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## Anonymous or Apostolic?

### Receiving the Gospels as Apostolic Testimony to Jesus

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#### THE LOST CATEGORY OF APOSTOLICITY IN GOSPELS RESEARCH

Justin Martyr regularly refers to books he calls “the memoirs of the apostles” (τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων) and at one point explains that these “are called Gospels” (καλεῖται Εὐαγγέλια) (1 *Apol.* 66).<sup>1</sup> In linking the Gospels to the apostles, Justin is not alone. The common testimony of the early church is that the four New Testament Gospels are fundamentally apostolic in their origins and character: they present the testimony of the apostles Matthew and John, and the “apostolic men” (*apostolici*) Mark and Luke (Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.2; cf. Justin, *Dial.* 103; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1). The category of “apostolicity,” however, has been largely either overlooked, or denied, in modern Gospels scholarship. The tendency has been to emphasize the formal anonymity of the Gospels,<sup>2</sup> and so to characterize them as repositories of oral tradi-

1. τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων [x15]: 1 *Apol.* 66–67; *Dial.* 100–106.

2. See Gathercole, “Alleged Anonymity,” 447–76, esp. 454: “The majority view,

tion (form criticism), edited collections of written sources (source and redaction criticism), the well-crafted narratives of unknown authors (narrative criticism), or—most recently—collective memories of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> The combined effect of these approaches has been to distance the Gospels from Jesus, to de-personalize their testimony to him, and so to undermine confidence in them, and him.<sup>4</sup> In recent scholarship, while Richard Bauckham has emphasized that the Gospels embody “eyewitness testimony” to Jesus,<sup>5</sup> and Simon Gathercole has shown that the Gospel authors were almost certainly known from the beginning,<sup>6</sup> the *apostolic* origins and character of the Gospels continue to receive short shrift.<sup>7</sup> My goal in this article, therefore, is to retrieve the category of apostolicity for our reading of the Gospels (Part 1), and to suggest some of its implications for Christian theology, and for the church’s worship, life, and mission (Part 2).<sup>8</sup>

## PART 1. THE APOSTOLIC ORIGINS AND CHARACTER OF THE GOSPELS

### (1) *The Gospels Are Grounded in the Testimony of “the Twelve”*

The place to begin is with the Gospels themselves, and specifically with their common testimony that Jesus personally chose and directly

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indeed near-consensus, among scholars” is that the Gospels are anonymous.

3. For form, source, redaction, and narrative critical approaches to the Gospels, see the relevant entries in Green et al., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. For the recent use of memory theory, see Keith, “Social Memory Theory [Parts One & Two].”

4. Cf. Gerhardsson, *Reliability of the Gospel Tradition*, 74.

5. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*; cf. “Gospels as Testimony to Jesus Christ.”

6. Gathercole, “Alleged Anonymity,” 447–76.

7. Exceptions include Stonehouse, *Origins of the Synoptic Gospels*, 113–31; Gerhardsson, *Reliability*, 73–74; Bockmuehl, “Whose Memory?,” 40; Pitre, *Case for Jesus*, 12–54.

8. “Apostolicity” does not require authorship by an apostle. A written work may be considered “apostolic” if it (1) has a direct historical connection to one or more apostles (apostolic origin), and (2) bears teaching consistent with that of the apostles (apostolic character). See Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 179–84.

commissioned “the Twelve” (οἱ δώδεκα),<sup>9</sup> his “apostles” (ἀπόστολοι),<sup>10</sup> to “testify” (μαρτυρέω / μάρτυρες) to him.<sup>11</sup> The wider New Testament continues to characterize the Twelve (plus Paul) as the primary “witnesses” (μάρτυρες / μαρτυρέω) to Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection,<sup>12</sup> and confirms that they played a central and authoritative role in the foundation of the faith.<sup>13</sup> This basic observation, together with the fact that all four Gospels were published within the lifetimes of (at least some of) the apostles,<sup>14</sup> renders it highly likely that the apostles not only proclaimed the gospel in oral form, but were active in its textualization, shaping the earliest written testimony to Jesus either by composing and publishing the Gospels themselves, or by overseeing the same. Certainly, the three synoptic Gospels give a full list of the Twelve early in their narratives (Matt 10:2–4 // Mark 3:13–19 // Luke 6:13–15), even though most of those named play no further role in the story. As Bauckham observes, this deliberate listing of the Twelve by name serves to identify this group as those “responsible for the overall shape of the story and much of its content.”<sup>15</sup> The Gospel of John also mentions “the Twelve” at two strategic points in its narrative, where it marks them out as those who were “chosen” (ἐκλέγομαι) by Jesus (6:70) to “bear witness” (μαρτυρέω) to him (15:27),<sup>16</sup> and who confessed him to have “the words of eternal life”

9. Matt 10:1–2, 5; 11:1; 19:28; 20:17; 26:14, 20, 47; 28:16 [οἱ ἑνδεκα after Judas’s departure]; Mark 3:14, 16; 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10, 17, 20, 43; Luke 6:13; 8:1; 9:1, 12; 18:31; 22:3, 30, 47; John 6:67, 70–71; 20:24. For the reliability of this testimony, see McKnight, “Jesus and the Twelve,” 181–214.

10. Matt 10:2; Mark 3:14 [some mss]; Luke 6:13; 9:10; 11:49; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10; John 13:16. Cf. the verb ἀποστέλλω in relation to the Twelve: Matt 10:5, 16; Mark 3:14; 6:7; Luke 9:2; John 4:38 [?]; 17:18.

11. Matt 10:18; Mark 6:11; 13:9; Luke 9:5; 21:13; 24:48; John 15:27; 19:35; 21:24.

12. Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39, 41–42; 13:31; 22:15, 18, 20; 23:11; 26:16, 22; 28:23; 1 Cor 1:6; 15:15 (cf. 1 Cor 15:5); 2 Thess 1:10; 1 Tim 2:6; 2 Tim 1:8; 1 Pet 5:1; 1 John 1:2; 4:14; 5:9–11; Rev 1:2, 9.

13. For “the Twelve” outside the Gospels, see Acts 6:2; 1 Cor 15:5; Rev 21:14. The members of this group, extended to include Matthias (Acts 1:15–26) and Paul (Acts 9:1–19), are more commonly designated by the noun ἀπόστολος [80x]. While this term can be used in a broader sense (Acts 14:14; Rom 16:7 [?]; 2 Cor 8:23; 11:5, 13; 12:11; Gal 1:19; Phil 2:25; Heb 3:1; Rev 2:2) it most often refers to the Twelve. For their foundational role, see esp. Acts 1:1–2, 21–22; 2:42; 6:2–4; 1 Cor 3:10–11; 11:28; Eph 2:20; 4:11; Rev 21:14.

14. For recent discussion of the dates of the Gospels, see Bernier, *Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament*, 33–84.

15. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 96–97; cf. Hengel, “Lukan Prologue,” 556–66.

16. For Jesus “choosing” (ἐκλέγομαι) of the Twelve, note also John 13:18; 15:16, 19.

(6:66–68), and recognized him as the resurrected “Lord” (20:24–25). In this way, the Fourth Gospel also suggests that the Twelve stand behind its written testimony to Jesus, even if “the beloved disciple” is most directly responsible for its distinctive form.

## (2) *The Gospels Present the Apostolic Gospel*

The apostolic origins and character of the Gospels are further indicated by the continuity between Jesus’s original proclamation, the preached apostolic gospel, and the written Gospels.<sup>17</sup> While modern scholarship has tended to drive a wedge between Jesus’s proclamation of “the kingdom,” and the early church’s proclamation of Jesus, the supposed contrasts have been overdrawn.<sup>18</sup> The Gospels testify that Jesus drew on Israel’s Scriptures to characterize his own message as “the gospel” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον),<sup>19</sup> and that his “gospel” concerned the arrival of “the kingdom of God” through his own life, death, and resurrection.<sup>20</sup> Jesus’s “gospel” was thus rooted in the Scriptures and took autobiographical shape. It is therefore likely that Jesus’s “gospel” was formative *both* for the Scripturally-rooted and biographically shaped “gospel” proclaimed by the apostles in Acts and the letters,<sup>21</sup> and for the Gospel writers’ choice to present their message in the form of Scripturally-rooted, proclamatory, biographies.<sup>22</sup> As C. H. Dodd pointed out, there is a remarkable similarity between the gospel Peter announces in Acts 10:34–43 and the shape and substance of the

17. See Stonehouse, *Origins*, 131–45, 176–92.

18. E.g., Bultmann’s dictum: after Easter “*the proclaimer became the proclaimed*” (Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 1:33); cf. 1:189: “Paul’s gospel was therefore fundamentally different from the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus.”

19. Matt 4:23; 9:35; 11:5; 24:14; 26:13; Mark 1:14–15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9; Luke 4:18, 43; 7:22; 8:1; 9:6; 16:16; 20:1. The Gospels also have Jesus make use of biblical texts which include “gospel” language: Matt 11:5 (with Isa 61:1; 35:5–6); Mark 1:14–15 (with Isa 40:9); Luke 4:16–21 (with Isa 61:1–3); Luke 7:22 (with Isa 61:1; 35:5); cf. Bird, *Gospel of the Lord*, 13–20.

