“Are the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Writings Part of the Apocrypha? Why Aren’t They Scripture?”

I can’t find any solid information on the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha [Ed. note: (Greek, “falsely attributed”) Jewish writings of the period between the Old and New Testament, which were attributed to authors who did not actually write them] **and why these books are not consider inspired scripture. I know they are considered false writings, but why?Are the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the Old Testament Apocrypha considered the same thing? Could the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha be just a branch of the Old Testament Apocrypha? And therefore the same principles are applied to the Pseudepigrapha and the Apocrypha about why they are not considered scripture?**

The books that you are referring to did not meet the standards of canonization. I suggest you read *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible* by Norman Geisler and William Nix. The Apocrypha is a different set of works that have traditionally been handed down along with the Old Testament by some Christians but not Jews. It is recognized as canonical by the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox church, but not Protestants who acknowledge its importance as intertestamental literature and even consider it helpful to read for spiritual development, but do not accord it the same status as Scripture. There are multiple theological and historical problems with these books. And their authorship remains unknown.

Dr. Lawrence Terlizzese

Posted Dec. 2, 2013

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"What About the Apocrypha?"

The Catholic institution claims the apocrypha is inspired. Protestants don't. Therefore, within the Body, there are two different lists of supposedly God-inspired authoritative Scripture.

So… How can we claim the Bible is authoritative when there are two differing lists of supposed Scriptures within Christianity…Two different Bibles? My next question is akin to the first: How do we know with certainty which list is THE list?" Both of these questions center on authority. Who do we trust as our God approved authority able to testify for us on behalf of Scriptures?

It is no wonder that the other religions of the world do not take true Christianity seriously when such fundamental divisions exist within the Body.

The Apocrypha is not included as part of the inspired text because it does not meet the criteria of the inspired canon. Here are just a few examples.

The Apocrypha contains historical errors. In Judith 1:1 Nebuchadnezzar is reigning in Ninevah instead of Babylon.

The Apocrypha contains unbiblical teaching. 2 Maccabees 12 teaches to pray for the dead. Tobit 12:9 teaches faith by works, a clear contradiction to the Bible (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Jesus and the Apostles do not quote the Apocrypha. We do not

see it directly quoted in the New Testament.

Finally Jesus tells us where the inspired canon ends in Luke 11:51. He says the prophets extend from Abel (Genesis 4) to Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:20-21). So the line of prophets ends with the Jewish Old Testament, the Masoretic text that Jesus used as authoritative.

The history of the Apocrypha is interesting. It was not part of the Catholic Church's inspired canon until 1545 AD. No council recognized it in the first four centuries. The historical evidence goes against the Apocrypha. It was incorporated by the Catholic Church in response to the Protestant challenge to several unbiblical teachings such as praying for the dead and penance. Hope this helps.

Patrick Zukeran
Probe Ministries

"Did the Early Church Fathers Accept the Apocrypha?"

I have been searching for some time to find quotes from the earliest church fathers (first through fourth centuries) that will demonstrate that they did not accept the books of the Old Testament Apocrypha (presently accepted by the Roman Catholic Church) as scripture. Do such evidences exist? Where might I find them? What was accepted as authoritative Old Testament scripture in the time of Jesus? Did certain copies of the Septuigint include the Apocrypha? Thank you for your assistance.

Let me try to answer your questions in order:

Do such evidences exist? Where might I find them?

F. F. Bruce uses extensive quotes from the early church fathers in both chapters five and six of his book *The Canon of Scripture* (InterVarsity Press, 1988). Chapter five includes church fathers in the east (Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, Origen and Athanasius, etc), while chapter six looks at the Latin west (Tertullian, Jerome and Augustine). The record is mixed; some accepted the apocryphal books with qualifications, others were more critical. Few accept them outright.

What was accepted as authoritative Old Testament scripture in the time of Jesus?

Both the Hebrew and Greek versions of the Old Testament were authoritative in Jesus' time. Bruce argues that Jesus read from and used the Hebrew version while Stephen, a Hellenist, would have used the Septuagint.

Did certain copies of the Septuagint include the Apocrypha?

The earliest extant copies we have of the Septuagint come from the Christian era (5th and 6th centuries). Although they include the apocryphal books, Bruce argues that there is no evidence of a wider canon for the Alexandrian of Greek Jews than was accepted by the Palestinian Jews. In fact, Philo (20 B.C – 50 A.D.) a Hellenistic Jew, does not mention the apocryphal additions.

Don Closson
Probe Ministries

The Old Testament Apocrypha Controversy – The Canon of Scripture

Don Closson analyzes the controversial issue of the Apocrypha, weighing the evidence on the canonicity of these books, affirming their value, but agreeing with the Protestant tradition which does not regard them as inspired Scripture.

The Source of the Controversy

A fundamental issue that separates Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions is the question of the Old Testament Apocrypha. Catholics argue that the Apocrypha was an integral part of the early church and should be included in the list of inspired Old Testament books. Protestants believe that the books of the Apocrypha are valuable for understanding the events and culture of the inter-testamental period and for devotional reading, but are not inspired nor should they be included in the canon, the list of books included in the Bible. This disagreement about which books belong in the Bible points to other differences in Roman Catholic and Protestant beliefs about canonicity itself and the interplay between the authority of the Bible and the authority of tradition as expressed in the institutional church. Catholics contend that God established the church and that the Church, the Roman Catholic Church, both gave us the Bible and verified its authenticity. Protestants believe that the Scriptures, the writings of the prophets and apostles, are the foundation upon which the church is built and are authenticated by the Holy Spirit, who has been and is active in church congregations and councils.

The books of the Apocrypha considered to be canonical by the Roman Catholic Church are first found in Christian era copies

of the Greek Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. According to Old Testament authority F. F. Bruce, Hebrew scholars in Alexandria, Egypt, began translating the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek around 250 B.C. because the Jews in that region had given up the Hebrew language for Greek.{1} The resulting translation is called the Septuagint (or LXX) because of legend that claims that seventy Hebrew scholars finished their work in seventy days, indicating its divine origins.

The books or writings from the Apocrypha that the Roman Catholic Church claims are inspired are Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Letter of Jeremiah, additions to Esther, Prayer of Azariah, Susanna (Daniel 13), and Bel and the Dragon (Daniel 14). Three other Apocryphal books in the Septuagint, the Prayer of Manasseh, and 1 & 2 Esdras, are not considered to be inspired or canonical by the Roman Catholic Church.

This disagreement over the canonicity of the Apocryphal books is significant if only for the size of the material being debated. By including it with the Old Testament one adds 152,185 words to the King James Bible. Considering that the King James New Testament has 181,253 words, one can see how including the books would greatly increase the influence of pre-Christian Jewish life and thought.

This issue is important for two other reasons as well. First, there are specific doctrines that are held by the Roman Catholic Church which are supported by the Apocryphal books. The selling of indulgences for forgiveness of sins and purgatory are two examples. Secondly, the issue of canonicity itself is reflected in the debate. Does the church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, recognize what is already canonical, or does the church make a text canonical by its declarations?

As believers who have called upon the saving work of Jesus

Christ as our only hope for salvation, we all want to know what is from God and what is from man. The remainder of this article will defend the traditional Protestant position against the inclusion of the Apocrypha as inspired canon.

The Jewish Canon

As we are considering the debate over the canonicity of the Old Testament Apocrypha or what has been called the "Septuagint plus," we will first look at evidence that Alexandrian Jews accepted what has been called a wider canon.

