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The Calling: Tahirih Of Persia And Her American Contemporaries



Synopsis

The Calling by Hussein Ahdieh and Hillary Chapman describes Tahirih (Qurrat al- Ayn), the trailblazing female nineteenth century Iranian poet, theologian and religious-revolutionary leader in a fresh, new manner, juxtaposing and interweaving her life and work with that of her American contemporaries--Mother Ann Lee, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, Olympia Brown, Ellen White and Mary Baker Eddy--women whose existence she was probably not aware of, but who shared with her a spiritual bond and vision of progress and justice. In 1852 she was executed by a state fearful of her message. Her last words were You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women.

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Customer Reviews

"The Calling Tahirih of Persia and her American contemporaries " Dr. Dorothy Marcic Columbia University Championing women's rights has become more important in recent weeks since the US Presidential election, and you might think the fight for female justice started in the 1960's, or perhaps after WWI, when Women's Suffrage was pushed forward. But you'd be wrong. And we have Hussein Ahdieh and Hillary Chapman to thank for writing a comprehensive narrative of two simultaneous struggles for women's rights, both of which started in the mid-19th century. One of them is known by an early meeting in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 and the other began in Persia (now Iran) in the 1840's. Ahdieh and Chapman's book, The Calling, is engaging and illuminating. How many knew that the women's movement was born of women leaders and speakers in the First Great

Awakening, that time of American evangelical religious fervor around 1740? Or how important the voice of female slaves was to the growing emergence of women's independent spirit? And then the shift to an as-yet unknown woman in Persia. Tahiri, the poet was born in the women's wing of her family home and "grew up in a world bounded by the lattice work on the walls." Against tradition, her father had the courage to educate her, and she became well-known for her eloquence and mastery of many subjects. Added to her unique status was the fact that she became an early follower of what is now the Baha'i Faith, a religion that taught, even back then, that women should have equal rights to men. Moving back and forth between the two struggles in such distant lands, the authors skillfully illustrate the common themes of what might otherwise seem as disparate social phenomenon. The book reads smoothly, and the reader wants to keep turning the page to find out what happens. How unusual is such writing in a work as thoroughly researched and referenced as *The Calling*. Writing such as this is not easy, and yet the authors make it appear as effortless as an autumn leaf blowing in a chilly wind. If you think women's rights are important, or you are just curious about how women first started to aspire to equal justice, read *The Calling*. You will not be disappointed.

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Review by Judge Dorothy Nelson : I have finally finished reading "How long must I be restrained?" You and Hillary have created a masterpiece that will be a very special book for hundreds of years to come. You should win a Baha'i Pulitzer Prize for your accomplishment! The depth of your research is amazing. The rich details, both of Tahiri and her American contemporaries is unequalled. Although I was familiar with many of the Americans, I was uninformed about the importance of Sojourner Truth and the birth of spiritualism. I knew of Gobineau, but not of Renan, Bellcombe, Lessona, Cheyne, Iqbal etc. etc. etc. I also learned so much more about the importance of Martha Root and Laura Barney. I could go on and on, but I will simply say your research and writing is extraordinary. I have absolutely nothing to suggest that would make this book any more exceptional than it is. With loving admiration and profound respect for your accomplishment.
Dorothy Nelson

Review by Dr. Amrollah Hemmat
The Calling is a book of tears and laughter, yet factual and rich with insightful historical, social and psychological analysis. It brings to life mesmerizing but forgotten stories of the 18th- 19th century heroines of America and their contemporary Tahiri, a martyred woman of Persia--their spiritual ecstasy and zeal, high-mindedness, courageous undertakings, unwavering faith, and steadfastness. Through the power their pen, or by passionate public speeches, these women introduced novel humanitarian discourses and altered, globally and permanently, the public opinion about their gender; and they did so at a time when the female gender was not allowed to be visible or heard in the public sphere, valued only for