20. E.g., Matt 11:2–6 // Luke 7:18–23; Matt 12:28 // Luke 11:20; Matt 16:21 // Mark 8:31 // Luke 9:22; Matt 17:22–23 // Mark 9:31 // Luke 9:44; Matt 20:18–19 // Mark 10:33–34 // Luke 18:31–33; Luke 4:16–21; 24:26, 45–47.

21. E.g., Acts 10:34–43; 13:23–31; Rom 1:1–4; 1 Cor 15:1–7; 2 Tim 2:8; cf. Gal 1:11–12; Heb 2:3; 1 Pet 3:2. Note further the possibility that Paul’s references to “the gospel of his Son / Christ / the Lord” might be read as plenary genitives, implying that the gospel proclaimed *about Jesus* was also first proclaimed *by Jesus* (Rom 1:19; 15:19; 16:25; 1 Cor 9:2; 2 Cor 2:12; 9:13; 10:14; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 3:2; 2 Thess 1:8).

22. Cf. Olmstead, “Genre of the Gospels,” 103–19, esp. 103.

Gospel of Mark.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Gathercole has now demonstrated that the core elements of the common apostolic gospel—namely, (1). Jesus’s identity as the Christ, (2). his death for sins, (3). his resurrection as Lord, and (4). the attestation of the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3–5, 11)—give shape and substance to all four canonical Gospels in a way that distinguishes them from the later non-canonical “Gospels.”<sup>24</sup> Gathercole reasonably concludes that the four Gospels “are theologically similar to one another” because “they . . . follow a preexisting apostolic ‘creed’ or preached gospel.”<sup>25</sup> The Gospels, that is, are “biographical expansions of the preached gospel.”<sup>26</sup> Certainly, the early church’s reception of the Gospels is consistent with this conclusion. Irenaeus and Tertullian, among others, assume that the “gospel” narrated in the four written Gospels is fundamentally the same as the “gospel” originally proclaimed by the apostles, and 1 Clement traces this “gospel” back to Jesus himself.<sup>27</sup> Thus all four canonical Gospels appear as apostolic in this further sense that the gospel message first proclaimed by Jesus, and then preached by the apostles, is now set forth in them in written form.

### (3) *The Gospels Claim to Bear Apostolic Testimony to Jesus*

The apostolic origins and character of the Gospels are further evident from the way in which each of them claims to present divinely-authorized apostolic testimony to Jesus in written form.

#### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

The Gospel of Matthew makes its claim to bear divinely authorized apostolic testimony to Jesus by drawing a line from God, through Jesus, to the apostles, and then to the written Gospel itself. Matthew’s Jesus

23. Dodd, “Framework of the Gospel Narratives,” 396–400; cf. Bock, “Gospel before the Gospels,” 97–104.

24. Gathercole, *Gospel and the Gospels*, 66–127, 667–724.

25. Gathercole, *Gospel and the Gospels*, 692; cf. Jensen, “Fourth Gospel and the Apostolic Mission,” 195–208.

26. Bird, *Gospel of the Lord*, 20.

27. 1 Clem 42:1; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4.2–5; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.16.1: “Mark . . . proclaimed the Gospel which he had written” (Μάρκον . . . τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον ὃ δὴ καὶ συνεγράψατο, κηρύττειν). See Hengel, *Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ*, 57.

is the divinely-authorized “Son of God” (3:17; 17:5),<sup>28</sup> who chooses and sends out “the Twelve” apostles to proclaim his gospel (10:5–7; cf. 4:23; 9:35), affirms that they represent him (10:40; cf. 18:20; 25:40, 45), grants them authority over his church (16:18–19; 18:18–20), and then commissions them to teach his commandments to the nations (28:18–20). Crucially, Matthew’s Jesus also indicates that this apostolic proclamation must ultimately take written form. He sets his own teaching in parallel with that of the ancient Scriptures (5:21–22, 27–28, 31–32, 33–34, 38–39, 43–44).<sup>29</sup> He puts his own words in the same category as God’s word through the Law and the Prophets (24:35 with 5:18; Isa 40:8). He claims that “my blood of the covenant” (26:28: τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης) seals the divine covenant (Exodus 24:8: דְּמִי הַבְּרִית / τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης), which previously took written form in a “book” (Exod 24:7: סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית / τὸ βιβλίον τῆς διαθήκης).<sup>30</sup> He commands his disciples to promulgate his teaching among “all the nations,” and “all the days until the end of the age” (28:18–20).<sup>31</sup> These stupendous claims together indicate that Jesus’s words and deeds bear universal and enduring divine authority, and so must be preserved and promulgated—like God’s earlier covenants, promises, and commandments—in written form.<sup>32</sup>

In this context, Matthew’s Jesus twice refers to “*this* gospel” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦτο), which will be proclaimed “in the whole world,” in a manner that suggests that the present *written* work is intended (24:14; 26:13).<sup>33</sup> As Ulrich Luz notes, “since ‘this’ is not defined by the context, τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον most likely means the gospel of Jesus contained in

28. Jesus also claims this identity for himself: 11:27; 21:37–38; 22:2, 42–45 [?]; 24:36; 26:63–64 [?]; 28:19. The narrative also identifies him as such: 2:15; 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16; 27:40, 43, 54.

29. This is further confirmed by Matthew’s arrangement of Jesus’s teaching into five blocks (Matt 5–7; 10; 13; 18; 24–25), which is probably designed to echo the five books of Moses. See Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:61–66.

30. The biblical covenants are regularly preserved in written form: Exod 31:18; 34:27; Deut 10:2; 29:21; 31:9–13; Josh 24:24–26; 1 Sam 10:25; cf. Kline, *Structure of Biblical Authority*, 39; Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 166.

31. In the Old Testament the expression “all the days” (כָּל־הַיָּמִים / πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας) regularly refers to an extended or indefinite period, sometimes equivalent to “forever” (עַד־עוֹלָם / εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα). For the two expressions in parallel, see 1 Kgs 9:3 // 2 Chron 7:16; cf. Deut 4:40; 5:29; 18:5; Josh 4:24; 1 Sam 2:35; 1 Kgs 8:40; 11:36, 39; 2 Kgs 8:19; 2 Chron 6:31; 21:7; Jer 31:36; 32:39; 33:18.

32. Cf. Hill, “God’s Speech in These Last Days,” 232–33.

33. In Matthew 24:14 and 26:13 the verb κηρύσσω (“proclaim”) indicates oral proclamation, but “Matthew undoubtedly offered his own Gospel as a foundation for the proclamation of the gospel” (Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1056).

all of the Gospel of Matthew.”<sup>34</sup> Crucially, the phrase “this gospel of the kingdom” (24:14: τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας) evokes both Jesus’s proclamation (4:17, 23; 9:35), and the apostolic proclamation he commissioned (10:7), and so characterizes Matthew’s book as a presentation of the same gospel now in written form.<sup>35</sup> This impression is strengthened by Jesus’s reference to “every scribe disciplined for the kingdom of heaven [πᾶς γραμματεὺς μαθητευθεὶς τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν]” (Matt 13:52), which refers to “the disciples” (13:36, 51). This unique Matthean saying suggests both that some of the disciples will engage in writing as part of their dominical commission (28:19),<sup>36</sup> and that Matthew intends to categorize his own literary work in those terms.<sup>37</sup>

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

The Gospel of Mark similarly presents itself as divinely-authorized apostolic testimony to Jesus. The Gospel’s *incipit* announces its intention to declare “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ . . .” (1:1), and the narrative quickly explicates this “gospel” as nothing less than “the gospel of God” (1:14).<sup>38</sup> This gospel was announced beforehand through the prophets (1:2–3 citing Exod 23:20a; Mal 3:1; Isa 40:3 with 40:9), was the subject of Jesus’s own proclamation (1:14–15),<sup>39</sup> and now—Mark

34. Luz, *Matthew*, 1:168–69; cf. 3:194: “This gospel of the kingdom” is “the proclamation of Jesus formulated in the Gospel of Matthew.”

35. The repetition of the phrase “this gospel” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦτο) in connection with Jesus’s anointing in Bethany (26:13) further suggests that “this gospel” includes Jesus’s deeds, perhaps especially those for which this anointing “prepared” him (26:12), namely, his suffering, death, burial, and resurrection (26:14–28:20).

36. Luz, *Matthew*, 2:287, observes that πᾶς γραμματεὺς (“every scribe”) indicates that the verse is not *exclusively* self-referential.

37. Note the parallel between “every scribe *disciplined* (μαθητευθεὶς) for the kingdom of heaven” (13:52) and “make disciples (μαθητεύσατε) of all nations” (28:19); cf. Moule, “St. Matthew’s Gospel,” 98; Nolland, *Matthew*, 570–71, esp. n141.

38. Mark 1:1 is best understood as a title for the whole book, which indicates its intention to narrate the “backstory” of the preached apostolic gospel. See Orr, “Mark as the Backstory.”

