

## **Western Academic Insight of Islam and its Prophet: A Critical Reading to the Writings of Watt, Norman, and Considine**

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### **Abstract**

There has been a gradual change in the Western academic stand toward developing scholarly approaches to investigate Prophet Muhammad's Islamic mission to the world. Early Western Orientalists presented Prophet Muhammad as a mistaken person to the founder of Islam and antichrist, but this is continually refined by academic advancement. Although Europeans now have a more realistic view of Islam and its Prophet, some historical biases persist, such as the portrayal of Thomas Carlyle for Prophet Muhammad as a world leader or hero. However, his true nature as a divine messenger is entirely missed or denied. Watt, Norman, and Considine examined, sorted, and proved some distorted reports. These academic experts advanced their approaches to understanding Prophet Muhammad's manners. They acknowledged the reflection of a European prejudice toward the Western material about Islam and its Messenger. More hard work is required to narrow the gap of misunderstanding between Islam and The West.

**Keywords:** Academic perspectives on Islam, historical biases on Prophet Muhammad, Western Orientalism.

### **Introduction**

The historical arguments about Islam and Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him—(PBUH), represent the diversity within Western scholarship, though they appear misleading and unconvincing. Some historical accounts such as labeling the Prophet as the antichrist, the founder of Islam, have barely fluctuated on wrong judgments designed to be historical facts. Negative stereotyping about Islam and its Prophet is the findings in the stocks of the Western Library. For instance, the portrayal of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Western publications about the church, the arts, literature, and politics is wholly wrong. According to William Montgomery Watt's *The Nature of Prophethood of Muhammad* (1987), Prophet Muhammad has been characterized as a forger, a fake prophet, and a malign individual who originated in Makkah. The sole objective of the Medieval sources was to depict Muhammad as evil as possible. Roger Pasquier, the British Arabist who has studied the life and work of the Prophet in-depth, notes that it is difficult to explain why this has been the case and that the only conceivable reason is that Christianity has historically viewed Islam as its most prominent adversary.<sup>1</sup> Some Western writers selected subjective materials about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and ignored objective ones. They significantly influenced modern Western intellectuals who have made a realistic assessment of Islam and its Prophet. Even if Europeans now see Islam and its founder with considerably greater objectivity, many long-standing biases persist. Some negative accounts are in the mindset of vast Western populations. They were instinctively obtained in childhood from the passing remarks of seniors and other haphazard sources. Therefore, William Muir was among the earliest authors to rely on actual Arabic sources of Islam.<sup>2</sup> Muir's *The Life of Mohammed from Original Sources* (1923) was intended as a significant departure from the hostility and vitriol of the Middle Ages, but non-Muslims have purposefully misled their faith's adherents and twisted the Great Messenger to disparage him and Islam. Western history does not establish a mere and clear historical identity of Prophet Muhammad, but the academic presentation of evidence has been the choice. Therefore, the authentic material introduces the attitudes that educated men have increasingly developed. It is essential to look at the Western academic expansion to understand Islam and Prophet Muhammad.

Twentieth-century writers and critics like Norman Daniel in *Islam and The West* (1993) argue that "The use of false evidence to attack Islam was all but universal."<sup>3</sup> It is notwithstanding the distortion of the

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Du Pasquier, *Unveiling Islam* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1995), 47.

<sup>2</sup> William Muir, *The Life of Mohammed from Original Sources* (Edinburgh: J. Grant, 1923), 376-8.

<sup>3</sup> Norman Daniel, *Islam and The West: The Making of an Image* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1993), 267.

Prophet Muhammad's values. The ethics of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) have begun to be recognized as an appealing quality to distinguish the traits of this Noble Messenger and what Allah, The Almighty, has given him. The Prophet has been identified by many experts who have studied his divinatory figure as one of the most inspirational men the world has ever known. Their continual transformation of the image of the Honorable Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the outcome of thorough research and analysis of the Messenger's life and outstanding ethics. This understanding comes from the legitimacy of material re-submitted by various honest twenty-first-century investigators, including William Watt, Daniel Norman, Craig Considine, Karen Armstrong, and other current writers. They introduce collective opinion to the West. This issue is for scholars to analyze the facts and to discover the true conclusions about the reasons presented in the literature of the Prophet's life in current Western works regarding Prophet Muhammad.

The gradually established opinions of sophisticated writers play a great role in introducing Islam to the regular viewpoints of men on the street. More true and accurate representations of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) arise in independent travelers' and intellectuals' scholarly writings, for instance, *Pilgrimage to Meccah and Madina* (1893) by Robert Burton, and *A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca* (1918) by John Wavell. Some other new authors who emerged in the twentieth century are Thomas Arnold, William Muir, and William Watt, who attempted to defend the Western Prophethood of Muhammad's origins and historical context in their writings.<sup>4</sup>

The intrusion of the West into the life of Prophet Muhammad than the *Noble Qur'an* and Islamic theology particularly Islamic monotheism, which is greatly different from the Christian one, has a purpose to fail Islam as a whole. This approach was done by earlier Arab pagans of Makkah. Prophet Muhammad was examined in different ways by great men for thirteen years in Makkah before migrating to Medina which was secure to his call to Islam. Many Arabs embraced Islam, and several others rejected it. The medieval West was previously junior to Muslim expansion in Europe. The Western nations protected their Christianity and established a persistently hostile conduct style that compelled Christian writers to make no sincere or impartial effort to comprehend Islam and Muhammad's prophethood. Classical themes formed the background of European thinking about the Islamic world. It is so odd that in modern Western thought, the Prophet Muhammad receives such glowing praise for his honesty and accomplishments yet receives less acclaim for being the final Prophet sent by Allah, the Almighty. Making a truthful landscape of Islam and its Prophet is part of knowledge, understanding, communication, and dialog of civilizations between the nations.

