

GOD'ED?

The Case for Islam as the Completion of Revelation

by Laurence B. Brown, MD

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Lines lead from the very first Jewish Christianity to the seventh century, indeed to Islam. . . . The analogies between the Qur'anic picture of Jesus and a Christology with a Jewish-Christian stamp are perplexing. These parallels are irrefutable and call for more intensive historical and systematic reflection.

—Hans Küng, *Islam, Past, Present and Future*
(2007, One World Publications. pp. 37, 44)

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– Notes on Scriptural Sources and Translations –

Biblical quotes in the following work, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the New King James Version. The reason for selecting this version of the Bible does not relate to the degree of scriptural fidelity, which is debatable, but rather to the popularity of the text. In English-speaking countries, the 1611 edition of the King James Version is the most widely read translation of the Bible. The *New King James Version* (NKJV) grew from an effort to render the 1611 translation more accessible to modern readers, tossing the *thees* and *thous* out the window. Unfortunately, little effort has been made to reconcile differences between the 1611 King James Version and the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus codices, which were discovered two centuries afterward and contain the oldest and most authoritative New Testament manuscripts found to date. Now that they are available, one can reasonably expect to see their influence upon more modern translations, but this is not the case in the New King James Version, which retains verses and passages in conflict with the most ancient and respected New Testament manuscripts. Therefore, while this book predominantly cites the New King James Version in the interest of satisfying the Protestant majority of Western Christianity, a complementary version is employed where greater scholastic accuracy is required.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) fills this gap. Like its predecessor, the Revised Standard Version (RSV), the NRSV is an ecumenical collaboration, reflected in its three separate Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox editions. More importantly, the NRSV reflects modern biblical scholarship hitherto unavailable. Indeed, the dust had barely been blown off the Dead Sea Scrolls when the RSV translation of the Old Testament was first published in 1946. For these reasons, the NRSV has effectively replaced the Revised Standard Version and enjoys the broadest acceptance of all Bible translations.

Quotations from the *World Bibliography of Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an* (hereafter TMQ), unless otherwise noted, are taken from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary*. Where more exacting translation is required, those of Saheeh International or of Muhammad Al-Hilali and Muhammad Khan (i.e., *The Noble Qur'an*) are employed.

Those who question the use of multiple translations need to understand that no language, and most especially one as complex as Arabic, can be translated with complete accuracy. As Professor A. Guillaume stated, "The Qur'an is one of the world's classics which cannot be translated without grave loss."¹

Hence the need for multiple translations, for no single translation can adequately convey the meaning of the original.

– Introduction –

Life is rather like a tin of sardines—we're all of us looking for the key.
—Alan Bennett, *Beyond the Fringe*²

This is the second of two books devoted to an analysis of the three Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As stated in the first book, *MisGod'ed*, the goals of this analysis are to define the valid links in the chain of revelation, trace this chain to its conclusion, and in the process expose the faithful and unfaithful (i.e., the “God’ed” and “mis-God’ed”) from among those who claim divine guidance. I assume readers have already finished the first book in the series, but for those who haven’t, *MisGod'ed* defined the differences between the Judaic, Christian, and Islamic understandings of God, analyzed the doctrinal differences that separate Christianity from Islam, and exposed the weaknesses of Judeo-Christian scripture and dogma. With regard to the latter, many of these weaknesses have become compounded, such as when false tenets of Christian faith were derived from scribal errors or scriptural forgeries. In other cases, illegitimate tenets of Christian faith were derived from non-biblical sources, which, of course, means scripture had little or nothing to do with them. Where elements of Christian canon *were* derived from biblical sources, it is shocking to find Paul’s teachings given priority over those of Jesus Christ, especially when the two teachings openly conflict.

This unreliability of Judeo-Christian sources forces many sincere seekers to look elsewhere for guidance. Hence this second volume in the series. Many who question institutionalized Jewish or Christian dogma find their logical objections opposed by the fiery emotion that accompanies blind indoctrination.

Not so with Islam.

In the words of Margaret Nydell, “They [i.e., Arab Muslims] are secure in their belief about the completeness of Islam, since it is accepted as the third and final refinement of the two previously revealed religions, Judaism and Christianity.”³

Many find the Islamic approach to religion refreshing, for Islam condemns blind indoctrination and demands derivation of religious truths from foundational evidence. Islam teaches accepted beliefs, to be sure, but it also claims not to overstep the boundaries of reason. Objective study is expected to reveal the chain of revelation and expose the unacceptable, ungodly elements of all scriptures and philosophies superseded by the revelation of the Holy Qur’an. Those who agree with this opinion recognize “submission to the will of God” as the only code of life acceptable to the Creator, and discover the teachings of Islam not only in the Holy Qur’an, but also in the scriptures that preceded it.

The Islamic claim is that sincere seekers should not feel intimidated, for Islam is nothing more than a revival and confirmation of the teachings of all the prophets. As stated in the Holy Qur’an, “This Qur’an is not such as can be produced by other than

Allah; on the contrary, it is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it, and a fuller explanation of the Book—wherein there is no doubt—from the Lord of the Worlds” (TMQ 10:37). On the other hand, Jewish and Christian institutions might feel very much threatened, for Islam exposes the false foundations upon which these institutions were constructed—foundations that, more often than not, were fabricated from followers’ teachings in preference to those of the prophets themselves.

How did this happen? According to Islam, in the days of oral tradition, Allah (i.e., God) sent a prophet to every nation. But when Allah gifted mankind with written language, the books of scripture supplanted the need for such a plethora of prophets. Revelation reached subsequent generations through the combination of oral tradition, written scripture, and religious men and women who served as pious examples to their communities.

God reportedly gifted mankind with a series of scriptures, having revealed the *suhuf* (“sheets”) to Abraham, the *zaboor* (psalms) to David, the *tawraat* (Torah) to Moses, the *injeel* (gospel) to Jesus, and the Qur’an to Muhammad. Each book replaced the preceding record once the pristine message of God’s revelation became sufficiently adulterated to warrant correction.

This scenario might sound familiar, for history is no stranger to the numerous individuals who altered or selectively interpreted revelation in accordance with deviant desires. With regard to these individuals, Allah teaches, “There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues, (as they read) you would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book; and they say, ‘That is from Allah,’ but it is not from Allah: it is they who tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it!” (TMQ 3:78), and “Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: ‘This is from Allah,’ to traffic with it for a miserable price!—woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby” (TMQ 2:79).

The historical result is that a common theme runs throughout the scriptural threads of the Abrahamic religions. As discussed in *MisGod’ed*, both Old and New Testaments bear undeniable earmarks of corruption. And yet a common creed courses through the revelation chain of the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Holy Qur’an. All three books teach divine unity and command adherence to God’s commandments. The deviations crept in when the job of recording, translating, or canonizing fell into the hands of those who sought to design religion closer to their hearts’ desire.

Consider, for example, the Psalms of David. If anyone believes that what remains in the hands of man is a complete and unadulterated book of guidance, capable of standing on its own merit, they had better have another read. Consider next the Old Testament, which is sufficiently riddled with errors to render the entire work suspect. Then consider the New Testament, which excluded anywhere between an estimated 250 and 2,000 non-canonical acts, epistles and gospels (which were discarded and burned with only a handful of “apocryphal” survivors).^{4(EN)} One wonders about the character of the men who made *that* editing choice, their intention and religious orientation, and their willingness to compromise scriptural truth in support of group ideology.

And then we have the renowned expert of textual criticism, Professor Bart D. Ehrman, telling us that scholars estimate the number of New Testament manuscript variants in the hundreds of thousands, some estimating as high as 400,000.⁵ In Ehrman’s now famous words, “There are more variations among our manuscripts than there are

words in the New Testament.”⁶

So where does this leave the seeker of religious truth, if not searching for the final, unadulterated book of God’s revelation? And could that final revelation be the Holy Qur’an? I leave all readers to answer that question themselves, based upon the evidence that follows.

Lastly, the problem with heavily referenced works such as this is that the reader doesn’t always know whether it’s worth flipping pages to read the endnotes. To solve this problem, endnotes containing explanatory text are denoted by the endnote number followed by (EN), like this, ^{36(EN)} which means, “Endnote number 36: Explanatory Note.” Endnote numbers lacking the (EN) denotation contain purely bibliographical information.

PART I: THE HOLY QUR'AN

*When Satan makes impure verses,
Allah sends a divine tune to cleanse them.*
—George Bernard Shaw, *The Adventures of the
Black Girl in Her Search for God*

1: A Brief History of the Holy Qur'an

One reason that history repeats itself is that so many people were not listening the first time.

—Margaret Hussey

The Holy Qur'an was revealed at the beginning of the seventh century, approximately six hundred years following the ministry of Jesus Christ. Muslims contend that, word for word, the revelation was placed in the mind and mouth of the prophet Muhammad during the last twenty-three years of his life. Conversely, nonbelievers charge Muhammad with a full rapsheet of false prophecy. Claims of scriptural plagiarism, deception, lying, and delusional thinking have all been advanced, as has the patronizing view of Muhammad having been a man of extraordinary intelligence and insight, but nothing more. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that Muhammad was epileptic, and the Holy Qur'an is a compilation of his mutterings while in the throes of seizure.

Perhaps this is due to recorded descriptions of Muhammad's altered appearance while receiving revelation. His beloved wife, A'ishah, noted that he broke out in a sweat when receiving revelation, even on a cold day. Those who seek to summarily execute Muhammad's character can fashion whatever garment of conclusions suits their taste from such scraps of evidence. However, those more circumspect might consider an altered appearance not just excused, but expected. What, after all, should we expect to read from the face of any mortal confronted with the spiritual assault of direct revelation?

Those who have experienced the pounding pulse, crawling skin, rising hair, spinal chill, and quickening of senses that accompany a spiritual anomaly can easily imagine the angel of revelation to elicit greater shock. Certainly a focused attention, a sweat on the brow, a blank stare would in no way exceed expectations. Far more unreasonable would be to assume that any mortal could converse with the angel of revelation in casual and comfortable terms—say, over a cappuccino and biscotti at one's local café. Many people break out in a sweat simply facing their boss. Just how much tighter their nerves might be stretched should they face the Creator of *all* bosses is hard to predict. Furthermore, anybody who has witnessed *grand mal* seizures knows epileptics do not produce intelligible speech, and cannot communicate during a seizure or even during the recovery of senses that follows. As W. Montgomery Watt comments,

Opponents of Islam have often asserted that Muhammad had epilepsy, and that therefore his religious experiences had no validity. As a matter of fact, the symptoms described are not identical with those of epilepsy, since that disease leads to physical and mental degeneration, whereas Muhammad was in the fullest possession of his faculties to the very

end. But, even if the allegation were true, the argument would be completely unsound and based on mere ignorance and prejudice; such physical concomitants neither validate nor invalidate religious experience.⁷

Hartwig Hirschfeld, a man never short of slanders against the Qur'an, a man who exposed his prejudice in the preface to his *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran* with the words, "The *Qoran*, the text-book of Islam, is in reality nothing but a counterfeit of the Bible,"⁸ nonetheless concluded,

What remains now of epileptic or hysterical influence on the origin of Islam? Absolutely nothing. Never has a man pronounced a sentence with more circumspection and consciousness than Muhammad did in the *iqra'* [the 96th *surah*, or chapter, of the Qur'an]. Should he have proclaimed it with nothing but prophetic enthusiasm, he must have been the greatest genius that ever lived.⁹

Of course, Muslims claim Muhammad pronounced the entire Qur'an, Surah (i.e., chapter) Al-'Alaq (commonly known as the *Iqra' Surah*) included, completely devoid of circumspection, for he only repeated what was revealed to him. Hirschfeld, though in clear disagreement with the Muslim viewpoint, nonetheless dismissed the charge of epilepsy as a blatant slander.

Delusional thinking should also be dismissed, for Muhammad did not appear to fully comprehend his first experience of revelation. So traumatic was his initial encounter with the angel Gabriel that Muhammad required convincing. As per the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Mohammed himself was frightened, incredulous, and unsure of the meaning of the experience. It required persuasion from his wife and friends before he was convinced and believed that he had actually received a revelation from God."¹⁰

Deluded people readily believe their delusions. That is what the word implies: a readiness to accept the implausible due to some warpage in the thought process. Furthermore, a significant period of time passed (some say as little as forty days, others as much as two years) between Muhammad's first and second revelation. Now, a deluded person's mind summons up bizarre ideas on a frequent basis. That is the nature of those who are psychologically disturbed—their bent reasoning does not spontaneously straighten out for a couple of days, much less a week, much less forty days or more. Such is also the case with charlatans and pathologic liars, who seem incapable of turning off their deceptions, which eventually become recognized in any case.

History having cleared Muhammad of the charges of delusion, lying and deception, no true scholar entertains such slanders. For example, Thomas Carlyle commented,

How he (Muhammad) was placed with Kadijah, a rich widow, as her steward, and traveled in her business, again to the fairs of Syria; how he managed all, as one can well understand, with fidelity, adroitness; how her gratitude, her regard for him grew: the story of their marriage is altogether a graceful intelligible one, as told us by the Arab authors. He

was twenty-five; she forty, though still beautiful. He seems to have lived in a most affectionate, peaceable, wholesome way with this wedded benefactress; loving her truly, and her alone. It goes greatly against the impostor-theory, the fact that he lived in this entirely unexceptionable, entirely quiet and commonplace way, till the heat of his years was done. He was forty before he talked of any mission from Heaven. All his irregularities, real and supposed, date from after his fiftieth year, when the good Kadijah died. All his “ambition,” seemingly, had been, hitherto, to live an honest life; his “fame,” the mere good-opinion of neighbours that knew him, had been sufficient hitherto. Not till he was already getting old, the prurient heat of his life all burnt out, and *peace* growing to be the chief thing this world could give him, did he start on the “career of ambition;” and, belying all his past character and existence, set up as a wretched empty charlatan to acquire what he could now no longer enjoy! For my share, I have no faith whatever in that.

Ah no: this deep-hearted Son of the Wilderness, with his beaming black eyes, and open social deep soul, had other thoughts in him than ambition. A silent great soul; he was one of those who cannot but be in earnest; whom Nature herself has appointed to be sincere. . . . We will leave it altogether, this impostor-hypothesis, as not credible; not very tolerable even, worthy chiefly of dismissal by us.¹¹

With regard to other attempts to disqualify the revelation Muhammad claimed, we must turn to an analysis of the Qur’an itself.

To begin with, the word *Qur’an* does not refer to a book, but to a revelation. Islamic tradition holds that this revelation was transmitted verbally to the prophet Muhammad by the angel of revelation, Gabriel. And so it has been maintained—as an oral tradition preserved to this day in the hearts and minds of devout *hafith* (memorizers, or “protectors” of the Qur’an), whose number in the present day is conservatively estimated to be no less than thirty million.