39. This point is strengthened if Mark’s references to “the gospel of Jesus Christ” (1:1: τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) and “the gospel of God” (1:14: τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ) are taken as subjective genitives (i.e., “the gospel *proclaimed by* Jesus Christ/God”) or plenary genitives (“the gospel *proclaimed by and about* Jesus Christ/God”). For the latter possibility, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 120–21; France, *Mark*, 53, 91.

claims—is set forth in written form in his book (1:1).<sup>40</sup> As the narrative develops, Jesus twice receives divine authorization as God’s prophesied “Son” (1:11; 9:7),<sup>41</sup> and appoints “the Twelve . . . apostles” to “proclaim” his message (3:14; 6:7–12).<sup>42</sup> As in Matthew, Mark’s Jesus anticipates that this apostolic proclamation will also take written form: his words—like God’s word—will “never pass away” (13:31; cf. Isa 40:6–8), and his blood seals “the covenant” which earlier took written form in a “book” (14:24; cf. Exod 24:7–8). Indeed, Mark’s Jesus also prophesies that “the gospel” will be “proclaimed” after his death in “the whole world” (13:14; 14:9; cf. 8:35; 10:29). As Charles Hill observes, “Mark is . . . certainly aware that what Jesus said would be told ‘wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world’ (14:9), he was now writing in a book.”<sup>43</sup>

The Second Gospel more directly underlines its apostolic credentials by drawing attention to the apostle Peter as its primary source. Peter is especially prominent in this Gospel.<sup>44</sup> He is repeatedly listed first among the disciples (3:16; 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33, 37). Mark twice reports what “Peter remembered” (11:21; 14:72).<sup>45</sup> The criticisms of the disciples focus especially on him (6:52; 8:14–21 [cf. Matt 16:12]; 14:32–42).<sup>46</sup> The Gospel as a whole exhibits a “Petrine perspective.”<sup>47</sup> Most importantly, the Gospel identifies Peter as its primary source—as Martin Hengel observes—by naming Peter first and last in the narrative (1:16 [x2]; 16:7), and highlighting his name in each case.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, as Bauckham demon-

40. So Guelich, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 9; cf. Hengel, “Titles of the Gospels,” 64–84; *Four Gospels*, 91.

41. Jesus claims the identity “Son of God” for himself: 12:6; 13:32; 14:61–62; cf. 8:38; 14:36. This identity is confirmed by the narrative and key characters within it: 1:1; 3:11; 5:7; 15:39.

42. In 3:14, whether the explanatory gloss οὗς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν (“whom he named apostles”) is original or not, the Twelve are clearly the apostles (cf. 6:7).

43. Hill, “God’s Speech,” 234n77; cf. Delorme, “Parole, Évangile et mémoire,” 113. Delorme rightly sees in Mark 14:9 “a sort of auto-justification of the text.” That is, the Gospel “authorizes itself from Jesus to recount what it recounts.”

44. 1:16–18, 29–31, 36; 3:16; 5:37–43; 8:29, 31–33; 9:2–8; 10:28–31; 11:21; 13:3–37; 14:27–31, 32–42, 54, 66–72; 16:7. See Feldmeier, “Portrayal of Peter,” 59; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 125–26, 147–49.

45. Hengel, *Saint Peter*, 37–40.

46. Cf. Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory*, 140.

47. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 155–82, 545–47, modifying and extending Turner, “Marcan Usage.”

48. 1:16 highlights Peter’s name by repetition. 16:7 highlights Peter’s name by singling him out from the other disciples, and listing his name after theirs, against the

strates, this “*inclusio* of eyewitness testimony” was a convention of ancient historiography by which authors identified their primary source.<sup>49</sup> Thus, while the Second Gospel no doubt relies on “the body of traditions first formulated in Jerusalem by the Twelve,” and also draws on the testimony of others, Mark presents these traditions “in the form in which Peter related them.”<sup>50</sup> Like Matthew, but in its own way, the Gospel of Mark claims to present divinely-authorized apostolic testimony to Jesus in written form.

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

The Gospel of Luke, likewise, presents itself as divinely authorized apostolic testimony to Jesus. Luke also draws strong lines of continuity between Jesus’s authority as “Son of God,” the apostles as Jesus’s authorized “witnesses,” and his own written work. Luke’s Jesus is, again, the divinely-authorized “Son” (1:32–33, 35; 3:22; 9:35),<sup>51</sup> who commissions the twelve apostles, and seventy-two others (6:12–16; 9:1–6; 10:1–20), and affirms that they bear his authority (10:16) to extend his own gospel proclamation (9:6: *εὐαγγελίζω*; with 4:18, 43; 7:22; 8:1; 16:16; 20:1). Indeed, Luke’s Jesus declares that the Scriptures—especially Isaiah—prophecy not only his own ministry, suffering, and glory (4:16–21; 24:27, 46 with Isa 61:1–2a; 52:7), but also the apostolic ministry of bearing “witness” to him, and announcing “forgiveness of sins in his name” (24:46–48; Acts 1:7–8 with Isa 2:2–3; 40:9; 43:10; 44:6–8; 49:6; 51:45; 59:20).<sup>52</sup> Significantly, Luke’s Jesus also indicates that this apostolic witness will include written

pattern of the Gospel (cf. 3:16; 5:37; 8:29; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33). See Hengel, *Saint Peter*, 42; *Four Gospels*, 82; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 124–26.

49. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 132–47, 515–20.

50. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 172. In addition to the Twelve (3:14, 16; 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:17, 20 [cf. 14:10, 43]), other named individuals may be primary sources for sections of the narrative. E.g., Jairus (5:22), Jesus’s mother Mary and Jesus’s brothers (6:3; cf. 3:31), Bartimaeus (10:46), Rufus (15:21 with Rom 16:13; cf. Matt 27:32; Luke 23:26); Mary Magdalene, Mary, Salome (15:40–41, 47; 16:1, 4–7); Joseph of Arimathea (15:43). See further Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 51–54, 520–24.

51. Jesus identifies himself as “Son of God”: 10:22; 20:41–44 [?]; 22:70 [?]. The narrative confirms his identity as such: 3:38; 4:3, 9, 41; 8:28; 20:13.

52. Cf. Hill, “God’s Speech,” 207–18. The book of Acts underscores the continuity between Jesus and the apostles by its reference to the Gospel as an account of what “Jesus began to do and teach” (1:1: *ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς ποιεῖν τε καὶ διδάσκειν*), which implies that Acts will narrate what Jesus *continued* to do and teach, by his Spirit, through the apostles and others. See Thompson, *Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 47–48.

testimony. His words—like the Law of God, and the prophetic Scriptures—“will not pass away” (21:33 with 16:17; Isa 40:8). His blood seals “the new covenant” (22:20; cf. Jer 31:31) which, like God’s earlier covenants, must be preserved in written form.<sup>53</sup> His mission through the apostles will be extended in duration (21:24: *καιροί* [pl.]; cf. Acts 1:7; 3:20), and universal in scope (24:47; Acts 1:8), and will, therefore, require “written documents which authoritatively preserve and continually proclaim” his gospel.<sup>54</sup>

Crucially, Luke’s Prologue emphasizes the apostolic character of his Gospel. He grounds the whole narrative in the testimony of “those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word” (*οἱ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ λόγου*) (1:2).<sup>55</sup> The unfolding narrative of Luke-Acts identifies the apostles as the core of this group:<sup>56</sup> they are, above all, Jesus “witnesses” (*μάρτυς*);<sup>57</sup> they were so “from the beginning” (Acts 1:22; 10:37: *ἀρξάμενος*); and they devote themselves to “the service of the word” (Acts 6:4: *τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου*).<sup>58</sup> Within this group, Luke highlights Peter and Paul. He retains Mark’s *inclusio*, naming Peter first and last (4:38; 24:34), but does so in his own way, and so re-affirms the foundational significance of Peter’s testimony.<sup>59</sup> Luke further narrates how the risen Lord directly “appointed” Paul as both “servant and witness” (Acts 26:16: *ὑπηρέτην καὶ μάρτυρα*; cf. 9:15; 22:15, 18; 23:11),<sup>60</sup> and so suggests that Paul’s testimony is also,

53. Hill, “God’s Speech,” 230–34.

54. “God’s Speech,” 217–18. Note further Acts 10:39–43, where Peter sets Jesus’s command that the apostles “testify” (*διαμαρτύρασθαι*) as his “witnesses” (*μάρτυρες*) in parallel with the written “testifying” (*μαρτυροῦσιν*) of the prophets.

55. The key term *αὐτόπτης* is a NT *hapax legomenon*. While it can refer to “personal / firsthand experience” of various kinds (Alexander, *Preface to Luke’s Gospel*, 34–41, 80–82, 120–22), it is commonly used by ancient historians (Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.29.1; 3.115.1; 4.16.1; Polybius, *Hist.* 3.4.13; Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.53–54). See Byrskog, *Story as History*, 48–49; Adams, “Luke’s Preface (1:1–4),” 177–91; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 119.

