

The remnant of medieval Christian perspectives on Prophet Muhammad: A critical evaluation of William Muir’s epileptic theory

Aliyu Kabir ^{*1,2}, Mohammed Muneer’deen Olodo Al-Shafi’i ¹, Ahmad Bazli Shafie ¹

¹Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Studies, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin Kampus Gong Badak, 21300 Kuala Nerus
Terengganu Darul Iman, Malaysia

²Al-Qalam University Katsina, Dutsinma Road, Katsina 820102, Katsina, Nigeria

*Corresponding author: aliyukabirakas02@gmail.com

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Abstract

The rise and growth of Islam have been perceived as a major threat to Christianity. Because of its great growth, Christians became very discouraged. This prompted them to look for any and all means to eradicate it. During the medieval period, Islam faced many intellectual and military attacks. One of the methods used is to create false theories that portray the Prophethood of Muhammad (saw) negatively. The most preposterous theory was the “epileptic theory” that sought to accuse him of epilepsy. Despite numerous attempts by Muslim scholars and some less biased Christian scholars to remove this idea from the scene, it still has relevance even in the writings of some of the most learned contemporary Christian scholars. In light of the fact that William Muir is one of the most knowledgeable and Contemporary Christian scholars, this study makes an effort to analyze and evaluate his views on this theory. In order to accomplish this, analytical, comparative and evaluative approaches were used in this process. According to the findings of the investigation, Muir’s claim that the Prophet (saw) suffered from epilepsy was not grounded in reality. If it is claimed that the experiences of the Prophet (saw) were attributed to epilepsy, it follows that the prophets of the Bible would be subject to the same accusation as well, as they shared similar physical experiences with the Prophet (saw).

Keywords: Remnant, Medieval Christian, Prophet Muhammad, William Muir

1.0 Introduction

Most of the Christian scholars, especially Orientalists, evaluated the mental health of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) using epileptic or pathological theories. This theory posits that the Prophet (saw) encountered epileptic seizures and suffered from a mental disorder. Whenever this thought occurred to him, he confidently said that it was a divine revelation that he received. This is why the theory says that, the *Qur’an* is believed to be the result of a paranoid delusion or hearing and seeing things that do not exist.

The epilepsy theory, was initially used by Christians in the Middle Ages. The most prominent among them was Jacob Van Maerlant. (Maerlant:1996). He vehemently claimed that the Prophet (saw) was suffering from epilepsy and accused him of lying to Khadijah in order to distract her from the fact that he was suffering from epilepsy every time he had a seizure. He claimed that on a particular day, when Muhammad had an epileptic fit and Khadijah witnessed it, she realized that she was married to a low-quality man. But Muhammad

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The Remnant of Medieval Christian Perspectives on Prophet Muhammad: A Critical evaluation of William Muir's Epileptic Theory

convinced her that his fall was not due to epilepsy. It was the angel Gabriel who came to him with inspiration from God. When he saw him, he could not bear the brilliance of his appearance, so he fell to the ground. (Maerlant:1996) Merlant confirmed that this was the method that Muhammad used to convince Khadijah and others of his credibility. (Maerlant:1996).

John of Damascus was one of the first medieval polemicists to criticize the Prophet (saw) for epilepsy. He contended that Muhammad's marriage to Khadijah not only provided him with comfort and wealth, but also enabled him to hide his epileptic seizures. (Reeves: 2003). In modern times, the majority of Christian scholars still adhere to this theory. One of them, William Muir, is undoubtedly the most influential. He confirmed that the Prophet (saw) suffered from epilepsy. Before dwell into exploration and evaluating his views on this theory, it is important to shed light on its historical and intellectual background.

William Muir is a contemporary Christian intellectual specializing in the field of Islamic studies. He was a Scottish scholar of Eastern cultures and served as a colonial official. Muir was known for his deep connection with the missionary community during his stay in India. He was an evangelical orientalist who fully supported their aims. However, Muir maintained a strong friendship with Carl Gottlieb Pfander. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) selected German Pietists to carry out their missionary endeavors in North India. After receiving a letter of encouragement, Muir immediately began writing a biography of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). (Daniel: 1966). Moreover, it is important to mention that Muir has clearly expressed the various contributions made to the advancement of Orientalist concepts related to Islam. Muir's writings, along with other colonial experts such as Seale's *The Doctrine of Islam* and Thomas P. Hughes's *Dictionary of Islam*, have been widely used as authoritative reference works in the field of Orientalist studies, especially within missionary circles. (Guenther: 1997).

2.0 Problem Statements

The doctrine of Epilepsy is a highly contentious issue among Muslim and Christian intellectuals. The majority of Orientalists acknowledged that this principle was established as a standard feature in their extensive literature. There appears to be a connection in Muir's book to the ancient hereditary idea that the Prophet (saw) suffered from epilepsy. He developed his argument by saying that the Prophet (saw) did not realize that he was inspired until much later than expected, and this realization did not come until after he was afflicted or exposed to a form of mental illness that prompted him to do so. However, Muir firmly believes that the Prophet Muhammad (saw) was subjected to convulsive seizures upon receiving heavenly revelations, which he linked to characteristics typically associated with epilepsy. Hence, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive and careful examination of Muir's view on the epilepsy hypothesis, including an evaluation of both the data he presents and the consequences of his claims.

3.0 Literature Review

It is generally accepted that the primary focus of interaction between Christians and Muslims is the discussion of epilepsy theory. Muslims and Christians alike have done a great deal of research on this topic. There is a strong interest in Christianity by Muir, and he is a very intellectual writer. His view has not been thoroughly examined, although he gave many views and wrote extensively about epilepsy against the Prophet Muhammad (saw). It happened that the majority of writers on Orientalist and Orientalism ignored this. Even the existing literature on it seems primarily descriptive and shallow without a critical evaluation. However, Islamic evaluation of Muir's views on epileptic seizures remains unabated. Some of the literature addressing epilepsy theory includes the following:

The article titled "The offensive portrayal of Prophet Muhammad (saw) in Western media and its consequences" was published in Rajasthan by Aijaz Ahmad Khan. The author provides a brief summary on the way that Western Christians portray the Prophet Muhammad (saw) since the first encounters with Islam and Muslims, and continued throughout the medieval time until the contemporary day. However, Muir's views on epileptic seizures against the Prophet (saw) were not been highlighted. (Aijaz Ahmad Khan: 2014).

