Christians, Muslims & .... War

A short guide exploring the texts, histories and attitudes of Christians and Muslims concerning violence, war and peace

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Cover pictures

The Crusader siege of Jerusalem, 1099

St Francis of Assisi meeting Sultan al-Kamil, c1219

Hikmah Guide No.2
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Introduction

War is sadly a constant, tragic fact in our world. Talk of a war to end all wars has always proven hollow and war only breeds more war. Today war is covered in more detail than ever before by the world’s media and horrifying images of death and destruction are regularly broadcast into our living rooms until we become disturbingly immune to the pain and suffering that war causes. Of particular concern in recent years has been the renewed growth of religious causes for such war and violence. Jihād especially has become a common word in our vocabulary and there has been much debate over the justice of recent wars conducted by western nations in response to terrorism.

Different categories and approaches to war can be identified ranging from pacifism to total war. But what does religion have to say about war? And in particular what do the Christian and Muslim faith traditions have to say about it? Christians have historically responded in a range of ways and been involved in pacifism, crusades (or holy war) and just war. Muslims have thought in terms of jihād both offensive (or expansionist) and defensive. In both religions the texts have a lot to say about war and violence, and both communities have a mixed history. Muslims today still claim to feel aggrieved by the Crusades and later western colonialism, both of which were supported by some Christians and opposed by others. Christians point to the early military expansion of Islamic rule across the birthplace of Christianity and, in Europe, the later threat of Ottoman invasion halted only at the gates of Vienna.

This Hikmah Guide presents a brief overview of the history, terminology and issues involved and points towards further reading and resources that will help you to go deeper. As with all Hikmah guides CMCS does not necessarily condone or support the views quoted or references cited. Rather the guide is intended to give the reader an appreciation of the range of approaches within both the Christian and Muslim communities.
The Christian Tradition

The Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) include many accounts of war and divinely sanctioned violence which many Christians find difficult to understand. Before conquering the city of Jericho, Joshua commanded that everything in the city should be “devoted to the LORD for destruction” (Joshua 6:17) which resulted in the slaughter of “both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword” (Joshua 6:21). There is a similar story in 1 Samuel 15 when God commands King Saul through the prophet Samuel to “strike and utterly destroy Amalek” with an identical list of collateral damage. When Saul fails to do as commanded, Samuel is angry and rejects Saul as king, beheading the enemy king himself (1 Samuel 15:3-33). And there are numerous other occasions when the Israelites are told to fight and even where God is pictured as slaying the enemy on behalf of His people (e.g. Exodus 14:28, 2 Samuel 5:24, 2 Kings 19:35).

These verses have been understood differently by different Christians at different times. To the ‘Christian’ European conquerors of new lands during the western colonial expansion into Asia and the Americas, the indigenous peoples often looked a lot like the Canaanites of the Hebrew Scriptures, giving sanction to forced conversion and even genocide. Some more liberal Christians have rejected such verses as myth, seeing them as incompatible with a loving Father God. The C2nd heretic Marcion even suggested that the god of the Old Testament must be a different god to the New Testament god, a heresy that Patrick Sookhdeo is concerned is re-emerging amongst Christians who he believes are “embracing only a gospel of grace, and thereby

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Figure 1: Battle of Jericho
rejecting the wrath of God” leading to the rejection of the Old Testament and of Israel.\textsuperscript{2} Other Christians allegorise Old Testament violence and apply it to spiritual warfare. The famous preacher Charles Spurgeon said, “‘You shall drive out the Canaanites’. Every sin has to be slaughtered”.\textsuperscript{3} Theologian Chris Wright is not content with this approach, however. He acknowledges that:

> you can always get a spiritual lesson out of (OT battles) somewhere .... (but) their primary form is simply historical narrative. ...... This is the way in which God in his sovereignty chose to work within human history to accomplish his saving purpose for humanity and for creation, including me. I may not understand why it had to be this way. I certainly do not like it. .... at some point I have to stand back from my questions, criticism, or complaint and receive the Bible’s own word on the matter.\textsuperscript{4}

