

(Library ebook) Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam

# Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam

*Karen Armstrong*

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**Karen Armstrong : Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Knowing MuhammadBy William Garrison Jr.ISBN:0575050128 is the 1991 "Victor Gollancz Ltd." (London) paperback edition titled "Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam" by Karen Anderson, 290 pages with notes and index. It is a reprint of ISBN:0062500147 (hardback)titled "Muhammad: a biography of the prophet", or ISBN: 0062508865 which is the 1993 "HarperSanFrancisco" (HarperCollins Publishers)paperback edition, of the same later title. Review: "Karen Armstrong's thought-provoking biography offers a picture of Muhammad which facilitates a profound understanding of Islam and the people who adhere to it so strongly. While discussing Muhammad's life and the fragile society of seventh-century Arabia, she takes particular events as a focus for exploring major tenets of the faith. In dealing with Muhammad's war against Mecca, she asks how far Islam should be considered a religion of the sword; in describing his relationships with his wives, daughters and female converts she considers the claims that Islam is a fiercely misogynistic religion; and while analysing his major political achievements in uniting the tribes of Arabia she explores the reasons why Muslims regard political activity as a religious duty. At the same time she asks why Muslims tend to see worldly success as a sign of God's blessing while Christians sanctify the notion of poverty and humility. Unlike other Western biographers of Muhammad, Karen Armstrong takes as her starting point the reality of his religious experience, thereby illuminating Islam's powerfully inspirational nature and offering challenging comparisons with the two religions most closely

related to it - Judaism and Christianity."

Western relations with the Muslim world are increasingly important to international stability, but, although more can be discovered about Muhammad than about any other founder of a world religion, much of what is known about him originates from prejudiced medieval accounts written at the time of the Crusades. Just as she used events in St Paul's life to examine Christian dilemmas in "The First Christian", here Karen Armstrong draws on events in Muhammad's life to discuss Western problems and prejudices. In considering his dealings with his wives and female converts, she asks whether he and his religion are truly as misogynistic as Westerners tend to believe. She also asks how his extraordinary political success has affected our view of Islam. Christians are used to the spectacle of the crucified Jesus and have sanctified the notion of failure and humiliation. Sunni Muslims, on the other hand, tend to see worldly success as a sign of God's blessing and are suffering peculiar difficulties now in coming to terms with the weakness vis-a-vis the West. The book has been written for general readership, but with the aim of maintaining standards of scholarship, and it offers a view of Muhammad the prophet as a sympathetic man whose exciting life helps one to appreciate the rich complexity of the Muslim tradition. Karen Armstrong's other books include "The Gospel According to Woman" and "Holy War".