S. Mubarak Ahmad in his article titled "Was Muhammad a Prophet or a King?", He asserts that Orientalists often misunderstood the life and actions of the Prophet (saw), and it is necessary to examine and confront their undesirable portrayal of the Prophet (saw) with factual evidence. It confirms the views of some Orientalists such as R. Bosworth Smith, Arnold Toynbee, and others. However, no comprehensive evaluation

on Muir's views regarding the Epileptic seizures against the Prophet (saw) has been discovered. While the paper includes a great deal of information regarding Christian views on the Prophethood of Muhammad (saw). (Mubarak: 1985).

Syed Ahmad Khan examines Muir's writings on the Prophet Muhammad (saw) in his work "A series of essays on the life of Muhammad". He asserts that Christian preconceptions influenced Muir's construction of the story of Prophet Muhammad (saw). The author's writings are overrated the Muir's writing, not evaluated based on the Islamic point of view and historical reality. The essay will be useful in analyzing Muir's view on epileptic seizures against the Prophet (saw). (Khan, Syed Ahmad: 1870).

Jabal Muhammad Buaben's work, titled *The Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West*, provides an overview of Western scholarship on the life and achievements of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). He examines the remnants of derogatory depictions of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) in controversial writings extending from the medieval to the twentieth century. The author examines many themes addressed in modern Christian writings, with particular emphasis on the works of Muir, Margoliouth, and Watt. However, Buaben's book only provides a depiction of Muir, Margoliouth, and Watt, without offering any further evaluation of their views in light of Islamic views and historical circumstances. Therefore, there is still a lack of evaluation of Muir's view on health condition of the Prophet (saw). (Buaben: 1996).

Muhammad Husayn Haykal, author of the book "Hayat Muhammad." The book was originally written in Arabic to assess the life of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). It was then translated into English by Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi in 1968. Haykal admits and cites Muir's book "The Life of Muhammad" as a source, but disputes his findings, asserting that Muir, being a devout Christians and missionaries constantly seize any opportunity to discredit the Prophet (saw). This book will help evaluate Muir's views and provide factual information about the health condition of the Prophet (saw). Haykal: 1976).

Mahmut Aydin in his study titled "Modern Western Christian Theological Understandings of Muslims since the Second Vatican Council," He explores the current Christian perspective on Prophethood of Muhammad (saw). The author examines the perspectives of William Montgomery Watt, William Cantwell Smith, Kenneth Cragg, Hans Kung, Keith Ward, and David Keer on the Prophethood of Muhammad (saw). However, he failed to emphasize Muir's perspectives on the Prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) in particular. This book will provide valuable insights into Christian viewpoints regarding the prophethood of Muhammad. (Mahmut Aydin: 2002).

However, extensive literatures have been produced in Muslim scholarship regarding the Prophethood of Muhammad (saw). One of the most popular books, especially among Muslims, is the book "The Islamic Concept of Prophethood" by Sayyed Abu Al-Hasan Al-Nadawi, which explores the importance of the Prophet in Islam. The author addressed the many aspects of Prophethood, starting with emphasizing its importance to humanity and civilization, as well as the unique qualities that Prophets possess. Al-Nadawi focuses his analysis of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) in chapters five, six, seven, and eight. These chapters provide unique insights into Muir's view on the Prophet's health condition, based on historical facts and the Islamic point of view. (S. Abul Hasan Al-Nadwi: 1995).

3.0 Methodology

This study is library-based, which means that the paper will be conducted using qualitative methods. Cresswell's definition of qualitative research method is, a systematic process of studying a particular topic with the aim of arriving at a comprehensive understanding of it. (Cresswell: 2012). In order to understand and evaluate William Muir's views on the health condition of the Prophet (saw) it is necessary to use several important approaches, such as descriptive, historical, analytical and evaluative methods.

The study will be divided into two distinct sections. The first part will focus on Muir's historical and intellectual background. The second half will consist of a critical analysis and evaluation of his ideas about the health condition of the Prophet (saw) from an Islamic perspective and historical facts.

3.1 Historical and Intellectual Backgrounds of William Muir

In order to conduct a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of an intellectual scholar's contributions, it is essential to completely and meticulously examine his intellectual background. To prevent hasty and

The Remnant of Medieval Christian Perspectives on Prophet Muhammad: A Critical evaluation of William Muir's Epileptic Theory

spontaneous assessment, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive investigation and examine the surrounding circumstances, both internal and external influences, as well as the various experiences that contributed to his scholarly achievements. These factors are not only relevant, but also essential and unavoidable. To search for those grounds, one must first search for the nature and quality of his scholarship. If the type and level of his scholarship are discovered in an appropriate and correct manner, then the analysis and evaluation of his works would be properly conducted and judged.

3.1.1 Muir's Personal and Social Backgrounds

Muir was born in Glasgow, Scotland on April 27, 1815. He received his education at Haileybury College, the University of Edinburgh, and Kilmarnock Academy in Glasgow. Upon completion of his university education, Muir developed an interest in studying Islam. (Bernard:1987). His grandfather, John William Muir, was a well-known and influential figure in Kilmarnock community. He served as local councilor from 1786 to 1806. William Muir Senior is believed to have been the first in his family to deal with religious issues in a very open and active manner. This occurred as a consequence of the increasing influence of Evangelicalism in the Lowland region of Scotland. (Powell: 2010). Muir Senior's commitment to evangelism had an impact on his family. Muir Junior and his brother were first influenced by the evangelical orbit in their homeland, and then became involved in the foreign mission to India. (Powell: 2010) However, the marriage between John Muir Senior (Muir's father) and Jean Fairley in 1780 resulted in an immediate economic advantage for Muir.

