



The Authenticity of the Quran

How do we know that the Quran we have today is the word of God?

The importance of this question cannot be underestimated. Scriptures form the bedrock of a religion's teachings and typically compel people to follow them on the assumption that they are of divine origin. However, with so many competing claims, it is no longer sufficient to rely on mere assumption alone to feel confident that a religious scripture ought to be trusted as Truth. If being a "Muslim" means "one who surrenders to the will of Allah", then every Muslim should know that it really is the will of Allah that one is surrendering to.

To answer the question, we first need to establish that the Qur'an we have today is the same Qur'an as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (p) and that no corruption has taken place in the transmission of that message. In other words, we initially need to prove the fact that the Qur'an has survived history, perfectly preserved. Secondly, we need to establish who the author of the Qur'an really is. This may be done by eliminating all possible authors that are unacceptable to reason. That is, we may be certain of the definite author by eliminating all unlikely authors. This two-step process is outlined below:

I. The Recording and Perfect Preservation of the Qur'an

The Glorious Qur'an, the Muslims' religious Scripture, was revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad (p) through the angel Gabriel. The revelation occurred piecemeal, over a period of twenty-three years, sometimes in brief verses and sometimes in longer chapters [1].

The Qur'an (lit. a "reading" or "recitation") is distinct from the recorded sayings and deeds (Sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad (p), which are instead preserved in a separate set of literature collectively called the "Ahadith" (lit. "news"; "report"; or "narration").

Upon receiving revelation, the Prophet (p) 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. Indeed, Allah describes this as one of its essential qualities for preservation and remembrance (Q.44:58; 54:17,22,32,40), 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" [2]. Large portions of the revelation were thus easily memorized by a large number of people in the community of the Prophet (p).

The Prophet (p) encouraged his Companions to learn each verse that was revealed and transmit it to others [3]. The Quran was also required to be recited regularly as an act of worship, especially during the daily meditative prayers (*salat*). Through these means, many repeatedly heard passages from the revelation recited to them, memorized them and used

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repeatedly heard passages from the revelation recited to them, memorized them and used them in prayer. The entire Qur'an 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 [4].

Furthermore, the sequence or order of the Quran was arranged by the Prophet (p) himself and was also well-known to the Companions [5]. Each Ramadan, the Prophet (p) would repeat after the angel Gabriel (reciting) the entire Qur'an in its exact order as far as it had been revealed, while in the presence of a number of his Companions [6]. In the year of his death, he recited it twice [7]. Thereby, the order of verses in each chapter and the order of the chapters became reinforced in the memories of each of the Companions present.

As the Companions spread out to various provinces with different populations, they took their recitations with them in order to instruct others [8]. In this way, the same Qur'an became widely retained in the memories of many people across vast and diverse areas of land.

Indeed, memorization of the Qur'an emerged into a continuous tradition across the centuries, with centers/schools for memorization being established across the Muslim world [9]. The Qur'an is perhaps the only book, religious or secular, that has been memorized completely by millions of people [10]. Leading orientalist Kenneth Cragg reflects that "this phenomenon of Quranic recital means that the text has traversed the centuries in an unbroken living sequence of devotion. It cannot, therefore, be handled as an antiquarian thing, nor as a historical document out of a distant past. The fact of hifz (Quranic memorization) has made the Quran a present possession through all the lapse of Muslim time and given it a human currency in every generation, never allowing its relegation to a bare authority for reference alone" [11].

The entire Qur'an was however also recorded in writing at the time of revelation from the Prophet's dictation by some of his literate companions, the most prominent of them being Zaid ibn Thabit [12]. Others among his noble scribes were Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Ibn Mas'ud, Mu'awiya ibn Abi-Sufyan, Khalid ibn Waleed and Zubayr ibn Awwam [13]. The verses were recorded on leather, parchment, scapulae (shoulder bones of animals) and the stalks of date palms [14].

