

T. H. E.

# HISTORY

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# MAHOMET,

That Grand Impostor.

Giving a minute Account of his Parentage, Rise and Progress, — His miraculous Journey to Jerusalem, and from thence, through the seven Heavens. — Their Distance one from another. — His access to the Divine Presence; and what marvellous things he saw and heard. — His Robberies and Wars. — His Wives and Concubines; with a particular account of his Death and Burial. Also, an account of the principal Tenets of Religion taught by that Impostor and his followers, &c.

By CHARLES THOMSON, Esq; Author of the Travels through Turkey, &c.

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## *History of Mahomet.*

**M**AHOMET was born at Mecca in Arabia, in the year of our Lord 571. He was of the tribe of the Korashites, esteemed the noblest in all that country, and was descended in a direct line, from Pher Korais, the first founder of it. Hence it appears, that Mahomet was not of such mean parentage as some have asserted, being of the noblest tribe of all Arabia, and his family the most considerable of that tribe, as having had the chief rule over it for several descents together. However, in the beginning of his life, he was in a very poor and despicable condition; for his father dying before he was two years old, and while his grandfather was still living, all the power and wealth of his family devolved on his uncles, who afterwards bore the chief sway in Mecca, under whose protection he first vented his delusions, and was supported against all his opposers.

He lived with his mother till he was eight years of age; when she died, his grandfather took him; but he dying soon after, Mahomet was committed to the care of one of his uncles, who being a great merchant, brought him up in the mercantile way.

He continued with his uncle till twenty-five years of age, when one of the principal men of the city died and left all his stock, which was

very considerable, to his widow, who wanted a factor to manage it for her, invited Mahomet to her service. During three years time, wherein he traded for her at Damascus and other places, he acquitted himself so honourably, and so far gained the favour and good opinion of his mistress, that she married him in the twenty-eighth year of his age; and thus from the condition of a servant, she advanced him to be master both of her person and estate. By this means, being rendered equal in wealth to the greatest in the city; his ambition made him aspire to the sovereignty which his ancestors had enjoyed, and of which he himself had been deprived, only by being an orphan before the death of his grand-father.

His trading into Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, made him well acquainted both with Jews and Christians; and observing that each of them were divided into several sects, he concluded that nothing would be more likely to raise him a party, and to accomplish his designs, than the framing and advancing of a new religion. For such a change he judged the inhabitants of Mecca might be well disposed, as their traffic and frequent converse with the Christians had abated somewhat of their zeal for that gross idolatry, to which they had been hitherto addicted; and at the same time, they were falling from Heathenism to Zendichism, an error much like that of the Sadducees among the Jews, as denying the resurrection and a future state: He therefore betook himself to frame such a religion as he thought would be most easily swallowed by those he had to deal with: and his scheme being a medley of Judaism, and Christianity; the heresies of the eastern Christians at that time, and the old Pagan rites of the Arabs, too  
well



well answering his intention, and gained him profelytes among all sorts of people.

However, that he might not immediately turn preacher against that idolatry which he had hitherto practised with his fellow citizens, and without some previous change, take upon him the character of a reformer and a prophet, so unsuitable to his wicked and licentious course of life; in the thirty-eighth year of his age he began to affect retirement, and withdrew every morning into a solitary cave near Mecca, where he pretended to spend his time in fasting, prayer and meditation; and there it is supposed he had his first consultations with those who helped him to compose his Alcoran. His first attempt was to draw his wife into a belief of his imposture; and in order to this, when he returned home at night from the cave, he used to tell her of visions he had seen, and strange voices he had heard; but she rejected those stories as the vain fancies of a disturbed imagination, or else the delusions of some evil spirit. He farther pretended a converse with the angel Gabriel; which she was as backward to believe as the other, till having advised with a fugitive Monk they then kept in the house, who was concerned with Mahomet in the contrivance, he brought her to be persuaded of the truth of all her husband had told her, and that he was really called to the prophetick office; and thus she became his first profelyte.

Having now, by living two years in a retired and austere manner, gained, as he thought, a sufficient reputation of sanctity for carrying on his design; in the fortieth year of his age he began to take upon him the title of the "Apostle of God," and to propagate his new religion; but this he did in private for the first four years, and

only among such as were his acquaintance and confidants. His second profelyte was his slave; and, the third, his cousin. Mahomet's fourth disciple, was a very rich man in Mecca, and being a person of wisdom and experience, gave his cause no small reputation; and his example was soon followed by five others, who were afterwards the principal generals of his armies, and contributed very much to the establishment of his empire and doctrine in those parts of the world.

After he had gained these nine profelytes, he began openly to publish his imposture to the people of Mecca, in the forty-fourth year of his age; and to declare himself a prophet sent by God to reduce them from the error of Paganism, and to teach them the true religion. He did not pretend to deliver to them a new one, but to revive the old one, which God first gave to Adam; and, after it had been lost in the corruption of mankind, restored it by revelation to Abraham, who taught it his son Ishmael their forefather. Adding, that Ishmael, when he first planted himself in Arabia, instructed the people in the same religion he had received from Abraham; but their posterity afterwards corrupted it into idolatry, which God had now sent him to destroy, and once again to restore the religion of Ishmael. Therefore, according to his own account, the Jews do not improperly call the religion of Mahomet by the name of Ishmaelism.

Mahomet, allowed both the Old and New Testaments, and that Moses and Jesus Christ were prophets sent from God; but affirmed, that the Jews and Christians had corrupted these holy writings, from which corruptions he was sent to purge them; to restore the law of God to its original purity; and therefore the most of the passages

pages which he quotes out of the Scriptures are much different in the Alcoran from what we find in our Bibles, and are artfully adapted to support his own delusions.

He pretended to receive all his revelations from the angel Gabriel, who he said was sent from God for that purpose. And whereas he was subject to the falling sickness; whenever he had a fit, he said it was a trance, occasioned by the brightness of the angel's appearance, who then came to communicate to him some new revelation. These pretended revelations he put into several chapters, the collection of which makes up the Alcoran, or Bible of the Mahometans; and taught them that the original of this book was laid up in the archives of heaven, and that the angel brought him the copy of it chapter by chapter, according as occasion required they should be published to the people.