In addition, Muir arrived in India in 1837 and became a member of the Bengal Civil Service, working for the East India Company. He joined a small but powerful group of British administrators located in the North-Western Provinces of India. (Powell: 2010). In 1840, Muir worked for the East India Company. During his time there, Muir married Elizabeth Huntley Wemyss when he was twenty years old. (Powell: 2010). Wemyss, a family with a long history in Scotland, resided in Kanpur, which is located in northern India. (Powell: 2010). In 1847, Muir was appointed as the Secretary to the Board of Revenue of the North West Provinces, located in Agra. Subsequently, in 1852, he was appointed Secretary of the North-Western Province. From 1857 to 1858, he was in charge of the Intelligent Service, which he commanded from a hidden location in Agra. Which was also his hideout during turbulent times. (Bernard:1987). In 1867, Muir was appointed as a financial member of the Viceroy's Council. He retired after becoming a member of the India Council in London in 1874, Muir's home in India was in the ancient Mughal city of Agra, where he stayed for most of the first half of his time in India, from 1847 to 1858. (Powell: 2010). However, Muir's time in India was extensive, and during this period, he encountered a variety of new influences, including political and cultural factors that shaped and stimulated his Evangelism.

As a prominent administrator during a critical period of religious rivalry in Northwest India, made much effort to persuade influential figures in India, especially Muslims but also occasionally Hindus, to abandon their hostility towards the British. He tried to convince them that actively engaging in British initiatives, specifically in the field of education, would be beneficial for India. (Powell: 2010). He had a close relationship with a Hindu Pandit who later converted to Christianity and became a priest named David Mohun. Muir was a strong supporter of Hindu and Muslim intellectuals who were willing to accept Christianity. (Powell: 2010) Pointing out that one of Muir's goals was to convert Muslims and Hindus to Christianity. But more importantly, Muir takes time to learn about these other religious traditions and their influential figures. However, his connections with Hindus, Muslims and intellectual leaders gave him inside knowledge of their religious systems. (Powell: 2010).

3.1.2 His Academic Background

William Muir began his education at Kilmarnock Academy, where he successfully completed his primary and secondary education in 1832. (Powell: 2010). Subsequently, he was sent to Haileybury College, which was widely viewed as being of higher calibre than Oxford University. (Powell: 2010). Clinton Bennett asserts that Charles Grant, who died in 1823, was the founder of Haileybury College. He is said to have created the curriculum with the aim of developing individuals like Muir. These individuals would serve as official servants of the East India Company and would also be representatives of the moralistic Christian religious tradition that was seen as superior to the inferior society of Indian, which they would eventually dominate. (Powell: 2010). Therefore, the aim of education at Haileybury was to prepare candidates like Muir who would be appointed as officials of the East India Company to increase its administrative effectiveness in India.

(Powell: 2010) Muir's education at Haileybury not only prepared him for a future career as an East India Company official, but also prepared him for a career as a scholar. Muir, on the other hand, has been a top-tier student who was seen as a gifted student throughout his time at the school. He was awarded many honors and awards. Because of Muir's exceptional academic performance, he was awarded a fellowship at the University of Edinburgh, the institution from which he graduated. As did the majority of Orientalists, Muir travelled widely to pursue the goals of education and intellectual purposes.

In addition to his role as an official of the East India Company, Muir showed a strong enthusiasm for educational endeavors during his time in India. (Powell: 2010). Muir, who held multiple positions in the Bengal Civil Service, had his views and writings inevitably influenced by his role in the colonial government. (Guenther:1997). His numerous offices within the empire contributed to this endeavor, as he was actively involved in educational initiatives and held a position in higher education as a government clerk in the capital of Agra from the 1840s to the 1850s. Specifically, he participated in evaluating the Eastern Section students in Arabic. Muir did not pursue Oriental studies, although he had exceptional proficiency in Oriental languages such as Arabic, Sanskrit and Persian. (Bennett:1992) He has acquired extensive knowledge and education in this particular field. However, between the 1840s and early 1850s, he became involved in the study of languages and religion. During this period, Muir began studying Arabic and Islamic civilization, which later influenced his writings about Islam and its Prophet. (Powell: 2010). These academic efforts culminated in the publication of his works on Islam, which were first published in the late 1850s.

His reputation as a scholar was established based on his exceptional book *The Life of Muhammad from the Original Source*. The first two volumes of the publication were published in 1858, while the last two volumes were published in 1861. Muir emphasized that his work is derived from the original sources of Islam. The written material he read included an abridged version of Ibn Hisham's *Biography of the Prophet (saw)*, a volume of al-Dabari's *Annals* covering the entire life of the Prophet (saw), as well as part of Ibn Sa'id's *Dabaqat*. However, Muir's scholarly interests must be understood in the context of economic changes and the contributions of Scottish scholars to British colonial ambition. Indeed, Scottish scholars, particularly historians such as Muir, helped shape the scope and nature of British imperial activity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (Powell: 2010).

When it comes to education, Muir has done a great deal of work towards strengthening the educational system in India. He was one of the key figures in the establishment of Muir Central College in India, which later became part of Allahabad University in Allahabad, the university was well funded and became one of the oldest universities in India. He was one of the most important contributors to the establishment of the college. During 1884, when Muir was elected to the position of President of the Royal Asiatic Society, he published articles on the Indian Language. Muir was made Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh in 1885. Due to illness, Muir resigned his position in 1903, and died on 11 July 1905, at Dean Park House in Edinburgh.

