

Fr. Menezes' Biography of Muhammad Reconsidered

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A storm has emerged regarding the biography of Muhammad written by Rev. J.L. Menezes, a Catholic missionary priest in India. The book was originally published in 1912 under the title, *The Life and the Religion of Mohammed*, by way of alerting Indian Muslims to the gross deficiencies exhibited by their prophet Muhammad. This book was recently republished by Roman Catholic Books, a self-styled conservative press devoted to “reprinting Catholic classics for the next century.”¹

Sales of this book have been promoted widely by conservative websites. Human Events Online named Menezes' book #1 among the “top ten conservative books for 2006.”² Meanwhile, National Review Online (NRO) received hundreds of letters objecting to its promotion and sale of Menezes' book. The NRO ad quotes the author as saying, “Mohammed posed as the apostle of God . . . while his life is marked by innumerable marriages; and great licentiousness, deeds of rapine, warfare, conquests, unmerciful butcheries, all the time invoking God's holy name to sanction his evil deeds.” The Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), on 17 Mar 2006, asked NRO to clarify its “position on Islamophobic hate speech and offer a public apology for promoting a book that so viciously attacks the faith of one-fifth of the world's population.”³ NRO agreed to remove the book advertisements but felt no need “to apologize for a position that isn't our own.”⁴

The purpose of this essay is to examine some of the claims made by Fr. Menezes in his book and to better understand why a book that purports to present a factual account derived from the Islamic sources is, in truth, a character assassination designed to discredit Islam and to exalt Catholicism in its place.

Just the Bare Facts

In his preface, Fr. Menezes disarms his readers by telling them that “I have sought to state the bare facts without comment, and whilst compromising nothing of the truth, have endeavored to avoid everything like partisanship or prejudice” (v). As one reads through the volume, however, Fr. Menezes progressively leaves aside his original intent and falls into unadulterated diatribes and unabated falsifications. By the end of the book, Fr. Menezes, having thoroughly discredited Muhammad and his religion, endeavors to appeal to his Muslim readers to accept the true prophet that God sent into the world: “Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; there is no other way to heaven but through Jesus Christ” (185).

What, according to Fr. Menezes, are the most grievous failings of Muhammad? Three in particular will be examined here: (a) Conversion by the sword; (b) Brutal massacres of Jews, and (c) Sexual improprieties. Each of these will be examined in their turn. See www.didache.info/islam.htm for the full text of this review.

Conversion by the Sword

Fr. Menezes begins by presenting a sympathetic narrative of the early years wherein Muhammad has his initial revelations and recruits his first followers in Mecca. This is the period marked with setbacks, persecutions, and even occasional assassination attempts on Muhammad’s life. With the flight from Mecca to Medina in 622 (the *hijrah*), however, Fr. Menezes alerts his readers to a radical transformation—whereas “hitherto Mahommed had propagated his religion by fair means, so that the whole success of his enterprise . . . must be attributed to persuasion only” (38), now, in Medina, “he pretended to have received the divine precept . . . to set up the true faith by the sword, for he considered that his design and enterprise would otherwise make but slow progress” (39). Thus, the stage was set for Muhammad, during his “first pilgrimage over which a Moslem officially presided” (83) in 631, to impose his will by only allowing Muslims to thereafter approach the Kaaba but, in addition, “he . . . sent orders to his governors that

the churches of the Christians and the synagogues of the Jews should be demolished everywhere and that mosques should be erected on their sites” (83).

Fr. Menezes is sadly deficient here in his facts. The Muslim community did in fact eventually come to take change of the pilgrimages to Mecca to exclude non-Muslims from worshipping their gods at the same site, but, as Karen Armstrong, makes plain, none of this took place in 631. True, Muhammad did personally destroy the idols that were set up in and near the Kaaba. As for the various pagans living in Mecca, however, Armstrong says this: “Nobody was made to accept Islam nor do they seem to have felt any pressure to do so. Reconciliation was still Muhammad’s objective” (200).

As for the destruction of the church and synagogues, Armstrong never makes reference to any such event ever taking place in Mecca. Anyone familiar with Islam knows that Muhammad did not consider himself to be the kind of prophet that negates all former prophets. Rather, Muhammad regarded all the former prophets (144,000) as having been sent by Allah to particular peoples at particular times. Thus, Moses was sent to the Jews; Jesus was sent to the Christians; Buddha was sent to the Buddhists. The distinction that Muhammad has is pure and simple that he was the first and last prophet ever sent to the Arabs.⁵ According to the Quran:

We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes, and that which has been given to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been given to all Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit (Quran, Sura 2:13).

