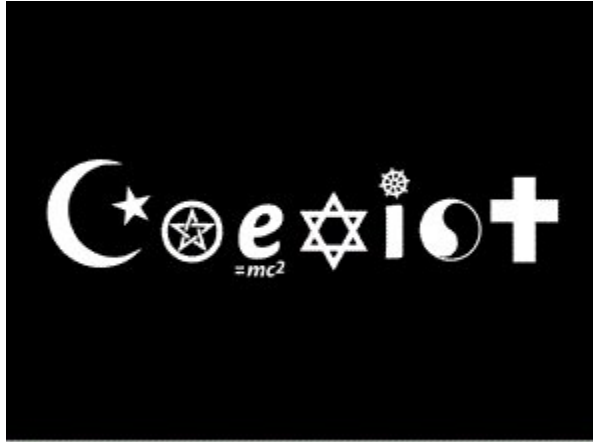


[The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)

Posted on 11 March 2011 by Danios



Having been a very strong advocate of religious tolerance and pluralism, it is with great reservation in my heart that I publish the [Understanding Jihad Series](#), which compares violence and war in the Judeo-Christian tradition to the jihad of Islam. Certainly, the intention is **not** to target one particular faith or religious group. Quite the contrary, the goal is to prevent religious majoritarianism, whereby the dominant religious and cultural group is able to target weaker, poorly represented minority populations. These articles are meant to prevent a certain level of religious smugness that has become quite prevalent today. In the words of [Prof. Philip Jenkins](#), “Jews and Christians...so ignore their own scriptures that they become self-righteous” towards Muslims and Islam.

The aggressive way that anti-Muslim propagandists have pushed the Islamophobic idea—that Muhammad/Islam/Quran/Sharia/Allah are so uniquely violent and warlike—has made it almost impossible for me *not* to write such articles. The data makes my case overwhelming: a recent [Pew Research poll](#) found that almost half of U.S. adults think that the Islamic religion is more likely to encourage violence than other religions, a figure that has almost doubled since 2002. A clear majority of conservative Republicans (66%), white Evangelicals (60%), and Tea Baggers (67%) believe Islam is more violent than other religions, with a plurality of whites (44%) and older folks (42-46%) also thinking this. (Of note is that blacks, Hispanics, and liberal Democrats are significantly less bigoted towards Islam.) The idea that Islam is more violent than other religions—held most strongly by old white conservatives—is a key pillar to the edifice of

Islamophobia. The need for the Understanding Jihad Series seems self-evident.

Any time Islam is mentioned on the internet, pseudo-experts ferociously start copying and pasting a litany of Islamic texts to whack Muslims over the head with. This anti-Muslim sentiment, fueled by profound ignorance (of both their own scriptures and Islamic), is no longer limited to fringe elements and has found its way into the mainstream. [Pro-Israeli hawks](#), in particular, have tried to transform this bigotry of Islam from a merely theological tussle into state policy. It is hoped that pointing to Judeo-Christian scriptural sources that are *far more* violent than what is quoted from Islamic sources will instill in the extremist Zionists and Messianic Christians a level of religious humility.

My fear in so doing, of course, is of offending well-meaning Jews and Christians. Indeed, while it is true that [there is a definite link between Zionism and Islamophobia](#), it is also true that some of the most effective defenders of Muslims are in fact Jews. These include such notable personalities as Glenn Greenwald, Richard Silverstein, Jon Stewart, Norman Finkelstein, Noam Chomsky, Max Blumenthal, and—without naming names—even some writers of LoonWatch (*gasp!*). To be absolutely clear, I do not think that Judaism and Christianity are violent religions. What I am simply trying to prove is that just because certain Quranic verses seem violent, one cannot make sweeping statements of the religion based on this...no more so than showing certain violent Biblical verses would prove the inherent nature of Judaism or Christianity. When people from the majority group realize that their own religious tradition also has “problematic” texts, they are usually more hesitant to rush to judgment about other faiths.

Although in the past I have compared Islam to Christianity—such as when [I compared the traditional Islamic concept of “dhimmi” to the traditional Christian concept of “perpetual serf”](#)—in the Understanding Jihad Series the comparison will more often be made with Judaism. The reason for this is that it is much easier to compare Islam to Judaism because both are very similar in basic structure. The Jewish Halacha is equivalent to the Islamic Sharia and the rabbinical tradition is analogous to the Islamic jurisprudential tradition. The similarities between the two religions are actually quite uncanny. Therefore, it makes sense to invoke this comparison.

The reader should not think that I believe that a certain religion or another is violent. Rather, there exist peaceful and violent *interpretations* of religion. I reject the view held by religious orthodoxy that the human mind is simply an empty receptacle that unthinkingly “obeys” the divine plan. Hundreds of years after their prophets have died, believers (of all faiths) are forced (by

virtue of not having a divine interlocutor) to exert their own minds and ethics to give life to texts, to render 3D realities from 2D texts. Such an elastic idea—that a religion is whatever its believers make it into—is certainly anathema to orthodox adherents who simply desire a step-by-step instruction manual to produce human automatons. But the truth is that even these orthodox adherents *necessarily* inject into the religious texts their own backgrounds, beliefs, and biases.

One can see why I do not think that simply showing a Biblical verse here or there would prove that Judaism or Christianity are violent faiths. There is a long journey from what is on the page to what is understood and put into practice. And once this reality is comprehended, it is hoped that Jews and Christians will gain a larger perspective when they approach Muslims and their religion.

It should be noted of course that not all Islamophobes are Jewish or Christian. Many are ex-Muslims who feel that their former religious affiliation gives them a free pass to be bigoted. This is hardly surprising, given that historically the worst oppressors of the Jewish minority in the Western world were actually ex-Jews converted to Christianity. Though they think of themselves as truly special, there is nothing unique about apostates from a religion; they have existed throughout history, and it was not uncommon for their zeal for their new religion to convert into wholesale bigotry for what they left behind.

When I argued that [Moses was more violent than Muhammad](#), one critic pointed out that atheists would condemn both. Yet, one only needs to glance at anti-Muslim websites to see that these atheistic Islamophobes try to (and need to) prove that Muhammad/Islam/Quran/Sharia/Allah are *uniquely* violent. Short of proving this uniqueness, their agenda fails. Thus, it hardly matters to the effectiveness of my article whether or not one believes in Jewish or Christian prophets. If we use the exact same standards applied to Islam to all religions and find them to be as violent or more violent than Islam, then what exactly is their point? This question is what my articles force onto them, to which the “I am not a believer” excuse hardly suffices.

There will definitely be those militant atheists who genuinely can’t tolerate *any* religious faith. These are the equal opportunity haters. But because they do not single out Islam, I am less bothered by them. Although many of their rantings are childish, they are not as destructive because they do not specifically target vulnerable minority populations.

Having thus expressed my general discomfort in writing these articles, I hope my readers can take into account context and intent. If, for example, a white supremacist site compiled a list of all criminals that are black, this would be a clear case of bigotry. An effective and appropriate way to counter this list would be to produce an even longer list of white criminals. Even though the action is the same (producing lists of criminals of a particular race), it is the context and intent that are all important. It is in a similar fashion that I am producing a "counter-list" of Biblical verses to counter the popular list of Quranic quotes that Islamophobes like to share. LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series will categorically answer the question that an alarmingly high number of Americans answered incorrectly: [is Islam more likely than other religions to encourage violence?](#)

I would nonetheless strongly caution overzealous Muslim readers from using these articles to stir hatred against Jews and Christians, noting that Islam has no shortage of "problematic" texts.

Warrior Prophet: Moses or Muhammad?

Posted on 06 March 2011 by Danios

This article is part 1 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series.

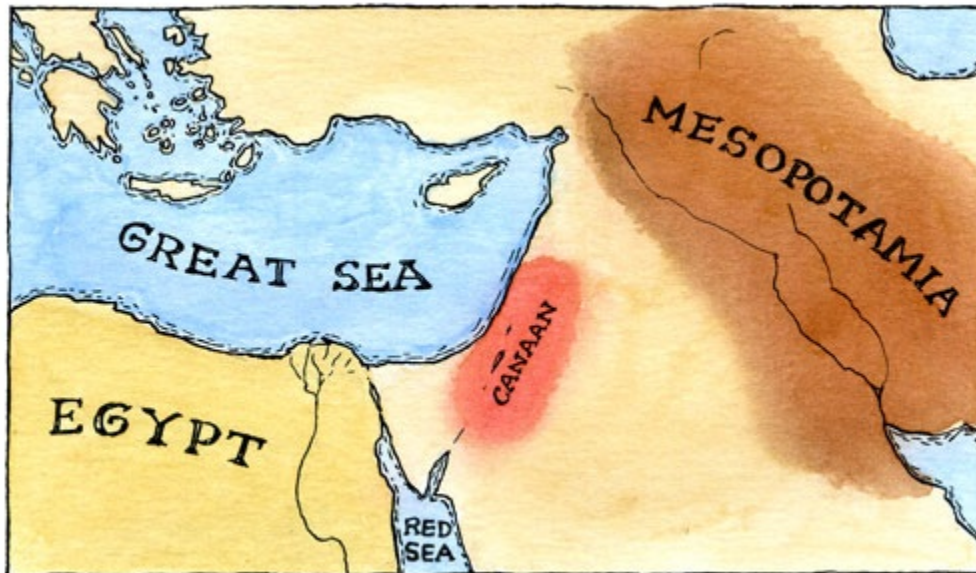
The video of [anti-Muslim bigots jeering at mosque-goers in Orange County](#) has now gone viral. Amongst those who sponsored the hateful event were two extremist Zionist Jews, namely [Pamela Geller](#) and *Rabbi* David Eliezrie. It was also sponsored by [ACT! for America](#), a fervently [pro-Israeli group](#) with heavy Christian Zionist overtones. The [link between Zionism and Islamophobia](#) is well-established.

As can be seen from the video, one of the principal ways these “Israeli-firsters” try to hurt Muslims is by insulting Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. In particular, they criticize Muhammad as being warlike and violent. The fact that their religious founder was belligerent explains why Muslims today are, or so the argument goes.

Yet, Moses—the prophet of Judaism and the principal figure of the religion—was far more warlike and violent than Muhammad. We know this from the Hebrew Bible, which is considered Judaism’s most sacred scripture and respected by Christians as the Old Testament. (The Biblical verses we will examine will also show us why the Bible is far more violent than the Quran.) Could the violent nature of Moses explain the belligerence of the modern day state of Israel and its supporters?

According to the Bible, a Jewish prophet by the name of Moses arose in Egypt. He liberated his people from bondage, and together they fled Egypt to the "promised land." The promised land was a place called Canaan (Palestine). This journey from Egypt to Canaan was known as the Exodus.

It might help to glance at a map:



So the Hebrews fled Egypt and traveled to Canaan.

But they hit a small snag. There were already people living in Canaan. These natives are referred to in the Bible as "The Seven Nations." (Not to be a stickler, but there were actually more than seven nations.) Here is what the tribes looked like before the Israelites arrived:



To resolve this dilemma, God ordered the Israelites to exterminate all the inhabitants of Canaan (men, women, and children) and to take their land. The God of the Bible commanded Moses and his followers:

Deuteronomy 20:17 You must utterly destroy the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, just as the LORD your God has commanded you.

The God of the Bible threatened the people of Palestine/Canaan with catastrophe ([nakba](#)):

Exodus 15:14 The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine.

15: 15 Then, the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the might men of Moab, trembling shall take hold on them, all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

15:16 Terror and dread shall fall on them; by the greatness of your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till your people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which you have purchased.

15:17 You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance.

In other words, God “purchased” the land that the natives lived on, and He would give it as “inheritance” to the Israelite conquerors. It should be clear that the words “all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away” refers to genocide, a point which we will subsequently be made clearer.

The Aradites were one group of peoples that inhabited Canaan, the land which the God of Israel had promised the Israelites. The Israelites marched towards them:

Numbers 33:40 At that time the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev in the land of Canaan, heard that the people of Israel were approaching his land.

One [Biblical commentary](#) explains that the Aradite king “heard of the coming of the children of Israel, towards the land of Canaan, **in order to possess it**, and he came out and fought with them.” The king had some initial success:

21:1 He attacked the Israelites and captured some of them.

Ancient Israel responded with even more brutality than the modern day state of Israel does:

21:2 Then Israel made this vow to the LORD: “If you will deliver these people into our hands, **we will totally destroy their cities.**”

21:3 The LORD heard the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites; **then they utterly destroyed them and their cities.** Thus the name of the place was called Hormah [Utter Destruction].

The word Hormah literally translates to “Ban”, because it means that there is a ban on all living things. As we shall see, the Israelites slaughtered men, women, children, cattle, sheep, donkeys, and anything that breathed. The word “Hormah” is often translated by Biblical commentators as “Utter Destruction.”

After annihilating the Aradites, Moses and the Israelites then turned their attention to the Amorites. The God of the Bible commanded the faithful to conquer the Amorite land of Heshbon:

Deuteronomy 2:24 Then the LORD said, "Now get moving! Cross the Arnon Gorge. Look, I will hand over to you Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and I will give you his land. **Attack him and begin to occupy the land.**

2:25 This very day **I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you.**"

The Israelites requested King Sihon to pass through his land. Sihon naturally refused, as he had heard reports of what the Israelites had done to his neighbors. When Sihon refused the request, the order was given to attack him:

2:30 But Sihon king of Heshbon refused to let us pass through. For the Lord your God had made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate in order to give him into your hands, as he has now done.

2:31 The Lord said to me, "See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his country over to you. **Now begin to conquer and possess his land.**"

Of course, every nation-state has a right to deny entry of foreigners into its territory. If, for example, the Iranian army requested permission to pass through Israel, would Iran have justification to attack Israel if the request was refused? King Sihon's denial of the request is all the more reasonable when we consider that (1) the king knew that the Israelites were bent on conquering his land, and (2) the peoples of that region had "hear[d] reports of you [Israelites]" that made them "tremble and be in anguish."

In any case, after furnishing themselves with a moral justification to invade Heshbon, Moses and the Israelites proceeded to kill the king of Heshbon and all his people:

2:33 The Lord our God delivered him over to us and we struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army.

2:34 **At that time we took all his cities and completely destroyed them—men, women and children. We left no survivors.**

2:35 But the livestock and the plunder from the towns we had captured we carried off for ourselves.

Multiple cities and their populations were completely annihilated:

2:36 From Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge, and from the city in the gorge, even as far as Gilead, not one city was too strong for us. The Lord our God gave us all of them.

King Sihon and his people, the Amorites of Heshbon, were ethnically cleansed. The Israelites then moved on to King Og and his people, the Amorites of Bashan. The God of the Bible commanded the Israelites to “do to him what you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites”, i.e. annihilate them:

Numbers 21:34 The LORD said to Moses, “Do not be afraid of Og, for I have handed him over to you, with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites who reigned in Heshbon.”

21:35 So they killed him and his sons and all his people, until there was none left to him alive, and they possessed his land.

Moses and the Israelites then massacred the inhabitants of sixty different cities:

Deuteronomy 3:3 So the Lord our God also gave into our hands Og king of Bashan and all his army. We struck them down, leaving no survivors.

3:4 At that time we took all his cities. **There was not one of the sixty cities that we did not take from them—the whole region of Argob, Og’s kingdom in Bashan.**

3:5 All these cities were fortified with high walls and with gates and bars, and there were also a great many unwalled villages.

3:6 We completely destroyed them, as we had done with Sihon king of Heshbon, **destroying every city—men, women and children.**

3:7 But all the livestock and the plunder from their cities we carried off for ourselves.

In fact, the Bible repeatedly sanctions the genocide of natives:

20:16 In the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, **do not leave alive anything that breathes.**

20:17 You must utterly destroy the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, just as the LORD your God has commanded you.

The next verse explains why “you must utterly destroy” them:

20:18 Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God.

The Bible advocates genocide of the adherents of other religions, due to the fear that the believers may convert. This becomes very clear when we consider the way Moses and the God of the Bible deal with the Moabites and Midianites. Some women from the Moabites and Midianites partook in consensual sexual relations with Israelite men. After cohabitating with idolatrous women, the Israelite men were affected by the Moabite and Midianite religion and culture. Eventually, these men started worshiping Ba'al Pe'or, the local god of the Moabites and Midianites. This earned the Israelites the wrath of God:

Numbers 25:1 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women,

25:2 who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods.

25:3 So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the Lord's anger burned against them.

God then sent a plague down upon the people of Israel, which was only lifted after one of the Israelites murdered a Midianite woman:

25:6 Then an Israelite man brought to his family a Midianite woman right before the eyes of Moses and the whole assembly of Israel while they were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

25:7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand

25:8 and followed the Israelite into the tent. **He drove the spear through both of them—through the Israelite and into the woman's body.** Then the plague against the Israelites was stopped;

25:9 but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.

25:10 The Lord said to Moses,

25:11 "Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for my honor among them, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them.

25:12 Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him.

25:13 He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites."

In verse 25:15, we learn that Cozbi was the name of the Midianite woman who was murdered. This "honor killing" placated God's anger, and God blessed the killer and his descendants with "a covenant of lasting priesthood." God did, however, command Moses and the Israelites to massacre the Midianites:

25:16 The Lord said to Moses,

25:17 **"Treat the Midianites as enemies and kill them."**

25:18 because they treated you as enemies when they deceived you in the affair of Peor and their sister Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite leader, the woman who was killed when the plague came as a result of Peor."

The above verse makes it clear why God commanded Moses and the Israelites to kill the Midianites: because of the "affair of Peor" (i.e. the idolatrous women having consensual sexual relations with the Israelite men and the subsequent idol worship) and Cozbi (the woman who had sexual relations with an Israelite man).

And so God commanded Moses to attack the Midianites:

31:1 The Lord said to Moses,

31:2 "Avenge the people of Israel of the Midianites. After that, you will be gathered to your people."

31:3 So Moses said to the people, "Arm some of your men to go to war against the Midianites and **to carry out the Lord's vengeance on them.**

31:4 Send into battle a thousand men from each of the tribes of Israel."

And:

31:7 They fought against Midian, as the Lord commanded Moses, and killed every man.

31:8 Among their victims were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba—the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.

31:9 The Israelites captured the Midianite women and children and took all the Midianite herds, flocks and goods as plunder.

31:10 They burned all the towns where the Midianites had settled, as well as all their camps.

31:11 They took all the plunder and spoils, including the people and animals,

31:12 and brought the captives, spoils and plunder to Moses and Eleazar the priest...

The Jewish followers of Moses killed every man, and took the women and children as slaves. They then returned to Moses, but he became upset at them for not killing the women and children as well. Only the young virgins fit to be sex slaves were to be kept alive:

31: 14 Moses was angry with the officers of the army—the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds—who returned from the battle.

31:15 “Have you allowed all the women to live?” he asked them.

31:16 “They were the ones who followed Balaam’s advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the Lord in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the Lord’s people.

31:17 Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man.

31:18 but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man.

Then God discusses how to divide up the spoils of war:

31:25 The Lord said to Moses,

31:26: “You and Eleazar the priest and the family heads of the community are to count all the people and animals that were captured.

31:27 Divide the spoils between the soldiers who took part in the battle and the rest of the community.

31:28 From the soldiers who fought in the battle, set apart as tribute for the Lord one out of every five hundred, whether persons, cattle, donkeys, sheep or goats."

This last verse seems to justify human sacrifices to God "as tribute for the Lord." The next few verses bear this out:

31:32 The plunder remaining from the spoils that the soldiers took was 675,000 sheep,

31:33 72,000 cattle,

31:34 61,000 donkeys

31:35 and 32,000 women who had never slept with a man.

31:36 The half share of those who fought in the battle was: 337,500 sheep,

31:37 of which the tribute for the Lord was 675;

31:38 36,000 cattle, of which the tribute for the Lord was 72;

31:39 30,500 donkeys, of which the tribute for the Lord was 61;

31:40 16,000 people, of which the tribute for the Lord was 32.

As for the Moabites, they avoided the wrath of Israel for a short period of time before they were ultimately decimated. That task was carried out by David, one of Moses' divinely chosen successors (and a prophet of Judaism in his own right). The faithful massacred two-thirds of the Moabites and took the remaining one-third as ~~chinnis~~ perpetual serfs:

2 Samuel 8:2 David also conquered the land of Moab. He made the people lie down on the ground in a row, and he measured them off in groups with a length of rope. He measured off two groups to be executed for every one group to be spared. The Moabites who were spared became David's subjects and paid him tribute money.

Some Biblical commentaries argue that two-thirds of the Moabite population was slaughtered while others argue that only the soldiers were. In any case, the Moabites were subjected to ~~chinnitude~~ perpetual serfdom and were

forced to pay ~~jizya~~ tribute. But eventually the Moabites revolted against this tributary tax:

2 Kings 3:4 King Mesha of Moab was a sheep breeder. He used to pay the king of Israel an annual tribute of 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.

3:5 But after Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

The Israelites, with the blessing of Elisha (another Jewish prophet), mobilized three large armies to stamp out the rebellion. The people of Moab attempted to defend themselves:

3:21 Now all the Moabites had heard that the three armies had come to fight against them; so every man, young and old, who could bear arms was called up and stationed on the border.

The Moabites were vanquished and slaughtered:

3:24 The Israelites invaded the land and **slaughtered the Moabites.**

3:25 They destroyed the towns, and each man threw a stone on every good field until it was covered. They stopped up all the springs and cut down every good tree. Only [the fortress of] Kir Hareseth was left with its stones in place, but men armed with slings surrounded it and attacked it as well.

The Israelites then called off the siege with the result that a few Moabites survived. The Moabites were finally destroyed altogether in **2 Chronicles 20**, although the actual narration is a bit difficult to follow.

The Biblical Moses was thus responsible for the massacre and genocide of several populations. These included the people of Arad, Heshbon (and her surrounding cities), Bashan (including at least sixty cities), and the Midianites. Before he passed away, Moses was very disappointed that he couldn't complete the ethnic cleansing of the land. He wanted to take part in the genocide of those living past the Jordan:

3:23 At that time I [Moses] pleaded with the Lord:

3:24 "O Sovereign Lord, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. **For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do?**

3:25 Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan—that fine hill country and Lebanon.”

