

The Prophet in the eyes and thoughts of well-acknowledged Western Thinkers

The following are some observations on the Prophet Muhammad, by well-acknowledged Western scholars and thinkers of modern times:

“There is no doubt that the Prophet Muhammad was a great reformer who did a magnificent service to human society. It is honor enough to say that he guided a whole nation to the light of truth and caused it to incline towards stability and peace and to prefer an ascetic lifestyle. He prevented it from shedding blood and presenting human sacrifices. He opened up for it the way of prosperity and civic living. This is a tremendous achievement which can only be undertaken by a powerful personality. A man like this is worthy of respect and honour.”The renowned Russian writer

~Count Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoj[1]

Mahatma Gandhi was the leader of the famous salt march in India Gandhi also led India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. Here is what he had to say about Muhammad

“I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today an undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind.... I became more than ever convinced that it was not

the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle. When I closed the second volume (of the Prophet's biography), I was sorry there was not more for me to read of that great life

~Mahatma Gandhi, [2]

“My choice of Muhammad (570 CE – 630 CE) to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the secular and religious level. ...It is probable that the relative influence of Muhammad on Islam has been larger than the combined influence of Jesus Christ and St. Paul on Christianity. ...It is this unparalleled combination of secular and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered the most influential single figure in human history.”

~Michael H. Hart, “The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History”, New York, 1987.[3]

Michener began his writing career during World War II , when as a lieutenant in the Navy he was assigned to the South Pacific as a naval historian. He later turned his notes and impressions into *Tales of the South Pacific* (1947), his first book, published when he was 40. It won the Pulitzer Prize and here's what this Author had to say about Muhammad

“No other religion in history spread so rapidly as Islam. The West has widely believed that this surge of religion was made possible by the sword. But no modern scholar accepts this idea, and the Qur’an is explicit in the support of the freedom of conscience”.

~James Michener ‘Islam:[4]

George Bernard Shaw was an Irish playwright and a co-founder of the London School of Economics. throughout his life he wrote many highly articulate pieces of journalism, his main talent was for drama, and he wrote more than 60 plays. He was also an essayist, novelist and short story writer. Amongst his many achievements here is what he had to say about Muhammad.

“I hold the religion of Muhammad in the highest esteem for its astounding vitality. It seems to me to be the only religion which is equipped to suit the changing faces of life and which is appropriate for all ages. I have studied the life of this amazing man and I believe that he deserves to be called the savior of the human race. If any religion had the chance of ruling over England, nay Europe within the next hundred years, it could be Islam. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much needed peace and happiness: I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today.”

~Sir George Bernard Shaw [5]

Michael H. Hart (born April 28, 1932 in New York City) is an astrophysicist who has also written many books on history and controversial articles on a variety of subjects here is what he had to say about Muhammad .

[Muhammad] was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels.

~Michael H. Hart states in his work [6]

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~The writer George Bernard-Shaw [7]

A silent great soul, one of that who cannot but be earnest. He was to kindle the world, the world's Maker had ordered so. The lies which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man [Muhammad] are disgraceful to ourselves only. The

- English philosopher Thomas Carlyle 'Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History' 1840

Europe has begun now to sense the wisdom of Muhammad and has developed a passion for his religion. It will also come to exonerate Islamic doctrine from all the false accusations laid at its door by Europeans in the Middle Ages. The religion of Muhammad will be the system upon which peace and contentment will be founded. From his Philosophy, Europe will derive the solution to perplexities, problems and complexities . . . Many of my fellow countrymen and other Europeans venerate the teachings of Islam. Hence I confirm my prophecy by saying that the first stirrings of the age of European Islam are near, this is inevitable. Yes, the world today is in dire need of a man like Muhammad to solve its complex problems.

