

The Myths of Muhammad

Islam's Most Sacred History Refutes Popular
Misconceptions about the Prophet of Islam

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Muslims often complain of the "misconceptions" about their religion in the West, yet very few seem to know all that much about the true history of Islam and its founder, Muhammad. As a result, the biggest misconceptions about Islam are often those originating from (and sincerely believed by) Muslims themselves.

As a service to Muslims and infidels alike, we hope to refute the contemporary mythology of Muhammad (popular in the West) by referring to the earliest and most reliable Muslim historians who based their writings on the narrations of those who actually knew their revered prophet. The historical compilations of **Ibn Ishaq** (compiled by **Ibn Hisham**), al-Tabari, Bukhari and Sahih Muslim are greatly respected in the Muslim academic community as a priceless source of biographical information and the details of Islam's origin and rise to power. These writings also provide the context for the Qur'an.

Understand that it is the Hadith (traditions), Sira (biography of Muhammad) and the Qur'an together that provide the true Islamic counterpart to the Christian Bible and Jewish Torah. The Qur'an is simply the purported words of Allah arranged in no particular order. It makes little sense outside of the context provided by the other two sources, and it even explicitly refers devout Muslims to them.

Articles posted here will occasionally be revised and improved, and new ones added. Readers not familiar with the life of Muhammad may want to consider approaching these myths through our brief article on the history of his life: ***The Life of Muhammad: An Inconvenient Truth***. It has been updated to include most of the same links found below, and it will help place these debunked myths into historical context - even though it is written from the Muslim point of view.

Muhammad in Mecca

MYTH: Muhammad was persecuted for preaching Islam

MYTH: Muhammad was tortured by the Meccans

MYTH: The Muslims Suffered Many Deaths at the Hands of Meccan Persecutors

MYTH: The Meccans were the First to Draw Blood in the Conflict with Muslims

MYTH: Muhammad Traveled to Jerusalem

MYTH: Persecution Forced Muhammad and the Muslims to Flee Mecca for Medina

Muhammad in Medina

MYTH: Muhammad was under Persecution by the Meccans in Medina

MYTH: Muhammad Raided Meccan Caravans to Retrieve Stolen Property

MYTH: Muhammad Fought the Battle of Badr in Self-Defense

MYTH: Muhammad was a Brave Warrior who Trusted Allah to Protect Him (Uhud)

MYTH: Muhammad Lived at Peace with the Jews (Part 1 - the Banu Qaynuqa)

MYTH: Muhammad Lived at Peace with the Jews (Part 2 - the Banu Nadir)

MYTH: Muhammad Lived at Peace with the Jews (Part 3 - the Banu Qurayza)

Muhammad the Conqueror

MYTH: Muhammad Only Waged War in Self-Defense

MYTH: Muhammad Never Approved of Rape

MYTH: Muhammad Never Killed Children

MYTH: The Meccans were the First to Break the Treaty of Hudaibiya

MYTH: Muhammad Always Chose Peace over War

MYTH: Islam Made Mecca a More Tolerant City

Muhammad the Moralist

MYTH: Muhammad Never Approved of Murder

MYTH: Muhammad Never Killed Captives

MYTH: Muhammad Condemned Pedophilia

MYTH: Muhammad took Multiple Wives as a Favor to Them

MYTH: Muhammad Never Approved of Dishonesty

MYTH: Muhammad Never Killed Women

MYTH: Muhammad was an Abolitionist

MYTH: Islam Did Away with Superstition

MYTH: Muhammad Never Approved of Torture

MYTH: Muhammad Never Killed the Elderly

MYTH: Muhammad Never Approved of Forcing Conversions to Islam

MYTH: Muhammad was a Forgiving Man

The Myth: *Muhammad was persecuted by the Meccans for Preaching Islam*

The Truth: According to Muslim historians, the Meccans were actually quite tolerant of Muhammad preaching his new religion. Mecca was an open society where different religions were respected. Polytheists, Jews and Christians lived and worshipped side-by-side, especially during the holy months, when pagan pilgrims would travel long distances from beyond the city to perform their rituals at the Kaba.

Muhammad brought on the resentment of the local people by breaking with tradition and cursing other religions:

“When the apostle openly displayed Islam as Allah ordered him, his people did not withdraw or turn against him, so far as I have heard, until he spoke disparagingly of their gods. When he did that, they took great offence and resolved unanimously to treat him as an enemy.” (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 167)

Although asked to stop, Muhammad continued to stir up trouble by “condemning” the local religion, causing the Meccans great anxiety:

“[The Meccans] said they had never known anything like the trouble they had endured from this fellow. He had declared their mode of life foolish, insulted their forefathers, reviled their religion, divided the community and cursed their gods” (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 183).

Not only was this an insult to the people and their traditions, but it also threatened the local economy, which depended on the annual pilgrimage. Still, they were so eager to live at peace, that they offered Muhammad money if he would stop stirring up trouble:

*“They decided to send for Muhammad and to negotiate and argue with him... When he came and sat down with them, they explained that that they had sent for him in order that they could talk together. **No Arab had ever treated his tribe as Muhammad had treated them**, and they repeated the charges... If it was money he wanted, they would make him the richest of them all; if it was honor, he should be their prince; if it was sovereignty, **they would make him king.**”* (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 188)

Further proof that the Meccans did not have a problem with Islam existing side-by-side with their own religion is found in the

episode known as the Satanic Verses. According to Muslim historians, Muhammad briefly agreed to their demand to cease disparaging the local gods and recognize the rights of others to their religion:

“When [the Meccans] heard that, they rejoiced. What he had said about their gods pleased and delighted them, and they gave ear to him... When he came to the prostration and finished the chapter, he prostrated and the Muslims followed their prophet in it, having faith in what he brought them and obeying his command. Those mushrikun of Quraysh and others who were in the mosque also prostrated on account of what they had heard him say about their gods. In the whole mosque there was no believer or kafir who did not prostrate”. (Al-Tabari, the Tarikh Vol.1)

The Meccans were clearly relieved that the unprecedented tension over religious beliefs was broken. They rejoiced by praying alongside the Muslims at the Kaba. They accepted the Muslims once Muhammad accepted them.

Unfortunately the period of peace and brotherhood was short-lived. Muhammad soon reneged on his words after his own people began to question the contradiction between his previous claims and his new-found tolerance for other faiths. This incident, particularly his about-face, had the effect of ratcheting up the tension and hostility all the more.

The Myth: *Muhammad was tortured by the Meccans*

The Truth: This never happened. Unlike some of his less fortunate followers, Muhammad enjoyed the protection of his powerful uncle, Abu Talib:

[The leading men of Mecca] *went to Abu Talib* [and said] *“Your nephew has cursed our gods, insulted our religion, mocked our way of life and accused our forefathers of error. Either you must stop him or you must let us get at him”*

But Abu Talib would not relent:

“The apostle continued on his way... In consequence, his relations with the Quraish [Meccans] deteriorated and men withdrew from him in enmity”. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 168).

For thirteen years, the worst that ever happened to Muhammad at Mecca was that he had dust thrown on him by a heckler and was occasionally mocked while praying at the Kaaba. He continued

to provoke the Meccans, at one point telling them that he had come to bring them "slaughter." This caused them to seize Muhammad in an attempt (by one named Uqba) to "throttle" him, but he was released unharmed almost immediately:

"Then they left him. That is the worst that I ever saw the Quraish do to him". (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 184).

I asked Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-As to inform me of the worst thing the pagans had done to Allah's Apostle. He said: "While Allah's Apostle was praying in the courtyard of the Ka'ba, Uqba bin Abi Mu'ait came and seized Allah's Apostle by the shoulder and twisted his garment round his neck and throttled him severely. Abu Bakr came and seized Uqba's shoulder and threw him away from Allah's Apostle and said, "Would you kill a man because he says: 'My Lord is Allah,' and has come to you with clear Signs from your Lord?" (Bukhari 60:339)

Though not injured, Muhammad would have his opportunity to forgive the man who had seized him when Uqba was captured following the Battle of Badr. According to his biographers, the prophet of Islam chose instead to have him slaughtered even as the unarmed prisoner begged for his life.

The Hadith also confirms that Muhammad was not physically harmed by the Meccans:

Allah's Apostle said, "Doesn't it astonish you how Allah protects me from the Quraish's abusing and cursing? They abuse Mudhammad and curse Mudhammad while I am Muhammad (and not Mudhammad)" (Bukhari 56:733)

As mentioned in several places, the worst indignity that Muhammad endured was an episode in which Abu Jahl and others mocked him while he was praying by putting the intestines of an animal on his back (Bukhari 4:241). The men who did this were later killed by the Muslims.

Neither does the Qur'an provide any support for the contemporary thesis that Muhammad suffered physical abuse at Mecca, despite the many harsh things said about those who rejected him - the redundancy of which is so abundant in the Qur'an that it comprises the majority of the text.

There is also an entire Sura is devoted to describing the gruesome and sadistic torture awaiting Abu Lahab and his wife in

hell, who are the only people mentioned by name in the Qur'an (other than Muhammad, of course). Yet, according to the authentic Hadith, their only crime was personal mockery of "the Messenger" at Mecca (Muslim 406, Bukhari 60:475).

The Myth: The Muslims were Persecuted and Suffered Many Deaths at Mecca

The Truth: It's true that there was persecution of the Muslims at Mecca, but the extent of the suffering is greatly exaggerated by modern-day storytellers, who are desperate to justify subsequent Muslim aggression.

It is important to note that Muhammad himself was the source of bitterness against the early Muslims, yet he was protected from personal consequence by his powerful uncle, Abu Talib. Muhammad's biographer recorded many instances in which the leading men of Mecca beseeched Muhammad (either directly or through his uncle) to stop mocking the religion of their ancestors:

Abu Sufyan, with other sundry notables, went to Abu Talib and said: "You know the trouble that exists between us and your nephew, so call him and let us make an agreement that he will leave us alone and we will leave him alone; let him have his religion and we will have ours." (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 278)

Muhammad felt safe in rejecting their peace offering because he did not have to be accountable for the trouble that he was causing. This undoubtedly compounded the frustration of the local leaders, some of whom then took it out on other Muslims over whom they had power. These were primarily slaves and lower ranking family members.

Modern apologists are fond of repeating an apocryphal tale concerning the martyring of an elderly woman named Umm Summayah. She was one of the first converts to Islam and a slave of Abu Jahl, an adversary of Muhammad. According to the contemporary version of the tale, Umm Summayah died of a spear thrust from Abu Jahl. Unfortunately, there is scant evidence to support this.

It is more likely that Umm Summayah died of stress while exposed to the heat at Mecca:

The B. Makhzum used to take out Ammar bin Yasir with his father mother, who were Muslims, in the heat of the day and

expose them to the heat of Mecca, and the Apostle passed by them and said, so I have heard, 'Patience, O family of Yasir! Your meeting place will be paradise.'" They killed his mother, for she refused to abandon Islam. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 206)

This is the *only* recorded death of a Muslim who had suffered persecution at Mecca. It is not supported by either Bukhari or Sahih Muslim, although Ibn Sad does make a reference to the event that appears to be based on Ibn Ishaq/Hisham's account. It is unclear why there is not more emphasis and provided detail concerning the death of Umm Summayah if she were actually bayoneted. (Interestingly, there is more evidence to support the death of Muhammad's own daughter from the stress of Muslim persecution following her father's death).

Beyond this curious event, which would have occurred *after* the Muslims became physically aggressive with Abu Jahl and the polytheists, there is nothing else to substantiate the wild tales of deadly abuse that contemporary Muslims are fond of claiming.

It is critical to note that, despite the detailed list of indictments against the Meccans that are scattered liberally and redundantly throughout the Qur'an, the holiest book of Islam never once says that any Muslims were actually killed by their adversaries during the thirteen years prior to their eviction. Instead, the worst of crimes is detailed in Sura 2:217:

"...but graver is it in the sight of Allah to prevent access to the path of Allah, to deny Him, to prevent access to the Sacred Mosque, and drive out its members."

Allah's indictment against the Meccans is that they evicted Muhammad from Mecca (the only eviction of record) and were denying he and some of the other Muslims the ability to visit the Kaaba during pilgrimage.

There is no mention of death inflicted on the early Muslims. Instead the same verse attempts to convince them that they are justified in killing Meccans merely for not wanting to have anything to do with them. The verse goes on to say:

"Tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter"

At the time, Muhammad was urging his people to attack merchant caravans from Mecca, which involved killing the drivers and stealing the goods. This became the primary source of income

for the Muslims at Medina, and Muhammad became a wealthy man by appropriating a fifth of all loot collected for himself (on Allah's command, of course).

The Myth: *The Pagans at Mecca were the First to Draw Blood in the Conflict with Muslims*

The Truth:

The Muslims were actually the first to resort to physical violence, when Sa'd bin Abu Waqqas picked up a camel's jawbone and struck a local polytheist who was "*rudely interrupting*" his group of praying Muslims. "*This was the first blood to be shed in Islam*" (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 166).

The new converts were quite aggressive, particularly when they could get away with it, which was the misfortune of others. An example is when one of the strongest Muslims, Hamza, struck a Meccan leader by the name of Abu Jahl 'violently' with his bow for speaking in an insulting way to Muhammad:

When he got to the mosque [Hamza] saw [Abu Jahl] sitting among the people, and went up to him until he stood over him, when he lifted up his bow and struck him a violent blow with it, saying, 'Will you insult him when I follow his religion, and say what he says? Hit me back if you can!' (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 185).

Although Abu Jahl did not retaliate against the more powerful man at the time, he later mistreated his Muslim slaves, almost certainly as a consequence of his public humiliation.

The Muslims would later be the first to declare war at Mecca, and were subsequently evicted. Even then, they were the first to renew hostilities as Muhammad ordered deadly raids against Meccan caravans from his new home in Medina.

The Myth: *Muhammad Traveled to Jerusalem*

The Truth:

The Muslim connection to Jerusalem is extremely tenuous compared to Judaism and Christianity. In fact, the claim to the city seems to exist largely because it is held sacred by Western religion. From the time of Muhammad to the present day, Islam has always been a "me too" faith, attempting to ride the coattails of other faiths to which it hopes to aspire.

The official reason that Muslims claim Jerusalem for themselves - after marching an army into the city only two years after Muhammad's death - is that their prophet once visited there...

Unfortunately this would have been in a dream - not in real life. As much as those who demand full control of Jerusalem today would prefer, there is simply no evidence that Muhammad's physical body ever made the trip.

There is certainly ample evidence that Muhammad did claim to have had a dream. At the time, he was trying to convince the doubters around him that he belonged to the line of Jewish prophets. What better way than to tell them that he led the other prophets (Abraham, Moses and Jesus) in prayer at the mosque in Jerusalem (even if no mosque had ever existed there)?

Aisha, Muhammad's favorite wife, later insisted that it was *not* a physical journey (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 265) and there has always been controversy within Islam about whether it was supposed to have been a physical or "spiritual" visit.

At the time, the Meccans mocked Muhammad for claiming to have visited Jerusalem in one night, since it was a one month journey to get there and back. In fact, "*many Muslims gave up their faith*" when they heard this, according to his biographer (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 265). But had the Meccans only known how big the universe really is, then they would have reserved the greatest ridicule for Muhammad's claim to have visited the gates of heaven in the same dream - and it is doubtful that anyone would have believed him at that point.

The observable universe is 93 billion light years wide, meaning that it takes 93 billion years to make it from one side to the other even traveling at the speed of light. In "*Leaving Islam*" by Ibn Warraq, a young contributor points out that if Muhammad had left the (non-existent) mosque in Jerusalem 1400 years ago, traveling at this phenomenal speed through the icy void of space, he would still be trying to make it out of our galaxy (p. 347). At this point, Muslims (who claim that theirs is the most "scientific" of religions) fall back on the idea that Muhammad visited Jerusalem "in spirit"... whatever that means.

To prove his claim, a nervous Muhammad gave a general description of the city "*from above*" to Abu Bakr, who "verified" it to be true. Muhammad shouldn't have worried about his most

faithful apostle, at least, since Abu Bakr had already pledged his loyalty to whatever his prophet had to say: *"If he says it, then it is true."* (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 265).

Abu Bakr's gullibility was legendary. Not only did he hand over his own 6-year-old daughter in "marriage" at Muhammad's request, but his prophet even got him believing in talking cows at one point:

Once Allah's Apostle; offered the Morning Prayer and then faced the people and said, "While a man was driving a cow, he suddenly rode over it and beat it. The cow said, "We have not been created for this, but we have been created for sloughing." On that the people said astonishingly, "Glorified be Allah! A cow speaks!" The Prophet said, "I believe this, and Abu Bakr and 'Umar too, believe it, although neither of them was present there. (Bukhari 56:677)

Obviously, those who believe in Muhammad's claim to have traveled to Jerusalem either in body or in spirit rely on blind faith rather than common sense. He was known to use the veil of sleep to make other grandiose claims about himself, once insisting *"while I was sleeping, the keys to the treasures of the world were brought to me and put in my hand"* (Bukhari 52:220).

Even though he had never traveled to Jerusalem before, it is highly likely that Muhammad heard descriptions of the city from traders who had been in the city, particularly since he was known to seek out story tellers on his business trips.

