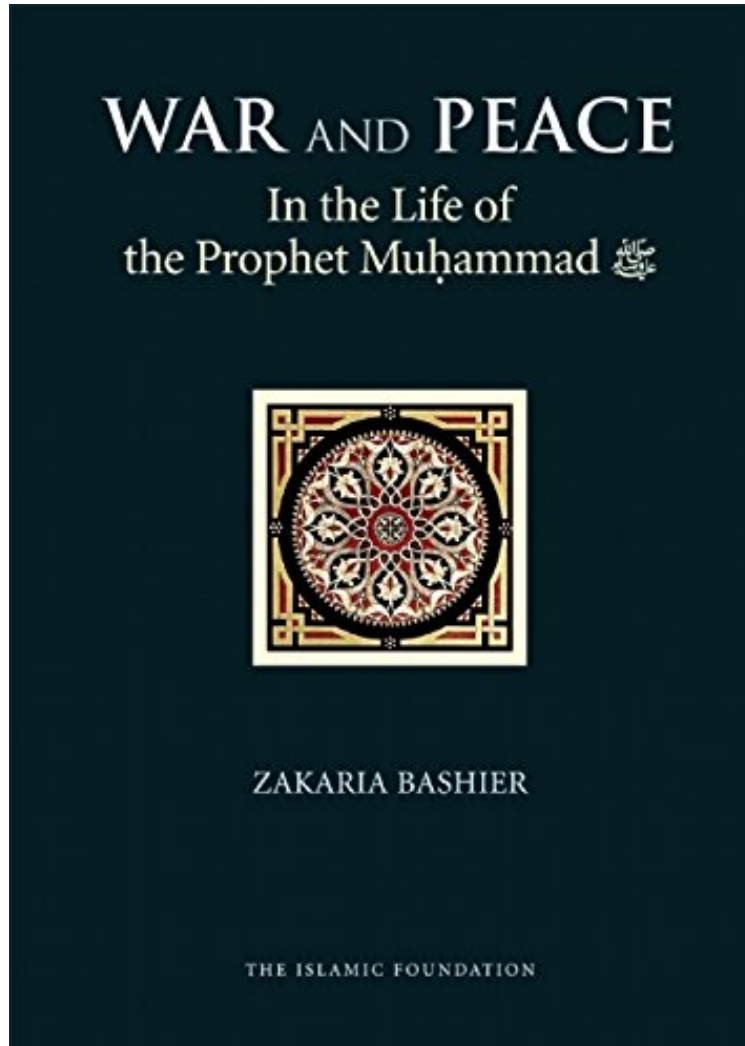


[Read ebook] War and Peace in the Life of the Prophet Muhammad

War and Peace in the Life of the Prophet Muhammad

Zakaria Bashier

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Zakaria Bashier : War and Peace in the Life of the Prophet Muhammad before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised War and Peace in the Life of the Prophet Muhammad:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An important book which enables the non-muslim to get a glimpse into the muslim mind and into the blood filled life of MuhammadBy AquinasLike most westerners, I was totally ignorant of the life of Mohammed until I read this book. The value of this book is that it is written from within Islam and not by western observers who may have no feeling or empathy for the religion. I would guess the writer is from the liberal tradition in Islam as he makes every effort to present the peaceful face of Islam.Even so, the western reader (religious or non-religious), being very much (whether he likes it or not) under the influence of Jesus of Nazareth and