-Sir George Bernard-Shaw

Muhammad was abstemious and simple in his abode, his food and his drink and his clothing and in the rest of his life and conditions. His food consisted mainly of bread with dates and water. He often mended his own clothes. What could be more honourable than this? Hail Muhammad the Prophet of rough clothing and food, who strived, was active during the day and awake during the night and persistent in promoting the religion of Allah. He was not one to covet that which lesser men covet such as rank, empire and power. He is in truth the Prophet of the sublime morals.

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- English philosopher Thomas Carlyle 'Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History'
1840

Was a French writer, poet and politician who was instrumental in the foundation of the Second Republic and the continuation of the Tricolore as the flag. He has said:

Never has a man set for himself, voluntarily or involuntarily, a more sublime aim, since this aim was superhuman; to subvert superstitions which had been imposed between man and his Creator, to render God unto man and man unto God; to restore the rational and sacred idea of divinity amidst the chaos of the material and disfigured gods of idolatry, then existing. Never has a man undertaken a work so far beyond human power with so feeble means, for he (Muhammad) had in the conception as well as in the execution of such a great design, no other instrument than himself and no other aid except a handful of men living in a corner of the desert. Finally, never has a man accomplished such a huge and lasting revolution in the world, because in less than two centuries after its appearance, Islam, in faith and in arms, reigned over the whole of Arabia, and conquered, in God's name, Persia, Western India, Abyssinia, Syria, Egypt, all the known continent of Northern Africa, Spain, etc. If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and souls . . . his forbearance in victory, his ambition, which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire; his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death; all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction which gave him the power to restore a dogma. This dogma was twofold, the unity of God and the immateriality of God; the former telling what God is, the latter what God is not. Philosopher, Orator, Apostle, Legislator, Warrior, Conqueror of Ideas, Restorer of Rational beliefs... The founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may ask, is there any man greater than he?

-Alphonse de La Martaine 'Histoire de la Turquie', v. ii, Paris, 1854

His simple eloquence, rendered impressive by the expression of a countenance wherein awfulness of majesty was tempered by an amiable sweetness, excited emotions of veneration and love; and he was gifted with that authoritative air of genius which alike influences the learned and commands the illiterate. As a friend and a parent, he exhibited the softest feelings of our nature . . . With all that simplicity which is so natural to a great mind, he performed the humbler offices whose homeliness it would be idle to conceal with pompous diction; even while Lord of Arabia, he mended his own shoes and coarse woollen garments, milked the ewes, swept the hearth, and kindled the fire, Dates and water were his usual fare, and milk and honey his luxuries. When he travelled he divided his morsel with his servant.

-John Davenport "An Apology for Mohammed and the Koran" London 1869

Head of the State as well as the Church, he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without Pope's pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar: without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue. if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by the divine right, it was Mohammad, for he had all the power without its instruments and without its supports. He cared not for the dressings of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life. In Mohammedanism everything is different here. Instead of the shadowy and the mysterious, we have history.... We know of the external history of Muhammad.... while for his internal history after his mission had been proclaimed, we have a book absolutely unique in its origin, in its preservation.... on the Substantial authority of which no one has ever been able to cast a serious doubt.

-Reverend Bosworth Smith "Mohammed and Mohammedanism" London 1874

The good sense of Mohammed despised the pomp of royalty. The Apostle of God submitted to the menial offices of the family; he kindled the fire; swept the floor; milked the ewes; and mended with his own hands his shoes and garments. Mohammed was distinguished by the beauty of his person, an outward gift which is seldom despised, except by those to whom it has been refused. Before he spoke, the orator engaged on his side the affections whether of a public or a private audience. They applauded his

commanding presence, his majestic aspect, his piercing eye, his gracious smile, his flowing beard, his countenance which painted every sensation of his soul, and the gestures that enforced each expression of the tongue. In the familiar offices of life, he scrupulously adhered to the grave and ceremonious politeness of his country; his respectful attention to the rich and powerful was dignified by his condescension and affability to the poorest citizen of Mecca; his memory was capacious and retentive, his wit easy and social, his imagination sublime, his judgement clear, rapid and decisive. He possessed the courage both of thought and action; bears the stamp of an original and superior genius.