56. Luke’s syntax identifies the “eyewitnesses from the beginning” with those who later became “servants of the word.” See Stonehouse, *Origins*, 116; Fitzmyer, *Gospel according to Luke*, 294; Alexander, *Preface*, 119; Byrskog, *Story*, 233–34; Hengel, “Lukan Prologue,” 533–88; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 122–23.

57. Luke 21:13: *εἰς μαρτύριον*; Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8, 21–22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:37, 39, 41; 13:31: *μάρτυς*.

58. The language for “service” differs (Luke 1:2: *ὑπηρεται . . . τοῦ λόγου*; Acts 6:4: *τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου*), but the conceptual similarities are evident. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 460–61 (§35.19–20), recognize the key terms (*ὑπηρετης*, *διακονία*) as belonging to the same semantic domain, “serve.”

59. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 126.

60. See Mather, “Paul in Acts.”

but differently, foundational for his Gospel (cf. Luke 1:2). Thus, while Luke no doubt draws upon the testimony of others beyond the circle of the Twelve,<sup>61</sup> the Third Gospel claims above all to embody the apostles' testimony to Jesus.

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

The Gospel of John, finally, also presents itself as divinely-authorized apostolic testimony to Jesus.<sup>62</sup> John's Jesus declares his own authority as "Son of God" (υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ),<sup>63</sup> who was "sent" (ἀποστέλλω) by the Father,<sup>64</sup> "came from God" (8:42: ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθον),<sup>65</sup> and brings teaching that "comes from God" (7:17: ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ; 8:40: παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ; cf. 3:34; 8:47; 14:10). Jesus makes plain, moreover, that after his departure "the Twelve" will be the custodians of God's word through him (John 6:67–69; 17:8, 14, 20).<sup>66</sup> They have been with him "from the beginning" (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς), and he will enable them, by the Spirit, to "bear witness" (μαρτυρεῖτε) to him (14:26; 15:26–27; 16:13).<sup>67</sup> After his resurrection, Jesus makes this Father-Son-Spirit-disciples connection explicit when he sets their mission in parallel with his own, and then "breathes" on them, saying "receive the Holy Spirit" (20:21–22; cf. 13:20; 15:20; 17:18). Significantly, Jesus sets his own teaching in parallel with the Scriptures (5:46–47; 6:45; cf. 2:22), and later speaks of calling "other sheep" to hear

61. E.g., (1) Mary (2:19, 51); (2) Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna (8:1–3; 24:10); cf. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 129–31.

62. The Fourth Gospel does not explicitly identify the Twelve by the noun ἀπόστολος (but note 13:16), but does apply the cognate verb ἀποστέλλω to them, setting their commission from Jesus in parallel with his commission from the Father (4:38; 17:18; cf. 20:21: πέμπω).

63. 5:25; 10:36; 11:4; cf. 5:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26; 6:40; 8:36; 14:13; 17:1. Other reliable characters in the narrative recognize Jesus as "Son of God": 1:49; 11:27; cf. 19:7. The narrator confirms that Jesus is God's "Son," indeed, his "only begotten" (μονογενής): 1:14, 18; 3:16–18, 35–36; 20:31.

64. 5:36, 38; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21; cf. 3:17, 34.

65. Cf. 3:2, 31; 6:46; 13:3; 16:27, 30.

66. The Fourth Gospel sees a close relationship between Jesus's "word" (λόγος [sing.]) and "words" (ῥῆμα [pl. forms]). See esp. 5:38, 47; 12:48; 17:6, 8, 14, 17, 20. Even if 17:8, 20 include reference to disciples beyond the Twelve, reference to them is primary.

67. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 384–90, shows that in the Gospel of John the μαρτυρ-word group ("testify," "testimony") functions not only with its normal legal connotations but also with historiographical force.

his “voice” through the disciples (10:16 with 17:8, 14, 20–21), and so suggests that their testimony will be textualized to enable its universal promulgation.

The Fourth Gospel most especially makes its claim to apostolicity through the character of “the beloved disciple” (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).<sup>68</sup> This disciple is: (1) probably one of the first two disciples called, and so a witness “from the beginning” (1:35–42 with 15:27);<sup>69</sup> (2) present at Jesus’s side, with Peter, in the Upper Room (13:23–25); (3) probably again with Peter at Jesus’s trial before the high priest (18:15–16);<sup>70</sup> (4) at the foot of cross when Jesus entrusts the care of his mother to him (19:26–27, 35); (5) present with Peter at the empty tomb, where he is the first to “see” and “believe” (20:2–10); (6) on the beach in Galilee, again with Peter and five other disciples, when he is the first to recognize the risen Lord (21:2–7); and (7) the subject of Jesus’s saying regarding his future (21:20–24).<sup>71</sup> This “beloved disciple” has a special intimacy with Jesus, is present at the most important Gospel events, and has unique insight into their significance.<sup>72</sup> He is not merely a follower of Jesus in the broad sense, nor even merely one of the Twelve, but one of Jesus’s closest companions. Crucially, while this Gospel likely includes testimony from other eyewitnesses,<sup>73</sup> the epilogue identifies “the beloved disciple” as “the

68. The disciple is described by the noun *ὁ μαθητής* (always definite), together with the verb *ἀγαπάω* (13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20) or *φιλέω* (20:2) in relative clauses which have Jesus as the subject.

69. Note how the unidentified initial disciple (1:35–42) parallels “the beloved disciple” in that Jesus or Peter turns and sees him “following” (1:38; 21:20: *ἀκολουθέω*), and he subsequently “remains” (1:38–39; 21:22–23: *μένω*). He is not here called “the beloved disciple” because this is the first time Jesus meets him. See Neirynck, “Anonymous Disciple”; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 127–28, 390–93, 554.

70. The identity of the “other disciple” (18:15–16) with “the beloved disciple” is suggested by: (1) the combination of the two expressions in 20:2–4, 8; (2) the similarly oblique manner of reference to both figures as a “disciple” with a descriptor (“whom Jesus loved” / “who was known to the high priest”); (3) the association of both figures with Peter (cf. 13:23–24; 20:2–10; 21:20–24). See Neirynck, *Evangelica*, 335–64; Köstenberger, *John*, 513–14.

71. The Fourth Gospel thus contains seven references to “the beloved disciple,” which—given the Gospel’s interest in series of seven—may confirm that this disciple is indeed on view in 1:35–42 and 18:15–16; his testimony completes the apostolic witness to Jesus. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 554, observes this possibility but discounts it given the uncertainty of 18:15–16.

72. Cf. Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 6; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 555.

73. E.g., Philip and Nathanael (1:43–51); Jesus’s mother (2:1–5); Jesus’s brothers (7:3); Mary Magdalene (20:1, 11).

disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has *written* these things” (ὁ μαθητὴς ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων καὶ ὁ γράψας ταῦτα) (21:24; cf. 20:30–31).<sup>74</sup>

Further, as Bauckham observes, this Gospel also employs an “*inclusio* of eyewitness testimony.” By locating “the beloved disciple” immediately *before* and *after* Peter at the beginning and end of the narrative (1:35–42; 21:20–24), it simultaneously encloses and affirms Peter’s testimony, and thus the Gospel of Mark (1:35–42; 21:20–24).<sup>75</sup> This *inclusio* is confirmed by the Gospel’s use of the “authoritative we” both in its opening declaration—“we have seen his glory” (1:14: ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ)—and in its closing affirmation—“we know that his testimony is true” (21:24: οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθὴς αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία ἐστίν; cf. 19:35).<sup>76</sup> For while the closing affirmation could be read as a reference to other eyewitnesses,<sup>77</sup> or to those who received the work,<sup>78</sup> it is best understood as an “authoritative we” of self-reference by which the author discloses his own identity, and solemnly affirms that his testimony is true.<sup>79</sup> The Fourth Gospel thus presents itself as a capstone to the other three Gospels, and—like them—claims to bear divinely-authorized apostolic testimony to Jesus in written form.

#### (4) *The Gospels originated in four apostolic missions of James, Peter, Paul, and John*

The Gospels’ own testimony to their apostolicity is further supported by the evidence that they had their origins in four distinct, but coordinated,

74. See Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 358–68.

75. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 127–29, 390–93; cf. “John for Readers of Mark.”

76. Despite a common suggestion, the epilogue (John 21) is almost certainly original to the Gospel: it balances the prologue, has multiple linguistic and thematic links with the narrative, and provides closure to it; there is also no evidence that the Gospel ever existed without the epilogue. See Minear, “Original Functions of John 21”; Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 665–68; Ellis, “Authenticity of John 21”; Köstenberger, *John*, 583–86; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 363–68.

