

Authenticity of
the
QUR'AN

DIN Publications

Module 101 Series

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Authenticity of the QUR'AN

A concise analysis of arguments regarding
the divine authorship and authenticity of
the Muslim sacred scripture.



Da'wah Institute of Nigeria
Islamic Education Trust Headquarters

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FOREWORD TO THE SERIES

Islam is considered by many observers to be the fastest growing religion in the world, yet it is the most misunderstood of the world's major faiths. Some misconceptions about Islam stem from calculated propaganda against Islam, but a good amount of it is attributable to the ignorance of many Muslims whose limited knowledge and practice of Islam perpetuates these misconceptions.

Due to the deficiencies of the common, restricted way of teaching Islam to children, many Muslims grow up believing that Islam requires only blind faith and invites no intellectual challenges. Often such Muslims manage with minimal knowledge of their faith until they interact with larger circles of people, in higher institutions or the work place, where they are confronted with many misconceptions about Islam, and face questions they cannot answer.

It is in response to the need for empowering Muslims to know their religion, and to share its beautiful message with the rest of humanity, that this work was begun.

This effort is part of a wider project of intellectual empowerment of the global Muslim world. Among the programs designed by the Islamic Education Trust over the past decade and a half is the Train the Trainers Course (TTC) in Islam and Dialogue. As its name indicates, the course is designed to train Da'wah volunteers in clarifying misconceptions about Islam, handling differences of opinion among Muslim scholars, and extending personal leadership training to others. The contents of this series of

books evolved from teaching manuals from the TTC. It is hoped that this publication will serve as intellectual resource material for Muslims of different backgrounds.

Justice Sheikh Ahmed Lemu
November 2008
Dhul-Qa'dah, 1429 A.H.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All praise and gratitude is due to Allah Who has made this work possible. And may the peace and blessings of Allah be in His last messenger, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

The Prophet said: “Whoever does not show gratitude to people does not show gratitude to Allah”. It is therefore with great pleasure that the Da‘wah Institute of Nigeria (DIN) takes this opportunity to express its sincere gratitude to all the brothers and sisters from all over the world, who have in various ways contributed to the development of the Train the Trainers Course in Islam and Dialogue (TTC) and its study material of which this book is a part.

The material has evolved into its present form over a long period before and after the TTC became an organized course in 1994.

The contributions to the course and its material have come in many ways, through numerous channels, both formally and informally, and from all over the world. They have come from contributors of various backgrounds, age-groups, organizations, and specializations.

It has unfortunately become practically impossible to cite all who deserve mention - but Allah has counted them all, and we continue to pray Allah to bless them with the best in this life and the next. We will however mention at least the countries where the major contributors have come from, and may Allah forgive us for any omissions.

Contributions to the development of the course have come from Australia, Bahrain, Burundi, Cameroun, Egypt, the Gambia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Liberia, Malaysia, New

Zealand, Niger, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, U.K., U.S.A., and most importantly, Nigeria.

In Nigeria, we would like to acknowledge many organizations for their key support in the development of the TTC material. These organizations include the Da'wah Coordination Council of Nigeria (DCCN), the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), the Movement for Islamic Culture and Awareness (MICA), the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN), the Muslim Corpers Association of Nigeria (MCAN), and the Nasrul-Lahi-il-Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT). Others include numerous University departments, Colleges of Education, and Colleges of Arts and Islamic Legal Studies.

We also feel obliged to acknowledge at least those who, to the best of our knowledge, worked the hardest on this particular topic. The chief editor of the material was Asiya Rodrigo, who also located most of the references in this work. Others who greatly assisted in other important capacities such as structure, contents and style include Justice Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, B. Aisha Lemu, Abdullahi Orire, Isa Friday Okonkwo, Muhammad Dukuly, Bashir Mundi, and Nuruddeen Lemu.

Finally, and on behalf of all the research team and staff of the Da'wah Institute of Nigeria (DIN), I would like to pray for the Trustees and minds behind the Islamic Education Trust (IET), and the DIN in particular, Justice Shiekh Ahmed Lemu and B. Aisha Lemu, whose wisdom, support, encouragement and leadership have helped bring the DIN to where it is today. *Alhamdulillah* and *jazakum Allahu khair*.

As only the Qur'an is perfect, this material will continue to evolve through revisions and improvements with better contributions from people like you, the reader, *inshā Allah* (by Allah's leave).

May the reward of whatever benefit comes from this material go to those who have in any way contributed to it. The Da'wah Institute of Nigeria (DIN) takes full responsibility for any errors in this work, and we pray that Allah and you the reader forgive us for whatever may be incorrect in it.

Alhaji Ibrahim Yahya
Director
Da'wah Institute of Nigeria.
November, 2008.

NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY AND TRANSLITERATION

◆ Use of “ﷺ”

It is a time-honored and cherished tradition among Muslims that whenever the name of any of the numerous Prophets of God is mentioned, peace and blessings of God are invoked upon him. In line with this tradition and the injunction in Qur'an 33:56, wherever the title “the Prophet,” “Messenger of Allah,” “Apostle of Allah,” or the Prophet’s name, “Muhammad,” appears in this text, the blessing in Arabic (ﷺ) appears next to it. It means “may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.” Contemporary writings on Islam by Muslims use many variations and abbreviations of this benediction in Arabic or English or other languages such as “S.A.W.,” “s.a.s.,” “s,” “p,” “pbuh” and others. In deciding which customary symbol to use, it is worth mentioning that in manuscripts belonging to the first two centuries of Islam’s intellectual heritage the writers did not rigidly adhere to the custom of writing a benediction after the Prophet’s name, and hence, there is no ‘best’ way of representing it.

◆ References to *ahadith* and commentaries drawn from computer software

Efforts have been made to ensure that all *ahadith* (narrations or reported actions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ) in this material are drawn from reliable and well-respected collections. Reservations expressed by respected authorities about the authenticity of any *hadith* have been indicated in footnotes, even as its presence in this text

indicates that it is considered authentic by other scholars of repute. An abundance of Islamic classical texts and some of their translations now exist on CD-ROMs. The present material has made use of some of these CD-ROMs for obtaining *ahadith* and their commentaries (*tafasiir*). The most commonly utilized CD-ROM database of hadith in English has been the *Alim Version 6.0* software. Hence, references to hadith collections that end with the phrase “in *Alim 6.0*” throughout this material refer to those obtained from the *Alim Version 6.0* database (ISL Software Corporation, 1986-2000). References to collections of *hadith* commentaries which have been drawn from other CD-ROMs have been noted in footnotes throughout the text.

◆ **Transliteration of Arabic words**

Modern Islamic literature in English utilizes a number of transliteration systems for Arabic words. With a few exceptions, this material has followed the system used by the majority, the details of which may be found in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. However, for our ease and simplicity, we have omitted the diacritical dots and dashes which facilitate exact pronunciations. It is expected that this should not render the words unreadable.

PREFACE

This book is the first of a series of publications by the Islamic Education Trust aimed at presenting accurate information about certain contentious aspects of the Islamic faith. The choice of an initial topic dealing with the authenticity of the Qur'an was made because it addresses the source of our religious guidance, which is the most important foundation of any belief system. Establishing the authenticity of the Qur'an is essential because it is from the scripture of a faith community that its identity, its duty to the Creator, and its relationship with other people are derived. Thus it is of utmost importance to establish that our belief in the Qur'an is not based on faith alone, but also on evidence and reason.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE QUR'ĀN

The basis for the beliefs of most religions is to be found in their scriptures. Most of these scriptures are believed to be inspired or revealed by Almighty God, and are therefore considered sacred and perfectly suited to guide the human race.

In a world where there are many competing claims for possession of “the word of God”, objective and reasonable evidence must therefore be put forward to convince anyone to believe in a particular scripture.

Therefore, ascertaining the authenticity of a scripture in a reasonable, honest and objective way is of fundamental importance in our search for the truth.

Let us therefore examine the authenticity of the Qur'ān. How do we know that it is truly the word of God?

To answer this question, we first need to establish that the Qur'ān we have today is the same Qur'ān as that which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), and that no corruption has taken place in the transmission of that message. In other words, we first need to find proof that the Qur'ān has survived history perfectly preserved. Secondly, we need to establish who the author of the Qur'ān really is. This may be done by examining all possible authors, and eliminating all that are contrary to evidence and reason. That is, we may reasonably deduce the author by eliminating all unlikely authors. This two-step process is outlined below under the following headings:

A. The recording and perfect preservation of the Qur'ān,

and

B. The source or authority of the Qur'ān.

A. THE RECORDING AND PERFECT PRESERVATION OF THE QUR'AN¹:

The Glorious Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) through the angel Gabriel (peace be upon him). The revelation occurred piecemeal, over a period of twenty-three years, sometimes in brief verses and sometimes in longer chapters.²

The Qur'ān (literally, a “reading” or “recitation”) is distinct from the recorded sayings and deeds (*Sunnah*) of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), which are also preserved in a separate set of literature collectively called the “*Hadith*” (lit. “news”; “report”; or “narration”).

1. During the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ)

Upon receiving revelation, the Prophet (ﷺ) engaged himself in the duty of conveying the message to his Companions through reciting the exact words he heard in their exact order. This is evident in his inclusion of even the words of Allah which were directed specifically to him, for example: “ *Qul* ” (“*Say* [to the people, O Muhammad]”). The Qur'an's rhythmic style and eloquent expression make it easy to memorize, just as nursery rhymes are easy to remember due to their rhythm, rhyme

¹ For a very useful guide to this topic, see M. M. Azami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text From Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments* (Leicester, UK: UK Islamic Academy, 2003).

² Muhammad Hamidullah, *Introduction to Islam* (London: MWH Publishers, 1979), p.17.

and vivid description. Indeed, Allah describes this as one of its essential qualities for preservation and remembrance³, particularly in an Arab society which prided itself on orations of lengthy pieces of poetry. Michael Zwettler notes that “in ancient times, when writing was scarcely used, memory and oral transmission was exercised and strengthened to a degree now almost unknown.”⁴ Large portions of the revelation were thus easily memorized by a large number of people in the community of the Prophet (ﷺ).

The Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged his Companions to learn each verse that was revealed and transmit it to others.⁵ The Qur’ān was also required to be recited regularly as an act of worship, especially during the daily meditative prayers (*salat*). Through these means, many people repeatedly heard passages from the revelation recited to them, and memorized them and used them in prayer. The entire Qur’ān was memorized verbatim (word for word) by some of the Prophet’s Companions. Among them were Zaid ibn Thabit, Ubayy ibn Ka’b, Mu’adh ibn Jabal, and Abu Zaid.⁶

Furthermore, the sequence or order of the Qur’ān was arranged through the Prophet (ﷺ) himself and was also well-known to the Companions.⁷ Each Ramadan, the

³ Q.44:58; 54:17, 22, 32, 40.

⁴ Michael Zwettler, *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry* (Ohio State Press, 1978), p.14.

⁵ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.6, no.546, in *Alim 6.0*.

⁶ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.6, no.525, in *Alim 6.0*.

⁷ Ahmad von Denffer, *Ulum al-Qur’an* (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1983), pp.41-42; Arthur Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur’an* (Leiden: Brill, 1937), p.31. Several narrations exist describing the Prophet (ﷺ) as instructing scribes where to place certain

Prophet (ﷺ) would repeat after the angel Gabriel (reciting) the entire Qur'ān in its exact order as far as it had been revealed, while in the presence of a number of his Companions.⁸ In the year of his death, he recited it twice.⁹ Thereby, the order of verses in each *surah* (chapter) and the order of the *surahs* became reinforced in the memories of each of the Companions present.

The entire Qur'ān was however also recorded in writing from the Prophet's dictation at the time of revelation by some of his literate companions, the most prominent of them being Zaid ibn Thabit.¹⁰ Others among his noble scribes were Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Ibn Mas'ud, Khalid ibn Waleed and Zubayr ibn Awwam.¹¹ The verses were

verses in their respective *surah* (chapters, hereafter written as “surahs”). These may be found in Tirmidhi's *Sunan*, *al-Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal, al-Hakim's *al-Mustadrak*, Suyuti's *al-Itqan* and al-Baqillani's *al-Intisar*, all cited in M. M. Azami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text From Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments* (Leicester, UK: UK Islamic Academy, 2003), p.71, fn.19-27. Azami (*ibid.*, p.72) also refers to *ahadith* where the Prophet (ﷺ) would recommend sections of certain surahs (e.g. the last two verses) to certain Companions, or where the Companions would mention sections of *surahs* that were recited at various times all as evidence that the arrangement of verses in their surah was well known to the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) even within his lifetime, and thus could not have been arranged after his passing away.

⁸ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.6, no.519, in *Alim 6.0*.

⁹ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.6, hadith nos.518 & 520, in *Alim 6.0*.

¹⁰ Jalal al-Din Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Maktab al-Thaqafiyya, 1973), vol.1, p.41 & 99.

¹¹ *Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Al-Isabab fi Tamyeez as-Sahabab* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1978); Bayard Dodge, *The Fibrist of al-Nadim: A Tenth Century Survey of Muslim Culture* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp.53-63. M. M. Azami in *The History of the Qur'anic Text From Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments* (Leicester, UK: UK

recorded on leather, parchment, scapulae (shoulder bones of animals), board and the stalks of date palms.¹² Evidence also exists that recorded verses would be read back to the Prophet (ﷺ) to eradicate scribal errors.¹³

Islamic Academy, 2003) in fact mentions 58 persons who used to write for the Prophet. (See the same author's Kuttab al-Nabi, Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 1974, for more details on these scribes).

¹² al-Harith al-Muhasabi, *Kitab Fahm al-Sunan* (cited in Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, n.d., vol.1, p.58).

¹³ Muhammad ibn Yahya as-Suli, *Adab al-Kuttab*. (Ed. B. al-Athari, Cairo, 1341), p.165 (cited in M. M. Azami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text From Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments*, Leicester, UK: UK Islamic Academy, 2003, p.69).

2. After the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ)

As the Companions spread out to various provinces with different populations, they took their memorizations (and recitations) with them in order to instruct others.¹⁴ In this way, the same Qur'ān became widely retained in the memories of many people across vast and diverse areas of land.

Indeed, the memorization of the Qur'ān emerged into a continuous tradition across the centuries, with centers/schools for memorization being established across the Muslim world.¹⁵ The Qur'ān is perhaps the only book, religious or secular, that has been memorized completely by millions of people.¹⁶ Leading orientalist Kenneth Cragg reflects that:

...this phenomenon of Qur'ānic recital means that the text has traversed the centuries in an unbroken living sequence of devotion. It cannot, therefore, be handled as an antiquarian text, or as a historical document out of a distant past. The fact of *hifẓ* (Qur'ānic memorization) has made the Qur'ān a living possession throughout the lapse of Muslim history and given it a human currency in every generation, never allowing its relegation to a bare authority for reference alone.¹⁷

The **compilation of the Qur'ān** (i.e. into a 'book form') was done soon after the Battle of *Yamama*

¹⁴ Ibn Hisham, *Seerah al-Nabi* (Cairo, n.d.), vol.1, p.199.

¹⁵ Labib as-Said, *The Recited Koran*. Trans. by Morroe Berger, A. Rauf, and Bernard Weiss (Princeton, USA: The Darwin Press, 1975), p.59.

¹⁶ William Graham, *Beyond the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.80

¹⁷ Kenneth Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur'an* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), p.26.

(11A.H/633C.E.), after the Prophet's death, during the Caliphate of Abubakr. Many companions became martyrs at that battle and it was feared that unless a written copy of the entire revelation was produced, large parts of the Qur'ān might be lost with the death of those who had memorized it (the *huffaẓ*). Therefore, at the suggestion of Umar to collect the Qur'ān in the form of writing, Zaid ibn Thabit was requested by Abu Bakr to head a committee which would gather together the scattered recordings of the Qur'ān and prepare a *subuf* - loose sheets which collectively bore the entire revelation on them.¹⁸ To safeguard the compilation from errors, the committee accepted only material which had been written down in the presence of the Prophet (ﷺ) himself, and which could be verified by at least two reliable witnesses who had actually heard the Prophet (ﷺ) recite the passage in question.¹⁹ Once completed and unanimously approved of by the Prophet's Companions, these sheets were kept with the Caliph Abubakr (d.13A.H./634C.E.), then passed on to the Caliph Umar (13-23A.H./634-644C.E.), and then to Umar's daughter, the Prophet's widow, Hafsa.²⁰

Although the Qur'ān was initially revealed in the Qurayshi dialect of Arabic to the Prophet (ﷺ), some verses were also later revealed in seven different linguistic variants²¹ of the various Arabian dialects to aid the

¹⁸ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.6, hadith nos.201 & 509; vol.9, no.301, in *Alim 6.0*.

¹⁹ Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari* (n.d.), Vol.9:14-15.

²⁰ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.6, no.201, in *Alim 6.0*.

²¹ Differences between the permissible readings were not great, did not involve significant changes in meaning, and covered only a fraction of all the verses of the Qur'ān. Examples are the words "*nunshirubaa*" ("We restore them to life") or "*nunshizubaa*," ("We raise them up"),

understanding of those belonging to non-Quraysh tribes. A *hadith* recorded in *Sahib al-Bukhari*, for instance, states:

Abdullah bin Abbas narrated that Allah's Apostle (ﷺ) said, "*Gabriel recited the Qur'an to me in one way. Then I requested him (to read it in another way), and continued asking him to recite it in other ways, and he recited it in several ways till he ultimately recited it in seven different ways.*"²²

Another *hadith* records:

Umar ibn al-Khattab said, "*I heard Hisham bin Hakim reciting Surat Al-Furqan during the lifetime of Allah's Apostle and I listened to his recitation and noticed that he recited in several different ways which Allah's Apostle had not taught me. I was about to jump over him during his prayer, but I controlled my temper, and when he had completed his prayer, I put his upper garment around his neck and seized him by it and said, 'Who taught you this Surah which I heard you reciting?' He replied, 'Allah's Apostle taught it to me.' I said, 'You have told a lie, for*

either of which could be used in Qur'an 2:259. Another variation involves pronunciation, such as "taabooh" or "taaboot," and "mu'min" or "moomun," and "alayhim" or "alayhumoo." Some variations are synonyms, such as "halumma," "ta'aala," and "aqbil" which all mean "come." There is some debate about the nature of the different readings of the Qur'an: whether they were dialectical variations, or some linguistic differences even within the same dialect, or merely various ways of expressing similar concepts encompassing several dialects within the same reading. The majority of scholars contend that the Uthmanic manuscript (which is preserved in contemporary use) encompasses several different linguistic variants within it, and maximizes the number of variations possible if the diacritical vowel marks (which were introduced long after the time of the Companions) are not observed. See Jalal al-Din Suyuti's *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, 4th edition (Cairo: al-Halabi Press, 1978), vol.1, p.142; and Yusuf Ibrahim al-Nur's *Ma' al-Masaabij*, 1st edition (Dubai: Dar al-Manar, 1993), p.34.

²² *Sahib al-Bukhari*, vol.6, *hadith* no.513, in *Alim* 6.0.