### **Academic Enlightenment**

Western Islamic scholarship has been in a tremendous dilemma of Islam which was and is a big challenge in the West because it is an extension of Christianity and Judaism, the dominant religions in the West. The rhetoric against Islam and Prophet Muhammad grew less harsh as the threat of Islam in Western Europe diminished in the late centuries but the typical Western scholar's image of Muhammad has not yet attained a degree of satisfaction for the sake of truth and does not permit objective academic research, despite improvements in tone and methods. Early Western Orientalists have been totally confused with the prophethood presentation of Muhammad (PBUH) in the light of inherited ideas.<sup>5</sup> For instance, Daniel Norman believes that the idea that Islam was a sexually immoral regime founded on false teachings is something that the West has carried over from its own history. It would be difficult to demonstrate a fundamental shift in thinking between the eleventh and twentieth centuries in these areas.<sup>6</sup> There is an enormous framework of incidents about Islam and its Prophet undergone by most historians, and the research writers thoroughly enhance the worldwide collection, acknowledging a modern understanding. Earlier Christians and advanced Western writers thought that Christianity and Western civilization were going to collapse if Islam reached Europe. Although there has been a gradual change overtimes in European views about Islam due to some diversity of opinions within the modern Western academia, religious and civilized Western institutions look at Islam as intimidation. Despite the

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<sup>4</sup> Such books as *Preaching Islam* (1896) by Sir Thomas Walker Arnold, Sir William Muir's *The Life of Mahomet* (1923), William Watt's later writings, *Muhammad's Mecca* (1953), and *Muhammad's Medina* (1964), *Islam and Christianity Today* (1983), *Muhammad as the Founder of Islam* (1984), and *The Nature of Prophethood of Muhammad* (1987), are all regarded as classics in the field and are within the context of English Orientalist writing.

<sup>5</sup> Saeed Sharafat Khan & Fahd Al-Olaqi, "Western Image of Muhammad (PBUH) as a Prophet," *TRAMES, Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 2020, 24 (74/69), 1, 88.

<sup>6</sup> Norman Daniel, *Islam, Europe, and Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960), p.xvi.

development of information technology, this fear stems from a lack of knowledge.<sup>7</sup> For instance, some eminent Western writers such as Simon Ockley, Margoliouth, George Bush, and William Muir engaged in lengthy discussions regarding the Prophet Muhammad's matters. Still, they eventually retreated the discrepancies between what they tried to assert about the law of the Qur'an or the Prophet's traditions as a copy of old previous religious texts. Islam offers a structure for governance and social interaction. The Islamic faith is founded on upholding the law, which is how salvation comes about. This method attracts people to Islam in a variety of ways. Prophet Muhammad was indeed fully aware of the political implications of the theological side of the events that surrounded him. In the early times, he would probably definitely have identified his ultimate goal as the conversion of all Arabs to Islam. The Prophet Muhammad may have missed Arab unity under the banner of Islam. Watt sees this as an inferred conclusion, with the explicit political unification of all Arabs remaining in the background.

Some Western authors such as David Samuel Margoliouth, George Bush, and William Muir were supposed to be knowledgeable. Still, they cannot discriminate between reliable and unauthentic sources, favoring the least impressive. For instance, Margoliouth misrepresents the intention of the Prophet (PBUH) toward Christians as hostile and began only after the Prophet's (PBUH) conquests had extended to parts of Arabia.<sup>8</sup> Some other secular scholars such as Bosworth Smith, Samuel Zwemer, Edward Sell, and Washington Irving, cannot ignore their Christian background or avoid biased perspectives in academic inquiry when they try to make a realistic appraisal of Islam. For instance, like Zwemer<sup>9</sup>, Smith depicts Islam as the "religion of the sword."<sup>10</sup> The influence of Western perspectives is seen in numerous contemporary Orientalists, such as William Watt. For instance, Watt claims that he has investigated the geopolitical expansion of Islam and concluded that it was based on an imperial outlook. In Watt's *Muhammad, Prophet, and Statesman* (1961), he asserts that Muhammad was primarily interested in the northern tribes because they were interested in Islam, but he disregards their physical proximity to Medina and the Al-Sham region as well as their commercial relationships. He thinks that they may have been more interested in Muhammad's faith than the pagans further south since they were to some extent Christians and may have been discouraged by the Persian rule of Syria (614-629). Unfortunately, Watt speculates his claim without any reliable sources or academic research.<sup>11</sup> This is being done to strengthen the economic embargo on the pagans of Mecca's route to the north. Watt contrasts the modern administrative setup to the new Muslim state as progressing toward increasing dictatorial control of this organization's activities.<sup>12</sup> Prophet Muhammad's personal diplomacy, tact, and management abilities were also very important. The Prophet was exceptionally talented with personal abilities to cite the minority who think they are treated properly inside the Islamic society, which heightens the opposition of balance, contentment, and zest.<sup>13</sup> In fact, Prophet Muhammad was entirely sincere and operated in the best interests of his people, according to some older and more current Orientalists including Watt.<sup>14</sup>

