



## SOURCES OF SĪRAH & HISTORICAL QUESTS: COMPARATIVE STUDY ON IBN E WARRAQ'S APPROACH AND ALBERT SCHWEITZER'S METHODOLOGY

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### ABSTRACT

*Ibn Warraq is founder of Institute for the secularization of Islamic society (ISIS). In his book "The Quest for Historical Jesus", he criticized on Sīrah and Islamic history, presented by familiar orientalist of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. He suggests to reject the authenticity of Muslim sources and insist on the need of such books of Sīrah which consist on critics and Non-Muslim sources. He presents the ideas that in the writings of Islamic history fictitious sources of Sīrah were emphasized which did not have any historical importance. This paper deals his ideas that sources of Sīrah should be verified by Non- Islamic sources. In case of difference, prior to non- Islamic sources should have priority for verification because Sīrah of the Muḥammad (PBUH) cannot be verified by pre-Islamic byzantine sources. He emphasizes on historians to raise questions, as Albert does about Jesus, on the historical status of the Prophet of Islam. Indeed, "The Quest for Historical Jesus" has been controversial and particularly in the Western academia. In this paper analytical and descriptive methodology has been applied. In the findings, authors concluded that he has applied Albert's methodology and tried to encounter prior Muslim sources of Sīrah. Both researchers' methodology has been rebuked with result of study that such baseless claims on the basis of logical and historical evidences highlighting their prejudice and academically dishonesty with sources and historical studies.*

**Key word:** Ibn e Warraq, Albert Schweitzer, Sources of Sīrah, Secularization, Analytical, Quest, Historical, Muḥammad, Jesus.



**Introduction:**

In the Islamic academia archives, almost Arabic sources of *Sīrah* has encompassed the basic historical and theological approaches over all other sources and literature of *Sīrah*. As well as, historical quests against messengers of Allah almighty got an appreciation through critics and their inaccurate & perishable thoughts. The present era is more uncertain with such thoughts due to the variety of Atheism and broad mindset, as two critics are being discussed in this research.

Ibn Warraq<sup>1</sup> belongs to a Pakistani Muslim family and he was born in British India before the independence of Pakistan.<sup>2</sup> He secured admission in a boarding school in England. After that he moved to University of Edinburg, Scotland and studied Philosophy and Arabic with *Montgomery Watt*<sup>3</sup>. In 1982 he went France and opened a restaurant.<sup>4</sup> He did not like any religion and presented himself as an atheist.<sup>5</sup> He also established Institute for the secularization of Islamic society (ISIS) and worked with the ultra-liberal group of Muslims. He is the author of many books. His famous writings are: *Why I am not a Muslim*, *The Origins of the Koran*, and *The Quest for Historical Muḥammad*.

While *Albert Schweitzer* (D 1965) was an Alsatian polymath. He was a theologian, organist, writer, humanitarian, philosopher, and physician. *Schweitzer* challenged both the secular view of Jesus as depicted by the historical-critical method current at this time, as well as the traditional Christian view. His contributions to the interpretation of Pauline Christianity concern the role of *Paul's* mysticism of 'being in Christ' as primary and the doctrine of Justification by Faith as secondary.

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<sup>1</sup>This is a pen name of the author (without any real name/ anonymously), as a critic of Islam. He presented himself as an atheist in Europe and Oriental studies. His book '*Why I am not Muslim*' contains on such subjects.

<sup>2</sup>Chesler, Phyllis, *Interview: Ibn Warraq on the Judeo-Christian Sources of the Koran, Middle East Forum*; [www.meforum.org/4840/koran-the-judeo-christian-sources](http://www.meforum.org/4840/koran-the-judeo-christian-sources) , (Accessed 20 April, 2019).

<sup>3</sup>**William Montgomery Watt** (2006) a Scottish historian, Orientalist, Anglican priest, and academic. He served as Professor of Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Edinburgh. He was the foremost non-Muslim interpreters of Islam in the west. His comprehensive biography of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, *Muhammad at Mecca* and *Muhammad at Medina*, are considered to be classics in the field.

<sup>4</sup>Ronald A. Lindsey, *A Bittersweet Farewell, No Faith Value Blog* (accessed 30 Nov, 2013).

<sup>5</sup>Ibn e Warraq, *Why I am not Muslim* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1995), xiv.

Ibn e Warraq is blamed that he has implanted the method of *Albert's* famous book "*The Historical Quest for the Jesus*".<sup>1</sup> This is also a fact that he has been criticized. He applied the methodology of *Albert's* as mentioned in many reviews of his book who was famous for his controversial theories regarding Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

**The quest for the historical *muḥammad* in western writings:**

Ibn e Warraq, is not the first person who started this type of quests. Basically its foundation belongs to earliest orientalist like *Arthur Jaffery*, who wrote an article on *The Quest of the Historical Muḥammad*<sup>3</sup> and *Andreas Gorke* in *Prospects and Limits in the Study of the Historical Muḥammad*.<sup>4</sup> Both scholars have discussed primary accounts on historical sources of *Sīrah* and Muslim literature in context to early Christian accounts. They have also studied the pre-critical period of these quests

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<sup>1</sup>*The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (German: Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung, literally 'History of Life-of-Jesus Research') is a 1906 work of Biblical historical criticism written by Albert Schweitzer during the previous year, before he began to study for a medical degree. The original edition was translated into English by William Montgomery and published in 1910. An expanded second German edition was published during 1913, containing theologically significant revisions and expansions. This expanded edition was not published in English until 2001.

<sup>2</sup>*Albert Schweitzer* maintained that the life of Jesus must be interpreted in the light of Jesus' own convictions, which reflected late Jewish eschatology and apocalypticism. Schweitzer writes: "The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the kingdom of God, who founded the kingdom of heaven upon earth and died to give his work its final consecration never existed. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in a historical garb. This image has not been destroyed from outside; it has fallen to pieces". Schweitzer, Albert, *the Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 478.