Allah's Apostle has taught it to me in a different way from yours.' So I dragged him to Allah's Apostle and said (to Allah's Apostle), 'I heard this person reciting Surat Al-Furqan in a way which you haven't taught me!' On that Allah's Apostle said, 'Release him, (O Umar!) Recite, O Hisham!' Then he recited in the same way as I heard him reciting. Then Allah's Apostle said, 'It was revealed in this way,' and added, 'Recite, O Umar!' I recited it as he had taught me. Allah's Apostle then said, 'It was revealed in this way. This Qur'an has been revealed to be recited in seven different ways, so recite of it whichever (way) is easier for you (or read as much of it as may be easy for you).'²³

At the time of the third Caliph Uthman (24A.H.-35A.H./644-656C.E.), however, a companion named Hudhayfah ibn Al-Yaman observed that the people of the regions of present-day Syria and Iraq began to have friction over their differing recitations of some words of the Qur'ān (disputing whether a different recitation was a mistake or one of the approved variant readings). This had the potential to cause unnecessary disunity over their differences, while new Muslims in provinces outside Arabia might become unsure which linguistic reading should be learned. Urged by Hudhayfah to take heed of how the People of the Book (*Ahl al-Kitab*) had differed among themselves regarding Allah's Word, the Caliph Uthman perceived the danger of divisions, disunity and corruption arising on the basis of different readings/linguistic variants of the Qur'ān which were earlier on approved by the Prophet (ﷺ).²⁴

He therefore requested Hafsah to send him the

²³ *Sabih al-Bukhari*, vol.6, hadith no.514, in *Alim 6.0*. See also Jalal al-Din Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Maktab al-Thaqafiyya, 1973), vol.1, p.41.

²⁴ *Sabih al-Bukhari*, vol.6, no.510.

manuscript of the Qur'ān which was in her safekeeping, and ordered the production of several bound copies of it (*masaahif*, sing. *mushaf*). The production of copies, however, had an additional condition attached to it that any passage written in a linguistic form where there may be potential for dispute should be substituted with the corresponding revelation (of that same passage) in the Qurayshi dialect (i.e. the dialect in which the Qur'ān had commenced being revealed to the Prophet). This task was entrusted to Zaid ibn Thabit, Abdullah ibn Al-Zubair, Sa'īd ibn As-'As, and Abdul Rahman ibn Harith ibn Hisham.²⁵

The reason the Qurayshi dialect was chosen was due to its being the dialect of the Prophet himself and the dialect of the most dominant tribe in Arabia; hence, the most widely accepted among all tribes.²⁶

Upon completion (in 25A.H./646C.E.), Uthman returned the original manuscript to Hafsa and sent the newly produced copies accompanied by reciters²⁷ to the major Islamic provinces to replace other materials that were in circulation. He also ordered that all other extracts or copies of the Qur'ān which differed from that undoubtedly authentic “official” copy²⁸ be burned so that

²⁵ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.4, no.709; vol.6, no.507.

²⁶ See, however, footnote 21 above on how the Uthmanic script still retained the possibility of subtle variations in recitation due to the non-existence of any diacritical marks (to indicate vowels) at that stage.

²⁷ Abdul-Fattah al-Qadi, “*al-Qira'at fi Nazar al-Mustashriqin wa al-Mulbidin*”, in *Majallat al-Azhar*, 1971, vol.43/2, p.175; cited in M. M. Azami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text From Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments* (Leicester, UK: UK Islamic Academy, 2003), p.95, n.36.

²⁸ This includes incomplete manuscripts and those with additional personal (explanatory) notes.

the Qur'ān would not suffer the same fate of alterations, uncertainty of authenticity and contradictory versions which characterized prior religious scriptures.

This action of Uthman was unanimously approved of by the Prophet's Companions, as evidenced in the accounts of Zaid, Mus'ab, and Ali that the Companions had gathered in large numbers to witness the burning, with no one speaking out against it. Rather, there were declarations of support and how satisfied the Companions were with him.²⁹ Furthermore, once produced, the *Mushaf* was read to the Companions for their final sanction.³⁰ Thus it was not the "original" Qur'ān that was burnt, nor was the incident a fabricated story to discredit Uthman in the eyes of the community, as some critics of Islam allege.

Some **orientalist critics** claim that the narrations in *hadith* collections (such as those used to support the above-mentioned history of the Qur'ān's preservation) cannot be trusted due to their being recorded by 'Muslim sources' who must have concocted the *hadith* in later centuries to justify partisan, dogmatic, juristic and ideological interests. However, it could be argued that news and civilizational history have always been discovered through eye-witness reports, and early Muslim scholars have developed some of the most rigorous criteria for scrutinizing such reports for

²⁹ See Nizam al-Din al-Naysaburi, *Ghara'ib al-Qur'an wa Ragha'ib al-Furqan* (Cairo, 1962); Ibn Abi Dawud, *Kitab al-Masaahif* (n.d.), p.12; cited in Arthur Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an* (Leiden: Brill, 1937); Jalal al-Din Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, 4th edition (Cairo: al-Halabi Press, 1978), vol.1, pp.170-171; and Badr al-Din al-Zarkashi, *Al-Burhan fi Ulum al-Qur'an*, (Cairo, 1957), vol.1, p.240 respectively.

³⁰ Ibn Kathir, *Fada'il al-Qur'an* (n.d.), 7:450.

authenticity including ascertaining a continuous chain of reporters, each reporter's memory skills, adherence to righteous conduct and reputation, records of their knowledge and honesty, who their students and teachers were, their political leanings and interpretive tendencies, evidence that they were there at the time of the event, as well as textual consistency with the Qur'ān and other established *hadith*.³¹ The majority of what we know of the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions are from *mutawaatir* (multiple-chain) reports.³²

This continuing and dynamic science (now over thirteen centuries old) has produced highly accurate, albeit not perfect, reports of Muslim history. The accusation that most Muslim scholarship has been based on forgery would necessarily imply that all the geographically scattered scholars of the first four centuries of *hadith* collection, who belonged to varied and competing schools of thought, as well as those who belonged to opposing theological and political factions,³³ collaborated together in a mutual conspiracy – an idea which neither appeals to reason nor the fact that such scholars were renowned for their piety

³¹ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Hadith Methodology (Usul al-Hadith): Authenticity, Compilation, Classification and Criticism of Hadith* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Ilmiah Publishers, 2002).

³² Reported by many different narrators, who all independently verified the same account.

³³ Not to mention the Greek, Persian, and Byzantine Non-Muslims who came into contact with Muslims and yet reported no contradiction to Muslim reports, or anything which would suggest the gradual evolution of a canonized Qur'anic text in later centuries. (See Muhammad Mohar Ali, *The Qur'an and the Orientalists: A Brief Survey of their Assumptions*, Ipswich, UK: Jam'iat Ihyaa' Minhaaj al-Sunnah, 2002, p.12).

and integrity of character.

Moreover, Estelle Whelan (1998) mentions that an abundance of references from a wide variety of texts and from various time periods point to the existence of a group of professional (paid) Qur'ān copyists in Madinah since the middle of the first century A.H., to meet the public demand for Qur'āns for personal, educational and official use.³⁴ Whelan further states that this evidence, among many others, all:

...point to the active production of copies of the Qur'ān from the late seventh century, coinciding with and confirming the epigraphic evidence of the established text itself. In fact, from the time of Mu'awiyah through the reign of al-Walid the Umayyad caliphs were actively engaged in codifying every aspect of Muslim religious practice... 'Abd al-Malik made sophisticated use of Qur'ānic quotations, on coinage and public monuments, to announce the new Islamic world order. Al-Walid gave monumental form to the Muslim house of worship and the service conducted in it. It seems beyond the bounds of credibility that such efforts would have preceded interest in codifying the text itself. The different types of evidence cited here all thus lead to the conclusion that the Muslim tradition is reliable, at least in broad outline, in attributing the first codification of the Qur'ānic text to Uthman and his appointed commission. The Qur'ān was available to his successors as an instrument to help weld the diverse

³⁴ Estelle Whelan, "Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qur'ān", *Journal of the American Orientalist Society*, vol.118, no.1, 1998, pp.10-12. The numerous reports of this fact included mentions so peripheral to the main narrative account, and by many individuals so 'insignificant' that it is difficult to conceive of them all being part of a grand forgery in later centuries.

peoples of the rapidly expanding empire into a relatively unified polity.³⁵

A number of orientalist such as Goldziher³⁶ have clung to the theory that certain variations in some of the reports make the entire story of the Qur'ān's codification dubious, and that Uthman's action was really to promote his own "version" over the versions of others. Yet other scholars have pointed out that these differences in some reports are often reconcilable due to the context of each narration³⁷, and the time of narration (some referring to earlier instances, such as prior to the completion of the entire Qur'ān³⁸). Muslim scholars also note that the number of *huffaẓ* (memorizers) was great for any given portion of the Qur'ān and therefore if any error had been made in Uthman's ordered compilation, someone would have pointed it out. Furthermore, the majority of the reports indicate that Uthman's official *mushaf* is *mutawaatir* - i.e. transmitted by so many people that they could not all have gotten together to agree in advance on what they would report³⁹ — while other variant readings of the Qur'ān were reported only by a sole companion or occasionally two or three. The role of Uthman, in other words, was simply that of a publisher of the authentic and agreed-upon Qur'ānic text, not that of a "collector" and far

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.12-13.

³⁶ Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies II* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971).

³⁷ The contexts, incidentally, are also recorded in the same *hadith* collections held to be suspect by some orientalists.

³⁸ For an example of this, see the discussion of the variance in the manuscripts of some Companions in Von Denffer, *Ulum al-Qur'an* (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1983), p.48, n.41.

³⁹ Bilal Philips, *Usool at-Tafseer* (Sharjah: Dar Al Fatah, 1997), p.159.

less that of a “compiler.”⁴⁰

Jeffrey Lang⁴¹ points out that orientalists often base their conclusions on mere speculation or fragmentary data which also stem from the same *hadith* collections that they criticize. In line with Edward Said’s comments on the underlying biases of Western scholarship,⁴² he also asserts that the bulk of orientalist analysis has been so predisposed to write off discrepancies in the body of early Muslim literature as evidence of *hadith* fabrications that it often overlooks clear evidence which easily explains otherwise. An example of this is the frequent criticism that *hadith* were forged in the second and third century after *Hijrah* to support jurists’ legal rulings⁴³. Azami⁴⁴ explains that such accusations often relied on a faulty

⁴⁰ Muhammad Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists* (Madina: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur’an, 1997), vol.1A, p.6.

⁴¹ Jeffrey Lang, *Struggling to Surrender* (Beltsville, USA: Amana Publications, 1994), p.92.

