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## A Critical Study of “The Messenger: The Life of Muḥammad” by RVC Bodley

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### Abstract

Hundreds of publications written in various Western languages throughout Europe at the end of the 19th century followed a generally negative trend. However, in the 20th century, orientalists emerged on the scene, nailing the plank of their predecessors. They educated their people about Islamic realities that they were still unaware of through their in-depth studies of Islam. After a thorough examination of the Qur'ān, Hadīth, and other Islamic knowledge sources, Islam was produced on these strong foundations. Ronald Victor Courtenay Bodley (1892–1970) was a writer of 19 compositions, a scriptwriter, a biographer, and an official in the British Army. Before the First World War, he traveled to Kashmir while serving in the military. On the counsel of Thomas Edward Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), he voyaged to Algeria and the Sahara desert where he went through seven years among the Arabian migrants. During his stay in Kashmir and the Sahara desert, he found the opportunity to learn about Islam and the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ). So on his arrival to England, he chose to compose the history of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). In this article, a critical analysis of his writing “The Messenger, The Life of Muḥammad” (ﷺ) has been presented.

**Keywords:** Orientalism, Life of RVC Bodley, Allegations on Sīrah, Blunders of European Writers, Critical Analysis

### Introduction to RVC Bodley

In European writers, Bodley’s family has a specific place and in this family, toward the finish of the nineteenth century, a youngster was

conceived who was named Ronald Victor Courtenay (R.V.C) Bodley. Bodley was born in 1892 in Paris, as he has expressed in “*Indiscretions of a Young Man*.”<sup>1</sup> He was the descendent of Sir Thomas Bodley (1545-1613), an English negotiator, researcher, and especially the originator of the Bodleian Library.<sup>2</sup> In the wake of getting his education from Eton School, Britain, he joined the English Armed Forces and prevailed to have the position of Lieutenant Colonel.<sup>3</sup> Bodley was keen on governmental issues and wished to improve his profession in this field yet Thomas Edward (T.E) Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia 1888-1935) halted him from joining political activities and asked to visit Arabia.<sup>4</sup> Bodley filled in as Military Aide Attaché in an English government office and during the activity, he got a chance to participate in the Paris Harmony Meeting (1919).<sup>5</sup>

Bodley's relationship with Hollywood is what sets his academic career apart from others. It was sparked by an employment opportunity for Richard Myers' play "The Hand" given to him by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), the author of the Whitney Historical Center.<sup>6</sup> Gertrude gave him the nickname "Ronnie" upon their meeting, recognizing his academic prowess and practical skills.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, he had the opportunity to collaborate with Hollywood megastar Charles Chaplin, popularly known as Charlie Chaplin (1889–1977), who recruited him for a feature film.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout his life, Bodley traveled to several places, including Algeria, America (1935), China (1930), Japan (1930), and, most notably, the Sahara Desert (1919). Illustrating his rationale for going to the Sahara, he writes:<sup>9</sup> During his seven years there, he observed Bedouin life, Muslim culture, and Islamic customs in great detail. Staying put, he made up his mind

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald Victor Courtenay Bodley, *Indiscretions of a Young Man* (London: H Saylor, 1931), p.251

<sup>2</sup> David Patrick, *Chambers's Biographical Dictionary* (Edinburgh: W&R Chambers Limited, 1898), pp.108-109

<sup>3</sup> Bodley, *The Soundless Sahara* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1968), Back cover

<sup>4</sup> Dale Carnegie and Bodley, *I Lived in the Garden of Allah, How to Stop Worrying and Start living* (Washington D.C: Library Of Congress, 1948), p.193

<sup>5</sup> *David Dutton, Paris 1918: The War Diary of the British Ambassador, the 17th Earl of Derby* (Liverpool: University Press, 2001), p.163

<sup>6</sup> William Snell, “R.V.C. Bodley (Bodley of Arabia) at Keio University 1933,” *The Hiyoshi Review of English Studies*, No.63 (September 2013), pp.37,39

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.38

<sup>9</sup> Bodley, *I Lived in the Garden of Allah*, p.193

to elaborate on the Blessed Prophet (ﷺ).<sup>10</sup> Bodley's family had a big influence on his academic standing. His mother encouraged him to write in his early years, and his father inspired him. He conveyed it with such commitment in his monumental effort, "In Search of Serenity." He had exceptional talent and was an amazing essayist.<sup>11</sup> His works are as under:

Algeria from Within (1927); Yasmina (1927); Opal Fire (London, 1928); Indiscretions of a Young Man (London, 1931); The Lilac Troll (London, 1932); The Soundless Sahara (Lo A Japanese Omelette (1933); Round The Red Lamp (written by Canon Doyle with notes by Bodley, Tokyo, 1934); Indiscreet Travels East (London, 1934); The Drama of the Pacific (Hokuseido Press, 1934); Admiral Togo (London, 1935); Gertrude Bell (London, 1940); Flight into Portugal (London, 1941); Wind in the Sahara (1944); The Gay Deserters (Creative Age, 1945); The Messenger, The Life of Muḥammad (1946); The Quest (London, 1947); I Lived in the Garden of Allah (1948); The Warrior Saint (1953); In Search of Serenity (Boston, 1955)

On May 26, 1970, this 78-year-old biographer, essayist, military official, and traveler passed away. He passed away in a nursing home called Birtley House, which is located in the southeast British district of Surrey's Bramley.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Messenger**

Towards the end of the 1800s, several books were written in various Western languages in Europe, with a usually negative theme. However, in the 1900s, these orientalists advanced beyond the group of professors who had previously failed them. They taught their people about Islamic reality, which they were still ignorant of, after giving Islam serious thought. The Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, and other Islamic texts were studied in depth, and publications explaining Islam were then elaborated upon these firm foundations. In the unlikely event that the Scriptures were written, a substantial quantity of information had been compiled, and Western scholars' essays on every aspect of the life of the Blessed Prophet were dispersed.