The Qur’an was also recorded by scribes, who faithfully transcribed each element of revelation at the time it was revealed. Unlike the New Testament, whose earliest books were written decades following Jesus’ ministry, the Holy Qur’an is the only book of scripture recorded at the time of revelation and preserved unchanged to the present day. Writing material was scarce, so the Holy Qur’an was originally recorded on palm leaves, sheets of leather, shoulder blades of large animals, and whatever else was immediately available. This bulky and inconvenient record was commissioned by Abu Bakr (the first Caliph)¹²(EN—Explanatory Note, as opposed to a bibliographical reference) to be copied and compiled into an official *mushaf* (book) roughly two years after Muhammad’s death.

This project was overseen by Zaid ibn Thabit, one of Muhammad’s faithful scribes. Between four and eight copies were completed during the caliphate of Uthman, and each copy was dedicated to one of the territories of the Islamic world. Two of these books still exist—one in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, the other in Istanbul, Turkey—and continue to serve as templates. Any Qur’an, anywhere in the world, can be authenticated against these “originals” to demonstrate the integrity and preservation of the sacred book

of Islam. It is this very preservation that many consider a miraculous proof of the sanctity of the Holy Qur'an. Dr. Laura Vaglieri adds this element of authenticity to her list of evidence: "We have still another proof of the divine origin of the Quran in the fact that its text has remained pure and unaltered through the centuries from the day of its delivery until today . . ." ¹³

Professor Arthur J. Arberry, Professor of Arabic at Cambridge University from 1947 to 1969, contributes: "Apart from certain orthographical modifications of the originally somewhat primitive method of writing, intended to render unambiguous and easy the task of reading the recitation, the Koran as printed in the twentieth century is identical with the Koran as authorized by Uthman more than 1300 years ago." ¹⁴ This opinion is not new. Sir William Muir, the nineteenth-century Orientalist and biographer of Muhammad, penned the following: "The recension of Othman has been handed down to us unaltered. . . . There is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text." ¹⁵

Whereas a more contemporary opinion can be summed up in the words of Adrian Brockett,

The transmission of the Qur'an after the death of Muhammad was essentially static, rather than organic. There was a single text, and nothing significant, not even allegedly abrogated material, could be taken out nor could anything be put in. This applied even to the early caliphs. . . . The transmission of the Qur'an has always been oral, just as it has always been written. ¹⁶

Tens of thousands of *sahaba* (Muslims who lived and interacted with the prophet Muhammad) unanimously approved the written record of the Holy Qur'an. All of these *sahaba* had memorized portions of the Qur'an and many were *hafith*, having memorized the Qur'an in its entirety. When the Qur'an was first compiled into a book, many *sahaba* possessed personal copies of their own recording. Many of these copies were incomplete and others (such as those of Abdullah ibn Masud, Ubay ibn Kab and Ibn Abbas), while correct in one reading, did not leave room for the multiple readings that constitute one of the miracles of the Qur'an. ^{17(EN)} Consequently, these partial records were not acknowledged, *even by their possessors*, as having been either complete or authoritative.

The only written record of the Qur'an to be accepted by unanimous approval was the officially adopted *mushaf* compiled by Zaid ibn Thabit and commissioned by Abu Bakr. To prevent confusion and the possibility of division in future generations, all other personal copies were voluntarily turned in and, along with the remnants of the bones, animal skins, and papyrus etched with the scripture, destroyed. Had this not been done, future generations may have fallen prey to ignorance or pride, preferring one of the incomplete works passed down in a family or tribe to the true and complete revelation. Tribal solidarity and religious schism almost certainly would have resulted. The pious *sahaba* appear to have recognized and eliminated this risk by preserving only the complete revelation, discarding the bits and pieces which, at the very least, could have become sources of contention.

Muslims are fond of pointing out that not a single one of Muhammad's contemporaries disagreed with the text of the official *mushaf*. Not a single *sahaba*

claimed a passage was left out or a non-Qur'anic passage inserted. Most importantly, the texts that were gathered and destroyed were *incomplete* records and not *differing* records. The possessors voluntarily relinquished their copies, because the *mushaf* compiled by Zaid ibn Thabit was comprehensive: there simply were no accurate records unrepresented therein. Furthermore, as stated above, the Qur'an has primarily been preserved not in writing, but in the memories of the faithful. Memorizers cross-checked and confirmed the official *mushaf*, and validated its completeness and accuracy. Not a single *hafith* dissented. And they numbered in the thousands.

The existence of even a few memorizers of the Qur'an after 1,400 years is extraordinary, but the existence of tens of millions? That . . . well, that seems miraculous.

According to contemporary census statistics, there are a billion Christians and many millions of Jews in the world, but not one of them holds the original scripture of their religion in memory. A rare rabbi might have memorized the Torah—not as it was revealed, but as it was reconstructed roughly two centuries following the destruction of the original, during the sacking of the Temple of Solomon by the conquering Babylonian empire in 586 BC. The only known version of the Old Testament, whether in memory or in print, contains the ungodly errors discussed in depth in my previous book, *MisGod'ed*.

Moreover, it is an *extremely* rare Christian who has memorized the entire New Testament, in the translation of just one of the thousands of versions known to exist. Even rarer, if not completely nonexistent, is the Christian who has memorized one of the 5,700 extant Greek manuscripts. But nowhere in the world and nowhere in history has anyone ever been known to have memorized the original Gospel of Jesus—simply because, as far as we know, it no longer exists. If it *did* exist, the Christian world would cease struggling to rectify the hundreds of thousands of variations in their extant Greek manuscripts, and would face the world with the uncorrupted original.

The Qur'an, then, is unique. It's the only book of scripture recorded at the time of revelation and maintained in the purity of the original to the present day. There may be different translations into non-Arabic languages, but there is only one original. Hence, there is no confusion such as exists with the many versions of the Bible. There is no frustration, such as results from lacking a definitive original scripture. There is no uncertainty, such as wondering what truths are sequestered from the public eye in the private library of the Vatican or in the fiercely guarded Qumran (Dead Sea) scrolls. No one need wonder how much the predominantly *Koiné* Greek differs from the spoken Aramaic of the prophet Jesus. Should the errors of translation from Aramaic and ancient Hebrew to *Koiné* Greek have been as numerous and grave as the errors that occurred translating *Koiné* Greek to English, all hope of biblical accuracy should have been dismissed long ago.

One huge difference between the Bible and the Qur'an is that the Qur'an was always in the hands of the people, whereas the Bible most definitely was not. Anybody who ever wanted a Qur'an could have one. First of all, the Bible did not exist in its present form—meaning with the present table of contents—until it was canonized at the council of Trent in the year 367 CE. Even then, it was strictly maintained in the Latin Vulgate for more than a millennium. And when John Wycliffe's English translation of the New Testament in 1382 was followed by that of William Tyndale (completed by Miles Coverdale and edited by John Rogers) and Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German (both of which were translated only as recently as the sixteenth century),

what was Tyndale's reward? Death—burned at the stake in 1536. Rogers'? Same fate, different stake, in 1555. Their predecessor, Wycliffe, escaped execution but not the fire, for the ecumenical Council of Constance condemned him *posthumously* in 1415, and his bones were exhumed and publicly burned. Had it not been for the intercession of Denmark, Miles Coverdale would have been similarly condemned. And like their authors, Wycliffe's and Tyndale's translations were publicly burned.

So for over 1500 years the Christian scriptures were available only in Greek or Latin: languages only the educated class and the more learned clergy could read, for many Catholic clergy were illiterate with regard to their own scripture. It is a sobering thought to realize that were Jesus Christ to return, even he would not be able to read either the Greek of our New Testament manuscripts or the Latin of the Catholic Vulgate, for his native tongue was Aramaic.¹⁸ Indeed, the educated class were a miniscule percentage of the population compared to today; only they could read the Bible, and then only if they had one. The combination of the great expense and scant availability of Bibles (all copied by hand), along with harsh laws prohibiting Bible possession by laity, severely curtailed their acquisition. Many of these laws prescribed death, especially for possession of translations in the vernacular or of unauthorized translations considered to be aligned with heresies, of which Protestant Bibles were considered the most offensive examples.

Not until Gutenberg's invention of moveable type in the 1450s was mass production of Bibles feasible, and not until the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was the Bible not only translated into languages of the literate laity (i.e., German and English), but mass-produced and permitted to the public.

For the first time in history, the sixteenth century witnessed the production of Bibles translated into the vernacular, together with the growth of new, non-Catholic churches endorsed by a sympathetic monarchy. Responding to the pressures of the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church produced the Douay-Rheims Bible, which presented the translation of the Latin Vulgate into English for the first time. The New Testament portion was completed in Rheims, France in 1582, and the Old Testament was completed in Douay in 1609–10. All the same, even with mass production then feasible, availability was severely constrained, for, “. . . it was calculated that there must have been about 25,000 printed Bibles in circulation in western Europe around 1515, one third of them in German, for about fifty million inhabitants; i.e. one Bible for every 2,000 souls.”¹⁹

What this means is that for over 1,500 years the common citizen could not verify the teachings of the Christian scriptures, both for lack of literacy and lack of Bibles. For an even greater period, laity could not question the canonized doctrines forced upon them for fear of a “bloodless death”—the pleasant-sounding euphemism by which burning at the stake came to be known.

Catholics argue that restriction of scriptural interpretation and religious education to the offices of the church was (and remains to this day) necessary to maintain orthodox understanding. Others argue that the church was less concerned with sheltering scripture from misinterpretation than it was with sheltering their power base and privileged position in society. Well do we know that the church believed the intricacies of the Christian mysteries were unlikely to be understood through deductive reasoning and the conclusions of laity. What is less well known is that the church did not even trust their

own scholars with biblical interpretation. As Pope Innocent III stated in 1199,

The mysteries of the faith are not to be explained rashly to anyone. Usually in fact, they cannot be understood by everyone, but only by those who are qualified to understand them with informed intelligence. . . . The depth of the divine Scriptures is such that not only the illiterate and uninitiated have difficulty understanding them, but also the educated and the gifted.²⁰

The Protestant stand, however, was that all humans were created with brains and the ability to interpret scripture for themselves. Protestants argue now, as they did in the past, that once people could freely read and study the Bible in their own language, they were able to discern biblical fact from canonized fiction. Once the errors of Catholicism were laid bare and the foundation of Catholic theology exposed as predominantly (and in many cases, entirely) non-biblical, gravitation toward Protestantism was inevitable.

Muslims take this argument one step further and assert that the shaky foundation of Christian scriptures should not drive people from one Christian sect to another, still basing beliefs upon a scriptural canon peppered with demonstrable errors and inconsistencies. Rather, they believe those seeking the truth of God should recognize the need for the Creator to have renewed His revelation.

Claiming this final revelation to be The Holy Qur'an, Muslims point out that the Qur'an was always in the hands and minds of the people. The Qur'an has been recited aloud in the daily prayers of the Muslims ever since revelation. Every year, in the month of Ramadan, the Qur'an is recited in its entirety aloud, in virtually every mosque in the world. Any Muslim listening could voice correction, but for 1,400 years there has never been so much as a single letter in dispute among orthodox (Sunni) Muslims. At the present day, that adds up to a billion unanimous votes. Amazingly enough, over time there have been many factions among the Sunni Muslims, some of them at war with one another. Uthman, the third Caliph, was assassinated while reading the Qur'an, and his dried blood is still to be seen on the pages. However, among all of these differing Muslim groups, and throughout all of these centuries, the authenticity of the Qur'an has never been questioned. Certainly the same cannot be said of the Bible. As F.F. Arbuthnot commented a century ago,

From a literary point of view, the Korân is regarded as a specimen of the purest Arabic, written in half poetry and half prose. It has been said that in some cases grammarians have adapted their rules to agree with certain phrases and expressions used in it, and that, though several attempts have been made to produce a work equal to it as far as elegant writing is concerned, none have as yet succeeded.

It will thus be seen, from the above, that a final and complete text of the Korân was prepared within twenty years after the death (A.D. 632) of Muhammad, and that this has remained the same, without any change or alteration by enthusiasts, translators, or interpolators, up to the present time. It is to be regretted that the same cannot be said of all the books of the Old and New Testaments.²¹

The Qur'an, furthermore, exists in a living language, understood by hundreds of millions of devout followers even to the present day. The Bible exists primarily in the dead language of *Koiné* Greek, with snippets of equally necrotic ancient Hebrew (not the Modern Hebrew spoken today) and Aramaic. In the entire world there are only a few scholars with partial understanding of these dead languages, and even they don't agree on translation. Evidence of the difficulty is found in the Preface to the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which was authorized by vote of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA in 1951. The RSV appears to have subsequently enjoyed the widest popular acceptance throughout the Christian world, but despite its ecumenical scholarship and global acceptance, the RSV admits,

Many difficulties and obscurities, of course, remain. Where the choice between two meanings is particularly difficult or doubtful, we have given an alternative rendering in a footnote. If in the judgement of the Committee the meaning of a passage is quite uncertain or obscure, either because of corruption in the text or because of the inadequacy of our present knowledge of the language, that fact is indicated by a note. It should not be assumed, however, that the Committee was entirely sure or unanimous concerning every rendering not so indicated.²²

Understanding of biblical manuscripts increases with each new discovery, as evidenced by the motivation of church authorities to revise the King James Version of 1611 to the American Standard Version of 1901, and subsequently to the Revised Standard Version fifty years later. The motivation for such revisions lay, as stated in the Preface of the RSV, in that the KJV suffers from "grave defects." More specifically, it contends, "The King James Version of the New Testament was based upon a Greek text that was marred by mistakes, containing the accumulated errors of fourteen centuries of manuscript copying."²³

And while understanding of the Greek New Testament continues to be refined, it is far from comprehensive at the present time, and is unlikely ever to be. In such a climate of uncertainty, mistranslation—whether deliberate, accidental, or well-intentioned—is easily passed off as accurate to those who lack the linguistic background to know better. The same is not true if the language is understood by the faithful, which is precisely the case with the Arabic language and the Holy Qur'an.

We might wonder, then, how Muslims support the assertion that the Qur'an is unique and unchanged. Unsubstantiated claims are not acceptable. Most of humanity have been asked—correction, *forced* to blind belief for too long. The sophisticated laity are tired of the appealing but unsubstantiated lines, sprinkled with the spittle of the proselytizers, and spiritually cold to the bone. Sincere seekers need a blanket of evidence to warm their convictions. Not just a cover that looks nice and cozy at a distance, but one that does the job.

What follows, then, are the myriad Qur'anic facets that stitch much of the quilt of evidence with which Muslims comfort their convictions.

2: Evidence — An Overview

When speculation has done its worst, two and two still make four.
—Samuel Johnson

The lack of references in the following discussion of Islamic history and Qur’anic constitution might seem surprising to those unfamiliar with Islamic history, but in fact are considered common knowledge among educated Muslims. Consequently, just as such well-known statements as, “The Bible is the foundational book of Christianity and contains the gospels attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John” needs no reference, neither does most of that which follows.

