

Israel, spent part of his early days in the calling of a shepherd. This fact is to be noticed. A shepherd's life in the East would give a youth of a thoughtful turn many opportunities for meditation, and to the effects of this part of Mahomet's life we probably owe many of those passages of the Koran which bear witness to his great familiarity and deep sympathy with external nature. We then find him in the service of the wealthy widow Khadijah, acting as her agent in her mercantile affairs, in itself a considerable rise in a city whose merchants were princes. Presently, at the age of twenty-five, his fortune is made by a marriage with his employer, whom tradition describes as fifteen years older than himself. Fifteen years later his prophetic career begins. Up to this time he is set before us as remarkable for nothing but the general excellence of his life and conversation. He joined, like the rest of his countrymen, in the idolatrous worship of Mecca, a worship which consisted in reverence for one Supreme Deity, combined with the worship of inferior powers, and among them especially certain female beings, who were looked upon as the daughters of God. Of the personal virtues of Mahomet there seems no doubt; his admirers would doubtless do their best to hide his faults, and to bring his excellencies into notice; but as a whole, the picture is clearly a genuine one; we accept it if only because those deeds of his later days which we cannot help looking on as crimes are honestly handed down to us. Many of the details also, the accounts which we read of his general simplicity of life, his boundless liberality, his kindness and affability to all men, his gentleness to slaves, children and animals, whatever play of fancy there may be in the details, still bear about them the signs of essential truth. One thing at least is clear; a man whose after-life showed him to be a man of strong passions, and who lived in a community which allowed an almost unrestricted polygamy, strictly kept his faith during the best years of his life to a single wife many years older than himself. On the whole, we cannot fail to see in the early life of Mahomet a thoroughly good man according to his light.

Presently he announces himself as the Prophet of the Lord, sent to call back his countrymen to that faith of their forefathers, Abraham and Ishmael, from which they had so grievously departed. They are no longer, in his own phrase, to give God companions, daughters or inferior powers of any kind. God alone is to be worshipped; the moral virtues are to be practised, and barbarous customs, like the burying alive of female children, are to be cast aside. God is proclaimed as the righteous and almighty ruler of the world, who will judge all mankind at the last day, and will award to them, according to their deeds in this life, everlasting happiness or everlasting torment. Such a creed the Prophet preaches; but for a while he has but few followers. The few whom he has, however, are those whose adherence was, in some sort, the best witness, if not to his mission, at least to his personal character. The first and the most earnest of believers in the Prophet were those who could best judge of the character of the man. His wife Khadijah, his noble freedman Zeyd, his friend the wise, bountiful, and moderate Abou-Bekr, were among the first to accept his mission. He kept the respect of men who utterly rejected his claims as an apostle; his uncle Abou-Talib, while refusing to give any heed to his teaching, never failed in his friendship, and, as long as he lived, effectually shielded him against the malice of his enemies. These days of his preaching at Mecca were his days of trial and persecution. Once, perhaps twice, his faith failed him; it might be in a fit of momentary despair that he uttered words which sounded like a compromise with idolatry, words which implied that inferior deities might be lawfully revered as mediators and intercessors with the Almighty. But his lapse was only for a season; he soon again took up his parable and again denounced all idolatry, all compromise with idolatry. Never again did his faith fail him; never again did he waver in his trust in his own mission, or in the truths which it was his mission to announce. He finds it expedient to counsel his followers to seek shelter in a strange land, but he himself keeps at his post among all dangers till a city of