The New Testament is more ambiguous in its stance towards war. Jesus Christ himself is best known for renouncing violence commanding his followers to “put away the sword” (\textit{John 18:11}) and “turn the other cheek” (\textit{Matthew 5:39}). He himself refused to use violence even when faced with unjust physical abuse and crucifixion, declaring that his kingdom was “not of this world” (\textit{John 18:36}). His enigmatic remarks about “bringing the sword” (\textit{Matthew 10:34}) seem to refer to social division and visions of a sword extending from his mouth suggest the power of his word to destroy spiritual enemies and lies rather than physical violence (\textit{Revelation 19:15}). That said, Jesus also seems to accept that wars will continue (\textit{Matthew 24:6}) and he never criticises soldiers for being in the army, even on occasion holding them up as examples of faith (\textit{Luke 7:1-10}). Some people point to his overturning of the money changers tables in the temple as a form of violence (\textit{John 2:15}). Later in the New Testament other writers seem to condone the use of force

\textsuperscript{2} Sookhdeo, Patrick. Recent Changes in Christian Approaches to Islam, Barnabas Aid, March/April 2010

\textsuperscript{3} Spurgeon, Charles, ‘Driving out the Canaanites and their iron chariots’, sermon no. 2049, 1888

by the state. Paul explains that rulers who bear the sword are God’s servants (Romans 13:4) and Peter agrees with him that wrongdoers should be punished (1 Peter 2:14). The Book of Hebrews commends Joshua and other Old Testament leaders for their prowess and success in battle (Hebrews 11).

Nonetheless, the example of the early church was almost entirely pacifist. Tertullian (c.155 –240AD) famously reminded his readers that "only without the sword can the Christian wage war, as Christ has abolished the sword". Other leaders also discouraged Christians from serving in the army or even as government officials – although this may have been as much to do with avoiding emperor worship and immoral lifestyles as it was with war and violence. This tradition is kept alive today in the Peace Churches, including the Mennonites, Amish, Christian Brethren and Quakers. Recent theologians supporting some sort of Christian pacifism include John Howard Yoder, Stanley Hauerwas and Richard Hays, who bases his reasoning squarely on God’s will revealed in the cross of Jesus:

(It is) not by the desire for saving our own skins and the skins of our children, not by some general feeling of reverence for human life, not by the naive hope that all people are really nice and will be friendly if we are friendly first. No, if our reasons for choosing nonviolence are shaped by the New Testament witness, we act in simple obedience to the God who willed that his own Son should give himself up to death on a cross.6

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Of course, Christian pacifism does not suggest that evil should not be confronted, but the emphasis of writers in the tradition of Martin Luther King, such as Walter Wink, is on non-violent resistance (NVR). Wink insists that “neutrality in a situation of oppression” is unacceptable. “Reduction of conflict by means of a phony “peace” is not a Christian goal. Justice is the goal” and NVR is directed to that end.7

However, from the time of the Roman emperor Constantine’s rule (306-337AD) onward the Christian church in the west changed from being a persecuted minority to being enmeshed in the affairs of state culminating in the Holy Roman Empire (C9th-C18th) and the concept of Christendom – although it should be noted that the church in the east had a very different history (see Jenkins 2009).8 Constantine claimed to have been told that he would conquer in the sign of the cross (Lat. *In hoc signo vinces*) and armies began to display the cross on flags, shields and uniforms. This culminated in the Crusades of the C11th to C13th during which Christian leaders in Europe mobilised armies to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslims by force. The nine or so crusades led to great loss of life not just in the Christian and Saracen armies but also amongst Muslim, Jewish and Eastern Christian communities around the Mediterranean. Most Christians today look back in horror at what was done in the name of Christ and some have sought to apologise for the violence.9 Some point to St Francis’ meeting with Sultan Kamil as the one positive example of

9 The *Reconciliation Walk*, the Yale “A Common Word” Christian Response
peacemaking in that era.\textsuperscript{10} Others, whilst not condoning the violence of the Crusades, have suggested that there were provocations and mitigating circumstances. For instance, the Barnabas Fund believes that “many (Christians) recognise that there was a need to defend the vulnerable Christians of the Holy Land. Thus, the First Crusade was an understandable (possibly justifiable) belated response to the initial Muslim aggression in the first expansionist jihād which conquered and subjugated vast Christian regions”.\textsuperscript{11}

And, of course, there have been more recent examples where Christians and even churches have given their support to violence and aggression. For instance, the Serbian Orthodox Church was complicit in the appalling violence against Bosnian Muslims in the early 1990s, and only in 2017 the Pope apologised for the ""the sins and failings of the Church and its members’ implicated in the 1994 Rwanda genocide that killed about 800,000 people”.\textsuperscript{12}