Nonetheless, details can be confirmed through a number of respected source books, among them *Manaahil al-‘Irfaan fee ‘Uloom al-Qur’an* by Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abd al Adheem az-Zarqaanee, *al-Madkhal li Dirasaat al-Qur’an al-Kareem* by Muhammad Abu Shahbah, and two books, both by the title of *Mabaahith fee ‘Uloom al-Qur’an*, one by Dr. Subhee al-Saalih, the other by Dr. Mannaa’ al-Qattaan. These books have yet to be translated from Arabic, but there are two excellent books in English. *‘Uloom Al-Qur’an: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur’an*, by Ahmad Von Denffer, is a basic though superficial introduction to the subject. A more scholarly and comprehensive work is *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur’aan*, by Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi.²⁴

On the other hand, the conclusions of many, if not most, non-Muslim authors are often tainted by religious prejudice. Most of these critical works rate so low in objective scholastic value as to have been cast out not only by Muslims, but by educated clergy, orientologists, and religious scholars as well, leading one author to lament,

The totally erroneous statements made about Islam in the West are sometimes the result of ignorance, and sometimes of systematic denigration. The most serious of all the untruths told about it are, however, those dealing with facts; for while mistaken opinions are excusable, the presentation of facts running contrary to the reality is not. It is disturbing to read blatant untruths in eminently respectable works written by authors who *a priori* are highly qualified.²⁵

Furthermore, many so-called “scholastic works” are discredited by the author’s own educated co-religionists. For the most part, however, the following details are simply omitted from such books, presumably because discussion of the subject is uncomfortable for those who deny the signs that seem to validate the Islamic revelation.

On the other hand, there is virtually zero disagreement throughout the Muslim world on the following subjects, and verification thereof is relatively easy considering the accuracy of historical record-keeping typical of the Islamic sciences and traditions.

Admittedly, some modern books of Muslim authorship also suffer inaccuracies, frequently from overzealous attempts to either modernize or glorify the religion. Nonetheless, the same commonly accepted elements of Qur'anic history are found to course through most such works with remarkable consistency. It is just these commonly accepted elements that will be discussed in this present work. Items of personal, sectarian, deviant (such as Ahmadi'ite, Shi'ite and Nation of Islam), or minority opinion are avoided herein, being left for those who wish to explore the less mainstream sects of Islam on their own.

3: Evidence #1 — Innate Appeal

All truth, in the long run, is only common sense clarified.

—Thomas Henry Huxley, *On the Study of Biology*

On the most superficial level, Muslims hold the truth of the Qur'an to be self-evident by the simple fact that it makes sense, precisely conforming to our inborn understanding of God and His methodology. But what religion lacks this claim? No proof satisfies all mankind, as evidenced by the fact that the world is not Muslim. However, on an individual level the proof is in the exposure. Many who read the foundational books of various religions find themselves inexplicably drawn to one specific book and the ideologies expressed therein. The Qur'an is no different. People simply have to sit down and read it.

Those who do will encounter a book of strikingly different character than those of the other Abrahamic faiths. Whereas the Old Testament is largely a book of laws, lengthy “begat” lists and dry history, the New Testament exudes spirituality while denying the reader concrete guidance on the significant issues of life. The Holy Qur'an, on the other hand, provides the foundation not only for the Islamic religion, but also for Islamic law, government, social conduct, family structure, and every facet of worldly and spiritual existence. H. G. Wells commented on the teachings of Islam as follows:

They established in the world a great tradition of dignified fair dealing, they breathe a spirit of generosity, and they are human and workable. They created a society more free from widespread cruelty and social oppression than any society had ever been in the world before. . . . It [i.e., Islam] was full of the spirit of kindness, generosity, and brotherhood; it was a simple and understandable religion; it was instinct with the chivalrous sentiment of the desert; and it made its appeal straight to the commonest instincts in the composition of ordinary men. Against it were pitted Judaism, which had made a racial hoard of God; Christianity talking and preaching endlessly now of trinities, doctrines, and heresies no ordinary man could make head or tail of; and Mazdaism, the cult of the Zoroastrian Magi, who had inspired the crucifixion of Mani. The bulk of the people to whom the challenge of Islam came did not trouble very much whether Muhammad was lustful or not, or whether he had done some shifty and questionable things; what appealed to them was that this God, Allah, he preached, was by the test of the conscience in their hearts, a God of righteousness, and that the honest acceptance of his doctrine and method opened the door wide in a world of uncertainty, treachery, and intolerable divisions to a great and increasing brotherhood of

trustworthy men on earth, and to a paradise not of perpetual exercises in praise and worship, in which saints, priests, and anointed kings were still to have the upper places, but of equal fellowship and simple and understandable delights such as their soul craved for. Without any ambiguous symbolism, without any darkening of altars or chanting of priests, Muhammad had brought home those attractive doctrines to the hearts of mankind.²⁶

The keystone of Islamic faith, as emphasized over and over again in the Holy Qur'an, is the simple message of monotheism. Muslims propose this message to have the greatest innate appeal of *all* knowledge, since the Creator instilled knowledge of His oneness and unique attributes into the mind, heart, and soul of every human being. Thus, no person (unless conditioned in life to do so) is likely to object when taught the oneness of the Creator, His many and unique names, and His perfect attributes.

With regard to the oneness of Allah, Islamic ideology is explicit on this point. Allah is One, eternal and absolute, not begotten and not begetting, without partner or co-sharer in divinity:

Say: He is Allah, The One and Only;
Allah, The Eternal, Absolute;
He begets not, nor is He begotten;
And there is none like unto Him.

(TMQ 112:1-4)

It is this clarification of Allah's uncompromised Unity to which Trinitarian Christians object, for Trinitarian ideology teaches that God is indeed One, but also three in One. Trinitarian arguments were discussed at length in my previous book, *MisGod'ed*, so here we can propose a test of innate understanding. Should we assume that convictions are comforted by embracing inherent understandings, the opposite most certainly should be true. Embracing teachings in conflict with inborn knowledge should bring stress and discomfort. Hence the test. Those living a religion that conforms to innate, God-given understanding (such as the oneness of the Creator) will be at ease explaining their convictions, for their explanation will match their audience's inherent understanding as well. On the other hand, those who attempt to explain notions that conflict with inborn knowledge will manifest frustration, both in the weakness of their arguments and in their inability to force their notions upon an audience that knows better. Resorts to emotional appeals, plays at self-righteousness and histrionics are the hallmark of those who fail in rational debate.

Secondary to creed, the Holy Qur'an presents many teachings applicable to everyday life. Manners are corrected, with an emphasis on modesty. The use of money, time, and energy is addressed, with focus on a balanced application to person, family, religion, and society. Miserliness is condemned, as is unwarranted extravagance. Even war is regulated, with laws laid down to foster honorable conflict, beginning with war being allowed only in circumstances where all other options are exhausted. Even then, Muslims are instructed not to abuse an advantage won, and to be merciful as much as the situation permits.

Fairness and equality, mercy and love are underlying Qur'anic themes that at times give way to a system of justice that is fair but harsh against those whose transgressions threaten the peace of Islamic society. No laws in the history of man have been more successful in restricting the evils of murder, rape, theft, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, alcohol, and drugs. Cheating, lying, bribery, usury, prejudice, and all forms of injustice are condemned, giving way to a social reform that, if implemented, would likely unite all mankind under the One God.

Polygamy, while practiced by only a minority of Muslims, permits a lawful avenue for those whose lusts might otherwise drive them to adultery. Women, on the other hand, are protected. Fourteen hundred years ago, Islam gave women rights to property, inheritance, religion and education—rights that were denied in Western society and Old and New Testament religions up until the twentieth century.

As the Holy Qur'an emphasizes the merits of freeing slaves, so too it frees the mind—correcting wrong beliefs and encouraging free thought. Objective truth is given priority over personal opinion, societal customs, family tradition, canonized institutional teachings, and all prejudicing outside influences. Compulsion of religion is forbidden in all circumstances. In addition, the Qur'an challenges and stimulates the intellect while soothing the spirit. In short, the Qur'an may be viewed as a “final testament,” giving mankind balanced guidance in all facets of life.

Muslims conceive the revelation to be undeniable. Non-Muslims disagree; they consider the revelation very much deniable, and profess the Muslims' claim to innate appeal false. After all, it doesn't appeal to them.

How do Muslims resolve this difficulty? Muslims believe *unprejudiced* minds will be receptive to teachings of the Holy Qur'an. Like a fertile field, open minds will best cultivate that which they were created to receive. However, most minds are very much prejudiced. By the time most Westerners learn about Islam, they have been subjected to a lifetime of anti-Islamic propaganda in social, religious and media circles. As a result, their hearts and minds are closed.

By analogy, the photon theory of light and prismatic effects on the visible spectrum will mean little or nothing to a blind person. Likewise, those whose hearts and minds are closed to Islam are not expected to appreciate Islamic evidence. But like light to a blind person, failure to perceive does not negate reality; it just won't convince those who fail to appreciate it. Those who study the message and find it a source of strength will understand the Islamic viewpoint; those who don't, won't.

Allah tells us He could have ordered mankind to all be of one mind: “If your Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one People: but they will not cease to dispute” (TMQ 11:118), but for reasons best known to Him, He didn't. The obvious implication is that God guides some and leaves others to stray, and this is exactly what the Qur'an teaches: “Truly Allah leaves to stray, whom He will; but He guides to Himself those who turn to Him in penitence” (TMQ 13:27). The fact that God guides some and not others is far from arbitrary. In fact, it's the result of each individual's actions and receptiveness, for “We send the Messengers only to give good news and to warn: so those who believe and mend (their lives), upon them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. But those who reject Our Signs, punishment shall touch them, for that they did not cease from transgressing” (TMQ 6:48–49), and “Whatever of good reaches you, is from Allah, but whatever of evil befalls you, it is from yourself” (TMQ 4:79).

In other words, God guides those who acknowledge Him, seek His guidance, and prove worthy. All others slam their own doors in the face of His guidance. That God guides only those who acknowledge Him and seek His guidance is no less understandable than the fact that teachers only instruct those who attend class, and gas station attendants only give directions to those who ask. As the Bible reports Jesus having stated, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8). Don’t ask, don’t seek and, well, what do people expect, if not to be left in the state of ignorance they themselves choose?

All this is one more link in the chain of continuity from the Old and New Testaments to the Holy Qur’an. The Old Testament teaches, “They do not know nor understand; For He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, *And* their hearts, so that they cannot understand” (Isaiah 44:18). The New Testament effectively repeats this lesson in Mark 4:11–12 and Matthew 13:11–15.

The burden of choice, then, is upon the individual. Those who seek guidance will answer the call to righteousness. Those who deny Allah will earn His wrath, but will have nobody to blame but themselves. That Allah guides those who turn to Him with sincerity is a manifestation of His mercy; that He leaves astray those who deny Him is a manifestation of His justice.

This viewpoint may seem elitist, but then so are all religions. The world is a heterogeneous mix of our-sect-is-saved-by-the-grace-of-God-and-all-others-will-burn-in-hell religious factions. Many religions paint themselves the elect of God and argue why they, and only they, will achieve salvation. Such arguments usually fall short not in reasoning why any one particular group is “saved,” the explanation of which always sounds good to those who belong, but in the inability to explain why the rest of mankind are condemned. The difference between the Islamic religion and others in this regard is that Islam provides a concrete explanation that satisfies both ends of the equation. Other religions largely fail to address this subject, and leave the outsider questioning why God would guide some and not others. The concept of an arbitrary God is simply not acceptable in the minds of most.

Muslims claim that, for those exposed to all the evidence Islam offers, one or more will appeal. Consistent with the purpose of revelation, Allah provides something from among all the evidence to convince each and every individual of the divine origin of His revelation. Recognition is easy; refusal requires obstinacy.

Hence, reward versus punishment.

4: Evidence #2 — The Language of the Qur'an

Language, as well as the faculty of speech, was the immediate gift of God.

—Noah Webster

The Holy Qur'an exists in one written form but ten different (though complementary) readings or recitations, and in seven different dialects. A person may wonder how this is possible. The answer lies in the intricacies of the Arabic language that, unlike non-Semitic languages, maintains an extraordinary flexibility owing to the fact that the alphabet does not contain short vowel letters. Short vowels, the most common vowels in Arabic, are designated by diacritical marks (distinguishing signs, like a slash or a whorl) placed above or below consonants. For example, the Arabic letter equivalent to B in English would be pronounced *ba* if a slash is above the letter, but *bi* if the slash is below the letter. Other formulations may render the letter *bu*, *baan*, *been*, *buun*, *baa*, *bii*, *buu*, *bai*, *bau*, etc.

When words are written with their diacritical marks, we readily understand their correct pronunciation and meaning. However, when Arabic is written without diacritical marks, we must rely upon context to determine each word's correct meaning, for identically spelled words can have different meanings depending upon how they are vowelled. For example, in the sentence, "A speck of dust flew into my eye," the Arabic word for "eye" can be vowelled to mean a spy, an important person or a high-ranking official, or even nobody. In fact, this one word can have over thirty meanings, including such diverse possibilities as a fountainhead of water and a capital asset. But only one meaning typically makes sense in any given context. Rarely, multiple meanings can apply, but only *extremely* rarely can all possible meanings apply in the context in which a word is written. Imagine a sentence that contains one or more words that have multiple possible meanings, with all of these meanings making sense. Now *that* is a rich language. Moreover, that is one of the miracles Muslims cite regarding the Holy Qur'an, for that is how the Qur'an is written, from beginning to end.

To begin even to grasp the complexity of this issue, we can leaf through any respected Arabic-English dictionary, such as Hans Wehr's *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. What we will find is that the overwhelming majority of Arabic words bear multiple translations. If we look up the same words in the most respected reference book, Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon*, we find the English explanation of a single Arabic word frequently runs into not just paragraphs, but *pages*.

In light of this complexity, there is little wonder that the Qur'an can exist in ten officially recognized recitations in seven different dialects. To accommodate this diversity, the original *mushaf* (book) of the Qur'an lacks diacritical marks, allowing for differences in pronunciation and meaning according to the rules of how vowel points can be assigned to the unvowelled text. What *is* astonishing, however, is that despite the

many linguistic possibilities, all recitations not only make sense, but also complement one another. Nowhere does a single sentence, much less a word, of one recitation contradict another. For example, the Arabic words for *owner* and *king* differ by only one vowel point, and yet both are appropriate descriptions of Allah. The result is that Qur'anic recitation, to a person endowed with comprehensive knowledge of Arabic, does not convey one specific lesson, but rather evokes a kaleidoscope of imagery and understanding.

