***The Book of Mormon, and the Quran - CA-021***

2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that, "All Scripture is inspired by God, or breathed out by God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." If you haven't heard this already, sooner or later someone is going to suggest to you that all Scripture is from God, so doesn't that mean that the Hindu scriptures, the Book of Mormon, the Buddhist scriptures, and scriptures of other world religions are inspired?

Before we examine these other Scriptures, let me just say, in beginning, that the human author of this passage is the apostle Paul. He was an ultra-orthodox Jew before he became a Christian. Then he was born again. He became a Hebrew Christian. He still had extremely high regard for the Old Testament Scriptures and the writings of the apostles (the parts of the New Testament which had been written when he wrote this). When the apostle Paul used the word Scripture, that's exactly what he meant – the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures and the works of the apostles which had been written up until then. The Hindu scriptures had already been written then, and many of the Buddhist scriptures had been written. None of the other world scriptures that I know of had been written at that time. But if someone had suggested to the apostle Paul that he meant to include those, he would have been shocked and horrified that anyone could misunderstand his statement so drastically.

One of the principals of hermeneutics is the writer's intent. So it is obvious to anyone who knows anything about the Hebrews or the early Christians (the apostles), the author's intent was to say that all of what we call the Bible (the Old Testament and the parts of the New Testament that had been written up until then) was inspired by God. There was nothing else. There was no implication that any other of the world's religious writings were inspired of God.

However, it is a good question. It's a question that deserves an answer. If we say in this world, these days, my Scriptures are correct, and others are wrong, that comes across as arrogance. So we owe other people an explanation. Be ready to give to every man who ask you a reason for the hope that is in you. So we're going to examine this now.

Someone might say, "My religious Scriptures (the Scriptures of my religion) are true, and everyone else is wrong, because they say they're true. My holy book says that is the truth, so it has to be the truth, because it says so." If someone says this, they're speaking in circular reasoning. And so owe the honest inquirer a better answer than that. It's a fair question. So we're going to give a fair answer by examining some of the world's religious writings.

**Six Principles for Examining Religious Books**

I want to introduce you to six principles that we should keep in mind when we're looking at any religious book. We're going to hold the Bible up to the light of these six principles. Then we're going to look at some of the other religious writings of the world. We're going to look at the only books that I know of that people claim are inerrant (right from God, and God-inspired). We're going to examine them in the light of these six principles. These six principles are based on common sense.

1. **An Established Community**

The first one is this: If God were going to reveal the truth to someone, and if God were going to communicate truth in written form to anyone, doesn't it stand to reason that He would do so with an established community – that revealed truth would come within an established community? Here is the reason I say that: Let's just suppose God had decided to choose the Japanese people to reveal truth to, and God speaks to some Japanese man and he says, "Hello down there. I am God." That would have very little meaning to the Japanese man. He would say, "What is God? Who is God? Do you mean you're the spirit of my ancestors, or are you one of the many gods that I have been told exist? Which God are you?"

This would be similar to God revealing Himself to someone in India, in the milieu of Hinduism, or to an American Indian with their Shamanism. So it would only stand to reason that God would reveal Himself within a community that had a vocabulary to understand spiritual things. Guess what? The Bible tells us that the Jewish people (the Hebrew race) are God's chosen people. That is, they are the stewards of the revelation of God. The Jewish people have a tradition that goes all the way back to Adam. It's a monotheistic tradition. There has never been a time, except in periods of apostasy, when the Jewish people were not worshipers of the one true God. Even then, they had a vocabulary. They had an understanding of the Scriptures.

Way back in Deuteronomy 18:14, God established this. God is speaking through Moses, and He says, "For those nations which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners. But as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so." So God protected the Jewish people from all of these false religions that they could get into through divination and soothsaying and mysticism. Then listen to verse 15: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me (like Moses) from among you, from your countrymen. You shall listen to him." Ever since this was revealed to the Jewish people, they knew that anyone who claimed to be a prophet had to be a Jew. They just wouldn't listen to anyone else. God chose the Jewish people (the family of Abraham) as His stewards. They had the tradition; they had the revelation; and, they had the knowledge. So He revealed Himself to the Jewish community, which makes sense, because, again, if He had revealed Himself to any other group of people, He would not have given them the background, the vocabulary, and the understanding that the Jews had since the very beginning.

