**Mohammed and Mohammedanism**

**The founder**

Mohammed, "the Praised One", the [prophet](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm) of [Islam](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08190a.htm) and the founder of Mohammedanism, was born at [Mecca](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10099a.htm) (20 August?) A.D. 570.

[Arabia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm) was then torn by [warring](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15546c.htm) factions. The tribe of Fihr, or Quarish, to which Mohammed belonged, had established itself in the south of Hijas (Hedjaz), near [Mecca](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10099a.htm), which was, even then, the principal religious and commercial centre of [Arabia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm). The power of the tribe was continually increasing; they had become the masters and the acknowledged guardians of the sacred Kaaba, within the town of [Mecca](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10099a.htm) — then visited in annual [pilgrimage](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12085a.htm) by the [heathen](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11388a.htm) [Arabs](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm) with their offerings and tributes — and had thereby gained such preeminence that it was comparatively easy for Mohammed to inaugurate his religious reform and his political campaign, which ended with the conquest of all [Arabia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm) and the fusion of the numerous [Arab](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm) tribes into one nation, with one religion, one code, and one sanctuary. (See [ARABIA](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm), *Christianity in Arabia*.)

Mohammed's father was Abdallah, of the [family](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05782a.htm) of Hashim, who died soon after his son's birth. At the age of six the boy lost his mother and was thereafter taken care of by his uncle Abu-Talib. He spent his early life as a shepherd and an attendant of caravans, and at the age of twenty-five married a rich [widow](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15617c.htm), Khadeejah, fifteen years his senior. She bore him six children, all of whom died very young except Fatima, his beloved daughter.

On his commercial journeys to [Syria](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14399a.htm) and Palestine he became acquainted with [Jews](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08399a.htm) and [Christians](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm), and acquired an imperfect knowledge of their religion and traditions. He was a man of retiring disposition, addicted to [prayer](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm) and [fasting](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05789c.htm), and was subject to epileptic fits. In his fortieth year (A.D. 612), he claimed to have received a call from the [Angel Gabriel](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06330a.htm), and thus began his active career as the [prophet](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm) of [Allah](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01316a.htm) and the [apostle](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01626c.htm) of [Arabia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm). His [converts](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04347a.htm) were about forty in all, including his wife, his daughter, his father-in-law Abu Bakr, his adopted son Ali Omar, and his [slave](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14036a.htm) Zayd. By his preaching and his attack on [heathenism](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11388a.htm), Mohammed provoked [persecution](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11703a.htm) which drove him from [Mecca](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10099a.htm) to Medina in 622, the year of the Hejira (Flight) and the beginning of the Mohammedan Era. At Medina he was recognized as the [prophet](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm) of [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), and his followers increased. He took the field against his enemies, conquered several [Arabian](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm), [Jewish](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08399a.htm), and [Christian](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm) tribes, entered [Mecca](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10099a.htm) in triumph in 630, demolished the [idols](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07636a.htm) of the Kaaba, became master of [Arabia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm), and finally united all the tribes under one emblem and one religion. In 632 he made his last pilgrimage to [Mecca](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10099a.htm) at the head of forty thousand followers, and soon after his return died of a [violent](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15446a.htm) fever in the sixty-third year of his age, the eleventh of the Hejira, and the year 633 of the [Christian](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm) era.

The sources of Mohammed's biography are numerous, but on the whole untrustworthy, being crowded with fictitious details, legends, and stories. None of his biographies were compiled during his lifetime, and the earliest was written a century and a half after his death. The [Koran](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm) is perhaps the only reliable source for the leading events in his career. His earliest and chief biographers are Ibn Ishaq (A.H. 151=A.D. 768), Wakidi (207=822), Ibn Hisham (213=828), Ibn Sa'd (230=845), Tirmidhi (279=892), Tabari (310-929), the "Lives of the Companions of Mohammed", the numerous [Koranic](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm) commentators [especially Tabari, quoted above, Zamakhshari 538=1144), and Baidawi (691=1292)], the "Musnad", or collection of traditions of Ahmad ibn Hanbal (241=855), the collections of Bokhari (256=870), the "Isabah", or "Dictionary of Persons who knew Mohammed", by Ibn Hajar, etc. All these collections and biographies are based on the so-called Hadiths, or "traditions", the historical value of which is more than [doubtful](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05141a.htm).

