The Quran

Introduction to the Quran

The Quran contains the written record of the revelations that Muhammad supposedly received from heaven. These began during his periods of meditation near Mecca and many of the earlier passages are an invective against idolatry and a call on the Meccans to repent. Examples from the Old and New Testaments are used to drive home the message to the Meccans. After Muhammad's flight to Medina, the revelations have a more practical turn and are concerned with the organisation of the Muslim community.

The Quran is shorter than the New Testament. It is written in rhyming prose and divided into 114 chapters (suras). These are arranged in order of length with the longest first. Much of the style is polemic.

Muslims believe the words of the Quran are an exact copy of the "guarded tablets" in heaven. Thus they are the very words of God and not to be tampered with. So the language, syntax and pronunciation are all part of the revelation. This cannot be altered. A translation is always inadequate.

To many Muslims the Quran and its words can be used as a talisman to ward off evil spirits. The correct pronunciation in recitation or writing the words is greatly stressed. Nearly always there is a neglect of its meaning. Millions of non-Arabic-speaking Muslims have memorised the whole book without knowing any Arabic.

The Quran both confirms the Bible and completely supersedes it. So Muslims acknowledge the validity of the revelation given to Moses (the Torah), to David (the Psalms) and to Jesus (the Gospel), but claim that the Quran goes beyond these. They believe these previous revelations have been corrupted (the Bible) and they are often reluctant to read them in spite of the Quranic injunction to do so. But if you compare the New Testament with the Quran, the latter clearly wants to return to the domination of the law and holds out no hope for us because of our inability to keep God's law.

The Chronological Development of the Quran

The Quran is not ordered by the time of the revelation, but in the order of sura length. Each sura – with the exception of the first (Al-Fatiha) – is arranged by its length and not its chronological sequence.

There is a lack of arrangement or sequence of the verses within a sura. So sometimes the first verses of a sura may not be found at the beginning. Also there is inter-mingling of verses that belong to different eras – the Meccan and Medinan. Shi'ite scholars agree that the verses are not properly arranged.

The three main structural elements in the Quran are:

- ✓ The Quran itself – the name "the Quran" appears about 70 times in the Quran. It comes from the Arabic word "to recite" (*qara'a*). There are other suggested alternatives. There is an Arabic word *qurantu* meaning "to pair one thing to another".

  If you read Muslims sources, they appear to dislike the source being *qara'a* for it is a Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac word. This implies the word reached Muhammad from Christian sources.
- ✓ A sura is a chapter in the Quran. Each sura has a name. There are 114 suras.
- ✓ The *aya* is sometimes translated "verse". The plural of *aya* is *ayat*.

Muslims believe the original Quran is written on golden tablets in heaven (the Preserved Tablet).
The Angel Gabriel memorised the Quran from the Preserved Tablet and brought it down to Muhammad in word and meaning.

The Compilation of the Quran

Muslims believe that Muhammad, in a trance – i.e. Gabriel was reciting to him, memorised what was said to him. He repeated what he had memorised to his followers who wrote it down on whatever was available. When Muhammad died in 632 A.D. what he left were scattered fragments written on various materials – leather, clay, palm leaves etc. These pieces were not kept in one place by Muhammad or anyone in particular. As they completed the Quran after his death, anyone who said he had a portion of the Quran should hand it in. Apparently Muhammad was in the habit of asking his scribes to add new verses to different texts.

A partial writing of the Quran took place in Medina. About 66% of the Quran was written in Mecca, but there is no evidence that any of what was written during this period was ever carried to Medina. So the Quran was largely compiled from memory.

Apparently Abu Bakr, Muhammad's successor, started to make a compilation after the great battle at al-Yamma (12 A.H. one year after the death of Muhammad) which Muslims won, though a very large number of them were killed. These Muslims had memorised parts of the Quran and Abu Bakr feared that very soon large parts might be lost in future battles. So he asked Umar Ibn al-Khattab and Zayd Ibn Thabat to take on the duty of compiling the Quran. It was probably written on papyrus. It took about a year to complete the Quran and this manuscript ended up with Umar, the second Caliph after Abu Bakr. After Umar's death, the manuscript went to his daughter Hafsa.

At this time apparently there were multiple different compilations and conflicts arose among Muslims about the variant Quranic readings for they were quite widespread. There were differences between the Qurans in Kufa and in Basra in Iraq and these were different from the Quran used in Damascus.