In Isaiah 8:20, God set up the principle through Isaiah. He said, "To the law and to the testimony, if they (Jewish prophets) do not speak according to this Word, it is because they have no light" (or no dawn). So God set up the principle. The Jewish people were to be the community that He revealed himself through; all true prophets were to be Jewish; and, they would speak consistently with what had already been revealed. No Jewish prophet ever stood up and said, "What the other prophets have said is wrong." But they addressed spiritual issues consistently with what the other Hebrew prophets had already taught. And God said, "If they contradict, it is because they don't know what they're talking about. They have no light."

So if you're speaking with an unbeliever, then you might want to plant that seed in their mind – that if God had wanted to reveal Himself to any other group of people, He would have had to have given them a lot of background so they could even understand the concepts that He was to deliver to them. The Jews already had that understanding from the very beginning.

1. **Regarded as Truth**

Secondly, it should be regarded by members of the community as truth. The Jewish people accepted the words of the prophets as true (sometimes not during the lifetime of the prophet), but by and large, in time, all the words of the prophets were accepted by the Hebrew community as truth. We don't find that always in other religions. As we will see, it has to be forced down their throats sometimes with the point of a sword.

1. **Subject to Truth Tests**

If God is going to reveal Himself in written form to anyone, the writings should be subject to truth tests. You should be able to check it out. It should measure up to everyday truth tests. For example, if it touches on history, geography, sociology, or science, you should be able to check it out and see that it is true. We have spent a long time (sometimes weeks) looking at the truth claims of the Bible. And we have seen that you can check out the Bible, and where it touches on something, it speaks the truth.

**Archaeology**

Sir William Ramsay was an archaeologist in the 1800s, and he was a skeptic when it came to Christianity. But his work as an archaeologist led him to become a believer. Anytime the Bible touched on his field of archaeology, there were many times he felt the Bible was mistaken, and he would try to prove it wrong by his discoveries, but it always turned out that the Bible was right. When Luke wrote about cities and states and buildings and names, Sir William Ramsey said, "I can't believe it. He was always right."

Nelson Glueck is no friend of fundamentalist Christianity. He was Jewish – a leading Jewish archaeologist. Once in a speech right here in Dallas at a Jewish temple, he said that he was tired of being treated like a fundamentalist Christian. But he said, "There's one thing that I have in common with fundamentalist Christians, and that is that the Bible is absolutely true." His career as an archaeologist convinced him that when the Bible talks about anything that can be checked out, it has been absolutely true.

**The Hittites**

We we've talked about some of the times that people have thought that the Bible was mistaken about something. For example, the Old Testament speaks of the Hittites (the Hittite nation), a Canaanite people that the Jews were to dispossess. For example, Encyclopedia Britannica, in the early 1900s had an article on the Hittites which defined the Hittites as a mythical people spoken of in the Bible that never really existed. Well, in the early 1920s, archaeologists discovered the remains of a great Hittite empire in the Middle East. We could go on and on and on.

**Maps**

You know, it's really hard to find a Bible without maps, because when you're reading along, you want to see some kind of visual representation of the names of the cities and the countries, and it's always there. It's hard to find a Bible without all kinds of helps. There are dictionaries where you can look up "denarius" and "shekels" (some of the biblical monetary units), because they've discovered all these things. When the Bible talks about "shekels" and "denari," that's exactly the kind of money they dig up. Jesus said, "Bring me a penny. Whose picture is on the penny? It's Caesar. They found pennies from the Roman Empire with pictures of Augustus Caesar. So when the Bible touches on anything, historically or geographically, you can check it out yourself, and you can find that it is true.