Bodley's book "The Messenger: The Life of Muḥammad" is a 22-chapter, complete autobiography of the Sacred Prophet (ﷺ). The writer has attempted to present every phase of the life of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), starting from his conception until his passing. In this work, the author discusses his

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Bodley, Indiscretions of a Young Man, p.230

<sup>12</sup> Snell, Bodley of Arabia, pp.41-42

favorable attitude toward Islam after consulting with several Orientalists. He has acknowledged the Islamic veracity that other orientalists typically ignore in their writings. He acknowledges the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and seems to be by the Qur'ān, Jihād, polygamy, and various other Islamic beliefs. Bodley claims that since the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) is "Rasūl Allah," the book's title perfectly captures his essence.<sup>13</sup> He wrote this biography for people who want to know more about Islam and the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), not for theologians or Orientalists.<sup>14</sup>

Bodley claims that the earlier biographers attempted to distort the Holy Prophet's (ﷺ) holy life and did not give the full picture of him. This is considered foul play. He said that these kinds of compositions started due of campaigns, and because the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) was the main emphasis, he became synonymous with obscenity. Some Christian essayists even tried to prove that the Christian cardinal was the Blessed Prophet (ﷺ).<sup>15</sup> Bodley also declares the Christians to be the defaulters, pointing out several false presumptions about Islam and Christianity and asserting that their hatred and disgust will determine the term of Mammetry, Maumets, and Revelry for the Blessed Prophet.<sup>16</sup>

This book was originally published in 1946 by Nursery City, New York, Doubleday, and Co.; it was then reprinted in Pakistan in 1954 by Orientalia Lahore. However, Dr. M.S. Nāz's Urdu translation was first published in 1991 by Maktaba 'Āliya. Distributed by Nazīr Sons Lahore, the work by Muhammad 'Alī Chirāgh was interpreted differently.

### **Merits of the Book**

Some merits of the book are as under:

#### **Muḥammadanism or Islam**

Bodley has occasionally criticized European ideas and acknowledged actual factors. For example, it is incorrect for Europeans to refer to Islam and its adherents as Muḥammadanism and Muḥammadens, respectively.<sup>17</sup> The Holy Qur'ān rejects this picture and names this religion as Islam and its lovers as Muslims.<sup>18</sup> According to Bodley, the Prophet of

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<sup>13</sup> Bodley, *The Messenger; The Life of Muḥammad*, (Lahore: Orientalia, 1954), p.vi

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p.1

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p.6

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>17</sup> William Muir, *The Life of Mohammad* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1923), p.70

<sup>18</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 3:19; 3:102

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Islam never asserted that the religion he taught was his idea<sup>19</sup> and the people who adopted his teachings were and still are referred to as "Muslims."<sup>20</sup>

### **The Holy Qur‘ān**

The final flawless holy book that Allah Almighty revealed is the Qur‘ān, which Western scholars have misrepresented. They believe it to be an academic fallout from the prophet Muhammad's trip to Syria and his one-on-one meetings with Christian priests.<sup>21,22,23</sup> Bodley acknowledges that the Qur‘ān is divine. He asserts that the Qur'an is the only work of literature that has survived for more than 1200 years in its entirety. Neither the Jewish nor the Christian religions have anything that even somewhat connects to this.<sup>24</sup> Bodley goes on to say that the Qur‘ān is still available today, despite having been composed initially under the guidance of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).<sup>25</sup>

### **Ḥaḍrat 'Āisha's Marriage**

Marriage with Ḥaḍrat 'Āisha is one of the problems about the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) on which the Europeans have perpetrated disgusting attacks. The Blessed Prophet's persona is unnecessarily implicated by the orientalist by dwelling on this marriage. Unlike other orientalist, Bodley has defended it and responded directly. He clarifies that these orientalist have failed to consider the reality that marriages of this kind have historically and currently are common in Asia. They have forgotten that in Eastern Europe, what was customary in Spain and Portugal still prevails.<sup>26</sup> Notwithstanding Bodley, Karen Armstrong and D.S. Margoliouth have additionally portrayed the support of this marriage.<sup>27</sup>

### **Plural Marriages of the Prophet**

Accordingly, one of the criticisms leveled against Islam by the Europeans is polygamy. Many of them have made fruitless attempts to undermine Islamic respect and status in this regard, even though early Christians practiced polygamy and there is no single instance in the history

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<sup>19</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.74

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.75

<sup>21</sup> William Coke Taylor, The History of Mohammedanism and its Sects (London: John W Parker), 2<sup>nd</sup> EDI, p.90

<sup>22</sup> Gabriel Said Reynolds, The Quran and its Historical Context (London: Taylor & Francis, 2008), p.70

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Jeffery, Islam Mohammed and His Religion (Indiana: Bobbs Merrill, 1979), p.47

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.199

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p.1

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.132

<sup>27</sup> Karen Armstrong, Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet (London: Phoenix Press, 1992), p.145

of Christianity or the Bible where Jesus prescribed a restriction on polygamy.<sup>28</sup> A few orientalists consider that solitary Islam is the religion that allows its supporters to have more than one spouse and it was not rehearsed in Madina previously.<sup>29</sup> Bodley dispels this myth and asserts that the most unjust accusation made by non-Muslims against the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is that Islam is a sensual religion, although no other major religion could have grown so rapidly by polygamy alone.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, he notes that polygamy makes the home a hallowed institution and reunites families rather than splitting them.<sup>31</sup>