3.1.3 Muir's Position in modern Christian Scholarship

William Muir is a contemporary Christian intellectual specializing in Islamic studies. He worked as a colonial administrator and was a Scottish orientalist. During Muir's time in India, he became known for his close relationship with the missionary community. As an evangelical Orientalist, he was a strong supporter of their ideals. Norman Daniel said, "Sir William Muir brings together three different worlds: the world of government, the world of scholarship, and the world of missions." (Norman: 1966).

However, Muir was an intimate friend of Karl Gottlieb Pfander. In order to carry out its missionary activity in North India, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) recruited German Pietists. Muir began his work on the biography of the Prophet Muhammad shortly after receiving an encouragement letter.

In addition, it is important to note that Muir demonstrated the various contributions that were made to the development of Orientalist thought on Islam in India. It is sufficient to say that Muir's books, along with those of other colonial scholars such as Sell's *the Faith of Islam* and Thomas P. Hughes' *A Dictionary of Islam*, served as normative reference works in the field of Orientalist studies in general, and that missionary circles in particular. It is worth mentioning that Muir had a significant impact on various contemporary and postmodern scholarship, such as David S. Margoliouth, Barbara D. Metcalf, C. A. Bayly Geoffrey A. Oddie, Saurabh Dube, John C. B. Webster, Avril Powell, Vishal Mangalwadi, Bennett, Hughes, Sell, and many others. (Guenther: 1997).

The Remnant of Medieval Christian Perspectives on Prophet Muhammad: A Critical evaluation of William Muir's Epileptic Theory

3.1.4 Some of His Various Publications

Muir's diverse achievements in the academic field not only enhanced his standing among Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals but also led to his inclusion in collections of the most prominent scholars in history. During his academic career, he authored many important books and articles on Hindu, Arabic and Islamic studies. The majority of his writings are highly controversial. However, some of his noteworthy publication that demonstrate his wide range of knowledge and experience in academics include:

- 1- The Life of Mahomet and History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira. Vols. 1-2 (1858)
- 2- The Life of Mahomet and History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira. Vols. 3-4. (1861)
- 3- The Opium Revenue (1875)
- 4- The Qur'an its Composition and Teaching and the Testimony it Bears to the Holy Scriptures (1878)
- 5- Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
- 6- Annals of the Early Caliphate (1883)
- 7- Mahomet and Islam: A Sketch of the Prophet's Life from Original Sources and a Brief Outline of His Religion (1884)
- 8- The Lord's Supper: An Abiding Witness to the Death of Christ Issue 36 of Present-day tracts (1886)
- 9- The Apology of al-Kindy – Written at the Court of Al-Mamun. In, Defence of Christianity Against Islam (1887)
- 10- The Caliphate: Its Rise, Decline and Fall – From Original Sources (1888)
- 11- Sweet First Fruits: A Tale of the 19th Century on the Truth and Virtues of the Christian Religion (1893)
- 12- The Beacon of Truth; or, Testimony of the Coran to the Truth of the Christian Religion (1894)
- 13- The Mameluke or Slave Dynasty of Egypt, 1260-1517 AD, End of the Caliphate (1896)
- 14- The Mohammedan Controversy: Biographies of Mohammed, Sprenger on Tradition, The Indian Liturgy, and the Psalter (1897)
- 15- James Thomason, Lieutenant-Governor N.W.P., India. Edinburgh (1897)
- 16- Agra Correspondence During the Mutiny (1898)
- 17- Two Old Faiths: Essays on the Religions of the Hindus and the Mohammedans (1901)
- 18- Records of the Intelligence Department of the Government of the North-West Provinces of India During the Mutiny of 1857, Including Correspondence with the Supreme Government, Delhi, Cawnpore, and Other Places (1902)
- 19- The Life of Mohammad, from Original Sources (1923)

3.1.5 Muir's Epileptic Theory

The purpose of this section of the research is to make an attempt to carry out a critical examination and evaluation of Muir's argument that the Prophet Muhammad (saw) suffered from epilepsy. It may be imperative to shed some light on the meaning and concept of epilepsy before undertaking such a task. As a result, it is hoped that it will be possible to identify and explain Muir's arguments, which led him to envision the Prophet (saw) suffering from epileptic seizures while receiving revelation of the *Qur'an*.

3.1.6 The meaning and Concept of Epilepsy

The condition known as epilepsy is characterized by sudden and recurrent disturbances in mental function, state of consciousness, sensory activity, or body movements. These disorders result from paroxysmal malfunction of cerebral nerve cells. (Britannica: 525). It is regarded as one of the most prevalent anxiety disorders, usually occurring in early childhood and old age. (Schmitz: 2002). Epilepsy is often accompanied by convulsions, characterized by a sudden loss of consciousness and involuntary shaking of the limbs. Other symptoms encompass peculiar and atypical behaviors, wistful and imaginative thoughts, hallucinations, and alterations in attitude. (Britannica: 525).

Epilepsy is defined by the occurrence of repeated seizures. During certain types of seizures, such as temporal lobe epilepsy or complex partial seizures, the individual loses conscious awareness of his surroundings and he may not know what is happening around him. (Illustrated Medical Dictionary: 1st edition) Although people with epilepsy usually do not feel any symptoms between seizures, they may have an aura shortly before the seizure occurs. Sometimes seizures may occur during times of illness, trauma, pressure, and stress. During seizures, a person with epilepsy often bites his or her tongue, feels drowsy and

becomes confused and unconscious. However, the obstacles and problems of seizures caused by epilepsy are not only limited to injuries, but also to psychological disorders such as depression. (Schmitz: 2002).