There is simply no compelling reason to believe that Muhammad's dream was anything other than that.

The Myth: Muhammad was forced by Persecution to Flee Mecca - and the Muslims were forced to Flee with Him

The Truth:

Both parts of this myth are wrong. Only Muhammad was in danger at Mecca and this was ***after*** he made a treaty of war against the local residents while living among them.

After his influential uncle died, Muhammad was exposed to the wrath of the Meccans, whom he had been insulting free of penalty for so many years. Still, they did ***not*** seek to harm him, because they believed that his vulnerability following the death of his protector meant that he would finally stop stirring up trouble.

They were mistaken.

Muhammad eventually made an alliance with another town, Medina, that included **provisions of war** against the Meccans. The parties to the treaty were asked *“Do you realize to what you are committing yourselves in pledging your support to this man? It is to war against all and sundry”* (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 299). The pledge to war is further confirmed in Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 305.

Therefore, it was only *after* Muhammad committed himself to armed revolution against the Meccans that the town’s leaders sought to have him either killed or evicted.

The historical account also flatly contradicts the popular view that all Muslims had to flee Mecca following Muhammad’s declaration of war. In fact, it was only Muhammad himself whom the Meccans were interested in seizing. This is proven by the episode recounted in Ibn Ishaq/Hisham (326-328) in which Muhammad’s own son-in-law, Ali, sleeps in his bed to trick his enemies into thinking that they had cornered him on the night they came to seize him.

Not only did the Meccans do no harm to Ali, even after finding out that he had fooled them, but he remained in the city for several days thereafter with Muhammad’s daughter Fatima in order to arrange the transfer of the family business to Medina.

The story of Fatima’s sister, Muhammad’s oldest daughter, is of acute embarrassment to those who insist Muslims were suffering in Mecca. Zaynab was married to Abu al-Aas ibn al-Rabee, one of Muhammad’s arch enemies, and had no desire to leave. When Muhammad took her husband prisoner at the Battle of Badr, Zaynab tried to ransom him, but the prophet of Islam would not free the man until she promised to leave Mecca and live in Medina with him instead. She was actually forced to trade her marriage for her husband’s life. It was not until Abu al-Aas agreed to “embrace” Islam (after being taken hostage again six years later following a Muslim caravan raid) that Muhammad allowed the two to live together.

Muslim biographers provide the names of other Muslims who continued to live in Mecca following Muhammad’s departure and there is no record that they were persecuted. There is even some evidence that the Muslims in *Medina* were allowed to conduct

pilgrimages back to Mecca during the holy months (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 424 & Qur'an 2:196).

It is important to note that Muhammad justified his own eviction at the hands of the Meccans by his subsequent actions in Medina, where he began evicting the native Jewish tribes within just a few months of arriving. Apologists are fond of claiming that the eviction (and outright execution) of the Jews on the direct order of Muhammad was necessary because of their “enmity” towards him.

Unfortunately for the Jews, the Muslims were far less patient and far more severe with them than the Meccans had been with Muhammad – but this is just one of the many grand hypocrisies of Islam.

A supremacist ideology is always its own justification.

***The Myth:* The Muslims were under Persecution from the Meccans while Living at Medina**

The Truth:

The only reason that this myth arose is the need for Muslim apologists to justify the more violent passages of the Qur'an's second chapter, which was “revealed” shortly after Muhammad arrived in Medina following the *hijra*. Passages from this chapter encourage believers to violence within the context of ending “tumult,” “oppression,” and “persecution.” Because of this, contemporary Muslim readers usually apply their personal definitions to these terms and assume that the Muslims in Medina must have been under attack at the time.

Unfortunately, what Muhammad meant by “persecution” is well-defined within the historical record, and it is quite different from the popular modern-day view. In fact, it was the Meccans who were acting in their own defense during this time.

Historians do not record any act of aggression by the Meccans against the Muslims during the time at which the second sura was narrated by Muhammad. There were no armies marching against them, nor any plans for such. The Meccans had no influence in this far-away town, and Muslims were not under persecution at the time by any stretch of the term as it is popularly understood today. According to the sequence of events in the Sira (biography), the Meccans were quite content with leaving Muhammad alone

following his eviction (even though he had made a pledge of war against them).

Common sense also tells us that had the Muslims been under actual attack then it would not have been necessary to inspire them to war. If someone has broken into your home and is in the process of savaging your family, you do really need a formal command from Allah telling you to act in self-defense?

Muhammad's pride was hurting from his ouster and his credibility as Allah's chosen one was damaged. He wanted revenge. He used his "revelations from Allah" to redefine persecution in order to convince his followers that they were under it. He wanted them to believe that the mere fact that the Meccans had evicted them to Medina and prevented their return was grounds for marching back with a vengeful army (ie. 2:193 - *"persecution is worse than slaughter"*).

But it was entirely reasonable for the Meccans to evict Muhammad and prevent his return. In the first place, the prophet of Islam had declared himself to be an armed revolutionary against them. What town would invite a sworn enemy back within its own gates? (Indeed, the Meccans were foolish enough to do exactly that a few years later and paid for it with the loss of their city and way of life).

The second reason that the Meccans did not want Muhammad anywhere near their town was that Islam was intolerant of other faiths and demanded sole possession of the Kaaba, the common worship area. In other words, it wasn't that the Meccans had a problem with Muslims circling the Kaaba, it was that Muslims wanted to bar everyone else from doing so. This is confirmed in the Quran (Sura 9:18-19), which evicted anyone from Mecca who refused to convert to Islam following his capture of the city in 630.

Against this reality, the words of Sura 2 take on a different meaning:

*"And slay them wherever ye find them, and drive them out of the places whence they drove you out, for **persecution is worse than slaughter**. And fight not with them at the Inviolable Place of Worship until they first attack you there, but if they attack you (there) then slay them. Such is the reward of disbelievers... And fight them until persecution is no more, and **religion is for Allah**. (Sura 2:191, 193)*

Although Muslims are fond of claiming that this passage is limited to matters of self-defense, the actual historical context firmly contradicts this. Instead the verse is a justification for aggression in the cause of advancing Islamic rule.

As we have pointed out, Muhammad and his Muslims were not under attack by the Meccans. They were not being slaughtered, hence the obvious distinction in the verse between “persecution” and slaughter.

“Persecution,” as we pointed out, means that Muslims living 300 miles away in Medina were simply barred from visiting Mecca and thus entering the “sacred mosque” (the Kaba). Muhammad was trying to convince his people that this (non-lethal) policy was justification for attacking and slaughtering the Meccans in the name of religion.

The only possible reason for marching on Mecca at the time would have been to capture the Kaaba and evict the pagans (note “*until religion is for Allah*”). Within its true context, the passage is therefore a manifesto for aggressive warfare against the Meccans, not a case of the Muslims being under real persecution so many miles away.

There is obvious irony in the fact that the “persecution” spoken of by Muhammad in this verse (to justify slaughter) is exactly the same sort of persecution that the Muslims were planning to impose on their adversaries... and did. To this day, anyone who is non-Muslim is forbidden to enter the city of Mecca merely on that basis.

Additional Notes:

Chronology according to Muslim historians:

*There is absolutely **no** record of Meccan aggression against the Muslims at Medina in the first three years after their arrival in 622.*

*Muhammad ordered the first raids against the Meccans a year after the hijra in February of 623, which eventually proved deadly. There is **no** record of Meccan aggression during this time.*

Word of an impending Muslim attack on a particularly rich caravan, prompted the Meccans to send an army out in defense, where they were goaded into battle and routed by the Muslims at Badr in March of 624.

*The Meccans avenged their loss at Badr (and the hostages that were cruelly executed by Muhammad) by routing the Muslims at Uhud, near Medina, in March of 625. If their ultimate objective had been to kill Muhammad and his followers, then they surely would have invaded the defenseless city and defeated them. They obviously did **not** have any interest in doing this.*

Muhammad behaved himself with the Meccans for one year, choosing to support himself instead by evicting local Jewish tribes and confiscating their property. Then he began attacking caravans in April of 626.

After a year of renewed Muslim aggression, the Meccans responded by sending an army to Medina a year later in April of 627, where they failed in a siege that is known as the 'Battle of the Trench.'

As can be seen, the historical record provides absolutely no evidence that the Muslims were being threatened in any way by the Meccans, and fully supports the view that it was the latter who were acting in self-defense. The Meccans had no interest in Muhammad and simply wanted to live in peace and pursue their commerce. At each turn, the prophet of Islam unnecessarily harassed them with deadly and provocative actions that eventually forced battles on several occasions.

The Myth: Muhammad Raided Meccan Caravans to Retrieve Stolen Property

The Truth:

After his eviction by the Meccans, Muhammad and his Muslims found refuge many miles away in Medina where they were *not* being bothered by their former adversaries. Despite this, Muhammad sent his men on seven unsuccessful raids against Meccan caravans before finally finding one, whereupon they *m urdered* the driver and plundered the contents. This particular caravan was especially vulnerable because the attack came during the holy months, when the merchants were least expecting it due to the generally agreed upon rule that the tribes of the area would not attack each other during that time:

[A Muslim raider] *who had shaved his head, looked down on them [the Meccan caravan], and when they saw him they felt safe*

and said, "They are pilgrims, you have nothing to fear from them." (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 424)

The shaved head caused the Muslims to look like pilgrims rather than raiders, which instilled a false sense of security in the drivers. However, Islam was a different sort of religion than what the Meccans were used to:

[The Muslim raiders] encouraged each other, and decided to kill as many as they could of them and take what they had. Waqid shot Amr bin al-Hadrami with an arrow and killed him... (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 425)

According to Ibn Kathir, the Muslims living in Mecca did not dispute that their brethren in Medina had killed, captured and stolen from the Quraish, but they were reluctant to accept that this had occurred during the sacred months:

The Quraysh said that Muhammad and his Companions violated the sanctity of the Sacred Month and shed blood, confiscated property and took prisoners during it. Those who refuted them among the Muslims who remained in Makkah replied that the Muslims had done that during the month of Shaḅan (which is not a sacred month). (Ibn Kathir)

Faced with to losing face by admitting his error, Muhammad went into his tent and then later emerged with a convenient and timely revelation from Allah that provided retroactive permission for the raid (and, of course sanctioned the stolen possessions for his own use):

They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it. Say: Fighting in it is a grave matter, and hindering (men) from Allah's way and denying Him, and (hindering men from) the Sacred Mosque and turning its people out of it, are still graver with Allah, and persecution is graver than slaughter (Qur'an 2:217)

Notice that the Qur'an does not say that the Meccans were guilty of killing Muslims, only that they were "persecuting" them by preventing them from the 'sacred mosque' (the Kaaba). The killing of the Meccan driver by the Muslims was the first deadly encounter between the two adversaries. This is of acute embarrassment to contemporary Muslim apologists, who like to say that Islam is against killing for any reason other than self-defense.

For this reason, there has arisen the modern myth that the Muslims of that time were simply “taking back” what was theirs - rather than exacting revenge and stealing. Contemporary apologists like to say that Muhammad and his followers were basically robbed by the Meccans on their way out of town. (The 1976 movie, “The Message,” explicitly perpetuates this misconception as well).

Apologists are somewhat vague as to how property theft justifies killing (particularly on the part of someone they otherwise like to portray as the paragon of forgiveness), nor do they attempt to explain how the *particular* victims of subsequent Muslim raids (usually the caravan drivers and laborers) were directly responsible for this supposed theft. This is the least of their problems, however, since not only is there *no* evidence to support the misconception that the Muslims were “taking back what was theirs” but it is specifically contradicted by the early historical record.

The event of the first attack on Meccan caravans is detailed quite well by Muhammad's biographer, Ibn Ishaq/Hisham, but nowhere does he mention the contents of the caravan as being Muslim property. In fact Ishaq explicitly describes the goods as belonging *to* the Meccans:

A caravan of Quraish carrying dry raisins and leather and other merchandise of Quraish passed by... (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 424)

Note also that the cargo plundered from the caravan specifically included raisins, which would have long since perished had they been from grapes grown and dried by the Muslim before they left Mecca nearly a full year earlier. A fifth of the loot was also given to Muhammad as war booty, which would not have been the case if it rightfully belonged to another Muslim (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 425).

Most of the Muslims living in Mecca had few assets to begin with, having been drawn largely from the lower rungs of the social ladder, but those who did would have had several years to liquidate their assets or transport them to a new location. As the instigator of the discord, Muhammad was the only Muslim literally forced to flee Mecca in the dead of night, but even his business affairs were sewn up on his behalf by Ali, his son-in-law:

Ali stayed in Mecca for three days and nights until he had restored the deposits which the apostle held. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 335)

So, if the Muslims at Medina weren't trying to recover stolen goods, why then were they plundering Meccan caravans? Muhammad provides the real reason for the looting and the killing:

“If you have killed in the sacred month, they have kept you back from the way of Allah with their unbelief in Him, and from the sacred mosque, and have driven you from it when you were its people. This is a more serious matter with Allah than the killing of those of them whom you have slain. ‘And seduction is worse than killing.’ They used to seduce the Muslim in his religion until they made him return to unbelief after believing, and that is worse with Allah than killing.” (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 426)

Thus, the justification for killing the Meccans and stealing their goods is **purely religious**. The only thing stolen from the Muslims was the ability to enter the sacred mosque (ie. complete the Haj ritual at the Kaaba). The innocent caravan drivers were therefore fair game for Muhammad’s deadly raids simply because Muslims felt *“kept back from the way of Allah”* by the “unbelief” of the Meccan leadership.

This is all the more apparent by the next major episode in which Muhammad sent his men to plunder caravans, which precipitated the Battle of Badr:

*When the Apostle heard about Abu Sufyan coming from Syria, he summoned the Muslims and said, “This is the Quraish caravan containing **their property**. Go out to attack it, perhaps Allah will give it as a **prey**.”* (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 428)

In this case the Meccans were returning *to Mecca* from a business trip to Syria. Any goods they were carrying would have been purchased from the Syrians.

Over the next nine years, the principle source of income for Muslims was wealth forcibly extracted from others. The targets of misfortune expanded well beyond the Meccans. By the time Muhammad died, his men were finding excuse to raid and steal from many other Arab tribes, Jews and even Christians. Like the mafia, a protection racket gradually evolved where other tribes were allowed to live peacefully provided they paid tribute to Muslim rulers.

The Myth: Muslims Fought the Battle of Badr in Self-Defense

The Truth:

If Muslims are only supposed to fight in self-defense, then the Battle of Badr would had to have been a case in which an enemy was attacking or marching on Muhammad at Medina. Of course, if this is what you want to believe, then stop right now and try to stay away from history books.

Muslim historians of the day meticulously documented the circumstances that preceded the Battle of Badr and there is not the least bit of wiggle room for anyone hoping to believe that Muslims fought in self-defense that day.

In the first place, the Meccans were *not* marching on Muhammad. They did send out an army - but it was to protect their caravans from Muslim raiders (who had recently killed Meccan caravan drivers defending their property). The Meccans were not interested in starting a war; only in seeing that their merchandise and drivers were unmolested by Muhammad's pirates.

According to the historians of the day:

*Then the apostle heard that Abu Sufyan was coming from Syria with a large caravan of Qurish, containing **their money and merchandise**, accompanied by some thirty or forty men... When the Apostle heard about Abu Sufyan coming from Syria, he summoned the Muslims and said, "This is the Quraish caravan containing **their property**. Go out to attack it, perhaps Allah will give it as a **prey**." (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 428)*

The account goes on to say that some of the Muslims were reluctant to participate in the attack because they did not want to go to war. Muhammad later refers to these peaceful Muslims as 'Hypocrites' in the Qur'an, where he also condemns them to Hell and demands that true Muslims deal with them harshly (66:9).

After Muhammad sent his men to attack the caravan, Abu Sufyan (his Meccan adversary) learned of his plans:

When he got near to the Hijaz, Abu Sufyan was seeking news and questioning every rider in his anxiety, until he got news from some riders that Muahmmad had called out his companions against him and his caravan. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 428)

Abu Sufyan did two things at this point to avert battle. He changed his route, so as to avoid Muhammad's army, and he sent

for help. The Meccans then sent out a larger force of about 900 men to rescue the caravan.

A lengthy cat and mouse game ensued between Muhammad and the Meccans, in which the latter do nearly everything they can to avoid a conflict and make their way home (Ishaq/Hisham 433 to 443). Eventually Muhammad successfully forces *them* into battle by deliberately stopping up the water wells on which they depended for the trek back to Mecca - and then planting his army between the remaining wells and the thirsty Meccans.

What part of this could possibly be confused with self-defense on the part of Muhammad?

At that point, the Muslims clearly had the advantage against the weary and reluctant Meccans, even though they were lesser in number. Initially, they amused themselves by killing the few men desperate enough to try and reach the water:

Al-Aswad, who was a quarrelsome ill-natured man, stepped forth and said, "I swear to God that I will drink from their cistern or destroy it or die before reaching it." Hamza [a Muslim strongman] came forth against him and when the two met, Hamza smote him and sent his foot and half his shank flying as he was near the cistern. He fell on his back and lay there, blood streaming from his foot toward his comrades. Then he crawled to the cistern and threw himself into it for the purpose of fulfilling his oath, but Hamza followed him and smote him..." (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 443)

The Muslims toyed with several other thirst-crazed Meccans in the same deadly manner before Muhammad finally gave the order to rout the "enemy."

