dermenghem, 46-47.

5- The First Revelation and the beginning of Islam

The Muslim sources tell us that prophet hood initiated with the sighting of true dreams which compelled him (SAW) to solitary meditation in the cave of Hira³²³. In his (SAW) fortieth or forty third year while he (SAW) was contemplating in the month of Ramazan Revelations commenced. A case of anachronism is apparent as Johnstone misquotes the holy month to be of Rajab instead of Ramazan. He completely ignored the fact that the true dreams were a precursor of Prophethood and proposed that the solitary meditation was a habit that Muhammad (SAW) developed owing to the time he (SAW) spent as a shepherd³²⁴. Stobart missed the entire background and directly started with the Revelation quoting three surah's of the Quran one after the other, Surah Al Qadar and Surah Al Najam and Surah Al Aalaq respectively, but the writer has avoided the names of the Surah's as usual and restricted himself to the numbers of the Surah's only. Tor Andrae has compared His (SAW) meditation with the "ascetic practices of Syrian Christianity"³²⁵ and tried to prove that Muhammad (SAW) adopted this after observing Christian monks. Dermenghem again brought forth the likeness she found in his (SAW) meditation and the ascetic prayers practiced by Christian monks of the desert³²⁶.

Although both writers differ in presentation of the same facts and sometimes one ignored an aspect of the same incident fervently quoted by the other throughout the work yet when it comes to present any negative aspect their approach is quite similar. As in the case of the

³²³ Ibne Khuldoon, *Tareekh – I – Ibne Khuldoon vol I, Rasool aur Khulafa e Rasool*, translated by Allama Hakim Ahmad Hussain Allahabadi (Karachi: Nafees Academy, 1981), 37.

³²⁴ Johnstone, 55.

³²⁵ Tor Andrae, 43.

³²⁶ Emile Dermenghem, 53.

first Revelation both vehemently stressed on the statement of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) that he thought of jumping from the mountain out of fear³²⁷. Stobart presented him (SAW) as ready for suicide³²⁸ while Johnstone dramatized it by calling it “anguish of mind made his brain reel” as he (SAW) tried to kill himself³²⁹. Still he, ignoring the availability of Ahadith on this topic, left the entire episode in the hands of speculation³³⁰. His stance is obvious as he unequivocally declared that,

“Probably no one will doubt that the whole story was woven by Muhammad [SAW], perhaps only half consciously, out of fragments dimly remembered of Jewish and Christian records”³³¹.

With this evidently goes the claim of objectivity and historicity, as he passed value judgments and failed to see him (SAW) in his time, understand his (SAW) position and emotional suffering as an Arab and a human being. He moved on to cite Sprenger who considered revelation a “veil..... to search the scriptures of Jews and Christians” but inferred that the Arab assessment is most reliable in this context describing the revelation, “partly derived from foreign secret prompters and partly from his own heated imagination”³³².

Stobart had, while discussing the first revelation mentioned an instance in which Quran targeted a person who according to him was the one who initiated the re building of Kaaba in pre Islamic days, and in two different Surah's being Surah Al Qalam and Surah Al Muddasir the Prophet of Islam (SAW) used very strong negative words against him even calling

³²⁷ Ibne Khuldun, foot note, 37

³²⁸ Stobart, 70.

³²⁹ Johnstone, 56.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid., 55-56.

³³² Ibid., 56, 57.

him of “Spurious birth”. For Stobart this was “unworthy of the prophetic character” and showed alarm and surprise that such word were “put into the mouth of the Almighty!”³³³ by including them in Quran. The instance is narrated in Surah Al Qalam of the Quran stating,

“And obey you not everyone who swears much and is a liar or is worthless. A slanderer, going about with calumnies. Hinderer of the good, transgressor, sinful. Cruel, and moreover base – born”³³⁴.

Mufti Muhammad Shafi in his *Maarif - ul - Quran* has identified this particular person to be Walid bin Mughira and authenticated that he was of illegitimate birth³³⁵. Secondly the reason behind such admonition is never probed. Same approach is followed in discussing Sura Al Lahab³³⁶ criticizing Abu Lahab an uncle of the Prophet (SAW) who along with his wife left no opportunity to harm the Prophet (SAW) himself and his followers. Johnstone labeled this short surah of the Quran as “characteristic of Muhammad’s fierce spirit”³³⁷. This also proved the argument presented before that any such happening that might not fall within the so called boundaries of their mind make up set to decipher the life of Muhammad (SAW) is out rightly negated without any effort to find the reality behind it. This issue is raised to counteract the claim of divinity of Quran and support their argument that Quran was not revealed but written by Muhammad (SAW) himself. In nut shell leading to the initial bias that whatever he (SAW) said was forged and based on lies and secondly, everything has to be judged and compared with Christian history as while narrating the occasion of the first public preaching when Ali (RT)

³³³ Stobart, footnote, 74

³³⁴ Al Quran, Al Qalam, verse 10-13.

³³⁵ Mufti Muhammad Shafi, *Maarif - ul - Quran*, vol 8(Karachi: Idara Maarif,2011), 533.

³³⁶ Al Quran, Surah Al Lahab.

³³⁷ Johnstone, 62.

responded immediately, he is called the “Peter Of Islam”³³⁸, and Abu Bakar was praised for serving the “church of Islam”³³⁹.

6- Mi’raj – The Night Journey of the Prophet of Islam (SAW)

As discussed in the beginning of the chapter the focus of the writers is on finding the relevance of Islam and the events in the life of the Prophet (SAW) in borrowing the ideas and events from Christianity and coloring them accordingly to suit the understanding of the Arabs. The occasion of the Night journey or Isra as called by Quran or Miraj provided them with an opportunity to prove their argument. Johnstone furnished the reader with a detailed account of the entire episode without mentioning the source of it. He asked his Christian reader to be reminded of “St. Paul’s mysterious rapture” while reading about the Night journey and accuses Muhammad (SAW) of “blasphemy”³⁴⁰ for putting “his lord” [Jesus] in second heaven as Muslim sources also confirmed it³⁴¹ far below Abraham, Moses and others. Although Ibne Kaseer reported Jesus to be on Fourth heaven instead of second³⁴². The idea of blaming Islam and

³³⁸ Ibid., 64.

³³⁹ Ibid., 69.

³⁴⁰ Johnstone, 82, 83.

³⁴¹ Tabri, 64, Ibne ishaq, 186.

³⁴² Ibne Kaseer, *Tareekh – e – Ibne Kaseer*, vol 3-4, Translated by Prof. Kaukab Shadani, (Karachi: Nafees Academy, 1987), 165.

Muslims doing “blasphemy against Christian doctrines”³⁴³ dated back to the earlier encounters of Islam with Christianity when Christians started judging everything related with Muslims with suspicion. He tried to convince his reader that the idea of Miraj was taken from “rabbinical or apocryphal sources”³⁴⁴. His (SAW) communication with Allah was thought to be the result of developing equivalence with Moses’s “Speaking face to face with God on Mount Sinai”³⁴⁵. Yet what hurt him most was how he (SAW) was shown to be the leader of all the Prophets including Jesus³⁴⁶. This made him call Muhammad (SAW) an “Antichrist” and further accused him (SAW) of having poor imagination and “perverted mind”³⁴⁷.

Stobart avoided the detail account of the incident and referred to Prideaux, Muir and a few others for further details but commented that he (SAW) received this “information through these [old and new Testament] and Jewish sources”³⁴⁸. Muir also dismissed the entire incident by calling it fanciful stories fabricated by the later people³⁴⁹. Bauben criticized Muir and argued that if he can accept the “transfiguration story in the life of Jesus and his bodily ascension” he should have believed in Miraj too³⁵⁰. Karam Shah Al Azhari has given references of different bibles to prove the Christian belief that Jesus ascended to the heaven and met the God³⁵¹. He also quoted ex. foreign minister of Romania who argued that physically it [Miraj] seems impossible but we cannot object on religious grounds as Christians also believe in certain incidents in the life of Jesus which cannot be proved through science and laws of Physics³⁵². Tor

³⁴³ Norman Daniel, 17.

