

“How Can We Know Jesus”—Addenda

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The following are things that I didn't have time to address during the sermon. There are three topics: the study of history, the criterion of embarrassment, and the question of whether the Bible is God's Word or not.

On History

The historian does not have direct access to past events. But he or she has access to the “residue” of history, and he or she must there make sense of certain facts. Historians create hypotheses, based on the evidence, and those hypotheses must be tested. According to William Lane Craig, “the historian's hypotheses are to be tested like anyone else's: by their logical consistency and their ability to explain the evidence.”¹ One must provide an explanation of the evidence, and then one can use certain criteria to see if that explanation is probable. After all, this is not observational or experimental science. It is more like forensic science. “The goal of historical knowledge is to obtain probability, not mathematical certainty.”² However, one shouldn't despair that such certainty can't be reached. In life, we use probability to make all kinds of decisions. The same is true in the court of law. “Even in a criminal case, in which the burden of proof is highest, the jury is asked to decide if the accused is guilty—not beyond all doubt, which is impossible—but beyond all reasonable doubt. Similarly, in history we should accept the hypothesis that provides the most probably explanation of the evidence.”³

So, how do we test a hypothesis? Craig summarizes the work of C. Behan McCullagh, who lists seven factors historians typically use to test a hypothesis.⁴ They are:

- 1) The hypothesis, together with other true statements, must imply further statements describing present, observable data.
- 2) The hypothesis must have greater *explanatory scope* (that is, imply a greater variety of observable data) than rival hypotheses.

¹ Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 3rd ed. (Wheat, IL: Crossway, 2008), 232.

² *Ibid.*, 234.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ C. Behan McCullagh, *Justifying Historical Descriptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 19, quoted in Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 233.

- 3) The hypothesis must have greater *explanatory power* (that is, make the observable data more probable) than rival hypotheses.
- 4) The hypothesis must be *more plausible* (that is, be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths, and its negation implied by fewer accepted truths) than rival hypotheses.
- 5) The hypothesis must be *less ad hoc* (that is, include fewer new suppositions about the past not already implied by existing knowledge) than rival hypotheses.
- 6) The hypothesis must be *disconfirmed by fewer accepted beliefs* (that is, when conjoined with accepted truths, imply fewer false statements) than rival hypotheses.
- 7) The hypothesis must so *exceed its rivals* in fulfilling conditions (2)-(6) that there is little chance of a rival hypothesis, after further investigation, exceeding it in meeting these conditions.

These criteria seem rather stringent, but the point is that any given hypothesis must be better than other, rival hypotheses. It must explain more of the data, be more coherent, be more plausible, and have less problematic data going against it than its rivals. In other words, it has to be seen as more probable than any other explanation.

Now, something else must be said. One of the great reasons why certain people cannot accept that the Gospels—along with the rest of the Bible—are historically reliable is an anti-miracle, anti-supernatural philosophical position. If a person doesn't believe that miracles are possible, he or she will rule them out as impossible before even looking at the evidence. If someone doesn't believe God exists, that person will not consider the possibility that Jesus could be God. But our presuppositions, or assumptions, are often wrong, because they are unexamined. How can one disprove the existence of God and miracles? By definition, the God of Christianity is immaterial and invisible. He cannot be detected through sight or touch. By definition, miracles are rare occurrences, ones that don't happen in the controlled environment of a laboratory. Could our assumptions about reality be wrong? N. T. Wright, a British theologian, asks, "How can any scientific enquiry not allow for the possibility that its own worldview might be incorrect?"⁵

The fact is that we all come to the study of history—or science, or theology—with a bias. As Wright says, "There is not, nor can there be, any such thing as a bare chronicle of events without a point of view."⁶ Our point of view is not an all-knowing and all-seeing one. Our bias may cause us to miss some points of data, or not consider certain things because they can't be fit

⁵ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992), 92.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

neatly into our worldview. We all filter reality through some type of lens, which can enhance or distort whatever we're looking at. This is very important when we're talking about history, because "all history involves selection."⁷ Our subjective view of history does not mean there are no objective past events that can be known. But the very fact that we all bring our presuppositions, our biases, and our limited points of view to history should humble us all and make us more cautious. "One learns to suspect people who claim to be the only unbiased voice on their subject; normally this simply means that their agenda is so large that, like a mountain which blots out the sky, they forget that it is there at all."⁸

Wright, like Craig, has something to say about historical method. His presentation is somewhat simpler. He states that a historical hypothesis must include all the data, must create a simple and coherent picture, and must explain other issues in a fruitful way. "In a historical hypothesis the data are of course source materials: in the ancient period this means written documents mainly, but there are also inscriptions, artifacts, archaeological evidence and so forth."⁹ All the data must be included, but the hypothesis should not be needlessly complicated (it shouldn't be *ad hoc*, as Craig stated). However, if one must choose between these two criteria, it is the data that matters. One can form a hypothesis, but if it doesn't explain all the data, then the hypothesis needs to be revised, which may cause us to see more data we hadn't selected, which may cause us to revise our hypothesis, and so on. This gives us some hope regarding our presuppositions: if the evidence doesn't fit our preconceived notions, then maybe it is those notions, not the evidence, that's the problem.

