

Qq

Q Document.

The *Gospel of Q* or *Q Document* is a hypothetical collection of Jesus' sayings that supposedly antedates the four Gospels. The *Q* hypothesis comes from the German word *Quelle*, meaning "sources." *Q* was used heavily by the Jesus Seminar to arrive at their radical conclusions. Since *Q* allegedly contains sayings, not works or miracles of Jesus, it is used as a basis for denying the resurrection. Since the earliest *Q* contained no references to Jesus' deity, this too is held to be a later mythological invention. If true, this would undermine the historic apologetic for Christianity (see APOLOGETICS, HISTORICAL ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF).

Supposed States and Dates of Q. According to *Q* proponent Burton Mack, there were really four successive states of *Q*: proto- *Q* 1, *Q* 1, proto- *Q* 2, and *Q* 2. The gospel(s) of *Q* supposedly developed between 30 and 65, before any canonical Gospels appeared. Thus, *Q* is supposed to provide, along with the *Gospel of Thomas* (see NAG HAMMADI GOSPELS), the earliest view of Jesus' followers.

Some scholars distinguish between *Q* 1 (ca. 50), consisting of short sayings of Jesus, and *Q* 2 (50–60), which may have been against the original Jesus group as evidenced by the judgmental tone of *Q* 2. This includes apocalyptic pronouncements of doom on those who refused their kingdom program. After the Jewish War (70), they upgraded their mythology (*Q* 3) to include statements about Jesus being divine (Mack, 53). On this breakdown, *Q* 1 presents Jesus as a sage, a wise teacher; *Q* 2 portrays him as prophetic and apocalyptic; and *Q* 3 as superhuman, embodying the wisdom of God and divine authority (Boyd, 121).

History of the Q Hypothesis. Judging from its widespread acceptance today, one would expect that the *Q* hypothesis had been around since the early church. The truth is that Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), the father of modern liberalism, gave impetus to the idea when he reinterpreted a statement by Papias (ca. 110) about Matthew compiling "the oracles" of Jesus (Gk. *ta logia*). This, Schleiermacher decided, was a document consisting only of Jesus' "sayings," rather than both "what the Lord said or did" (see Linnemann, *Is There a Synoptic Problem?* 20). Later, Christian Hermann Weisse (1801–1866) claimed that this saying-source was used by Luke in compiling his Gospel, thus giving rise to the concept of *Q*. Others added that Mark was used by both Matthew and Luke. Thus, *Q* is posited to account for the material used by Matthew and Luke that is not found in Mark, their common source.

However, in spite of its popularity, *Q* has been rejected by many biblical scholars from the time it was first proposed. B. F. Westcott (1825–1901), Theodore Zahn (1838–1933), and Adolf Schlatter (1852–1938) are examples of older scholars. Eta Linnemann, John Wenham, and William Farmer are examples of contemporary scholars.

Alleged Basis of Q. According to proponents, "the *Q* hypothesis, together with Marcan priority, is the most efficient way of accounting for the myriad details in the relationship of these three texts to one another." For "Matthew and Luke agree in their sequence of events in the life of Jesus only when they also agree with Mark." And "this peculiar pattern has led almost all scholars of the New Testament to the conclusion that Matthew and Luke must have made use of Mark as a kind of outline for their respective works, but quite independently of one another." This Marcan priority, however, doesn't account for a good deal of material shared by Matthew and Luke. "How could Matthew and Luke have included these several sayings, parables, and occasional stories—sometimes offering versions that are very close in wording—independently of one another?" In view of this, "the *Q* hypothesis arose as a way of accounting for the material common to Matthew and Luke, but not found in Mark" (Patterson, 39–40). This similarity in content and order of events is used to show literary dependence of the latter documents on the former, that is, of Matthew and Luke upon Mark and *Q*.

Evaluation. From an apologetic vantage point, the so-called "Gospel of *Q*" has serious implications for the authenticity of the Gospels and the historic apologetic for Christianity. But the evidence shows that the hypothesis in no way undermines the authenticity of the biblical Gospels.

A central consideration is that there is not one shred of documentary evidence that *Q* ever existed. No manuscript or any version of it has ever been found. No church Father ever cited any work corresponding to what current scholars mean by *Q*. From what is known of the documentary tradition of the early Christian centuries, this lacuna is improbable in the extreme if the work ever existed. Former *Q* proponent Linnemann observes the reverence with which critics regard *Q*: "This is the stuff of fairy tales" (Linnemann, "Is There a *Q*?" 19). Apologists can assume with confidence that *Q* is a modern creation and that no manuscript will turn up next week to prove them wrong.

As Gregory Boyd observes, "we could account for such similarities in other ways that don't require relying on a hypothetical document." For example, "from what we know about Jewish oral tradition and memorization, we could convincingly argue that the commonalities between Luke and Matthew simply indicate the reliability of the oral traditions that lie behind both. A number of reputable scholars take this position. Others argue that Luke used Matthew as a source document. Luke 1:1–4 indicates that he used several sources. This would account for similarity" (Boyd, 119–20).

The argument for *Q* is circular reasoning. Mack, for example, argued that "frequently the way sayings are grouped together or ordered [in *Q*] makes a point. Sometimes a saying offers a specific interpretation of a preceding unit of material" (Mack, 106). And "the order and organization of material are . . . clear signs of the coherence of a particular layer of tradition" (ibid., 108). However, the only *Q* we possess was constructed by *Q* proponents from Matthew

and Luke. They decided how these sayings would be put together. So it is no surprise that they were ordered to make a point, since it is those who constructed *Q* who ordered them in this way (ibid., 125). They are begging the question.

The *Q* hypothesis is based on a reconstructionist view of history that rejects New Testament history in Acts. If the *Q* hypothesis is correct as interpreted by some modern scholars, the book of Acts must be altogether false. Yet no book in the New Testament has more authentication of its historical accuracy than Acts. Historians specializing in the Roman Empire, such as A. N. Sherwin-White and Colin Hemer, have provided overwhelming evidence of its authenticity (*see* ACTS, HISTORICITY OF). Sherwin-White wrote: “For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . Any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted” (Sherwin-White, 189). Before them there was the work of William Ramsay who, after decades of research, concluded that in the presentation of hundreds of historical details, Dr. Luke has not made a single mistake (see Ramsay). But if Acts is good history, the historical reconstruction of *Q* is mythology.