A thorough analysis of the Bible's Book of 1 Kings reveals the enchanting story of Solomon and the conclusion that he had 700 wives and 300 concubines,<sup>32</sup> whereas Abraham, David, and Rehoboam had more than a single wife.<sup>33</sup>

### **Author’s Viewpoint Regarding Jihād**

One of the core tenets of Islam is jihad, which is extremely important to combat but also means, in other words, to seek to defend or expand Islam through either a military or a morally driven internal effort.<sup>34,35</sup> Orientalists have typically used Jihād as a victim to accuse Islam of being violent and to paint a false image of Islam and Muslims so that non-Muslims would view Islam as a broken, suspicious, and, given the current circumstances, terrorist religion. However, they have neglected the fact that Islam is not as violent as Christianity and Judaism.<sup>36</sup> The author has unquestionably made protective arguments for the goodness of Islamic Jihād and shown, using biblical citations, that the holy wars have also been refined in Christianity.<sup>37</sup> The Muslim activists have been told by the Europeans that they killed individuals in general and stole their equipment from the affected areas. As

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<sup>28</sup> Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips and Dr. Jamila Jones, *Polygamy in Islam* (Riyad: International Islamic publishing House, 2005), p.14

<sup>29</sup> William Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Karachi; Mehran Printers, 2006), 7<sup>th</sup> EDI, p.277

<sup>30</sup> Bodley, *The Messenger*, p.81

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p.82

<sup>32</sup> 1 Kings, 11:1-3

<sup>33</sup> 1 Chronicles, 14:3 ; 11:21

<sup>34</sup> Muhammad Murtaḍā al Ḥussainī Al Zubaidī, *Tāj al ’Urūs min Jawāhir al Qāmūs* (Kwait: 1994), 2<sup>nd</sup> edi, vol.7, pp.534,537

<sup>35</sup> Angel M Rabasa, *The Muslim World After 9/11* (California: RAND Corporation, 2004), p.xxxviii

<sup>36</sup> Raymond Ibrahim, *Are Judaism and Christianity as Violent as Islam Middle East Quarterly*, vol.16, No.3, (Summer 2009), p.4

<sup>37</sup> Bodley, *The Messenger*, p.135

a rational writer, Bodley refutes this accusation by asserting that, in the years after the death of the holy Prophet (ﷺ), Muslim armies never established vassals among the conquered and they never pillaged their natural wealth for personal benefit.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to providing a willing defense of Jihād, Bodley also explains the historicity and reveals the reality hidden behind the Christian façade. He asserts that during the Muslim invasion of Spain in the ninth century, everything Christian was upheld. This continued until the fourteenth century when Arab power in Europe collapsed. It stopped when the Christians took over once more.<sup>39</sup>

### **Preservation of the Prophet's Sīrah**

Of all the prophets, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) is the most important figure whose character and way of life have been preserved, and whose exercises are entirely public. Bodley concedes this point, pointing out that although we do have some incomplete accounts of Christ's life, we know nothing about the thirty years that preceded the final three. Neither do the Buddha nor Confucius. The life of the Prophet Muhammad is well documented. His upbringing, habits, kinship, and past are not legendary or rumored. His internal record after the announcement of his mission was not some mistily inherited custom of an enigmatic or perplexed preacher. Though he starts writing history later than the others, those who take the time to investigate will discover that there.<sup>40,41</sup>

### **Acceptance of Miracles**

The author's proclamation of the marvels of the Blessed Prophet, which remarkably acknowledges the Night Journey (Mi'rāj) that is discussed in a different chapter, is one of his most remarkable features. In support of the Prophet's persona in this circumstance, he claims that "miracles and supernatural revelations, if they are to be believed, belong to any age," meaning that they may occur two millennia before or two millennia after Christ. Therefore, those who mock Muhammad on Mount Ḥira should also mock Moses on Mount Sinai and Jesus on the Galilean hills. They had to laugh at Bernadette Soubirous in the Pyrenees and Joan of Arc in her Domremy highlands.<sup>42</sup>

### **Refutation Regarding Borrowing of the Qur'ān**

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, pp.84-85

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p.271

<sup>40</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.1

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p.93

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.56

Some European researchers think the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) established his religion upon the Bible under the supervision of Waraqah b. Naofal.<sup>43,44</sup> Bodley disputes this accusation and claims that the widespread assertion that Prophet Mohammad (ﷺ) stole from the Bible is false. It was something he had never noticed. With the probable exception of a few passages from Waraqa's incomplete rendition, he had no Bible to follow.<sup>45</sup>

### **References from the Bible**

One of Bodley's other tendencies is to quote biblical justifications, which are meant to support specific Islamic traditions. Examples of this are his portrayals of Zam Zam and Ismā'īl's lineage.<sup>46</sup>

### **References from the Holy Qur'ān**

The extraordinary claim to fame of the book that segregates its author from a few different orientalists is to cite the verses of the Holy Qur'ān. He anyplace arranges the essential thoughts or lessons of Islam and explains them delivering the stanzas of the Qur'ān as should be obvious in the chapter vi<sup>47</sup> and xv.<sup>48</sup>

### **Demerits of the Book**

Aside from this effort, Bodley was unable to save himself from mistakes since he is a human. This is true even if he did his best to elucidate the life story of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and include him among the prophets. Some of them are unquestionably the result of his Orientalist condition, while others are attributable to his literary fluency. Let's examine the book's faults.