Jews and Christians who find difficulty with the concept of an unvowelled scripture should recognize the common ground between the Bible and the Qur'an in this respect, for the foundational manuscripts of the Old Testament are similarly unvowelled. As per the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

Since texts traditionally omitted vowels in writing, the Masoretes^{27(EN)} introduced vowel signs to guarantee correct pronunciation. Among the various systems of vocalization that were invented, the one fashioned in the city of Tiberias, Galilee, eventually gained ascendancy. In addition, signs for stress and pause were added to the text to facilitate public reading of the Scriptures in the synagogue.²⁸

Similarly, modern books of the Qur'an are predominantly recorded in the *Hafs 'an 'Aasim* recitation, which has become the most popular of the many accepted recitations among Muslims. One important difference between these two examples is that the Masoretic text of the Old Testament “gained ascendancy” from “among the various systems of vocalization that were invented” (and let's pause over that word, *invented*), whereas the *Hafs 'an 'Aasim* recitation of the Holy Qur'an is one of the recognized recitations of the original.

As discussed in the previous volume, *MisGod'ed*, neither of the original revelations sent down to Moses or Jesus are known to exist, but like the Arabic of the Qur'an, both were written in Semitic languages (ancient Hebrew for the Torah of Moses; Aramaic—Jesus' native language—for the Gospel of Jesus). Hence, were the original Gospel of Jesus available, we would expect the text to be unvowelled. But because the original Torah and Gospel of Jesus are *not* available, Old and New Testament translators have attempted to compensate for this deficiency. The Preface of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible notes the following, with regard to the Old Testament: “The vowel signs, which were added by the Masoretes, are accepted also in the main, but where a more probable and convincing reading can be obtained by assuming different vowels, this has been done.”²⁹

Oh. Well, doesn't *that* give us a warm and comfortable feeling, considering our salvation hangs in the balance.

The room for textual manipulation is obvious, and the thought teases the imagination: prior to standardization by the Masoretes, the Jewish Bible lacked punctuation marks, vowels, capital letters, and even word spaces. Just for fun, we can run the words of any sentence in any language together, reduce capital letters to small case, remove punctuation, vowel letters and diacritical marks, and then see how easily this model of the original message can be corrupted.

For example, the teaching, “God is One” would be written *gdsn*, which could be

re-expanded to “God is One.” However, *gdsn* could just as easily be misinterpreted to mean “Good son,” “Good sin,” “Go do sin,” “God’s son” (following the rules of Semitic languages a single consonant, such as the S in this case, can be doubled), or even “Sun-God” (in Semitic languages, a modifier follows its noun. Hence, *gdsn* could be expanded to “God-Sun,” the Semitic equivalent of “Sun-God” in English).

In this manner, we could easily misinterpret or manipulate the condensed *gdsn* from orthodoxy to heresy, and those reading the translation would be clueless to our corruption. How much more easily could we (or, more to the point, the Bible translators) misinterpret entire pages of Old and New Testament manuscripts closer to our desires than to the actual meaning? And yet, the same can not be done with the Holy Qur’an, for at no time was the scripture of Islam ever lost; the original was always available as a primary source by which to identify errors.

Punctuation is critical as well, as pointed out by F. F. Arbuthnot, who relates the amusing story of a British Member of Parliament forced to issue a retraction after calling another member a liar. The member worded his retraction as, “I said the gentleman lied, it is true; and I am sorry for it.” However, the following morning the retraction appeared in the local paper as, “I said the gentleman lied. It is true; and I am sorry for it.”³⁰ A reversal in meaning can result from a mistake in a single punctuation point in such circumstances.

We can fairly question, then, who determined what constituted a “more probable and convincing reading” of the relatively featureless, unvowelled, unpunctuated, uncapitalized Jewish scriptures? Was that decision based upon doctrinal prejudice or objective research? And if the vowel system of the Masoretes was trustworthy enough to be accepted as the scriptural authority for an entire religion, why the need to assume “different vowels” in certain places in order to obtain “a more probable and convincing reading”? Lastly, why restrict audience awareness of these controversies to the rarely read preface rather than note them where they occur in the text?

The answer to this last question is easy—the controversies are too numerous. Entire books have been written regarding these disputes, and to include these discussions in the text of the Jewish Bible would more than double its size. It would also discourage the readership. Even blind faith has trouble overlooking too many controversies.

The conditions rightfully provoke no small degree of suspicion on the part of those who recognize the potential for adjusting translation to match doctrinal preference. The Preface to the RSV continues as follows: “Sometimes it is evident that the text has suffered in transmission, but none of the versions provides a satisfactory restoration. Here we can only follow the best judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text.”³¹

The fact that the most universally accepted Bible in history admits to the text having “suffered in transmission” does not necessarily imply any fault of modern scholarship, but it does imply an uncertain foundation.

So while both the Bible and the Qur’an were recorded in consonantal texts, the two vary greatly in reliability. The Qur’an was revealed and maintained as an oral tradition until the present day, so pronunciation and meaning have never been in question. The various readings of the Qur’an are all complementary, unlike the Bible where the “more probable and convincing reading” seeks definition, since the various verbal possibilities differ significantly in meaning. The Qur’an has been maintained

unchanged to the present day, whereas (to quote again from the RSV Preface) “for the New Testament we have a large number of Greek manuscripts, preserving many variant forms of the text.”³² No single one of which is authoritative.

The context in which the literary miracle of the Qur’an was revealed is important in this regard, for each prophet appears to have been endowed with a sign that was uniquely impressive to those to whom he was sent. The skill most revered by ancient Egyptians was magic, and that most respected by Jews, doctoring. No surprise, then, that Moses was given miracles that stunned Pharaoh’s court sorcerers into submission. Equally, there should be no surprise that Jesus was given the miracle of healing.

So what was the highest skill and most respected art of the Arabs? Poetry, and eloquence of the spoken word. The complexity of the Arabic language stems from a profusion of dialects that, “could diversify the fourscore names of honey, the two hundred of a serpent, the five hundred of a lion, the thousand of a sword, at a time when this copious dictionary was entrusted to the memory of an illiterate people.”³³ So devoted were the Arabs to the impact of the spoken word that they held annual festivals, described as follows:

Thirty days were employed in the exchange, not only of corn and wine, but of eloquence and poetry. The prize was disputed by the generous emulation of the bards; the victorious performance was deposited in the archives of princes and emirs, and we may read, in our own language, the seven original poems which were inscribed in letters of gold, and suspended in the temple of Mecca.³⁴

R. Bosworth Smith comments,

What the Olympic Games did for Greece in keeping up the national feeling, as distinct from tribal independence, in giving a brief cessation from hostilities, and acting as a literary center, that the annual fairs at Okaz and Mujanna were to Arabia. Here tribes made up their dissensions, exchanged prisoners of war, and, most important of all, competed with one another in extempore poetic contests. Even in the “times of ignorance,” each tribe produced its own poet-laureate; and the most ready and the best saw his poem transcribed in letters of gold, or suspended on the wall of the entrance of the Kaaba, where it would be seen by every pilgrim who might visit the most sacred place in the country.³⁵

In short, the Arabs liked their poetry.

The consistency plays out, for as the miracles of Moses overwhelmed the magic of Pharaoh’s sorcerers, and as Jesus’ ministrations humiliated the physicians of his time, Muhammad transmitted a revelation composed in the most beautiful Arabic ever known to man. One passage of the Holy Qur’an can reduce hardened desert dwellers to tears, while another can elevate the spirits of the faithful to heights of ecstasy. The novelist James A. Michener, in his essay, “Islam: The Misunderstood Religion,” writes:

The Koran is probably the most often read book in the world, surely the most often memorized, and possibly the most influential in the daily life of the people who believe in it. Not quite so long as the New Testament, written in an exalted style, it is neither poetry nor ordinary prose, yet it possesses the ability to arouse its hearers to ecstasies of faith.³⁶

The miraculous beauty of the Qur'an is so affecting as to have spawned a plethora of testimonies. Most convincing is the historical record of the *enemies* of Muhammad, many of whom were so drawn by the beauty of the Qur'an that they would sneak at night through the inky desert darkness to eavesdrop on nighttime recitations. On one such occasion, a number of these men bumped into one another on the way home from the reading. Identifying one another as the *leaders* of Muhammad's enemies (Abu Sufyan and Abu Jahl being two of the three), they vowed never to return. The next night they ran into one another under the same circumstances again. This time they *really* swore not to return, pledging an oath by their idols in testimony to their sincerity. The next night they collided in the darkness once again.³⁷ Muslims regard this story as evidence of the irresistible beauty of the Holy Qur'an—a beauty so affecting that it drew the ears and imaginations of even the most hardened of detractors, the staunchest of enemies.

The conversion of Umar, one of the greatest warriors of his time and, up to the moment of his conversion, a greatly feared opponent of Islam, is frequently cited. Setting out to kill Muhammad, he was diverted to his sister's home where, upon hearing the recitation of just one *surah*, he converted on the spot.

Other exemplary cases are to be found in the examples of Unays al-Ghifaaree and Al-Kindii, two of the greatest Muslim poets of Muhammad's time. Unays al-Ghifaaree had this to say after his first encounter with Muhammad: "I have met a man of your religion in Makkah who claims to be sent by Allah. The people claim that he is a poet, or a sorcerer, or a magician. Yet, I have heard the words of sorcerers, and these words in no way resemble those uttered by a sorcerer. And I also compared his words to the verses of a poet, but such words cannot be uttered by a poet. By Allah, he is the truthful, and they are the liars!"³⁸ Al-Kindii, when asked to compose a passage like that found in the Qur'an, stated that it simply wasn't possible. Al-Kindii indicated that he would need to write books in order to convey the meaning of just a few lines of the Qur'an. His inability to match the beauty and content of the Qur'an is held by Muslims as testimony to the divine nature of Allah's challenge to mankind: "And if you [Arab pagans, Jews and Christians] are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down (i.e. the Qur'an) to Our slave (the prophet Muhammad), then produce a *surah* [chapter] of the like thereof and call your witnesses (supporters and helpers) besides Allah, if you are truthful" (TMQ 2:23). The reader is reminded that the "We" and "Our" in the above quote are English translations of the "royal plural" (as discussed in *MisGod'ed*) and not the plural of numbers. Having said that, the quote benefits from closer examination.

Allah is recorded as having challenged mankind no less than five times to attempt to match the Qur'an. The first challenge (in order of revelation, not in the order presented in the chapters) was to write an entire book equal to that of the Qur'an (*surahs* 17:88 and 52:33–34). When the greatest poets of the Arabic language could not produce even a single contestant, Allah issued a second challenge to write ten chapters the like of the

Qur'an (*surah* 11:13). When the Arabian nation hung its head in abject literary humiliation, Allah reduced the challenge to producing one lone *surah* the like of that found in the Qur'an (*surah* 10:38, followed by *surah* 2:23). For 1,400 years native Arabic-speaking Jews, Christians, pagans, and atheists have struggled to disprove the Qur'an for religious, political, and personal reasons. And Arabic is their native tongue.

Something seems almost surreal about this scenario, for the shortest *surah* in the Qur'an is Al-Kauthar, number 108, weighing in at a power-packed, meaning-filled three lines. *Three*. Three lines totaling a scant ten words. So why has mankind been unable to write three lines equal or better for the past 1,400 years? Why has mankind been unable to "produce a *surah* of the like thereof"?

Muslims point out that human standards are easily broken. Seemingly impossible barriers are routinely transgressed, unbeatable records beaten, and previously unimagined successes achieved. The four-minute mile has been broken, the speed of sound shattered, the moon trod upon, the atom split, and electrons frozen. But why has all of mankind been unable to write the like of the Qur'an? After 1,400 years? It's not for lack of time to think about it, that's for sure.

Al-Waleed ibn al-Mughera, a lifelong antagonist of Islam and a poet in his own right, admitted, "By Allah, I heard a speech (the Qur'an) from Muhammad now; it is not from men or jinn (spirits)—it is like sweetness. It is like the highest fruit in a tree growing in rich soil, and nothing can be above it."³⁹ When the best poets and the most avowed enemies admit the supremacy of the revelation, such opinions should be respected.

While some assert that Muhammad was just a very great poet, Muslims point out that one character trait of great artists is that when they finish cutting their ears off, they fret over their dissatisfaction with their work. Would a person expect Beethoven, who struggled mightily over his masterpieces, as his heavily marked-over scores attest, to challenge the world to write better music? Or would Michelangelo, who shattered his statues to shards because he felt they weren't good enough, challenge the world to sculpt a better statue? Such a bold challenge could only be made, with confidence, by the One Who orders creation and knows He will never allow the challenge to be met. And so, 1,400 years later, as noted by numerous authors, the challenge still stands. Professor A. J. Arberry states: "The Koran undeniably abounds in fine writing; it has its own extremely individual qualities; the language is highly idiomatic, yet for the most part delusively simple; the rhythms and rhymes are inseparable features of its impressive eloquence, and these are indeed inimitable."⁴⁰

Dr. Laura Vaglieri contributes,

The Miracle of Islam *par excellence* is the Quran, through which a constant and unbroken tradition transmits to us news of an absolute certainty. This is a book which cannot be imitated. Each of its expressions is a comprehensive one, and yet it is of proper size, neither too long nor too short. Its style is original. There is no model for this style in Arab literature of the times preceding it. The effect which it produces on the human soul is obtained without any adventitious aid through its own inherent excellences. The verses are equally eloquent all through the text, even when they deal with topics, such as

commandments and prohibitions, which must necessarily affect its tone. Stories of Prophets, descriptions of the beginning and the end of the world, enumerations and expositions of the divine attributes are repeated but repeated in a way which is so impressive that they do not weaken the effect. The text proceeds from one topic to another without losing its power. Depth and sweetness, qualities which generally do not go together, are found together here, where each rhetoric figure finds a perfect application. . . . We find there vast stores of knowledge which are beyond the capacity of the most intelligent of men, the greatest of philosophers and the ablest of politicians.⁴¹

And A. Guillaume sums up as follows:

The Qurān is one of the world's classics which cannot be translated without grave loss. It (The Holy Qurān) has a rhythm of peculiar beauty and a cadence that charms the ear. Many Christian Arabs speak of its style with warm admiration, and most Arabists acknowledge its excellence. . . . indeed it may be affirmed that within the literature of the Arabs, wide and fecund as it is both in poetry and in elevated prose, there is nothing to compare with it.⁴²

One notable point about the language of the Qur'an is that Muhammad first received revelation when he was forty years old. People knew his character, his walk, his talk, his ethics, his morals. They *knew* his speech. The observation is frequently made that habits and personality traits do not markedly change past the age of thirty. An ancient Chinese proverb correctly states, "With men as with silk, it is most difficult to change colors once the dye has set."