³⁴⁴ Johnstone, 87.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibne Saad, 313.

³⁴⁷ Johnstone, 87

³⁴⁸ Stobart, 141.

³⁴⁹ William Muir, vol. 2. 219.

³⁵⁰ Bauben, 31.

³⁵¹ Karam Shah Al Azhari, *Zia un Nabi*, vol. 2, 488.

³⁵² Ibid., 487-488.

Andrae undermined the significance of the entire incident by calling it a “dream” and commented that the Arabs specially the non-believers gave it more importance than “the Prophet himself desired”³⁵³. The above discussion reinforces the initial claim that mind frame of these writers was set at the onset of the work and failed to overpower their identity and attachment to their religion thus their work lack objectivity.

7- Establishment of a State in Madina and the battle of Badar

The migration of the Prophet (SAW) marked the beginning of a new phase in the lives of the Muslims and Islam. A state was finally established with Muhammad (SAW) as the ruler accepted unanimously by not only the Arabs but the Jews also, living around Madina. The events of the migration are avoided and ignored by both writers. Stobart's comment on his (SAW) stay in Quba (a place near Madina) is worth noticing as it points to the direction the argument is going to lead in the coming chapters. One can easily detect the bias in his approach as he accused him (SAW) of delaying his stay in Quba to make the people of Madina wait for a

³⁵³ Tor Andrae, 50.

longer time in order to prove his importance³⁵⁴. In other words he is of the view that he (SAW) used delayed tactics intentionally to make others feel not only his (SAW) presence but also the significance of his (SAW) authority that he has to exercise later in Madina. The usage of Christian terms as a tool to analyze and explain Muslim terms continued unhindered, as he called Masjid a “temple” and the Imam is called a “Vicar”³⁵⁵.

Johnstone asserted that his (SAW) power was initially spiritual and after establishing strong foothold in religious field he moved to establish the political power³⁵⁶. He [Johnstone] argued that whatever he (SAW) did in Madina had a political motive behind it. Brotherhood was established among the locals and the migrants to avoid jealousies and “secure his power on political side”³⁵⁷. Agreement with Jews is also seen in the same light, thus enabling him (SAW) to be powerful enough to wage war against the Makkans who according to him did nothing oppressive and hostile to his (SAW) family or the remaining Muslims after his departure from Makkah³⁵⁸. Here he ignored the treatment he (SAW) received from the Makkans during his stay in Makkah³⁵⁹. Stobart likewise blamed him (SAW) of using the Jews for his own purposes by first approving their “Divine authority”, using their scripture for proving the “truth of his mission”, making their holy place as the first Qibla for Muslims and later asserting that they have hidden the truth about his Prophet Hood³⁶⁰. One can easily detect the soft and inclined approach towards the Jews as he takes their side quite often, negating objectivity.

³⁵⁴ Stobart, 148.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.,149.

³⁵⁶ Johnstone, 89.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 90.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 91.

³⁵⁹ Al Tabri, 77-80.

³⁶⁰ Stobart, 153-154.

Johnstone, out - rightly accused Islam of being hostile in nature. He compared Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW) with Buddhism and Christianity³⁶¹ and deduced that Buddha and Christ both were against violence but Muhammad the Prophet of Islam (SAW) motivated his followers to become uncompromising and destructive. He traced this aggressive nature to the hard climatic conditions and deduced that environment created the "stern warrior-faith of Islam"³⁶². Norman Daniel confirms this view that developed in the initial stage of western thought calling Islam a "religious fraud" developed to incite "aggression and lust"³⁶³. This approach persisted and Johnstone proved his argument by declaring Muslims to be fierce and ready to attack, with the prospects of subjugating the hostile Makkans and "enriching themselves"³⁶⁴. Stobart is of the same opinion and for him Muhammad (SAW) wanted "employment for the eager passions of his disciples"³⁶⁵ but for him reason was less economic, he assumed that the companions of the Prophet (SAW) disliked the environment of Madina and longed for their return to Makkah. Whatever the cause may be, both agreed that Muslims once established in Madina sought to enlarge the premises of their rule and this finally led to the battle of Badar.

While narrating the war of Badar both agreed on the following points:

- Muslims initiated the war
- They violated the sanctity of the sacred month and then legalized it through a revelation
- They attacked the peaceful trade caravan of the Makkans for plundering
- It marked the beginning of Jihad for the Muslims

³⁶¹ Johnstone,4.

³⁶² Ibid., 6.

³⁶³ Norman Daniel, 17.

³⁶⁴ Johnstone, 91.

³⁶⁵ Stobart,154.

Keeping in mind the conditions in which Muslims migrated from Makkah, the treatment they received while they were in Makkah, the revelations that Muhammad (SAW) received from Allah declaring Islam to be the final revelation made to supersede all the manmade religions, and the commencement of Jihad that could be defensive or offensive depending upon the situation, it seems obvious that Muslims started preparing themselves for any future war. The world history is a proof of this fact that any new nation / country finds it imperative to remain vigilant and equipped against any external threat that they perceive and if they have a known enemy then this vigilance is targeted towards it. Same was the case with Muslims and the new born state of Madina. Even after the migration of the Prophet (SAW), the Makkans continued to torture the remaining Muslims, seized the houses and lands³⁶⁶ of those who have already migrated and this was a real concern for the Muslims of Madina. A few days after the migration of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), Quraish wrote a letter to Abdullah bin Ubai³⁶⁷ asking him to either kill Muhammad (SAW) or expel him from Madina failing to do both he was threatened that they will attack Madina, arrest them and capture their women³⁶⁸. The Prophet of Islam persuaded him of not accepting the demands of Quraish but he himself had a strong grudge against Muhammad (SAW) therefore he started a campaign against him (SAW)³⁶⁹.

Another incident is quoted in this reference, stating that Saad bin Maaz went to Makkah to perform Umrah and stayed with Ummaya bin Khalaf with whom he had friendship. During Tawaf he met Abu Jahal (Uncle and arch enemy of the Prophet (SAW)), who threatened Saad, in reply Saad told him that if he tried to stop Muslims from Hajj they will stop the trade caravans of Quraish. Muslims while living in Madina were in continuous fear that Quraish might

³⁶⁶ Karam Shah al Azhari, *Zia un Nabi*, vol 3, 32-34, 133.

³⁶⁷ A person who was the leader of Madina before the arrival of Muhammad (SAW) and who was going to be the king.

³⁶⁸ Shibli Nomani, Syed Suleman Nadwi, *Seerat un Nabi*, part 1&2, (Lahore: Idara Islamiyat,2002), 199.

³⁶⁹ Ghulam Rasul Saeedi, *Sharah Sahih Muslim*, vol. 5.(Lahore: Rumi Publications), 561-562.

attack at any time. Allama Shibli Naumani and Syed Suleman Nadwi have quoted many Ahadith from Bukhari and Muslim in this regard explaining the particular time³⁷⁰. Interestingly when war was allowed it was specially meant to be against those who waged war against Muslims as is said in Al Baqarah, “and fight in the way of Allah those who fight you”³⁷¹. Therefore to put pressure on them The Prophet of Islam (SAW) arranged attacks on the trade caravans of the Makkans as these were of extreme importance to them. In other words one can say that this was a strategy used to relieve Muslims of Makkah from the life threats they were facing and to force them to remain peaceful³⁷². Many expeditions were conducted against the Quraish with the intention of disturbing their trade and history proves that in almost all not a single person was killed nor any wealth taken from them³⁷³.