Here is the point of this little discussion of history and hypothesis: one's presuppositions can always say that God cannot possibly exist, or at least that Jesus cannot possibly be God and man, have performed miracles, or risen from the grave. You can cling to those assumptions, and no amount of evidence may change your mind. But what if your presuppositions are wrong? What if the claims of the New Testament are facts, evidence that must be considered? There is no counterevidence that falsifies the claims of the New Testament. We simply don't have contemporary sources that say, "This didn't happen! Jesus' mother wasn't a virgin. He died and stayed dead." They don't exist. And the claims that Paul and the Gospel writers made in the first century were astounding: a man died and rose from the grave on the third day, appeared to

⁷ Ibid., 83.

⁸ Ibid., 85.

⁹ Ibid. 100.

hundreds of eyewitnesses, and then ascended to heaven. Such claims would be repudiated if they weren't true.

Again, you can always demand more evidence or withhold your judgment. You can say things like, "Well, if I saw it all on video, I'd believe it." I wonder if that's true. Would more evidence bring you to trust Jesus? If so, how much would you need? Is it a lack of evidence that keeps you from Jesus, or is it something else?

Given the claims of Christianity—that our eternal destiny lies in the hands of Jesus—we must realize that we shouldn't come to the question of Jesus lightly. We don't come as neutral, objective persons. If the Bible is true, we have everything to gain or everything to lose, depending on how we respond to its message. (The same cannot be said for other historical subjects.) If we are skeptical of the story of Jesus, perhaps we should also be skeptical of our skepticism. Is it that the story of Jesus is unbelievable, or is it that you have other reasons for not wanting to believe it? Perhaps you don't see how the story could have any bearing on your life. You don't think there's a God or an afterlife; when you die, you die, and that's it. But how do you know? Perhaps it's an authority issue: you want to remain the authority over your life, instead of turning over that authority to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Perhaps you are waiting for absolute, mathematical certainty. But you know that juries declare people guilty with less certainty.

At some point, we must come to a decision on Jesus. But let's not make a decision flippantly. Let's dig into the evidence. Let's read the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—to see what they have to say. Let's make a well-informed decision.

The Criterion of Embarrassment

Historians and (often, skeptical) Bible scholars use various criteria to determine if a particular piece of writing is historically accurate or not. These criteria include the criterion of multiple attestation—are there two or more independent sources?—and the criterion of historical coherence—do the details cohere with everything else we know of that time? A very interesting criterion is the criterion of embarrassment. "All it means is that material that potentially would have created awkwardness or embarrassment for the early church is not likely something that a

Christian invented sometime after Easter.”¹⁰ Events or sayings that could potentially paint Jesus or the disciples in a bad light are not likely to be fabricated.

Here are some of the potentially embarrassing details we find in the Gospels. The disciples are shown to be dim-witted (Mark 9:32; Luke 18:34; John 12:16), not concerned about Jesus (they fall asleep while he is praying to God the Father—Mark 14:32-41), wrong in their theology (Jesus rebukes Peter, calling him “Satan”—Mark 8:33), and cowardly, fleeing from Jesus when he is arrested (Matt. 26:56) and denying knowing him (Matt. 26:69-75). The way Jesus is depicted could be construed as embarrassing, for he is called “out of his mind” (Mark 3:21), a “drunkard” (Matt. 11:19), demon-possessed (John 7:20; 8:48), and “insane” (John 10:20). (To be clear, Jesus was none of these things, but he was—and is—often misunderstood.) His genealogy (see Matt. 1:2-16) includes prostitutes, murderers, adulterers, and idolaters. He received a “baptism of repentance” from John the Baptist, who wondered why he should baptize Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17; the reason is that Jesus, in his baptism, was identifying with sinful people, though he had no sin of which to repent). His own brothers don’t believe that he is the Messiah, the anointed one sent by God to save his people (John 7:5). The first witnesses of the resurrection were women; at a time when female testimony was hardly regarded, no one would make this up. Even after seeing the resurrected Jesus, some of his followers doubted (Matt. 28:17). There are explanations for all of these potentially embarrassing details, but would someone really make such things up?