The codification of the Qur'an (i.e. into a 'book form') was done soon after the Battle of Yamama (11AH/633CE), after the Prophet's death, during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr. 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'an might be lost with the death of those who had memorized it. Therefore, at the suggestion of Umar to collect the Qur'an 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'an and prepare a suhuf - loose sheets which bore the entire revelation on them [15]. To safeguard the compilation from errors, the committee accepted only material which had been written down in the presence of the Prophet (p) himself, and which could be verified by at least two reliable witnesses who had actually heard the Prophet (p) recite the passage in question [16]. Once completed and unanimously approved of by the Prophet's Companions, these sheets were kept with the Caliph Abu Bakr (d. 13AH/634CE), then passed on to the Caliph Umar (13-23AH/634-644CE), and then Umar's daughter and the Prophet's widow, Hafsa [17].

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Although the Quran was initially revealed in the Quraysh dialect of Arabic to the Prophet (p), it was also later revealed in seven different Arabian dialects to aid the understanding of those belonging to non-Quraysh tribes [18]. At the time of the third Caliph Uthman (23AH-35AH/644-656CE), however, a companion named Hudhayfah ibn Al-Yaman observed that the people of the regions of present-day Syria and Iraq had begun disputing over various pronunciations of some of the words of the Qur'an, while new Muslims in provinces outside Arabia were unsure which dialect should be learned. Urged by Hudhayfah to take heed of how the *Ahl al-Kitab* (People of the Book) had differed among themselves regarding Allah's Word, Uthman perceived the danger of divisions, disunity and corruption arising on the basis of different readings/dialects of the Qur'an which were earlier on approved by the Prophet (p) [19]. He therefore requested Hafsa to send him the manuscript of the Qur'an which was in her safekeeping, and ordered the production of several bounded copies of it (*masaahif*, sg. *mushaf*) using the Quraysh dialect (i.e. the dialect of the Prophet himself and in which the Quran had commenced being revealed in). This task was entrusted to the Companions Zaid ibn Thabit, Abdullah ibn Az-Zubair, Sa'id ibn As-'As, and Abdur Rahman ibn Harith ibn Hisham [20].

Upon completion (in 25AH/646CE), Uthman returned the original manuscript to Hafsa and sent the copies 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'an which differed from that undoubted "official" copy (including incomplete manuscripts and those with additional personal notes) be burnt so that the Qur'an 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. Their accounts also reveal that many had openly declared their support for Uthman at the time, and how pleased they were with the measures he had taken [21]. It was therefore not the "Original" Qur'an that was burnt, nor a fabricated story to discredit Uthman in the eyes of the community, as some critics of Islam allege.

The story of how the Quran came to be preserved as described above is drawn entirely from authentic Ahadith. Some orientalist critics, however, claim that the narrations in Hadith collections cannot be trusted due to their being recorded by "Muslim sources". These orientalists ignore the fact that news and social history have always been uncovered through eye-witness reports, and that early Muslim scholars have developed some of the most rigorous criteria to scrutinize such reports for authenticity [22]. The majority of what we know of the life of the Prophet (p) and his Companions are from *mutawaatir* reports (reported by many different reliable narrators, who all independently verify the same account). This continuing and dynamic science (now over thirteen centuries old) has produced highly accurate (albeit not perfect) reports of Muslim history. Through this science, thousands of scholars have repeatedly analyzed the Ahadith collections in order to identify and filter out any fabrications. The accusation that most Muslim scholarship has been based on forgery would necessarily implicate that all the geographically scattered scholars of the first four centuries of Hadith collection, who belonged to varied and competing schools of thought, collaborated together in a mutual conspiracy – an idea which neither appeals to reason nor the fact that such scholars were renowned for their piety and integrity of character.

A number of orientalists (such as Ignaz Goldziher [23]) have been attached to the theory that certain variations in some of the reports make the entire story of the Qur'an's codification dubious. Yet other scholars have pointed out that these differences are often reconcilable due to context of each narration (contexts which, incidentally, are also recorded in Ahadith collections), and the time of narration (some referring to earlier instances, such as prior to the completion of the entire Qur'an [24]). Muslim scholars also note that the number of memorizers was great for any given portion of the Quran and therefore if any error had been made in Uthman's codification, someone would have pointed it out. Furthermore, the majority of the reports indicate that the text of Uthman's codification is *mutawaatir* – ie. transmitted and agreed upon by many people – while other variant readings were only used by a sole companion or occasionally two or three [25].