*Schweitzer* cross-referenced the many New Testament verses declaring imminent fulfilment of the promise of the World's ending within the lifetime of Jesus's original followers. He wrote that in his view, in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus speaks of a "tribulation", with his "coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (Mark), and states that it will happen but it has not: "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew, 24:34) or, "have taken place" (Luke 21:32). Similarly, in 1st Peter 1:20, "Christ, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest in these last times for you," as well as "But the end of all things is at hand," (1 Peter 4:7) and "Surely, I come quickly." (Revelation 22:20).

<sup>3</sup>Jaffery, Arthur, *the Quest of the Historical Muhammad*, the Muslim World: 16 (1926), pp: 327-348.

<sup>4</sup>*The Transmission and Dynamics of the Textual Sources of Islam: Essays in Honour of Harald*. ed.: Nicolet Boekhof-van der Voort; Kees Versteegh; Joas Wagmakers (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 137-151.

and their beginnings. *Arthur Jaffery*, especially elaborated the pathological, political and economics lives with advance criticism on this subject. He also presented a deliberating arguments on mythology, mysticism and eschatological aspects of holy prophet (PBUH), in the light of orientalist of pre and advance critics' era. *Ibn Warraq* in his book "*The Quest for the Historical Muḥammad*" which is basically compilation of various articles as we have mentioned in different sections of this study, disapproves the Islamic sources of *Sīrah* and have presented critical thoughts and theories regarding the sources of *Sīrah* presented by prominent Orientalists of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, like *Ernest Renan*,<sup>1</sup> *Henri Lammens*,<sup>2</sup> *C. H. Becker*,<sup>3</sup> *Arthur Jeffery*,<sup>4</sup> *Joseph Schacht*,<sup>5</sup> as well as famous historians of the eastern studies and early Islamic traditional historiography in Arabic like *Conrad Lawrence I*,<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>**Ernest Renan** (1892) was a French expert of Semitic languages and philosopher, biblical scholar, critic and historian of religion. He was the author of more than fifty books.

<sup>2</sup>**Henri Lammens** (1937) was an Orientalist historian and Jesuit, who wrote on the early history of Islam. His famous writings are *Islam: Beliefs and Institutions*, *The Age of Muhammad and the Chronology of the Sira*, and *Fatima and the Daughters of Muhammad*.

<sup>3</sup>**Carl Heinrich Becker** (1933) was a German orientalist and politician in Prussia. He was one of the founders of the study of the contemporary Middle East. He has thirteen books on Islamic conceptualism studies.

<sup>4</sup>**Arthur Jeffery** (1892), the author of extensive historical studies of Middle Eastern manuscripts. His important works include *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an: The Old Codices*, which catalogs all surviving documented variants of the orthodox Quran text; and *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*, which traces the origins of 318 foreign (non-Arabic) words found in the Qur'an. Some of Jeffery's studies are included in *The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book*, edited by Ibn Warraq.

<sup>5</sup>**Joseph Franz Schacht** (1969) was a British-German professor of Arabic and Islam at Columbia University in New York. He was the leading Western scholar on Islamic law, whose *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, is still considered a centrally important work on the subject. The author of many articles in the first and second editions of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Schacht also edited the second edition of *The Legacy of Islam* for the Legacy series of Oxford University Press and authored a textbook under the title *An Introduction to Islamic Law*.

<sup>6</sup>**Lawrence I. Conrad** (b 1949), is a historian of Near Eastern Medicine, at the UCL Centre for the History of Medicine in London, UK and a Lecturer at University College, London. He received his Ph.D. from Princeton University. He is the author of numerous studies on medieval Near Eastern social history, Arabic and Islamic medicine, and Arabic, Greek, and Syriac historiography. He collaborated with Albrecht Noth on the second edition of *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*. Some of his work is published in *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*.

Judith Koren,<sup>1</sup> Yehuda D Nevo,<sup>2</sup> F.E. Peters,<sup>3</sup> Herbert Berg<sup>4</sup> and G. R. Hawting.<sup>5</sup> In the First chapter he highlights the doubts presented by Ernest Renan on the historical status of the holy Prophet (PBUH) as well as the beginning of Islam<sup>6</sup>, by rejecting the authenticity of Islam in ridiculous ways and insisting on the need of books and sources produced by Non-Muslim critiques on *Sīrah* rather than faith based historical and authentic facts. He has been blamed that this book is not more than a combination of five hundred pages, by which he just want to get fame and status in orient studies and literature as well as in European society. As Daniel Martin

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<sup>1</sup>His famous book is *Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State* which is co-authored with Yehuda D. Nevo.

<sup>2</sup>**Yehuda D. Nevo** (1992) was a Middle Eastern archeologist living in Israel. They fundamentally doubt the historicity of Islamic traditional accounts of early Islam, thus adhering to the Revisionist School of Islamic Studies. Nevo and Koren co-authored a work called *Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State*, which presents a theory of the origins and development of the Islamic state and religion. According to them, the Arabs conquered the Near East as pagans and took over the Jewish-Christian monotheism they encountered in the conquered land, later transforming it into their own religion. Thus, the story of Muhammad as a prophet and the Quran are considered to be not at all true. This strong skepticism resulted in heavy criticism by other historians. Some of Nevo's work is also published in the book *Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, edited by Ibn Warraq.

<sup>3</sup>**Francis Edward Peters** (b 1927), who generally publishes as **F.E. Peters**, is Professor Emeritus of History, Religion and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University.

<sup>4</sup>**Herbert Berg**, a scholar of religion, is a Professor in the Department of International Studies and the Department of Philosophy and Religion, at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. He was recognized as a specialist on the Nation of Islam, Berg's primary work shares much in common with scholars who study the earliest histories of modern religious movements. In this regard, he uses social theory to study the historical sources and context of the early texts of Islam. He had more than fifty renowned books.

