

### The Al Koran.

The word KORAN, derived from the verb KARA, *to read*, properly signifies *the reading, legend, or that which ought to be read*; by which name the Mohammedans denote not only the entire book or volume of the Koran, but also any particular chapter or section of it, just as the Jews, in their language, call the whole Scripture, or any part of it, by the name of *Karah*, or *Mikra*, words of precisely the same origin and import as Koran. This book must be regarded as the code of laws, religion, and morality, which Mohammed, in his character of legislator and prophet, promulgated to the people of Arabia. As it is therefore the only book of law among the Mussulmans, and comprehends also the religious doctrines which they are taught to believe, it follows, that with them a doctor in the law is also a doctor in theology, which two professions are wholly inseparable. This law, upon which is founded all their theology and jurisprudence, is comprised in the Koran, in the same manner as the civil code of the Jews is comprised in the five books of Moses.

The collection of moral traditions, composed of the sayings and actions of the prophet, and forming a kind of supplement to the Koran, the Moslems call the *Sonnah*; just as the Jews have denominated the book containing their oral traditions, the *Mishna*.

The entire Koran is divided into one hundred and fourteen portions, which are denominated *Suras*, or chapters; and these again into smaller divisions, called *Ayat*, answering nearly, though not exactly, to our verses.

There appears to be an entire absence of anything like design or method in either the larger or the smaller divisions. Neither the time at which they were delivered, nor the matter they contain, was the rule by which they were arranged. They were, in fact, apparently thrown together without order or meaning. One verse has seldom any connexion with the preceding; and the same subject, unless it be some narrative, such as that of Abraham, Joseph, or Pharaoh, distorted from the Sacred Scriptures, is in no case continued for a dozen verses in succession; each one appears an isolated precept or exclamation, the tendency and pertinence of which it is often difficult and frequent-

ly impossible to discover. The first nine titles will convey to the reader a fair conception of the arrangement, and something of the nature, of the subjects embraced in the whole. 1. The Preface. 2. The Cow. 3. The Family of Iram. 4. Women. 5. Table. 6. Cattle. 7. Al Araf. 8. The Spoils. 9. The Declaration of Immunity.

Immediately after the title, at the head of every chapter, with the single exception of the ninth, is prefixed the solemn form, "IN THE NAME OF THE MOST MERCIFUL GOD." This form is called by the Mohammedans, *Bismillah*, and is invariably placed by them at the beginning of all their books and writings in general, as a peculiar mark or distinguishing characteristic of their religion: it being deemed a species of impiety to omit it. The Jews, for the same purpose, make use of the form, 'In the name of the Lord,' or, 'In the name of the great God;' and the Eastern Christians that of, 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

In its general outline of facts, the Koran corresponds with the Old Testament in the following historical details: the accounts of the creation of the world; of the fall of Adam; of the general deluge; of the deliverance of Noah and his family in the ark; the call of Abraham; the stories of Isaac and Ishmael; of Jacob and the patriarchs; the selection of the Jews as God's chosen people; the prophetic office, miracles, and administration of Moses; the inspiration and authority of the Hebrew historians, prophets, and psalmists, especially of David and Solomon; and, lastly, of the promise of the advent of the Messiah, with many of the accompanying predictions respecting it.

Again, with the New Testament the Koran concurs in the recognition of Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah of the Jews; in his miraculous conception by the breath or spirit of God; the immaculate nativity of the Virgin Mary; his title of Logos, or Word of God; in the miraculous birth of John the Baptist, son of Zecharias, as his forerunner; in his performance of many mighty signs and miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, and controlling and casting out devils; in his rejection and persecution by his own countrymen; his condemnation to the death of the cross; his bodily