Appendix Three: The New Testament Versus the Book of Mormon and the Qur’an, or, Is the Bible the Word of God or the Word of Man?

The Bible claims that it is not the word of man, but the Word of God. Peter, after speaking of the Transfiguration, writes the following words about Scripture:

¹⁹And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:19-21).¹¹

¹⁰ Craig A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006), 49.

¹¹ The Scripture passages in this section are taken from the English Standard Version.

Peter claims that “the prophetic word” of Scripture is more fully confirmed than the Transfiguration. That is quite a claim. Furthermore, this prophecy of Scripture (Peter means that all of Scripture is prophetic, in the sense that prophets spoke the words of God) does not come from human interpretation or will. It is the result of the Holy Spirit, carrying men along.

Throughout the Bible, it is clear that the prophets and apostles are not delivering their own message. They never claim to be writing one of many religious documents. The prophets stated, time and again, “Thus says the LORD . . .” God told Jeremiah, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth” (Jer. 1:8). He told Ezekiel, “You shall speak my words to them” (Ezek. 2:7). This is the pattern of the Old Testament prophets.

Jesus himself certainly affirmed that God authored the Old Testament. In Matthew 19:4-5, Jesus said, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’” Jesus is quoting Genesis 2:24. Notice, Jesus says, “Have you not read that *he who created them . . . said . . .*” Though Moses wrote this passage in Genesis, it is ultimately God speaking. (Compare also Rom. 9:17 with Exod. 9:16—the same point is made in reverse). Paul said that all Scripture (meaning the Old Testament) is authored by God (2 Tim. 3:16). Paul elsewhere puts the Old Testament and the New Testament on the same level calling them both Scripture (he quotes Deut. 25:4 and Luke 10:7 in 1 Tim. 5:18, referring to both passages as “Scripture”). Furthermore, Peter calls Paul’s letters “Scripture” in 2 Peter 3:15-16. Acts 1:16 states that “the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David” and then quotes Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. (The same is true in Acts 4:25 and Heb. 3:7; 4:7.) So, the Holy Spirit spoke through a human author, David, just as 2 Peter 1:19-21 claims. Additionally, it should be noted that the author of Hebrews claims that Jesus spoke Psalm 40:6-8 (Heb. 10:5-7) and the Holy Spirit spoke Jeremiah 31:33-34 (Heb. 10:15-17). The implication is clear: the entirety of the Bible is God’s Word.

The New Testament apostles show an awareness of sharing God’s Word, not just their own. Peter, of course, acknowledges that in the passage we just looked at. To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, “If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). To the Thessalonians, he wrote, “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the

word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thess. 2:13). Paul knew he was delivering God’s Word.

In 2 Peter 1:19-21, quoted above, Peter is affirming verbal plenary inspiration, to use theological terms. That means that all (*plenary*) words of the Bible (*verbal*) are inspired (*inspiration*), or breathed out by God, through the agency of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that God dictated the words of the Bible to the prophets and apostles. Rather, the Holy Spirit worked through these men (who were “carried along”) to produce the exact result he desired. God used the personalities and experiences of the biblical authors to produce his perfect Word. This method of writing God’s Word might seem odd to us, but it is perfectly characteristic of God’s actions throughout history. It testifies to God’s sovereignty in using imperfect human beings as his instruments to achieve his perfect ends.

In order to understand how credible the Bible’s claims are, we should contrast the origin of the Bible with two other sacred books, *The Book of Mormon* and the Qur’an. When viewed in this light, the strength of the Bible stands out.

Mormonism, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, was founded by Joseph Smith (1805-1844). *The Book of Mormon*, one of the chief spiritual books of Mormonism, was published in 1830. Smith purportedly received a visit from the angel Moroni in upstate New York in 1823. The angel told him the location of some buried golden plates. Between 1827 and 1829, Smith “translated” the “reformed Egyptian” hieroglyphics on the plates by using a “seer stone.”¹² Smith would look at the seer stone, placed at the bottom of a stovepipe hat (in order to block out any light), to “translate” the contents of the golden plates. He dictated what he saw to his disciple, Oliver Cowdery, who sat on the opposite side of a curtain from Smith. Shortly before *The Book of Mormon* was completed, Smith claims that John the Baptist appeared in person. Smith wrote of this event in *The Pearl of Great Price*:

68 We still continued the work of translation, when, in the ensuing month (May, 1829), we on a certain day went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins, that we found mentioned in the translation of the plates. While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

¹² It should be noted that Smith used seer stones to attempt to locate treasure. He had a reputation for being involved in magic and treasure hunting. See Richard Abanes, *One Nation under Gods* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003), particularly chapter 2, “Moroni, Magic, and Masonry.”