So there were many variant readings of the Quran. Finally a committee of 12 was assembled to edit the various Qurans and come up with a unified version. This version – our present Quran – was largely based on Hafsa's copy. Sadly this copy was burnt soon after her death.

There are some differences between a Sunni Quran and a Shia Quran. The Shia believe the Sunni version is a "corrupted" Quran but when al-Mahdi comes he will bring the true uncorrected Quran.

The Chronological Sequence of the Quran

This is important to Muslims because of the practice of abrogation. If two verses contradict each other, the latter verse replaces the earlier verse. So about 70 A.H. (688 A.D.) there was an attempt at making a chronological sequence especially of verses given in the Meccan period – i.e. before the Hijra and the Medinan period – after the Hijra.

It is commonly agreed that there are 85 suras from the Meccan period and 28 suras from the Medinan period – and the Fatiha. There are some suras that are debatable. No one is sure whether they are from the Medinan period or the Meccan origin. These are the following:

13, 47, 55, 57, 61, 64, 83, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, 107, 112, 113, 114

It is suggested that the order of the Meccan suras is as follows:

96, 74, 73, 93, 94, 113, 114, 1, 109, 112, 111, 108, 104, 107, 102, 92, 68, 90, 105, 106, 97, 86, 91, 80, 87, 95, 103, 85, 101, 99, 82, 81, 84, 100, 79, 77, 78, 88, 89, 75, 83, 69, 51, 52, 56, 53, 70, 55, 54, 37, 71, 76, 44, 50, 20, 26, 15, 19, 38, 36, 43, 72, 67, 23, 21, 25, 17, 27, 18, 32, 41, 45, 16, 30, 11, 14, 12, 40, 39, 29, 31, 42, 10, 34, 35, 7.

The suggested order of the Medinan suras is:

2, 98, 64, 62, 8, 47, 3, 61, 57, 4, 65, 59, 33, 63, 24, 58, 22, 48, 66, 60, 110, 49, 5, 9.

Then within a sura the verses are not in chronological order – i.e. the first verses are not at the beginning. The Shia say they are not properly arranged and blame the Sunni.

The Reliability of non-Arabic Qurans (translations into English)

Arabic and English are very different and this is the cause of many difficulties. Here is one example: the Arabic word *mutawaffika* (3:55) means 'causing you to die'. However most Muslims believe that Jesus did not die on the Cross but was taken up into heaven and that He will return and then will die and be buried in Medina.

Here are some translations of this verse:

Pickthall: *"When Allah said, 'O Jesus! Lo! I am gathering thee and causing thee to ascend to me.' "*

Sher Ali: *"When Allah said, 'O Jesus, I will cause thee to die a natural death and will raise thee to myself ….' "*

Yusuf Ali: *"God said, 'O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to myself.' "*

Palmer: *"When God said, 'O Jesus! I will make thee die and take thee up again to me.' "*

Other translators of the Quran translate this *aya* in the same way as Palmer – i.e. George Sale and N. J. Dawood but not Arthur Arberry or Thomas Cleary.

Why do Muslims believe that the Lord Jesus did not die on the Cross? 4:157 says, *"But they did not kill him and did not crucify him, but the resemblance was made for them."* If you are going to buy an English translation of the Quran avoid Yusuf Ali's translation.

Sources of the Quran

At the time Muhammad was having 'revelations' that later became the Quran, there were four other religious communities in Arabia. Each of them had their own book. In some ways the books of these other religions parallel the Quran. Here are a few examples:

The Influence of Sabian ideas

The Sabians had a flourishing kingdom in the Hadramaut and in Yemen before 700 B.C. They worshipped the stars, plants and the moon. They succumbed to the attack from Axum about 350 A.D. and then from Persia in 579 A.D. Their capital was near Sanaa. In Arabic they are called *Subbi*. They still exist in Iraq (Basra). They are Gnostics mixed in with Zoroastrianism. Several things have been borrowed from them:

- ✓ 30 days fast
- ✓ Five compulsory prayer times
- ✓ The honouring of a building – the Kabaa
- ✓ Festivals such as Al Fitr taken into Islam

The Influence of the Persian Magi (Zoroastrians)

They consider fire as the purest and noblest element and worship it. Originally they were from the Iranian uplands. Their religion was reformed a couple of times and their book is the Zend-Avesta.