By the age of forty, most people have settled into a solid framework of character traits. Not only had Muhammad proved himself no author (a point referred to in the verse, "And you were not [able] to recite a Book before this [Book came], nor are you [able] to transcribe it with your right hand; in that case, indeed, would the talkers of vanities have doubted" [TMQ 29:48]), but the language of Muhammad was identifiably on a much lower plane than that of the Qur'an. Furthermore, Muhammad was very specific about which words were recorded as revelation. He initially forbade his companions to record his own words in any form whatsoever, and commanded, "Do not write anything from me except the Qur'an. Whoever writes anything besides the Qur'an should burn it."⁴³

Even later, when Muhammad permitted the recording of *hadith*, his words and those of the revelation were never mixed, and there is no confusion over the fact that the words of Muhammad never approached the divine eloquence of the Qur'an. To this day, we can verify this language difference by comparing any book of *hadith* with the Holy Qur'an. The traditions of Muhammad were recorded in scores of volumes of *hadith*, preserving his speech in a multitude of sources that give the reader extraordinary insight into his character and literary abilities. Yet the rhyme and rhythm, the emotionally evocative essence of the message and the unique beauty of the Qur'an are nowhere found in Muhammad's own speech. As Dr. Laura Vaglieri questioned, "How could this

marvelous book be the work of Muhammad, an illiterate Arab who in all his life composed only two or three verses, none of which reveals the least poetic quality; e.g. ‘I am the Prophet and do not lie. I am the son of Abd el-Muttalib.’”⁴⁴

Professor A. J. Arberry elaborates as follows:

We know quite well how Mohammed spoke in his normal, everyday moods; for his *obiter dicta* have been preserved in great abundance. It is simply untrue therefore to say, as Margoliouth said, that “it would be difficult to find another case in which there is such a complete identity between the literary work and the mind of the man who produced it.” Accepting, as we have good reason to accept, the sayings of Mohammed recorded in the books of Traditions as substantially authentic, and supposing, as Margoliouth supposed, that the Koran was Mohammed’s conscious production, it would be more reasonable to say that it would be difficult to find another case in which the literary expression of a man differed so fundamentally from his ordinary speech.⁴⁵

The point is that the difference between the language of Muhammad and that of the Qur’an is so readily identifiable that detractors of Islam have driven their imaginations great distances in order to deny the Qur’an as revelation. Many non-Muslims, such as the above-referenced Oxford orientalist, David Margoliouth, have gone so far as to allow religious prejudice to override scholastic standards. These orientalist disingenuously deny what, to less biased scholars, is a clear reality. Non-Muslim Arabic scholars (such as the aforementioned A. J. Arberry^{46(EN)}) readily appreciate the difference between Muhammad’s speech and the literary miracle of the Qur’an. Consequently, this difference demands explanation. For if not from the mind of Muhammad, what was the source of the Holy Qur’an?

In trying to provide an explanation without crediting revelation, some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that Muhammad must have had a teacher who tutored the composition of the Qur’an. This, they propose, would explain the difference. And indeed it might. However, Muhammad’s contemporaries recognized that the structure of the Qur’an was completely foreign to all lexical forms of Arabic poetry.⁴⁷ It remains so to this day. Furthermore, if ever there had been such an accomplished tutor, who was he (or she) and what happened to his other works? Where are his other equally glorious and distinctive compositions? Common sense tells us a people who valued their literature as much as the Arabs would have preserved such treasures from this alleged tutor. And yet none are known to exist.

To expand the argument, the Holy Qur’an broke many, if not most, of the pre-existing literary rules. For one thing, poetry most frequently concerns matters of common interest—wine, women and song, for example—with excursions into the esoteric at the pens of the masters. In Muhammad’s time Arabic poetry, like its Western parallel, reveled in romantic and hedonistic delights. However, issues of tribal superiority, the virtues of people and animals of noble breeding or notable qualities, contests of strength and wit, local heroes and history were also the subject of poetic glorification. As can be imagined, much of Arabic poetry extolled the virtues of one’s

own person, tribe, kith and kin, while denigrating all others.^{48(EN)}

The Qur'an broke this mold. Exaggeration was avoided, descriptions were confined to the limits of reality, and chosen topics strayed into the fields of law and legislation, manners and morals, social and civil responsibilities, and religious beliefs and practices. The combination of such seemingly dry topics with unembellished accounting fails to constitute what most people would consider ingredients for a literary masterpiece. And yet, fourteen hundred years of Arab poets identify the Holy Qur'an as the most eloquent and provocative expression of their language the world has ever seen.

Hard to believe.

But isn't that what a miracle is? An extraordinary reality that defies reasonable expectations?

Though repetitive, the Qur'an is not monotonous; though conveyed through a human conduit (i.e., Muhammad), it does not betray the fluctuations of mood and tone that is unavoidable among poets; though revealed over a period of twenty-three years, there is no evolution of style, no development of technique typical of a work written over such a long period of time. In defiance of normal human variability, the Qur'an remained consistent in its expression and superlative in its eloquence, from topic to topic, from beginning to end.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the superlative beauty of the Holy Qur'an is that it was not revealed in chronological order. As verses were revealed, Muhammad was commanded to place each new verse in a specific spot in the framework of what had been revealed up to that point. Frequently new verses were sandwiched between two previously revealed verses, inserted at a divinely ordained position in the scripture. In the Preface to his translation of the Holy Qur'an, Professor A. J. Arberry commented on this process as follows:

I have followed the traditional arrangement for all its admitted perplexities. The Suras themselves are in many instances—and this has been recognized by Muslim students from the earliest times—of a composite character, holding embedded in them fragments received by Muhammad at widely differing dates . . .⁴⁹

Again, Muslims point out the inconsistency between this process and human methodology. People tell stories and relate historical accounts, and attempt to link them together. Whether we examine a history book or the Bible, the pattern is the same—stories are strung together end-to-end, in an effort to achieve continuity. Constructing the Qur'an piecemeal, as was done, violates both human capacity and methodology. Furthermore, if Muhammad had faked revelation, literary contortionism just was not necessary, for throughout history false messiahs have misled the masses with far, far less, and for good reason—false messiahs are lazy. No false messiah can be imagined to ever have worked this hard!

Consequently, to be fair, those who believe they can come up with three verses that rival those of the Qur'an now have to do it backwards! Now they have to write the last line first (without having previously conceived the first two lines), the first line next and the second line last. Or something like that. Now they have to do it in such a way that each stage of the composition stands by itself, bears an intelligent message, and achieves

an unrivaled literary eloquence. Additionally, the teachings have to foretell a future event, address a current concern, or teach a scientific fact that will not be known for the next 1,400 years. Ten different readings in seven different dialects at each stage of passage construction are required—each one complementary in meaning, each one embodying the above qualities. If it sounds impossible, the Muslim claim is that, from a human perspective, it is!

Yet the Qur'an was recorded in just this fashion over a period of twenty-three years, with the revelation transmitted through the lips of an illiterate man, Muhammad. If construction of just three lines seems impossible, how could Muhammad have composed a complete book in this manner, when he could neither read nor write in the first place? And lacking the luxury of a written work-in-progress to which he could refer, how could he have filled in the missing pieces over a period of two decades? Each stage of the work bears a comprehensible message of such practicality and beauty that no human has been able to match as little as three lines. There are no demonstrable errors, inconsistencies, or disruptions in flow. Can we imagine all of the above, at *each* of the hundreds (if not thousands) of stages of revelation, having been accomplished by a human being? Most people can't assemble a do-it-yourself project without putting the long bolt in the short hole, misplacing shelves and partitions, or similar errors—and all that despite having a manual in hand. In the end, human efforts approach perfection through a series of corrected errors.

So could a book of such complexity have been written by one man, or even a team of men? Muslims assert that the revelation and content of the Holy Qur'an defy both human ability *and* methodology. After just a few years, if not a couple months, events would have conspired to negate planned verses, the plan to put such-and-such a verse here or there would have been forgotten, and the whole thing would have degenerated into an incoherent mess.

If nothing else, no human could predict they would live long enough to complete the task; an early demise would have left the work with gaping holes where future passages were planned.

Fourteen centuries ago, a forty year-old man living in the desert could have reasonably expected to be at the end of his life, and to have had a good run of it. To have expected to live another twenty-three years in that time and under conditions of persecution and warfare against overwhelming odds would have seemed grossly unrealistic at best. An even greater breach from reality would have been to imagine that anyone could foresee the events around which future passages of the Qur'an would be revealed.

One of the first lessons a con artist learns is that good liars have to have better memories. But the Islamic view is that no human has ever lived with the memory necessary to compose such a complex work. And yet, this is how the Qur'an was revealed. Verse by verse, over a period of twenty-three years, the Qur'an was pieced together and filled out in such a manner that it was, at all stages of development, an incomparable, eloquent revelation of such sublime force and beauty as to change the hearts of man and the direction of mankind.

The question as to Who the author was, in the mind of the Muslim, does not entertain a human candidate.

There are those who agree that no human could write such a book, but who assert

it must be the work of Satan. Such assertions are disappointing, at best, for the New Testament relates that many disbelieving Jews made the same claim about Jesus—that his works were not of God, but of Satan, the prince of devils (Matthew 12:24, Mark 3:22, Luke 11:15).

On one hand, Christian hearts melt at the stories of the miracles of Jesus, wondering how the disbelieving Jews could possibly have denied these miracles as evidence of Jesus' prophethood. The Christians who read these biblical stories think that, had they been there, they wouldn't have been so blind—they would have believed. But would they have? After all, these are frequently the same Christians who slander the miracle of the Qur'an as the work of the devil. Such Christians begin to look very much like the disbelieving Jews in Jesus' day, for despite the weight of evidence (miracles included), they not only adopt elaborate excuses to dismiss the Muslim scripture, but they frequently advance the same reflexive claim—that it is the work of the "prince of devils."

Even that challenge has an answer, though, for Muslims point out that the Holy Qur'an's teachings preclude such a possibility. *Surah 16, ayah 98* (i.e., chapter and verse) directs the Muslim, "When you do read the Qur'an, seek Allah's protection from Shaytan the Rejected One" (Yusuf Ali translation). The Muhammad Al-Hilali and Muhammad Khan translation is even more explicit: "So when you want to recite the Qur'an, seek refuge with Allah from Shaitan (Satan), the outcast (the cursed one)." Common sense tells us that Satan would not write a book that directs a person to take refuge from himself with Almighty God. Some might stretch their imaginations far enough to assert that Satan is just that tricky, but only the hypocritical Christian can make such a claim, for the Bible reads,

But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?" (Matthew 12:25–26)

This teaching is echoed in Mark 3:23–27 and Luke 11:17. To deny the argument is to deny not only Jesus, but also three of the New Testament gospels. And for those who consider the Bible the word of God, it is denial of God Himself. The point? That *surah 16, ayah 98* is not just a Muslim argument. It is, in fact, a biblical argument!

The Islamic world thus presents this challenge: If man and Satan are excluded as authors, exactly Whom does that leave?

5: Evidence #3 — Relation of Revelation to Preceding Events

The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.

—L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between*, Prologue

Many biblical stories are retold in the Qur'an, but with significant differences. A frequent challenge is the assertion that the Qur'an was copied from the Old and New Testaments. There are many difficulties with this proposal, the first being that Muhammad was illiterate, and could not have read the Jewish and Christian scriptures had he tried. For that matter, Arab Jews and Christians could not have read their Bibles, even had they tried. Why? Because they didn't exist. Evidence suggests there was no such thing as an Arabic Bible during the lifetime of Muhammad, and for centuries to follow.

This lack of an Arabic Bible is disturbing to those who propose that Muhammad copied biblical stories into the Qur'an. Although discovery of an Arabic Bible predating the seventh century would bring considerable joy to such claimants, this search has proved disappointing. *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, a series of voluminous tomes filled with poison and slanders aimed at Islam, nonetheless admits, "There is no evidence of any parts of the Bible having been translated into Arabic before Islam."⁵⁰ Hasting's *Dictionary of the Bible* attributes the first Arabic translation of the Bible to the tenth century,⁵¹ while *Encyclopedia Judaica* attributes the first Arabic translation of the Old Testament either to Hunayn ibn Ishaq (800–873 CE) or to Saadia (born Joseph Gaon, 882–942 CE).⁵²

Thus, we have to wonder what Jewish and Christian sources existed in Muhammad's day. If there was no Arabic Bible, what was there? Copying something that didn't exist would be, well, tough—even tougher for the illiterate.

The presence of Jews and Christians in the Arabian Peninsula during Muhammad's time is well known. Khadijah (Muhammad's first wife) had an aged cousin, Waraqah ibn Nawfal, who was Christian. Furthermore, Muhammad came into contact with Bahira-Sergius, a Nestorian monk of Syria, at a young age. Contact with the Jews of his community, and the opportunity for instruction in their religion, was no less likely. Thus a case can be made for Muhammad having learned the basics of the Jewish and Christian religions through their oral traditions. As the Jews and Christians passed the teachings of their religions to one another, they also could have conveyed them to Muhammad. Such a case can be made. And such a case can be destroyed.

The problem with this proposal is not that Jewish and Christian oral traditions were unavailable, for no doubt they were readily available. No, the problem relates to exactly *what* Jewish and Christian teachings circulated in the Arabian Peninsula during Muhammad's time. For in fact, the Arabs do not appear to have embraced the mainstream views of the Jewish and Christian religions during this period. Regarding the period of

Muhammad's prophethood, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* comments,

Neither Arabian Jews nor Arabian Christians, unfortunately, were to be classed among the better representatives of their faiths at the time. The former had lived in comparative isolation possibly since the middle of the 1st millennium B.C., although they had been mildly successful in proselytism, and the latter were mainly heretical Monophysites, remote in every sense from the centers of Christian learning.⁵³

Paul D. Wegner, author of *The Journey from Texts to Translations*, contributes this:

The Scriptures do not seem to have been extant in an Arabic version before the time of Muhammad (570–632), who knew the gospel story only in oral form, and mainly from Syriac sources. These Syriac sources were marked by Docetism (believed that Jesus had only a divine nature and only appeared to be incarnate—they thought the material world and thus one's body was inherently evil) . . .⁵⁴

Hence the problem. The proposal is that Muhammad copied from Jewish and Christian sources, even though he was illiterate, hard copies of the Bible didn't exist, and the only sources of Jewish and Christian oral traditions were those of the poorer "representatives of their faiths." In other words, these were the traditions of the heretical Monophysites, Docetists, and Nestorians. Why, then, doesn't the Qur'an just copy the dogma peculiar to these heretical sects? Why does the Qur'an condemn associating Jesus Christ with divinity, rather than endorse the Monophysite belief in a union of godhead and manhood in the one nature of Jesus Christ? Why does the Qur'an validate Jesus Christ as a man, and not advocate the Docetist concept of Jesus having been a phantasm? And why does the Qur'an reject the Nestorian claim to union of God (the son) with Jesus (the man)? If the Qur'an was copied from oral traditions, and the Jewish and Christian Arabs were poor representatives of their faiths, why are their heresies not argued in the Holy Qur'an? Why does the Qur'an address the valid beliefs of the Jewish orthodoxy, the commonly accepted historical accounts of both Old and New Testaments, and the mainstream issues of the Trinitarian Christianity of Constantinople? Why doesn't it present the unorthodox concepts of the Arab Jews and Christians of Muhammad's time?

