All Hofmann’s expressed views reveal him to be a diehard Wahhābī/Salafī, convinced beyond doubt that Sufism is a major factor in Muslim decline. Consequently, his sweeping rejection of Islamic philosophy. Sufism and artistic endeavour are at least a partial repudiation of mainstream Islamic civilization. This casual dismissal of some of the greatest personalities in the history of Islamic civilization (including al-Asha‘arī, al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, Rūmī, Ibn Rushd, al-Ḥallāj and Ibn ‘Arabī) in merely a few contemptuous phrases, is most painful for the ordinary Muslim reader.

Modernists often claim that the Qur‘ān and the Sunnah are sufficient for them; but they must be interpreted, so who to follow? In the case of Hofmann, he takes Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abduh, the pioneer of modernism in the Arab world, Muhammad Asad, Fāṭīḥ ‘Uthmān, and Turābī as his guides, convinced even of the superiority of the American convert, Jaffery Lang, over the giants of philosophy, theology and Sufism during Islam’s Golden Age.

Above all else, Hofmann is a modern man and not a traditional man. Notwithstanding his constant criticisms of contemporary western civilization, he feels thoroughly at home in today’s world.

However, that does not stop him from launching a most scathing attack against the catastrophic consequences of the godless Kemalist regimes in Turkey as his unforgettable description of his mother-in-law’s funeral in Istanbul at the conclusion of the book illustrates. When disrespect to the dead reaches such extremes as wearing jeans and gaudy T-shirts, standing around and joking and smoking, could it be that we Muslims have already sunk to the abyss of no return?

Maryam Jameelah


Probably many mothers or grandmothers and even fathers and grandfathers may be worrying how to tell their children or grandchildren about the basic facts of life from a truly Islamic point of view. And because they find it
difficult to begin with the correct approach they may postpone this difficult task again and again, hoping for a miracle.

But what mostly happens is that their children get this vital information either from friends or class-mates or during sex education lessons at school. And this can hardly ever be the approach desirable for a Muslim child.

And yet the much awaited miracle is not out of reach because Fatima M. D’Oyen, herself a mother of three children, has settled down and written a concise but extremely informative book on the topic that is to be highly recommended. She called it *The Miracle of Life* and when I got hold of it I felt urged to ‘try it out’ on my 10 year old grandson and the success was very encouraging.

In my opinion it is neither a book to be given to the child to read it by himself or herself, nor should it be transmitted in haste. I think the best results can be achieved if it is discussed para by para with the child who will have many questions to ask so that the loving consideration of the transmitter is asked for. And even if this procedure takes weeks, it appears to me very rewarding because the transmitter can also learn a lot and may start pondering over matters long since lost sight of.

The “Note to Parents” is a convincing argument in favour of sex education at home carried out by bringing in religious / Islamic considerations nearly at the end of every para. In this way, it becomes religious education *par excellence* at an early age. This because who can rely in this respect on schools in Muslim countries not to speak of schools which Muslim children may have to attend elsewhere?

In a beautiful and very simple language the child is told about the 250 babies born on our earth every minute and the circle of life and death and how the meaning of all this is explained to us in the Qur’ân. Lovely photos show how the heaven and the earth were gradually prepared for the first human beings, Adam and his wife, Eve, who disobeyed Allah, allowing Satan to trick them out of the Garden of Paradise.

The question “Our ancestors — the apes?” is answered by clarifying that while the Qur’ân is giving us facts which so far have never been disproved, the advocates of the so-called theory of evolution are basing their ideas on mere opinion which may or may not be true because it comes from people who may make mistakes. On p. 19 we read: “If there were ape-like creatures on earth long ago who could stand on their hind legs and make simple tools, it does not mean that we humans descended from them. According to the Qur’ân, Allah continues to re-create the creation. He is always making new species and things which we do not even know about...” and: “The main difference between the Qur’ânic view and the scientific point of view is that
the Qur'an states that Allah made everything in order and balance, with a specific purpose from the first moment. Things did not just evolve by themselves, by chance, in a chaotic universe. They were made with love and wisdom, in order to serve their Creator and fulfill a special function.”

From understanding how animals reproduce the child is then led to human reproduction and hot topics like birth control and population growth are touched. A concise graph shows how the baby gradually develops before it is born. Islamic customs after birth are mentioned, and the care of the newborn, as well as “Heredity, Environment and Destiny” — that is, all “what makes us who we are”.

While concluding part one “The Life Circle”, some guidelines have been given to preserve the innocence of infants and young children from being violated.

“Becoming an Adult” is the title of part two which is intended for children from 10 years upward. The first part is so charming that one is at first rather shocked when words like menstruation, wet dreams, premarital sex, teenage pregnancy, abortion, sexually-transmitted diseases and homosexuality turn up. But then, how long do we want to put off discussing such topics with our growing children? Until it is too late? After all, the child may be confronted with matters like sexual abuse already at a very early age and so “it is better to be safe than sorry” and not to “take risks”, as the author puts it.

In part two the reader or transmitter is gradually guided from one problem to the next in a way that appears to me quite satisfying and helpful. Topics like “Understanding Teenagers” cry for our own sensitive behaviour towards and patience with young people, while many of us tend to scolding and grumbling when things don’t go the way we would like to have them.

“Personal Hygiene”, “Building Meaningful Friendships”, “An Age to Marry” and “The Islamic Wedding” are touched and also matters like “Islamic Punishment for Fornication and Adultery” to which an answer may have to be given during school lessons by a Muslim youth.

The saying: “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is connected with the question of “Purity, Modesty and Chastity” and “The Islamic Dress Code” and it is with special pleasure that I find here clear indications that all these virtues in behaviour are not only to be expected from girls but just as well from boys. I also like straightforward words in regard to other people’s dress codes such as these: “We must remember that we are not responsible for anyone’s action except our own. If we give good advice to our brothers and sisters in Islam, we must do that in a polite and sensitive way, with kindness. People who spend much of their time being critical of others
and trying to reform them, often simply end up chasing them further away because of their lack of wisdom” (p. 38).

*The Miracle of Life* is a book which has taught me — a Muslima for the last 42 years — a lot and which I would very much like to see published in many languages. It definitely is “a practical guide on sex education and traditional family values” as announced on the book cover.

Fatima Grimm


Fundamentalism has emerged as one of the most challenging and controversial religious phenomena of our times. While many of the earliest fundamentalist movements emerged at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, it is only in the past few decades that the phenomenon has manifested itself in its full force and danger. Most of the serious scholarship on fundamentalism dates from the 1990’s, and the events of September 11, 2001 have added a certain urgency to come to a correct understanding not only of the concept as such, but also of the social, psychological, political and economical elements involved. *Understanding Fundamentalism* was written before these tragic events, and does not refer directly to the movements involved in the terrorist attacks on America. However, Antoun’s discussion of the phenomenon of fundamentalism in Islamic as well as in other monotheistic traditions may help to clarify some of the central issues involved in all forms of religious fundamentalism.

One of the questions that have been at the centre of scholarly discussion is whether the term “fundamentalism” can be used outside of its American Christian context of origin and applied to movements which do not designate themselves by this term. Antoun takes a middle course in this discussion, recognizing that the circumstances and content of fundamentalism may differ from one religion to the next, while arguing for the existence of a common worldview and a number of universal characteristics in fundamentalist movements across religions. He describes fundamentalism as “an orientation