⁴² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

⁴³ See, for example, J. Schacht, *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (O.U.P., 1953). This conclusion is not supported by the generality of orientalists themselves. For example, N.J. Coulson writes that Schacht’s theses are “systematically developed to the extent of holding that the evidence of legal traditions carries us back to about the year A.H. 100 only; and when the authenticity of every alleged ruling of the Prophet is denied, a void is assumed, or rather created, in the picture of the development of law in early Muslim society. From a practical standpoint, and taking the attendant circumstances into consideration, the notion of such a vacuum is difficult to accept.” (*A History of Islamic Law*, London, 1964, pp.64-65; quoted in Muhammad Mohar Ali, *The Qur’an and the Orientalists: A Brief Survey of their Assumptions*, Ipswich, UK: Jam’iat Ihya’ Minhaaj al-Sunnah, 2002, p.7).

⁴⁴ Muhammad M. Azami, *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (Beirut, 1968).

comparison of legal and *hadith* literature when in fact they are two distinct fields, such that inferences about one science cannot validly be made by studying the development of another. He further lucidly outlines specific juridical activities of the Prophet (ﷺ) and first century legal literature which prove that Islamic legal traditions did not only emerge in the second century after *Hijrah*.⁴⁵ The theory that all *hadith* about the collection of the Qur'ān were forged in the second and third century has been further refuted by proof that the bulk of the *hadith* were actually written down in the first century.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Muhammad M. Azami, *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Riyadh: King Saud University & NY: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1985).

⁴⁶ See, for example, Fuad Sezgin, *Geschichte der Arabischen Schriftums* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), vol.1; Muhammad Hamidullah, *Sabifa Hammam ibn Munabbih: The Earliest Extant Work on the Hadith* (Paris: Centre Cultural Islamique, 1979). Moreover, even if some *hadith* and *seerah* materials were collected in the second century from 100 years of traceable oral transmissions, this does not necessarily dismiss them as historical sources. Illustrating this point, Maxime Rodinson writes:

An interval of a hundred years is not excessive for the collective memory of a society such as that formed by early Arab Islam. An Arab tribe of the Sudan transmits orally (even today) historical traditions and poetry, the oldest of which are attributed to an important tribal ancestor who lives in the second half of the sixteenth century and whose existence is attested by texts. It ought to be pointed out here that in ideological movements the question of origins is a matter of great interest during times of expansion. In my own childhood and adolescence I personally

In an excellent attempt at objective analysis of Western criticism of hadith traditions, Jeffrey Lang (1994)⁴⁷ concludes that Muslim scholars' deductions of history hold more solid ground with the available evidence than their orientalist counterparts' deductions. Estelle Whelan observes that orientalist analysis is often "guided predominantly by generalizations drawn from the history of the biblical text, which were then applied to Muslim scripture."⁴⁸ Orientalist theories are further addressed and refuted in the works of Azami⁴⁹, Abbott⁵⁰, Siddiqi⁵¹, Ali⁵²

knew Charles Rappoport who in his own youth had visited Friedrich Engels. Both of us had a considerable number of books on the biography of this latter (born, it should be noted, in 1820); otherwise I would undoubtedly have questioned my informer avidly on the life of one of the founders of Marxism. If I had done so I would not be in a position of informing those younger than myself regarding events going back to 1840.

("A Critical Survey of Modern Studies on Muhammad", in Merlin Swartz (ed.), *Studies in Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, p.44).

⁴⁷ Jeffrey Lang, *Struggling to Surrender* (Beltsville, USA: Amana Publications, 1994), pp.90-105.

⁴⁸ Estelle Whelan, "Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qur'an", *Journal of the American Orientalist Society*, vol.118, no.1, 1998, p.2.

⁴⁹ Muhammad M. Azami, *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (Beirut, 1968). See also M. M. Azami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text From Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments* (Leicester, UK: UK Islamic Academy, 2003).

⁵⁰ Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri, Vol.1: Historic Texts* (Chicago, 1957) & *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri, Vol.2: Qur'anic Commentary and Tradition* (Chicago, 1967).

⁵¹ Muhammad Z. Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development, Special Features and Criticism*, Calcutta, India: Calcutta University Press, 1961. (Revised edition published by the Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge, 1993).

and Abdul Ghafar.⁵³

3. Acknowledgment by Orientalists

Despite such defective theories, many orientalist themselves have admitted, like H.A.R. Gibb (1969), that, “It seems reasonably well established that no material changes were introduced and that the original form of Mohammed’s discourses were preserved with scrupulous precision.”⁵⁴

John Burton (1977), despite staunch skepticism of all hadith, still writes at the end of his substantial work on the Qur’ān’s compilation that:

No major differences of doctrines can be constructed on the basis of the parallel readings based on the Uthmanic consonantal outline, yet ascribed to *mushafs* other than his. All the rival readings unquestionably represent one and the same text. They are substantially

⁵² Muhammad Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, 2 volumes. (Madina: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur’ān, 1997). Ali’s excellent thesis makes special reference to the detailed flaws in the reasoning and conclusions of William Muir, Margoliouth, and Montgomery Watt. He eruditely demonstrates how such scholars often make use of isolated, weak or spurious reports, make gravely incorrect interpretations out of context, and use only part of a report to substantiate a point of view; and in doing all of these, impute motives to authors or reporters that are completely unfounded. More recent orientalist claims against the Qur’ān are debunked in another highly commendable paper by M.M. Ali, entitled *The Qur’an and the Orientalists: A Brief Survey of their Assumptions* (Ipswich, UK: Jam’iat Ihyaa’ Minhaaj al-Sunnah, 2002).

⁵³ Suhaib H. Abdul Ghafar, *Criticism of Hadith among Muslims* (IFTA, 1984).

⁵⁴ H.A.R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.50.

agreed in what they transmit...⁵⁵

He further states that the Qur'ān as we have it today is “the text which has come down to us in the form in which it was organized and approved by the Prophet.... What we have today in our hands is the *mushaf* of Muhammad.”⁵⁶

Kenneth Cragg (1973) describes the transmission of the Qur'ān from the time of revelation to today as occurring in “an unbroken living sequence of devotion,”⁵⁷ while Schwally concurs that “As far as the various pieces of revelation are concerned, we may be confident that their text has been generally transmitted exactly as it was found in the Prophet’s legacy.”⁵⁸

4. Oldest manuscripts of the Qur'ān

The historical credibility of the Qur'ān is further established by the fact that several first century *mushafs* still exist today, including some attributed to the time of Caliph Uthman.⁵⁹ One of the most famous of these is the *mushaf* that presently lies in the Museum of the city of Tashkent in

⁵⁵ John Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'an* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 171

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.239-40.

⁵⁷ Kenneth Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur'an* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), p.26.

⁵⁸ Schwally, *Geschichte des Qurans* (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909-1938), vol.2, p.120.

⁵⁹ See M. M. Azami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text From Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments* (Leicester, UK: UK Islamic Academy, 2003), pp.316-318 for a partial list of such early first century manuscripts, and where they are housed today.

Uzbekistan, Central Asia.⁶⁰ A facsimile of the *mushaf* in Tashkent is available at the Columbia University Library in the US.⁶¹ This copy is tangible proof that the text of the Qur'ān we have in circulation today is identical with that of the time of the Prophet and his Companions.⁶² A copy of the *mushaf* sent to Syria (duplicated before a fire in 1310A.H./1892C.E. destroyed the Jaami' Masjid where it was housed) also exists in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul⁶³, and an early manuscript on gazelle parchment exists in Dar al-Kutub as-Sultaniyyah in Egypt⁶⁴. More ancient manuscripts from all periods of Islamic history, found in the Library of Congress in Washington, the Chester Beatty Museum in Dublin (Ireland) and the London Museum, have been compared with those in Tashkent, Turkey and Egypt, with results confirming that there have not been any changes in the text from its original time of writing.⁶⁵

Early last century, the Institute for Koranforschung, for example, in the University of Munich (Germany), collected over 42,000 complete and incomplete ancient copies of the Qur'ān. After around fifty years of research, they reported that there was no variance between the

⁶⁰ Yusuf Ibrahim al-Nur, *Ma' al-Masaabif*, 1st edition (Dubai: Dar al-Manar, 1993), p.117; Isma'il Makhdum, *Tarikh al-Mushaf al-Uthmani fi Tashqand* (Tashkent: Al-Idara al-Diniya, 1971), p.22.

⁶¹ *The Muslim World*, vol.30 (n.p., 1940), pp.357-358.

⁶² For more arguments on the authenticity of these manuscripts and refutations of Christian polemics against their historicity, see http://www.muslim-answers.org/auth_q2.htm, 2001.

⁶³ Yusuf Ibrahim al-Nur, *Ma' al-Masaabif*, 1st edition (Dubai: Dar al-Manar, 1993), p.113.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.114

⁶⁵ Bilal Philips, *Usool at-Tafseer* (Sharjah: Dar Al Fatah, 1997), p.157.

various copies, except the occasional mistakes of the copyist which could easily be ascertained. This Institute was unfortunately destroyed by bombs during WWII.⁶⁶

Inscriptions of the Qur'ān also exist on various ancient artifacts and structures which corroborate with Qur'ānic verses in existence today. For example, two long inscriptions in blue-and-gold glass mosaic encircle the inner and outer faces of the octagonal arcade of the Dome of the Rock. They are established to have been commissioned by the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik in 72A.H./691-692C.E. These inscriptions contain excerpts from various parts of the Qur'ān using the same wording which appears in modern-day Qur'āns.⁶⁷

Thus, due to the efforts of the early Companions, with Allah's assistance, the Qur'ān as we have it today is recited in the same manner as it was revealed. This makes it the only major religious scripture that is still completely retained and understood in its original language. Indeed, as Sir William Muir states, "There is probably no other book

⁶⁶ Mohammed Hamidullah (n.d.) *Muhammad Rasulallah*. Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e-Islamiat, p.179.