<sup>5</sup>**Gerald R. Hawting** (b 1944) is a British historian and Islamicist. Hawting's teachers were Bernard Lewis and John Wansbrough. He is Emeritus Professor for the History of the near and Middle East at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. Famous books are *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, John Wansbrough, Islam, and monotheism, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History*. And As an editor and co-author his writings are *Approaches to the Quran*, *The Development of Islamic Ritual*.

<sup>6</sup>Ibn Warraq, *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad* (New York: Prometheus books, 2000), 05.

comments it a just book selling tact.<sup>1</sup> As well as According to Donner Fred<sup>2</sup> this book is lacking of special featuring in Arabic Studies. He also blamed *ibn Warraq* As inconsistent handling of Arabic materials and implantation of unoriginal arguments.<sup>3</sup> And *Fred McGraw Donner* reviews on his book saying “Basically, it is a collection of sound articles, framed by a seriously flawed introduction, and put in the service of anti-Islamic polemic dedicated to the proposition that Islam is a sham and that honest scholarship on Islam requires gratuitous rudeness to Muslim sensibilities”<sup>4</sup> such comments can be found in a review by *As ‘ad Abu Khalil*.<sup>5</sup> *Alfons Teipen* also criticized his editing as he particularizes this book just a polemic addition in literature.<sup>6</sup> As in the study of reviews, *Asma Afsaruddin* finds too much harsh wordings in this regard by claiming his effort a poisoned and worthless work.<sup>7</sup> *Ibn e Warraq* is also discouraged by his writing of historical quest, due to his dishonesty and duplicity of method.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>He said: “*This modern son of a bookseller imprints a polemical farce not worth the 500-plus pages of paper it wastes*”. Varisco, Daniel Martin, *Orientalism's Wake: The Ongoing Politics of a Polemic*, MEI Viewpoints 12, (2009): 12.

<sup>2</sup>**Fred McGraw Donner** (b 1945) is a scholar of Islam and Professor of Near Eastern History at the University of Chicago. He has published several books about early Islamic history. Donner's book *The Early Islamic Conquests* was published in 1981. He has also published a translation of a volume of the history of Al-Tabari in 1993. Donner's book *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, an account of the early years of the spiritual movement that would come to be known as Islam.

<sup>3</sup>Fred., Donner, *Review: The Quest for the Historical Muhammad* (Archived 11 June, 2007 at the Wayback Machine), Middle East Studies Association Bulletin (2001), (Chicago: University of Chicago)

<sup>4</sup> Donner, Fred M. *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad, ed. and trans. by Ibn Warraq*, Middle East Studies Association Bulletin 35, no. 1 (2001): 75-76.

<sup>5</sup>Abu Khalil, As'ad, *the Islam Industry and Scholarship: Review Article*, Middle East Journal 58, no. 1 (2004): 130-137.

<sup>6</sup>Teipen, Alfons H. *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, Journal of Ecumenical Studies 40, no. 3 (2003), 328-329.

<sup>7</sup> <https://peoplepill.com/people/ibn-warraq/> (accessed on 8 May, 2020).

<sup>8</sup>Fred, Donner, *Review: The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, 76. as he said: “The author of an earlier book entitled *Why I Am Not a Muslim* (1995), “Ibn Warraq” and his co-conspirator “Ibn al-Rawandi” detest anything that, to them, smacks of apologetic; for this reason they criticize harshly several noted authors for their ‘bad faith’ or ‘moral ambiguity.’ Yet this book is itself a monument to duplicity. The compiler never has the honesty or courage to divulge his identity, even though a list of contributors. Gives a

In the end, *Herbert Berg* concludes the result of his research's summary that Jesus is reimagined in ways that would never be permitted with *Muhammad*, ways that seem, if not overtly theological, then covertly so.<sup>1</sup>

**Islamic sources and theoretical groups of orientalists:**

Regarding Islamic sources of *Sīrah*, orientalists are divided into two groups<sup>2</sup>; First group has adopted negative and disappointing attitude. According to them the sources of Islamic history were written after a long time after the death of holy Prophet (PBUH), and it was a time when Muslims were divided into various religious sects and political groups. So, they did not present real *Sīrah* but psychiatric trends and prejudices of their era. These efforts were supporting their sects and political parties which contained fictional and fascinating narratives. Founders of this group are especially *Ignaz Gold Ziher*<sup>3</sup>, *Patricia Crone*<sup>4</sup> and *Lammens*.

Second group of orientalists is supporter of the thinking that although there are many deficiencies in Islamic sources but it is not justified to rejected them all. According to them, that available huge storage of sources can be helpful for preparing a general and gross sketch of holy Prophet (PBUH), and an authentic *Sīrah* of holy Prophet (PBUH) can be arranged on solid information deriving by deep and wide study of these sources. Represents of this group are *Rio Rippon* in *Muhammad and the Believers*, *Mintgomery watt* and *Martin forward*<sup>5</sup> etc.

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biographical sketch of all the other contributors who, unlike “Ibn Warraq” and “Ibn al-Rawandi,” are already well-known”.

<sup>1</sup>Fred, Donner, *Review: The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, 76.

<sup>2</sup>Bennett, Clinton, *In Search of Jesus* (London & New York: Continuum, 2001), 37-40.

<sup>3</sup>**Ignác (Yitzhaq Yehuda) Goldziher** (1921), often credited as **Ignaz Goldziher**, was a Hungarian scholar of Islam. Along with the German Theodor Nöldeke and the Dutch Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, he is considered the founder of modern Islamic studies in Europe. He is famous worldwide through his writings on Islam.