The period following the victorious battle was one of giddy celebration for the Muslims. The decapitated heads of Muhammad's opponents from Mecca were presented to him, and their slayers honored. Live captives were brought before him as well, where he ordered some ransomed and others executed. In what seemed bizarre even to his own men, Muhammad walked among the bodies of the dead Meccans and taunted them, insisting that they could hear him in Hell (Bukhari 59:314).

The captured wealth of the Meccans was divided among the victors. Hamza, the man who had slaughtered the first Meccan attempting to reach water, turned his cruel amusement toward

defenseless animals, cutting the humps off of camels and disemboweling them for no reason other than to relish their agony (Bukhari 59:340).

Amid the drunken carnage, Allah “spoke” to Muhammad and told him to make sure that the other Muslims gave him a fifth of the war booty. These words have become permanently recorded in the Qur’an (8:1), even though they have no relevance today.

The prophet of Islam also informed his men that their victory was actually due to a legion of angels sent down by Allah (8:9) - which were, of course, visible only to Muhammad (8:50). (For some reason, the angels didn’t show at the next battle, in which the Muslims were routed at Uhud).

Much of the 8th Sura, one of the Qur’an’s more violent chapters, was “revealed” following the aftermath of the Battle of Badr. Many of the verses make little sense outside of their historical context, proving that the Sira (biography of Muhammad) is necessary for interpreting the Qur’an.

In this case, the historical context is completely at odds with any misconception on the part of modern-day Muslims that the Battle of Badr was a defensive conflict. Only the Meccans fought in defense of their lives and property that day – and they did so reluctantly, after Muhammad took monumental steps to force them into battle.

***The Myth:* Muhammad was a Brave Warrior who Trusted Allah to Protect Him**

The Truth:

So strong is the cult of personality in Islam that most Muslims fail to recognize the contrast between Muhammad’s word and deeds.

There are many places where Muhammad **says** that he trusts Allah to protect him:

O Messenger! Make known that which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord, for if thou do it not, thou wilt not have conveyed His message. Allah will protect thee from mankind. Lo! Allah guideth not the disbelieving folk. (Quran 5:67, see also 8:30)

Nor can a soul die except by Allah’s leave... (Quran 3:145)

He also encourages his men to believe that they will be safe, even to the point of being reckless in battle:

*[Auf bin Harith asked] “O Allah’s apostle, what makes Allah laugh with joy at his servant?” He answered, “When he plunges into the midst of the enemy **without mail.**” (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 445)*

As it turns out, Auf took his advice and did exactly that:

*Auf drew off the mail-coat that was on him and threw it away: then he seized his sword and fought the enemy **till he was slain.** (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 445)*

Auf’s fate at the Battle of Badr must have made an impression on Muhammad because the next time the prophet of Islam went into battle (at Uhud) he was sure to put on **two coats** of armor beforehand! (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 560)

Other parts of the Battle of Uhud seem to support the idea that Muhammad was having second thoughts about the ability of Allah and his angels to protect him. He not only planted himself firmly at the rear of his army, but also made sure that he was surrounded by a small group of bodyguards. This was a strategic decision that actually backfired when the enemy unexpectedly outflanked the Muslims and advanced directly into his area.

Allah’s angels were nowhere to be found, and Muhammad, desperate to save his own skin, began selling paradise to the men around him in exchange for their lives:

It has been reported on the authority of Anas b. Malik that (when the enemy got the upper hand) on the day of the Battle of Uhud, the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) was left with only seven men from the Ansar and two men from the Quraish. When the enemy advanced towards him and overwhelmed him, he said: Whoso turns them away from us will attain Paradise or will be my Companion in Paradise. A man from the Ansar came forward and fought (the enemy) until he was killed. The enemy advanced and overwhelmed him again and he repeated the words: Whoso turns them away, from us will attain Paradise or will be my Companion in Paradise. A man from the Ansar came forward and fought until he was killed. This state continued until the seven Ansar were killed (one after the other). Muslim 19:4413)

As the passage relates, seven men stepped forward, one-by-one, to be slain in defense of Muhammad on the promise that they

would be his “*companion in paradise.*” (None appeared to question why Muhammad himself was so anxious to avoid the wonderful hereafter).

One man named Abu Dujana “*made his body a shield for the apostle*” (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 573). According to the account, his back literally bristled with arrows until he fell over dead.

For his part, Muhammad managed to flee the battle for the safety of a nearby mountain:

“The apostle made for a rock on the mountain to climb it. He had become heavy by reason of his age, and moreover he had put on two coats of mail so when he tried to get up he could not so. Talha squatted beneath him and lifted him up until he settled comfortably up on it.” (Ibn Ishaq/ Hisham 577)

As one might expect, the period immediately following the rout of the Muslims at Uhud was somewhat of an awkward moment for the self-proclaimed prophet, given the smack that he had been talking after the victory at Badr (See Sura 8). Many Muslims had been killed at Uhud and their bodies mutilated afterwards.

Even Muhammad, the apostle of mighty Allah, had been injured in the face from a thrown rock (perhaps as he was peeking out from behind the others in search of somewhere to run). The blood seemed to be at odds with his pretentious claim of being Allah’s chosen one, given that his god obviously declined to catch the rock in midair.

At first Muhammad appears to try to regain the confidence of his people with a boastful war story to distract attention from his facial injury. He claimed to have killed the man who did it:

[Muhammad] *used the water to wash the blood from his face and as he poured it over his head he said: “The wrath of Allah is fierce against him who bloodied the face of His prophet”* (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 576).

Muhammad also forbade the dead from being brought back and buried at Medina, which would have deepened the humiliation of his fledgling religion and further undermined confidence in him (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 586).

What ensued next was a series of excuses to explain the defeat at Uhud, which are detailed in the third sura of the Quran. The weakest excuse offered is that the debacle was necessary to “test”

the believers so that *“Allah may know those who believe”* (3:140). Perhaps someone then asked the obvious question of how an omniscient Allah was otherwise unable to know this, which inspired several additional excuses.

Muhammad’s next try was to blame a contingent of “hypocrites” who failed to accompany them into battle (3:167). But this had also been the case at Badr, where the Muslims had been victorious due to Allah’s angels (seen only by Muhammad, of course). Why no angels this time?

Finally, Muhammad simply blamed the sin of the people for their own defeat and told them to beg for *his* forgiveness. They had pushed him into a battle that he did not want, and then fought poorly, even *“abandoning the messenger”* (3:153) whose presence Allah had been so generous in blessing them with (3:164). Clearly the people had let Muhammad down, but he and Allah promised to be magnanimous if the people acknowledged their error (3:152).

For good measure, Muhammad also added that the Devil made them do it (3:155).

The master of psychology eventually regained the confidence of his people, particularly after a fresh series of raids against Meccan caravans that continued the flow of pilfered goods into the community.

Muslim sycophancy remains to this day. Compare the historical account of Muhammad’s desperation and flight at Uhud with this commentary by 20th century translator, Yusuf Ali that is downright hilarious against the eyewitness account:

“There was no rout... Had it not been for [Muhammad’s] firmness, courage, and coolness, all would have been lost.” (Yusuf Ali margin note #442)

Yeah... As for Muhammad, he was no longer taking chances on “Allah’s protection.” In fact, he actually immortalized the obligation of his people to protect him with their weapons in the Qur’an, even to the point of allowing his bodyguards to carry them into a mosque if he was present:

When thou (O Messenger) art with them, and standest to lead them in prayer, Let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with thee, Taking their arms with them: When they finish their prostrations, let them Take their position in the rear. And let the

other party come up which hath not yet prayed - and let them pray with thee, Taking all precaution, and bearing arms... (Quran 4:102)

Although part of Allah's "eternal word" to man, these instructions concerning his personal bodyguards have absolutely no relevance today, unless it is to encourage Muslim fundamentalists in their persistent practice of hiding weapons at mosques and even staging terror attacks from them.

Finally, there is strong evidence that Muhammad died from having been poisoned, or at least that he thought this was the case. His death was not pleasant. According to his biographer, "*he suffered much pain*" (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 1006).

Perhaps one reason that contemporary Muslims are unwilling to accept this account is that it contradicts the claim of divine protection. But even the Qur'an mentions that by then "Allah's apostle" was relying on his own security service.

The Myth: Muhammad Lived at Peace with the Jews - Part 1: The Banu Qaynuqa

The Truth:

The early part of the Qur'an was written while Muhammad lived in Mecca, a town with very few Jews and no Jewish tribes. At the time, he presented himself to the Meccans as a Jewish prophet based on the stories that he learned from the Jews that he met on his travels – and from his cousin Waraqa, a convert from Judaism (the Qur'an addresses this accusation, but only to the extent of denying it).

When Muhammad relocated to Medina, there were three Jewish tribes living there already whose good graces he needed to stay in initially, since he and his small band of Muslim immigrants were in a position of relative weakness. He tried to convince the Jews that he was the last in the succession of their own prophets and even changed the Qibla (direction of prayer) toward Jerusalem, the center of the Jewish world.

The Jews at Medina were not impressed with Muhammad's esoteric claims, particularly since there were obvious discrepancies between their Torah and his version of the same stories. In the Qur'an, history from the Bible is presented immaturely and sounds more like a series of fairy tales with the same redundant moral –

believe in Muhammad's claims about himself or face earthly destruction and eternal torment.

When asked why he didn't provide proof of his prophethood by performing some sort of miracle as the prophets of the past had done, Muhammad came up with a clever excuse by saying that there was no point in doing so since the Jews had rejected those past prophets anyway (Quran 3:183-184). Thus, Muhammad had nothing to offer but his own testimony.

The prophet of Islam did not handle the Jewish rejection well, particularly since his people had been relying heavily on his many claims of being a prophet in the same mode as Moses, Abraham and Jesus. Muhammad "resolved" his dilemma by claiming that the Jews of Medina were heretics and he arbitrarily dismissed their "version" of the Torah by claiming that they had corrupted it and "hidden" the verses that supported his claims of being a prophet. (Interestingly, despite the many Jews who converted to Islam, either out of compulsion or free will, no one ever produced the "uncorrupted Torah" that was supposed to have existed).

Following Muhammad's victory against the Meccans at Badr, his wealth and power had increased to the point of being able to take care of his "Jew problem." The words of the Qur'an become noticeably harsher toward the "People of the Book" in the Medina portion of the text, and his actions become confrontational.

Although much is made of the "Constitution" of Medina, the treaty that Muhammad created for all of the local tribes on his arrival, contemporary Muslims are often reluctant to admit the injunction that cancelled out this treaty less than two years later:

"While we were in the Mosque, the Prophet came out and said, "Let us go to the Jews" We went out till we reached Bait-ul-Midras. He said to them, "If you embrace Islam, you will be safe. You should know that the earth belongs to Allah and His Apostle, and I want to expel you from this land. So, if anyone amongst you owns some property, he is permitted to sell it, otherwise you should know that the Earth belongs to Allah and His Apostle." (Bukhari 53:392)

Having announced his intentions, Muhammad looked for an excuse to take land from those Jews who refused to convert to Islam. His first target was a tribe that had recently been aligned in a conflict against the other two. Muhammad guessed correctly

that the other Jewish tribes would not come to the assistance of the Banu Qaynuqa if he laid siege to them.

Muhammad's excuse is said to be an incident in which a Muslim was killed by an angry Jewish mob. That the mob was angry because the Muslim in question had *just murdered* a Jewish merchant over a woman's honor is sometimes conveniently forgotten by contemporary apologists, who nonetheless admit that Muhammad chose to lay siege to the Qaynuqa stronghold rather than mediate a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

This point is important. According to Muslim historians, the first bloodshed was when a Jew was murdered by a Muslim for playing a prank on a Muslim woman (by lifting her dress). The Muslim was killed in retaliation by those who had just witnessed the murder.

On what basis is physical violence - much less murder - justified by a prank of this sort? Moreover, if Muhammad believed in the Old Testament law of "an eye for an eye," then why did he not recognize the legitimacy of the second killing against the disparity of the first?

In any event, the self-proclaimed prophet of God responded with self-serving force against a people that had welcomed him to their community less than two years earlier. Unprepared for battle, the Qaynuqa surrendered to their former guest without a fight.

Muhammad wished to slay the entire tribe outright, but was talked out of it by a mutual Arab friend, who was horrified by his intentions:

Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul went to him when God had put them in his power and said, "O Muhammad, deal kindly with my clients" (now they were allies of Khazraj), but the apostle put him off. He repeated the words, and the apostle turned away from him, whereupon he thrust his hand into the collar of the apostle's robe; the apostle was so angry that his face became almost black. He said, "Confound you, let me go." He answered, "No, by God, I will not let you go until you deal kindly with my clients. Four hundred men without mail and three hundred mailed protected me from all mine enemies; would you cut them down in one morning? By God, I am a man who fears that circumstances may change" The apostle said, "You can have them." (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 546)

Muhammad was thus talked into allowing the Jews of Qaynuqa to escape only with a few tools and the clothes on their back. He confiscated their wealth and land, taking a fifth for himself and giving the rest to the other Muslims. (According to the Qur'an, this was their punishment for not believing in Muhammad 3:10-12).

The man who had saved the lives of the Jews was later called a hypocrite by Muhammad, and it is evident that he deeply regretted his decision not to slay the Qaynuqa. One of the nine Qur'anic verses that prohibit Muslims from taking Jews and Christians as friends was "revealed" at this time.

Thus was Muhammad able to fulfill his own promise that "those who resist Allah and his Messenger will be humiliated" (Quran 58:20), further solidifying his credibility with the Muslims – and inspiring fourteen centuries of relentless Jihad in the name of following his example.

***The Myth:* Muhammad Lived at Peace with the Jews - Part 2: The Banu Nadir**

The Truth:

Muhammad evicted the second Jewish tribe, the Banu Nadir, less than a year after evicting the first. The circumstances under which this occurred are a strong testimony to the double-standards by which the Muslims treated others (explicitly laid out in the Quran: 48:29).

In 625, one of Muhammad's soldiers murdered two men in their sleep who were from a tribe that had "an agreement of friendship" with him (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 650). It was decided that blood-money would be offered to satisfy this debt (although Muhammad held non-Muslims to the highest standards, he never put his own men to death for killing non-Muslims). However, rather than take care of this debt himself from the substantial wealth that he acquired from raiding Meccan caravans and confiscating Jewish property, Muhammad went to a Jewish tribe, the Banu Nadir, to request their contribution, even though the tribe had nothing to do with the murder (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 652).

Once he showed up with his men, Muhammad made his demands and then waited outside the wall of their house for the money. Later, he claimed that Allah spoke to him during this time

and told him that the Jews were going to assassinate him by dropping a rock from the roof of the house onto his head:

As the apostle was with a number of his companions... news came to him from heaven about what these people intended (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 652)

Muhammad left, then returned with an army and laid siege to the entire community, forcing them to surrender without a fight. As with the Qaynuqa (the Jewish tribe before them), the people were evicted with the clothes on their back and what they could pack on their camels. Another revelation from Allah (relayed through Muhammad, of course) allowed the prophet of Islam to personally confiscate *all* of the remaining property for himself (Bukhari 52:153).

For the skeptic, there are a couple of problems with Muhammad's justification for evicting an entire tribe of people even within the boundaries of the account. In the first place, it is certainly suspicious that he demanded that another tribe pay for what his own men had done - and that he went personally to collect the money. Given what Allah supposedly knew, one wonders why Allah didn't just save His "messenger" the trip.

As for Muhammad's assertion that his god spoke in his ear, thus enabling him to confiscate the wealth of an entire community for his personal gain... well, let's just say that it is curious at best. Revelations of convenience were quite common in Muhammad's life, providing him with wealth from Muslims and non-Muslims alike, along with eleven wives and unlimited sex with female slaves. He operated with the impunity of a cult leader.

But the largest problem is that Muhammad justified his attack on the Banu Nadir by saying that they had planned to assassinate him. By this standard, the Jews would have been acting entirely within their rights, given that the prophet of Islam had carried out several assassinations against their own community by that time!

A Banu Nadir Jew named Ka'b al-Ashraf was actually murdered on Muhammad's order just a few months before the entire tribe was attacked. The excuse was that he had lamented the killing of the Meccans at the Battle of Badr and responded by composing crude poems about the Muslim women:

Then he composed amatory verses of an insulting nature about the Muslim women. The apostle said..."Who will rid me of al-Ashraf?" [Another Muslim] said, "I will deal with him for you O apostle of Allah. I will kill him." He said, "Do so if you can." (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 550)

Muhammad gave the man permission to take any measures necessary to murder the poet, including lying. The assassin gathered a group of Muslims and tricked al-Ashraf to come out of his house, alone and unarmed, by pretending to be interested in obtaining a loan.