⁶⁷ Estelle Whelan, "Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qur'an", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol.118, no.1, 1998, p.6. Whelan notes that these excerpts were incorporated into a liturgy of devotions which also, therefore, included other statements in accordance with its theme, and only minor variations exist in some verses to remain consistent with the literary/rhetorical style – a feature of how Muslims even today incorporate the Qur'an into their sermons and writings. The early inscription demonstrating this practice "was dependent upon recognition of the text by the listeners, or readers – a strong indication that the Qur'an was already the common property of the community in the last decade of the seventh century." (*Ibid.*, p.8).

in the world which has remained twelve centuries [now fourteen] with so pure a text.”⁶⁸

The evidence above confirms Allah’s promise in the Qur’ān: “*Verily, We have revealed the Reminder, and verily We shall preserve it*” (Q.15:9). The Qur’ān has been preserved in both oral and written form in a way no other book before it has, with each (written and oral) form providing a check and balance for the authenticity of the other.

However, even though the text of the Qur’ān has remained intact till today, how are we sure that its words actually originated from God and not some other source? This takes us to examine the authority, or source of the Qur’ān.

B. SOURCE OR AUTHORSHIP OF THE QUR’ĀN

It is a foundational doctrine of Islam that the Qur’ān was revealed verbatim (i.e. word for word) by God, to Muhammad (ﷺ). Non-Muslims, however, who do not support this view can have no differences with Muslims concerning the fact that the Qur’ān was at least first witnessed to be uttered by Muhammad (ﷺ), a Makkan Arab in the 7th century C. E.

A Muslim’s claim of “**internal evidence**” for the divine authorship of the Qur’ān from the Qur’ān itself (e.g. Q.4:82; 6:19; 6:92; 27:6; 45:2, etc.) is understandably looked upon with skepticism, as nearly anyone can quote passages from his or her scripture that claim that it is revelation from God. We are therefore forced by reason and

⁶⁸ Sir William Muir, *Life of Mohamet* (London, 1984), vol.1, “Introduction”.

objectivity to look outside textual claims of divine origin for **“external evidence”** of the Qur’ān’s divine source or authority.

The simple proposed structure for the presentation of this **“external evidence”** is an **“elimination process”**, whereby we discover the answer to the question “Who is the author of the Qur’ān?” by eliminating all alternative answers which are definitely implausible. In other words, the definite or (at least) most probable author or source of the Qur’ān is identified by eliminating unacceptable alternative candidates.

There are various contradictory views and opinions held by some Non-Muslims as to the source of the Qur’ān. The following list of “possible” authors reflects the main theories:

- ◆ Muhammad (ﷺ)
- ◆ Some other Arab poet(s), scholars, etc.
- ◆ Some non-Arab scholars, or poets or religious personalities
- ◆ Monks or Rabbis (i.e. the theory that the Qur’ān was developed from the Bible or Judeo-Christian sources)
- ◆ Satan (or other deceitful “spirits” or “aliens”, etc.)
- ◆ God/Allah

We may now proceed to examine from a closer study of the Qur’ān and history how plausible these theories are.

1. **Muhammad ﷺ: unlettered and uneducated**

The fact that Muhammad (ﷺ) could neither read

nor write (Q.29:48) is well known and uncontested by even his Non-Muslim contemporaries and present day historians. He had no schooling or teacher of any kind, and he had never been known to compose oral poetry or prose. The Qur'ān, with its all-embracing laws and freedom from all inconsistencies, has its greatness acknowledged even by Non-Muslim scholars.⁶⁹ Its contents treat social, economic, political and religious legislation, history, views of the universe, living things, thought, psychology, interpersonal transactions, war, peace, marriage, worship, business, and everything relating to life - with no contradicting principles. The Qur'ān has never been edited or revised as it was never in need of any revision or correction. How were such vast subject areas expounded upon with such precision by a 7th century Arab with no formal education or even the ability to read what scant material there may have been in his environment on such topics? Where and when has history ever produced an illiterate and uneducated author of such a scripture?

2. Muhammad's known Integrity

Muhammad's sincerity, truthfulness and integrity were so well known that he was even nicknamed "*Al-Ameen*" (The Trustworthy) by his pre-Islamic community. Not a single lie is recorded against him, and many modern Western orientalist have themselves admitted that contrary to any deliberate

⁶⁹ see Fredrick Denny, *Islam* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p.88; Dr. Maurice Bucaille, *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* (Indianapolis, USA: American Trust Publications, 1983), p.163; and H.A.R. Gibb, *Wither Islam* (New York: A.M.S. Press, 1932), p.350; etc.

deception, it is an undeniable fact that the Prophet (ﷺ) had a profoundly sincere conviction that it was revealed to him by God Himself.⁷⁰

If his integrity had been in question, and he was supposed to have been motivated by the desire for personal glory to produce the Qur'ān, why then would he disclaim authorship and instead claim it was from God, especially when the pagan Makkans had conceded that no one could produce such a scripture (Q.2:23-24; 17:88, etc.), and one could only marvel at it? His enemies even offered him kingship over Makkah and any riches he desired if only he would stop reciting. If it was true that he desired personal glory and leadership, why would he decline the offer when it was presented to him and instead prefer a life of humility, simplicity, persecution, sanctions, and even hostile attack by those who felt threatened by the Message of self-surrender to One God?

In addition, how reasonable is it to believe that unlettered Muhammad (ﷺ) would author the Qur'ān for personal benefit and then within the Qur'ān correct and reprove himself? For example:

“He frowned and turned away when the blind man came to him...” (Q.80:1-2), *“...And you did fear men, though God is more deserving that you should fear Him”* (Q.33:37. See also Q.18:23-24, etc).

Why would he embarrass himself when he could simply omit or favorably modify such verses in the Qur'ān? They were certainly not to his advantage if his

⁷⁰ See for example, H.A.R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p.25; and W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p.52.

goals were power and prestige. The existence of such verses only proves that Muhammad (ﷺ) was indeed a truthful and sincere Messenger of God.

3. The Style of the Qur'ān

There is a world of difference between the style of the Qur'ān and Muhammad's own style as recorded in the books of *Abadith*. These differences are immediately evident. The sayings of Muhammad (*abadith*) are conversational, oratorical, and expository, of a kind the Arabs were already familiar with. By contrast, the style of the Qur'ān is authoritative (“*We created the heavens and the earth...*”; “*Say!...*”) and challenging (“*...had it (the Qur'an) been from any other than God, they would have found therein much discrepancies*” (Q.4:82); “*...Say then: “Bring a chapter like it and call, if you can, on other than God... (Q.10:38); “...then bring a chapter like unto it... and if you cannot, for surely you cannot, then...*” (Q.2:23-24)).⁷¹

⁷¹ The unique style of the Qur'ān has been extensively analyzed by Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1996). Robinson writes that while the Qur'ān at first glance may appear to be jumbled and disordered in its series of discourses, especially when reading its passages in a continuum, closer examination reveals a remarkable structure and logic behind its expressions and arrangement. For example, the Qur'ān's frequent interchanging of pronouns for Allah (within the same verse) follows a distinct pattern to enhance the purpose of those passages where this occurs. More specifically, he states that:

[the] sudden pronominal shifts are characteristic of the Qur'anic discourse [i.e. a unique feature of its style]. Although they sometimes strain the rules of syntax to the limit, they are a very

What fallible human being would write a book and challenge humanity to find discrepancies in it, as does the author of the Qur'ān (Q.4:82)? Would any sensible student after writing an exam paper add a note to the lecturer saying "Read my answers with care and find any discrepancies or mistakes in it if you can!?" The bold and self-assured style of the Qur'ān is simply that of the All-Knowing Creator.

Furthermore, the Qur'ān is a literary masterpiece of Arabic which was and remains unrivalled in its eloquence.⁷² Its rhythmic style, rhyme, near-haunting depth of expression, majesty, and "inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to

effective rhetorical device. The implied speaker shifts from 'He' to 'We' as a self-designation in contexts where He wishes to express the plurality of His power or generosity; He shifts from 'He' to 'I' when He wishes to express His immanence especially when divine unity is at stake; He shifts from 'We' or 'I' to 'He' in order to introduce a cognitive element into the discourse; He shifts from 'I' to 'We' to stress His power and to safeguard against anyone inferring that the utterance is Muhammad's; and He shifts from 'We' to 'I' to introduce an element of immediacy, intimacy or threat [admonition]...

Similar pronominal shifts also occur in respect of the addressee. The speaker may suddenly turn from talking about 'them' to addressing them as 'you', either to threaten them or to honor them. Alternatively, He may suddenly turn from addressing them as 'you' to referring to them as 'them', either to honor them, to humiliate them or to enable them to gain self-knowledge by seeing themselves as they appear to others." (*Ibid.* pp.254-255).

Many more examples of the Qur'an's stylistic features are provided in Robinson's unique study.

⁷² Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. x.

tears and ecstasy,”⁷³ shook the foundations of a society which had prided itself on its oratory skills. Contests were held every year in Makkah for who could recite the longest and most eloquent pieces from memory. When the Qur’ān was revealed, all such contests were brought to a halt, as there was no one who could conceivably compete against it.

Like the miracle of Moses’ stick turning into a real snake which outdid the ability of all the Pharaoh’s magicians at a time when the Egyptians were noted for their mastery of sorcery and magic, and the miracle of Jesus’ healing of the blind and bringing the dead back to life which outdid the ability of all the physicians at a time when the Jews were noted for their mastery of medicine, the Qur’ān was the Prophet Muhammad’s own miracle.⁷⁴ How could such magnificent and unrivalled expressions emanate from a man who, for 40 years, was never known for any such ability?

4. Similarities and Discrepancies between the Qur’ān and the Bible

The mere existence of similarities between any two books is insufficient to prove that one must have been copied from the other. Both could have drawn information from a third common source, thus accounting for some similarities between them. This, in fact, is the argument of the Qur’ān that Allah is the

⁷³ M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York: Dorset Press, 1930), p. vii.

⁷⁴ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.6, Book on Virtues of the Qur’an, hadith no.504; *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Faith, hadith no.283.

Source of all authentic revelation (Q.4:47).