This being the case, Muhammad felt no necessity to either denigrate nor to supplant what Moses had delivered to the Jews nor what Jesus had delivered to the Christians. Broadly speaking, Muhammad regarded both Jews and Christians as “muslims” in the sense that they too had submitted to Allah. There was no movement, consequently, to destroy bibles or Christian houses of worship, since, Islam understood these books and places as

having the same foundation for Christians as does the Quran and the mosque for Muslims. In fact, relative to Christians, Muhammad revealed the following:

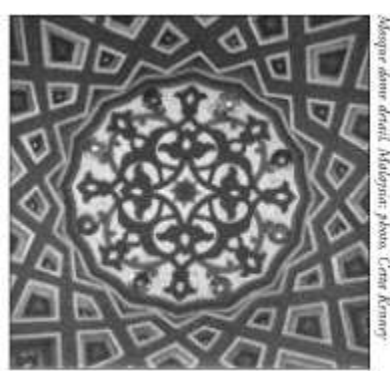
You [Muslims] will surely find that the nearest in affection to those who believe are the ones who say, "We are Christians" (Quran 5:82).

Needless to say, there is nothing within the Jewish or Christian Scriptures to commend Muslims. This is understandable because neither Moses nor Jesus has any reason to promote Muslims since, for their contemporaries, Islam was still something to come in the future. On the other hand, there is nothing in the message of Jesus to suppose that he would have denounced Muhammad in the way Fr. Menezes feels called to do.⁶

Since Christians have the habit of creating factions whereby the members of different denominations frequently claim their superiority and unwillingness to acknowledge outsiders as have a claim on their love and affection, the Muslim claim to inclusivity may sound strange and incomprehensible. Fr. Menezes, for example, finds it entirely fitting to entirely discredit Islam and its prophet by way of making an appeal to Jesus Christ. Muslims, for their part, feel no such compulsion. As can be expected, Muslims honor Muhammad and model their lives after his own. At the same time, however, they honor Moses and Jesus as well. Granted they do not study the Torah or the Gospels, for they do not imagine that these sacred writings were expressly intended for them. Rather, they allow that the Quran offers to them what the Torah and the Gospels offers to Jews and Christians.

Quite clearly, Allah says to Muslims: "There should be no coercion in the matter of faith" (Quran 2:256). Armstrong, accordingly, brings to her readers attention that Muhammad married Safiyyah, the daughter of his old Jewish enemy, Huyay, chief of Nadir, by way of sealing the peace between them. Muhammad "told Safiyyah that if any of his other wives taunted her about her Jewish ancestry, she should reply, 'My father is Aaron and my uncle is Moses'" (192). Since the Quran honors both Aaron and Moses, no Muslim could rebuke Safiyyah (or any other Jew for that matter) for having such

prophets as her ancestors. Armstrong, accordingly, also notes that “Maryam was a Christian and did not wish to convert to Islam, but she became Muhammad’s *sarayak*, a wife who retained the status of a slave but whose children would be free” (196). The son born to them was significantly named Ibrahim [Abraham]. Thus, even in his own household, Muhammad had no wish to keep himself far from marriages with Jewish and Christian women. This makes it even more ludicrous to have Fr. Menezes imagining that Muhammad had churches and synagogues destroyed in order to build mosques.



Mosque floor detail, Malabar, Kerala, India

Fr. Menezes tells of a “community of Arabian Christians” (82) “from the state of Nazran” sent a delegation to Muhammad. This delegation refused to acknowledge Muhammad as “their prophet” (82); accordingly, “heavy taxes were levied on them” (82) and “they were allowed for a time to continue in their religion, but he [Muhammad] forbade the baptism of their children” (83). None of the Arabian tribes is named “Nazran.” Nonetheless, a variant spelling “Najran” is associated with this narrative:

The incident . . . is reported in nearly all the primary sources on the Prophet’s life, and there is no dispute about its historical veracity.^[i] In the ninth year after the Hijra (631), a prominent Christian delegation from Najraⁿ, an important centre of Christianity in the Yemen, came to engage the Prophet in theological debate in Medina. The main point of contention was the nature of Christ: was he one of the messengers of God or the unique Son of God? What is of importance for our purposes is not the disagreements voiced, but the fact that when these Christians requested to leave the city to perform their liturgy, the Prophet invited them to accomplish their rites in his own mosque. According to Ibn Ishaq, who gives the standard account of this remarkable event, the Christians in question were Malaki, that is, they performed the Byzantine Christian rites. This means that they were enacting the Eucharistic rites which incorporated the fully-developed trinitarian theology of the Orthodox councils, emphasizing the definitive creed of the divine sonship of Christ – doctrines explicitly criticized in the Quran. Nonetheless, the

Prophet allowed the Christians to accomplish their mass and their rites in his own mosque.⁷

Fr. Menezes surely must have known of the history of this delegation as recorded in the earliest biographer, Ibn Ishaq. Instead of reporting how the delegation that came for theological debate was ready to leave Medina in order to celebrate their Eucharist and discovered, to their amazement, that Muhammad welcomed them to use the only mosque that existed in all of Islam, Fr. Menezes tells us about heavy taxation and forbidding baptism of their children. Strange. Or maybe not so strange. Fr. Menezes has undoubtedly credited an account of this delegation or deliberately skewed the story himself in such a way as to prepare the reader for yet a bigger lie: “In 630 he [Muhammad] sent an [military] expedition against the Christians and Jews that inhabited south of Palestine and forced them to embrace Islam” (83). No such event ever took place! So much for Fr. Menezes’ assurances—“I have sought to state the bare facts” (v).

Brutal Massacres of Jews

In addition to the above, Fr. Menezes accuses Muhammad as brutally massacring Jewish populations at various times and places. The most odious of these slaughters involves the Banu Quraizah tribe. Ibn Ishaq, Muhammad’s earliest biographer, recounts the massacre: “The apostle went out to the market of Medina (which is still its market today) and dug trenches in it. Then he sent for [the men of Banu Quraizah] and struck off their heads in those trenches. . . . There were 600 to 700 in all” (Sera, 689). Fr. Menezes who initially wanted to “state the bare facts without comment” (v) does not hesitate to add the following:

One shudders at the horrible transaction and the picture of the man, a messenger of the most merciful God, who, unmoved to pity, nay more, withy fierce denunciations, could witness this awful carnage, a deed of incomparable atrocity, to its end. This crime is not only memorable for its atrocity, but affords us a view of the sanguinary principles which at this time regulated Mahommed’s conduct.

Yet, in the Koran, this accursed slaughter is applauded, attributed to divine interposition, and pronounced as quite consonant with the love and compassion of the All-Merciful God! (65).

In fairness to Fr. Menezes, he does mention in passing that the tribe of Banu Quraizah had been “the chief instruments of this invasion” (64). The invasion spoken of here refers to the army of ten thousand that had been amassed and, for one month, surrounded the community at Medina that was defended by a mere three thousand. The aim of the ten thousand was to put Muhammad and all his male followers to the sword and to sell off all their women and children. When a violent windstorm had saved Medina, Muhammad felt that he had to deal with the Banu Quraizah who were solemnly pledged by a mutual protection alliance with the Muslim immigrants. Armstrong clearly tells us what Fr. Menezes fails to say, namely, that during the siege, the Banu Quraizah “when they saw the vast Meccan army filling the plain in front of the city as far as the eye could see, their chief agreed to help the confederacy [of invaders] and provide the Quraysh with weapons and supplies” (160). Once the invaders returned home, consequently, Muhammad decided to deal with the traitors in their midst such that, never again, would they call the Muslim community’s safety into question. Armstrong makes it clear that two other tribes of Jews at Medina refused to make a mutual protection alliance with the Muslim community and were allowed to leave unhindered. Contrary to the assertions of Fr. Menezes, the slaughter of the Banu Qurayzah men was not an immoral or an anti-Jewish act. Karen Armstrong explains:

The Qurayzah were not killed on religious or racial grounds. None of the other Jewish tribes in the oasis [of Medina] either objected or attempted to intervene, clearly regarding it as a purely political and tribal matter. . . . Muhammad had no ideological quarrel with the Jewish people. He once said, “He who wrongs or destroys a Jew or a Christian will have to answer on the Day of Judgment.” (162-163).