God rejected Moses’ plea and declared:

3:28 “But commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and **will cause them to inherit the land that you will see.**”

And so, the job of genocide was divinely passed on from Moses to his successor, Joshua.

Addendum I :

The wars of Muhammad will be addressed in a subsequent part of the Understanding Jihad Series, which will directly refute chapter 1 (*Muhammad: Prophet of War*) of Robert Spencer’s book, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*.

However, it would be helpful to point out the most striking difference between Moses and Muhammad in this regard. Moses targeted and killed civilians—women, children, babies, and the infirm elderly. Moses ordered his soldiers: “Kill all the boys[,] and kill every woman” (Numbers 31:17), an order which is an oft-repeated imperative in the Bible. Meanwhile, Muhammad explicitly forbade targeting civilians on numerous occasions, saying: “Do not kill an infirm old man, an infant, a child, or a woman.” (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, book 14, #2608)

Addendum II :

It could be argued that the life and wars of Moses are of questionable historicity, and that secular scholarship would doubt the accuracy of Jewish scriptural sources. Yet, this argument is nullified by the fact that the life and wars of Muhammad are similarly subject to questionable historicity. The primary sources of Muhammad’s life and wars come almost exclusively from the Islamic scriptural sources and tradition, namely “(1) casual allusions in the Qur’an and (2) oral traditions”. More neutral non-Muslim sources from the seventh century are scant, and at most confirm the existence of Muhammad and very basic data. Writes Professor Solomon Alexander Nigosian on p.6 of [*Islam: Its History, Teaching, and Practices*](#):

The attempt to separate the historical from the unhistorical elements in the available sources has yielded few, if any, positive results regarding the

figure of Muhammad or the role he played in Islam. The predicament faced by modern scholars is perhaps best stated by Harald Motzki:

At present, the study of Muhammad, the founder of the Muslim community, is obviously caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, it is not possible to write a historical biography of the Prophet without being accused of using the sources uncritically, while on the other hand, when using the sources critically, it is simply not possible to write such a biography.

In order to construct narratives of Muhammad's wars, one must rely on the Islamic scriptural sources and tradition (the same ones which Islamophobes use to criticize Islam). It seems only reasonable and fair then to compare Muhammad with the Moses derived from the Jewish scriptural sources and tradition. And in this light, Moses does not stack up well against Muhammad.

Addendum III:

Those who are familiar with my writing know very well that the intent here is not at all to "bash" Moses or Judaism, but rather to give the haters a taste of their own medicine in order that they realize the error in their ways. In particular, the goal is to show that the absurd standard Islam is held to—or anything related to Islam (Muhammad, Allah, the Quran, Sharia, Muslims, Muslim-majority countries, etc.)—is unfair, a fact that becomes painfully obvious when applied in a similar way to a Jewish/Christian/ analogue.

Addendum IV:

Many of the counter-arguments raised by our opponents will be addressed in further editions of this series. I initially had planned on releasing the entire Understanding Jihad Series as one mega-article. Having realized that this would be well over one hundred pages long, I decided to heed the advice of LW readers who requested that my articles be split into parts so as to be easier to digest. This decision comes with the regret that many of my responses to the trite counter-arguments I know the Islam-bashers are itching to use will be published at a later date.

Who was the Most Violent Prophet in History?

Posted on 14 March 2011 by Danios

This article is part 2 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my "disclaimer" here, which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



Who was the most violent prophet in history?

Most readers will immediately assume it was the Prophet Muhammad, thanks to a decades long wave of Islamophobia and a sustained campaign of anti-Muslim propaganda. But here's a tip: it wasn't Muhammad. Not by a long shot. In fact, [Moses had Muhammad beat by far](#).

But it wasn't even Moses. In fact, it was **Joshua**—a Jewish prophet of Israel. Today, he is regarded by Jews as “a mighty warrior” of the faith, a victorious hero, and a righteous prophet after Moses:

Before he passed away, Moses was very disappointed that he couldn't complete the ethnic cleansing of the land. He wanted to take part in the genocide of those living past the Jordan:

3:23 At that time I [Moses] pleaded with the Lord:

3:24 “O Sovereign Lord, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. **For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do?**

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God rejected Moses’ plea and declared:

3:28 “But commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and **will cause them to inherit the land that you will see.**”

And so, the job of genocide was divinely passed on from Moses to his successor, Joshua.

Joshua sought to complete the task that Moses had left undone. It is recorded in the most sacred Jewish holy book, the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament of Christianity), that God Himself commanded Joshua to finish the genocide of the natives living on the other side of the Jordan River:

Joshua 1:1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide:

1:2 “Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites.

1:3 I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

1:4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west.

1:5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

1:6 Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.”

The city of Jericho stood between Joshua and the land he was to conquer. As one city after another fell to the sword of Judaism, the people of Jericho feared for their fate. Would they too be subjected to ethnic cleansing?

One of the natives of the city, a woman by the name of Rahab, was so fearful of the wild-eyed massacres that the God-chosen people were known for that she said:

Joshua 2:9 "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that your terror is fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are deathly afraid of you.

2:10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you, when you came out of Egypt; and what you did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond the Jordan, unto Sihon and to Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

2:11 No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things."

Rahab offered to hide Israelite spies, who were sent to engage in ~~stealth~~ herem. In exchange for her services, she begged the Israelites to spare her family from the brutal massacre that was sure to come after the conquest of her city. Rahab implored:

2:12 "Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign

2:13 that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from death."

The Israelites agreed, but warned her:

2:19 "If anyone goes outside your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head; we will not be responsible."

In other words, every living thing in that city—except what was in her house—was to be utterly destroyed. The entire city was to be smitten as a sacrifice to the Lord:

6:17 The city and all that is in it are to be **devoted** to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent.

As a [footnote](#) clarifies, "devoted" to the Lord means: "The Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the LORD, often by totally destroying them."

[The illustration at the top of this article is of the Battle of Jericho. Readers will notice the Jewish *shofars*, ram horns used in times of war. The Israelites sounded these shofars prior to invading the city and slaughtering all of its inhabitants. It is in this context that the anti-Muslim protesters in Orange County used them against Muslim-Americans in that now famous [video](#).]

To their credit, the Israelite invaders fulfilled their promise, sparing those in Rahab's house. They did, however, kill everyone else, women and children included:

6:21 They devoted the city to the Lord and **utterly destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old**, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

However, the silver, gold, bronze, and iron were taken as plunder:

6:19 But all the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord, and must go into his treasury.

And the city was razed to the ground:

6:24 Then **they burned the whole city and everything in it**, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the Lord's house.

After "utterly destroying" Jericho, Joshua and the believers turned their attention to the city of Ai:

8:1 Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the kings of Ai, his people, his city and his land.

8:2 You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king, except that you may carry off their plunder and livestock for yourselves. Set an ambush behind the city."

8:3 So Joshua and the whole army moved out to attack Ai. He chose thirty thousand of his best fighting men and sent them out at night

8:4 with these orders: "Listen carefully. You are to set an ambush behind the city..."

Joshua continued:

8:7 "You are to rise up from ambush and take the city. The Lord your God will give it into your hand.

8:8 "When you have taken the city, set it on fire. Do what your Lord has commanded. See to it! You have my orders."

As per their orders from God and his prophet, the city was razed:

8:19 They entered the city and captured it and quickly set it on fire.

When the men of Ai fought back, they were decimated by Israel:

8:22 Israel cut them down, leaving them neither survivors nor fugitives.

After cutting down the soldiers, the Israelites entered the city to kill off all the civilians (twelve thousand men and women altogether):

8:24 When Israel had finished killing all the men of Ai in the fields and the in the wilderness where they had chased them, and when every one of them had been put to the sword, all the Israelites returned to Ai and killed those who were in it.

8:25 Twelve thousand men and women were put to death that day—all the people of Ai.

8:26 For Joshua did not draw back the hand that held out his javelin until he had destroyed all who lived in Ai.

8:27 But Israel did carry off for themselves the livestock and plunder of this city, as the Lord had instructed Joshua.

8:28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanent heap of ruins, a desolate place to this day.

The king's body was then mutilated:

8:29 [Joshua] impaled the body of the king of Ai on a pole and left it there until evening. At sunset, Joshua ordered them to take the body from the pole and throw it down at the entrance of the city gate.

And then the believers built a ~~triumphal mosque~~ triumphal synagogue:

8:30 Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal, an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel.

Terror and fear of the genocidal wrath of the believers spread far and wide, just as the God of the Bible promised. One such people who were struck with dread were the people of Gibeon, who offered themselves up as slaves in exchange for their lives. The Gibeonites said to Joshua:

9:24 "We feared for our lives because of you, and that is why we did this."

The Gibeonites were permitted to live so long as they ["left idolatry"](#) and lived under the ["yolk of servitude"](#). They were consigned to the curse of [perpetual servitude](#) and permitted only to be "woodcutters and water carriers", which were considered ["very low and mean employment"](#):

9:23 "You are now under a curse: You will never cease to serve as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God."

Joshua had thus destroyed Jericho and Ai, and neutralized Gibeon. The neighboring five Amorite kingdoms became aware that the Israelites were headed for them next, and formed a coalition to defend themselves. However, the Amorite coalition was soundly defeated by the Israelite army, and the five Amorite kings fled to a cave in Makkedah. The Israelites captured the kings and Joshua had them humiliated and executed:

10:24 When they had brought these kings to Joshua, he summoned all the men of Israel and said to the army commanders who had come with him, **"Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings." So they came forward and placed their feet on their necks.**

10:25 Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. **This is what the Lord will do to all the enemies you are going to fight.**"

10:26 **Then Joshua struck and killed the kings and hung them on five trees, and they were left hanging on the trees until evening.**

10:27 At sunset Joshua gave the order and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had been hiding.

The Israelite vengeance was also savaged upon Makkedah (the city where the five kings had fled to), which was ethnically cleansed:

10:28 That same day Joshua captured and destroyed the town of Makkedah. **He killed everyone in it, including the king, leaving no survivors.** He destroyed them all.

The Israelite army then did the same to the southern cities, putting all to the sword—men, women, and children. First, the city of Libnah:

10:30 The city [of Libnah] and everyone in it Joshua put to the sword. He left no survivors there.

Then Lachish:

10:32 The Lord handed Lachish over to Israel, and Joshua took it on the second day. The city and everyone in it he put to the sword, just as he had done to Libnah.

Then Eglon:

10:35 They captured [Eglon] that same day and put it to the sword and totally destroyed everyone in it, just as they had done to Lachish.

Then Hebron:

10:37 They took the city and put it to the sword, together with its king, its villages and everyone in it. They left no survivors. Just as at Eglon, they totally destroyed it and everyone in it.

Then Debir:

10:39 They took the city, its king and its villages, and put them to the sword. Everyone in it they totally destroyed. They left no survivors.

The killing was thorough and complete:

10:40 So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded.

10:41 Joshua subdued them from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza and from the whole region of Goshen to Gibeon.

10:42 All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.

After the decimation of the southern cities, the northern cities banded together to fight off Israel. The Israelites responded in the familiar way—killing every man, woman, and child:

11:11 The Israelites completely destroyed every living thing in the city, leaving no survivors. Not a single person was spared. And then Joshua burned the city.

11:12 Joshua slaughtered all the other kings and their people, completely destroying them, just as Moses, the servant of the LORD, had commanded.

11:13 But the Israelites did not burn any of the towns built on mounds except Hazor, which Joshua burned.

11:14 And the Israelites took all the plunder and livestock of **the ravaged towns** for themselves. But **they killed all the people, leaving no survivors.**

11:15 As the LORD had commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua. And Joshua did as he was told, **carefully obeying all the commands that the LORD had given to Moses.**

Joshua then utterly destroyed the Anakites:

11:21 During this period Joshua destroyed all the Anakites...**He killed them all and completely destroyed their towns.**

11:22 No Anakites were left in Israelite territory; only in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod did any survive.

11:23 So Joshua took the entire land, **just as the LORD had directed Moses,** and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel...

After all this death and destruction...

11:23 ... Then the land had rest from war.

By this time, Joshua was on his deathbed and gave parting instructions to his people. He promised them that they would drive out the survivors from amongst the vanquished nations and usurp their land:

23:1 Now it came to pass, a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age

23:2 And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers, and said to them: "I am old, advanced in age.

23:2 You have seen all that the **LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you**, for the LORD your God *is* He who has fought for you.

23:4 See, I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, as far as the Great Sea westward.

23:5 And the LORD your God will expel them from before you and drive them out of your sight. So you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God promised you.

And so died Joshua, the most violent prophet in all of history.

Addendum I :

Aside from the sheer magnitude of Joshua's killings, the major difference between Joshua and Muhammad is the issue of targeting civilians. Joshua, [like Moses](#), targeted and killed civilians—women, children, babies, and the infirm elderly. The Bible states that Joshua "utterly destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys." (Joshua 6:21) On the other hand, the Prophet Muhammad "forbade the killing of women and children." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol.4, Book 52, #258)

Addendum II :

The historicity of the Biblical account—of Moses, Joshua, and the Exodus/Conquest—is discussed [here](#).

Addendum III :

My intention in writing this article is **not** to bash Judaism or Christianity, but rather to refute a common argument raised by Islamophobes. To fully understand why I wrote this article, make sure you've read this: [**The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?**](#)

Update I :

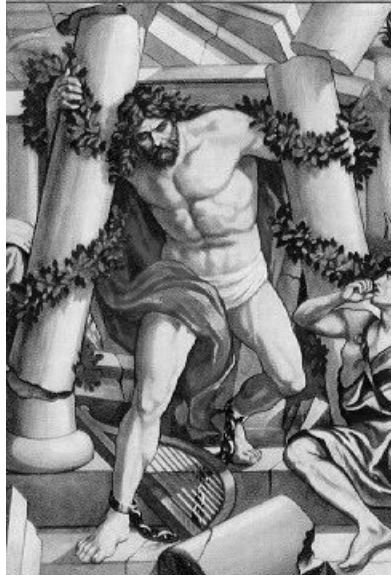
I cannot reiterate enough how much I really, really didn't want to write this article because I know it could offend Jewish and Christian readers—but I simply do not see how I can *convincingly* refute the [Islamophobic argument](#) without doing it this way.

[The Suicide Bomber Prophet](#)

Posted on 20 March 2011 by Danios

This article is part 3 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article:

[The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



As we noted in an earlier [article](#):

A recent [Pew Research poll](#) found that almost half of U.S. adults think that the Islamic religion is more likely to encourage violence than other religions, a figure that has almost doubled since 2002. A clear majority of conservative Republicans (66%), white Evangelicals (60%), and Tea Baggers (67%) believe Islam is more violent than other religions, with a plurality of whites (44%) and older folks (42-46%) also thinking this. (Of note is that blacks, Hispanics, and liberal Democrats are significantly less bigoted towards Islam.) The idea that Islam is more violent than other religions—held most strongly by old white conservatives—is a key pillar to the edifice of Islamophobia.

Prof. [Philip Jenkins](#) writes:

In the minds of ordinary Christians – and Jews – the Koran teaches savagery and warfare, while the Bible offers a message of love, forgiveness, and charity.

Worse, the Quran is said to be a book of terrorism. It was in this vein that [Bill O'Reilly](#) invoked an analogy between the Quran and terrorism and Mein Kampf and Nazism. *It must be the Quran that compels these Islamic radicals to engage in suicide bombing and terrorism.*

Prof. Jenkins responds:

In fact, the Bible overflows with “texts of terror,” to borrow a phrase coined by the American theologian Phyllis Trible. The Bible contains far more verses praising or urging bloodshed than does the Koran, and biblical violence is often far more extreme, and marked by more indiscriminate savagery.

In [part 1](#) of LoonWatch’s Understanding Jihad Series, we traced the violence of the Bible to the Jewish prophet Moses, who submitted heathen nations to what can only be described as genocide. In [part 2](#), we moved on to Moses’ divinely ordained successor, Joshua, who was arguably the most violent prophet in history. But the holy killing did not stop there.

The Warrior Tribe

After the death of Joshua, the Israelites wondered who would carry on the God-sanctioned genocide and conquest of the promised land. They did not have to wait long for the answer. God passed down the sword of the faith to the tribe of Judah:

Judges 1:1 After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked the LORD, “Who will be the first to go up and fight for us against the Canaanites?”

1:2 The LORD answered, “Judah, for I have given them victory over the land.”

Judah heeded this call and continued the holy genocide against the unbelievers, culminating in the brutal conquest of Jerusalem:

1:8 The men of Judah attacked Jerusalem also and took it. **They put the city to the sword and set it on fire.**

From there, the tribe of Judah vanquished the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills (1:9), Hebron, the Sheshai, Ahiman, Talmai (1:10), and Debir (1:11). They destroyed Zephath:

1:17 [Judah] attacked the Canaanites living in Zephath, and they utterly destroyed the city. Therefore it was called Hormah [*Hormah* means Destruction.]

Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron (1:18) fell to the Israelite nation, for "the Lord was with the men of Judah." (1:19)

Judge, Jury, and Executioner

After the massacre of most of the inhabitants of Canaan, the God of the Bible was concerned with ensuring that Israel remain warlike:

3:1 These are the nations the Lord left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan

3:2 It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before.

The sword was then wielded by the judges of Israel, first with Othniel, then Ehud, then Shamgar, then Barak, then Gideon, then Jephthah, and then Samson. Each of these judges of God was involved in religiously motivated massacres. The Bible recounts the hundreds of thousands of people they collectively slaughtered. From the first Israelite judge:

3:10 The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war.

To the last of them:

1 Samuel 7:11 The men of Israel chased the Philistines from Mizpah to a place below Beth-car, slaughtering them all along the way.

Samson the Suicide Bomber Glorified in the Bible

One of the Israelite judges is worthy of special mention: the [Jewish prophet](#) Samson. According to the Bible, Samson was responsible for killing thousands of Philistines (the indigenous population of southern Canaan). Eventually, the Philistines successfully used a ruse to capture Samson, who was then taken to a temple where he was to be given as a sacrifice to one of the Philistine gods. Instead, Samson leaned against the pillars of the temple, and brought the temple down, killing himself along with 3,000 men and women:

Judges 16:26 Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them."

16:27 Now the house was full of men and women. **All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women**, who looked on while Samson entertained.

16:28 Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes."

16:29 Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other,

16:30 Samson said, **"Let me die with the Philistines!"** Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. **Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.**

Today, Samson is glorified as a hero by Israelis. Far from being a dead letter, Samson's deed has become part of Israel's state policy. The Samson Option is a doctrine adopted by the state of Israel, which states that should Israel's existence ever be threatened, it will release a nuclear holocaust upon its enemies and other targets as well. As Israeli military historian Prof. Martin van Creveld famously put it (as reproduced on p.119 of David Hirst's *The Gun and The Olive Branch*):

We possess several hundred atomic warheads and rockets and can launch them as targets in all directions...We have the capability to take the world down with us. And I can assure you that that will happen, before Israel goes under.

Unfortunately, the temple Samson destroyed has now become entire countries or even the entire world.

David: Giant Slayer and Baby Killer

The militant sword of Israel was then passed from the judges to holy kings. The first king of the United Kingdom of Israel was Saul. His story is especially interesting, and one which we will return to. We will however focus now on David, who at that time was Saul's appointed generalissimo. The Israelite ladies fawned over David, not only because he killed the Philistine Goliath but also because he massacred "tens of thousands":

1 Samuel 18:6 When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King

Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes.

18:7 As they danced, they sang: **"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."**

It should be noted that by the end of David's death, he ended up killing not tens of thousands, but *hundreds* of thousands. In any case, King Saul became jealous over the fact that David was credited with more kills than he was:

18:8 Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?"

18:9 And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

But then the king's daughter fell in love with David. It seems that David was interested in this proposal but thought he was too poor to offer an adequate dowry:

18:23 David said, "Do you think it is a small matter to become the king's son-in-law? I'm only a poor man and little known."

King Saul reassured David that he accepted ~~American-Express~~ penile foreskins:

18:25 Saul replied, "Say to David, 'The king wants no other price for the bride **than a hundred Philistine foreskins**, to take revenge on his enemies.'"

David was unfazed by this interesting request and brought back *double* the number of requested foreskins:

18:27 David and his men went out and **killed two hundred Philistines. He brought their foreskins and presented the full number to the king** so that he might become the king's son-in-law. Then Saul gave him his daughter Michal in marriage.

However, King Saul's jealousy continued to grow and he unsuccessfully tried to kill his son-in-law. David found refuge in Ziklag (Philistine territory!) and raided other cities to stay financially afloat. Typical Biblical cruelty was added to these ~~ghazwas~~ raids:

18:8 Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites...

18:9 Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish.

18:10 When Achish asked, "Where did you go raiding today?" David would say, "Against the Negev of Judah" or "Against the Negev of Jerahmeel" or "Against the Negev of the Kenites."

18:11 He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, "They might inform on us and say, 'This is what David did.'" And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory.

David massacred the Amalekites—men, women, and children:

30:17 David and his men rushed in among them and slaughtered them throughout that night and the entire next day until evening. None of the Amalekites escaped except 400 young men who fled on camels.

Eventually David became king of Israel and continued his string of conquests, subjugating heathens to Israelite rule:

2 Samuel 12:31 He also made slaves of the people of Rabbah and forced them to labor with saws, iron picks, and iron axes, and to work in the brick kilns. That is how he dealt with the people of all the Ammonite towns.

It should be noted that David's slaughter of the Philistines was sanctioned by God:

1 Samuel 23:2 David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and smite these Philistines?" And the LORD said unto David, "Go, and smite the Philistines..."

God promised David:

23:4 "I am going to give the Philistines into your hand."

As well as:

2 Samuel 5:19 So David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?" The Lord answered him, "Yes, go! For I will surely hand the Philistines over to you."

And David did what God commanded him to do:

5:25 And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him, and smote the Philistines.

Although we will discuss the genocide of Amalekites in a later article, it is safe to say that virtually every Biblical authority agrees that this was God-ordained as well. In fact, God approved of *everything* David did—all of his many killings—except for "in the case of Uriah the Hittite":

1 Kings 15:5 David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord and had not failed to keep any of the Lord's commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.

Uriah was one of King David's soldiers. David had an affair with Uriah's wife and had Uriah killed, an act which earned God's displeasure. God forgave David, but it was the one killing that God did not approve of. The [Geneva Study Bible](#) commentary assures us that David "enterprised no war, but by God's command."

