

18. Telephoning God? Part 2 ("God-authored" books)

Viewed as deadlier than a hydrogen bomb; denying that God authored a book repulses Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Fundamentalists. That's because many use the idea of a God-authored book as their religious foundation.

Fundamentalist belief is immovable allegiance to a religious book's inerrant, infallible, exact verbatim inspiration as truly God-authored, interpreted more or less literally. Others, while rejecting verbatim inspiration, contend that God inspired each document. The idea of a God-authored book has been attacked for centuries. Colonialist Ethan Allen and Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson challenged the Bible's divine inspiration, and today's challenges are legion.

Since Christian and Jewish writings are part of my culture, this is my primary focus. However, I view the "Old Testament" (actually the Jewish Tanakh or Hebrew Bible) and the Christian New Testament writings as completely separate books. For familiarity's sake I sometimes refer to them together as "The Bible." **If this Bible's purported divine inspiration cannot hold up to logical debate, perhaps a devout believer can show that this idea is nonessential before a skeptic refutes it. However, if its divine inspiration is obvious, challenges should be welcomed, to expose the unreasonableness of skeptics.** Therefore, let's examine the evidence.

The "Old Testament"

Widely varying lists of textual contradictions and other mistakes have been compiled. I've examined these lists, finding that most entries aren't really errors but simple misunderstandings easily explained. Other supposed errors are hard to explain, but reasonable explanations do surface. Still other supposed incongruities seemingly defy explanation, which seem like truly bogus texts. Here is my own assessment:

The Old Testament apparently contradicts the New Testament and contradicts itself: Jacob says he's seen God face to face (Gen.32:30) Yet God says, "Thou cannot see my face; no man shall see me, and live" (Ex.33: 20). Ex.24:9-11 and Amos 9:1 say that some men saw God, yet Jesus said "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18). The Old Testament godly are blessed with wealth and children, while New Testament poor and singles are especially blessed.

In Ex.15:3, The LORD is a man of war. In Rom.15:33: The God of peace be with all. Advocates of peace often quote Isaiah 2:4's beating swords into plowshares while pro-war advocates quote Joel 3:10's beating plowshares into swords. Endless circumgyration ensues.

In Deut.24:16, children won't be put to death for their fathers, while in Isa.14:21: Prepare slaughter for the children for their fathers' iniquity. There's a three way disagreement on what constitutes Israel's twelve tribes. The Numbers lists, Joshua 19 + 21, and Revelation 7 each have twelve by adding or subtracting Levi, Joseph, or Dan. Some passages have God creating the universe in six days, and afterward, everything is very good. Other passages have a long period of nebulous history where angels rebelled and became demonic.

In Proverbs wine is terrible, while in Song of Solomon wine is great. II Kings 2:11 clearly says that Elijah ascended into heaven. Yet Jesus said "No man hath ascended into heaven, only Jesus himself (John 3:13). Earth will perish in Psalm.102:25-26 and Hebrews 1:10-11, while Earth will abide forever in Psalm.78:69 and Ecclesiastes 1:4.

God supposedly sent an evil spirit to trouble Saul (Samuel 16:14-23), while throughout the Bible we're to have no contact with dark forces, and demons are cast out. Since children mock Elisha the prophet's baldness (II Kings 2:23-24) he curses them, sending two she bears (as if the bear's sex

made any difference) which tear apart forty-two of them. Yet Jesus said about his persecutors who had him crucified: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:33-34).

Judges 4 has a woman as an authority over men while another woman kills a man, which seems to contradict the tenor of this male-dominated Bible. Besides, it has Deborah leading the military because Barak is cowardly, while in Hebrews 11:32 Barak is heroic and Deborah is not even mentioned.

Some Old Testament passages reflect ignorance of science or biology. In Genesis 7, a total worldwide flood envelops Earth up to the mountaintops. This excess of water alone would have exceeded all four oceans. Yet ten months later, it “all dried up” (Gen.8:3-7) Then in Gen.9:11-16 God creates rainbows as if the laws of light refraction weren’t previously operating. Moreover, approximately 900,000 people died in a modern flood, probably more than were on Earth when God supposedly said He’d never again destroy Earth with a flood.