There was a period when they were a strong political influence over some parts of the Arabian Peninsula. In 628 A.D., Badzan, the Persian governor, submitted to Muhammad and paid tribute to him. Several things were borrowed into Islam from Zoroastrianism:

- ✓ Muhammad's night journey (17:1) – the *miraj* when he went to Jerusalem, up into heaven and back is mirrored in 'the ascension of Arta Viraf' in the Pahlavi book
- ✓ Paradise with its houris
- ✓ The ascent of Azazil from hell – found in the Hadith

The influence of Jewish ideas and practices

Muhammad claimed he was called to call the Arabs to the faith of Abraham. Several practices show Jewish influence:

- ✓ For quite a while Muslims prayed towards Jerusalem (the *Qiblah*)
- ✓ Muhammad observed the Jewish Day of Atonement
- ✓ He was accused of being helped by a Jew in producing part of the Quran – see 46:9
- ✓ He borrowed heavily not so much from the Old Testament but from rabbinical traditions
    - Cain and Abel and a raven (5:30-35)
    - Abraham's deliverance from the fire Nimrod made to destroy him (2:260 and 6:74-84)
    - the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon (27:17, 20-45)
    - Harun and Marut in 2:96 from the Midrash Yalkut 44
    - other examples include stories of Joseph, Saul and David

The point of all these examples is to show the discrepancy between Muhammad's citations and the Old Testament. Muhammad had been commanded to ask 'the People of the Book' for information to allay his doubts (10:94). He never read the Old Testament. What occurred was by oral communication.

The influence of Christian ideas

In Muhammad's day, Arabia was ringed by Christian influences – Monophysites and Diophysites. Samuel Zwemer comments that Adalas, a monk of Nineveh, settled in Mecca and apparently helped Muhammad in writing the Quran (16:105). Also apparently there were two sword-makers in Mecca, Jaber and Yassar, who used to read aloud from the Bible. Ibn Ishak also records that Muhammad knew well a Christian called Ar-Rahman in central Arabia (Yamama). There was also a cousin of Khadijah who was a Christian and one of Muhammad's wives was an Egyptian Copt called Miriam. So in the Quran you find evidence of this Christian influence:

- ✓ The legend of the companions of the cave (16:8-25)
- ✓ Much on the Virgin Mary (19:16-35) [Muhammad clearly thought that Mary was identical to Miriam the sister of Moses.]
- ✓ The childhood of the Lord Jesus – the story of the bird from clay (3:41, 43; 19:29-31; 5:109-110)
- ✓ Muhammad's misconceptions of the Trinity (5:77, 116; 4:169)

There are many other examples such as the denial of the Crucifixion, the story of the future death of the Lord Jesus, the creation of Adam, Adams joy and grief in heaven. All these are in the Quran.

In his book, **The Sources of Islam**, W. St Clair-Tisdall comments, **"The influence of true and genuine Christian teaching upon the Quran and upon Islam in general has been very slight indeed, while on the other hand, the apocryphal traditions and in certain respects heretical doctrines have a claim to be one of the original sources of Islam."**

/hy is this so? During the long wars between Byzantium and Parthia (Iran), there was very heavy taxation in the Roman Empire in order to keep the war going. (Wars cost a great deal.) The Byzantines made non-diophysites pay much higher taxes than the Orthodox Christians. So in order to pay fewer taxes, heretical sects tried to move out of the Byzantine Empire. Many heretical groups moved into Arabia and it was these groups of heretical Christians that Muhammad mainly met.

The Influence of the Hanifs

In Medina – **Abu Amr**

In Taif (near Mecca) – **Ummiyah ibn Zalt**

In Mecca – **Waraqah** – **Ubaidu'ilah** – **Uthaman** – **Zaid Ibn Amr**

In Mecca all four hanifs were somehow related to Muhammad. Before Muhammad hanifs taught:

- ✓ that it should be prohibited to kill baby daughters
- ✓ that all idolatry was to be rejected
- ✓ the promise of future happiness in "the garden"
- ✓ they applied titles to the one God:
  - Merciful – Ar Rahman
  - Lord – Ar Rabb
  - The Forgiving One – Al Ghafur

  These titles are used for God by Muslims today.

Some of what the Quran teaches

"The Quran says …."