While narrating the events of the war it's quite apparent that they took sides of the non-Muslims/ Makkans. They tried to justify the defeat of Quraish by providing reasons. For example they claimed that Quraish had all the disadvantages as water wells were destroyed by the Muslim army and during the fight sun was shining in the eyes of the Makkans thus partially blinding them³⁷⁴. Muhammad (SAW) was accused of playing the role of only a commander thus avoiding actual fight³⁷⁵. They failed to provide any logical reason for the victory Muslims enjoyed after the war neither could they justify how three hundred Muslims defeated three times bigger enemy in their first ever battle after the establishment of their state. Johnstone mockingly hints on the claim of the Quran that a group of angels was sent by Allah to help the Muslims and fight against the non-believers by saying that Muhammad (SAW), “transformed the fierce blasts

³⁷⁰ Shibli Nomani, Syed Suleman Nadwi, *Seerat un Nabi*, part 1&2, 200-201.

³⁷¹ Al Quran Al Baqarah, 190.

³⁷² Shibli Nomani, Syed Suleman Nadwi, *Seerat un Nabi*, part 1&2, (Lahore: Idara Islamiat,2002), 201.

³⁷³ Ibne Khuldun, vol 1, 74-77

³⁷⁴ Johnstone, 93

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

that swept across the valley into a legion of angels under Gabriel and Michael fighting for the believers”³⁷⁶.

Again the angels were compared with the “great Twin Brethren” of Rome following the precedent of referring everything to the Christian history. Although Quran has unequivocally declared that Allah sent His angels³⁷⁷ to help Muslims during Badar and a number of Ahadith are present narrating the coming and fighting of angels such as in the explanation of Sahih Muslim, Allama Ghulam Rasul Saeedi has given a detailed Hadith in this reference³⁷⁸. Yet no effort was made to consult the Muslim sources and find the Muslim stance on the events of Muslim history. The way war was described portrayed the Quraish in a positive perspective-a party forced into the war, totally ignoring their strength and preparation.

8- Inferences drawn by the authors

The inferences drawn by the two writers not only show similarity of thought but also the continuation of the cognitive process from the medieval times. Johnstone’s language in describing Islam as “the mark of scorn, insult and persecution”³⁷⁹ evidently points at the mind make-up of the writer and the hatred he had towards Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW). It also proves that the western/British writers judged Islam from Christian standards and anything

³⁷⁶ Ibid, 94.

³⁷⁷ Al Quran Al Anfal, 1,2.

³⁷⁸ Ghulam Rasul Saeedi, *Sharh Sahih Muslim*, vol 5, (Lahore: Rumi Publications and Printers, 1991), 466-468.

³⁷⁹ Johnstone, 226

falling below that standard was considered as evil. Stobart on the other hand in the beginning of his work narrated his resolve to find the facts only and not the motives, yet throughout the work commented on the motives of the Prophet of Islam (SAW). In his conclusion he tactfully summarized the entire work and his biases while leaving the decision on the independent opinion of the intelligent reader³⁸⁰. Even after going through the entire life history of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) his stance remained the same as he called Islam a creed and the Prophet of Islam (SAW) its founder. This depicts the nature of the oriental writings which were conducted to prove the notions well established in the occidental/British mind as Stobart declared Islam “one of the greatest evils which have afflicted humanity”³⁸¹.

Their affiliation with their religion seems to hinder unbiased judgment and objectivity for example, Johnstone laments that after taking full benefit from the Christian and Jewish scriptures, Muhammad (SAW) claimed that Quran was revealed. Again for him the Prophet(SAW) pretended about the revelation and this strengthened his belief that he (SAW) was an imposter³⁸². Stobart also indirectly supported the view of Muhammad’s (SAW) imposture³⁸³. For him Islam owe its emergence to the enmity he (SAW) felt towards Christianity, progress, civilization and truth³⁸⁴. Both called Christianity the “purer” faith³⁸⁵ which they lamented, could not attract him (SAW). One can conclude from this that these writings were not research based and were not written with an intention to find truth. Neither were they founded on the primary Muslim sources which were available to them.

³⁸⁰ Stobart, 227.

³⁸¹ Stobart, 228.

³⁸² Johnstone, 227.

³⁸³ Stobart, 231.

³⁸⁴ Stobart, 228.

³⁸⁵ Johnstone, 227, Stobart, 228.

Their favorite topic appears to be the position of Women in Islam which they believed was “degraded”³⁸⁶ to being a slave and a puppet in the hands of her husband. Lack of knowledge about Muslim sources is apparent from this claim. Quran has identified the position of women and numerous Ahadith accentuate the status of women as a daughter, sister, wife and a mother³⁸⁷. It also appears that the writers were unaware of the condition of women in Arab society before Islam³⁸⁸. Quran refers to this in Surah Al Nahl³⁸⁹,

“And when the news of (the birth of) a female (child) is brought to any of them, his face becomes dark, and he is filled with inward grief!. He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that whereof he has been informed. Shall he keep her with dishonor or bury her in the earth? Certainly evil is their decision”

Quite contrarily Stobart quoted Muir in a foot note claiming that Women were in a better condition before Islam³⁹⁰.

Another issue that caught their interest was the Islamic law. Different penalties were declared as inhuman and barbarous without pondering for a second on the logic behind these laws. Once more, ignoring the Hadith of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) saying that try to avoid the verdict on hadd as much as possible on the basis of doubts³⁹¹. This saying obviously indicates the nature and reason of the punishments. The purpose was to create the fear of punishment in the hearts of the people to refrain them from committing such heinous crimes. It

³⁸⁶ Johnstone, 227, Stobart, 229.

³⁸⁷ For a detailed discussion on the topic see, Abul Ala Maududi, *Al Hijab and the Status of Women in Islam* translated and edited by Al-Ash'ari (Lahore: Islamic Publications(Pvt.)Ltd. 1979)

³⁸⁸ Shibli Naumani, Syed Suleman Nadwi, *Seerat un Nabi*, vol. 4. 184-186.

³⁸⁹ Al Quran, Al Nahl, verse no. 58-59.

³⁹⁰ Stobart, 229.

³⁹¹ Abu Bakar Jabar Al Jazaeri, *Minhaj ul Muslim* translated in Urdu by Muhammad Rafique Al Asari (Lahore: Dar us Salam Publishers and Distributors, N.D), 751.

was a preventive measure. The Prophet of Islam (SAW) made it clear that even if his (SAW) daughter commits the crime she will have to suffer the same punishment³⁹².

Both agreed that power corrupted him (SAW) and his initial moral standing suffered a huge blow after the establishment of a state in Madina. Both presented this regression in morality by his (SAW) marriages. The topic seems to enjoy the attention of majority of Orientalists. The reason for these marriages was not sexual lust has been proven by many Muslim writers³⁹³. Yet it's apparent that these writers were not ready to go through the Muslim sources to find the reasons or truth but grabbed every instance they could to degrade the Prophet of Islam (SAW). Stobart could not hide his animosity against the Prophet of Islam (SAW) and referred to his (SAW) "earth-born passions and secret motives" behind his actions especially after the Hijra³⁹⁴. The only criterion acceptable to him was the ideals of Christianity and he persisted to gauge the truth of Islam on that criteria.

His entire thought revolved around the sacrifice Jesus made for the salvation of mankind. It seems that he could not comprehend the Islamic teachings regarding the efforts of a person for his own redemption. He considered it as the basic difference between Islam and Christianity.

A comparison between Quran and the Gospels was done to prove the simplicity of the Gospels and the complicate nature of the Islamic injunctions for which he used terms like "burdensome, toilsome, severe, and mechanical" concluding that the observance of these rituals were away from the "purity of life"³⁹⁵. Interestingly while criticizing the Quran he forgot that

³⁹² Ibid., 750.

³⁹³ For detailed discussion on the topic see Karam Shah Al Azhari, *Zia un Nabi* vol. 7.

³⁹⁴ Stobart, 232.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 234.

Bible was continuously changed and modified over time with political necessities³⁹⁶. While Quran was recorded at the time of the Prophet (SAW) and not a single word has been changed in it, Bible was initially an oral record and the Christians had no way of proving the authenticity of it besides the consistency of a tradition in different accounts³⁹⁷.

Therefore it can be concluded from the above discussion that both writers put their utmost effort in proving that Islam was essentially against Christianity and as Christianity was and is the pure and true faith anything against it has to be false and evil.