An important event in early Christianity was the Council of Jerusalem in 49, at which the teaching of Paul was the central focus of the controversy. As Linnemann notes, “Are we to believe that this Council was content to quibble over the interpretation of Jewish law, as Luke reports, when Paul was ‘mythologizing’ the gospel, claiming Jesus to be God’s son, while the *Q* people believed him to be no more than a Sage?” (Linnemann, “Is There a *Q* ?” 20). Surely, if the people of *Q* were Jesus people, not Christians, there would be some trace of this conflict in the New Testament. There is not (ibid.).

Neither order of events nor similarity of content is convincing grounds for positing literary dependence. The only way to show literary dependence is to prove a high percentage of identical literary construction. But this is not the case, as Linnemann has demonstrated (ibid., 21–23). “Similarity in content is in itself no proof of literary dependence. It could also be caused by different people covering the same event. A saying of Jesus should not have differed much as reported independently by two or more people who heard it. Similarity might be historically, not literarily, transmitted” (ibid., 22). Nor can the existence of a source document be demonstrated by sequence of accounts. Only twenty-four pairs of parallels, 36.9 percent, occur within one chapter of each other. Only five (7.69 percent) occur in the same point of narrative in Matthew and Luke. In view of this, Linnemann argues, “It takes a robust imagination” to suppose literary dependence (ibid.).

Literary dependence assumes identical wording. But the number of identical words in parallel verses is 1792 or 41 percent of Matthew’s *Q* portion and 42 percent of Luke’s. In seventeen of the sixty-five parallel pairs alleged to have come from *Q*, one-quarter of *Q*, the number of identical words is less than 25 percent. In the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30), the longest *Q* passage, only sixty of 291 words are identical with Luke 19:11–27. Of these words, nine are the word *and*, seven are articles, and six are pronouns. That leaves thirty-eight of 291 words on which to establish dependence. Most of those occur in direct speech. “Thus the similarity is easily accounted for by a historically reliable memory that reached both Matthew and Luke” (ibid.). The longest passage in the high-agreement area has 78 percent identical words. That is no longer than Psalm 1, a text many know by heart. Says Linnemann, “It is not

difficult to imagine accounts of this length being committed to memory in the oral culture of Jesus’ day” (ibid.).

There is no reason to accept the assumption that nearly all of *Q* is contained in Matthew and Luke. The primary argument is that, since Matthew and Luke retain a large amount of Mark in their Gospels, they would do the same for *Q*. But this does not follow, since Matthew and Luke may both have valued Mark more highly.

It is also assumed that there were several versions of *Q*. Besides the subjective criteria on which this was decided, it may be a violation of “Ockham’s Razor,” that hypotheses should not be multiplied without necessity. There is a more simple explanation if one predicates that the Gospels were assembled by eyewitnesses and contemporaries who had access to the original sayings and deeds of Jesus.

Overlap in the Gospels can be accounted for on the premise that either (1) the writers were independent eyewitnesses whose accounts would naturally overlap; (2) the later Gospel writers used the first Gospel written, plus their independent sources, and/or a common pool of oral sayings of Jesus; or (3) an early edition of Matthew or Mark was used later by the author as well as the other Gospel writers. The sources Luke mentions (Luke 1:1–4) may be other canonical Gospels composed by eyewitnesses.

If a precanonical Gospel record of Jesus existed, there is no good reason to believe it omitted the miracle or deity claims. Indeed, since the Old Testament claimed deity for the Messiah (esp. Pss. 45:6 ; 110:1 ; Isa. 7:14 ; 9:6 ; Micah 5:2 ; Zech. 12:10), there is no reason why someone claiming to be the Jewish Messiah would not do so as well (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF ; VIRGIN BIRTH).

Even if there had been some miracleless deposit of original sayings of Jesus prior to the Gospels, this would not prove Jesus did not do miracles nor say many other things. It may have been an early disciple accustomed to keeping records, such as Matthew the former tax collector, recorded the sayings of Jesus because he knew they would be needed later. For example, if we had only Galatians (and not Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Thessalonians), we might assume that Paul was not concerned about the resurrection. Galatians only mentions it once. Possessing an early document of sayings does not allow us to conclude that Christ did not perform miracles unless the document explicitly says so. Or, it might have been that, in view of the tremendous impact the world’s greatest Teacher made on their minds and hearts for three years, there was an oral deposit of Jesus’ words in the memories of the disciples before there were any written records. Indeed, according to John, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would bring to mind the things he had taught them (John 14:26 ; 16:13).

And if we take the presupposition so far as to imagine that an anti-miracle version of *Q* existed, it could have been an early revision of Jesus’ words and deeds in opposition to the original disciples. After all, serious doctrinal deviations appeared even during the apostles’ time (cf. Colossians 2 ; 1 Timothy 4 ; 1 John 4). Jesus warned of false prophets (Matt. 7:15).

When segments of text attributed to *Q* are examined as a whole, there is evidence of Jesus' miracles and divinity. Jesus claimed his "father" gave him authority over the whole world (*Q* s24). Jesus considered himself greater than Solomon or the prophet Jonah (*Q* s32). He believed those who disowned him would be disowned by God (*Q* s37). Jesus would determine who would be excluded from God's kingdom (*Q* s47). He predicted the future (*Q* s49). Jesus demanded that his disciples put him over all human beings, even their parents (*Q* s52). His followers would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (*Q* s62). Jesus even referred to his resurrection via the "sign" (miracle) of Jonah (*Q* s32). No doubt this evidence is one reason critics attempt to stratify *Q* into multiple documents, pushing the statements to as late a period as possible. However, the grounds for doing so are highly subjective, and, even so, the statements are still early enough to be authentic—during the time eyewitnesses were still alive.

In contrast to the hypothetical *Q*, the earliest known actual manuscript and documents of the Christian faith contained references to Christ's miracles and divinity. John is filled with both (see JOHN, GOSPEL OF) and the John Rylands Fragment is the earliest undisputed manuscript of Christian origins (see NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS). First Corinthians is accepted even by critics as coming from the pen of Paul in 55 or 56, only twenty-two or twenty-three years after Jesus' death. It refers to the resurrection as having been "received" from Paul in his earlier teachings (1 Cor. 15:1, 4-8).