### **Abrah's Attack on Makkah**

Portraying the assault of Yemenet armed force in the leadership of Abraha, Bodley states that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the granddad of the Sacred Prophet (ﷺ) drove a military and drove the trespassers out of the city,<sup>49</sup> though, no kind of army was driven by him and not a solitary resident faced

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<sup>43</sup> Muhammad Mohar Ali, *The Qur'ān and the Orientalists* (UK: Jamī'at Iḥyā Minhāj al-Sunnah, 2004), p.40; Ockley, Simon, *The History of the Saracens; Lives of Mohammed and His successors*, Henry G Bohn, London, 1847, p.2

<sup>44</sup> Simon Ockley, *The History of the Saracens*, p.2

<sup>45</sup> Bodley, *The Messenger*, p.77

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p.1; Genesis, 17:20

<sup>47</sup> Bodley, *The Messenger*, pp.74-92

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, pp.196-207

<sup>49</sup> Bodley, *The Messenger*, p.22



the foe. The Holy Qur'ān mentions that God sent birds to kill the invaders, and Muslim scholars have described this event in great detail.<sup>50,51,52,53</sup>

### **Birth of the Holy Prophet**

Bodley notes in his description of the birth of the Holy Prophet that there are no secrets surrounding the birth of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Just like all the others, he was born. While, there are a lot of Muslim traditions in which such miracles are narrated,<sup>54</sup> and some orientalist also have mentioned these mysteries.<sup>55</sup>

### **Wrong Name of the Holy Prophet**

In the account of the Holy Prophet's birth, Bodley claims that Quthān was his original name; nevertheless, he was subsequently given the name Muḥammad.<sup>56</sup> There is no proof in Islamic history about such a name referenced by the author while various orientalist have elucidated his veritable name, Muḥammad (ﷺ).<sup>57</sup>

### **Faith of the Prophet's Parents**

Bodley has misinterpreted the doctrinal status of the Sacred Prophet's mother and minimized her nobility proclaiming her as an idolateress or an agnostic lady<sup>58</sup> while, it is expressed in the Islamic compositions that all progenitors of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) were inerrant,

<sup>50</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 105:1-5; Muhammad b. Ishāq, Al-Sīra al-Nabwiah, Dārul kutub, Bairūt, 2004, pp.40-49

<sup>51</sup> Muhammad b. Sa'd, Ṭabaqāt Ibn Sa'd (Karachi: Nafīs Academy), Trans. 'Allāmah 'Abdullah al 'Imādī, vol.1, Part.1, pp.109-112

<sup>52</sup> Abu al Fidā 'Imād al-Dīn Ibn Kathīr, Al Badayah wa al Nihayah (Karachi: Nafīs Academy, 1987) edited by Prof. Kaokab Shādānī, vol.5, p.154

<sup>53</sup> 'Alī Ibn Burhān al-Dīn Ḥalbī, Insān al 'Uyūn fi Sīrat al Amīn al Māmūn (Karachi: Dār al Ishā'at, 2009), Trans. Muhammad Aslam Qāsim, vol.1, pp.197-205

<sup>54</sup> Muhammad b. Ishāq Yasār, Al-Sīra al-Nabwiah, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah Bairūt, 2004), p.97; Ibn Sa'd, Ṭabaqāt, vol.1, pp.121-22; Ibn Kathīr, Al Badayah, vol.2, p.166

<sup>55</sup> Henry Stubbe, An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism, (Luzac &Co, 1911) edited by Ḥāfiẓ Maḥmūd Khān Sharānī, p.73; George Bush, The Life of Mohammed (New York: A.L. Fowle, 1900), pp.34-35; Gladys. M Draycott, Mahomet Founder of Islam (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co, 1916), p.29; Aloys Sprenger, The Life of Muhammad from Original Sources (Allahabad: The Presbyterian Mission Press, 1851), p.76; Irving, Mahomet, p.30

<sup>56</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.24

<sup>57</sup> Irving, Mahomet, p.31 ; Alfred Guillaume, The Life of Muḥammad, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p.69; Muir, The Life of Mohammad, p.5; Canon Sell, The Life of Muhammad (India: The Christian Literature Society, 1913), p.7 ; Bush, The Life of Mohammed, p.32

<sup>58</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.262

blessed, monotheists and depurated from each sort of polytheism. There are several evidences and vindication of their faith in Islamic writings.<sup>59</sup>

### **The Miracle of Night Journey (Mi'rāj)**

In-depth explanations of the supernatural phenomenon of night excursions (Mi'rāj) may be found in Sīrah texts. Additionally, Bodley has given this miracle a stunning inclusion. He depicts the journey and states that contrary to Islamic customs, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) was sleeping at Muṭ'am Ibn 'Adī's house. According to Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) was at home when this happened.<sup>60</sup> Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Kathīr both depicted that he was in the home of Umm Hānī bint Abū Ṭālib.<sup>61</sup> In any case, Ṭabarī claims that Jibrāīl mixed him up for the journey while he was asleep in the Bayt Allah yard next to the Ka'ba.<sup>62</sup> Along these lines, there is no such proof in history which may exhibit that the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) was in the home of Muṭ'am Ibn 'Adī.

### **Adhān**

The Muslims examined the problem of how to gather for prayers once Masjid e Nabawī was constructed. A few suggestions were made for this case, but Adhān was preferred, and Ḥaḍrat Bilāl was selected for it. As per Bodley's portrayal, Bilāl was designated to fulfill this requirement after the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) fulfilled it himself.<sup>63</sup> In this instance, Imām Bukhārī reports—using Ibn 'Umar as a source—that the people debated the problem surrounding the request for Ṣalāt. 'Umar was the first to suggest that a man should call (the people) for Ṣalāt; hence, Allah's Messenger gave Bilal the command to stand and recite the Adhan for Ṣalāt. Other recommendations were to use a bell like the Christians use, and some suggested using a trumpet like the Jews do.<sup>64</sup> The Islamic works, as well as the non-Muslim researchers additionally have depicted this custom that Bilāl was the first Muazzin (caller to mosque for prayer).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Zarqānī, Muhammad b. 'Abd al Bāqī, Zarqānī al Mawāhib, Egypt, vol.1, p.168 ; Nabhānī, Yoūsaf b. Ismā'īl, Ḥujjatullah al Ālamīn fī Mo'jizāt Syed al Mursalīn, Bairūt, p.412 ; Shāmī, Muhammad b. Yoūsaf, Subal al-Hudā wa al-Rishād fī Sīrat Khair al'Ībād, Dārul kutub, Bairut, vol.1, pp.229-233, vol.2, pp.120-128 ; Ḥalbī, Insān al 'Uyūn fī Sīrat al Amīn al Māmūn, vol.1, pp.6-177; Ibn Najīm, 'Allāma Zain al Dīn Ibrahīm, Al Ishbāh wa al Nẓāir, Idāratul Qur'ān, Karachi, vol.2, p.467