In fact, Jews and Christians today revere David's "obedience to God" and even argue to become ["more like David"](#). Jewish and Christian children read about David in Sunday school.

Addendum I :

Muhammad's wars will be discussed in a future part of this series. But suffice to say, we have now set the groundwork to prove that several Jewish prophets—including [Moses](#), [Joshua](#), Samson, and David—were far more violent and warlike than Muhammad.

The major difference between Muhammad and the others was with regard to targeting and killing civilians. Samson killed 3,000 men and women in his suicide bomb attack, and David "did not leave a man or woman alive." (1 Samuel 18:11) This stands in marked contrast with Muhammad who repeatedly "forbade the killing of women and children." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol.4, Book 52, #258)

Regardless of issues surrounding [historicity](#), what is quite clear is that the Bible glorifies genocide and the killing of civilians, whereas the Quran does

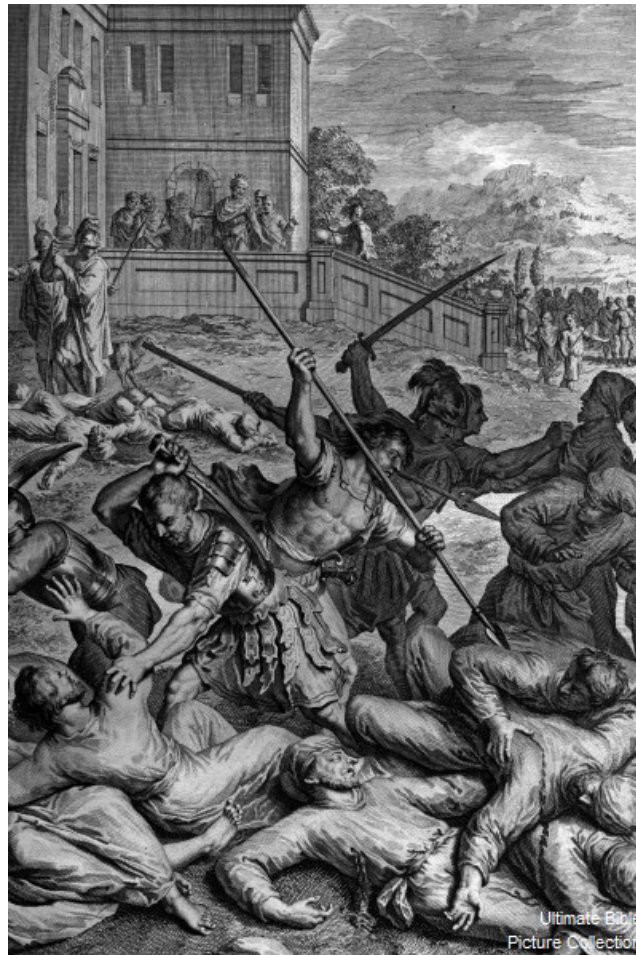
not. Unlike the Bible, no single verse in the Quran talks about killing women, children, and babies.

[What the Quran-bashers Don't Want You to Know About the Bible](#)

Posted on 26 March 2011 by Danios

This article is part 4 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article:

[The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



What the Quran-bashers don't want you to know is that the Bible is far more violent than the Quran. In fact, the Bible—unlike the Quran—glorifies **genocide**; we've documented some of these genocide-glorifying passages in our earlier articles: see [part 1](#), [part 2](#), and [part 3](#).

The anti-Muslim bigots—such as the extremist Jewish Zionist [Pamela Geller](#) and the fervent, zealous Catholic polemicist [Robert Spencer](#)—especially don't want you to know about the Biblical passages regarding King Saul. The

reason they don't want you to read these passages is that it would make the Islamic literature look quite tame by comparison, and well, that wouldn't be too good for the anti-Muslim business, now would it?

It is of course getting tedious, redundant, and a bit boring to document all the God-sanctioned genocides of the Bible; there are too many of them, so they seem to mesh together. Having said that, Saul's genocide of the Amalekites warrants special attention, so it would behoove our readers to suffer through one last article on this topic. It should be noted, however, that our collection of violent Biblical verses is non-exhaustive, limited only by our own boredom.

So, who was Saul? He was the first king of the United Kingdom of Israel, divinely appointed to this position by the Jewish prophet Samuel. His first task as king was to ethnically cleanse the land of the Amalekite peoples:

1 Samuel 15:1 Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one the Lord sent to anoint you king over his people, over Israel; so listen now to the message from the Lord.

15:2 This is what the Almighty Lord says: 'I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

15:3 Now go, attack the Amalekites and **utterly destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants,** cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.'"

Notice that it was God Himself who ordered Saul to slaughter the Amalekites. And so King Saul led the Israelites in war against the Amalekites. Per God's directives, Saul "put to death men and women, children and infants." He killed every human being with the lone exception of the Amalekite king; he also spared some animals. By sparing King Agag's life, Saul failed to complete the *mitzvah* (the religious obligation) of genocide—something which was completely unacceptable to the God of the Bible:

15:7 Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, to the east of Egypt.

15:8 He took Agag, king of the Amalekites, alive, and **all his people he utterly destroyed with the sword.**

15:9 But Saul and the army spared [King] Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

15:10 Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel:

15:11 "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the Lord all that night.

Saul tried to defend himself, but God stripped him of his kingship:

15:13 When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The Lord bless you! I have carried out the Lord's instructions."

15:14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?"

15:15 Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."

15:16 "Stop!" Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night."

"Tell me," Saul replied.

15:17 Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel.

15:18 And he [the Lord] sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.'

15:19 Why did you not obey the Lord? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord?"

15:20 "But I did obey the Lord," Saul said. "I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag, their king.

15:21 The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal."

15:22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

15:23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king."

15:24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.

15:25 Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord."

15:26 But Samuel said to him, "I will not go back with you. **You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!**"

Saul repeatedly repented for his "failure":

15:30 Saul replied, "I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord your God."

And God was sad that He had chosen such a sissy to be king:

15:35 The Lord repented that He had made Saul king over Israel.

Saul was stripped of his kingship, which was given to [David](#)—who was frankly just much better at killing civilians. In fact, all the Israelite chicks fawned over David for being a more proficient killer; all the girls wanted him and all the guys (including Saul himself) wanted to *be* him:

18:6 When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes.

18:7 As they danced, they sang: **"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."**

18:8 Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?"

18:9 And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

Certainly, killing thousands just doesn't cut it. The mass murderer field is just so saturated, that you really need to kill tens of thousands to be considered competitive for Heaven University. No wonder Samuel felt like an absolute idiot for sending a sissy to do a man's job; realizing this, he cleaned up Saul's mess:

15:33 Samuel put Agag to death before the Lord at Gilgal.

King Agag was not the only one who was killed: God was so upset over the whole not killing everybody thing that He killed Saul *and his three sons*. The prophet Samuel explained to Saul why this was his fate:

28:18 Because you did not obey the Lord or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the Lord has done this to you today.

[Using the emotive language of Pamela Geller, would this be a case of the mafioso Jewish god offing one of his goons for failing to carry out a hit--or in this case, a hit against thousands of people?]

According to the Jewish texts (as reproduced on p.76 of Vol.11 of [The Jewish Encyclopedia](#)), Saul had protested the commandment to "utterly destroy" the Amalekites, saying:

For one found slain the Torah requires a sin offering [*Deuteronomy 21: 1-9*]; and here so many shall be slain. If the old have sinned, why should the young suffer; and if men have been guilty, why should the cattle be destroyed?

What Saul didn't realize was that obeying the Lord's commandment—in this case to kill women and children—was more important than anything else. The Bible explains the reason for Saul's demise:

1 Chronicles 10:13 Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD. **He failed to obey the LORD's command...**

A well-renowned [Biblical commentary](#) explains:

Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord—in having spared the king of the Amalekites and taken the flocks of the people as spoils [1Sa 15:9],

Today, Jews and Christians revere David over Saul, emphasizing the fact that David was more obedient to God than Saul. For example, ministry founder [Tom Bushnell](#) asks:

When faced with difficult decisions, should we act like King David or King Saul?

...King David and King Saul are as antithetical as any two people in the Bible. If we look at some of the defining moments in their lives, we see two men with drastically different outlooks on life.

When faced with a decision, Saul's first thought was, "Is this pleasing to me?"

King David's first thought usually was, "Is my choice pleasing to the Lord?"

Bushnell then gives this specific example to illustrate:

Saul was disobedient when he spared king Agag and the best of the livestock of the Amalekites. (Partial obedience is disobedience).

David was careful to follow the commands of the Lord, even during battle.

One can only imagine the reaction of the Islamophobes—Spencer, Geller, et al.—had the Quran glorified genocide in this way. In fact, they can never cite verses in the Quran that promote, sanction, or justify genocide—because they simply do not exist. Indeed, there are explicit statements of the Prophet Muhammad forbidding the killing of women and children.

So next time anti-Muslim bigots troll the net by copying and pasting a litany of Quranic quotes in order to bash Muslims, we encourage readers to link this article about Saul (as well as our earlier articles about [Moses](#), [Joshua](#), [Samson](#), and [David](#)) Reproducing these genocidal verses from the Bible is a good way to serve the Islamophobes a steaming hot platter of STFU, our absolute favorite dish.

Addendum I :

Perhaps the tone of voice in this article is a bit too aggressive, and as always with such topics I have my [regrets](#). Yet, in the spirit of [International Judge a Koran Day](#), I think a healthy dose of STFU is necessary. If you want to judge the Quran, then let's also be sure to judge some Bible. I'll see your jihad and raise you a [herem](#).

Jesus Loves His Enemies...and Then Kills Them All

Posted on 23 April 2011 by Danios



This article is part 5 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)

Anti-Muslim demagoguery relies on the demonization of the Prophet Muhammad, who is characterized as being especially violent and warlike.

This idea has certainly gained currency in the "Judeo-Christian West".

When it is pointed out that the Biblical prophets—including [Moses](#), [Joshua](#), [Samson](#), [Saul](#), [David](#), among many others—were far more violent and warlike (and even engaged in [religiously sanctioned genocide](#)), anti-Muslim pro-Christian ideologues will respond by disregarding or downplaying the Old Testament and will instead focus on the personality of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Didn't Jesus preach nonviolence and "loving one's enemies"? The anti-Muslim ideologues use this idea to assault the religion of Islam with. For example, the Catholic apologist Robert Spencer compares Islam to Christianity by juxtaposing carefully selected quotes from Jesus to Islamic texts. In his book *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*, Spencer includes a "Muhammad vs Jesus" section. He cites the following sayings of Jesus in the Bible:

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"

"If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also"

"Blessed are the peacemakers"

"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy"

"But love your enemies, and do good"

These "peaceful" verses of the Bible are compared to select violent-sounding Quranic verses. The violent verses of the Bible "don't count" and are craftily excluded from the comparison ("that's just the Old Testament!"). To tighten the noose, peaceful verses of the Quran are also excluded from the heavily biased analysis: these "don't count" since they are supposedly from when Muhammad was still in Mecca.

To understand the last point, one needs to have a basic understanding of the Prophet Muhammad's biography: he first declared his prophethood in the city of Mecca. Only a very small segment of society accepted him (mostly the weak and poor), whereas the masses—especially the powerful leaders of the city—not only rejected him but actively persecuted him. The chapters of the Quran that were revealed during this period are known as the Meccan chapters. Eventually, Muhammad fled to the city of Medina, whose people accepted him as their ruler. He went from persecuted prophet to ruler and commander-in-chief of a fledgling city-state.

The anti-Muslim ideologues claim that the peaceful and tolerant verses of the Quran come from when Muhammad was weak and persecuted in Mecca. These verses are "canceled", they argue, by the violent-sounding verses in the Medinan chapters. Robert Spencer writes in his book:

Islamic theology divides the Qur'an into "Meccan" and "Medinan" suras [chapters]. The Meccan ones come from the first segment of Muhammad's career as a prophet, when he simply called the Meccans to Islam. Later, after he fled to Medina, his positions hardened. The Medinan suras [are]...filled with matters of law and ritual—and exhortations to jihad warfare against unbelievers. The relatively tolerant verses quoted above and others like them generally date from the Meccan period, while those with a more violent and intolerant edge are mostly from Medina. [\[1\]](#)

The Islamophobes portray Muhammad as opportunistic: when he was weak and under the rule of the pagans, he called for peace. Without being in a position of authority, Muhammad was hardly in a position to do otherwise. *As soon as he came to power, however, he waged "jihad warfare" (what a*

strange phrase!) against them. This is why, they argue, the peaceful verses of the Quran simply “don’t count”.

The merits of Spencer’s claims about the Prophet Muhammad will be critiqued in a future article of this Series. For now, however, we will demonstrate that, using such logic, it is equally possible to invalidate the “peaceful” sayings of Jesus Christ. While he was a persecuted prophet, Jesus advocated nonviolence and peaceful resistance. He was hardly in a position to do otherwise, right? Once in power, however, this changes dramatically and violent warfare becomes the new *modus operandi*.

The Messiah

Just as Muhammad’s biography can be divided into a Meccan and Medinan period, so too can Jesus’s lifestory be divided into a First and Second Coming. (Likewise can Moses’ lifestory be divided into pre- and post-Exodus: prior to Exodus, Moses was largely peaceful, but after Exodus, Moses became the leader of the emerging Jewish state—and subsequently [engaged in holy wars and even genocide against other nations](#).) In the First Coming of Christ, only a small segment of society (mostly from the weak and poor) accepted Jesus, whereas the leaders and authorities persecuted him. During this time period, Jesus advised his followers to engage in nonviolent resistance only, perhaps even pacifism. Jesus advised his followers to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” According to the Bible, this didn’t stop his Jewish and Roman persecutors from crucifying him.

Yet, the *Second* Coming of Christ is a central theological belief of Christianity. When Jesus returns to earth, the gloves will be off: no longer will he practice nonviolence or pacifism. Enemies will be mercilessly killed, not loved. In this manner, Jesus will fulfill the messianic prophecies found in the Bible—both in the Old *and* New Testaments. To Christians, Jesus is the *Messiah* (the Greek word “Christ” has the same meaning as the Hebrew word “Messiah”)—the same Messiah that the Jews had been in anticipation of.

It is important to understand how the concept of Messiah developed.

According to the Bible, Moses and his followers fled persecution in Egypt to find refuge in the land of Canaan. They believed that God had bequeathed this land to them, which would come to be known as Israel.

Unfortunately, there were already peoples who lived in Canaan, a problem that Moses and his followers rectified via military might. The native Canaanites were subsequently occupied, exterminated, or run off their

ancestral lands. When the natives fought back, the Israelites attributed this to their innate and infernal hatred of the Jewish people.

After ruling the “promised land” for a time, the Israelites were themselves conquered by outsiders. The Babylonian Empire captured the Kingdom of Judah and expelled the Jews. Though the Israelites felt no remorse over occupying, slaughtering, and running off the native inhabitants of Canaan, they were mortified when they received similar (albeit milder) treatment. In exile, the Jews prayed for vengeance, as recorded in a divine prayer in the Bible:

Psalm 137:8 O Babylon, you will be destroyed. Happy is the one who pays you back for what you have done to us.

137:9 Blessed is the one who grabs your babies and smashes them against a rock.

(We can hardly imagine the glee that an Islamophobe would feel had such a violent passage, one that blesses those who smash infidel babies against rocks, been found in the Quran instead of the Bible.)

It was during the time of exile that the Jewish concept of Messiah was first born. Dutch historian [Jona Lendering](#) writes:

The word Messiah renders the Aramaic word *mešîhâ'*, which in turn renders the Hebrew *māšîah*. In Antiquity, these words were usually translated into Greek as *Christos* and into Latin as *Christus*, hence the English word *Christ*. All these words mean simply ‘anointed one’, **anointment being a way to show that a Jewish leader had received God’s personal help.**

It was believed that the Messiah (the Anointed One) would receive God’s personal help against the enemies of Israel; the Messiah would defeat the Babylonians and reestablish the Jewish state of Israel. Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, fulfilled this role by conquering Babylon and releasing the Jews from exile. Israel Smith Clare writes:

After Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, had conquered Babylon, he issued an edict permitting the Jews to return to their own country and to rebuild the city and Temple of Jerusalem. ^[2]

Prof. Martin Bernal of Cornell University writes:

The first Messiah in the Bible was Cyrus, the king of Persia who released the Jews—at least those who wanted to leave—from Exile in Babylon. ^[3]

As for this passage in the Bible:

Psalm 137:8 O Babylon, you will be destroyed. Happy is the one who pays you back for what you have done to us.

137:9 Blessed is the one who grabs your babies and smashes them against a rock.

[Clarke's Commentary on the Bible](#) comments on this verse:

This was Cyrus, who was chosen of God to do this work, and is therefore called happy, as being God's agent in its destruction.

The Jews thereby returned to the promised land and rebuilt their nation. According to Jewish tradition, however, this did not last long: the Roman Empire conquered the land, destroyed the Temple, and exiled the Jews once again. As a result, as Lendering puts it, "the old prophecies [about Messiah] became relevant again." Although in Jewish tradition there is a messiah for each generation, there is also *the* Messiah, which is what is commonly thought of when we hear the word. The Messiah would fulfill the task of destroying *all* of Israel's enemies.

[JewFaq.org](#) says of *the* Messiah, which they spell as *mashiach* (emphasis is ours):

The mashiach will be a great political leader descended from King David (Jeremiah 23:5). The mashiach is often referred to as "mashiach ben David" (mashiach, son of David). He will be well-versed in Jewish law, and observant of its commandments (Isaiah 11:2-5). He will be a charismatic leader, inspiring others to follow his example. **He will be a great military leader, who will win battles for Israel.** He will be a great judge, who makes righteous decisions (Jeremiah 33:15).

[KosherJudaism.org](#) states:

The Messiah will defeat and conquer the enemies surrounding Israel.

The Second Coming of Christ

Around 4 B.C., a prophet by the name of Jesus was born. He claimed to be the Messiah, and some Jews followed him. The followers of Christ eventually split into numerous sects, and eventually one triumphed over all others.

These became what are today known as Christians. As for the majority of Jews, they rejected Jesus. Why? The Jews rejected (and continue to reject)

Jesus because he did not fulfill the prophecies pertaining to the Messiah.

How could Jesus be the Messiah when he not only did not defeat or conquer Israel's enemies, but he never even led an army into a single war? On the contrary, didn't Jesus preach nonviolence and "loving one's enemies"?

Instead of rejecting these militaristic aspects of the Messiah, Christians attribute them to Jesus during his Second Coming. No longer will Jesus be a weak and persecuted prophet. Instead, he will hold governmental authority, and is depicted as powerful and mighty. This Jesus will certainly not love his enemies or turn the other cheek to them. In fact, the Bible tells us that Jesus will wage violent warfare against his enemies, and he will mercilessly kill them all.

Many Christians talk about how Jesus Christ will bring peace to the world, once and for all. But they often neglect to mention *how* this world "peace" is obtained. It is only after slaughtering his opponents and subduing "the nations" (the entire world?) under the foot of the global Christian empire that the world will have "peace". [Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible](#) explains:

There shall be no more war; horses and chariots shall be no more used in a hostile way; but there shall be perfect peace, **all enemies being destroyed**, which agrees with Micah 2:3 Zechariah 9:10.

In other words, there will be peace for the simple reason that there will be nobody left to fight, all opponents having been slaughtered or subdued.

This world "peace" is the same "peace" that any conqueror dreams of: after utterly defeating and conquering all of one's neighbors and enemies, what is there left but "peace", insofar as the non-existence of violence? In the accidentally insightful words of the Evangelist [Wayne Blank](#): "Put another way, humans aren't going to have anything left to fight about." Following conquest, a foreign occupier would obviously want the occupied peoples to be peaceful, as this would eliminate the nuisance of having to fight off freedom-fighters. The absence of violence would allow the conquering force to effortlessly sustain its occupation.

The events of the Second Coming of Christ are found in the Bible, including the Book of Revelation—which is the last book in the New Testament. Jesus will "judge and wage war" (Rev. 19:11), his robe will be "dipped in blood" (19:13), and he will be accompanied by "armies" (19:14) with which he will "strike down the nations" (19:15), including ["the Gentiles"](#) in general and ["the nations that were opposed to him"](#) in specific. This will result in the ["utter destruction of all his enemies"](#). Furthermore: ["in his second](#)

[coming\[,\] he will complete their destruction, when he shall put down all opposing rule, principality, and power."](#)

Once he conquers the infidels, Jesus "will rule them with an iron rod" (19:15). **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** writes:

The good news is that The Return Of Jesus Christ is going to happen. The even better news is that this time **He's not coming to be sacrificed by the world, but to rule it**, along with those who have been faithful and obedient to Him. The world is going to know true peace, and genuine justice, in a way that it has never known before...

How Will World Peace Happen?

...[This will] not [be] by pleading and debate, but with a rod of iron. Those who choose to love and obey Him will be loved, while **those who choose to rebel and hate Him will know His wrath.**

Jesus will "will release the fierce wrath of God" (19:15) on them, and ["he shall execute the severest judgment on the opposers of his truth"](#). Because of this, "every tribe on earth will mourn because of him" (Rev. 1:7), and they will ["express the inward terror and horror of their minds, at his appearing; they will fear his resentment"](#). Just as the people of Canaan were terrified by [the Israelite war machine](#), so too would the unbelievers ["look with trembling upon \[Jesus\]"](#). This is repeated in the Gospels, that "the Son of man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn" (Matthew 24:30). ["All the nations of the world shall wail when he comes to judgment"](#) and the enemies of Jesus ["shall mourn at the great calamities coming upon them"](#).

Far from the meek prophet of the First Coming, Jesus on his return will command a very strong military force that will "destroy[] every ruler, authority, and power". Not only is this consistent with the legacy of conquests by the Biblical prophets, it is actually a fulfillment or completion of the task that [Moses](#) initiated: holy war and conquest in the name of God. In First Corinthians (part of the New Testament) it is prophesied that instead of loving his enemies, Christ will subdue and humble them under his feet:

1 Corinthians 15:24 [Jesus] will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power.

15:25 For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet.