In Gen.1:16 the moon is called a great light (lamp in the underlying Hebrew text) while the moon has no light and merely reflects the sun. In Gen.1:29-30 all plants are to be eaten, apparently even poisonous ones. Sam.2:8, Job 38:4-6, and Psalm.93:1 suppose that Earth is stationary with a foundation, a theme of numerous mythological tales, namely Atlas with Earth on his back, and Earth resting upon tortoises and elephants. Kings 7:23 has a circle ten cubits in diameter measuring thirty cubits around when it should be over thirty-one (the ratio of a circle’s circumference to its diameter is approximately 3.1416).

We not only have a sexually supercharged woman (Gen.39:6b-12), but one acting out with everything to lose. Fantasizing on the writer’s part perhaps? For the problem with this scenario, see 32.Grrrl Power part 2 under Sex Drive.

For both contradictions and scientific errors we have the story of Adam and Eve. Eden’s serpent is often viewed as Satan before he was cursed, which would contradict the teaching that Satan was an angel before being cursed. If Satan is viewed as merely entering the serpent, then the serpent was cursed through no fault of his own. Supposedly snakes previously had legs. Having no legs seems calamitous from an uninformed human perspective, but it’s now known that snake’s specialized bodies would be disadvantaged from having legs. Also, Genesis’ unheard of snake breed ate dust or dirt instead of rodents like other snakes.

Although God doesn’t tempt anyone (James 1:13) Genesis chapters 2-3 has God creating the tree of forbidden fruit in close proximity to where Adam and Eve reside, telling them its location, making it attractive, and having Adam and Eve reside in the same locale as the tempter. Isn’t this like welcoming a drug dealer onto a grade-school playground? Although Adam and Eve had a choice to either obey or disobey, what happens after the tree of forbidden fruit drops seeds, causing forbidden trees to confusedly sprout amidst acceptable trees? Besides, electricity wasn’t discovered yet, which would prevent people from knowing which trees were which if they ate at night. Then there’s the contradiction between God creating everything good and creating something bad.

Everyone coming from Adam and Eve would require brothers and sisters mating to populate Earth, condemned by the Bible (Lev.20:17, Deut.27:22) and everyone else. Every race coming from the same parents is another insurmountable problem, complicated, contrived, and contradictory explanations notwithstanding. **I always enjoyed the Genesis creation story which magnifies God, gives a pleasant alternative to haphazard Evolution, and provides fodder for many inspiring sermons. But viewing it as historical in our twenty-first century would discredit Christianity.**

The story of Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25:23-34 and chapter 27) starts with twins having no resemblance; the writer apparently lacked knowledge of genetics. Then Jacob receives God’s blessings by taking advantage of his brother, violating the command not to defraud (Lev.19:13) and by breaking God’s commandment not to bear false witness against thy brother. And Jacob wouldn’t be able to secure Esau’s birthright anyway; it would simply be one man’s word against another’s. And by Jacob standing in for Esau to get Isaac’s blessing the blessing would logically have gone to Esau not Jacob. And if Rebekah could prepare goat meat to taste like venison, Esau wouldn’t have gained Isaac’s favor by provid-

ing venison to begin with. Although this story is used to warn against foolishness, it is more often used to promote Jewish racial supremacy.

Judges 9:8-15 apparently plagiarizes Aesop's fable of the Logs and the Olive(13) since the original form of Aesop's fable makes perfect sense, while the Bible version misses the point. Besides, many such texts strikingly resemble discounted extra-biblical stories, such as Adam and Eve's adventures in *Lost Books of the Bible*(14) and the Song of Solomon's amazing resemblance to ancient Egyptian love poetry. Why would God ape man in clandestine fashion instead of radiating His otherworldly message as a transcending beacon? Artistic license was fashionable; authors often created stories that reflected what they thought might have occurred.

Painstaking explanations supposedly rectify all apparent mistakes and defend the notion of a God-authored book. Yet if a friend writes you a message, must it be studied for weeks to understand it? Wouldn't a critical warning sign be crystal clear? The Bible has so many difficulties that it's bewildering. Since God isn't the author of confusion (Corinthians 14:33) logically, He neither authored nor inspired the Hebrew Bible. Notably, New Testament Scripture seems to be free from contradictions and scientific errors.

