

## Philip Schaff's "Life & Character of Mohammad": Details about the Founder of Islam from the Biblical Perspective; Imprecatory Prayer against Christians & Jews

40. While on the subject of Islam and Muhammad this is a great opportunity to relate to you an excerpt that I've had on my to-do list for some while waiting for the right place to insert it. The source is Philip Schaff's article on Mohammedanism in his *History of the Christian Church*.

Mohammed was born about A.D. 570 at Mecca, the only child of a young widow named Amina. He belonged to the heathen family of the Hāshim, which was not wealthy, but claimed lineal descent from Ishmael, and was connected with the Koreish, the leading tribe of the Arabs and the hereditary guardians of the sacred Kaaba. When a boy of four years he was seized with something like a fit of epilepsy, which Wāckidi and other historians transformed into a miraculous occurrence. He was often subject to severe headaches and feverish convulsions, in which he fell on the ground like a drunken man, and snored like a camel.<sup>1</sup> (pp. 160-62)

Mohammed made a scanty living as an attendant on caravans and by watching sheep and goats. The latter is rather a disreputable occupation among the Arabs, and left to unmarried women and slaves; but he afterwards gloried in it by appealing to the example of Moses and David, and said that God never calls a prophet who has not been a shepherd before.

He had a most fertile imagination and a genius for poetry and religion, but no learning. It is a disputed question among Moslem and Christian scholars whether he could even read and write.<sup>2</sup> Probably he could not. He dictated the Koran from inspiration to his disciples and clerks. What knowledge he possessed, he picked up on the way from intercourse with men, from hearing books read, and especially from his travels. (pp. 162-63)

In his twenty-fifth year he married a rich widow, Chadijah \ka-dē'-jä), who was fifteen years older than himself. The marriage was happy and fruitful of six children, two sons and four daughters; but all died except little Fâtima \fa'-ti-mah), who became the mother of innumerable legitimate and illegitimate descendants of the prophet. (p. 163)

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<sup>1</sup> A. Sprenger has a long chapter on this disease of Mohammed, which he calls, *hysteria muscularis* (*Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammad*), I. 207–268.

<sup>2</sup> Sprenger discusses the question, and answers it in the affirmative, Vol. II. 398. The Koran (29) says: "Formerly [before I sent down the book, *i.e.* the Koran] thou didst not read any book nor write one with thy right hand!" From this, some Moslems infer that *after* the reception of the Koran, he was supernaturally taught to read and write; but others hold that he was ignorant of both. Syed Ahmed Khan Bahador says: "Not the least doubt now exists that the Prophet was wholly unacquainted with the art of writing, being also, as a matter of course (?), unable to read the hand-writing of others; for which reason, and for this only, he was called *Ummee*" (illiterate).

On his commercial journeys to Syria, he became acquainted with Jews and Christians, and acquired an imperfect knowledge of their traditions. He had violent convulsions and epileptic fits, which his enemies, and at first he himself, traced to demoniacal possessions, but afterwards to the overpowering presence of God. His soul was fired with the idea of the divine unity, which became his ruling passion; and then he awoke to the bold thought that he was a messenger of God, called to warn his countrymen to escape the judgment and the damnation of hell by forsaking idolatry and worshipping the only true God.

His monotheistic enthusiasm was disturbed, though not weakened, by his ignorance and his imperfect sense of the difference between right and wrong. (p. 164)

He was recognized in Medina as prophet and lawgiver. At first he proclaimed toleration: "Let there be no compulsion in religion;" but afterwards he revealed the opposite principle that all unbelievers must be summoned to Islâm, tribute, or the sword. With an increasing army of his enthusiastic followers, he took the field against his enemies, gained in 624 his first victory over the Koreish with an army of 305 (mostly citizens of Medina) against a force twice as large, conquered several Jewish and Christian tribes, ordered and watched in person the massacre of six hundred Jews in one day, while their wives and children were sold into slavery (627), triumphantly entered Mecca (630), demolished the three hundred and sixty idols of the Kaaba, and became master of Arabia. The Koreish were overawed by his success, and now shouted: "There is but one God, and Mohammed is his prophet." The various tribes were melted into a nation, and their old hereditary feuds changed into a common fanatical hatred of the infidels, as the followers of all other religions were called. The last chapter of the Koran commands the remorseless extermination of all idolaters in Arabia, unless they submit within four months. (pp. 164-65)

(Mohammed) died of a violent fever in the house and the arms of Ayesha [‘A’ishah] lä'-i-sha\, June 8, 632, in the sixty-third year of his age, and was buried on the spot where he died, which is now enclosed by a mosque. He suffered great pain, cried and wailed, turned on his couch in despair, and said to his wives when they expressed their surprise at his conduct: "Do ye not know that prophets have to suffer more than all others? One was eaten up by vermin; another died so poor that he had nothing but rags to cover his shame; but their reward will be all the greater in the life beyond." Among his last utterances were: "The Lord destroy the Jews and Christians! Let there not remain any faith but that of Islâm throughout the whole of Arabia." (p. 166)

The Koran, if chronologically arranged, must be regarded as the best commentary on his character. While his followers regard him to this day as the greatest prophet of God, he was long abhorred in Christendom as a wicked impostor, as the antichrist, or the false prophet, predicted in the Bible, and inspired by the father of lies. (p. 168)

The calmer judgment of recent historians inclines to the belief that he combined the good and bad qualities of an Oriental chief, and that in the earlier part of his life he was a sincere reformer and enthusiast, but after the establishment of his kingdom a slave of ambition for conquest.