Various Christians have thought and written about the topic of war. Augustine (354-430AD) was one of the first and he is often credited with coining the phrase just war. This idea was later developed by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274AD) and has now become a set of criteria for how war can be started (Jus ad bellum) and how it should be conducted (Jus in bello). According to this theory a war can only be started by a recognised government or authority as a last resort in a just cause, with right intention, proportional means and a probability of success. Armies must not target non-combatants, must treat prisoners fairly and must not use indiscriminate

\textsuperscript{11} Barnabas Fund Response to the Yale Center for Faith and Culture Statement, 2008, and Durie, Mark. (2008). ‘Reflections upon ‘Loving God and Neighbor Together’
weapons or cause excessive loss of civilian life. These ideas to some extent have become enshrined in international law but are not always followed by governments. Contemporary Christian theologians supporting the just war position include Oliver O’Donovan and Nigel Biggar, who understands that when Jesus told Peter to away his sword he only meant it in the context of his imminent arrest. For Biggar the dilemma is that “on the one hand going to war causes terrible evils, but on the other hand not going to war permits them” and he draws on contemporary examples of cases in which he believes intervention would have maintained peace and prevented great loss of life, controversially arguing that the second Gulf war was justified.\footnote{Biggar, Nigel. 2013. \textit{In Defence of War}. Oxford: Oxford University Press}

It is not only western theologians who have wrestled with the issue of violence. In the global south liberation theology became a significant voice drawing inspiration for its “preference for the poor” not just from Christian theology but also from Marxist principles. Starting in South America in the 1960s and 70s with the work of Gustavo Gutierrez, liberation has been important in many areas of conflict and deprivation including South Africa, Palestine, India and within black theology. At times its concern to right injustice has come close to embracing violence and counter-revolution\footnote{See Sigmund, Paul. 1991. ‘Christianity and violence: The case of liberation theology’, \textit{Terrorism and Political Violence}, 3/4: 63-79}. As John Azumah notes “some Christians in West Africa are rejecting Jesus’ pacifist teaching and adopting what they call ‘third cheek theology’” arguing that they have no cheek left to turn that has not been struck, causing them to take “revenge by resorting to violence and murdering Muslims” who have been oppressing them\footnote{Azumah, John. 2008. \textit{My Neighbour's Faith: Islam Explained for African Christians}. Hippo Books, 124}.

This short introduction to the history of Christian thinking on war and violence demonstrates that Christians have not always – and still do not – agree on what the Bible says about war and whether Christians should
engage in fighting. Of course, Christians will all agree that the personal use of violence, other than for perhaps self-defence, is not permissible and that the violent taking of revenge is wrong – although American evangelical enthusiasm for guns makes some wonder. The disagreement is mostly around state-sponsored violence. Practising Christians will be found in the armed forces of many nations not to mention the West’s multi-billion-dollar arms production trade, but others will be found demonstrating against war, nuclear weapons and military intervention in foreign affairs. Some Christians have supported and taken part in western military intervention in the Middle East, but others will be found demonstrating against war, nuclear weapons and military intervention in foreign affairs.16

Adding to the confusion, as always, it is not easy, or even possible, to distinguish between those who are Christians by name and culture and those who are practising and following the teaching of Jesus. To what extent were Protestants and Catholics at the height of the troubles in Northern Ireland behaving as Christians, and to what extent were they involved in religious identity politics? Was the Christian Phalange in Lebanon justified by Christian faith for their part in the Lebanese civil war, especially during the Sabra and Shatila massacres? What some people do in the name of Christianity may have nothing to do with the Gospel. When politicians profess Christian faith and claim God’s guidance in declaring a “crusade” or other violent course of action, then non-Christians may be forgiven for presuming that those politicians think that they have the sanction of Christian teaching to do so.17

16 Wallis, Jim. 2015. '5 Things to Know About ISIS and the Theology of Evil', https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-wallis/5-things-to-know-about-isis_b_6768668.html
17 It has been reported that Bush claimed God had told him to take military action. See for instance, ‘George Bush: 'God told me to end the tyranny in Iraq', https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/07/iraq.usa
The Muslim Tradition

Muhammad was born in Arabia in the 7th century into a context of warring tribes and idolatry, albeit with some Jewish and Christian influence. In the early days of his ministry, he found himself opposed and under pressure in Mecca with only his powerful relatives to protect him. The passages of the Qur’an dating to this period do not contain commands to fight. Rather, the emphasis is on the need for people to repent, acknowledge God and turn from their sin.