<sup>60</sup> Bukhārī, Book,8, Chapter, 1, Hadith, 349 ; Book.60, Chapter.5, Hadith.3342

<sup>61</sup> Ṭabaqāt, vol.1, pp.223-224 ; Ibn Kathīr, vol.3, p.127

<sup>62</sup> Ṭabarī, vol.2, p.64

<sup>63</sup> Bodley, The Messenger , pp.125-26

<sup>64</sup> Bukhārī, Book, 10, Chapter, 1, hadith, 604

<sup>65</sup> Muslim, Book.4, Chapter.1 Hadith.837; Ibn Athīr, Usdl Ghābah, vol.1, p.307 ; Ibn Mājah, Muhammad bin Yazīd, Sunan Ibn Mājah, Book.3, Chapter.1, Hadith.706 ; Book.3,

## Return of 'Abdullah b. Ubayy from Uḥud

On the occasion of the Uḥud conflict, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) discussed the matter with his allies, considering the options of living undercover inside the city or venturing outside to face the enemy. Abdullah b. Ubayy and a few others maintained the first option, but the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), who was more inclined toward the majority, the younger Muslims, gave them the order to leave the city.<sup>66</sup> As the Muslims approached Uḥud, they encountered a Jewish group who had come to fight alongside the Muslims against the Quraish. However, the Blessed Prophet (ﷺ) stopped them from joining the Muslim army, stating that they had no good reason to unite against the Makkans.<sup>67</sup> After hearing this information together with his 300 companions, Abdulla B. Ubayy left en route and returned before the gatherings clashed. Bodley has made an effort to learn why the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) felt offended by having these 300 in his army. Although it is not true, Abdullah b. Ubayy has returned. As his thought suggested, he wanted to stay in the city anyway; young people and adolescents were given more importance than he was, thus he was unable to accompany them.<sup>68</sup> That is the reason he returned before the fight began. So the author's thought isn't right.

## The Change of Qiblah

Following their move to Madīna, Muslims began to perform their prayers toward Bayt al-Maqdas; but, at the Holy Prophet's (ﷺ) request, the direction of prayer was altered to the Ka'bah.<sup>69</sup> The Muslims were standing in their prayers when they got the order to change direction so, during their prayers, they turned their countenances to the Ka'bah. As indicated by the author this occasion happened on a November morning<sup>70</sup> while it happened

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Chapter.2, Hadith.707; Tirmadhī, Abu 'Īsā Muhammad bin 'Īsā, Jāmi' At-Tirmadhī, Book.2, Chapter.25, Hadith.189 ; Ibn Kathīr, vol.3, p.235 ; Muir, William, The Life of Mohammad, pp.196-97

<sup>66</sup> Ali, Syed Amīr, Spirit of Islam, Life and Teachings of Mohammed, S.K.Lahiri & Co, Calcutta,1902, p.64 ; Gilchrist, John, Muhammad The Prophet of Islam,Life Challenge Africa,Nairobi, 2003, p.20

<sup>67</sup> Haykal, Muhammad Hussain, The Life of Muhammad, edit by Ismaīl Razi A. al-Faruqi, p.308.

<sup>68</sup> Lings, Martin, Muhammad, His Life Based on the Earliest Sources,Carvan Press, Lahore, 1994, p.178 ; Watt, William Montgomery, Muhammad at Medina, Oxford University Press, London,1956, p.22 ; E.Dinet & Siliman ben Ibrahim, The Life of Mohammad,The Prophet of Allah, Paris Book Club, Paris, p.190 ; Sell, Canon, The Life of Muhammad, S.P.C.K. Press, Madras, 1913, p.135

<sup>69</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 2:144

<sup>70</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.152

around early afternoon (the hour of Zohar prayer) as it is narrated in a few commentaries of the Qur'ān,<sup>71</sup> but Imām Bukhārī and Imām Tirmadhī have stated 'Aṣar prayer (afternoon).<sup>72</sup>

### **Relationship of 'Alī and Ja'far**

Bodley claims that 'Alī and Ja'far are a couple and that "the Negus had always befriended the Muslims and given them sanctuary from the earliest days of the call." Sixty of them were still residing at his court, including Jafar, Ali's half-brother and the son of Abu Taleb.<sup>73</sup> Contrary to what the author claims, Ja'far was not 'Alī's half-brother. They shared the same parents at birth. It was Fāṭimah bint Asad b. Hāshim who was their mother.<sup>74</sup>

### **Ransom of Abū al-'Āṣ**

Seventy Makkans were taken prisoner toward the end of the Badr battle, and they were given the option of paying a reward or educating the Muslim children. One of the captives was Abū al-'Āṣ, the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), who was restrained by ropes. According to the author, he was released with the promise that he would send his wife, Zainub, the Prophet's daughter, to Madīna.<sup>75</sup> Bodley made an effort to find evidence of it, but there was none. A piece of jewelry that Ḥaḍrat Khadijah had given his wife Zainub as a dowry served as his ransom. However, this fact was also documented in the writings of Muslim historians A. Guillaume, E. Dinet, and William Muir.<sup>76</sup>