The selected facts and the interpretations done by both writers discussed in the present chapter undoubtedly prove that both writers had the same mind make-up while writing the books. Both believed that Muhammad (SAW) was an imposter lacking originality; therefore the religion he founded was not divine. They were of the view that he (SAW) took ideas from Christianity and Judaism and combined them with his (SAW) own genius to create a new creed. One can see that throughout the work Muhammad (SAW) and his actions were judged on the criteria of Christianity. No Muslim sources were consulted in writing on Seerah and whenever Quran was consulted, it was done to prove something against Christianity. The continuation of the thought process from the medieval times is the hallmark of these works.

³⁹⁶ S. M. Hafeez, 26.

³⁹⁷ Micheal Grant, 202-204, S. M. Hafeez, 1.

Chapter 4

Explaining the Approach of the Authors: The influence of the Nineteenth Century Imperialist interests on History writing

As the two writers representing the group of writers focusing on maligning the personality of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) during the 19th century in this work are British, therefore focus will be on the British thought and methodology of historiography although they were in close association with the general western intellectual tradition. Bhatti in his Ph. D thesis identified different schools of thought prevalent among the British writers and claimed that all had the same objectives namely

- To strengthen the British imperial rule in India
- To change the Indian society in European sense
- To westernize, Anglicize, Christianize the natives

Whatever the name of the school might be, they all agreed on considering Muslims as foreigners, imperial, despotic, religiously prejudiced society of fighters. He is of the view that British

historiography had an administrative course. They treated Muslim civilization as inferior to the western civilization though their criteria were all self-generated³⁹⁸.

Therefore to understand the British thought one have to delve into the colonial era, the concept of imperialism, the factors leading to the rise of imperialism, its impact on the British and their subjects residing in the colonized areas, as both books were published during British rule of the sub-continent. This group of British writers followed the mind make up formed by the early writers who had a deep impact of the socio-political conditions of that time. Edward Said is of the opinion that the affiliation of a person with the Occident determined his attitude towards the Orient³⁹⁹. Thus in order to understand the reasons behind the particular trends in history writing it is essential to focus on two concepts both dependent on each other and resulting in what finally emerged as the trend of historiography to write on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW). These include Orientalism and Imperialism. This chapter intends to discuss these two concepts to provide the framework of British thinking confined to somewhat the ruling class and their cognitive level with the purpose to comprehend their writings on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW).

³⁹⁸ Muhammad Shafique Bhatti, "British Historiography of Muslim India 1800-1857 (Ph. D. Thesis, Department of History, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, 2005)

³⁹⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 11.

Orientalist Background:

As already discussed in chapter 1 of the present study Orient stands for the civilizations of the east of the west including Islam, China, India and Japan. According to the Oxford Dictionary, Orientalism is “style, artifacts or traits considered characteristic of the peoples and cultures of Asia” or “the representation of Asia in a stereotyped way that is regarded as embodying a colonist attitude”⁴⁰⁰. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines an orientalist as “a person who studies the languages, arts etc. of orient countries”⁴⁰¹. Orientalism is also defined as “a quality, mannerism or custom specific to or characteristic of the orient” or “scholarly knowledge of the Asian cultures, languages and peoples”⁴⁰². Karam Shah Al Azhari has defined orientalism as the research done on the religions, languages, cultures, history, literature and resources of the countries of the east specially Islam by western writers in general and Christian and Jews in particular to make these countries their slaves and to impose their religion and culture on them and take advantage of their economic resources after politically controlling them⁴⁰³. Edward Said identified three overlapping spheres of Orientalism as a concept and expertise being,

- Varying historical and cultural relations between east and west, encompassing over 4000 year old history

⁴⁰⁰ www.oxforddictionaries.com

⁴⁰¹ Oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com

⁴⁰² www.thefreedictionary.com

⁴⁰³ Karam Shah Al Azhari, *Zia un Nabi*, 123

- A scientific approach developed in the nineteenth century to specialize in the culture and tradition of the Orient
- Ideological foundations, beliefs, metaphors and fantasies of the oriental countries owing to the political and economic importance of the area⁴⁰⁴

It was the lure of the eastern world, the promising economic opportunities, its military power, intellectual strength and cultural wealth that gave rise to Orientalism. The seeds of Orientalism were sown with the encounter of Islam with Christianity when west developed its vision of the east as “unfathomable, exotic and erotic place where mysteries dwell and cruel and barbaric scenes are staged”⁴⁰⁵. In reality orient became a place that could satisfy the hidden desires of the west by providing all that was not available there. For that matter stories were fabricated and imagination was used to its full to create a utopia, as in the words of Ziauddin Sardar, “Orientalism is thus a constructed ignorance, a deliberate self-deception, which is eventually projected on the orient”⁴⁰⁶.

For Said, Orientalism refers to the relation of east and west revolving around power with varying degrees of hegemony of the latter over the former based on the concept of racial superiority⁴⁰⁷. Orientalism was not developed because west was interested in discovering east for the sake of knowledge but it emerged out of a fear of the unknown and depicted west’s contemporary concerns⁴⁰⁸. Orientalism was thus based on extensively studying the Asian civilization including Islam, China, India and Japan, to identify, edit and interpret the fundamental texts of the afore mentioned civilizations.

⁴⁰⁴ Edward Said, “Orientalism Reconsidered” in *Orientalism: A Reader* ed. by A. L. Macfie (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 346.

⁴⁰⁵ Ziauddin Sardar, *Concepts in the Social Sciences Orientalism* (New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited, 2002), 2.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁰⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 5-7.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 13-14.

Edward Said recognized some core issues while dealing with the Oriental studies. He looked at the nature and kind of people involved in studying the Orient, their social and political environment which sets their frame of mind, and the audience they intended to cater with their works. Secondly methodology of writing adopted and what service the knowledge produced was going to serve and how these writers are affected by those with power in their hands⁴⁰⁹.

One can easily notice that besides Islam rest of the civilizations were confined to geographical territories. The concern about Islam is quite apparent as the encounter between Islam and Christianity date back to the early expansion of the Muslim empire. P. K. Hitti while discussing the place of Islam in western literature argues that although Zoroastrians and Budhists also came in contact with the west/Christians but none suffered such condemnation as Islam faced. He attributed it to the sense of dread, enmity and prejudice of the west because of the political and military conquests of Islam. He also found language barrier another factor that hindered the proper understanding of Islam⁴¹⁰. Ziauddin Sardar holds that "history of Orientalism begins with the history of Islam⁴¹¹. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi is of the view that although religious, political and economic factors have combined to produce the concept of orientalism but religious factor has been of key importance⁴¹². To Said Muslims presented an arena of economic, political, cultural and religious interest to the west and attracted their attention and because Muslim defied what were believed to be standard definitions⁴¹³. According

⁴⁰⁹ Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered", 347.

⁴¹⁰ P. K. Hitti, 49.

⁴¹¹ Ziauddin Sardar, 17.

⁴¹² Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Western Civilization: Islam and Muslims* (India: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1974), 173.

⁴¹³ Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered", 348.

to Gordon E. Pruett Orientalists took Islam as “a powerful enemy, a failed civilization in need of restoration and revision; a mission field....”⁴¹⁴.

Islam was taken as a problem by these Christians as they were perturbed by the emergence of a new religion after the death of Jesus⁴¹⁵. To exaggerate the problem Islam not only accepted Jesus as the Prophet of Allah but also allowed Christians to follow their religion freely in the Muslim state. Christianity failed to reciprocate this civility as they were still striving to establish a uniform system in their own areas of influence. Within hundred years of its inception Islam reached the borders of western empire causing a military, political cultural and intellectual threat. Orientalism was the counter strategy developed by Christianity to answer the advances of the Muslims. The initial interaction between east and west came through small groups of traders, travelers, philosophers, thieves etc. Their writings painted an attractive and fascinating picture of the far off place which slowly became a land of opportunities and imagination⁴¹⁶.

