

Suggestions for the Book *From God to Us* (2013 edition)

By Steve Morrison May. 9, 2020

For learning about how God gave us His precious word, the Bible, *From God to Us* is a great book I heartily recommend to seminary students, Bible college students, and to Christians in general. It has both breadth of covering the entire topic, and depth of the details, while remaining a very readable and endearing book. However, when writing about so much, it is inevitable that fallible people can make some mistakes. Here are what I believe are mistakes I have found. If you read the book, and correct for these mistakes, then I believe you will have a great resource that will not be misleading. My motivation for writing this was so that students would not be taught important but false information that was on pages 138 and 217. I am fond of the book, but teaching truth is more important than a book. In my experience in apologetics, you will find situations where you can choose to be a) more persuasive, or b) more truthful. Whenever you find yourself in that situation, always go with option b). Our number one goal is not to convert people to Christ, not to preach the gospel, though those are very important. Our number one goal is to love and obey God, glorifying Him in truth.

p.16 says that Jews and Christians have the same chapter and verse numbering in their Bibles. That is true with one small exception. While Jewish and Christian Bibles have identical content for the Book of Micah, Micah 4:14 in Jewish and Roman Catholic Bibles is Micah 5:1 in Protestant Bibles.

p.61 says that the *Shepherd of Hermas* was written in the Apocalyptic style of Revelation. Since it has little to do with end time events, it is better to say it was written as a vision, like Revelation, but the *Shepherd of Hermas* would not at all be considered apocalyptic literature.

p.61-62 Many of the dates here, such as Clement of Alexandria (ca.150-215 CE), Tertullian (ca.160-220 CE) are not dates of when they wrote but when they lived. We actually have no information on when Clement of Alexandria was born, but these dates are as good as we know, though it does not really matter when he was born. But it might be more helpful to know when he wrote, which was from about 193-215/217/220 CE. Likewise, we don't know if Tertullian was born 150 or 170 CE. But he wrote from about 198-220 CE.

p.75 "Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Hinduism are non-theistic religions, and in a non-theistic world no miracles are possible." It is better to understand that some Buddhists and Hindus have taught miracles. Hinduism can be considered a loose collection of different religions, and in the types of Hinduism that most Hindus believe, they think their gods and goddesses did many miracles. Likewise, Mahayana Buddhists think that their Bodhisattvas could do miraculous things.

p.129 (expansion) What is said here is correct as is. However, it is also good to know that someone can mistakenly believe apocryphal books are scripture (like Augustine, Ambrose of Milan, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, the Council of Ephesus, or (inconsistently) Athanasius), and still be a genuine Christian.

p.217 "Five Fathers alone from Irenaeus to Eusebius possess almost 36,000 quotations from the New Testament..." Actually, Eusebius prior to Nicea has about 292 NT quotes and 271 NT allusions.
and also

p.138 Early citations

This is a miscalculation. There are not so many early citations because much of Origen's writing is only available to us through Rufinus' Latin translation. Some of the works where we have both the original Greek language and Rufinus' Latin translation show that Rufinus frequently added his own expansions of phrases and scripture references. Jerome, a good translator, severely chastised Rufinus for his inaccurate translation. Rufinus knew both Latin and Greek well, but he added his own words as Origen's. Also, it is difficult to count verses in Tatian's *Diatessaron*. For example, if Tatian quoted all forty verses in a chapter, split by a quote from a verse in another gospel, do you count that as 2 quotes, 3 quotes, or 41 quotes. In that example, I would count that as only three citations. Looking at just quotes, not just allusions or paraphrases, here is a count of New Testament citations.