Similarly, we have to wonder why the Qur'an records history differently from how the Arabs understood it. The Qur'an repeatedly claims to reveal historical details previously unknown to the Arabs—Jews and Christians included. Following the story of Noah, the Qur'an teaches, "Such are some of the stories of the Unseen, which We have revealed to you: before this, neither you nor your people knew them" (TMQ 11:49).

And yet no one, whether well-traveled pagan, scholarly Jew or Christian, or even Muslim, ever ran to the front of the congregation yelling, "Wait a minute, I knew that!" Once again, copying Jewish or Christian traditions that didn't exist, either on paper or in oral tradition, would be, well, troublesome. What could possibly have been the source of such information if the other religious *authorities* were themselves clueless?

The most significant point, however, is that the Qur'an corrects, rather than

repeats, biblical errors. What should we think of a book that corrected the as-yet unrecognized errors considered “gospel truth” during Muhammad’s lifetime? A man-made book designed to appeal to the masses would be expected to confirm, rather than deny, popular opinion. True revelation, however, would be expected to correct falsehoods, no matter how distasteful the truth may seem. And such is the case with the Holy Qur’an—correct beliefs were reinforced and unrecognized errors were rectified.

The most important corrections relate to elements of belief, as discussed in the first volume of this series, *MisGod’ed*. The Holy Qur’an challenges Christians by telling them to look in their own book, for they will find that Jesus never called himself “Son of God” (see *MisGod’ed*). Now, how could Muhammad have known that? As discussed above, he couldn’t read their book. For that matter, *they* couldn’t read their book; it would be two centuries before a translation would be available to them. So what were Muhammad’s sources? Again, the most he could have heard were snippets of Christian oral traditions. But how could he have known he had heard them all? Or correctly? Without a Bible for reference, how could he have known that throughout the New Testament, Jesus never identified himself as the “Son of God”? The safer bet, given what he must have been told, would have been to state the exact opposite. To this day, it is the rare Christian who knows Jesus never called himself “Son of God” in the Bible. So how did Muhammad know this?

Examples of more objective, verifiable corrections include scientific evidence. But we can also consider such simple elements as Jesus’ age at the beginning of his ministry.

According to the Bible, “Now Jesus himself began his ministry at about thirty years of age . . .” (Luke 3:23)

So says the Bible.

And so say most Christians.

However, history suggests Jesus was considerably older—perhaps as old as forty-six, but not less than thirty-eight.⁵⁵ Where do we get these numbers? Jesus was born during the reign of King Herod the Great of Judaea (who died shortly after a lunar eclipse dated by astronomers to March 12–13, 4 BC) and began his ministry after John the Baptist’s imprisonment. Why was John the Baptist imprisoned? For rebuking Antipas—King Herod the Great’s son, also known as Herod the Tetrarch (i.e., governor) of Galilee and Perea—for marrying his own niece and sister-in-law. Now, we can fairly assume that Antipas could not have married his sister-in-law unless his brother was, by one means or another, out of the picture. Some small degree of sibling rivalry might otherwise have ensued. Sure enough, in his *Jewish Antiquities*, the first-century historian Josephus documents that Herod’s dear brother Philip died “in the twentieth year of the reign of Tiberius,” which corresponds with 33–34 CE.⁵⁶ A soap opera here, a battle there, a journey to fetch the questionably grieving widow, a marriage, a public rebuke, and John the Baptist found himself in jail waiting for the manipulative step-daughter to dance. The timing works out to Jesus having started his ministry on or after 34 CE, as per the gospels of Mark and Luke: “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14).

The time span from 4 BC to 34 CE being thirty-eight years, Jesus could not have started his ministry before the age of thirty-eight.

Assuming that Jesus was not born on the day King Herod the Great died, and

allowing a more reasonable period of time for his son, Herod Antipas, to have acquired his sister-in-law, Jesus was more likely well into his forties. Such an assumption is not unreasonable. To understand why, let us consider the sequence of events:

1. Jesus Christ was born during the reign of King Herod the Great. (Matthew 2:1)
2. Following Jesus' birth, the Magi (wise men), having seen the star signaling his miraculous birth, came to Jerusalem from the east. (Matthew 2:1)
——That's one major trip. In a period of history when first-class transportation meant a camel that didn't spit, such things took time.
3. Herod sent the Magi on a reconnaissance trip to Bethlehem. (Matthew 2:8)
——That's a second trip.
4. The Magi returned to their countries, unbeknownst to Herod. (Matthew 2:12)
——That's a third trip.
5. An angel of God directed Joseph to "arise," and flee. (Matthew 2:13)
6. Joseph arose. . . (Matthew 2:14)
——That may only have taken a minute or so.
7. And took the family to Egypt for an indefinite leave of absence. (Matthew 2:14)
——That probably took slightly longer. A fourth trip.
8. Herod found out about the deception. (Matthew 2:16)
——That probably took some time, too. A fifth trip (by the messenger).
9. Herod, being a man of such paranoia as to have executed his beloved wife Mariamne and, on separate occasions, three sons thought to threaten his throne, sent his flunkies in tyranny to kill all the male children two years old and less in Bethlehem and the vicinity. (Matthew 2:16)
——Why two years old and younger? “. . . according to the time which he had determined from the wise men” (Matthew 2:16). In other words, Jesus Christ was getting on in infancy.
10. After an unspecified period of time, Herod died. (Matthew 2:19)

Given the above scenario, we can reasonably expect Jesus to have been born at least two years prior to King Herod the Great's demise. In other words, he was born in or before 6 BC. Similarly, we can reasonably expect that events surrounding Herod Antipas' shady marriage unfolded somewhat slower than a snap of the fingers.

Suddenly the question posed to Jesus in John 8:57, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" makes sense. We can logically expect that, had Jesus been in his thirties, this challenge would have been worded, "You are not yet *forty* years old . . ." But it isn't. And now we understand why.

Illustrating yet another biblical difficulty is not the point. The take-home message is that to this day Christians read Luke 3:23 ("Now Jesus himself began his ministry at about thirty years of age . . .") and assert that Jesus started his ministry around the age of thirty. Had Muhammad asked, this is almost certainly what he would have been told. Now, what does the Qur'an say? That Jesus spoke to the people in childhood, and when he was *kahlan* (*surah* 5:110). *Kahlan* describes a man aged between thirty and fifty.⁵⁷ Had the Bible been copied, we would expect to find "Luke's" claim that Jesus was "about thirty." However, just as historical evidence defies the biblical record, the Qur'anic description corrects, rather than repeats, this biblical error.

How about another example? The title *pharaoh* was applied to Egyptian rulers only during the years 1539–1292 BC and *circa* 945–730 BC.⁵⁸ To quote, “The Egyptian term became a title of respect for the king during the 18th dynasty. . . . Any use of ‘Pharaoh’ for kings preceding Thutmose III is an anachronism.”⁵⁹ And Thutmose III lived—drum roll, please—from approximately 1490 to 1436 BC.⁶⁰ So any use of the term *pharaoh* prior to the 1490s BC would be an anachronism: “an attribution of a custom, event, etc., to the wrong period.”⁶¹

What does this have to do with the Bible and the Holy Qur’an?

During the prophet Joseph’s time (around 1700 BC), Egypt was ruled by a different line of monarchy. And had been for some time. The Hyksos Dynasty were ethnic Arabs who usurped the Egyptian throne *circa* 2000 BC, and ruled Egypt to the end of the fifteenth century BC. They never called their kings “Pharaoh.” And here Joseph was, in the minus-seventeen hundreds, smack-dab in the middle of the Hyksos Dynasty. Yet the Bible labels both the kings of Joseph (Genesis, chapters 39–50) and of Moses (Exodus 2–18) as “Pharaoh.” What we know of history, however, conflicts with the use of this term during the time of Joseph. But oh, well, one out of two isn’t bad, if that is the standard of accuracy we seek in a book of revelation.

Now, what about the Qur’an?

The Qur’an correctly acknowledges the king of Moses’ time as “Pharaoh,” but identifies the king of Egypt in the time of Joseph as just that—the “King” (See *Surah Yusuf*—i.e., *surah* 12). Here again, the Qur’an corrects, rather than repeats, a biblical error, despite the fact that the Qur’an mentions the title “Pharaoh” over seventy times. However, each of these mentions refers to a historical period when the monarch of Egypt was actually identified as “Pharaoh.” Considering this context, the conspicuous avoidance of this term in reference to the ruler during Joseph’s time appears significant.

Speaking of Egypt, the Qur’an records Pharaoh having ordered a man called Haman to bake bricks for construction (TMQ 28:38). The word *haman* comes to us from hieroglyphics and is believed to mean “the chief of the workers in the stone-quarries.”⁶² In other words, in a time and place where construction was largely tantamount to stacking blocks, “Haman” was in charge of supplies.

Now, hieroglyphics died out centuries before Muhammad’s time, and was only relearned with the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799 CE. Here is what happened: After the deaths of Marcus Antonius (i.e., Marc Antony) and Cleopatra in 30 BC, Roman governorship superseded the Egyptian dynastic system, and Latin became the language of the realm. Consequently, the writing system of hieroglyphics died out within the next century. Discovery of the Rosetta Stone resuscitated the hieroglyphics, but this was by no means easy. Even with the Rosetta Stone in hand, the effort demanded time (more than twenty years), inspiration, and some of the most brilliant minds of Europe. All of which leads us to question how the author of the Qur’an knew to title the man in charge of construction supplies “Haman.” With hieroglyphics dead and buried for over five hundred years, and such titles presumably extinct as well, what was the source of such knowledge in Muhammad’s day?

Now let’s consider a less obscure example.

Jesus never identified his followers as “Christians.” In fact, his followers did not adopt this label until years following his ministry. Nonetheless, once adopted, the label stuck. So if Muhammad had asked the Christians of his time what they called themselves,

they would have said, “Christian” (or *Masihyyun*, in Arabic). *Masihyyun* describes the followers (-*yyun*) of Christ (*Messiah* in Hebrew, *Masih* in Arabic).

Makes sense? Sure. To this day, Western Christians identify themselves as just that—Christians. Likewise, their Arab counterparts identify themselves as *Masihyyun* (followers of Christ). By what name, then, would Muhammad have known Jesus’ followers? As *Masihyyun*. Why, then, is this word not mentioned once in the Qur’an? Not one, single, solitary time?

The Qur’an mentions Christians repeatedly, not as “Christians” or *Masihyyun*, but as *Nasara* (Nazarenes). Now, wait a minute. How many Christians, anywhere in the world, have ever called themselves “Nazarenes”? Very few, I suspect. Why then does the Qur’an employ the faithful biblical term of “Nazarene,” rather than the popular Arabic label of *Masihyyun*? Who told Muhammad that although virtually all Christians identify themselves as “Christian,” Jesus never did? We find in Acts 11:26 that “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” In other words, non-believers first applied this term to Christ’s followers around 43 CE, roughly ten years following his ministry. Furthermore, it doesn’t appear to have been a polite term.

Contrary to popular belief, the term *Christian* appears to have been conceived as a name of contempt. It’s what disbelievers called the followers of Christ—a distasteful name to believers who knew themselves as Jews, following the latest in the line of Jewish prophets. And yet that very label is now worn with pride, despite the fact that, “it appears to have been more widely used by pagans, and according to Tacitus it was in common use by the time of the Neronian persecution (Annals, 15.44).”⁶³

In other words, “Christian” was a derogatory label imposed upon believers by their enemies. And yet the term stuck and, with typical Christian humility, was eventually adopted.

Fine. Now we know. But how many readers knew this fact before reading it here? More to the point, who told Muhammad? Who told Muhammad the term “Christian” (*Masihyyun* in Arabic) began its life as a derogatory term, and was never uttered by Jesus Christ? Who told Muhammad a more respectful biblical term is *Nasara*? And why would Muhammad bother to swim against such an overwhelmingly strong current of public opinion? Unless, that is, he only conveyed words given to him—words that corrected his own opinion as well as that of most of the rest of mankind?

The above issues, while addressing relatively small details of historical accuracy, are highly significant. It is these minute details that function as tripwires upon which false prophethood snags a toe. Nobody trips over a building; it is always the small, seemingly insignificant bumps people stumble over. However, rather than painting a new gloss over old errors, it is just these minute points of detail the Qur’an corrects with exquisite accuracy.

The Bible teaches, “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10). If this teaching is applied to the Bible, the significance of even the smallest error (i.e., unfaithfulness to detail) becomes apparent. Even as little as a copying error should sound the alarm to the fact that “he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.” Details are important, for it is on the basis of detail that we differentiate between human fallibility and divine inerrancy.

And then there is Iram.

The Holy Qur'an makes passing mention of a city named Iram (TMQ 89:7). As it turns out, Iram was lost to history for over 3,500 years, and only recently discovered. Who, then, knew to mention Iram in the Holy Qur'an? For two thousand years prior to the revelation, there was no evidence it had ever existed.

The archeological roadmap to Iram passes through the ancient city of Ebla, as discussed in the December 1978 issue of *National Geographic*. The article, "Ebla, Splendor of an Unknown Empire" outlines one of the greatest archeological finds of the present epoch—the discovery of the city of Ebla in Northwest Syria.⁶⁴ The magnitude of the Ebla find is related as follows:

In 1975, Matthiae [Paolo Matthiae, one of the two archaeologists in charge of the dig] hit an archeological jackpot. In the ruins of a palace apparently destroyed in the 23rd century B.C., he came upon the greatest third-millennium archive ever unearthed. More than 15,000 cuneiform tablets and fragments—the commercial records, treaties, chronicles—whispered, through the mists of ancient and ambiguous syntax, of an unknown Semitic empire, with Ebla as its seat, that once dominated much of the Middle East. . . . this find struck the scholarly world like a thunderbolt.⁶⁵

How big is this find? To quote Dr. Ignace J. Gelb, "Ebla was a mighty kingdom, treated on an equal footing with the most powerful states of the time."⁶⁶ How important are the cuneiform tablets? To quote Dr. Giovanni Pettinato, "All the other texts of this period recovered to date do not total a fourth of those from Ebla."⁶⁷

This massive collection of cuneiform plates (clay tablets inscribed with wedge-shaped writing) lifts the veil of obscurity from the face of history to reveal an image contrary to many classical preconceptions. These tablets reveal a rich culture in a thriving community—so much so that archeological experts conclude: "Ebla rivaled Egypt and Mesopotamia as a major power of the ancient world."⁶⁸

Wow.