According to Margoliouth, Prophet Muhammad faked his religious earnestness by portraying a divine messenger like a character in a play and manipulating his acts to provide the appearance of spirituality.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, they require miracles from Muhammad as the credentials of a prophet presenting a divine religion. *The Noble Qur'an* itself confirmed that Muhammad was not a miracle worker like other prophets. He was given the Noble Qur'an as a great miracle (52:33-35).<sup>16</sup> Modern Westerners have little trouble in demonstrating how Prophet Muhammad may have been misled.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the divine code of ethics outlines principles and standards that every human being should act on behalf of the good morals required to be followed. The Qur'an and otherworldly texts are completely distinct from one another. Many themes of the Qur'an have no analogs in the Testaments such as "begotten of God," and "Jacob wrestles with God" (Genesis 32:22-32). The Islamic depiction of God in the Qur'an is superior to that

<sup>7</sup> Sahrasad, H., Nurdin, M. A., Dar, M., & Baihaky, R. "Multiculturalism, Islamophobia and the Muslim Minority in Australia: A Reflection," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun*, (2024), 19(1), 341.

<sup>8</sup> See Margoliouth, *Mohammed, In Series: What did they teach?* (Blackie, 1939), 60.

<sup>9</sup> See Samuel M. Zwemer, "The Sword of Muhammad and Ali." *Moslem World*, XXI, April, (1931), 109-121.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Mohammed and Mohammedanism* (Smith, Elder & Co. 1874), 61.

<sup>11</sup> See Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford UP., 1961), 180.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.217.

<sup>14</sup> See Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*. (Oxford UP. 1956), 18.

<sup>15</sup> See Margoliouth, *Mohammedanism* (Thornton Butterworth, 1928), 88, 89, 104-106.

<sup>16</sup> All references are taken from the English Translation by M. T. Al-Hilali, & Khan, M. M. (2023), Trans., *The Noble Qur'an*. Tanzil - Quran Navigator <http://tanzil.net>

<sup>17</sup> See Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford UP., 1961), 17.

portrayal in the Testament which represents the evangelical God as weaker and less powerful than the flawless God of Islam as in *The Noble Qur'ān* (7:152, 5:72 & 42:11). These revealed verses of the Qur'an discuss monotheism, which is rooted in Judaeo-Christian theology and is characterized by its ideas of God as the Creator, resurrection and judgment, and revelation. Later revealed passages, which contain both Old and New Testament content, further tarnish the dependency on the Biblical legacy. This point of view creates some difficulties for Christian researchers in understanding why Prophet Muhammad's preaching started around 610 A.D.<sup>18</sup> The goal of the Prophet Muhammad was to win the Meccans' hearts and minds.

The twenty-first-century writings about Islam are out of the box of English Orientalist writing. For instance, Craig Considine finds out that the same human acts are similarly parallel in Prophet Muhammad and Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup> The personal characteristics of the Prophet (PBUH) capture their attention rather than presenting historical reality. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is a unique sample of humanity for the entire humankind or human features. He outstandingly fits into human beings in his compassion, mercy, and empathy. Allah, The Almighty, describes him as the best example of kindness for all human beings in the world including otherworldly creatures. Allah, The Almighty says, "*And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds*" (*The Noble Qur'ān*, 21:107). The new scholarly approach toward Islam and the Prophet Muhammad established more communication between the Islamic world and the Western World. The continuing faithful adjustment of the depiction of Islam and His Messenger Muhammad (PBUH) is an academic production of perfect awareness and comprehensive investigation. The research's attempt is worthwhile undertaking with objective and accurate academic investigation. It is a humble challenge to bring into light the corpus of the accounts of Islam and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with academic research to the sources of the facts through the interpretations of contemporary Western writings.

### **Writings of William Watt**

Professor William Montgomery Watt (1909-2006) works enrich the English Library with thorough investigations of Islam and its Prophet introduced in volumes. Most of the arguments, themes, and opinions raised in Watt's writings are mentioned by many historians but he turns the other way around to say the same in new words. For instance, Watt thinks that Prophet Muhammad's humanity is the root of Islamic culture but "disapproved by the modern West."<sup>20</sup> He asserts that he has scrutinized the reality of Arabian civilization, and concludes that the early Arab converts were naïve, illiterate, and unable to differentiate between the political and economic advantages of Islam.<sup>21</sup> The Christian claim — which was vigorously pressed in the West—was that the Arabs, who had embraced Islam, lacked the capacity to evaluate it.<sup>22</sup> For instance, Watt thinks that the Arabs were unable to distinguish between the system's economic, political, and religious components because they saw Islam as a whole. Watt states that they had to decide whether to join the system or continue to reject the religious profession of believing in God and His message.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Watt makes the incorrect claim that a man cannot hold a conviction of this type unless he is a part of Muhammad's community, which was both political and religious. Therefore, there is no reason to doubt the possibility of a large-scale, essentially religious migration into the Islamic community in the 630s A.D.<sup>24</sup>

The analysis of investigation on Islam and its Prophet which European writers, like Watt, think in opposition to their accusations. He recognizes that they have been conscious of enmity to Islam. They came up with mutually agreeable presuppositions to support rejection as well and they created a singular narrative of Muhammad's life. For instance, Watt admits to taking a scholastic approach to analyze Muhammad's prophethood and how his views on the Islamic identification of God and the Holy Spirit have shifted overnight. There has been no study into this matter, although he has indicated in *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* that Muhammad did not identify the Spirit, but afterward felt it was a greater type of angel named the Spirit. Finally, he connects it to the angel Gabriel.<sup>25</sup> Watt finds

<sup>18</sup> Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam* (Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1992), 14.