The feeling of deprivation was aggravated by early Muslim conquests and the subjugation of Christian areas by the Muslims. This juxtaposition led to the cultural impact of Islam on Christians. The counter reaction came immediately and instead of strengthening their bases they resorted to portraying the ruling class in a way to minimize the impact. Even then the image of Islam in the west was vague till the tenth century. Eleventh century onwards this group of Christians started organizing their efforts and redirecting them towards Muslims, thus Islam emerged as their sole enemy. This increasing realization of a strong enemy occupying their holy

⁴¹⁴ Gordon E. Pruett, ““Islam” and Orientalism” in *Orientalism, Islam and Islamists* ed. by Asaf Hussain, Robert Olson, Jamil Qurshi (America: Amana Books, 1984),43.

⁴¹⁵ Karam Shah Al Azhari, 148.

⁴¹⁶ Helen G. Matthew, *Asia In The Modern World*, ed. (New York: Mentor Books, 1963), 13.

places demanded some drastic measures. Therefore Islam was presented as powerful, rich cult of pagans worshipping Muhammad which they termed as Mahomet⁴¹⁷.

It can be deduced that the initial image of Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW) was based on ideological rivalry based upon the conquests of Islam and a sense of inferiority penetrating among some Christians. To combat this feeling, a pseudo sense of superiority of Christianity and Jesus Christ was developed meanwhile denouncing Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW). According to Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, the fundamental duty of the orientalists was to find the weaknesses of Islam which can be exploited to gain political and economic benefits. The methodology of the orientalist was to first select a goal for him and then find whatever fits that preconceived picture. The authenticity or originality of the sources carried no importance. This resulted in presenting “a most hideous picture” of Islam, Muslims and the Prophet of Islam before the western world⁴¹⁸.

John of Damascus, a Christian scholar may be considered as the founder of Orientalism who painted Islam as a pagan Cult, Kaaba to be an idol in Makkah and Prophet Muhammad as an “irreligious and licentious man”⁴¹⁹. He also accused the Prophet of Islam (SAW) of combining Christianity and Judaism under the guidance of an Arian Monk to manufacture Islam⁴²⁰. His work was the first of its kind and provided the guideline for future works of this kind for centuries. Ziauddin Sardar quoted R. W. Southern saying that the social structure of Islam was quite opposite to the west. The western society was agrarian, feudal and monastic with priests holding key positions whereas Islamic society was based on vast cities, rich courts, and

⁴¹⁷ Maxime Rodinson, The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam in *The Legacy of Islam* ed. By Joseph Schacht and C. E. Bosworth (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 12.

⁴¹⁸ Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, 175.

⁴¹⁹ Ziauddin Sardar, 18.

⁴²⁰ P. K. Hitti, *Islam and the West: A Historical and Cultural Survey* (New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, INC. 1962), 50.

egalitarian society devoid of monasteries and priests⁴²¹. Maxime Rodinson holds that the wealth of the Muslim countries attracted western interest as they found commercial benefits as early as ninth century⁴²².

Bible was consulted to predict that Islam will soon disappear from the world, the Prophet of Islam (SAW) was pronounced as an Antichrist and Islam as a menacing scheme against Christianity. The people who developed this image and forwarded it were well versed in Christianity as they searched for answers in Bible but totally ignorant about Islam and interestingly were not willing to learn anything about Islam. Therefore it can be said that “orientalism is composed of what the west wishes to know, not of what can be known”⁴²³

The eleventh century invasion of Jerusalem brought Christians in direct contact with the Muslims, resulting in a multi-facet reaction including political, ideological, cultural and economic aspects but generally there was no necessity felt in the west to discover the political history of Islam. Information was gathered about the possible weaknesses of the Muslim political leaders to use it in the favor of west. Crusades brought a change and stirred the imagination of this group of Christians to search for the ideological basis of Islam with the intension to “show the hateful character of Islam by presenting it in crude terms”⁴²⁴. This resulted in focusing attention on the life of the Prophet of Islam (SAW).

Between 1100 and 1140 the Latin these authors gave free reign to their imagination portraying Muhammad the Prophet of Islam (SAW) as a sorcerer with all possible evils present in his personality without any source material whatsoever present to verify the information. In

⁴²¹ Ziauddin Sardar, 18.

⁴²² Maxime Rodinson, 20.

⁴²³ Ziauddin Sardar, 19.

⁴²⁴ Maxime Rodinson, 13.

this reference P. K. Hitti mentions a bishop of Cordova who declared that at the death of Muhammad (SAW), while the disciples waited for angels to come and carry the dead body “but instead dogs came and devoured it”, later swine were added to the fable. A later version suspended Muhammad’s (SAW) coffin in midair⁴²⁵.

In fact no need was felt to consult sources or verify the information as the writings were fulfilling the purpose of appealing the public as in the words of Maxime Rodinson, “pure fiction, whose only object was to spur the readers interest was mixed in varying proportions of belief which inflamed hatred of the foe”⁴²⁶. Ziauddin Sardar calls it “Black propaganda” which was deliberately fabricated to further the cause of crusades and mold the public opinion in the favor of crusaders⁴²⁷. Muslims were judged on the criteria and principles of Christianity. Sometimes equated with idolaters, at others having trinity as their belief. Muhammad was presented as being worshipped in Synagogues – an attempt to relate Islam with Judaism which was also unacceptable to Christians⁴²⁸.

Islam and Crusades both became related to each other in the sense that Crusades owed its existence to Islam and the unity of Christianity was depended on the threat perception of the Christians from the Muslim power. Therefore it was in the favor of the leaders of Christianity and Crusades to maintain the status quo to ensure the continuing support from the public. Grigori Bondarevsky is of the opinion that after the Crusades the west has used “armed force, sabotage,

⁴²⁵ P. K. Hitti, 51.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁴²⁷ Ziauddin Sardar, 20. (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1985), 6.

⁴²⁷ Ziauddin Sardar, 22, 23.

⁴²⁸ Ziauddin Sardar, 21, Maxime Rodinson, 14

intervention, and provocation of national, ethnic, religious and inter-state conflicts to enslave the Muslim people" and "to undermine the authority and influence of the Muslim religion"⁴²⁹.

The thirteenth century saw translations of the Arabic works including the sciences which led to a little favorable change towards Islam but at the same time sent warning tones to the orientalists who enhanced their efforts to minimize the impact. Therefore Islam was seen and presented not only as a "theological heresy but also a heresy at the level of morals and practices". In contrast Christianity was depicted as "normal" way of life⁴³⁰. The information gathered from these learning places was not used for understanding Islam but to support the polemic ideas about Islam and to find arguments to strengthen their own faith in Christianity⁴³¹.

For the medieval writer, writings had a moral perspective. Everything had to be categorized in good or bad spheres. Therefore the western travelers saw the orient from this perspective. They saw what they wanted to see and reported back in their writings what their audience was anticipating. As a consequence their writings were based on imagination and speculation confined in their own paradigm which they created for themselves and followed strictly as far as Islam was concerned⁴³². Even in the age of enlightenment there were writers who took these earlier writings as truth although better sources were available to be sorted out, and in case the Muslim sources were taken into consideration, the conclusions arrived at favored their interest. Such an example is given by Ziauddin Sardar where one particular Sir John after going through so called available Muslim sources deduced that Muslims are "capable of conversion"⁴³³. Efforts were made to attract Muslims towards Christianity and the concept of

⁴²⁹ Grigori Bondarevsky, *Muslims and the West* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1985), 6.

⁴³⁰ Ziauddin Sardar, 22, 23.

⁴³¹ Maxime Rodinson, 17.

⁴³² Ibid., 14.

⁴³³ Ziauddin Sardar, 26.

spiritual crusades emerged aimed at converting Muslims⁴³⁴. After the failure of these attempts it was decided by the ruling class to launch an academic incursion on Muslims. For that matter it was proposed to establish Arabic chairs at different universities of Europe. This was finally done in the middle of seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

The relations of west with the east underwent a dynamic change after the arrival of western voyages on the coasts of India. Renaissance and Reformation brought change within the west finally converting the east into a "reserved laboratory" from where answers were sought⁴³⁵. The racial superiority solved the problem convincing the west of their great achievements in all fields of life deducing that they are well ahead of the Oriental countries. From here on the nexus of Imperialism and Orientalism emerged and grew stronger day by day transforming east i.e. India into a colony. Edward Said is of the view that hard confinements of ideas were developed about the Orient in general and Islam in particular and the west was conditioned to see the former with the limitations once applied to them⁴³⁶.