### **Witnesses of the Ḥudaibiyah Treaty**

A pact between the Makkans and Muslims was negotiated at the site of Ḥudaibiyah, and eight representatives from each group signed it. In this

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<sup>71</sup> Jārullah, Abī al-Qāsim Mahmūd b. 'Umar Zamakhsharī, Al-Kashhāf, Maktaba al Abīkān, Riāḍ, 1998, vol.1, p.343 ; Sayūṭī, Jalā al-Dīn, al-Dur al-Manthūr fi Tafsīr Bilmathūr, al-Dirāsāt al-Arabia wal Islamia, Qāhirah, 2003, vol.2, p.12 ; Al-Ṭabarī, Muhammad b. Jurair, Tafsīr Ṭabarī, al-Dirāsāt al-Arabia wal Islamia, Qāhirah, 2001, vol.2, p.608 ; Jabar, Imām Mujāhid, Al Tafsīr al-Imām Mujahid bin Jabar, edit by, Abd al-Salām, Dr. Muhammad, Al Dirāsāt al-Islamiah, Bairūt, 1989, p.216 ; Al-Azharī, Pīr Karam Shah, Dīā al-Qur'ān, Dīā al-Qur'ān Publications, Lahore, 1995, vol.1, p.103

<sup>72</sup> Bukhārī, Book.8, Chapter.31, Hadith.399 ; Jām'e Tirmadhī, Book.2, Chapter.138, Hadith.340

<sup>73</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, pp.223-24

<sup>74</sup> Ibn Athīr, Usdul Ghābah, vol.2, p.405 ; Ṭabaqāt, vol.1, p.14

<sup>75</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.146

<sup>76</sup> A.Guillaume, The Life of Mohammad, p.314 ; E.Dinet, The Life of Mohammad, The Prophet of Allah, The Paris Book Club, Paris, 2005, p.78 ; Muir, William, Mahomet & Islam, The Religion Tract Society, Paul's Churchyard, 1887, pp.168-169 ; Ibn Khaldūn, vol.2, p.77. Ibn Kathīr, vol.2, p.154

case, Bodley lists three Muslim individuals—Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān—while listing just two Makkan individuals: Huweitib b. 'Abd al 'Uzzā and Miqrāz b. Ḥafṣ,<sup>77</sup> while, as per Islamic traditions, among these members were Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Abd al Raḥmān b. 'Aof, 'Abdullah b. Suhail b. 'Amr, Sa'd b.—Abī Ṭālib from the Muslim side and Maḥmūd b. Muslima and Mikraz b. Ḥafṣ from the Makkans.<sup>78</sup> Just Ibn Sa'd has expressed the name of 'Uthmān among these people.<sup>79</sup>

### **Conversion of the Negus**

After the Ḥudaybiyah treaty the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) sent his emissaries to different emperors of the world to invite them to Islam and the Negus<sup>80</sup> was additionally included in them. The author contends that there is no historical evidence to support Negus' conversion to Islam and implies that he is the victim of some bias because of it.<sup>81</sup> Although there are other customs found in reliable Islamic sources that attest to the Negus's status as a devout Muslim up until death, the claim that there is "no confirmation in works of history" is merely meant to scare readers.

### **'Ammarah bint Ḥamzah b. 'Abd al Muṭṭalib**

The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) visited Makkah for pilgrimage, after the Ḥudaibiyah treaty, and on his arrival, he took 'Ammarah with him to Madīna. At the same time, he wedded with Maimūnah. The author misconstrued 'Ammarah's position and proclaimed her the daughter of Maimūnah,<sup>82</sup> however, as per the history, she was the little girl of Ḥamzah b. 'Abd al Muṭṭalib and her mom's name was Salmā bint 'Amīs.<sup>83</sup> Additionally, the author has made an effort to misrepresent Ḥaḍrat 'Alī's personality in this instance. He claims that 'Ammarah caught the attention of the Prophet's companions because she was young and attractive. Particularly 'Alī wished to make her his wife.<sup>84</sup> The companions just wished to accept her in their custody as an honor yet the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) did

<sup>77</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, pp.216-17

<sup>78</sup> Ṭabarī, vol.2, p.256 ; Ibn Kathīr, vol.4, p.140 ; Ibn Khaldūn, vol.2, p.115 ; A. Guillaume, The Life of Mohammad, p.505

<sup>79</sup> Ṭabaqāt, vol.1, p.324

<sup>80</sup> This was the title of the rulers of Abyssinia State at that era. The real name of the Negus of Prophet's time was Aṣḥam'a Ibn Abjar.

<sup>81</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.224

<sup>82</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, pp.239,300

<sup>83</sup> Ṭabaqāt, vol.1, p.344 ; Ibn Athīr, Usdul Ghābah, vol.3, p.887

<sup>84</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.239

handover her to Ja’far B. Abī Ṭālib due to his wife because she was the auntie of ’Ammārah.<sup>85</sup>

### **The Son-in-Law of Abū Bakr**

Accounting for the battle of Uḥud, the writer has referenced Ṭalḥa b. ’Ubaidullah, who safeguarded the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) from the Makkans, as the son-in-law of Abū Bakr which is off-base.<sup>86</sup> The complete name of this companion mentioned by Ibn Athīr is Ṭalḥa b. ’Ubaidullah b. ’Uthmān b. ’Amr b. Ka’b b. Sa’d.<sup>87</sup> There is another companion of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) whose name is also Ṭalḥa b. ’Ubaidullah. Ibn Athīr has narrated his genealogy as Ṭalḥa b. ’Ubaidullah b. Musāfiḥ b. ’Ayād b. Ṣakhar b. ’Āmir.<sup>88</sup> This person had once said that he would wed with ’Āisha after the demise of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and on this announcement, Allah Almighty restricted the Muslims from wedding the widows of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ).<sup>89</sup>

