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And We have not sent you,
[O Muammad], except as a mercy
to the worlds.

(*) Al-Anbiyā'107





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Editorial Note

In the Name of
Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most
Compassionate

All praise is due to Allah, who sent His Prophet with guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail over all other religions. He is sufficient as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings, and a warner. May peace and blessings be upon Muhammad, the Chosen One, whose prophethood enlightened minds and whose message uplifted values, and upon his noble Household and his chosen Companions.

With each issue of Our Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household), we renew our connection with the noble Prophetic biography—not merely as a historical account but as a continuous source of insight, a field for reflection, and a space for critical and scholarly engagement, especially in response to the various challenges, misconceptions, and ideological distortions raised against it.

In this ninth issue, we shed light on multiple themes that re-examine the Prophetic biography through legal, political, social, and intellectual lenses. In our study of Prophetic migration, we revisit this foundational event from both a legal and political perspective, revealing its vital role in state-building and identity formation. In a critical review of how Western writings have portrayed the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) up to the time of the Crusades, we trace the contours of distortion and instrumentalization. We also highlight



the dangers
of ideologically driven readings
of the Qur'an and Hadith and their impact on
shaping Islam's political identity.

This issue also includes a study on the right to privacy in the Prophetic biography, demonstrating how the noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) offered a sublime model for upholding human dignity. The issue concludes with a critical reading of the Prophet's image in Thomas Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*, striking a balance between admiration and fairness while exploring the cultural filters through which the "other" receives his image.

In this and every issue of the magazine, we strive to bridge academic research with the noble Prophetic mission—defending it, refuting falsehoods imposed upon it, and affirming its values in a world overwhelmed by distortion and malicious interpretations.

We pray that Allah accepts this endeavor and grants it reward in the scale of all who serve the Sunnah of His Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) and exert themselves in its defense. And our final word is: praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

NABIYUNA

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The Image of the Prophet Muhammad in Western Writings Until the Time of the Crusades



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The Image of the Prophet Muhammad in Western Writings Until the Time of the Crusades

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Orientalism, the Crusades, and Historiographical Methods



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Abstract

This research presents the development of the image drawn by the West of the noble Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and it shows that this image stemmed from a spirit of hostility and hatred. This was reflected in a significant amount of distortion, accusations, and the inability to understand the universal human dimension of his message. The study clarifies that this image took shape at the hands of John of Damascus in the Levant, and his biased writings became a source for Western researchers writing about Islam. Those who wrote about his noble biography and Islam were Christian clergymen; thus, religious factors profoundly impacted the absence of any fair presentation of his life. On the other hand, the shift of confrontation from the Levant to al-Andalus and France, the launching of the Crusades, and the renewed military clashes between Muslims and Europeans all refused to follow the path of fairness and justice toward religion and a Prophet for whom belief in Jesus (peace be upon him) and affirmation that God raised him to a high position was a condition of faith.



Introduction

Researchers in the field of Orientalism, or those examining the Western image of Islam and its noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household), often encounter objections from individuals who see no justification for addressing this subject, which primarily revolves around recounting Western fabrications and accusations directed at the most honorable of creation and the most complete of messages. Others go further in expressing disdain for such a field, asking: “Why concern yourselves with the Orientalists? Why follow what they have written? Some are biased and spiteful, while others merely execute the agendas of institutions and entities that bear ill will toward our lands. It would be better to bury this prejudiced and hostile literature rather than disseminate it.”

At first glance, this objection may seem justified. After all, who among us finds it easy to write down the insults and accusations hurled at the one upon whom God and His angels send blessings, the one sent as a mercy to the world? Yet the truth is that attention to Western writings and tracing accusations and biases—despite their bitterness—holds significant importance. These writings reveal the underlying foundations that continue to fuel modern Western hatred, commonly referred to today as “Islamophobia.” Furthermore, Western governments have long relied—and still rely—on the expertise of Orientalists in their dealings with the East, whether in preparing for the colonial era, during their occupations, or even after their military withdrawals. These experts continue, even today, to contribute to the propagation of hatred, the weakening of states, and the fragmentation of nations. Thus, research into Orientalism and Western attitudes toward Islam and its Prophet offers essential explanations for many contemporary policies that support oppressive occupiers and seek to annihilate or expel the indigenous people from their lands.

This study seeks to trace the origins of this hostile stance by examining the development of the image the West constructed of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and of Islam and Muslims during the Middle Ages. It begins with the initial con-

tact between the two sides following the Islamic conquests and the subsequent shift of confrontation to new arenas such as the Jazira region, Armenia, and the Levant, and then to Egypt and the Maghreb. This contact advanced when Arabs and Muslims penetrated Europe—Spain, southern France, Sicily, and southern Italy. Eventually, the Western response culminated in the Crusades during the 6th and 7th Islamic centuries / 12th and 13th Gregorian centuries, when Western powers launched campaigns to occupy the heart of Islam in its sacred lands—home to the first qibla and the third holiest sanctuary.