3.1.7 Investigation of Muir's Views on Prophet's Mental Distraction (Epilepsy)

The ancient inherited pathological theory claiming that the Prophet Muhammad (saw) suffered from epilepsy is important in Muir's treatises on him. He asserts that the prevailing claim in many Christian writings that the Prophet suffered from epilepsy receives notable confirmation in the experiences he went through during the process of revelation. However, if we carefully analyze the Prophet's experiences throughout the period of revelation, it becomes clear that he suffered from epileptic seizures. He developed his argument by narrating that the Prophet (saw) did not realize that he was inspired until much later than expected, and this realization did not come until after he suffered or was exposed to a type of mental illness that prompted him to protest his statements. However, Muir had a strong conviction that the Prophet (saw) suffered from convulsive seizures while receiving divine revelations, which he attributed to symptoms commonly associated with epilepsy. According to this assertion, if we are to critically examine the Prophet's experiences during the revelation, it is clear that he was suffering from epileptic seizures.

Furthermore, he continued in asserting that "While Muhammad was absorbed in such thoughts, sometimes doubting, sometimes believing, he sometimes suffered from a mental distress. To this period may be attributed such passages (Surah al-Duha and Surah al-Sharh), in which, after a deep depression, he seeks to reassure his soul by recalling the past blessings of God Almighty". (Muir: 1923). However, Muir's entire analysis makes it clear that the Prophet (saw) was considered as a person suffering from a mental disorder. On the other hand, the signs of severe epilepsy, such as the gradual collapse of brain power, biting the tongue, and throwing objects in the hand, why did the Prophet (saw) not preach them? Muir was not mentioned. It is natural for the reader to wonder why such a prominent scholar proposes such a controversial theory without providing supporting details.

3.2 Analysis and Evaluation of Muir's Views on Prophet's Mental Distraction (Epilepsy)

3.2.1 Muir's Evidence and His Assertion

Although Muir did not provide any evidence that could be considered conclusive, neither scientific nor logical, to support his claim, it is possible that he relied on some traditions that were associated with the physical experiences of the Prophet at the time of revelation.

Based on the physical experiences that the Prophet (saw) was going through at the time of the revelation, it appears that Muir came to the conclusion that the Prophet (saw) suffered from a psychological condition. Therefore, Muir came to the conclusion that these experiences were indicators of epilepsy, and he was therefore identified as an epileptic. Thus, since he suffered from epilepsy, the *Qur'an* he was carrying was not from God. It was a figment of his imagination.

3.2.2 Refutation

As we explained previously, the claim that the Prophet (saw) suffered from epilepsy is one of the oldest claims that has no basis in truth. This assertion made by Christian scholars, their aim is to discredit the Prophet (saw) by attributing his condition to an "a paroxysm of cataleptic insanity".¹ However, this claim, as we have discussed, was intended to mock, entertain and ultimately reject the authenticity of the Glorious *Qur'an*.

Due to the fact that Muir endorses and promotes this argument without any medical evidence, despite his recognized knowledge in the field of Islamic studies, it is possible that his readers will have doubts regarding the verification of this allegation. This loophole, as clearly demonstrated in his discussion, cannot be justified in academic circles. Therefore, drawing such a problematic and provocative medical conclusion that is dangerously linked to religious issues on the basis of false assumptions is completely unacceptable and cannot be tolerated under any circumstances.

¹ The words mentioned above between the inverted commas are the same words used by Springer in his accusation of the Prophet (saw) with mental illness. See A. Sprenger, Life of Mohammad from Original Sources (Allahabad: Pres by Terian Mission Press, 1851), 114.

The Remnant of Medieval Christian Perspectives on Prophet Muhammad: A Critical evaluation of William Muir's Epileptic Theory

However, since the main basis for this assertion depends on the position of the Prophet at the time of receiving the revelation, narrations relating to these circumstances or experiences must be carefully scrutinized. This evaluation aims to determine the extent to which this assertion deviates or is consistent with actual events in the life of the Prophet (saw).

3.3 Medical View on Epilepsy

In this section, it is important to explain the causes of epilepsy, the different types of seizures, how it is treated, and the common misconceptions surrounding it. This will help us understand epilepsy more clearly. From there, we can examine the validity of Muir's claims about the Prophet (saw) from a medical perspective.

3.3.1 Causes of Epilepsy

Epilepsy can occur for many different reasons, and sometimes doctors cannot determine the exact cause. A common cause is genetics, meaning a person may inherit the condition from a family member. In other cases, brain injuries, such as those resulting from traffic accidents, falling down, strokes, or severe head trauma, can lead to epilepsy. These injuries can damage the parts of the brain that is responsible for movement and consciousness, potentially leading to seizures. (Donald: 2012)

Other causes include brain tumors, which may affect the normal function of brain cells. Infections such as meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain) or encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) can also cause epilepsy. Some children may develop epilepsy as a result of injuries before birth (called prenatal injury), especially if the mother experienced complications during pregnancy or childbirth. In addition, developmental disorders, such as autism or neurofibromatosis, may affect brain structure and increase the risk of seizures. Despite the many causes, the important thing is that epilepsy can often be managed with appropriate medical care. (Donald: 2012)

3.3.2 Types of Epilepsy

There are two main categories:

- 1- Focal (partial) seizures: These begin in one area of the brain.
- 2- Generalized seizures: These affects both sides of the brain. (Donald: 2012)

3.3.3 Treatments of Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a medical condition that can often be controlled with appropriate treatment. The most common and effective method of treating epilepsy is antiepileptic medications, also known as anti-seizure medications (ASMs). These medications help reduce or stop seizures in many patients. However, not everyone responds well to medication alone. For people with severe or drug-resistant epilepsy, surgery may be an option. Surgery is performed to remove or repair the part of the brain that is causing seizures. Another option is vagus nerve stimulation (VNS), in which a small device is implanted in the chest and sends signals to the brain to help control seizures. (Donald: 2012).

In addition to medical treatments, some lifestyle and dietary changes can also help. The ketogenic diet, which is high in fat and low in carbohydrates, has shown good results in some children and adults with epilepsy. This special diet changes how the brain uses energy and can reduce seizure activity. Healthy lifestyle choices, such as getting enough sleep, managing stress, and avoiding known seizure triggers (like flashing lights or lack of sleep), are also important. With a combination of these treatments and habits, many people with epilepsy are able to live healthy, active lives. (Donald: 2012).