Rejecting the notion of a supernaturally inspired Bible doesn't necessarily align one with unbelievers. Atheists' disbelief in Santa's flying reindeer doesn't mean you must do the opposite and believe. All groups have occasionally held erroneous ideas.

Further Examination

Let's examine some arguments attempting to cumulatively prove that the Bible, Old and New Testaments together, is supernatural followed by my response. One example of refutation per claim should suffice, since something originating from God should be perfect and completely consistent.

"The Bible claims divine authorship. For example, 'Prophecy came not by man's will: but godly men spake through the Holy Ghost.' Also, the Thessalonians received the disciple's words as God's words, not men's." However, the Bible there says that the prophecy originated from God, not the texts themselves. The Apostle Paul wrote: To the rest speak I, not God.....(Cor.7:12). I have no commandment of God, yet I give my judgment (Cor. 7:25). I suppose therefore (Cor.7:26). That which I speak, I speak not after God, but as it were foolishly.....(II Cor.10:17). The Bible does claim to be God-authored in II Timothy 3:16. However, the Koran more emphatically claims to be God authored: Surah al-Nisa' 4:82: "Will they not ponder on the Quran? If it had been from any other than God they would have found therein much contradiction..... Surah As-Sajdah 32:2: "This is the revelation of the book in which there is no doubt, from the lord of the worlds" (There are many other such passages).¹⁵ So if you reject the Koran's claim of God-authorship as being evidence in support of it, then in fairness you must throw out any God-authorship claim in the Bible as being evidence in support of it.

"The Bible was written by forty authors over fifteen centuries, in three languages, on three continents, by such diverse people as farmers, fishermen, kings, politicians, scholars, shepherds, and soldiers, their circumstances ranging from prisons to palaces. Such diverse people harmoniously agreeing cannot occur naturally; it's supernatural."

Yes, extremely diverse people would not, cannot, and will not agree (That's why I oppose multiculturalism). But the writers weren't diverse enough. Without exception, "Old Testament" writers were Jewish, every New Testament writer was Christian, all were white males, and all were of the literary class, when most people couldn't write. A God-authored book could include hundreds of writers spanning a hundred centuries, have ten different languages or illiterate writers, both sexes, different races, and different religions or non-religious people included.

"The Hebrew Bible teaches the highest moral and ethical standards." Yet Lot offers up his daughters to satisfy men intent on rape (Genesis 19). In Joshua 6:17, God commends Rahab the har-

lot's deceptive actions and lying from Josh.2:1-6. In Leviticus 21:17-23 there is blatant prejudice against physical handicaps and differences, including dwarfs and those with flat noses.

"The Bible's frank record of the weaknesses and wrongdoings of its leading characters proves its complete authenticity, since fictional stories would supposedly say only good things about Jewish people and the Church." However, it is common knowledge among writers that exposing your weaknesses, faults, and scandals garners interest, and whitewashing decreases interest.

"Jesus Christ is the Bible's central character." No. Before Christ, not everyone thought that Hebrew scripture referred to a coming Messiah, and only Christian believers see Jesus as its Messiah. So Jesus is certainly not the central character in Hebrew scripture, which comprises three-fourths of the Bible. The fourteen million Jews worldwide view the Hebrew Bible as exclusively their book, and that Christians hijacked it by claiming it as their own. I happily agree. If you want to declare a group of writings God-authored because Jesus is the main character, we should mate the "New Testament" with other early Church writings, not Hebrew scripture.

"The Bible's extraordinary antiquity, despite attempts to destroy it, shows providential preservation." However, the Bible isn't the oldest book. Egyptian pyramid texts inscribed on inner chamber walls indisputably date to 3000 BC. Their not being "books" is mere technicality, since modern books didn't exist. The Egyptians wouldn't have better preservation because of their pyramids and sarcophagi if the Israelites courted God's providence, since God's power would be the ultimate preservation method if God wanted to preserve Hebrew scripture. Hinduism's Rig Veda boasts 1500 BC, and tradition has the I Ching written by Chinese emperor Fu His (2953-2838 BC). These dates are disputed, but so are biblical dates. And there have always been more people wanting to preserve the Bible than destroy it. Despite considering it inaccurate, Islamic nations have always acknowledged it.