It is important to emphasize that the propagation of hatred, distortion, and falsification stemmed from personal interests that ignored the noble Islamic values and the generous, tolerant treatment extended to those under the protection of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his Household)—namely, the peoples who came under Islamic rule. These interests also disregarded the high regard that the Qur'an accorded to Lady Mary, the Virgin, and her son, the servant and messenger of God, Jesus (peace be upon him). Thus, the hostile stance was governed by specific political and religious interests, which manipulated facts and intensified slander and bias, as will be demonstrated.



First: The Western Image of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Islam Until the Time of the Crusades

The image shaped by Westerners in the Middle Ages and beyond regarding Islam and its noble Prophet was not a product of its time alone; instead, it resulted from accumulated narratives passed down since the early decades of Islam. Its foundation was laid by writings of Christians who lived under Islamic rule, whether in the East or the West. The first among them was John, known as John of Damascus.

A- John of Damascus (36 AH / 657 CE – 132 AH / 750 CE)

The theologian John of Damascus is considered the first non-Muslim to write about Islam.¹ His writings profoundly impacted the formation of the Western image of Islam. Sources indicate that John, known as “of Damascus,” was a member of the Umayyad administration in the Levant. His real name was Mansur ibn Sarjun ibn Mansur. His father worked in the Umayyad financial administration, while his grandfather had held the same position under Byzantine rule.²

B. John was born in 35 or 36 AH (656 or 657 CE), meaning he grew up during the Umayyad era and lived for more than ninety years, dying in the same year the Umayyad state fell.³ Based on this, it is clear that his family enjoyed a high social and financial status under the Umayyads, which remained unchanged despite the transition of power from the Byzantines to the Muslims. The new regime maintained his and his father’s positions. John was close to the Umayyads and a companion in their gatherings. Nevertheless, he was the first to attack Islam, its Prophet, and the Holy Qur’an.

Sources mention that after years of public service, John withdrew from worldly affairs and dedicated himself to worship and writing on religious subjects. At forty, he retired to the Monastery of Saint Sabas in Jerusalem, where he devoted himself to theological writing. He authored several works, making him one of the earliest theo-

1 John of Damascus Janosik, Daniel, *The First Apologist to the Muslims: The Trinity and Christian Apologetics in the Early Islamic Period* (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016), p. XI.

2 ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Awda al-Ghamidi Al-Ghamidi, *John of Damascus: Pioneer of Intellectual Aggression Against Islam (35 AH–132/655–750 CE)*, 2015, p. 15.

3 Al-Ghamidi, p. 16.

logians of Orthodox Christianity.⁴ Among the topics he addressed was the Iconoclastic Controversy—specifically, the campaign by Byzantine Emperor Leo III the Isaurian * to destroy religious relics, images, and icons. John opposed this movement and defended the veneration of such items, writing several letters on the subject.^{5 6}

Among his significant works is *The Fountain of Knowledge* (also known as *The Source of Wisdom*), in which he explored the relationship between philosophy and Christian doctrine. This book gained great fame as it became the first philosophical reference specifically designed to aid in studying theology. It remains essential to understand the Orthodox tradition embraced by the Eastern Church.⁷

What distinguishes John of Damascus most is his position on Islam. He was the first Christian theologian to attempt an interpretation of Islam. He authored a work titled *The Hundred Heresies*, included within *The Source of Wisdom*, in which he listed one hundred heresies that had deviated from Christianity. According to him, the last of these was Islam, which he claimed was founded by a man from the descendants of Ishmael and taught by an Arian monk. John proceeds to describe Islam from a biased and hostile perspective. The significance of what John presented is that it was the first account of Islam written from outside the faith, and his claims became a foundational reference for medieval Western writers on Islam.^{8 9}

4 John of Damascus, *The Hundred Heresies*, 1997, p. 42-43.

5 Al-Baz Al-Arini, *History of the Byzantine State* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiya, 1989), 179–180.

6 Peter Schadler, *John of Damascus and Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), p. 10.

7 Damascus, *The Hundred Heresies*, p. 42-43.

8 Al-Ghamidi, *John of Damascus: Pioneer of Intellectual Aggression Against Islam* (35 AH–132/655–750 CE), p. 17.

9 Muhammad Amin Al-Dirshawi, “The Position of John of Damascus Towards Islam and Its Principles and Its Impact on Islamic-Christian Relations” (Qatar University, 2024), p. 50-60.

*Leo III the Isaurian (685–741) was a Roman emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire from 717 to 741. He derived his title “the Isaurian” from the district of Isauria in Cilicia. He was the founder of the Isaurian dynasty and brought an end to the “Twenty Years’ Anarchy,” a period of major turmoil in the Byzantine Empire between 695 and 717 that was marked by the rapid succession of many emperors to the throne. He also ended the continuous defeats and territorial losses that the Byzantines had suffered during the seventh century, and he successfully defended the empire against the Umayyad invasions. Among his most important actions was the destruction of images and statues within churches and the prohibition of depicting sacred religious figures. In Christian literature, John was referred to as the last of the Greek Fathers of the Church.)