3.3.4 Common Misconceptions Surrounding Epilepsy

From a medical standpoint, epilepsy is not attributed to possession, spiritual forces, or curses. These are cultural misconceptions common in many societies. However, it may be important to pay more attention to the causes of epilepsy, the types of seizures, how it is treated, and common misconceptions about it. When we clearly understand these aspects, we realize that epilepsy is a medical condition that affects the brain, not something mysterious or magical. This understanding helps us know how to care for people with epilepsy

with compassion, support, and appropriate medical assistance. By knowing more, we can also remove the fear and confusion surrounding this condition.

Furthermore, when considering William Muir's claims about the Prophet (saw), it is important to examine them from the perspective of medical knowledge. If, in the past, someone described symptoms similar to epilepsy without a scientific understanding of them, we must be careful not to accept those views blindly. Today's medical research shows that epilepsy is a brain disorder with known causes, not a sign of insanity, possession, or anything spiritual. Therefore, any claim linking epilepsy to a negative judgment of someone, especially someone as noble as the Prophet (saw), should be examined carefully and respectfully, based on facts, not assumptions.

3.4 Prophet's Physical Condition during the Revelation: Analysis of Islamic Data

The Holy *Qur'an* gives a complete account of the various circumstances in which revelation occurs.² It does not directly mention the experiences that the Prophet Muhammad (saw) went through during the process of receiving revelation. But it can be concluded that there is evidence in the Holy *Qur'an* indicating that the Prophet (saw) received divine revelation in difficult and hard circumstances. This inference can be drawn from the verse in which Allah says: "We shall, indeed, send down to you a weighty word". (*Qur'an*: 73:5). The word 'Qaulan thaqilah' meaning (a weighty word) is attributed to the Holy *Qur'an* itself. (Ibn Ashur:1984) Describing it as 'Thaqilah' meaning (heavy) may confirm the truth of the statement that the Prophet (saw) was receiving revelation in difficult circumstances. It seems that Ibn Ashur took this position, as he said, "The verse: "We shall, indeed, send down to you a weighty word". It indicates that receiving it from the one who revealed it to him was hard and difficult. Then Ibn Khaldun said that:

It should be known that, in general, the state of revelation presents difficulties and pains... this is the reason for his (Prophet's) well-known remoteness...and choking (feeling) when in that condition of which the Prophet used to speak. The reason, as we already established, is that revelation means leaving one's humanity, in order to attain angelic perceptions and to hear the speech of the soul. This causes pain since it means that an essence leaves its own essence and exchanges its own stage for the ultimate stage (of the angels). This is the meaning of the choking feeling which Muhammad referred to in connection with the beginning of revelation in his statement: "And he (Gabriel) choked me until it became too much for me; then he released me. Then he said, 'Read,' and I replied, 'I cannot read.' He did this a second and a third time, as the tradition tells. (Ibn Khaldun: 1967)

Ibn Khaldun's comment mentioned above indicates that revelation is not a common phenomenon. It is a departure from human nature, or replacing human nature with the nature of angels in order to reach angelic perceptions and hear the words of the spirit. In other words, it is a form of communication with the angelic world. Therefore, this condition must cause pain, and the person associated with such a condition must also feel pain. However, it appears from the previous discussion that the Prophet (saw), faced adversity throughout the revelation of the Glorious *Qur'an*. If the Prophet (saw) faced hardship due to his interaction with the heavenly realm, what challenges that could arise from the change in his condition during this interaction.

However, there is a tradition narrated by Aishah that can give credence to the above-mentioned discourse. In the course of a detailed account of 'Hadith al-ifk', the lie against her, she said, "... then, he experienced the heaviness that was previously present during the moment of receiving divine revelation. He was sweating from the burden of Allah's words on him, and even in the winter, his sweat was dripping like silvery beads..." (Muslim: n.d).

Moreover, there are a large number of traditions that explain the physical condition of the Prophet (saw) during the revelation. In a narration by Aisha, it is mentioned that al-Harith ibn Hisham asked the Messenger of Allah (saw), "O Messenger of Allah! How does the revelation come to you?" The Messenger of Allah replied, "Sometimes it comes to me like a bell ringing, and it's the hardest of all. Then this state passes and I realize what is revealed. On some occasions, an angel being appears before me in the form of a male, and speaks to me verbally, during which I make sure to remember the content of his words. Aisha continued, "Indeed, I witnessed the Prophet (saw) receiving inspiration on a very cold day, and when it was finished, his

² Allah the Almighty has mentioned three ways of revelation in the Holy *Qur'an*; "And it is not for any human being that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a partition or that he sends a messenger to reveal, by His permission, what He wills. Indeed, He is Most High, Most Wise". *Qur'an* (42:51)

The Remnant of Medieval Christian Perspectives on Prophet Muhammad: A Critical evaluation of William Muir's Epileptic Theory

forehead would be dripping with sweat" (Al-Bukhari: 846). Ibn Hajar explained that Aisha's saying "on a very cold day" indicates the tendency towards hardship and pain during the inspiration because it is not compatible with human nature. Excessive sweating on a very cold day indicates that there is something external added to human nature. (Ibn Hajar: 1379).

In the *hadith* narrated by Al-Bukhari, the weight of the Prophet (saw), increased every time the revelation came down to him. And in the narration of Zaid bin Thabit. "...So Allah revealed to His Messenger (saw) that his thigh was on my thigh, and his thigh was so heavy that I feared it would break mine,". (Al-Bukhari: 846). Another tradition indicates that his face changed during the revelation. This was narrated by Ubadah ibn al-Samit "When the revelation came to the Messenger of Allah (saw), he felt burden and the colour of his face changed". (Muslim: n.d). Ubadah ibn al-Samit narrated another *hadith* indicating that the Prophet (saw), used to lower his head when the revelation came to him. He narrated that, "When the revelation came to the Messenger of Allah (saw) he lowered his head and his companions lowered their heads. And it was over, he raised his head". (Muslim: n.d).