**Fulfilled Prophecy**

The Bible even goes above and beyond this with fulfilled prophecy. No other religious book has dared to predict the future with any detail. We'll look at some areas where they have, and they failed at it. But the biblical prophets predicted the future, sometimes hundreds of years in advance. The Lord Jesus Christ predicted His own resurrection recorded in the pages of Scripture. No religious leader of any of the world's religions has ever done that. They have never stood up before a group of people and said, "OK, kill me, and three days later I'll rise from the dead." The Lord Jesus Christ (the Word of God) went far beyond the normal, everyday truth claims.

So any religious work should be subject to truth claims. You ought to be able to check it out. The things that you can check out, you should be able to check out, and they should line up. The Bible does so above and beyond the requirements.

1. **Spiritual Issues**

A book which claims to be God's revelation should address important spiritual issues seriously and consistently. Well, most Bible scholars agree that the first biblical book written is the book of Job. There's a lot of internal evidence which makes us believe that Job is the most ancient of books. When Genesis was probably being handed down orally, Job was written. So what does Job deal with? Why do righteous people suffer? This is a really fundamental question that people want an answer to.

The next oldest book, Genesis – does it deal with important spiritual issues that people want answers to? What about the issue of origins? Everyone wants to know where we came from; where the earth came from; who made it; and, how it got here. Genesis jumps right in asking these questions. Why do men and women marry? Why do people do wrong? Why do people die? It's all there in Genesis. And throughout Scripture, these big questions that really matter (these issues) are dealt with consistently. For the thousands of years that the Bible was written, the same answers are there for each of these issues, seriously and consistently. No other religious writing (no book that people claim is God's revelation) comes anywhere near this.

Again, Isaiah 8:20: "If prophets speak, and they don't agree with what's already been written in the Hebrew Scriptures, it's because they have no light – no dawning."

1. **Textual Integrity**

Any book which claims to tell the truth about spiritual matters should have textual integrity. That means that there should be some evidence that, even though it is a copy, it should be consistent with the autograph. It should have been produced legitimately. It shouldn't have been forged. It should be as old as it says it is. Again, the Bible is the only book which can make this claim and stand behind it.

The Jewish people had such a deep reverence for Scripture that a copyist (a scribe) was a profession. Each time a man would write a page of the Old Testament, he would count the letters from right to left, and then he would count the letters from left to right. If his two tallies didn't match up, he would have to keep working on it and get someone else to help him until he found out what letter he had added or left out. When he came to the name of God (the sacred name of God), before he would write that, he would stop; go get a new quill pen; cut it to fit; write the name; destroy it; and, then go get another one.

The Jews were almost superstitious in their reverence for Scripture, and this is why the copies (the ancient Hebrew text in the Scriptures) are almost identical. Occasionally, you have variances in spelling, especially in numbers. Sometimes you have a slight difference in number, but the variances are very few, and none of them affect a doctrine to speak off.

So the older we find manuscripts, the more it confirms that what we have today is essentially the Word of God. When they discover a new manuscript, Christian scholars don't rise up and say, "Well, let's destroy it because it might embarrass us by not being what we've said is in there. Christian scholars from all over the world are saying, "Hurry up and publish it so we can check it out." The older the manuscripts, the more they confirm that the Word of God is what God says it is, and it does have textual integrity.

1. **Power to Change People**

Any book that is revealed by the supernatural to human beings should possess the power to change people. What I mean is that if when you learned the truth about anything, it changes your behavior. I know a man who used to take massive doses of vitamin A. Then he read that too much vitamin A can really be harmful to the body. So he doesn't take much vitamin A anymore – nowhere near what he used to.

If you read that burning a certain grade of gasoline in your car is not good for your car, you stop burning that and you burn a different octane, because when we learn the truth about anything, it affects our behavior. So if God reveals the truth, and people absorb that truth through reading, then their behavior is going to be changed.

