

Talk 2: Authorship

Part 1: Intro- Why is this important? If we can't trust the witnesses who knows what is true?

Most modern scholars reject the biblical canon as is, but based on what?

Our Objective is to give you a basic understanding of how the bible is put together and how good the arguments are for it's reliability.

Part 2: Autographs-

Controversy: "We don't have copies of the copies of the copies" -Bart Ehrman

In fact no autographs of any significant original author or work exists from the ancient world [see book dates]. Some letters found in ancient garbage sites are extant. Would they be valuable? If a manuscript of the gospel of Luke with the signature 'Luke' on it was found dated 40-80AD were found, would it prove that this is the authentic true written work of Luke? No, even though it would be considered quite a find.

Bias: The authorship of the New Testament is subject to tremendous bias among scholars & Christians. This often has deep roots in scholarship- you be the judge when reading. Double and triple check EVERYTHING, whether from Christian sources or non-Christian.

Anti-supernatural bias generally rules out any kind of veracity and seeks alternative explanations.

Part 3: General agreements & Controversy

Controversy: Here are some of the major reasons put forward for rejecting disciple/gospel authorship:

- 1) Gospel writers do not write in the first person.
- 2) Existing copies use "Gospel According to"/"Gospel of" interchangeably (added much later)
- 3) According to Acts 4:13, John and Peter were 'illiterate men' [see John 8:19]
- 4) Wouldn't have written early with the end in sight [Matt 16:28].
- 5) Wrote late when the disciples were dead to preserve story (by apostolic community).
- 6) Why don't they name themselves?
- 7) Why wait so long to write gospels?

General Agreement: Here are points where scholars agree

- 1) All four gospels written in the first century
- 2) All four written by authors or the followers of early disciples
- 3) Jesus was a real person and many of His true sayings were captured in texts.

Part 4: Dating of the books- How to do it.

Controversy: Gospel writings late first or very early second century according to many scholars. Some letters and epistles are considered second century.

General Agreement: Most Pauline letters pre-date gospels and are early (50-60s)

Destruction of the Temple, 70AD: like a hundred 9/11's to the Jewish people at the time. When the temple was destroyed the center of life for the Jewish people was knocked out- how can you worship anymore? Where will the sacrifices take place? Add to it the civic dislocation and the annihilation of political hopes of having your own country again.

Therefore the mention or lack of mention of the destruction of the temple is a powerful tool.

Dating Hebrews: The thrust of the argument of the book is about Jewish believers in Christ giving up on Christianity and going back to Judaism. Yet the author never mentions the temple being destroyed, and talks about ongoing sacrifices there [Hebrews 8:3/10:3]. So probably before 70AD

Dating Clement of Rome (to the Corinthians): Often considered at 96AD because of two things. Bishops of Rome list has him there in 90s; otherwise because persecution is mentioned, and there is a great Roman persecution of Domitian 96AD. Clement quotes Hebrews and also speaks of the temple as still in use. Since he doesn't have to have been bishop to have written (just the 'missions correspondent' from church fathers) and the bishops list has wide variants, that is not a decisive factor. Also persecutions occur in 68AD and in fact all through the book of Acts.

Dating the Gospels: Most modern scholars place gospels after 70AD, in large part because of Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple. If not after, then the predictions are true. This is likely a bias issue.

Mark, earliest of the gospels in Greek according to Papias (100-110AD). Least polished.

Luke finishes Acts, the second book, written after gospel [Acts 1:1-2]. Acts finishes roughly around 62AD; Luke uses sections of Mark; this places Mark in the late 50s, Luke in perhaps the early 60s.

Matthew, according to Papias wrote first in Hebrew, then in Greek. Was the Hebrew a gospel or a collection of sayings? Since he uses Mark in the Greek text, and uses similar text sources as Luke, his Greek text is likely after at a similar time or after Luke.

John, lived to be very old according to church fathers, and the gospel is often considered to be late. The author shows signs that he lived and saw Jerusalem before 70AD (pool of Bethesda, John 5:1-2, in the present tense)

Other reasons for dating books: Reasons are many and varied.