On his first appearing publickly as a prophet, the people laughed at him; and some called him Magician, Liar, Impostor, and the like opprobrious names, of which he often complains in the Alcoran; so that for a year or two he made very little progress, and scarce met with any thing but scorn and contempt for his pains. This however, did not discourage him from pursuing his design, which he did in a manner the most likely to obtain success: for he was a man of ready wit, and very engaging address, bearing all affronts, without shewing the least resentment; and knew how to apply himself to all sorts and degrees of people, soothing the rich with praise and flattery, and gaining the affections of the poor, by relieving their necessities. In a word, by an artful and insinuating behaviour, he at length surmounted the difficulties that stood in his way; so that in the fifth year of his pretended mission, his party was



was increased to forty, himself included, many of them persons of wealth and reputation, whose example was likely to have a considerable influence over their fellow citizens.

The inhabitants of Mecca began now to be alarmed at his progress; those that were zealous for the idolatry of their forefathers opposing him as an enemy of their gods, and a dangerous innovator of their religion: And others, who saw farther into his schemes were sensible they tended to destroy the public liberty, and to establish a tyranny over them; and therefore combined together to take him off by violence. But his uncle found means to defeat the designs of his enemies; and by his power, being chief of the tribe, preserved him from all attempts that were formed against him: for though he himself persisted in the Paganism of his ancestors, yet he had so great an affection for the impostor, as being his kinsman, and educated chiefly in his own house, that he firmly supported him against all his opposers. Under his protection therefore Mahomet went boldly on to preach to the people in the publick places of the city, and to publish his revelations, as he pretended they were brought him from time to time by the angel Gabriel.

The main arguments he made use of to delude men into a belief of his imposture, were his threats and promises, as being those which most easily work upon the minds of the vulgar. His promises were chiefly of a paradise, which he cunningly framed as to make it consist wholly of such pleasures and delights as were best suited to the taste of the Arabians; a people living within the Torrid Zone, who by the nature of their climate, as well as the corruption of their manners were exceedingly given to the love of women.



and would not fail of being captivated with hopes of rivers and streams of water, cooling drinks, shaded gardens, delicious fruits, and other enjoyments of that kind, which to them, were particularly desirable, on account of the scorching heat and dryness of their country. Accordingly he tells his followers, "They shall enter into pleasant gardens, watered by rivulets and fountains, near which they shall repose themselves upon the softest beds, adorned with all manner of precious stones, under the shade of trees that shall continually yield all manner of the most agreeable fruits; and that there they shall enjoy women ever young and beautiful, with large black eyes, and complexions always fresh and charming as polished pearls; in whose company they shall solace themselves with amorous delights to all eternity, drinking likewise the most delicious wines and other liquors, without ever being intoxicated or overcharged thereby, which shall be served up to them by beautiful boys in cups of gold and glasses set with diamonds," &c. And with the same kind of subtilty he described the punishments of hell which he threatened to all that would not believe in his mission, to consist in such torments as must appear to them most grievous and afflicting; telling them, "That they shall suffer an unconceivable thirst, and should have nothing to drink but boiling and stinking water; that they should dwell for ever in continual fire, and be surrounded with a black hot, and salt smoke; that they should eat nothing but briars and thorns and the fruit of the tree Zacon, which should be in their bellies like burning pitch;" and other frightful stories of the same nature. Thus some were allured, and others

thers terrified to embrace his new system of religion.

To these motives he added, (that nothing might be wanting), the threats of grievous punishments and judgments in this life, as well as in that which is to come, if they would not hearken to his doctrine. To this end, he took all opportunities of representing to them the terrible destruction that had overtaken such as refused to listen to the prophets sent before him: How the deluge came upon the old world: Sodom was destroyed by fire, and the Egyptians were sore afflicted with various plagues, for their contempt and disobedience to Noah, Lot, and Moses; and how Ad and Thamor, two ancient tribes of the Arabians, (as, he on purpose feigned), were totally extirpated for the same reason. On account of such stories as these, which he frequently inculcated to the people, his enemies called him "A teller of old Fables;" but by these artifices, his party continued to increase, which was at last joined by two of his uncles, though severals of them continued to oppose him, as a man who carried on designs that tended to the prejudice of his country.

But that which grieved him most was, that his opposers required him to work a miracle; "For, said they, Moses, Jesus, and the other  
 " prophets, wrought miracles to prove that their  
 " millions was divine, and therefore if thou art  
 " a prophet, and greater than any that were sent  
 " before thee, as thou boastest thyself to be, de-  
 " monstrate it to us by the same sort of proof:  
 " Raise the dead, cause the dumb to speak, and  
 " the deaf to hear, and then we will believe  
 " thee." This objection, he endeavoured to evade, or answer divers ways; but his most con-  
 siderable

considerable reply was, "That their predecessors had  
 " contemned the miracles of Saleh, and the o-  
 " ther-prophets, and therefore God would work  
 " no more amongst them." At another time he  
 would insist, "That those whom God had or-  
 " dained to believe, would believe without mi-  
 " racles, and those that he had not ordained,  
 " would never be convinced by that kind of evi-  
 " dence: and that therefore, they were entirely  
 " needless:" But none of his reasons being sa-  
 tisfactory, as plainly confessing he had not the  
 power of working miracles, with which other  
 prophets were endowed, he was deserted by ma-  
 ny of his followers.

Finding all his sophistry too weak, on his re-  
 tiring to Medina, another city of Arabia, he took  
 the sword in his hand, and having got an army  
 to back his cause, he soon changed his note; for  
 then he pretended, "That since God had sent  
 " Moses and Jesus with miracles, and men would  
 " not hearken to their doctrine, he had now  
 " sent him in the last place without miracles, to  
 " force them to obedience by the power of the  
 " sword." Pursuant hereto, he forbade his dis-  
 ciples to enter into any further disputes about his  
 religion, and commanded them to destroy all who  
 opposed it, promising great rewards in a future  
 state to such as would take up arms in its defence,  
 and that those who died in the cause should have  
 a crown of martyrdom.