These traditions, in fact, represent a gradual, and more or less artificial, legendary development, rather than supplementary historical information. According to them, Mohammed was simple in his habits, but most careful of his personal appearance. He loved perfumes and [hated](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07149b.htm) strong drink. Of a highly nervous temperament, he shrank from bodily pain. Though gifted with great powers of [imagination](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07672a.htm), he was taciturn. He was affectionate and magnanimous, [pious](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12748a.htm) and austere in the practice of his religion, brave, [zealous](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15753a.htm), and above reproach in his personal and [family](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05782a.htm) conduct. Palgrave, however, wisely remarks that "the ideals of Arab virtue were first conceived and then attributed to him". Nevertheless, with every allowance for exaggeration, Mohammed is shown by his life and deeds to have been a man of dauntless [courage](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06147a.htm), great generalship, strong [patriotism](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03794b.htm), merciful by nature, and quick to forgive. And yet he was ruthless in his dealings with the [Jews](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08399a.htm), when once he had ceased to hope for their submission. He approved of [assassination](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15108a.htm), when it furthered his cause; however barbarous or treacherous the means, the end justified it in his eyes; and in more than one case he not only approved, but also instigated the crime.

Concerning his [moral](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10559a.htm) [character](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03584b.htm) and sincerity, contradictory opinions have been expressed by scholars in the last three centuries. Many of these opinions are biased either by an extreme [hatred](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07149b.htm) of Islam and its founder or by an exaggerated admiration, coupled with a [hatred](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07149b.htm) of [Christianity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm).

[Luther](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09438b.htm) looked upon him as "a [devil](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04764a.htm) and [first-born](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06081a.htm) child of [Satan](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04764a.htm)". Maracci held that Mohammed and Mohammedanism were not very dissimilar to [Luther](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09438b.htm) and [Protestantism](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12495a.htm). Spanheim and D'Herbelot characterize him as a "wicked [impostor](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07698b.htm)", and a "dastardly [liar](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09469a.htm)", while Prideaux stamps him as a willful deceiver. Such indiscriminate abuse is unsupported by facts.

Modern scholars, such as Sprenger, Noldeke, Weil, Muir, Koelle, Grimme, Margoliouth, give us a more correct and unbiased estimate of Mohammed's life and [character](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03584b.htm), and substantially agree as to his motives, prophetic call, personal qualifications, and sincerity. The various estimates of several recent critics have been ably collected and summarized by Zwemer, in his "Islam, a Challenge to Faith" (New York, 1907). According to Sir William Muir, Marcus Dods, and some others, Mohammed was at first sincere, but later, carried away by success, he practiced [deception](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09469a.htm) wherever it would gain his end. Koelle "finds the key to the first period of Mohammed's life in Khadija, his first wife", after whose death he became a prey to his [evil](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm) [passions](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11534a.htm). Sprenger attributes the alleged [revelations](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13005a.htm) to epileptic fits, or to "a paroxysm of cataleptic [insanity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08041a.htm)".

Zwemer himself goes on to criticize the life of Mohammed by the standards, first, of the [Old](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14526a.htm) and [New Testaments](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14530a.htm), both of which Mohammed acknowledged as [Divine revelation](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13001a.htm); second, by the [pagan](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11388a.htm) [morality](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10559a.htm) of his [Arabian](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm) compatriots; lastly, by the new law of which he pretended to be the "divinely appointed medium and custodian". According to this author, the [prophet](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm) was [false](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05781a.htm) even to the [ethical](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05556a.htm) traditions of the [idolatrous](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07636a.htm) brigands among whom he lived, and grossly violated the easy sexual [morality](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10559a.htm) of his own system. After this, it is hardly [necessary](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm) to say that, in Zwemer's opinion, Mohammed fell very far short of the most elementary requirements of [Scriptural](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13635b.htm) [morality](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10559a.htm). Quoting Johnstone, Zwemer concludes by remarking that the judgment of these modern scholars, however harsh, rests on evidence which "comes all from the lips and the pens of his own devoted adherents. . .And the followers of the [prophet](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm) can scarcely complain if, even on such evidence, the verdict of history goes against him".

**The system**

***Geographical extent, divisions, and distribution of Mohammedans***

After Mohammed's death Mohammedanism aspired to become a world power and a universal religion. The weakness of the Byzantine, the unfortunate rivalry between the [Greek](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06752a.htm) and [Latin](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09022a.htm) [Churches](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm), the [schisms](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13529a.htm) of [Nestorius](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10755a.htm) and [Eutyches](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05631a.htm), the failing power of the Sassanian dynasty of [Persia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11712a.htm), the lax [moral](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10559a.htm) code of the new religion, the power of the sword and of fanaticism, the hope of plunder and the love of conquest — all these factors combined with the genius of the caliphs, the successors of Mohammed, to effect the conquest, in considerably less than a century, of Palestine, [Syria](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14399a.htm), Mesopotamia, [Egypt](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05329b.htm), North [Africa](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01181a.htm), and the South of [Spain](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14169b.htm). The Moslems even crossed the Pyrenees, threatening to stable their horses in [St. Peter's](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13369b.htm) at [Rome](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13164a.htm), but were at last defeated by [Charles Martel](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03629a.htm) at [Tours](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15002a.htm), in 732, just one hundred years from the death of Mohammed. This defeat arrested their western conquests and saved [Europe](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05607b.htm).