"World history and archeology confirm biblical texts." Yet countless books are historical while the Bible is sometimes unhistorical. The Ark of the Covenant has disappeared, no trace of Solomon's temple exists, nobody knows where the garden of Eden was, and there's no clue where Job's land of Uz, equally historical as Oz, could have been. Compare that with the wealth of information we have about King Tutankhamun and other Egyptians contemporaneous with the Israelites.

"Because Scripture refers to dinosaurs, dinosaurs bear witness to the Bible." However, dinosaurs discredit Genesis if they weren't on Noah's ark since it clearly states that two of every kind were on board. In some species, one animal alone would be almost half the ship's length; others were two-thirds its given height; others weighed as much as fifteen elephants. Even if they started as baby animals, they all had a half year to grow on the ark. Then there's the need for a half years supply of food for every animal, who would expel waste on board for a year. Also, the area where the ark supposedly landed (mountains of Ararat) would logically have the greatest diversity of dinosaur fossils and other animal remains. It does not.

"The Bible's brevity and banality shows that it wasn't written for sensationalism or entertainment. Rather, God wanted to focus on serious business." However, the Hebrew Bible is filled with gross and gory escapades, especially Judges Chapters 3 and 19. The Song of Solomon is a miniature romance novel filled with sexual innuendo (more pronounced in the original Hebrew), Ezekiel chapters 40-48 are tediously detailed, and Revelation is very sensationalistic.

"The Proverbs are a wellspring of superhuman knowledge in support of a God-authored book. A three thousand year old book having no contradictions, scientific or historic errors, nor errors in logic, while exceeding the wisdom of most modern people, must be divine."

Yet consider how Proverbs achieves this feat. It completely avoids mentioning anything remotely scientific or historical. Most of its proclamations are so general and repetitive, it's easy to avoid errors. For example, its repeated admonishments to seek wisdom and avoid fools and foolishness are utterly nonspecific and completely open to interpretation. The foolishness and ignorance of modern society may make its teachings look profound. But in reality, things that Proverbs warns against, like

the danger of joining gangs and angering kings, and that laziness causes poverty, should be common sense.

Consider the following passages: Proverbs 14:24: “The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is their folly.” Proverbs 30:15-16: “The horseleach hath two daughters, crying Give, give.....three things yea four are never satisfied.....graves, barren wombs, earth without water, and fire.” Having phrases which appear to be meaningless blather is a common writer’s mistake, which shows a lack of editing.

“Biblical scientific accuracy was far ahead of current human knowledge. Modern scientists discovered that every element in man’s body is also in soil, supporting the Genesis idea of man being formed from earth.” However, mortuaries weren’t available to preserve bodies, which could be readily observed turning back to dirt.

“God hangeth the earth upon nothing (Job 26:7) corrects ancient imaginings, such as believing giant turtles support Earth. The sun’s circuit through space is also mentioned.” However, Job 9:6 and 26:11 mention the pillars of heaven and earth, and Job 38:12-13 suggests that Earth has edges like a rug. These passages are conveniently deemed figurative, while accurate passages are conveniently literalized.

“Leviticus 17:5 declares that animals dying naturally shouldn’t be eaten, providing the most advanced health regulations.” However, road-kill with maggots should be naturally repugnant. “Lev.17:11-14 reveals that life resides in blood. Even in George Washington’s day they foolishly practiced bloodletting to get rid of ‘bad blood’.” However, with all the biblical swordplay, the result of extreme hemorrhaging was obvious three millennia ago. “Isaiah 40:22’s Circle of the earth declares Earth to be round.” Yet it doesn’t say Earth is a globe. Perhaps disc as in table top? The early Church thought Earth was flat, and they read those passages.