In another account, it is documented that the Prophet (saw) exhibited the act of snoring while receiving divine revelation. Safwan ibn Ya'la ibn Umayyah informed us, based on the account of his father, about what he heard him report: "A gentleman approached the Prophet (saw) while he was in Ji'ranah, donning a cloak that exhibited remnants of Kaluq or Sufra on it (both are kind of perfume)". Then he asked: "(O Prophet!) What do you order me to do during my Umrah?" So, Allah revealed to His Prophet (saw) while he was covered with a garment. I desired to observe the Prophet (saw) receiving divine inspiration. Umar exclaimed: Come! Would you be pleased to witness the divine inspiration bestowed upon the Prophet (saw)? I responded affirmatively. Umar lifted the bottom of his garment, allowing me to witness the Prophet (saw) snoring. The narrator then added that I believed he said, "The snoring was similar to that of a camel...". (Al-Bukhari: 1422AH).

3.5 Are those Experiences Mental Distraction (Epilepsy)?

As mentioned above, anything that happened to the Prophet (saw) during the revelation was due to the weight of Allah's words, as Abu Shamah said in his comment on the *hadith* reported by Aisha, mentioned in the Prophet's (saw) sweat during the revelation. The sweat that was coming out from the Prophet (saw), and the redness of his face, his wheezing, and his weight gain, are all due to the weight of the revelation, as Allah the Almighty told him at the beginning of his mission. "We have sent down upon you a heavy word". (Abu Shamah: 1999) Therefore, anyone who makes a claim that contradicts this must support it with clear and unambiguous evidence.

However, if the experiences faced by the Prophet during the Revelation were considered as a sign of epilepsy, as Muir suggested, it would mean that some Biblical prophets would also be vulnerable to such an accusation, since they too had similar experiences as documented in the Bible. For example, "Daniel said that he was the only one who saw the vision: and the men that were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves." So I was left alone and witnessed this strange vision, but I had no strength left. My once bright appearance had changed horribly, and I no longer had any strength. And I heard the sound of his words. When I heard the sound of his words, I sat on my face in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground". (Daniel: 1993).

Daniel expressed extreme fear and felt an involuntary tremor while having his vision. "As he was speaking these words to me, I stood there shaking. After that, he directed his statement towards me. Fear not, Daniel, for the first day, as you go on your journey to understand and demonstrate humility in the presence of your God" (Daniel: 1993).

Furthermore, Daniel reportedly reported that he was experiencing difficulty, anxiety, and a lack of strength. He said: Then I opened my mouth and spoke. So I said to the one who was in front of me, saying: O Lord, as a result of the vision, I was afflicted with pain, and I had no strength left. How can a servant of my Lord speak to my Lord? Because now there is no strength left in me, and there is no breath left in me". (Daniel: 1993). These anxieties and troubles were comparable to those that the Prophet Muhammad (saw) experienced during the revelation. It was also one of the reasons for his change in mood, as we discussed previously. If the Orientalists and Christian missionaries considered the Prophet (saw) to suffer from epilepsy on the basis that his conditions changed during the revelation, then Daniel, the prophet of the Bible, should also face the same

accusation because he was experienced to the same troubles that the Prophet (saw) engaged. But we do not hear any of the Christian scholars accusing him of what they accused the Prophet (saw) of Jeremiah, another prophet from the Bible, when he spoke about his vision, he said: "My heart is broken within me, and all my bones are shaking; I am like a drunken man, like a drunken man for the Lord's sake." And for the sake of his holy words". However, Muir's claim can also be falsified on the grounds that it does not correspond to historical events. It has been mentioned in history that epilepsy was known to the Arabs. They can distinguish it from other conditions.³

In addition, whoever reads the biography of the Prophet (saw) will find that the idea that he (the Prophet) was unconscious throughout the period of revelation is a historical one. According to the narration of Aisha, Sawdah (one of the Prophet's wives) went out to fulfil her physical needs after the Hijab was imposed. She was a fat woman who could not hide her identity from those who knew her. So, when Umar saw her, he said: "Oh Sawdah! I swear to Allah, you cannot hide yourself from us, so think of another way so that no one will recognize you when you go out". So, then Sawdah returned while the Prophet (saw) was in my house eating his food, and in his hand was a bone full of meat. She entered (to my house) and told (the Prophet): "O Messenger of Allah!" I went out to answer the call of nature, and Umar said to me such-and-such. Then Allah revealed to him, and when he finished, the bone was in his hand, but he did not put it down. He said to Sawdah: "He has given you (the women) permission." "To go out to meet your needs". (Al-Bukhari: 1422AH).

The above *hadith* contains a clear indication that the Prophet (saw) was receiving revelation in his consciousness. According to records kept by Muslim, there has never been a time in history when the Prophet (saw) was discovered unconscious either during or after receiving the revelation. Although the Orientalists passionately claimed that he had always been unconscious in the past, they neglected to provide any accurate historical event to support their assertion. In addition, no historical account has been discovered in which an epileptic patient remembers what he did or what happened to him during an epileptic seizure. On the other hand, a large number of narrations indicate that the Prophet (saw) was able to remember the verses that were revealed to him. If it is indeed true, as Muir concluded, that he (the Prophet) had epilepsy, then it would have been impossible for him to remember any of the verses that were revealed to him. The fact that he could remember not just a single verse, but sometimes even an entire Sirah, may cast some doubt on such a theory. Again, in the history of epilepsy before and after the Prophet (saw), no one has ever composed a single *surah* equivalent to a Sirah in the Holy *Qur'an* or even just a wise statement that has been recognized as a hero. If individuals suffering from epilepsy have the ability to produce important literary works, such as the Holy *Qur'an* or other sayings, then it raises the question as to why only the Prophet Muhammad (saw) was able to achieve such a remarkable feat?