In the eighth and ninth centuries they conquered [Persia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11712a.htm), Afghanistan, and a large part of [India](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07722a.htm), and in the twelfth century they had already become the absolute masters of all Western [Asia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01777b.htm), [Spain](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14169b.htm) and North [Africa](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01181a.htm), [Sicily](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13772a.htm), etc. They were finally conquered by the Mongols and [Turks](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15097a.htm), in the thirteenth century, but the new conquerors adopted Mohammed's religion and, in the fifteenth century, overthrew the tottering [Byzantine Empire](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03096a.htm) (1453). From that stronghold (Constantinople) they even threatened the German, but were successfully defeated at the gates of [Vienna](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15417a.htm), and driven back across the Danube, in 1683.

Mohammedanism now comprises various [theological](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14580x.htm) schools and political factions. The Orthodox (Sunni) uphold the legitimacy of the succession of the first three caliphs, Abu Bakr, Omar, and Uthman, while the Schismatics (Shiah) champion the Divine [right](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13055c.htm) of Ali as against the successions of these caliphs whom they call "usurpers", and whose names, [tombs](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14773b.htm), and memorials they insult and detest. The Shiah number at present about twelve million adherents, or about one-twentieth of the whole Mohammedan world, and are scattered over [Persia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11712a.htm) and [India](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07722a.htm). The Sunni are subdivided into four principal [theological](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14580x.htm) schools, or [sects](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13674a.htm), viz., the Hanifites, found mostly in [Turkey](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15097a.htm), Central [Asia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01777b.htm), and Northern [India](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07722a.htm); the Shafites in Southern [India](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07722a.htm) and [Egypt](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05329b.htm); the Malikites, in Morocco, Barbary, and parts of [Arabia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm); and the Hanbalites in Central and Eastern [Arabia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm) and in some parts of [Africa](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01181a.htm). The Shiah are also subdivided into various, but less important, [sects](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13674a.htm). Of the proverbial seventy-three [sects](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13674a.htm) of Islam, thirty-two are assigned to the Shiah. The principal differences between the two are:

* as to the legitimate successors of Mohammed;
* the Shiah observe the [ceremonies](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03538b.htm) of the month of [fasting](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05789c.htm), Muharram, in commemoration of Ali, Hasan, Husain, and Bibi Fatimah, whilst the Sunnites only regard the tenth day of that month as sacred, and as being the day on which [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) created Adam and [Eve](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05646b.htm);
* the Shiah permit temporary [marriages](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09707a.htm), contracted for a certain sum of money, whilst the Sunnites maintain that Mohammed forbade them;
* the Shi'ites include the [Fire-Worshippers](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02151b.htm) among the "People of the Book", whilst the Sunnites acknowledge only Jews, Christians, and Moslems as such;
* several minor differences in the [ceremonies](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03538b.htm) of [prayer](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm) and ablution;
* the Shiah admit a principle of religious compromise in order to escape [persecution](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11703a.htm) and death, whilst the Sunni regard this as apostasy.

There are also minor [sects](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13674a.htm), the principal of which are the Aliites, or Fatimites, the Asharians, Azaragites, Babakites, Babbis, Idrisites, Ismailians and Assassins, Jabrians, Kaissanites, Karmathians, Kharjites, followers of the Mahdi, Mu'tazilites, Qadrains, Safrians, Sifatians, Sufis, Wahabis, and Zaidites. The distinctive features of these various [sects](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13674a.htm) are political as well as religious; only three or four of them now possess any influence.

In spite of these divisions, however, the principal articles of [faith](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm) and [morality](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10559a.htm), and the [ritual](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09306a.htm), are substantially uniform.

According to the latest and most reliable accounts (1907), the number of Mohammedans in the world is about 233 millions, although some estimate the number as high as 300 millions, others, again, as low as 175 millions. Nearly 60 millions are in [Africa](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01181a.htm), 170 millions in [Asia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01777b.htm), and about 5 millions in [Europe](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05607b.htm). Their total number amounts to about one-fourth of the population of [Asia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01777b.htm), and one-seventh that of the whole world. Their [geographical](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06447a.htm) distribution is as follows:

*Asia*

[India](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07722a.htm), 62 millions; other British possessions (such as [Aden](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01141d.htm), Bahrein, [Ceylon](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03547c.htm), and [Cyprus](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04589a.htm)), about one million and a half; [Russia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13231c.htm)(Asiatic and [European](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05607b.htm)), the Caucasus, Russian [Turkestan](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15095a.htm), and the Amur region, about 13 millions; [Philippine Islands](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12010a.htm), 350,000;[Dutch](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10759a.htm) East Indies (including Java, [Sumatra](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14333b.htm), [Borneo](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02687a.htm), Celebes, etc.) about 30 millions; French possessions in [Asia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01777b.htm) ([Pondicherry](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12228c.htm), Annam, Cambodia, Cochin-China, Tonking, [Laos](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08794b.htm)), about one million and a half; Bokhara, 1,200,000; Khiva, 800,000; [Persia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11712a.htm), 8,800,000; Afghanistan, 4,000,000; [China](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03663b.htm) and [Chinese](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03663b.htm) [Turkestan](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15095a.htm), 30,000,000; [Japan](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08297a.htm) and Formosa, 30,000; [Korea](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04361b.htm), 10,000; [Siam](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13765a.htm), 1,000,000; [Asia Minor](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01782a.htm); [Armenia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01736b.htm) and Kurdistan, 1,795,000; Mesopotamia, 1,200,000; [Syria](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14399a.htm), 1,100,000; [Arabia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm), 4,500,000. Total, 170,000,000.

*Africa*

[Egypt](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05329b.htm), 9,000,000; Tripoli, 1,250,000; [Tunis](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15088a.htm), 1,700,000; Algeria, 4,000,000; [Morocco](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10574a.htm), 5,600,000; Eritrea, 150,000; Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1,000,000; Senegambia-Niger, 18,000,000; [Abyssinia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02032c.htm), 350,000; [Kamerun](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08596a.htm), 2,000,000; [Nigeria](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11073c.htm), 6,000,000; [Dahomey](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04603b.htm), 350,000; Ivory Coast, 800,000; [Liberia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09216a.htm), 600,000; [Sierra Leone](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13783a.htm), 333,000; French Guinea, 1,500,000; French, British, and Italian Somaliland, British East African Protectorate, Uganda, Togoland, Gambia and Senegal, about 2,000,000; [Zanzibar](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15750c.htm), German East Africa, [Portuguese East Africa](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12311a.htm), [Rhodesia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13025a.htm), [Congo Free State](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04228a.htm), and French [Congo](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04228a.htm), about 4,000,000; South Africa and adjacent island, about 235,000.-Approximate total, 60,000,000.

[*Europe*](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05607b.htm)

[Turkey](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15097a.htm) in [Europe](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05607b.htm), 2,100,000; [Greece](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06735a.htm), [Servia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13732a.htm), [Rumania](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13224b.htm), and [Bulgaria](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03046a.htm), about 1,369,000. Total, about 3,500,000.

*America and Australia*

About 70,000.

About 7,000,000 (i.e., four-fifths) of the [Persian](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11712a.htm) Mohammedans and about 5,000,000 of the Indian Mohammedans are Shiahs; the rest of the Mohammedan world — about 221,000,000 — are almost all Sunnites.

***Tenets***

The principal tents of Mohammedanism are laid down in the [Koran](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm). As aids in interpreting the religious system of the [Koran](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm) we have: *first*, the so-called "Traditions", which are supposed to contain supplementary teachings and doctrine of Mohammed, a very considerable part of which, however, is decidedly spurious; *second*, the consensus of the [doctors](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05072b.htm) of Islam represented by the most celebrated imâms, the founders of the various Islamic [sects](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13674a.htm), the [Koranic](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm) commentators and the masters of Mohammedans [jurisprudence](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09053a.htm); *third*, the [analogy](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01449a.htm), or [deduction](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04674a.htm) from recognized principles admitted in the [Koran](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm) and in the Traditions. Mohammed's religion, known among its adherents as Islam, contains practically nothing original; it is a confused combination of native [Arabian](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm) [heathenism](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11388a.htm), [Judaism](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08537a.htm), [Christianity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm), [Sabiism (Mandoeanism)](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10705a.htm), Hanifism, and [Zoroastrianism](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02151b.htm).

The system may be divided into two parts: [dogma](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05089a.htm), or theory; and [morals](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10559a.htm), or practice. The whole fabric is built on five fundamental points, one belonging to [faith](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm), or theory, and the other four to [morals](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10559a.htm), or practice. All Mohammedan [dogma](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05089a.htm) is supposed to be expressed in the one formula: "there is no [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) but the [true God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm); and Mohammed is His [prophet](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm)." But this one confession implies for Mohammedans six distinct articles:

* [belief](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm) in the [unity of God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10499a.htm);
* in His [angels](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm);
* in His [Scripture](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13635b.htm);
* in His [prophets](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm);
* in the [Resurrection](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12792a.htm) and [Day of Judgment](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08552a.htm); and
* in [God's](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) absolute and irrevocable decree and [predetermination](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05793a.htm) both of [good](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm) and of [evil](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm).

The four points relating to [morals](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10559a.htm), or practice, are:

* [prayer](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm), ablutions, and purifications;
* [alms](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01328f.htm):
* [fasting](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05789c.htm); and
* [pilgrimage](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12085a.htm) to [Mecca](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10099a.htm).