<sup>4</sup>**Patricia Crone** (2015) a Danish-American author, Orientalist and historian specializing in early Islamic history. Crone was a member of the Revisionist school of Islamic studies and questioned the historicity of the Islamic traditions about the beginnings of Islam. The major theme of Patricia Crone's scholarly life was the fundamental questioning of the historicity of Islamic sources which concern the beginnings of Islam. Her two best-known works concentrate on this topic: *Hagarism and Meccan Trade*. Three decades after *Hagarism*, Fred Donner called Crone's work a “milestone” in the field of Orientalist study of Islam.

<sup>5</sup>**Martin Forward** (b 1952) is a British, Methodist Christian. He had spent a period of time in India where he was ordained into the Church of South India. Currently, he is the Executive Director of Aurora University's Wackerlin Center for Faith and Action and

**Difference between Muslims and Orientalists regarding sources:**

Main issue among differences between Muslims and orientalist regarding the historical sources about early period of Islamic history is of trust on sources which almost found in Islamic traditions. Textual witnesses of Islam contained on the holy Quran, *Sunnah* and traditions of the acts of *Ummah*. Beside it these also include calligraphy obtained from mosques, palaces, cemetery graves and coins etc. Now the question is, whether an historian should accept all these witnesses without any hesitation or he should reject them all? Unfortunately, a neutral reader finds both groups on extreme. A group insists on accepting all Islamic sources including unauthentic, whereas the other rejects all Islamic sources and insists on to purely rely on non-Islamic sources. Muslim scholars have successfully managed to write the history of early period of Islam with critical thinking and investigating available material. This is why the total rejection of these sources will create a weird situation. Factually how would one make it possible to investigate the knowledge (of Islamic source) after its complete rejection?!

Although criticism on sources is a scholarly approach but most critics adopt biased and flawed strategy to criticize. We believe in balanced and moderate opinion that non-Islamic sources cannot be accepted without critical investigation and the Islamic sources are also not acceptable which propagate and empowered by specific theories and beliefs; it is an act of scholarly dishonesty. For understanding orientalist theories about Islamic sources analytical study of *Fred. M Donner* can be helpful. As he said for approaching to the fact of Islamic foundations theory of skepticism on Islamic sources is that a major portion of Islamic traditions is incomplete which present a suspicious picture of Islamic sources. That's why we know very little about the beginning of Islam but it raised a question that's why we present alternate of Islamic sources for knowing the facts.<sup>1</sup>

If we really know nothing about facts than surely Islamic source are best alternate for information. Unprejudiced orientalist like *John L. Esposito*<sup>2</sup> weren't considered

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the Helena Wackerlin Professor of Religion, and has participated in numerous interfaith dialogues. He has authored a number of books related to Islam and Christianity, such as 'Muhammad: A Short Biography' and 'Jesus: A Short Biography' respectively. Muhammad: A Short Biography, Oxford: One world, The Failure of Islamic Modernism? : Syed Ameer Ali's Interpretation of Islam.

<sup>1</sup>Donner, Fred, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginning of Islamic Historical Writings*, (Princeton: NJ, 1998).

<sup>2</sup>**John Louis Esposito** (b 1940) is University Professor, Professor of Religion & International Affairs and Islamic Studies at Georgetown University in Washington,

who have deep understanding of religion and have admitted the authenticity of Islamic sources and were faced bitter critics for having apologetic attitude for Islam. In the end *Faruk Terzic* Said:

*“To sum up, there is a clear parallel between Christianity and Islam in the modern period, where the sources of both religions were called into question. In the case of Christianity, biblical criticism went so far as to deny the authenticity of the sacred scriptures of Christianity. Orientalists on the other hand, attacked the authenticity of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Modern Islamic scholarship did not reject the Qur’an, but the Sunnah suffered a strong assault at the hands of modern reformers”<sup>1</sup>*

*Ibn e Warraq* claimed that it is a theory which can provide a proper background to discussions about starting period of Islam among revisionists and traditionalists but in fact he could not make any progress in this concern. However, there are deeper and prominent effects of revisionists on his theories which is proved by his selection of un-neutral articles and translations. The purpose of adopting this methodology is not neutral research but is a perfect critic on those who accept the authenticity of Islamic history or having moderate opinion in this regard. Disputed thoughts of *Ibn e Warraq* are contrary to principles for historians described by *Bernard Lewis*<sup>2</sup> by which book started:

*“Historians in free counties have a moral and professional obligation not shirk the difficult issues and subjects that some people would place under some sort of taboo; not to submit to voluntary censorship, but to deal with these matters fairly, honestly, without apologetics, without polemic, and of course competently”<sup>3</sup>*

That’s why the selections of *Ibn e Warraq* do not show his scholarly approach but are reflections of greeting to those who criticize Islam. The *Quest for the historical Muḥammad* is a best example for the above discussion.

#### **Theoretical and historical aspect of *Aḥādīth*:**

He included two articles of *Henri Lammens* in his book. He claimed that in the writings of Islamic history fictitious sources of *Sīrah* which did not have any importance historically were unnecessarily emphasized. According to him all Islamic knowledge about the beginning of Islam consists on the poor historical

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D.C. He was also the Founding Director of the Prince Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown. He is the most famous scholar of nowadays.

<sup>1</sup>Terzic, Faruk, *Parallels between the Historical Quest for Jesus and Modern Biographies of Muhammad*, *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 22, no.1 (2012): 36-49.