### **Instructions to ’Abdullah b. Jaḥsh**

After the Madīna migration, the Muslims endured an onslaught of three foes, Makkans, Jews, and hypocrites. Considering some proper arrangements the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) dispatched a couple of soldiers to different sides of Madīna to observe the movements of Quraish. ’Abdullah b. Jaḥsh was sent to the valley of Nakhla, the domain between Makkah and Ṭā’if, with the decree to watch and notice the movements of the Makkans. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) gave him a letter and ordered him to read after reaching there. At this stage Bodley, attempting to make the occasion dubious, has expressed mistaken directives of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). He writes that the information included in this letter provided ’Abdullah with the unexpected news that he might assault any caravans belonging to the Quraish.<sup>90</sup>

The author’s thought, as he has expressed, is that ’Abdullah b. Jaḥsh was told only for assault or looting is thoroughly off-base as per the descriptions described by historians.<sup>91</sup> He was commanded just to watch the surroundings. William Muir mentioned the content of the letter that was given to ’Abdullah B. Jaḥash and told them to read the following two days

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p.239

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p.167

<sup>87</sup> Ibn Athīr, Usdul Ghābah, vol.2, p.117

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p.122

<sup>89</sup> Al Qur’ān, 33:53

<sup>90</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.138

<sup>91</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, p.68; Tabaqāt, vol.1, p.249; Ibn Kathīr, vol.3, p.257; Muir, William, The Life of Muhammad, p.210; Wollaston, Arthur Naylor, The Sword of Islam, John Murray, London, 1905, p.58

of voyaging. According to William Muir the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) placed in 'Abdullah's hands a letter, and asked him not to read it till he reached the valley two days march toward Makkah. On reaching the place, 'Abdullah opened the letter, and read it aloud to his comrades as follows: "Advance to Nakhla, in the name of God, and with His blessing! Yet compel not any of your companions against his inclination. Proceed with those that accompany thee willingly; and when you have arrived at the valley of Nakhla, stay there in wait for the caravans of Quraish."<sup>92</sup>

### **The Letter of Ḥāṭib b. Abī Balta'ah**

At the hour of the march to Makkah, everything was kept covert yet Ḥāṭib b. Abī Balta'ah sent a lady with a message to inform the Makkans about the coming circumstances. Describing this incident Bodley reports that the Prophet of Islam *heard of this through his intelligence corpsmen, so that the woman was arrested and brought back.*"<sup>93</sup> As per the Islamic traditions the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) was informed by Allah Almighty as it has been mentioned in the Qur'ān<sup>94</sup> and narrated by early Muslim scholars as well.<sup>95</sup>

### **Conversion of Hind d. 'Utbah b. Rabi'ah**

Hind d. 'Utbah b. Rabi'ah, the adversary of Islam and spouse of Abū Sufyān, introduced herself to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), during the event of Makkah conquest, and converted to Islam. Bodley states that Hind never converted and, until she died, she hated and despised the Prophet."<sup>96</sup> All verifiable writings state that after conversion she passed her life as a Muslim and took part in the battle of Yarmūk from the Muslim side.<sup>97</sup>

### **Fifth Caliph of Islam**

It is written in practically all Islamic writings that a caliphate in Islam existed for three decades after the passing of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and this period is comprised of initial four caliphs, Abū Bakar, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī, and included with Imām Ḥasan the fifth one, on whom the Muslim Ummah is agreed. When 'Alī was martyred Amīr Mu'āwiah b. Abū Sufyān took charge of the Islamic world after the treaty with Imām Ḥasan.<sup>98</sup> The

<sup>92</sup> Muir, William, The Life of Muhammad, pp.208-209

<sup>93</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.248

<sup>94</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 60:1

<sup>95</sup> Bukhārī, Book.65, Chapter.1, Hadith.4890 ; Rāzī, Imām Fakhrudīn, Mafātīḥul Ghaib, vol.29, p.297. Syūfī, Imām Jalal al Dīn, al Dur al Manthūr Fī Tafsīr Bilmathūr, vol.14, p.404

<sup>96</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, pp.254-55

<sup>97</sup> Ibn Athīr, Usdul Ghābah, vol.3, pp.952-53 ; Ṭabarī, vol.2, pp.308-09 ; Ibn Kathīr, vol.4, p.254 ; Ṭabaqāt, vol.4, Part, 6, p.172 ; A. Guillaume, The Life of Mohammad,p.553

<sup>98</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.120

author has declared him as the fifth caliph of Islam.<sup>99</sup> Unmistakably Caliphate was finished with Imām Ḥasan and after him, it changed over to monarchy. Ibn Kathīr has clarified the Ḥadīth for this situation. So the Muslim Ummah does not agree with Mu’āwiah b. Abū Sufyān was the fifth caliph, however, he was conceded the first king in Islam.<sup>100</sup> So the author has a great misunderstanding in this issue.

