THE AUTHORS OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

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Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

Who wrote the four gospels? The answer seems obvious: Mat­thew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew was one of Jesus’ twelve apostles; Mark was “John Mark,” missionary compan­ion of Paul and Peter; Luke was a physician who accompanied Paul on his journeys; and John was also one of the twelve.[[1]](#footnote-1) The titles of the gospels tell us who their authors were.

None of the four gospels, however, states the name of its author, *except* in its title. Nowhere in the actual text of a gospel is it said that Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John wrote it. Prov­ing the accuracy of the ti­tles is therefore crucial to establishing the traditional authors.

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Most English translations of the New Testament enti­tle the four, “The Gos­pel According to Matthew,” “The Gospel According to Mark,” etc. These titles also occur in most Greek manu­scripts of the New Testament, where the titles are: ἐυαγγέλιον κατὰ Μαθθαῖον, ἐυαγγέλιον κατὰ Μάρκον, ἐυαγγέλιον κατὰ Λοῦκον, ἐυαγγέλιον κατὰ Ιωάννης. (Transliterated to English: *euanggelion kata Maththaion*, *euanggelion kata Markon*, *euanggelion kata Loukon*, *euanggelion kata Iōannēs*). The earliest Greek manu­scripts, however, simply say, “Accord­ing to Mat­thew,” “According to Mark,” etc. (κατὰ Μαθθαῖoν, κατὰ Mάρ­κoν, etc.). These are probably the earliest gospel titles, and they imply the word “gos­pel.” The Greek word for “gos­pel” (εὐαγγέλιoν, *euanggelion*—from which we get words like “evangelist” and “evangelism”) original­ly meant “good news”; but for Christians it soon came also to mean a book that presents the good news about Jesus.

It is unlikely, however, that the gospel titles were part of the orig­inal gos­pels; probably they were added later. Three con­sider­ations make this likely.

* Probably the four gospel writers did not know each other.[[2]](#footnote-2) It would be too coinci­den­tal for four isolated authors, writing on the same sub­ject, to happen upon such similar titles. (On the other hand, it is likely that Matthew and Luke each had a copy of Mark when writing their gospels. If the Markan copies said “According to Mark,” then Matthew and Luke could have imitated that title.)
* It would be very peculiar for a person to write a book and then name it after himself: for example, “Ac­cording to Joe Smith.” It is especially un­likely that a Christian author in the first cen­tury would use his own name to enti­tle an ac­count of his Lord’s life.
* The most important consideration concerns the preposi­tion κατά, “according to.” Grammarians of New Testament Greek believe that κατά in the titles is a way of saying the pos­ses­sive: “Gospel According to Matthew” means “Matthew’s Gospel.”[[3]](#footnote-3) But probably the reason κατά, of all Greek preposi­tions, de­veloped this meaning is because it often had a distributive mean­­ing—as if the single good news had been distributed in four parts,[[4]](#footnote-4) like a pack of cards dealt into four hands. A gospel dispersed in four parts, however, is an idea that could only come about after the gos­pels were col­lec­ted together. That means that the present titles of the gospels cannot have been added to them until the gospels had become a collection.

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The ear­liest evidence of the four gospels being a collec­tion is from about the 150s ad.[[5]](#footnote-5) The gos­pels *may* have become a collection at any time between the completion of the last gospel to be written (probably John, c. ad 100) and our first evidence of them as a collection (c. 150s). But a date for the collection toward the end of this period is likely. A late date would allow time for the four gospels to cir­culate widely enough to ap­pear in the same locale. Also, it would allow time for the four to be­come thought of as four distributed parts of a single gospel, a single “good news.” Since the titles were almost certainly added some time after the gospels were collected into a group, and since their collection was probably between, say, ad 130-150, the titles must date from c. ad 130-150.[[6]](#footnote-6) None of the four apostles would still have been alive in ad 130-150, so the titles must not be original to the gospels. This late date for the titles weakens the titles’ reliabil­ity: at best they are second-hand informa­tion.

The crucial question now becomes: Can we trace the second-hand information backward, into a period closer to the writing of the gospels? Perhaps many early Christians discussed the author­ship of the gospels. But, from the period before ad 130-150, we only have one man’s remarks concerning author­ship. That man is Papias, bishop of Hiera­polis in Asia Minor. Papias wrote a five-volume work, *The Sayings of the Lord Ex­plained*, around ad 95-110. The five volumes themselves have disappeared, but fortunate­ly several quota­tions from them have survived in books that are still extant: *The History of the Church* (Latin: *His­toria ec­clesi­as­tica*), by Euse­bius, bishop of Caesarea, written c. ad 325; *Against the Heresies* (Latin: *Adversus haereses*), by Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon, written c. ad 180.