Some scholars have noted that the only Christians that the Prophet (ﷺ) is recorded to have personally met prior to his mission did not spend enough time with him to teach him of their scripture, and no other historical record mentions that anyone taught the Prophet (ﷺ) from among the Jews or Christians.⁷⁵

Furthermore, the Arabs of his time were very eager to discredit the Prophet (ﷺ). Hence, if there was any secret teacher, such a teacher would certainly have been exposed by them right there and then. Due to their lack of conclusive proof, they could only make conjectural accusations. The Qur'ān, in fact, addresses the allegation that Muhammad (ﷺ) had a teacher, saying:

And, indeed, fully well do We know that they say, 'It is but a human being that imparts this to him!' But the tongue of he to whom they so maliciously point is notably peculiar while this is Arabic pure and clear (Q.16:103).

Muhammad Asad (1980) comments on this verse:

Whereas some of the pagan Quraysh regarded the ideas expressed in the Qur'ān as “invented” by Muhammad, others thought that they must have been imparted to him by a foreigner, perhaps a Christian who lived in Mecca at that time, or whom the Prophet was supposed to have encountered at an earlier period of his life. Various conjectures have been advanced both by early Muslim commentators and by modern orientalists as to the “identity” of the person or persons whom the suspicious Meccans might have had in mind in this

⁷⁵ Bilal Philips, *Usool at-Tafseer* (Sharjah: Dar al-Fatah, 1997), pp.127-128.

connection but all these conjectures are purely speculative and, therefore, of no historical value whatsoever. The suspicion of the pagan Meccans implies no more than the historical fact that those of the Prophet's opponents who were unwilling to pay him the compliment of having "invented" the Qur'ān (the profundity of which they were unable to deny) conveniently attributed its authorship or, at least, its inspiration to a non-Arab "teacher" of the Prophet.⁷⁶

That these suspicions had no solid backing is evident in the fact that they were unconvincing to the vast numbers of Arabs and non-Arabs of varying faiths and social strata who eventually converted to Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Furthermore, could the Qur'ān have been copied from the Bible if serious creedal differences exist between both scriptures? Regarding doctrines such as the concepts of God and prophethood, sin and forgiveness, the Qur'ān differs significantly with the Bible. The Qur'ān in fact addresses Jews and Christians directly when correcting what it declares are corruptions in their own beliefs and scriptures. Interestingly, Qur'ānic revelations of doctrinal problems with Christianity were revealed largely in the Makkan period, prior to the Prophet's migration to Madinah, where he would have encountered many more Jewish and Christian scholars, and prior to his marriages to wives of Jewish and Christian backgrounds.

Even in the cases of narrations common to both scriptures, vital discrepancies can be observed. For example, unlike the Bible, the Qur'ān does not blame

⁷⁶ M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980), p.412, n.130.

women for the mistake committed by Adam and Eve (peace be upon them) in disobeying God in the Garden of Eden. (Compare Genesis 3:12-13 to Q.91:7-8 and 2:35-37).

The Qur'ān also emphasizes that Adam and Eve repented to God (Q.7:23) and were forgiven by Him (Q.2:37), contrary to the Bible's account that they were not forgiven and their "original sin" carried on to all succeeding generations of humankind. (Genesis 3:14-17).

It further mentions that the eventual dwelling of Adam and Eve on Earth was already part of God's plan even before He created them (Q.2:30). It does not necessarily consider man's dwelling on earth as a sort of punishment, as does the Bible (Genesis 3:17-19).

Other significant variations can be seen in the stories of Solomon⁷⁷, Abraham⁷⁸, Ishmael and Isaac, Lot, Noah⁷⁹, Moses and Jesus⁸⁰ (peace be upon them all).

The Qur'ān also mentions a good amount of historical information about which the Bible is completely silent. From which portion of the Bible could the following have

⁷⁷ e.g. the Qur'an rejects that this Prophet was ever a worshipper of idols - compare Q.2:102 with 1 Kings 11:4.

⁷⁸ e.g. the Qur'an describes the account of the story of God's command to sacrifice his son as occurring in a dream with his son as a willing participant before being saved by God's intervention, while the Bible speaks of God speaking directly to him and his son as unaware of his plans – compare Q.37:99-111 with Genesis 22:1-19.

⁷⁹ The Bible describes the Great Flood as covering the entire Earth whereas the Qur'an describes the flood as a local event only, a description which is more consistent with scientific evidence - compare Q.25:37 with Genesis 7:23.

⁸⁰ A critical difference is the Qur'an's insistence that Jesus (peace be upon him) was never truly crucified.

been copied?

- ❖ The stories of the people of 'Ad and Thamud (Q.29:38), and their Prophets, Hud (p)⁸¹ (Q.7:65) and Salih (p) (Q.11:61-68).
- ❖ The dialogue between Prophet Noah (p) and his son before the flood (Q.11:42-43).
- ❖ The dialogue between Abraham (p) and his father (Q.6:74), as well as between him and a king (Q.2:258), and between him and his people (Q.22:70-102; 29:16-18; 37:83-98; 21:57).
- ❖ The mention of the city of Iram (Q.89:7).
- ❖ The Pharaoh of the Exodus having drowned, with his body preserved as a sign for people of future generations (Q.10:90-92).
- ❖ Jesus' miracles of speaking from the cradle (Q.3:46), and his producing (by God's will) a bird from clay (Q.3:49), etc.

For further examples, see the following references from the Qur'an: 21:69, 2:260, and 3:37.

5. Qur'anic Teachings about Satan and about morality

Some claim that the Qur'ān was the work of the devil.⁸² Those who make this claim believe the devil to be evil and deceptive, and therefore believe the Qur'ān

⁸¹ (p) – peace be upon him.

⁸² See Norman Daniel's *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image* (UK: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), p.83, 94, etc.

was devised to mislead people away from Truth and the 'glory of God.' Let us examine how much sense, rather, non-sense this allegation makes.

If he authored or inspired the Qur'ān, why would Satan, within his message, curse himself and call himself an open enemy of man (Q.2:168, 208; 6:142; 7:22; 17:53; 35:6; 36:60; 43:62), a deceiver (Q.35:5), man's deserter (Q.25:29), and an arrogant (Q.38:74-75) sneaking whisperer (Q.114:4-5)? Why would he discourage people from associating with him using words as compelling as:

And the one who takes Satan as a patron instead of Allah has surely incurred a great loss. He makes promises to them and arouses desires in them, but Satan's promises are nothing but deception. (Q.4:119-120; 17:64)

And why would Satan command that before reciting the Qur'ān, one must first say "I seek refuge in God from Satan the accursed" (Q.16:98)? Which of his aims would be furthered by Satan so vehemently condemning and sabotaging himself?

Also, is it acceptable to reason to hold the view that Satan would compel people towards personal and societal spiritual and moral growth, ask people to do good, to be virtuous, to worship none but God, to not follow Satan or his whispers⁸³, and to avoid and

⁸³ Some misinterpret the Qur'anic verse 22:52: "Never did We send a Messenger or a Prophet before you but that when he framed a desire Satan threw something into his desire but God will cancel anything Satan throws in and God will establish His signs for He is full of knowledge and wisdom" to mean that the Prophet (p) mistakenly recited words whispered to him by Satan when he was conveying the Revelation to some idol-worshippers. These whispers have been called by some the "Satanic verses" which

struggle against evil, especially through the doing of good? And does it make sense to think that Satan would tell others in the Qur'ān that he really has no power over them (Q.16:99) and that everyone is accountable for their own choices (Q.3:25; 17:15; 40:17, 45:22, 75:14; 81:14); that God is Most Forgiving (Q.15:49; 39:53; 85:14) and rewards all those who are patient and sincerely repent to Him (Q.5:74, 16:119, 42:25); and that God will not do the least injustice to anyone (Q.17:71, 23:62)? Which of these attributes of the Qur'ān is at all deceptive or responsible for leading people away from truth? Which of the Qur'ān's teachings has ever been proven false, so that the Qur'ān may be considered as not promoting truth?

If it is agreed that Satan is evil and promotes vice, whereas the attitude of the Qur'ān is an overwhelming condemnation for evil and the ultimate ambition of the Qur'ān for a human being is the eradication of vice, how can the Qur'ān be of satanic authorship?

To hold such a view is clearly repugnant to reason, as Satan would only have undermined himself and his objectives, furthered the cause of God, and instilled *God will cancel anything Satan throws in and God will establish His signs for He is full of knowledge and wisdom*⁷ to mean that the Prophet (p) mistakenly recited words whispered to him by Satan when he was conveying the Revelation to some idol-worshippers. These whispers have been called by some the "Satanic verses" which were supposedly later abrogated by Allah in subsequent revelations. This story has been discredited with

were supposedly later abrogated by Allah in subsequent revelations. This story has been discredited with authoritative proofs by M. Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol.1A. (Madina: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an, 1997), pp.683-702.

authoritative proofs by M. Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, more hope in true believers of God through this means. Even the Bible attests, “*And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.*” (Mark 3:26).⁸⁴ This argument applies to any “Satanic forces”, be they “evil spirits”, “deceitful aliens”, or other similar sources.

Moreover, given the miraculous beauty, rhythmic eloquence, flawless records and precision-perfect insights of the Qur’ān, unmatched by any other scripture known to man, it is unfathomable to accept that Satan would be an even greater author than God Himself (presuming, as a critic of another faith would, that God is the author of any of the other scriptures)!⁸⁵

The argument that the Qur’ān must be the work of Satan because it contradicts some beliefs held by Non-Muslims assumes that those (non-Qur’ānic) beliefs are true. Unless such an assumption is founded on reasonable evidence (as we are attempting to establish for the Qur’ān), the allegation rests on shaky foundations. Clear and verifiable criteria need to be established for a scripture to be accepted as absolutely true. Otherwise, the same doubt and allegation of Satan’s intervention may be applied to any other scripture, including the Bible, and indeed, any other oral or written composition of knowledge in existence

⁸⁴ Cited in H.M. Njozi, *The Sources of the Qur’an: A Critical Review of the Authorship Theories* (Saudi Arabia: WAMY Publications, 1991), p.96.

⁸⁵ We do not presume that all scriptures held by people *today* are authored by God, but merely write this phrase as a presumption held by Non-Muslims who allege that Satan is the deceptive author of the Qur’an while God is the author of their own respective scriptures.

today.