Jeffrey Lang [26] 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 [27], he also remarks 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 that easily explains otherwise. An example of this is the frequent criticism that Ahadith were forged in the second and third century after Hijrah to support jurists' legal rulings. Azami [28] explains that such accusations often relied on a faulty comparison of legal and hadith literature when in fact they are two distinct fields. One involves narrating and verifying Ahadith, the other involves deriving legal opinions and discussions from such Ahadith. Inferences about one science cannot validly be made by studying the development of another. The theory that all Ahadith about the collection of the Quran were forged in the second and third century has been further refuted by proof that much of the Ahadith were actually written down in the first century [29].

In an excellent attempt at objective analysis of Western criticism of Hadith traditions, Jeffrey Lang [30] concludes that Muslim scholars' deductions of history hold ground more solidly with the available evidence than their orientalist counterparts'. Orientalist theories are further addressed and refuted in the works of Ali [31], Azami [32], Abbott [33], Siddiqi [34], and Abdul Ghafar [35].

Despite such defective theories, many orientalists themselves have admitted like Gibb 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" [36]. John Burton, at the end of his substantial work on the Qur'an's compilation, says with reference to criticisms made of different readings narrated in Ahadith 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 agreed in what they transmit..." [37]. He further states that the Quran 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." [38]. Kenneth Cragg describes the transmission of the Quran from the time of revelation to today as occurring in "an unbroken living sequence of devotion" [39]. Schwally concurs that "As far as the various pieces of revelation are concerned we may be confident we may be confident that their text has

revelation are concerned, he may, be concerned, he may, be concerned that their text has been generally transmitted exactly as it was found in the Prophet's legacy" [40].

The historical credibility of the Quran is further established by the fact that one of the copies sent out by the Caliph Uthman is still in existence today. It lies in the Museum of the City of Tashkent in Uzbekistan, Central Asia [41]. A facsimile of the mushaf in Tashkent is available at the Columbia University Library in the USA [42]. This copy is proof that the text of the Qur'an we have in circulation today is identical with that of the time of the Prophet and his companions. A copy of the mushaf sent to Syria (duplicated before a fire in 1310AH/1892CE destroyed the Jaami' Masjid where it was housed) also exists in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul [43], and an early manuscript on gazelle parchment exists in Dar al-Kutub as-Sultaniyyah in Egypt. 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 [44].

The Institute for Koranforschung, for example, in the University of Munich (Germany), collected over 42,000 complete or incomplete ancient copies of the Qur'an. After around fifty years of research, they reported that there was no variance between the various copies, except the occasional mistakes of the copyist which could easily be ascertained. This Institute was unfortunately destroyed by bombs during WWII [45].

Thus, due to the efforts of the early companions, with Allah's assistance, the Qur'an as we have it today is recited in the same manner as it was revealed. This makes it the only 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 in the world which has remained twelve centuries [now fourteen] with so pure a text" [46].

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

But though it is proven that the text of the Qur'an has remained intact till today, how are we sure that that words actually originated from God and not some other source? This takes us to look at the authenticity, authority, or source of the Qur'an.

II. Source or Authority of the Qur'an

Concerning the authorship of the Qur'an, Muslims believe that it was revealed verbatim (ie. word for word) by God, to Muhammad (p). Non-Muslims, however, who do not support this view can have no differences with Muslims concerning the fact that the Qur'an was at least first witnessed to be uttered by Muhammad (p), a Makkan Arab in the 7th century CE and, as proved above, there have been no changes to the records of his utterances since then.

Muslims' claim of "internal evidence" for the divine authorship of the Qur'an, ie. from statements to that effect in the Qur'an 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 the scripture in question is revelation from God. We are therefore forced by reason and objectivity to look elsewhere for “external evidence” of the Qur’an’s divine source or authority.

The simple proposed structure for the presentation of this “external evidence” is an elimination process, where we get to the answer of the question – “Who is the author of the Qur’an?” – by eliminating all alternative answers to this question which are definitely implausible. In other words, the definite or (at least) most probable author or source of the Qur’an 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’an. The following list of “possible” authors reflects the main theories.

1. Muhammad (p)
2. Some other Arab poet(s), scholars, etc.
3. Some non-Arab scholars, or poets or religious personalities
4. Monks or Rabbis (i.e. from the Bible or Judeo-Christian sources)
5. Satan (or other deceitful “spirits” or “aliens”, etc.)
6. God

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

Muhammad: unlettered and uneducated

The fact that Muhammad 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. He had never been known to compose oral poetry or prose. The Qur’an, with its all-embracing laws and freedom from all inconsistencies, has its greatness acknowledged even by non-Muslim scholars [47]. Its contents treat social, economic, political and religious legislation, history, views of the universe, living things, thought, human transactions, war, peace, marriage, worship, business, and everything relating to life - with no contradicting principles. The Qur’an 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?