"passivity, emotionality, and physical weakness." Their support of various causes, be it women's suffrage, abolitionism, Indian rights, opposition to capital punishment, temperance, or the support of the marginalized populations, led not only to the eventual realization of many of their altruistic objectives, but also to a change in the social status of women, allowing them to go to universities, preach, and fill jobs they had never done or been permitted to do--journalism, nursing, teaching, factory and clerical work and even being employed as spies and soldiers. This was merely a humble beginning for the redemption of half of the population of the world from their eternal condemnation. The book demonstrates, with detailed historical evidence, how these groundbreaking social changes took place in the cultural context of messianic beliefs--driven by the expectation of the Christians in the US and the Moslems in Persia for the advent of the Day of the End, the era of the fulfillment of eschatological prophecies. The timing cannot be more appropriate for the publication of this invaluable book: at the brink of the 21st century, when East is East and West is West no longer, when we witness, globally, women of various races, ethnicities and creeds, raising their voices for the cause of justice, compassion and love, echoing Tahirih's calling of hope and faith: Injustice will be convicted by the power of justice. Ignorance will be defeated by the power of thought. Everywhere the carpet of equity will be rolled out. Everywhere the seeds of amity will be scattered. At this point in history when attempts for global unity, sympathy, justice, and equity feel ever so trying--as challenging as they were two centuries back--may Tahirih's far reaching sagacity inform the vision of all women and men of insight and faith: The reign of disunity will be vanquished from all regions, Diverse peoples of the world will become one nation. Review by Prof. Michael Pennl have read, with enormous delight and humility, your learned and beautifully written chronicle. And while I am in no position to judge the accuracy of the history, I can say that the whole work has stimulated within me a hunger to learn more about the period and about the great women whose lives you have so richly captured. I especially love the way that you use the voices of powerful women to tell the story of their own rise to social and spiritual power in the two cultural contexts of the east and west. I love also the rhetorical cadence and power of your text. The narrative is propelled by an energy that is rare in historical works of this kind and I want to congratulate you and Hillary for this inspired contribution. It is evident that the confirmations of God are flowing down upon you, even as waters flow from the mountains to irrigate the receptive valleys below. Please accept my best wishes for continued success and remember me in your prayers as I remember you in mine.... Review by Dr. Duane K. Troxel. The authors of this book- Hussein Ahdieh and Hillary Chapman celebrate one of the world's pre-eminent champions of the emancipation of women and basic human rights. Such a book could not be timelier. Today the topic of basic

human rights--especially the rights of women--is passionately debated in the halls of government and centres of worship everywhere. Both Ahdieh and Chapman visually set the scene of women in society in both Persia and America. Women's rights, privations, and obligations are explored. Tahiri (pronounced tau-hair-eh), meaning "The Pure One" was born Fatimah Baraghani in 1817 in the northern Persian city Qazvin. From childhood Tahiri exhibited deep piety and intellectual brilliance; so much so that her father, a high ranking cleric, permitted her to undertake higher Islamic studies which were then reserved to men alone. What draws the Western reader into this setting is how the authors play off the role of women in Persia against that of American women in the 19th century. Not unlike a compelling screenplay they cut back and forth from Persia to America where we easily sympathize with the sufferings and privations of women in both societies. In those days Persian women were invisible and mute at that time. American women were neither invisible nor mute but had little outlet for their talents and faculties. They were the 'weaker sex' confined to the tasks of home-making and child-rearing, in ways not unlike their Persian counterparts. In both Persian and American society the spirit of a new religious awakening was sweeping through society. Women responded to this new calling which inevitably brought them into conflict with men, who dominated government and religion in both settings. In the West it was the "Great Awakening" and the anticipation of the "Second Coming of Christ". In Persia there was an expectation among followers of some Muslim denominations of the appearance of a "Promised One". Religion became the vehicle that propelled women in both societies to make advances for their sex. Back and forth the authors take us from Persia--as we follow the progress of Tahiri--to America where women are slowly insinuating themselves into popular causes and writing and speaking to defend those causes. And back to Persia where we learn about the youthful Babi, and the incredible response to His Teachings which included the now eloquent poetess Tahiri. Surprisingly it was the separation of church and state in America that created public education and gave a place to girls to be educated equally with boys, at least in lower education. In America freedom of religion was guaranteed by The Bill of Rights. In Persia people were not free to believe as they wished if those beliefs ran counter to interpretations of a powerful Shi'ite clergy who could order them arrested and even killed. Ahdieh and Chapman review the fascinating account of William Miller, who ultimately predicted Christ's return in October 1844 and whose Millerite Movement initially attracted thousands. Back in Persia 1844 was the exact year in which the Babi arose to proclaim the Advent of the Promised One of All Religions was at hand. "The Babi had not come to renew Islam by reviving the old traditions and institutions but by bringing a new divine revelation to reinvigorate the inner lives of people.".....It is tragic to relate how Tahiri prepared