the Cross will be surprised how the face of God, loving until the end, as seen in Christ is replaced by a different face, the face of the God of wrath in some of the Old Testament writings is re-emerging. Readers need to be aware that this book is replete with violence and Mohammed plays a key part. For westerners, used to the Christian tradition of turning the other cheek, the pursuit of violent means to bring about the spread of Islam will be hard to take. The consistent bad press which Jews get in the life of Muhammad will be very uncomfortable for all, particularly Christians, conscious of how Christianity, contrary to the Spirit of their God (in Christ), persecuted Jews themselves. In the book, burning a house down with Jews in it is justified on the basis the Jews were "haughty". The writer tries hard to reconcile the opposing suras on the treatment of infidels but comes up with a notion that western readers will regard as wholly contradictory. His view is that the later sura (which favours killing the infidel) is time specific but somehow part of the eternal mind of God. This simply won't wash. Note that radical Muslims regard the later sura (pro-violence) as abrogating the earlier sura (promoting peace). The writer fails to prove that the radicals are not more in keeping with the Koran. Some readers will rightly note that the Old Testament texts are full of sacred violence. This must be admitted and not justified. I think what one can say to that is: Christians believe that God unveils his face to the extent that cultural conditions are favourable to the unveiling. We see in the Old Testament right from the beginning where the voice of the murdered Abel is raised to God to the Psalms and the Prophets, God's face being slowly revealed. It is true that violence and wrath is attributed to God, but having seen the face of God in Christ, we can say that what we are seeing in the Old Testament is a dialogue between God and Man and sometimes we get more of Man than God: hence Man's violence is God's wrath. But, what we surely have is a gradual relinquishment of the myth of violence. Thus, Christ gives Himself up to death rather than resist his opponents. This book will show to Westerners how radically different Islam is to Christianity. For Christians, this book will be evidence that in Islam God's face is being re-veiled or, to use another metaphor, the mosaic of Christ's face is being partially whitewashed and violence is again being given a significant place in religion. So, by way of conclusion, this is indeed a valuable book. The writer may be surprised that reaction by westerners is not what he expected. This is because Jesus of Nazareth (the lamb of God) is for the vast majority of westerners (whether they recognise it or not) the face of God. Muslims may rightly say: Mohammed is just like King David or the patriarchs or whatever. But, for Westerners, such a comparison may be apt in some ways, but it misses the point: we do not want a God who condones violence: we want the lamb not the lion. [Some later and more moderate thoughts after letting the content sink in! - Below is what I wrote when I first read the book.]-----I should say that I picked this book up almost by accident - I suppose the title of "war and peace" made me think of Tolstoy. The book makes alarming reading. Muhammad seems to have been involved in so much bloodshed. That being said, it must be said that we cannot judge the past in light of the present. However, the Christian, having the life of Christ before the eyes of his soul, cannot but be baffled by the violent life of Muhammad. On one occasion, he desires to mutilate the bodies of his dead opponents because they had done something similar to his comrades (page 82 of UK edition). He relents but nonetheless, the fact that he wanted to do it is chilling. Bizarrely (and this is where the logic fails), the author says: "Thus Muhammad couldn't be the author of the Qur'an, since no one would rebuke himself and reverse his position in such circumstances" Why not? It is precisely the role of conscience to rebuke and bring to heel when we contemplate acts of evil - what's strange about that - certainly nothing miraculous. The author says something similar at page 160 where Muhammad's conscience intervened again. There is also an account of him executing prisoners and burning Jews in their house but, of course, the author explains that these Jews were "haughty". Indeed, it appears that the Jews come into a lot of bad press in this book because of their continuously opposing Muhammad. There is a discussion of the sura of the sword which calls for the killing of the infidel including the people of the book. This later sura contradicts an earlier sura which calls for peace with the people of the book. The author rejects the idea that the later sura abrogates the earlier sura and says that the later sura was time specific (see page 28/29 of the UK edition). Bizarrely, even though time specific, he says it is eternal. This is precisely the issue over which the West struggles with the East. For the Muslim, it is my understanding (and this book supports it) that God is so absolutely transcendent that he can contradict himself. For Christians (well, I am speaking here for Catholics - I am also thinking of the Pope's Regensburg address), Christ (and hence God) is Logos (Greek for reason or meaning). In particular, God's transcendence cannot conflict with his reason. This is a key point because if God is not a "logical" God, then the Muslims are right - there is no room for discussion. And yet, even this is too simplistic because when the Koran says contradictory things, Muslims do try to find an explanation. Bashier himself provides an irrational explanation for the contradictory suras on violence towards non-believers. The extremist Muslims are in a way more logical - they adopt the rule of abrogation (the later sura overrides the earlier sura) and thus conclude that the later sura commanding the killing of the infidel takes precedence. The rule of abrogation is at least a logical one! But, this business of reasons is not an academic one. Ask a Muslim the following questions and I will assure you will get something along the lines that God can do what he wants: i) why do Muslims accept that Jesus was born of a virgin or put it another way why is the so-called inferior prophet given a miraculous birth and the so-called superior one (Muhammad) given an ordinary birth? ii) why is Jesus rather than Muhammad coming at the end of time? iii) why is Jesus in the Koran at all - in other words, why is he important and what really was the content of his teachings. The Koran accepts the Torah and the Gospel but what is the content they accept? Presumably they don't accept the versions

of the Torah and the gospels which is in every christian's bible. Thus what is the significance of their acceptance of the Torah and the gospels? The glossing over the relentless violence evident in the career of Muhammad is alarming (again, we need to remember not to judge the past by the present but Muhammad is held up as an example). One comes away with a very sour taste and a bewilderment that a billion people follow the teachings of this person who seem to have had a strong predilection for violence. Lastly, some other points spring to mind: i) at page 64 he says "the strength of one believer was equal to that of the combined strength of the unbeliever. When later the muslims became weakened by their desire for worldly things, their valor was reduced to just double that of the unbelievers" - I found this bemusing. ii) at page 139 he says racism is more prevalent in western countries than in muslim countries - where is his evidence for this as it will surprise many. iii) He describes Islam as pluralist on page 173 - try public worship in Saudi Arabia! I think this book will be valuable to people in the west as i) it shows the career of Muhammad from the perspective of a muslim "insider" and ii) it gives an important insight into the mind of the modern muslim (namely the author himself). However, let it be said that this is the view of one muslim and thus what the author says, I suppose, should be treated with caution.

By analyzing the Prophet's conduct in war and his measures for ensuring peace the misperception that Islam is inextricably linked with violence can be allayed. The major battles in the early history of Islam are studied in the wider context of Islamic teachings on war and peace, as are the Qur'anic verses which allow Muslims to wage war, if necessary.