The murder took place in the dark and was a messy affair. al-Ashraf began screaming as he was being stabbed:

Meanwhile the enemy of Allah had made such a noise that every fort around us was showing a light. I thrust [the dagger] into the lower part of his body, then I bore down upon it until I reached his genitals, and the enemy of Allah fell to the ground. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 552)

These two events demonstrate that the Muslims of Medina operated under a different standard than what they held to those around them. Muslims were allowed to kill others when they felt insulted or in danger, but others were not allowed to even plot in defense of their own lives.

Muhammad was in a position to deny others the same sympathy and tolerance that he demanded for himself because of the control that he had established within his first two years of arriving in Medina. He used his newfound power to order assassinations and evictions, thus putting dissenters in fear.

Keep in mind that when Muhammad was in Mecca, he told the elders there that he would bring them "slaughter" (Tabari Vol 6, 102) and they subsequently evicted him. Yet, instead of recognizing the logic behind this, Muhammad complained incessantly about his ignominious ouster and eventually returned with a conquering army. He also behaved with extreme hypocrisy toward those who spoke out against him, regardless of what sort of threat they actually posed.

For today's Muslims, who prefer to believe that Muhammad was an unselfish man of perfect character, the fate of the Banu Nadir is but a minor inconvenience. It does not bother them that an

entire tribe of Jews was evicted on the basis of a hypothetical assassination plot following the very real assassination of one of their leaders. Jews are not Muslims. Hence they are not entitled to be treated with the same respect.

Islam is the ultimate supremacist ideology.

The Myth:

Muhammad Lived at Peace with the Jews - Part 3: The Banu Qurayza

The Truth:

Verses 5:45-48 of the Qur'an affirm the Old Testament rule of "an eye for an eye," but also add the Christian principle that forgiveness is more noble than retaliation. If ever there was proof that these words do *not* necessarily apply to the treatment of non-Muslims, however, it is in Muhammad's conduct toward the Jews in general and the Qurayza tribe in particular.

Muhammad and his band of immigrants arrived in Medina in 622 completely dependent on the hospitality of the three Jewish tribes that lived there alongside the Arabs. In less than two years, two of the tribes that had welcomed him, the Banu Qaynuqa and the Banu Nadir would be evicted, losing their land and their wealth to the Muslims as soon as their guests gained the power to conquer and confiscate. Muhammad accomplished this by deftly exploiting his opponents divisions.

The prophet of Islam chose the order of the doomed tribes carefully. He knew that the other two tribes would not come to the assistance of the first, for example, since they had been aligned against one another in a recent war. He also knew that the third would not assist the second - due to a dispute over "blood money."

The last tribe to remain was the Banu Qurayza. Like the others, the Qurayza were a peaceful community of farmers and tradesmen who eventually surrendered to Muhammad without a fight. Although the prophet of Islam had been wise enough not to order the wholesale slaughter of the first two tribes following their defeat (which certainly would have stiffened the resistance of the Qurayza), there was no practical reason for Muhammad to repress his genocidal urges once the last tribe had surrendered their wealth and power.

Over 800 surrendered men and boys (and at least one woman) from the Qurayza tribe were beheaded by the prophet of Islam in a bloodbath that is of acute embarrassment to today's Muslim apologists. It is an episode that is not only completely at odds with the idea that Islam is a peaceful religion, but also the claim that it is the heir to Christianity, since even that religion's most dedicated critics could hardly imagine Jesus and his disciples doing such a thing.

It is only in modern times, as Islam finds itself having to compete with morally mature religions in open debate, that the story of the massacre has become controversial. Some Muslims deny the episode, largely on the basis of mere inconvenience. Others are unaware of it altogether. But, not only is the incident well documented in the Hadith and Sira (biography of Muhammad), there is even a brief reference to it in the Qur'an (verse 33:26).

Since Islam makes no apologies, particularly for anything that Muhammad personally did, contemporary Muslims generally try to convince themselves that the victims of Qurayza deserved their fate. They must have turned on the Muslims in battle and inflicted many deaths, forcing Muhammad to yield to the wishes of his people and respond in kind.

Unfortunately, the accounts of what happened, as related to the early Muslim historians by eyewitnesses, do not support this myth. In fact, it was the Qurayza who were caught in an impossible situation at the time between the Muslims and their Meccan adversaries.

Shortly after arriving in Medina in 622, Muhammad began raiding the merchant caravans traveling to and from neighboring Mecca. He would steal their property and kill anyone who defended it (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 424-425). The Jews of Qurayza had nothing to do with this. Much like the Meccans, the Jews were also traders and they appreciated the value of security in doing business. They neither encouraged Muhammad's raids nor shared in his ill-gotten gain.

After a few years of this, the Meccans eventually realized that they would have to try and capture Medina, since it was being used as a base of operations by Muhammad and his pirates. In 627, they sent an army to the outskirts of the city and appeared

poised to take it in what has been called the Battle of the Trench (the Muslims dug a trench around the exposed northern and western parts of the city to stop the Meccan military advance).

The Qurayza, who lived to the east of Medina, were thus caught in a bad situation. Not responsible for Muhammad's war, they were nonetheless drawn into it, particularly when they were approached by a Meccan leader and asked not to assist Muhammad in his defense against the siege (to that point, the Qurayza had contributed digging tools to the Muslims, but not fighters).

The chief of the Qurayza did not wish to even entertain the Meccan envoy, but he was tricked into allowing him into his home (Ishaq/Hisham 674). Once there, the Meccan began making his case that the battle was going against Muhammad and that his fall was imminent. The anguish of the Qurayza chief over the trying circumstances of the position that he felt forced into is noted even by Muslim historians:

When Ka'b heard of Huyayy's coming he shut the door of his fort in his face, and when he asked permission to enter he refused to see him, saying that he was a man of ill omen... Then Huyayy accused him of [being inhospitable]... This so enraged Ka'b that he threw open his door. [Huyayy] said to him, "Good heavens, Ka'b, I have brought you immortal fame and a great army... They have made a firm agreement and promised me that they will not depart until we have made an end of Muhammad and his men. "Ka'b said, "By God, you have brought me immortal shame and an empty cloud while it thunders and lightnings with nothing in it. Woe to you Huyayy, leave me as I am." (Ishaq/Hisham 674)

After much "wheedling" by the Meccans, however, the Qurayza leader finally gave in and agreed to **remain neutral** in the conflict. He would neither contribute troops to the city's defense nor to its impending capture at the hands of an army with superior numbers. The Muslims would be left on their own to deal with the conflict they had started with the Meccans.

The first twenty days of the conflict passed "without fighting" (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 676) other than a few exchanges of arrows across the trench. A half-hearted effort on that day to breach the defenses proved fatal to the Meccan, thus convincing their leader that they could not win unless the Qurayza joined the battle from

the other side. However, the Qurayza refused, ironically enough, thus prompting the Meccans to immediately abandon the siege.

A grand total of just *six Muslims* had been killed at the Battle of the Trench. Each of their names were carefully recorded (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 699) - none were killed by the Qurayza or by anything done by the Qurayza.

With the battle over, however, Muhammad surprised his army by turning them against the Qurayza fortress, claiming that the neutrality of the leader was a breach of the original constitution of Medina which the prophet of Islam had personally drawn up for the tribes five years earlier. The original language of this 'treaty' is not known, however, and later guesses as to what it might have said seem suspiciously tailored.

It is unlikely, for example, that the tribes of Medina would have given Muslims the right to slaughter them for merely speaking out against him, yet several prominent Jewish leaders and poets had been assassinated on Muhammad's order prior to the Qurayza affair. At least one innocent merchant was slain by his Muslim business partner following Muhammad's order in 624 for his men to "*kill any Jew who falls into your power*" (al-Tabari 7:97). Muhammad had also attacked the two other Jewish tribes - parties to the same agreement - looting their property and then evicting them from their land.

There is little doubt that the troubles Muhammad brought on Medina, through his mistreatment of the Jews and his relentless pursuit of hostilities against the Meccans, were a part of the sales pitch made by the Meccans to the Qurayza leader to win his neutrality - along with the implicit threat of slaughter if the city were taken by the Meccans. From Kab's perspective, it would only be a matter of time before Muhammad found an excuse to attack and plunder his tribe as well.

Contrary to popular misconceptions, however, the Qurayza had *not* attacked the Muslims. In fact, had they attacked, then it surely would have been the end of Muhammad and his band of pirates since the southern end of the city was completely exposed to the Qurayza. In a terrible irony, it was the decision *not* to engage in violence that later sealed the fate of the Jews, who were only the first in a very long line of victims to horribly overestimate the value that Islam places on the lives of unbelievers.

According to Muhammad, it was the angel Gabriel (seen only by himself, of course) who ordered the siege on the Qurayza. After twenty-five days of blockade, the Jews gave in and surrendered to the prophet of Islam. As Ibn Ishaq/Hisham puts it, they “*submitted themselves to the Apostle’s judgment*” (Ishaq/Hisham 688).

Another misconception is that Muhammad did not render the death sentence against the Qurayza and was therefore not responsible for it. There is a partial truth in this, in that Muhammad clearly attempted to offload responsibility on another party. However, from the narrative, it is obvious that Muhammad clearly approved of the subsequent massacre - a fact further verified both by his choice of “arbitrator” and his subsequent reaction.

First, the prophet of Islam tricked the Qurayza by getting them to agree to put their fate in the hands of “one of their own.” In fact, this was a Jewish convert to Islam, a Muslim who had fought in the Battle of the Trench. Unbeknownst to the Qurayza, Sa’d bin Muadh had also been one of the few Muslims fatally injured in the battle (Ishaq/Hisham 689), which one can reasonably assume to have influenced his judgment. According to the Hadith, he was quite eager to continue slaying “unbelievers” even as he lay dying in his tent (Bukhari 59:448).

Secondly, when Sa’d did render his decree that the men of Qurayza should be killed and their women and children pressed into slavery, Muhammad did not express the slightest bit of disapproval. In fact, the prophet of Islam *confirmed* this barbaric sentence to be Allah’s judgment as well (Bukhari 58:148).

Consider the contrast between the historical Muhammad and the man of “peace and forgiveness” that today’s Muslims often assure us that he was. In light of the fact that the Qurayza had not killed anyone, wouldn’t a true man of peace have simply sought dialogue with them to try and determine their grievance, find common ground and then resolve the matter with dignity to both parties?

Instead, the prophet of Islam had the men bound with rope. He dug trenches and then began beheading the captives in batches. In a scene that must have resembled footage of Hitler’s death squads, small groups of helpless Jews, who had done no harm to anyone, were brought out and forced to kneel, staring

down at the bodies of others before their own heads were lopped off and their bodies were pushed down into the ditch.

There is some evidence that Muhammad personally engaged in the slaughter. Not only does the earliest narrative bluntly say that the apostle “*sent for them*” and “*made an end of them,*” but there is also support for this in the Qur’an. Verse 33:26 says of the Qurayza, “*some you slew, some you took captive.*” The Arabic “you: is in the plural, but the Qur’an is supposed to be Allah’s conversation with Muhammad, so it makes no sense that he would not be included.

In any event, there is no denying that Muhammad found pleasure in the slaughter, particularly after acquiring a pretty young Jewish girl (freshly “widowed” and thus available to him for sexual servitude) (Ishaq/Hisham 693).

Other women were not quite as complaint. The historians record the reaction of one woman who literally lost her mind as her family was being killed. The executioners apparently found her maniacal laughter annoying and beheaded her as well. As Aisha later recounted:

“I will not forget that she was laughing extremely although she knew that she would be killed” (Abu Dawud 2665)

(One can forgive Aisha's obtuseness. At the time that she and her husband sat observing the carnage together, the wife of Muhammad was only 12-years-old).

Boys as young as 13 or 14 were executed as well, provided that they had reached puberty. The Muslims ordered the boys to drop their clothes. Those with pubic hair then had their throats cut (Abu Dawud 4390). There was no point in trying to determine whether or not they were *actual combatants* because there were none. *There had been no combat!*

Muhammad parceled out the widows and surviving children as slaves to his men for sexual servitude and labor. The wealth accumulated by the Qurayza was also divided. Since the tribe had been a peaceful farming and trading community, there were not enough weapons and horses taken to suit Muhammad’s tastes, so he obtained more of these by trading off some of the Qurayza women in a distant slave market (Ishaq 693).

In addition to the main question as to why people who had not killed anyone were put to death and enslaved, there are several others raised by Muhammad's massacre of the Qurayza. For example, the Quran says that *no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another*" (Quran 53:38) yet every member of the tribe was punished for a decision pressed on one reluctant member.

And what of the places in the Qur'an where violent passages are sometimes mitigated by the occasional admonishment to cease killing those who stop fighting? The surrendered Qurayza had never even fought in the first place.

While Muslim apologists grapple with the challenges posed by this episode, the fate of the Qurayza is only the first of many such massacres that the Religion of Peace has provided the world. Whether it be the 4,000 Jews at Granada in 1066, the 100,000 Hindus on a single day in 1399, or the million or so Christian Armenians in the early 1900's, untold tens of millions of innocents have perished in mass executions at the hands of Islam's dedicated disciples...

Yet, there has never been, nor will there ever be in the future, an apology from those who follow Muhammad, since the massacre of infidels was the example personally set by their prophet at Qurayza.

The Myth: Muhammad only Waged War in Self-Defense

The Truth:

The myth that warfare is only justified in Islam under the condition of self-defense is disproved by the account of the Battle of Badr, in which Muhammad sent his men out to raid caravans, then deliberately provoked a battle with the Meccan army sent out to defend them. The case for aggressive warfare is also supported by the fate of the three Jewish tribes of Medina, who were cleansed because they had rejected Muhammad's claims of prophethood (and because the Muslims wanted their possessions).

Consider the fate of the Banu Mustaliq, an Arab tribe:

"The Prophet had suddenly attacked Bani Mustaliq without warning while they were heedless and their cattle were being watered at the places of water. Their fighting men were killed and their women and children were taken as captives" (Bukhari 46:717)

Although there are many reliable accounts from the Hadith and Sira that mention the Mustaliq grazing cattle, not one mentions Muhammad making any effort at peacemaking. In this case, Muhammad's men raped the women (with his approval) after slaughtering the men (Sahih Muslim 3371). What does raping a female captive have to do with self-defense?

In many situations, Muhammad waged war for the purpose of revenge, such as the attack on the Lihyan, in which the people were clearly not prepared for war and saved themselves only by fleeing into the hills (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 718). Muhammad also attacked the people of Taif as soon as he had the opportunity to avenge their rejection of him (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 280 & 872).

Also disproving the myth that Muhammad only fought in self-defense is the account of his first attack on the Christians. There was no compelling reason for him to send an army to Muta (in Syria, where they met with disaster at the hands of the Byzantines). Had this been a matter of self-defense, then the enemy would surely have followed the routed army back to Arabia, but this was not the case (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 791).

Near the end of his life, the prophet of Islam directed military campaigns for the mere purpose of spreading Islamic rule. He knew that some cities would resist and others would not. He left instructions to his people for dealing with each case:

The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: If you come to a township (which has surrendered without a formal war) and stay therein, you have a share (that will be in the form of an award) in (the properties obtained from) it. If a township disobeys Allah and His Messenger (and actually fights against the Muslims) one-fifth of the booty seized therefrom is for Allah and His Apostle and the rest is for you. (Sahih Muslim 4346)

As can be seen, those who were *not* at war with the Muslims are to be subjugated anyway, and their property seized. The only distinguishing factor is the extent of Muslim entitlement following the victory.

Military campaigns to extend Islamic domination include the raid on Tabuk, which was a second incursion into the Christian territory of Syria, in which Muhammad forced the local populace to pay him tribute after ambushing and killing local civilians to assert his authority (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 903). Another example would be the

“convert or die” mandate given to an Arab tribe, the Banu al-Harith:

Then the apostle sent Khalid bin Walid... to the Banu al-Harith and ordered him to invite them to Islam three days before he attacked them. If they accepted then he was to accept it from them, and if they declined he was to fight them. So Khalid set out and came to them, and sent out riders in all directions inviting the people to Islam, saying, “If you accept Islam you will be safe.” So the men accepted Islam as they were invited. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 959)

Obviously self-defense was not a factor in any of these cases (even though some Muslims are prone to embellish the record with imaginary details not found therein). As with the capture of Mecca in 630, these early Muslims had clear military superiority and the target of their aggression was in no position to defend itself.

In fact, the first part of the 9th Sura, the most bellicose chapter of the Qur’an, was revealed shortly *after* the Muslims had established military dominance in Mecca. Consider one of the more violent verses:

But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them (9:5)

The words, “*when the forbidden months are past,*” precludes the possibility that this was a matter of self-defense. The Muslims had already been given the divine right to fight during the sacred months, and it is simply implausible that they would have suffered attacks over a four month period without defending themselves. That they were not under attack is consistent with the historical context, in which the *Haj* period was a traditional time of peace and tolerance throughout Arabia.

Although not under attack from the pagans, Muhammad ordered his men to chase and kill the unbelievers following the Haj. The pagans who agreed to become Muslim (ie. practice the pillars of Islam, *zakat* and *salat*) would be allowed to live following their conversion. Verse 9:29 offers a separate rule for Jews and Christians, allowing them to keep their religion as long as they pay

protection money to Muslims and acknowledge the inferiority of their faith. Should they resist, then they should be killed.