On this head the Mahometan doctors argue  
 cunningly enough in the following manner: 'The  
 prophets of God, say they, are of divers sorts;  
 according to the divers attributes of his divine  
 nature, which they are sent to shew forth to the  
 world. Thus Jesus Christ was sent to manifest  
 the Righteousness, the Power, and the Know-  
 ledge

ledge of God; the first of which he did accordingly in his being implacable, i. e. in the state of a person who cannot sin; the second, in working those miracles which none but a divine power could effect; and, the third, in that he knew the secrets of men's hearts, and foretold things to come. In like manner, Solomon was sent to manifest the Wisdom, the Glory, and the Majesty of God; and Moses, to show his Providence and his clemency; none of whom having a power to force men to believe, miracles were necessary to convince them of the truth of their missions: but Mahomet, say they, was a prophet sent principally to manifest the fortitude of God by the power of the sword; which alone being sufficient to compel men to the faith, he wrought no miracles, as not wanting their assistance to accomplish the will of heaven. Hence it hath become the universal doctrine of the Mahometans, that their religion is to be propagated by the sword, and all the faithful (Mahometans) are bound to fight in its defence.

In the eighth year of his pretended mission, his party growing formidable at Mecca, the citizens passed a decree, whereby they directly forbade every one to follow him for the future. This prohibition did him no prejudice during the life of his uncle; but he dying two years after, and the chief government of the city falling into the hands of one who violently opposed Mahomet; all his enemies laid hold of this advantage to renew their opposition against him; which they did with such success, that they soon put a stop to the progress of his imposture at Mecca, and he was also deserted by many of his disciples.

Mahomet's aim all along was to have gained such a party at Mecca, as to have made himself  
 master



maſter of the whole city, and from thence to have armed his followers in order to reduce the reſt of Arabia. To this purpoſe it was that he ſo often inculcated to them, that all who received the faith he preached, muſt fight for it, and that his doctrine was to be propagated by the ſword: but having no hopes of accompliſhing this his deſign at Mecca, his thoughts were employed on going to ſome other town that might be more commodious for carrying on his projects. With this view he took a journey to Tayif, a town about forty miles from Mecca, where one of his uncles reſided, who had a very conſiderable intereſt among the inhabitants. Under his protection he thought to have ſpread his deluſions, and at length to have got poſſeſſion of the place; but after a month's ſtay, not having been able to gain one profelyte, he returned to Mecca, there to wait a more favourable opportunity of purſuing the ſchemes he had projected.

About this time his firſt wife died, after ſhe had lived with him two and twenty years; he married two other wives, and ſoon after he took a third; whereby making himſelf ſon-in-law to three of the principal men of his party, he attached them the more firmly to his intereſt.

In the twelfth year of his pretended miſſion is placed the Miſra, that is, his famous night's journey from Mecca to Jeruſalem, and from thence to Heaven; of which he gives the following account:

One night as he lay in bed with his beſt beloved wife, he heard a knocking at the door, whereupon ariſing and opening it, he found there the angel Gabriel with ſeventy pair of wings expanded,

ded, whiter than snow, and clearer than chryſtal, and the beaſt Alborak ſtanding by him, on which, ſays he, the prophets uſed to be carried from place to place to execute any divine command. This beaſt Mahomet deſcribes to be as white as milk, of a mixed nature between an aſs and a mule, but not quite ſo big as the latter, and as ſwift as lightning, which the word Alborak ſignifies in the Arabick language. On Mahomet's appearing at the door, the angel ſaluted him with a pleaſant countenance, telling him he was ſent to bring him to heaven, where he ſhould ſee ſtrange myſteries, not lawful to be ſeen by any other man, and ordered him to mount Alborak; but the beaſt being wanton and ſkittiſh with idleneſs, having reſted from the time of Chriſt till now, would not ſtand ſtill for Mahomet for to get upon his back, till he had firſt ſoothed him by promiſing him a place in paradise; whereupon having quietly mounted, the angel leading the way with the bridle in his hand, he was carried in the twinkling of an eye from Meccà to Jeruſalem. On his coming thither, all the departed prophets and ſaints appeared at the gate of the temple to ſalute him; and attending him to the chief oratory, deſired him to pray for them, and then departed; whereupon Mahomet and the angel going out of the temple, found there a ladder of light ready fixed for them, which they immediately aſcended, leaving Alborak tied to a rock till their return.

On their arrival at the firſt heaven, and Gabriel's knocking and informing the porter who was there, the gates, which Mahomet deſcribes to be of a prodigious ſize, were immediately opened.

This

This first heaven, he tells us, was all of pure silver; and the stars, each as big as a large mountain, hung from it by chains of gold; and that angels kept watch in these stars, to prevent the approach of evil spirits. Here he saw a decrepid old man, our first father Adam it seems, who saluting him, gave God thanks for so great a son, and then recommended himself to his prayers. In the same heaven he also saw a multitude of angels in all manner of shapes, viz. of men, beasts, and birds; and among the last saw a cock, white as snow, of such a prodigious bigness, that his feet standing upon the first heaven, his head reached up to the second, which was at the distance of five hundred years journey according to our usual rate of travelling. Others say, his head reaches up through all the seven heavens, as far as the throne of God, which is above seven times higher; that his wings are adorned with carbuncles and pearls, and extended east and west, to a distance answerable to his height. This, says Mahomet, Gabriel told me was the chief angel of the cocks; and that every morning, God singing an hymn, this cock constantly joined him by crowing, which is so loud, that all (except men and fairies) hear it in heaven and in earth, and then all other cocks crow also. The Mahometans say, "That the voice of one reading in the Alcoran, of him who early every morning prays for pardon of his sins, and the voice of the cock, are three voices which God always hears with acceptance."

From the first heaven, the impostor tells us, he ascended up to the second, at the distance of five hundred years journey above it, which he makes

to be the height of each of the seven heavens above the other. In this heaven, which was of pure gold, he saw Noab, who congratulated him, and desired his prayers: And here he also saw twice as many angels as before, one of them so large, that as he stood on the second heaven, his head reached up to the third.

Hence he ascended to the third heaven, made of precious stones; at the entrance of which he met Abraham, who likewise desired the favour of his prayers; and here he saw a still greater number of angels, and one among them of such a very enormous size, that the distance between his two eyes was seventy thousand days journey. —(Here the ingenious Dr. Prideaux observes, Mahomet was out of his mathematicks, for the distance between a man's eye's, being in proportion to his height, but as one to seventy two, at this rate the height of the angel must have been fourteen thousand years journey, which is four times as much as the height of all his heavens put together.) — This the angel Gabriel informed him was the angel of Death; for he had a large table before him, whereupon he is continually writing the names of all that are born into the world, computes the days of their life, and when he finds they have compleated their number assigned them, he blots out their names, and the persons do then immediately die.