Pastor and Biblical scholar Ron Teed explains that Jesus Christ brought “comfort and salvation at His first coming” but will bring “vengeance on God’s enemies” during his Second Coming. There are thus “two comings of Christ, the first to save, the second to judge”—yet in debates with Muslims it seems that Christians play up the First Coming and completely ignore the Second. The popular [Teed Commentaries](#) explains how “vengeance” is for Christ’s enemies (the “unbelievers”) and “comfort” only for his followers (the believers):

The Messiah will bring both comfort and **vengeance. He will take vengeance on God’s enemies** and bring comfort to His people. This is a summary of the mission of Christ. He brought comfort and salvation at His first coming during His earthly ministry according to Luke...

However, He said nothing of taking vengeance on God’s enemies at that time, for that part of his mission will not be fulfilled till He returns triumphant...

[There are] two comings of Christ, the first to save, the second to judge.

In His First coming He did the things mentioned in Isaiah 61:1-2; in His Second Coming He will do the things in verses 2-3. **When He returns He will bring judgment on unbelievers. This will be the day of God’s “vengeance.”**

The ever popular Evangelical site [GotQuestions.org](#) sums it up nicely:

Jesus’ second coming will be exceedingly violent. [Revelation 19:11-21](#) describes the ultimate war with Christ, the conquering commander who judges and makes war “with justice” (v. 11). It’s going to be bloody (v. 13) and gory. The birds will eat the flesh of all those who oppose Him (v. 17-18). **He has no compassion upon His enemies, whom He will conquer completely and consign to a “fiery lake of burning sulfur” (v. 20).**

It is an error to say that God never supports a war. **Jesus is not a pacifist.**

Will the Real Messiah Please Stand Up?

Whereas the Second Coming of Christ is curiously forgotten in debates with Muslims, it is conveniently remembered during debates with Jews. One of the primary (if not *the* primary) functions of the promised messiah in the Judeo-Christian tradition is, after all, vengeance against Israel’s enemies and global dominance. Indeed, the entire concept of Messiah emerged following the conquest of Jewish lands with the subjugation and exile of its

inhabitants. The Messiah stood as hope for the redemption of Israel as well as revenge against her enemies.

Jewish polemical tracts against Christians reveal to us how militarism is a fundamental characteristic of the Messiah. The Christian response in turn reveal how Jesus Christ will indeed be militaristic (during his Second Coming). David Klinghoffer, an Orthodox Jewish author, writes in his book *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*:

There were certainly those among [Jesus'] followers who saw him as the promised Messiah. This was natural. The first century produced messiahs the way our own time produces movie stars. There was always a hot new candidate for the role emerging from obscurity, whose glory faded either as he was slaughtered by the Romans or as his followers lost interest when he failed to produce the goods promised by the prophets. [\[4\]](#)

"The goods" refer to the military conquest of Israel's enemies and world domination. The fact that Jesus failed to produce these "goods" proves that he is not the promised messiah. Klinghoffer continues:

Let him do what the "son of man," the promised Messiah, had been advertised as being destined to do from Daniel back through Ezekiel and Isaiah and the rest of the prophets. Let him rule as a monarch, his kingship extending over "all peoples, nations, and languages." Let him return the exiles and build the Temple and defeat the oppressors and establish universal peace, as the prophets also said...

Let Jesus come up with the real messianic goods—visible to all rather than requiring us to accept someone's assurance that, for example, he was born in Bethlehem—and then we'll take him seriously. [\[5\]](#)

This point is reiterated in his book numerous times:

Hearing Jesus preach, a Jew might reasonably have crossed his arms upon his chest and muttered, "Hm, intriguing, but let's see what happens." After all, the scriptures themselves common-sensically defined a false prophet as someone whose prophecies fail to come true. According to Deuteronomy, this was the chief test of a prophet. [\[6\]](#)

Klinghoffer writes elsewhere:

The Hebrew prophets describe the elements of a messianic scenario that could not easily be overlooked: an ingathering of the Jewish exiles, the reign of a messianic king, a new covenant with the Jews based on a restored

commitment to observance of the commandments, a new Temple, the recognition of God by the world's peoples. The future Davidic king was expected to radically change the world. [\[7\]](#)

The "radical change" involves the "subjugation" of the nations:

The Messiah would be a military and political leader. Philo, whose views have sometimes been taken as foreshadowing Christian teachings, is clear on this: "For 'there shall come forth a man' (Num. 24: 7), says the oracle, and **leading his host of war he will subdue great and populous nations.**"

The Gospel writers thus faced the challenge that Jesus never raised an army, fought the Romans, returned any Jewish exiles, ruled over any population, or did anything else a king messiah would do. [\[8\]](#)

The subjugated nations would then "prostrate" themselves to the Messiah and "serve" him ([perpetual servitude?](#)):

The promised royal scion of David, the Messiah, would surely inspire veneration and awe beyond that accorded even to David himself...The nations will "prostrate" themselves before God, says one psalm; but **so will they "prostrate" themselves (same Hebrew verb) before the Davidic king**, says another psalm...As Daniel puts it..."[The Messiah] was given dominion, honor, kingship, so that all peoples, nations, and languages would serve him." [\[9\]](#)

Klinghoffer defines the Messiah as he "who conquers and rules the nations and liberates the Jews" and describes him as "a mighty warrior". He rhetorically asks:

Was there in Jewish tradition any room for a dead Messiah? Didn't Jesus's death tend to cast doubt on his ability to accomplish all the world-transforming things the Messiah was supposed to do? [\[10\]](#)

Again, the "world-transforming things" include violent holy war against the heathen nations and their subjugation under his rule. Klinghoffer answers his own question:

But was Jesus a ruler over Israel? On the contrary, the younger Kimchi pointed out, "He did not govern Israel but they governed him." [\[11\]](#)

Christians reply by arguing that Jesus *will* fulfill these prophecies, just during his Second Coming. [The Good News](#), a Christian magazine with a readership of nearly half a million subscribers, responds to the Jewish criticism by

arguing that Jesus returns “a second time” as a “conquering King” who will “slay the great armies of those who opposed Him”. Jesus will be “the promised Messiah whom the prophets claimed would rule all nations ‘with a rod of iron’” and “all nations would come under His rule”.

Klinghoffer, our Orthodox Jewish interlocutor, cries foul:

Christians respond by saying that “the famously unfulfilled prophecies (for instance, that the messianic era will be one of peace) apply to the second and final act in Jesus’s career, when he returns to earth. This is a convenient and necessary dodge: The Bible itself never speaks of a two-act messianic drama. [\[11\]](#)

The interesting dynamic is thus established: Jews accuse Jesus of not being militaristic enough, and Christian apologists respond by eagerly proving the militaristic nature of Jesus during his Second Coming.

Christians Affirm Militant Old Testament Prophecies

Far from saying “it’s just the Old Testament!”, Christians routinely—and as a matter of accepted fundamental theology—use the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah to validate their belief in Jesus—prophecies that have militaristic overtones. The Book of Isaiah, for example, has numerous prophecies in it that Christians routinely attribute to Jesus Christ. For example:

Isaiah 35:4 Say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, **he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution** he will come to save you.”

[Matthew Henry’s commentary](#) of this verse says:

Assurance is given of the approach of Messiah, **to take vengeance on the powers of darkness**, to recompense with abundant comforts those that mourn in Zion; He will come and save. **He will come again at the end of time, to punish those who have troubled his people**; and to give those who were troubled such rest as will be a full reward for all their troubles.

This will be “a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion’s cause” (34:8) against the [“nations at enmity with the church”](#) and [“those found opposing the church of Christ”, which will result in “the destruction of \[the church’s\] enemies.”](#) Likewise do Christians claim that the Book of Micah foretells the Second Coming of Christ:

Micah 15:5 I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the heathen, such as they have not heard.

[One Biblical commentary](#) helpfully explains this verse:

Christ will give his Son either the hearts or necks of his enemies, and make them either his friends or his footstool.

[NassirH, a reader of our website, astutely commented: *I suppose this is what JihadWatch writer Roland Shirk meant when he said "Islam is a religion of fear and force, and its adherents can only be at your feet or at your throat."*]

[Another Biblical commentary](#) notes: "Here no mention is made of Mercy, but only of executing vengeance; and that, with wrath and fury." Yet [another](#) states that this is "a prophecy of the final overthrow of all the enemies of pure and undefiled religion" and that this is ["a threatening of vengeance to the Heathens"](#).

When we published articles comparing the Judeo-Christian prophets of the Hebrew Bible to the Prophet Muhammad, an anti-Muslim bigot by the name of Percey (formerly known as Cassidy) claimed that the genocides of the Old Testament were "not supported by Christ's teachings." This hardly seems the case, however, when we consider that Jesus will bring to a climax the holy war first initiated by Moses against the enemies of Israel. Jesus will *fulfill*, not repudiate, Old Testament holy wars against Israel's foes. In fact, the war will be expanded to heathen nations in general, or at least those that reject Jesus.

Conclusion

We could reproduce violent Christian texts *ad nauseum*...What is clear is that the Christian conception of Jesus can very easily be characterized as violent. Prof. Melancthon W. Jacobus writes in *A Standard Bible Dictionary*:

[Jesus] excluded from **the Messiah's character the main elements of the popular ideal, i.e. that of a conquering hero, who would exalt Israel above the heathen**, and through such exclusion He seemed to fail to realize the older Scriptural conception. **The failure, however, was only apparent and temporary. For in the second coming in glory He was to achieve this work.** Accordingly, His disciples recognized a twofoldness in His Messiahship: (1) They saw realized in His past life the ideal Servant of Jehovah, the spiritual Messiah, the Christ who teaches and suffers for the people, and (2) **they looked forward to the realization of the Davidic**

and conquering Messiah in His second coming in power and glory to conquer the nations and reign over them. ^[12]

How then do we reconcile the seemingly peaceful and pacifist sayings of Jesus with the violent and warlike Second Coming of Christ? There are numerous ways to do this, but perhaps the most convincing is that Jesus' peaceful and pacifist sayings were directed towards a resident's personal and local enemies—usually (but not always) referring to fellow co-religionists. It did *not* refer to a government's foreign adversaries, certainly not to heathen nations. Prof. Richard A. Horsley of the University of Michigan argues:

The cluster of sayings keynoted by "love your enemies" pertains neither to external, political enemies nor to the question of nonviolence or nonresistance...The content of nearly all the sayings indicates a context of local interaction with personal enemies, not of relations with foreign or political foes...

"Love your enemies" and the related sayings apparently were understood by [Jesus'] followers...to refer to local social-economic relations, largely within the village community, which was still probably coextensive with the religious community in most cases...[although sometimes referring] to persecutors outside the religious community but still in the local residential community—and certainly not the national or political enemies. ^[13]

This is consistent with the ruling given by the Evangelical site GotQuestions.org, which permits governments to wage war whilst forbidding individuals from "personal vendettas":

God has allowed for just wars throughout the history of His people. From Abraham to Deborah to David, God's people have fought as instruments of judgment from a righteous and holy God. [Romans 13:1-4](#) tells us to submit ourselves to government authorities and that nations have the right to bear the sword against evildoers, both foreign and domestic.

Violence occurs, but we must recognize the difference between holy judgment on sin and our own personal vendettas against those we dislike, which is the inevitable outcome of pride ([Psalm 73:6](#)).

As for the "turning the other cheek" passage, it is known that the slap on the cheek that was being referred to here was in that particular culture understood as an insult, not as assault. The passage itself has to do with a person responding to a personal insult, and has nothing to do with pacifism.

In any case, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary* clarifies: "Of course, He applied this to personal insults, not to groups or nations." ^[14]

Some Christians maintain that fighting the enemies on the battlefield does not exclude loving them. This begs the question: how absolutely irrelevant is this strange form of “love” for enemies that does not proscribe *killing* them?

Whatever the reason for the contradiction between loving enemies on the one hand and killing them on the other, the point is that the comparison between a supposedly peaceful Jesus and violent Muhammad is not just a vapid oversimplification but pure falsity. It is only through a very selective and biased analysis—a carefully crafted comparison between the most peaceful sounding verses of the New Testament (a handful of quotes from Jesus that constitute a small fraction of the Bible overall) with the most violent sounding verses of the Quran (those too out of context, as we shall see in future parts of this Series).

Anything that doesn't fit this agenda simply “doesn't count” (and indeed, the anti-Muslim pro-Christian readers will furiously rack their brains to figure out ways to make the violent Jesus verses “not count”). The Islamophobic logic is thus: If we exclude all violent verses from the Bible and all the peaceful verses from the Quran, then *aha! See how much more violent the Quran is compared to the Bible!* Anti-Muslim Christians scoff at Islam and exalt their religion by informing Muslims of how Jesus, unlike Muhammad, loved his enemies. Let the Muslims reply back ever so wryly: Jesus loved them so much that he kills them.

Addendum I :

Anti-Muslim Christians often chant “Muhammad was a prophet of war, whereas Jesus was the Prince of Peace”. A few points about this are worthy of being mentioned: first, Muhammad never used the title “prophet of war” nor is this mentioned in the Quran or anywhere else. In fact, one of the most common epithets used for Muhammad, one found in the Quran no less, was “A Mercy to All Humanity”. (More on this in a later part of the Series.) Jesus, on the other hand, will be a “Warrior King” and a “Conquering King.” Should it then be “Muhammad is A Mercy to All Humanity, whereas Jesus is the Warrior King”?

As for Jesus being the Prince of Peace, this epithet comes from Isaiah 9:6:

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and **the government will be on his shoulders**. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**.

9:7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace. He will rule with fairness and justice from **the throne of his ancestor David** for all eternity. **The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies will make this happen.**

One [Christian website](#) paraphrases this succinctly: "Israel's enemies will be destroyed. Peace will flow to the four corners of the earth, as the Prince of Peace rules and reigns." Again, this is the "peace" that conquerors dream of. Jesus is the Prince of Peace because he declares war, slaughters and subjugates all possible enemies to the point where nobody is left to fight, and *voila!* there is peace!

This brings us to the commonly quoted (and oft-debated) verse of the Bible, in which Jesus says:

Matthew 10:34 Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Most debates focus on whether or not the word "sword" here is metaphorical or not. Leaving aside the fact that even if this is a metaphor it is certainly a very violent sounding one, it would actually behoove us to focus on the word "peace" in this verse. Jesus told the Jews: "do not think I have come to bring peace on earth" as a way to explain his failure to produce "the goods": ["the Jews believed that when the Messiah comes, there would be a time of world peace."](#) Naturally, this world "peace" would be brought about through war. Of course, in his Second Coming will Jesus bring this "peace on earth" (and by "peace", what is meant is war, slaughter, and subjugation). As we can see, this verse confirms the militant nature of the Messiah (and thus Jesus), regardless of if it is metaphorical or not.

Addendum II:

Here is another hotly debated verse, in which Jesus says:

Luke 19:27 But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.

Robert Spencer dismisses this verse, saying: "These are the words of a king in a parable." Yes, this was a parable that Jesus told his disciples. But what was his intention in narrating this parable? [Gill's Explanation to the Entire Bible](#) explains that it was to explain what will happen to the Jews "when Christ shall come a second time": Jesus will "destroy the Jewish nation" for rejecting him "and then all other enemies will be slain and destroyed" as

well. Death and destruction will be the fate of whoever does not accept Jesus' reign as Warrior King.

This was hardly an innocuous story. It reminds us of a scene in the movie [Gladiator](#) when the evil Roman emperor Commodus tells his nephew a story about an "emperor" who was betrayed by his sister ("his own blood") and how he "struck down" her son as revenge. (Watch it [here](#).) The story was a thinly veiled threat, as was Jesus' parable.

One can only hardly imagine how Islamophobes like Robert Spencer would react had it been the Prophet Muhammad who had used such a violent parable, threatening to return to earth in order to "slay" anyone who "did not want me to reign over them"! This would certainly "count" since all violence in the Quran "counts" whereas whatever is peaceful in the Quran "doesn't count", and whatever is violent in the Bible "doesn't count" and whatever is peaceful in the Bible "counts". Heads I win, tails you lose.

Footnotes

[refer back to article](#) 1. Spencer, Robert. *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*. Washington, DC: Regnery Pub., 2005. 24. Print.

[refer back to article](#) 2. Clare, Israel S. *The Centennial Universal History: A Clear and Concise History of All Nations*. P. W. Ziegler, 1876. 33. Print.

[refer back to article](#) 3. Bernal, Martin. *Black Athena*. Vol. 1. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ., 1996. 125. Print.

[refer back to article](#) 4. Klinghoffer, David. *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus: the Turning Point in Western History*. New York: Three Leaves/Doubleday, 2006. 61. Print.

[refer back to article](#) 5. Ibid., p.71

[refer back to article](#) 6. Ibid., p.64

[refer back to article](#) 7. Ibid., p.62

[refer back to article](#) 8. Ibid., p.63

[refer back to article](#) 9. Ibid., p.69

[refer back to article](#) 10. Ibid., p.161

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[The Bible's Prescriptive, Open-Ended, and Universal Commandments to Wage Holy War and Enslave Infidels \(I\)](#)

Posted on 05 May 2011 by Danios

This article is part 6 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



In his book *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*, anti-Muslim Catholic apologist [Robert Spencer](#) calls the Quran a “book of war” that is “violent and intransigent.” In contrast, he argues, “there is nothing in the Bible that rivals the Qur’an’s exhortations to violence.” This view is held by the general public as well; in the words of [Prof. Philip Jenkins](#):

In the minds of ordinary Christians – and Jews – the Koran teaches savagery and warfare, while the Bible offers a message of love, forgiveness, and charity.

This viewpoint is used to promote bigotry against Muslims and Islam, and to fan the flames of Islamophobia. Fortunately, we’ve “utterly destroyed” this viewpoint (see parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), and [5](#) of this Series), and have categorically shown that the Bible is far more violent than the Quran. As Prof. Jenkins puts it:

In fact, the Bible overflows with “texts of terror,” to borrow a phrase coined by the American theologian Phyllis Trible. The Bible contains far more verses

praising or urging bloodshed than does the Koran, and biblical violence is often far more extreme, and marked by more indiscriminate savagery.

The Bible sanctions genocide, something that one simply cannot find any equivalent of in the Quran. In the Bible are verses calling for the slaughter of civilians, with explicit calls for the butchering of women, children, and even babies. Even the most violent-sounding passages in the Quran do not come close to saying this.

The “Descriptive vs. Prescriptive” Defense

Keenly aware of the fact that the horribly violent verses in the Bible sound far worse than anything in the Quran, Robert Spencer and other anti-Muslim ideologues have to explain why these Biblical passages “don’t count” (whereas the violent sounding Quranic verses always “count”). This follows an important rule of thumb employed by Islamophobes, as we explained in a previous [article](#):

All violence in the Quran “counts” whereas whatever is peaceful in the Quran “doesn’t count”, and whatever is violent in the Bible “doesn’t count” and whatever is peaceful in the Bible “counts”. Heads I win, tails you lose.

Islamophobes argue that the violent passages in the Bible “don’t count” because “the Biblical verses are merely descriptive, not prescriptive like in the Quran.” In other words, the Bible only records and *describes* the violence committed by Judeo-Christian prophets, without prescribing believers of today to carry these acts out.

According to this view, the God of the Bible only commands war against the people of the Seven Nations, who simply do not exist any more. *Since they don’t exist any more, those Biblical verses are effectively dead letters.* This is how the pro-Christian argument goes anyways.

The ultra-conservative Catholic organization [The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property](#) summarizes Spencer’s argument in a sympathetic [review](#) of his book:

Biblical references record God’s commands to specific people to wage war against certain groups for a particular purpose and a limited time period. These passages are a historic account of God’s dealings with His people. Conversely, the Koran’s more numerous violent passages call upon Muslims of all times to fight unbelievers with impunity and spread Islam with the sword.

And in Robert Spencer's own words (found on pp.28-31 of his book):

Islamic apologists more often tend to focus on several Old Testament passages:

* "When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you. And when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them" (Deuteronomy 7:1-2)

* "When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you. However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. When the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword. Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the LORD your God has given you. Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes" (Deuteronomy 20:10-17).

* "Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man intimately. But all the girls who have not known man intimately, spare for yourselves" (Numbers 31:17-18).

Strong stuff, right? Just as bad as "slay the unbelievers wherever you find them" (Qur'an 9:5) and "Therefore, when ye meet the unbelievers in fight, smite at their necks; at length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly on them" (Quran 47:4) and all the rest, right?

Wrong. Unless you happen to be a Hittite, Girgashite, Amorite, Canaanite, Perizzite, Hivite, or Jebusite, [the Seven Nations] these Biblical passages simply do not apply to you. The Qur'an exhorts believers to fight unbelievers without specifying anywhere in the text that only certain unbelievers are to be fought, or only for a certain period of time, or some other distinction. Taking the texts at face value, the command to make war against unbelievers is open-ended and universal. The Old Testament, in contrast, records God's commands to the Israelites to make war against particular people only. This is jarring to modern sensibilities, to be sure, but it does not amount to the same thing.

Robert Spencer reproduces Biblical verses to prove his claim when in actuality these verses are all the proof needed to refute his claim. One does not need to go further than *his own page in his own book* to see how fallacious his basic argument is!

The first passage is Deuteronomy 7: 1-2, which orders the believers to “utterly destroy” the people of the Seven Nations:

When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you. And when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then **you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them** and show no favor to them” (Deuteronomy 7:1-2)

The believers are forbidden to sign a peace treaty with the people of the Seven Nations (“you shall make no covenant with them”), and they must be ethnically cleansed (“you shall utterly destroy them”).

The next passage Spencer cites explains what to do with all nations **other than** the Seven Nations:

When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you. However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. When the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword. Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the LORD your God has given you. **Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations nearby.** **Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes.** (Deuteronomy 20:10-17).

In his book, Robert Spencer completely omitted the verse in red above. Notice how the words in red (Deuteronomy 20:15) simply do not appear in Spencer’s rendition of the passage. Take a look for yourself (click on the image to view):



This time, Spencer didn't even bother using those ever so strategic ellipses to manipulate the meaning of a passage. One wonders at the convenient omission of Deuteronomy 20: 15 and whether or not this is a mistake or deception. It is certainly a very helpful "mistake".

Furthermore, Spencer didn't reproduce 20:17 either:

20:17 But you shall utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD your God has commanded you.

