

REVIEWS

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Dr. Khalifa Abdul Hakim's "The Prophet and His Message." Published by Institute of Islamic Culture, Club Road, Lahore. (First Edition, March, 1972. Pages 455. Price Rs. 1.5/-)

Dr. Khalifa Abdul Hakim died in January, 1959. This book is therefore a posthumous publication. Had he lived to have a final look at the manuscript, it might have improved immensely. Nonetheless, the book, as it is, without having the advantage of final revision by the author, is a complete and well-ordered exposition of the subject-matter which he intended to discuss, elaborate and present. And the manner and style he has adopted, and the references employed indicate the author's command over the subject and his mastery over the logical presentation of his point of view.

The text is preceded by a 'Foreword' by Justice S. A. Rahman who says that the Prophet's advent as "Mercy to the World" appears to him "to be the keynote of the author's clear and cogent exposition of the Prophet's teachings". Mr. Justice S. A. Rahman further says that in the Second Part dealing with the Prophet's message, "rationale of all the major Islamic tenets is brought out in a lucid discussion, at a high philosophic level, in consonance with the dynamic and progressive spirit of Islam". There is no doubt that Islam is "dynamic and progressive" but we must say herein lies occasion for deep thought and realistic imagination to determine whether the progress sought for is within the orbit of Islam or it has been allowed to cross the boundary in the anxiety to prove that every surmise of the Western thinkers can be found out in Islam. It is a well-known fact that while a handful of the so-called Muslim integral recommend that the vast and valuable collections of the Hadithes should be discarded as trash, relying solely on the Holy Quran as the only source of law and guidance, the consensus of the Muslim theologians uphold that the two together form an integral whole and "dynamism and progress" must be determined within this circle.

"The Prophet and His Message" is broadly divided into two parts. The First Part consists of eight chapters spread over 165 pages. The Second Part

consists of twelve chapters spread over 290 pages.

The first chapter is captioned "General Introduction" and it is in this chapter that the author rises to the greatest stature of the scholarly exposition of a comparative study of religions quoting all relevant references supposed to be authentic. "Philosophical ethics in the West begins with Socrates and Plato" writes the author, "but they do not make the cords of human heart vibrate". Plato's Republic is an exponent of an "idealistic scheme of ethics and politics" but it draws a "pattern of caste system". Coming to Budha he writes "life, according to him, could not be mended; the only remedy, therefore, is that it must be ended". Krishna desires that a person must be dedicated to his duty. "This Karma Yoga as presented by Krishna in the Bhagvat Gita, comes very close to the positive ethics of Islam". According to him "the simple mono-theistic creed of Jesus" was wrapped into the concept of incarnation which is "a most unforgiveable blasphemy". Writing about Zoroastrianism the author very aptly remarks that it "made existence an eternal battle-ground of light and darkness, God and the Devil" Thus quoting exhaustively and bringing up the distinctive traits of all the extant religious dogmas with reference to some of the great thinkers such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Goethe, Nietzsche etc. quite convincingly and logically proves that "comprehending life in all its variety, diversity and a constant attempt to harmonise multiplicity into a constant unity, is the distinguishing feature of Islam", and this distinguishing feature was not an impracticable ideal or theory but it was so practical that the Prophet of Islam showed its practicability in his own life and his earliest associates worked wonders in the world with this same teachings. Thus "the comprehensiveness of Islam and its attempted harmonisation of the various spheres of life under an all-embracing ideal was embodied in the life of the Prophet".

In the book the author has drawn his material from the Quran, the Hadithes and the Biographies of the Prophet and has indeed succeeded in presenting the Prophet of Islam "as a super-human being, distinguishable from other human beings only by the revelation of eternal truths especially granted to him." The Prophet laid the foundation of a state and society where fundamental human rights were secured by all irrespective of anything. Equality before law and perfect freedom granted to the people are yet to be desired by mankind. According to Islam "life here, as seen and experienced and lived, is not the whole reality. Our purpose should be better and higher life both here and here-after."

In the second chapter under the caption "Before the Call" the author describes the life of the Prophet with great eloquence and marvellous success. He has dealt with the childhood and the youth of the Prophet, pointing out his personal integrity. He has very successfully refuted the unfounded accusation of the Western critics, such as the "Imposter Theory", and the statement of Professor Margoliouth of Oxford alleging that he and his wife Khadija were wont to worship the idol Uzza before retiring in the night. Commenting on the views that he borrowed his religious ideas from the Christian monks he holds it absurd but at the same time he considers "the Orthodox Muslim belief" that the Prophet knew nothing of the Biblical lore as untenable".