From thence he then proceeded to the fourth heaven, which was all of emerald, where he met with Joseph the son of Jacob, who desired a share in his prayers also. Here were still a greater number of angels than in the former heaven; one  
of



of whom, much larger than the rest, was perpetually weeping and lamenting, which, as Gabriel informed Mahomet, was for the the sins of men, and their destruction consequent thereupon.

In the fifth heaven, which he tells us was made of Adamant, he found Moses, who also besought him to intercede with God in his behalf: and here he saw a much greater number of angels than in any of the former stages.

On his entering into the sixth heaven, which says he, was all of carbuncle, he met with John the Baptist, who likewise commended himself to his prayers; and here the number of angels was greater than in any of the former heavens.

From thence he ascended up to the seventh heaven, which was all made of divine light, where he found Jesus Christ, whose prayers, Mahomet himself, as he tells us, desired; hereby intimating Jesus Christ to be the greater, in order to flatter and please the Christians, and thereby to draw them the more easily into his impotture. Here he saw more angels than in all the other heavens put together, and among them, a very extraordinary one, having seventy thousand heads, and in every head as many tongues, and every tongue uttering as many distinct voices at once, which he continued day and night, incessantly praising and glorifying the great Creator.

The angel Gabriel, having brought Mahomet thus far, told him, That he, for his own part, was not permitted to go any farther; but directed Mahomet to ascend up the rest of the way himself to

the throne of God: In which passage, Mahomet says he went through water, snow, and such other difficulties, till he came where he heard a voice saying unto him, O Mahomet! salute thy Creator! From hence ascending still higher, he came to a place of vast extension of light, of such brightness as could not be endured, which, as Mahomet says, was the habitation of the Almighty, where his throne was: On the right side whereof, says he, was an Arabic inscription to the following purpose, "There is no God but God, and "Mahomet is his prophet." This is the Mahometan Creed, and he tells us, that this inscription was written on all the gates of the seven heavens.

The impostor adds, That approaching the presence of God within two bow shots, he saw him sitting upon his throne with a covering of seventy thousand veils before his face: that God put forth his hand, in token of his favour, and laid it upon Mahomet, which was of that exceeding coldness, that it pierced the very marrow of his back, and he could not bear it. That after this, God conversed familiarly with him, revealed to him a great many hidden mysteries, and made him understand his whole law; and how he would have the world instructed in the knowledge of it: And, in fine, gave him several privileges above the rest of mankind.

Being then dismissed, he returned to the angel Gabriel, who reconducted him through all the heavens the same way that he came, set him upon the beast Alborak, which they had left tied at Jerusalem, and from thence, with the bridle  
in

in his hand, brought him back again to Mecca; and all this in the space of one tenth part of a night, as Mahomet himself affirms.

When he came to relate this extraordinary fiction to the people next morning, it was received, as it deserved, with general contempt and derision; and, many of his disciples, as ashamed of him, as an abominable liar, left him on this occasion. Others would have followed their example, had not one of his principal followers put a stop to the defection, by his avouching and professing his belief of the whole story: for which extraordinary service, he acquired the title of *Af-fudic*, or the Just. And this fiction is now as firmly believed by the Mahometans as we believe the gospel; only, it seems it was once disputed, whether this was a vision or a real journey; but their doctors have at length, after some disputation, resolved it to be a real journey.

However ridiculous this story might at first appear, Mahomet in the end gained great advantage from it; for after it came once to be believed, all his sayings passed for sacred truths brought down from heaven, and every word that dropped from him, and every action relating to his religion, was carefully observed. These being reduced to writing after his death, make up these volumes of traditions which the Mahometans call the *Sonna*, and which among them is the same as the Oral Law was among the Jews. And as the Jews had their books in which their Oral Law was recited, explained and digested under several heads and chapters by many different authorities; so are there great numbers of books among the  
 Maho-

Mahometans concerning their Sonna, in which all the acts and sayings of Mahomet, relating to his religion, are recorded and commented upon, which books make up the whole of their theology, as well speculative as practical.

Tho' the publication of the above mentioned fiction considerably weakened Mahomet's party in and about Mecca; and several of them for some practices against the government, were forced to fly into Ethiopia, yet these losses were soon compensated by the profelytes which he gained at Medina, which was inhabited partly by Jews, and partly by Christians, who persecuted one another with great violence; and one of the contending parties, in order to strengthen themselves, fell in with Mahomet, and it is generally supposed to be the Christians, from the kindness that the impostor shewed at first to the professors of Christianity, and his very barbarous and inhuman treatment of the Jews. But be that as it may, in the thirteenth year of Mahomet's pretended mission, there came seventy-three men and two women from Medina to Mahomet at Mecca, and embraced his religion; out of which number he chose twelve, and having given them proper instructions, sent them back again to their own country to propagate his doctrine; in which they laboured with such success, that they soon brought over great part of the inhabitants.

At the same time, Mahomet and his followers at Mecca, met with nothing but opposition and discouragement, and the government of that city, looked upon the impostor with such a jealous eye, that a design was actually laid to have surprised



prised and cut him off; but he having received timely intelligence of it, fled from thence with all his disciples; and notwithstanding several parties were sent out to pursue and apprehend him, he escaped them by hiding himself some considerable time in a cave, and at last got safe to Medina, where he was received by his friends with loud acclamations of joy. He lodged for some time at first in the house of one of the chief of his profelytes in that place; but he built himself a house very soon after, where he usually resided as long as he lived, and erected a mosque adjoining to it for the public exercise of his religion.

Mahomet, having now fixed himself at Medina, gave his daughter Fatima in marriage to his cousin Ali, the son of his deceased uncle. She being the only child then living of six, which he had by his first wife; and indeed the only one that survived him, notwithstanding the many wives that he took; and from her alone all those derive their pedigree, which pretend are of the family of Mahomet. Her father used to reckon her among the most perfect of women, and of which sort he held that there were never more than four from the beginning of the world; and those, says Mahomet, were Asiah, the wife of Pharaoh; the Virgin Mary, Cadigna his own wife, and his daughter Fatima.