4.0 Results and Discussions

Muir's attempt to compare the state of the Prophet (saw) at the time of the revelation and the hallucinatory experiences of individuals suffering from epilepsy has been deemed false. If the history of the Prophet is carefully investigated, it will become quite clear that there was never a moment in the course of history when he mistakenly believed that an absent person was present with him due to mental illness. Whoever says that such an event occurred must provide accurate and correct historical support, otherwise he will be accused of bias. As a result, since Muir's conclusion on this matter is not supported by any reality, it is impossible to consider this conclusion as a rational and scientific conclusion. Muir's attempt to link the Prophet's sweating during revelation to epilepsy is illogical. The historical tradition surrounding Aisha's account of the Prophet sweating while receiving revelation provides convincing evidence that this particular type of revelation is very challenging. It is clear that the sweat of the Prophet (saw) is indicated in this *hadith*, and this is attributed to the difficulties he faced, without which he would not have sweated. Since there is no other source for this information other than this Islamic reference, and since the perspiration was justified by the hardship of revelation in this same reference, saying otherwise must be seen as an attempt to change the meaning of what

³ In a *hadith* narrated by At-Êi ibn AbÊ RabÊÍ he said, Ibn Abbas, inform me: "Shall I not direct you to a woman from the people of Paradise"? I answered in the affirmative. Then he said: This black woman came to the Prophet (saw) and said: I suffer from epilepsy and my body is exposed, so pray to God for me. The Prophet (to her) said: "If you wish, it is yours" so that you may be patient and enter Paradise. If you wish, I ask Allah to heal you." She said: I will be patient, but I have a request please: But I used to be uncovered, so pray to Allah that I do not uncover myself. The Prophet (saw) accepted her request and prayed for her. See Al-Bukhari, Sahif..., Íadith no. 5652. This *hadith* clearly indicates that epilepsy was known before and during the life of the Prophet (saw).

The Remnant of Medieval Christian Perspectives on Prophet Muhammad: A Critical evaluation of William Muir's Epileptic Theory

the text represents.

Finally, Prophet Muhammad (saw) did not suffer from epilepsy, a fact acknowledged by Muslim and non-Muslim authors alike. For example, W. M. Watt mentions this in his writing:

Opponents of Islam have often asserted that Muhammad had epilepsy and that therefore his religious experiences had no validity. In fact, the symptoms described are not identical to those of epilepsy, because the disease leads to physical and mental degeneration, while Muhammad was in the fullest possession of his faculties to the very end. But even if the claim were true, the argument would be completely unsound and based on mere ignorance and bias; Such physical accompaniments neither validate nor invalidate the religious experience. (Watt: 1953).

T. L. Vaswani, though not a Muslim, expresses his astonishment and thus write:

Again, and again he (Muhammad) has the "fits"; the pressure of the unseen is upon him; and his trembling lips uttered the eloquent wisdom recorded in the *Qur'an*. Yet one European critic-Sprenger-speaks of Muhamad's "fits" as "epilepsy"! Carlyle has better understanding of Muhamad when he speaks of him as the type of the heroic Prophet. Muhammad was a hero and a Prophet... (Vaswani: 1923).

Edward Gibbon in his discussion on the death of the Prophet (saw) appears to have been disappointed by the description of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) as suffering from epilepsy. He therefore expressed his regret and remarked that "his (the Prophet's) epileptic fits, a ridiculous slander of the Greeks, would be an object of pity rather than disgust." He described it as "a ridiculous slander of the Greeks" (Gibbon:1887) showing his dissatisfaction with it.

Additionally, John Davenport, a prominent Christian scholar, refuted this assertion and put forward the argument that:

What was the real character of Mohammed's (Muhammad's) ecstatic periods; whether they were simply reveries of profound meditation, or swoons connected with a morbid excitability of the mental or physical constitution, it would be difficult to determine... The assertion, so often repeated, that Mohammed (Muhammad) was subject to epileptic fits, is a base invention of the Greeks, who would seem to impute that morbid affection to the apostle of a novel creed as a stain upon his moral character deserving the reprobation and abhorrence of the Christian world. Surely, those malignant bigots might have reflected that if Mohammed had really been afflicted with that dreadful malady Christian charity ought to have commanded them to pity his misfortune rather than rejoice over it, or affect to regard it in the light of a sign of Divine wrath. (John:1869).

5.0 Conclusion

The above discussion has clearly stated Muir's view on epilepsy theory. The implication, as we noted earlier, is that the Prophet Muhammad (saw) was of unsound mentality. This greatly damage his status as a prophet and undermines the validity of the divine revelation he received from Allah. However, it has been evaluated that the physical experiences he had during the revelation were not epileptic seizures, and that the weight of Allah's words. Also, a comprehensive medical view reveals the possible causes of epilepsy, but in the case of the Prophet (saw), there is no historical report indicating that he suffered from any of these causes. However, it was not only the Prophet (saw) who had such an experience when he was having his vision, but it was also said that the prophets of the Bible had gone through it during their vision. Therefore, if it is said that he suffers from epilepsy on the basis of that, then those prophets of the Bible must also be subjected to such a charge, to which we believe Christians would never agree.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors explicitly state that they have no competing interests, such as financial or personal relationships, related to the writing of this paper.

Author's Contribution

Upon conducting a comprehensive literature review and analyzing texts related to the appropriate topic. The researcher confirms the absence of a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of Muir's views on the Epileptic theory, especially from the Islamic perspective, and considering the widest range of historical reality in its precise sense. The research seeks to address the intellectual gap and contribute understanding of Christian perspectives regarding the Epileptic theory in the medieval and contemporary period.

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