Commenting on the blasphemous allegation of sexuality the author retorts "the unjust critic tolerates the Biblical polygamy of these Prophets and Patriarchs (of Israel) as divinely approved but when it comes to Mohammed he imputes sensuality as a motive". Continuing he reminds the Western critics that "monogamy was first made a matter of legislation in the West by the Emperor Justinian, a Roman (and Pagan) jurist". And removing the curtain from the perverted sex attitude of the Western societies he writes..."adultery is preferred to bigamy or polygamy. In the legally monogamous Christian West fornication is not a crime, and the law takes no notice of men and women living in sexual intimacy without contracting a civil or religious marriage. And these nations stigmatise the Muslims as Polygamous. Disclosing the facts about the sexually criminal societies of the West he very rightly observes "Muhammed set an example of ideal monogamous marriage to be practised in the normal conditions of life but as Islam was legislating for all grades of culture and all kinds of circumstances it allowed restricted and regulated polygamy".

The third chapter deals with "The Call". Under this heading he has successfully refuted the baseless theories of Freud, Jung, and Adler and exposed the hollowness of William James and Max Nordon regarding their view of "neurotics". Referring to the local opposition he concludes that the motive was "economic, racial, tribal or national".

The fourth chapter deals with Migration and the circumstances have been explained full.

The fifth chapter is captioned "Arrival at Medina" followed by other two chapters dealing with the Political struggle and Fightings. In these three chapters the author has successfully portrayed the enthusiastic welcome the

Prophet received at Medina and the circumstances compelling him to fight for the survival of Islam and the Muslims and lastly the conquest of Mecca and the treatment meted out to the now vanquished but once blood-thirsty enemies. Commenting on the universal forgiveness he poses the question to the modern world "is there any case in the long human history which can equal in magnanimity this act of unconditional forgiveness for the types of enemy whom Muhammad forgave?" But the civilised West which held Nuremberg trial and killed all the enemies can hardly appreciate this magnanimous forgiveness in so early a period as seventh century A.D. A Christian member of the Australian Parliament, discussing the treatment to be meted out to Vanquished Japan said, "Let us forget all the cruelties and iniquities prescribed by this enemy and treat the Japanese as Muhammad had treated his enemies". But did this appeal stir the stone hearted West?

Mentioning that "when an Ansar died his Emigrant brother inherited from him in preference to his blood-relations" he says that "longer this...natural heirs and blood-relations were given priorities and their shares were fixed". He concludes "the shares thus fixed are generally believed by a large majority of Muslims to be the final law of Islam" ..."but in liberal reconstruction of Muslim jurisprudence it would be legitimate to adopt a new pattern by adaptation to fundamentally different circumstances". (Page 96-97). This view is contrary to the verdict given by all the learned theologians of the last fourteen hundred years. He has however dealt with at length on this point and quoted several instances in support of his view. But all these instances are related to the interpretation of the laws within the recognised standard and norms of the law.

The eighth chapter on "Morals and Manners" is the last chapter of Part I of the book. He has sub-divided the chapter under the headings of Precept and Example and Religion and Morality. Under these two heads he has made a comparative study of Buddhism, Brahmanism, Judaism, Christianity and proved successfully the superiority of the laws of Islam. Buddhism, Christianity and Brahmanism, according to him "developed two common characteristics: incarnation and asceticism". Budha has nothing to offer to us in the realm of civilisation or culture as his ethics is full of negative morality. Christianity "based salvation, not on moral living, but on belief in irrational dogma". "Hinduism and Buddhism taught that human beings are born burdened with the consequences of their actions in previous lives and Christianity said that every human child is born with ineradicable perversion

of its nature. Islam contradicted these and held that human beings are born with human nature with potentialities both for good and evil". He concludes beautifully that "Mosaic law was loveless" and the Christian's "love was lawless". Islam combined the two in a healthy synthesis.