<sup>19</sup> See C. Considine, *The Humanity of Muhammad: A Christian View* (New Jersey: Blue Dome P., 2020), 14.

<sup>20</sup> See Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford UP, 1961), 223, 235.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

that Muhammad possibly changed his perspective after learning about the Jewish belief that God is invisible. He believes that the specific interpretations of the visions are unimportant; what matters is the support they provided for Muhammad's trust in himself as a man with a unique power from God.<sup>26</sup> Truthfully, Watt is compelled to concede some of the divine autonomy in the Prophet's teachings and behavior at various points in his argument. He recognizes the non-man-made religious and ethical inspiration or understanding that can only be found in religion, thus it is presumably suggested by that. This idea is not one of statesmanship that derives from revelation.<sup>27</sup> It is a social and political stance that was probably unintentionally inspired by Christian doctrine and the secular erosion of one's prophetic authority.

Professor Watt acknowledges that although initiatives have been made to alter the erroneous perception of Muhammad that modern Western scholars have acquired, success is elusive due to the pervasiveness of the many viewpoints.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, Watt inconsistently gives more suspicions than investigating Islamic issues. Watt shows more objectivity due to his influence by Islamic sources but he emotively assaults Muhammad and Islam by saying that the heavenly revelation is a type of "true and sound" "creative imagination."<sup>29</sup> For instance, he dismisses the idea that a Prophet in a desolate place may receive heavenly guidance. He claims that it was astounding for a guy in faraway Mecca in the seventh century to think that he had been chosen by God to be a prophet.<sup>30</sup> However, Watt wants to emphasize how the Qur'an and the Biblical or Judeo-Christian tradition are related as it was quoted from previous holy texts.<sup>31</sup> He supposes that the Qur'an is examined under the surface of words and tales of ancient prophets or loyal responses to perplexed worshipers over a crisis like the deity of Jesus but he seriously refutes the Islamic conception of political, social, and economic principles found in the Qur'an.<sup>32</sup> Watt argues that because there is no simply faint reflection of the previous religions, Islam avoids any idea of supremacy. He goes on to say that Islam is the result of the synthesis of Biblical principles with an autonomous movement of the human spirit caused by local conditions. When describing the origins of Islam, all these factors must be kept in mind.<sup>33</sup>

The Islamic sources such as *Sirah* by Ibn-Is'faq (d. 768) and *Maghiizi* of al-Waqidi (d. 822) that Watt has studied, helped him to offer several accurate observations regarding Muhammad's personal conduct, fidelity, moderation, and generosity. Watt comments that 'none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad.'<sup>34</sup> He may also have acknowledged Muhammad's strong rejection of polytheism and idolatry as well as Muhammad's great faith in divine direction, constancy, resolve, and honesty in Makkah. He says, "Of all the world's great men none has been so much maligned as Muhammad."<sup>35</sup> However, his criticisms of the Prophet as being harsh, cunning, dishonest, voluble, promiscuous, contradictory, and inventing revelations, as well as the fact that his prophethood deteriorated into worldly and wicked matters, negate any reasonable criticisms. For instance, he claims that it is a 'slight exaggeration' to say that Prophet "Muhammad was remarkably free from pride" yet "his own function has had grave consequences and cannot be ignored."<sup>36</sup> In several occasions of his books such as *Muhammad at Mecca* and *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, 1953, 1956), Watt's primary concerns of prominence are the fallacy of Muhammad's prophethood, the fabrication of revelations to excuse wicked deeds, violence, sexuality, immorality, and similar themes to Muir and Margoliouth. Nobody who is not engaged in the work is likely to deny that it is heavily based on preconceptions. Watt has adopted the Western Orientalists' views that Muhammad was a mistaken man. He gives an example that "the modern Westerner has no difficulty in showing how Muhammad may have been mistaken."<sup>37</sup> Watt, akin to several Western Orientalists, firmly thinks that Judaeo-Christian influences may have impacted Prophet Muhammad,<sup>38</sup> so, he erroneously represents Prophet Muhammad as he feigned receiving divine revelations.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>28</sup> See Watt, *What is Islam?* (Oxford University Press., 1980), 1-2.

<sup>29</sup> See Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: UP., 1961), 239.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>32</sup> See Jalal M. Buaben, *Image of Prophet Muhammad in the West* (London: Islamic Foundation, 1996), 201.

<sup>33</sup> See Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman*, (Oxford UP, 1961), .55.

<sup>34</sup> See Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: University Press, 1953), 52.