For a Muslim, the Quran is the very word of God in the most literal sense. Muhammad was merely the recipient of that word and passed it on. In theory, for Muslims, the Quran has no imprint of the prophet's character at all. So nothing is more blasphemous to a Muslim than to attribute the Quran to Muhammad as we sometimes do of books of the Bible – i.e. John's Gospel.

But as we try and understand what the Quran says, it is important to understand that it isn't the only source of authority for a Muslim. The Hadith (the traditions of Muhammad sayings and behaviour) are also authoritative. But the Quran is the primary source. It doesn't cover everything that a Muslim should do and believe but what it does say speaks to a Muslim with absolute divine authority.

However some Quranic texts are no longer valid since they have been abrogated by a later prophetic statement. This is why we need to know the order in which the suras were given.

The Testimony of the Quran to itself

There are many verses in the Quran that assert it is a revelation directly from God. The following verses were "revealed" to Muhammad in reply to objections that he had just produced it himself.

17:90 *"Say, 'if mankind and jinn united together to bring the like of this Quran they could not bring the like though they back each other up.' "*

10:39 *"This Quran would not have been devised by any beside God; but it verifies what was before it …. Do they say, 'He* (Muhammad) *has devised it'? Say then, 'bring a sura like it and call, if you can, on other than God, if you do tell the truth.' "*

The Testimony of the Quran to the Bible

Islam teaches that there were 104 holy books "sent down" on the prophets, but only four remain:

- ✓ the Torah – the law but including the whole of the Old Testament except the Psalms
- ✓ the Zabour – the Psalms
- ✓ the Injil – the Gospel but including the New Testament in general
- ✓ the Quran

There are over 120 references in the Quran to the Bible (O.T., N.T. and Psalms) testifying to their being genuine revelations from God. Jews and Christians are generally known as 'People of the Book'.

It is important to understand that Muhammad did not claim to want to establish a new religion. His concern was to bring the peoples of Arabia back to the "original" religion of the Arabs that was preached by all prophets from Adam onwards. This religion was always Islam and those who were

followers were always Muslims (Arabic = *muslimun* = 'to resign oneself' to God. It doesn't at first relate to Muhammad's followers)

Sura 2:130-133, *"And who is averse to the religion of Abraham except those who make fools of themselves? We chose him in this world and he will be among the perfect. When his Lord said to him, 'Surrender', he said, 'I surrender to the Lord of the universe'. And Abraham enjoined his sons to do so as did Jacob, 'O my sons! God has chosen religion for you so that you would not die' …. He said to his sons, 'What will you worship after my passing?' They said, 'We will worship your God, the God of your fathers, Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac – one God to whom we have surrendered.' "*

Typical verses that indicate the acceptance by Muhammad of the existing holy books are found in the following sura:

4:162 *"We have inspired you, as we inspired Noah and the prophets after him. We inspired Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon and we gave David the Psalms."*

Muhammad's dependence on the existing holy books is very clear.

10:94 *"So if you have been in doubt about what we revealed to you, then ask those who have already been reading Scripture before you. Truth has come to you from your Lord, so do not be a doubter."*

So as 'People of the Book' we are in a very strong position to invite our Muslim friends to read the Scriptures for the Quran clearly testifies to their authenticity.

There are many things in the Quran that perplex the thoughtful Muslim and Muslims are encouraged to consult Christians about matters of religion they don't understand.

There is a problem here, for if a Muslim does start reading the Bible he/she soon finds teaching that obviously contradicts the teaching of the Quran. This is a serious problem for a Muslim. If the Quran, the Torah, the Zabour and the Injil are all from God and if the Quran is a confirmation of the message of these three books, then clearly there should be harmony and continuity and not contradiction.

There are only two conclusions that he can honestly arrive at:

1. The Quran is not a revelation from God.

2. The Torah, the Zabour and the Injil are not **now** the true revelation from God – only the Quran is!

So Muslims have introduced the theory that the existing copies of the Bible have all been corrupted since the time of Muhammad – meaning that our current Bible is hopelessly corrupted. They find some support for this theory in the Quran.

3:69 *"A party of the 'People of the Book' wished they could mislead you, but they only misled themselves without knowing."*

3:73 *"And do not believe anyone unless he follows your religion."*

One example of how this alleged corruption occurs is the Muslim contention that John 16:7 and other places that refer to the Holy Spirit as "the comforter" were originally prophecies concerning the coming of Muhammad. Muhammad was also called 'Ahmed'.