-Edward Gibbon "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" 1823

History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated. De Lacy O'Leary 'Islam at the Crossroads' London, 1923

Incidentally these well-established facts dispose of the idea so widely fostered in Christian writings that the Muslims, wherever they went, forced people to accept Islam at the point of the sword.

-Lawrence E. Browne 'The Prospects of Islam' 1944

To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems that it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad.... Thus, not merely must we credit Muhammad with essential honesty and integrity of purpose, if we are to understand him at all; if we are to correct the errors we have inherited from the past, we must not forget the conclusive proof is a much stricter requirement than a show of plausibility, and in a matter such as this only to be attained with difficulty.

-W. Montgomery Watt 'Muhammad at Mecca' Oxford, 1953

Muhammad, the Messenger of Islam, exhibited for most of his life if not all of his life a striking moderateness. His final victory points to a greatness of character rarely to be found in history. He ordered his army to give quarter to the old and the weak, the children and the women, and warned them against destroying houses or pillaging or

cutting down fruiting trees. He ordered them not to draw their swords except in dire need. It is even said that he used to rebuke some of his generals and physically put right their mistakes.

-Emil Dirmargen, Orientalist, "The life of Muhammad"

Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah was courageous in fighting battles himself giving strength and endurance to the hearts of those who were weaker. He was merciful with the weak, and would give refuge to a great number of the needy in his house. Although he maintained a reverential aura, he had a plain manner about him with no affectation whatsoever. He was cheerful and easy to deal with and with an even temper not easily angered by inquisitive people and always had a smile on his face. There is no doubt that he had many traits which made him attractive to the people of his time, but he had conveyed to those people a sublime example in religion and morals, and transcended the old notions under which they were suffering. When he had gathered them as one body under the banner of this sublime example, he made from them a power which later shook the very foundations of the Ancient world.

- Florandes & Marseille "The Eastern World"

Muhammad the messenger of Islam possessed noble traits such as gentleness, bravery, and the noblest of morals. A person was not able to evaluate him without being affected by these attributes. Muhammad bore the enmity of his family and tribe for years without losing determination or strength. His nobility was such that he would never be the first to withdraw his hand from one who shook hands with him even from a child and he would never pass by a group of people men or children without giving a greeting of peace, all the while smiling sweetly and with beautiful words which would enchant he who heard them and win his heart.

-The English Orientalist Hollen Paul

Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, or R. A. Nicholson (18 August 1868 – 27 August 1945), was an eminent English Orientalist , and a scholar of Islamic literature.

The Qur'an is a splendid humanistic document which explains in detail the secret of the behaviour of Muhammad in all the events of his life. We even find therein an additional subject matter through which we are able to follow the progress of Islam from its inception and appearance in its early history. We do not find the like in Buddhism or Christianity or any of the other ancient religions. These are the unique features of Islam and they confirm and prove that it is the complete religion for humanity and that it is the religion of the future.

- The Scottish Orientalist Ronald A. Nicholson

The greatest success of Mohammad's life was affected by sheer moral force. It is not the propagation but the permanency of his religion that deserves our wonder, the same pure and perfect impression which he engraved at Mecca and Medina is preserved after the revolutions of twelve centuries by the Indian, the African and the Turkish proselytes of the Koran.... The Mohammedans have uniformly withstood the temptation of reducing the object of their faith and devotion to a level with the senses and imagination of man. 'I believe in One God and Mohammad the Apostle of God' is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honours of the prophet have never transgressed the measure of human virtue, and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion.

-Edward Gibbon & Simon Oakley 'History of the Saracen Empire' London, 1870

Islam is a religion that is essentially rationalistic in the widest sense of this term considered etymologically and historically.... the teachings of the Prophet, the Qur'an has invariably kept its place as the fundamental starting point, and the dogma of unity of God has always been proclaimed therein with a grandeur a majesty, an invariable purity and with a note of sure conviction, which it is hard to find surpassed outside the pale of Islam.... A creed so precise, so stripped of all theological complexities and consequently so accessible to the ordinary understanding might be expected to possess and does indeed possess a marvellous power of winning its way into the consciences of men.