The *Q* Assumptions. Obviously, though most *Q* advocates would be reluctant to admit it, there is an antisupernatural bias behind their view. Following the naturalistic approach to the Gospels that began with David Strauss in 1835-1836) they assume the miraculous does not occur. Thus, all records of miraculous events are categorized as later results of mythmaking (see MYTHOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT). The haste at which they jump to this conclusion when, even granting an early "sayings" source, betrays a desire to eliminate the supernatural. The confidence with which critics come to an antisupernatural conclusion on such speculative and hypothetical grounds supports the thesis that they really begin with a naturalistic presupposition. Compare the words of one *Q* advocate: "The narrative canonical gospels can no longer be viewed as the trustworthy accounts of unique and stupendous historical events at the foundation of the Christian faith." Instead, "the gospels must now be seen as the result of early Christian mythmaking" (Patterson, "The Lost Gospel," 40).

Beginning with a disbelief in miracles, it comes as no surprise that their imaginary reconstruction of *Q* in the early time period is devoid of miracle stories, including the resurrection.

The *Q* hypothesis is based on an incredible number of assumptions (see Boyd, 122-24):

1. Mark was the earliest Gospel and Matthew and Luke followed its form and content. The same data can be explained by positing an oral tradition or putting Matthew first.
2. *Q* existed as a written document. There is no proof for this.

3. A *Q* can be reconstructed from what Matthew and Luke have in common that is not found in Mark. But if *Q* existed there is no objective way to know how much of it was used.
4. *Q* was composed to express everything early Christians believed about Jesus. Why could it not have been simply a collection of sayings?
5. It is also assumed that a community of people created *Q*. There is no proof of this. One person could just as easily have collected Jesus' sayings.
6. *Q* can be accurately understood by discerning its various literary stages. No objective criteria are offered by which this can be done.
7. These alleged states reflect various stages of the thinking of Jesus' followers. The various views could as easily have been concurrent.
8. The views of Christ are incompatible with one another. Jesus could have been teacher, prophet, and divine authority. If these elements are together at the end, why could they not have all been there at the beginning?

Boyd summarizes: "We see, then, that the liberal revision of the picture of Jesus and of early church history on the basis of *Q* amounts to nothing more than a pile of arbitrary assumptions built on other arbitrary assumptions" (Boyd, 24).

Conclusion. The argument for the *Q* hypothesis, particularly in its naturalistic form, are without historical, documentary, or literary foundations. As Boyd noted, "among other things, the entire scheme is completely conjectural. These scholars ask us to trade the reliable Gospel portrait of Christ for a hypothetical reconstruction of history based on a hypothetical reconstruction of a hypothetical document" (Boyd, 121-22). There is nothing in the canonical Gospels that cannot be accounted for by positing that the authors were eyewitnesses and/or contemporaries of the events and that they provided an accurate account of what they reported just as Luke claims (Luke 1:1-4).

In the words of one former *Q* disciple, "The Gospels report the words and deeds of Jesus. They do this partly through direct eyewitnesses (Matthew and John) and partly through those who were informed by eyewitnesses (Mark and Luke). The similarities as well as the differences in the Gospel accounts are just what one expects from eyewitness reminiscence" (ibid.).

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Quantum Physics. See INDETERMINACY, PRINCIPLE OF .

Quest for Historical Jesus. See JESUS, QUEST FOR HISTORICAL.

Qur'an, Alleged Divine Origin of.

Orthodox Islam and historic Christianity cannot both be true. Either religion claims that its scriptures alone are the inspired Word of God. They also contain mutually exclusive claims: God is three persons. God is only one person. The Bible says Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead three days later. The *Qur'an* says that he did not (see CHRIST, DEATH OF ; CHRIST'S DEATH, MORAL OBJECTIONS TO ; CHRIST'S DEATH, SUBSTITUTION LEGEND ; RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR). Thus, it is necessary for the Christian apologist to challenge the divine authority claims of the *Qur'an* .

Origin of the Qur'an. The Islamic claim for the *Qur'an* is unparalleled by that in any other major religion. Is the *Qur'an* a miracle? Muhammad claimed it was—indeed it was the only miracle he offered as proof of his claims to be a prophet (sura 17:88). The evidence Muslims give for this claim includes the following points.

Argument from Unique Literary Style. Eloquence is highly questionable as a test for divine inspiration, yet a foundation stone of the Islamic position is that the *Qur'an* possesses a literary quality and style that could only have come directly from God. At best the *Qur'an* 's literary qualifications prove that Muhammad was a gifted person. But amazing artistic and intellectual gifts are hardly supernatural. Mozart wrote his first symphony at the age of six and produced his entire music corpus before age 35 when he died. Muhammad did not begin to write until age 40. But what Muslim would say that Mozart's works are miraculous? If eloquence were the test, a

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case could be made for the divine authority of many literary classics, from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to Shakespeare.

Further, even some early Muslim scholars admitted that the *Qur'an* was not perfect in its literary form. The Iranian Shiite scholar Ali Dashti notes that "among the Moslem scholars of the early period, before bigotry and hyperbole prevailed, were some such as Ebrahim on-Nassam who openly acknowledged that the arrangement and syntax of the Qoran are not miraculous and that works of equal or greater value could be produced by other God-fearing persons." Although some condemned this view (based on their interpretation of sura 17:90), on-Nassam had many defenders, among them several leading exponents of the Motazelite school (Dashti, 48).

The *Qur'an* is not unrivaled, even among works in Arabic. Islamic scholar, C. G. Pfander, points out that "it is by no means the universal opinion of unprejudiced Arabic scholars that the literary style of the *Qur'an* is superior to that of all other books in the Arabic language." For example, "some doubt whether in eloquence and poetry it surpasses the Mu'allaqat, or the Magamat or Hariri, though in Muslim lands few people are courageous enough to express such an opinion" (Pfander, 264). Dashti, contends, however, that the *Qur'an* contains numerous grammatical irregularities. He notes that:

The Qoran contains sentences which are incomplete and not fully intelligible without the aid of commentaries; foreign words, unfamiliar Arabic words, and words used with other than the normal meaning; adjectives and verbs inflected without observance of the concord of gender and number; illogical and ungrammatically applied pronouns which sometimes have no referent; and predicates which in rhymed passages are often remote from the subjects.