*(1) Dogma*

The doctrines of Islam concerning [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) — His [unity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10499a.htm) and [Divine attributes](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02062e.htm) — are essentially those of the [Bible](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02543a.htm); but to the doctrines of the [Trinity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15047a.htm) and of the [Divine Sonship](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14142b.htm) of [Christ](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08374c.htm) Mohammed had the strongest antipathy. As Noldeke remarks, Mohammed's acquaintance with those two [dogmas](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05089a.htm) was superficial; even the clauses of the [Creed](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04478a.htm) that referred to them were not properly known to him, and thus he felt that it was quite impossible to bring them into harmony with the simple [Semitic](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13706a.htm) [Monotheism](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10499a.htm); probably, too, it was this consideration alone that hindered him from embracing [Christianity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm) (*Sketches from Eastern History*, 62).

The number of [prophets](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm) sent by [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) is said to have been about 124,000, and of [apostles](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01626c.htm), 315. Of the former, 22 are mentioned by name in the [Koran](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm) — such as [Adam](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01129a.htm), [Noah](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11088a.htm), [Abraham](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01051a.htm), [Moses](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10596a.htm), [Jesus](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08374c.htm).

According to the Sunni, the [Prophets](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm) and [Apostles](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01626c.htm) were sinless and superior to the [angels](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm), and they had the power of performing miracles. Mohammedan angelology and [demonology](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04713a.htm) are almost wholly based on later [Jewish](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08399a.htm) and early [Christian](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm) traditions. The angels are [believed](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm) to be free from all [sin](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14004b.htm); they neither eat nor drink; there is no distinction of sex among them. They are, as a rule, invisible, save to animals, although, at times, they appear in [human](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm) [form](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06137b.htm). The principal [angels](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm) are: [Gabriel](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06330a.htm), the guardian and communicator of [God's revelation](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13001a.htm) to [man](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm); [Michael](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10275b.htm), the guardian of [men](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm); Azrail, the [angel](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm) of death, whose [duty](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05215a.htm) is to receive men’s souls when they die; and Israfil, the [angel](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm) of the [Resurrection](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12792a.htm).

In addition to these there are the [Seraphim](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13725b.htm), who surround the throne of [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), constantly [chanting](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09304a.htm) His praises; the Secretaries, who record the actions of [men](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm); the Observers, who spy on every word and deed of [mankind](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm); the Travelers, whose [duty](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05215a.htm) it is to traverse the whole earth in order to [know](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm) whether, and when, [men](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm) utter the name of [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm); the [Angels](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm) of the Seven Planets; the Angels who have charge of [hell](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07207a.htm); and a countless multitude of [heavenly](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07170a.htm) beings who fill all [space](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14167a.htm). The chief [devil](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04764a.htm) is Iblis, who, like his numerous companions, was once the nearest to [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), but was cast out for refusing to pay homage to [Adam](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01129a.htm) at the command of God. These [devils](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04764a.htm) are harmful both to the [souls](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14153a.htm) and to the bodies of [men](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm), although their [evil](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm) influence is constantly checked by Divine interference.

Besides [angels](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm) and [devils](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04764a.htm), there are also jinns, or genii, creatures of fire, able to eat, drink, propagate, and die; some [good](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm), others [bad](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm), but all capable of future [salvation](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13407a.htm) and damnation.

[God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) rewards [good](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm) and punishes [evil deeds](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14004b.htm). He is merciful and is easily propitiated by [repentance](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11618b.htm). The punishment of the impenitent wicked will be fearful, and the reward of the faithful great. All [men](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm) will have to [rise from the dead](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12792a.htm) and submit to the universal. The Day of [Resurrection](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12792a.htm) and of [Judgment](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08552a.htm) will be preceded and accompanied by seventeen fearful, or greater, signs in [heaven](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07170a.htm) and on earth, and eight lesser ones, some of which are identical with those mentioned in the [New Testament](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14530a.htm). The Resurrection will be general and will extend to all creatures — [angels](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm), jinns, [men](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm), and brutes. The torments of [hell](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07207a.htm) and the pleasures of [Paradise](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07170a.htm), but especially the latter, are proverbially crass and sensual. [Hell](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07207a.htm) is divided into seven regions: Jahannam, reserved for faithless Mohammedans; Laza, for the [Jews](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08399a.htm); Al-Hutama, for the [Christians](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm); Al-Sair, for the [Sabians](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10705a.htm); Al-Saqar, for the Magians; Al-Jahim, for [idolaters](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07636a.htm); Al-Hawiyat, for [hypocrites](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07610a.htm). As to the torments of [hell](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07207a.htm), it is [believed](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm) that the damned will dwell amid pestilential winds and in scalding water, and in the shadow of a black smoke. Draughts of boiling water will be forced down their throats. They will be dragged by the scalp, flung into the fire, wrapped in garments of flame, and beaten with iron maces. When their skins are well burned, other skins will be given them for their greater torture. While the damnation of all [infidels](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08002b.htm) will be hopeless and [eternal](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05551b.htm), the Moslems, who, though holding the [true](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) religion, have been guilty of heinous [sins](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14004b.htm), will be delivered from [hell](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07207a.htm) after expiating their crimes.