Fr. Menezes further decries the fact that this particular slaughter was “applauded in the Quran.” Here, again, nothing in the Quran does what Fr. Menezes implies.⁸ What is puzzling is that Fr. Menezes fails to notice in his own bible that so much of the wholesale slaughter that went into the conquest of the Promised Land was orchestrated by Almighty God. Rev. Bill Moyers reminds self-righteous Christians who are offended at jihad in Islam that their version of jihad in the bible is far more brutal:

Women and children are hacked to death on God's order; unborn infants are ripped from their mother's wombs; cities are leveled—their women killed if they have had sex, the virgins taken at God's command for the pleasure of his holy warriors. God even sends Moses back to rebuke his soldiers for sparing the lives of 50,000 captives and tells them to finish the job. One tribe after another falls to God-ordered genocide: the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites—names so ancient they have disappeared into the mists as fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, grandparents and grandchildren, infants in arms, shepherds, threshers, carpenters, merchants, housewives—living human beings, flesh and blood: "And when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them; then you must utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them . . . (and) your eyes shall not pity them."

“So it is written,” Moyers concludes, “Written in the Holy Bible.”⁹ These people are not exterminated because they betrayed sacred treaties. Far from it. They happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The land the Lord wants to give to “his people” has to be cleared and cleansed of the old paganism practiced by the current inhabitants. So, even the women and children are not spared as they were in Medina. They too must suffer for the sins of their parents. God has decreed it.

Did the prophet Muhammad engage in warfare? Decidedly. Yet, as Armstrong explains, none of this had anything to do with recruiting followers—just as the conquest of Canaan had nothing to do with recruiting Israelites. Quite to the contrary, Muhammad

gained many followers because he severely limited warfare and practiced a program of nonviolence:

As a paradigmatic personality, Muhammad has important lessons, not only for Muslims, but also for Western people. His life was a jihad: as we shall see, this word does not mean “holy war,” it means “struggle.” Muhammad literally sweated with the effort to bring peace to war-torn Arabia, and we need people who are prepared to do this today. His life was a tireless campaign against greed, injustice, and arrogance. He realized that Arabia was at a turning point and that the old way of thinking would no longer suffice. . . (19).

Far from entering into a character assassination based upon half-truths and outright lies, Karen Armstrong writes a biography of Muhammad that comes close to admiration whereas Fr. Menezes leads us straight to despising the man. To this distortion, Armstrong reflects:

Western critics also persist in viewing the Prophet of Islam as a man of war, and fail to see that from the very first he was opposed to the *jahili* arrogance and egotism that not only fuelled the aggression of his time but is much in evidence in some leaders, Western and Muslim alike, today. The Prophet, whose aim was peace and practical compassion, is becoming a symbol of division strife—a development that is not only tragic but also dangerous to the stability on which the future of our species depends.

Sexual Improprieties

Fr. Menezes draws attention to Muhammad’s sexual excessiveness as the most serious of his failings: “Whatever he may have been in his earlier days, while Kadijah his first wife was alive; in his later years, the attractions and passionate enjoyment of women proved his human frailty more than any other thing . . .” (94). It is no secret that Muhammad championed the equality of women in ways that were offensive to his male followers. Furthermore, “his taste [for women] and the secret of his pleasures being generally known, we have likewise seen how tribes [and individual followers] anxious to

gain his favour, presented him with the fairest of their women, most of whom were added to his harem [of wives] or kept as concubines” (84). Nor is it unknown that, with up to ten wives surrounding him, a tremendous jealousy oscillated among them and left him with a tumultuous household. He had to resort to drawing lots to decide who would accompany him on expeditions and to set up for himself a strict rotation whereby he would sleep with a different wife every night.

One cannot entirely dismiss the thought that Fr. Menezes lived his own life as a celibate and regarded celibacy (his own and that of Jesus’) as a special sign of dedication to God and an advantage in seeking holiness. Thus, it is quite understandable that Fr. Menezes finds the sensuality of Muhammad to be a serious impediment to his claim to be a prophet. In contrast, Karen Armstrong endeavors to situate Muhammad’s harem within the culture of his time rather than to judge it based on our own:

Muhammad harem has excited a good deal of prurient and ill-natured speculation in the West, but in Arabia, where polygamy was more common than the monogamous marriage that Muhammad had enjoyed with Khadijah, it would have been commonplace. These marriages were not romantic or sexual love affairs but were undertaken largely for practical ends. . . . Muhammad’s marriages usually had a political aim. He was starting to establish an entirely different kind of clan, based on ideology [i.e., submission to God] rather than kinship, but the blood tie was still a sacred value and helped to cement this experimental community (104-105).