77. E.g., Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 588; Morris, *John*, 775.

78. E.g., Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 2:1125; Ridderbos, *Gospel According to John*, 671.

79. Compare: 3:2, 11; 1 John 1:1–5; 4:14; 3 John 12. See esp. Hill, “Authentication of John,” 398–437; cf. Carson, *John*, 682–84; Köstenberger, *John*, 604–6; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 368–83.

apostolic missions, led respectively by James of Jerusalem (Matthew), Peter (Mark), Paul (Luke), and John (John).<sup>80</sup>

This probability is initially suggested by four general observations. First, Paul testifies that as early as 47 CE the four leading apostles—“James, Cephas [Peter], John” and Paul—agreed to coordinate their endeavors, with each of them providing leadership to an apostolic mission (Gal 2:7–9).<sup>81</sup> Second, the book of Acts highlights the same four men, drawing attention to the roles of Peter, John, and James in the mission to the Jews in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria (Acts 3:1; 4:13; 8:14; 12:17; 15:13–21; 21:17–26), and of Paul in the mission to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 13:46–48; 15:2, 12; 21:19; 26:15–18; 28:28).<sup>82</sup> Third, the New Testament letters and Revelation indicate that these same four apostles each oversaw a network of churches: James writes to “the twelve tribes of the dispersion” (James 1:1); Peter to the churches of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pet 1:1); Paul to the churches of Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia (1 Cor–2 Thess), and; John to the seven churches of Asia (Rev 1:4, 11; 2:1–3:22; cf. 1–3 John).<sup>83</sup> Fourth, Clement of Alexandria later bears witness to the leading role of these same four apostles when he refers to “the tradition of the blessed doctrine derived directly from the holy apostles, Peter, James, John and Paul . . .” (Clement, *Strom.* 1.1.11).<sup>84</sup> Taken together, these general observations render it plausible that each of the four Gospels had its origins in a distinct apostolic mission, and served to aid and augment the apostolic proclamation of the gospel.

This probability is further supported by a substantial body of evidence which more specifically connects the four Gospels, respectively, to James (Matthew), Peter (Mark), Paul (Luke), and John (John).

80. See Ellis, “Gospels Criticism,” 45–54; “New Directions,” 71–92; *Making of the New Testament*, 32–36, 251–66, 307–14; Barnett, *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity*, 376–94; Smith, “Gospels in Early Christian Literature,” 196–97; Jensen, “Gospel and the New Testament,” 85–91.

81. Cf. Barnett, *Rise*, 300: “[This] passage, more than any other in the New Testament, explains the subsequent actual history of the apostolic age.” While James of Jerusalem was not one of the Twelve, he was significant within the apostolic circle (1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9, 12; Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18).

82. This is not to discount the ministries of Stephen, Philip, Tabitha, Lydia, Apollos, Aquila, Priscilla, and others but merely to note that none of these provided apostolic leadership to the mission.

83. Barnett, *Making the Gospels*, 229–30. These four apostolic missions can account for the whole New Testament, apart from Hebrews and Jude.

84. Ellis, *Making of the New Testament*, 309.

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW IN JAMES'S MISSION

The First Gospel has strong connections with James of Jerusalem and the early mission to Jews in Palestine and Syria. The author of this Gospel is, of course, traditionally identified as the apostle Matthew, and there are good reasons to accept this tradition.<sup>85</sup> The Gospel itself subtly hints that Matthew was its author. It identifies Levi as Matthew (9:9 with Mark 2:14 // Luke 5:27, 29), and uniquely notes his profession as “the tax-collector” (10:3: Μαθθαῖος ὁ τελώνης; cf. 9:9; contrast Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15).<sup>86</sup> This is best explained as the author’s self-deprecatory reference to the his own past,<sup>87</sup> which also identifies him as uniquely equipped with the literary skills necessary for writing a Gospel (cf. 13:52).<sup>88</sup> Certainly, the extant manuscripts unanimously identify this Gospel using variations of the formula “according to Matthew” (κατὰ Μαθθαῖον),<sup>89</sup> and the early church agrees that the apostle Matthew was its author.<sup>90</sup> Granted, the early and widespread testimony, beginning with Papias around 95–110 CE,<sup>91</sup> is that Matthew originally wrote “In the Hebrew language” (Ἐβραϊδὶ

85. For Matthew as author of the First Gospel, see Goodspeed, *Matthew*; Stonehouse, *Origins*, 1–47; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 43–53; Gundry, *Matthew*, 609–22; Carson, “Matthew,” 40–43.

86. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 108–112, argues against the identification of Levi and Matthew on the basis that (1) Mark does not identify the two (2:14; 3:18) and (2) the onomastic evidence is weak for Jews in the period bearing two common Semitic personal names. He concludes that the author of the First Gospel “was not himself the apostle Matthew” (112). The limited evidence, however, cannot prove the case against Matthew / Levi having two names. The Gospel’s unique reference to Matthew as “the tax collector” (10:3) remains an important clue to its authorship.

87. Cf. Carson, “Matthew,” 40. *Contra* Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 107, who suggests that the designation ὁ τελώνης may have served to distinguish Matthew (Μαθθαῖος) from Matthias (Μαθθίας), who was later added to the Twelve (Acts 1:23, 26). The Gospel of Matthew, however, has no need to make such a distinction.

88. Pitre, *Case*, 26–28.

89. For the various formulations, see Gathercole, “Titles of the Gospels,” 63–65.

90. (1) Papias in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16; (2) Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1 (cf. in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.8.2); (3) Origen, *Comm. Matt.* in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.4 (cf. Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.6; 6.32); (4) Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.2, 5; (5) Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.10.3; (6) Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 14.15; (7) Epiphanius, *Pan.* 2.1.51; (8) Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 3 (cf. *Prol. in Matt.*; *Praef. in quat. ev.*; *Comm. Os.* 11.2; *Comm. in Jesai.* 6.9); (9) Augustine, *Cons.* 1.1.1; 1.2.4.

91. See Yarbrough, “Date of Papias,” 181–91.

διαλέκτω),<sup>92</sup> that is, “in his native tongue” (πατρίωι γλώττηι).<sup>93</sup> While this testimony creates the difficulty of relating the putative Hebrew original to our Greek Gospel,<sup>94</sup> Matthew’s training as a tax-collector in the trilingual context of first-century Galilee makes it plausible that he played a key role in transmitting apostolic testimony to Jesus in both Hebrew and Greek.<sup>95</sup> Papias (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.6) testifies that Matthew published his Hebrew Gospel to serve the ongoing mission to the Jews of Palestine and Syria when his own focus shifted to the wider Gentile mission.<sup>96</sup> It therefore seems most likely that Matthew later incorporated this first edition into an expanded Greek Gospel, which also made use of the Gospel of Mark, and was designed to serve that wider Gentile mission.<sup>97</sup> The common objection that Matthew, as an apostle, is unlikely to have relied so heavily on Mark, is readily countered by the twin observations that Mark presents Peter’s testimony, which Matthew no doubt respected, and that Matthew was not present at all the events he narrates.<sup>98</sup> Although it is hard to be certain about these judgments, the con-

92. Papias in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16. Also: Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, Cyril, Jerome, and Augustine (see note 90 above). Kürzinger’s suggestion that Papias refers to the semitic style of Matthew’s Greek Gospel has not been widely followed (see Kürzinger, “Das Papiaszeugnis”).

93. Papias in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.6. For the argument that Papias is Eusebius’s (unnamed) source in *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.5–13, 15, see Hill, “What Papias Said”; *Johannine Corpus*, 385–94, 409–16. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 433–37, offers critique, but see Hill, “Orthodox Gospel.” In support of Hill at this point, see Furlong, “Theodore of Mopsuestia.” For modification, suggesting the Papian fragment is limited to 3.24.5–8a, see Manor, “Papias, Origen, and Eusebius.”

94. Papias describes Matthew’s work as τὰ λόγια (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16), which almost certainly refers to a written Gospel. Papias also uses the plural (λογίων) for Mark’s composition, which includes “the things said and done by Christ,” and is clearly the written Gospel of Mark (3.39.15). Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1 (Γραφήν ἐξήνεγκεν Εὐαγγελίου) and Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.10.3 (τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον Εὐαγγέλιον) explicitly refer to Matthew’s Hebrew composition as his “Gospel” (τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον).

95. See Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 178–85.

96. For Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.6 as a Papian fragment, see note 93 above.

97. The Gospel title κατὰ Ματθαῖον (see note 89 above) most likely indicates Matthew as the author of the Greek Gospel rather than merely its primary source. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1 affirms Matthew as the author and regularly cites from the Greek (e.g., *Haer.* 1.20.3 [Matt 11:25–27]; 3.11.8 [Matt 1:1, 18]; 3.22.2 [Matt 26:38]). Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.2, 5 also seems to credit Matthew with the Greek Gospel. Alternatively, it is possible that someone else translated the Gospel or incorporated Matthew’s Hebrew testimony into an essentially new composition (so, differently: Papias in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16; Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 3).

98. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:12–13; Carson, “Matthew,” 41; Pitre, *Case*, 27–28.

sistent early Christian testimony that the apostle Matthew wrote the First Gospel demands to be taken seriously.