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 orientalisks have themselves admitted that contrary to any deliberate deception, that the Prophet (p) had a profoundly sincere conviction that it was revealed to him by God Himself is undeniable [48].

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'an, 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.), but only marvel at it? His enemies even offered him kingship over Makka and any riches he desired if only he would stop reciting. If it was true that he desired his 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 One God?

In addition, how reasonable is it to believe that unlettered Muhammad (p) would author the Qur'an for personal benefit and then within the Qur'an 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'an? They were certainly not to his advantage if his goals were power and prestige. The existence of such verses only proves that Muhammad (p) was indeed a truthful and sincere Messenger of God!

The style of the Qur'an

There is a world of difference between the style of the Qur'an and Muhammad's own style as recorded in the books of Ahadith. The differences between the two in every respect – style and contents – are immediately evident. The sayings of Muhammad (Ahadith) are conversational, oratorical, and expository, of a kind the Arabs were already familiar with. By contrast, the style of the Qur'an 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 can not — for surely you cannot, then...*" (Q.2:23-24)).

Which fallible human being would write a book and challenge humanity to find discrepancies in it, as does the author of the Qur'an (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 style of the Qur'an is simply that of the All-Knowing Creator.

Furthermore, the Quran is a literary masterpiece of Arabic which was and remains unrivaled in its eloquence. Its rhythmic style, rhyme, near-haunting depth of expression, majesty, and "inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy" [49], shook the foundations of a society which had prided itself on its oratory skills. Contests were held every year in Makka for who could recite the longest and most eloquent pieces from memory. When the Qur'an was revealed, all such contests were brought to a halt, as there was no more competition.

competent.

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 doctors at a time when the Jews were noted for their mastery of medicine, the Qur'an was the Prophet Muhammad's own miracle [50]. How could such magnificent and unrivaled expressions emanate from a man who, for 40 years, was never known for any such ability?

Similarities and discrepancies between the Qur'an 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'an that Allah is the Source of all authentic revelation (Q.4:47).

Some scholars have noted that the only Christians the Prophet (p) is recorded as having been personally introduced to prior to his mission did not spend long enough time with him to teach him of their scripture, and no other historical record mentions anyone who taught the Prophet from among the Jews and Christians [51]. Furthermore, the Arabs of his time were very eager to discredit him. Hence, if there was any secret teacher, he would most likely have been exposed by them then.

Furthermore, could the Qur'an have been copied from the Bible if they exhibit serious creedal differences? Regarding doctrines such as the concepts of God and prophethood, sin and forgiveness, the Qur'an differs significantly with the Bible. The Qur'an in fact addresses Jews and Christians directly when correcting what it states are corruptions in their own scriptures. Interestingly, Qur'anic revelations of doctrinal problems with Christianity were sent largely in the Makkan period, prior to the Prophet's migration to Madina, where he would have encountered many more Jewish and Christian scholars.

Even in the case of narration common to both scriptures, vital discrepancies can be observed. For example, the Qur'an, unlike the Bible:

— does not blame women for the mistake committed by Adam and Eve (peace be upon them) in disobeying God in the Garden of Eden. (Compare Genesis 3:12-17 with Q.91:7-8 and 2:35-37);

— emphasizes that Adam and Eve repented to God (Q.7:23) and were forgiven by Him (Q.2:37);

— 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), and not a sort of punishment (Genesis 3:17-19).

Other significant variations can be seen in the stories of Solomon [52], Abraham [53], Ishmael and Isaac, Lot, Noah [54], Moses and Jesus [55] (peace be upon them).

The Qur'an also mentions a good amount of historical information about which the Bible is completely silent. From which portion of the Bible were the following copied?

- ◆ The stories of the people of 'Ad and Thamud, and their Prophets, Hud (p) and Saleh (p).
- ◆ 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 he and a king (Q.2:258), and between he 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's 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.

Qur'anic teachings about Satan and about morality

Some claim that the Qur'an was the work of the devil [56]. Let us examine how much sense (or non-sense) this allegation makes.

