

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

MUHAMMAD

The Prophet of Revolution

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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Introduction

In an American publication entitled "*The 100*", the author mentions the one hundred people he believes to have exerted the greatest influence on human history. The author, Dr Michael Hart, was born into a Christian family, and received a scientific education. But at the top of his roll of honour he has placed neither Christ's name, nor Newton's. There is one person, he believes, whose achievements excel all others: that person is the Prophet Mohammad. No one else has had such an impact on the history of man. "He was the only man in history," he writes, "Who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels." (Dr Michael Hart, *The 100*, New York, 1978)

Just as to the American, Michael Hart, he is the most outstanding figure of human history, to the English historian, Thomas Carlyle, he is "the hero of the Prophets."

In ancient times, when Abraham and Ishmael were building the House in Mecca, they prayed for a prophet among their descendants. 2500 years later, this "hero", the Prophet Mohammad, arose from the people of Mecca bringing with him special divine succour. The prayer of Abraham was fulfilled, and with it the purpose of the prophets' coming to the world was achieved.

Before Mohammad, history did not accurately record the lives of the prophets. From a strictly academic and historical point of view, then, their prophethood has not been established. The Prophet Jesus was the last of the ancient line of prophets. Yet so tenuous is his historical position that Bertrand Russell has had occa-

sion to remark: "Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all." This is not the case with the prophet Mohammad, the last of the prophets. His life is so well-documented and clearly laid down in history that anyone who studies his life is forced to agree with Professor Hitti that, "Mohammad was born in the full light of history."

The most important thing which contributes to the permanence of the prophethood of Mohammad is the Quran, a permanent and lasting miracle, which was revealed to him by God. If this miracle had been of the same order as those bestowed upon the other prophets who went before him, its effect would not have lasted beyond his own lifetime, and his prophethood would not have endured throughout the coming generations as it did. A miracle is a wondrous event which man is unable to emulate. So it is with the Quran. It is beyond man to emulate it. There is no doubt that it is a miracle from God.

Mohammad's role was exceptional in that he was to be the last of the prophets. It had been so ordained by God. The final revelation of God's will was to be conveyed to the people by him and, for posterity, the scriptures had to be preserved by him and subsequently by his devoted followers throughout the centuries. In order to ensure that this would be so, the Prophet had to bring about a great revolution that would give him a following the world over.

Mohammad is the father of no man among you. He is the Prophet of God and the last of the prophets. God has knowledge of all things.

(Quran, 33:40)

The Prophet was chosen by God to give the kind of guidance to people which they needed if they were to lead upright, virtuous lives. If man has complete control over what he does, it is because, in this world, he is on trial. He has been given free will to act as he chooses, because he is being tested. The Prophets, in spite of their divine mission, cannot force people to change their ways. All they can do is communicate the message with which God has entrusted them:

Yet what should apostles do but give plain warning?

(Quran, 16:35)

God has done the maximum to ensure that man should not go astray in his journey through life. He has given man a conscience, enabling him to differentiate between what is right and wrong, and has placed him in a world based on justice. But should man fail to listen to his conscience, or be deaf to the silent message emanating from every object of God's creation, God has His prophets throughout the ages to put the truth to the peoples of many different lands, and so that they might not fail to comprehend, this God-sent message has come to them in their own languages.

In pre-Islamic times religious institutions had become debased by the veneration of mere mortals; whereas the prophet Mohammad admitted of no other form of religion but that based on the worship of the immortal God. Religious beliefs had very frequently been founded on superstition; but by him they were established on the foundation of reality. It was he who taught men to conquer nature instead of worshipping it, thus paving the way for the scientific era. And where political power had been in the hands of one hereditary monarch, he showed the way to government by the people. While learning had been based on conjecture and assumption, he taught man to learn from observation of reality. In cases where human society had been vitiated by cruelty and oppression, he showed people how to live together in justice and peace. These are all achievements of the prophet of Islam. They cannot in truth be attributed to anyone else besides him. It was he who changed the tide of human history while others have just swum with the tide he set in motion.

From whatever angle one looks at history, ever-broadening reverberations of his impact will be manifest. All that is best in human values, all the important advances of human civilization, are direct or indirect results of the revolution he brought about.

His own personal life was a perfect example for mankind. Because he himself was made to experience all kinds of special conditions, he was able to provide a model for living both at the individual and societal levels. He showed man the life that God would like him to live on earth, for in all matters each and every one of his actions was in accordance with the will of God. Not only did he establish the perfect pattern for the worship of God, but he also showed how God helps those who truly devote their lives to His service. We can see from his life how, if one fears God, there is nothing else that one need fear. If one remains patient in the face of

provocation, He will pour oil on troubled waters. If one rises above negative impulses, one can win over everyone, even enemies. If one sacrifices this world for the next, one will eventually have the best of both worlds.

At any time the followers of the Prophet can prevail over others, just as a farmer who cultivates his land by divinely inspired methods reaps a fine crop. God has provided all of the conditions necessary and conducive to the dominance of the divine religion. By understanding and utilizing them, adherents of this religion can bring Islamic thought into pre-eminence.

Between the time of the Prophet Abraham and the coming of the Prophet Mohammad, two thousand five hundred years elapsed. Throughout this period the stage was being set for the coming of the Prophet. The Prophet, acting at God's behest, played the role for which he was cast. That was why his mission was supremely successful.

In making the Prophet Mohammad the greatest figure, and consequently one of the most resplendent landmarks in human history, God has betowed his greatest favour on mankind. Whoever seeks a guide for himself cannot fail to see him, for he stands out like a tower, a mountain on the horizon, radiating light like a beacon, beckoning all to the true path. It is inevitable that a seeker of truth will be drawn up to the magnificent pinnacle on which he stands.

During the fourteen hundred years that have passed since the times of the Prophet Mohammad, the historical changes that have occurred, the massive advances in human knowledge that have taken place, have all combined in support of Islam. The religion that the Prophet taught can still take pride of place over other religions. But, for this to be achieved, divinely-inspired methods have to be adopted. This rule, which applied to the Prophet, equally applies to his followers.

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