John justified his writings against Islam by expressing fear over Christians in the Levant welcoming Islamic rule, which they found to be more just, fair, and merciful than Byzantine governance. He was also concerned about the growing number of Christians in the Levant and elsewhere converting to Islam.¹⁰ More importantly, the Qur'an's opposition to dominant Christian doctrines—such as the crucifixion, the divinity of Christ (peace be upon him), and the Trinity—posed a direct challenge to Christian theologians, who had spent centuries rationalizing and defending these beliefs.¹¹

John devoted a section of his work to Islam, titled *The Hundredth Heresy*, which does not exceed 28 pages. He divided it into two parts. The first discussed his views on the Qur'an, attempting to refute criticisms directed at Christianity * and offering a brief study of three Qur'anic chapters: al-Nisa', al-Ma'idah, and al-Baqarah, to which he added a fabricated chapter he called *The She-Camel of God*.¹² The second part, titled *A Discussion Between a Muslim and a Christian*, presents a fictional debate addressing controversial Christian theological issues with Islam, such as free will, the birth and divinity of Christ (peace be upon him), baptism, incarnation, and more.^{13 14 15}

John's aim in this dialogue was for the Christian to emerge victorious, while the Muslim character readily concedes to his opponent's arguments. The Muslim ultimately accepts the Christian claims, with John concluding the discussion with the

10 Schadler, *John of Damascus and Islam*, pp. 59-60.

11 Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin, 1997), p. 515.

12 Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, p. 56-60.

13 Hoyland, p. 62-77.

14 Damascus, *The Hundred Heresies*, p. 50-54.

15 Schadler, *John of Damascus and Islam*, p. 119.

*At the forefront of his writings was the issue of the status of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him), his birth, and his crucifixion. He presented a formulation of his interpretation of verse 116 from Surat al-Ma'idah. (When Allah will say, "O Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to the people, 'Take me and my mother as gods besides Allah?'" He will say, "Glory be to You! It was not for me to say what I had no right to say. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, but I do not know what is within Yourself. Truly, You alone are the Knower of the unseen.)

words: “And thus the Muslim is astonished and confused, having nothing left to respond with, and withdraws from the discussion devoid of objections.”¹⁶

What is important here is that these discussions became the core material for later European polemics against Islam, and they remained the standard content presented by every Western polemicist who addressed Islam. The orientalist Robert Hoyland remarks on this:

“This work greatly impacted the language, tone, and content of later Byzantine polemics against Islam. The themes of Christian doctrine, the Prophet Muhammad’s birth and book, the worship of the cross, and the alleged licentiousness of Muslims—illustrated by the story of Zayd and the descriptions of paradise—were all repeated over and over again in the same spirit of hostility, bias, and generalization.”^{17 18}

B. Al-Andalus and the Distorted Image of Islam and Its Prophet

The Arab conquest of al-Andalus was another gateway through which the West came into contact with Islam, its religion, and its civilization. The tolerant attitude of the Arab conquerors toward the Christian population led many to admire Arab culture, with a significant number eventually converting to Islam. These converts were known as Muwalladun. Others who remained Christian adopted the Arabic language and wrote in Arabic literature; some even introduced Arabic into church rituals instead of Latin. These individuals became known as Mozarabs.¹⁹ This growing Arabization rang alarm bells within the Church and its clergy, just as it had for John of Damascus in the Levant. They feared that conversion to Islam or the adoption of Arab culture would erode the Church’s authority and influence.

We possess a document that reflects the Church’s anger, represented in a well-known passage by the Spanish priest Alvaro, in which he laments the Christian youth

¹⁶ Damascus, *The Hundred Heresies*, p. 77.

¹⁷ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, p. 488.

¹⁸ Hoyland, p. 515-516.

¹⁹ Muhammad ‘Abd Allah Anan, *The Islamic State in Al-Andalus* (Cairo: al-Khanji Press, 1997), vol. 1, p. 66.



of Spain for their fascination with Arab culture and literature and their neglect of their own beliefs and original culture:

“My Christian brothers delight in the poems and tales of the Arabs. They study the books of Muhammad’s jurists and philosophers not to refute them but to acquire an elegant and correct Arabic style. Where today can one find a man of the common people who reads Latin commentaries on the Holy Scriptures? Who studies the Gospels or the books of the Prophets and Apostles? Alas! The most gifted Christian youth knows no literature or language other than Arabic. They read and study Arabic books with eagerness and devotion. They collect vast libraries of Arabic works at great expense, and in every place, they sing the praises of Arab heritage. Meanwhile, they recoil when Christian books are mentioned.”²⁰

Once again, the peace, stability, and tolerance of Islamic rule in al-Andalus provided grounds for some clergy to incite hatred against Islam and to distort the exceptional conduct Muslims showed toward Christians in al-Andalus. Among the inciting events was what became known as the Martyrdom Movement or the Martyrs of Córdoba. This involved incidents reported by a Spanish priest named Eulogius, in which several Christians in Córdoba insulted Islam and denigrated the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Muslim judiciary in al-Andalus initially attempted to dismiss this deviance by portraying those individuals as lacking discernment. However, their persistent and hateful attacks on the Prophet eventually led them to receive their rightful punishment. The number of those involved reached nearly fifty individuals, and the movement occurred between 851 and 859 CE.²¹

The most prominent figure behind this movement was the Eulogius above, who played a significant role in inciting sedition with his writings attacking Islam and its Prophet. He claimed to have discovered a biography of the Prophet in one of the northern monasteries in the Navarre region, southeast of Pamplona. According to American historian Yanna Vasilevich, this biography shows apparent influence from

²⁰ Anan, vol. 1, p. 270.