In the Second Part consisting of chapters 9 to 20, dealing with the Prophet's message, "the rationale of all the major Islamic tenets is brought out in a lucid discussion, at a high philosophic level, in consonance with the dynamic and progressive spirit of Islam". The Islamic tenets in these chapters are discussed under the captions of (9) the Religion of Love (10) Rights and Duties (11) The Ethical Teachings of Islam (12) Islam's Ideal Man (13) How Islam Revolutionised Arabian Society (14) Is Universal Religion Possible (15) What is Islam (16) Evolution (17) Religion and Symbolism (19) Islam and Democracy and (20) Law and Islam.

These captions are enough to give a vivid picture of the contents that have been dealt with. The marvel of these discussions lies in the facts that all these points have been discussed in detail with special reference to the views held on these topics .by all other religions and the well-known philosophers and thinkers. Thus the readers are acquainted not only with the Islamic tenets but the tenets of all the extant religions and learned views and they can very well draw their own conclusions and admit the superiority of Islam if read and thought of with impartial and unbiased mind.

The learned Muslim theologians may however differ from the author in certain interpretations which may appear to be contrary to the well established views held by the Orthodox theologians but they must give credit for the learned exposition of his own point of view.

1. On page 180 he writes that the Quran "repeats twice its liberal theistic faith that all believers in God and after-life who lead virtuous lives are saved". This interpretation regarding salvation is not in consonance with the established view of the Muslim theologians.

2. On page 213 the author has bestowed praise on the liberalism practised by the Muslim rulers, in respect of other religions, from Cordova to Baghdad He says "If Islam had practised religious intolerance and coercion and used pressures that were common in the ancient and medieval world, all Spain, all Eastern Europe, all India would have been solidly Muslim today". This may lead a critic to think that the spread of Islam elsewhere was probably the result of pressure or coercion. As a matter of fact in Spain, Eastern Europe and India the Muslim rulers failed in their duty to propagate

Islam through the recognised methods of peaceful preaching and had therefore to pay heavy penalty in the form of persecution, massacre and slavery

3. The Quranic reference of the "Trust" offered by God and accepted by man has been interpreted as "Free Will" (Page 220). This is contrary to the established view. This is a matter of interpretation.

4. On page 298 the author has supported the theory of Evolution. This concept is in contradiction to the established view of the Muslim thinkers. But the author appears to be overawed by the glittering of the Western thought and pleads that "no religion can now command universal approval which runs counter to the conception of Evolution... Through immeasurable ages the unicellular pulsation of life has reached its highest manifestation in the human organism". He further asserts that "no form of life came into existence *ex-nihilo* at a stroke."

The logic that a religion counter to the conception of Evolution cannot command universal approval is fallacious inasmuch as a theory cannot necessarily be accepted for the sake of its acceptance by a section of the Western thinkers. Further the claim that "no form of life came into existence *ex-nihilo* at a stroke" appears to be contrary to the Quranic verse "*kun fa-yakun*".

Pleading the acceptance of the theory, the author on Page 299 holds that 'the unity and solidarity of humanity, irrespective of race, creed or colour, is another indispensable belief for any religion that aspires to be universal'. In this connection it is quite pertinent to note that the Islamic theory of the creation of mankind from one and the same parent is a more unifying force than the theory of Evolution in which it is difficult to prove that only one pair of man could have evolved in this world. The Whites, under this theory, can have reasons to claim that they belonged to different ancestors. Similar may be the explanations of other races. The theory of Evolution has further been explained more elaborately in a separate chapter (Chapter Sixteenth). Dealing with this theory of Evolution he admits that "no orthodox Muslim theologian has ever conceived life and existence in terms of Evolution" but Ibn Miskawaih and Rumi "presented pretty elaborate convictions about it" and Iqbal was convinced that the Quran supported the dynamic and evolutionary view of life". Unfortunately he has not given the references of these authors. Since the theory is disputed, it was all the more necessary for the guidance of other researchers involved in this kind of research. The three

Muslim names quoted by him are held in great esteem by the Muslims and a reference to them might have strengthened the stand of the author. More surprisingly, however, he contradicts himself by admitting that "no theology reconcilable with the concept of created evolution has yet been constructed which would seek its support and justification from the Quran itself." (Page 315). If that be, the case how can it be claimed that "Iqbal was convinced" of its truth? The author, however, belongs to that group which aspires to prove every bit of his own belief from the holy Quran. He claims that "we believe that it is possible to do so". But as the Destiny did not allow him further lease of life, the proof from the Quran is yet to be accomplished by some one of his followers.