61:6 *"And Jesus, Son of Mary, said, 'O children of Israel, I am God's messenger to you, confirming the truth of the Torah before me and heralding a messenger who will come after me, his name is Ahmed – the most praiseworthy'."*

Muslims believe the Greek word 'paracletos' – translated 'comforter' in the Injil is really 'periculutos' in the original Injil, which means 'Ahmed' in Arabic.

This, and all the other alleged corruptions of the Scriptures, can be shown to have no foundation because we have complete manuscripts of the Greek New Testament in various museums dated 200 years or more

before the time of Muhammad. It is easy to verify that the present Arabic versions of the Bible are an exact translation of the original 1st century copies and not the Quranic variant.

The Affirmations of the Quran

The affirmations of the Quran are as important as its denials. These affirmations fix the picture of the teaching of the Lord Jesus and other Christian teaching firmly in the mind of many Muslims. Here are some affirmations:

- **The Fall**

  2:35-36 *"And we said, 'Adam dwell in the garden you and your wife and eat from it comfortably when and as you want. But do not approach this particular tree lest you become wrongdoers'. Then Satan made them to slip from there and caused them to depart the state they were in. And we said, 'Descend in mutual antipathy; yet you will have an abode and belongings on earth for a while'."* [See also 7:11-25 and 20:116-123]

  Please note that the Quran does not understand that the earthly paradise is the Garden of Eden. Paradise is in heaven and it was from heaven to earth that Adam and Eve fell.

- **The Virgin Birth of the Lord Jesus**

  Some of the longest suras in the Quran are concerned with the Lord Jesus and His mother Mary and the annunciation of the birth of the Lord Jesus. Sura 19 is entitled "Mary" and sura 3 is called "the family of Imran". There is also mention of the virgin birth in sura 4 (women).

  3:42-45 *"And the angel said, 'O Mary, God has chosen you and purified you, chosen you over the women of all peoples. Mary, obey your Lord devoutly, worship and bow in prayer with those bowing in prayer.' The angel said, 'O Mary, God gives you good news of a Word from God named the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, honoured in the world and the hereafter and one of the intimates of God ….' She said, 'My Lord! How can I have a son, when no man has touched me?' Thus does God create at will when God decides on something God simply says to it, 'be' and it is."*

  [See also 19: 16-27 for some amazing but non-biblical information. Sura 66:12 mentions Mary.]

- **The assertion that the Lord Jesus is a created being**

sura 3:59 it says, *"Jesus was to God like Abraham was: God created him from the dust, then said 'Be' and he was."*

The obvious intention of this verse is to establish that the Lord Jesus was merely a man. But there is an ambiguity as to whether the phrase, 'he created him' refers to Adam or Jesus. If it refers to Adam, then there is no contradiction of the Bible. But most Muslims see it as referring to the Lord Jesus. In any case, Christians' best reply to this verse is to state that the Bible also compares the Lord Jesus to Adam, not because He is created like Adam but that, like Adam, He is the head of a new creation.

The Miracles of the Lord Jesus

There is quite a lot in the Quran and much more in the Hadith of the miracles performed by the Lord Jesus as a way of authenticating His mission but there is no mention of His compassion. They are always stated to be, 'by the permission of God'. There is no recognition of the fact that the Lord Jesus had any inherent divine power.

3:49 *"… and I heal the blind and the leprous and revive the dead with God's permission …."*

5:110 *"Then God will say, 'Jesus, Son of Mary, remember my favour to you and your mother when I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit. You spoke to the people in the cradle and in maturity and when I taught you Scripture and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel …. and you healed the blind and the leprous by my permission. And you raised the dead by my permission…."*

The Sinlessness of the Lord Jesus

19:19 [The angel speaking to Mary before the birth of Jesus] *"He said, 'I am only a messenger from your Lord to give you a sinless son'."*

The Denials of the Quran

The denials of the Quran relate to the most essential beliefs of the Christian faith – the Trinity, the deity of the Lord Jesus, the sonship of the Lord Jesus and the Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. We will look at these in turn.