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Euse­bius quotes a statement by Papias concerning the au­thorship of the first gospel. It reads: “Matthew compiled the *Sayings* in the Aramaic language, and everyone translated them as well as he could.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

Papias apparently affirms the tradition that later appears in the title of the first gospel: the author was the apostle Matthew. Curious­ly, however, Papias calls Matthew’s com­pos­i­tion *Sayings*; and *Sayings* is not an apt description of the first gospel, since it contains as many narratives as sayings. Also, Pa­pi­as says that Matthew com­piled the *Sayings* in Aramaic.[[8]](#footnote-8) This cannot refer to our gospel of Matthew, because many passages in Matthew, Mark, and Luke have identical Greek wording, which shows that all three were originally written in Greek.

Some schol­ars have thought that perhaps Papias meant a collec­tion of Jesus’ sayings, like Q, that was later incorpo­rated into the gospel of Matthew.[[9]](#footnote-9) Since Matthew wrote the pre-gospel collec­tion, they reason, perhaps his name was transferred to the gospel. While it is possible that an origi­nal document in Aramaic under­lay Q, however, the copies of Q used by Matthew and Luke were cer­tainly in Greek, since the wordings of the Q pas­sages in Matthew and Luke are often the same. Besides, if Papias were refer­ring to a sayings document, then he would only be saying that Matthew was the author of a sayings collec­tion. It would not follow that Matthew was also the author of the completed gospel.

But since Papias does say “*Matthew* wrote,” he probably does mean the first gospel, and not a sayings source. In that case, he is simply incorrect: it is highly unlikely that our first gospel was written by Matthew, or by any other member of the twelve disciples. For one thing, the date of Matthew (c. ad 85) is late for apostol­ic author­ship.[[10]](#footnote-10) More importantly, Matthew de­pends heavily on Mark’s gospel for information about Jesus. No evange­list would need to rely so heavily on anoth­er’s gospel if he had been an eyewitness of Jesus. Our first gospel, therefore, was surely not written by Matthew.

Papias’ statement of c. ad 130, then, is probably just hearsay that had become common in Christian communities. But if early Chris­tians attributed an otherwise anonymous gospel to Matthew, why did they pick him, since he was not prominent in early Christianity? Perhaps they chose Matthew because, where Mark and Luke relate Jesus’ call of Levi (Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32), Matthew relates the call but calls Levi “Matthew” (9:9-13). Also, though all three men­tion Matthew in lists of the twelve dis­ciples, only Mat­thew’s gospel adds that Matthew was a tax collec­tor (10:3). Since the first gospel seems to know more about Matthew, per­haps early Christians surmised that the gospel had been written by him. Naming the gospel after Matthew would fulfill two natural desires: to supply as many details about first-century Christianity as possible, and to give the first gospel apostolic authority.

At any rate, Papias’ statement is of little value. And, since better infor­ma­tion was probably not available when the titles were added c. ad 150-175, the first title, we con­clude, is unreli­able.

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The earliest evidence for the authorship of the second gospel also comes from Papias. Here is the statement about Mark that Eusebius, in *History of the Church*, quotes from Papias’ *Sayings of the Lord Explained*: “This, too, the presbyter used to say. ‘Mark, who had been Peter’s interpreter, wrote down carefully, but not in order, all that he remembered of the Lord’s sayings and doings.’”[[11]](#footnote-11)

Whereas, concerning Matthew, Papias did not say (in the fragment preserved by Eusebius) how he came upon the informa­tion that Matthew wrote the first gospel, here he actually quotes someone else about Mark, someone whom he calls “the presby­ter.”[[12]](#footnote-12) In other quotations of Papias preserved by Eusebius, Papias makes it clear that the presby­ter’s name was John. Some scholars have thought that Papias’ John the Presbyter was in fact John the apos­tle. Iren­aeus, the bishop of Lyons, sug­gested this already c. ad 180.[[13]](#footnote-13) But Eusebius himself took Papias to be referring to one of Papias’ teachers, and most scholars today think Euse­bius was correct.