It was only when Muhammad and his early followers migrated from Mecca to Medina (the hijra of 622AD/0AH) that the first permission to fight occurs with God’s promise of victory (Q22:39). Later it seems that Muhammad and the community may have been reluctant to fight but the Qur’an insists that fighting has been prescribed and may be good for them (Q2:216). Notwithstanding this reticence, the Qur’an and later traditions record the battles that Muhammad and the early Muslims were involved in, and biographers such as al-Tabari and Ibn Ishaq list around 26 battles. One particularly bloody instance, recorded by al-Tabari amongst others, was the beheading of several hundred men of the Banu Qurayza for which Muhammad was present and gave his assent. Later in the Qur’an there are even more trenchant commands about fighting including the well-known exhortation to slay the polytheists (mushrikūn) (Q9:5) unless they repent, pray and pay zakāt. Some modern English translations even make a direct

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18 Surah The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj) 22:39 – “Those who have been attacked are permitted to take up arms because they have been wronged – God has the power to help them”
19 Surah The Cow (al-Baqarah) 2:216 – “Fighting is ordained for you, though you dislike it. You may dislike something although it is good for you, or like something although it is bad for you: God knows and you do not.”
20 Surah Repentance (at-Tawbah) 9:5 – “When the [four] forbidden months are over, wherever you encounter the idolaters, kill them, seize them, besiege them, wait for them at every lookout post; but if they turn [to God], maintain the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms, let them go on their way, for God is most forgiving and merciful.”
connection with modern fighting (Q8:60). That said there are also texts that suggest restraint (Q2:190) and others that urge peace when possible (Q8:61).

Following Muhammad’s unexpected death in 632 the Muslim armies quickly conquered the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant, North Africa and within a century Muslim rule extended as far as Spain in the west and the Indus River in the east. Whilst this may be seen as a political expansion and Christian and Jewish communities continued to exist in places for many centuries and up to the present day, it was nonetheless a colonial imperial enterprise with religious inspiration which many Muslims look back on as a sign of God’s blessing on their religion. As Shabbir Akhtar puts it:

Islam is the paradigm of religion born as imperial power. No other faith was intentionally founded to be a successful amalgam of faith and power. Although Muslims did not convert the world at the point of the sword, they did try to conquer it in the fastest and largely permanent conquest of recorded military history.

So, given Muhammad’s involvement in fighting, the Qur’an’s sanction of war and the early Muslim expansion, how do Muslims interpret these texts and histories? What is the Islamic view of violence and war? For some it is enough to say that Muhammad was a

Figure 4: Siege of Constantinople, 1453

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21 Surah The Bounties (al-Anfal) 8:60 – “And make ready against them all you can of power, including steeds of war (tanks, planes, missiles, artillery, etc.) to threaten the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others besides whom, you may not know but whom Allah does know. And whatever you shall spend in the Cause of Allah shall be repaid unto you, and you shall not be treated unjustly”, The Noble Qur’an, translated by al-Hilali & Khan.

22 Surah The Cow (al-Baqarah) 2:190 – “Fight in God’s cause against those who fight you, but do not overstep the limits: c God does not love those who overstep the limits”.

23 Surah The Bounties (al-Anfal) 8:61 – “But if they incline towards peace, you [Prophet] must also incline towards it, and put your trust in God: He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing”.

man of his time and that these wars were no worse than other wars. Others take his engagement in physical fighting more seriously. They point out that Muhammad raised the standards of morality in conflict and by “his own magnanimous treatment of his most bitter enemies upon his conquest of Mecca has remained the supreme concrete example to be followed”. This has led to the conditions pertaining to acceptable Muslim warfare – somewhat akin to Christian just war theory – being codified in the *shari’a*. For example, an injunction from Abu Bakr, the first caliph, is often quoted as requiring that women, children, the infirm and non-combatants should not be killed. Prisoners should be well-treated, corpses should not be mutilated and even trees should not be cut down.