He adds, "these and other such aberrations in the language have given scope to critics who deny the Qoran's eloquence" (Dashti, 48–49). He lists numerous examples (suras 74:1; 4:160; 20:66; 2:172, etc.), one of which is "In verse 9 of *Sura 49 (ol-Hojorat)*, 'If two parties of believers have started to fight each other, make peace between them.' The verb for "have started to fight" is in the plural, whereas it ought to be in the dual like its subject, "two parties." Anis A. Shorosh lists other literary flaws in the *Qur'an* . For example, in sura 2:177 he points out that the word *Sabireen* in Arabic should have been *Sabiroon* because of its position in the sentence. Likewise, *Sabieen* in sura 5:69 is more correct Arabic than *Sabioon* . Also, Shorosh notes that there is "a gross error in Arabic" in sura 3:59 (Shorosh, 199–200). Dashti counts more than 100 aberrations from normal rules and structures of Arabic (Dashti, 50). With such problems, the *Qur'an* may be eloquent, but it is neither perfect nor unparalleled.

As Pfander observed, "even were it proved beyond the possibility of doubt that the *Qur'an* far surpassed all other books in eloquence, elegance, and poetry, that would no more prove its inspiration than a man's strength would demonstrate his wisdom or a woman's beauty her virtue" (Pfander, 267). There is no logical connection between literary eloquence and divine authority. The sovereign God (whom Muslims accept) could choose to speak in plain everyday language, if he wished. At best one might attempt to argue that if God said it, he would say it most eloquently. Even so, it would be a logical fallacy to argue that simply because it is eloquent God must have said it. Humans can speak eloquently, and God can speak in common language.

Other religions have used the beautiful literary style of their work as a sign of its divine origin. Would Muslims accept the inspiration of these works? For example, the Persian founder of the Manichaeans, Mani, “is said to have claimed that men should believe in him as the Paraclete [“Helper” Jesus promised in John 14] because he produced a book called *Artand*, full of beautiful pictures.” Further, “he said that the book had been given him by God, that no living man could paint pictures equal in beauty to those contained in it, and that therefore it had evidently come from God himself” (Pfander, 264). Yet no Muslim will accept this claim. Why then should non-Muslims accept literary beauty as a valid test for the divine authority of the Qur’an?

Argument from Muhammad’s Illiteracy. In addition to its style, the human source and content of the *Qur’an* is proof of its divine origin. They insist that no book with its message could have come from an illiterate prophet, as was Muhammad.

It is questionable that Muhammad was actually illiterate. As one authority noted, the Arabic words *al ummi*, translated “the unlettered” prophet in the *Qur’an* (sura 7:157), “may be [rendered] ‘heathen’ rather than ‘illiterate.’” Pfander prefers the translation, “the Gentile Prophet,” agreeing that the term does not imply illiteracy (Pfander, 254). The same word is rendered “gentiles” in sura 62:2: “He it is Who hath sent among gentiles (*al ummi*),” and in suras 2:73; 3:19, 69; 7:156.

The evidence suggests that Muhammad was not illiterate. For example, “when the Treaty of Hudaibah was being signed, Muhammad took the pen from Ali, struck out the words in which Ali had designated him “the apostle of God” and wrote instead with his own hand the words, “son of Abdu’l-lah.” And “tradition tells us too that, when he was dying, Muhammad called for pen and ink, to write a command appointing his successor, but his strength failed him before writing-materials were brought” (Pfander, 255).

W. Montgomery Watt informs us that “many Meccans were able to read and write, and there is therefore a presumption that an efficient merchant, as Muhammad was, knew something of the arts” (Watt, 40). Even Muslim scholars refer to Muhammad as being “perfect in intellect” (Gudel, 72). If Muhammad lacked formal training in earlier years, there is no reason why such an intelligent person could not have caught up on his own later.

Third, even if it were granted that Muhammad was illiterate, it does not follow that the *Qur’an* was dictated to him by God. There are other possible explanations. Even if he was not formally trained, Muhammad was a bright person possessing great skills. His scribe could have made up for deficiencies by stylizing the work. This was a common practice. Homer was blind, and so he probably did not write his epics himself. Some critics argue that it is possible that Muhammad’s first impression was right, that he received the information from an evil spirit, who might have aided his ability (*see* MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED DIVINE CALL OF).

Argument from the Preservation of the Qur’an. Does perfect preservation prove divine inspiration? Muslims imply that the *Qur’an* is identical to the original, and this sets the book above the Bible. *Qur’an* critics dispute this. First, there is often a serious over-claim as to the

preservation of the *Qur’an*. While it is true that the present *Qur’an* is a nearly perfect copy of its seventh-century original, it is not true that this is exactly the way it came from Muhammad.

The *Qur’an* was originally given orally by Muhammad and memorized by devout followers, most of whom were killed shortly after Muhammad’s death. According to early tradition, Muhammad’s scribes wrote on pieces of paper, stones, palm-leaves, shoulder-blades, ribs, and bits of leather. Muslims believe that during the lifetime of Muhammad the *Qur’an* was written down. But, according to the testimony of Zayd, a contemporary and follower of Muhammad, he was requested by Abu Bakr to “search out the [various chapters and verses of] the *Qur’an* and gather it together.” He responded, “accordingly, I sought out the *Qur’an*: I gathered it together from leafless palm branches and thin white stones and men’s breasts . . .” (Pfander, 258–59). In the 650s, during the reign of Uthman ibn Affan, the third Muslim Caliph, it was reported that several Muslim communities were using different versions of the *Qur’an*. Once again, Zayd was called in to prepare the official revised version. It is this version that has remained uniform and intact, not any original version that came directly from Muhammad.