²¹ Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 23.

John of Damascus, whose writings had reached Eulogius through direct contact with a monk from the Monastery of Saint Sabas, where John had composed his book.²² In this supposed biography, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is portrayed—as Eulogius claims—as a greedy usurer driven by lust (God forbid) who received revelation in the form of a golden-mouthed eagle and died horrifically, resembling the Antichrist. John of Damascus’s influence is evident in the distortion of the Prophet’s marriage to Lady Zaynab, which is evidence of his alleged lustfulness.²³ Eulogius further claims that the Prophet became a tool of Satan after corrupting the Christian teachings he had supposedly encountered during his trade journeys in the Levant.²⁴ Like John before him, he opposes the Islamic reinterpretation of Christianity. He also attempts to brand Islam as heresy, stating:

“Among all the authors of heresies since the Ascension, this miserable one—who, incited by Satan, founded a sect of new superstitions—was the most deviant from the Holy Church. He defamed the ancient authority of the Law, rejected the visions of the prophets, trampled upon the truth of the holy Gospel, and hated the apostles’ doctrine.”²⁵

Islam is the only religion that honors previous prophets and considers belief in them a fundamental pillar of the Islamic faith.

Nevertheless, Eulogius continued to inflame the misguided zeal of youth with his fabrications in an attempt to generate popular resistance against Islam and to prevent Spaniards from embracing the religion or adopting its culture. His efforts, however, failed, and even the Church in Córdoba rejected him. As a result of his actions, he was sentenced to death and executed in 859 CE, marking the end of the sedition he helped incite.²⁶ Contemporary European historians did not affirm Eulogius’s claim of discovering a prophetic biography but instead concluded that he had fabricated it himself.^{27 28}

22 Janna Walsilwisky, “The ‘Life of Muhammad’ in Eulogius of Córdoba: Some Evidence for the Transmission of Greek Polemic to the Latin West,” *The Journal of Early Medieval Europe*, 2008, p. 333.

23 Walsilwisky, p. 344.

24 Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, p. 90.

25 Wolf, p. 88.

26 Wolf, 34.

27 Wolf, p. 90.

28 Walsilwisky, “The Life of Muhammad in Eulogius of Cordoba: Some Evidence for the Transmission of Greek Polemic to the Latin West,” p. 334.



C. The Song of Roland

Hatred found another face and source in warfare, which also played a role in distorting historical truths. The battles fought by the Franks against Muslims in northern Spain during the reign of Charlemagne contributed to the defamation of Islam and its noble Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the famous epic *The Song of Roland*. This epic, composed in Old French, consists of approximately 4,000 verses.²⁹ It recounts Emperor Charlemagne's campaign in northern Spain, a campaign said to have lasted several years, and then describes a battle led by his nephew Roland against the Muslims, resulting in Roland's death.³⁰ In retaliation, Charlemagne invades the city of Zaragoza and seizes it from the Muslims.

Needless to say, the epic is based on historical fabrication, transforming a minor skirmish between Charlemagne's forces and the Basque tribes of Spain into a decisive and fateful battle between Muslims and the Carolingians—a battle in which divine intervention is portrayed as playing a role, with the angel Gabriel siding with Charlemagne, protecting him from the Muslim commander's sword and enabling him to slay the Muslim ruler.³¹

The epic portrays Muslims as pagan infidels who worship three idols: Mahound (a distorted form of Muhammad), Tervagant, and Apollo. They are depicted as swearing by these idols and invoking their names during battle, and their statues are said to reside in the city of Zaragoza.³² Ironically, the Muslim ruler of Zaragoza, in a fit of rage following his defeat by Charlemagne, smashes all of these idols.³³ Historian John Tolan points out that the choice of these three gods was a deliberate mirror of the Christian Trinity and that the victory of Charlemagne's army symbolized the supposed falsity

29 See: Muhammad 'Ali Saja, *The Song of Roland: A Study of Its History and Political Impact in the Middle Ages* (Baghdad: Bayt al-Hikma, 2021).

30 Tolan, p. 10

31 Tolan, p. 31.

32 Dana Carlton Munro, "The Western Attitude toward Islam during the Period of the Crusades," *Speculum*, 1931, 331, p. 331.

33 Tolan, p. 32.

and deception of the Islamic “trinity,” leading to its inevitable defeat. Here, the image of the Antichrist invoked by Eulogius in his portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) is recalled again.³⁴

It is striking that although the epic refers to events from the early 9th century—during Charlemagne’s reign—it flourished during the Crusades, three centuries later, when the promotion of hatred had found a new justification. Such hatred and distortion were precisely the tools used to drive the ordinary people into the inferno of war, as we shall later see.