The most salacious of Muhammad’s marriages turns around the daughter of his lifelong friend, Abu Bakr. According to the Hadith, the events were as follows:

‘A’isha (Allah be pleased with her) reported that Allah’s Apostle (may peace be upon him) married her when she was seven years old, and she was taken to his house as a bride when she was nine, and her dolls were with her; and when he (the Holy Prophet) died she was eighteen years old.¹⁰

In order to gauge how this issue is used to discredit Muhammad in some circles, consider the following material found on the Yahoo! Answers site:

Q: According to Islamic scholars, even they say: Muhammad was a sexual pervert. Do you agree with [the] facts?

A: As far as women are concerned, they were just objects of sexual desire for Prophet Mohammed. Here I expose the insatiable sexual appetite that Mohammed possessed. . . . Among his many other wives Mohammed also married a 6 year old baby, Ayesha. She was his favorite wife. This marriage is a clear proof that his pedophilic tendency started manifesting itself after Khadija's death, because when she was alive he did not want to offend her because all the wealth belonged to her.¹¹

Clearly the intent of the author here is to find a disordered sexuality lurking behind Muhammad's choice of his second bride in Medina.

As for Muhammad's engagement and marriage with 'A'isha, Karen Armstrong writes a much more sympathetic account rooted in the culture of the era:

There was no impropriety in Muhammad's betrothal to 'A'isha. Marriages conducted in absentia to seal an alliance were often contracted at this time between adults and minors who were even younger than 'A'isha. This practice continued in Europe well into the early modern period. There was no question of consummating¹² the marriage until 'A'isha reached puberty, when she would be married off like any other girl (105).

Catholic Diatribes Against Luther

At this point, it is helpful to make reference to the biography of Martin Luther prepared by the historian and Vatican archivist, Fr. Heinrich Denifle. Like Fr. Menezes' work, Fr. Denifle introduced his massive work, *Luther and Lutheranism*¹³, by telling his readers that the history they are about to read has been based upon an impeccable

attention to sources. In fact, Fr. Denifle introduced thousands of citations from Luther's writings by way of sustaining his two principal theses that have been summarized as follows:

The first is that Luther was so vile that he could not possibly be an instrument of God, that he was an impostor whose reforming zeal was but a cloak to his own moral decadence; the second thesis is that this so-called reformer made no discovery at all in the theological realm, that he was not only a liar, but an ignorant liar—too ignorant of the true medieval context to understand the prevalent [church] teaching of the righteousness of God.¹⁴

To support the first thesis, Fr. Denifle systematically accused Luther of hypocrisy, pride, forgery, slander, pornography ("a depraved sex maniac"), debauchery, drunkenness, sedition, corruption. As analyzed by a recent Catholic scholar:

Such accusations are seriously drawn up and in the guise of scientific objectivity have deceived many: they are dictated by blind anger. He [Fr. Denifle]cries out towards the end of his book, "Luther, these is nothing divine in you!" At the end he appeals to Protestants, 'Have done with Luther, return to the [Catholic] Church.'¹⁵

Unfortunately, the parallels between Fr. Denifle's study of the life of Luther and Fr. Menezes' study of the life of Muhammad are all too evident. These men both wrote in a time when it was assumed that anyone opposing the Catholic Church was either mentally unbalanced or a tool of the devil. Happily, for most Catholics, such times have passed.

A dozen years ago, when the Crossroad Publishing Company decided to issue an illustrated biography of Martin Luther on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of his birth (1483-1983), the editors invited a Roman Catholic priest, Fr. Peter Manns, to write the text and a world-famous Lutheran theologian, Jaroslav Pelikan, to write the introduction. This reversal of things indicates how far the "cold war" had thawed: a Catholic historian was trusted to present the meaning and significance of Luther's life and gift for both Protestants and Catholics alike. With a disarming candidness, Pelikan acknowledged that Mann's

portrait of Luther rang true to his Lutheran sensibilities, and he went on to recall what a reversal of things this represents:

Martin Luther: An Illustrated Biography can serve as a corrective of the distortions of Luther and his Reformation that have marred the confessional literature in English. Above all, the Luther who emerges from these pages stands out as profoundly Catholic in his devotion to the Church, to her creeds, and to her sacraments. Even when he denounced the Church for betraying the trust given to her by Christ, he was speaking in the name of that which the Church confessed and had taught him to confess. . . .

