

BOOK REVIEW

SHARIF AL-MUJAHID, *Ideology of Pakistan*, (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, 2001), pp. 212. Price not mentioned.

REVIEWED BY RAIS AHMAD KHAN.

The book was originally published in 1974 and was out of print for sometime. The Islamic Research Institute is to be lauded for publishing a largely revised, updated and enlarged version of the book.

The opening chapter discusses the relevance and importance of Islamic Ideology for Pakistan and supports the argument by pointing to the role of Christian concepts values and traditions in the west. Chapters two-three briefly trace the evolution of the two-nations' concept and the role Islam played in creating a Muslim nationhood in India. Chapter four argues the division of Pakistan and emergence of Bangladesh were not necessarily the denouement of the Islamic Ideology or of the two-nation theory. All it showed was the gradual erosion of the cluster of shared values, beliefs, attitudes and political orientation because the ruling elites failed to translate the Islamic Ideology into social action programs. Chapter five is exclusively devoted to defining the basic ingredients of the Islamic ideology.

The division of India on the basis of religion did not make much sense to the people in the west where secularism reigned supreme. Many in Pakistan also questioned the attempt to make Pakistan an Islamic state. It seems the book was written to answer there critics. It is an extensively researched and very well argued book. Sharif al-Mujahid's scholarship is impressive indeed as is evidenced by the large number and quality of sources drawn upon.

His citing of the references to Christianity in the constitutions of a number of western countries is not very convincing. He has failed to make a distinction between Christianity as culture and Christianity as faith. The western societies are secular in nature and the role of Christianity there is only symbolic.

One has no quarrel with the general argument of the book but pragmatically speaking; one cannot but point out the dismal failure of the Islamic ideology as a tool of nation building. In the fifth chapter, Sharif al Mujahid has rightly pointed out that the essential ingredients of Islamic ideology comprise both *huquq Allah* and *huquq-al-ibad*, i.e., duties owed to God and duties owed to fellowmen. Unfortunately in Pakistan the emphasis has been only on the former and the latter has been forgotten. This bifurcation of individual morality from social morality and the total disregard of the latter has been calamitous. According to Sharif al-Mujahid it is not the ideology that has failed the nation; it is the nation that has failed the Ideology.

The value of the book has been greatly enhanced by a scholarly foreword contributed by Dr. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, four appendices, a comprehensive bibliography and an index. The production values of the book are excellent.

SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*, ABC International Group Inc., Chicago, Originally Printed in 1975, revised, enlarged and undated 2001. pp. 298, ISBN-1-930637-13-6.

Distributed by Kazi Publications, Lahore.

REVIEWED BY MARYAM JAMEELAH.

“... Muslims in whom the power of Faith (Ƴm«n) has become weakened by the illusion that traditional (orthodox) Islam is something that belongs only to the past, believe that by identifying themselves with modernistic theories and interpretations, they are allying themselves with forces that must of necessity prevail in the future. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth!” (p.128)

This truth was suddenly revealed to the reviewer as she went through her old file of news clippings collected some forty years ago during the military dictatorship of President Ayub Khan (1958-1969), all dealing with his efforts under Martial Law to become a Pakistani Atatürk and change Islam to suit the demands of the 20th century. As she read through these clippings, the yellowed newsprint nearly disintegrated in her hands from age. It was then she realized that nearly all these self-appointed “reformers” had long been dead, forgotten and consigned to the dust-bin of history. The Luther-style Reformation and *aggiornamento* or drastic up-dating of Islam, never happened!

More than two centuries of the most enthusiastic imitation of the West in the military, political, economic, scientific, technological, industrial, cultural, educational and artistic fields never brought any Muslim country anywhere near the power, prosperity, riches and vitality enjoyed by Europe and America. Now with the social and cultural fabric of the West itself fast disintegrating, it can no longer attract *Dar ul Islam* as the supreme model to emulate.

Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr proceeds in this book to refute in detail the entire modern western mind-set, especially evolutionism and progressivism which has resulted in so much havoc in every Muslim land. He shows how evolutionism, diligently taught in every school, college and university, has resulted in a world-wide educational crisis. He also demonstrates that the environmental crisis is in reality the result of the pollution of the soul with atheism and materialism.