One of the best documented examples of Muslim aggression during the lifetime of Muhammad is the attack on the peaceful community of Khaybar. This followed the treaty of Hudaibiya between the Muslims and Meccans, which called for a period of peace between the two groups. The treaty was controversial with Muslims, not only because it contradicted Allah's prior mandate to "drive out" the Meccans with violent force (2:191), but also because Muhammad agreed not to be recognized as a prophet in the document (Muslim 4401).

Muhammad decided that it was prudent to attack the Jews at Khaybar in order to regain the trust of his people and placate their grumbling with military victory and (especially) the stolen wealth that followed. This is embarrassing to modern-day Muslim apologists, who try to justify the siege by imagining that the sleepy farming community, located about 100 miles outside of Medina, posed some sort of necessary threat.

Unfortunately for contemporary apologists, not only is there *no* supporting evidence that the Muslims were under attack by the Khaybar, there are at least three historical references that *flatly contradict* any notion of self-defense on the part of Muhammad. The first is a description of the initial attack by Ibn Ishaq/Hisham:

We met the workers of Khaybar coming out in the morning with their spades and baskets. When they saw the apostle and the army they cried, "Muhammad with his force," and turned tail and fled... The apostle seized the property piece by piece... (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 757)

The people of Khaybar were not attacking Muhammad. They were farming their land with shovels and buckets, not even knowing that they were supposed to be at war. This is further confirmed in the same text:

When the apostle raided a people he waited until the morning. If he heard a call to prayer he held back; if he did not hear it he attacked. We came to Khaybar by night, and the apostle passed the night there; and when morning came he did not hear the call to prayer, so he rode and we rode with him. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 757)

Muhammad attacked only *after* waiting to see if the people of Khaybar issued a morning call to prayer. This would have no possible relevance had they already been at war with him.

Perhaps the best proof that Muhammad was not acting in self-defense is the fact that his own people did not understand why they were marching to war. His son-in-law, who was in charge of the military expedition, had to ask for justification:

Allah's Messenger called Ali [and said]: "Proceed on and do not look about until Allah grants you victory," and Ali went a bit and then halted and did not look about and then said in a loud voice: "Allah's Messenger, on what issue should I fight with the people?" Thereupon he (the Prophet) said: "Fight with them until they bear testimony to the fact that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his Messenger..." (Sahih Muslim 5917)

The question Ali posed would have been unnecessary had the Muslims been under attack by the Khaybar or if the answer to the question were obvious. As it is, Muhammad's reply underscores the ostensible purpose of the campaign, which was to force the Jews into acknowledging the superiority of Islam.

Muhammad's men easily captured Khaybar and divided up the loot. The prophet of Islam tortured the community's treasurer to extract information, then had him killed (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 764). Muhammad then took the man's widow, Saffiya, as his wife after trading two other captured women to one of his lieutenants (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 758). The surviving Jews were allowed to stay on their land provided that they gave their Muslim masters an ample share of their crops.

Therefore, the rule of aggression in Islam, from the example set by Muhammad, is that it is proportional to the power held by Muslims, and *not* the persecution that they are under. The rare verses of peace in the Qur'an were "revealed" in Mecca, when true oppression existed (in some cases). The verses of violence that are revealed later correspond to Muslim military might even as any persecution of Muslims had largely dried up.

***The Myth:* Muhammad Would Never Approve of Rape**

The Truth:

It is against Islam to rape *Muslim* women, but Muhammad actually encouraged the rape of others captured in battle. This hadith provides the context for the Qur'anic verse (4:24):

The Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) sent a military expedition to Awtas on the occasion of the battle of Hunain. They met their enemy and fought with them. They defeated them and took them captives.

Some of the Companions of the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) were reluctant to have intercourse with the female captives in the presence of their husbands who were unbelievers. So Allah, the Exalted, sent down the Qur'anic verse: (Sura 4:24) "And all married women (are forbidden) unto you save those (captives) whom your right hands possess." (Abu Dawud 2150, also Muslim 3433)

Actually, as the hadith indicates, it wasn't Muhammad, but "Allah the Exalted" who told the men to rape the women in front of their husbands - which is all the more reason not to think of Islam as being the same as other religion.

Note also that the husbands of these unfortunate victims were obviously alive after battle. This is important because it flatly contradicts those apologists who like to argue that the women Muhammad enslaved were widowed and thus unable to fend for themselves. *(Even if the apologists were right, what sort of a moral code is it that forces a widow to choose between being raped and starving?)*

There are several other episodes in which Muhammad is offered the clear opportunity to disavow raping women - yet he instead offers advice on how to proceed. In one case, his men were reluctant to devalue their new slaves for later resale by getting them pregnant. Muhammad was asked about *coitus interruptus* in particular:

"O Allah's Apostle! We get female captives as our share of booty, and we are interested in their prices, what is your opinion about coitus interruptus?" The Prophet said, "Do you really do that? It is better for you not to do it. No soul that which Allah has destined to exist, but will surely come into existence." (Bukhari 34:432)

As indicated, the prophet of Islam did not mind his men raping the women, provided they ejaculated within the bodies of their victims.

As one might imagine, Muhammad's obvious approval of raping women captured in battle and his own personal participation as recorded in many places is of intense inconvenience to the Muslim apologists of our time. For this reason, some of them attempt to explain away these many episodes and Qur'anic references to sex with captives by pretending that these are cases in which women have fled bad marriages and sought refuge with the Muslims. Some apologists even refer to them as "wives," even though the Qur'an makes a clear distinction between "those whom thy right hand possesses" and true wives (see Sura 33:50).

Beyond the desperation of the 21st century apologist however, there is absolutely nothing in the historical text that supports this rosy revision of Muslim history. The women of the Banu Mustaliq were sold into slavery following their rape:

*"We went out with Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) on the expedition to the Bi'l-Mustaliq and took captive some excellent Arab women; and we desired them, for we were suffering from the absence of our wives, (but at the same time) we also desired ransom for them. So we decided to have sexual intercourse with them but by observing 'azl (Withdrawing the male sexual organ before emission of semen to avoid-conception). But we said: We are doing an act whereas Allah's Messenger is amongst us; why not ask him? So we asked Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him), and he said: **It does not matter**" (Sahih Muslim 3371)*

In fact, female slaves were traded like any other simple commodity by Muhammad and his band of devoted followers:

"Then the apostle sent Sa-d b. Zayd al-Ansari, brother of Abdu'l-Ashal with some of the captive women of Banu Qurayza to Najd and he sold them for horses and weapons." (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham/Hisham 693)

Is it Islamic to sell one's wife for horses? Clearly these were not wives!

More importantly, by definition a "captured" woman is not one who is fleeing her husband. She is fleeing her captor (ie. the Muslim slave raider). This hadith describes a typical raid, in which

the women and children are captured as they are attempting to flee the attacking Muslims:

"...and then we attacked from all sides and reached their watering-place where a battle was fought. Some of the enemies were killed and some were taken prisoners. I saw a group of persons that consisted of women and children [escaping in the distance]. I was afraid lest they should reach the mountain before me, so I shot an arrow between them and the mountain. When they saw the arrow, they stopped. So I brought them, driving them along" (Sahih Muslim 4345)

The Muslim narrator (who happens to be Muhammad's adopted son) sees the women trying to escape (following the massacre of their men) and cuts off their route by shooting an arrow into their path. These aren't women trying to seek refuge with the Muslims. They are trying to avoid capture *by* the Muslims.

The same hadith goes on to recount that Muhammad personally demanded one of the captured women for his own use:

I drove them along until I brought them to Abu Bakr who bestowed that girl upon me as a prize. So we arrived in Medina. I had not yet disrobed her when the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) met me in the street and said: "Give me that girl." (Sahih Muslim 4345)

The prophet of Islam and his companions used war to collect women for personal sexual use and for trading. Unless she was arbitrarily declared as someone's wife, the woman became a sex slave. In no case was her fate tied to anything that she had personally done, nor was she given a choice about her future.

The Myth: Muhammad Never Killed Children

The Truth:

It is probably fair to say that Muhammad did not approve of the intentional killing of children. A verse from the Qur'an laments the pre-Islamic Arab practice of infanticide against baby girls. Other evidence from the Hadith suggests that he instructed his men not to kill children in battle, if it could be avoided, but to capture them for slavery.

Children were often given a specific reprieve from the mandate to "kill those who disbelieve in Allah":

[Muhammad said] *“Fight everyone in the way of Allah and kill those who disbelieve in Allah. Do not be deceitful with the spoils; do not be treacherous, nor mutilate nor kill children.”* (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 992)

But Muhammad’s definition of a child was not the same as our modern understanding. Following the surrender of the Qurayza stronghold, he ordered the execution of *every* male child who had reached puberty. His men had the boys drop their pants so that they could chop the head off of anyone with pubic hair (Sahih Muslim 4390).

Keep in mind that many Muslims often insist that Aisha reached puberty at age nine, since that is the age that Muhammad began having sex with her. If so, then the age for “manhood” among boys might have been considered around twelve.

Muhammad also played a bit loose with the lives of women and children during wartime. As recorded in both Bukhari and Sahih Muslim:

It is reported on the authority of Sa’b b. Jaththama that the Prophet of Allah (may peace be upon him), when asked about the women and children of the polytheists being killed during the night raid, said: “They are from them.” (Sahih Muslim 4322, see also Bukhari 52:256)

This does not justify the *targeted* killing of women and children per se, but it does prove that collateral damage is entirely acceptable if it accomplishes the military goal of spreading Islamic rule. It is doubtful that Muhammad would ever shrug off the killing of young Muslims as he did the killing of non-Muslim children.

Muhammad did, in fact, draw a distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim children and said that it would be permissible to kill a child who has no prospect of accepting Islam:

*The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) used not to kill the children, so thou shouldst not kill them **unless** you could know what Khadir had known about the child he killed, or **you** could distinguish between a child who would grow up to be a believer (and a child who would grow up to be a non-believer), so that you killed the (prospective) non-believer and left the (prospective) believer aside.* (Sahih Muslim 4457)

After capturing Mecca, the prophet of Islam also ordered the execution of two “singing girls” who had mocked him in verse:

“...two singing-girls Fartana and her friend who used to sing satirical songs about the apostle, so he ordered that they should be killed...” (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 819)

The Myth: The Meccans were the First to Break the Treaty of Hudaibiya

The Truth:

Less than two years after making a treaty with the people of Mecca, Muhammad returned with an army and took the city by surprise. Although this has been a traditional source of pride for Muslims down through the centuries, contemporary scholars are more apt to dwell on excusing Muhammad's action, since it contrasts with the claim that Islam is a religion of peace.

Rather than making the case that Muhammad was forced into war, which the historical account clearly does *not* support, today's apologists argue that he was justified in taking Mecca on the basis that the other party had violated the treaty between them. Of particular interest are the technicalities concerning alliances.

After the treaty of Hudaibiya was made, two feuding tribes aligned themselves on opposite sides of the Meccan-Muslim divide. The tribe allied with the Meccans had suffered a series of murders at the hands of the other prior to the alliance, which they sought to avenge.

Rather than get bogged down with names for the moment, let's summarize it as follows:

1. A member of Tribe A (later allied with Mecca) is murdered by members of Tribe B (later allied with Muhammad).

2. Tribe A murders a member of Tribe B in revenge.

3. Tribe B then murders three members of Tribe A in revenge.

4. After committing these murders, Tribe B joins the Muslim alliance.

5. In response, Tribe A joins the Meccans.

6. Tribe A then seeks revenge for the last murders by killing members of Tribe B.

This is detailed in Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 803, in which Tribe A is called the Banu Bakr and Tribe B is the Khuza'a. Although the Khuza'a had started the original chain of murder, the fact that they were attacked by the tribe allied with the Meccans after allying with the Muslims constituted a technical breach of the treaty - which Muhammad then capitalized on by marching his superior forces into Mecca and establishing the authority of Islam by force.

On the surface then, it would appear that the Meccans were the first to violate the treaty. Even though most Muslims admit that the Meccans did not want a war, they still insist that Muhammad was justified in taking Mecca because of the treaty violation.

But, in fact, Muhammad was the first to violate the Treaty of Hudaibiya. Even the Qur'an acknowledges this, which means any knowledgeable Muslim must as well.

The terms of the treaty specified that any Muslim who flees Mecca for Medina (where Muhammad resided) must be returned. But when a group of Muslims did exactly that a few weeks after the treaty signing, Muhammad did not return all of them, but kept the women. A verse from Allah arrived conveniently to justify his decision (60:10).

Today's Muslims have only one answer for this: Allah gave Muhammad His personal permission to break the treaty. It is an obvious double standard, but one that they are comfortable with, since Muslims believe their religion makes them superior. (It remains unclear as to why Allah had Muhammad sign on to terms that were intended to be violated).

Eschewing technicalities at this point, the apologists then begin to talk of the seriousness of violations, claiming that the killing of those tribe members allied with the Muslims constituted a graver offense. They are correct, of course, but there is yet another piece to the story that drives home the double standard all the more:

As it turns out, *Muslims were murdering Meccans* after the treaty signing and prior to the revenge killings between the allied tribes!

Bukhari 50:891 tells of a man named Abu Basir who embraced Islam and then killed a Meccan. Muhammad sends the man to live

on the coast, where he forms a group of seventy Muslims who support themselves by attacking Meccan caravans. According to the Hadith, he and the other Muslims *“killed them and took their property.”* Muir words it as follows, *“They waylaid every caravan from Mecca (for since the truce, traffic with Syria had again sprung up) and spared the life of no one.”*

Attacking and killing Meccans was an obvious violation of the treaty of Hudaibiya, but the victims did not want war with Muhammad and thus did not march against him. Yet, Muhammad jumped on the first excuse to attack the Meccans, even though they were not threatening him. His adversaries wanted peace, but he wanted power. Needless to say, they had little choice but to surrender to him without a fight.

The dual ethics of Islam are ingrained in the faith, including the disparate treatment of unbelievers. It should be no surprise that Muhammad held others to standards by which he was personally unwilling to abide. In this case, he was the first to violate the treaty of Hudaibiya. Thus did he establish an example for his followers: a promise to non-Muslims is not obligatory for the believer. As Abu Bakr, himself a military leader, put it:

“If I take an oath to do something and later on I find something else better than the first one, then I do what is better and make expiation for my oath.” (Bukhari 78:618)

Muhammad no doubt would have agreed:

“The Prophet said: ‘War is deceit.’” (Bukhari 52:269)

The Myth: Muhammad Always Chose Peace over War

The Truth:

Actually, Muhammad rarely if ever opted for peace when he had the power to dominate. As the Hadith records in many places, the prophet of Islam said that he had *“been called to fight all men until they testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger.”* The goal of Islam is the rule of Islam.

Although originally invited to Medina to be a peacemaker (of all things) the prophet of Islam immediately brought war to this community of traders by first raiding Meccan caravans - which brought down foreign hostility on all residents - then later exploiting internal divisions for personal gain. (See Myth: The

Muslims were under Meccan Persecuted at Medina for a timeline of Muhammad's constant attempts to provoke war with the Meccans).

As we have detailed, Muhammad conquered each of the Jewish tribes at Medina as soon as he had the ability. He also did what he could to provoke the Battle of Badr, forcing the Meccans to fight when they clearly did not want war. Near the end of his life, he directed a continuous series of foreign military expeditions to attack people who were not attacking the Muslims, with the goal of obtaining tribute or conversions.

One example that refutes the myth that Muhammad chose peace over war is when a report came to him that a man named Usayr ibn Zarim was attempting to gather an armed force against the Muslims. According to the *true* story of what happened (found in Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 981), Muhammad sent an armed band to Usayr's community, which convinced him that he would be guaranteed safe passage to a meeting with Muhammad to discuss peace. However, once vulnerable, the leader and his thirty companions were easily slaughtered by the Muslim tricksters.

Another well-documented example is the series of events leading up to the taking of Mecca by his army in 630. As we have shown, the Muslims were the first to break the treaty between themselves and the Meccans by not returning fleeing Muslims to Mecca (as stipulated in the agreement) as well as by raiding Meccan caravans and murdering the drivers (both before and after the treaty). But when a tribe allied with the Meccans killed members of a tribe allied with the Muslims in revenge for an earlier murder, it was feared the Muhammad would not be so accommodating.

The leader at Mecca was a man named Abu Sufyan. Anticipating that the Muslims might look for an excuse to attack his people, Abu Sufyan traveled to Medina to engage Muhammad in dialogue for the purpose of assuring peace between the two parties. Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 807 details the poor man's efforts to see the Muslim leader in a long passage that plainly indicates his mounting desperation for peace.

It is during this visit that Abu Sufyan enters the homes of a number of prominent Muslims, including Muhammad's son-in-law and daughter. Clearly he is not interested in harming them. In the end, Abu Sufyan is rebuffed by Muhammad and does not gain

the opportunity to talk peace. The prophet of Islam is more interested in a surprise attack on Mecca:

[Muhammad] said, “*Oh Allah, take eyes and ears from the Quraysh [Mecca] so that we may take them by surprise in their land,*” and the men got themselves ready. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 808)

In that the other Meccans had no idea that they were supposed to be at war with the Muslims, Muhammad was entirely successful:

When the apostle had reached Marr al-Azhran, [the] Quraysh were completely ignorant of the fact and did not even know what he was doing. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 811).