-T. W. Arnold 'The Preaching of Islam' London 1913

Four years after the death of Justinian, A.D. 569, was born in Mecca, in Arabia, the man who, of all men, has exercised the greatest influence upon the human race... To be the

religious head of many empires, to guide the daily life of one-third of the human race, may perhaps justify the title of a Messenger of God.

- Dr. William Draper 'History of Intellectual Development of Europe'

Muhammad, The Prophet of Islam gained the love of the world and the love of his enemies in particular. This when he set an example in the finest of morals by freeing ten thousand prisoners who had previously been working to kill and destroy him and his companions . . .

-Lord Hadleigh

The Arabian Prophet had powerful and strong morals and a personality which weighed up, examined, and tested every step he took in his life. There is no fault in his character whatsoever. Given that we are in need of a complete paradigm To fulfil our needs in life, the personality of Muhammad the Holy Prophet fulfils this need. It is the mirror which reflects for us lofty reasoning, magnanimity, nobility, bravery, patience, kindness, humility, forgiveness, humbleness and modesty and all the essential morals of which humanitarianism. We see this present in the personality of the Prophet Muhammad in glowing colours.

-Lord Hadleigh

I thought and prayed for forty years so that I might arrive at the truth. I must confess that my visit to the Islamic east filled me with respect for the serene [Islamic] faith which induces one to worship God all throughout one's life not just on Sundays. I am eternally grateful to God that he has guided me to Islam which has become a firm reality in my heart and has allowed me to attain happiness and tranquillity which previously were not attainable. I was in a dark cavern, then Islam took me out into an expansive land illuminated by the Sun and I began to smell the pure fresh sea air.

-Lord Hadleigh

Note:


In above document, certain words have been abbreviated to reduce repetition throughout the text.

(s) Peace be upon him and his Progeny

(a.s) Peace be upon him

Resources:

[1] Prophet Muhammad Mercy to the World pg. 178

Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy (*/ˈtɒlstɔɪ, ˈtɒl-/*^[1] Russian: Лев Никола́евич Толсто́й, pronounced *[lʲɛf nʲɪkɐˈlajvʲɪtɕ tɐlˈstɔj]* ( listen); 9 September [O.S. 28 August] 1828 – 20 November [O.S. 7 November] 1910), usually referred to in English as Leo Tolstoy, was a Russian novelist regarded as one of the greatest of all time. He is best known for *War and Peace* (1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1877). H

[2] statement published in ‘Young India’ 1924.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (*/ˈgɑːndi, ˈgæən-/*^[2]; October , 2, 1869 – January , 30, 1948) was the preeminent leader of the Indian independence movement in British-ruled India. Gandhi was a prolific writer. One of Gandhi's earliest publications, *Hind Swaraj*, published in Gujarati in 1909, is recognised^[by whom?] as the intellectual blueprint of India's independence movement.

[3] Prophet Muhammad Mercy to the World pg. 179

Michael H. Hart (born April 28, 1932) is an American astrophysicist and author, most notably of *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*.

[4]. The Misunderstood Religion’ Reader’s Digest, May 1955, pp. 68-70 James C.

Michener was known for the popularity of his works; he had numerous bestsellers and works selected for Book of the Month Club.

[5] The Genuine Islam’ Vol. 1, No. 8, 1936

George Bernard Shaw was born July 26, 1856, in Dublin, Ireland. In 1876 he moved to London, where he wrote regularly but struggled financially. In 1895, he became a theater critic for the *Saturday Review* and began writing plays of his own. His play *Pygmalion* was later made into a film twice, and the screenplay he wrote for the first

version of it won an Oscar. During his lifetime, he wrote more than 60 plays and won many other awards, among them the Nobel Prize.

[6] The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History

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