As mentioned previously, Jews in Alexandria, Egypt, began translating the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint) hundreds of years before Christ. Because the earliest complete manuscripts we have of this version of the OT includes extra books called the Apocrypha, many believe that these books should be considered part of the OT canon even though they are not found in the Hebrew OT. In effect, some argue that we have two OT canons, the Hebrew canon of twenty-two books, often called the Palestinian canon, and the larger Greek or Alexandrian canon that includes the Apocrypha.

F. F. Bruce states there is no evidence that the Jews (neither Hebrew nor Greek speaking) ever accepted a wider canon than the twenty-two books of the Hebrew OT. He argues that when the Christian community took over the Greek OT they added the Apocrypha to it and "gave some measure of scriptural status to them also."{2}

Gleason Archer makes the point that other Jewish translations of the OT did not include the Apocryphal books. The Targums, the Aramaic translation of the OT, did not include them; neither did the earliest versions of the Syriac translation called the Peshitta. Only one Jewish translation, the Greek (Septuagint), and those translations later derived from it (the Italia, the Coptic, Ethiopic, and later Syriac) contained the Apocrypha.{3}

Even the respected Greek Jewish scholar Philo of Alexandria never quotes from the Apocrypha. One would think that if the Greek Jews had accepted the additional books, they would have used them as part of the canon. Josephus, who used the Septuagint and made references to 1 Esdras and 1 Maccabees writing about 90 A.D. states that the canon was closed in the time of Artaxerxes I whose reign ended in 423 B.C.{4} It is also important to note that Aquila's Greek version of the OT made about 128 A.D., which was adopted by the Alexandrian Jews, did not include the Apocrypha.

Advocates of the Apocrypha argue that it does not matter if the Jews ever accepted the extra books since they rejected Jesus as well. They contend that the only important opinion is that of the early church. However, even the Christian era copies of the Greek Septuagint differ in their selection of included books. The three oldest complete copies we have of the Greek OT include different additional books. Codex Vaticanus (4th century) omits 1 and 2 Maccabees, which is canonical according to the Roman Catholic Church, and includes 1 Esdras, which they reject. Codex Sinaiticus (4th century) leaves out Baruch. which is supposed to be canonical, but includes 4 Maccabees, which they reject. Codex Alexandrinus (5th century) includes three non-canonical Apocryphal books, 1 Esdras and 3 and 4 Maccabees.{5} All of this points to the fact that although these books were included in these early Bibles, this alone does not guarantee their status as canon.

Although some may find it unimportant that the Jews rejected the inspiration and canonicity of the Apocrypha, Paul argues in Romans that the Jews have been entrusted with the "very words of God."{6} And as we will see, the early church was not unanimous regarding the appropriate use of the Apocrypha. But first, let's consider how Jesus and the apostles viewed the Apocrypha.

Jesus and the Apostles

Those who support the canonicity of the Apocrypha argue that both Jesus and his followers were familiar with the Greek OT called the Septuagint. They also argue that when the New Testament writers quote Old Testament passages, they are quoting from the Greek OT. Since the Septuagint included the additional books of the Apocrypha, Jesus and the apostles must have accepted the Apocrypha as inspired scripture. In other words, the acceptance of the Septuagint indicates acceptance of the Apocrypha as well. Finally, they contend that the New Testament is full of references to material found in the Apocrypha, further establishing its canonicity. A number of objections have been raised to these arguments.

First, the claim that the Septuagint of apostolic times included the Apocrypha is not certain. As we noted previously, the earliest manuscripts we have of the entire Septuagint are from the 4th century. If Jesus used the Septuagint, it may or may not have included the extra books. Also remember that although the 4th century copies do include the Apocryphal books, none include the same list of books. Second, F. F. Bruce argues that instead of using the Septuagint, which was probably available at the time, Jesus and his disciples actually used the Hebrew text during His ministry. Bruce writes, "When Jesus was about to read the second lesson in the Nazareth synagogue . . . it was most probably a Hebrew scroll that he received."{7} It was later, as the early church formed and the gospel was carried to the Greek-speaking world, that the Septuagint became the text often used by the growing church.

Bruce agrees that all the writers of the New Testament made use of the Septuagint. However, none of them gives us an exact list of what the canonical books are. While it is possible that New Testament writers like Paul allude to works in the Apocrypha, that alone does not give those works scriptural

status. The problem for those advocating a wider canon is that the New Testament writers allude to, or even quote many works that no one claims to be inspired. For instance, Paul may be thinking of the book of Wisdom when he wrote the first few chapters of Romans. But what of the much clearer reference in Jude 14 to 1 Enoch 1:9, which no one claims to be inspired? How about the possible use of a work called the *Assumption of Moses* that appears to be referenced in Jude 9? Should this work also be part of the canon? Then there is Paul's occasional use of Greek authors to make a point. In Acts 17 Paul quotes line five from Aratus' *Phaenomena*, and in 1 Corinthians he quotes from Menander's comedy, *Thais*. No one claims that these works are inspired.

Recognizing the fact that the Septuagint was probably available to both Jesus and his disciples, it becomes even more remarkable that there are no direct quotes from any of the Apocryphal books being championed for canonicity. Jesus makes clear reference to all but four Old Testament books from the Hebrew canon, but he never directly refers to the apocryphal books.

The Church Fathers

Those who support the canonicity of the Apocrypha argue that the early church Fathers accepted the books as Scripture. In reality, their support is anything but unanimous. Although many of the church Fathers held the books in high esteem, they often refused to include them in their list of inspired books.

In the Eastern Church, the home of the Septuagint, one would expect to find unanimous support for the canonicity of the "Septuagint plus," the Greek OT and the Apocrypha among the early Fathers. However, such is not the case. Although the well-known Justin Martyr rejected the Hebrew OT, accusing it of attempting to hide references to Christ, many others in the East accepted the Hebrew canon's shorter list of authoritative books. Melito of Sardis, the Bishop of Sardis in 170 A.D.,

listed the OT books in a letter to a friend. His list was identical to the Hebrew canon except for Esther. Another manuscript, written about the same time as Melito's by the Greek patriarchate in Jerusalem, listed the twenty- four (see footnote on how the books were counted) books of the Hebrew OT as the canon.{8}

Origen, who is considered to be the greatest Bible scholar among the Greek Fathers, limited the accepted OT scriptures to the twenty-four books of the Hebrew canon. Although he defends the use of such books as the History of Susanna, he rejects their canonicity. Both Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus limited the OT canon to the books of the Hebrew tradition. Athanasius, the defender of the Trinitarian view at the Council of Nicea, wrote in his thirty-ninth festal letter (which announced the date of Easter in 367) of his concern about the introduction of "apocryphal" works into the list of holy scripture. Although he agreed that there are other books "to be read to those who are recent converts to our company and wish to be instructed in the word of true religion," his list of OT agrees with the Hebrew canon. Gregory of Nazianzus is known for arranging the books of the Bible in verse form for memorization. He did not include the "Septuagint plus" books in his list. Eventually, in the 1600's, the Eastern Church did officially accept the Septuagint with its extra books as canon, along with its claim that the Septuagint is the divinely inspired version of the OT.

In the Latin West, Tertullian was typical of church leaders up until Jerome. Tertullian accepted the entire "Septuagint plus" as canon and was willing to open the list even wider. He wanted to include 1 Enoch because of its mention in Jude. He also argued for the divine nature of the *Sibylline Oracles* as a parallel revelation to the Bible.{9}

However, Jerome is a pivotal person for understanding the relationship between the early church and the OT canon. Having mastered both Greek and eventually Hebrew, Jerome realized

that the only satisfactory way to translate the OT is to abandon the Septuagint and work from the original Hebrew. Eventually, he separated the Apocryphal books from the rest of the Hebrew OT saying that "Whatever falls outside these (Hebrew texts) . . . are not in the canon."{10} He added that the books may be read for edification, but not for ecclesiastical dogmas.