In his book *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur’an*, European archaeologist, Arthur Jeffry, revealed his discovery of one of three known copies of some early Islamic works called *Masahif*. These books related the state of the *Qur’an* text prior to its standardization under Uthman. It reveals, contrary to Muslims’ claim, that there were several differing texts prior to Uthman’s revision. In fact, as Dashti points out, some *Qur’anic* verses were changed due to the scribes’ suggestions to Muhammad and others by the influence of Umar I, second caliph of the Muslim Empire, on Muhammad.

Jeffry concludes that Uthman’s recension “was a necessary stroke of policy to establish a standard text for the whole empire.” Since there were wide divergences between the *Qur’ans* of Medina, Mecca, Basra, Kufa, and Damascus, “Uthman’s solution was to canonize the Medinan Codex and order all others to be destroyed.” Therefore, he concludes, “there can be little doubt that the text canonized by Uthman was only one among several types of text in existence at the time” (Jeffry, 7–8).

Not all Muslims today accept the same version of the *Qur’an*. The Sunni Muslims accept the Sahih tradition of Masud as authoritative. Masud was one of the few people authorized by Muhammad to teach the *Qur’an*. Yet the Ibn Masud Codex of the *Qur’an* has a multitude of variations from the Uthmanic recension. In the second sura alone there are nearly 150 variations. It takes Jeffry some ninety-four pages to show the variations between the two. He also demonstrates that the variant readings are not just a matter of dialect, as many Muslims claim. Some variations involved a whole clause and others omitted complete sentences. Jeffry concludes that the Uthman text that was canonized was only one out of many, and “there is grave suspicion that Uthman may have seriously edited the text he canonized” (Jeffry, ix–x).

Islamic tradition reveals certain things not found in the present *Qur’an*. One tells us that Ayishah, one of Muhammad’s wives, said: “Among what was sent down of the *Qur’an* were ten well known (verses) about—Suckling, which prohibited: then they were annulled by five well known ones. Then the Apostle of God deceased, and they are what is recited of the *Qur’an*” (Pfander, 256). Another example of something not found in today’s *Qur’an* is what Umar said:

“Verily God sent Muhammad with the truth, and He sent down upon him the Book, accordingly the Verse of Stoning was part of what God Most High sent Down: the Apostle of God stoned, and we stoned after him, and in the Book of God stoning is the adulterer’s due” (Pfander, 256). This original revelation was apparently changed and one hundred stripes replaced stoning as the punishment for adultery (sura 24:2)

The so-called “satanic verses” illustrate another change in the original text. According to one version of these verses Muhammad had an early revelation in Mecca, which allowed intercession to certain idols, which said:

Did you consider al-hat and al-Uzza

And al-Manat, the third, the other?

Those are the swans exalted;

Their intercession is expected;

Their likes are not neglected (Watt, 60).

Sometime after this Muhammad received another revelation canceling the last three lines (verses) and substituting what we now find in sura 53 verses 21–23 which omit the part about interceding to these gods. According to Watt, both versions had been recited publicly. Muhammad’s explanation was that Satan had deceived him and inserted the false verses without his knowing it!

W. St. Clair-Tisdall, who long worked among Muslims, pointed out that even in the present *Qur’an* there are some variations.

Among various readings may be mentioned: (1) in Surah XXVIII, 48, some read “Sahirani” for “sihrani”; (2) in Surah XXXII, 6, after “ummahatuhum” one reading adds the words “wa hua abun lahum”; (3) in Surah XXXIV, 18, for “rabbana ba’id” some read “rabuna ba’ada”; (4) in Surah XXXVIII, 22, for “tis’un” another reading is “tis’atun”; (5) in Surah XIX, 35, for “tantaruna” some read “yamtaruna” (Clair-Tisdall, 60).

Although Shi’ite Muslims are in the minority, they are the second largest Islamic sect in the world, with more than 100 million followers. They claim that Caliph Uthman intentionally eliminated many verses from the *Qur’an* which spoke of Ali.

L. Bevan Jones summed up the matter well in his book, *The People of the Mosque*, when he said: “while it may be true that no other work has remained for twelve centuries with so pure a text, it is probably equally true that no other has suffered so drastic a purging” (Jones, 62).

Even were the *Qur’an* a perfect word-for-word copy of the original as given by Muhammad, it would not prove the original was inspired of God. All it would demonstrate is that today’s *Qur’an* is a carbon copy of whatever Muhammad said. It would say or prove nothing about the

truth of what he said. The Muslim claim that they have the true religion, because they have the only perfectly copied holy book, is as logically fallacious as someone preferring a perfectly printed counterfeit \$1000 bill over a slightly imperfect genuine one. The crucial question, which Muslim apologists beg by this argument, is whether the original is God’s Word, not whether they possess a perfect copy of it.

Argument from Prophecies. Does the *Qur’an* contain predictive prophecies which prove its divine origin? This is treated in detail in the article MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED MIRACLES OF . Points include:

Most of the predictions are really exhortations of a religious military leader to fight on and God will give them the victory. The one substantive prediction was about the Roman victory over the Persian army at Issus (in sura 30:2–4) did not come within the time period given by the prophecy of “within a few years” and was to be expected.

The only other notable prophecy is a reference to ten nights found in sura 89:2 that is interpreted as a veiled prediction of the ten years of persecution suffered by early Muslims. This is a doubtful interpretation, since the line apparently speaks of pilgrimage (*see* PROPHECY AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE).

Argument from Unity. Insisting that the *Qur’an* must be divine revelation because it is self-consistent and non-contradictory is also unconvincing. As noted, Muhammad’s revelations were sometimes changed, including the cited “satanic verses” where the original revelation permitted a certain tribe to worship pagan gods in sura 53:21–23. This is a serious matter for a prophet who believes polytheism is the ultimate sin.

The whole concept of abrogation (*mansukh*) where previous mistakes were corrected by later verses (called *nasikh*) reveals a lack of unity in the *Qur’an* . sura 2:106 says, “Such of Our revelations as We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring (in place) one better or the like thereof. Knowest thou not that Allah is Able to do all things?” For example, what is called “the sword verse” (sura 9:5) supposedly annuls 124 verses which originally encouraged tolerance (cf. sura 2:256). The *Qur’an* says emphatically “Let there be no compulsion In religions” (sura 2:256), yet in other places it urges Muslims to “Fight those who believe not” (sura 9:29) and “fight and slay The Pagans wherever ye find them” (sura 9:5). *Nasikh* is a contradiction in that the *Qur’an* claims that “No change there can be in the Words of God” (sura 10:64), which they say the *Qur’an* is. For “there is none That can alter the Words (and Decrees) of God” (sura 6:34). Yet the *Qur’an* teaches the doctrine of abrogation by which later revelations annul previous ones.