If he authored or inspired the Qur'an, why would Satan curse himself and call himself the worst enemy of man (Q.35:6; 36:60)? Why would Satan command that before reciting the Qur'an, one must first say "I seek refuge in God from Satan the accursed" (Q.16:98)? How could Satan so vehemently condemn himself? Is it really acceptable to common sense to hold the view that Satan would ask people to do good, to be moral and virtuous, to worship none but God, to not follow Satan or his whispers, and to avoid and struggle against evil?

To hold such a view is clearly repugnant to reason, as Satan has only undermined himself through this means if he is the author. 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 [57]). This argument applies to any "Satanic forces", be they "evil spirits", "deceitful aliens", etc.

The Qur'an's factual contents and scientific information

Within the Qur'an 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 discovered or confirmed, regarding the universe, biology, embryology, astronomy, physics, geography, meteorology, medicine, history, oceanography, etc. Below are some examples of modern scientific discoveries mentioned in the Qur'an:

– The Lost City of Iram (Qur'an 89:7)

The existence of the city of Iram was unknown to any historian in the world prior to the excavation in Syria (in 1973) at the site of the ancient city of Ebla where clay tablets found there confirmed that the people of Ebla used to do business with the people of Iram. Details of this can be found in the National Geographic magazine of December, 1978. So unknown was

the city of Iram until recently that even some Muslim commentators, out of embarrassment or feeling apologetic for their religion, have commented on this mention of the city in the Qur'an as being perhaps figurative, saying that Iram was possibly a man and not a city! How did the author of the Qur'an know of the existence of the city of Iram (Q.89:7) when no one else knew it?

– Worker bees being female (Quran 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 "*ittakhidhi*", which is a feminine form (for Arabic verbs, unlike English ones, differentiate between the sexes). In Arabic, the female form is used when all those it refers to are female, whereas the masculine is used when a group contains at least one male. Therefore the Qur'an is in fact saying: "Take for yourself, you female bees, dwellings..."

A swarm of bees comprises three types: a queen, the worker bees who collect 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. Thus the phrasing of this command in the Qur'an is in perfect correspondence with the fact that male bees do not participate in the construction of the hive or "dwelling", which is the sole work of the females.

– Mountains as "stakes" and stabilizers

In his co-authored book entitled "*Earth*" [58], Professor Emeritus Frank Press says that mountains have underlying roots. These roots are deeply embedded in the ground; thus, mountains have a shape like a stake. [59].

This is just how the Qur'an has described mountains. The Creator is recorded in the Quran (78:6-7) as saying: *"Have We not made the earth as a resting place (for you), and the mountains as (its) stakes?"*

Modern earth sciences have shown that mountains have deep roots underground, and that these roots can reach several times their elevations above the surface of the ground. So the most suitable word to describe mountains on the basis of this information is the word "stake", since most of a properly set (tent) stake is hidden underground. How did the author of the Quran know such a precise description when the theory of mountains having deep roots was introduced only in the latter half of the nineteenth century [60].

Mountains also play an important role in stabilizing the crust of the earth. They hinder the shaking of the earth. The author of the Qur'an 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 the rapidly spinning earth. This knowledge about the role of mountains just began to be understood in the late 1960's. [61].

– The spherical shape of the Earth

The Spherical Shape of the Earth

In several places (Q.7:54; 36:37; 31:29), the Qur'an 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 the night around the day and He wraps the day around the night." The Arabic verb "kawwara" 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 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'an's use of words in this description is thus remarkable.

– The expanding universe (Quran 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, We have built it with power. 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 fact is confirmed in Stephen Hawking's classic book "A Brief History of Time" [62].

– The "Big Bang" (Quran 21:30)

In Qur'an 21:30 we read:

"Have not those who disbelieve seen that the heavens and the earth were fused (ratq) and then We broke them apart (fataqa), and We made every living thing out of water. Will they then not believe?"

Scientists have postulated for a long 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, called the "Big Bang." 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 [63]. The verse above therefore is in agreement with scientific observations.

Jeffrey Lang also notes that "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 their own myth to be unlearned and then replaced by a new myth, or was it a myth to be learned from the past?"

was it then meant to be understood by people of a much later era who would be familiar with modern scientific findings?" [64].