Second: The Image of Islam and the Crusades

The final decades of the eleventh century witnessed a violent wave of warfare against Muslims in Western Europe. The last Muslim stronghold in Sicily fell during the Battle of Palermo in 1072, followed by the fall of Toledo in 1085. The triple assault—according to the historian Ibn al-Athir—was completed by the attack on the Holy Land in the Levant.³⁵ The Papacy played the central role in calling for these wars and mobilizing Europeans to fight Muslims. However, its role in directing the war eastward was of particular priority and had the most significant impact. At this point, the most effective means of inciting hatred was deployed: accusing the enemy of disbelief and attributing every evil to them. This necessitated a return to the literature of hatred promoted by figures such as John of Damascus, Eulogius of Spain, and others.

A. Pope Urban II and His Speech at Clermont in 1095

The first formal proclamation of hatred came from the highest Western religious institution—the Papacy—through the first declaration of the Crusades: the speech by Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont in 1095. This speech is widely regarded as the spark that ignited the Crusades, lasting over two centuries.³⁶ The speech reflects

³⁴ Tolan, p. 4.

³⁵ Izz al-Din Ibn Al-Athir, *Al-Kamil Fi Al-Tarikh*, ed. Omar Abd al-Salam Tadmuri (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1997), vol. 8, p. 115-116.

³⁶ Hanadi al-Sayyid Mahmoud ‘Awad, Muhammad Mu’nis, *The Speech of Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont in France* (Alexandria: Library of Literature, 2018).



the influence of prior Western writings and the dominance of the distorted image they propagated. The more political interests grew, the more fervently hostile propaganda served those interests.

In the speech—which exists in multiple versions * ³⁷—Muslims are described, above all, as an impure, vile, and contemptible people, a race characterized by such baseness and depravity that they are said to be enslaved by devils and demons and cast out from the mercy of God.³⁸ Urban continues his incitement to hatred, even at the expense of falsehood and distortion, despite his position as the highest-ranking religious authority, by accusing Muslims of committing crimes against Christians in the East. He provides a repulsive narrative that any serious historian knows to be entirely baseless:

“They circumcise Christians and sprinkle the blood of circumcision on the altars or pour it into baptismal fonts. When they wish to torture people to death in disgrace, they pierce their navels, pull out the ends of their intestines, and tie them to a stake; then they beat the victim until the entrails gush out and he falls prostrate on the ground. They tie others to posts and pierce them with arrows. They force others to stretch out their necks, then attack them with drawn swords, aiming to sever their heads in one blow. And what shall I say about the vile rape of women? Better left unspoken than said.”³⁹

Undoubtedly, such descriptions, coming from a figure of the Pope’s stature at that time, were accepted as undeniable truth. What is striking is that this speech, which incited war, stood in stark contradiction to the commandments brought by Prophet

37 Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*. Translated by Nur al-Din Ghanem. 2nd ed., vol. 1. Cairo: The Egyptian General Book Organization, 1994, 189.

38 Amanda J. Godfrey Godfrey, “The Spread of Anti-Islamic Sentiment in Middle Age Europe,” *Honors Journal*, 2023, p. 2.

39 Ziya Polat, “Violence and the Anti-Islamic Discourse: Analysis of Pope Urban II and His Speech at the Council of Clermont,” *Journal of AAl-Tamaddun* 19 (2024), vol. 19, pp. 127-140.

*It is well known that the speech has come down to us in multiple versions, as it was recorded by four contemporary historians. Among them was Robert the Monk, who was present at the delivery of the speech and documented it himself. Another was Baldric of Dol, who presented it as if he had also attended the assembly. The fourth was Guibert of Nogent, who is believed to have possibly based his account on the narration of others.

Moses (peace be upon him), particularly the sixth commandment: “You shall not kill,” and to the teachings of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him), who not only rejected killing but also taught: “If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if someone takes your cloak, do not withhold your tunic from him as well.”⁴⁰

B. The Image of Islam Among the Chroniclers of the First Crusade

Most significant is that the perceptions promoted by Pope Urban’s speech resonated in the minds of those who participated in the First Crusade. This is evident in the writings of Crusader chroniclers who took part in it, such as the anonymous author of *Gesta Francorum* (The Deeds of the Franks), Fulcher de Chartres.*

The anonymous chronicler did not merely echo Urban’s sermon, depicting Muslims as infidels or pagans,⁴¹ but also repeated Urban’s exact phrasing, describing them as “a cursed race deprived of the mercy of the Lord.” In the Battle of Dorylaeum against the Seljuk Turks, he revives the notion that Muslims were followers of the devil, writing: “They [the Turks] gnashed their teeth and screamed with wild cries, shouting satanic words I could not understand.”⁴²

As for Fulcher of Chartres **, he frequently used terms such as “infidels” and “pagans” to describe Muslims.⁴³ His most infamous statement, however, comes in his depiction of the horrific massacre carried out by the Crusaders in Jerusalem. He praises this crime, which took place in both the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, claiming it purified the location “where the Orientals had practiced their pagan rites with delusional rituals.” He exults in the slaughter, writing:

⁴⁰ Gospel of Luke, Chapter 6, Verse 29.