<sup>2</sup>A Famous orientalist and historian of present era.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibn Warraq, the Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, 15.

foundations.<sup>1</sup> According to C. H. Becker, *Sīrah*, even with its best expansions, is not an authentic source of history. It is a collection of *aḥādīth*, which were organized according to the requirements of *Sīrah* writings in those days. To him *aḥādīth* by their nature are interpretations of unfamiliar words and sentences of the *Quran* or were artificially created in the later period to Islamize and legalize the laws. That's why interpretational and theoretical aspect of *aḥādīth* is more ancient than its historical aspect.<sup>2</sup> Aurther Jaffery said:

*"Now the time has come that the reverence of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) should be reviewed and such academic and critical standards should be fixed which can be followed in future. For this purpose if we wait for an Islamic Scholar like Schweitzer's intelligence and academic capabilities then it may be too long, we ourselves have to start such types of audit efforts."*<sup>3</sup>

He stressed on non-Muslim scholars to work for new standards to verify the existing traditions of Islamic history and *Sīrah*. These new academic standards and traditions of Islamic history and *Sīrah* must be examined under the traditions of non-Muslim historians.

#### **Modern Western sciences and Islamic Traditions:**

Some orientalist thinks that Islamic traditions must be analyzed in the light of modern Western sciences. However, it is crucial to know whether that would be helpful or not. Joseph Schacht is not sure about it as he states:

*"Results of the evidences of texts have surprised me for ten years but I cannot accept such results which are not similar to the foundations of our critical and historical study of Islamic pioneer two or three centuries. One of these foundations is the discovery of Gold Ziher, that traditions of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) did not provide any authentic knowledge about the starting period of Islam, but interpreting the trends of third hijri century."*<sup>4</sup>

According to Schacht, information about *Sīrah* and Islamic history acquired by the companions of the holy Prophet (PBUH) is not authentic but interpreting the trends of 3<sup>rd</sup> century. It is also obvious that he is not ready to accept the results which are not similar to their foundations of critical and historical study of Islamic

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<sup>1</sup>Ibn Warraq, *the Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, 217-218.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 358.

traditions. It is also a painful reality that some Muslim modernists deems that Sunnah and sources of *Sīrah* must be examined in order to so call modern scientific methods as Terzic, Faruk says:

*. The orientalist's view of the Sunnah was that it was a Muslim tradition that had grown over time and had been presented as the tradition of the prophet Muhammad himself in order to give it more authority. Consequently, modern Muslim intellectuals called for a review of hadith literature based on modern scientific methods. In extreme cases some Muslim modernists rejected the authority of the Sunnah altogether, and a trend of thought emerged that was called Quranist''<sup>1</sup>*

So, this is fate met by the Sunnah, the second most important source of Islam after the Qur'an. In spite of the wealth of scholarship on *Ḥadīth* literature, its authenticity was called into question, which is still unpleasant and unacceptable for Muslim academia.

#### **Birth of the Holy Prophet (PBUH):**

He derived the quest regarding birth of holy prophet (PBUH) from *Lawrence I. Conrad* who stated that Islamic traditions about the incident of last half of 6<sup>th</sup> century created many issues. He also rejected the tradition about the birth of Prophet (PBUH) in the year of elephant because non-Islamic sources do not configure it. He insists that according to some Islamic and non-Islamic sources Prophet (PBUH) was not born in the year of elephant.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Verification of Islamic sources without Islamic traditions:**

In his opinion, as well as *Judith Korean* and *Yehuda D. Nevo* referred a new style for the study of Islamic history. In this perspective he suggested that Islamic sources of *Sīrah* should be verified by Non- Islamic sources, if they differ then prior to non-Islamic sources. Because according to them *Sīrah* of the Prophet (PBUH) cannot be verified by pre-Islamic *byzantine* sources. About the verification of Islamic sources without Islamic traditions like evidences of archaeology, *Nevo* stated that samples of calligraphy and museum of pre 691/71. AH, do not verify any religious law or beliefs of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions. First evidences about the sentence of *Kalmah* were also found by an *Arab Sasani* in the period of *Khalid bin Abdullah* (691/71 AH).<sup>3</sup>

#### **Admiration of the status of holy Muḥammad (PBUH):**

Historical status of holy prophet (PBUH) had been admired in all time, but the

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<sup>1</sup>Terzic, Faruk, *Parallels between the Historical Quest for Jesus and Modern Biographies of Muhammad*, 41.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 420.

Orientalists and atheists e.g. *F. E. Peters* admired with critical thinking of *Albert Schweitzer*. He emphasized on historians to raise questions, like *Albert*, on the historical status of the Prophet of Islam. Following *Albert Schweitzer*, he himself wrote an article entitled “*The Quest for historical Muhammad*”.

This last problem raises one final difference between the studies of them *historical Jesus and Muhammad*. Rare indeed is the non-Muslim scholar who subscribes to *Muhammad* the success of Islam. As *Arnal* points out:

“*The ultimate goal of historical Jesus studies is to uncover the origins of Christianity itself, to reconstruct the Jesus who is assumed somehow to lie behind this movement as its root cause. The problem here is that the whole enterprise thus conceived, rests on an exceptionally precarious set of assumptions.*”<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these orientalist, *Ibn-e-Warraq* has also mentioned the articles of *Herbert Berg* and *G. R. Hawting*. These articles did not produce anything new. These are merely interpretations and explanations of *John Wans Rough’s*<sup>2</sup> critical study on Islamic sources.

#### **Similarity of method with Albert:**

Quests are well presented in his book which is actually written on the style of a famous book of *Albert Schweitzer* “*The Quest of the Historical Jesus*”. The writer, on

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<sup>1</sup>His insist particulate is that “The notion that individuals cause or found religious movements is itself open to question on theoretical grounds. But at an even more basic level, the idea that the Christianity that came to dominate the Roman Empire and thence the world was the movement that Jesus himself caused or founded—as opposed to a movement revolving around an image of Jesus that was itself the product of mythmaking and legendary accretions— cannot be sustained, in part because of research into the historical Jesus himself. The discontinuity between the behavior and teaching of the historical Jesus as he is normally reconstructed and the beliefs and doctrines of what became the Christian religion is so vast as to make the assumption of any causal link between the two an instance of especially disgraceful special pleading” See: *Arnal, William, The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism and the Construction of identity*, (London: Equinox publishing Ltd., 2005), 76-77.