<sup>35</sup> See Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman*, (Oxford UP, 1961), 231

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 59

## Writings of Daniel Norman

Daniel Norman (1919-1992) was a renowned expert on intercultural interactions and the Middle Ages. His works investigate the political and religious factors that contribute to the often-negative Western perceptions of Islam. Norman thinks that some medieval concepts survive in Christian and European thought. For instance, he asserts that there is a persistent Western disposition of intellectual disdain toward Muhammad, characterizing him as a 'fraudulent' or 'hypocritical' figure in his prophetic claims while depicting him as an ambitious schemer, a bandit, and a lecher. In addition to highlighting Islam's deficiencies compared to Christianity, there is a focus on heresy, especially on the Trinity, and an obsession with the Qur'anic portrayal of Christ.<sup>39</sup> Besides the rise of Islam, Muslim empires reach the Christian European lands. It was a challenge to Christendom, but Daniel Norman considers that the movement of Western Europeans among Muslim nations changed their views about Islam. He insists that Islam is neither only a rejection of Christianity nor merely a part-affirmation of it, but it came to be understood in both ways.<sup>40</sup> The most significant and defining contribution of Western philosophy to the study of Islam was the enduring perception of how that religion testifies to Christ. This was frequently, as when the Qur'an was unintentionally interpreted to convey the Trinity, entirely incomprehensible to Muslims but it approached Muslim interpretation more closely when it elaborated on the Qur'anic 'corroboration' of Christians and became even more aligned when it emphasized God's selection of Jesus and Mary.<sup>41</sup> Islam was considered a deviation from the truth held by the Christian Church, and the Islamic perception of Christianity was similarly a deviation from the truth protected by Islam.

Daniel Norman thinks that the West needs an in-depth academic investigation of its disadvantageous tradition to approach Islam and its Prophet. Although some academics contend that Muslims' perceptions of and attitudes toward Muhammad should not necessarily reflect those of others, no form of research is more risky than unchecked conjecture and purposeful material misrepresentation. Norman asserts that for centuries negative images of Islam and its Prophet had been reinfused into Western thought and the world of scholarship. For instance, "D. S. Margoliouth, Sir William Muir, and Pere Lammens have maintained an attitude that is not fundamentally sympathetic to Muhammad or to Islam;" "with many ideas that have served Christian apologetic since the time of St John of Damascus of criticism, for example, of Muhammad's personal standards of his use of force and of diplomacy, even the suggestion of self-delusion that is only one stage removed from conscious fraud."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, Daniel supposes that three major themes of undeniable significance guide Western conceptions of Islam. The first theme remains unquestionably persistent and significant. Two other themes related to some of humanity's biggest concerns, such as power, sex, and religion, are equally important. These are the perennial points of contention between Christians and Muslims.<sup>43</sup> With his intellectual abilities, Daniel Norman has recognized that the Qur'an is not essentially a history book. As a result, the best place to view Islam is in the Traditions, but according to his premise, the academic account would present Muhammad in a positive light, therefore it cannot be false. Oddly, the West denies Muhammad's profound and sincere spirituality. Moreover, Western intellectual attitude shows no interest in studying scientific information in Islam, *The Noble Qur'an*, and the Hadith of the Prophet. There is no genuine interest in Islam itself, but rather in cultivating a specific mindset around it among Christians. For instance, in contrast to the showing of the divine origin of Christianity, it is undoubtedly one of the most compelling shreds of evidence that Islam was a human invention and that it owes its development and establishment nearly entirely to the sword.<sup>44</sup>

The Western focus on Muhammad's life as full of fraud serves the Christian apologetic in Muir's translation of the *Risalah* since the time of St John of Damascus. Muir's claim to have received revelation served as a justification for acts of violence, salaciousness, and humanity. Due to the way he used religion to excuse vice and weakness, Muhammad was a tremendous blasphemer.<sup>45</sup> It is amazing to think that so much of what Medieval European scholars stated about Muhammad was accepted as fact at the time. Norman states that Western authors and audiences alike accepted anything that

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<sup>39</sup> See Daniel, *Islam and The West: The Making of an Image* (Oneworld Publications, 1993), 276.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 287-8.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 300-1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 278.

suggested Muhammad could not have been the true Prophet of God.<sup>46</sup> The Western debate depended heavily on Prophet Muhammad's background and personality, which appears to be a scholarly technique used to refute Islam. Daniel Norman believes that 'the historian of ideas is like the historian of events, who must present enough of the facts to allow the critic to agree or disagree with his conclusions.'<sup>47</sup>

The continual shift in how positively Islam is portrayed is the result of research and awareness. For instance, Clinton Bennett describes it as "a detailed life of Muhammad more complete than almost any other previous book, at least in English," pointing out that it also makes facts about Muhammad's life available to readers of all faiths.<sup>48</sup> They significantly reformed the attitude of the Western public toward Islam and provided the Western library with authentic information. They are unlikely to pursue a genuine understanding of Islamic culture but lack first-hand experience. Much better Western writing is by Norman Daniel in *Islam and The West* (1993). The author discusses the misinterpretation of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a factor contributing to the evolving contradiction within the self-perception of English identity. These writings have been liberated from outdated fantastical notions, as well as from the contemporary political and theological biases directed toward Eastern cultures. They aim to achieve a genuine understanding of this integral aspect of global civilization's historical development.