69 Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.

70 He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me.

71 Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him first, and afterwards he baptized me—after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded.

72 The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this Priesthood upon us, said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament, and that he acted under the direction of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which Priesthood, he said, would in due time be conferred on us, and that I should be called the first Elder of the Church, and he (Oliver Cowdery) the second. It was on the fifteenth day of May, 1829, that we were ordained under the hand of this messenger, and baptized.

73 Immediately on our coming up out of the water after we had been baptized, we experienced great and glorious blessings from our Heavenly Father. No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and he stood up and prophesied many things which should shortly come to pass. And again, so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church, and this generation of the children of men. We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation.¹³

This story is extraordinary for many reasons, of course. I will point out only a few problems with Smith's story, though there are many, many more. The first problem is that in the 1851 edition of *The Pearl of Great Price*, Smith said that it was Nephi, not Moroni, who appeared to him. This "error" was "corrected" in subsequent editions. However, handwritten manuscripts from 1842 also state that it was Nephi, not Moroni, who appeared to Smith.¹⁴ This, I suppose, could be written off as a copyist's error—a slip of the mind or a slip of the pen.

The second problem is far more serious. Just a few verses before the above-quoted passage from *The Pearl of Great Price*, Smith writes:

¹³ "Joseph Smith—History 1:68-73" in *The Pearl of Great Price*.

¹⁴ Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, gen. ed. Ravi Zacharias, managing ed. Jill Martin Rische and Kevin Rische (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2003), 200-01.

63 Sometime in this month of February, the aforementioned Mr. Martin Harris came to our place, got the characters which I had drawn off the plates, and started with them to the city of New York. For what took place relative to him and the characters, I refer to his own account of the circumstances, as he related them to me after his return, which was as follows:

64 “I went to the city of New York, and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Charles Anthon, a gentleman celebrated for his literary attainments. Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. I then showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic; and he said they were true characters. He gave me a certificate, certifying to the people of Palmyra that they were true characters, and that the translation of such of them as had been translated was also correct. I took the certificate and put it into my pocket, and was just leaving the house, when Mr. Anthon called me back, and asked me how the young man found out that there were gold plates in the place where he found them. I answered that an angel of God had revealed it unto him.

65 “He then said to me, ‘Let me see that certificate.’ I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it to him, when he took it and tore it to pieces, saying that there was no such thing now as ministering of angels, and that if I would bring the plates to him he would translate them. I informed him that part of the plates were sealed, and that I was forbidden to bring them. He replied, ‘I cannot read a sealed book.’ I left him and went to Dr. Mitchell, who sanctioned what Professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation.”

Smith reports that Martin Harris took a sample of the “reformed Egyptian” writing on the golden plates and brought it to Charles Anthon, a professor at Columbia University, who then affirmed the authenticity of the writing and the translation Smith had made. The only dispute came when Anthon denied that angels could have brought such a document to Smith.

All of the above sounds possible, except for one problem. Anthon never approved of the writings and the translation that were shown to him. E. D. Howe learned of Smith’s claim and wrote a letter to Anthon about it. Anthon wrote a letter back to Howe, dated February 17, 1834. In the letter, Anthon stated that the story was “perfectly false.” He wrote, “Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick, perhaps a *hoax*.” He then described the writing on the paper as a jumble of Greek and Hebrew, as well as Roman letters inverted or placed sideways, arranged in columns. He wrote, “[I] well remember that the paper contained anything else but ‘Egyptian Hieroglyphics’.”¹⁵

¹⁵ E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painsville, OH: n.p., 1834), 270-72; quoted in Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, 212-13.

As if that were not enough, *The Book of Mormon* has other problems. It has long passages copied out of the King James Bible and though it claims to recall the history of people living in the Americas between 600 BC and AD 421, archaeologists have not located any of these places and have no evidence of these peoples. Other details in *The Book of Mormon* do not agree with archaeological evidence. Thomas Stuart Ferguson, a professor at Brigham Young University, was given the task of finding archaeological evidence for *The Book of Mormon*. “After twenty-five years of dedicated archaeological research, Ferguson found nothing to back up the book and, in fact, he called the geography of *The Book of Mormon* ‘fictional.’”¹⁶