Do you know anybody whose behavior has ever been changed by reading the Bible? Well, I know a few. We could talk all night. I had a friend at Dallas Seminary who was a former Roman Catholic. He was on vacation in Mexico once. Some of you might have been to Mexico, and you know that standards of sanitation are not the same as American. Most Americans going to Mexico have a bout in varying degrees of seriousness with what we call "turista" or "Montezuma's revenge." Well, he got sick, and he was holed up in a motel room for several days. The TV was in Spanish, which he did not understand. He had no books and no magazines except a bilingual Gideon Bible with Spanish on one side, and English on the other. So out of sheer boredom, he started reading the New Testament. When he got to Ephesians 2:8-9, he had an epiphany experience. He became born again, and boy, when he got back to the United States, he says that he shoved the book of Ephesians, open to Ephesians 2:8-9, under his priest's face and said, "Why didn't you tell me this? Why didn't you tell me? I was saved by grace and not of works." That's just one story.

What about Martin Luther, who read, "The just shall live by faith? And he pondered on that: "What in the world does that mean? The just shall live by faith." Then all of a sudden, after it incubated for a while in his mind, and he had wrestled with it, the Holy Spirit shown His light on it, and Martin Luther said, "Aha, I know what that means. Those who are justified shall live eternally by faith, because that's the way we are justified – by grace through faith," and the Reformation broke out.

Again, we could go on and on. I knew a Hebrew Christian at Dallas Seminary who, in growing up, his parents had always taught him, "Don't read the New Testament because it talks about Jesus, and we don't believe in Jesus. So just don't ever read the New Testament. Someone at school gave him a New Testament. He just had to read it, and he used to read it in bed at night with the covers pulled over his head, with a flashlight. There's a name for Jewish people who read the New Testament, and it's Christians. Jerry Benjamin became a Christian by reading the New Testament.

There are many stories of people whose lives have been changed by reading the Bible. Do you know any Christians (any born again believers) who have read the Bible and their behavior has been changed? I know a few who decided to get serious about taking in God's word, and boy, their lives start blossoming.

I have never heard anyone give a testimony like this: "Well, I was in a motel room once and I picked up the Book of Mormon, and my life has never been the same. My life was totally changed. I was transformed by reading the Book of Mormon." I've never heard anybody give that testimony of the Quran, or the Hindu, or the Buddhist scriptures, or any other book except the Bible.

**Books that Claim to be Inerrant**

So as far as I know, there are only six other books in the whole world, in all the history of mankind, which claim to be absolute inerrant revelation from God. So we're going to spend a few minutes on each one, and examine each of these. They are, first of all, the Book of Mormon, the Quran, and the Sikh scriptures (an Indian religion). They have their scriptures and they believe that it is totally inspired from God. There are three major Hindu Scriptures, and then there are many more. Then there are quite a few Buddhist scriptures. Then the Jehovah's Witnesses have taught that the Watchtower organization is God's prophet. So anything they print and publish is inerrant truth.

So we're going to look at each one of these and see just where they stand in their claims to be the Word of God – God's inspired revelation.

1. **The Book of Mormon**

First of all is the Book of Mormon. Maybe before we look at the book itself, we need to look at the character of Joseph Smith. You know, if someone makes a truth claim to you, you're going to take that into consideration. Whether they're speaking of religious matters or anything else, you're going to say, "What is this person's credibility?"

**Joseph Smith**

First of all, Joseph Smith, even as a young boy, was interested in fortune telling and treasure hunting. He always had a desire to get rich quick. He believed that finding some hidden treasure would be the shortcut to wealth. Joseph Smith was arrested as a young man; tried; and, found guilty, and had to pay a fine for what was called back then "using a peep stone." It was some kind of precious or semi-precious gem that he claimed to be able to look at and help people discover the location of hidden treasure. People would pay him to do this, and no one ever found any treasure. So he was brought to the law, and he was found guilty of fraud. So Joseph Smith had had this desire to be a fortune teller and discover hidden treasure, which would make him suspect. He was wasn't always honest about it either.

All we have to go by about how Joseph Smith discovered the Book of Mormon is his word because he didn't have any witnesses. He said that there were a lot of religions, and being the sincere man that that he was, he wanted to make sure that he chose the right religion. So he asked God to please reveal to him what the right religion was. Out of all the sects and denominations, which one should he join?