Daniel Norman talks brilliantly about Islam's appeal to people, including Christians. In fact, there are many Arab Christian tribes in Arabia. Some tribes or sections of them were largely Christians. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad argued them with the revelation about the Trinity, theology, and Jesus. Most of them embraced Islam and its teachings. Earlier, Norman Daniel described the Western misunderstanding of Islam and its Prophet as a process by which the 'other' became the opposite of our self-image.<sup>49</sup> The unbiased and truthful information about Islam and its Prophet is interwoven with academic techniques to keep the truth away from Western readers. Inappropriately, some Western accounts about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are totally mistaken in Western works. Although *The Noble Qur'an* is Islam's long-life and universal miracle, the West failed to understand the *Noble Qur'an* and Prophet Muhammad. For educated authors, the Qur'anic revelation of the oneness of God, the threats of hellfire, and the demands for belief in and devotion to God seem unkind and even foolish.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, there was no insight into understanding the realities of Islamic spiritual practices in the Western perspective on Islam. *The Qur'an* references scientific information that contemporary science has validated or hypothesized, such as the "Big Bang Theory" is recognized (*The Qur'an*, 21:30); the Earth possesses an ovate shape (*The Qur'an*, 39:5, 79:30), and Oxygen levels diminish with altitude (*The Qur'an*, 6:125). This information could be communicated more efficiently inside Western academia.

The academic investigation of Muhammad's prophethood was intentionally not to establish the prophetic signs with academic impartiality but to represent him as a false prophet. Daniel Norman believes that many historians are aware of a wide body of events, and the research involvement precisely contributed to the general stock, allowing for a fresher perspective.<sup>51</sup> It hasn't been very long since opinions of different ages have been investigated, organized, and known. For instance, in a Medinan revelation, the *Qur'an* reiterated the call and urged the followers of the Book, including Christians and Jews, to work together with Muslims for the benefit of the divine religions, which together form an unbreakable chain of divine blessings for humanity. *The Qur'an* states that belief in all Prophets and Messengers sent by Allah, the Almighty, is a prerequisite for becoming a Muslim (*The Qur'an*, 2:136). To remain a Muslim, one must acknowledge the prophethood of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and all other Biblical figures. This conviction is essential to emphasize the continuation of this chain of prophethood, which is inextricably linked. The fact that the arrival of the final Messenger and the revelation of the last and complete message had been foreshadowed by earlier prophets and divine messages mentioned in the *Qur'an* was done to underline this relationship further. Muslim scholars have been researching ancient religious texts to uncover verses that make prophecies regarding the arrival of Prophet Muhammad based on such Qur'anic assertions (*The Noble Qur'an*, 16: 4). Research into older texts was encouraged by the Qur'anic verses mentioned above as well as accounts ascribed

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 107-8.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., xiv

<sup>48</sup> See Clinton Bennett, *In Search of Muhammad* (London: Cassell, 1998), 95.

<sup>49</sup> See Daniel Norman, *Islam and The West: The Making of an Image* (Oneworld Publication, 1993), 78.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 330-1.

to various companions who had converted to Islam from Jewish or Christian backgrounds. They published facts that backed up the Qur'an and other Islamic teachings. On the other hand, the majority of Jewish and Christian scholars have not only denied that any such prophecies exist in their scriptures but have also challenged the Muslim viewpoint by either changing the translations of the relevant words or verses or by providing alternative interpretations.

Daniel addresses the difficulty of many Western interpretations of Islam. With the rise of the British Empire, Muslims were frequently seen as honest, self-reliant individuals who resembled Europeans in this regard. This is undoubtedly a result of both the Islamic legacy of warfare and the valor displayed by numerous Muslim nations throughout the interaction among nations.<sup>52</sup> Subsequently, the tendency of the British to conserve Islamic civilization in some instances and to leave it alone in others stands out in the British experience and appears to stem from inherited sentiments. In Western publications such as Thomas Arnold, William Muir, and William Watt, Muhammad's humanitarian attitude toward the destitute is only mentioned briefly, generally in a sentence or two. For instance, in opening Makkah, if Prophet Muhammad had been cold-blooded, of dubious character, and always willing to make up revelations to fulfill his desires, he could have used one of these channels to establish his authority and exact revenge on the pagan enemies who had waged wars against him and injured his followers on numerous occasions. If Mohammed had been a pre-Christian prophet of Arabia, it would have been difficult to exclude him from the ranks of the messengers who prepared the way for the revelation. According to Emil Brunner, this claim to be a prophet "does not seem to be in any way justified by the actual content of the revelations."<sup>53</sup> This justification lacks a firm foundation and stems from a dissatisfaction with the provision of justifications for misrepresentations of Islam and the inaccuracies regarding the life of the Prophet Muhammad.

Daniel's trust in Muslim scholars is deeply rooted in his consciousness, probably due to his thorough studies of Islamic sources such as authentic Arab and Muslim translated texts for ibn Ishaq, al-Bukhari, and authoritative men like al-Ghazali and ibn al-'Arabi.<sup>54</sup> Although some medieval interpretations of Muhammad and Islam have a significant influence on academic life, Daniel has adjusted his study focus to include more mainstream considerations. The historical method is the transmitted judgment of experience and imagination, which interests the hypotheses in explaining the data available about Islam and its Messenger (PBUH). Moreover, some other historical perceptions of sexual freedom, according to the Western mentality, have undergone several stages and have been so widely accepted in Europe that it has changed attitudes toward Islam. In the same way, the failure of Muslims to acquire Western practices, while being given a chance, served to further reinforce the superiority sense in which European conceptions of Islam have changed quickly in line with the faster rate of development in European thought.