The impostor being now master of a very considerable town, and having got together a body of troops, made no scruple to pull off the mask, and instead of using arguments any longer to bring the people over to his opinion, he now made it death  
for

for any one in the least to oppose or contradict his doctrine; commanding all his faithful disciples to arm themselves and to fight for it, rather than to dispute about it, and he commanded that they should spare none that did not embrace it, or submit to pay a tribute for the redemption of their lives, or indulgence in their infidelity. And accordingly in most Mahometan countries, to this very day, the inhabitants of a different persuasion pay a certain tax or duty for being tolerate in the exercise of their religion.

The first enterprizes of Mahomet, after his taking up the sword, look more like so many robberies than warlike expeditions; much less are they consistent with his specious pretence of fighting for the cause of God. He began by ordering one of his uncles with a party of thirty horse, to intercept and plunder the caravan of Mecca, that was on the road in their return from Syria. This officer accordingly posted himself in a wood, near which they were to pass, but on their approach, finding them guarded by three hundred men sent from Mecca for that purpose, he thought it most prudent to let them alone, and return to Medina. Several other expeditions of the same kind were undertaken the same year, and with much about the same success.

The next year, (A. D. 623) Mahomet marched in person with three hundred and twenty men to attack a rich caravan travelling from Mecca towards Syria, with a vast deal of money and merchandise; but coming up with them, he found them guarded by a convoy of a thousand men, whereupon a fierce battle ensued. The victory,  
which

which remained a long time desperate and doubtful, at the length fell to the side of Mahomet; but the caravan made so good a retreat, that they saved a good part of their baggage. However Mahomet's troops gained a very considerable booty, which had like to have been the occasion of breeding a fatal quarrel among them: for the army consisting of two parties, the men of Medina, who had given him so kind a reception, and those of Mecca, who had been the companions of his flight, the former insisting on a larger share than the latter. In order to put an end to this controversy, Mahomet thought proper to compose the eighth chapter of his Alcoran; whereby he allots the fifth part of the spoil to himself, and the rest to be equally divided between the contending parties.

The very extraordinary success of this action, against an enemy so much superior as to numbers, gave Mahomet and his followers great encouragement. He frequently boasts of it in his Alcoran, and would have it to be believed that two miracles were wrought for him on that occasion. The first, says Mahomet, was, "That God made his army appear much more numerous to his enemies than it was in reality, which much damped their courage:" And the second was, "That he sent troops of angels to his assistance, which contributed greatly towards his victory." To make his success to look the more miraculous, Mahomet multiplies the forces that he fought against to three thousand men, besides the drivers: but the credit of this great odds stands upon no other foundation than that of his own single testimony.

In the year, (A. D. 624) Mahomet made war upon

upon some tribes of the Arabs that pretended to be of the Jewish religion; and after several bloody and desperate engagements, with various successes on both sides, Mahomet at last having taken their fortified places, and made many of them prisoners, he sold them for slaves, and divided their effects among his soldiers and followers. But towards the end of the year, Mahomet received a very signal defeat, which reduced his affairs to a low condition; for the people of Mecca, in order to revenge the last year's affront, marched against Mahomet with an army of three thousand foot, and two hundred horse; and having seized upon a mountain, only four miles distance from Medina, they so distressed the town from thence, that Mahomet, though he could muster no more than a thousand men, was forced to hazard a battle, in order to dislodge them from that important post, at the first onset Mahomet had the advantage, but being at last overpowered by the enemy's numbers, he lost many of his men; and among the rest his standard bearer. The Impostor himself received several dangerous wounds, and would probably have lost his life, had not two of his companions come in timely to his assistance; in which action he received a wound in his hand, that deprived him ever after of the use of some of his fingers.

From this ill success, the people of Medina, began to argue that Mahomet was no prophet, nor so much in favour with God, as he pretended; and others murmured, and were ready to mutiny, on account of their friends and relations that were killed in the battle. To silence the former he told them, "That his defeat was occasioned by the sins of some in his army, and for this reason God  
" permitted



“permitted him to be vanquished:” And to oppose the clamours and complaints of the latter, he introduced his doctrine of Predestination, telling them, “That as for those who were slain in the late battle, their fate was inevitable; and that if they had remained at home in their houses, they must have died when they did, the period of every man’s life being absolutely fixed and predetermined of God, beyond which time it could not possibly be prolonged:” But for their comfort, he added, “That as they died fighting for the faith, they had obtained the crown of martyrdom, and were now alive with God in Paradise in a state of everlasting bliss, which was infinitely to be preferred before this life, and all the satisfaction the world afforded.” And these doctrines he found so strengthened the courage and resolution of his disciples, that he did not fail to inculcate them ever after.

The next year Mahomet made war upon a tribe of Jewish Arabs in the neighbourhood of Medina, whom he forced to fly towards Syria; but a party of his troops overtaking them near the border of that country, put them every man to the sword, one only excepted, who had the good fortune to escape. The same year he fought a second battle, and had many other skirmishes with those that refused to submit to him, which were attended with various success.

In one of these expeditions, some of his officers, being heated with liquor and deeply engaged in play, fell out amongst themselves, and had very near ruined his affairs; and therefore, for preventing the like mischief, he prohibited his followers the use of wine, and all games of chance

for the future. To give this prohibition the greater weight, he invented a fable of two angels, who he tells us were in times past sent down from heaven to administer justice, and teach men righteousness in the province of Babylon: that while they were there, a certain woman invited them to dinner, and set wine before them, which God had forbidden them to drink; but venturing to transgress the divine command, they became so intoxicated, that they tempted the woman to lewdness; who promised to consent on condition that one of them should first carry her to heaven, and the other bring her back again. This being agreed to, when the woman got to heaven, she refused to return, and declared to God the whole matter; whereupon, as a reward of her virtue, she was made the morning star, and the angels were severely punished, by being hung up by the feet in a deep pit near Babylon till the day of judgment.