- **The denial of the Trinity and of the Deity of the Lord Jesus**

  4:171 *"People of Scripture, do not go to excess in your religion and do not say anything about God but the truth. The Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, was only a messenger, a word from God, which God sent down to Mary, a spirit from God. So believe in God and God's messengers. And do not speak of the Trinity. It is best for you to refrain. God is one sole divinity too transcendent to have a son…."*

  6:101 and 102 *"How can the creator of the heavens and the earth have a son without having a consort? The creator produced all things and knows everything. That is God, your Lord, there is no other deity but the creator of all things. So worship God who is in charge of all things."*

  5:116 *"And God will say, 'Jesus, son of Mary, did you tell people, 'Take to me and my mother as deities rather than God'? He will say, 'Glory to you! It is not for me to say what I have no right to. If I used to say that, you would have known it. You know what is my essence while I do not know what is your essence. For you are the one who knows all hidden secrets'."*

  Clearly what Muslims are rejecting is the false teaching of some heretical Christian sects then current in Arabia, for what Muhammad was rejecting has never been taught by Orthodox Christians. What Muhammad thought was the Trinity consisted of the father, the mother (Mary) and the son! Some heretical Christians did believe this, but only a few. But the majority of Middle Eastern Christians had/have an extreme veneration of Mary. Muhammad met some of these and this no doubt gave rise to this view. [The phrase, 'glory to you' in Arabic is used as a strong form of oath.]

- **The Denial of the Sonship of the Lord Jesus**

  There are many Quranic verses that stress the absolute unity of God and, by implication, deny the sonship of the Lord Jesus. There are others such as sura 112 that deny the possibility of sonship in general.

  112 *"Say, 'it is God, unique. God the eternal, not begetting or begotten, not having any equal'."*

  There are number of verses where the sonship of the Lord Jesus is specifically denied.

  19:34 *"That was Jesus, son of Mary, a word of truth about which they doubt. Having a son is not attributable to God who is beyond that and when, having determined something, merely says to it 'be' and it is."*

  The seriousness of the Muslim view of what we Christian believers think of the Trinity and the deity of the Lord Jesus is seen in the following verse:

  4:48 *"God does not forgive idolatry but forgives everything else for whomever God wills. And whoever associates anything with God has concocted a monstrous wrong."*

  The sin of '*shirk*' – associating anyone with God as a co-deity – is the most deadly of all sins and what makes the concept of the Trinity so very blasphemous in the eyes of the Muslim is our statement that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God. This arises from the fact that Muhammad (and so all Muslims ever since) could only think of sonship in terms of a sexual relationship of the father and mother. We

probably offend Muslims more when we say the Lord Jesus is the Son of God, than if we say the Lord Jesus is God.

- **The Denial of the Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus**

  This is perhaps the most basic of all Muslim denials partly because it is so categorical.

  4:156-8 *"… on account of their scoffing too and their monstrous slander of Mary and on account of their saying, 'We killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, messenger of God' whereas they did not kill him, they did not crucify him, although it was made to seem thus to them. As for those who differ on this, they are certainly in doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it, only following conjecture; but they surely did not kill him, rather God raised him up to the divine presence and God is almighty, most wise."*

  So no Muslim can ignore this categorical denial of the death of the Lord Jesus but it does pose difficulties. The basic assertion is that the Lord Jesus did not die. But this is a difficult position for them to maintain, for if the Lord Jesus did not die, He would obviously be far superior to other prophets, including Muhammad, who did die. It also poses a problem as to an apparent contradiction for it says in sura 19:33-34 of the Lord Jesus, *"So peace upon me the day I was born and the day I die and the day I am resurrected alive. That was Jesus, son of Mary, a word of truth which they doubt."*

  The way Muslims resolve the dilemma is to say that someone who looked like Jesus was substituted for the Lord Jesus before the Crucifixion and somehow Jesus was taken up into heaven. He will return in the last days, fight against the enemies of God, be killed and be buried in the tomb of Muhammad, Abu Bakr and Umar. Jesus will be the fourth prophet to be buried beside the great Mosque in Medina where there is a grave waiting for Him. There He will await the general resurrection of the dead worldwide.