The contention that a Satanic origin of the Qur’ān is supported by feedback from supernatural or mystical sources⁸⁶ may hold more weight to those whose faiths do not call for reasoning in the verification of Scripture. If a person’s belief is that Truth and reality are only established by mystical insight and subjective experience, then no explanation, however reasonable, may prove otherwise to that person. It is only natural therefore that once a subjective experience is attributed to be communication from God, any statement that opposes the message of this experience is considered Satanic. If this method of determining “Truth” were applied universally, it would necessitate accepting all beliefs derived from mystical experience as equally divine in origin.⁸⁷

Hence, the allegation of Satan having authored the Qur’ān is not based on any reasonable or empirical evidence. Rather, the allegation is based only on the suspicion of ulterior motives, and serves to justify ’blind disbelief’.

6. The Qur’ān’s factual contents and scientific information

Within the Qur’ān are recorded facts about ancient times that were unknown to Muhammad’s contemporaries and even to historians in the first half of the 20th century. In scores of verses, we also find references to scientific wonders, some only recently

⁸⁶ Such as a “holy spirit”, “ancestor”, “saint”, or personal “god”.

⁸⁷ Including pagan cults, astrology, and all forms of animism.

discovered, regarding the universe, biology, embryology, astronomy, physics, geography, climatology, medicine, history, oceanography, etc. Below are some examples of modern scientific discoveries that are mentioned in the Qur'ān.

❖ **The Lost City of *Iram* (Qur'ān 89:7)**

The existence of the city of Iram was unknown to any historian in the world prior to an excavation in Syria (in 1973) at the site of the ancient city of Ebla⁸⁸ where clay tablets found there confirmed that the people of Ebla used to have business relations with the people of Iram. Details of this can be found in the National Geographic magazine of December, 1978, which also notes that the only mention of Iram archaeologists and historians have ever otherwise come across is in the Holy Qur'ān.⁸⁹ So unknown was the city of Iram until recently that even some Muslim commentators commented on the mention of the city in the Qur'ān as being perhaps figurative, saying that Iram was possibly a tall man and not a city! How did the author of the Qur'ān know of the existence of the city of Iram (Q.89:7) when no one else knew it?

❖ **Worker bees being female (Qur'ān 16:68)**

A subtle yet extraordinary precision in describing a natural phenomenon occurs in Q.16:68: “*And your Lord inspired the bee, (saying), 'Take for yourself dwellings in hills, on trees and in what they (mankind) build.'*” The imperative “take” above is the translation of the Arabic word

⁸⁸ Also known as Eblus.

⁸⁹ Howard LaFay, “Ebla: Splendor of an Unknown Empire”, *National Geographic Magazine*, 1978, pp.735-736 - The full article spans from pp.730-759.

“*ittakhidhiy*”, which is a feminine form (since Arabic expressions, unlike English ones, differentiate between the sexes). In Arabic, the feminine is used when all those to whom a word refers are female, whereas the masculine is used when a group contains at least one male. Therefore the Qur’ān is in fact saying: “*Take for yourself, you female bee, dwellings...*”

Science has gradually discovered that a swarm of bees comprises three types: a queen, the worker bees that collect pollen, produce honey and build the hive, and the male drones, whose sole purpose is to impregnate the queen and are then killed off by the worker bees. These worker bees are all females with underdeveloped sex organs.⁹⁰ Thus the phrasing of this command in the Qur’ān is in perfect correspondence with the fact that male bees do not participate in the construction of the hive or bees’ “dwellings”, which is the sole work of the females. This is an example of the sort of precision in the Qur’ān which refutes the idea of it having been produced by guesswork, for probability dictates that the masculine form should have been used.⁹¹

⁹⁰ “Keepers are all Abuzz Tending to their Bee Hives: Natural Honey Rewards Efforts”, The Washington Times, May 2, 2002, p.M14, New World Communications Inc.

⁹¹ If one had no prior knowledge about bees and gender or role-differentiation, the bees being addressed in the verse could either consist of: some males and some females, all males, or all females. All things being equal, if the feminine may only be used if the bees addressed were all female, the probability of guessing correctly out of all possible combinations of genders among the bees are as follows: masculine - $\frac{2}{3}$, feminine - $\frac{1}{3}$ This conservative figure does not acknowledge socio-cultural and historical biases which would favor the

❖ Mountains as “pegs” and stabilizers (Q.78:6-7)

In his co-authored book entitled “Earth,”⁹² Professor Emeritus Frank Press (1982) says that mountains are not just high above ground but have underlying roots. These roots are deeply embedded in the ground. Thus, mountains are shaped like pegs.⁹³ This is just how the Qur’ān has described mountains. The Creator is recorded in the Qur’ān as saying: “*Have We not made the earth as a resting place (for you), and the mountains as (its) pegs?*” (Q.78:6-7)

Modern earth sciences document that, like icebergs, underground mountain roots can reach several times their elevations above the surface of the ground.⁹⁴ On the basis of this information, then, the most suitable word to describe mountains is the word “pegs”, since most of a properly set (tent) peg is hidden underground and the term would be most familiar to the seventh century desert community that received the revelation.

How did the author of the Qur’ān know such a precise description when the theory of mountains

view that male animals would most likely be involved in any serious labor, and thus increase the probability even more of opting for the masculine form.

⁹² Press and Siever, *Earth*, 3rd edition. (San Francisco, USA: W.H. Freeman and Co., 1982), p.435.

⁹³ See also E.J. Tarbuck and F.K. Lutgens, *Earth Science*, 3rd edn. (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1982), pp.157-158, for illustrations.

⁹⁴ Z.R. El-Naggar, *The Geological Concept of Mountains in the Qur’an*, 1st edition. (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1991), p. 5.

having deep roots was introduced only in the latter half of the nineteenth century?⁹⁵

Mountains also are said in the Qurʾān to play an important role in stabilizing the 'shaking' crust of the earth. The author states: "*And He has set firm mountains in the earth so that it could not shake with you...*" (Q.16:15). Likewise, the modern theory of plate tectonics holds that mountains work as stabilizers of moving lithospheric plates⁹⁶ on the surface of our rapidly spinning planet, and significantly neutralize the effects of earthquakes and tremors when the plates collide.

This knowledge about the role of mountains just began to be understood in the late 1960's.⁹⁷

❖ The Spherical Shape of the Earth

In several places (Q.7:54; 36:37; 31:29), the Qurʾān directs us to consider the alternation of night and day as another sign from the Almighty. For example, the verse 39:5 states: "...*He wraps (kanwiru) the night around the day and He wraps the day around the night.*" The Arabic verb "*kanwiru*" means "to coil or wrap around" and has the connotation of wrapping or winding something around a spherical object, such as winding a strand of yarn around its ball, or a turban cloth around a

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ The lithosphere is the upper layer of the Earth's surface, going down to a depth of a little over 1000km below ground level. The lithosphere is divided into a number of 'plates' with active rifts separating them. The plates act like rafts 'drifting' upon the more fluid layer of the Earth beneath. See any textbook on physical geography for more details.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

person's head.

From the perspective of the planet Earth, this is exactly what takes place in that a half sphere of night followed by a half sphere of day is continually being wound around its surface. An observer from space, looking at Earth from a distance, would see in fact what appears to be the winding of day and night around the planet in a circular motion. When observing from a stationary angle, the light of the day appears to merge into the night and vice versa. This is due to the earth's rotation and the sun's relatively stationary position in relation to the earth. The Qur'ān's use of words in this description is thus remarkable.

❖ Development of the Human Embryo

The Qur'ān (23:12-14) describes the development of the embryo at a microscopic level inside the womb in the following manner: *Man did We fashion from a quintessence of clay. Then We placed him as (a drop of) seminal fluid in a place of rest firmly fixed. Then We fashioned the seminal fluid into a leech-like thing that clings.⁹⁸ Then We fashioned that leech-like thing that clings into a chewed-like lump. Then We fashioned the chewed-like lump into bones and We clothed the bones with flesh. Then We developed it into another creature. So hallowed be Allah, the best of creators; Q.96:1-2: ...who fashioned man from a leech-like thing that clings; and*

⁹⁸ The word “*alaq*” is sometimes incorrectly translated as “a blood-clot”. While “blood clot” is a derived meaning, the original meaning is in fact more exact in its description of the embryo at this stage – see Maurice Bucaille, *What is the Origin of Man?* (Paris: Seghers, 1983), p.186.

Q.22:5: *We fashioned you out of dust, then out of a drop of fluid, then out of a leech-like thing that clings, then out of a morsel of flesh – partly formed and partly unformed...*

The stunning detail and accuracy of these descriptions of the various stages of embryonic development are confirmed in K. Moore and T.V.N. Persaud's renowned textbook *The Developing Human*.⁹⁹ A number of recognized scientists have testified that such precise knowledge about embryonic stages has only been possessed by the scientific community in the last forty years.¹⁰⁰

❖ The Expanding Universe (Qur'an 51:47)

By studying the galactic spectrum, scientists have recently established that the universe is expanding. In the Qur'an (51:47), we read: "*The firmament have We built with power, and verily, We are expanding it.*" The word "*samaa'a*" means firmament or heaven in the sense of the extra-terrestrial world, and the word "*musi'un*" is the present plural participle of the verb "*awsa'a*", which means "to widen, to extend, to expand." This scientific fact is explained further in Stephen Hawking's classic,

⁹⁹ K.L. Moore and T.V.N. Persaud, *The Developing Human*, 5th edition. (Philadelphia, USA: W.B. Saunders Co., 1993), p.8. See also I.A. Ibrahim, *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam*, 2nd edition. (Houston, USA: Darussalam Publishers, 1997), pp.6-11; Maurice Bucaille, *What is the Origin of Man?* (Paris: Seghers, 1983), pp.182-188; and Jeffrey Lang, *Struggling to Surrender* (Beltsville, USA: Aman Publications, 1994), p.34.