The nineteenth century writers had the above mentioned legacy, intensified with a new surge of religious revival and economic compulsions. The contributions of the medieval writers echoed in the writings of these nineteenth century writers where Muslims were considered to be created only to get "punishment for the sins of Christians", Muhammad was taken as an "illiterate barbarian" and Quran "a thing so full of tautologies, incoherencies, and such gross absurdities of so impure and carnal mixture..."⁴³⁷. The orient was considered as static but the problem of immense importance was the difference of religions. To resolve this, these British writers resorted to some old techniques of explaining and investigating Islam as used in the

⁴³⁴ P. K. Hitti, 52.

⁴³⁵ Ziauddin Sardar, 28.

⁴³⁶ Edward Said, Orientalism Reconsidered, 349.

⁴³⁷ Ziauddin Sardar, 30.

medieval times. The availability of new sources only increased the bulk of information present but not the results or deductions. Religious revivalism opened new opportunities for the missionary work offering development as a reward for conversion. It was thus considered expedient to malign the picture of Islam to prepare favorable grounds for the propagation of Christianity⁴³⁸. East India Company actively participated in bringing the missionaries and providing support to their activities.

The nineteenth century writings of this particular group of writers thus portrayed the above picture vividly without trying to use the western scholarship of history writing. Value judgments were passed freely without offering any reference to any Muslim source. These writings were simply a clear picture of “contempt wrapped in a sense of moral and religious bigotry”⁴³⁹ and this view found full support from the colonial administrators. The job of the orientalist was to develop an intellectual and literary base for the imperial mind that could help them in the cause of empire building, and to provide the necessary information about the history and culture of the natives⁴⁴⁰. Orientalists became the right hand of their respective governments and devised such policies to strengthen imperialism⁴⁴¹. In other words orientalists were the cognitive leaders of the imperialists and the imperialists were the supporters and guardians of the orientalists⁴⁴².

⁴³⁸ Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, 173.

⁴³⁹ Ziauddin Sardar, 44.

⁴⁴⁰ Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, 174.

⁴⁴¹ Karam Shah Al Azhari, 166.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 175.

Imperialism as the major Interest during 19th century

Imperialism, as defined by the *Dictionary of Human Geography*, is "an unequal human and territorial relationship, usually in the form of an empire, based on ideas of superiority and practices of dominance, and involving the extension of authority and control of one state or people over another"⁴⁴³. According to *Encyclopedia Americana* Imperialism "is often applied to the outward thrust of European society – the carrying of political, economic, and moral practices into non – European areas"⁴⁴⁴. In particular it refers to the time when Britain and France started making Asia and later Africa their colonies; exploitation of technologically backward nations by the technologically advanced nations. Imperialism is differentiated from colonialism being ideological in nature as well as economic, operating as a state policy, controlled from the center, whereas colonialism is confined to the development for settlement or for economic purposes only, although both are usually considered as synonyms.

Imperialism also involves the impact of one society considering itself superior on the other society deemed backward. K. K. Aziz while discussing the imperial tide acknowledges that imperialism involved the "right of the English race to rule the earth"⁴⁴⁵. The New Encyclopedia Britannica defines Imperialism as "state policy, practice, or advocacy of extending power and

⁴⁴³ Wikipedia, Imperialism.

⁴⁴⁴ *Encyclopedia Americana*, International Edition, Article on Imperialism, Volume 14, 821.

⁴⁴⁵ K. K. Aziz, *The British India A study in Imperialism* (Islamabad: National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, 1976), 2.

dominion, especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control of other areas”⁴⁴⁶. The term has a negative connotation as it always engage the use of force.

Imperialism was not a simple phenomenon, rather it is a nexus of getting economic privileges regardless of the fact that they belong to some other nation, expanding political power beyond its own boundaries. Development of political and economic interests and the rising demands of a growing country motivated them to move beyond the geographical boundaries of their country and control areas far away from their soil. For this dynamic activity, the state first needed the support of its own people which was easily gathered by providing such slogans and raising such issues that appealed the public. This included degradation of the natives, their religions and religious personalities for which book were written extensively portraying the locals and their religions as anti-Christ, barbarians, uncivilized, unscientific and backward. Once the purpose fulfilled, the economic benefits worked as catalysts to keep their allegiance to the cause of the state. K. K Aziz has summarized the imperial motives as:

“From the seventies onward the Englishman, whatever his political convictions or part loyalties, was an imperialist at heart. Imperialism became a sort of public religion to which practically everyone subscribed, because he found something in it to please his heart (the common man), to ease his conscience (the missionary), to enrich his pocket (the trader), to satisfy his curiosity (the explorer), to fulfill his earthly mission (the upholder of progress and civilization), to win laurels (the soldier and the governor), to improve his family (the younger sons of aristocracy), and to indulge his ego (the white man’s burden)”⁴⁴⁷.

Maxime Rodinson views nineteenth century as having three peculiar characters, one of them being Imperialism which was colored by “utilitarian sense of western superiority, full of

⁴⁴⁶ *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Article on Imperialism, volume 6, 272.

⁴⁴⁷ K.K.Aziz.,7.

contempt for other civilizations”⁴⁴⁸. Satish Chandra(as already discussed in chapter 1 of the present work) holds that the writing of history in the nineteenth century has one major purpose and that is to provide logical base to the European domination of the world and for that certain parameters were established including a firm belief in the superior traits of the European nations and the absence of these traits among the colonized people⁴⁴⁹.

The British colonial thought can be traced to the Marxist tradition in the History, who treated History from an economic perspective, thus produced Historical Materialism, believing that “all events of human history are fundamentally conditioned or determined by the basic economic structure of the society”⁴⁵⁰. Economics thus occupied foremost importance,⁴⁵¹ with a desire to find cheap raw material, labor, capital investment and secure, guaranteed markets for their products⁴⁵². Stanley Wolpert endorses this argument by providing minute details of the advent of British East India Company for the sake of gaining material benefits⁴⁵³. The European capitalists were forced by the internal logic of their competitive system to seek abroad in less developed countries opportunities to control raw material, to find markets, and to find profitable fields of investment.

Grigori Bondarevsky also shares the view that the root cause of the intense involvement of the west in the affairs of the east was economical⁴⁵⁴. K. K. Aziz holds that to survive and become rich England needed colonies. After the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century

⁴⁴⁸ Maxime Rodinson, “The western image and Western Studies of Islam” in *The Legacy of Islam*, ed by, Joseph Schacht and C. E. Bosworth (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 43.

⁴⁴⁹ Satish Chandra, *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1996), 85-86.

⁴⁵⁰ William Barrett, Henry D. Aiken, *The 20th Century Philosophy*, ed. (New York: Random House, 1962), 466.

⁴⁵¹ K. K. Aziz,3.

⁴⁵² *Encyclopedia Americana*, Article on Imperialism, 821.

⁴⁵³ Stanley Wolpert, *Roots of Confrontation in South Asia: Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and the Superpowers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 39-40.

⁴⁵⁴ Grigori Bondarevsky, *Muslims and the West* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1985) , 9.

the government was forced to allow emigration to the colonies as it provided a solution to unemployment as well as over population. There was also a great demand for raw material and new markets for the increasing production⁴⁵⁵. In return colonies got experienced working hands and empire found opportunities to fulfill imperial motives⁴⁵⁶.