Consider Joshua 10:12-14. The sun revolving around Earth supports man’s false notion of geocentricism, and Joshua is a genie master, ordering around God. The famous dispute involving the Catholic Church and Galileo, a pioneer heliocentricist, revolved around this very passage. Since geocentricism is false, Joshua’s book cannot be divine. And time is postulated, not controlled, by the Sun’s and Earth’s movement. Besides, why favor one group of barbarians over another, especially since God could have resolved the conflict instantly? And since Joshua’s book was intertwined with the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) as a “Hexateuch” that also damages the Pentateuch’s credibility.

Deuteronomy 22:13-21 is ignorant and harmful. We cannot prove whether or not a woman ever had sex, as hymens are often broken through mundane physical activity, while many women who had sex retained intact hymens.¹⁶

Fulfilled prophecy is a solid reason for divine inspiration. However, prophecy is only a small fraction of the Bible. And the prophets spoke prophecy; they didn’t write it, except for John’s unfulfilled Revelation. The prophecies may have originally been separate from the objectionable and dubious material, having been scurrilously mated together.

Possible Harm from Insisting that God Authored the Bible

Besides belief in a God-authored Bible giving rise to the private interpretation mess, those who believe that God authored every passage of the Hebrew Bible (which was separate and apart from the Church’s writings for 1,200 years) may conclude that everything therein should be followed. Besides the fact that science and biology are minimized, some examples are:

Every populace without exception not of God’s Chosen People are depicted as utterly depraved barbarians. Every reader conveniently deems himself one of the Chosen People.

The main characters (role models) don't merely exhibit common human failings; sometimes their failings are worse than those of the average person. Their behavior has been used to justify polygamy and other nonsense.

Commands to marry and reproduce cause harassment and denigration of singles, and now our planet suffers from overpopulation. Pets are nonexistent and animals are slaughtered while men are told to subdue the earth, not protect the environment.

Hard drug dealers, who've promoted the death, suffering, and enslavement of millions, destroying them physically, mentally, and spiritually, aren't even mentioned. There's no proscribed punishment for them whatsoever, while picking up sticks, tapping rocks, and other trivial actions called for the death penalty.

The Hebrew Bible wholly supported the institution of slavery. (Lev.22:44-46 and other passages). New Testament "slaves" were more like servants.

Dozens of pertinent topics crucial to modern life are excluded. If God authored this book He could have predicted the future and relayed modern life beforehand.

Stories such as the Creation and Noah's ark inspire children, but other stories are far less innocuous. Although the book of Psalms is greatly inspiring, in Psalm 58, the writer talks about washing his feet in people's blood. This vengeful and gross sentiment contrasts with Jesus' humble example of washing others' feet and loving one's enemies. If Jesus was God, how is Psalms God-authored?

The worst aspect of the Hebrew Bible is all the warfare, murder, rape, pillaging, and mayhem which reflects on its authors. In defense of that I've heard: "Before Jesus, Prince of Peace, peace couldn't exist." Yet peace did exist, and Christianity teaches that Christ was a preexistent being.

Many American Christian believers call themselves God's righteous ones, and "fight against evil empires." Many Jews still consider themselves the Chosen People, superior to everyone else. And many Middle Easterners call America the Great Satan, battling others "in Allah's name." And each group has a book filled with examples of killing everyone else. Hmmm. How can we not see the harm in lauding stories of men hearing voices that told them to butcher other people?

Even if those who were killed deserved it because they were completely evil, why wouldn't God instantly destroy all the wicked Himself like He did to Sodom and Gomorrah, instead of having men deal with the negative psychological impact of brutal warfare? Besides, much of the Hebrew Bible is simply a redundant "The children of Israel smote so and so with the sword, saith the LORD", it's not teaching anything new. So let's break the chains and shackles that come with deifying these writings.

More Observations

For the most glaring inconsistency, most believers in a God-authored book never read the entire book they claim is God-authored. Others ignore anywhere from small parts on up to most of it, rejecting whatever "God wrote" that they don't like. Then these "God-authored books" are copyrighted. If a book is copyrighted by Joe Schmo, we know that God isn't the author, it's Joe Schmo. If it's copyrighted by the Flimflam Company, it was authored by Flimflam employees. If a copyrighted book is God-authored, it better say Copyright by God. If you insist on the Bible being divinely inspired, at least use a non-copyrighted translation such as the Authorized King James Version.