Many, such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr quoted above, understand Muhammad’s battles to have been purely defensive rather than offensive. Thus, they would argue that the only permitted form of physical violence for Muslims today is to defend themselves when attacked. Presumably discounting the initial Muslim conquests, Tariq Ramadan suggests that “war may be fought only in situations of resistance and must never be launched to acquire

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26 “When you become victorious over your enemies, do not kill their children, old people and women. Do not go even close to their date palms, nor burn their harvest, nor cut their fruit bearing trees. Do not break the promise once you have made it, and do not break the terms of treaty once you have entered into it. You will meet on your way people in the monasteries, the monks engaged in the worship of Allah, leave them alone and do not disperse them. Let them please themselves and do not destroy their monasteries, and do not kill them. May the peace of Allah be upon you”. Quoted in Doi, Abdur Rahman. *Shari’ah: the Islamic law*. London: TaHa, 446, from Al-‘Ajuz, Manahij al-Shari’ah al-islamiyyah vol 1, p 345
colonies, to occupy territory, to gain access to natural resources or impose religion by conversion.” However, he goes on to admit that:

It must be recognised that the Muslims, in their long history, have often been far from just and peace-loving. Islamic history is rife with war, with oppression, with exploitation and colonisation. Idealisation of the past is of no use in confronting the challenges of our era. Muslims have waged wars of expansion, have established colonial type regimes, enforced religious conversion, upheld slavery, targeted civilians, manipulated religion and exploited their fellow human beings. Though they were clearly acting against the principles and prescriptions of their religion, some of them did so while claiming to be acting in the name of Islam.27

Other Muslims, however, have a wholly different approach and look to Muhammad’s engagement in warfare as a normative model. They see themselves as being at war with the enemies of Islam and use the Islamic theory of abrogation (naskh) to defend their violent interpretations and actions. This is a system of interpretation which claims that chronologically later verses in the Qur’an can replace earlier verses. So, for instance, the earlier verse about there being no compulsion in religion (Q2:256)28 is superseded by the later command to fight the polytheists (Q9:5), who may well include Christians accused of polytheism because of the doctrine of the Trinity. Muslim Brotherhood ideologue Sayyid Qutb dismissed suggestions that jihād was only a defensive war as a reaction to the “wily attacks of the orientalists”. For him “the command to refrain from fighting during the Meccan period was a temporary stage” to build up strength to begin fighting.29

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28 Surah The Cow (al-Baqarah) 2:256 – “There is no compulsion in religion: true guidance has become distinct from error, so whoever rejects false gods and believes in God has grasped the firmest hand-hold, one that will never break. God is all hearing and all knowing”.
Whilst the principle of abrogation is an accepted interpretative tool in Islamic thought – and indeed is affirmed by the Qur’an itself (Q2:106)\(^30\) – it is seen as problematic by some Muslims. For instance, Mahmoud Taha suggested that the earlier Meccan parts of the Qur’an were actually the normative revelation and that the later Medinan parts were an accommodation to humankind’s lack of development in the early period.\(^31\) This view, however, has not been widely accepted.

Consequently, Islam does not have a tradition of pacifism *per se*, although the Ahmadiyya sect – seen as heretical by other Muslims – comes closest to it, while still accepting that defensive wars may be necessary.\(^32\) There are, however, many Muslim organizations which engage in peace-building, reconciliation and even Non-Violent Resistance.\(^33\)

Muslims who want to emphasise the non-violent aspect of Islam say that the most important interpretative tool for understanding the Qur’an’s attitude to

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\(^30\) Surah The Cow (*al-Baqarah*) 2:106 – “Any revelation We cause to be superseded or forgotten, We replace with something better or similar. Do you [Prophet] not know that God has power over everything?”


violence is that of the occasions of revelation (asbāb ul-nuzūl). This approach seeks to find out from Hadith and other sources what was happening and what the context was when Muhammad reported receiving a particular revelation. So, for instance, the commands to fight in the Qur’ān maybe came during specific battles and so should be restricted to the historical context in which the early Muslims found themselves. They cannot be generalised and applied at all times and in all places. Rather it is the verses about peace and non-coercion which should be universalised.

So, what of the Muslim and war today? Muslims point out that the Arabic word jihād literally means struggle and that the concept of jihād is wider than physical fighting (the normal word in the Qur’ān is from the root q-t-l meaning to fight or combat). Seyyed Hossein Nasr goes as far as to suggest that “all of life is a jihād, because it is a striving to live according to the will of God”. Along with others he quotes a hadith citing Muhammad as returning from battle and saying, ‘We have returned from the lesser jihād to the greater jihād’. Developing this idea Ramadan says that:

spiritual jihād - called jihād al-nafs (self) – is an individual’s effort to master the dark side of his or her character (and) ..... a person can wage a spiritual jihād against egoism and arrogance, against poverty, racism or corruption, just as that person can wage jihād for education, social injustice, equality and peace.