Under the chapter "Law and Islam" the author holds that only those rituals and laws which are enjoined in the Quran are rigid and cannot be changed or modified. But those which were prescribed by the Prophet are subject to changes. "It is legitimate to believe that what is not prescribed in the Quran is a variable element". (Page 428). According to him "even if a ruling is believed to have originated in the Prophet he was giving it not as an eternally valid revelation but something that met a particular situation". (Page 430). This position is totally untenable by the Muslims all over the world who very rightly apprehended that its acceptance would lead to anarchy and confusion in every realm of society and no more universal uniformity even in regard to the prayers and rituals would be conceivable. The Muslim Jurists first refer to the Quran and then to the Hadithes believed to be authentic and in case they find anything in the authentic Hadithes, they cannot dare add or subtract anything from it. They exercise their free judgement only with respect to that which is not explicit in the Quran or the Hadith and in that case also they remain confined to the spirit of Islam.

His summing up of the chapter is quite comprehensive. "In Islamic society law cannot be secular in the sense that it should renounce any connection with religion. For a Muslim, religion is an all-comprehensive reality. Personal morality, social relationship, private law, public law, inter-faith or international relations must be justified and referred back to the fundamentals of Islam". (page 446). But for him the "fundamentals" are only the Quran whereas for the Muslim jurists it includes the authentic Hadithes.

In conclusion it must be admitted that the book is full of learned discourses and is a very useful and informative treatise on the comparative study of religions. He has very successfully explored the cause of Islam

proving logically that Islam alone is the true religion and what-ever runs counter to it is false. He has also replied to the malign criticism made by some of the Western scholars on Islam and the Prophet. The study of this book will help a lot the non-Muslims and those ignorant of Islam, in understanding the truth about religions. We wish he would have avoided the controversial matters relating to the fundamentals of Islamic belief.

M. Hadi Hussain: Imam Abu Hanifah-Life and Work.

Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, Rs. 17/- Pages 256.

'Allamah Shibli Numani's "Sirat al-Numan" is a well-known biography of Imam Azam Abu Hanifa al-Numan in Urdu and is still unparalleled, as it gives not only the biography of the great Imam but also an analysis of the salient characteristics of the Hanafi School of Law. It also reveals to the adherents of other schools of Islamic Law as to how much their leaders are indebted to the great Imam, his pupils, and their works. In view of the importance of the book, it has been rendered into English by Mr. M. Hadi Hussain who is so well-known as a writer for his several books in English and Urdu.

The work under review bears an eloquent testimony to the fact that Mr. Hadi Hussain has an admirable mastery over both the languages — English and Urdu. His simple, easy style has facilitated greatly his task of translating the ornate scholarly diction of one of the greatest Urdu prose-writers — 'Allamah Shibli Numani.

Perhaps, it will not be far from truth to say that the present English translation seems, for the modern westernised young readers, to a great extent, to be more easily intelligible than the original. While the translation seems to be marvellously perfect, skilful and accurate, the beautiful language induces the readers to proceed with the work till its end.

The students would have been greatly benefited if the translator would have thrown some light on the method of his own translation in an introduction added by himself, and have enlightened his readers on the system of his own writing and rendering from one language to another. Nevertheless, even the learned scholars excel one another in the art of expressing their own theme and manifesting their own ideas. What is appreciable with the present translator is that he possesses a unique knack and skill with which he displays his own mastery in rendering the learned

passages of ‘Allamah Shibli in his own simple and attractive English.

Just like the writer the publishers also deserve our congratulations and appreciation for making such an important study accessible to us in the present beautiful volume at a moderately reasonable price.

The Arabic readers would not, however, mind some minor mistakes that have crept in the transliteration of a number of titles and names so easily detectable by them.⁷³ The work has distinguished itself for its criticus apparatus and good transliteration.

⁷³ p. iv : al-Durr read al- Dural:

p. V : al-Sumairi: read al-Saimary,

p. vi. (B) al-Intiha: read gal-Intiqa',

p. (25) 'Abr : read 'Ibar'.

p. 13. Qadariyyah : read 'Qadariyyah' : Marjiyya : read 'Murji'ah, p. 19. 21. 'Ainiyyah : read Uyanyah; p• 20, read turuq : 'turuq', p. 21. 2, Shafi raed Sha'bi'.