Diverse groups disagree on how many books constitute the Hebrew scriptures. Protestants say 39, Catholics say 46, the Orthodox canonized 49, and some historical groups have 53, making an 80-book Bible. (The Septuagint: Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures which Jesus quoted from, had all 53). This division and the occasional brokenness of the texts causes words word meanings, and passages to be perpetually disputed by believers in a God-authored book.

Concerning the Ten Commandments, they only applied to one's neighbor. The scrolls from which these precepts came from had no first word capitalization, commas, or periods. So in Exodus chapter 20 it says Thou shalt not kill, commit adultery, or steal from thy [Jewish] neighbor. This ex-

plains the apparent contradiction in Deuteronomy 20:13-14, where the Israelites were told to kill, commit adultery, and steal from others. And the Levitical precept love your neighbor as yourself (Lev.19:18) only applied to fellow Israelites as well. Besides being a monument to Jewish racial supremacy, the Hebrew Bible doesn't produce faith; half of Jews are basically atheists.¹⁷

Jesus quoting the Old Testament certainly doesn't mean He endorsed the whole thing. Rather, this appears to be circumstantial. He couldn't have quoted the New Testament since it wasn't in existence. And since He was of Jewish lineage, He naturally used the Hebrew scriptures as a reference point. If He was Indian, He would have undoubtedly quoted the Vedas instead. Besides, most Jews rejected Christ even though He accommodated Himself to them. By ignoring their corrupt texts He might have been completely rejected. Yet He incorporated them since prophetic light still shone through Hebraistic squalor. Also, fables can beautifully illustrate truth.

Although the Old Testament (actually the Jewish Tanakh) was quoted many times in Christian scripture, this is still only a small fraction of it. Jesus and His apostles knew how to gather gems from those texts like miners panning for small gold nuggets within gallons of mud. But most people can't, and better leave it alone.

The Old Testament God CANNOT be the true God because the Old Testament says that the true God immediately answers His religious leaders with miracles and false gods would not (Kings 18:22-39). Since calling on the Old Testament god does NOT result in immediate, dramatic miracles, the Old Testament is self-refuting.

Jesus made it perfectly clear that the Jewish leaders were terribly corrupt. Yet the Jewish leaders took painstaking efforts to preserve the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament). Therefore, these texts being an accurate reflection of God's will would be illogical. Rather, I would expect the Jewish leaders to maintain texts that were corrupt and self-serving. So the Hebrew Bible is a cracked antique relic which gives Christianity validity through historical reference. As an antique collector's bottle, let's keep it in the curio cabinet, only drinking our new wine from new bottles (Matthew 9:17 KJV).

The Koran (Qur'an) and Book of Mormon

The relatively young Koran sprang from its parent the Bible, recycled Bible stories comprising much of its content. Therefore much Bible refutation is automatically Koran refutation. Muslim apologists disparage that comparison, believing the Qur'an came directly from God, while considering the Bible corrupt. Yet why would God create a book that resembles another book that's corrupt, instead of something unique and special? And what internal evidence shows that it's God-authored? If none exists, it's circular reasoning.

Furthermore, the Koran's reiteration of Bible stories contradicts details of those stories. Since the Koran was written much later, who should we believe between the two? Worse yet, the Koran's authors try to top or best the Bible by making those stories even more fantastic. For example, instead of Moses causing a stream of water to spring from a rock, the Qur'an's version has Moses causing twelve streams to spring forth. And instead of disobedient people being bitten by snakes, the Koran's God turns people into apes.

Major differences between the Bible and Koran are that the Koran has no fulfilled prophecy whatsoever, nor any emphasis on loving God, only fearing Him. And instead of being perfected with a new covenant, as Christ's sublime coming perfected the old, there's a Hadith (more of the same). And instead of expanding the Old Covenant notion of a chosen people into the New Covenant proclamation that everyone can be special through Christ, the Koran merely switches God's chosen people from the Israelites to the Arabs. And while the Old Testament merely mentioned polygamy in a neutral, matter of fact way, the Koran made things worse by promoting the practice. Christ however, clarified that proper marriage is always monogamous.