At any rate, John the Presbyter’s statement con­cerning Mark has problems. The assertion that Mark’s events were “not in order” implies that John the Presbyter knew the cor­rect order. John the Presbyter, however, was probably not an eyewitness of Jesus’ life; as a teacher of Pa­pias, he was probably a third-generation Chris­tian. In all likelihood, then, he based his judgment that Mark is disorder­ly, not on a comparison of Mark with Jesus’ life, but on a compar­ison of Mark with another gos­pel. The other gospel to which John the Presby­ter compared Mark would probably have been Matthew, since, judging by frequency of quotation, Matthew was the most popu­lar gospel in John the Presbyter’s day (early 100s ad). John the Presby­ter’s state­ment about order, then, is of no value to us: we have Mark and Matthew and can com­pare their “orderli­ness” for our­selves.

But the greatest difficulty with Papias’ statement on Mark comes from the assertion that Mark was “Peter’s interpreter.” Modern investiga­tions of the structure of Mark—in particular, form criticism—have convincingly shown that the contents of Mark’s gospel under­went a period of oral trans­mission before they were written. The contents of Mark cannot, then, be the transcribed memo­ries of a single eye­witness, Peter.

The connection of the second gospel with Peter probably did not arise because Peter is more prominent in Mark than in the other gospels. (Although Mark mentions Peter’s name in three places where it is not found in Matthew and Luke [Mark 1:36, 11:31, 13:­3], Peter is not more prominent.) Perhaps the idea that Mark was Peter’s “in­terpreter” was inferred by early Chris­tians from 1 Peter 5:13, which reads, “She who is at Baby­lon, who is likewise cho­sen, sends you greet­ings; and so does my son Mark.”

At any rate, as with Papias’ statement concerning Matthew, so with his statement concerning Mark: Papias’ evi­dence for the author­ship of the gospels is not reliable. Once again it looks as if the earliest information about a gospel’s author is “second-century guess­work.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

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Eusebius only quotes Papias about Matthew and Mark. Either Papias did not discuss the authorship of Luke and John, or Euse­bius chose not to quote him. Our earliest statement about the author of the third gospel comes from Iren­aeus, who grew up in Asia Minor but became the bishop of Lyons in France. In his chief work, *Adversus haereses* (*Against the Heresies*), he writes: “Luke, too, the companion of Paul, set forth in a book the gospel as preached by him [Paul]. . . . this Luke was insepara­ble from Paul and was his collabora­tor in [preach­ing] the gospel . . .”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Though this is the first statement we have about the author of the third gospel (other than the gospel’s title), the idea that its author was Luke the com­pan­ion of Paul had probably been around for some time. The reason why Mar­cion (who was excommunicated c. ad 144 by Pope Telesphorus) put only Luke alongside ten letters of Paul in his canon of the New Testament was probably because he thought Luke had been a companion of Paul. Hence Marcion likely knew, c. ad 140, the tradition that Luke the com­panion of Paul wrote the third gospel.

Nothing in the third gospel itself suggests that it was writ­ten by a companion of Paul. But the same person who wrote Luke also wrote the Acts of the Apos­tles,[[16]](#footnote-16) and at first glance Acts seems to have been written by a companion of Paul. Several times the author of Acts uses “we” in de­scribing Paul’s travels. For example, Acts 16:10: “we sought to go on into Macedo­nia . . .” Early readers of Acts no doubt as­sumed that the author of Acts was an asso­ciate of Paul’s. Since Paul in his letters some­times refers to a travel­ing com­panion named Luke,[[17]](#footnote-17) readers of Acts perhaps assumed that the “we” of Acts included Luke. Since they knew that the author of Acts also wrote the third gospel, apparently they concluded that the third gospel was written by Luke.[[18]](#footnote-18)

In fact, howev­er, it is unlikely that a companion of Paul wrote the third gospel, because it is unlikely that a companion of Paul wrote Acts. For one thing, Acts several times contra­dicts the order of events in Paul’s letters. Moreover, Acts shows no knowl­edge of Paul’s famous let­ters.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Perhaps one reason for attri­buting the third gospel to Luke was to con­nect the gospel with an apostle, i.e., Paul. This, at least, is the suggestion of a leading expert on Luke, Joseph Fitzmyer:

Irenaeus clearly ascribes the Third Gospel to Luke, an “insepara­ble” companion of Paul, because of his desire to estab­lish its “apostol­ic” origin. . . . Once Luke is recog­nized as the companion of Paul, he became to him what Mark was believed to have been to Peter, a com­piler of his preach­ing.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Once again, the traditions of author­ship of the gospels, and thus the gospel titles that enshrine those traditions, appear to be of little value in determining the authors of the gospels.