The joys and [glories](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm) of [Paradise](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07170a.htm) are as fantastic and sensual as the lascivious [Arabian](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm) [mind](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10321a.htm) could possibly imagine. "As plenty of water is one of the greatest additions to the delights of the Bedouin [Arab](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm), the [Koran](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm) often speaks of the rivers of [Paradise](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07170a.htm) as a principal ornament thereof; some of these streams flow with water, some with wine and others with honey, besides many other lesser springs and fountains, whose pebbles are rubies and emeralds, while their earth consists of camphor, their beds of musk, and their sides of saffron. But all these [glories](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm) will be eclipsed by the resplendent and ravishing girls, or *houris*, of [Paradise](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14519a.htm), the enjoyment of whose company will be the principal [felicity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07131b.htm) of the faithful. These maidens are [created](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04470a.htm) not of clay, as in the case of mortal [women](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm), but of pure musk, and free from all natural impurities, defects, and inconveniences. They will be beautiful and modest and secluded from public view in pavilions of hollow pearls. The pleasures of [Paradise](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14519a.htm) will be so overwhelming that God will give to everyone the potentialities of a hundred [individuals](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07762a.htm). To each [individuals](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07762a.htm) a large mansion will be assigned, and the very meanest will have at his disposal at least 80,000 servants and seventy-two wives of the girls of [Paradise](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07170a.htm). While eating they will be waited on by 300 attendants, the food being served in dishes of gold, whereof 300 shall be set before him at once, containing each a different kind of food, and an inexhaustible supply of wine and liquors. The magnificence of the garments and gems is conformable to the delicacy of their diet. For they will be clothed in the richest silks and brocades, and adorned with bracelets of gold and silver, and crowns set with pearls, and will make use of silken carpets, couches, pillows, etc., and in order that they may enjoy all these pleasures, [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) will grant them perpetual youth, beauty, and vigor. Music and singing will also be ravishing and everlasting" (Wollaston, "Muhammed, His Life and Doctrines").

The Mohammedan doctrine of [predestination](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12378a.htm) is equivalent to [fatalism](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05791a.htm). They [believe](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm) in [God's](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) absolute decree and predetermination both of [good](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm) and of [evil](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm); viz., whatever has been or shall be in the world, whether [good](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm) or [bad](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm), proceeds entirely from the Divine will, and is irrevocably fixed and recorded from all [eternity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05551b.htm). The possession and the exercise of our own [free will](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06259a.htm) is, accordingly, futile and useless. The absurdity of this doctrine was felt by later Mohammedan [theologians](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14580a.htm), who sought in vain by various subtle distinctions to minimize it.

*(2) Practice*

The five pillars of the practical and of the ritualistic side of Islam are the recital of the Creed and [prayers](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm), [fasting](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05789c.htm), [almsgiving](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01328f.htm), and the [pilgrimage](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12085a.htm) to [Mecca](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10099a.htm).

The formula of the Creed has been given above, and its recital is [necessary](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm) for [salvation](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13407a.htm).

The daily [prayers](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm) are five in number: before sunrise, at midday, at four in the afternoon, at sunset, and shortly before midnight. The forms of [prayer](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm) and the postures are prescribed in a very limited [Koranic](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm) [liturgy](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09306a.htm). All [prayers](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm) must be made looking towards Mecca, and must be preceded by washing, neglect of which renders the [prayers](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm) of no effect. Public [prayer](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm) is made on Friday in the mosque, and is led by an imâm. Only men attend the public [prayers](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm), as [women](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm) seldom [pray](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm) even at home. dead are [meritorious](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10202b.htm) and commended.

[Fasting](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05789c.htm) is commended at all seasons, but prescribed only in the month of Ramadan. It begins at sunrise and ends at sunset, and is very rigorous, especially when the [fasting](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05789c.htm) season falls in summer. At the end of Ramadan comes the great feast-day, generally called Bairam, or Fitr, i.e., "Breaking of the Fast". The other great festival is that of Azha, borrowed with modifications from the Jewish.

[Almsgiving](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01328f.htm)is highly commended: on the feast-day after Ramadan it is [obligatory](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11189a.htm), and is to be directed to the "faithful" (Mohammedans) only.