Islam is then presented in the light of Sufism as the only remedy that can save modern man. Far from having died out in the distant past, despite all assaults from without and within Islam) including its civilization and culture) still is very much alive. What is required is not the discovery of new truths or expanding the frontier of knowledge but the re-assertion and Re-application of nearly lost forgotten truths, no less by the West itself.

Nasr is a great believer in the necessity for Dialogue, not only between Islam and the West but even much more with the Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian traditions. Although Islam and modernism (and post-modernism) are ideologically irreconcilable, nevertheless, on a purely human level, Islam and the West can peacefully co-exist, providing the latter stops its imperialist policies.

IQBAL SINGH, *The Ardent Pilgrim*,

New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997. xiv, 183 pp.

REVIEWED BY SHAFIQUE N. VIRANI.

This engaging volume is a revision of the author's biography of the noted poet and thinker, Mohammed Iqbal, originally published in 1951. The author, Iqbal Gurpratap Singh, was a noted journalist who passed away on February

5, 2000, at the age of 89. He had been well known for his column, “So it’s reported,” a weekly analysis of British reporting on India, which used to appear on the back page of the India Weekly.

Divided into twelve chapters, the book touches on a range of subjects, including the early influences on the poet; his education and training in both India and abroad; his return to his homeland and the increasing emphasis in his poetry on Islamic motifs; his desertion of many of the classical themes in Persian and Urdu poetry and his advocacy of the development of khudi, or ego; his reaction against the ideals of the West; the occasional dissonance between his philosophy as expressed in his writings and his deeds; his thought as expressed in his major works; some insights into his life; a summary; and finally a chapter entitled “Matters of No Importance?” which explores Iqbal’s personal life, including his marital relationships and his estrangement from his elder son. The placement of this last chapter strikes a somewhat odd chord and it would have been better integrated earlier in the work rather than after the summary.

The common theme that runs through the book is that Iqbal’s personality was “a sum of contradictions,” a confession made by the poet himself in one of his couplets. Singh’s purpose in highlighting this feature of Iqbal’s persona is not, as he himself cautions, “to prepare the ground for an adverse judgment” but rather to examine “the relation of theory to practice” (p. 141) in the poet’s life. This tension is ably demonstrated by example. While in verse Iqbal mocked those who sought titles from the government, he himself accepted knighthood. While in his *Payam-i Mashriq* he denounced the League of Nations as a “Society of Coffin-Thieves,” it seems that had the Viceroy agreed to his nomination as a member of the Indian delegation, he would have had no reservations to participation in the deliberations of the “Coffin-Thieves.” Such contradictions, and the poet’s possible motivations, are discussed in chapter 7, entitled “A Chapter of Deeds.” Despite such observations, by no means is *The Ardent Pilgrim* unkind in its assessment of Iqbal. Rather, these contradictions in the poet’s personality are seen as aspects of its complexity.

One of the book’s strengths lies in Singh’s assessment of Iqbal’s oeuvre. In a personal yet incisive treatment, the author appraises the contents of a number of the poet’s major works. Their themes and literary qualities are

expounded upon and salient points of the philosophy contained in them are brought to light. Translations of selected verses are quite beautiful, and at times the reader wishes that Singh had been less sparing in his quotations of them. He goes into some depth in explicating the *Javid Nama*, considered by many to be the poet's magnum opus. Iqbal's personality is investigated through his poetry, which is situated in its social and political context. It is a balanced account in which Iqbal emerges as a multifaceted, yet very human, figure. In summing up, Singh views Iqbal's importance not in founding any school of poetry but in acting as a bridge between past and present: "Iqbal is the link. Standing on the edge of two epochs, it can be claimed, he represents the last in the chain of classical poets of the Indo-Persian order and the first of the Moderns. That is his significance" (p. 139).

There are occasional blunders in the work. The author compares the Urdu language's history of less than five hundred years with Persian's of two thousand years or greater (p. 26). While descriptions of the trajectory of a language's development and judgments of its age are subjective at best, we can state with some confidence that the Persian language and idiom of which Iqbal was the inheritor did not reach back until the time of Christ. While he certainly would have understood the poetry of say, Rudaki (d. 940), Persian of a more distant past would have been incomprehensible, as the language underwent dramatic changes after Arabic words entered its lexicon with the spread of Islam. Copy errors, however, are few. We may note, for example, "the most fruitful phrase [i.e. phrase] of his career" (p. 98) and "Abdul Qadir had been Iqbal's friends [i.e. friend]" (p. 151). These minor drawbacks, however, do not significantly detract from the work.

