

Tariq Ramadan
The Messenger
The Meanings of the Life of Muhammad
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If discovering another faith is best done through hearing the words of a representative of that faith, what better way to begin to understand the prophet Muhammad than to pick up a book by a devout Muslim scholar. Tariq Ramadan has studied in Cairo and Geneva, and is at present a professor in Switzerland. He is extensively involved in peace, social justice and dialogue issues, but has become something of a hate-figure among right-wing conservative Americans, which is perhaps as good a recommendation as anyone should need. This book paints a picture of Muhammad not often heard in the West: a leader who is tolerant, kind, gentle, scrupulously honest, and keenly aware of the needs of orphans and the poor. He concludes: 'Muhammad's life journey offered at every stage an existence devoted to the worship of God. The heart cannot but commune with such a being as he follows the path to freedom... The Prophet carried a universal message, both in the experience of love present throughout his life and in his reminders to people of the need to adhere to a universal ethic that transcends divisions, affiliations, and rigid identities...' This may not be the last word on Muhammad, but it is an important word to hear in these troubled times.

Nicholas Alan SSF

Underscoring the historical importance and meaning of Muhammad, *The Messenger* addresses the significance of the Prophet for some of today's most controversial issues, such as the treatment of the poor, the role of women, Islamic criminal punishments, war, racism, and relations with other religions. Named by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 most important innovators of the century, Tariq Ramadan is a leading Muslim scholar, with a large following especially among young European and American Muslims. In his first book written for a wide audience, he offers a biography of the Prophet Muhammad, highlighting the spiritual and ethical teachings of one of the most influential figures in human history. The life of the Prophet Muhammad, to whom the Angel Gabriel revealed the verses of the Quran, has provided inspiration to Muslims for hundreds of years. Interspersed with spiritual and philosophical meditations, this profound and stimulating biography shows how Muhammad's message can be used to address some of today's most controversial issues - from the treatment of the poor and the role of women to the interpretation of jihad and relations with other religions. It offers Muslims a new understanding of Muhammad's life and introduces non-Muslims to the story of the Prophet and t