The First Gospel also has strong links with James of Jerusalem and his mission to the Jews of Palestine and Syria.<sup>99</sup> The strongest evidence for this association is provided by the multiple parallels between Jesus's teaching in Matthew and James's teaching in his letter.<sup>100</sup> The association is further supported by the original Hebrew language of the Gospel, its publication in Palestine,<sup>101</sup> its Jewish-Christian flavor,<sup>102</sup> and its multiple points of contact with the Jewish-Christian *Didache*.<sup>103</sup> There is also an intriguing parallel between the First Gospel's approach to the Christian mission—first “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6; 15:24), and then to the nations (28:19; cf. 2:1–12; 8:5–12; 24:14; 25:32)—and James's approach to the same, as reported in Acts and in Paul (Acts 15:13–21; cf. Gal 2:9–10). Thus, it seems likely that the First Gospel is apostolic not only in the strong sense that it was authored by the apostle Matthew, but also in the further sense that it was designed to support the apostolic mission to the Jews under the leadership of James of Jerusalem.

### THE GOSPEL OF MARK IN PETER'S MISSION

The Gospel of Mark has strong associations with the apostle Peter and his mission to Jews and Gentiles throughout the Graeco-Roman world. We have already seen that the Second Gospel itself identifies Peter as its primary source, and the connections between this Gospel and Peter are further supported by Peter's reference to Mark as “my son” (1 Pet 5:13; cf.

99. James exercised authority in Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and probably also Antioch and beyond (cf. Acts 15:1–4; 22–31). See Bockmuehl, “Antioch and James the Just.”

100. Note esp. (1) Jas 1:20 // Matt 5:22; (2) Jas 2:11 // Matt 5:21–30; (3) Jas 2:14–16 // Matt 7:21–23; (4) Jas 2:15–16 // Matt 25:34–35; (5) Jas 3:13 // Matt 5:3, 5; (6) Jas 4:8 // Matt 5:8; (7) Jas 5:12 // Matt 5:33–37. The precise relationship between Jesus's teaching as it is reflected in Matthew and the letter of James is beyond our scope. For various proposals, see Shepherd, “Epistle of James and the Gospel of Matthew,” 40–51; Mc-Cartney, *James*, 50–52; McKnight, *Letter of James*, 25–27; Allison, “Audience of James,” 58–77.

101. Papias in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.6 (see note 93 above); Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1; Jerome, *De Vir. Ill.* 3.

102. See esp. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:7–58.

103. For the likely provenance of the *Didache* in Syria-Palestine, see Niederwimmer, *Didache*, 52–54. For the relationship between Matthew and the *Didache*, see Draper and Jefford, *Didache*, §3, 247–428.

Acts 12:12–17),<sup>104</sup> and by the parallel between Peter's gospel preaching in Acts (esp. Acts 10:34–43) and Mark's Gospel outline.<sup>105</sup>

The early church is unanimous in its testimony that the Gospel of Mark presents the gospel preached by Peter.<sup>106</sup> The earliest testimony to this effect again comes from Papias, who reports the testimony of "the presbyter John" (ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης) that "Mark, having become Peter's translator (ἐρμηνευτής), wrote down accurately, though not in order, as much as he remembered (ὅσα ἐμνημόνευσεν) of the things said and done by Christ" (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.14–15). Whether Papias's "presbyter John" is John the apostle,<sup>107</sup> or another John,<sup>108</sup> Papias here reports first-century testimony to the apostolic origin of the Gospel of Mark. Indeed, "the presbyter's" description of Mark as Peter's ἐρμηνευτής probably characterizes him not merely as Peter's "interpreter," but as his "translator," indicating a close verbal correspondence between Peter's gospel preaching and the written Gospel narrative.<sup>109</sup> Consistent with this, Papias's description of how Mark wrote things "as he remembered" them probably refers not to Mark's memory of Peter but to Peter's memory of Jesus (cf. Mark 11:21; 14:72; Justin, *Dial.* 106), and so again credits Peter with the substance of Mark's Gospel.<sup>110</sup>

Other patristic authors draw similarly strong connections between Peter's preaching and the Gospel of Mark. Justin Martyr identifies

104. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.14.6; Jerome, *Chron.* 179; *Vir. Ill.* 1 place Peter in Rome from the second year of Claudius (42 CE). For the possibility that Mark travelled with Peter, see Wenham, *Redating Matthew, Mark and Luke*, 146–72; Bernier, *Rethinking*, 74.

105. See note 23 above.

106. (1) Papias in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.14–15; cf. 2.15.1–2; (2) Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 106 (see note 111 below); (3) Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1 (cf. in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.8.1–3); 3.10.5; (4) Clement of Alexandria in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.15.1–2; 6.14.5–7; *Adumbr.* on 1 Peter 5:13 (Peppard, *Son of God in the Roman World*, 90); (5) Origen, *Comm. Matt.* in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.5; (6) the Old Gospel Prologue to Mark; (7) the Old Gospel Prologue to Luke; (8) Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.30.1; (9) Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.5; (10) Athanasius, *Sermon on the Nativity*, 28; (11) Jerome, *Epist.* 120.11; *Vir. ill.* 1, 8; *Comm. Matt.* Prol. 6; (12) Augustine, *Cons.* 1.2–2.4. Further, Mur. Frag. 1 probably reflects this tradition, but the text is fragmentary at this point.

107. Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2:437–38; Baum, "Papias und der Presbyter Johannes," 30–33; Gundry, "Apostolically Johannine Pre-Papian Tradition," 49–73; Shanks, *Papias and the New Testament*, 19, 154–55.

108. Lightfoot, *Essays*, 144–46; Munck, "Presbyters and Disciples of the Lord," 237–38; Körtner, *Papias von Hierapolis*, 124–25; Hengel, *Johannine Question*, 17, 27–28; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 15–21.

109. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 205–10.

110. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 210–14.

the uniquely Markan reference to Jesus naming the sons of Zebedee “Boanerges” (Mark 3:16–17) as a record found in Peter’s “memoirs” (ἀπομνημονεύματα) (*Dial.* 106).<sup>111</sup> Irenaeus affirms that Mark handed down to us in writing “the things proclaimed by Peter” (τὰ ὑπὸ Πέτρου κηρυσσόμενα) (*Haer.* 3.1.1). Clement of Alexandria characterizes Mark’s Gospel as “a written memorial” (διὰ γραφῆς ὑπόμνημα) of Peter’s teaching, and reports that Peter gave his apostolic approval for its use in the churches (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.15.1–2).<sup>112</sup> Tertullian asserts that the Gospel “which Mark published may be affirmed to be Peter’s” (*Marcus quod edidit Petri affirmetur*) (*Marc.* 4.5.3). The same Peter–Mark connection may also be reflected in other sources.<sup>113</sup> This testimony is so early and so widespread that it is unlikely to be entirely dependent on Papias.<sup>114</sup> The early Christian texts also do not provide any alternative explanation for the origin of the Gospel of Mark.

None of this implies that the Second Gospel is exclusively dependent on Peter’s testimony. As we noted, Mark also seems to have relied on other named eyewitnesses.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, Mark and his Gospel are clearly associated with the apostle Paul.<sup>116</sup> Mark served as Paul’s “assistant” in gospel ministry (Acts 13:5: ὑπηρέτης; cf. 12:25),<sup>117</sup> and Peter, Paul, and Mark were all together in Rome in the 50s or early 60s.<sup>118</sup> The Second Gospel has multiple theological affinities with Paul’s letters, including

111. Thornton, “Justin und das Markusevangelium.”

112. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7 provides a somewhat contradictory report of Clement’s testimony, asserting that when Peter learned of Mark’s work, “he neither directly forbade it nor encouraged it.”

113. See Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 235–38, discussing G. Thom. 13 and Clement, *Strom.* 7.106.4.

114. Oden and Hall, *Mark*, xxi, xxv.

115. See note 50 above.

116. For the Mark–Paul connection, see esp. Marcus, “Mark”; Bird, “Mark”; Mitchell, “Mark”; Orr, “Mark as Backstory,” 256–58.

117. Byrskog, *Story*, 279, suggests that Acts’ description of John Mark as Paul and Barnabas’s “assistant” (Acts 13:5: ὑπηρέτης) may imply that Mark “served Barnabas and Paul with material that aided them in their preaching activity.” This may also imply that Mark was one of the “servants of the word” who supplied Luke with a source for his own Gospel-writing activity (Luke 1:2), especially since Luke and Mark were together in Rome in the 50s/early 60s (Col 4:10, 14; Phlm 24; 2 Tim 4:11); cf. Holmes, “Luke’s Description of John Mark,” 63–72, esp. 68; Taylor, “Ministry of Mark,” 136–38.