### **Tomb of Aaron**

Referencing the shrine of Ḥaḍrat Hārūn (Aaron, the Holy Prophet of God and the genuine brother of Moses,<sup>101</sup> Bodley states that Mount Uḥud is the entombment spot of Aaron,<sup>102</sup> which is not as per the Islamic conventions and the Bible. There are two different traditions in the Bible in the event of Aaron’s death and grave. As per the Book of Numbers, Aaron went up to Mount Hor and passed away there.<sup>103</sup> However, the story in this regard is told differently in the Book of Deuteronomy. The children of Israel traveled from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera, where Aaron passed away and was buried, according to the book of Deuteronomy.<sup>104</sup> There is a lot of voyaging distance between Hor and Mosera.<sup>105</sup> Mount Hor is situated near the border of Edom, Jordan, as it is written in the Book of Numbers,<sup>106</sup> while Mosera is a station where the Israelites stayed for some time during their exodus.<sup>107</sup> So the author did not get to the base of the issue; it is only his impulse.

### **Interrogation after Death in Grave**

It is acknowledged by all Muslims that there would be a Cross-examination in the grave. Imām Bukhārī has described just one inquiry for this situation which is “What did you use to say about this man Muhammad?”<sup>108</sup> Imām Tirmadhī and Imām Abū Ḥanīfa both have narrated

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p.120

<sup>100</sup> Suyūṭī, J̄lāl al Dīn, Tarīkh al Khulafā, edit by Ḥanfī, Shabbīr Aḥmad Anṣārī, Maktaba Khalīl, Lahore, 2008, pp.234-35; Ibn Kathīr, vol.8, p.32 ; Irving, Washington, Muhammad and His Successors, pp.494-95; Al Mas’ūdī, Abū al Ḥasan bin Ḥussain, Tārīkh al Mas’ūdī , Nafīs Academy, Karachi, 1985, vol.2, p.362; Ṭabarī, vol.4, p.23 ; Ibn Khaldūn, vol.2, p.440

<sup>101</sup> The Book of Exodus, 6:20 ; Al Qur’ān, 28:34,20:24-30

<sup>102</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.162

<sup>103</sup> The Book of Numbers, 20:25-29 ; 33:37-38

<sup>104</sup> The Book of Deuteronomy, 10:6

<sup>105</sup> The Book of Numbers, 33:31-37

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 20:23, 33:37

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 33:29-31

<sup>108</sup> Bukhārī, Book,23, Chapter, 67, Hadith,1338



three questions, Who is your Lord? What is your religion? And who is your Prophet?<sup>109</sup> Bodley's statement is different. He has described four questions which are "Who is God? Who is the Messenger? What is your religion? On what side was your Qibla?"<sup>110</sup> So Bodley has included the fourth inquiry himself that is not referenced in any authentic Hadīth.

### Dichotomy

We may look at dichotomy at certain spots in the book. The author depicts a few issues at one spot however on the other spot he alternately portrays the same. For instance, about 'Alī he announces him the son of Abū Ṭālib and the cousin of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) which is valid,<sup>111</sup> yet somewhere else he proclaims him as the nephew of the Holy Prophet.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, depicting the connection of Fāṭimah with 'Alī he pronounces him Faṭima's cousin which is off-base.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, at a place, he explains the arrival of 'Alī from Yemen endeavor, to Madīnah<sup>114</sup> but, in the same chapter, he writes that 'Alī reached Makkah<sup>115</sup> which is a clear logical inconsistency between the statements. As per Islamic history, the subsequent articulation is valid.<sup>116</sup> Additionally, Bodley's statements differ regarding the primary Arabic reading of the Bible. He mentions that Warāqa is credited as being the one who translated the Old and New Testaments into Arabic initially.<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, he states in another place that the Old and New Testaments were first translated into Arabic centuries after the death of Muhammad.<sup>118</sup> So keeping in view these bumbles of the author we may envision his imprudence.

### Conclusion

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<sup>109</sup> Tirmadhī, Book,44,Chapter,14 Hadith,3120 ; Thābit, Abū Ḥanīfa, No'mān, Musnad al Imām al Āzam, edit by Iqbāl, Muhammad Zafar, Maktaba Raḥmāniah, Lahore, p.276

<sup>110</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.89

<sup>111</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, pp.46,62; Hishām, 'Abd al-Malik, Al-Sīra al-Nabwiah, Dārul kutub, 3<sup>rd</sup> EDI, 1990, Bairūt, p.51; Alfred Guillaume, The Life of Muhammad, Mass Printers, Karachi, 1967, p.113; Sa'd, Muhammad bin, Ṭabaqāt Ibn Sa'd, edited by, al 'Imādī, 'Allāmah 'Abdullah, Nafees Academy, Karachi, vol.1, p.139

<sup>112</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, pp. 272, 295

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p.48

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p.272

<sup>115</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.274

<sup>116</sup> Ibn Sa'd, Ṭabaqāt, vol.1, p.380; Ibn Kathīr, Al Badayah wa al Nihayah, edit by, Shādānī, Prof. Kaokab, Nafīs Academy, 1987, vol.5, p.154; Ṭabarī, Tarīkh al Umam wal Malūk, vol.2, p.370

<sup>117</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.44-45

<sup>118</sup> Bodley, The Messenger, p.77

Before the crusades, all attempts of Western scholars were the base of their outlooks and without any research and investigation. But, after the crusades, they changed their methodology and opened a new avenue approaching Islamic writings and enquired some realities. They acknowledged the social, political, moral, and domestic elements of the life of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) yet did not concede him as the Messenger of God. This inscription of Bodley isn't much different from other Europeans. In some places, he protects some Islamic thoughts and matters coherently and makes reference to the respectable elements of the extraordinary character of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) in great words be that as it may, at certain spots he uses such idiotic wording which means his despoiling. In certain issues he underpins completely Islam like the Qur‘ān as the last message of God, an instance of epilepsy, marvels of the Prophet (ﷺ), Polygamy in Islam, Jihād, Marriage of ‘Āisha and the matter of ‘Āisha's necklace and so on, however in certain undertakings he appears the casualty of extraordinary mistaken assumptions. So this work is a blend of uncertainty and confidence.



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