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The fourth gospel, like the first three, nowhere states the name of its author (outside the titles). Unlike the first three, however, it does contain a statement about its author. Here are the fourth gos­pel’s concluding verses (John 21:20, 24-25):

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them [Peter and Jesus]; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the [last] supper . . . 24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. 25 But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

According to this passage, the author of the fourth gospel is the disciple who lay near Jesus’ breast at the last supper. If one turns to the account of the last supper in John, one finds this narrative (John 13:21b-26):

. . . “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.” 22 The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. 23 One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; 24 Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. 25 So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” 26 Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot.

Here again, the disciple close to Jesus’ breast is the one “whom Jesus loved.” This “beloved disci­ple,” as both passages make clear, is not Peter. Can we identify which of the other dis­ciples he is?

Besides the passages we have quoted, the beloved disciple ap­pears in John 19:26, 20:2, and 21:7; but none of these verses mentions the disciple’s identity. Thus, there is no evidence in the fourth gospel to allow us to identify its author. What is more, the conclu­sion of the gospel—John 21:24-25, the only spot in John that says its author was the beloved disciple—is a later addition to the gospel, not an original part of it. (The author of the conclusion cannot be the beloved disciple himself, since the author of the conclusion refers to him­self in the first person [“we” and “I”] but refers to the be­loved disciple in the third person [“his”].) The concluding verses were probably added later to emphasize that the author of the gospel was in fact an apos­tle.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Aside from the title, our earliest identifi­cation of the fourth gos­pel’s au­thor with the apostle John is by Iren­aeus, c. ad 180:

After that, John, the disciple of the Lord, he who had leaned on his breast, also published the Gospel, while living at Ephesus in Asia. . . . John lived there till the time of Trajan [ad 98-117].[[22]](#footnote-22)

Some schol­ars have proposed that Irenaeus meant a John other than John the apostle—John Mark, for example, or Papias’ John the Presby­ter.[[23]](#footnote-23) But surely Irenaeus meant John the apostle, since he iden­tifies his John with “he who had leaned on his breast” and since the disciple at Jesus breast was one of the twelve (only the twelve were at the last supper).

Irenaeus does not say *how* he learned that John the apostle was the author of the fourth gospel. Perhaps he got his informa­tion from Polycarp, a bishop whom Irenaeus knew in his youth. Eu­se­bius quotes excerpts from Irenaeus’ works that refer to Polycarp.

Polycarp was not only instructed by apostles and conver­sant with many who had seen the Lord, but was appointed by apostles to serve in Asia as Bishop of Smyrna. I myself [i.e., Irenaeus] saw him in my early years, for he lived a long time and was very old indeed . . .[[24]](#footnote-24)

When I was still a boy I saw . . . Polycarp . . ., his goings out and comings in, the character of his life, his per­sonal appear­ance, his addresses to crowded con­grega­tions. I re­member how he spoke of his [conver­sations] with John and with the others who had seen the Lord . . .[[25]](#footnote-25)

Whether Irenaeus’ information that John was the author of the fourth gospel was from Polycarp or not, Irenaeus—and per­haps Polycarp before him—was surely wrong to attribute the fourth gospel to John. If the fourth gospel were by an apostle, then in it we would be directly in touch with histori­cal reminis­cences of Jesus him­self. Yet John’s gospel differs so drastic­ally from the synop­tics that both the synoptics *and* John cannot primarily contain direct histor­ical reminis­cences.[[26]](#footnote-26) Scholars are nearly unanimous that the synop­tics, not John, are more histor­ically credible. The fourth gospel, in fact, is more like devo­tional literature: it is more a meditation on the nature of Jesus than a synop­tic-type life of Jesus.

Once again, we find that a rumor of authorship from Chris­tian tradi­tion, enshrined in a gospel title, is not a re­li­able source of in­for­­mation.

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The informa­tion available to those who composed the titles c. ad 150 was apparent­ly hearsay, and the titles, therefore, are unreli­able.

The answer to our initial question, then, “Who wrote the four gospels?” must be: we do not know. The gospels are anony­mous Christian writings which were later supplied with titles to connect each gos­pel with an apostle—Matthew and John for the first and fourth gospels, Peter and Paul for the second and third gospels.