Well, God was very accommodating. I believe the first time God appeared to him, he appeared as Jesus and God the Father. They told him not to bother with any of the world's religions (including all of the denominations of Christianity), because they were all wrong. God himself would reveal to Joseph Smith what was right.

How many people witnessed this? Joseph Smith was all alone when this supposedly happened. He also discovered the Book of Mormon when he was alone. He also translated it when he was alone. He translated it by putting on a pair of special glasses that the angel Moroni gave him so that he could translate the original plates of the Book of Mormon, which, according to Joseph Smith, were written in a language called Reformed Egyptian. Joseph Smith didn't know Reformed Egyptian, but when he put these glasses on, he could supernaturally translate these books into English.

Did he have any witnesses to this? Well, he chose three men, who were his friends, and told them that he wanted them to be his witnesses. These men said, "Yes, we've seen the plates. We've seen Joseph translating these. We attest that he's telling the truth. However, all three of these men later recanted. All three of them either voluntarily left the Mormon Church or they were excommunicated from the Mormon Church. So we can't put any stock in what Joseph Smith's three witnesses said.

As far as Joseph Smith's character, Joseph Smith died when he was taken to jail because of a morals charge. He had said that God had revealed to him that it was OK for him and certain other leaders of the Mormon Church to practice polygamy. So they were in a city, taking as many wives as they could. The people of the town had had about enough of it. So they had Joseph Smith arrested. While he was in jail, some of the people said, "We can't wait on the law to take justice." So they decided to lynch Joseph Smith. They broke into the jail, and they were successful in putting him to death. However, he managed to get a revolver and took several people with him. So number one, what about the character of the person who says he has received the revelation?

Another point about Joseph Smith and his revelation is that he purchased a scroll once from a traveling mummy exhibition. It was purported to be an ancient Egyptian papyrus. He purchased it and said, "Oh, yeah, with my experience with Reformed Egyptian in translating Mormon, I recognized this. This is the Book of Abraham. It tells about Abraham as a prophet." So he kept and treasured this. It disappeared from his possession. About 100 years later, it ended up at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Someone said, "You know, this is considered a sacred book of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. We should return it to them." This was sacred to their founder, Joseph Smith. So they returned it to the religious leaders of the Mormon Church, who made the mistake of giving it to some of their own archaeologists at Brigham Young University.

There's a term for Mormon archaeologists who turn their archeological skills onto the Mormon Church. What they're called is ex-Mormons. These guys were Egyptologists. They knew Egyptian language when they saw it, and they could translate it. So they were really pleased to get this book of Abraham in ancient Egyptian. They translated it, and it had nothing to do with Abraham. It was indeed a genuine Egyptian papyrus, but it was a copy of the Egyptian book of the Dead. It tells, according to Egyptian mythology, what happens when people die. You go up before god Horus, and he would put all your good deeds on one side of the scales, and your bad deeds on the other to see whether you would have a happy or an unhappy afterlife. So the Mormon archaeologists who translated this are now known as former Mormon archaeologists.

As far as the Book of Mormon goes, there have been books written, proving that Joseph Smith wasn't even the author of The Book of Mormon. There's one good one called Who Really wrote The Book of Mormon? The author of this book has done his homework, and he makes a really strong case that Mormon was written by a man named Solomon Spalding, who wrote it for entertainment. Back in the 1800s, people didn't have TV or radio, so they sat around and talked, and they would even read to one another. So when Solomon Spalding was an old gentleman, he was retired and didn't have much else to do. So he wrote the story about an Indian tribe who migrated over from the Middle East and became American Indians. He made it all up, and he never meant for anyone to believe it. It was strictly entertainment. Joseph Smith came upon the book, bought it, and said, "Behold, this is what God has revealed to me."

**The Book Itself**

The book itself has a lot of inconsistencies in it. All the book has to do is contradict itself, or make one mistake, and it's not an inerrant book. I could write an inerrant book as long as I didn't make any mistakes. But the first time I make a mistake, it's no longer inerrant. Mormons claim that the Book of Mormon is God's inerrant revelation.