Although Augustine included the "Septuagint plus" books in his list of the canon, he didn't know Hebrew. Jerome later convinced him of the inspired nature of the Hebrew OT, but Augustine never dropped his support for the Apocrypha. The early church Fathers were anything but unanimous in their support for the inspiration of the Apocrypha.

The Question of Canonicity

The relationship between the church and the Bible is a complex one. The question of canonicity is often framed in an either/or setting. Either the infallible Roman Catholic Church, having absolute authority, decides the issue, or we have absolute chaos with no possible guidance whatsoever regarding the limits of what is inspired and what isn't.

In a recent meeting of Catholics, Protestants, and Eastern Orthodox theologians called the Rose Hill conference, evangelical theologian Harold O. J. Brown asks that we hold a dynamic view of this relationship between the church and the Bible. He notes that Catholics have argued "that the church—the Catholic Church—gave us the Bible and that church authority authenticates it."{11} Protestants have responded with the view that "Scripture creates the church, which is built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles."{12} However, he admits that there is no way to make the New Testament older than the church. Does this leave us then bowing to church authority only? Brown doesn't think so. He writes, "[I]t is the work of the Spirit that makes the Scripture divinely authoritative and preserves them from

error. In addition the Holy Spirit was active in the early congregations and councils, enabling them to recognize the right Scriptures as God's Word." He adds that even though the completed canon is younger than the church, it is not in captivity to the church. Instead, "it is the 'norm that norms' the church's teaching and life."{13}

Many Catholics argue that the additional books found in the Apocrypha (Septuagint plus) which they call the deutero-canon, were universally held by the early church to be canonical. This is a considerable overstatement. However, Protestants have acted as if these books never existed or played any role whatsoever in the early church. This too is an extreme position. Although many of the early church fathers recognized a distinction between the Apocryphal books and inspired Scripture, they universally held them in high regard. Protestants who are serious students of their faith cannot ignore this material if they hope to understand the early church or the thinking of its earliest theologians.

On the issue of canonicity, of the Old Testament or the New, Norman Geisler lists the principles that outline the Protestant perspective. Put in the form of a series of questions he asks, "Was the book written by a spokesperson for God, who was confirmed by an act of God, who told the truth in the power of God, and was accepted by the people of God?"{14} If these can be answered in the affirmative, especially the first question, the book was usually immediately recognized as inspired and included in the canon. The Old Testament Apocrypha lacks many of these characteristics. None of the books claim to be written by a prophet and Maccabees specifically denies being prophetic.{15} Others contain extensive factual errors.{16} Most importantly, many in the early church including Melito of Sardis, Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Jerome rejected the canonicity of the Apocrypha, although retaining high regards for its devotional and inspirational value.

A final irony in this matter is the fact that even Cardinal Cajetan, who opposed Luther at Augsburg in 1518, published a *Commentary on All the Authentic Historical Books of the Old Testament* (1532) in which he did not include the Apocrypha.{17}

Notes

1. F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 43.
2. Ibid., 45.
3. Gleason L Archer., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1974), 73.
4. Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p 99.
5. Archer, 73.
6. Romans 3:2 (NIV)
7. Bruce, 49.
8. Ibid., 72. Ezra and Nehemiah were often combined into one book, as were Lamentations and Jeremiah and the twelve minor prophets.
9. Ibid., 87.
10. Ibid., 90.
11. Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture With The Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 187.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1999) 85.
15. Ibid., 32.
16. Unger, 109-111.
17. Geisler, 31

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“Where Are the Rest of Jesus’ Teachings?”

I have been searching for text/documents/anything that Jesus taught. He had over three years of anointed ministry, and only a few lines in the Gospels are recorded. Where is the rest of His teachings? I doubt that He wrote them down to a great extent, but surely some of his followers wrote down His teachings.

It’s great to hear about your excitement for the teachings of Jesus! May the Lord increase your tribe!

There is, unfortunately, a lot of nonsense written about Jesus—both at the scholarly and popular level (though doubtless more at the popular level). The fact of the matter is that the earliest and best historical evidence concerning Jesus and his teachings is to be found in the New Testament. Nothing else even comes close.

Of course, Jesus is mentioned in some ancient non-Christian sources. I have written a brief article about it here: probe.org/ancient-evidence-for-jesus-from-non-christian-sources-2/

Additionally, the Gospel of Thomas appears to contain some of Jesus’ actual sayings. According to New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman, probably about 1/3 of this gospel contains actual sayings of Jesus (or something close), about 1/3 of the sayings are full-blown Gnosticism (espousing things that Jesus never taught), and the final 1/3 are somewhere in between these two.

But here’s the thing. The Gospel of Thomas is an early second

century production. The other apocryphal and pseudepigraphical gospels are later still. By contrast, all of the New Testament documents (including the four gospels) are first century productions. So bottom line: if you want to know what Jesus really taught, you need to read the New Testament (and the NT gospels in particular). Indeed, the reason scholars think that some of the sayings in the Gospel of Thomas are probably authentic sayings of Jesus is because they are consistent with sayings we find in the New Testament Gospels—the earliest and most historically trustworthy documents we have concerning the life and teachings of Jesus.

A few other books you might enjoy by good, solid, evangelical Jesus scholars:

1. *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels*, by Craig A. Evans: www.amazon.com/Fabricating-Jesus-Scholars-Distort-Gospels/dp/0830833188/

2. *Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss the Real Jesus and Mislead Popular Culture*, by Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace: www.amazon.com/Reinventing-Jesus-J-Ed-Komoszewski/dp/082542982X/

3. *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*, by Gary R. Habermas: www.amazon.com/Historical-Jesus-Ancient-Evidence-Christ/dp/0899007325/

May the Lord greatly bless you in your studies!

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

Posted April 27, 2017
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Christian Worldview Links

Here are some other sites that we suggest are worth checking out.

Worldview Academy

Worldview Academy is a non-denominational ministry committed to training students and parents to think and live in accord with the Christian worldview. They pursue this mission via three primary programs: WVA Leadership Camps, week-long camps that train and equip students 13 and older; "Mere Christianity" Worldview Weekends, providing the same basic education for adults and teens at host churches nation-wide; and educational resources.

Worldview Matters

Which Way Does Your Worldview Compass Point? Like a compass pointing north, a worldview provides the bearings a person needs for determining which direction to take when any issue is faced. The only problem is, not every worldview points north. "Think Again!" is a multi-media, interactive workshop that clarifies the latitude and longitute lines of a biblically based worldview.

Christian Information Ministries

Bill Crouse and Russ Wise are former Probe staff members who have written prodigiously on a number of current issues from a Christian perspective. Bill also offers the Rapid Response Report, an analysis of important issues in our culture today that you can read online or receive by e-mail:

www.rapidresponsereport.com

Leadership University

LU has an awesome amount of information on a wide variety of topics of interest to high school and college students. This is a terrific resource for those seeking a Christian perspective. Note: the website is no longer being updated, but the content is still available. Click here for an alpha listing of articles.

Stand to Reason

Greg Koukl's ministry is building Christian thinkers for the public defense of the faith. This site has articles on abortion, apologetics, ethics, evolution, homosexuality, philosophy, life, science, social issues, and theology.