<sup>2</sup>**John Edward Wansbrough** (2002) was an American historian. Wansbrough is credited with founded the so-called "revisionist" school of Islamic Studies through his fundamental criticism of the historical credibility of the classical Islamic narratives concerning Islam's beginnings and his attempt to develop an alternative, historically more credible version of Islam's beginnings. He argued the Quran was written and collected in an over a 200 year period, and should be dated not from the 1st-century Hijaz, Western Arabia, but from the 2nd/3rd century AH in Abbasid Iraq.

the basis of lack of information and unauthentic source, proved the Jesus a fiction in spite of an authentic historical personality and insisted on to searching the real and historical Jesus. He states:

*“Jesus will not present himself in modern lanes of historical personality because we know nothing about him. We know about him only that we know nothing about him.”<sup>1</sup>*

The fact is that this book has been controversial for long period of time in the Western academia particularly. *Herbert Berg* blamed him that he has used the methodology of *Albert’s Quests*, he wrote:

*“The most recent methods used to reconstructing the sources for the historical Muhammad will sound very similar to historical Jesus scholars. Instead of two or three gospels that share enough material, Islamic scholars are faced with numerous different but apparently related historical hadiths for each incident in the life of Muhammad”<sup>2</sup>*

*Herbert Berg* explains more about the history of *Quests* and method of both academics schools by encountering that “one of the most significant differences between the study of *Muhammad* and Jesus is the attitude towards the figures. Much of this may have to do with the fact that most critical studies of *Muhammad* have been done by non-Muslims, whereas most of those about Jesus have been done by Christians or former Christians”<sup>3</sup>

#### **Authenticity of christian sources:**

In the subject of quest for historical Jesus, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus’s*<sup>4</sup> historical and literal critics have rebuked the authenticity of Christian sources and have also

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<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, Albert, *the Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 15-16.

<sup>2</sup>Berg, Herbert, and Sarah Rollens. “*The Historical Muhammad and the Historical Jesus: A Comparison of Scholarly Reinventions and Reinterpretations.*” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 37, no.2 (2008): 271-292.

<sup>3</sup>Berg, Herbert, and Sarah Rollens, *the Historical Muhammad and the Historical Jesus: A Comparison of Scholarly Reinventions and Reinterpretations*, 277.

He also revealed that “*Certainly, in terms of sophistication, detail, and effort, historical Muhammad scholars are behind their historical Jesus counterparts, and the former have much more to learn from the latter than vice versa. However, when it comes to the conclusions drawn from the sources and the methodologies employed, the reverse is true.*”

<sup>4</sup>**Hermann Samuel Reimarus** (1768), was a German philosopher and writer of the Enlightenment who is remembered for his Deism, the doctrine that human reason can arrive at a knowledge of God and ethics from a study of nature and our own internal reality, thus eliminating the need for religions based on revelation. He denied the supernatural origin of Christianity, and was the first influential critic to investigate

caused to destroy the atmosphere of trust on Bible in general. He rejected the unnatural and false teachings of Bible. Main contents of this purification were birth of Jesus by *Virgin Mary*, all miracles, all tales and stories about the prophecy, predictions of Jesus and all other matter of this kind. Moreover, he rejected the all details about acts of Jesus's life because he consider them the result of tales narrated by his companions. His frustrated and hardest critics lies in the claim that real Jesus was a political Jesus who with the passage of time became a spiritual person. In his opinion Jesus was not struggling for rule of God or success in after life but he struggled for the power as well as the salvation from slavery of *Banī Isrāīl*.

For achieving such tasks, he was in need of God's help and he was expecting this too but when he failed and the Roman soldiers arrested him, he was much disappointed. The words spoken by he on death board reflects his clear condition:

*"O father why you left me."*<sup>1</sup>

Although, after thunderous denunciation by its critiques, the authenticity of Christian sources was rebuked. This kind of act examines how same standard was applied by *Ibn-e- Warraq* along with some non-Muslim scholars, for the study of Islamic history and how he has rejected the Islamic sources? About these modern and Christian biographies *Faruk Terzic* says:

*"In spite of the great effort on the part of modern biographers to create new images of Jesus and Muhammad, they somehow fail to appeal to the modern mind. Moreover, the aim of using these biographies as mediums to reach out to believers and perhaps non-believers and convey the faith to them was perhaps never achieved. By reinterpreting the lives of Jesus and Muhammad, the meanings and messages of their respective faiths have undergone considerable changes as well, so much so that there was great confusion as to what these new images represent and which kind of faith they profess"*<sup>2</sup>

This analysis reflects that both scholars misinterpreted the teachings of both messengers of Allah almighty and they have also tried to undergo their faiths too.

**Following Albert's pattern in study of Islamic history:**

There was a great resemblance in results of quest for historical Jesus and Islamic

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the historical Jesus. According to Reimarus, Jesus was a mortal Jewish prophet, and the apostles founded Christianity as a religion separate from Jesus' own ministry.