As Gerhard Nehls keenly observed, “we should like to find out how a divine revelation can be improved. We would have expected it to have been perfect and true right from the start” (Nehls, 11). Some Muslims, like Ali, claim that abrogation is just “progressive revelation,” adapting God’s same message to different people living at different periods. “But Sura 2:106 [on abrogation] does not speak of culture or progressive revelation with reference to scriptures given prior to Mohammed, but to Quranic verses only!” (Nehls, 12). It makes sense that God would progressively reveal himself over 1500 years of time, as in the Bible (*see* PROGRESSIVE

REVELATION). But the Bible brings to fulfillment and expands on earlier teaching, rather than making corrections, and certainly not within twenty years. This seems particularly true in view of the fact that the correction verses are often near the ones being corrected. What is more, there are verses that the Quranic abrogations apparently forgot to redact. In sura 7:54 (and 32:4) we are told that the world was made in six days. But in sura 41:9–12 it says it took God a total of eight days to create the world (two plus four plus two). How can both be correct?

The *Qur'an* also claims humans are responsible for their own choices (sura 18:29), yet it claims God has sealed the fate of all in advance, saying, “Every man’s fate We have fastened On his own neck: On the Day of Judgment We shall bring out For him a scroll, Which he will see Spread open” (sura 17:13; also see 10:99–100).

Even if the *Qur'an* were consistent, unity or self-consistency is at best a negative test for truth, not a positive one. Of course, if a Book is from God who cannot err, then it won’t have any contradictions in it. However, just because a book has no contradictions does not mean God is the author. As John W. Montgomery insightfully observed, Euclid’s geometry is self-consistent, but this is not ground to call it divinely authoritative (Montgomery, 94).

Self-consistency is the kind of argument that others (including Christians) use for their holy books. But not all can be the inspired Word of God since they are mutually contradictory. Unity in itself does not prove divine authenticity, or all self-consistent but opposing holy books are all true. The Bible is at least as self-consistent as the *Qur'an*, but no Muslim would admit that it therefore is inspired of God.

Argument from Scientific Accuracy. This argument has gained popularity in recent times, primarily due to Maurice Bucaille’s book, *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science*, in which Christianity is attacked for holding back the progress of science, and the *Qur’an* is exalted as promoting science. Indeed, he insists that the *Qur’an* marvelously fore-shadowed modern science in many of its statements, thus miraculously confirming its divine origin.

But Christianity, not Islam, was the mother of modern science. M. B. Foster, writing for the prestigious English philosophy journal *Mind* noted that the Christian doctrine of creation is the origin of modern science (see Foster, Whitehead, 13–14). The founders of almost every area of modern science were Christians working from their worldview. This includes men such as Nikolai Copernicus, Johannes Kepler, William Kelvin, Isaac Newton, Blaise Pascal, Robert Boyle, James Clark Maxwell, and Louis Agassiz (see SCIENCE OF ORIGINS).

So while Islamic monotheism made many contributions to modern culture, it is an overstatement to claim credit for the origin of modern science. Muslim armies destroyed vast resources of knowledge. Pfander, for example, notes that under the Caliph Umar the Muslim soldiers destroyed the vast libraries at Alexandria and Persia. When the general asked Umar what he should do with the books, he is said to have replied: “Cast them into the rivers. For, if in these books there is guidance, then we have still better guidance in the Book of God. If, on the contrary, there is in them that which will lead astray, then may God protect us from them” (Pfander, 365).

Second, it is a mistake to assume that a book is inspired simply because it conforms with modern science (see SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE). Muslim and Christian apologists have made the mistake of assuming the truth of a particular scientific knowledge system. Scientific knowledge changes. Then what appeared to be “harmony” can vanish. Embarrassing mistakes have been made by defenders attempting to see modern scientific theories in their Holy Book.

Even if perfect harmony could be demonstrated between the *Qur'an* and scientific fact, this would not prove the divine inspiration of the *Qur'an*. It would simply prove that the *Qur'an* made no scientific error. At best, scientific accuracy is a negative test for truth. If error were found, it would prove that it was not the Word of God. The same applies to the Bible or any other religious book. Of course, if a book consistently and accurately anticipated by centuries what was only later discovered, then this could be used in a theistic context to indicate a supernatural source. But the *Qur'an* shows no evidence of supernatural predictions as does the Bible.

Some critics question just how scientifically accurate the *Qur'an* is. Take, for example, the *Qur'an*’s highly controversial statement that human beings are formed from a clot of blood. Surah 23:14 reads, “Then We made the sperm Into a clot of congealed blood; Then of that clot We made A (foetus) lump; then We Made out of that lump Bones and clothed the bones With flesh.” This is scarcely a scientific description of embryonic development. In order to avoid the problem, Bucaille retranslates the verse, rendering the Arabia word *alaq* (“blood clot”) as “the thing which clings” (Bucaille, 204). However, this is questionable. It is contrary to the work of recognized Islamic authorities who did the major English translations. And Bucaille himself recognized that “a majority of translations describe . . . man’s formation from a ‘blood clot’ or ‘adhesion’ ” (Bucaille, 198). This leaves the impression that his own home-made translation was generated to solve the problem, since he recognizes that “a statement of this kind is totally unacceptable to scientists specializing in this field” (ibid.).

Likewise, other critics note that the *Qur'an* in sura 18:86 speaks of one traveling west “till, when he reached the setting-place of the sun, he found it setting in a muddy spring.” But even in his attempt to explain this problem, Yusuf Ali admits this has “puzzled Commentators.” Nor does he really explain the problem, but simply asserts that this cannot be “the extreme west, for there is no such thing” (Ali, 754, n. 2430). Indeed, there is no extreme west, nor can anyone by traveling west come to the place eventually to the place where the sun sets. But this is what the text says, unscientific as it may be.