When Abu Sufyan learned that Muhammad was marching on the city, he made one last effort to talk peace with him, this time attempting to use the Muslim leader’s wife as an intercessory. The woman attempted to reason with Muhammad, referring to Abu Sufyan and his companion as Muhammad’s own “cousin and brother-in-law” (which he was). Muhammad turned them away with this reply:

“I have no use for them. As for my cousin, he as wounded my pride; and as for my aunt’s son and my brother-in-law, he spoke insulting of me in Mecca.” (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 811)

Thus, according to his own biographer, the prophet of Islam chose to go to war against an unwilling party merely out of personal pride and personal offense. After conquering Mecca he even ordered the executions of those who had insulted him, apparently oblivious to the hypocrisy, since it was a third-party revenge killing that he originally used as justification for his own attack on the city.

The Myth: Muhammad Made Mecca a More Tolerant City

The Truth:

Most everyone agrees that after thirteen years of preaching his new religion, Muhammad did not have very much success and was forced to flee Mecca with his 150 followers. There he formed an army and returned eight years later to conquer the city that rejected him.

Muslims who are not as knowledgeable about the true record left by the historians of the day believe that Mecca was a city of extreme religious persecution and evil pagans who simply had to

be conquered because of the danger they posed. Muhammad then fully forgave the people and everyone lived in harmony, enjoying the new age of peace and religious tolerance that Islam brought to the city.

Today's Muslims have a visceral need to believe that their religion made Mecca a better city, because if Islam wasn't better than the paganism that came before, then it has little chance of being better than Western religion and other alternatives that exist today.

Unfortunately, the picture painted by the early Muslim historians is in stark contrast to what today's Muslims desperately want to believe. The truth is that Islam transformed a highly tolerant and religiously pluralistic city into one of only two in the entire world where one is not even allowed to set foot if they do not profess the predominant religion. (Not surprisingly, Medina is the other).

Mecca, prior to Muhammad, was one of six cities in Arabia with a Kaaba, the cube-like building that housed hundreds of idols and religious artifacts. The Meccans were mostly polytheists, who worshipped their preferred gods yet respected everyone else's.

Mecca was also the site of an annual religious pilgrimage, in which people from across the region would visit the city over a four month period. The commerce and income generated from this annual event was extremely important to the local economy.

People from foreign lands were allowed to store their idols at the Kaaba, including Hindus. There was even room made for the faith of Jews and Christians, who worshipped there alongside the others. Meccans allowed conversions between faiths and there was no record of persecution against those who practiced their religion without insulting others.

Even Muhammad's own experience is proof of the Meccan desire to live in peace and harmony. According to Muslim historical sources, the people of Mecca did *not* mind Muhammad preaching a new religion, as he began to do in 610 at the age of 40. They simply asked that he be as tolerant of them as they were of him.

Instead of obliging, however, the self-proclaimed prophet broke with tradition and openly insulted the local religions as well as the ancestors of the people who practiced it. (See *Myth: Muhammad*

was Persecuted by the Meccans for Preaching Islam for references). This not only caused great offense, but it directly threatened the primary source of livelihood for many residents.

Even so, the people allowed Muhammad to preach in contradiction to local customs for **13 years**, which is *proof positive* of their tolerance. In fact, it was the Muslims who were the first to draw blood, as they became increasingly violent toward the skeptical mainstream of society.

To be fair, there were some Meccans who responded in kind after the Muslims became violent, but only one death was recorded in the Sira (that of an elderly slave from stress) and none in the Hadith. Muhammad's presence was still tolerated up to the point that he finally joined with a foreign tribe in an alliance of war against the very city in which he lived. At that point he was evicted from Mecca. The year was 622.

Although his adversaries were content leaving him alone in Medina, where he fled with his cult, Muhammad would not let go of the bitterness of his rejection. He constantly harassed the Meccans by raiding their caravans and goading them into open conflict. Eventually, he tricked them into signing a 10-year treaty which left them defenseless before his army when he suddenly decided to take the city by surprise less than two years later in 630.

The violent history of early Islam leaves little for Muslim apologists to make the case that Islam is a peaceful, tolerant religion. The occupation of Mecca in the aftermath of Muhammad's victory is usually their primary example, however, since it was not followed by widespread massacre of the residents (other than the annihilation of anyone who tried to defend his home from foreign occupation, as a handful did).

Yet, it is fascinating to see just how low Islam's own defenders must set the bar for their religion. It is clear from the accounts of Ibn Ishaq/Hisham and other early historians that the residents of Mecca did *not* want war, did *not* prepare for war, and were obviously *not* expecting it when Muhammad marched through the gates of their city with an army of 10,000 soldiers. There is simply no reason to expect that these innocent people would be slaughtered in the first place (other than the fact that the prophet of Islam had ordered such massacres in the past).

As it was, there were some residents who were sentenced to death by Muhammad himself (*"a small number who were to be killed even if they were found beneath the curtains of the Ka'ba"* Ishaq/Hisham 818, see also Abu Dawud 2677). These included his old enemies who had personally mocked and rejected him, including two slave girls who had made up songs about him:

"He had two singing girls, Fartana and her friend, who used to sing satirical songs about the apostle, so he ordered that they should be killed" (Ibn Ishaq/ Hisham 819)

Their master, Ibn Khatal, an apostate from Islam, was also slain on Muhammad's order even as he tried to take refuge in what was considered the holiest of places:

Allah's Apostle entered Mecca in the year of its Conquest wearing an Arabian helmet on his head and when the Prophet took it off, a person came and said, "Ibn Khatal is holding the covering of the Ka'ba (taking refuge in the Ka'ba)." The Prophet said, "Kill him." (Bukhari 29:72, Muslim 7:3145)

A former scribe of Muhammad's named Abdullah also made the hit list for leaving Islam after realizing that the transmissions from Allah were arbitrary by successfully suggesting changes to Muhammad about the wording of certain supposedly immutable "revelations."

As with some of the others, Abdullah managed to save his neck by "converting" to Islam just before the moment of execution. Rather than mock the people who mocked him, or turn the other cheek (as a different "prophet" named Jesus once preached), Muhammad killed those who would not repent for rejecting him.

It was at this point that Mecca, one of the most religiously diverse cities on earth, became one of the most oppressive and intolerant. Muhammad's first order of business was to destroy the idols of the very people who allowed him to preach his religion in their city for thirteen years:

"The Prophet entered Mecca and (at that time) there were three hundred and sixty idols around the Ka'ba. He started stabbing the idols with a stick he had in his hand and reciting: "Truth (Islam) has come and Falsehood (disbelief) has vanished." (Bukhari 43:658)

The prophet of Islam then sent his men out to destroy the temples of other tribes, both around Mecca (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 840) and as far away as Yemen (Bukhari 59:643).

With their own religion violently destroyed, most Meccans had no choice but to outwardly "embrace" the very religion they had adamantly rejected for the twenty-one years prior to having a sword at their throat. To say that this was heartfelt (as some Muslims today actually do) stretches the limits of credulity.

Before evicting those who would not convert, Muhammad first used the allied strength of the local Meccans to conquer a neighboring city, al-Taif, as payback for their earlier rejection of him (and, ironically enough, their own unwillingness to make an alliance with him against the Meccans).

After a few months, Muhammad was in a position to break what was left of his treaty and forcibly evict the remaining non-Muslims from their own city:

"So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush, then if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free to them." (Quran 9:5)

Prayer and the "poor due" are among the pillars of Islam - salat and zakat respectively. According to Islam's holiest text therefore, the only way for polytheists to avoid death was to convert to Islam or flee the city. Consider the fate of an elderly man who preferred to pray in his own way:

"The Prophet recited Suratan-Najm (103) at Mecca and prostrated while reciting it and those who were with him did the same except an old man who took a handful of small stones or earth and lifted it to his forehead and said, 'This is sufficient for me.' Later on, I saw him killed as a non-believer." (Sahih Muslim 19:173).

Needless to say, anyone who did not profess their faith in Muhammad after a four month grace period was not allowed back even to perform the pilgrimage, which had been a centuries-old tradition. According to the Qur'an, this was not because they posed any sort of physical threat, but rather because they were "unclean" (Quran 9:28)

The story of Muhammad's violent expulsion of non-Muslims from their own city can also be found in Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 920-923. Muslim apologists often claim that Muhammad only commanded the killing of those pagans who had "broken the treaty," yet the historical context states that the command to fight applies to *"the polytheists who had broken the agreement as well as those who had a general agreement after the four months which had been given them as a fixed time"* (Ishaq/Hisham 922). In other words, unbelievers were given four months to vacate their homes, whether they had done anything wrong or not.

Those who were left in the once tolerant city of Mecca lived under a draconian theocracy in which an outward display of religion was required by Muhammad as a test of personal loyalty. Those who refused to comply were literally burned alive:

"The Prophet said, 'No prayer is harder for the hypocrites than the Fajr and the 'Isha' prayers and if they knew the reward for these prayers at their respective times, they would certainly present themselves (in the mosques) even if they had to crawl.' The Prophet added, 'Certainly I decided to order the Mu'adh-dhin (call-maker) to pronounce Iqama and order a man to lead the prayer and then take a fire flame to burn all those who had not left their houses so far for the prayer along with their houses.'" Bukhari 11:626

Jews and Christians weren't spared the religious bigotry. In fact, they were eventually chased out of the entire Arabian peninsula based on Muhammad's final injunction from his deathbed:

I will expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula and will not leave any but Muslim. (Sahih Muslim 4366)

So, Muhammad not only evicted non-Muslims from Mecca, he also banned them from approaching the Kaaba altogether. This was an extraordinary example of hypocrisy given that, according to the Qur'an's second chapter, preventing people from worshipping at the Kaaba is akin to "persecution," and so important that "slaughter" is mandated by Allah in this case.

Islam thus became a system of double standards in which "might makes right" and the morality of an action is judged only by whether or not it advances Islam or benefits Muslims. To this day, Muslims demand the freedom to preach their faith in non-Muslim countries, yet actively deny the same right to other

religions where and when they have the power. They also insist that others have the right to convert to Islam, while no Muslim has the right to leave on penalty of death.

The effects of supplanting the traditional pagan system with Muhammad's legacy of intolerance were undeniable. Fifty years after Muhammad's death, the Kaaba, which had stood for centuries under the banner of religious tolerance and respect, lay in ruins from one of the many internal Muslim wars that sprang up immediately following Muhammad's death.

To this day, Muslims are still at each other's throats and there is no Islamic country in the world that truly allows other religions to preach openly and recruit converts as Muhammad was allowed to do in Mecca. In stark contrast to its pre-Islamic history, this city now holds the honor as being the most religiously intolerant city on earth, as non-Muslims are not even allowed to visit... and there is not a single Muslim voice of protest.

The Myth: Muhammad Would Never Approve of Murder

The Truth:

"Kill any Jew that falls into your power!"

This was the command that Muhammad gave to his people following the murder of another Jew named Ka'b al-Ashraf. From the nighttime assassination of Asma bint Marwan (a poet and mother of five) to the Christians killed at Tabuk, this is but one of many examples from the Sira that refute the silly idea that the prophet of Islam never approved of murder.

Following the gory assassination of al-Ashraf, Muhammad wished to assert his dominance in Medina by instilling terror into the hearts of the local Jewish population. Many of the locals were having second thoughts about allowing the Muslim immigrants into their community, which seemed particularly unwise in retrospect given that Muhammad had already begun killing and evicting the original residents only eighteen months after arriving.

Muhammad's solution was to intimidate the local populace, particularly the two surviving Jewish tribes (the Nadir and Qurayza). Gleeful over the successful assassination of the Nadir leader, al-Ashraf, the prophet of Islam immediately exhorted his men to a random murder spree that would further narrow down the opposition through terror and conversion.

Following Muhammad's mandate to kill *"any Jew that falls into your power,"* a Muslim follower stabbed his Jewish business partner to death. The Muslim's brother was initially horrified by the crime, since they were not only on friendly terms with the victim, but the merchant was integral to their own livelihood:

The apostle said, "Kill any Jew that falls into your power." Thereupon Muhayyisa leapt upon Ibn Sunayna, a Jewish merchant with whom they had social and business relations, and killed him. Huwayyisa was not a Muslim at the time, though he was the elder brother. When Muhayyisa killed [the Jew] Huwayyisa began to beat him, saying, "You enemy of God, did you kill him when much of the fat on your belly comes from his wealth?" Muhayyisa answered, "Had the one who ordered me to kill him ordered me to kill you I would have cut your head off." This was the beginning of Huwayyisa's acceptance of Islam... [Huwayyisa] replied exclaimed, "By God, a religion which can bring you to this is marvelous!" and he became a Muslim. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 554)

The unbelieving brother is quite impressed with Islam's ability to influence a man even to kill his own family on Muhammad's order. As such, he accepts the "Religion of Peace" on the spot (assuming his conversion was not out of self-preservation).

Another example of Muhammad clearly approving of murder occurred following a botched attempt to assassinate an arch rival in Mecca. Muhammad's hand-picked assassins were discovered before they could carry out their mission and had to hide in a cave. An innocent man grazing his horse soon came their way:

While we were in the cave, up came Thuman bin Malik bin Ubaydullah al-Taymi cutting grass for a horse of his. He kept coming nearer until he was at the very entrance of the cave... I went out and stabbed him under the breast with the dagger. He shrieked so loud that the Meccans heard him. (Al-Tabari 1439)

After this, the killers later found themselves in another cave, into which a one-eyed shepherd haplessly entered while taking a break:

When he asked who I was I told him that I was one of the [Muslims]. Then he laid down beside me and lifting up his voice began to sing: "I won't be a Muslim as long as I live, nor heed to their religion give."

I said (to myself) 'you will soon know' and as soon as the badu was asleep and snoring I got up and killed him in a more horrible way than any man has been killed. I put the end of my bow in his sound eye, then I bore down on it until I it out at the back of his neck. (Al-Tabari 1440)

Amazingly, the murder spree was not yet finished. The Muslims killed a third Meccan on the way back and took another prisoner. Muhammad was told about the various murders, including that of the sleeping shepherd whose only "crime" was to say that he would never be Muslim. His reaction:

{Muhammad} laughed so that one could see his back teeth. He asked me the news and when I told him what had happened, he blessed me. (Tabari 1441)

There are many other examples in which Muhammad ordered or approved of the killing of non-Muslims who simply weren't guilty of capital crimes, even according to the devout Muslim historians who recorded the events. Since murder is defined in Islam as a person killing another member of their own class (see the Law of Equality, Qur'an 2:178), becoming a Muslim was the only way to ensure that one wasn't murdered by Muhammad's men at the time.

The Myth: Muhammad Never Killed Captives

The Truth:

Islamic terrorists take and execute hostages on an almost daily basis. So much so that mainstream Muslims rarely even bother to comment. When they do, however, we are assured that this has "nothing to do with Islam" because Muhammad never executed prisoners of war, or anyone else taken hostage...

Except that he did.

During the Battle of Badr, several defenseless Meccans were slaughtered by Muhammad's companions. These included a man named Umayya and his young son, who were taken prisoner by a Muslim (a former friend who tried to protect them), but were then set upon by a mob before they could be escorted to safety:

"I said (would you attack) my prisoners? But ... The people formed a ring around us as I was protecting him. Then a man drew his sword and cut off his son's foot so that he fell down and Umayya [the boy's father] let out a cry such as I have never

heard... They hewed them to pieces with their swords until they were dead.” (Ibn Ishaq / Hisham 449)

Another heartwarming account of Muslim chivalry during the same battle concerns Abu Jahl, one of Muhammad’s arch-enemies at Mecca. He met his death as he lay defenseless. In this case, two Muslims took the opportunity to administer the death blow:

*Muawwidh passed Abu Jahl as he lay there **helpless** and smote him until he left him at his last gasp. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 451)*

Another Muslim named Abdullah then came by and put his foot on Abu Jahl’s neck and taunted him before decapitating him:

Then I cut off his head and brought it to the apostle saying, “This is the head of the enemy of Allah, Abu Jahl.”...I threw his head before the apostle and he gave thanks to Allah. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 451).

Apparently these companions of Muhammad were unaware of the “Muslim rule” against killing captives. But who could really blame them? Not only did the prophet of Islam praise them for the slaughter, he also ordered the killing of another captive brought before him.

Uqba bin Abu Muayt pled for his life:

“When the apostle ordered him to be killed, Uqba said, “But who will look after my children, O Muhammad?” [Muhammad’s reply] “Hell.” The man was put to death. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 458)

Other captives were ransomed, but Uqba received special treatment because he had mocked Muhammad at Mecca. His crime was that he had thrown the entrails of a dead animal on Muhammad’s back as he was praying, to the amusement of other Meccans (Muslim 4422, Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 277). The prophet of Islam determined that this fraternity prank was worth killing over, and it became the first of several other occasions in which people were slain on Muhammad’s order merely for mocking him.