Spiritual Counterfeits Project

For years, SCP has been providing in-depth Christian perspective on the enemy's deceptions and schemes in arenas ranging from near-death experiences to virtual reality to the latest New Age trends.

Access Research Network

Visit this site for a responsible, Christian perspective on science, technology and society. The folks at ARN have been friends of Probe for a long time.

Vital Signs Ministries

Vital Signs Ministries is a Christ-centered pro-life agency, created to help tell the truth about abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, chastity and other life issues. They are a group of Christians who genuinely desire to obey God's commands to

seek justice for those threatened by the death ethic which now rampages through our culture.

The Things That Matter Most (and I-Tunes)

Airing on major talk radio stations in Houston and Dallas, this program explores what we believe and why we believe it with guests as diverse as theologian R.C. Sproul and atheist Sam Harris. Each week hosts (longtime worldview friend of Probe) Lael Arrington and Rick Davis explore scholarly evidence and fascinating personal stories about God and eternity, reason and faith, purpose and meaning with both skeptics and true believers. Select Listen to shows to download archived programs on Christianity.

Bible Study Tools

BibleStudyTools.com is the largest free online Bible website for verse search and in-depth studies. You can create personalized Bible Studies with the ability to highlight Scripture, save notes in the margin and search and compare 31 versions side by side on a split-panel screen, all for free. Includes: Over 30 different Bible translations; Bible translations in Spanish, French, German, Italian and Dutch; Apocrypha books in different versions; Bible Commentaries including Matthew Henry, Scofield and Wesley; Concordances from Nave, Strong, Torrey and others; Popular dictionaries of the Bible including Baker's Evangelical, Easton's, and Smith's; Biblical Encyclopedias; Church history writings like Fox's Book of Martyrs and those of Flavius Josephus; Greek and Hebrew Lexicons; Bible Maps and guides for bible study.

Kerby Anderson Recommends. . .

Abortion Facts [http://www.abortionfacts.com]

Wallbuilders [http://www.walbuilders.com]

Town Hall [http://www.townhall.com/]

Heritage Foundation [http://www.heritage.org/]

National Review [http://www.townhall.com/]

Freedom Works [http://www.freedomworks.org/]

Media Research Center [http://www.mrc.org/]

One News Now [http://www.onenewsnow.com/]

Family Research Council [http://www.frc.org/]

American Family Association [http://www.afa.net/]

National Right to Life [http://www.nrlc.org/]

Christian Coalition [http://www.cc.org/]

Concerned Women for America [http://www.cwfa.org/]

National Religious Broadcasters [http://nrb.org/]

Moody Bible Institute [http://www.moody.edu]

Christian Broadcasting Network [http://www.the700club.org/]

Leadership University [http://www.leaderu.com/]

World Magazine [http://www.worldmag.com]

Traditional Values Coalition [http://www.traditionalvalues.org]

Eagle Forum [http://www.eagleforum.org]

Favorites of Other Probe Staff…

The Biblical Studies Foundation

This is a treasure trove of biblical commentaries, message/sermon illustrations, well-written essays and even

the work-in-progress "NET Bible." Teachers and pastors will find this a tremendous resource for their preparation.

Living Hope Ministries

Living Hope is a discipleship ministry especially for those dealing with unwanted homosexuality and the family and friends of those either struggling with same-sex desires or actively choosing a gay identity. Their mission is to proclaim God's truth as they journey with those seeking sexual and relational wholeness through a more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Since 1989 Living Hope Ministries has provided a safe place for individuals seeking restoration and healing through weekly support group meetings, moderated online support forums, in-depth discipleship programs, and active partnerships with churches around the world. Excellent articles and testimonies, as well as access to the world's largest online support groups that are confidential, anonymous, and safe.

The Medical Institute for Sexual Health

The Medical Institute is a nonprofit medical organization founded in 1992 by gynecologist Joe S. McIlhaney, Jr., M.D., designed to confront the world epidemics of nonmarital pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. The only 100 percent effective way to avoid nonmarital pregnancy and STD infection is to avoid sexual activity outside a mutually faithful lifelong relationship – marriage. The Medical Institute believes there is a new sexual revolution underway – one based on science, built on character and bridged through education.

Bible Prayer Fellowship

This organization exists to "share how you can know God intimately and enjoy the abundant life He gives to those who

seek Him. We want you to be one of our prayer partners. Together let's learn to pray prayers that really transform individuals, families, small groups and churches."

C.S. Lewis Society of California

Good resources for fans of Christian worldview master C.S. Lewis.

Forum of Christian Leaders

The Forum of Christian Leaders online (FOCL) is a web site which presents audio and video recordings of talks by Christian leaders from Europe and America. Recordings come from the annual European Leadership Forum which Rick Wade attended several years, and cover a wide range of topics in such areas as apologetics, discipleship, theology, economics and business, counseling and psychology, education, leadership, and culture and art. The Forum is a place for Christians in leadership positions to interact and support each other, so presenters speak from their own experience in ministry. Presentation formats include answers to specific questions, short talks, workshops, webinars, and longer courses. This is a rich resource!

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Which Way Does Your Worldview Compass Point? Like a compass pointing north, a worldview provides the bearings a person needs for determining which direction to take when any issue is faced. The only problem is, not every worldview points north. "Think Again!" is a multi-media, interactive workshop that clarifies the latitude and longitute lines of a biblically based worldview.

Christian Information Ministries

Bill Crouse and Russ Wise are former Probe staff members who have written prodigiously on a number of current issues from a Christian perspective. Bill also offers the Rapid Response Report, an analysis of important issues in our culture today that you can read online or receive by e-mail: www.rapidresponsereport.com

Leadership University

LU has an awesome amount of information on a wide variety of topics of interest to high school and college students. This is a terrific resource for those seeking a Christian perspective.

Stand to Reason

Greg Koukl's ministry is building Christian thinkers for the public defense of the faith. This site has articles on abortion, apologetics, ethics, evolution, homosexuality, philosophy, life, science, social issues, and theology.

Spiritual Counterfeits Project

For years, SCP has been providing in-depth Christian perspective on the enemy's deceptions and schemes in arenas ranging from near-death experiences to virtual reality to the latest New Age trends.

Access Research Network

Visit this site for a responsible, Christian perspective on science, technology and society. The folks at ARN have been friends of Probe for a long time.

Vital Signs Ministries

Vital Signs Ministries is a Christ-centered pro-life agency, created to help tell the truth about abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, chastity and other life issues. They are a group of Christians who genuinely desire to obey God's commands to seek justice for those threatened by the death ethic which now rampages through our culture.