The next year (A. D. 626.) Mahomet was in great danger of being totally undone; for the people of Mecca having made an alliance with several tribes of Jewish Arabians, marched against him with an army of ten thousand men. Mahomet advanced to meet them, but finding himself not in a condition to give them battle, on account of their superior numbers, he thought fit to intrench, and was in a manner besieged by the enemy in his camp. While the two armies lay so near each other, he found means to corrupt some of the enemies officers, who took all opportunities of sowing dissension among the confederates, and at last, by their advice and example, prevailed upon them to retreat and separate: and thus, this expedition, from which Mahomet had  
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ſo much to fear, ended in the loſs of only ſix men on his ſide and three on the other.

Mahomet knew very well how to make uſe of the advantage the enemy had given him by this retreat, he immediately marched againſt one of the confederate tribes, laying ſiege to their ſtrong places, and forcing them to ſurrender at diſcretion. Moſt of the men were put to the ſword, the women and children ſold for ſlaves, and the booty he divided among his ſoldiers.

He likewiſe ſubdued ſeveral other tribes of the Arabians, treating them for the moſt part in the ſame cruel manner; but finding among the captives, a woman of extraordinary beauty, he fell in love with her, and made her his wife, and for her ſake he releaſed all her relations who had been taken priſoners.

Having gained many victories, and conſiderably increaſed his forces, Mahomet now reſolved to return the viſit to his enemies at Mecca; and a battle was fought between them near that city, in which, no great advantage being obtained on either ſide, a truce was concluded, whereby it was agreed, “ That all who were friends to Mahomet  
“ in Mecca, might have liberty of joining him,  
“ and thoſe in his army, who deſired it, might  
“ return to their houſes at Mecca: and that Ma-  
“ homet, or any of his party, ſhould be permit-  
“ ted to come into the city at any time during the  
“ truce, and to remain there for three days, pro-  
“ vided they came without arms, and in a peace-  
“ able manner.”

The impoſtor on his return to Medina, looking upon his authority to be pretty well eſtabliſhed, cauſed his army to proclaim him king under a tree.

near that city. He retained however, the office of chief priest of his religion, and transmitted both the regal and pontifical functions to his successors, which continued so for near 300 years after his death, when the governors of the several provinces of the empire assumed the regal authority, and left the Caliph nothing but the priesthood.

When Mahomet had finished his mosque at Medina, he used to officiate in it himself; praying and preaching to the people, as he leaned upon a piece of a beam or stump of a tree, driven into the ground for that purpose; but being now advanced to the regal dignity, he did not think this accommodation suitable to his grandeur; and therefore by the advice of one of his wives, he caused a pulpit to be erected, with a seat in it, from whence he afterwards harangued the audience. Hereupon, say the Mahometans, the beam or stump he used to lean on groaned, thereby expressing its grief for being thus deserted, and no longer thought worthy to be employed in so honourable a service.

Mahomet still vigorously pushed on the war against the Jewish Arabs, and having taken the city of Choibar, fixed his quarters in the house of one of the principle inhabitants, whose daughter dressing a shoulder of mutton for his supper, poisoned it, in order to make trial whether he was a prophet or not, as she herself acknowledged; for if he was a prophet, she concluded, he could certainly know that the meat was poisoned, and so would receive no harm: but if he was not a prophet, she thought it would be doing the world a good service to rid it of so great a tyrant and impostor.



impostor On this occasion some of the Mahometans tell us of a miracle, viz. "That the shoulder of mutton spoke, and informed Mahomet of its being poisoned;" but alas! it was rather too late, for one of his company eating greedily of it, fell down dead upon the place; and though Mahomet had not immediately the same fate, having but just tasted it, yet he swallowed so much that he was never quite well afterwards, and died of it at three years end in the city of Medina.

Mahomet having now an army of ten thousand men under his command, resolved to make himself master of Mecca; and accordingly on pretence that the inhabitants had broken the truce, he marched on a sudden, and surprised the city, which not being in any posture of defence, surrendered to him without opposition. Having taken possession of it, he put to death all those that had been his most zealous enemies; which struck such terror to the rest, that they readily submitted to his government and religion. He then proceeded to break down the images in and about their temple, and gave it a new consecration, determining to continue it in its ancient honour, by making it still the chief place of his worship, and enjoining his followers to resort thither in pilgrimage as formerly. The images of most note he found in their temple, were those of Abraham and Ishmael; but there was a multitude of others, both within and without, which the Arabians worshipped as mediators and intercessors for them with the supreme God; for the Arabians always held, that there was but one only God, the Creator and governor of all things, whom they never durst represent by any image, and whom they thought themselves unworthy to approach directly

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without any mediation. This was the reason of their placing of the images of angels and holy men in their temples, to which they directed their worship and devotions, and in this consisted the whole of the Arabian idolatry, which Mahomet totally abolished.

The success of Mahomet's arms, and his innovations in matters of religion united the Pagan tribes of the Arabians against him; who assembling their forces gave him battle, and drove him to the very walls of Mecca; but he having rallied his troops, and renewed the engagement, he gained such a complete victory over his enemies, that he took from them their baggage, their wives and children, and all their substance; which consisted chiefly in flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. The remaining part of the year was spent in demolishing the temples and images of the Arabians wherever he came: and having reduced most part of Arabia under his power, the following year he turned his arms towards Syria, and made himself master of Tobue, a town belonging to the Greek Emperor; after which he forced several petty princes to become tributaries to him and then returned with his victorious army to Medina.

Mahomet's empire and religion became now to be established throughout all Arabia; and he sent his lieutenants to different parts of the country to govern in his name, who made it their first business to destroy the Pagan temples and images, and all the remains of the Arabian idolatry. Towards the conclusion of the year, Mahomet undertook a pilgrimage to Mecca, where a vast concourse of people resorted to him from all parts of Arabia, whom he instructed in his new law, and then returned to Medina.

Soon after this journey, he found himself in a very bad state of health, occasioned by the poison he had taken about three years before, which still working in his body, at last brought him so low, that he was forced to take to his bed, and died in less than a fortnight. Being delirious in his sickness, he called for pen, ink, and paper, telling his people he would leave them such instructions as should preserve them from error after his death; but some of his particular friends that were about him, being sensible of his condition, put it off, and nothing was done in the affair; which many of the Mahometans seem to bewail, as thinking it a great unhappiness to be deprived of these intended dictates of their dying prophet. During his illness he complained much of the bit that he had eaten at Choiber, telling those that visited him, that he had felt the torments of it in his body ever since, and at times it brought upon him very dangerous pains; that now his heart-strings were about to break. At last he expired in the greatest misery.