First of all, it makes a lot of grammatical mistakes in King James English. Whoever wrote the Book of Mormon thought that God always spoke King James English, because that was the translation of the Bible that they read from. It was already a couple of hundred years old, and people didn't talk like that anymore. So when they tried to mimic King James English, they made a lot of mistakes, just like we do if we start trying to use "thees" and "thous" and "doest" and "doeth" and so on. We're going to make mistakes. Whoever wrote the Book of Mormon made a lot of mistakes in King James English, which is really not fitting – for God to make mistakes. But he made a lot of great grammatical mistakes in the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon, just like the Bible, refers to cities and places and people and all kinds of geographical locations. But guess what? Not one of them has been discovered. We'll get to that in just a minute. But let me just show you one gross error – a logical inconsistency. The Book of Mormon says that the Jewish people (some of the Jewish tribes) migrated to what is now the United States in North America. There were about 20 people in all. There were no more than 20 people. 30 years later, we see those 20 people have become such a big group of people that they divide themselves into two different nations – in 30 years. That's really inconceivable.

The Book of Mormon speaks of these two different nations, which became the American Indians, as having wars, in which eventually one tribe totally annihilates the other tribe. When it speaks of these huge battles, you would think that you could go to the place where these battles supposedly took place, and it would just be an archaeologist's paradise because you would find skeletons, spears, tomahawks, and arrowheads. Guess what? They haven't found anything. One thing about these great battles is that they never left any trace.

Joseph Smith also claimed that the Book of Mormon was written in Reformed Egyptian. No Egyptologist has ever heard of Reformed Egyptian, except if he's a Mormon. Then the Mormons just say, "Well, we don't know anything about that, except that's what Mormon was written in. So it's obvious that there never was a language called Reformed Egyptian. There have been no ancient copies of the Book of Mormon found. You know, concerning the Bible, scholars just constantly find these ancient manuscripts hidden away in monasteries; in old churches; in ruins; and, in clay pots with tar put over the lid like they were putting these up for storage for future generations. They find these of the Bible all over the place. They have never found an ancient manuscript of the Book of Mormon.

Not only that, they've never found any artifacts of the people that Joseph Smith talks about. They have found no coins, and no trace of the civilizations that Joseph Smith claims took place in the Book of Mormon. There is absolutely no connection between the Hebrews and the North American Indians linguistically. They're light years apart linguistically. Hebrew has nothing in common with any North American Indian dialect. Between the Hebrews and the North American Indians, there is no DNA connection.

You know, we saw that film last September where some Mormon scientists decided, "Hey, American Indians are descendants of the ancient Hebrews. So let's run some DNA tests." There was absolutely no commonality. These scientists are either known as ex-Mormons now, or the ones who haven't left are not talking about it. So we cannot take the Book of Mormon seriously as revelation from God.

1. **The Quran**

The next book that is believed by some people to be God's revelation is the Quran. Again, with the Quran, we have one person who said that God sent the angel Gabriel to give Muhammad the revelation. Gabriel dictated the Quran, and either Muhammad wrote it down, or whoever happened to be near him wrote it down. Muhammad would go into a trance; he would always cover his head; fall to the ground; and, start reciting his dictation from the angel Gabriel. But no one ever saw the angel Gabriel except Muhammad. It's debatable whether Muhammad was even literate or not, so it's doubtful that he wrote it himself. Besides, he was always in a trance when he received these revelations. So whoever happened to be nearest might write it down whenever Muhammad would go into a trance. Remember that they were in the desert. This was 1200 years ago. They didn't have notepads and word processors, so they would pick up a stone, a leaf, a bone, or whatever they could find, and start writing on it. This was the Quran.

When Muhammad died, there was a bloody struggle over who would be his successor. Finally, the man who succeeded Muhammad, several years later, collected all of the bones; all of the leaves; and, all of the rocks that made up the Quran. He had it all copied in a book form, and then destroyed all of the originals. So nobody even knows if the Quran is really what Muhammad claimed that the angel Gabriel recited to him or not. We have to take the word of Abu Bakr who said, "This is going to be the Quran." So we really don't know.