The Things That Matter Most (and I-Tunes)

Airing on major talk radio stations in Houston and Dallas, this program explores what we believe and why we believe it with guests as diverse as theologian R.C. Sproul and atheist Sam Harris. Each week hosts (longtime worldview friend of Probe) Lael Arrington and Rick Davis explore scholarly evidence and fascinating personal stories about God and

eternity, reason and faith, purpose and meaning with both skeptics and true believers. Select Listen to shows to download archived programs on Christianity:
The Case for the Real Jesus, Lee Strobel;
Islam: Inside the Hajj, Dr. Hesham Hassaballa;
Science and God: The Human Genome Project, Director, Dr. Francis Collins,
How Science Shows that God Does Not Exist, Dr. Victor Stenger (with Dr. Hugh Ross);
Skeptics: The Gospel of Judas, Dr. Bart Ehrman (with Dr. Darrel Bock),
Time mag humor writer, Joel Stein;
Morality: PostSecrets, Frank Warren,
War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning, Chris Hedges;
Religions: Kabbalah, Yehuda Berg,
Escaping Scientology, Karen Pressley;
Origins: What Evolution Can and Can't Do, Dr. Michael Behe;
Health: Why Good Things Happen to Good People, Dr. Stephen Post;
Spiritual Memoirs: Finding God Beyond Harvard, Kelly Monroe Kullberg,
Letting Go of God, Saturday Night Live comedienne Julia Sweeney;
Afterlife: 90 Minutes in Heaven, Don Piper,
Near Death Experiences, Dr. Gary Habermas

Bible Study Tools

BibleStudyTools.com is the largest free online Bible website for verse search and in-depth studies. You can create personalized Bible Studies with the ability to highlight Scripture, save notes in the margin and search and compare 31 versions side by side on a split-panel screen, all for free. Includes: Over 30 different Bible translations; Bible translations in Spanish, French, German, Italian and Dutch; Apocrypha books in different versions; Bible Commentaries including Matthew Henry, Scofield and Wesley; Concordances

from Nave, Strong, Torrey and others; Popular dictionaries of the Bible including Baker's Evangelical, Easton's, and Smith's; Biblical Encyclopedias; Church history writings like Fox's Book of Martyrs and those of Flavius Josephus; Greek and Hebrew Lexicons; Bible Maps and guides for bible study.

Kerby Anderson Recommends. . .

Abortion Facts [http://www.abortionfacts.com]
Wallbuilders [http://www.walbuilders.com]
Town Hall [http://www.townhall.com/]
Heritage Foundation [http://www.heritage.org/]
National Review [http://www.townhall.com/]
Freedom Works [http://www.freedomworks.org/]
Media Research Center [http://www.mrc.org/]
One News Now [http://www.onenewsnow.com/]
Family Research Council [http://www.frc.org/]
American Family Association [http://www.afa.net/]
National Right to Life [http://www.nrlc.org/]
Christian Coalition [http://www.cc.org/]
Concerned Women for America [http://www.cwfa.org/]
National Religious Broadcasters [http://nrb.org/]
Moody Bible Institute [http://www.moody.edu]
Christian Broadcasting Network [http://www.the700club.org/]
Leadership University [http://www.leaderu.com/]
World Magazine [http://www.worldmag.com]
Traditional Values Coalition [http://www.traditionalvalues.org]
Eagle Forum [http://www.eagleforum.org]

Favorites of Other Probe Staff…

The Biblical Studies Foundation

This is a treasure trove of biblical commentaries,

message/sermon illustrations, well-written essays and even the work-in-progress "NET Bible." Teachers and pastors will find this a tremendous resource for their preparation.

Christianity and Homosexuality Home Page

With links to articles by both Exodus International and Homosexuals Anonymous (Christian organizations ministering to those seeking help for their homosexuality), this page is an excellent resource for those seeking to understand this issue that holds suffering people in its grip.

The Medical Institute for Sexual Health

The Medical Institute is a nonprofit medical organization founded in 1992 by gynecologist Joe S. McIlhaney, Jr., M.D., designed to confront the world epidemics of nonmarital pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. The only 100 percent effective way to avoid nonmarital pregnancy and STD infection is to avoid sexual activity outside a mutually faithful lifelong relationship – marriage. The Medical Institute believes there is a new sexual revolution underway – one based on science, built on character and bridged through education.

Bible Prayer Fellowship

This organization exists to "share how you can know God intimately and enjoy the abundant life He gives to those who seek Him. We want you to be one of our prayer partners. Together let's learn to pray prayers that really transform individuals, families, small groups and churches."

C.S. Lewis Society of California

Good resources for fans of Christian worldview master C.S. Lewis.

Forum of Christian Leaders

> *The Forum of Christian Leaders online (FOCL) is a web site which presents audio and video recordings of talks by Christian leaders from Europe and America. Recordings come from the annual European Leadership Forum which Rick Wade attended several years, and cover a wide range of topics in such areas as apologetics, discipleship, theology, economics and business, counseling and psychology, education, leadership, and culture and art. The Forum is a place for Christians in leadership positions to interact and support each other, so presenters speak from their own experience in ministry. Presentation formats include answers to specific questions, short talks, workshops, webinars, and longer courses. This is a rich resource!*

"Did the Church Create the Bible?"

What would you say to a Catholic person who said "the church created the Bible"?

In a very real sense, the person who says this is basically correct. But some qualifications are also needed.

First, the church did not create the Old Testament. These books preceded the church by quite a bit (assuming the church began on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2).

Second, it's important to remember that the New Testament books (like those of the Old Testament) are both a divine and human creation. The books were authored by human beings, but

their writings were superintended by the Holy Spirit (this is the doctrine of inspiration).

Third, it's important to remember that Protestants and Roman Catholics have a slightly different canon of Scripture. That is, Catholics include some books (e.g. the Apocrypha) which Protestants do not include in the canon of Scripture (i.e. authoritative, divinely inspired books).

However, once we make these qualifications, it is evident (I think) that the New Testament was written (and brought into its present canonical form) by the church. These writings weren't written by non-Christians after all, but by believers—who are part of the church. The same would go for the process of canonization. Of course, God was providentially guiding those leaders who ultimately decided which books should (and should not) be part of the New Testament. But the fact remains that this was also a decision of the church.

As a "bare bones" statement, then, I think the person who says this is essentially correct.

Shalom in Christ,
Michael Gleghorn

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"Are There Really Three Archangels in the Bible?"

I guess I was told (and believed) that there were three archangels. In my Sunday School class this past weekend the leader said there is only one, Michael. I see that Michael is the only one explicitly listed in the Bible but I think

Gabriel is inferred as an archangel. What do you say?

Thanks for the question. To start, an archangel is a high ranking or principal angel. There are two archangels mentioned in the Scriptures: Michael and Gabriel. The identification of Michael as an archangel is more explicit, as you mentioned earlier (Jude 1:9) than Gabriel. However, a case for Gabriel can be seen implicitly. Gabriel's Old and New Testament appearances come during great moments of salvation history, confirming his important rank in the celestial order. Michael is mentioned in Daniel 10:13, 10:21, 12:1, Jude 1:9, and Revelation 12:7. Gabriel is mentioned in Daniel 8:15-19, 9:21-23, Luke 1:19, and Luke 1:26.

The reason why you might have been taught that there were three archangels is that in the Roman Catholic tradition, they include the archangel Rafael. The mention of Rafael comes from the apocryphal writing, the Book of Tobias. Apocryphal writings are considered useful and beneficial by Protestants, but not canonical due to their late dates of inscription.

I hope this helps.

Nathan Townsie

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Jesus in the Qur'an – Muslims Receive a False View

Dr. Zukeran clearly lays out the differences between a biblical view of Jesus and the view brought forth in the Qura'n. He makes a strong case that the biblical reports are supported by historical fact while the Muslim writings were

created to strengthen their case. Looking at the birth, the life and the death of Christ he highlights the distinct differences and the case for a Christian view over an Islamic view.

The Debate

Islam and Christianity both recognize Jesus as a significant historical figure. However, they teach contrary doctrines regarding the nature and person of Jesus Christ. Christians have taught from the beginning that Jesus is the divine Son of God. This was not a doctrine invented centuries after the life of Christ as some allege, but was taught from the beginning by Christ Himself and the church. There is strong evidence that the New Testament was written in the first century, and there are numerous verses proclaiming the deity of Christ (Matt. 1:23; Mark 2:1-12; John 1:1). Old Testament prophecies regarding the nature of the Messiah proclaimed that He would be human as well as divine (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6). Even non-Christian Roman historical works, such as the writings of Pliny the Younger (AD 112) and Celsus (AD 177), acknowledge that the Christians worshipped Christ as God.