His death occasioned some confusion among his followers, for many of them apprehended he could not die, or at least that he would revive again; and therefore assembled about the door of the house where the corps lay, crying out, "Do not bury him, for the Apostle of God is not dead." One Omar, a principal man among them, was of this opinion, and drawing his sword, swore, "That if any one should say Mahomet was dead, he would cut him to pieces:" but Abu Beker, who seems by his address on several occasions, to be the best qualified to succeed the Impostor, came in and demanded, "Do you worship Mahomet, or the God of Mahomet? If one worship the  
" God

“ God of Mahomet, he is immortal and lives for ever; but as for Mahomet, he is certainly dead.” And then cited several passages from the Alcoran, to prove that he must die as other men. Whereupon Omar and his party were satisfied, and believed their prophet was dead, not to come to life again till the general resurrection.

No sooner was this dispute ended, but another arose about the place of his burial; for those who fled with him from Mecca, insisted that he should be buried there; and those of Medina, being desirous of having him interred in their city, where he had ended his days; and a third party pleaded, that he ought to be carried to Jerusalem, and to be buried amongst the prophets: but in this particular also, they were governed by Abu Beker, who told them, that he had often heard Mahomet himself say, “ That a prophet should be buried in the place where he died;” and thereupon commanded a grave to be dug directly under his bed, where he was interred by the consent of all present, and not suspended in the air in an iron coffin by means of loadstones, as has been fabulously reported. A little chapel or tower, covered with a cupula has since been built round his tomb, which stands at one of the corners of the chief mosque of Medina, founded by Mahomet himself, as before related; and hither the pilgrims frequently resort out of devotion, on their return from Mecca, tho’ they are under no obligation to do this from any command of the Mahometan law.

Mahomet was just sixty-three years old on the day he died, and the three and twentieth year of his pretended apostleship: he had spent thirteen at Mecca, and the last ten at Medina, in which  
time



time he laid the foundation of one of the greatest revolutions that ever happened in the world; for within the compass of eighty years his successors extended their dominion over more kingdoms than the Romans did in eight hundred; and tho' their empire did not continue in its grandeur much above three hundred years, yet out of it has arisen several others, kingdoms and empires, some of them the most potent in the world, as those of Turkey, Persia, and the Great Mogul, &c.

This pretended prophet, is said to have been of a good stature and comely aspect, and affected much to be thought to resemble the patriarch Abraham. And though it be granted that he was illiterate, it is certain he had extraordinary natural abilities, and well knew how to apply himself to the passions and affections of weak men, and make every accident subservient to his own designs. His two predominate passions were lust and ambition. The course he took to establish himself an empire, abundantly shews the latter, and the multitude of women he had to do with, sufficiently declares the former. And indeed a tincture of these runs through the whole frame of his religion, there being scarce a chapter in the Alcoran which does not lay down some law of war and bloodshed, or else give some liberty for the use of women here, or some promise for the enjoyment of them hereafter.

While his first wife lived, it does not appear that he took any other: but tho' he was fifty years of age when she died, he afterwards multiplied wives and concubines apace: those that say he had the fewest allotting him fifteen wives, and others reckoning up twenty-one, of which five died before him, six he divorced, and ten were alive at his death.

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One of his wives he took from one of his slaves, to whom she had been married before, which giving great offence to his disciples, who looked upon it as a scandalous action, he upon this composed the 33d chapter of the Alcoran, where he introduces God's approving his conduct in this affair, and hence this wife took occasion to boast, that his other wives were only given him by their relations, but she was married to him by God himself, who lives above the seven heavens.

Besides his wives, Mahomet had an Egyptian concubine in his old age, of whom he was extremely fond. This girl had been sent to him out of Egypt as a present, when she was about fifteen years of age, and he was soon captivated with her beauty; but how privately soever he managed his amours for fear of his wives, they were too cunning for him, and caught him in bed with this young Egyptian. Hereupon they reproached him bitterly, that so holy a man as he was, a prophet sent from God to teach men righteousness, should prove false to their bed, and pursue his inordinate lusts in his advanced age; at which being quite confounded, he promised with an oath, that if they would conceal the matter, he would never be guilty of the like crime for the future: but the violence of his flame soon led him into the same transgression, and he was again discovered in the fact by his jealous wives, who flew into a desperate rage, and loaded him with heavier reproaches than before: whereupon he was obliged to have recourse to his usual artifice, pretending a new revelation to justify him in this particular, which may be found in the sixty-sixth chapter of his Alcoran, where he introduces God giving permission to him and his followers to lie with their female slaves

slaves. This liberty, no doubt, gave great satisfaction to his disciples, and is to this day universally made use of in all the Mahometan countries.

Mahomet was excessively jealous of his wives, and accordingly, to deter them from a crime he feared they would commit, he threatens them with double the punishment of other wives, both here and hereafter, if they proved false to his bed. He required them likewise, to remain in a state of widowhood after his death, and prohibited his followers to marry them.

In fine, it is justly observed, that whatever Mahomet proposed to do, he always brought in heaven approving it, and framed some chapter of his Alcoran to countenance his design. If any objection against him or his religion were to be answered, any doubt to be solved, any discontent among his people to be quieted, any scandal to be removed, or whatever else was to be done for the interest and promotion of his imposture, his constant recourse was to the angel Gabriel for a new revelation.

Having now done with the history of this famous Impostor, shall now give a short sketch of the Mahometan religion, which may be summed up in a very narrow compass, for in general they make but two articles of faith, and five of practice. The first article of their creed is "That there is no other God but God;" which grand maxim of their-theology seems to have been taken from the Jews, who were often rehearsing these words, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord," Deut. vi. 14. They not only insist on the unity of divine nature, in opposition to those that  
 worship



worship a plurality of gods, but there is only one person in the divine Trinity; and account all such as own any thing of number in the Divinity, to be infidels and idolaters.