Can the man who is usually blamed or credited for tearing us apart help to bring us together? That may be too much to hope, at least for the present. But the cause can only be aided by a book about this man that dares to tell the truth.¹⁶

This then is where we can rightly end. The biography of Muhammad prepared by Fr. Menezes can only succeed in satisfying the incoherent antagonism of a misinformed public bent upon discrediting Islam at its very roots. The biography of Karen Armstrong, in contrast, is written by a Catholic scholar roughly a century later, when the Catholic Church had arrived at a much more sympathetic understanding of Islam. In this age, Catholics are encouraged to dialogue with Muslims in order to rightly understand the Muhammad and his legacy. Accordingly, those who want to understand and to prepare themselves to meet their Muslim neighbors would be well served by reading Karen Armstrong's biography. Fr. Menezes biography, meanwhile, remains a remnant of a fanatical era wherein character assassination and ugly half-truths served to instill fear and suspicion calculated to isolate us from our neighbors. Hopefully the age of inter-faith hatred will not return. To insure this, however, we need to listen to brave persons¹⁷ able to speak across the boundaries that separate us. Only then will we find an effective antidote to the poison of Islamophobia that has so dangerously passed into the American bloodstream following 9/11.

¹ <http://www.booksforcatholics.com/>

² <http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=18356>

³ <http://jihadwatch.org/archives/005469.php>

⁴ <http://corner.nationalreview.com/post/>

?q=MDk1ZTRhMTIyZTkzYmNkNTlmY2U2ZjlkY2FiMGMzYmE=

⁵ Unlike those Christians who maintain that Jesus negated and superceded the message delivered by Moses, Muslims throughout the world have understood that there is a strict equality among the prophets in so far as each was sent in due time by Allah to a particular people. Islam is thus in an advantageous position to honor and to dialogue with Jews and Christians.

⁶ The Gospel of Mark recounts a scene in which the disciples reported to Jesus that they hindered a man who was healing and exorcising in the name of Jesus “because he was not following us” (9:38). Jesus rebukes his disciples conduct saying, “He who is not against us is for us” (9:40). Such a saying could indeed be applied to Muslims.

⁷ Reza Shah-Kazemi, “Defining Without Confining: reflections on a prophetic usage of sacred space,” *Interreligious Insight* (July 2005)

<http://www.interreligiousinsight.org/July2005/July05Shah-Kazemi.html>

⁸ Later Islamic scholars would use Quran 8:55-58 as applying to the slaughter at Medina.

⁹ Bill Moyers indicates how entirely impossible it is to decide how Jews will act today based on what one finds, as an outsider, in their sacred writings. The same thing, of course, holds for the Gospels as well. Outsiders who find Jesus saying, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt 10:34 RSV), might be tempted to think that Christians are trained to foment wars. Some Christians, of course, have taken this saying out of context and used it to promote their own programs of strife. Other Christians, accordingly, have challenged and corrected their misunderstanding. The same thing is happening when responsible

Muslims speak out against their co-religionists who use selective texts in the Quran to forward terrorist activities that involve the killing of innocent women and children as a means to achieve justice or retribution. See the “**Muslim Condemnations of the September 11 Attacks,**” <http://www.cair.com/html/911statements.html>

¹⁰ *Sahih Muslim*, Book 008, Number 3311.

¹¹

http://www.answers.com/main/ntquery?dsid=2526&dekey=1&lid=ya_qa&s2=Battle+of+Khaybar&questionID=20060730015218AADMPMK&startFrom=0

¹² There is some uncertainty regarding the age of `A`isha at the time of this consummation. From the sources, it would appear that `A`isha was nine and the Prophet was forty-five. For a fuller discussion of the issue, see the forum on Islamicity.com, http://www.islamicity.com/forum/forum_posts.asp?TID=77&PN=1

¹³ Henrich Denifle, *Luther and Lutherdom*, tr., Raymond Volz from the German original (Somerset, OH: Torch Press, 1917).

¹⁴ James Atkinson, *Martin Luther: Prophet to the Catholic Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 10-11.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Peter Manns, *Martin Luther* (New York: Crossroad, 1983) 8-9.

¹⁷ Karen Armstrong represents only one of many persons who is speaking across the boundaries. Recently, three women engaged in a soul-searching and brutally honest dialogue across the boundaries and shared their exchanges in the book, *The Faith Club: A Muslim, a Christian, A Jew—Three Women Search for Understanding* (New York: Free Press, 2006). See <http://www.thefaithclub.com/> for details on how to begin your own “faith club.”