 Muslims reject the biblical teaching that Christ is the divine Son of God. Islam builds upon the teachings of the Qur'an, which is considered perfect and without error. The Qur'an teaches that Jesus was a significant prophet but not the divine Son of God. Muslims reject the doctrine of the Trinity, and, therefore, worshipping Jesus as God is considered *shirk,* or blasphemy (Sura 5:72).

Islam teaches that Jesus Himself never claimed to be the Son of God. Sura 9:30 states,"The Jews call Ezra a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. God's curse be upon them: how they are deluded away from the truth!" The assertion that God

stands against those who believe in the deity of Christ is in contradiction with the Bible. Sura 5:116-117 states:

> *And behold! God will say [i.e. on the Day of Judgment]: "Oh Jesus, the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of God?" He will say: "Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, You would indeed have known it. You know what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Yours. For You know in full all that is hidden. Never did I say to them anything except what You commanded me to say: 'Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.' And I was a witness over them while I lived among them. When You took me up, You were the Watcher over them, and You are a witness to all things."*

Chapter five of the Qur'an asserts that Christianity taught the worship of Mary as a god. From this passage and others, many Muslims have incorrectly concluded that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is the Father, the Son, and Mary. In fact, the New Testament never taught the worship of Mary. Instead it clearly taught that one must worship the Lord God alone (Matt. 4:10). The biblical doctrine of the Trinity never included Mary. The chapter further states that Jesus Himself clearly denied claiming to be the Son of God and would not accept the worship of others. In contrast, the Bible teaches that Jesus claimed to be the divine Son of God and received worship (Jn. 8; Matt. 14:33; 28:17). Sura 5:75 states:

> *Christ, the son of Mary, was no more than a messenger; many were the messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food. See how God makes His signs clear to them; yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the truth!*

The Qur'an emphatically teaches that Jesus was a prophet and not the divine Son of God. Those who believe Jesus is divine

are “deluded.”

The Apostle John, writing in AD 90, states in chapter one of his gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The Apostle Paul, writing his letter to the Colossians in AD 60, states in chapter 2:9, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.”

It is apparent that Christianity and Islam teach contrary views of Christ and, therefore, cannot both be true at the same time. In this article I will investigate what the Qur’an teaches regarding the life of Christ and compare it with the Gospels. Since they teach contrary views, I will examine to see whether the Bible or the Qur’an has the greater weight of evidence to support its teachings on the nature of Christ.

Infancy Narratives of Christ in the Qur’an

What does the Qur’an teach regarding the childhood years of Christ? Not only do the Bible and the Qur’an teach contrary views regarding the nature of Christ, they also record contrary accounts of His early life. The Bible teaches that Jesus was born in Bethlehem during the time of Caesar Augustus and the reign of King Herod over Bethlehem. Jesus was born in a stable because there were no rooms available for Mary and Joseph. On the eve of His birth, shepherds, who were told of his birth by angels, visited him. Later, wise men from the East came and worshipped the child. Herod, threatened by the announcement of a newborn king, sought to kill the child. Joseph fled from Herod, traveled to Egypt, and, after Herod’s death, returned to Nazareth where Jesus grew up. The Gospels rely on eyewitness accounts for their source of information.

The Qur’an includes stories regarding the birth and childhood of Christ, but it relies on very questionable sources that are not eyewitness accounts. First, the Qur’an teaches that Jesus

was born in the desert under a palm tree. Sura 19 teaches that Mary, feeling the pangs of childbirth, seized the trunk of a palm tree and desired at that moment to die. However, the baby Jesus speaks to her from beneath saying, "Grieve not; for your Lord has provided a rivulet beneath you. And shake towards yourself the trunk of the palm tree: it will let fall fresh ripe dates upon you. So eat drink and cool [your] eye" (Sura 19: 24-25).

This story parallels an account from the apocryphal *Gospel of Pseudo Matthew*, which is dated to the early seventh century AD (between AD 600 and 625).{1} New Testament scholar Dan Wallace dates this Gospel even later to the eighth to ninth century AD.{2} Wallace's date would push back the date of the Qur'an to several generations after Muhammad. In chapter 20 of this apocryphal work, Joseph and Mary are fleeing to Egypt and come to rest under a tall palm tree. Mary longs to eat the fruit of a palm tree and Joseph states their need for water. It is then the infant Jesus speaks to the palm tree:

> *Then the child Jesus, with a joyful countenance, reposing in the bosom of His mother, said to the palm: "O tree, bend thy branches, and refresh my mother with thy fruit." And immediately at these words the palm bent its top down to the very feet of the blessed Mary; and they gathered from it fruit, with which they were all refreshed. And after they had gathered all its fruit, it remained bent down, waiting the order to rise from Him who bad commanded it to stoop. Then Jesus said to it: "Raise thyself, O palm tree, and be strong, and be the companion of my trees, which are in the paradise of my Father; and open from thy roots a vein of water which has been hid in the earth, and let the waters flow, so that we may be satisfied from thee." And it rose up immediately, and at its root there began to come forth a spring of water exceedingly clear and cool and sparkling. And when they saw the spring of water, they rejoiced with great joy, and were satisfied, themselves and all their cattle and their beasts.*

> *Wherefore they gave thanks to God.*

Historians and textual scholars such as F. F. Bruce have concluded that Muhammad incorporated this story from the apocryphal *Gospel of Pseudo Matthew*.{3}

Another infant narrative from the Qur'an teaches that not long after Jesus' birth, Mary presents the infant to her people, several of whom question her regarding the baby. In her defense she points to the infant, which confuses the people since the child is only an infant. Then to everyone's surprise, the newborn Jesus speaks saying:

> *I am indeed a servant of Allah, He has given me revelation and made me a Prophet; And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live. [He] has made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable; So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life [again]. Such was (Prophet) Jesus, the son of Mary. A saying of truth, concerning what they doubt (Sura 19:30-33).*

This account teaches that shortly after his birth, Jesus spoke, proclaiming His calling as the prophet of Allah, and defending the innocence of His mother Mary. The source of this story is another pseudo-gospel, the *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Savior*.{4} According to Wallace, this apocryphal work was written in the fifth or sixth century AD.{5} This work states:

> *We have found it recorded in the book of Josephus the Chief Priest, who was in the time of Christ (and men say that he was Caiaphas), that this man said that Jesus spake when He was in the cradle, and said to Mary His Mother, "Verily I am Jesus, the Son of God, the Word which thou hast borne, according as the angel Gabriel gave thee the good news; and*

> *My Father hath sent Me for the salvation of the world."*

Here we see the parallels between the Qur'an and this apocryphal work. This work specifically mentions the infant Jesus speaking from his cradle, declaring His calling from God.