– That at one point in time, the whole universe was nothing but a cloud of "smoke" (Q.41:11)

The description of the Quran 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...*" (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" [65]. It is virtually inconceivable that a person of seventh century Arabia could have known such information about the beginnings of the universe.

– The Qur'anic description of the development of the human embryo

The Qur'an (23:12-14) describes the development of the embryo at a microscopic level inside the womb in the following manner: "*Man We did 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 (the word "alaq" is sometimes incorrectly translated as a blood-clot). 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 out of it another creature. So hallowed be Allah, the Best of Artisans*"; Q.96:1-2: "...who fashioned man from a leech-like thing that clings"; and 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 incredible accuracy of these descriptions of the various stages of embryonic development are confirmed in Keith Moore and T.V.N. Presaud's 5th edition textbook "The Developing Human" and others [66].

These are just a few of the numerous scientific revelations in the Quran. Readers who are interested in further examples, are referred to "*The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*" by Maurice Bucaille [67], "*Struggling to Surrender*" p.33-38, by Jeffery Lang [68], "*The Qur'anic Phenomenon*" by Malik Bennabi [69], "*The Developing Human*", 3rd edition, by Keith L. Moore [70], "*A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam*", by I. A. Ibrahim, [71], "*The Sources of the Qur'an*" by Hamza Mustapha Njozi [72], "*The Basis of Muslim Beliefs*" [73] and "*The Amazing Quran*" by Gary Miller [74], etc.

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'an (67:3-4), the revelation nevertheless seems to point 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. To be generous to the skeptic, perhaps one or two of the scientific revelations were

the result of nothing more than a good guess or coincidence, but how probable could it have been that they all were?

Comparing Qur'anic statements that deal with the physical universe with certain scientific notions leads us to discover profound similarities. But, more notably, as Dr. Maurice Bucaille observes, the Qur'an 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'an, 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. [75].

Dr. Bucaille 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'an which are connected with science could have been the work of a man. It is, moreover, perfectly legitimate, not only to regard the Qur'an 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 studied today, appear as a challenge to explanation in human terms." [76].

Conclusions

In examining the possible source of the Qur'an we have covered the following points:

- ◆ Muhammad's being unlettered,
- ◆ Muhammad's integrity,
- ◆ The Style of the Qur'an,
- ◆ Discrepancies between the Qur'an and the Bible,
- ◆ Qur'anic teachings about Satan and about morality, and
- ◆ The Qur'an's factual contents and scientific information.

These points were presented to aid us in our "elimination process" of unacceptable sources or authors of the Qur'an, as follows:

Muhammad (p): We might start by eliminating Muhammad (p) from the list of possible authors of the Qur'an. There is just no way he could have authored the Qur'an in view of points 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 presented above.

Other Arab Poet(s), Scholar(s), etc. We can also eliminate any other Arab from the list of possible authors in view of points 2, 3 and 6 (at least).

Some non-Arab: 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): This alternative source of the Qur'an is unreasonable in view of points 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6.

Satan (or other deceitful spirits or aliens, or anyone on his side, etc.): This option is also unacceptable in view of the points discussed, especially under 5.

God (i.e. Allah): In the absence of any more acceptable alternative as source and author of the Qur'an, one is more or less forced by reason to accept the Qur'an for what it claims to be – revelation from God through His Prophet Muhammad (p). 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 possible sources of the Qur'an, it is also only the last alternative – God – who even claims in the Qur'an itself to be the author of the scripture.

The position, therefore, which holds that Allah is the author of the Qur'an still stands, and the challenge (or falsification test, Q.4:82) remains open to anyone to disprove the Qur'an's claim to being revelation from Allah. Having undertaken this task ourselves, the Muslim's contention that the Quran is the Word of God appears not just a product of blind faith but, in fact, a product of very sound and reasoned judgment in light of all the available evidence. Indeed, after having assessed the evidence, it would be blind faith to contend otherwise!

Note: 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!

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[52] eg. the Quran rejects that this Prophet was ever a worshipper of idols – compare Q.2:102 with 1 Kings 11:4

[53] eg. the Quran 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

[54] The Bible describes the Great Flood as covering the entire Earth whereas the Quran 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

[55] A critical difference is the Quran's insistence that Jesus (p) was never truly crucified

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