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Mohammed

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W. J. Hodges. '78

Mohammed.

One of the most successful religious impostures the world has ever seen is Mohammedanism, which owed its origin to the enthusiasm of a single individual about whom there has been a great diversity of opinions. Some, eminent for their ability and scholarship, holding that he was of a

truly noble character
and one of the greatest
benefactors of our race.
These admit that he
had his weak points,
(and who they say has not)
and that there are dark
stains upon some por-
tions of his history. Others
of equal ability maintain
that he was an impos-
tor and his life one
of conscious deception
and guilt. Amidst
these conflicting opin-
ions based upon the
investigation of the
same historic data
it might seem like
presumption on our

part to attempt an estimate of his character, or an enumeration of the causes which ensured his success, and yet this is the task upon which we enter, not anticipating however that we shall exhaust the subject, or forever settle the controversy. Moham-med was born (A.D. 570) at a time most favorable for introducing a new system of religion and government. He also possessed to an eminent degree those mental qualifi

cations which enabled him to rightly apprehend and take advantage of these auspicious omens. On the one hand the religious state of the world was favorable for a change. Christianity soon after the conversion of Constantine began to wane. Besides the patronage of the government religion was popular and conversions by communities took place. Popularity took the place of persecution, worldliness took the place of spirituality and so

at the birth of Moham-
med we find the church
corrupted and shorn of
its vitality and power.
On the other hand the Roman
and Persian monarch-
ies through corruption
and luxury had fallen
into decay while Arabia
was strong and vigorous
only needing some com-
mon bond of union
to make her power felt
among the nations.
Mohammed possessed
but few opportunities for
education aside from
those afforded by personal
contact with his fellow
men. These he seems

to have fully improved,
His knowledge of Juda-
ism was gained from
Israelites residing in
Arabia. Some say that
for a time he studied the
law under a Jewish
rabbi. On his trading
expeditions to Syria
and other countries he
came in contact with
Christians and from
them he gained an
insight into the doc-
trines of Christianity.

Thus comparatively un-
known, Mohammed, en-
gaged in the peaceful
pursuits of trade and
in the study of the

great themes of govern-
ment and religion,
passed his life until
his fortieth year. Thus
far in his history there
have been no indications
of his superiority or that
he was in preparation
for the prophetic office.
From this point tracing
his history as he has
given it to us in the
Koran a great change in
his life begins. He is
brought in direct com-
munication with the
spirit world. He is
permitted to enter
into the council cham-
bers of The King The

Lord of Hosts. He receives
a Divine call to the
prophetic office. The
angel Gabriel who
had come to Mary
telling her of the
honor conferred on
her comes to him
informing him that
he is called of God to
fill the prophetic of-
fice and that as he is
to be the last so also
he is to be the greatest
of all his prophets. For
twentythree years he stood
before the world as one
sent of God and speak-
ing with Divine author-
ity. Had he made no

claim to Divine author-
ity and in addition
to this could we blot
out the last ten or
eleven years of his
life it would not be
a difficult matter
to form a just estimate
of his character. Previous
to his call he had
acquired the name of
the faithful and for
thirteen years after
that event we find
him true to his mission
of proclaiming the Divine
existence and Unity.

He met with opposition
and even persecution
but in the midst of it

all he was firm and unyielding. Using no compulsory measures but declaring that it was his duty to proclaim the truth whether men accepted it or not. While there was much in his life, during this period, that was inconsistent and much in his teaching that was detestable and absurd, there are in both many things to commend. That he possessed some noble qualities no one can well deny. That there was much in his

system which, in it-
self, would have tended
to the elevation of his
countrymen is also
manifest. But after
making due allowance
for all the modifying
influences of his envi-
ronment, judging him
and his system by the
standard which he
set (that is a true proph-
et of God) we must brand
him as an impostor
and as consciously
such going forth in
the Divine name
to deceive the people.
The succeeding portion
of his life has been so

black and infamous
that even his best friends
and greatest admirers
have utterly failed to
exculpate him. When
once he had gained
the power to compel
obedience the true
character of the man
quickly appeared and
became more and
more manifest until
the day of his death.

He was guilty of forg-
ing the name of God
This was manifested
in his repeated affir-
mations of the Divine
authority and in the
readiness with which

contradictory Divine Revelations were made to meet the ever changing necessities of his cause. At Mecca all his messages were of a peaceful and conciliatory character. at Medina all were in favor of war rapine and plunder. At Mecca God was just and merciful always ready to forgive. at Medina He was relentless and unforgiving He was guilty of murder having delivered up the innocent unprotected and unoffending

to the fury of his fanatical followers. He was guilty of polygamy and the grossest sensuality. That he pampered to the tastes and basest passions of his followers is also true. That there is abundant proof to sustain these charges, even in the Koran, no impartial reader of the same will deny.

His want of opportunities for culture; the influence of Yeticism together with that of a degenerated Judaism and Christianity upon his religious nature:

and finally the baneful effects of Yatatism, which occupied so prominent a place in his system, are all inadequate to shield him from these charges. He had his virtues but in the light of the evidence which he has furnished us we can but brand him as an impostor and his system one at war with the best interests of humanity.