Whatever the case, the Biblical passage (the one that Robert Spencer uses as a proof) is *actually* saying that **the general rule** is that heathens are to be offered terms of "peace", which entails being reduced to "forced labor" ([perpetual servitude](#)). (This is the Bible's version of "peace", and the same type of world "peace" that [Jesus, the "Prince of Peace", will bring during his Second Coming](#).) If the heathens reject these terms of "peace", then in that case they are to be attacked and every single man (including non-combatants) is to be killed. Meanwhile, the women and the children are to be enslaved, and the animals and all property are to be taken as booty.

After stating this **general rule**, the God of the Bible clarifies that **this does not apply** to the people of the Seven Nations, who must be "utterly destroy[ed]". The women and children **cannot be taken as slaves** because the believers "shall not leave alive anything that breathes." In other words, Spencer's rationalization could be applied to Deuteronomy 20:16-17 (the genocidal verses advocating "utter destruction") but *not* to Deuteronomy 20:10-15 (the verses advocating perpetual servitude of heathens).

The Bible thus advocates genocide against heathen residing inside the Promised Land, and [perpetual servitude of heathen](#) outside of it. Genocide is the rule for the Seven Nations (Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites), whereas perpetual servitude is the rule for all heathens other than this. The enforcement of this Biblical

rule (genocide inside the Promised Land and slavery outside of it) can be seen in the story of Gibeon. As infidels, the Gibeonites were forced to choose between genocide and slavery (both options requiring forced conversion); we explain this story [here \[pdf document\]](#).

The Battle Psalms

Above have we refuted the argument that the Bible calls for holy war against the Seven Nations exclusively. But the juiciest Biblical verses are actually found in the Book of Psalms, including this doozie:

Psalms 149:5 Let godly people triumph in glory. Let them sing for joy on their beds.

149:6 Let the praises of God be in their mouths, and a two-edged sword in their hands,

149:7 to execute vengeance on the heathen and punishment on the people,

149:8 to bind their kings with chains, and their leaders with iron shackles.

There's much more in the Book of Psalms, and that's up next...

Editor's Note: Due to the length of this article, it will be split into four pages, the next page to be published tomorrow.

Update I: Page 2 is now available [here](#).

Update II: Page 3 is now available [here](#).

Update III: Page 4 is now available [here](#).

Majority of Americans Believe the Bible is Literally True and the Word of God

Posted on 12 May 2011 by Danios

This article is part 7 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



[Robert Spencer](#) and other anti-Muslim bigots fear-monger about Islam and Muslims by demonizing the Quran, calling it a "book of violence and war."

This, they argue, is quite unlike other religious scriptures, and is *especially* unlike the Bible, which is a book of love and good morals.

We threw cold water on this argument by reproducing oodles of violent passages found in the Bible (see parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), and [6](#) of this Series), showing that the Bible is in fact way more more violent than the Quran.

Instead of defending their initial argument (the oft-repeated claim that the Quran is a *uniquely* violent holy book, far more violent than the Bible) or even their "fall back" argument (the claim that the violent Biblical passages are merely "descriptive" unlike the Quran's violent passages that are supposedly "prescriptive, open-ended, and universal"—a claim that we refuted in [part 6](#) of this Series), Islamophobes quickly move on to their next "fall back" argument:

Jews and Christians no longer believe in the inerrant nature of the Bible, unlike the Muslims who take the Quran as absolutely accurate. We are told that Jews and Christians have moved beyond the Bible (even "tossed it

aside!"), whereas the primitive Muslims continue to follow their archaic holy book. Therefore, the argument goes, invoking the Bible is hardly relevant, since "most Jews and Christians no longer give credence to it."

This argument is not grounded in fact, however. A poll by [Rasmussen Reports](#) found that a majority of all Americans (63%) believe the Bible is literally true and the Word of God, with less than a quarter (24%) disagreeing with this belief. This is quite amazing when one considers that [about 20% of Americans are neither Jewish or Christian!](#) The percentage of those who believe in the literal meaning of the Bible jumps to 70% for Protestants, and becomes overwhelming (89%) for Evangelical Christians in specific. Meanwhile, 77% of Republicans believe in the literal truth of the Bible.

A [Pew Research poll](#) bore out fairly similar results, with 78% of Americans believing that the Bible is either the actual or [inspired](#) Word of God. This view is held by 88% of Protestants, 82% of Catholics, and 91% of other Christian groups. Contrary to the emerging scholarly consensus that the Biblical stories such as Exodus and Conquest are "best regarded as a myth", only a minority of the public at large (19% of Americans, 11% of Protestants, 16% of Catholics, and 6% of other Christian groups) believe that the Bible is just "ancient fables, history, and legends."

Quite the opposite of what our opponents claim, most Christian-Americans very much believe in the accuracy of their scriptural texts. This explains, for instance, why [only a minority of Christians in America believe in evolution](#), with ["60 percent of Americans who call themselves Evangelical Christians...favor replacing evolution with creationism in schools altogether."](#)

Whether it's [evolution](#) or [abortion](#), Christian-Americans take the Bible very, very seriously.

* * * *

As always, our opponents will rely on a "fall back" argument and claim that the case of Europe is different, that the United States is far more religious than the "bastion of atheism" across the pond. The Christians in Europe, we are told, aren't that serious about their religion.

We will preempt this argument by pointing out that only a quarter of the world's Christians are in Europe. The other three-quarters are in North and South America, Africa, and Asia. Latin America has as many Christians as Europe does, and they take their religion [very seriously](#). So too is the case in Christian Africa and Asia, which together accounts for far more Christians

than in Europe. It is a reasonable assumption that the Christians in Latin America, Africa, and Asia take the Bible very seriously. Therefore, the “but Europe is different!” excuse is of limited utility.

The majority of Christians actually live in the developing world. It is of course expected that our opponents will insist on comparing the minority of Christians in the First World to the Muslims in the Third World.

* * * *

The “official view” of the Church reinforces our assertion: [“The Christian Church as a whole claims that the Bible is inspired and inerrant.”](#) Both the Catholic Church and mainstream Protestantism (certainly Evangelical Christianity) view the Bible as accurate. This is a doctrinal view that has always been held and continues to be held by “mainstream Christianity”.

Anti-Islam ideologues further misleading arguments when they exaggerate between the views about “inerrancy” between Christians and Muslims. One “mainstream Christian view” posits that the Bible does have some “errors” in it. The anti-Muslim ideologues shrug off the violent verses in the Bible by arguing that “well, we don’t believe that the Bible is without errors, unlike the Muslims!” This deceptive argument implies that the Christians believe that those violent verses are erroneous/inaccurate.

Yet, this “mainstream Christian view” holds that the Bible is [“98.5% textually pure”](#) and “the 1.5% that is in question is mainly nothing more than spelling errors and occasional word omissions like the words ‘the,’ ‘but,’ etc.” In fact, none of these errors “affect[] doctrinal truths.” Certainly, these “errors” do *not* encompass the violent holy wars that are narrated about the Biblical prophets: “In fact, nothing in ancient history even comes close to the accuracy of the New Testament documents.” Nor do they include the exhortations to violence (“prescriptive, open-ended, and universal” calls to holy war against infidels) found in the Book of Psalms.

What then is the relevance of this argument except to obfuscate the issue?

The fact is that only 6-16% of Christians in America recognize the Bible as “ancient fables, history, and legends.” That having been established, we could care less about whether or not the word “the” should have been “a” or the other way around.

Neither is it relevant whether or not one believes the Bible is “literally” the Word of God or the “inspired” Word of God, as both amount to the same thing: a text that is considered accurate by its followers. As one popular Evangelical site, [GotQuestions.org](#), puts it: “Inspiration means the Bible truly

is the Word of God...Because the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, we can conclude that they are also inerrant and authoritative...Without a doubt the Bible is what it claims to be—the undeniable, authoritative, Word of God to humanity.”

As long as the majority of Christians don’t believe that the Bible is just “ancient fables, history, and legends” (which they don’t), whether they consider the Bible the literal or inspired word of God is largely inconsequential to the argument at hand.

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Unfortunately, we could not locate any poll about Jewish views towards the accuracy of the Bible. But as far as “official views” go, Orthodox Judaism (the only strand of Judaism recognized by the state of Israel) takes the Hebrew Bible very, very seriously.

* * * *

Lastly, it is rather quite telling that the Islamophobes have now fallen back on the argument that “Jews and Christians have tossed the Bible aside”: is this not a sign of surrender and an implicit admission that the Bible glorifies and exhorts violence and that there is no reasonable way of denying this? The need to invoke the argument (or rather, to fall back on it) is an indirect admission that the contrary could not be convincingly argued.

Compare this reaction to Muslims, who instead of needing to rely on the “but we don’t take the Quran seriously” defense, can reasonably argue—using the mitigating verses of the Quran—that the Quran calls for war in self-defense only (Just War Doctrine). Worded another way: the Bible is so violent that it simply can’t be defended, at least not using the same standards the anti-Muslim ideologues employ against the Quran.

The “But That’s Just the Old Testament!” Cop-Out

Posted on 22 May 2011 by Danios

This article is part 8 of LoonWatch’s Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my [“disclaimer”](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



We showcased violence in the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) in parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), and [6](#) of this Series. Even though this list of Biblical verses was hardly exhaustive, it was more than enough to refute the claim—made by Islamophobes like [Robert Spencer](#) (and unfortunately [accepted as fact by the majority of Americans](#))—that the Quran is more violent than the Bible.

In response, many Christians rely on a “fall back” argument: they claim that this “doesn’t count” since “it’s just the Old Testament!” and supposedly Jesus Christ rejected the violent legacy of the OT. It is of course of paramount importance to the anti-Muslim Christians—as well as to [“culturally Christian” atheists](#) and your run-of-the-mill Islamophobes who need to prove the “uniquely” violent nature of Islam’s holy book—to neutralize the Old Testament. After all, if the Old Testament “counts”, then it would be a case of Mutually Assured Destruction (M.A.D.) to attack the Quran for its alleged violence: the Old Testament is by far the more violent book.

There are numerous reasons the “But It’s Just the Old Testament!” Defense doesn’t do the trick:

1) There is no explicit or categorical textual proof from the New Testament that supports the idea that the Old Testament (or the Law) “doesn’t count”. For every verse cited to prove such a claim, there is another that can be cited for the opposite view. In fact, it seems that the textual proof for the opposite view is greater, even overwhelming. For example, Jesus says in the Gospels:

Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

5:19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

And Jesus also said:

Luke 16:17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for one dot of the Law to become void.

There are other verses that similarly seem to affirm the importance of keeping the Law. On the other hand, the evidences used to counter this view are less explicit and less direct.

2) Both the Old and New Testament are considered by all mainstream branches of Christianity to be [“just as inspired as the New Testament.”](#) The New Testament itself affirms the accuracy of the Old Testament:

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

3:17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[“All Scripture – This properly refers to the Old Testament...it includes the whole of the Old Testament, and is the solemn testimony of Paul that it was all inspired.”](#) More importantly, as [Catholic.com](#) says (emphasis is ours): “Scripture — all of Scripture — is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3: 16). This means that the Old Testament is just as inspired as the New Testament and ***thus an expression of the will of Christ.***”

[**Update I:** A reader pointed out the following: *Christians see Jesus as God. That means that he was also the God of the Old Testament. The same God who commanded all those killings and the author of all those violent and disgusting commands as listed in your previous articles. So the violence Jesus supports and predicts is not only evident in the New Testament, but he is supposedly also the author of said violent commands in the Old testament as well.* Not only then is the Old Testament "an expression of the will of Christ"--it *is* Christ.]

Protestant Christianity, as seen on this popular [Evangelical site](#), also agrees with this assessment:

Jesus is always in perfect agreement with the Father ([John 10:30](#)), so we cannot argue that war was only God's will in the Old Testament. God does not change ([Malachi 3:6](#); [James 1:17](#)).

3) On this note, Jesus Christ *himself* is depicted in the *New Testament* as being very violent during his Second Coming (see [part 5](#)). Even if we completely sweep the Biblical prophets and the Old Testament under the rug (which is exactly what anti-Muslim Christians do in debates with Muslims), it doesn't change the fact that Jesus in the New Testament is very violent: he promises to kill or subjugate all of his enemies, which includes those whose only crime is to refuse to believe in him. So, even if we completely disregard the OT, this wouldn't solve the "problem".

More importantly, the fact that Jesus *promised* to kill his enemies (a promise he made during his First Coming)—**even if he is yet to fulfill this promise**—shows that Jesus did *not* reject the violent ways of the earlier Biblical prophets. He simply was not in a position of authority or power to carry out these acts of unbridled violence. He wouldn't have promised violence if he truly rejected the OT's violence.

When we published an article about the violent Second Coming of Christ, many critics cried "you can't compare Jesus' supposed violence in the future with what Muhammad actually already did!" (How quickly anti-Muslim Christians can turn something they believe in with all their might and which they believe is central to their faith—the Second Coming of Christ—into a "supposed" event makes us wonder if this is not Christian [taqiyya](#)?) Yet, it was during his First Coming that Jesus made the promise to kill all those who did not believe in him; the *action*—a violent threat to ruthlessly slaughter infidels (i.e. Luke 19:27)—*has already been made*.

4) Christians not only routinely cite the Old Testament, but they specifically cite it with regard to Jesus. Various prophecies in the OT are attributed to

Jesus: these prophecies depict the Messiah as a violent conquering king who brutally vanquishes his enemies. (Please read the section entitled "Christians Affirm Militant Old Testament Prophecies" in [part 5](#) of the Understanding Jihad Series.) This reinforces point #3 above: Jesus is seen as *fulfilling*, not rejecting, the violence of the Old Testament. After all, the violence of the OT was "an expression of the will of Christ."

5) The official views of the Church itself do not endorse the idea of "tossing the Old Testament aside": even when it comes to formulating a doctrine in regards to war, [the OT must be taken into consideration](#). It is argued that there is concordance, not dissonance, between the Old and New Testaments. As the esteemed theologian [Prof. Samuele R. Bacchiocchi](#) concluded:

An attentive study shows that the NT complements, rather than contradicts the teachings of the OT regarding warfare...A balanced reading of the NT texts suggests that there is a basic agreement between the Old and New Testaments on their teaching on warfare.

The violent wars in the OT are reconciled by arguing that Biblical Israel was justified in its declarations of war and was only acting in self-defense: ["At various times in the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to defend their nation by force of arms."](#) Of course, this is not supported by the facts: the Israelites were clearly [the aggressors, annihilating and/or running off the indigenous populations](#) of a land that they believed was divinely given to them. They were only "defending themselves" insofar as any aggressive occupier will "resist" those they occupy.

6) The fact of the matter is that all mainstream Christian groups affirm both the Old and New Testament as canon. The Church fought off any attempts to "throw away the Old Testament". In the second century of Christianity, Marcion of Sinope rejected the Old Testament because of the violence, war atrocities, and genocide contained therein. He was denounced by the Church, and his views towards the Old Testament were officially damned as heresy. Tertullian, the Father of Western Christianity, issued a rebuttal against Marcion.

We [read](#):

Marcionism. Marcionism owed its existence to Marcion, an individual who gained popularity in Rome in 140-144. His theology was influenced heavily by the Gnostics, and he denied the power of the God of the Old Testament. He promulgated the use of a limited form of the New Testament, including Luke's Gospel and Acts, and many of the Pauline epistles, the former since Luke was a Gentile and the latter since he was sent to preach to the

Gentiles. He found the God of the Old Testament contradictory and inhumane. The “orthodox” Christianity of the time rejected his argumentation, upheld the value of the Old Testament, and dutifully began the work of canonization of the Old and New Testaments. The specter of Marcion loomed large enough so as to merit refutation by Tertullian at the end of the second century; nevertheless, Marcion’s movement mostly died out or assimilated into other Gnostic groups.

Marcionism died out, thanks to the Church and its insistence of the Old Testament’s validity. [The Catholic Encyclopedia](#) calls the Marcionist sect “perhaps the most dangerous foe Christianity has ever known.” Today, there are some modern-day believers, called New Testament Only Christians, who reject the Old Testament due to its inherent violence, war atrocities, and genocide. This group is a very small minority, a “heretical” group that is at odds with the main body of Christianity.

So, unless you happen to be a New Testament Only Christian, the “But That’s Just the Old Testament!” Defense simply doesn’t apply to you. The existence of the New Testament Only Christians, however, is actually indicative of just how violent the Bible is: it couldn’t be reconciled, so more than half of it had to be jettisoned.

* * * *

None of this is to say that Christians *must* interpret the Bible in a violent manner. But what we *are* saying is that a softer reading of the Bible requires textual acrobatics, convoluted argumentation, and theological mind-bending. The reasons given why the Old Testament Law are no longer in effect are far more complex to grasp than the simple, straight-forward understanding one gets from reading Jesus’ seemingly simple, straight-forward statements, such as:

Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

5:19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

This reinforces a point made in an [earlier part](#) of this Series:

Why is it that these anti-Muslim ideologues allow theological and textual acrobatics when it comes to the Bible, but meanwhile they forbid the contextualization of Quranic verses? Certainly it is much easier to “constrain” the violent verses of the Quran than it is for the Bible, since the Quran itself almost always cushions these verses in between mitigating verses. This contrasts quite considerably with the Bible, which has violent verses wrapped in violent passages.

Anti-Muslim Christians point to various verses of the Quran that they claim are intrinsically violent. When it is pointed out to them that their own holy book is replete with violent passages, they respond by explaining why and how they interpret these Biblical passages in a peaceful manner. In the same breath, however, they forbid Muslims from doing the same to the Quran.

Rejecting the Old Testament is a perfectly fine way for a Christian believer to theologically constrain the violence of the Bible, one that we wholeheartedly support. But such a believer should know that his holy book requires such theological mechanisms to constrain its violence, and this should logically endow upon him some religious modesty when it comes to the holy books of others.

* * * *

7) Perhaps the most important reason why the “But That’s Just the Old Testament!” Defense doesn’t work is that it doesn’t do a damned thing for Jewish followers of the Hebrew Bible. Jews don’t believe in the New Testament or Jesus. In fact, their most holiest of books is the Torah, which is the first five books of the Old Testament (known as the *Tanakh* or Hebrew Bible to Jews). These include Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—some of the most violent books of the entire Bible, replete with holy war and divinely ordained genocide. To Jews, the Torah and the Hebrew Bible are 100% active and applicable, with no New Testament to overrule or abrogate them.

When we published articles showcasing the violence of the Bible—especially after our article about [“the Bible’s prescriptive, open-ended, and universal commandments to wage holy war and enslave infidels”](#)—pro-Christian elements were quick to throw the Old Testament (and their Jewish comrades) under the bus: *The God of the Old Testament was a god of war, whereas the New Testament is a god of love.*

In order to prove their claim against Islam, the anti-Muslim ideologues must prove the “uniqueness” of the Quran’s violence. Certainly, this is Robert Spencer’s clear-as-daylight argument on p.19 of his book *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*:

The Qur’an is **unique** among the sacred writings of the world in counseling its adherents to make war against unbelievers.

Short of proving the uniqueness of the Quran’s violence, Spencer et al. have failed in what they set out to do. If it can only be proved that the Quran is only as violent as the Tanakh (or the Torah)—or that Islam is just as violent as Judaism—then what big deal is this? If Spencer wants to fear-monger about Islam, and if—using the same standards—it can be proven that Judaism is just as violent as Islam (nay, more violent)—then will Spencer also fear-monger about Judaism? Can we expect a *JewWatch.com* website coming soon?

In fact, such a site already exists, and it looks like JihadWatch, just against Jews instead of Muslims. Indeed, if the same conclusions about Islam were applied to Judaism, then all this would be exposed for what it really is: wholesale bigotry. But it is much easier to get away with bigotry against Muslims than it is against Jews.

How can Robert Spencer hide behind the “But That’s Just the Old Testament!” Defense when his comrade-in-arms is Jewish? [Pamela Geller](#) of the Atlas Shrugs blog is a partner in crime with Spencer and company.

Clearly, the anti-Muslim Christian right is linked at the hip with Zionist Jews in their shared hatred of Muslims. Why is one side of this unholy alliance willing to throw the other under the bus, and why is the other side ominously quiet when they hear arguments such as “But That’s Just the Old Testament”?

Our argument has never been that the Quran has no violence in it. Rather, our argument is: *all holy books, including the Quran but also the Bible, have violence in them; in fact, the Bible is far more violent than the Quran*. This is in response to the question that most Americans answered incorrectly: [is Islam more likely than other religions to encourage violence?](#) Most importantly, this argument of ours is a response to a claim made by Robert Spencer.

This argument of ours is also based in our deeply held conviction that religions and religious scriptures are just what their readers make of them, as stated in the [introduction of this Series](#):

The reader should not think that I believe that a certain religion or another is violent. Rather, there exist peaceful and violent *interpretations* of religion. I reject the view held by religious orthodoxy that the human mind is simply an empty receptacle that unthinkingly “obeys” the divine plan. Hundreds of years after their prophets have died, believers (of all faiths) are forced (by virtue of not having a divine interlocutor) to exert their own minds and ethics to give life to texts, to render 3D realities from 2D texts. Such an elastic idea—that a religion is whatever its believers make it into—is certainly anathema to orthodox adherents who simply desire a step-by-step instruction manual to produce human automatons. But the truth is that even these orthodox adherents *necessarily* inject into the religious texts their own backgrounds, beliefs, and biases.

One can see why I do not think that simply showing a Biblical verse here or there would prove that Judaism or Christianity are violent faiths. There is a long journey from what is on the page to what is understood and put into practice. And once this reality is comprehended, it is hoped that Jews and Christians will gain a larger perspective when they approach Muslims and their religion.

Opponents have claimed that this Series so far has just been a case of *tu quoque* fallacy: yet, this is fundamentally misunderstanding the purpose of this Series, which is certainly not designed to convert the readers to Islam, but rather to refute the commonly held notion that [Islam is somehow more violent than other faiths](#), a view that the majoritarian group can easily hold (and demagogues like Robert Spencer can reinforce) unless dissenters like ourselves challenge it.

Update I:

See [page II](#) of this article for our follow-up piece.

[The “But That’s Just the Old Testament!” Cop-Out \(II\): How the Christian Right Interprets the Bible](#)

Posted on 02 June 2011 by Danios

Refer to [page 1](#) of this article.



Any and all violence in the Quran “counts”. Nothing violent in the Bible ever “counts”.

