

Foreword to Ayatullah's Last Lectures

Following European renaissance there was a need of a basic change in the method of studying the Islamic sources in order to be able to face the modern trends in the fields of so-called science, philosophy, and Western Culture.

It became necessary to look at the social, economic, political and psychological questions in the light of the vast original Islamic literature with the spirit of inquiry which became prevalent in the world following its emancipation from the ignorance of middle ages and the ecclesiastical Inquisition.

It became a duty of our Islamic centres of learning and our erudite Muslim scholars to take appropriate steps to check the onslaught of the flood of misconceptions and exploitation of freedom and culture in the sacred name of science and religion.

It was indifference or rather opposition of the Church and ecclesiastical circle to the movement of Renaissance that made religion confined to the four walls of the churches and turned out the Pope and his divines from the field of public administration, economy, politics and cultural affairs.

The Europeans who were jealous of the Muslims whose broad-mindedness they had experienced in Andalus (Spain) and other centres of learning which they frequented for receiving their education and who were envious of the grandeur of the Muslims in Baghdad, Iran, Egypt and other countries of which they had heard, imagined that Islam was similar to their own religion.

Subsequently in order to subdue the countries of the Muslim East and to facilitate their exploitation by the greedy and corrupt white colonialists, they invented the theory of the separation of politics from religion and antagonism between the old and the new sciences. They tried to create a gulf between these two views and the two systems.

They not only separated the language of religion from the language of modern science, culture and philosophy, but also caused a big breach between the two with the result that conciliation between these two languages becomes difficult.

That is why whenever anyone of those religious-minded people who had been to Europe and were

conversant with modern civilization and culture, tried to defend and propagate whatever of religion was left to him, he in most cases presented religion in a distorted and displeasing form which appeared to be incompatible with modern civilization and modern sciences.

Many of our scholars, especially during the last 100 years have tried to bridge this gulf and to introduce modern science and civilization in a perspective compatible with the broad and progressive outlook of Islam and free from all misconceptions and distortions.

In this respect valuable contributions were made by such distinguished scholars as Sayyid Jamaluddin Asadabadi, Ayatullah Shaykh Balaghi, Ayatullah Mirza Muhammad Husayn Naini, Shaykh Muhammad Riza Najafi, Shaykh Hibatullah Shahrastani, Mirza Abbas Ali Wa'iz Charindabi and lately Shaykh Muhammad Riza Muzaffar and Professor Ahmad Amin.

Anyhow the value of the work done by them has been limited and temporary. They could not cure the ailment of the young men who studied Western science, and the gulf between science and civilization on the one hand and religion and moral principles on the other continued as it was.

This was the position till Ayatullah Sadr an illustrious scholar and a prominent personality of Shi'ah history appeared in Najaf and with his valuable and world famous works, did full justice to Western science, civilization, economics and psychology, and dispelled all misgivings about them.

Simultaneously with this intellectual movement, we in Iran also had certain scholars, though less known, who were fully conversant with the civilization and culture of the West and the East and who in their research work followed a correct line of thought and critically examined modern science and civilization from Islamic point of view.

Our philosopher and thinker Ayatullah Mutahhari, who laid down his life for the Islamic revolution in Iran, was virtually Ayatullah Sadr's comrade in-arms in his struggle for stopping the misuse of Western science and civilization. The difference between the two was that till his martyrdom Mutahhari was not introduced on a world level. Only Muslim intellectuals took inspiration from him in their revolutionary activities.

We see that the same line has been followed by some other distinguished scholars and philosophers like Allamah Tabataba'i the author of authentic commentary on the Qur'an al-Mizan, the eminent Islamic thinker Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari and others.

What distinguishes Ayatullah Sadr is that he had been busy with his intellectual struggle in the field of ***Our Philosophy, Our Economics and Our Culture*** on a world level long before others. Perhaps had mercenary Iraq not received instructions from its masters, it would not have, despite its bloodthirstiness, dared to commit the crime of putting him to death. The big powers regarded this great scholar as a threat to their imperialistic designs.

The keenness which the Islamic Research Unit of the Renaissance Foundation is showing in publishing and popularizing the works of this scholar is not due to the fact that he and his illustrious sister were killed in cold blood by the henchmen of imperialism for the sole crime of defending our revolution. For this revolution many other people have sacrificed their lives, but we are unable to discharge our duty which we owe to these martyrs.

Then how can we render his due to this martyr who rendered valuable service to our people and the world at large?

Actually the idea is to convey the thoughts of this great scholar who has shown his true Islamic thinking, deep knowledge and revolutionary spirit in all fields of knowledge and philosophy boldly and successfully.

This book is the fruit of his last discourse. It consists of 14 lectures. The first two lectures discuss a change in the study of the exegesis of the Qur'an. They contain very useful matter on the subject.

From the third lecture the author enters into the topical discussion of the norms of history in the light of the Qur'an. With his deep study, he throws ample light on this new subject. He has made valuable contribution to the discussion of economic, political and sociological problems. In the important 14th lecture he soars from the material world to the spiritual world, and there also shows his mettle.

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