**Inconsistencies**

But the Quran has some inconsistencies. First of all, you've probably heard of The Satanic Verses. These are a few verses in the Quran that Muhammad said that the Angel Gabriel had revealed to him. But then he changed his mind and said, "No, Satan tricked me. He slipped in and masqueraded as the angel Gabriel, and I went ahead and recorded these, but I found out later I was wrong." So that is very suspect. A man claims to be a prophet, but then he takes back part of what he has written, and says that he was tricked into writing it.

There's another interesting story about Muhammad. People were memorizing the Quran, and going around reciting it, even in Muhammad's lifetime. Once he passed a man who was reciting the Quran, and he stopped and listened to him and he said, "Ah, may Allah bless this man for reciting these verses that I missed the first time." Muhammad also said that some of his revelation was superseded by other revelation. In other words, a revelation would come to him later that the first revelation was wrong, and he should deny it, and replace it with the most current revelation. This is especially in regard to some of the things that he taught that later proved to be embarrassing.

Not many people know much about the Quran today. If you speak with a Muslim, they're going to know a little bit about the Quran, but very few of them have ever really read it. Most of the people who know what the Quran really teaches are ex-Muslims who have become Christians. They have been so shocked that they go back and read what they were supposed to have believed, and they just shake their heads and say, "I can't believe that I was deceived by this for so long".

One reason that a lot of Muslims don't know what's in the Quran is that it's in Arabic. Muslims teach that Arabic is a sacred language, and there can be no valid translation of the Quran. It has to be read in Arabic. You can get a translation down at Barnes and Noble or somewhere. But the translation that I have doesn't say, "The Quran." It says, "The meaning of the glorious Quran" (in English). Most of the translations that I've seen say something like that. They don't claim to be the Quran. They claim to be a commentary on the Quran, because for centuries people have been taught that the Quran cannot be translated. If you want to know what it really says, you have to learn Arabic.

I have spoken to (and I've read ex-Muslims) who know the Quran in Arabic, and they say, "You know, you hear all this stuff about it being such beautiful poetry, but it's really not all that great." It's Arabic literature. If you believe it's the absolute truth of the Word of God, then you hold it in high esteem. But if you don't, it's nothing.

So we're talking about a book that is held in esteem by many people as the revealed Word of God, and yet it was written supposedly by one man. There's even some doubt about that. It's full of contradictions, and it's full of confusion. Muhammad's mind was very confused about religion, and he shows it in the Quran. For example, he confuses Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Miriam, the sister of Moses several times in the Quran. He places the prophet Ezekiel as having lived in the time of the judges. Because of a similarity in the names of Jesus and Esau in Arabic, he confuses Jesus and Esau several times.

He has a list of about ten prophets that he lists, supposedly in chronological order. Incidentally, Alexander the Great is a prophet, according to Muhammad. I have no idea why. But the last three that he lists are Jonah, Samson, and a guy named George. I have no idea who George was, but he places these three (Jonah, Samson, and George) after Jesus chronologically.

The Quran is 114 chapters, and it's organized not chronologically, and not by subject, but guess what? By length. The longest ones are presented first, and then they gradually get smaller until the last Surah (or chapter) is really short. Muhammad received these supposed revelations over a period of 22 years. Yet they show no development of theology. All they show is from long to short. It's really weird. It's really strange for a book that claims to be the revelation from God.

I use the word "theology," and sometimes you'll read in the paper or in Time magazine or something about some Islamic theologian. I've done a little bit of reading about what they study in an Islamic theological seminary, and you would think (per the word "theology"), "Boy, these guys really do some serious study." One of the biggest subjects of debate among Muslim theologians I have heard recently is not only, is it OK for a woman to show the backs of her hands, or is that a sin? But also, is it OK to sacrifice a camel who has been sodomized? These are the great theological issues that Islam is wrestling with today. So we have several very serious problems in taking the Quran seriously as a revelation from God.

Next time we'll look at the Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh Scriptures.

Leon Adkins, 2003

[**Back to the Advanced Bible Doctrine (Philippians) index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/philippiansdanish.htm)

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