Date of writing	Quotes (but not allusions) by author	approx. pages	Gospels	Acts	Paul's Letters	General Epistles	Revelation	Total
96-98	<i>1 Clement</i>	16.25	2	0	3	8	0	13
95-110	Papias	2	1	0	2	0	0	3
c.100-117	Ignatius of Antioch	13	2	0	4	2	0	8
c.60-120	<i>The Didache</i>	4.75	17	0	0	1	0	18
c.70-130	<i>Epistle of Barnabas</i>	12.5	4	0	0	1	0	5
c.120-140	<i>2 Clement</i>	5.75	1	0	3	2	0	6
100-155	Polycarp	3.5	11	0	9	4	0	24
c.130-200	<i>Epistle to Diognetes</i>	5.25	0	0	0	0	0	0
c.115-155	<i>Shepherd of Hermas</i>	46.5	3	0	0	0	0	3
c.138-165	Justin Martyr	116.5	56	1	0	0	0	57
c.172	<i>The Diatessaron</i>	86	1010	0	0	0	0	1010
c.160-202	Irenaeus of Lyons	282.75	368	45	251	18	22	704
193-220	Clement of Alexandria	389.5	366	12	445	60	4	887
198-220	Tertullian	928	557	21	631	25	18	1252
222-236	Hippolytus	218	100	2	52	3	21	178
225-254	Origen	742	768	22	471	63	16	1340
250-257	Novatian	38.5	86	1	41	1	0	129
c.246-258	Cyprian of Carthage	250.5	396	28	263	49	59	795
killed 304	Victorinus of Petau	18.5	19	1	14	0	96	130
c.270-312	Methodius	77.5	17	0	74	1	6	98
318-325	Eusebius before Nicea	1000	143	24	72	46	7	292
95-325	66 other authors	922.55	232	46	160	82	21	832
95-325 CE	Totals of 87 authors	5179.8	4116	179	2426	316	263	7296

p.217 "Not only did the early Fathers cite all twenty-seven books of the New Testament, they also quoted virtually all of the verses in all of these twenty-seven books." Quoting virtually of the verses is a mistake here. and

p.138 "In fact, within about 200 years after the first century [300 A.D.], not only every book but nearly every verse of the New Testament was cited in one or more of the fathers-over thirty-six thousand citations by the fathers (see chap. 13). Actually, it depends on your definition of "cited". One could argue that if someone mentioned the Parable of the Good Samaritan, they just cited every verse in that parable. If you limit this to just quotes, and count fractions of verses as just fractions of verses, here is what was quoted from each book.

Book of the New Testament	% of book quoted	Verses quoted	Verses not quoted	Total verses	Number of quotes
Matthew	87.3%	935.18	135.82	1071	1806
Mark	78.1%	529.19	148.81	678	412
Luke	84.8%	975.73	175.27	1151	1025
John	96.7%	850.22	28.78	879	944
Acts	20.1%	201.30	801.70	1003	179

Romans	60.0%	259.69	173.31	433	524
1 Corinthians	64.8%	282.97	154.03	437	797
2 Corinthians	42.8%	110.08	146.92	257	221
Galatians	59.9%	89.23	59.77	149	187
Ephesians	66.2%	102.65	52.35	155	212
Philippians	40.8%	42.39	61.61	104	94
Colossians	66.0%	62.66	32.34	95	111
1 Thessalonians	34.9%	31.05	57.95	89	49
2 Thessalonians	49.7%	23.38	23.62	47	44
1 Timothy	51.0%	57.62	55.38	113	114
2 Timothy	36.9%	30.62	52.38	83	51
Titus	31.7%	14.58	31.42	46	22
Philemon	0.0%	0.00	25.00	25	0
Hebrews	46.3%	140.40	162.60	303	117
James	1.9%	2.06	105.94	108	11
1 Peter	40.4%	42.44	62.56	105	70
2 Peter	3.8%	2.29	58.71	61	4
1 John	56.7%	58.92	45.08	104	103
2 John	28.0%	3.64	9.36	13	4
3 John	0.0%	0.00	14.00	14	0
Jude	28.8%	7.19	17.81	25	7
Revelation	56.4%	227.95	176.05	404	263
Total New Testament	63.9%	5083.43	2868.57	7952	7296