¹⁰⁰ A.M. Al-Rehaili, *This is the Truth: Newly Discovered Scientific Facts Revealed in the Qur'aan & Authentic Hadeeth* (Riyadh: Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, 1998); <http://www.it-is-truth.org>

❖ **The Original Explosion (Qur’ān 21:30)**

In Qur’ān 21:30 we read: “*Have not those who disbelieve seen that the heavens and the earth were fused (ratq) and then We clove them asunder (fataqnaa), and We made every living thing out of water. Will they then not believe?*”

Scientists have postulated for some time now that the universe was originally a single primary mass of nearly infinite density that subsequently split into multiple fragments after a tremendous explosion, commonly known as the Big Bang. While the Qur’ān does not elaborate whether the entire Big Bang Theory as we know it is true or false, it does corroborate with scientific observations that the universe expanded from an explosion of initial primary mass.¹⁰²

It has also been established that all living cells consist mostly of water, which is the essential element for the existence of life as we know it. The word “*maa’a*” is commonly translated as “water” but refers to both water in the sky and in the sea, and in fact any sort of liquid.¹⁰³ The verse above therefore is in agreement with scientific observations.

Jeffrey Lang (1994) also notes that:

¹⁰¹ Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (London: Bantam Books, 1990), p.13.

¹⁰² More information on various unresolved issues that arise from the Big Bang Theory may be found in J. Malone, *Unresolved Mysteries of Science* (Canada: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2001).

¹⁰³ Maurice Bucaille, *What is the Origin of Man?* (Paris: Seghers, 1983), p.166.

...the more interesting observation is that this challenge to unbelievers was proclaimed in the seventh century. We may ask ourselves: Which unbelievers are being addressed here? For the contemporaries of Muhammad, this revelation had many compelling aspects, but this question could not have made much sense to them unless there was some ancient, and presently unknown, Arabian mythology to which they could relate it.

Was it then meant to be understood by people of a much later era who would be familiar with modern scientific findings?¹⁰⁴

❖ **That the whole universe was once nothing but a cloud of “smoke” (Q.41:11)**

The Qur’ān’s description of the universe as having been shaped out of a cloud of smoke: *And He who turned [His design] to the skies when it had been smoke (dukhaan)...* (Q.41:11) is now an undisputed principle of modern cosmology. The term “smoke” is most befitting to explain the opaque, highly dense and hot gaseous composition that existed prior to the universe’s expansion. New stars are in fact still forming, as astronomers explain, from the remnants of that primary “smoke.”¹⁰⁵ It is virtually inconceivable that a person of seventh century Arabia could have

¹⁰⁴ Jeffrey Lang, *Struggling to Surrender* (Beltsville, USA: Amana Publications, 1994), p.36.

¹⁰⁵ Stephen Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes: A Modern View of the Origin of the Universe*, 5th printing (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), pp.94-105. See also I.A. Ibrahim, *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam*, 2nd edition. (Houston, USA: Darussalam Publishers, 1997), p.14.

known such information about the beginnings of the universe.

These are just a few of the numerous scientific revelations in the Qur'ān.¹⁰⁶ How many well trained modern scientists and geniuses with the aid of hi-tech equipment, satellites, telescopes, microscopes and computers were required to discover the above facts, and over what time span? Is it even conceivable that any human being over 1,400 years ago could have produced a scripture with such information in it, let alone a person who had never been educated?

Although the inability of man to encompass all the mysteries and complexity of creation is mentioned in the Qur'ān (67:3-4), the revelation nevertheless seems to point

¹⁰⁶ Readers who are interested in further examples, are referred to: Maurice Bucaille, *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* (Indianapolis, USA: American Trust Publications, 1978); Jeffrey Lang, *Struggling to Surrender* (Beltsville, USA: Amana Publications, 1994), pp.33-38; Malik Bennabi, *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*. Transl. by A.B. Kirkary (Indianapolis, USA: American Trust Publications, 1983); Keith Moore, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology with Islamic Additions*, 3rd edition. (Jeddah: Dar al-Qiblah, 1983); I.A. Ibrahim, *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam*, 2nd edition. (Houston: Darussalam Publishers, 1997); H.M. Njozi, *The Sources of the Qur'an: A Critical Review of the Authorship Theories* (Saudi Arabia: WAMY Publications, 1991); A.M. Al-Rehaili, *This is the Truth: Newly Discovered Scientific Facts Revealed in the Qur'aan & Authentic Hadeeth*. (Riyadh: Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, 1998); <http://www.it-is-truth.org>; Gary Miller, *The Basis of Muslim Beliefs* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Prime Minister's Department – Islamic Affairs Division, 1995); and Gary Miller, *The Amazing Qur'an*, <http://users.erols.com/ameen/amazingq.htm>, 2001), etc. Note: "The Amazing Qur'an" has been published on numerous websites on the net. Should the website written here be non-functional, readers are advised to run a search for the booklet using an internet search engine in order to find it elsewhere.

to various natural phenomena as if urging human beings to enquire and verify what is said again, with such an attitude of confidence that one can only assume the author is indeed challenging our disbelief. A skeptic may argue that one or two of the scientific revelations were the result of a good guess or coincidence, but how probable could it have been that they all were good guesses and coincidences? Moreover, would such skepticism be based on rigorous objectivity or on the whims of blind disbelief?

When comparisons are made between Qur'ānic statements relating to the physical universe and certain scientific notions, we are led to discover profound similarities. And more notably, as Dr. Maurice Bucaille (1978) observes, the Qur'ān is distinguished from all other works of antiquity that describe or attempt to explain the workings of nature in that it avoids mistaken concepts. For in the Qur'ān, many subjects are referred to that have a bearing on modern knowledge without a single statement that contradicts what has been established by present-day science.¹⁰⁷

Dr. Bucaille (*ibid.*) goes as far as to conclude his study with the following remark:

In view of the level of knowledge in Muhammad's day, it is inconceivable that many statements in the Qur'ān which are connected with science could have been the work of a man. It is, moreover, perfectly legitimate, not only to regard the Qur'ān as an expression of Revelation, but also to award it a very special place, on account of the guarantee of authenticity it provides and the presence in it of scientific statements which, when

¹⁰⁷ Maurice Bucaille, *The Qur'an and Modern Science*, (Indianapolis, USA: American Trust Publications, 1978).

studied today, appear as a challenge to explanation in human terms.¹⁰⁸

Indeed, such considerations “...force the impartial scientist to admit his inability to provide an explanation which calls solely upon materialistic reasoning.”¹⁰⁹

7. The Elimination Process:

In examining the various claimed sources of the Qur’ān, the following points have been discussed:

- I) Muhammad’s being unlettered,
- II) Muhammad’s integrity,
- III) The Style of the Qur’ān,
- IV) Discrepancies between the Qur’ān and the Bible,
- V) Qur’ānic teachings about Satan and about morality, and
- VI) The Qur’ān’s factual contents and scientific information.

This numbering serves as a key to the “elimination” table below, which illustrates what points may be used to eliminate unacceptable candidates for authorship of the Qur’ān:

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.163.

¹⁰⁹ Maurice Bucaille, *The Qur'an and Modern Science*, Lecture presented at the Commonwealth Institute (London, 1981); <http://www.sultan.org/articles/QScience.html>

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Muhammad (ﷺ)	X	X	X		X	X
Other Arab poets		X	X			X
Non-Arab contemporaries of Muhammad (ﷺ)		X	X			X
Christian or Jewish learned men	X	X	X	X		X
Satan or other deceitful non-humans		X			X	
Allah						

The following points are presented to aid us in our “elimination process” of unacceptable authors of the Qur’ān:

- ❖ **Muhammad (ﷺ):** It would be reasonable to start by eliminating Muhammad (ﷺ) from the list of possible authors of the Qur’ān. There is no conceivable way he could have composed the Qur’ān or invented the Qur’an in view of points 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 presented, at least.
- ❖ **Arab Poet(s), Scholar(s), etc.:** We may also eliminate any other Arab from the list of possible authors in view of points 2, 3 and 6 (at least).
- ❖ **Non-Arabs:** The reasons for the elimination of any Arab from the list also eliminate any non-Arab scholar, poet or religious personality.
- ❖ **Christian Monks or Jewish Rabbis (i.e. Judeo-Christian sources):** To consider this as an alternative

source of the Qur'ān is unreasonable in view of points 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6.

- ❖ **Satan (or deceitful spirits, aliens, or any devil-inspired source):** This option is also unacceptable in view of the points discussed, especially under 5.
- ❖ **God (i.e. Allah):** In the absence of any acceptable alternative as source and author of the Qur'ān, one is more or less compelled by reason to accept the Qur'ān for what it claims to be — revelation from God through His Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). This position seems reasonable not just because it is the only option that cannot be objectively eliminated, but because it is only reasonable to expect that a book with such qualities and contents would come from man's Creator and Guide. Of all the arguable sources for the Qur'ān, it is only God, the inevitable alternative, that even makes a claim to the scripture's authorship.

8. Conclusion

The position, therefore, which holds that Allah is the author of the Qur'ān remains valid in view of all available information. However,

having undertaken this task ourselves, the Muslim's assertion that the Qur'ān is the Word of God is not just a product of blind faith, but, in fact, the result of very sound and reasoned judgment in the light of the above analysis. Indeed, after having assessed the

evidence, it may be considered 'blind disbelief' to contend

Last Word!

The evidence for the Divine Authorship of the Qur'an is also evidence for the existence of the Divine. Allah must exist, unless a more reasonably acceptable author of the Qur'an can be produced. The challenge

otherwise. The Qur'ān's challenge (or falsification test¹¹⁰) remains open to anyone to disprove this claim.

¹¹⁰ Q.4:82: "...had it been from any other than Allah, they would have found therein much discrepancy."

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www.sunnipath.com
www.uga.edu/islam
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¹¹¹ These online resources have very useful information and products on Islam. This list is, however, far from being exhaustive, as new websites debut on the internet daily. Other Islamic websites may be even more informative than the above listed, and whereas these websites are recommended, not all the views and opinions expressed in them necessarily reflect those of DIN or the IET.