## **Writings of Craig Considine**

Craig Considine (1985 - now), one of the most influential global voices speaking in admiration of the Prophet of Islam, thinks that there was Muslim-Christian coexistence and dialog in the time of Prophet Muhammad. American scholars have quite scarce fresh English material on Islam and its Prophet. His academic standing is to look at objective materials about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that many authors ignore. For instance, Craig Considine wrote several articles and books such as "Jesus Christ and Prophet Muhammad followed 'The Golden Rule'" (2015), "Christians and Muslims should embrace 'The Jihad of Jesus'" (2016), "Religious Pluralism and Civic Rights in a 'Muslim nation': an analysis of Prophet Muhammad's covenants with Christians" (2016), "Why a Christian can view Muhammad as a Prophet" (2017), and *The Humanity of Muhammad: A Christian View* (2020). It appears that he is the sole scholar entering the arena with a newly developed work authored by an individual who advocates for constructive interfaith relations. While it is acknowledged that Western civilization, technology, and philosophy hold a position of superiority, Craig Considine posits that Islam and Christianity share a common origin.<sup>55</sup> This perspective serves as a foundational framework for examining the discourse surrounding Islam within the context of Western scholarship.

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<sup>52</sup> See Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh UP, 1960), 481.

<sup>53</sup> See Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford UP, 1961), 237-8.

<sup>54</sup> See Daniel, *Islam and The West* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1993), 9.

<sup>55</sup> See Considine, *The Humanity of Muhammad: A Christian View* (Blue Dome, 2020), 12.



The Islamic faith holds a significance that is comparable to that of the Christian faith. Craig Considine identifies shared divine teachings between Christianity and Islam, offering valuable insights into Western thought and the Christian perspective. For those outside the Muslim community, Craig Considine's writings serve as an essential resource for enhancing the understanding of Muhammad and the tenets of Islam.<sup>56</sup> He positively perceives Christianity and Islam as one religion that is not simply a religious conviction but it is additionally a way of life. For instance, Craig has recognized that both religions have a political system and a way of life that their canons extend beyond faith to other facets of existence.<sup>57</sup> Islamic social norms, judicial, and legislative functions undoubtedly provided a foundation for the Prophet Muhammad's ascent into the political mainstream of society. To such an extent, Craig concludes that over centuries, many changes made to Muslim people's political or social landscape generally come at the price of their devotion to Islam. He made a lot of leadership-style decisions of peace throughout his prophetic ministry.<sup>58</sup> Allah, the Immense, says in the *Noble Qur'an*: "We have sent you forth to all humankind, so that you may give them good news and warn them" (*Noble Qur'an*, 34:28). Prophet Muhammad worked to propagate Islam throughout the world while always acting under the direction of God. The actions of the Prophet Muhammad always reflect a deeply spiritual and prophetic goal, never those of a sectarian leader. As Professor Martin Forward<sup>59</sup> notes, some Christian authors opt against employing the word 'prophet' for Muhammad (Forward, 120). It is an attempt to cast doubt on Muhammad's status as a prophet by suggesting that Muhammad was more of a politician than a prophet. They do not enhance the comprehension of Muhammad's religious and spiritual worldview.<sup>60</sup> They attribute his achievement in creating the Islamic country to his skill as a wise politician.

The Prophet is a paradigmatic character who must be examined from a variety of angles before being given a meaningful assessment. It is challenging for Craig Considine to have an intention to defend the honor of Prophet Muhammad. Because of his prominent membership in top groups of Islamic academics, he claims that there are many shared values between Muslims and Christians, such as righteousness, reverence, humility, integrity, peace, justice, dignity, service, and mercy. Unlike Western thought, Craig thinks that there are positive messages in Islam and Christianity that people should live with righteousness. Even when Muslims appear to follow the moral rule of God, Islam is typically considered as falling short of Christianity.<sup>61</sup> Craig Considine's assessment approach provides English-speaking readers with accurate information for the advancement of true knowledge worldwide. This new Western insight can help motivate world readers to collaborate in the fight against fabrication in all its forms, oppose misinterpretation in all its appearances, and acknowledge that a new approach is a necessary first step toward a comprehensive understanding of Prophet Muhammad.

Craig Considine's scholarly approach is to establish a high human elation in the Prophet's conduct in contrast to the strange-looking tendency of intellectual opposition to Muhammad in Western writings. He wrote extensively on Muhammad's humanity, which gives a definitive, authentic study of Muhammad. He has opened a new door for academic excellence in Western Islamic scholarship. His erudition as a reclusive scholar is to write for a select academic readership; besides, he serves the Western public, too. On the other hand, he compares Christianity and Islam using the concept of humanity, which is beneficial since it demonstrates the proper approach for contrasting religious ideals with actual social events. In some passages of the *Noble Qur'an* (3:81,110; 7:158), God the Almighty refers to His choice of the permanent nation for His religion. He chose the Arabs, and from them, He chose Muhammad, for they all had the best-distinguished characteristics of wisdom, pride, strength, courage, piety, hospitality, and fidelity. These qualities were there with other prophets, but their offspring lost those potentials. Arabs are wise, proud, strong, courageous, pious, generous, and faithful,

<sup>56</sup> See Fahd Al-Olaqi, "Understanding the Humanity of Prophet Muhammad and Jesus: A Western Peacebuilding Phase towards Islam," *TRAMES-Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2021, 25(75/70), 4, p.472.

<sup>57</sup> See Khan & Al-Olaqi, "Western Image of Muhammad (PBUH) as a Prophet," *TRAMES, Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* (2020), 24(74/69), 1, p.75.