Many scholars only consider Korans valid if they're written in Arabic. Yet why would Allah choose to keep his divine message in the language of a people with one of the lowest literacy rates? Besides, the vast majority of people can neither read nor speak Arabic.

Instead of the heavenly reward being intimate union with God, it's having a harem of beautiful women. Heterosexual women who achieve Heaven are out of luck. The vague injunction for women to cover "what's properly concealed" (whatever that is) single-handedly creates a major conflict over laws of dress. The Koran also has dozens of its own contradictions.

Most followers take objectionable passages about killing infidels (everyone not Muslim) in a figurative or spiritualized way. But since their literal meaning is that of violence which fundamentalists act upon, that's like swimming in a gasoline pool and hoping nobody throws a match. Quoting Muslim professor Hassan Hanafi: "The Koran is a supermarket, where you can find whatever you're looking for." (18) And consider the article *Is The Qur'an The Word of God?* by Dr. Robert Morey.¹⁹

Syria's Tripoli Library has around twenty thousand commentaries on the Koran. Let's say that reading the Koran is like being on the telephone with God and these commentaries are necessary to interpret it. That would make communicating on this telephone more difficult than having to assemble and disassemble a telephone by hand every time you talked on it. Using this alleged vehicle of divine inspiration would be harder than using my car if I had to assemble and disassemble it before and after I drove it. I could have English directions, while the Koran's only approved directions are in Arabic, which I can't read.

The Book of Mormon was supposedly introduced by the angel Moroni in the nineteenth century on solid gold plates. There's no evidence that these plates ever existed beside Mormons saying they existed, although gold cannot deteriorate. And it wouldn't be old enough to have been lost in the annals of antiquity. Rather, a cache of unburied gold would be extremely conspicuous. With gold heavier than lead, the text would have weighed a ton. And since pure gold is extremely soft, dropping or dragging the plates would have ruined its legibility. And instead of being originally written in the current language like the Bible was, it was "written in Egyptian, then translated with magic rocks."

Although Mormonism was attested to by three men claiming to be witnesses of God's new revelation, three is too few. They could have been friends who conspired together to create fiction. Jesus' message that Christianity superseded Judaism was attested to by *hundreds* of men claiming to be witnesses of God's new revelation.

Also, the Book of Mormon plagiarizes the Bible and is poorly written, yet proponents claim that "its perfect text completes the Bible's insufficient and corrupt text." It contains references to places and events unknown anywhere else and also contradicts Christ's words in the Gospels. And **definitely find out about the character of prophet Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, and Mormonism's hidden secrets.**²⁰⁻²³

Advocates of either the Koran or Book of Mormon promote their book by claiming the idea of an *open* Bible canon. A shrewd minister who staunchly affirmed a *closed* canon capitalized on this. When an Islamic apologist proclaimed an open canon, the minister trumpeted the Book of Mormon. Horrified, the Islamic man retracted his claim. When a Mormon proclaimed an open canon, the minister trumpeted the Koran. Horrified, the Mormon retracted his claim.

Besides, neither the Koran nor Book of Mormon add other pertinent information. They don't explain anything about modern life or improve upon Christ's moral imperatives. While the New Testament scriptures close with beautiful imagery of God in Heaven, the reward for the righteous, both the Koran and Book of Mormon, obviously originating from worldly men, have righteous men supposedly rewarded with endless sexual indulgence and polygamy.

Comparatively, Asian religious texts have never been considered God-authored, yet these Eastern religions are older than Christianity or Islam, and their history is far more peaceful with much less division and infighting.

The “New Testament”

I reject any alleged authority of the Hebrew Bible. This is more than fair, since Jewish people not only reject the authority of my Christian scriptures, they never read them. Furthermore, on March 23, 1980 a demonstration was held by burning hundreds of copies of the New Testament in Jerusalem, supervised by the Jewish organization Yad Le'akhim, and subsidized by the Israeli Ministry of Religions.(24) Now for the origin of the Christian writings:

For Christianity's first 350 years, no solidified “New Testament” existed. Various individual gospel accounts, letters, and epistles (Around 75 different ones existed) slowly circulated amongst various congregations. Any one congregation was fortunate to have a few. Many non-canonical writings were equally read and circulated. Because of expansion and oppression, more visible, formal unity was needed.