Total number of quotes does not add because they sometimes quoted multiple verses together. This is on the web at www.biblequery.org/Bible/BibleCanon/EarlyChristianNTQuotes.xls

p.141 Archelaus' *Disputation with Manes* happened about 262-278 CE as *From God to Us* indicates. However, it was apparently written down by an author named Hegemonius of Sirmium (4th century CE). Hence it is more accurate to place the writing in the 4th century CE. (*mea culpa, this is my error.*)

p.148 "Furthermore, the pseudepigrapha denies the deity of Christ (Arianism)." Then, as if in support of that, it quotes from the Gnostic Gospel of Judas. It is better to understand that the Gospel of Judas does not relate to Arianism. This does not relate the Arianism, and Arianism did not directly deny the deity of Christ. Rather by trying to make Christ if a different substance from the Father, and affirming that Christ was a lesser divine being, they denied that Christ was God in the same way that God the Father was. But Arians would all affirm the deity of Christ, but it was by their own definition. The Council of Nicea was not about whether Jesus was deity, as some Muslims have claimed, but rather how Jesus was deity.

p.150 "*Hebrews*. Since the author does not identify himself and disclaims being one of the apostles (Heb. 2:3), ..." Hebrews 2:3 says, "...which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who hear *Him*," (NKJV) So this shows the author was not one of the eleven apostles, but what about Paul? Paul heard Jesus on the road to Damascus, but it is good to understand that early Christians saw "wriggle room" where Paul could still be included.

p.199 On the chart, "Hysichius" is better spelled as "Hesychius"

p.215 "By this time [in the first half of the second century] almost every book of the New Testament was explicitly cited as scripture. This is a misstatement if just saying "Paul's writings" is not counted as explicit. James and 3 John were never explicitly cited as Scripture until after Nicea. The following were cited as scripture, but not until the Muratorian Canon: John, Acts, 2 Corinthians, Philemon, 1 Peter, 2 John, Jude, 2 Thessalonians (Muratorian Canon, implied by Irenaeus), Hebrews (Irenaeus), 1 Peter (Tertullian). Many of these were in fact cited by the first half of the second century, but not "explicitly cited as scripture". *From God*

to *Us* p.139 says that the Muratorian Canon was 170 CE. That is twenty years after the first half of the second century. Others might date the Muratorian canon from 190 to 217 A.D.

p.241 “If there were a lie in the book regarding its origin or authorship, how could its contents be believed?” This might be correct if the author lied about that but not if someone else erroneously attributed authorship. It could still be a trustworthy book if the claim of authorship was added later. For example, 2 Clement never claimed it was by anyone named Clement. That title was tacked on by others later. Hypothetically speaking, even though we know the names of the gospel writers (through Papias and Ignatius, disciples of the apostle John), if they were written by someone else, that would not discredit the books since they don’t make a claim of who they were written by.

p.251 on the ending of Mark, there are two sides to this argument, as *From God to Us* already says. Here is a little more detail about the other side of the argument. Replace this
“Mark 16:9-20 (KJV) produces one of the most perplexing of all textual problems. These verses are lacking in many of the oldest and best Greek manuscripts, such as (aleph), B, Old Latin manuscript k, the Sinaitic Syriac, many Old Armenian manuscript, and a number of Ethiopic manuscripts. Many of the ancient fathers show no knowledge of it, and Jerome admitted that this portion was omitted from almost all Greek copies. Among the witnesses that have these verses, some also have an asterisk (* or rotated *]), or obelus (-) to indicated that they are a spurious addition to the text. There is also another ending which occurs in several uncials, a few minuscules, and several manuscript copies of ancient versions. The familiar long ending of the KJV and the Received text is found in a vast number of uncial manuscripts (C, D, I, W, and theta), most minuscules, most Old Latin manuscripts, the Latin Vulgate, and in some Syriac and Coptic manuscripts. In Codex W the long ending is expanded after verse 14.”
With this:

Mark 16:9-20 (KJV, NKJV) produces one of the most perplexing of all textual problems. Here is the evidence against it. These verses are lacking in many of the oldest and best Greek manuscripts, such as (aleph), B, Old Latin manuscript k, the Sinaitic Syriac, many Old Armenian manuscript, and a number of Ethiopic manuscripts. Jerome admitted that this portion was omitted from almost all Greek copies. Among the witnesses that have these verses, some also have an asterisk (* or rotated *]), or obelus (-) to indicated that they are a spurious addition to the text. There is also another ending which occurs in several uncials, a few minuscules, and several manuscript copies of ancient versions.