The Teaching of the Quran about subjects also covered in the Bible

There are many of these. We will only cover:

- The Devil/Satan
- Hell
- Heaven/Paradise
- Resurrection and judgement
- Forgiveness of sins
- Predestination
- Prayer
- Freedom of worship
- Islam as the only true religion

- **The Devil/Satan**

Satan's origin and works are described in sura 7:11-17: *"We created you, then formed you, then we said to the angels, 'Bow to Adam' and they bowed, except Iblis* (Satan), *the Despaired, who was not one of those who bowed. God said, 'What prevented you from bowing when I ordered you to?' He said, 'I am better than he – you made me from fire, whereas you made him from clay'. God said, 'Then get down from there; it is not for you to act insolently there, so get out, for you are being petty'. He said, 'Give me time, until they are resurrected'. God said, 'You are indeed one of those given time.' He said, 'Then since you have entrapped me, I will waylay them on your straight path. Then I will come upon them from before and behind and from their right and their left and you will not find them most grateful.' God said, 'Get out of here, despised and rejected. If any of them follow you, I will fill hell with you all'."*

- **Hell**

74:26-31 *"I will roast him in hellfire. And what will teach you what hellfire is? It leaves nothing and spares nothing, scorching the human being. Over it are nineteen and we have made only angels commanders of hell."*

88:2-7 *"Some faces will be downcast that day, labouring, exhausted, roasting in a burning fire, given to drink from a boiling spring. There will be no food for them, but bitter thorn that neither nourishes nor satisfies hunger."*

- **Paradise (Heaven)**

88:8-16 *"Some faces will be happy that day, satisfied with their endeavour, in a lofty garden, where they'll hear no-nonsense. There will be a running spring there, there will be elevated couches there and cups set out and cushions arranged and rich carpets laid."*

56:10:26 *"And those on the forefront will precede. They will be the favourites in gardens of happiness, a number of ancient and a few of those of later times; on couches inlaid with gold and jewels; reclining on them facing each other. Around them shall go immortalised youths with goblets and jugs and caps from fountains. They will suffer no headache from that and will not be exhausted and there will be fruit for them to choose from and whatever flesh of fowl they desire. And there will be large eyed maidens like treasured pearls as a reward for what they did. They will hear ….. no accusation: only the saying 'Peace, peace'."*

56:35-*38 "We have created the females as a special creation making them virgins, loving wives as companions for the company of the right."*

- **Resurrection and Judgement**

21:47 *"And we will set up the scales of justice for the day of resurrection, so no soul will be mistreated at all: even not as much as the weight of a mustard seed. We will bring* (it) *out and we are quite capable of taking account."*

"The future" forms a very large part of the teaching of the Quran, especially in the early suras that reflect Muhammad's early preaching in Mecca. There are lengthy accounts of the resurrection in suras 75; 81:1-19; 82; 83:4-20; 84:1-19. The following is an extract from 81:1-14:

"When the sun is rolled up and when the stars fall lustreless and when the mountains are blown away … and when the wild beasts are herded and when oceans are flooded (sea levels rise?) *and when the souls are matched* (with their bodies) *and when the infant girl who was buried is asked for what offence she was killed and when the pages are opened and when the sky is stripped and when the blaze* (hell) *is fired up and when the garden* (paradise) *is drawn near, each soul will know what it has brought about."*

- **Forgiveness**

There is very little in the Quran about forgiveness. From what is mentioned it is clear that it is regarded as a quite arbitrary act of God which has little, if any, moral basis and requires no act of redemption or reconciliation. Here are a few quotes – nearly all – on this subject.

4:48 *"God does not forgive idolatry, but forgives anything else for whomever God wills. And whoever associates anything with God has concocted a monstrous wrong."*

4:116 *"God does not forgive deification of anyone or anything, but forgives all else for whomever God wills."*

35:7 *"For those who scoffed, there is intense agony, while for those who believed and did good works, there is forgiveness and tremendous reward."*

- **Predestination/Fate**

This is very closely linked with forgiveness.

35:8 *"God leads astray whom he will and guides whom he pleases."*

6:39 *"God confuses whomever God will and places whomever God will on a straight path."*

14:4 *"And God leads people astray at will and guides anyone at will and God is the almighty, supremely wise."*

74:31 *"Thus God leads anyone astray at will and guides anyone at will …."*

- **Prayer**

The Muslim prays five times a day. There is no one *aya* in the Quran in which all five times of prayer are mentioned together. Prayer, for a Muslim, is a religious exercise rather than prayer as a believer knows it. It must be said in Arabic and the same forms and words are used every time. Here are some Quranic verses referring to prayer.