Others point to different types of jihād besides jihād bil-sayf (the sword) such as: jihād bil-qalam (pen) or lisan (tongue), in other words propagating Islam;

36 Ramadan, Tariq. 2017. Islam: the essentials, Pelican, 159 and 258
jihād bil-yad (hand) building society; and several other variants.37 However, there is disagreement about such interpretations. Some Muslims, such as Hassan al-Banna of the Muslim Brotherhood, have pointed out that traditionally the hadith about the “greater jihād” has been considered to be “weak” and unreliable.38 Akhtar dismisses it as “forged and in any case implausible” being only “polemically useful to Sufis and progressive Muslims eager to please Western audiences”.39

So, some Muslims, such as those in al-Qaeda and other groups, understand jihād to be an obligation on all Muslims and see themselves fighting a defensive – or even an offensive– war against western infidels interfering in Muslim lands, whom they often refer to as Neo-colonial Crusaders or Zionists. Other Muslims reject this interpretation emphasising that even a defensive jihād has to be sanctioned by a legitimate religious authority.

As in the Christian case, non-Muslims find it difficult to understand how people who all call themselves Muslims can have these conflicting views and attitudes. However, the history and interpretative principles above help to explain why Muslims may disagree over the Islamic approach to war and violence. It explains why there are peace-loving and militant Muslims today who both claim the texts and traditions for themselves.

37 See an article on jihad by the Islamic Supreme Council of America, www.islamicsupremecouncil.org/understanding-islam/legal-rulings/21-jihad-classical-islamic-perspective.html
Further reading

Further reading on religions and war


Further reading on Christian views of war

- Jensen, Phillip. 2011. 'What is the Christian perspective on war? Five views', in *Christianity Today*.

Christian pacifism


**Christian just war theory**


• [Catholic Teaching Concerning a Just War](http://catholicism.org)


**The Crusades**


**Further reading on Islamic views of war**

• Chittick, William. 1990. 'The Theological Roots of Peace and War according to Islam', *Islamic Quarterly*, 34/3: 145

**Jihād**


• Bukhari, ‘Fighting for the Cause of Allah’ from his book of Sahih Hadith

• Hussain, Ghuffar & Erin Saltman. 2014. 'Jihād Trending: a comprehensive analysis of online extremism and how to counter it' (Quilliam)

• Mansoor, Parvez. 2012. 'Jihād, Anyone?', *Critical Muslim, 2/1*:


Peacemaking in Islam


• Smock, David & Qamar-ul Huda. 2009. 'Islamic Peacemaking since 9/11' (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace)
Questions for reflection

For all

What are the shortcomings of just war theory?
What alternatives do you see to state-sponsored war and violence?
People often say that religion is the cause of wars? Is this really true?
Sometimes? Always? Never?
To what degree is it ‘Christians’ and ‘Muslims’ that initiate or take part in violence?
Have you ever thought about ‘just peacemaking’ or being involved in peacemaking yourself?

For Christians

In what ways may non-Christians perceive the Christian texts (Old and New Testament) to be violent? How do you explain this?
Do you believe that war can be justified? In what circumstances?
What are the shortcomings of just war theory?
What are the shortcomings of pacifism?
What do you say when others accuse Christians today of war and interventionism?
Have you ever thought about ‘just peacemaking’ or being involved in peacemaking yourself?

For Muslims

In what ways may non-Muslims perceive the Muslim texts (Qur’an, hadith and tafsir) to be violent? How do you understand these texts?
How would you explain the relevance of nasikh wa mansukh and asbab al-nuzul as they relate to the war verses?
To what extent are Muslims involved in violent conflict today? Which conflicts are justified, and which are not?
What do you say when others accuse Islam of being a violent (or peaceful) religion?
Have you ever thought about just peacemaking or being involved in peacemaking yourself?
“These Hikmah Guides are an excellent resource, looking constructively at issues which sometimes appear to divide Christians and Muslims, and applying the same standards and criteria to each tradition”. Prof Hugh Goddard (Professor Emeritus, University of Edinburgh).

“Readers are expertly guided so that they can comprehend and then reflect on the sheer range of sectarian diversity within the modern world's two global religious superpowers”. Dr Shabbir Akhtar (Regent’s Park College, Oxford)

“At last, accessible and readable guides to hot button issues in Christian-Muslim encounter, at once non-polemical and academically rigorous. The fruit of a sustained collaboration by Christian and Muslim academics. Highly recommended. Dr Philip Lewis (Inter-faith Consultant to the Bishop of Leeds and former Lecturer at Bradford University)

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