-Some claim late writing so that **stories and legends** have time to grow around them, but even in the worst case scenarios there is not enough time. **Advanced Christology** in the gospel of John or Hebrews are seen as a later addition, since Christ was just a man. This is again based on a bias, assuming that early Christianity was different from biblical Christianity.

Part 5: Authors claimed

Controversy: Basically the authorship of every book of the NT is in doubt by most modern scholars. Marcion (d. 160AD) canon shows only Luke as an author of only a single gospel.

Who didn't doubt the authorship? The early church and church fathers- uniform agreement. **No evidence that the gospels ever circulated anonymously.** The letters have names attached, naturally.

Let's look at the chain of connectivity between disciples and Early Apostolic and Church Fathers:

Clement, bishop of Rome (d. 99AD), knew Peter, possibly Paul mentions him [Phil 4:3].

Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (d. 108AD), converted young, knew the apostles

Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna (d. 155AD) was a disciple of John, personally knew Ignatius.

All quote from the gospels to a greater or lesser extent- but don't give attribution since they are not writing history or polemics, but letters

Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (d. 130AD), claims to have known John, Philip's daughters and other friends of the apostles. Says Mark wrote for Peter, and Matthew wrote first in Hebrew.

Justin Martyr, apologist & philosopher (d. 165AD), mentions that the four gospels (memoirs) are read **weekly** in every church [see 1 Tim 4:13]

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon (d. 202AD) saw and heard Polycarp preach. He says Polycarp was converted by the apostles themselves. Quotes Justin Martyr.

Tatian, (d. 180AD) student of Justin Martyr, wrote *Diatessaron*, or harmony of the gospels

All these quote from the gospels, speak of authorship in their works

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea (d. 339), Church historian, had existing works of early fathers

Tertullian, Apologist (d. 240)

“The same authority of the apostolic churches will afford evidence to the other Gospels also, which we possess equally through their means, and according to their usage--I mean the Gospels of John and Matthew--whilst that which Mark published may be affirmed to be Peter's whose interpreter Mark was. For even Luke's form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul. And it may well seem that the works which disciples publish belong to their masters. Well, then, Marcion ought to be called to a strict account concerning these (other Gospels) also, for having omitted them, and insisted in preference on Luke; as if they, too, had not had free course in the churches, as well as Luke's Gospel, from the beginning. Nay, it is even more credible that they existed from the very beginning; for, being the work of apostles, they were prior, and contemporary in origin with the churches themselves.”

The Muratorian fragment (late 2nd) talks about what is considered canonical and what isn't.

Some things to consider:

- 1) These writings were in use daily all in churches everywhere. The disciples and their disciples taught and wrote about these things daily from the time of Christ onward. This was not a handful of specialists writing about obscure details long after the fact.
- 2) This was a culture connected to Judaism, where life revolved around the book. Commentaries on the writings were what was considered important to study and were studied extensively. The disciples heard the Torah (Tanakh) read in synagogues **every** Sabbath. It was even the school textbook. The Dead sea scrolls contain 900 separate writings, the majority of which had different writers (not merely copyists).
- 3) Unlikely to choose Mark or Luke as names to add later to gospels. Each relatively obscure
- 4) Copies of Paul's work was passed around churches [Col 4:16]. How is it possible that instead of writing down the gospels that vague sayings were left floating around for later Christians after the apostles to collect, redact, and write under false names in the 2nd century?

Part 6: Synoptic problem and 'Q' (synoptic meaning “same viewpoint)

Controversy: Large portions of the gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke are similar- in many cases identical. Therefore the books are redacted (edited) compilations of other works.

There is **clearly interdependence** in the synoptics (does not include John). The question is who was the main source for whom? There are many theories. A common one is that there is a source document called 'Q' (Quelle, or source) that is theorized about (but no evidence to its existence). This is a list of sayings of Jesus and events that someone may have written out that Matthew and Luke used, but not Mark- his gospel was used by Matthew and Luke as well as 'Q'. Again, such a document may have existed, or might not have- there are no mentions of it in any writings at all. The saying of Jesus were no doubt known to all believers and were repeated constantly, but 'Q' offers a fair reason for the similarities being so striking.