The historical problems of Mormonism go from bad to worse. Joseph Smith claimed that he acquired the *Book of Abraham* in 1835. In that year, Smith’s church purchased several papyrus scrolls purportedly written by Abraham and Joseph, patriarchs who appear in biblical book of Genesis. (These men would have lived well over three thousand years earlier.) Smith translated these scrolls, which contained important information regarding Mormon doctrines such as pre-existence. However, the truth of the matter is that the scrolls Smith acquired were copies of common Egyptian funeral texts. In 1912, several Egyptologists examined Smith’s “translations” and found them to be “fraud,” “absurd,” “a fabrication,” and “undoubtedly the work of pure imagination.” These judgments were based on Smith’s drawings of the scrolls. However, the actual scrolls themselves were destroyed in a fire in Chicago in 1876. Therefore, Mormons could claim that Smith’s translation, based on the scrolls, not the drawings, was accurate. However, papyri fragments of these scrolls reappeared in New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1967. These fragments showed that Smith’s critics were right all along. We have proof that Smith was a fraud.¹⁷

Let us compare that story to the story of the prophet Muhammad and the Qur’an. Muhammad was born in Mecca about A.D. 570. In 610, he supposedly began to receive a series of revelations from the angel Gabriel. Winfried Corduan describes this revelation:

The unique twists of Muhammad’s spiritual experience began in A.D. 610, while he was meditating in a cave located on what is now called the Mount of Light, overlooking the plain of Arafat outside Mecca. As Muhammad fell into a trance, trembling and sweating, the angel of Gabriel spoke to him. “Recite!” the angel proclaimed to him. At this moment the brooding, introspective merchant turned

¹⁶ Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, 216.

¹⁷ The information in this paragraph was taken from Abanes, *One Nation under Gods*, 449-55.

into the stern prophet who refused to compromise his convictions and suffered for his steadfastness.¹⁸

The Qur'an consists of a number of revelations allegedly given to Muhammad from Gabriel between 610 and 632, the year Muhammad died. There are 114 revelations in the Qur'an, each written down in a *sura*, or chapter. Muhammad did not write down his revelations, but after his death, they were collected into one book. He would recite these revelations to those present in the community (Qur'an means "reading" or "reciting"). His followers memorized these portions of the Qur'an, and some of them wrote the revelations down.

The second Caliph (successor to Muhammad), Umar ibn Kattab, ordered Zayd ibn Thabit, one of Muhammad's secretaries, to compile these writings into the Qur'an. Later, in 651, the third Caliph, Uthman ibn Affan, noticed something problematic for the early Muslim community. Several Muslim communities were using versions of the Qur'an that varied in their readings. He was concerned that this might lead to doctrinal confusion. Therefore, he requested that an official copy of the Qur'an be made and that all other copies be burned.¹⁹

The creation of the Qur'an is radically different from the origin of the Bible. Corduan explains: "The Qur'an is essentially the product of one man. Its content spans a little more than twenty years within a single cultural context. By contrast, the Bible spans about fifteen hundred years in several different languages and highly divergent cultures."²⁰ The approximately forty human authors of the Bible wrote its books in different places at different times. The New Testament, in particular, has multiple authors, writing from multiple locations, to multiple locations, at multiple times. James White calls this "multifocality."²¹

Obviously, the origin of the Bible is quite different from the origin of *The Book of Mormon* and the Qur'an. It was not delivered to one man. No group of conspiratorial men edited the Bible and burned all previous copies. The early Christian church was too busy growing rapidly and avoiding persecution to have the means to create a document in a centralized manner. According to James White,

[M]any people believe the ancient church somehow "controlled" the text of Scripture, so that if an ancient leader or group wanted to "delete" a belief they no longer held, they could do so. *This is manifestly not the case.* Never was there a

¹⁸ Winfried Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1998), 79.

¹⁹ Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 93.

²⁰ Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, 108.

²¹ White, *The King James Only Controversy*, 82.

time when any man, group of men, or church “controlled” the scriptural text. Even if a group had decided to alter it, they could never gather up all the copies already in existence; the means of travel would preclude such an attempt even if one was launched, for distribution of the copies would far exceed anyone’s ability to recover them all.²²

The composition of the Bible was divinely superintended, not fabricated by one man or group of men, the way the facts suggest *The Book of Mormon* and the Qur’an were created.

²² James R. White, *Scripture Alone: Exploring the Bible’s Accuracy, Authority and Authenticity* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2004), 144 (original emphasis). He makes a similar point in *The King James Only Controversy*, 77: “You see, because the New Testament books were written at various times and were quickly copied and distributed as soon as they were written, there was never a time when anyone or any group could gather up all the manuscripts and make extensive changes in the text itself, like cutting out Christ’s deity or inserting some foreign doctrine or concept. Neither could someone gather up the texts and try to make them all say the same thing by harmonizing them. If someone had indeed done this, we could never be certain what the apostles had written, and what the truth actually is.”