herself for her martyrdom by dressing as a bridepreparing for her bridegroom and giving expression to these deathless words: "You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women." This book should be part of every high school and university literature course the issues it raises should be discussed today, as the station of women is still pathetically below that of men in nearly every aspect of life." The Calling Tahirih of Persia and her American contemporaries " Dr. Dorothy Marcic Columbia University Championing women's rights has become more important in recent weeks since the US Presidential election, and you might think the fight for female justice started in the 1960's, or perhaps after WWI, when Women's Suffrage was pushed forward. But you'd be wrong. And we have Hussein Ahdieh and Hillary Chapman to thank for writing a comprehensive narrative of two simultaneous struggles for women's rights, both of which started in the mid-19th century. One of them is known by an early meeting in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 and the other began in Persia (now Iran) in the 1840's. Ahdieh and Chapman's book, The Calling, is engaging and illuminating. How many knew that the women's movement was born of women leaders and speakers in the First Great Awakening, that time of American evangelical religious fervor around 1740? Or how important the voice of female slaves was to the growing emergence of women's independent spirit? And then the shift to an as-yet unknown woman in Persia. Tahirih the poet was born in the women's wing of her family home and "grew up in a world bounded by the lattice work on the walls." Against tradition, her father had the courage to educate her, and she became well-known for her eloquence and mastery of many subjects. Added to her unique status was the fact that she became an early follower of what is now the Baha'i Faith, a religion that taught, even back then, that women should have equal rights to men. Moving back and forth between the two struggles in such distant lands, the authors skillfully illustrate the common themes of what might otherwise seem as disparate social phenomenon. The book reads smoothly, and the reader wants to keep turning the page to find out what happens. How unusual is such writing in a work as thoroughly researched and referenced as The Calling. Writing such as this is not easy, and yet the authors make it appear as effortless as an autumn leaf blowing in a chilly wind. If you think women's rights are important, or you are just curious about how women first started to aspire to equal justice, read The Calling. You will not be disappointed. drdorothy.com Review by Judge Dorothy Nelson : I have finally finished reading "How long must I be restrained?" You and Hillary have created a masterpiece that will be a very special book for hundreds of years to come. You should win a Baha'i Pulitzer Prize for your accomplishment! The depth of your research is amazing. The rich details, both of Tahirih and her American contemporaries is unequalled. Although I was familiar with many of the Americans, I was uninformed about the importance of Sojourner Truth and the birth of spiritualism. I knew of

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In their forthcoming book "The Calling: Tahirih of Persia and her American Contemporaries" authors Hussein Ahdieh and Hillary Chapman celebrate one of the world's pre-eminent champions of the emancipation of women and basic human rights. Such a book could not be timelier. Today the topic of basic human rights especially the rights of women is passionately debated in the halls of government and centres of worship everywhere. Both Ahdieh and Chapman visually set the scene of women in society in both Persia and America. Women's rights, privations, and obligations are explored. Tahirih (pronounced tau-hair-eh), meaning "The Pure One" was born Fatimah Baraghjin in c.1817 in the northern Persian city Qazvin. From childhood Tahirih exhibited deep piety and intellectual brilliance; so much so that her father, a high ranking cleric, permitted her to undertake higher Islamic studies which were then reserved to men alone. Even as a youngster she won a reputation for scholarship and debate. What draws the Western reader into this setting is how the authors play off the role of women in Persia against that of American women in the 19th century. Not unlike a compelling screenplay they cut back and forth from Persia to America where we easily sympathize with the sufferings and privations of women in both societies. In those days Persian women were cloistered at home and sequestered behind robes called chadors when out in public. Women were invisible and mute at that time. American women were neither invisible nor mute but had little outlet for their talents and faculties. They were the "weaker sex" confined to the tasks of home-making and child-rearing, in ways not unlike their Persian counterparts. In both Persian and American society the spirit of a new religious awakening was sweeping through society. Women responded to this new calling which inevitably brought them into conflict with men, who dominated government and religion in both settings. In the West it was the "Great Awakening" and the anticipation of the "Second Coming of Christ". In Persia there was an expectation among followers of some Muslim denominations of the appearance of a "Promised One". Religion became the vehicle that propelled women in both societies to make advances for their sex. Back and forth the authors take us from Persia--as we follow