Interestingly, there appears to be evidence that Muhammad regretted not killing all of his captives, instead of ransoming some. Verse 8:67 of the Qur’an was “revealed” in the aftermath of Badr and says *“It is not for any prophet to have captives until he hath made slaughter in the land.”*

The prophet of Islam went on to execute many other captives, most notoriously the 800 men and boys taken prisoner at Qurayza. His men also brutally murdered an elderly woman named Umm Qirfa after taking her prisoner following a raid on the tribe of Banu Fazara. According to al-Tabari she was killed by, *“putting a rope to her two legs and to two camels and driving them until they rent her in two.”* (The woman’s daughter was then doled out to one of her Muslim killers).

While it is common to hear Muslims claim that their religion is “against” killing hostages, the actual history of Islam proves that nothing could be further from the truth

The Myth: Muhammad Condemned Pedophilia

The Truth:

The legitimacy of “marrying” pre-pubescent girls who have not yet had their “monthly courses” is established both in the Qur’an and in the “perfect example” set by Muhammad for his Muslim followers.

The Qur’an:

Such of your women as have passed the age of monthly courses, for them the prescribed period, if ye have any doubts, is three months, and for those who have no courses (it is the same) (65:4)

The rule concerns divorce, which obviously implies marriage. Muhammad wanted believing men to observe a three month waiting period before evicting their wives, to make sure that they weren’t pregnant.

Muhammad elsewhere encouraged his men to marry “young girls” for sexual pleasure:

“Allah’s Apostle said to me, “Have you got married O Jabir?” I replied, “Yes.” He asked “What, a virgin or a matron?” I replied, “Not a virgin but a matron.” He said, “Why did you not marry a young girl who would have fondled with you?” (Bukhari 59:382)

Lest there be any doubt by what he meant by “young,” Muhammad set the example by marrying and having sex with Aisha when she was only 9-years-old:

Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) reported: “Allah’s Messenger (may peace be upon him) married me when I was six years old,

and I was admitted to his house at the age of nine.” (Sahih Muslim 3309) This is confirmed in many other hadith as well.

According to the most reliable traditions, Aisha brought her dolls to Muhammad’s house for play (Muslim 3341) and he would fondle the little girl in the tub while taking baths with her (Bukhari 6:298). Aisha was just a teenager by the time Muhammad died, but she had already spent over half her life in marriage to him

Even worse for Muslims is that part of *the Qur’an was actually “revealed” while Muhammad was in bed with this little girl:*

[Muhammad said] “...the Divine Inspirations do not come to me on any of the beds except that of Aisha.” (Bukhari 47:755)

So, no... Muhammad did not condemn pedophilia.

Not even close.

The Myth: Muhammad Took Multiple Wives as a Favor to them

The Truth:

Many Muslims who are more familiar with the Qur’an than the Hadith erroneously believe that Muhammad had only four wives (the Qur’an limits a man to four - Sura 4:3). However, given that *nine* of Muhammad’s wives outlived him, it is obvious that he must have given himself special treatment somewhere along the way.

In fact, this special treatment is detailed in the Qur’an (Sura 33:50-51) in which “Allah” lists all of the categories of women who are made available to Muhammad. (It is unclear why this personal directive should be a part of Allah’s universal and unchanging word to all of mankind).

There are two things of which to take note of in this verse. First, the context is that Allah permitted Muhammad so many women *as a favor to him*. Other men are not allowed to have this many wives, no matter how much they wish (although they are permitted to have an unlimited number of sex slaves).

Secondly, *the needs of the women are not mentioned* as a factor for marriage. Indeed, Muhammad married most of his wives based on their *attractiveness* to him. This was obviously the case with Zainab, who was married to his adopted son at the time that he coveted her (another curiously personal directive from Allah allowed him her pleasure - Sura 33:37).

Many of the women that Muhammad captured during battle were also beautiful and would have been “married” by other Muslims. A good example is Safiyya of Khaybar. Not only did Muhammad personally have her husband killed (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 764), but he had already given her as booty to another Muslim before he decided that he wanted her for himself (Bukhari 14:68).

The Myth: Muhammad Never Approved of Dishonesty

The Truth:

Although Muslims are required to be truthful with each other, Muhammad did approve of lying in cases where doing so advanced the cause of Islam, either in war or peace. His famous statement that “*War is deceit*” is found in Bukhari 52:269 and elsewhere. It is perfectly acceptable for a Muslim to deceive an enemy in order to gain power.

This applies not only in war, but also when it comes to assassinating enemies of Islam. Muhammad gave permission for Muslims to lie in order to draw out those who spoke against the “Religion of Peace” from their places of refuge so that they might be killed for expressing their discontent. This was the case with the murder of Ka’b al-Ashraf, who had composed derogatory poems about Muslim women:

Allah's Apostle said, "Who is willing to kill Ka'b bin Al-Ashraf who has hurt Allah and His Apostle?" Thereupon Muhammad bin Maslama got up saying, "O Allah's Apostle! Would you like that I kill him?" The Prophet said, "Yes," Muhammad bin Maslama said, "Then allow me to say a (false) thing (i.e. to deceive Ka'b). "The Prophet said, "You may say it." (Bukhari 59:369)

Muhammad also sent his men to kill a Jew at Khaybar named Usayr ibn Zarim. In order to fool the man into dropping his guard and leaving his fortress, the Muslims pretended that Muhammad wanted to reconcile their differences and that they had nothing to fear:

When they came to him they spoke to him and made him promises, treating him well, saying that if he would come to the apostle, he would give him an appointment and honor him. They kept on at him until he went with them with a number of Jews... [Once the Jews were disarmed] all the apostles' companions fell

upon their Jewish companions and killed them except one man who escaped on his feet. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 981).

Muhammad found lies to be useful not just in making it easier to kill his critics, but also to secure debt (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 770) and bring peace:

Allah's Apostle said] "He who makes peace between the people by inventing good information or saying good things, is not a liar." (Bukhari 49:857)

Islamic law has expanded on this theme to include lies that benefit personal relationships, such as a man telling his wife something that isn't true in order to placate her.

In the present day, there are many lies and half-truths told about Islam and Muhammad's life that are intended to advance Islam in the West. In order to justify the violent aggression of early Muslims, for example, many contemporary scholars exaggerate the extent to which they were persecuted and often pretend that Muhammad's life was in real danger at Medina when, in fact, it was not. Although knowing better, these apologists often claim that Muslims only fight in self-defense and that Islam is tolerant of other religions, posing no threat to Western values.

This is not to say that every Muslim who repeats these falsehoods does so knowingly. Most simply lack either the opportunity or the will to learn the ugly truth about their own religion.

The Myth: Muhammad Never Killed Women

The Truth:

Muhammad directly ordered the death of several women in his time. After he captured Mecca in 630, for example, he demanded that two female slaves be put to death along with their master, merely because they had mocked Muhammad in song (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 819, Abu Dawud 2678).

The brutal death of Umm Qirfa also refutes this myth. So do the women who were killed in battle (Bukhari 52:257), when Muhammad's men attacked a town or tribe – although his preference was that women be captured for sexual servitude rather than killed.

One account not only speaks of the killing of a defenseless woman, but also refutes the broader misconception that Islam is against attacking others for reasons other than self-defense:

*We went with the apostle on the raid of Dhatu'l-Riqa of Nakhil and a man killed the wife of one of the polytheists. When the apostle was on his way back, her husband, who had **been away**, returned and heard the news of her death. He swore that he would not rest until he had taken vengeance. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 665)*

Muhammad ordered a Jewish woman put to death for literally losing her mind while the male members of her family were being beheaded (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 691). There were also several women that the prophet of Islam ordered killed for adultery. One example:

He went to her in the morning and she made a confession. And Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) made pronouncement about her and she was stoned to death. (Sahih Muslim 4209)

There are other examples as well, but perhaps the story from Muhammad's biography that best lays to rest the silly idea that he never approved of harming women is the assassination of Asma bint Marwan, a poet and mother of five. For the crime of "*displaying disaffection*" at the Muslim murder of an elderly man (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 995), the "apostle" ordered her executed in the dead of night.

The brutal murder of this woman by an assassin - who had to remove a suckling infant before plunging the knife into her breast - is recounted here, as is Muhammad's glee on hearing that his order had been successfully carried out.

Muslims who don't deny the story outright (as many are prone to do) usually claim that Asma posed a threat to Muhammad, since she urged the Medinan community to put an end to the Muslim reign of terror before it was too late. Such fervent believers never appear to question why a man claiming to be Allah's mouthpiece would find it necessary to respond to a woman's dissention with *violence* rather than *logical argument*, particularly if he had done nothing wrong to begin with.

It is also interesting to note that even when Muhammad forbade the killing of non-combatants in war, he took no action against the most brutal abusers from among his ranks. In addition to the

account of Umm Qirfa (noted above) there is the fate of an unknown woman "whom Khalid bin Walid had killed" in front of the other Muslims (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 856). Although not approving of the woman's murder, Muhammad took no punitive measures against Khalid, who was left in charge and went on to lead the military conquest of Christian and Persian lands. (This was not even the first time that Khalid bin Walid had slaughtered innocent people, including women - see Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 834-838 for a more graphic event).

The Myth: Muhammad was an Abolitionist. He Purchased the Freedom of Slaves

The Truth:

Typical of those who propagate the myth of Muhammad as an abolitionist is this little nugget, from a Muslim website notorious for pushing *taqiyya*:

"Our Prophet (peace be upon him) never approved of slavery. He once purchased the life of a slave who came to him, liberating him from his master!"

No doubt there are plenty of gullible users on the Internet who swallowed this hook, line and sinker, but here is the real story on which it is based:

There came a slave and pledged allegiance to Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) on migration; he (the Holy Prophet) did not know that he was a slave. Then there came his master and demanded him back, whereupon Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) said: Sell him to me. And he bought him for two black slaves, and he did not afterwards take allegiance from anyone until he had asked him whether he was a slave (or a free man) (Sahih Muslim 3901).

Hmmm... this certainly places the story of "Muhammad the Abolitionist" in a whole different light!

In the first place, Muhammad "purchased" the slave by trading two black slaves, which is hardly a shining example of emancipation. Not only that, but it establishes the fact that **Muhammad owned and traded African slaves**. As a wealthy businessman, he certainly could have liberated all three slaves, but instead chose to sell the two Africans into an uncertain future.

Secondly, it is obvious from the passage that Muhammad felt he had been conned into liberating the slave who had come to him, since he was not told of his status as a slave. Because, of this, Muhammad decided that he would not be duped again. In the future, he would always ask first about whether a man was free or not before deciding whether to accept allegiance.

Neither is there any record of Muhammad “liberating” slaves captured in battle, unless there was something that he personally gained from the act. In fact, he made slaves out of those who were previously free people, particularly if they were women and children. Sometimes he used families as leverage to force their men into accepting Islam:

The apostle told them to tell Malik that if he came to him as a Muslim he would return his family and property to him and give him a hundred camels. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 879)

Captured women were passed out like party favors to his men, some of whom were then passed along to others. This passage tells of Muhammad giving women as sex slaves to the three men who would become his successors, the future caliphs Umar, Uthman and Ali:

The apostle gave Ali a girl called Rayta; and he gave Uthman a girl called Zaynab; and he gave Umar a girl whom Umar gave to his son Abdullah. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 878)

Allah gave Muslim men a divine mandate to keep as many sex slaves as they wished (Qur’an 4:24, 33:52...) Contemporary apologists often pretend that this applies only to women captured in battle, but the same privilege is granted to believing men in 70:30, a passage “revealed” to the Muslims in Mecca, when they had not fought in battle.

Much could be written about Muhammad’s prolific and well-documented relationship with slaves, but one of the most insightful examples comes from this hadith (which is repeated elsewhere):

*The Prophet sent for a woman from the emigrants and she had a slave who was a carpenter. The Prophet said to her "**Order your slave to prepare the wood (pieces) for the pulpit.**" So, she ordered her slave who went and cut the wood from the tamarisk and prepared the pulpit, for the Prophet. When he finished the pulpit, the woman informed the Prophet that it had been finished. The*

Prophet asked her to send that pulpit to him, so they brought it. The Prophet lifted it and placed it at the place in which you see now. (Bukari 47:743)

The very pulpit that Muhammad preached Islam from was constructed from slave labor on his command! Now does this sound like Muhammad had a problem with slavery?

The Myth: Islam did Away with Superstition

The Truth:

Although contemporary Muslims like to believe that Islam is a mature Abrahamic religion that has no place for archaic superstition, the truth is that Muhammad believed in black magic and curses. This is documented in the Qur'an and Hadith.

The Qur'an, Islam's holiest book, actually contains several references to magic and witchcraft. According to 2:102, magic was taught to men by demons. Moses himself was able to practice magic (7:116). Muhammad was told to "seek refuge" from witchcraft in Sura 113, a passage that is supposed to be recited six times a day by devout Muslims.

In the Hadith, Muhammad establishes the "evil eye" as a fact:

Ibn 'Abbas reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: The influence of an evil eye is a fact; if anything would precede the destiny it would be the influence of an evil eye, and when you are asked to take bath (as a cure) from the influence of an evil eye, you should take bath. (Muslim 5427)

The enemies of Muhammad were even able to cast spells over him (or so he claimed):

A'isha reported that a Jew from among the Jews of Banu Zuraiq who was called Labid b. al-A'sam cast spell upon Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) with the result that he (under the influence of the spell) felt that he had been doing something whereas in fact he had not been doing that. (This state of affairs lasted) until one day or during one night Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) made supplication (to dispel its effects. (Muslim 5428). (Bukhari 54:490 repeats the same story and adds that Muhammad was "bewitched").

Bukhari 71:660 also goes into further detail, saying that Muhammad was made to think that he had sexual relations with

his wives when he had not (due to the magic). the passage also lists the materials used to cast the spell, which included a lock of his own hair – reminiscent of voodoo practices.

Muhammad prescribed eating seven dates in the morning to ward off evil spells (Muslim 5081, Bukhari 65:356).

To this day, women are sometimes arrested or even killed in hard-line Islamic countries on suspicion of “black magic.”

The prophet of Islam actually claimed to have super powers over invisible demons:

"The Prophet said, "Last night a big demon (afreet) from the Jinns came to me and wanted to interrupt my prayers (or said something similar) but Allah enabled me to overpower him. I wanted to fasten him to one of the pillars of the mosque so that all of you could see him in the morning but I remembered the statement of my brother Solomon (as stated in Quran): My Lord! Forgive me and bestow on me a kingdom such as shall not belong to anybody after me (38:35)." (Bukhari 8:450)

His credulous followers believed that it was more important for Muhammad to forgive and release the demon, rather than keep him tied to a pillar for a period of time so that they might verify his fantastic story.

Muhammad was also extremely superstitious. He believed:

- A child resembles whichever parent climaxed first (Bukhari 55:546)
- Satan causes yawning (Bukhari 73:245)
- Spoons should be covered before going to bed (Bukhari 69:527)
- Oversleeping is caused by Satan urinating in one's ear (Bukhari 54:492)
- The bathroom should be entered with the left foot first. (Fiqh - Islamic law)
- Keeping a dog as a pet will cost the owner a celestial reward (Bukhari 67:389)
- A man should spit only to his left (Muslim 7149)
- The penis should be held with the left hand only when urinating (Muslim 512)

- A person should wipe their butt with an odd number of stones after defecating (Bukhari 4:162)
- Satan sleeps in ones nose, so water should be snorted each day (Bukhari 54:516)
- No one should lie on their back with one foot crossing the other.
- Bad dreams can be warded off by spitting over the left side of the bed (Bukhari 87:115)
- The right shoe should be put on before the left (Muslim 514)
- No one should enter the house through the back door (Qur'an 2:189)

Muhammad also told Muslims which way to face when they defecate (back towards Mecca, per Sahih Muslim 507) and which direction they should be buried (facing toward Mecca).

Perhaps the biggest superstition (which has caused untold monetary expense and loss of life to Muslims) is that believers need to travel to Mecca and circle a meteorite seven times. This practice was borrowed directly from the Arab pagans, which even Muhammad's successors found odd (Muslim 2915).

Of the idols worshipped by the pagans at Mecca in Muhammad's time, only the black rock was allowed to remain, since it was holy to his Quraish tribe.

The Myth: Muhammad Would Never Approve of Torture

The Truth:

One reason why *actual* torture exists in most Muslim countries - and why groups like the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) rarely complain - is that Muhammad himself approved of torture as both an interrogation technique and as a way of putting an offender to death. There are several examples of this from the Sira, Hadith and the Qur'an.

When Muhammad's favorite wife Aisha was accused of adultery, he launched an investigation that included the brutal interrogation of a female slave:

So the apostle called Burayra to ask her, and Ali got up and gave her a violent beating, saying "Tell the Apostle the truth." (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 734)

When Muhammad wished to attack the Meccan army at Badr, his men captured two slaves who were carrying water for the caravans and brought them into his presence. They were interrogated under torture as Muhammad stood praying nearby:

*“...they brought them along and questioned them while the apostle was standing praying... The people were dismayed at their report...and so they beat them. When **they were beaten soundly...**”* (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 436)

An egregious example of gruesome torture is Muhammad’s order of execution for several murderers. Rather than simply carry out an eye-for-an-eye killing, the prophet of Islam ordered that the men be executed slowly in the most physically agonizing manner:

They were caught and brought to him (the Holy Prophet). He commanded about them, and (thus) their hands and feet were cut off and their eyes were gouged and then they were thrown in the sun, until they died. (Sahih Muslim 4131 -this account is also confirmed by at least three other narrations).