Others have observed that the so-called scientific foreshadowing of the *Qur'an* is highly questionable. Kenneth Cragg notes that “It has been frequently claimed by some Muslim exegetes of the *Qur'an* that modern inventions and scientific data, even nuclear fission, have been anticipated there and can now be detected in passages not hitherto appreciated for their prescience. Meanings earlier unsuspected disclose themselves as science proceeds.” This conclusion, however, “is strongly repudiated by others as the kind of corroboration the *Qur'an*, as a ‘spiritual’ Scripture, neither needs nor approves.” (Cragg, 42).

Even if the *Qur'an* were proven to be scientifically accurate, it would not thereby be divinely authoritative. All accuracy would prove is that the *Qur'an* made no scientific blunders. This

would not be unparalleled. Some Jewish scholars claim the same for the Torah and many Christians claim exactly the same thing for the Bible, using very similar arguments. But Bucaille would not allow that this demonstrates that the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God.

Argument from Mathematical Structure. One popular proof for the *Qur'an*'s divine origin is its alleged miraculous basis in the number nineteen. Nineteen is the sum of the numerical value of all the letters in the word "one" (from the basic belief that God is one). Such an apologetic method does not find a great deal of acceptance in scholarly circles for good reason. No Muslim would accept a message claiming to be from God if it taught idolatry or immorality. Certainly no message containing such claims would be accepted on mathematical grounds alone. So even if the *Qur'an* were a mathematical "miracle," this would not be sufficient to prove that it was of God even to thinking Muslims.

Second, even if the odds are astronomic against the *Qur'an* having all these amazing combinations of the number 19, it proves nothing more than that there is a mathematical order behind the language of the *Qur'an*. Since language is an expression of the order of human thought and since this order can often be reduced to mathematical expression, it is not unusual that a mathematical order can be found behind the language of a document. In fact, there is nothing so unusual about sentences having nineteen letters.

Further, the same kind of argument (based on the number seven) has been used to "prove" the inspiration of the Bible. Take the first verse of the Bible "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." G. Nehls points out that:

The verse consist of 7 Hebrew words and 28 letters (7x4). There are three nouns: "God, heavens, earth". their total numeric value . . . is 777 (7x11). The verb "created" has the value 203 (7x29). The object is contained in the first three words—with 14 letters (7x2). The other four words contain the subject—also with 14 letters (7x2) [and so on].

But no Muslim would allow this to count as an argument in favor of the divine inspiration of the Bible. At best the argument is esoteric and unconvincing. Even most Muslim scholars avoid using it.

Argument from Changed Lives. Apologists point to the transformation of lives and culture by the *Qur'an* as a proof of its divine origin. Such transformations should be expected. When one fervently believes something to be true they live by it. But this still leaves open the question as to whether it is the Word of God. Any set of ideas fervently believed and applied will transform believers and their culture. This is true whether the ideas are Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, or Judaistic. What Muslim would accept the argument that Karl Marx's *Das Capital* is inspired because it transformed millions of lives and many cultures?

Critics find it no surprise that so many converted to Islam when it is remembered what the promised reward was for those who did and the threatened punishment for those who did not. Those who "submitted" were promised Paradise with beautiful women (sura 2:25; 4:57). But "The punishment of those Who wage war against God And His Apostle, and strive With might . . . Is: execution, or crucifixion, Or the cutting off of hands And feet from opposite sides, Or exile

from the land" (sura 5:36). Islamic tradition reports that Muhammad gave the exhortation to his followers that: "The sword is the key of heaven and of hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two month's fasting and prayer. Whoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven at the day of judgment" (Gibbon, 360–61).

Human greed played a part. "Arab warriors were . . . entitled to four-fifths of all the booty they gathered in the form of movable goods and captives" (Noss, 711). It was of great advantage for the enemy to submit. Polytheists had two choices: submit or die. Christians and Jews had another alternative: they could pay heavy taxes (sura 9:5, 29). Also Islamic conquests were successful because in some of the conquered lands the people were fed up with the maltreatment of their Roman rulers and willingly accepted Islam's emphasis on equality and brotherhood.

Further, a Christian or Jewish person could argue for the truth of their religions on the same ground. It should not be surprising that sincere belief in God, his moral law, and a final day of judgment would change one's life—things which all moral monotheists believe. But one cannot jump from this to prove Muhammad is the last and final prophet of God.

If it is possible to prove that changed lives in one religion are evidence of its unique divine origin, then in view of the transforming power of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16), Christianity is equal, if not superior, to Islam. In his famous *Evidences of Christianity*, William Paley observes:

For what are we comparing? A Galilean peasant accompanied by a few fishermen with a conqueror at the head of his army. We compare Jesus, without force, without power, without support, without one external circumstance of attraction or influence, prevailing against the prejudices, the learning, the hierarchy, of his country, against the ancient religious opinions, the pompous religious rites, the philosophy, the wisdom, the authority, of the Roman empire, in the most polished and enlightened period of its existence,—with Mahomet making his way amongst Arabs; collecting followers in the mist of conquests and triumphs, in the darkest ages and countries of the world, and when success in arms not only operated by that command of men's wills and persons which attend prosperous undertakings, but was considered as a sure testimony of Divine approbation. That multitudes, persuaded by this argument, should join the train of a victorious chief; that still greater multitudes should, without any argument, bow down before irresistible power—is a conduct in which we cannot see much to surprise us; in which we can see nothing that resembles the causes by which the establishment of Christianity was effected. [Paley, 257]

Argument from the Rapid Spread of Islam. Some Muslim scholars point to the rapid spread of Islam as proof of its divine origin. According to one Muslim apologist, "the rapid spread of Islam shows that God Most High sent it as His final revelation to men" (Pfander, 226). Islam teaches that it is destined to be the universal religion. There are several serious problems with this reasoning. First, one could question both size and rapid growth as definitive tests for truth. The majority is not always right. Indeed, history has shown they are often wrong.