[Pilgrimage](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12085a.htm) to [Mecca](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10099a.htm) once in a lifetime is a [duty](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05215a.htm) incumbent on every free Moslem of sufficient means and bodily strength; the merit of it cannot be obtained by deputy, and the [ceremonies](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03538b.htm) are strictly similar to those performed by the [Prophet](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm) himself (*see* MECCA). [Pilgrimages](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12085a.htm) to the [tombs](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14773b.htm) of [saints](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04171a.htm) are very common nowadays, especially in [Persia](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11712a.htm) and [India](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07722a.htm), although they were absolutely forbidden by Mohammed.

***Morals***

It is hardly [necessary](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm) here to emphasize the fact that the [ethics](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05556a.htm) of Islam are far inferior to those of [Judaism](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08537a.htm) and even more inferior to those of the [New Testament](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14530a.htm). Furthermore, we cannot agree with Noldeke when he maintains that, although in many respects the [ethics](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05556a.htm) of Islam are not to be compared even with such [Christianity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm) as prevailed, and still prevails, in the East, nevertheless, in other points, the new [faith](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm) — simple, robust, in the vigor of its youth — far surpassed the religion of the Syrian and [Egyptian](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05329b.htm) [Christians](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm), which was in a stagnating condition, and steadily sinking lower and lower into the depths of barbarism (op. cit., Wollaston, 71, 72). The history and the development, as well as the past and present religious, social, and ethical condition of all the [Christian](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm) nations and countries, no matter of what [sect](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13674a.htm) or school they may be, as compared with these of the various Mohammedan countries, in all ages, is a sufficient refutation of Noldeke's assertion. That in the [ethics](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05556a.htm) of Islam there is a great deal to admire and to approve, is beyond dispute; but of originality or superiority, there is none. What is really [good](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm) in Mohammedan [ethics](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05556a.htm) is either commonplace or borrowed from some other [religions](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12738a.htm), whereas what is characteristic is nearly always imperfect or wicked.

The principal [sins](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14004b.htm) forbidden by Mohammed are [idolatry](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07636a.htm) and [apostasy](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01624b.htm), [adultery](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01163a.htm), [false witness](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09469a.htm) against a brother Moslem, [games of chance](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06375b.htm), the drinking of wine or other intoxicants, [usury](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15235c.htm), and [divination](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05048b.htm) by arrows. Brotherly [love](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09397a.htm) is confined in Islam to Mohammedans. Any form of [idolatry](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07636a.htm) or [apostasy](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01624b.htm) is severely punished in Islam, but the violation of any of the other ordinances is generally allowed to go unpunished, unless it seriously conflicts with the social welfare or the political order of the State. Among other prohibitions mention must be made of the eating of blood, of swine's flesh, of whatever dies of itself, or is slain in [honor](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07462a.htm) of any idol, or is strangled, or killed by a blow, or a fall, or by another beast. In case of dire [necessity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm), however, these restrictions may be dispensed with. [Infanticide](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08001b.htm), extensively practiced by the pre-Islamic [Arabs](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm), is strictly forbidden by Mohammed, as is also the [sacrificing](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13309a.htm) of children to [idols](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07636a.htm) in fulfilment of [vows](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15511a.htm), etc. The crime of [infanticide](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08001b.htm) commonly took the form of burying newborn females, lest the [parents](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11478c.htm) should be reduced to poverty by providing for them, or else that they might avoid the sorrow and disgrace which would follow, if their daughters should be made captives or become [scandalous](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13506d.htm) by their behavior.

Religion and the State are not separated in Islam. Hence Mohammedan [jurisprudence](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09053a.htm), civil and criminal, is mainly based on the Koran and on the "Traditions". Thousands of judicial decisions are attributed to Mohammed and incorporated in the various collections of Hadith. Mohammed commanded reverence and obedience to [parents](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11478c.htm), and kindness to wives and [slaves](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14036a.htm). [Slander](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14035b.htm) and backbiting are strongly denounced, although [false](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05781a.htm) evidence is allowed to hide a Moslem's crime and to save his [reputation](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12776c.htm) or [life](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09238c.htm).

As regards marriage, [polygamy](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02564a.htm), and [divorce](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05054c.htm), the [Koran](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm) explicitly (sura iv, v. 3) allows four lawful wives at a time, whom the husband may [divorce](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05054c.htm) whenever he pleases. Slave-mistresses and [concubines](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04207a.htm) are permitted in any number. At present, however, owing to [economic](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12213b.htm) reasons, [concubinage](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04207a.htm) is not as commonly practiced as Western popular opinion seems to hold. Seclusion of wives is commanded, and in case of [unfaithfulness](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01163a.htm), the wife's evidence, either in her own defense or against her husband, is not admitted, while that of the husband invariably is. In this, as in there judicial cases, the evidence of two [women](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm), if admitted, is sometimes allowed to be worth that of one [man](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm). The [man](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm) is allowed to [repudiate](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05054c.htm) his wife on the slightest pretext, but the woman is not permitted even to separate herself from her husband unless it be for ill-usage, want of proper maintenance, or neglect of conjugal [duty](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05215a.htm); and even then she generally loses her dowry, when she does not if [divorced](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05054c.htm) by her husband, unless she has been guilty of immodesty or [notorious](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11126b.htm) disobedience. Both husband and wife are explicitly forbidden by Mohammed to seek [divorce](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05054c.htm) on any slight occasion or the prompting of a whim, but this warning was not heeded either by Mohammed himself or by his followers. A [divorced](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05054c.htm) wife, in order to ascertain the paternity of a possible or probable offspring, must wait three months before she marries again. A [widow](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15617c.htm), on the other hand, must wait four months and ten days. Immorality in general is severely condemned and punished by the [Koran](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm), but the [moral](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10559a.htm) laxity and depraved sensualism of the Mohammedans at large have practically nullified its effects.