⁴¹ The Anonymous Chronicler, *The Deeds of the Franks and the Pilgrims of Jerusalem*, ed. Hasan Habashi (Riyadh: Arab Thought Press, 1958), p. 40.

⁴² Chronicler, p. 39-40.

⁴³ Chartres, *History*, p. 64, 65, 74.

*in *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, and Raymond of Aguilers in The History of the Franks: The Conquest of Jerusalem*.

**Fulcher de Chartres (1059–1127) was a crusader historian and priest who took part in the First Crusade under the command of Robert, Count of Normandy. In 1097 he entered the service of Baldwin I in Edessa, and later became Baldwin’s chaplain. He then moved with him to the Kingdom of Jerusalem after Baldwin became its king in 1100.

“With drawn swords, our men ran through the city, sparing no one—not even those pleading for mercy. The crowd fell like rotting apples from a shaken branch or acorns from swaying oak trees.”⁴⁴

Even more troubling is the way he invokes the name of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) and the church to justify this massacre:

“This place will be restored to its eternal glory by those who believed in and trusted Him. They have reclaimed the site that had long been defiled by superstition.”⁴⁵

As for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), these chroniclers and their contemporaries repeated the same lies and fabrications found earlier in *The Song of Roland*, including the claim that Islam involved idol worship and that Muhammad was one of three deities. In his work *The Deeds of Tancred*, the chronicler Ralph of Caen speaks of three gods: Apollo, Mars, and Muhammad.⁴⁶ When describing the massacre in Jerusalem, he glorifies the feats of his lord, Tancred the Norman, especially when he opened the gates of the Dome of the Rock. He writes:

“They opened the doors and found a silver statue seated on a high throne—so heavy that it took six strong men to lift it... The statue of Muhammad was entirely covered with jewels and draped in purple cloth woven with gold.”⁴⁷

The Prophet’s image was thus equated—as earlier in Spanish monastic writings—with that of the Antichrist. According to historian John Tolan, these depictions emphasized power and wealth: a figure clothed in purple and crowned with gold and gemstones—standing in stark contrast to Jesus (peace be upon him), who wore a crown of thorns, was crucified, and whose hands were pierced with nails.⁴⁸

This vile image—inserted into the very sanctuary of the Lord—is, as Tolan describes it, “the dramatic climax of vengeance in the First Crusade,” in which the followers of the so-called “true prophet” triumph over the “false prophet” as perceived by the

44 Chartres, p. 75.

45 Chartres, p. 76.

46 Munro, “The Western Attitude toward Islam during the Period of the Crusades”, p. 332.

47 Tolan, *The Faces*, p. 42.

48 Tolan, p. 26.

chroniclers. This narrative served to justify the bloody massacre committed by the Crusaders in the holy places.⁴⁹ It also echoes what was previously seen in *The Song of Roland*, where the false trinity fails, and the true trinity prevails.

The most ironic and deceitful account comes from the historian Raymond of Aguilers, who justifies the horrific massacre that accompanied the Crusaders' seizure of Jerusalem as an act of divine retribution for the Muslims' alleged treatment of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him). He writes:

"When we arrived at the Temple of Solomon, the usual site for their chants and rituals, what happened there? If I told you, you would not believe me. So, suffice it to say that the Crusaders rode their horses in blood that reached their knees and the saddles in the Temple of Solomon and its portico. I believe this was divine justice: the Temple of Solomon received the blood of those who had blasphemed the Lord there for many years."⁵⁰

This final statement draws on the cumulative narratives of John of Damascus, Eulogius, and Pope Urban, all of whom had accused Muslims of insulting Christ and distorting his image in Christian doctrine.

C. Guibert of Nogent and the Evolution of the Image

Despite the Crusaders' settlement in the East and their direct contact with the Christians and Muslims of the region—and their exposure to the prevailing spirit of peace—the image of Islam did not significantly evolve. This is because war required the perpetuation of hatred, which served as the fuel to attract more Europeans to join the conflict. Thus, in 1115, Guibert of Nogent writes:

"According to the commonly held opinion, if I have understood it correctly, a certain man named Mathomus led [these people] away from belief in the Son and the Holy Spirit and taught them to confess only to the Father as the Creator. He taught that Jesus Christ was a sinless man and a created being. Let me summarize his teachings by saying that he commanded circumcision while allowing his followers to indulge in all kinds of shameful desires."⁵¹

49 Tolán, p. 41.

50 Ibid.

51 Nogent—Sous-Coucy Guibert, *The Deeds of God Through the Franks*, ed. Robert Levine (Boston: Boydell Press, 1997), p. 53.



Guibert continues with a distorted account of the Prophet Muhammad's life, admitting that he did not rely on written sources but rather on hearsay. He claims Muhammad was poor and illiterate and that he owed his status to marrying the widow of his master. He had epilepsy, Guibert asserts, but concealed it from his wife by pretending to have divine visions. In truth, he allegedly received his teachings from a rogue Christian monk inspired by the devil to use Muhammad to undermine Christianity.⁵² Once again, the narratives of John of Damascus and Eulogius resurface, as we have seen before.