<sup>58</sup> Published on Huffington Post (24.04.2015). Available online at <<https://craigconsidinetcd.com/2015/04/24/jesus-christ-and-prophet-muhammad-followed-the-golden-rule/>>. Accessed on 07.08.2021

<sup>59</sup> Professor Martin Forward is a British, Methodist Christian lecturer and author on religion and Professor of Religion at Aurora University, Illinois He has taught Islam at the Universities of Leicester, Bristol and Cambridge. He wrote *Muhammad: A Short Biography* (1998). Oxford: Oneworld.

<sup>60</sup> See Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam* (Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1992), 14.

<sup>61</sup> See Considine, "Religious Pluralism and Civic Rights in a 'Muslim nation': an analysis of Prophet Muhammad's covenants with Christians," *Religions* (2016), 7, 2, 15., p.15.

are distinguished attributes to be studied by scholars. Craig admires Prophet Muhammad and his characteristics as he was the best ethical man. He has represented his admiration in his book *The Humanity of Muhammad: A Christian View* (2020). God the Almighty praised him, “*And verily, you (O Muhammad SAW) are on an exalted standard of character*” (*The Noble Qur’an*, 68:4). Craig holds a position and renown in the circle of prominent Islamic studies researchers, which provides him with various Islamic sources; thus, one would anticipate less vitriol but a favorable attitude toward Islam and its Prophet.

Craig Considine has a mild interest in Islamic ethics and religious practices, which can help many people to reevaluate their information with truthful facts. Unfortunately, the traditional Western insight is trying to understand Prophet Muhammad, his human character, his ethnic background, and negative stereotypes unjustly associated with him sometimes present a barrier that needs to be overcome. Such negative ideas to attach Islam with violence or a social phobia cannot help to reach into a productive communication. A comprehensive analysis of diverse viewpoints, both in Islamic study and Western academia, would enhance the discourse’s balance. Although Considine’s insight or personal beliefs might influence some modern Western interpretations and writings on Islam and Prophet Muhammad, one of the conventional and intellectual typecasts about Prophet Muhammad is to perceive him as a moralizing person or a Prophet who committed his existence to convert his people, the Arabian polytheists, from their inadequate existence by appealing for prophethood. This attitude, although it emerges as harmless apparently, utterly overlooks his time accomplishments and impact on the memoirs of early civilization. Craig Considine provides fresh new insight into Prophet Muhammad, a human model of a son, orphan, nephew, friend, cross-cultural navigator, seeker of truth, businessman, husband, mystic, Prophet, community builder, anti-racist, revolutionary, educator, statesman, civic nation builder, lawyer, diplomat, mediator, general, theologian, pluralist, friend, peacemaker, and overall champion and friend of humanity.

On the other hand, Craig Considine’s representation of establishing a combination of Islam and Christianity into a new insight is a mistaken step. Islam is the last ideal religion, and it has introduced various social and economic regulations that other earlier faiths did not have. Allah says, ‘*Today I have completed to you your religion, and I have fulfilled my grace and I satisfy Islam as your religion*’ (*The Noble Qur’ān*, 5:3). Thus, Craig appreciates the Prophet (PBUH) as well as he accepts his divine prophethood as that of Ibrahim, Moses, or Jesus (Peace Be Upon Them).

The notion of characterizing Islam as a return to the original, unadulterated religion of Abraham is at odds with contemporary Western standards of historical objectivity and is fundamentally inaccurate. However, it is essential to acknowledge from a sociological perspective that Islam has achieved significant success within its indigenous context. Furthermore, the Arabian Peninsula engaged in interactions with Christians and Christian teachings, which allowed the Prophet Muhammad to articulate the foundational principles of Islam with minimal modification while sidestepping the adverse critiques from Jewish communities. Early Arabs perceived Islam as embodying a series of remarkable ideas that contributed to the emergence of a new civilization. This scholarly insight offers readers a wealth of information, particularly within some contemporary Western writings concerning the early interactions between Muslims and Christians.<sup>62</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Prominent Western scholars are reexamining the prevailing perceptions of Islam and its Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by striving for balance and delivering an authentic portrayal of his life. In contrast to the outdated remnants of medieval critiques of Islam, which have devolved into mere speculation, the objectivity inherent in Western scholarship has significantly diminished the misrepresentation of Islamic teachings and fostered more equitable viewpoints. Scholars such as William Watt, Daniel Norman, and Craig Considine are reconstructing a nuanced understanding of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad by applying innovative academic methodologies that consider the historical, cultural, religious, and humanitarian context of his life.

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<sup>62</sup> See Fahd Al-Olaqi, "Understanding the Humanity of Prophet Muhammad and Jesus: A Western Peacebuilding Phase towards Islam," *TRAMES-Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, (2021), 25(75/70), 4, p.472.

William Watt provides insightful and constructive analyses of the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), utilizing Islamic sources more extensively than traditional European narratives. Daniel Norman enhances the dialog concerning Islamic civilization in relation to Western and English-speaking contexts, contributing to a more profound academic inquiry that facilitates improved comprehension between the Islamic world and the West. Craig Considine adopts a productive perspective in his research on Western interpretations of the actions of Prophet Muhammad, which has the potential to effect gradual changes in public knowledge regarding Islam and the Prophet (PBUH). Such constructive and informative insights may inspire contemporary scholars eager to engage in Islamic studies in the current century.

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