This is the axiom closely adhered to by anti-Muslim pro-Christian elements.

We are told that the Old Testament, which is clearly far more violent and warlike than the Quran (see [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), and [6](#)), simply “doesn’t count”. The double-standards used to single out the Quran—and exonerate the Bible—have been exposed on [page 1](#) of this article.

We proved that the most straightforward, intuitive, and obvious reading of the Bible would support the enduring and even eternal applicability of the Old Testament’s violence. This does not mean that peaceful interpretations do not exist. They most certainly do. But if the anti-Muslim pro-Christian bigots will apply a standard of “well, your text *clearly* says XYZ” to the Quran, then this applies even more so to the Bible.

Some critics reassured us that we simply did not understand Christian theology—that we are just too ignorant or too stupid to interpret the Bible.

What we have provided, however, is not simply our own interpretation: right-wing Christians *themselves* interpret the Bible in this way. They look to the Old Testament for guidance when it comes to matters of war and

peace, quite the opposite of what is claimed in debates with Muslims (i.e. “but that’s just the Old Testament” and “the Old Testament doesn’t count!”)

The Christian Right, which singles out the Quran as being “uniquely violent”, is the same group that most often looks to the wars of the Old Testament for inspiration. Case in point: professional Islamophobe Dr. Robert Morey, a Christian theologian and pastor. A self-proclaimed “professional apologist” Morey runs a right-wing Christian group called Faith Defenders. He is a highly regarded figure amongst the religious right, and [“is recognized internationally as a professional philosopher and theologian whose careful scholarship and apologetic abilities establish him as one of Christianity’s top defenders.”](#) According to [his bio](#), his works were included in the Christian Booksellers Association list of The Best of the Good Books and he won Christianity Today’s Significant Books of the Year.

Dr. Morey’s Islamophobic works include *Islam Unveiled* (1991), *The Islamic Invasion* (1992), and *Winning the War Against Radical Islam* (2002). Morey is one of the most recognizable faces in the Christian vs. Muslim debates.

The influential far right-wing website *WorldNetDaily*, which is [aligned with the religious right](#) and in fact founded by Christian Evangelist Joseph Farah, published a plea requesting \$1.2 million to fund Morey’s “crusade” against Islam. (Robert Spencer also writes for *WorldNetDaily*.)

Morey’s site, *FaithDefenders.com*, supports [Act for America](#), the hate organization run by [Bridget Gabriel](#) and [associated with Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer](#). Morey’s books are sold on [Ali Sina’s website](#), the anti-Muslim [Faith Freedom International](#), the same Ali Sina whose work is reproduced by Robert Spencer on JihadWatch. [Daniel Pipes](#), another one of their comrade-in-arms, also reviewed Morey’s book *The Islamic Invasion*. The point is: Robert Morey is a well-known figure in anti-Muslim circles.

More importantly, Robert Morey’s book *When Is It Right to Fight?*—which has as its fundamental argument that wars of aggression are Biblically justified by the Old Testament—was met with acclaim by the religious right. For example, John M. Whitehead, founder of the Rutherford Institute, effusively praised *When Is It Right to Fight?* as “one of the best books on the subject.” Church pastor and famous Christian broadcaster (“Hall-of-Famer” at the National Religious Broadcasters) D. James Kennedy strongly recommended Morey’s book to “all who love and defend liberty” (if, on the other hand, you don’t love liberty, this book may not be for you).

The Dallas Theological Seminary, a notable Evangelical seminary, called Morey’s book “stimulating, thought provoking and helpful.” *The Biblical Evangelist*, a bi-monthly Evangelist magazine, not only loved the book

(boasting that "Morey totally annihilates the position of pacifism") but in fact raved about his books and scholarship in general ("[we have] been extremely pleased with all of them" and "Morey is a very scholarly writer"). [All quotes above appear on the back of Morey's book.]

Robert Morey's book *When Is It Right to Fight?* can be considered a compendium of the Christian Right's justifications for waging wars. In this book, Morey justifies America's many wars of aggression *using none other than the Bible*. He responds to Christian pacifists who claim that we shouldn't base our lives on the Old Testament, saying:

The unity of the Scriptures should not be broken simply because we don't like what they say. The New Testament authors did not hesitate to derive doctrine and ethics from principles contained in the Old Testament (2 Tim. 3:16-17) (p.136)

Far from rejecting the wars and warlike prophets of the Old Testament, Morey claims that "the patriarchs and prophets" are "models for us to follow today":

Throughout the Old Testament, the patriarchs and prophets are pictured as real people struggling with the same kinds of problems we face today. This is why they are listed in Hebrews 11 as models for us to follow today. In this biblical spirit, let us examine their lives and history for answers to our questions. (p.12)

Morey goes on (emphasis is ours):

Perhaps the best place to begin is with the book of beginnings, Genesis...Genesis opens with the revelation that warfare is going on between God and Satan...**This cosmic war between God and Satan now involves the inhabitants of the earth** as well as those of heaven. God is called the "Lord of Hosts", i.e. "the Lord of armies." He is the Lord of the armies of the heaven **and on earth.**

Throughout Scripture, **earthly wars**, where the conflict is clearly between good and evil, are viewed as manifestations of the spiritual conflict taking place in heaven. For example, in Job 1:6-17, the Sabeans and the Chaldeans, as agents of Satan in his conflict with God, raided Job's flocks and killed his servants. The violence against Job was a reflection of the war between God and Satan. Other Old Testament examples can be cited: 1 Chron. 21:1; 2 Kings 6:8-18; Dan. 10:7-14. (p.12)

Not only does Morey support using the Old Testament wars as “models for us to follow today” but notice also that he condones the concept of “holy war”: earthly wars are between “good and evil”, or more specifically, between the “agents of God” and the “agents of Satan”. Assigning one side to God and the other to Satan almost ensures the idea of holy war. Morey takes the concept to its logical conclusion, and permits the “agents of God” to use the same methods as God (“utter destruction”) against the “agents of Satan” on earth.

Morey says further:

The New Testament continues the tradition of depicting the course of human history as warfare between God and Satan, viewing it in terms of conflict between two kingdoms (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). (p.13)

Christian pacifists point out that Jesus will return to rid the world of wars.

Morey counters this by arguing that (1) Jesus will only accomplish this task through the use of force, conquering his opponents in war. This, as we argued in [a previous article in the Series](#), is a conquerer’s “peace”. (2) The fact that Jesus said he will come back to end wars, instead of simply forbidding his followers from participating in the military or to wage wars, is an indication that wars will continue until the End Times. Wars will end only after Jesus destroys the forces of evil altogether, and until then the “agents of God” must continue to wage war against the “agents of Satan” in order that the “tyranny of Satan” not reign supreme. Says Morey (emphasis is ours):

Heavenly and earthly warfare will never be halted until Christ returns to earth to judge the wicked and establish his eternal kingdom (Isa. 65:17-25; Matt. 24:6-8)

The last battle which shall end wars will involve both heavenly **and earthly armies** (Rev. 12:7-9; 19:11-21). This last battle is what the Bible calls Armageddon (Rev. 16:15, 16). (p.13)

This quote also refutes the earlier counter-argument raised by our opponents: when [we argued that Jesus was not “peaceful” as portrayed by them and that he would wage brutal war when he returns to earth](#), they argued that during his Second Coming it would be “heavenly” and “celestial” beings that would do the killing—therefore, we couldn’t possibly use this example to compare to Muhammad’s wars which involved humans and “earthly” beings. Yet, as Morey notes, the wars of Christ’s Second Coming will involve “both heavenly and earthly armies”, which the Bible itself attests to. The killing will be inflicted by “celestial beings” *and men*.

Christian pacifists often cite Isaiah 2:4, in which it is said that Jesus will bring an end to wars. Morey says:

But Isaiah is only saying that wars will cease after Christ returns and judges the wicked (Isa. 2:10-21). Isaiah is describing the new earth where righteousness reigns (vs. 1-3).

In the New Testament, Jesus clearly indicated that wars will continue until the end of history (Matt. 24:6, 7) (p.13)

The argument goes: If Jesus will fight Evil when he returns, and we should follow his example, then shouldn't we fight Evil as well? Christian pacifists often ask "What Would Jesus Do?", arguing that Jesus would love his enemies. But in reality, [he kills them](#). Jesus will only stop fighting them when his enemies are killed or conquered. So shouldn't we kill or fight our enemies until they are dead or conquered?

Instead of merely indicating that he would bring an end to wars, why wouldn't Jesus simply have forbidden war upon his followers? Writes Morey:

In Matt. 24:6, Jesus clearly stated that wars would remain part of human experience until the end of the age. If He were a pacifist, then this would have been a perfect opportunity to condemn all wars. Jesus did not do so in this passage. (p.40)

Morey goes on:

God's angelic armies do not use the techniques of nonresistance in their fight against Satan. Instead, God's army will forcefully cast them out of heaven at the final battle. If pacifism does not work in heaven, neither will it work on earth. (pp.17-18)

The fact that Jesus promised to use force, violence, and war means that these cannot be viewed as something unchristianlike, for Jesus would never call for something unchristianlike. Reasons Morey:

If the sinless Son of God is going to use force to destroy His enemies, then it is not possible to view the use of force as intrinsically wrong or immoral. (p.42)

Robert Morey argues:

If the Scriptures taught that the use of force is intrinsically wrong and immoral, how could it describe the return of Christ as Jesus waging a righteous war?

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war (Rev. 19:11, NASB).

The fact that Jesus will return to punish the wicked with flaming fire reveals that the use of force is not intrinsically incompatible with love, justice, righteousness, or truth. As long as the war to end all wars is righteous and true, lesser wars fought for the same reasons will always be righteous and true. Once the righteousness of Armageddon is accepted, the principle of the just war is established. (pp.20-21)

Morey uses the term "just war", but be not mistaken: his version of "just war" does not restrict warfare to self-defense only. Once again, he uses the Old Testament to prove his case and argues that restricting war to self-defense runs contrary to the Bible:

It is assumed by some that only wars fought in self-defense are just. It would be immoral for one nation to attack another nation unless that nation was attacked first.

The problem with the above theory is that Abraham's use of force was not in self-defense. Chedorlaomer was not attacking him. Abraham was initiating the conflict by pursuing and attacking a tyrannical enemy.

In this light, it is clear that wars of aggression in which one strikes the first blow against tyrants can sometimes be viewed as perfectly just and righteous. (p.22)

Morey's frightening justification for "wars of aggression" gives religious legitimization to an extremely right-wing, neoconservative foreign policy. He writes (emphasis is ours):

It can also be legitimately deduced from Abraham's example that **it is perfectly just for the Free World to use force when necessary and practical to deliver captive nations everywhere** (Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, East Germany, Angola, Cuba, Central America, etc.). (pp.22-23)

Morey's book was first published in 1985, near the end of the Cold War. If it could be argued that it is justified for the Free World (the Judeo-Christian

West) to attack any country under the sway of ungodly Communism, then it is even more justified to wage war against the even more evil moon-god religion of Islam. Surely, a government under Sharia Law is worse than one under Communism.

Indeed, not only has Morey since republished his book, he has smoothly transferred his wrath from Communism to Islam (a good right-wing Christian needs *something* to hate). Not only should Muslim countries be attacked and occupied, but the war “will not be won until we bomb the Kabah in Mecca” and other Islamic holy sites, as he writes on his [website](#):

First, as I wrote in my book, *How to Win the War Against Radical Islam*, the war against the Muslim Jihadists will be long and costly and will not be won until we bomb the Kabah in Mecca. Islam is based on a brick and mortar building that can be destroyed. They pray to that building five times a day, make a pilgrimage to it, run around it, kiss a black rock on the wall, then run between two hills and finally throw rocks at a pillar. What if that building, the Kabah, was destroyed? They could not pray to it or make a pilgrimage to it. The old pagan temple of the moon-god, al-ilah, is the Achilles’ heel of Islam. Destroy it and you destroy Islam’s soul.

In fact, Morey wants to nuke Mecca (and Medina?), which seems to be somewhat of a common fantasy for right-wing Christians and neoconservatives. (He also supports nuking Iran.) Posted on [Morey’s blog site](#) was this gem:

In the end, just as it happened with Japan (Hiroshima/Nagasaki), Muslim holy sites will have to be destroyed...The qur’an promises Muslims that Allah will never allow these sites to be destroyed by the infidels. Without Mecca, Muslims will not be able to hold their ritualistic prayers on Fridays or anytime for that matter.

It may surprise Robert Morey to know that the Kaaba has been severely damaged and even destroyed numerous times in history, even in the time of the Prophet Muhammad himself. Muslims believe that the Kaaba was destroyed in the time of Noah and rebuilt by Abraham. From the time of Abraham to the time of Muhammad, it is said that the Kaaba sustained significant wear-and-tear and damage, periodically being repaired and restored. Thereafter, the Kaaba sustained fire damage, flooding, and was even completely destroyed during a time of civil war.

To Morey’s complete amazement no doubt, the Kaaba was even demolished by one of the disciples of the Prophet Muhammad himself, in order to be

reconstructed and expanded. And another Caliph after this demolished the Kaaba yet again, rebuilding it to his desire.

Is it not a bit dangerous to offer such a solution—nuking Mecca to destroy the Kaaba—without actually *knowing* the religious views of Muslims? Robert Morey seems to be under the impression that Muslims will simply throw in the towel should the Kaaba be destroyed: “Ok you guys got us, we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.” Contrary to what Morey posits, Muslims will most definitely still be able to pray the five ritualistic prayers. Islam won’t come to an end if the Kaaba is destroyed: Muslims will just rebuild it.

Perhaps Morey, the self-proclaimed “scholar on Islam”, should do some basic research first? Even Wikipedia would be a good enough place to start for him.

Going back to the subject at hand, Morey finds nothing in the Bible that contradicts the use of nuclear weaponry. And why should he, when the damage from a nuclear weapon would result in no more deaths than the genocidal wars waged by [Moses](#), [Joshua](#), [Samson](#), [Saul](#), [David](#), etc. found in the Old Testament of the Bible—in which men, women, children, babies, animals, and “all that breathed” were killed?

But what about the the issue of Mutually Assured Destruction? Shouldn’t we avoid nuclear war if not for our enemies but for ourselves? Won’t the enemy retaliate with nuclear bombs and then there would be no life left on earth?

Morey assures us:

Christians need to understand that there is not conclusive evidence that all life would be destroyed on this planet if nuclear war broke out...Many scientists believe that nuclear war is not only survivable but winnable. (pp.130-131)

Furthermore, we should throw caution and restraint to the wind, since God has promised us that we can’t kill all life on earth, no matter how hard we try. Therefore, feel free to nuke and kill all you want. Writes Morey:

Another vital point, God’s Word guarantees that humanity will not be annihilated by wars of its own making. Jesus said that the earth would continue to experience wars until He returned to judge the wicked. (Matt. 24:6) (pp.131-132)

One suspects that a similarly callous attitude towards global warming can be taken, based on the same reasoning.

In any case, after Morey approves of “wars of aggression” based on Abraham’s example, he says:

If the West could only follow Abraham’s godly example, the Communists would soon abandon their program for world conquest. (p.23)

So, the Free World (the Judeo-Christian West) is to wage a war “everywhere”, but it’s the Communists who have the “program for world conquest”. It would be interesting to note the Soviet Union’s own “fear” that the United States and the “Free World” had a desire to spread their ideology worldwide (“world conquest”) and would thus have a similar justification to conquer the world first.

Naturally, Robert Morey feels the same way about Muslims, who according to him want to conquer the world and impose Sharia on everyone. Therefore, it is imperative for the “Free World” (the Judeo-Christian West) to occupy the lands of Islam in order to stop this from happening. World conquest to prevent world conquest.

In our article entitled [Jesus Loves His Enemies...And Then Kills Them All](#), we argued that the Bible merely prohibits “personal vengeance” by individual citizens and not war waged by governments against other nations. We wrote then:

How then do we reconcile the seemingly peaceful and pacifist sayings of Jesus with the violent and warlike Second Coming of Christ? There are numerous ways to do this, but perhaps the most convincing is that Jesus’ peaceful and pacifist sayings were directed towards a resident’s personal and local enemies—usually (but not always) referring to fellow co-religionists. It did *not* refer to a government’s foreign adversaries, certainly not to heathen nations...

This is consistent with the ruling given by the Evangelical site [GotQuestions.org](#), which permits governments to wage war whilst forbidding individuals from “personal vendettas”.

Morey agrees, saying:

The Scriptures recognize a fundamental difference between the use of just force and the exercise of personal violence. (p.24)

The peaceful verses in the New Testament are with regard to “personal violence” and have nothing to do with how governments behave, so argues Morey:

When the New Testament condemns acts of personal violence in such places as Rom. 12:19, it is merely quoting the Old Testament's condemnation. The Old Testament's censure of personal violence in such places as Deut. 32:35 is not viewed as a condemnation of the just use of force elsewhere in the Old Testament. It is clear that while acts of vindictive personal violence are never justified, the proper use of force [by governments] is justifiable. (p.25)

Robert Morey then moves from Genesis to Exodus, arguing that "If God wanted his people to be pacifists, this would have been an ideal time to establish this" (p.27). Instead, "Israel developed an army at God's command" (p.27) and waged an aggressive war against the native inhabitants of Canaan.

From Numbers Morey goes to Joshua: "Joshua led his people to victory over the enemies of God and Israel" (p.28). As we detailed in our article entitled [Who was the Most Violent Prophet in History?](#), Joshua engaged in genocide and ethnic cleansing. Far from seeing this as something despicable ("unlike Muslims who can never see anything wrong with Muhammad!"), Morey says that "Joshua's leadership in military" matters is "a shining example" (p.28).

Morey then says that Joshua obtained peace through war: "peace was won and maintained by the use of force" (Josh. 21:44-45). This is more proof that the Second Coming of Jesus will bring peace only in the sense that any conquerer brings "peace" once all resistance is put down.

Morey then discusses Judges, condoning the violent tactics of the Israelites (emphasis is ours):

These brave men and women used assassinations, **terrorist acts**, sabotage, guerrilla warfare, and open revolt by armed resistance, **all under the blessing of God**. At no point in Judges are these freedom fighters condemned because they used force to destroy tyranny. Let it also be noted that the authors of the New Testament do not hesitate to hold up these freedom fighters as examples of faith and courage **for modern-day Christians to follow** (Heb. 11:32-40).

If the New Testament taught pacifism, as some imagine, the freedom fighters described in Judges would never have been praised by the New Testament writers as examples to follow today. (pp.28-29)

Not only should "modern-day Christians" use "terroristic acts"—which would be "under the blessing of God"—but so too is the art of assassination to be embraced:

It should also be noted that use of assassination to remove tyrants is viewed in Scripture as thoroughly just and commendatory. Ehud's assassination of Eglon or the other assassinations committed by freedom fighters to overthrow tyrants throughout biblical history are always praised in Scripture as legitimate and just means of force. If one takes the biblical record seriously, assassination to remove a tyrant is not murder. (p.31)

Robert Morey then condones assassination of all the Soviet leaders (p.31), and even says that "the same is true for the oppressed peoples in all captive nations" (p.32)—and as he notes elsewhere, "captive nations" means "everywhere" except the Free World (the Judeo-Christian West). Certainly this applies to the lands of Islam today, which are ruled by the worst tyrants of all. Thus does Morey give Biblical justification for Ann Coulter's [statement](#):

We should invade their [Muslim] countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity.

Morey eventually transitions to the "imprecatory Psalms" [imprecatory: invoking evil upon]. Far from claiming "they are just songs!" as some of our opponents did, Morey uses them as a source for war doctrine. He points out:

There is not a single psalm which teaches nonresistance to tyranny. (p.33)

Wrapping up his survey of the Old Testament, Robert Morey concludes:

In our survey of the Old Testament, we have found that from Genesis to Malachi, God views the use of force to deal with tyranny and crime as just, holy, and true. (p.34)

Morey reasons, quite reasonably, that the New Testament cannot view something (in this case, the "use of force") as morally wrong if it was viewed as something morally right in the Old Testament. He rhetorically asks:

Could the New Testament view something as morally wrong if it was viewed as morally right in the Old Testament? (pp.34-35)

Morey argues further that Jesus and his apostles almost never addressed the idea of war in the New Testament (p.37), and that the condemnations of violence here should be seen as only forbidding individuals from personal vengeance, not nation-states from going to war. In fact, points out Morey (emphasis is ours):

At no point in Jesus' ministry did He ever tell Israel or Rome that governments should disarm. He never condemned the just use of force as taught in the Scriptures, nor did He ever condemn the police for using force to punish criminals. Despite the clarity of the Old Testament in its divine approval of the use of force, Jesus never once preached against a nation having an army or the state maintaining a police force.

Logically, this can lead us to only one possible inference. Jesus' silence meant that He approved of and accepted Old Testament precedent of the valid use of force. **Whenever we study the Scriptures, a biblical and historical precedent stands until directly removed by divine revelation.** (p.39)

The bolded part above is important: Morey is saying that it cannot be claimed that one part of the Bible "doesn't count" unless another Biblical passage clearly proves this. In the absence of a clear and unequivocal verse in the New Testament that condemns or at least abrogates the wars of the Old Testament, one simply cannot claim that these "don't count". For example, circumcision is condoned in the Old Testament, but rejected in the New Testament. Had the New Testament been silent on the issue of circumcision, no believer could say this is not necessary. Morey argues:

The apostles sought to carry on the teaching of the law and the prophets as well as the teachings of Christ. For them, the gospel was just as much an Old Testament truth as it was a New Testament revelation (Rom. 1:1-3, 1 Cor. 15:3, 4). They looked to the Old Testament Scriptures for basic principles of doctrine and ethics.

The apostles were careful to point out when various aspects of the Old Testament ceremonial laws, for instance, were superseded by the finished work of Christ. The book of Hebrews is a prime example of this.

Therefore, it is significant that nowhere in the Acts or the Epistles do the apostles ever deal with such issues as whether or not the state can maintain a military force or a national police force. Why did the apostles never deal with such issues?

The Old Testament clearly taught that God leads armies and has established penal justice. Christ never disapproved of that position in the Gospels. If the apostles rejected the Old Testament position on war and now taught pacifism, this would have stirred as much controversy as the laying aside of circumcision. (p.51)

He goes on:

If the apostles had condemned the Old Testament teaching on the use of force, they would have generated a great deal of controversy with the Jews...The silence of the New Testament in this regard, coupled with the silence of the Mishnah and Talmud, clearly indicates that the apostolic church was not teaching pacifism in opposition to the teaching of the Old Testament.