The second article of the Mahometan faith is this, "That Mahomet was the messenger of God." Hereby they intend to exclude all other religions, under pretence that their prophet was the last and greatest of all the prophets that God ever sent into the world; and, would have it believed, that as the Jewish religion ceased on the coming of the Messiah, so likewise the Christian religion was abrogated by the coming of Mahomet: Not but they acknowledge Moses and Jesus Christ to have been great prophets; but Mahomet, they hold to be "the prophet," by way of excellence, and the Comforter promised in the scripture, John xvi. 7. Nay, they assert, that the very name of Mahomet, both here and in other places of the gospel, was expressly mentioned; but that the Christians, out of prejudice, have erased it, and corrupted the sacred writings.

As the practical part of the Mahometan religion is chiefly comprehended in the five following precepts: 1. That they observe their corporeal purifications. 2. That they pray to God at the appointed times. 3. That they give alms to the poor. 4. That they fast during the month of Ramazen. 5. That they go in pilgrimage to the temple of Mecca, if they are able. To these may be added some other articles, which are not esteemed absolutely necessary to salvation: As that of circumcision: Of keeping friday a sabbath: Of drinking no wine: And of eating no swines flesh, no things strangled.



of the service seem in the least to abate their zeal and devotion.

The next indispenfible duty of the Mahometans, and without which even their prayers are held to be vain and ineffectual, is that of alms giving; but their doctors are not agreed by what rules every one ought to measure their charity. Some think a man is obliged to give annually a tenth part of his substance to the poor; others say that a fortieth, and some that a hundredth is sufficient. The truth is, they are commanded to give different proportions of different sorts of goods, and are also advised to regard no limits in their liberality to the necessitous. Hence it comes to pass, that many give a fourth of what they are worth, others a third, and some give half of their estates once in their lifetime; nay, there have been instances of men who have given all their fortunes to the poor, and lived ever after upon alms themselves. There is no people in the world among whom poverty is so honourable as among the Mahometans, who say of a person that makes a voluntary profession of it, "That as he possesses nothing, so he is possessed by nothing;" by which they mean to suggest, that in the midst of his poverty, he is master of himself and of the world, on account of that freedom from carnal desires which they suppose he enjoys, whilst the rest of mankind are slaves to their passions and insatiable appetites.

The Mahometans look upon circumcision rather as a mark of obedience to their religion, than an essential law, and that it is not absolutely necessary to salvation, though the omission is generally esteemed sinful, and believe that children may be saved without it.

The Mahometans regard Friday above othe days of the week, and regularly attend their places of public worship at noon, and some of them will do no business all that day; because they believe it was on Friday th. Mahomet, being persecuted by the idolatrous inhabitants of Mecca, was forced to fly for safety from that city to Medina.

Tho' the Mahometans be prohibited the use of wine, yet many of them do not look upon it as absolutely forbidden; and even those who do, cannot help confessing it is an excellent liquor, and that the temptation is so inviting, that the sin of drinking it is very excusable. When a Mahometan has tasted the least drop of wine, he thinks the crime will be no greater if he drinks a gallon; and therefore if they once begin, they swallow it down so plentifully, that they are usually intoxicated before they desist; and tho' some of them abstain from wine all their lifetime, yet the generality of them make no great scruple of drinking it in private.

With respect to swines flesh, and things strangled, there is a great number of the Mahometans have them in abhorrence, insomuch that they imagine themselves polluted even by an accidental touch of them, and are forced to have recourse to their oblations to wash away the defilement; but there are others of them, that look upon the eating or touching of swines flesh or things strangled, as not absolutely prohibited; but there are such a variety of sects among them, and some of them differing so very widely one from another, to give any particular account of them, would be almost impossible, so we shall here put an end to the history of that grand Impator and his followers.

The Mahometans believe, "That what defiles the body is capable also of defiling the soul: and that which purifies the one, will in like manner purify the other." For this reason, they lay great stress upon keeping their bodies clean and unpoiluted, and accordingly observe their washings or oblations with the greatest exactness. They scarce perform any act of devotion without washing: their prayers are vain and criminal that are offered up with unwashed hands; and it is the highest profanation to touch the Alcoran in such a state of uncleanness.

When the Mahometans go to ease nature, they always furnish themselves with two cloths which they hang at their girdle, or carry across their arm, as a butler does his napkin; and they also take a pot of water in their hand, or else it is constantly provided in the privy, into which they dip their fingers, and therewith cleanse all those parts through which nature discharges herself; for they are not allowed to use paper for this purpose, or any thing that may be written upon; but more especially written paper, lest their should be any thing sacred, as the name of God or some scrap of the Alcoran upon it: neither are they to use the right hand in these offices. After the business is over, they are obliged to wash and scour their hands, for which we may suppose there is sufficient occasion; and so scrupulous are they about this ceremony, that if they happen to break wind, they think the oblation is annulled, and they are forced to begin anew. It may be presumed, that it is a terrible misfortune for a Mahometan to have looseness, for in that case, this purification which must be perpetually repeated, becomes an excessive burden.

The Mahometans perform their prayers five times in twenty-four hours; the first time is between day-break and sun-rising; the second at noon; the third at the middle hour between noon and sun-set; the fourth at sun-set, and the fifth about an hour and a half after the sun is down. The Mahometans lay a very great stress on the duty of prayer, terming it the "Key of paradise," and the "support of religion," and though they are not absolutely obliged to repair to the mosques yet nothing but sickness can excuse them from offering up their devotions at the appointed times, whether they be at home or abroad. When they are upon a journey, and judge it to be about the hour of prayer, they stop and make the preparatory oblation if water can be had; and then spreading a little carpet upon the ground, which they always carry along with them for that purpose, they repeat the same prayers and make the same bowings and prostrations, as if they had been present in their temples: and this they also perform in the streets, and places of the greatest concourse; which must be allowed to carry with it an air of hypocrisy, notwithstanding all their seeming fervency and attention.

But upon the whole, it must be acknowledged that the greatest reverence and attention of the Mahometans in their addresses to heaven, is what many Christians might blush to observe. No accident or object disturbs or diverts them from the duty they are engaged in, their eyes remain fixed, and their gestures are most of them just and suitable to the occasion. Their voices are agreeably varied according to the subject they are upon, whether prayers or praises; nor does the frequency