The Encyclopedia Britannica agrees with this view quoting Marxist view that Imperialism is a “late stage of capitalism”⁴⁵⁷, when they need new markets to find consumers for the over production. Karl de Schweinitz Jr. in his study of Imperialism in India focused on the use of coercion in different fields starting from economics⁴⁵⁸. The problem with materialism lies in making people totally free to do whatever they like to attain full happiness even at the expense of others. This ultimately results in “racial discrimination, imperialism and colonialism, lawlessness, violence, social anarchy and irresponsibility”⁴⁵⁹. Edward Said also agrees that it were the “richness [of] the Orient” that attracted west toward east⁴⁶⁰.

People started visiting the colonies and wrote books to inform others. These books were the sole source of knowledge about the colonies. The British who wrote these books never tried to gather accurate information⁴⁶¹ yet these books prepared the public opinion in favor of imperialism and the books on Seerah were a continuation of this series. The first colonial society was formed in 1868 with a Historian Lord Bury as its head⁴⁶², therefore it can be deduced that the ruling class supporting the view of orientalist used History writing and historians to make the

⁴⁵⁵ B. V. Rao, *History of Asia :From early times to the Present* (New Delhi: New Dawn Press, INC.,2005), 309.

⁴⁵⁶ K. K. Aziz.,8.

⁴⁵⁷ *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Article on Imperialism 272.

⁴⁵⁸ Karl de Schweinitz Jr., *The Rise and Fall of British India: Imperialism as inequality* (New York: Methuen & Co. 1983), 4.

⁴⁵⁹ Maryam Jameelah,ed., *Western Civilization condemned by Itself : A Comprehensive Study of Moral Retrogression and its Consequences* Vol 1(Lahore: Mohammad Yousaf Khan & Sons, 1979), xxii.

⁴⁶⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism Reconsidered*, 349.

⁴⁶¹ Gulfishan Khan., 61.

⁴⁶² K. K. Aziz., 24.

empire strong and keep the colonies intact. But if economics was the sole reason then colonization would have been enough to satisfy the need. There were other factors at work too, which converted colonialism into imperialism.

Politics occupy the second position interacting with economic factors. Mostly political control was deemed necessary to facilitate the unhindered supply of raw material and easy availability of labor. It was also a source of earning political prestige⁴⁶³. East India Company's trade was detrimental for Indian trade and economy as it constituted only one sided drain of resources and wealth and secondly they launched their campaign of political control and territorial expansion⁴⁶⁴. The merchants were rather expert in "political machinations and intrigues" in the words of B. V Rao and they manipulated the deteriorating political condition of India for their own benefit⁴⁶⁵. Territorial aggrandizement therefore remained a key and essential element of imperialism⁴⁶⁶. Consequently colonies were made to control the trade⁴⁶⁷ and ensure the survival of England among other rapidly growing countries.

Racial superiority was a key component in imperialism⁴⁶⁸. Lord Kitchner, a military commander in India is reported to have said, "It is this consciousness of the inherent superiority of the European which has won us India"⁴⁶⁹. The statement in itself is a clear depiction of the mind make-up of the British military as well as administrative elite. K. K. Aziz has quoted many English men in this regard such as Sir Charles Dilke saying " Nature seems to intend the English for a race of officers, to direct and guide the cheap labor of the eastern peoples", James Froude

⁴⁶³ B. V. Rao, 309.

⁴⁶⁴ Gulfishan Khan,63.

⁴⁶⁵ B. V. Rao,309.

⁴⁶⁶ Karl de Schweinitz Jr., 14.

⁴⁶⁷ K. K. Aziz, 4.

⁴⁶⁸ Gulfishan Khan., 61.

⁴⁶⁹ John p. Mckay, Bennett D. Hill, John Buckler, *A History of Western Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), 847.

saying, "We have conquered our present position because the English are a race of unusual vigour both of body and mind", Rhodes saying, "We happen to be the best people in the world, with the highest ideals of decency and justice and liberty and peace; and more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for humanity"⁴⁷⁰ so on so forth. The proclaimed supremacy was attributed to two factors namely Religion and Science. Religion had a vital role in the English society as their morality was based in religion and their high moral profile made them superior to other nations of the world. After the eighteenth century's emphasis on reason lost its grip religion occupied the place with ferocious power. Naturally it became a tool of imperial intellectual paraphernalia. English Society was a Christian society, the empire was Christian and the expansion of empire meant the propagation of Christianity. It was considered a duty to spread the fruits of their civilization and a superior religion to the inferior races taken as infidels and sometimes compared to animals⁴⁷¹.

J. A. Hobson⁴⁷² in his work *Imperialism: A Study* emphasized the positive side of Imperialism completely ignoring the other side. He justified his claims through arguments that British rule was beneficial to Indians more than the native government as it brought development, progress and education in the form of missionary work thus proving that the sense of supremacy was a part and parcel of Imperial thought shared by the entire English race.

In the words of K. K. Aziz, "Christianity and commerce seem to have made a pleasant and profitable recipe for the imperialists"⁴⁷³. He is of the view that power corrupted the majority of the Christians and made them intolerant and the use of force/coercion became a frequent tool to suppress the opposition even if it emerged from among their own kind and if this opposition is

⁴⁷⁰ K. K. Aziz, 34.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 35,39.

⁴⁷² J A Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 285-288.

⁴⁷³ K. K. Aziz, 39.

from the ones considered as the low casts, it was strictly subdued. Muhammad Akram gave a quotation from *The life of Amir Abdur Rahman, Amir of Afghanistan* saying that in India Islam was the only danger for British rule⁴⁷⁴. Interestingly with the above came the white man's burden to civilize the backward world, as they assumed the "responsibility of trusteeship for the welfare of mankind"⁴⁷⁵. Therefore a strange and complex system developed aiming at improving the condition of the colonized people at the same time taking all their material resources, civilizing them by using force to adopt the scientific and superior religion and at the same time denouncing their religion. Science also came to support and reinforce the concept of racial superiority as Darwin presented his "Origin of Species", presenting the idea of Natural selection. The theory was based on the idea of the survival of the fittest⁴⁷⁶. It was deduced that as the British are the best race they are naturally selected and dominance over the weak nations of the world is a rightfully owned position.

Aslam Syed believes that the British administrator historians of India had a very strong reason to present Islam as a false and absurd religion. They wished to convince the majority of Indians that their dominance was benevolent and in that manner minimize the potential threat to their raj⁴⁷⁷. They talked about their superiority in science and technology and argued that Christianity was based on reason and truth, thus prevailed over Islam. They portrayed their victory over the Muslims as a triumph of Christianity over Islam. Most of the Christian writers ridiculed the Prophet of Islam (SAW) and presented Muslim history as a series of plundering's, killings and forcible conversions⁴⁷⁸.

⁴⁷⁴ Muhammad Akram, *A Look at the West* (Lahore: Islamic Publications Limited, 1982), 21.

⁴⁷⁵ Karl de Schweinitz Jr., 15.

⁴⁷⁶ K. K. Aziz, 50.

⁴⁷⁷ Aslam Syed, 2.

⁴⁷⁸ K. K. Aziz, 50.

Another reason of imperialism was Preventive Self Defence. A fear seized the ruling class of England that other powerful nations might try to undermine their sphere of influence. In reaction they expanded their own area of influence focusing on building a strong and powerful empire and afterwards developing accessories (infrastructure, Navy etc.) to protect it. The idea was to expand the empire till it reaches the civilized world or sea as uncivilized countries at their border posed a continuous threat therefore they had to be absorbed and assimilated before they try something of the sort against the empire⁴⁷⁹.

The criteria of what is civilized was developed keeping in mind their own society and religion and the people having anything different were put in the category of uncivilized. Hobson defined the process of civilizing the Indians and classified the hallmarks to be the establishment of peace, improvement of the standard of justice, building of infrastructure and establishment of industries and breaking of the religious superstitions⁴⁸⁰. The standard of judgment remained British. These civilized people of England considered everything related with the Orientals / colonized people (in this case the Indians in general and Muslims in particular) inferior and backward. They believed that the literature of the natives is scanty, worthless and not equivalent to the western scholarship⁴⁸¹ although there was no serious effort on the part of the west to study and understand the available sources in native languages.