D. Peter the Venerable and the Image of the Prophet Muhammad

In 1143, on the eve of the Second Crusade, the first Latin translation of the Qur'an appeared under the commission of Peter the Venerable, abbot of the Cluny monastery. The timing and location of this translation are highly significant: Cluny was in southern France, where fighters gathered before heading to the Spanish kingdoms to wage war against Muslims under the papal blessing.⁵³ Moreover, Cluny was the center of a reform movement—known as the Cluniac movement—that laid the ideological foundations for the Crusades, as noted by historian Giles Constable.⁵⁴

The translation was part of the intellectual campaign accompanying the military battles against Muslims.⁵⁵ Peter sought to understand the source of Muslim strength—the Qur'an. To that end, he employed two well-known translators: Hermann of Dalmatia and Robert of Ketton. Peter sponsored the translation and traveled to Spain to provide the translators with the necessary texts. He then authored a treatise titled *A Summary of the Entire Heresy of the Saracens*,⁵⁶ in which he presented his views on Islam and its Prophet in detail, repeating many earlier errors and prejudices and even adding to them.⁵⁷

⁵² Guibert, p. 53.

⁵³ Giles Constable, "Cluny and the First Crusade," *Actes Du Colloque Universitaire International de Clermont-Ferrand*, n.d., 179.

⁵⁴ Constable, pp. 179-180.

⁵⁵ James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 26.

⁵⁶ Munro, "The Western Attitude toward Islam during the Period of the Crusades", p. 337.

⁵⁷ Janosik, Daniel, *The First Apologist to the Muslims: The Trinity and Christian Apologetics in the Early Islamic Period*, p. 19.

He began by addressing a key issue: whether Islam was a form of paganism or a Christian heresy. Both views, it seems, were widespread in medieval Europe. Peter titled his work clearly, classifying Islam as “complete heresy,” though he appeared hesitant to be definitive, writing:

“Although I call these people heretics because they share some beliefs with us while opposing us in many others, perhaps it would be more accurate to call them pagans or irreligious. For although they speak some truths about God, they nevertheless preach many lies, and they do not partake in baptism, penance, or any Christian sacrament—behaviors that no other heretics before them have ever adopted.”⁵⁸

Peter argues that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH&H) was originally a Christian cleric, akin to the Eastern Church figures like Nicholas, Arius, or Nestorius, stating:

“As for Muhammad... some believe that this Muhammad was Nicholas, one of the first seven deacons and that the Nicolaitan sect named after him—also condemned in the Book of Revelation—is the very religion of the modern Muslims... He was of Arab origin, of humble birth, and at first, worshipped ancient idols just as the other Arabs did at the time... Since he lived as a barbarian among barbarians and a pagan slave among pagans, he found them more easily seduced than other peoples due to their ignorance of divine and human law. Thus, he embarked on this wicked project that he had conceived.”⁵⁹

Peter revisits the myth of the devil misguiding Muhammad by sending him a Nestorian heretic monk named Sergius expelled from the Church, claiming that this heretic joined forces with the “false prophet.”⁶⁰

58 Kritzeck, Peter the Venerable and Islam, p. 29.

59 Kritzeck, p. 124.

60 Kritzeck, p. 129.



Peter addresses two critical questions:

First, why did the Arab Prophet not adopt Christianity if it was the true religion? He answers that the Jews were to blame, having deliberately prevented Muhammad from embracing true Christianity by not instilling in him the truths of the Holy Scriptures. Instead, they taught him their myths, which they still expound today.⁶¹ In conclusion, Peter writes:

“Thus, after having been instructed by the best of teachers (Jews and heretics), Muhammad invented his Qur’an. In his barbaric way, he completed and falsified this wicked scripture from Jewish myths and heretical nonsense... With this deadly concoction, he poisoned this ignorant pagan person who knew nothing of God. This is how this faithless man acted openly, praising both Jewish and Christian law while simultaneously asserting that neither needed to be followed.”⁶²

Peter summarizes Islam’s position toward Catholic Christianity as follows:

“The essence of this heresy is the refusal to accept that Jesus Christ is God or the Son of God while affirming instead that he was a great man, beloved by God, a pure man, a wise man, and a very great prophet. In reality, these ideas were conceived long ago by the devil, first planted by Arius, and finally manifested through this devil—Muhammad.”⁶³

If we have dwelled at length on Peter the Venerable’s views—despite their hostile and crude nature—they reveal several essential facts. First, Peter had access to the first complete Latin translation of the Qur’an, meaning he was not ignorant of Islam’s primary sources. Therefore, his hostility did not stem from ignorance. Second, Peter interpreted Islam through his Catholic lens. He viewed all Christian sects outside Catholicism as heretical and blasphemous. As we have seen, he grouped Nicholas, Arius, and Nestorius under the label of heretics. His fundamental dispute with Islam and other Christian denominations lies in the claim of Jesus’ divinity.⁶⁴

61 Tolan, *The Faces*, p. 8.

62 Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, p. 131.