A third account in the Qur'an records Jesus making birds out of clay and then bringing them to life. Sura 3:49 states:

> *I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it and it becomes a bird by Allah's leave: And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead by Allah's leave; and I declare to you what you eat and what you store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you, if you did believe.*

This story of Christ breathing life into clay birds has no parallel in the Gospels. Instead, this story comes from another apocryphal work, *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. Historical evidence indicates this Gospel was not written by Thomas; moreover, it was not even written in the lifetime of the apostles. The earliest manuscript of this Gospel dates from the sixth century AD., but most scholars date this work in the late second century.{6} New Testament scholar Wilhelm Schneemelcher writes that the author was most likely not Jewish but a Gentile Christian. He asserts the fact that "the author was of gentile Christian origin may be assumed with certainty, since his work betrays no knowledge of things Jewish."{7}

Another account of Jesus in this *Infancy Gospel* reveals a capricious child who inflicts painful revenge several times on those who cross him in a manner he does not like. Fred Lapham states, "[M]any of the stories in the earlier part of the work are morally offensive and indefensible, showing the growing

Jesus to be cruel, callous, and vindictive, and exercising power without regard for the consequences."{8} This account portrays a young Jesus contrary to that in the Gospels. A vengeful and bad-tempered Jesus would be contrary to the description given in Luke which states that he was "filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him" (Lk. 2:40). Also, a child of the character portrayed in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* would not likely be described as growing in "wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Lk. 2:52).

There are several concerns regarding the accounts of Christ in the Qur'an. First, the infancy accounts of Christ contradict the Gospels. The Qur'an teaches that Jesus was born in the desert under a palm tree while the New Testament Gospels teach that Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem in a stable (Lk. 2:7). The infancy narratives in the Qur'an teach that Jesus performed miracles in his infancy and childhood. However, John 2:11 states that Jesus' first miracle was performed in Cana of Galilee at the beginning of His ministry. Since the Qur'an and the Bible present contrary accounts of the life of Christ, both cannot be true at the same time.

What Does the Historical Evidence Support?

The historical evidence strongly confirms the New Testament Gospel accounts. First of all, two of these authors—Matthew and John—were eyewitnesses. Meanwhile, Mark and Luke derived their facts from the apostles themselves. There are numerous facts that support this to be the case. The internal evidence, archaeology, manuscript evidence, quotes from the early Church Fathers, and ancient non-Christian historical works affirm the first century date and historical accuracy of the gospels.{9}

Muhammad wrote the Qur'an nearly six centuries after the life of Christ. Unlike the Gospel writers who relied on eyewitness sources, Islam's defense is that the angel Gabriel revealed

the information to Muhammad. However, the parallels to Gnostic apocryphal works reveal that Muhammad's sources came from a mixture of Christian fables and Gnostic works that were prevalent in Arabia at that time.

Muhammad no doubt had interaction with Christians. There were several Christian communities in Arabia, and he would have also met Christian traders traveling in caravans along the trade routes. Also his first wife, Khadija, had a cousin named Waraqa who was a Christian.{10} These Christian and Gnostic "Christian" sources told Muhammad stories from the New Testament and also the fables and apocryphal stories spreading at that time. Since Muhammad was illiterate, he was not able to read and research these sources for himself; instead he relied on second or third hand accounts told to him. As he retold the stories, some of the details were changed due to an incorrect telling, a lapse in memory, or a desire for them to better fit his belief system.

In creating the Qur'an, Muhammad does recount some biblical stories, but he also relies on apocryphal sources written centuries after the eyewitnesses. These works present a Gnostic refashioning of Christ and have shown to be unhistorical in nature. Since they were not derived from apostolic sources and presented a false view of Christ, they were never considered part of inspired Scripture. The evidence strongly favors the New Testament Gospel accounts over the Qur'an. Since the Qur'an presents stories contrary to the Gospels, its historical accuracy and inspiration comes into question. Also, if Muhammad recorded false stories regarding the infant life of Christ, one must also question his understanding of the nature of Christ as well.

In citing apocryphal works as unreliable, one may fairly question whether the Bible quotes apocryphal works. Indeed, there are occasions where the Bible does quote from uninspired sources. One of the most questioned are Jude's references to the *Assumption of Moses* (Jude 9) and the *Book of Enoch* (Jude

14-15). However, these two references do not present a theological or historical problem since they do not present any teaching contrary to biblical revelation. So, although Jude does quote uninspired sources, there is no reason to reject the inspiration of Jude. Although the *Assumption of Moses* and the *Book of Enoch* are apocryphal works, Jude is referencing portions that are true and consistent with other areas of the Bible. Therefore, this does not affect either the doctrine of inspiration or the integrity of Jude's book.

In contrast, the birth and infancy account of Christ in the Qur'an is problematic since it both contradicts the New Testament Gospels and presents a contrary view regarding the nature of Christ. Therefore, unlike Jude, it is inconsistent with the New Testament, and we must decide whether it is the Qur'an or the Gospels that are in error.

The Life of Christ

The Qur'an speaks on five aspects of Christ's life. The Qur'an teaches that Jesus was a prophet of God but rejects the deity of Christ. However, it does affirm that Christ lived a remarkable life. The Qur'an affirms the virgin birth of Christ (Sura 3:42-47; 19:16-21). The Qur'an affirms the prophetic call of Christ. It also affirms that Christ performed many miracles. The Qur'an affirms that Christ was sinless (Sura 19:16-21). However, it rejects the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ and instead teaches that Christ did not suffer physical death but God raised Him up to heaven (Sura 4:158).

What is significant to realize is that, comparing Jesus to Muhammad in the Qur'an, Jesus performs greater works than Muhammad. First, according to the Qur'an, Christ is born of a virgin while there is nothing miraculous regarding the birth of Muhammad. Second, the Qur'an teaches that Christ accomplished many miracles, but Muhammad does not perform any

in the Qur'an. The Qur'an teaches that true prophets of God are confirmed by miracles. It teaches that previous prophets Moses and Jesus were confirmed as prophets by their miracles (Sura 7:106-8; 116-119; 5:113). However, when the people ask Muhammad to do so, he refuses, stating that the Jews witnessed miracles from the prophets but remained in unbelief (Sura 28:47-51; 17:90-95). If, according to the Qur'an, God confirmed His prophets through miracles, a question remains as to why He would not confirm Muhammad with the same "seal" of the prophets. This certainly was within God's ability to accomplish.

Contemporary Muslim author Isma'il Al-Faruqi claims that "Muslims do not claim any miracles for Muhammad. In their view, what proves Muhammad's prophethood is the sublime beauty and greatness of the revelation itself, the Holy Qur'an, not any inexplicable breaches of natural law which confound human reason."{11} Muslim scholar Abdullah Yusuf Ali admitted that Muhammad did not perform any miracle "in the sense of a reversing of Nature."{12}

Muslim apologists point to the miracle accounts of Muhammad in the *Hadith*, a record of the sayings of Muhammad. However, the Qur'an is the inspired book of God, and the *Hadith* does not carry the authority of the Qur'an. The *Hadith* was written nearly one to two centuries after the life of Muhammad. Since this follows the pattern historians such as A.N. Sherwin-White have identified of miracle accounts that appear two generations after the lifetime of the eyewitnesses, the alleged miracle accounts in the *Hadith* stand in question. Moreover, the *Hadith* accounts seem to also go against the spirit of Muhammad in the Qur'an who repeatedly refused to perform miracles (3:181–84; 4:153; 6:8–9). It is also significant to note that many Muslim scholars such as Sahih Bukhari, who is considered to be the most reliable collector of the sayings in the *Hadith,* believed the vast majority of the miracle stories to be false.{13}

When pressed to defend the miracles of Muhammad, some point to Muhammad's night journey in Sura 19 in which he claims to have been transported to Jerusalem and then ascended to heaven on the back of a mule (Sura 17:1). There is no reason to take this passage as referring to a literal trip to heaven as even many Muslim scholars do not take it as such. The noted translator of the Qur'an, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, comments on this passage, noting that "it opens with the mystic Vision of the Ascension of the Holy Prophet; he is transported from the Sacred Mosque (of Mecca) to the Farthest Mosque (of Jerusalem) at night and shown some of the Signs of God."{14} Even according to one of the earliest Islamic traditions, Muhammad's wife A'isha reported that "the apostle's body remained where it was but God removed his spirit by night."{15} Further, even if this were to be understood as a miracle claim, there is no evidence presented to test its authenticity. Since it lacks testability, it has no apologetic value.{16}

Another miracle is the prophecy of victory at the Battle of Badr (Sura 3:123; 8:17). However, it is a stretch to call this a supernatural miracle. It is common that generals will predict victory over an enemy army to inspire his troops. Also, Muhammad did not prophesy his defeat at the Battle of Uhud a year later.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam teach that God confirms His messengers through miracles. The Old Testament prophets, Jesus, and the apostles have the testimony of miracles but this is lacking in the testimony of Muhammad. The miracle testimony of Christ affirms that He was more than a prophet.

