

[Karen Armstrong's Campaign of Disinformation](#)

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In 1992, HarperCollins published Karen Armstrong's "**MUHAMMAD: A Biography of the Prophet.**" That was the first time I heard about this author. When I had the opportunity to glance at the book, I noticed right away that it was not just another Western biography of the Prophet. It was a deliberate attempt to engage in an apologetic for Islam. I had hoped that Miss Armstrong and her book would not be taken seriously in the West, but I was wrong.

Lately, she has been very busy, lecturing on Islam, on both sides of the Atlantic. It seems that several Westerners are quite impressed by her, as shown in the 11 November, 2006, issue of **The Wall Street Journal**. Karen Elliott House, a former publisher of the Journal, contributed an article under the title of "**Five Best, Sense of Ummah: These books are essential to understanding Islam.**"

She listed the following: 1. "Islam" by Vartan Gregorian (Brookings, 2003); 2. "Muhammad" by Karen Armstrong (HarperCollins, 1992), 3. "What Went Wrong?" by Bernard Lewis (Oxford, 2002); 4. "The Koran Interpreted" translated by A.J. Arberry (Macmillan, 1955); 5. "Wahhabi Islam" by Natana J. Delong-Bas (Oxford, 2004).

I was very disappointed by the choice of Karen Armstrong's book, "**Muhammad.**" To be listed alongside books by Bernard Lewis and A. J. Arberry is astonishing, if not shocking! Miss House could have referred to such classical books that tell a credible story of Muhammad: "**The Life of Muhammad,**" by A. Guillaume, and the standard book on the Muslim Prophet, **Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman,** by W. Montgomery Watt. I guess, it would have been too much to expect Miss House to recommend Robert Spencer's latest book, "**The Truth about Muhammad**" Regnery Publishing, 2006!

As you begin to read Karen Armstrong's book, you'll be struck by her deliberate manipulation of the historical data regarding Muhammad. For example, in her **Introduction** she writes:

"In 1984, I had to make a television programme about Sufism, the mysticism of Islam, and was particularly impressed by the Sufi appreciation of other religions --- a quality that I had certainly not encountered in Christianity! This challenged everything that I had taken for granted about 'Islam' and I wanted to learn more... We know more about Muhammad than about the founder of any major faith so that a study of his life can give us an important insight into the nature of the religious experience." P. 13, 14

Further on, in Chapter 2, she wrote:

"In the Qur'an, therefore, we have a contemporaneous commentary on Muhammad's career that is unique in the history of religion: it enables us to see the peculiar difficulties he had to contend with, and how his vision evolved to become more profound and

universal in scope. In contrast, we know very little about Jesus.” P.51

To claim that we know more about Muhammad than about Jesus Christ is pure propaganda for Islam. The Qur'an does mention certain episodes in the life of Muhammad; but how could they be reliable when he himself was relating them, while attributing their source to Allah? As to the various biographies of Muhammad, they were written more than a century after his death, and were based on various accounts taken from the **Hadith**, i.e. the Traditions. The fact that there were many spurious Hadiths circulating in Islam, led Muslim scholars to reject a great number of them, and to produce their own versions of what is known as the **Sahih** (Authentic) **Traditions**.

The most “authoritative” source on the Traditions of Muhammad which we possess are taken from a raconteur of the Hadith, **Ibn Hisham**, who died in the middle of the 9th Century, around two hundred years after the death of the Prophet! In contrast, the Gospels, written within a few decades after the death, and resurrection of Christ, give us accurate and completely reliable accounts of the person, the miracles, and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it is well-known that the science of Textual Criticism existed in the Christian tradition; it gathered and compared several early Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, in order to give us the most trustworthy account of the life of Jesus Christ. **There is no such thing as textual criticism of the Qur'an within the Muslim community.** They regard their holy book as the very words of Allah. In Islam, the Qur'an is **qadeem**, i.e. uncreated.

Armstrong's book is replete with disinformation and propaganda. She never tires of blaming the West for misunderstanding Islam. As she brings this “masterpiece” to a close, she writes,

“We in the West have never been able to cope with Islam: our ideas of it have been crude and dismissive and today we seem to belie our avowed commitment to tolerance and compassion by our contempt for the pain and inchoate distress in the Muslim world.”
P. 265

“Today some Muslims are beginning to turn against the cultures of the People of the Book, which have humiliated and despised them. They have even begun to Islamise their own hatred. The beloved figure of the Prophet Muhammad became central to one of the latest clashes between Islam and the West during the Salman Rushdie affair. If Muslims need to understand our Western traditions and institutions more thoroughly today, we in the West need to divest ourselves of some of our old prejudice. Perhaps one place to start is with the figure of Muhammad: a complex, passionate man who sometimes did things that it is difficult for us to accept, but who had genius of a profound order and founded a religion and cultural tradition that was not based on the sword ---despite the Western myth--- and whose name ‘Islam’ signifies peace and reconciliation.” P. 266

So, Miss Armstrong lectures us about the need of “**divesting ourselves of some of our old prejudice**” and to start “**with the figure of Muhammad.**” Does she expect us to erase all that we have learned about the founder of Islam, from both Arabic and Western sources,

and to accept her sanitized bio of the Prophet?! Does she really want us to believe that he ***“founded a religion and cultural tradition that was not based on the sword ---despite the Western myth--- and whose name ‘Islam’ signifies peace and reconciliation”?*** Whom is she kidding? Where did she pick up her knowledge of Arabic, and who ever instructed her that ***‘Islam’ signifies peace and reconciliation?*** I have spent many years learning Arabic grammar and syntax. I can tell you, Miss Armstrong that ***“Islam”*** means ***“surrender.”*** It signifies total surrender to Allah, as he is revealed in the Qur’an.