Gulfishan Khan has narrated many instances where the British interest in learning Persian is apparent, he also discussed the attempts of many eager British to write about Persian grammar and poetry. He provided the names of those natives who went to England to teach Persian. He noted that majority of the interested British were the ones who were either employed in the East

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 45, 46.

⁴⁸⁰ J. A. Hobson, 287.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 54.

India Company or wanted to be employed there. He concluded that very few natives comprehended the motives behind the interest of these British people. Still fewer analyzed the situation and recognized the defect of British scholarship which he summarized as being hasty in their decisions and passing value judgments without acquiring full knowledge and thus it resulted in spreading “erroneous views and misconceptions”⁴⁸². In nut shell the British interest in native literature was confined to getting a basic know how of the languages to understand and interpret the local communication, instead of employing locals as translators. As far as their views on the quality of native literature is concerned, they were confident that they themselves were the

“finest prophet of the new values to be sent to foreign lands; there to preach the virtues of his own superiority, to civilize the poor wretches ignorant of the meaning of life, to bring them the comforts of modern living, to bless them with peace and law and order, to bring them the light of western knowledge, and to take them on the path which led to the dignity of man and the sovereignty of virtue”⁴⁸³.

The 1857 mutiny by the Indians made British rethink their policies about the natives, considering the natives ability to retaliate and their own resolve to keep India as their colony, they resorted to any possible action particularly degrading them. As their rule was guided by God, only they had the right to tell what is civilized, they felt no need to ponder over the native claimants of civilization or to those who refused to be civilized. K. K. Aziz called it the English man’s “racial arrogance, intellectual intolerance and incredible ignorance of everything non-European”,⁴⁸⁴.

⁴⁸² Gulfishan Khan, *Indian Muslim Perceptions of the West During the Eighteenth Century* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 248-259.

⁴⁸³ K.K. Aziz, 55.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 13.

Gulfishan Khan also supports the view that racial superiority and arrogance remained a key element of the British character during their rule in India⁴⁸⁵. Stanley Wolpert commented on the British attitude by saying, “To most British eyes, natives all looked the same, dark and sinister, dirty, untrustworthy, shifty-eyed, dim-witted”⁴⁸⁶ One can easily detect the paradox in their (British) thought processes, on one hand they declared themselves to be the champions of freedom, peace and progress and on the other hand they not only made almost half of the world their colony but treated the natives as slaves. In the words of Grigori Bondarevsky “the colonialists, as a rule, disguised their predatory and aggressive plans and aims with hypocritical and demagogic slogans about the dissemination of Christianity, the freedom of trade, the elimination of slavery and the protection of religious and national minorities”⁴⁸⁷.

The political and commercial exploration and expansion molded the writings of these British writers drenched in hatred and bias towards Muslims and Islam. The colonial/imperial powers used History to justify their political ventures. The failure of 1857 war of independence not only toppled the government in the sub-continent but also changed the paradigms. This group of British administrators and scholars manifested their deep rooted biases against Islam and its followers in a number of studies which were undertaken with a specific purpose of denouncing Islam and downgrading Muslims in the eyes of the non-Muslim majority in India⁴⁸⁸. Grigori Bondarevsky holds that as the “national sentiments of the Muslim peoples are closely connected with Islam” therefore it was deemed necessary “to undermine the authority and influence of the

⁴⁸⁵ Gulfishan Khan, 62.

⁴⁸⁶ Stanley Wolpert, 46.

⁴⁸⁷ Grigori Bondarevsky, Introduction to *Muslims and the west* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1985), 6.

⁴⁸⁸ M. Aslam Syed, *Muslim response to the west*, 3.

Muslim religion”⁴⁸⁹. In nut-shell the style of writing history especially on the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), by the British authors clearly manifest this outlook.

⁴⁸⁹ Grigori Bondarevsky, 6.

Conclusion

The present work aimed at finding answers to a number of questions regarding the trend of Seerah writing among the western/ British writers. The inferences drawn from the preceding chapters can be divided into four categories depending upon the nature of discussion in each chapter. Firstly the study discovered that the western/ British interest in the Seerah of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) commenced with the initial encounters of Islam and Christianity. The claim of Islam as being a religion from Allah and disbelieving in the doctrine of Trinity shattered the centuries old believes of Christianity. The Christian belief of Jesus as the Son of God and the final redeemer of sins suffered a big blow with Islam's claim of Muhammad(SAW) as the final Prophet of Allah and Islam as the final and complete religion. This feeling intensified with the fact that Islam claimed to be the only acceptable religion to Allah⁴⁹⁰. Attraction to new faith and the rapidly increasing number of Muslims created fear in the minds of the Christians, followed by the political and military expansion of Islam which brought Muslims at the border of the Christian world in considerably short time.

The counter strategy developed by a group of Christians particularly during crusade was military encounter on one hand and to destroying the reputation of Islam on the other. For that matter writings were initiated on the life and personality of Jesus according to the historical scholarship that was developed by the west over time. To find the truth about Jesus ways were constructed to separate the historical Jesus from the Christ of Faith. Sources were

⁴⁹⁰ Al Quran, Ale Imran, verse 19.

searched and sifted carefully in an attempt to clear all ambiguities, different schools of thought developed over time to reach the criteria of objectivity and reliability. Although the fact remained that the primary sources of information on Jesus were the Gospels whose authenticity and credibility were a matter of question. Historiographical approach was followed to discover Jesus in a way that was best suited to the requirement of the time.

The other aspect of the two pronged strategy was to humiliate the status of the Prophet of Islam (SAW). Therefore the life of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) became the target of these writers' biases and prejudices. No need was felt to apply the western historical scholarship on the Seerah of the Prophet (SAW) as the purpose of the work, it seems, was not to find the truth but to disgrace his (SAW) personality. Such trend continued till the appearance of orientalism as a full-fledged discipline in the study of the East including the Muslim world.

The two selected writers of the nineteenth century namely Johnstone and Stobart were found to be following the medieval and orientalist trend while writing on the Seerah of the Prophet (SAW). The assumptions made by the some early writers on Seerah were strictly obeyed. Stobart claimed to be presenting the facts only, avoiding any discussion on the motives of the Prophet (SAW). However, the study of his book reveals that his entire work is based on probing the motives, and ignoring the facts. Johnstone's language is extremely harsh, as he directly accused the Prophet and used derogatory remarks throughout the book. His avowed purpose of writing the book was to find the weaknesses of the founder of the new religious creed, instead of following the historiographical approach of not compromising on truth.

The study of analysis of facts and their interpretation reveals that the two writers had an agenda in mind to accomplish through their writings thus they focused on the lack of originality

of the Prophet (SAW) and tried to prove that he (SAW) took the basic information from Old and New Testament, endeavoring to prove him (SAW) to be an imposter and opportunist. Their criterion was to judge him (SAW) from the Christian standards following the lead of the medieval writers. They did not use Muslim sources which would disconfirm the analyses by the two authors. The conclusions drawn by both the writers once more endorsed the thesis of the present study i.e., these western/British writers consciously tried to defame Islam and the Prophet of Islam (SAW).

The historical setting and the time frame in which these two studies were conducted played key role in determining the shape of the works. Nineteenth century's political and economic compulsions emerged in the form of Imperialism and molded every aspect of British life including historiography. Initially when Islam was dominating the world scene, it was the sense of inferiority that led to the evolution of Orientalism and instigated the polemic writings but these nineteenth century British writers reinforced by Imperialism and worldwide conquests drenched in a sense of superiority commenced to denounce the personality of the Prophet (SAW) and everything related to him. History writing served as a tool in the hands of the imperialist class to prove their racial supremacy and arrogance. The concept of imperialism made some of the British believe that they were the best race and had a right to rule the backward areas of the world and take the light of progress to them in the form of Christian moral values. The resistance of the natives especially Muslims to accept Christianity provided them with an opportunity to prove everything related to Muslims as inferior, backward and not worthy of any respect. The two writings reflect the trend of the time, namely British Imperialist ideas.

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