When we survey the Epistles, we do not find a single place where the apostles exhorted Israel or Rome to disarm their military forces or where the apostles condemned war or a Christian's participation in the military. There is no indication that they taught anything different than what is found in the [Old Testament] law. (p.52)

Morey raises several arguments as to why it cannot be said that Jesus disapproved of the Old Testament war doctrine, including the fact that

when dealing with Roman or Jewish soldiers, Jesus never told them to leave the military or that it was morally wrong to be soldiers (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 6:15)...If He were a pacifist and opposed in principle any violence by anyone, He would not have failed to rebuke those who were in the military. Jesus was not known for overlooking sin in the lives of those who sat under His teaching. He denounced sin wherever and whomever He saw it. (p.40)

Morey is referring to several verses in the New Testament in which Christian soldiers are referred to, and there is no condemnation of them for being in the military profession. This, even though the Roman Empire waged wars of aggression and imperial conquest. This lends further credibility to the idea that nothing in the New Testament contradicts the Old Testament's approval of wars of conquest.

Furthermore, the evidences used to prove the pacifism of Jesus are misinterpretations, reasons Robert Morey. For example, "You have heard that it was said to people long ago...but I tell you..." was not a case of Jesus "rejecting the Old Testament, but the warped and twisted interpretation of the [Jewish] Pharisees..." (p.45)

Whenever Jesus is discussing peaceful coexistence, it is between neighbors, not nations:

Second, Jesus is clearly discussing personal ethics. He is describing vital inner qualities of piety and the ways in which we should respond to our neighbors when they become sources of irritation.

That is why Jesus could talk about loving one's neighbor, turning the other cheek and giving one's coat to someone. At no point in the passage does Jesus discuss national or international ethics. (pp.45-46)

We dealt with the "turning the other cheek" issue in [our earlier article](#):

As for the "turning the other cheek" passage, it is known that the slap on the cheek that was being referred to here was in that particular culture understood as an insult, not as assault. The passage itself has to do with a person responding to a personal insult, and has nothing to do with pacifism.

In any case, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary* clarifies: "Of course, He applied this to personal insults, not to groups or nations." ^[14]

Robert Morey agrees and points out that

the slap of the right cheek by the back of the left hand was a personal insult and not an act of violence done in the context of war...It was a personal insult, like spitting in someone's face. (p.47)

As for the verse "blessed are the peacemakers", Morey notes:

"Blessed are the peacemakers" (v 9). The Greek word "peacemaker" was one of Caesar's titles. He was called "the peacemaker" because he won and maintained peace by the use of force. The word does not mean "peaceable" or "pacifistic" or "peace at any price." The word meant "peace through strength." As such, it named the head of the Roman army without contradiction. (pp.47-48)

This, as we mentioned several times before in this Series, is the "peace" that the Bible speaks of: the conqueror's "peace". It is the "peace" that [Joshua](#) brought: the Book of Joshua documents in great detail a lifetime of leading genocidal wars, and then—once the enemies are killed, run off, or subdued in the land—"the land had rest from war" (Joshua 11:23). There was peace because nobody was left to fight.

The same is the case with Jesus during his Second Coming, as we noted before in [Jesus Loves His Enemies...And Then Kills Them All](#). Indeed, Robert Morey concludes that Jesus "was not in any way uncomfortable with the Old Testament teaching in this regard [i.e. war]" (p.48).

* * * *

What we are trying to prove—and have succeeded in doing so—is that the Bible can certainly and quite easily be interpreted by Christians to affirm the

violence in the Old Testament. Robert Morey, one of the leading anti-Muslim pro-Christian theologians in the nation, does exactly that. The Christian Right interprets the Bible in this violent and warlike way. And this is the most straightforward, intuitive, and obvious meaning of the Bible.

This certainly does not mean that all Christians, or even a majority, read the Bible in this manner. What is clear, however, is that just as Christians can point to violent texts in the Quran, so too can Muslims point to (even more) violent texts in the Bible. When Christians say the Quran can be (or even *must* be) interpreted in a violent way, **then using the exact same logic** Muslims can say the same of the Bible.

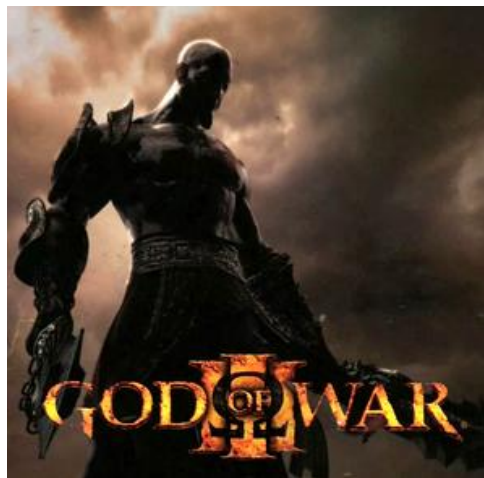
Lastly, it should be noted again that Robert Morey's understanding of "just war" does not at all conform to the Just War Theory, and the reason it doesn't is that the Bible itself does not. The Bible is thus flawed with regard to *jus ad bellum* (the right to wage war) as it sanctions the right to wage "wars of aggression" (as Morey says on p.22: "In this light, it is clear that wars of aggression in which one strikes the first blow against tyrants can sometimes be viewed as perfectly just and righteous"); it is also flawed with regard to *jus in bello* (conduct in war) for it permits the killing of non-combatants, even "utter destruction" (which is why Morey does not find nuking Mecca to be problematic). As we shall see in a future part in the Series, proper principles with regard to *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* are much easier to find in the Quran.

The Bible's Yahweh, a War-God?: Called "Lord of Armies" Over 280 Times in the Bible and "Lord of Peace" Just Once (I)

Posted on 29 August 2011 by Danios

*This piece was first published on Aug, 23.

This article is the conclusion to [part 9](#) of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



Islamophobes argue that the holy book of Islam, the Quran, is *uniquely* violent as compared to other religious scriptures—certainly more so than the “peace-loving Bible.” Similarly, they argue that the prophet of Islam, Muhammad, was *uniquely* violent as far as prophets go—certainly more so than the religious figures of the Judeo-Christian faith.

These reassuring platitudes were shattered in LoonWatch's [Understanding Jihad Series](#), (see parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), and [8](#)). Clearly, the Bible is more violent than the Quran, and the Biblical prophets were more violent than the Islamic prophet.

But what about the Islamic God? How does He compare to the Judeo-Christian God? Is it true that Allah of the Quran is *uniquely* warlike and violent as the anti-Muslim camp claims?

We previously came to the conclusion (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)) that Jews, Christians, and Muslims all worship the same God—however, whereas the God of the Bible and the God of the Quran are *essentially* the

same, they differ somewhat in their *details*. In other words, they have slightly differing qualities and characteristics. For example, [Christians would argue that their God is Trinitarian, whereas the Islamic God is Unitarian.](#)

Anti-Muslim Jews and Christians often try to portray the Islamic God as *uniquely* warlike and violent, as opposed to the supposedly loving and peaceful God of the Bible. However, I will argue (quite convincingly) that in fact the Quranic God is no more warlike and violent than the Biblical one.

Indeed, we might even be able to say the opposite: Yahweh of the Bible, *unlike* Allah of the Quran, is a war-god.

Yahweh originated from a war-god tradition. [Dr. Lloyd M. Barre](#) writes:

The earliest Yahwistic traditions reveal that Yahweh was a bedouin war god from the deserts of Edom and of the surrounding regions. His essentially warlike characteristics are demonstrated by his name, by cultic celebrations of his mighty deeds, and by his ark.

Prof. Mark S. Smith notes on p.144 of *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism* that Yahweh was introduced to the Israelites as a "divine warrior [god] from the south." Indeed, "Yahweh and Baal co-existed and later competed as warrior-gods" (Ibid., p.33). This motif continued in the Israelite tradition: the tribal warrior-god Yahweh went to war against competing gods and nations on behalf of Israel.

Although Yahweh, the God the Israelites adopted, would one day become the supreme God of the land and eliminate his competition, initially he was just one of many competing "war and storm-gods;" as Prof. Erhard S. Gerstenberger writes on p.151 of *Theologies of the Old Testament* (emphasis added):

Yahweh was not always God in Israel and at every social level. Rather, **initially he belongs only to the storm and war gods** like Baal, Anath, Hadad, Resheph and Chemosh...His original homeland was the southern regions of present-day Palestine and Jordan. Thus the regional and functional, cultural and social limitations of Yahweh should be beyond all doubt. The elaboration of ideas about Yahweh, e.g. as a guarantor of fertility, personal good fortune, head of a pantheon, creator of the world, judge of the world, etc. is gradual and only fully unfolds in the exilic/post-exilic age, always in connection with social and historical changes.

In other words, Yahweh started out as a "storm and war god," and only later acquired other functions now commonly associated with God, including for example the ability to create.

Prof. Corrine Carvalho writes on p.79 of *Encountering Ancient Voices: A Guide to Reading the Old Testament* that "Yahweh was first and foremost a warrior God." From the very beginning, "God appeared to the ancient people as a warrior...armed in military attire, to contend with all the forces of his foes'" (p.19 of *God is a Warrior* by Professor Tremper Longman). This is a reflection of God being introduced to the Hebrews in a time of persecution and war, as Moses defeats Pharaoh's forces and then leads his people to war against the Canaanites in the Promised Land.

As we shall see later, herein lies a major difference between Yahweh of Judaism and Allah of Islam; the very first introduction of Yahweh to the believers was in the war-god role, *not* as the creator of all things; as Robert Wright writes in *The Evolution of God*:

...If you go back to the poems that most scholars consider the oldest pieces of the Bible, there's no mention of God creating *anything*. He seems more interested in destroying; he is in large part a warrior god. What some believe to be the oldest piece of all, Exodus 15, is an ode to Yahweh for drowning Egypt's army in the Red Sea. It begins, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea...the Lord is a warrior."

He notes:

The part about creating stars and the moon and the sun and light itself—the story in the first chapter of Genesis—seems to have been added later. In the beginning, so far as we can tell, Yahweh was not yet a cosmic creator.

Biblical scholar Prof. J.M.P. Smith writes in *Religion and War in Israel* published in *The American Journal of Theology* (emphasis added):

Among the functions of Yahweh called into play by Israel's needs, **the leading place in the earlier times was held by war...Hence, Yahweh is constantly represented as a war-god.** He it is who marches at the head of Israel's armies (Deut. 33:27); his right arm brings victory to Israel's banners (Exod. 15:6); Israel's wars are "the wars of Yahweh" himself (Num. 21:14; I Sam. 18:17, 25:28); Israel's obligation is to "come to the help of Yahweh, to the help of Yahweh against the mighty" (Judg. 5:23); Israel's enemies are Yahweh's enemies (Judg. 5:31; I Sam. 30:26); Yahweh is Israel's sword and shield (Deut. 33:29); yea, he is a "a man of war" (Exod. 15:3) **As the leader of a nation of war, Yahweh was credited with the military practices of the day. He shrank not from drastic and cruel measures.** Indeed, he lent his name and influence to the perpetration of such **deeds of barbarity...Yahweh orders the total extermination of**

clans and towns, including man, woman, and child (I Sam. 15:3; Josh 6:17 f.).

In line with the customary belief in ancient times, the warrior-god of Israel did not just lend his help from afar or through divine agents but was thought to literally accompany the soldiers on the battlefield. Professor Sa-Moon Kang of Hebrew University of Jerusalem writes on p.224 of *Divine War in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East* (emphasis added):

YHWH was understood as the divine warrior...YHWH intervened not only to help the army on the battlefield but **He also marched in front of the king and soldiers**...The victory after the battles was given to YHWH, and the spoils obtained were dedicated to YHWH and His treasures.

In *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism*, winner of the 2005 National Jewish Book Award, Howard Schwartz writes (emphasis added):

40. The Warrior God

Yahweh is a mighty warrior who defeated Pharaoh at the Red Sea...God appeared to Pharaoh as a mighty warrior, carrying a fiery bow, with a sword of lightning, traveling through the heavens in a chariot...God took a cherub from His Throne of Glory and rode upon it, waging war against Pharaoh and Egypt, as it is said, He mounted a cherub and flew (Ps. 18:11). Leaping from one wing to another, God taunted Pharaoh, "O evil one, do you have a cherub? Can you do this?"

When the angels saw that God was waging war against the Egyptians on the sea, they came to His aid. Some came carrying swords and others carrying bows or lances. God said to them, "I do not need your aid, for when I go to battle, I go alone." That is why it is said that Yahweh is a man of war (Exod. 15:3).

Notice here that Yahweh does not merely engage in fighting via divine or worldly agents. Instead, he is literally on the battlefield itself, fighting as a warrior god. Schwartz goes on:

In addition to Exodus 15:3, *Yahweh is a man of war*, God is described as a warrior in Psalm 24: *Who is the King of glory—Yahweh, mighty and valiant, Yahweh, valiant in battle* (Ps. 24:8). Frank Moore Cross finds in this passage a strong echo of the Canaanite pattern, in which both El and Ba'al are described as warrior gods.

Prof. F.E. Peters writes on p.272 of *The Monotheists*:

Yahweh was a warrior God (Exod. 5:3, Isa. 42:13)...The Israelites, quite like the pre-Islamic Arabs, even carried their God with them into conflict on occasion (Num. 10:35-36).

Eventually, the Ark became associated with the presence of God Himself, and was brought to the battle front. Prof. Reuven Fireston writes in an article entitled *Holy War Idea in the Hebrew Bible*:

The Ark of the Covenant is the symbol and banner of God's presence in battle (1 Sam. 4:4, 2 Sam. 11:11), and this connection between the Ark and the presence of God in war is made already in the desert in Num.10:35: "When the Ark was to set out, Moses would say: Advance O Lord! May your enemies be scattered and may your foes flee before you!" The Ark is like a battle station from which God fights for Israel and, although not mentioned in every battle, probably went forth often and is referred to in passing as a regular part of the battle array (Jud. 4:14). The Philistine army was terrified of the Ark itself and related to the Ark as if it were the very appearance of God (1 Sam. 4:5-8)

On pp.16-17 of *God Is a Warrior*, Longman et al. trace the "the divine warrior theme," dividing it into "five stages:"

The first stage is God's appearance as a warrior who fights on behalf of his people Israel against their flesh-and-blood enemies. The second stage overlaps with the first, yet culminates Israel's independent political history as God fights in judgment against Israel itself. The Old Testament period ends during the third stage as Israel's prophets look to the future and proclaim the advent of a powerful divine warrior. While many studies of the divine warrior are restricted to the Old Testament, we will show its development into the New Testament. The Gospels and letters reflect a fourth stage, Christ's earthly ministry as the work of a conqueror, though they also look forward to the next stage. The fifth and final stage is anticipated by the church as it awaits the return of the divine warrior who will judge the spiritual and human enemies of God.

The divine warrior theme is one of the basic motifs of the Bible, and can be seen from the very start of the Biblical narrative with Moses defeating the Egyptians all the way to the end of with it with the triumphant return of the divine warrior conqueror Jesus Christ. The genocide against the infidels begins with Moses and comes to its completion with Jesus (refer to parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), and [8](#) of the Understanding Jihad Series).

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That Yahweh, the God of the Bible, is a war-god is clearly written in the text itself:

Exodus 15:3 The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His Name.

Of note aside from the obvious “man of war” appellation is that Yahweh is depicted as a man who is actually physically on the battlefield as a warrior, instead of merely helping from afar. “The Lord will fight for you” (Ex. 14:14) is meant to be taken very literally.

Says the Bible elsewhere:

Isaiah 42:13 The Lord will march forward like a warrior. He will arouse His zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against all His enemies.

God was not just any warrior, but the best of them—victorious in battle:

Psalms 24:8 Who is the King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

He would prove his might in battle by crushing the heads of his enemies:

68:21 Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies.

Indeed, the God of the Bible would order his people to do more than that, commanding them to ethnically cleanse and commit genocide against infidel populations (again, refer to parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), and [8](#) of the Understanding Jihad Series).

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That Yahweh was a warrior-god can be ascertained from the choice of name itself. A longer name for Yahweh is found in the Bible: *Yahweh Tzevaot* or *Yahweh Sabaoth*, which is translated as “Lord of hosts” or “Lord of armies.” Prof. Corrine L. Carvalho writes on p.79 of *Encountering Ancient Voices: A Guide to Reading the Old Testament*:

In other passages in the Bible, a longer version of the name, the Lord of hosts, could also be translated as “the one who created the heavenly armies.” This would suggest that Yahweh was first and foremost a warrior God.

Biblical scholar Jonathan Kirsch writes in *God Against the Gods*:

Among the many titles and honorifics used to describe the God of Israel is *Elohim Yahweh Sabaoth*, which is usually translated as “Lord of Hosts” but also means “Yahweh, the God of Armies.”

This name, Lord of Hosts (Armies)—which defines God’s function as the war-God (or warrior God)—is used well over **two-hundred** times in the Bible.

Stephen D. Renn notes on p.440 of the *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*:

This title, translated “Lord of hosts,” occurs around two hundred times [in the Bible], mainly in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the postexilic prophets. It is found occassionally in the Former Prophets, Chronicles, and Psalms.

Biblical scholar David Noel Freedman writes on page 1402 of *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*:

Yahweh is linked with *seba’ot* (“armies/hosts”) 284 times in the Hebrew Bible.

Jehovah is another way to spell *Yahweh* in English. BlueLetterBible.org says of Jehovah Sabaoth (the Lord of Armies):

Use in the Bible: *Jehovah* and *Elohim* occur with *Sabaoth* over 285 times. It is most frequently used in Jeremiah and Isaiah. *Jehovah Sabaoth* is first used in [1Sa 1:3](#).

Interestingly, if you scroll up just one entry above, you find the following entry for *Jehovah-Shalom* (the Lord of Peace):

Use in the Bible: In the Old Testament *Jehovah-Shalom* occurs only once in [Jdg 6:24](#).

In other words, God is the Lord of Armies over 280 times in the Bible, but Lord of Peace only once. Based on this, would you say that the emphasis of God’s nature is on his warlike nature or his peaceful side?

* * * * *

To make matters worse, the *one* time that the Lord of Peace is used, the passage isn’t that peaceful at all. As noted above, the name Yahweh Shalom is found in Judges 6, in which God orders an Israelite man named Gideon to ethnically cleanse the indigenous population of Midian, reassuring him that “you will strike down all the Midianites together” (Jdg 6:16).

Gideon expresses some doubt about his ability to do this “great task,” and he wants to make sure it’s really God who said that (reasonable enough, right?). Gideon asks God to prove that it’s really Him, so God reveals an angel to him. The angel burns up some meat and bread, which are both completely incinerated. The meat and bread represent the Midianites, who are to be “utterly destroyed.”

Once Gideon realizes it’s an angel in front of him, he panics and thinks that God is angry with him for asking for proof. Gideon is worried that God might kill him for that. That’s when God reassures him that He’s not going to kill him (Gideon, that is), whereupon Gideon breathes a huge sigh of relief and calls God the Lord of Peace for not killing him. Gideon decides to build an altar at that place which he calls “The Lord is Peace” and then God tells him to build an altar by destroying the altar built for the pagan god Baal.

Then, the Bible goes on to tell how God helps Gideon destroy the Midianites. Of note too is the fact the name Gideon is a Hebrew name that [means](#) “he that bruises or breaks; **a destroyer**,” as well as “mighty warrior.” So, The Destroyer built an altar called The Lord is Peace by destroying an altar to another god, in thanks to God for sending him proof that He is the one who asked him to destroy the heathen Midianites. Not very peaceful at all.

* * * * *

Indeed, “[‘Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of hosts’ is one of the frequent titles or names of God in the Old Testament.](#)” In fact, using [BlueLetterBible.org](#) I compiled a list of the most frequently used names in the Bible, and Yahweh Sabaoth is God’s *fourth* most frequently used name in the Bible:

Most Frequently Used Names for God in the Bible

1. Yahweh (Lord): 6,519 times
2. El, Elohim (God): over 2,000 times
3. Adonai (Lord): 434 times
- 4. Yahweh Sabaoth (The Lord of Hosts/Armies): over 285 times**
5. El Elyon (The Most High God): 28 times
6. El Shaddai (Lord God Almighty): 7 times
7. Qanna (Jealous): 6 times
8. El Olam (The Everlasting God): 4 times
9. Yahweh-Raah (The Lord is My Shepherd): 4 times
10. Yahweh Tsidkenu (The Lord Our Righteousness): 2 times
11. Yahweh Mekoddishkem (The Lord Who Sanctifies You): 2 times
12. Yahweh Nissi (The Lord My Banner): 1 time
13. Yahweh-Rapha (The Lord That Heals): 1 time

- 14. Yahweh Shammah (The Lord is There): 1 time
- 15. Yahweh Jireh (The Lord Will Provide): 1 time
- 16. Yahweh-Shalom (The Lord is Peace): 1 time**

(This list seems consistent with that provided by [Agape Bible Study](#).)

This would mean that not only is Lord of Hosts/Armies the fourth most common name of God, it would mean that it is the *first* most frequently used *descriptive* name of God in the Bible, behind only *generic* names such as Yahweh (Lord), El/Elohim (God), and Adonai (Lord). Sabaoth is certainly the most common descriptor following Yahweh, with *Raah* (as in *Yahweh-Raah*) a very distant second place.

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Having thus understood the warlike and violent origin and nature of the Judeo-Christian God, one would wonder why it would be something necessary for Muslims to prove that they worship the same deity. If it is agreed—as is only reasonable—that Muslims worship the same God as Jews and Christians but that their conception and understanding of God differs—I argue that the Judeo-Christian conception and understanding of God is not very desirable in the first place. That the Islamic view of God differs in regard to war and violence *is a good thing*.

Stay tuned for the next page, in which we contrast the Islamic conception and understanding of God with the Judeo-Christian one...

What I Bet You Didn't Know About the Christian Just War Tradition (I)

Posted on 25 October 2011 by Danios



This article is part 11 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)

It is common to hear comparisons between the so-called "just war tradition" in Christianity and the jihad of Islam. We are told that Jesus of the New Testament was non-violent and that the early Church was pacifist.