<sup>1</sup>Mathew: 27:46

<sup>2</sup>Terzic, Faruk, *Parallels between the Historical Quest for Jesus and Modern Biographies of Muhammad*, 41.

teachings. Same standard was applied by some non-Muslim scholars for the study of Islamic history and rejected the Islamic sources. The results of Quest for historical Jesus and critics on Christianity in 18<sup>th</sup> century encouraged the orientalist to experience the above mentioned methodology on Islam and *Sīrah*.<sup>1</sup> In the first step of strategy adopted by orientalist regarding historical and critical study of Islamic source, they approached the primary sources and rejected the secondary sources. In the second step they refused to accept the primary sources in their existing condition and started critical analysis. *Gustav wail*<sup>2</sup> is one among the Western writers who has based Islamic sources for his research efforts. First time in 1934, in his book "*Mohammad der Proher*", he applied the historical critical method on the *Sīrah* of Prophet (PBUH). Nevertheless, his approach towards primary sources was limited, and he had only a book of *Al-Sīrah* by *Ibn-e-Hasham*.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Methodology of Albert applied on *Sīrah* study:**

*Ibn-e-Warraq* and his selected orientalist especially *Aurther Jaffery* and *F.E Peters* have also applied the methodology of *Albert* on *Sīrah* to challenge the historical status of Islamic Prophet (PBUH). As it is already discussed that *Aurther Jaffery* is a pioneer orientalist who in 1926 wrote an article<sup>4</sup> and subjected the historical status of Islamic Prophet and crated the term "*The Quest for Historical Muhammad*" which is a part of title given by *Montgomery Watt* in the book of *Albert*. *Arthur Jaffrey*, following the orientalist critical methodology in the light of critical research, took a step for historical review of *Sīrah*. In his opinion, now all sources regarding *Sīrah* should be collected for deriving results and after critical and academic investigation, standards for future research on *Sīrah* should be fixed and declared.<sup>5</sup>

But interestingly, he rejected the abilities of Muslim scholars and advised the orientalist to take step. He said for this investigating nature tasks, if we will wait for a genius Islamic scholar like *Schweitzer*, then we have to wait for a long, we ourselves should start planning and sketch for this investigation. He said:

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<sup>1</sup>Rodinson, Maxime, *A Critical Survey of Modern Studies on Muhammad, Studies on Islam*, ed. Merlin L. Swartz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 24.

<sup>2</sup>**Gustav Weil** (1889) was a German orientalist. His famous writings are: *The Bible, the Koran, and the Talmud: or, Biblical Legends of the Mussulmans, Compiled from Arabic Sources, and Compared with Jewish Traditions*.

<sup>3</sup>Jeffrey, Arthur, *The Quest of the Historical Muhammad, in the Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, ed. Ibn Warraq (New York: Prometheus Books, 2000), 344.

<sup>4</sup>Jeffrey, Arthur, *The Quest of the Historical Muhammad*, *The Muslim World* 16 (1926): 327-348.

<sup>5</sup>Jeffrey, Arthur, *The Quest of the Historical Muhammad*, 225.

*“We may have long to wait for the rise of an Islamic scholar with genius and scholarly preparation of a Schweitzer, to undertake this task, but we may endeavor with more or less success to briefly sketch the outline of such an investigation.”<sup>1</sup>*

In 1980, a seminar was held in Germany on this topic addressing the issue that the available sources of *Sīrah* are unauthentic, how to find out the real and historical *Muḥammad* (PBUH) in the presence of non-authoritative sources while in the absence of authentic sources.

**Resemblance between search of historical Jesus and sources of *Sīrah*:**

The most important point regarding the resemblance between the search of historical Jesus of Western thinkers and critics of orientalists on the sources of *Sīrah* is a question about the authenticity of traditional sources or to prove them completely incredible and same can be observed in the books of Muslim Scholars.<sup>2</sup> However, Muslim scholars have described the logics of metaphorical events,<sup>3</sup> but difference between *Sīrah* of *Jesus* and *Muḥammad* (PBUH) is that Prophet of Islam was a human being. Moreover, to be God, to be resurrected after death or other metaphorical things are not attributed to him like Jesus. However, holy Quran is a living miracle of holy Prophet (PBUH) containing the facts about truth by which many rationalists are totally flabbergasted.

**Rational & logical explanation and theory of review**

First, the rational level and logical explanation of the miracle of Quran is so high that sense itself is humbled. In this context, the theory that the original prophet who lived in history and Prophet described by traditional Islamic sources are not same is a totally baseless hypothesis which has caused nothing except confusions. Therefore, the search of real historical *Muḥammad* (PBUH) by scattered materials in Islamic sources is a vivid sign of orientalist prejudice in modern era.

And secondly, important point of discussion about the historical status of *Sīrah* sources is a claim of the supporters of modern orientalist theory of review such as *Judith Korean* and *Yahoda D. Nevo*. They argue that Islamic sources of *Sīrah* should be verified by non-Islamic sources and if there are differences then the findings of non-Islamic sources should accept preferably. But the question is, whether these

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey, Arthur, *the Quest of the Historical Muhammad*, ed. Ibn Warraq, 339.

<sup>2</sup> Khan, (Sir) Syed Ahmad, *Al-Khuthbaat al- Ahmadiyah* (Lahore: Naqshbandia Floor, 1914), 12-15.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Hamidullah, *Muhammad Rasool Ullah*, (Haidarabad, 1974).

non-Islamic sources can provide satisfactory information about the *Sīrah* of Prophet (PBUH). If yes, then

1. Can these sources be verified and classified as neutral sources?
2. What is the opinion of non-Muslim historians about them?

We find out the answers of these questions in the introductory section/introduction of *Ibn-e-Warraq*. When we examine the list of non-Islamic sources regarding *Sīrah* presented by *Ibn e Warraq*, we find that they are not reliable. For example, according to "*Doctrina Jacobi*"<sup>1</sup> *Muḥammad* (PBUH) was alive on occasion of victory over Palestine.<sup>2</sup> After this example one can easily understand that how such types of non-Islamic sources are misleading and on what basis these can be historically significant.

### **Prejudiced views of Non-Muslim historians & *Sīrah* of Jesus:**

Undoubtedly, after a careful examination of such studies including *Ibn e Warraq*, it is vividly seen that these books of non-Muslim historians are full of prejudice and hostility towards Islam. Mostly non-Muslim historians were non-Arabs and were conquered by Muslims, so they observed, understood and described Muslims as their enemies.