From many circulating texts, Church authorities tediously sorted and weeded through everything, decided which booklets were or weren't canonical, and decided the order in which all 27 booklets appear. That's the origin of the “New Testament.” Saint Athanasius first proposed that these 27 letters, no more, no less, should be canonized as New Testament scripture (AD 367) ratified by the councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (AD 397). Not until then was our present canon solidified. Afterward, disputes still existed. Eventually enough copies were made for each congregation to have one book. Again, not for individual believers, since printing presses didn't emerge for another thousand years. Considering these facts, it would be inconceivable for everyone to use these writings as an exact blueprint or pattern.

I do lionize this “New Testament”, Matthew-Revelation. “These fountains of salvation satisfy those who thirst with their living words.”(St. Athanasius AD 367). However, since we're under Christianity's New Covenant, and knowing that the designation testament is synonymous with covenant, many conclude that these 27 books comprise the New Covenant (Christianity itself) in toto. Yet while other men's deaths facilitate powerlessness and inaction, making their Last Will and Testament's instructions total and final, the omnipotent Lord conquered death, declaring: “I'm with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt.28:20). Nowhere in these writings designated as The New Testament does it call itself the New Testament (which is Christ's new covenant; Christianity itself). The Canonized Writings of the New Testament Church would be an accurate title.

Besides canonized scripture, I advocate most early documents written about Christ. Although some material might be inaccurate, nothing innate within the canonized “New Testament” proves it's more accurate or godly than writings deemed “apocryphal” or “pseudepigraphal.” Discounting extra-biblical writings seems like circular reasoning (the canon declares itself accurate). Rather, the canon gains legitimacy from the testimonial of other writings. One Gospel account may have a detail; another account may exclude it but have another detail, while yet another has both or neither. This would be an insurmountable problem, if God were the author. God, being omniscient, would know every detail. However, if the Gospels are viewed as multiple eyewitness accounts, as closing your left eye, right eye, both or neither radically changes your view, every piece enmeshes like a jigsaw puzzle.

Atheist Bill Maher cried “Only two of the four Gospels (Matthew and Luke) mention the virgin birth. If such an important concept was true, all four Gospels would mention it.” However, all four Gospels infer a virgin birth. Mark and John portray Christ as both born of God and born of a natural woman, while Christ was Mary's firstborn son. Therefore, virgin birth is implied. Besides, extra-canonical Gospel accounts also document the virgin birth explicitly, such as *The Protevangelium of James, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, and The History of Joseph the Carpenter*. The peerless Gospel message is without contradiction.

Underlying the Christian canon are thousands of Greek manuscripts, making it even more reliable than Shakespearean plays, whose textual gaps were filled by guesswork (The Hebrew Bible has even more textual gaps). Besides the multiple writers substantiating one another, dozens of extra-biblic-

al works substantiate the Christian canon. Being manmade doesn't mean inaccurate. Micrometers and lasers are completely man-made, yet are extremely accurate.

James 3:7 is an example of an inaccuracy; many creatures have never been tamed. However, its accuracy would detract from James's splendid illustration. Other passages have a similar bent; they hold your attention by exercising artistic license. Christian scripture teaches morality, not zoology, which morality is one hundred percent consistent. The Christian scriptures stand alone as the greatest written source for living righteously and achieving Heaven because of its superb treatise of Christ's teachings.

But again, these scriptures must be understood according to their historical interpretations; they are not of private interpretation. Otherwise, they are not "Thus saith the Lord, they are Thus saith YOU. Besides reading the "New Testament," I listen to it on tape. I also read other noteworthy pieces of literature for knowledge's sake. I hold all accounts of Christianity's founder JESUS as sacred, ignore bothersome texts and ideas which have unfortunately been associated with my faith, and seek wisdom from other wholesome sources. The enigmatic Christian scriptures themselves say: "Whatever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, ponder these things" (Philippians 4:8).