So what happened to so great a culture? Where did it go?

Into the ground.

Around 2300 BC, Sargon defeated Ebla and razed the city. The burning of the palace turned the library into a kiln, and the fire baked the clay tablets into ceramic preservation. Excavated layers of the ruins reveal that Ebla was rebuilt only to be destroyed again around three centuries later, most likely by the Amorites. Rebuilt upon the ruins once more, "Ebla flourished briefly once again, but around 1800 B.C. the city began to decline, and within two hundred years finally disappeared from history."⁶⁹

What does this have to do with Iram? Ebla, like all major world powers, kept records of all cities with which they transacted business or from which they exacted tribute. These records were stored in the palace library. And what do we find there? Mention of Beirut, Damascus, Gaza, Sodom, Gomorrah, among others. What else? "Also included is Iram, an obscure city referred to in *surah* 89 of the Koran."⁷⁰ So in 1975 Iram, as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an 1,400 years ago, became historically verified.

What else was verified? Ebla's library records also mention the cities of Ad and Shamutu (believed to be the city of the early Arabian people known as the Thamud): two

other lost civilizations mentioned in the Qur'an.⁷¹ As a matter of fact, five short Qur'anic verses (89:6–10) mention four lost civilizations, all of which are now historically identified: Iram, Ad, Shamutu, and the people of Pharaoh.

Could Muhammad have known of Iram? Ad? No doubt he knew of the people of Pharaoh, and almost certainly he knew of Shamutu, in structure if not in name, for the ruins of Shamutu exist to this day in the Arabian city of *Mada'in Salih*. But Iram and Ad? Could Muhammad have known of cultures that disappeared thousands of years before the sun rose on his first day in his mother's arms? Could he have known the names of lost cities in a time and place where the closest thing to an information superhighway was a level trail and a fast camel?

Not likely.

The average American can't name the first three settlements in the United States, and might miss the correct answer even if offered in the form of a multiple-choice question. And those settlements are not only well known, but are only a few centuries old. So by what means did Muhammad come up with the names Iram, Ad, and Thamud? To reference lost names is risky—unless, that is, you're God.

And that, Muslims assert, is the point.

When we conjure up an image of a false prophet, we tend to imagine someone who struggles to gain confidence from his followers. A false prophet would be foolish to deal in any facts, prophecies, or beliefs other than the commonly accepted ones, whether valid or not. So why would Muhammad have gone out on a limb by naming lost civilizations when he could have limited his comments to famous cities, like Nazareth? The Christians around Muhammad must have filled his ears with tales of Nazareth, so we have to wonder why Nazareth isn't mentioned in the Qur'an. Giving Nazareth a plug would have fostered considerable goodwill among his Christian compatriots, and we are hard-pressed to imagine the harm. Unless, that is, Nazareth didn't exist. And, as a matter of fact, it may not have.

Nazareth is mentioned twenty-nine times in the New Testament, but no town by that name appears to have existed in the time of Jesus. Now, whether or not Nazareth did in fact exist isn't terribly important. But it is interesting to note that the Romans had comprehensive mercantile and tax records of all the towns in Palestine. They were methodical about these records, for they didn't like having to scour the countryside seeking pockets of peasants to beat the taxes out of. Nazareth, however, is not mentioned. In addition, Nazareth "is not among the places mentioned in Joshua 19:10f., nor is it referred to by Josephus, who gives the names of forty-five Galilean towns, nor by the Talmud, which names sixty-three."⁷²

In fact, *Encyclopedia Judaica* informs us that outside of the Bible, Nazareth isn't mentioned in the historical record until the third century CE.⁷³ We have to wonder if this reflects a deficiency in the historical record or an error in the Bible. Was there, or was there not, a Nazareth in Jesus' day?

Some scholars speculate that Nazareth and modern day *en Nasira* are one and the same. But no one knows for sure.

Why, then, was Jesus Christ called the Nazarene? Hard to say. However, *Nazarene* is the English translation of the Greek *Nazoraios*, which appears to derive from the Hebrew *Nozrim*, which itself stems from *Nozrei ha-Brit*—the ancient Hebrew name by which the Qumran community identified themselves as "Keepers of the Covenant."⁷⁴

If the extraction seems strained, we might consider that the modern-day *Tsar* (or *Czar*) derives from *Kaiser*, itself derived from *Caesar*, and bearing no relation to either seeded hamburger rolls or gourmet salads. As all etymologists know, words separated by two thousand years wrinkle with age.

But to get back to *Nazarene*,

Contrary to the assumptions of later tradition, it has nothing whatever to do with Jesus' alleged upbringing in Nazareth, which, the evidence (or lack of it) suggests, did not even exist at the time. Indeed, it seems to have been the very perplexity of early commentators encountering the unfamiliar term "Nazorean" that led them to conclude Jesus' family came from Nazareth, which by then had appeared on the map.⁷⁵

Search Palestine now, and we find Nazareth in lower Galilee (i.e., Northern Palestine). The problem is, the city by this name does not appear to have existed in biblical times. So, does the naming of a Palestinian city as "Nazareth" represent a Christian effort to backfill a scriptural deficiency? Maybe. But more likely, as is the case with the American city of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the founding fathers of the Palestinian city of Nazareth adopted its biblical name simply because they liked it.

One thing we can say for sure is that Jesus Christ wasn't born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Similarly, there is no good reason to presume he had any association with the Palestinian city that now claims the title of Nazareth.

However this juggling of biblical names occurred, the point is that this constitutes one more point of Qur'anic accuracy. The Bible mentions a place that appears not to have existed in Jesus' lifetime, whereas the Qur'an doesn't. Avoiding repetition of this little-known biblical error tells us something important about the Qur'an and its author. "Nazareth" is just the kind of popular scriptural currency that would have appealed to the Christians of Muhammad's time, yet it bears no mention in the Holy Qur'an.

Weird.

That is, if we assume the Qur'an to have been authored by a man.

But back to Iram. To propose the existence of a city for which there was no record during Muhammad's lifetime (not to mention for the next fourteen centuries) is pretty bold for a man. Even bolder would be the mention of not just one but *three* such cities, *in succession*. That's . . . that's . . . well, that's beyond unlikely. Muhammad would had to have been both foolish and historically fortunate. And what, we might ask, was the motivation? For there was nothing to be won and a great deal to be lost from such a mention.

On the other hand, Muslims propose that our all-knowing God would have known that 1,400 years later evidence of Iram, Ad, and the Thamud people would be identified, providing signs for this present age.

Hmm.

Muslims hold that one of the miracles of the Qur'an is just this—it is timeless. Although the revelation was completed roughly 1,400 years ago, the miracles continue to surface even in the present day.

6: Evidence #4 — Relation of Revelation to Contemporaneous Events

Truth would become more popular if it were not always stating ugly facts.

—Henry H. Haskins

The fact that specific passages of the Holy Qur'an were revealed at the same time as the events they describe is not particularly surprising. What *is* surprising, however, is not what the revelation contains, but what is conspicuously absent.

For example, Muhammad outlived his first love and first wife, the woman with whom he spent twenty-five years of his youth, Khadijah. She died after two long, painful years during which the Makkan pagans ostracized, persecuted, and starved Muhammad and his followers. Twenty-five years of love, support, caring, and kindness—gone. His first wife, so beloved that he remained faithful to her throughout their marriage and throughout his youth—gone. The first person to believe in his prophethood, the wife who bore all but one of his eight children—gone. So devoted was she that she exhausted her wealth and sacrificed her tribal relationships in support of him. After which, she was gone.

Musicians croon over their lost loves; artists immortalize their infatuations in marble and on canvas, photographers fill albums with glossy memorials and poets pour their hearts onto paper with the ink of liquid lamentation. Yet despite what a person might expect, nowhere does the Qur'an mention the name Khadijah. Not once. The wives of Pharaoh, Noah, and Lot are alluded to, but Khadijah is not mentioned a single solitary time. Why? Because she wasn't loved? When Muhammad later had several wives, his then favorite wife, A'ishah, commented that she was never as jealous of any woman as she was of Khadijah, for Muhammad remembered her frequently, with love and respect. A'ishah once related that Muhammad commented,

She believed in me when no one else did. She embraced Islam when people disbelieved in me. And she helped and comforted me in her person and wealth when there was none else to lend me a helping hand. I had children only from her.⁷⁶

And yet the woman who so filled the life and mind of Muhammad was never mentioned in the Qur'an. For that matter, neither his father (who died before his birth), his mother (who died while he was a child), nor his wife Khadijah, nor any of his sons or daughters is mentioned. They are not even hinted at.

Many orientalists claim that the Qur'an is not true revelation, but came from Muhammad's mind. Compounding the peculiarity of this claim is the startling fact that the *only* woman the Qur'an mentions by name is Mary, an Israelite and the mother of Jesus. And she is mentioned in glowing terms. As a matter of fact, a whole *surah* bears

her name. The Muslim questions if this could be the product of the mind of a man. To declare Muhammad a false prophet, when he excluded the women who filled his life and memory from the revelation he claimed, in favor of an Israelite woman and the mother of an Israelite prophet, drives recklessly against the flow of reasonable expectation.

During Muhammad's life, he saw every one of his four sons die. All but one of his four daughters predeceased him. His favored uncle, Hamzah, was killed in battle and mutilated in a horrific manner. Muhammad and his followers were regularly insulted, humiliated, beaten, and on occasion murdered. On one occasion the offal of a slaughtered camel was dumped on Muhammad's back while he was prostrate in prayer. The sheer weight of this offal reportedly pinned him to the ground until his daughter uncovered him. Now, camels smell bad enough while they're living. Try to imagine the smell of their decomposing guts in the tropical sun. Then try to imagine being buried in the tangled mass of their slimy offense, rivulets of rotting camel juice running down exposed arms, cheeks and, oh yes, behind the ears. A refreshing massage-head shower is a couple thousand calendar pages away, with soap not yet registered in the patent office. Such events must have tortured Muhammad's memory. Yet they are described nowhere in the Qur'an.

On a more positive note, Muhammad was obsessed about oral hygiene. He brushed his teeth before every prayer, which equates to no less than five times a day. Furthermore, he taught his companions to brush the tongue as well, over 1,300 years before the tongue was recognized as the primary source of halitosis. Cleanliness was a passion of the Prophet's, and a practice associated with Muslim prayer. Mentioned in the Qur'an? Not once.

Muhammad taught that every illness has a cure. Whether true or not, reliable traditions relate that he firmly believed this. Why, then, don't we find the Qur'an filled with home remedies? The only mention of any product of medicinal value is a reference to honey, in which "there is healing for men" (TMQ 16:69). Certainly the throat lozenge and cold-and-flu pharmaceutical companies do not dispute this point.

So the Qur'an is remarkable in that its content does not reflect the mind of the messenger. In fact, in some cases the Qur'an does the exact opposite, and corrects Muhammad's errors in judgment.

For example, many passages defined issues with which Muhammad and his companions were immediately concerned, or delivered lessons regarding contemporaneous events. Such passages are legion. However, instead of affirming Muhammad's judgment, the Qur'an not only admonishes certain of the believers, but even corrects Muhammad on occasion. *Surah* 80 admonishes Muhammad for having frowned and turned his back on a blind Muslim who, in seeking guidance, interrupted a conversation to which Muhammad mistakenly assigned priority. The error in judgment was understandable, but it was an error nonetheless. And according to the Holy Qur'an, it was an error deserving of correction.

On other occasions, revelation admonished Muhammad for forbidding himself the use of honey (after being deceived into believing it gave his breath a bad odor—TMQ 66:1), for directing his adopted son to keep his marriage when divorce was preferable (TMQ 33:37), and for praying for forgiveness of the Hypocrites (Muslims-in-name-only who were denied the mercy of Allah due to their obstinate rebellion—TMQ 9:80). The admonishment for his error of judgment with regard to his adopted son, Zaid, and his

unhappy marriage to Zainab, was of such extreme embarrassment that Muhammad's wife, A'ishah, later commented to the effect that, "Were Muhammad to have concealed anything from the revelation, he would have concealed this verse [i.e., TMQ 33:37]"⁷⁷

In one case Muhammad was corrected for being vengeful,^{78(EN)} in another for being lenient.^{79(EN)} Although such errors of judgment were rare, they highlight his humanity.^{80(EN)} Equally important, they reveal his sincerity, for Muhammad's errors required correction by the One Whom Muhammad represented, lest they be misperceived as bearing God's approval. However, unlike a false prophet, who would have concealed his shortcomings, Muhammad conveyed revelation that immortalized his mistakes, and Allah's admonition thereof.

So here is a man who claimed every letter of revelation was from God, including the passages that corrected his own errors and instructed him to repent. Weird. If, that is, we imagine the Qur'an to have been authored by a false prophet. False prophets are either liars or deluded, and both types attempt to build confidence in their followers by portraying themselves as perfect. The author of the Qur'an fails to fit this profile. So if not a man, Who, then, authored the Qur'an?

7: Evidence #5 — Relation of Revelation to Subsequent Events

I don't know what the future may hold, but I know who holds the future.

—Ralph Abernathy

As Albert Einstein wisely commented, “I never think of the future. It comes soon enough.” The problem is that when the future *does* come, it is frequently contrary to expectations. Hence the difficulty with predictions. The only One who can know the future with certainty is the One who determines it. All others expose their human fallibility when they play with predictions, for future events typically prove them wrong, at least part of the time.

The validity of biblical predictions is no surprise to those who presume much of the Bible to be from God. So, too, with the Holy Qur’an. What *is* problematic, however, is to consider the Qur’an to have been of human authorship in the face of the remarkable accuracy of its predictions.

Unlike other books, the Bible included, Muslims assert there is not a single prediction made in the Qur’an that is assailable from a historic or scientific point of view. And, in fact, those who desire to discredit the holy book of Islam have desperately sought a weak link in Qur’anic prophesies for nearly 1,400 years. To date, they have discredited nothing, for no such error has ever been found. For this reason, we must note that detractors of the Islamic religion typically focus their criticisms upon emotional issues, such as Islamic practices considered distasteful in Western society. In other words, they tell us what they don’t like about Islam, rather than discredit the Islamic evidence. This is, at best, a capricious approach.

We should bear this phenomenon in mind, for the fact is that there is no book in history, other than the Qur’an, which succeeds so completely with its predictions. Choose any book of a philosopher, soothsayer or false prophet, and you may find a few predictions that came true, but you’ll also find a great many that didn’t. Not so with the Holy Qur’an, the accuracy of which repels any reasonable criticism.

For example, early in the history of the Qur’an, while the Muslims were still an oppressed minority in Makkah, a verse was revealed in the “Moon” *surah* that promised victory (in battle) to the Muslims over the pagan Quraysh (i.e., the dominant tribe in Makkah):

Are you Unbelievers (O Quraysh) better than they?
Or do you have an immunity in the Sacred Books?
Or do they say: “We, acting together, can defend ourselves?”
Soon will their multitude be put to flight, and they will show their
backs.