63 Kritzeck, p. 145.

64 Kritzeck, p. 129.

Undoubtedly, Peter the Venerable's prominent position gave his views great weight and influence, contributing to the spread of such thinking. His ideas became a reference point for those who came after him in interpreting Islam and constructing the image of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his life.⁶⁵

D. The Historian and Archbishop William of Tyre and His View of the Prophet and Islam
What is particularly striking is that the continued Crusader occupation of Arab and Islamic lands in the Levant remained a decisive factor in shaping Western perceptions of Islam. Despite daily interactions, diplomatic exchanges, and direct relationships between Muslims and Crusaders—which allowed the latter to observe Muslims closely and gain insight into their religion—ignorance, prejudice, and hostility continued to leave their mark on Western writings. One of the most prominent examples of this can be seen in the work of the renowned Crusader historian William of Tyre, who became the Archbishop of Tyre and nearly ascended to the Patriarchate of the Kingdom. He also tutored Baldwin IV, the son of the Crusader King Amalric.⁶⁶

Although William claimed to have deep knowledge of Islam, stating that he was fluent in Arabic and had written a dedicated book titled *The Eastern Princes*, in which he purportedly:

“...described in great detail the circumstances surrounding Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household), and when he appeared—as well as the events that led to his declaration as the prophet sent by God. We also explained the nature of his religion and mission, the land over which he extended his authority, how many years he lived, who his successors were, and how they followed his misguided and deceptive path in spreading these wicked principles worldwide.”⁶⁷

Nevertheless, his hostile outlook and the fact that he lived during the era of ongoing warfare between Muslims and Crusaders led him to adopt and reproduce earlier antagonistic writings. In truth, the Arabic translation of William's text by Dr. Hasan Habashi

65 Munro, “The Western Attitude toward Islam during the Period of the Crusades.”

66 Burhan Jum'ah Rashid, “The Image of Muslims in the Book ‘The History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea’ (University of Tikrit, 2015), p. 20-25.

67 William the Archbishop of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Seas*, ed. Emily Babcock and A.C. Krey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), vol. 1, p. 61.

does not convey the historian's hostile portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household), as it omits the harsh and obscene expressions used by William against the Prophet of mercy.⁶⁸ He opens his book with the following:

"During the reign of the Roman Emperor Heraclius, as mentioned by ancient historians and preserved in Eastern tradition, the wicked doctrines of Muhammad gained a firm foothold in the East. The firstborn of Satan deceitfully proclaimed himself as a prophet sent by God. Consequently, he gained control over the eastern regions, particularly the Arabian Peninsula. The poisoned seed he planted spread across the provinces, for his successors used the sword and violence—rather than preaching and guidance—to force people into accepting the erroneous doctrines of this Prophet against their will."⁶⁹

Elsewhere in the book, William continues to repeat slanders against the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) and his religion, affirming that hatred remained inflamed across the battlefields, especially within the ecclesiastical circles that actively supported the war—a war in which the ordinary people were always its fuel. Even the high moral conduct, unwavering commitment to treaties, and elevated ethical standards demonstrated by Muslims failed to amend that distorted image. So long as the spirit of hostility prevailed, there was no hope for the invader and occupier to speak the truth.

Many had attempted before them and came after them, but their words were exposed and refuted. As Allah, the Exalted, said:

"They want to extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah refuses except to perfect His light, even if the disbelievers hate it. He is the One who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail over all religions, even if the polytheists hate it."(Surat al-Tawbah, verses 32–33)

68 William Al-Suri, *A History of the Crusades*, ed. Hasan Habashi (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1991), p. 63.

69 Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Seas*, p. 60.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that any sincere Muslim researcher feels a deep aversion to even mentioning the insults directed at our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household), whom God Almighty sent as a mercy to the world. Yet the lasting impact of these attacks over the centuries, coupled with the continued Western role in our region, compels the researcher to pursue an answer to a fundamental question: Why this hatred and hostility toward Islam? Part of the answer lies in the deeply rooted enmity promoted by churchmen and warriors during the Middle Ages.

This study sought to emphasize that personal interests were primarily behind the fueling of hatred—whether to divert people from the path of proper guidance or to rally armies and push them into the fires of war. The second point is that the foundations of this hatred and hostility stemmed from two main factors: the first was the military threat posed by Islam through its conquest of territories that had previously been under Byzantine control—such as the Levant, Egypt, and the Maghreb—and through its expansion into Europe and domination of its southern regions. The second factor was the increasing number of local Christian populations who embraced Islam in the newly conquered lands, which led to both military and ideological confrontation.

The third issue lies in the intellectual and theological disputes raised by the West in response to Islamic doctrines that restored the actual concept of monotheism to Christianity—by affirming the humanity of Jesus (peace be upon him), rejecting incarnation, crucifixion, and similar beliefs.

Finally, despite the spirit of tolerance that Islam and its followers have demonstrated in dealing with people of other faiths, those driven by malice and resentment have chosen to ignore this reality and continue to incite hatred, spread distortions, and level accusations against the noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household).

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