According to this standard narrative, it was only with Constantine that the Church "fell from Grace" and accepted a very limited concept of defensive war, one that sought to limit, restrain, and constrain war. We are told that the violent acts committed by Christians throughout history were done in contradiction to this doctrine.

Many Westerners seem to be under the impression that we can draw a straight line from the ancient Greeks to St. Augustine to Thomas Aquinas to Hugo Grotius to modern international law. This very selective, cursory, and incomplete understanding of history creates a very "generous" depiction of Christian tradition. Once this mythical and fabricated history is created, it is compared to the jihad tradition of Islam. No such "generous" depictions of Islamic tradition are harbored; if anything, the most cynical view possible is taken.

Such an unfair comparison—coupled with a completely Western perspective on contemporary world affairs—begs the question: why is Islam so violent? Why is the Islamic tradition so much more warlike than the Christian one?

Many right-wing Christians and even secular people of the “Judeo-Christian tradition” exhibit a great deal of religious arrogance, especially when it comes to this subject. Repeatedly, we are told to compare the supposedly peaceful Christian just war tradition with the allegedly brutal Islamic jihad tradition.

Occasionally, Christian polemicists have some level of shame and recognize that the history of Christianity has been marred by war and violence: the Crusades, the ethnic cleansing of the Americas, and the colonial enterprise come to mind. We are assured, however, that these occurrences were “in direct contradiction” to official church doctrine. This is what career Islamophobe Robert Spencer argues, for instance, in his book *Islam Unveiled*. This is, we are told, completely unlike the Islamic offenses throughout history, which were supposedly in line with traditional Islamic thought.

In this article series, I will prove that this understanding of the Christian just war tradition is mythical, fanciful, and misleading. Throughout history, there were serious shortcomings to the Christian understanding of just war—both in matters of *jus ad bellum* (the right to wage war) and *jus in bello* (right conduct during war). Specifically, just war doctrine was restricted to Christians and Europeans. Its constraints simply did not apply to “infidels”, “pagans”, “heathens”, “barbarians”, and “primitives”. The Christian just war tradition was not just exclusivist but through-and-through racist.

One could reasonably argue that such a critique suffers from a modern bias: using contemporary standards to evaluate pre-modern societies is not something I generally encourage. Yet, if we insist on critiquing historical Islam based on such standards, then surely we should be willing to apply the same to Christianity.

Additionally, this shortcoming—the lack of application of the just war principles to infidels—is hardly a tertiary issue. Instead, it lies at the very heart of the comparison that is continually invoked between Christianity and Islam. One could only imagine, for instance, the reaction of anti-Muslim critics if the dictates of war ethic in Islam were applicable to fellow Muslims only. Had this been the case, such a thing would not be seen as a mere “shortcoming” but indicative of the “Islamic supremacist attitude.” This wouldn’t be understood as something that could be relegated to a footnote or a few sentences buried somewhere deep in a huge text (which is the case with books talking about the Christian just war tradition). Instead, pages and pages would be written about the injustices of the Islamic principles of war.

This double standard between believer and infidel, were it to exist in the Islamic tradition (and it does, to an extent), would become the **focus** of discussion. But when it comes to the Judeo-Christian tradition, such things are relegated to “by the way” points that are minimized, ignored, or simply forgotten. Western understandings of the Christian just war tradition create a narrative by cherry-picking views here and there to create a moral trajectory that is extremely generous to that tradition. Meanwhile, Islamic and Eastern traditions are viewed with Orientalist lenses, focusing on the injustices and flaws (particularly with regard to religious minorities). This of course may be a result of a primarily Eurocentric view of history: *how did their war ethic affect people that were like me?*

Yet, if we wanted to extrapolate an overarching theme of the Christian just war tradition, it would have to be this: the Christian just war tradition did **not** limit war (as is commonly argued) **but instead, for the most part, served to justify the conquest and dispossession of indigenous populations.** This was not merely a case of misapplying or exploiting doctrines. Rather, the doctrines were themselves expounded in a way so as to facilitate such applications. Many of history’s famous just war theorists were generating such theories to provide the moral arguments to justify colonial conquest. The tradition was more about **justifying** wars than about limiting violence to just wars. The Christian acts of violence throughout history were **not in spite of** Church doctrine; they were more often than not **because** of it.

Why is it that, even in some scholarly books, the Christian just war tradition towards **fellow believers** is compared to the Islamic attitudes towards war with **unbelievers**? Either the Christian treatment of Christians should be compared to the Islamic treatment of Muslims, or alternatively the Christian treatment of infidels should be compared to the Islamic treatment of the same. It is the unfair comparison between apples and oranges that serves to reinforce this warped understanding of the matter.

* * * * *

An error we must avoid is conflating the modern-day just war doctrine with the historical Christian just war tradition. Although St. Augustine laid down some principles that, through a long process of evolution, found themselves in today’s doctrine, it should be noted that Augustine’s views of just war were, by today’s standards, extremely unjust. One must compare *this* proto-doctrine with what was practiced in traditional Islam, instead of retroactively superimposing the modern concept of just war onto Augustine.

Indeed, “one of the most influential contemporary interpreters of the [just war] tradition today, James Turner Johnson, goes so far as to say that to all intents and purposes, ‘there is no just war doctrine, in the classic form as we know it today, in either Augustine or the theologians or canonists of the high Middle Ages. This doctrine in its classic form [as we know it today], including both a *jus ad bellum*...and a *jus in bello*...does not exist before the end of the middle ages. **Conservatively, it is incorrect to speak of classic just war doctrine existing before about 1500**” (Prof. Nicholas Rengger on p.34 of *War: Essays in Political Philosophy*).

In other words, for 1500 years—roughly seventy-five percent of Christian history—**there was no real just war doctrine**. Shouldn’t this fact be stated when comparing Christian and Islamic traditions? The just war doctrine—as we know it today—arose during a time when the Christian Church’s power was waning, hardly something for Christians to boast about.

And even after that—lest our opponents be tempted to use this fact to their advantage (that the Christian world distanced itself from the Church unlike in the Islamic world)—the just war doctrine that was established continued to be applied, from both a doctrinal standpoint and on-the-ground, to only Christians/Europeans. This continued to be the case in the sixteenth century and all the way through the nineteenth century.

It was only for a fleeting moment in the twentieth century that just war doctrine became universal. It is an irony that in no other century was just war theory so horrifically violated, and this by the Western world (with the United States dropping two atomic bombs on civilian populations).

This brings us to the situation today: Jewish and Christian neocons and extreme Zionists in the United States and Israel are leading the charge against the just war doctrine, trying to use legal means to change it to accommodate the War ~~on~~ of Terror. Many of our opponents are the most vociferous proponents of doing away with such quaint principles as just war, at least when it comes to dealing with Muslims.

Is it this fleeting moment in Christian history, in which for a fraction of a second the just war doctrine really existed, that our opponents use to bash Muslims over the head with?

* * * * *

The standard meme among Islamophobes—and wrongfully accepted by the majority of Americans—has been that [Islam is exceptionally violent](#)—certainly more violent than Judaism and Christianity. When we look at the scriptural

sources, however, this does not bear out: the Bible is far more violent than the Quran (see parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6-i](#), [6-ii](#), [6-iii](#), [6-iv](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9-i](#), and [9-ii](#) of [LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series](#).)

Among the many other “fall back” arguments used by our opponents, we are reassured that Judaism and Christianity have “interpretive traditions” that have moved away from literal, violent understandings of Biblical passages—altogether unlike Islam (so we are told). Robert Spencer writes on p.31 of *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*:

When modern-day Jews and Christians read their Bibles, they simply don't interpret the passages cited as exhorting them to violent action against unbelievers. This is due to the influence of centuries of interpretive traditions that have moved away from literalism regarding these passages. But in Islam, there is no comparable interpretive tradition. The jihad passages in the Qur'an are anything but a dead letter.

The Islamophobes then temporarily move away from quoting the scriptural sources but instead focus on comparing (1) the traditional interpretations of the canonical texts, and (2) the modern-day understandings of said texts.

In both respects, we are told, the Judeo-Christian tradition is more peaceful than the Islamic one.

In the previous article series (entitled [Does Jewish Law Justify Killing Civilians?](#)), I addressed the Jewish side of “the Judeo-Christian tradition.”

[Note: That article series is being modified before the last couple pages will be published. I have decided to take reader input and mellow it out quite a bit, i.e. remove the images, change the title, etc.] I proved that both **traditional** and **contemporary** Jewish understandings of the scriptural sources could hardly be used to justify the argument against Islam.

But when it comes to such matters, it might be more important to address the Christian side of the coin. Considering that Christians are in the majority in this country, it is more common to hear right-wing Christians invoke bellicose comparisons between their faith and Islam. Robert Spencer, an anti-Muslim Catholic polemicist, relies on this comparison routinely.

In order to shield himself from possible “counter-attack,” Spencer uses an interesting argument. In a section entitled “Theological Equivalence” in his book *Islam Unveiled*, Spencer writes:

When confronted with this kind of evidence [about Islam's violence], many Western commentators practice a theological version of “moral equivalence,” analogous to the geopolitical form which held that the Soviet Union and the

United States were essentially equally free and equally oppressive.

"Christians," these commentators say, "have behaved the same way, and have used the Bible to justify violence. Islam is no different: people can use it to wage war or to wage peace."

I am one of these "Western commentators." Spencer cites "the humanist Samuel Bradley" who noted that "Central America was savaged" because of "this country's God." Bradley quoted "Spanish conquistador Pizarro" who slaughtered the indigenous population, by his own admission, only "by the grace of God."

But, Spencer rejects such "theological equivalence," arguing that Pizarro violated "the Just War principles of his own Roman Catholic Church."

Spencer is not just arguing that the *modern-day* just war theory would prohibit the European conquest and dispossession of the Native Americans, but that *even in the time of the conquest and dispossession itself the Church's just war doctrine did*. He is arguing that the Christian acts of violence throughout history were "fundamentally different" than those committed by Muslims, since—according to him—the former were done *against the just war doctrine of the Church*, whereas the latter were endorsed by the Islamic religious establishment.

But, as I have argued above, this is patently false. The Christian just war tradition was used to *justify* the conquest and dispossession of the Native Americans, one of the greatest crimes in all of history. In fact, these doctrines were formulated for that exact purpose in mind.

* * * * *

Disclaimer:

Naturally, as was the case with the article series on Jewish law, there is the chance of offending well-meaning and good-hearted Christians. Let it be known, again, that nowhere am I trying to paint the entire Christian faith or community with a broad brush. There exists no shortage of Christians who oppose war (especially America's current wars in the Muslim world) and who advocate peace, tolerance, and mutual respect.

Critically evaluating religious traditions can be uncomfortable, but the problems therein should not be ignored nor should we pretend they don't exist. Honest evaluations of the past can be the key to coming up with more tolerant answers for the present and future.

I have already discussed some of the problems with the Jewish tradition.

This article series deals with the Christian tradition. Rest assured, however, that a future article series of mine will take a critical look at the Islamic tradition as well. However, because Islamophobia has become so rampant and pervasive in our culture, I do not think that this should be done before we first look at the problems inherent in the Judeo-Christian tradition that our society is based on. Once that is done, we can then look at the Islamic tradition from a more nuanced, balanced, and helpful perspective. This is the purpose of this somewhat controversial article series.

To be continued...

Update I: A reader pointed out that I made many claims above but did not back them up with proof. I should clarify that this page is just the introductory piece to the article series and simply states what I **will** prove.

It is just a statement of my thesis; the proof to back the thesis up is still to come—hence, the “to be continued...”

----- Comments -----

@ Danios.

Please read the following and then comment on this. My thought is Craig has the better argument.

William Lane Craig writes:

According to the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament), when God called forth his people out of slavery in Egypt and back to the land of their forefathers, he directed them to kill all the Canaanite clans who were living in the land (Deut. 7.1-2; 20.16-18). The destruction was to be complete: every man, woman, and child was to be killed. The book of Joshua tells the story of Israel's carrying out God's command in city after city throughout Canaan.

These stories offend our moral sensibilities. Ironically, however, our moral sensibilities in the West have been largely, and for many people unconsciously, shaped by our Judaeo-Christian heritage, which has taught us the intrinsic value of human beings, the importance of dealing justly rather than capriciously, and the necessity of the punishment's fitting the crime. The Bible itself inculcates the values which these stories seem to violate.

The command to kill all the Canaanite peoples is jarring precisely because it seems so at odds with the portrait of Yahweh, Israel's God, which is painted in the Hebrew Scriptures. Contrary to the vituperative rhetoric of someone

like Richard Dawkins, the God of the Hebrew Bible is a God of justice, long-suffering, and compassion.

You can't read the Old Testament prophets without a sense of God's profound care for the poor, the oppressed, the down-trodden, the orphaned, and so on. God demands just laws and just rulers. He literally pleads with people to repent of their unjust ways that He might not judge them. "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ez. 33.11).

He sends a prophet even to the pagan city of Nineveh because of his pity for its inhabitants, "who do not know their right hand from their left" (Jon. 4.11). The Pentateuch itself contains the Ten Commandments, one of the greatest of ancient moral codes, which has shaped Western society. Even the stricture "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" was not a prescription of vengeance but a check on excessive punishment for any crime, serving to moderate violence.

God's judgement is anything but capricious. When the Lord announces His intention to judge Sodom and Gomorrah for their sins, Abraham boldly asks,

"Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Gen. 18.25).

Like a Middle Eastern merchant haggling for a bargain, Abraham continually lowers his price, and each time God meets it without hesitation, assuring Abraham that if there are even ten righteous persons in the city, He will not destroy it for their sake.

So then what is Yahweh doing in commanding Israel's armies to exterminate the Canaanite peoples? It is precisely because we have come to expect Yahweh to act justly and with compassion that we find these stories so difficult to understand. How can He command soldiers to slaughter children?

Now before attempting to say something by way of answer to this difficult question, we should do well first to pause and ask ourselves what is at stake here. Suppose we agree that if God (who is perfectly good) exists, He could not have issued such a command. What follows? That Jesus didn't rise from the dead? That God does not exist? Hardly! So what is the problem supposed to be?

I've often heard popularizers raise this issue as a refutation of the moral argument for God's existence. But that's plainly incorrect. The claim that God could not have issued such a command doesn't falsify or undercut either of the two premises in the moral argument as I have defended it:

1. If God does not exist, objective moral values do not exist.
2. Objective moral values do exist.
3. Therefore, God exists.

In fact, insofar as the atheist thinks that God did something morally wrong in commanding the extermination of the Canaanites, he affirms premise (2). So what is the problem supposed to be?

The problem, it seems to me, is that if God could not have issued such a command, then the biblical stories must be false. Either the incidents never really happened but are just Israeli folklore; or else, if they did, then Israel, carried away in a fit of nationalistic fervor, thinking that God was on their side, claimed that God had commanded them to commit these atrocities, when in fact He had not. In other words, this problem is really an objection to biblical inerrancy.

In fact, ironically, many Old Testament critics are sceptical that the events of the conquest of Canaan ever occurred. They take these stories to be part of the legends of the founding of Israel, akin to the myths of Romulus and Remus and the founding of Rome. For such critics the problem of God's issuing such a command evaporates.

Now that puts the issue in quite a different perspective! The question of biblical inerrancy is an important one, but it's not like the existence of God or the deity of Christ! If we Christians can't find a good answer to the question before us and are, moreover, persuaded that such a command is inconsistent with God's nature, then we'll have to give up biblical inerrancy. But we shouldn't let the unbeliever raising this question get away with thinking that it implies more than it does.

I think that a good start at this problem is to enunciate our ethical theory that underlies our moral judgements. According to the version of divine command ethics which I've defended, our moral duties are constituted by the commands of a holy and loving God. Since God doesn't issue commands to Himself, He has no moral duties to fulfill. He is certainly not subject to the same moral obligations and prohibitions that we are. For example, I have no right to take an innocent life. For me to do so would be murder. But God has

no such prohibition. He can give and take life as He chooses. We all recognize this when we accuse some authority who presumes to take life as "playing God." Human authorities arrogate to themselves rights which belong only to God. God is under no obligation whatsoever to extend my life for another second. If He wanted to strike me dead right now, that's His prerogative.

What that implies is that God has the right to take the lives of the Canaanites when He sees fit. How long they live and when they die is up to Him.

So the problem isn't that God ended the Canaanites' lives. The problem is that He commanded the Israeli soldiers to end them. Isn't that like commanding someone to commit murder? No, it's not. Rather, since our moral duties are determined by God's commands, it is commanding someone to do something which, in the absence of a divine command, would have been murder. The act was morally obligatory for the Israeli soldiers in virtue of God's command, even though, had they undertaken it on their own initiative, it would have been wrong.

On divine command theory, then, God has the right to command an act, which, in the absence of a divine command, would have been sin, but which is now morally obligatory in virtue of that command.

All right; but isn't such a command contrary to God's nature? Well, let's look at the case more closely. It is perhaps significant that the story of Yahweh's destruction of Sodom—along with his solemn assurances to Abraham that were there as many as ten righteous persons in Sodom, the city would not have been destroyed—forms part of the background to the conquest of Canaan and Yahweh's command to destroy the cities there. The implication is that the Canaanites are not righteous people but have come under God's judgement.

In fact, prior to Israel's bondage in Egypt, God tells Abraham,

"Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. . . . And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites [one of the Canaanite clans] is not yet complete" (Gen. 15. 13, 16).

Think of it! God stays His judgement of the Canaanite clans 400 years because their wickedness had not reached the point of intolerability! This is the long-suffering God we know in the Hebrew Scriptures. He even allows

his own chosen people to languish in slavery for four centuries before determining that the Canaanite peoples are ripe for judgement and calling His people forth from Egypt.

By the time of their destruction, Canaanite culture was, in fact, debauched and cruel, embracing such practices as ritual prostitution and even child sacrifice. The Canaanites are to be destroyed "that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God" (Deut. 20.18). God had morally sufficient reasons for His judgement upon Canaan, and Israel was merely the instrument of His justice, just as centuries later God would use the pagan nations of Assyria and Babylon to judge Israel.

But why take the lives of innocent children? The terrible totality of the destruction was undoubtedly related to the prohibition of assimilation to pagan nations on Israel's part. In commanding complete destruction of the Canaanites, the Lord says, "You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons, or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods" (Deut 7.3-4). This command is part and parcel of the whole fabric of complex Jewish ritual law distinguishing clean and unclean practices. To the contemporary Western mind many of the regulations in Old Testament law seem absolutely bizarre and pointless: not to mix linen with wool, not to use the same vessels for meat and for milk products, etc. The overriding thrust of these regulations is to prohibit various kinds of mixing. Clear lines of distinction are being drawn: this and not that. These serve as daily, tangible reminders that Israel is a special people set apart for God Himself.

I spoke once with an Indian missionary who told me that the Eastern mind has an inveterate tendency toward amalgamation. He said Hindus upon hearing the Gospel would smile and say, "Sub ehki eh, sahib, sub ehki eh!" ("All is One, sahib, All is One!" [Hindustani speakers forgive my transliteration!]). It made it almost impossible to reach them because even logical contradictions were subsumed in the whole. He said that he thought the reason God gave Israel so many arbitrary commands about clean and unclean was to teach them the Law of Contradiction!

By setting such strong, harsh dichotomies God taught Israel that any assimilation to pagan idolatry is intolerable. It was His way of preserving Israel's spiritual health and posterity. God knew that if these Canaanite children were allowed to live, they would spell the undoing of Israel. The killing of the Canaanite children not only served to prevent assimilation to Canaanite identity but also served as a shattering, tangible illustration of Israel's being set exclusively apart for God.

Moreover, if we believe, as I do, that God's grace is extended to those who die in infancy or as small children, the death of these children was actually their salvation. We are so wedded to an earthly, naturalistic perspective that we forget that those who die are happy to quit this earth for heaven's incomparable joy. Therefore, God does these children no wrong in taking their lives.

So whom does God wrong in commanding the destruction of the Canaanites? Not the Canaanite adults, for they were corrupt and deserving of judgement. Not the children, for they inherit eternal life. So who is wronged? Ironically, I think the most difficult part of this whole debate is the apparent wrong done to the Israeli soldiers themselves. Can you imagine what it would be like to have to break into some house and kill a terrified woman and her children? The brutalizing effect on these Israeli soldiers is disturbing.

But then, again, we're thinking of this from a Christianized, Western standpoint. For people in the ancient world, life was already brutal. Violence and war were a fact of life for people living in the ancient Near East. Evidence of this fact is that the people who told these stories apparently thought nothing of what the Israeli soldiers were commanded to do (especially if these are founding legends of the nation). No one was wringing his hands over the soldiers' having to kill the Canaanites; those who did so were national heroes.

Moreover, my point above returns. Nothing could so illustrate to the Israelis the seriousness of their calling as a people set apart for God alone. Yahweh is not to be trifled with. He means business, and if Israel apostasizes the same could happen to her. As C. S. Lewis puts it, "Aslan is not a tame lion."

Now how does all this relate to Islamic jihad? Islam sees violence as a means of propagating the Muslim faith. Islam divides the world into two camps: the dar al-Islam (House of Submission) and the dar al-harb (House of War). The former are those lands which have been brought into submission to Islam; the latter are those nations which have not yet been brought into submission. This is how Islam actually views the world!

By contrast, the conquest of Canaan represented God's just judgement upon those peoples. The purpose was not at all to get them to convert to Judaism! War was not being used as an instrument of propagating the Jewish faith. Moreover, the slaughter of the Canaanites represented an unusual historical circumstance, not a regular means of behavior.

The problem with Islam, then, is not that it has got the wrong moral theory; it's that it has got the wrong God. If the Muslim thinks that our moral duties

are constituted by God's commands, then I agree with him. But Muslims and Christians differ radically over God's nature. Christians believe that God is all-loving, while Muslims believe that God loves only Muslims. Allah has no love for unbelievers and sinners. Therefore, they can be killed indiscriminately. Moreover, in Islam God's omnipotence trumps everything, even His own nature. He is therefore utterly arbitrary in His dealing with mankind. By contrast Christians hold that God's holy and loving nature determines what He commands.

The question, then, is not whose moral theory is correct, but which is the true God?