(TMQ 54:43–45)

Now, at the time of this revelation, the Muslims were few, weak, and regularly beaten and killed by the pagan majority. Five years later, when emigrating to Medina, the Muslims were still so weak that the main tribe of Makkah, the Quraysh, confiscated their land, property and wealth, detained their wives, and tortured and killed those unfortunate few who lacked tribal protection. Not only were the Muslims no force to contend with, but they lacked sufficient numbers to expect anything but a life of persecution. The syrup on the *kanafa*^{81(EN)} was that the verses of the Qur'an that command the Muslims to fight oppression and tyranny had not yet been revealed. Furthermore, among a people whose family ties were tight enough to chafe, the concept of waging war on one's own tribe was foreign to all but the most sociopathic of imaginations.

So seemingly out of place was this prediction that the future second caliph of Islam, Umar ibn al-Khattab, questioned, "Which group will we defeat?"⁸² Even he did not immediately grasp that the revelation spoke of the Muslims defeating the pagans of his own tribe of Quraysh. And only later, when the Muslims were actually commanded to fight tyranny and oppression, did they have sufficient numbers to do so. The following verse from the "Light" *surah* was subsequently revealed in Makkah, prior to the Muslim emigration to Medina:

Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion—the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: "They will worship Me (alone) and not associate anything with Me." If any do reject Faith after this, they are rebellious and wicked. (TMQ 24:55).

As predicted in the "Moon" *surah*, the "multitude" of unbelieving Quraysh were "put to flight" and "showed their backs" at the Battle of Badr. The Quraysh army outnumbered the Muslims by more than four to one, but it was the Quraysh who suffered the greatest losses. Rather than massacring the Muslims, as their overwhelming superiority in men and arms might have led us to expect, the Quraysh dead outnumbered the Muslim dead five to one. Both sides reported seeing angels fighting among the Muslim ranks, and the Quraysh fled in terror.^{83,84}

Subsequently, in fulfillment of the "Light" *surah*, the Muslims were decisively victorious when they peacefully retook Makkah in 8 AH.^{85(EN)} True to the prediction, their fear and insecurity was replaced by security and peace, due to their established authority both in power and religion.

The peace and security encountered in Makkah is itself a fulfillment of revelation, as follows . . .

Please purchase book for remainder

¹ Guillaume, Alfred. 1990. *Islam*. Penguin Books. pp. 73–74.

² Cohen, M.J. and J.M. 1996. *The Penguin Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Quotations*. Penguin Books.

³ Nydell, Margaret K. 2006. *Understanding Arabs*. Intercultural Press. p. 34.

⁴ As per the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “The history of the term's [*apocrypha*] usage indicates that it referred to a body of esoteric writings that were at first prized, later tolerated, and finally excluded.” It is interesting to note that the apocrypha, though initially “prized,” eventually fell to the station of simply being tolerated, and subsequently to being rejected. The assertion that the same sequence of religious evolution ultimately resulted in the modification and/or rejection of Jesus Christ’s teachings does not exactly remain distant. And how can it, when the very history of early “Christianity” is shaded in doubt? To quote from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* once again,

The writers of the four Gospels included in the New Testament were bearing witness to assured truths that the faithful ought to know, and *no convincing reconstruction of historical facts is possible* from these books of the New Testament. The only avowedly historical book in it (i.e., the New Testament) is the Acts of the Apostles. The New Testament as a whole represents merely a selection from the early Christian writings. It includes *only* what conformed to the doctrine of the church when, later on, that doctrine became fixed in one form. Between the Acts of the Apostles, dating probably from the late 1st century, and the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea (died c. 340) and his contemporaries in the first quarter of the 4th century, there is an almost complete gap in Christian historiography. (Above italics mine.)

And so, we have to wonder, “What did the early first-, second-, and third-century “Christians” know that we don’t?”

⁵ Ehrman, Bart D. 2005. *Misquoting Jesus*. HarperCollins. p. 89.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

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- ⁷ Watt, W. Montgomery. 1953. *Muhammad at Mecca*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. p. 57.
- ⁸ Hirschfeld, Hartwig, Ph.D. 1902. *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran*. London: Royal Asiatic Society. Preface, ii.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- ¹⁰ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. 1967. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America. Vol 9, p. 1001.
- ¹¹ Carlyle, Thomas. 1841. *On Heros, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*. London: James Fraser, Regent Street. pp. 86–87, 89.
- ¹² Islam lacks clergy or a papal equivalent, but it does have officers (i.e., judges, governors, etc.) who serve to govern the Islamic nation. The caliph is the highest of these officials, but this does not give him power over the religion. On the contrary, his decrees are subject to approval by religious scholars.
- ¹³ Vaglieri, Dr. Laura Veccia. Translated from Italian by Dr. Aldo Caselli, Haverford College, Pennsylvania. Originally published in Italian under the title *Apologia dell' Islamismo* (Rome, A. F. Formiggini, 1925). 1980. *An Interpretation of Islam*. Zurich: Islamic Foundation. pp. 41–42.
- ¹⁴ Arberry, Arthur J. 1964. *The Koran Interpreted*. London: Oxford University Press. Introduction, p. ix.
- ¹⁵ Muir, Sir William. 1923. *The Life of Mohammad*. Edinburgh: John Grant. Introduction, pp. xxii–xxiii.
- ¹⁶ Rippin, Andrew (editor). 1988. *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*. Chapter: “Value of Hafs and Warsh Transmissions,” by Adrian Brockett. Oxford: Clarendon Press. pp. 44–45.
- ¹⁷ See Part 1, Chapter 4 for more on this issue.
- ¹⁸ Ehrman, Bart D. 2003. *Lost Christianities*. Oxford University Press. p. 102.
- ¹⁹ Fossier, Robert (editor). 1986. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of The Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Vol. 3, p. 495.
- ²⁰ Denzinger, Henricus & Schonmetzer, Adolfus. 1973. *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*. Barcinone: Herder. p. 246.
- ²¹ Arbuthnot, F. F. 1885. *The Construction of the Bible and the Korân*. London: Watts &

Co. pp. 5–6.

²² The Bible, Revised Standard Version. 1977. New York: American Bible Society.
Preface, p. v.

²³ Ibid., Preface, p. iii.

²⁴ This last book is available through Al-Hidaayah Publishing, P.O. Box 3332,
Birmingham, U.K. B10 9AW.

²⁵ Bucaille, Maurice, M.D. 1977. *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*. Lahore: Kazi
Publications. pp. 110–111.

²⁶ Wells, H. G. 1922. *The Outline of History*. Fourth Edition. Volume 2, pp. 686–688.

²⁷ The seventh to eleventh-century Jewish scribes who devised the diacritical marks
which standardized pronunciation, verse division, and vowel notation in the Old
Testament.

²⁸ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. CD-ROM.

²⁹ The Bible, Revised Standard Version. Preface, p. iv.

³⁰ Arbuthnot, F. F. p. 10.

³¹ The Bible, Revised Standard Version. Preface, pp. iv-v.

³² Ibid., Preface, p. iv.

³³ Gibbon, Edward, Esq. 1854. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.
London: Henry G. Bohn. Vol. 5, Chapter L, p. 452.

³⁴ Ibid., Chapter L, p. 453.

³⁵ Smith, R. Bosworth, M.A. 1986. *Mohammad and Mohammadanism*. London: Darf
Publishers Ltd. pp. 64–65.

³⁶ Michener, James A. May, 1955. "Islam: The Misunderstood Religion," in *Reader's
Digest* (American Edition). p. 70.

³⁷ Muhammad Ibn Ishaq ibn Yasar. 1963. *Seerat An-Nabi*. Maydan Al Azhar (Cairo):
Muhammad Ali Sabi'eh & Children. Vol. 1. p. 207

³⁸ Narrated by *Muslim* (the famous ninth century *hadith* scholar, Muslim ibn Al-Hajjaj).

³⁹ *Manaahil Al-Irfaan fi Uluum Al-Qur'an (Wells of Knowledge of the Sciences of the
Qur'an)*. 1988. Muhammad Abdul-At-Theem Az-Zarqaani. Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmee'a.
Vol 1. p. 216.

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- ⁴⁰ Arberry, A. J. 1953. *The Holy Koran: An Introduction with Selections*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. p. 28.
- ⁴¹ Vaglieri, Dr. Laura Veccia. pp. 40–41.
- ⁴² Guillaume, Alfred. pp. 73–74.
- ⁴³ Narrated by *Muslim*.
- ⁴⁴ Vaglieri, Dr. Laura Veccia. pp. 40–41.
- ⁴⁵ Arberry, A. J. *The Holy Koran: An Introduction with Selections*. pp. 31–32.
- ⁴⁶ On the same page as the preceding quote (i.e., p. 31), Professor Arberry wrote, “As for the faithful, I will not conceal from them, what they will not in any case imagine, that I am no Muslim, nor could ever be.”
- ⁴⁷ Said Qutub, *Fi Thilal Al-Qur’an*.
- ⁴⁸ The Arabs considered poetry so potent that wars were sometimes initiated, fought and concluded on its basis. In these cases, literary wars escalated from sharp tongues to sharp swords. Such feuds of verse and violence typically ended as they had begun, with a wise poet reminding both tribes in heart-rending verse of their losses and the bleak future of continued hostility, as compared to the benefits of reconciling differences.
- ⁴⁹ Arberry, A. J. 1996. *The Koran Interpreted*. A Touchstone Book: Simon & Schuster. Preface, p. 25.
- ⁵⁰ Hastings, James. 1913. *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. Charles Scribner’s Sons. Vol X, p. 540.
- ⁵¹ Hastings, James (editor); Revised edition by Frederick C. Grant and H. H. Rowley. 1963. *Dictionary of The Bible*. 2nd edition. Charles Scribner’s Sons. p. 105.
- ⁵² *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. 1971. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd. Vol 4, p. 863.
- ⁵³ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol 9, p. 1001.
- ⁵⁴ Wegner, Paul D. *The Journey from Texts to Translations*. 1999. Grand Rapids: Baker Books. p. 250.
- ⁵⁵ Fox, Robin Lane. 1991. *The Unauthorized Version: Truth and Fiction in the Bible*. Viking Press. pp. 28–34.
- ⁵⁶ Whiston, William, A.M. 1998. *Josephus, The Complete Works*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. 18.4.6., p. 580.

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- ⁵⁷ Wehr, Hans. *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. 3rd printing. Beirut: Librairie Du Liban; London: MacDonald & Evans Ltd. 1980.
- ⁵⁸ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. CD-ROM.
- ⁵⁹ *The Encyclopedia Americana International Edition*. 1998. Grolier Inc. Vol 21. p. 848.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol 26. p. 714.
- ⁶¹ Thompson, Della (editor). *The Oxford Dictionary of Current English*. 1993. Second Edition. Oxford University Press. p. 26.
- ⁶² Ranke, Hermann. *Die Ägyptischen Personennamen (Dictionary of Personal Names of the New Kingdom)*. Verzeichnis der Namen, Verlag Von J J Augustin in Glückstadt, Band I (1935); Band II (1952).
- ⁶³ Meagher, Paul Kevin OP, S.T.M., Thomas C. O'Brien, Sister Consuelo Maria Aherne, SSJ (editors). 1979. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*. Philadelphia: Corpus Publications. Vol 1, p. 741.
- ⁶⁴ Those with deeper interest may wish to research *Atlantis of the Sands*, by Ranulph Frennes, *Ebla: A Revelation in Archeology*, by Chaim Bermant and Michael Weitzman, and *Lost Civilizations*, by Bill Harris.
- ⁶⁵ *National Geographic*. December, 1978. pp. 731–5.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 735.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 731.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 748.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 736.
- ⁷¹ Bermant, Chaim and Michael Weitzman. 1979. *Ebla: A Revelation in Archaeology*. Times Books. p. 191.
- ⁷² Kraeling, Emil G. Ph.D. 1952. *Rand McNally Bible Atlas*. Rand McNally & Co. p. 358.
- ⁷³ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-ROM Edition. 1997. Judaica Multimedia (Israel) Limited. “Nazareth” entry.
- ⁷⁴ Baigent, Michael and Richard Leigh. 1991. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception*. New York: Summit Books/Simon & Schuster Inc. p. 174.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Musnad Ahmad*.

⁷⁷ Narrated by *Al-Bukhari*.

⁷⁸ When Muhammad's beloved uncle Hamzah was slain in battle and horribly mutilated, he promised to do the same to seventy of the enemy. In *surah* Nahl, 16:126–128, Muhammad was corrected and commanded to no greater than equal punishment, and patience and restraint. Years later, the Muslims conquered Makkah and the woman who commissioned Hamzah's murder presented herself to Muhammad. She had not only ordered Hamzah killed, but had cut out and chewed the liver of his corpse. Yet Muhammad forgave her.

⁷⁹ On the occasion of Muhammad having ransomed a group of captives—men who were aggressive enemies of God, and who were captured while fighting the Muslims for their faith. (TMQ 8:67)

⁸⁰ A point needs to be made in this regard. Orthodox (Sunni) Muslims are sensitive to the fact that because Muhammad is recognized as having suffered the rare error of human judgment, certain “Muslims” have misinterpreted this fact, and have sought to discredit whichever of his statements and actions are to their personal distaste. Such people take what they want from the *sunnah* of the prophet, and selectively disavow all that which goes against their preference, manufacturing the excuse that perhaps Muhammad's judgment with regard to specific matters was faulty. The essential element of Islamic faith compromised by such suggestions is that the Islamic religion teaches that any error of the prophet was corrected within his lifetime, for Allah would not allow the words or actions of His messenger to convey an error. Hence, whereas the rare fault of judgment was consistent with the humanity of the messenger, the prompt correction of those errors is consistent with the perfection of the Creator, and with the perfection of the message He chose to transmit, both in revelation and in the living example of the prophet.

⁸¹ A traditional Arab desert composed of layers of shredded wheat, chopped nuts, and either cream or melted cheese, seasoned with cardamom and drenched with sugar-syrup spiced with cinnamon and cloves.

⁸² Sa'eid Hawwa. 1990. *Ar-Rasool, Salallahu Alayhi Wa Salam*. Second Edition. Cairo: Dar As-Salaam Publishing. pp. 282–3.

⁸³ Lings, Martin. 1995. *Muhammad, His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*. The Islamic Texts Society. p. 148.

⁸⁴ Al-Mubarakpuri, Safi-ur-Rahman. 1995. *Ar-Raheeq Al-Makhtum (The Sealed Nectar)*. Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam. pp. 210–226.

⁸⁵ A.H.—“After Hijra”—the Islamic calendar’s zero point being the Prophet’s migration from Makkah to Medina in July of 622 CE.