nearly every aspect of life. Dr Duane K. Troxel, Evanston, Illinois

REVIEW by Robert Harris 21 March 2017
The Calling: Tahirih of Persia and her American Contemporaries
The Calling is an amazing book about the worldwide emancipation of women. Women colleagues of mine (and thousands of others who have worked ceaselessly to advance the global safety, education, status of women) should be pleased that this tightly-woven, 308 page homage to brave women leaders, was written by two men. Hussein Ahdieh, born in Iran, is a respected educator in New York City. Hillary Chapman is a teacher, poet, writer and songwriter, born in Washington. Imagine! Accomplished and published male researchers and writers, devoting their powerful talents to tell a story of women in the 1800s, women from wildly diverse circumstances, who were called to confront the intractable opposition to equal opportunities for women. This writing team has a history of vividly telling the stories of many powerful and successful women in previous books: *Awakening, A Way Out of No Way*, and *Abdu'l-Baha in New York*. Here, however, their entire focus in *The Calling* shines their powerful research laser-beam on the legendary leaders of gender equity in the West, and introduces many to a compelling and transformative religious and literary figure, Tahirih. This should be a film! What a swirl of activity! Change was at hand! Amid the backdrop in America of the Great Awakening, the revivalist movements, the Second Coming fervor, the abolitionists, and Seneca Falls, we meet women who were, for the first time, speaking in public before audiences of women AND men. They were the founders of religious movements, suffragettes, reformers, novelists, journalists, opponents of slavery, war and alcohol. You will meet women such as Ellen G. White, Mary Baker Eddy, Mother Ann Lee, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Dorothea Dix, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sarah Moore Grimke and her sister Angelina, Mary Ann McClintock, Antoinette Brown Blackwell, Olympia Brown, Lizzie Doten, Cora Hatch, Fannie Burbank, Elizabeth Lowe Watson, Paula Wright Davis, Harriet Hunt, and Ernestine Rose. In a total rupture of traditional roles, they were to be found on stages, at podiums, organizing conferences and regularly quoted in the newspapers of their day. These luminous names are some of the agents of change of what we, today, consider to be western civilization. They were the mighty stirrers of the cauldron of change as society itself was being re-formed. Across the world, in many ways a totally different world, practically alone, was Tahirih, a brilliant Persian woman who was most rare because she was literate. She wrote poems, boldly delivered fiery speeches directly to men; a recognized leader whose brazen methods provoked tremendous agitation within and without of the infant religion that would soon be known as the

Bahá'í Faith. She personally and openly challenged every convention of civil behavior known in the entire Middle East. Essentially she believed herself to be an equal with men, and she did not hesitate to exercise her birthright as a human being. Her searing story of challenging what is, to this day, a totally male-dominated culture, is meticulously documented by the gifted Ahdieh and Chapman, with the help of some glorious translations of her famous poetry. The authors construct a compelling narrative of her life and her ardent desire to free women from the ancient shackles of orthodoxy and ignorance. Her vision, her struggle, and her eventual murder have inspired many girls and women in Iran and beyond; artists, authors, musicians, and even human rights lawyers have been motivated by her spirit and her story. Tragically, poetically and powerfully, even her shameful execution gives her an opportunity to express her hopeful spirit. As she is strangled, she utters her dying words: "You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women!" The episodes that juxtapose East and West are knitted together artfully in *The Calling*. These stories serve as a reminder that hundreds of millions of human beings live their daily lives in constraints—physical, psychological, political, religious and traditional. Too many have their feet bound, are kept hidden and veiled, are married as children, are mutilated at puberty, are denied education, are silent prisoners within their own lives. The entire human race is in great need of emancipation—not just women are suffering. All of humanity pays the price for this loss of opportunity. I am so proud of these two men, who continue to raise their talented voices to rid our world, once and for all time, of the scourge, the shame, and the virus of prejudice and gross inequality. Robert Harris Princeton, New Jersey

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