On the other hand, here is the evidence for the familiar long ending of the KJV, NKJV, and the Received text. way before these earliest manuscripts, Irenaeus (182-188 A.D.) quotes from it, Tertullian (190-220 A.D.) alludes to it, and *The Diatessaron* (c.172 A.D.) quotes it. Aphrahat, (c.337 A.D.) writing at the time Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, quotes three verses in full. Vaticanus has a blank space for it, and Sinaiticus in its place, has writing that was pumiced out (erased). With no ending to Mark, Mark would be the only work in all of religious and secular Greek literature that ends with the word for (ῥαπ). The Curetonian Syriac (3rd/4th century) has it. Around the time of the Armenian manuscripts, these writers have it: Victor of Antioch (c.425-450 A.D. has it), Hesychius of Jerusalem (after 450 A.D., and Cyril of Alexandria (444 A.D.) accepts as scripture Nestorius’ quote of it. It is found in a vast number of uncial Bible manuscripts, A (c.450 A.D.), the fifth century manuscripts C, D, I, W, most minuscules, most Old Latin manuscripts, the Latin Vulgate, and in some Syriac and Coptic manuscripts. In Codex W the long ending is expanded after verse 14.

p.243 concerning New Testament variants *From God to Us* says following:

Yet there is an ambiguity in saying 200,000 variants exist, since these represent only about 10,000 places in the New Testament. If a single word were misspelled in 3,000 different manuscripts, they are counted as 3,000 variants. Once the counting procedure is understood, and the mechanical (orthographic) variants have been eliminated, the remaining significant variants are surprisingly few in number. In his recent popular book, *Misquoting Jesus*, agnostic New Testament critic Bart Ehrman contends there are so many “errors” (variants)

that we don't know how many there are, perhaps 4,000. He asserts, "These copies different from each other in so many places that we don't even know how many differences there are." (5)

Ironically, the way Ehrman counts "errors" (variants), there were 1.6 million errors in the first printing of his book. For there were 16 errors, and the book printed an alleged 100,000 copies. (6) Yet Ehrman would be shocked if someone denied the credibility of his book based on this count. Similarly, no one should deny the credibility of the bible on Ehrman's count. Ehrman himself admits the biblical variants do not affect the central message of the Bible. He wrote, 'In fact, most of the changes found in early Christian manuscripts have nothing to do with theology or ideology. Far and away the most changes are the result of mistakes pure and simply-slips of the pen, accidental omissions, inadvertent additions, misspelled, words, blunders of one sort or another.'" (7)

This might have come from Norm Geisler's *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* p.532, which says, "Some have estimated there are about 200,000 of them. First of all, these are not "errors" but variant readings, the vast majority of which are strictly grammatical. Second, these readings are spread throughout more than 5300 manuscripts, so that a variant spelling of one letter of one word in one verse in 2000 manuscripts is counted as 2000 'errors'."

The 200,000 is NOT each variant times the number of manuscripts. There are about 4,800 Greek manuscripts, plus 2,000 Byzantine lectionaries, so let's round that up to 6,800. Even not counting 15,000 to 20,000 manuscripts in other languages. Just 6,800 manuscript s, with just over 29 variants per manuscript is already 200,000. So 200,000 is variants times manuscripts it is in cannot be correct, as Daniel Wallace says in <https://bible.org/article/number-textual-variants-evangelical-miscalculation>

On the other hand, there are only about 137,986 or so word in the entire New Testament, so if each word was a variant, you could not have more than 137,986 variants. So apparently when is spelled four different ways, in at least one manuscript each, that counts as three variants. regardless of how many manuscripts had each spelling. Yo can see https://books.google.com/books?id=HsBnNsgFrAMC&pg=RA1-PT4368&lpg=RA1-PT4368&dq=Bible+how+to+count+200,000+variants&source=bl&ots=yLTffJnEQd&sig=ACfU3U2LKwYmdi_Jj5Mzjn1d1LlozTeoKw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwin6KO5rLHpAhUFA6wKHREVBikQ6AEwBHoEC_AkQAQ#v=onepage&q=Bible%20how%20to%20count%20200%2C000%20variants&f=false for more information on this.