On the whole, *The Ardent Pilgrim* is engagingly written with an elegance of style that makes it a pleasure to read. It should really be considered a series of interconnected essays on Iqbal. Those who seek a minutely annotated tome of Iqbal scholarship may therefore find themselves disappointed with this volume. Notes are rare, and occasionally statements are made without argument or reference to a source. This fact makes it difficult to trace the origin of the author's quotations. However, the title dubs it to be "An Introduction to the Life and Work of Mohammed Iqbal," and in this claim it is certainly successful.

SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring values for Humanity*, Harper Collins Publishers Inc., New York, pp. 338, ISBN-0-06-009924-0. *Islam: Religion, History and Civilization*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Harper Collins Publishers Inc., New York, 2003, pp. 198, ISBN-0-06-050714-4.

REVIEWED BY MARYAM JAMEELAH.

Who was responsible for the events of 9/11/01, who really did it, we will probably never know! The bitter tragedy is the overwhelming price that the Muslim *Ummah*, especially in the U.S.A., has been made to pay for this without any true investigation, no fair trials of the accused but on suspicion and hearsay only.

Ever since these events, more and more curiosity has been aroused to know about Islam. The full glare of the media has greatly increased popular hatred and contempt for Muslims branded as fanatics and extremists, entirely overlooking the fact that extremists today are equally found in every religion. Witness the Christian evangelical “right”, the Zionist settlers in the occupied territories of Palestine, the Fascist Hindu nationalists responsible for such dreadful atrocities against the Muslims in India. All these extremists share in common an utter lack of mercy, compassion and love enjoined by the true teachings of all the major historic religions of the world. It is this rigid exclusivist approach which feeds the fires of more and more hatred and strife.

Both books under review were written in the light of 9-11-01 to combat prejudice and misinformation and promote better understanding between Islam and West. The author writes from a non-sectarian perspective and a full acceptance of the universal spiritual, cultural and historic legacy of Islam from its inception to the present day. It is to the credit of both books that the author’s lucid concise manner and of writing includes everything of importance within only a limited space and omits nothing the enquiring reader would most wish to learn.

Unfortunately, the author’s presentation of Jihad as purely defensive is not entirely correct. From 632-732 A.D. Islam was clearly on an extraordinarily vigorous offensive as it was also at the height of the Ottoman Empire and other periods of Islamic history as well.

Likewise, although Islam neither created nor encouraged slavery and the Holy Prophet certainly strove to ameliorate the terrible lot of slaves to the extent possible under the social conditions as he found them, to abolish slavery completely was inconceivable. Furthermore, all “medieval” *fiqh* in its explanation of *Shari‘at* regarded slavery as a legitimate social institution and issued elaborate legislation for slaves as property. Slavery was not eradicated for “internal reasons” spontaneously, as the author implies, but only by the European colonial powers throughout the Muslim world during the late 19th early 20th century by force, the colonialists themselves having no reason to feel self-righteous as only a short time previously they had conducted the most brutal traffic in human flesh from Africa to the New World.

Of course Muslim women have always worked, especially those in subsistence agriculture and the handicrafts but they almost always worked at home under the close supervision of their men folk, this work in the traditional sector greatly strengthening family and community. The author fails to point out the great contrast of work in the modern sector involving abandonment of home for office and factory under the impersonal competitive employment of total strangers at considerable distance from the home that has proved catastrophic for the family, especially the children, resulting in social breakdown. If nothing is done to stop this exodus of women from the home, what has happened in the West will eventually also take place in the East.

The author deserves to be most commended for his upholding the necessity for beauty as expressed in traditional Islamic art and above all, for his conclusive proofs that modernity and Islam are irreconcilable, especially industrialism and its horrific effects on the urban environment in every Muslim land. Both books written for a western audience convey in full the beauty, depth and spiritual peace of the author’s faith.