

Humanism & Infallibility

A few Muslims intellectuals, swayed by the idea of humanism, relativity and pluralism, wish to present the prophets and messengers of God as fallible in order to justify the moral weaknesses found among ordinary people.

This motive can also be observed in the early history of Islam when the scholars attached to the political establishments tried to water down the infallibility of the Prophet (S) in order to explain away the moral weakness and ethical wrongdoings of the rulers of their time. We have such examples in the modern era also.

Malcolm X, when he was a Minister in the Nation of Islam movement, describes how he attempted to justify the adultery of the self-proclaimed prophet, Elija Muhammad. He says:

“I thought of one bridge that could be used if and when the shattering disclosure should become public. Loyal Muslims could be taught that a man's accomplishments in his life outweigh his personal, human weaknesses. Wallace Muhammad [Elija's son] helped me to review the Qur'an and the Bible for documentation. David's adultery with Bathsheba weighed less on history's scales, for instance, than the positive fact of David's killing Goliath.

Thinking of Lot, we think not of incest, but of his saving the people from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Or, our image of Noah isn't of his getting drunk—but of his building the ark and teaching people to save themselves from the flood. We think of Moses leading the Hebrews from bondage, not of Moses' adultery with the Ethiopian women. In all of the cases I reviewed, the positive outweighed the negative.”

When he described his damage control strategy to Elija Muhammad, the leader said, “Son, I am not surprised...You always have had such a good understanding of prophecy, and of spiritual things. You recognize that's what all of this is—prophecy. You have the kind of understanding that only an old man has. I am David...When you read about how David took another man's wife. I'm that David. You read about Noah, who got drunk—that's me. You read about Lot, who went and laid up with his own daughters. I have to fulfill all of those things.”¹

Tom Harpur, a theologian, an ex–Minister of the Church, and a columnist of the religious column of the *Toronto Star*, wrote the article “Not even Jesus claimed infallibility” on 2nd May 1993. Once Jesus was stripped of infallibility, I was not at all surprised to see Harpur taking the second step of publishing another article a year latter entitled as “Gospels could support speculation that Jesus might have been gay.”²

This is what happens when you take away the infallibility from the prophets and the messengers of God! Instead of looking up to them as models and guides, people —especially those in position of power— justify their own immoral behaviour and lifestyle by presenting the prophets as fallible and sinners.

1. A. Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (NY: Ballantine Books, 1964) p. 297–299.

2. See *The Toronto Star*, May 2, 1993, p. B5; May 15, 1994, p. A13

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