He had a melancholic and nervous temperament, liable to fantastic hallucinations and alternations of high excitement and deep depression, bordering at times on despair and suicide. The story of his early and frequent epileptic fits throws some light on his revelations, during which he sometimes growled like a camel, foamed at his mouth, and streamed with perspiration.

He believed in evil spirits, omens, charms, and dreams. His mind was neither clear nor sharp, but strong and fervent, and under the influence of an exuberant imagination. He was a poet of high order, and the Koran is the first classic in Arabic literature. He believed himself to be a prophet, irresistibly impelled by supernatural influence to teach and warn his fellow-men. He started with the over-powering conviction of the unity of God and a horror of idolatry, and wished to rescue his countrymen from this sin of sins and from the terrors of the judgment to come; but gradually he rose above the office of a national reformer to that of the founder of a universal religion, which was to absorb the other religions, and to be propagated by violence. It is difficult to draw the line in such a character between honest zeal and selfish ambition, the fear of God and the love of power and glory. (pp. 168-69)

He was easy of access to visitors who approached him with faith and reverence; patient, generous, and (according to Ayesha) as modest and bashful "as a veiled virgin." But towards his enemies he was cruel and revengeful. He did not shrink from perfidy. He believed in the use of the sword as the best missionary, and was utterly unscrupulous as to the means of success. He had great moral, but little physical courage; he braved for thirteen years the taunts and threats of the people, but never exposed himself to danger in battle, although he always accompanied his forces. (p. 169)

Mohammed was a slave of sensual passion. Ayesha, who knew him best in his private character and habits, used to say: "The prophet loved three things, women, perfumes and food; he had his heart's desire of the two first, but not of the last." The motives of his excess in polygamy were his sensuality which grew with his years, and his desire for male offspring. His followers excused or justified him by the examples of Abraham, David and Solomon, and by the difficulties of his prophetic office, which were so great that God gave him a compensation in sexual enjoyment, and endowed him with greater capacity than thirty ordinary men. He had at least fourteen legal wives, and a number of slave concubines besides. At his death he left nine widows. He claimed special revelations which gave him greater liberty of sexual indulgence than ordinary Moslems (who are restricted to four wives), and exempted him from the prohibition of marrying near relatives. (pp. 169-70)

He speaks freely of this subject in the Koran, Surah 4, and 33. In the latter this scandalous passage occurs: "O Prophet! we allow thee thy wives whom thou hast dowered, and the slaves whom thy right hand possesseth out of the booty which God hath granted thee, and the daughters of thy uncle, and of thy paternal and maternal aunts who fled with thee to Medina, and any believing woman who hath given herself up to the Prophet, if the Prophet desired to wed her, a privilege for thee above the rest of the faithful."

Afterwards in the same Surah he says: “Ye must not trouble the Apostle of God, nor marry his wives after him forever. This would be a grave offence with God.”

His wives were all widows except Ayesha. Ayesha, the daughter of Abū Bakr la-bū bak'-erl, was his especial favorite. He married her when she was a girl of nine years, and he fifty-three years old. She could read, had a copy of the Koran, and knew more about theology, genealogy and poetry than all the other widows of Mohammed. He announced that she would be his wife also in Paradise. After his death she was the most sacred person among the Moslems and the highest authority on religious and legal questions.<sup>3</sup>  
(p. 170)

41. This man, his legalistic, murderous, and blasphemous religion, and their followers are being given affirmative- action-type privileges to practice their rituals, mantras, and prayers in the public square, federal schools, and the workplace while these same privileges are legally denied to Christians.
42. It is significant to remember that the origin of Christianity is completely Jewish: the Lord was a Jew in the line of David, all the apostles were Jews, all but one of the human authors of the New Testament were Jews, and, in the Church Age, Gentile and Jewish believers are one in Christ Jesus.
43. Therefore, we are not only sons of the free woman through faith in Christ we also become targets of the sons of the bondwoman. Christianity and Islam are genetic, spiritual, and theological enemies and never the twain shall meet.

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<sup>3</sup> Philip Schaff, “Life and Character of Mohammed,” in *History of the Christian Church: Mediaeval Christianity from Gregory I to Gregory VII, A.D. 590–1073* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1910), 4:160–166; 168–170.