118. Col 4:10; Phlm 24; 2 Tim 4:11; 1 Pet 5:13. The Pauline texts in this list indicate that the earlier differences between Paul and Mark had been overcome (Acts 13:13; 15:36–41). Interestingly, Apostolic Constitutions 2.57 refers to “Luke and Mark” as “the Gospels . . . which the fellow-workers of Paul received and left to you.”

prominent use of “gospel” language,<sup>119</sup> and an “apocalyptic” understanding of the crucifixion.<sup>120</sup> The Gospel of Mark, then, is apostolic in the double sense that it is grounded in Peter’s gospel ministry, and also shaped by Paul’s, such that it almost certainly played a role in both apostolic missions.<sup>121</sup>

### THE GOSPEL OF LUKE IN PAUL’S MISSION

The Gospel of Luke has strong connections with the apostle Paul and his mission to the Gentiles. As is well recognized, the author of Luke-Acts indicates by the “we” passages in Acts that he travelled with Paul in the course of his ministry (16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18), and was with Paul in Rome towards the end (27:1–28:16).<sup>122</sup> Paul himself indicates that Luke was with him in Rome, referring to Luke as “the beloved physician” (Col 4:14), his “fellow worker” (Phlm 24), and the one who “alone” was with him in his final days (2 Tim 4:11). Significantly, Luke-Acts shares several theological-thematic correspondences with Paul’s letters.<sup>123</sup> The two-volume work uniquely emphasizes the Pauline themes of Jesus’s ascension,<sup>124</sup> justification through faith,<sup>125</sup> mission to the Gentiles,<sup>126</sup>

119. Mark employs the noun εὐαγγέλιον seven or eight times (1:1, 14, 15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15 [?]). Contrast four uses in Matthew (4:23, 9:35, 24:14, 26:13), and none in Luke and John (though note Luke’s frequent use of the cognate verb εὐαγγελίζω [x10]). See further Orr, “Mark as Backstory,” 256–58.

120. Marcus, “Mark,” 479–83.

121. Cf. Bird, “Mark,” 32: the Gospel of Mark is “Petrine testimony shaped into an evangelical narrative conducive to Pauline proclamation.”

122. See, already, Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.14.1. In recent scholarship, see Hengel, *Acts*, 66; Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 98–103; Keener, *Acts*, 1:406–9; Adams, “Relationships of Paul and Luke.”

123. See Ellis, *Gospel of Luke*, 45–47; Marshall, “Luke’s View of Paul,” 41–51; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 145–47; Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 189–206; Keener, *Acts*, 1:250–57.

124. Only Luke-Acts narrates Jesus’s ascension: Luke 24:50–53; Acts 1:9–11. Luke-Acts also emphasizes Jesus’s ascension in other ways: Luke 22:69 (contrast Mark 14:62 // Matt 26:64); Acts 2:33–35; 3:20–21; 5:31; 7:55–56. For Jesus’s ascension/exaltation in Paul’s letters: Rom 1:4; 8:34; Eph 1:20–23; 2:6; Phil 3:20; Col 3:1; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:16; 2 Thess 1:7.

125. In Luke-Acts: Luke 10:29; 16:15; 18:9–14; Acts 13:38–39. In Paul’s letters: Rom 2:13; 3:20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5, 25; 5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30, 33; 1 Cor 4:4; 6:11; Gal 2:16–17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:4; Titus 3:7.

126. In Luke-Acts: Acts 9:15; 13:16, 26, 46–48; 14:27; 15:3, 12; 18:6; 21:19; 22:21; 26:17, 20, 23; 28:28. In Paul’s letters: Rom 1:5, 13; 11:13; 15:16, 18; 16:26; Gal 1:16; 2:2, 8–9; Eph 3:1, 8; 1 Thess 2:16; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 4:17. Note, esp., Romans 1:16 “first to

freedom for Gentile converts from circumcision,<sup>127</sup> and the role of Christian ministers as “stewards” (οἰκονόμος / οἰκονομία).<sup>128</sup> Further, Paul’s only two direct citations of Jesus’s words reflect their Lukan form: his rehearsal of the Lord’s Supper tradition includes the uniquely Lucan reference to “the new covenant” (ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη) (1 Cor 11:24–25 with Luke 22:19–20);<sup>129</sup> his appeal to “the Scripture” (ἡ γραφή) that “the worker is worthy of his wages” (Ἄξιός ὁ ἐργάτης τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ) reflects Luke’s version of the dominical saying (1 Tim 5:18 with Luke 10:7).<sup>130</sup> Yet further, Paul’s letters presuppose that his readers are familiar with a gospel narrative: his credal statements affirming that “Christ died for us” and “was raised” don’t make sense without one (e.g., 1 Thess 1:10; 5:10; Gal 1:4; Rom 1:3–4; 1 Cor 15:3–5); his exhortations to “imitate Christ” similarly require knowledge of Christ’s life (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6).<sup>131</sup> While Paul himself no doubt supplied this narrative in his gospel preaching (e.g., Gal 3:1), it is also likely that Paul’s churches had a written narrative, and the Third Gospel is the best candidate.<sup>132</sup> All of this creates a strong cumulative case that the Gospel of Luke was the Gospel of Paul’s mission.

The early church writings, perhaps beginning with Papias,<sup>133</sup> and undoubtedly from Irenaeus onwards, unanimously testify that the Third Gospel was written by Luke, the “travelling companion” of Paul.<sup>134</sup> It

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the Jew, then to the Gentiles,” which parallels the strategy ascribed to Paul in Acts (9:20; 13:5, 14, 46; 14:1; 17:2, 10, 17; 18:4, 6–8, 19; 19:8; 28:17–28).

127. In Luke-Acts: Acts 15:1–2, 12 (cf. Acts 10–11). In Paul’s letters: Rom 2:25–29; 4:9–12; 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 2:12; 5:2–12; 6:15; Phil 3:3; Col 2:11; Titus 1:10.

128. In Luke: 12:42–48; 16:1–9. In Paul’s letters: 1 Cor 4:1; 9:17; Eph 3:2; Col 1:25; 1 Tim 1:4; Titus 1:7. See Quinn, *Letter to Titus*, 89; Tomlinson, “Purpose and Stewardship,” 82–83.

129. There are multiple points of contact. For analysis, see Gathercole, *Gospel*, 88–92.

130. The parallel in Matthew 10:10 has τροφή (“food”) rather than μισθός (“wages”). For Paul’s reference to “the Scripture” including both Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7, see Kruger, “First Timothy 5:18”; Swinson, *What Is Scripture?*, 91–119.

131. Cf. Hengel, *Acts*, 43–44; *Four Gospels*, 147.

132. Bernier, *Rethinking*, 76–80, makes a good case for an early date for Luke’s Gospel (59 CE).

133. In Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.7, 15. See Hill, “What Papias Said,” 625–29, who argues that Papias stands behind Eusebius’s statement that Luke was “aided” in writing his Gospel “by his intimacy and his stay with Paul and by his acquaintance with the rest of the apostles” (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.15).

134. (1) Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1 (cf. Eus. *Hist. eccl.* 5.8.3); 3.10.1; 3.14.1; (2) Mur. Frag. 2–8; (3) the Old Gospel Prologue to Luke; (4) Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.2, 5; (5) Origen, *Comm. Matt.*, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.4–5; *Princ.* 2.6.7; (6) Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*,

is remarkable that from the relatively long list of Paul's companions in Rome this early testimony singles out Luke, a non-apostle and relatively minor New Testament figure.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, Irenaeus attributes the substance of the Third Gospel to Paul, when he says that "Luke, the follower of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel that Paul proclaimed" (Λουκᾶς δέ, ὁ ἀκόλουθος Παύλου, τὸ ὑπ' ἐκείνου κηρυσσόμενον Εὐαγγέλιον ἐν βίβλῳ κατέθετο) (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.8.3). Tertullian, similarly, states that "it is customary to ascribe Luke's digest to Paul" (*Nam et Lucae digestum Paulo adscribere solent*).<sup>136</sup> Origen says that Paul himself "praised" (ἐπαινούμενον) Luke's Gospel when he described an un-named "brother who is praised throughout all the churches in the Gospel" (τὸν ἀδελφὸν οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ διὰ πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν) (2 Cor 8:18).<sup>137</sup> Eusebius, perhaps reflecting Papias, interprets Paul's references to "my gospel" (Rom 2:16; 2 Tim 2:8) as references to the Gospel composed by Luke (*Hist. eccl.* 3.4.7).<sup>138</sup> Whatever the merits of these judgments, they testify to an early, widespread, and abiding sense that Luke was the Gospel of Paul's mission. Since this sense reflects connections already evident in the New Testament itself, we are right to conclude that the Third Gospel took shape under Paul's apostolic authority, and was designed for use in his apostolic mission.

### THE GOSPEL OF JOHN IN JOHN'S MISSION

The Gospel of John, finally, is most obviously located within the apostolic mission of John. While the traditional recognition that the apostle John authored the Fourth Gospel has been questioned in modern scholarship, it is well supported by the primary evidence, and has been ably

3.4.7–8; (7) Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 7; (8) Apos. Con. 2:57. Augustine, *Cons.* 1.2–2.4 identifies Luke as the author of the Third Gospel, and characterizes him, with Mark, as one who investigated the "facts" from the apostles but does not make the connection with Paul.

135. The other possibilities include: Timothy (Phlm 1), Tychicus (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7; 2 Tim 4:12), Onesimus (Col 4:9; Phlm 1:10), Aristarchus and Mark (Col 4:10; Phlm 24), Justus (Col 4:11), Epaphras (Col 1:7; 4:12; Phlm 23), Demas (Col 4:14; Phlm 24; 2 Tim 4:10), Epaphroditus (Phil 4:18), Onesiphorus (2 Tim 1:16), Crescens and Titus (2 Tim 4:10), Mark (2 Tim 4:11), Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, and Claudia (2 Tim 4:21).

136. Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.5.