So, to prefer these sources on eye witnesses of prophetic period cannot be considered unbiased and scholarly thinking. Quality and quantity of non-Islamic sources both are unable to describe the details about the history of the advent of Islam. *Ibn-e-Warraq* has admitted this fact by presenting the statement of *R.S Humphreys*:

*"An adequate and convincing reconstruction of Islam's first century from these materials alone is simply not possible."*<sup>3</sup>

In *Doctrina Jacobi*, described about the Prophet of Islam without mentioning his name in these words:

*"He appeared as a prophet of Arabs and have keys of paradise."*<sup>4</sup>

Other historians of that period have also presented the prophet of Islam as leader and teacher, who restricted lying, adultery, wine and meat of dead animals.

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<sup>1</sup>It is among the pioneer non-Islamic sources of 7<sup>th</sup> century

<sup>2</sup>*Ibn Warraq, the Quest for the Historical Muhammad, 23.*

<sup>3</sup>**R. Stephen Humphreys** (b 1942) is an American historian specializing in the history of Southwest Asia and North Africa. He was the 'Abd al-Aziz al-Sa'ud Professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara and is now an emeritus professor at that institution. Humphreys received a PhD from the University of Michigan in 1969.

To see this: *Ibn Warraq, The Quest for the Historical Muhammad, 35.*

<sup>4</sup>R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, (1997), 119-120.

In these sources, the followers of the holy Prophet (PBUH) have been presented as monotheists as well as the followers of *Ibrahimi* religions. Another interesting tradition is of a Bargratusis priest named Sebeos. He described the Prophetic period in these words:

*“In that period a trader Mahmat (Muhammad) from Bani Israel appeared as a preacher and leader”<sup>1</sup>*

These Western researchers are not well aware of the history of *Bani Israel* and *Bani Ismail*. For example, he described that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) formed *Bani Israel*, whereas he (PBUH) belonged to *Bani Israel*. This statement reflects the level of his scholarly attributions and abilities. Moreover, he described the Prophet of Islam as a trader, preacher and leader. <sup>2</sup>

The questions of orientalist on historical status of the *Sīrah* of Islamic Prophet can be presented to them in a different way. What results would be expected if the historical status of the *Sīrah* of Jesus had been questioned in the light of Jewish or the sources of other religions.

#### **Findings and Reviewed illusions:**

1. On this topic thoughts of moderate orientalists like *Joseph Horowitz*,<sup>3</sup> *Bosworth R smith*,<sup>4</sup> *Harald Motzki*,<sup>5</sup> *Uri Rubin etc* <sup>6</sup> are appreciable which *Ibn-e-Warraq* did not mentioned in his book due to his prejudice because they challenged the theories of revisionists.
2. Un-neutral thinking style of *Ibn-e-Warraq* has made writings especially his book on this specific topic; “*the Quest for the historical Muhammad*” that one which misleads a common reader. Moreover, it seems that his agenda is merely to oppose Islam rather than scholarly services.
3. He discourages the opinions of all those orientalists who support Islam. That’s why he declared the opinion of *Mintgomery watt* about Islamic sources<sup>7</sup> a bad

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<sup>1</sup> R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It*, 119-120.

<sup>2</sup>R. W. Thomson, *The Armenian History Attributed To Sebeos Part II: Historical Commentary* (Liverpool: University Press, 1999), 31:95-96.

<sup>3</sup>Lawrence I. Conrad, *the Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors* (New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Smith, R. Bosworth, *Muhammad and Mohammadanism* (London, 1876).

<sup>5</sup>Motzki, Harald, *the Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Rubin, Uri, *the Eye of the Beholder, the Life of Muhammad by the Early Muslims* (1995).

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Warraq, *the Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, 20.

faith and criticized him bitterly.

4. The most striking point is that the above discussed book is a totally a biased effort in the cover of academic approaches. Some articles contain scholarly and research issues which can be proved positive for creative results.
5. He, unfortunately, starts his book with the declaration of rejection of all Islamic sources with an extreme attitude.
6. This is why a sensible observer and neutral reader cannot accept it as an academic and research-oriented approach. As *Fred M. Donner* said that the publication of "*The Quest for the historical Muhammad*" is a bad incident because *Ibn e Warraq* had made the theory of revisionism unbearable<sup>1</sup> for Muslims which has made difficult investigation on the starting period of Islam.

#### **Conclusion & Results of Study:**

1. *Ibn-e-Warraq* Claimed himself as an atheist and presented as modern western thinker.
2. In his book *the Quest for the historical Quests*, he suggests to reject the authenticity of Muslim sources and insist on the need of such books of *Sīrah* which consist on critics by Non-Muslim sources. He presents the ideas that in the writings of Islamic history fictitious sources of *Sīrah* were emphasized which did not have any historical importance.
3. In this regard he did not find itself new methodology to discuss quests but he depends on *Albert Schweitzer's* method of quests.
4. Basically, the quest for the historical Jesus by Albert and a so called modern biography of *Muhammad* are two themes that at first sight may not have anything in common, but both shared the status of being central figures of two world religions who were exposed to the challenges of modernity.
5. During this exposure, their images went through a process of considerable reinterpretation. The process was chiefly influenced by the idea that modern rationalism and scientific methodology can discover the real historical images hidden behind the sacred texts and pre-modern historical material.
6. Hence, there was a tendency to consider the traditional biographies of Jesus and *Muhammad* that had been passed down as superstitions and misleading and the new modern biographies as his tropically, rationally, and scientifically correct.

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<sup>1</sup>Donner, Fred M, *Book Review of Ibn Warraq's The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, Middle East Studies Association Bulletin 35, no.1 (2001): 75.

### *Sources of Sīrah & historical quests*

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7. Broadly speaking, the traditional sources of the life stories of Jesus and *Muḥammad* (PBUH) were not regarded as reliable by western academia, and the religious images they portrayed were dismissed and declared false and unacceptable. The new modern biographies were supposed to present an objective and unbiased image.



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