The WSJ article appeared on Veterans’ Day 2006. Five days later, The Mosaic Foundation issued this bulletin: **Karen Armstrong to Lecture on ‘Islam: The Misunderstood Religion.’** The Foundation introduced the event which was to take place on Monday, 20 November with these glowing words:

*“Karen Armstrong, prolific author, speaker, teacher and media commentator on religious affairs in the U.S. and England, will launch the Mosaic Foundation’s new lecture series **“Re- Discovering the Arab World.”** Her lecture is entitled **“Islam: The Misunderstood Religion.”**”*

The event was held at the National Press Club, 529 14th St. NW, 13th Floor (Ballroom), Washington, D.C. It took place under the auspices of an organization that defines itself as follows: *“Established in 1998,” as “an American charitable and educational, nonprofit organization founded and run by the spouses of Arab Ambassadors to the United States. Through its projects, Mosaic seeks to improve the lives of women and children globally and increase understanding and appreciation of Arab culture in the United States.”*

So, the spouses of Arab ambassadors to the US enlisted the help of Miss Armstrong to enlighten the American public about the true nature of Islam, and our need to re-discover the Arab world!

I don’t know what the renowned speaker said in her 20 November lecture, but I can share with the readers of FFI, the comments she had made on 18 September, on Pope Benedict’s words relative to Islam. They were published in the Guardian; I am positive they provide us with an up-to-date idea of Karen Armstrong’s campaign of disinformation. Here are excerpts from the interview:

She began by saying that *“The Pope’s remarks were dangerous, and will convince many more Muslims that the west is incurably Islamophobic*

“Last week, Pope Benedict XVI quoted, without qualification and with apparent approval, the words of the 14th-century Byzantine emperor Manuel II: ‘Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.’ The Vatican seemed bemused by the Muslim outrage occasioned by the Pope’s words, claiming that the Holy Father had simply intended ‘to cultivate an attitude of respect and dialogue toward the other religions and cultures, and obviously also towards Islam.’”

*“But the Pope’s good intentions seem far from obvious. Hatred of Islam is so ubiquitous and so deeply rooted in western culture that it brings together people who are usually at daggers drawn. **Neither the Danish cartoonists, who published the offensive caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad last February, nor the Christian fundamentalists who have called him a paedophile and a terrorist, would ordinarily make common cause with the Pope; yet on the subject of Islam they are in full agreement.** [Emphasis is mine, JT]*

*“Pope Benedict delivered his controversial speech in Germany the day after the fifth anniversary of September 11. It is difficult to believe that his reference to an inherently violent strain in Islam was entirely accidental. He has, most unfortunately, withdrawn from the interfaith initiatives inaugurated by his predecessor, John Paul II, at a time when they are more desperately needed than ever. **Coming on the heels of the Danish cartoon crisis, his remarks were extremely dangerous. They will convince more Muslims that the west is incurably Islamophobic and engaged in a new crusade.***

[Emphasis is mine, JT]

“We simply cannot afford this type of bigotry. The trouble is that too many people in the western world unconsciously share this prejudice, convinced that Islam and the Qur'an are addicted to violence. The 9/11 terrorists, who in fact violated essential Islamic principles, have confirmed this deep-rooted western perception and are seen as typical Muslims instead of the deviants they really were.

*“With disturbing regularity, this medieval conviction surfaces every time there is trouble in the Middle East. Yet until the 20th century, Islam was a far more tolerant and peaceful faith than Christianity. **The Qur'an strictly forbids any coercion in religion and regards all rightly guided religion as coming from God; and despite the western belief to the contrary, Muslims did not impose their faith by the sword.*** [Emphasis is mine, JT]

“The early conquests in Persia and Byzantium after the Prophet's death were inspired by political rather than religious aspirations. Until the middle of the eighth century, Jews and Christians in the Muslim empire were actively discouraged from conversion to Islam, as, according to Qur'anic teaching, they had received authentic revelations of their own.

** **The extremism and intolerance that have surfaced in the Muslim world in our own day are a response to intractable political problems - oil, Palestine, the occupation of Muslim lands, the prevalence of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, and the west's perceived 'double standards' - and not to an ingrained religious imperative.***

[Emphasis is mine, JT]

*“But the old myth of Islam as a chronically violent faith persists, and surfaces at the most inappropriate moments. As one of the received ideas of the west, it seems well-nigh impossible to eradicate. Indeed, we may even be strengthening it by falling back into our old habits of projection. **As we see the violence - in Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon - for which we bear a measure of responsibility, there is a temptation, perhaps, to blame it all on 'Islam.'** But if we are feeding our prejudice in this way, we do so at our peril.”*

[Emphasis is mine, JT]

I leave it to the reader of the above quotations, and especially those that appear in bold characters, to judge about the reliability of Karen Armstrong, as an “expert” on Islam. She excelled in placing all the blame on us in the West, for the ills of the Muslim world, both ancient and modern. I guess, if she were interviewed today, 22 November 2006, she would have added that the West was also responsible for the brutal assassination of Pierre Gemayel, a minister in the Lebanese cabinet. Really, there can be no end to **Karen Armstrong's Campaign of Disinformation!**

The real motive for discouraging Jews and Christians from Islamizing was that the Dhimmi people of the Islamic Empire were the major source of income for the state. They had to pay the **jizya tax, and not only that, but do it with all humility; thus acknowledging the superiority of Islam!*