The Qur’an also prescribes a similar form of execution:

*The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is: execution, or crucifixion, or **the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides.*** (Quran 5:33)

What constitutes “*mischief in the land*” is left to the interpretation of the powers that be.

When Muhammad sent his army to overrun the peaceful farming community of Khaybar, he was not satisfied with the plunder and felt that the town’s treasurer might be holding out on him. He had the man brought to him:

*When he [Muhammad] asked him about the rest he refused to produce it, so the apostle gave orders to al-Zubayr bin al-Awwam, **“Torture him until you extract what he has.”** So he kindled a fire with flint and steel on his chest until he was nearly dead. Then the apostle delivered him to Muhammad bin Maslama and he struck off his head.”* (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 764)

(As a happy side note to the story – the man’s brutal murder left a beautiful young widow named Saffiya, whom Muhammad was then able to “marry”. As his biographer tells it, on the day he had

her husband killed, the prophet of Islam *"passed the night with her in a tent of his."* (Ibn Ishaq/ Hisham 517)

The Myth: Muhammad Never Killed the Elderly

The Truth:

According to his biographers, Muhammad had his men butcher at least three elderly persons: Umm Qirfa, Abu Afak and an unnamed man who refused to prostrate himself at the Kaaba.

After assuming military superiority in Arabia, Muhammad sent his adopted son, Zayd bin Haritha, on a raid against a tribe that wanted nothing to do with Islam. They resisted the first attempt to force them into the Muslim fold, and so Muhammad sent Zayd back, where he was successful in killing the men and capturing the women as they were attempting to flee with their children:

"...and then we attacked from all sides and reached their watering-place where a battle was fought. Some of the enemies were killed and some were taken prisoners. I saw a group of persons that consisted of women and children [escaping in the distance]. I was afraid lest they should reach the mountain before me, so I shot an arrow between them and the mountain. When they saw the arrow, they stopped. So I brought them, driving them along" (Sahih Muslim 4345)

The captured women included Umm Qirfa:

She was a very old woman, wife of Malik. Her daughter [and another] were also taken. Zayd ordered Qays to kill Umm Qirfa and he killed her cruelly by putting a rope between her legs and to two camels and driving them until they rent her in two. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 980)

The old woman's daughter was brought back to Mecca along with the other prisoners, where she was awarded to her captor as a "prize." This was before Muhammad noticed her:

*I drove them along until I brought them to Abu Bakr who bestowed that girl upon me as a **prize**. So we arrived in Medina. I had not yet disrobed her when the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) met me in the street and said: "Give me that girl."* (Sahih Muslim 4345)

After having been “killed cruelly” the old woman was spared the sight of her daughter passed between lustful men, which included the prophet of Islam himself.

The eminent scholar, Sir William Muir, notes:

We read of no disapprobation expressed by the Prophet at the inhumane treatment of Omm Kirfa, and are therefore warranted in holding him to be an accomplice in the ferocious act. (The Life of Mahomet)

Muhammad also ordered the death of an elderly man named Abu Afak. This occurred less than two years after he had arrived at Medina. Abu Afak was said to be 120 years old. His "crime" was to compose satirical poetry about Muhammad in protest of the many assassinations that the prophet of Islam had ordered.

For "showing disaffection," Abu Afak himself became Muhammad's next victim:

The apostle said, "Who will deal with this rascal for me?" Whereupon [a follower] went forth and killed him. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 995).

The official reason is that Abu Afak, "gave the lie to Allah's religion." The assassin is said to have mocked his victim by thrusting the knife into the body while saying, "take that, Abu Afak, in spite of your age." (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 995)

Muhammad later killed a woman (and mother of five) for protesting the death of Afak. That the self-proclaimed prophet of Allah had to murder those who spoke out about him, rather than countering their words with argument, speaks poorly as to the legitimacy of his claims.

Yet another elderly man was murdered following Muhammad's order to kill any non-Muslim who remained in Mecca following his capture of the city in 630. (The early part of the Qur'an's ninth chapter commands the slayings). The man's death is recorded in Bukhari:

The Prophet recited Suratan-Najm (103) at Mecca and prostrated while reciting it and those who were with him did the same except an old man who took a handful of small stones or earth and lifted it to his forehead and said, "This is sufficient for me." Later on, I saw him killed as a non-believer. (Bukhari 19:173)

The Myth: Muhammad Rejected Conversions to Islam Made under Duress

The Truth:

The oft-quoted Qur'anic verse "*let there be no compulsion in religion*" (2:256) takes a serious beating against the reality of Muhammad's later years. The prophet of Islam had no real power when this seemingly tolerant passage was "revealed". Things were much different, however, by the time the ninth Sura was recited, which explicitly calls for forcing others into prayer and paying the *jizya* (9:29).

Examples from Muhammad's life prove beyond a reasonable doubt that he was *not* opposed to forcible conversions and even ordered them once he had the military authority to do so,

Continuing the story of Abu Sufyan (see 'Myth: Muhammad always Chose Peace over War'), when the Meccan leader visited the Muslim army camp in 630 in an attempt to convince Muhammad not to make war, he was chased into their prophet's presence at the point of a sword. There he was "invited" to embrace Islam:

[Muhammad] said, "Woe to you, Abu Sufyan, isn't it time that you recognize that I am Allah's apostle?" He (Abu Sufyan) answered, "As to that I still have some doubt." I (the narrator) said to him, "Submit and testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the apostle of Allah before you lose your head," so he did so. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 814)

No word of admonishment from Muhammad is recorded. The prophet of Islam fully accepted the "conversion" and immediately made use of Abu Sufyan to further his political goals. (Abu Sufyan and his progeny had the last laugh, however, as they went on to inherit the Muslim empire and murder the prophet's favorite grandchildren... but that is a different story).

After he had conquered Mecca, Muhammad began ordering the executions of those who had insulted him or apostatized. One of these was his former scribe, Abdullah bin Sa'd, who transcribed Muhammad's "revelations" from Allah, but lost his faith in the "prophet" when the latter adopted editing changes that he suggested (Allah's word was supposed to be unalterable). Abdullah saved himself by reverting back to Islam in Muhammad's presence

at Mecca as the prophet of Islam waited for someone to strike off his head:

The apostle remained silent for a long time til finally he said 'yes.' When Uthman [and Abdullah] had left, he said to his companions who were sitting around him, "I kept silent so that one of you might get up and strike off his head!" One of the Ansar said, "Then why didn't you give me a sign, O apostle of Allah?" He answered that a prophet does not kill by pointing. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 819).

Several poets were murdered by Muhammad at Mecca for the crime of having mocked him. Another such poet, named Ka'b bin Zuhayr, saved his own skin by converting to Islam after finding no other way to avoid execution. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 888-889).

The Hadith also records that many other Meccans converted to Islam under obvious duress. As one apprehensive observer noted to Muhammad at the time:

(They embraced Islam because) they were defeated at your hands (and as such their Islam is not dependable). (Sahih Muslim 4453)

These sorts of conversions were fully recognized by Muhammad, as proven by this hadith, in which he rebukes a soldier for killing a person who had "converted" merely to save his life:

Allah's Apostle sent us towards Al-Huruqa, and in the morning we attacked them and defeated them. I and an Ansari man followed a man from among them and when we took him over, he said, "La ilaha illal-Lah." On hearing that, the Ansari man stopped, but I killed him by stabbing him with my spear. When we returned, the Prophet came to know about that and he said, "O Usama! Did you kill him after he had said "La ilaha ilal-Lah?" I said, "But he said so only to save himself." The Prophet kept on repeating that so often that I wished I had not embraced Islam before that day. (Bukhari 59:568)

(Note that Muhammad was not in the least bit concerned that the victims were slaughtered while fleeing the Muslim army. This is another strike against the myth that Muslims are only supposed to fight in self-defense).

By this time Muhammad was spreading Islam by any means necessary. He was even using captured wealth to **buy loyalty**:

“Allah’s Apostle gave (gifts) to some people to the exclusion of some others. The latter seemed to be displeased by that. The Prophet said, “I give to some people, lest they should deviate from True Faith” (Bukhari 53:373).

Muhammad actually captured a man’s wife and children, then used them as **leverage** to force his conversion:

“The apostle told them to tell Malik that if he came to him as a Muslim he would return his family and property to him and give him a hundred camels”. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 879)

Islam was being cheapened. It was no longer a religion, but rather a political allegiance established by force. Muhammad sent one of his men to Yemen with a military force, where a local pagan leader was told, *“Testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah, or else I will chop off your neck.”* (Bukhari 59:643)

Neither was there any heartfelt religious conviction in the reluctant “conversion” of the Thaqif tribe, for example:

[The Thaqif leaders said to one another] “We are in an impasse. You have seen how the affair of this man [Muhammad] has progressed. All the Arabs have accepted Islam and you lack the power to fight them... don’t you see that your herds are not safe; none of you can go out without being cut off.” (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 915)

Their solution was to “accept Islam,” and so they sent their couriers to Muhammad to announce their conversion, ask for a promise that they would no longer be harassed by the Muslims, and request a grace period before they had to ‘give up’ their old religion:

“The riders of Thaqif had come to make their submission and accept Islam on the apostle’s conditions provided that they could get a document guaranteeing their people and their land and animals... Among the things they asked the apostle was that they should be allowed to retain their idol al-Lat undestroyed for three years. The apostle refused, and they continued to ask him for a year or two and he refused...” (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 916)

Obviously the Thaqif were not acting out of a true belief in Islam, but rather from the desperation in which non-Muslims Arabs were finding themselves in the wake of Muslim

aggression. Muhammad had the power and he was directing his armies to wipe out those who would not submit to Islam.

“Fight everyone in the way of Allah and kill those who disbelieve in Allah,” were his instructions to one of his military leaders (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 992). Muhammad also congratulated a faraway king on accepting Islam and “killing the polytheists” under his reign, even as he directed another military leader to “invite” a neighboring tribe to Islam and then slaughter them if they refused:

“Then the apostle sent Khalid bin Walid... to the Banu al-Harith and ordered him to invite them to Islam three days before he attacked them. If they accepted then he was to accept it from them; and if they declined he was to fight them”. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 959)

Khalid’s famous announcement, *“If you accept Islam, then you will be safe,”* is echoed by Jihadists like Osama bin Laden to this day.

The Myth: Muhammad was a Forgiving Man

The Truth:

Muhammad did forgive, but his grace was conspicuously limited to those who accepted Islam (often under duress). Modern-day apologists are prone to “forgetting” this as they attempt to make the case that their prophet was a sort of Christ-like figure. Obscure details are cherry-picked from Muhammad’s early life and divorced from context even as more numerous and less ambiguous mitigating events are conveniently excluded.

Consider this little gem from CAIR’s Ibrahim Hooper:

“Even when the prophet was in a position of power, he chose the path of kindness and reconciliation”.

When he returned to Mecca after years of exile and personal attacks, he did not take revenge on the people of the city, but instead offered a general amnesty.”

Hooper’s definition of “general amnesty” is amazingly selective. Muhammad’s biographer lists at least ten Meccans whom the prophet of Islam ordered put to death for personal insults or for apostasy (leaving Islam). If the fact that an entire city wasn’t put to the sword after being conquered by a man against whom it

did *not* want to fight is proof of forgiveness, then we would have to say that the bar is being set quite low.

In fact, we have noted elsewhere at least five good reasons to believe that Muhammad was not a forgiving man.

1. The fact that he attacked Meccan caravans that were not attacking him, literally killing innocent drivers because of their city's previous rejection of him.

2. The brutal execution of 800 Jews at Qurayza who had killed no one, but belonged to a tribe whose leader was pressed to switch loyalties in a time of conflict.

3. The killing of Uqba for the crime of mocking him at Mecca.

4. The executions ordered at Medina of those who had insulted him.

5. The executions ordered at Mecca of those who had insulted him.

It was Muhammad's unwillingness to forgive the people of Mecca for rejecting him that drove him to attack them at every opportunity, even though they were not bothering him at Medina. Though given ample opportunity to move on, he refused. Instead the prophet of Islam incited his followers with verses 'from Allah' that demanded they "drive out" the Meccans from their own city – purely out of revenge, personal superiority and entitlement.

Those who were spared at Mecca, following its capture by an army of 10,000 Muslims, were allowed to live because they either had nothing to do with the former harassment of Muhammad or because they accepted Islam. The allegiance of both groups was needed by the prophet of Islam to expand his political authority over surrounding tribes through military expansion. In a matter of months, Muhammad was no longer in need of their services and ordered the eviction all those who refused to convert. Anyone who declined to embrace his religion was chased from their own city at the point of a sword (see Qur'an Sura 9).

Interestingly, one of the neighboring towns that Muhammad opportunistically attacked after taking Mecca was Taif. This is somewhat ironic because Muhammad's earlier brush with the people of that town is actually noted by contemporary apologists as an

example of his forgiving character! Here, again, is Ibrahim Hooper's version:

"In another tradition, the prophet was offered the opportunity to have God punish the people of a town near Mecca who refused the message of Islam and attacked him with stones. Again, the prophet did not choose to respond in kind to the abuse".

It bears mentioning that neither the accounts of Muhammad's "stoning" nor Allah's "offer" to Muhammad are recorded by the earliest and most reliable accounts of the episode. Instead, they show that Muhammad was chased away from the city with verbal insults after showing up uninvited and abusing the local religion with insults. (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 279-281).

Hooper is certainly right about Muhammad not responding in kind, however, since that would have meant insulting the residents and rejecting their religion (as they had done to him). Instead, the prophet of Islam returned with an army ten years later and laid siege to the town, killing the defenders and enslaving their women and children. His biographers provide no compelling reason for this other than their earlier rejection of him (unless you count a Muslim foot soldier's desire to capture a girl from Taif and impregnate her – Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 874).

The fact that Muhammad returned with an army casts serious doubt on the later tradition that Hooper cites. If Muhammad rejected the opportunity to call down Allah's wrath on the town, then why did he return with military force as soon as he was able to do so? The only thing that had changed in the interim was his position of power.

Even if the later (and more questionable) account of Allah's offer is taken at face value, it relies solely on Muhammad's word. Just as with the rest of his communication with Allah, no one else was there to witness the conversation. Is it really credible that Muhammad actually had the power to call down divine punishment on a town? Why then was a later siege necessary – particularly since it cost Muslim lives (Ibn Ishaq/Hisham 876)?

According to biographers, Muhammad originally went to Taif with the hope of forming a new military alliance against the Quraish tribe of Mecca. Since Muhammad later had people murdered for supposedly trying to do the same thing to him, however, Muslims often insist that it was necessary for reasons of

self-defense. But this makes no sense if Muhammad truly had the wrath of Allah at his beck and call. Muslims cannot have it both ways.

Another example that proves both the scarcity of anecdote showing Muhammad to be a forgiving man, and the desperation of contemporary apologists to compensate, is the repetition of this legendary story (again, we quoting CAIR's Ibrahim Hooper):

“There was a lady who threw garbage in the path of the prophet on a daily basis. One day, she didn't do it. The prophet went to inquire about her health, because he thought she might be sick. This lady ended up converting to Islam. So, that's how you respond to people who attack you, with forgiveness and with kindness”.

The story is legendary because it is a legend, of course, which is why apologists do not quote the source. In fact, the fictitious episode was invented nearly thirteen centuries after Muhammad died. Not only that, but it was created as a means of defense *against* Islamic intolerance by Abdul Baha, a founding member of the Baha'i cult. (It didn't work. To this day his followers continue to suffer horrible persecution in Muslim countries).

The real story of what happened to the woman who insulted Muhammad is found in the Hadith:

A Jewish woman used to insult the Prophet and say bad things about him, so a man strangled her until she died, and the Prophet ruled that no blood money was due in this case. (Abu Dawud 4349)

The mere fact that apologists like CAIR's Hooper substitute historical fact with suspect narrative, half-truth and outright deception to convince the rest of us that their prophet was a man of forgiveness is evidence enough that this is not the case. Muhammad did not reason with people once he had power. He demanded strict obedience, and this is confirmed by many episodes of violent retaliation and punishment.

After killing several of those who insulted him, even Muhammad's own community was in such fear that they would even kill their own family members who were critical of him to avoid his vengeance. One man even killed his own wife in the presence of their young children:

“A blind man had a slave-mother [his wife, the mother of his children] who used to abuse the Prophet (pbuh) and disparage him. He forbade her but she did not stop. He rebuked her but she did not give up her habit. One night she began to slander the Prophet (pbuh) and abuse him. So he took a dagger, placed it on her belly, pressed it, and killed her. A child who came between her legs was smeared with the blood that was there”. Abu Dawud 38:4348.

Muhammad was told about the gruesome murder the next day and naturally offered his approval. The woman had insulted him and therefore deserved to die. That is the lesson in "forgiveness" that the prophet of Islam left his people.