Even by its own test Islam is not the true religion, since Christianity has been and still is the largest religion in the world in number of adherents—a fact that is a great embarrassment to

Muslims. Further, even if rapid growth is used as a test of the truth of a system, Christianity, not Islam, would prove to be the true religion. For it grew faster at the beginning by its simple message and under heavy persecution by the Romans than did Islam by force of arms. In fact, it not only gained thousands of immediate converts from its Jewish roots within days and weeks (Acts 2:41 ; 4:4 ; 5:14), but it conquered the Roman empire by spiritual force, within its first few centuries.

To be sure, Christian crusaders (twelfth–fourteenth centuries) also engaged in the use of the sword, which Jesus forbid his disciples to do to spread his message (Matt. 26:52). But this was long after Christianity had conquered the world without it. By contrast, Islam did not grow on the mere strength of its message but only later when it used the sword. Indeed, early Christianity grew the most when the Roman government was using the sword on Christians during the first three centuries.

There are perfectly natural reasons for Islam’s later rapid spread, says Shorrosh. Islam glorified Arabic people, customs, and language. It provided an incentive to conquer and plunder other lands. It utilized the ability to fight in the desert. It provided a heavenly reward for dying, and it absorbed many pre-Islamic practices in Arab culture. Even if one points to more positive reasons, such as moral, political, and cultural improvements, there seems to be no reason to posit anything but natural causes for the spread of Islam. Finally, there were natural incentives for the many converts. Soldiers were promised paradise as a reward for dying in the spread of Islam. And the people who did not submit were threatened with death, slavery, or taxation. There is no need to appeal to the supernatural to account for growth of Islam under these conditions.

Islamic scholar, Wilfred Cantwell Smith pinpoints the Muslim dilemma. Muslims believe Islam is God-willed and destined to dominate the world, so its failure to do so must be an indication that God’s sovereign will is being frustrated. But Muslims deny that God’s will can be frustrated. Hence, logically they should conclude that it is not God-willed. Muhammad’s biographer, M. H. Haykal misses the point in his response that human beings are free, and any defeat or set-backs are to be attributed to them (Haykal, 605). If in fact God has willed the supremacy of Islam, then his sovereign will has been frustrated, through human freedom or without it. For Islam is not and has not been since the time of its inception the enduring dominant religion of the world numerically, spiritually, or culturally. Even if Islam should have a sudden burst of success and surpass all other religions, this would not prove it is of God. Logically, all that success proves is that it succeeded, not necessarily that it is true. For even after something succeeds we can still ask: Is it true or false?

Argument from God Speaking in First Person. Muslims appeal to the fact that God speaks in the first person as evidence that the *Qur’an* is the Word of God. In the Bible God is generally referred to in the second or third person, from a human point of view. However, not all the *Qur’an* speaks of God in the first person, so by this logic only those sections in the first person are inspired. No Muslim would willingly say that. Also, in much of the Bible God speaks in the first person yet Muslims do not admit that these passages *are* the words of God, especially when God blesses Israel, giving them the land of Palestine as an inheritance.

The truth is that both the *Qur’an* and the Bible have passages which speak of God in the first person and in the third person. So, Muslims can hardly use this as a unique proof of the divine origin of the *Qur’an* .

Evidence of a Human-Inspired Qur’an. Not only is evidence lacking for a divine origin of the *Qur’an* , but there is strong indications that its origin is not divine.

Fallibility. God cannot make mistakes or change his mind. Yet, as was shown above, the *Qur’an* reflects such fallibility on many occasions.

Purely Human Sources. Based on the findings of reputable scholars of Islam, the content of the *Qur’an* can be traced to either Jewish or Christian works (often from Jewish or Christian apocrypha) or pagan sources. Arthur Jeffry, in his technical and scholarly volume, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur’an* , ably demonstrates that “not only the greater part of the religious vocabulary, but also most of the cultural vocabulary of the *Qur’an* is of non-Arabic origin” (Jeffry, 2). Some of the vocabulary sources include Abyssinian, Persian, Greek, Syriac, Hebrew, and Coptic (ibid., 12–32).

St. Clair-Tisdall, in *The Sources of Islam* , also reveals the direct dependence of certain *Qur’anic* stories from the Old Testament on the Jewish *Talmud* . The influence of the Talmud can be seen on the *Qur’anic* stories of Cain and Abel, Abraham and the idols, and the Queen of Sheba. The direct influence of Christian apocrypha can be seen in the story of seven sleepers and the childhood miracles of Jesus, and Zoroastrian doctrines appear in descriptions of the houris (virgins) in Paradise and the Sirat (the bridge between hell and paradise; Tisdall, 49–59, 74–91). Muslim practices of visiting the shrine of Ka’aba, and the many details of the ceremony of Hajj, including visits to the hills of Safa and Marwa, and the throwing of stones against a stone pillar symbolizing Satan, were all pre-Islamic practices of pagan Arabia (Dashti, 55, 93–94, 164).

The Genius of Muhammad. As was noted above, Muhammad may not have been illiterate, and even if he had no formal training, he was a bright and talented person. There is no reason that such a creative mind could not have been the source of teachings in the *Qur’an* that have no known human antecedents.

Muhammad biographer Haykal identifies a possible source of Muhammad’s “revelations” in his description of the creative Arab imagination: “Living as he does under the vault of heaven and moving constantly in search of pasture or trade, and being constantly forced into the excesses, exaggerations, and even lies which the life of trade usually entails, the Arab is given to the exercise of his imagination and cultivates it at all times whether for good or for ill, for peace or for war” (ibid., 319).

Possible Satanic Sources of the Qur’an. It is also possible that Muhammad could have received his revelations from an evil spirit. He himself at first believed that his “revelations” were coming from a demon but he was encouraged by his wife Khadija and her cousin, Waraqah, to believe the revelation came from God. This is told more fully in the article MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED DIVINE CALL OF . Whether by his own genius, other human sources, or finite evil spirits, there is nothing in the *Qur’an* that cannot be explained without divine revelation.

Conclusion. In spite of the above evidences against any divine origin of the *Qur'an* , it is interesting that Muslim authors have been most unwilling to address the issue of the human origins of the *Qur'an* , but have simply repeated their dogmatic assertions about its divine source. In fact, seldom does one find an acknowledgment of problems, let alone a defense, among Muslim scholars.

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