[Slavery](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14039a.htm) is not only tolerated in the [Koran](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm), but is looked upon as a practical [necessity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm), while the manumission of [slaves](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14036a.htm) is regarded as a [meritorious](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10202b.htm) deed. It must be observed, however, that among Mohammedans, the children of [slaves](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14036a.htm) and of [concubines](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04207a.htm) are generally considered equally legitimate with those of legal wives, none being accounted bastards except such as are born of public prostitutes, and whose fathers are unknown. The accusation often brought against the [Koran](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm) that it teaches that [women](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm) have no souls is without foundation. The [Koranic](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm) [law](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09053a.htm) concerning inheritance insists that [women](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm) and [orphans](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11322b.htm) be treated with [justice](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08571c.htm) and kindness. Generally speaking, however, males are entitled to twice as much as [females](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm). Contracts are to be conscientiously drawn up in the presence of [witnesses](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15677a.htm). [Murder](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07441a.htm), manslaughter, and [suicide](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14326b.htm) are explicitly forbidden, although blood revenge is allowed. In case of personal injury, the [law](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09053a.htm) of retaliation is approved.

In conclusion, reference must be made here to the sacred months, and to the weekly holy day. The [Arabs](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm) had a year of twelve lunar months, and this, as often as seemed [necessary](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm), they brought roughly into accordance with the solar year by the intercalation of a thirteenth month. The Mohammedan year, however, has a mean duration of 354 days, and is ten or eleven days shorter than the solar year, and Mohammedan festivals, accordingly, move in succession through all the seasons.

The Mohammedan Era begins with the Hegira, which is assumed to have taken place on the 16th day of July, A.D. 622. To find what year of the [Christian Era](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04636c.htm) (A.D.) is represented by a given year of the Mohammedan Era (A.H.), the rule is: Subtract from the Mohammedan [date](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04636c.htm) the product of three times the last completed number of centuries, and add 621 to the remainder. (This rule, however, gives an exact result only for the first day of a Mohammedan century. Thus, e.g., the first day of the fourteenth century came in the course of the year of Our Lord 1883.) The first, seven, eleventh and twelfth months of the Mohammedan year are sacred; during these months it is not lawful to wage [war](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15546c.htm). The twelfth month is [consecrated](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04276a.htm) to the annual [pilgrimage](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12085a.htm) to [Mecca](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10099a.htm), and, in order to protect [pilgrims](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12085a.htm), the preceding (eleventh) month and the following (first of the new year) are also inviolable. The seventh month is reserved for the [fast](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05789c.htm) which Mohammed substituted for a month (the ninth) devoted by the [Arabs](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm) in pre-Islamic times to excessive eating and drinking. Mohammed selected Friday as the sacred day of the week, and several fanciful reasons are adduced by the Prophet himself and by his followers for the selection; the most probable motive was the desire to have a holy day different from that of the [Jews](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08399a.htm) and that of the [Christians](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm). It is [certain](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03539b.htm), however, that Friday was a day of solemn gatherings and public festivities among the pre-Islamic [Arabs](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01663a.htm). Abstinence from work is not enjoined on Friday, but it is commanded that public prayers and worship must be performed on that day. Another custom dating from antiquity and still universally observed by all Mohammedans, although not explicitly enjoined in the [Koran](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm), is [circumcision](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03777a.htm). It is looked upon as a semi-religious practice, and its performance is preceded and accompanied by great festivities.

In matters political Islam is a system of despotism at home and aggression abroad. The Prophet commanded absolute submission to the imâm. In no case was the sword to be raised against him. The [rights](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13055c.htm) of non-Moslem subjects are of the vaguest and most limited kind, and a religious [war](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15546c.htm) is a sacred [duty](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05215a.htm) whenever there is a chance of success against the "Infidel". [Medieval](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10285c.htm) and modern Mohammedan, especially [Turkish](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15097a.htm), [persecutions](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11703a.htm) of both [Jews](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08399a.htm) and [Christians](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm) are perhaps the best illustration of this fanatical religious and political spirit.