5:6 *"Believers, when you are going to pray, wash your faces and your hands and arms to the elbow and wipe your head and your feet to the ankles ….. and if you cannot obtain water, then get yourself fine earth or sand and wipe your faces and hands with it. God does not want to make it hard for you, but he wants to make you clean."*

This refers to the ablutions which must precede prayer and which Muhammad described as the half of faith and the key to prayer,

4:103 *"When you have concluded the prayer judiciously, then remembrance of God while standing, sitting and on your sides and when you are secure then pray regularly. For prayer at certain times is prescribed for believers."*

11:114 *"Pray regularly at the borders of the day and the approaches of the night. For good works remove bad works …."*

- **Freedom of worship**

Practice may be very different from what is meant to be believed. The Quran clearly teaches **in one place** freedom in religion.

2:256 *"There is no compulsion in religion; true direction is already distinct from error so whoever repudiates idols and believes in God has taken hold of the most reliable handle which does not break."*

But there are other parts of the Quran that contradict this statement. In sura 9 it speaks of a treaty that the Muslims had made with the Meccan polytheists. Sura 9:4 encourages the Muslims to keep the terms of the treaty. But then in 9:5 it says, *"But when the sacred months are passed, then kill idolaters wherever you find them."* And again in 9:29, *"Fight the ones among those to whom Scripture has been given who do not have faith in God and the last day."*
So Orthodox Islam still adheres to the doctrine of *Jihad*.

- **Islam is the only true religion**
  [See 3:17, 78 and 4:113-116]

3:79 *"Whoever craves other than Islam for religion, it shall surely not be accepted from him and he shall, in the next world, be of those who lose."*

4:113 *"If not for the grace and mercy of God on you, a fraction of them would have contrived to mislead you. But they only mislead themselves while they do no harm to you and God has revealed to you scripture and wisdom and taught you what you did not know. And God's grace on you is tremendous."*

Conclusion

These are some of the principle versus of the Quran dealing with matters where there is both conflict and contact with the Bible. There is much more in the Quran that deals with matters of legislation for Muslims and some stories of the prophets – some of which contradict the Bible.

There is little order or design in the Quran from the point of view of a westerner. The vital skill for Muslims is to memorise it in Arabic and then learn to chant it in Arabic. This has an almost hypnotic effect on Arabic-speaking peoples. But if we really want to understand something of the way Arabs/Muslims are conditioned to think of religion, it is our duty to gain some knowledge of the Quran so that we may be better able to share the Gospel with them.

Reading the Quran in English

There are number of translations in English. One of the earliest is by George Sale (1784). Other early translations are Rodwell (1861) and E. H. Palmer (1880). More recent translations include N. J. Dawood (1956) and A. J. Arbury (1955).

In the text above I have used the translation of Thomas Cleary into modern English. Thomas Cleary is an American with a PhD from Harvard. It may not be a very literal translation, but it is easy to read. It is published by Starlatch Press.

Arbury's translation, **The Quran Interpreted**, attempts to overcome all other translations that lose the poetic style in translation. Arbury has translated it into blank verse. The drawback of this is that it only marks every fifth verse or so and so it is difficult to look anything up quickly.

Another problem is that there are different versifications in the Quran. For example, 29:45 indicates the 29th sura and the 45th verse. But different Qurans printed in different parts of the world use different specifications. So if you can't find a verse, look in the context about four or five verses before or after.

Respect for the Quran

56:77-79 *"That this is indeed a notable Quran, in a book kept hidden which none touches save the purified."*

These verses are written on the flyleaf of most Arabic Qurans. Usually Muslims will have gone through a series of ritual ablutions before they pick up Quran. So when visiting an Arab home never touch the Quran. In your home, if you mark/underline anything in your Quran keep it hidden. Never put your copy of the Quran on the floor or in a pile of other books in a place where a Muslim could see it.

This is very different from our attitude to the Bible. We are cleansed by. We don't have to be purified before touching it.

I think it is true that the Quran never suggests that the Bible has been corrupted. Nor does it claim to replace the Bible as God's final edition of revelation. It clearly says in several places (3:3; 4:47; 6:92; 10:37) that the purpose of the Quran is to **confirm** the Bible. In fact it commands Muslims to believe and to practice the "previous Scriptures" (2:2-5, 121, 136) and it commands Christians to hold fast to their Scriptures (5:71). In sura 10:94 speaking to Muhammad, God says, *"If you are in doubt as to what we* (God) *have revealed to you, then ask those who were reading the Book* (the Bible) *from before you."*

A comparison of the Bible and the Quran is very rarely productive. It leads to frustration and the alienation of Muslims from the Lord Jesus. We need to use the Quran to show that the Lord Jesus was much more than a prophet.