This brings us to a final consideration. If the purpose of attaching names to the gospels was to secure for them apostolic authority, then the names “Matthew” and “John” are understand­able: they were among the twelve. But why the names “Mark” and “Luke”? If attaching each gospel to an apostle were the only motive behind the choice of names, then one would expect early Christians to call the second and third gospels “The Gospel According to Peter” and “The Gospel According to Paul.” Thus, authorship of the second and third gospels by Mark and Luke is not as unlike­ly as authorship of the first and fourth by Matthew and John. The increased likelihood is admittedly not strong: we have already seen the reasons why early Christians might have come up with the names “Mark” and “Luke.” Still, that the names of relatively ob­scure Chris­tians became attached to the second and third gospels is to some degree a point in favor of the authenticity of those names.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Nevertheless, since early Church tradition did settle upon the names, “Matthew,” “Mark,” “Luke,” and “John,” we can go ahead and use these names to designate the authors of the four gos­pels—remembering, however, that in all probability all four gospels were originally anonymous.

1. References to Matthew: Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13. Ref­erences to Mark: Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Philem 24; 1 Pet 5:13. Refer­ences to Luke: Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Philem 24. Refer­ences to John: Matt 10:2; Mark 3:17; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. There are various reasons to assume this. For example, Matthew and Luke never place a passage in the same place when Mark has some other location for it. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testa­ment and Other Early Christian Literature*. Rev. and trans. Robert W. Funk. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1961. 408: “periphra­sis of the gen.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Edgar Goodspeed (*An Introduc­tion to the New Testament*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1937. 125 n. 1): “In ancient manuscripts of the gospels, the collected four are entitled ‘Gospel,’ each one receiv­ing a head­ing: ‘Accord­ing to Mat­thew,’ ‘According to Mark,’ ‘Ac­cording to Luke,’ and ‘Ac­cording to John.’ This use of the pre­position *kata* is diffi­cult, but it is probably dis­tribu­tive in force—‘(The Part) According to Mat­thew,’ etc.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Justin Martyr refers to the memoirs [*apomnemoneumata*] which are called gospels” (*First Apology* 66.3; see 67.3). According to Larry Hurtado, “if we examine Justin’s references to these “memoirs of the apostles,” he often quotes from them, and what he quotes is recognizable, most often from the Gospel of Matthew, but also sometimes from Luke and (less obviously) the other familiar Gospels.” (“Justin Martyr and the Gospels.” *LarryHurtado*.*WordPress*.*com*. 1 Sept. 2017. 28 Feb. 2022. Web.) Justin’s *First Apology* apparently dates from c. ad 147-61 (because it is addressed to Emperor Antoninus Pius and his adopted sons, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus.) Hence, the gospel seem to have formed a collection by c. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. K.L. Carroll. “The Creation of the Fourfold Gospel.” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 37 (1954-55) 68-77. Cited in Hans von Campen­hausen. *The Formation of the Christian Bible*. Trans. J.A. Baker. London: A and C. Black; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972. 171. Von Campenhausen himself suggests the date ad 150 (pp. 128, 142). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Eusebius. *The History of the Church from Christ to Con­stan­tine*. Trans. G.A. Wil­liamson. Harmonds­worth, Eng­land: Penguin, 1965. 152. (*Hist*. *eccl*. 3.39.16.) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Actually, Papias may be referring either to Aramaic or to Hebrew (the Greek word here is *Hebraïdi*, which meant either lan­guage); but probably Arama­ic is meant. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. “Q” is the designation for a hypothetical document that was used by Matthew and Luke in composing their gospels. Since only Matthew and Luke have many sayings of Jesus that are not in not Mark and John, and since they report them mostly in the same order, Matthew and Luke presumably had a source for these sayings that Mark and John lacked. Since the sayings only in Matthew and Luke are sometimes word for word the same, presumably their source was a document and not just free-floating oral traditions. (“Q” is from the German word for “source,” which is *Quelle*: the scholars who first inferred the existence of Q were Germans.) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Even if Matthew were as young as fifteen to twenty years of age during Jesus’ earthly ministry (c. ad 27-30), he would have been in his late seventies in ad 85. Since the average life expectancy of a male in Greek and Roman times was about 33, it is not probable that Matthew wrote in his seventies. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Hist*. *eccl*. 3.39.15. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. English translations usually render the Greek πρεσβύτερoς (*presbyteros*) as “pres­byter” or “el­der.” A “presby­ter” or “elder” in early Christianity would seem to be a man of author­ity in a local community, but one under the ultimate authority, an ἐπίσκoπoς (*episkopos*) or “over­seer” (see, e.g., Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23). *Presbyteros* eventually became the English word “priest” (*presbyt* simplified), just as *episkopos* eventually became the English word “bishop” (*piskop* simplified). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*. 5.33. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Reginald Fuller. *Critical Introduction to the New Testa­ment*. London: Gerald Duck­worth, 1966. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *Adv*. *haer*. 3.1.1; 3.14.1. Quoted from Joseph A. Fitzmyer. *The Gospel According to Luke*. An­chor Bi­ble 28-29. 2 vols. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983. 28.38. The square brackets are Fitzmyer’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Luke and Acts exhibit the same style (one that is distinctive in the New Testament); both are addressed to someone named Theophilus (Luke 1:3, Acts 1:1); and only at the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts is the ascension reported in the New Testament (Luke 24:50-51, Acts 1:2, 9). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Col 4:14, “Luke the beloved physi­cian and Demas greet you . . .” Philem 23, “De­mas, and Luke, my fellow workers . . .” 2 Tim 4:11, “Luke alone is with me.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Among all the companions mentioned by Paul in his letters, why select Luke? Perhaps because Luke and Acts are in excellent Greek, and Luke was a physician (and therefore well-educated). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. On the other hand, in favor of Lucan authorship is the similarity of the structure of the ker­yg­ma (basic preaching) in Luke and in Paul:

    Years ago C.H. Dodd tried to isolate the kerygma [proclamation] in the content-sense found in the speeches of Acts; and he compared it with the keryg­matic passages in Paul’s letters. [159] . . . Dodd singled out three points in which the kerygma in Acts differed from that of Paul: (a) in the ker­ygma in Acts Jesus is not called the “Son of God” (contrast Rom 1:3-4); (b) it is not said that he died “for our sins” (cf. 1 Cor 15:3); or (c) that the exalted Christ intercedes for us (cf. Rom 8:34). Dodd thought that he could regard these kerygmatic frag­ments in Acts as part of the “Jerusalem *kerygma*” [*Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* 25], i.e. as pre-Lucan and primitive. This is precisely the con­tro­ver­sial aspect of his thesis. [160] . . . it is significant that the content of the Lucan keryg­ma turns out to be similar to the Pauline, with which it is so often pejoratively compared. . . . the sim­i­larity out­weighs the diversi­ty. (Fitz­myer *Gospel According to Luke* 28.159-61) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Fitzmyer *Gospel According to Luke* 28.38. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. In fact, the whole of John 21 is probably a later addition: note that a perfectly adequate conclusion occurs at the end of John 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Adv*. *haer*. 3.1.2; 3.3.4. Quoted from Rudolf Schnackenburg. *The Gospel According to St John*. Trans. Kevin Smyth. 3 vols. London: Burns and Oates, 1968. 1.78. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Raymond E. Brown. *The Gospel according to John*. Anchor Bible/ 2 vols. Garden City: Double­day, 1968. 29.xc. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Eusebius, *History* 167 (*Hist*. *eccl*. 4.14.3-8). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ibid. 227 (*Hist*. *eccl*. 5.20.4-8). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. There are numerous contradictions of chronology and geography between the synoptics and John—for example, in the synoptics Jesus goes to Jerusa­lem only once during his ministry, but in John he goes three times. Other differences include the time of the cleansing of the temple (at the beginning of the public ministry in John, at the end in the synoptics); the narrative of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper (absent in John, present in the synoptics); etc. Moreover, in John there are no parables, no exorcisms, no pithy apho­risms; instead there are long and vague discourses that are more like theolog­ical reflec­tions on the nature of Christ than they are like synoptic say­ings. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. B.H. Sreet­er summa­rized the situation well: “We thus arrive at the quite simple conclusion: the burden of proof is on those who would assert the traditional authorship of Matthew and John and on those who would deny it in the case of Mark and Luke.” (*The Four Gospels*: *A Study of Origins*, *Treating of the Manuscript Tradi­tion*, *Sources*, *Authorship*, *and Dates*. London: Macmillan, 1924. 562.) [↑](#footnote-ref-27)