The Resurrection

The Qur'an rejects the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ because Muslims believe that Allah would not allow His prophet to die such a shameful kind of death. The

Qur'an teaches that Jesus did not die on the cross. Sura 4:157-159 states:

> *That they said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God';—But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not:— Nay, God raised him up unto Himself; and God is exalted in power, wise;—And there is none of the people of the Book but must believe in him before his death; And on the Day of Judgment He will be a witness against them.*

Muslims believe that Jesus did not die on the cross but escaped death and was taken up to heaven. The phrase "God raised him up unto Himself" is understood to teach that Jesus was taken up alive to heaven, never experiencing death. Based on the phrase, "it was made to appear to them," orthodox Muslims have traditionally interpreted this to mean that God made someone else look like Jesus, and this person was crucified instead of Christ. There are various views regarding the identity of this substitute. Candidates include Judas, Simon of Cyrene, or a teen age boy.

The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus predicted His death and resurrection (Matt. 26:2; Mk. 10:33; 14:8; Jn. 2:19). The Bible records the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ, which is central to the preaching of the apostles and to Christianity. The Qur'an and the Gospels cannot be true at the same time since they present contradictory accounts. One must examine the historical evidence and determine which account the evidence supports.

There is strong evidence to support the historicity of the Gospels and the fact that they were written by first century eyewitnesses or their close associates.{17} We also have

thousands of ancient manuscripts dated as early as the beginning of the second century, confirming that the Gospels have been accurately preserved.{18} There are also several non-Christian Roman and Jewish historical works that affirm both the death of Christ and that Christians believed He had risen from the dead. These include the writings of Tacitus, Thallus, Lucian, Josephus, and the Jewish Talmud.{19} Finally, the preaching of the death and resurrection of Christ began just days after His death on the cross, and has been continuously preached since then for over two thousand years. This account was proclaimed from the beginning, not generations after the resurrection.

The Qur'an's account is not built on historical evidence but rather a commitment to Muslim theology. There is little historical evidence to support the Qur'an in its denial of the crucifixion and resurrection and its assertion that someone else took Jesus' place on the cross. To support their view, Muslims often appeal to the "Lost Gospels." These are the Gnostic Gospels such as the *Gospel of Judas* and others. However, these have proven to be non-apostolic works, written centuries after the life of the apostles. They are not regarded as historically accurate and were written by Gnostics attempting to refashion Jesus in their image.{20}

The death and resurrection of Christ is one of the most reliably recorded events in ancient history. The historical evidence strongly favors the Gospel account. Therefore, the Qur'an would be in error, and its inspiration must, therefore, be questioned.

Conclusion

As we have studied, the Qur'an and the Bible present contrary views on the nature and life of Christ. The Qur'an rejects the deity of Christ and the death and resurrection of Christ. The Qur'an presents stories regarding the infancy of Christ that

are contrary to the New Testament and rely on Gnostic apocryphal works as its source. The Qur'an rejects major doctrines and events recorded in the Bible. Since the historical evidence upholds the Gospels, the perfection and inspiration of the Qur'an is in question since its teachings contradict major doctrines and events taught in the New Testament.

That being said, from a survey of the Qur'an, one should realize that even in the Qur'an, Jesus is greater than Muhammad. First, Jesus' titles in the Qur'an are greater. Despite rejecting the deity of Christ, the Qur'an gives Jesus several honorary titles. He is given the titles of Messiah, the Word of God, the Spirit of God (Sura 4:169-71), the Speech of Truth (Sura 19:34-35), a Sign unto Men, and Mercy from God (Sura 19:21). Although these titles may refer to deity in Christian theology, Muslims do not equate these titles in the same way.

Second, Jesus' miracles in the Qur'an are greater, for the Qur'an affirms several miraculous aspects of Christ's life. The Qur'an affirms the virgin birth of Christ (Sura 19:16-21; 3:37-45). The Qur'an also affirms that Christ performed miracles (Sura 3:37-45; 43: 63-65). The Qur'an also affirms the prophethood of Christ (19:29-31). The Qur'an also affirms that Christ did not die but was raised up to heaven by God (4:158; 19:33). In contrast, according to the Qur'an, there is very little, if anything, supernatural regarding the life of Muhammad.

Even in the Qur'an, Jesus lived a life that is much more extraordinary than Muhammad. Since this is evident in the Qur'an, it would be wise for all Muslims to study the life of Jesus in the Bible. Not only is the Bible an accurate historical record, but it is a text that Muhammad encouraged Muslims to study (Sura 10:94; 2:136; 4:163; 5:56; 5:68; 35:31). Muhammad believed the Bible in the sixth century AD was accurate. We have many ancient New Testaments that predate

the sixth century. Examples include the Chester Beatty Papyri (AD 250), Codex Vaticanus (AD 325 – 350), Codex Sinaiticus (AD 340), Codex Alexandrinus (AD 450), the Latin Vulgate (fourth century AD), and Syriac New Testament (AD 508). From these we can be assured that we have accurate copies of the New Testament that predate the sixth century.

I encourage all Muslims, therefore, to read the New Testament and learn what it says about Jesus Christ. One will soon discover that He was more than a prophet; He was indeed the unique Son Of God.

Notes

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2. Ed Komoszewski, James Sawyer, and Daniel Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 156.
3. F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), 172-73.
4. St. Clair Tisdall, *The Original Sources of the Qur'an* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1905), ch. 4, section 3.
5. Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus*, 156.
6. Ronald Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas* (Santa Rosa, CA.: Polebridge Press, 1995), 91-92.
7. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 442.
8. Fred Lapham, *An Introduction to the New Testament Apocrypha* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 130.
9. See Patrick Zukeran, "The Historical Reliability of the Gospels," Probe Ministries, 2004, probe.org/historical-reliability-of-the-gospels
10. Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1967), 83.
11. Isma'il Al-Faruqi, *Islam* (Niles, IL: Argus Communications, 1984), 20, quoted in Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb,

Answering Islam : The Crescent in Light of the Cross, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 105.
12. Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam : The Crescent in Light of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 167.
13. Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, 169.
14. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "Introduction to Sura XVII," in *Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* (Cairo, Egypt: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Masri, n.d.) 691.
15. Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, 183.
16. Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, 2nd ed., 164.
17. Zukeran, "The Historical Reliability of the Gospels."
18. Ibid.
19. Patrick Zukeran, "Jesus in Ancient Non-Christian Sources," Evidence and Answers, bit.ly/18XCiME
20. Patrick Zukeran. "Discerning Fact from Fiction in *The Da Vinci Code*," Evidence and Answers, evidenceandanswers.org/articles/DaVinciCodeA1.pdf

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