137. Origen, *Comm. Matt.* (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.6) with Origen, *Hom. Luc.*

1. See Hill, "What Papias Said," 627–28.

138. Hill, "What Papias Said," 627.

defended.<sup>139</sup> As I have noted already, the Gospel itself indicates that its author, “the beloved disciple,” was not merely an eyewitness, nor even merely one of the Twelve, but among Jesus’s closest disciples (§1.3). In this context, the close association between “the beloved disciple” and Peter (1:35–42; 13:23–24; 18:15–16; 20:2–9; 21:7, 20–23), which parallels the Synoptic presentation of Peter, James, and John as Jesus’s inner circle, suggests that “the beloved disciple” is *that* John.<sup>140</sup> Certainly, the Gospel epilogue identifies “the beloved disciple” as one of the seven to whom the risen Jesus appeared on the beach in Galilee (21:2, 7, 20).<sup>141</sup> Since Peter, Thomas, and Nathanael are named in that passage, “the beloved disciple” must be either one of “the sons of Zebedee,” or one of the two un-named disciples. Since James Zebedee suffered an early martyrdom (Acts 12:2), and nothing more can be said about the two un-named disciples, John son of Zebedee emerges as the most likely candidate. Finally, the Gospel’s lack of any explicit mention of John Zebedee is difficult to explain unless he was the author, and its potentially confusing identification of the Baptist simply as “John” also makes good sense if the other famous John (Zebedee) is only referred to in other terms.<sup>142</sup> The Gospel’s own testimony thus makes it extremely difficult to accept the view of Hengel, Bauckham, and others, that “the beloved disciple” was “John the elder” mentioned by Papias—a disciple and an eyewitness but not one of the Twelve.<sup>143</sup> As Michael Kruger observes, “to believe this, we would have

139. E.g., Westcott, *Gospel According to St. John*, v–xxxiv; Morris, *Studies in the Fourth Gospel*, 139–214; Robinson, *Priority of John*, 93–122; Carson, *John*, 68–81; Ridderbos, *John*, 672–83; Blomberg, *Historical Reliability of John’s Gospel*, 22–41; Köstenberger and Stout, “Disciple Jesus Loved”; Rainbow, *Johannine Theology*, 39–51.

140. For Peter, James, and John as Jesus’s inner circle (sometimes with Andrew) in the Synoptics, see Matt 4:18–22; 17:1; 26:37; Mark 1:16–20, 29; 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33; Luke 5:1–11; 8:51; 9:28; 22:8 (Peter and John only). Note also: (1) James and John together (without Peter): Matt 20:20–28; Mark 10:35–45; (2) James and John with Peter and Andrew at the beginning of the list of the Twelve (Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–18; Luke 6:14–16; cf. Acts 1:13). Further, for readers of the Fourth Gospel who know the Synoptics, the affirmation in John 1:14 (“we have seen his glory”) provides a further clue that John, son of Zebedee, is the author, since it includes multiple echoes of the transfiguration (“see,” “glory,” “Son,” “tabernacle”), where only Peter, James, and John were present (esp. Luke 9:28–36; cf. Matt 17:1–8 // Mark 9:2–8).

141. Westcott, *St. John*, xxii.

142. 1:6, 15, 19, 26, 28, 32, 35, 40; 3:23–24, 26–27; 4:1; 5:33, 36; 10:40–41. Morris, *John*, 7–8, notes that the Fourth Gospel is careful to distinguish “Judas Iscariot” (6:71; 13:2, 26) from “Judas not Iscariot” (14:22). The Gospel also distinguishes Bethany across the Jordan (1:28) from the other Bethany (11:1, 18; 12:1).

143. Hengel, *Johannine Question*, 102–8; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 384–471,

to believe that there were actually *two* Johns in Jesus's inner circle, each with the same name, each a close companion of Peter, each present at the Last Supper, and each a direct witness of the resurrection."<sup>144</sup> As it is, the Gospels give no hint of a second John in Jesus's inner circle, and the presence of another John at the Last Supper is especially difficult to reconcile with the Synoptic Gospels, which only positively identify "the Twelve" (Matt 26:20; Mark 14:17, 20), or "his apostles" (Luke 22:14 with 6:13–16) as present on that occasion.<sup>145</sup>

The early Christian testimony unanimously identifies "John" as the author of the Fourth Gospel,<sup>146</sup> and the extant Gospel titles do the same.<sup>147</sup> Several sources explicitly identify this John as the apostle. Papias pairs "Matthew and John" as the "only . . . disciples of the Lord" who "have left us written memorials" (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.5),<sup>148</sup> and Eusebius (perhaps further reporting Papias) calls this same "John"—who wrote the Gospel—"the apostle" (τὸν ἀπόστολον Ἰωάννην) (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.11).<sup>149</sup> Hegesippus (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.18.1) refers to "the apostle" who was "also at the same time the evangelist John" (τὸν ἀπόστολον ἅμα καὶ εὐαγγελιστὴν Ἰωάννην).<sup>150</sup> The Muratorian

550–89; Behr, *John the Theologian*, 43–98; Furlong, *Identity of John the Evangelist*.

144. Cf. Kruger, "Review," 416.

145. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 563–66 argues that neither John nor the Synoptics limit those present to the Twelve. This is true enough, but the Synoptics only positively identify that group. The Fourth Gospel confirms this focus in two ways: (1) by referring to those present as those whom Jesus "chose" (ἐκλέγομαι: 13:18; 15:16, 19 with 6:70; see Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 122–24); (2) by describing how "the beloved disciple . . . was reclining (ἦν ἀνακείμενος) at Jesus's side" (13:23), which parallels the Synoptic description of Jesus "reclining (ἀνέκειτο) with the Twelve" (Matt 26:20; cf. Mark 14:17–18; Luke 22:14).

146. (1) Papias in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.5, 11 (see note 93 above); (2) Hegesippus in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.18.1 (see Lawlor, *Eusebiana*, 40–56); (3) Ptolemy in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.8.5; (4) Theophilus, *Autol.* 2.22; (5) Polycrates in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.24.2–3; (6) Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.9.2–3; 3.1.1; (7) Mur. Frag. 9–16; (8) Clement of Alexandria, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7; *Paed.* 1.6; *F. Cass.* 3; *Quis div.* 8; (9) Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.2, 5; (10) Origen in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.9–10 (cf. 6.25.6); (11) the Old Gospel Prologue to Luke; (12) the Old Gospel Prologue to John; (13) Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 3.24.1–2; 3.39.5; (14) Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 9; (15) Augustine, *Cons.* 1.1.1; 1.2.3.

147. See Gathercole, "Titles," 68–69.

148. For Papias's knowledge of the Fourth Gospel, note Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.4, listing the apostles in Johannine order (1:35–51; 21:2). See Hill, "Orthodox Gospel," 233–300, esp. 286 (with bibliography).

149. See Hill, "What Papias Said," 591, 613–14, but note Manor, "Papias," 10–13.

150. The reference to John as "Evangelist" here almost certainly carries the sense of "Gospel-Writer" rather than the New Testament sense of one who proclaims the gospel

Canon identifies “John, one of the disciples” (*Iohannis ex discipulis*) as the author of the Fourth Gospel (Mur. Frag. 9).<sup>151</sup> Irenaeus attributes the teaching that “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14) to “John . . . the apostle” (Ἰωάννης . . . τὸν Ἀπόστολον) (*Haer.* 1.9.2–3), and later speaks of how “John, the disciple of the Lord (Ἰωάννης, ὁ μαθητὴς τοῦ Κυρίου), who also leaned upon his breast, also himself published the Gospel” (αὐτὸς ἐξέδωκε τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον) (*Haer.* 3.1.1).<sup>152</sup> Clement of Alexandria says it is “according to the apostle” (κατὰ τὸν ἀπόστολον) that “the law was given through Moses,” while “grace and truth through Jesus Christ” (*Quis div.* 8 citing John 1:17). Tertullian is explicit that the apostle John authored the Fourth Gospel (*Marc.* 4.2, 5), and this same testimony is repeated by the Old Gospel Prologues to Luke,<sup>153</sup> and by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.24.1–2; 3.39.5), Jerome (*Vir. ill.* 9), and Augustine (Augustine, *Cons.* 1.1.1; 1.2.3). Given the strength of this early tradition, and especially the testimony of the Fourth Gospel itself, it is best to recognize that this Gospel was written by John, the son of Zebedee, as part of his apostolic commission.

(5) *The Early Church Received the Gospels as Apostolic Testimony to Jesus: the Testimony of Papias, Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian*

The apostolic origins and character of the four Gospels are further corroborated by the explicit testimony of the early church. Already at the beginning of the second century, Papias explicitly distinguishes between the apostles’ oral proclamation of the gospel (κηρύσσω) and their subsequent publication of the gospel in writing (γραφή) (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.5–7).<sup>154</sup> He emphasizes the apostolic character of all four Gospels, indicating that Matthew and John, “the disciples of the Lord” (τῶν τοῦ Κυρίου μαθητῶν), left “written memorials” (ὑπομνήματα) in their Gospels (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 3.24.5; cf. 3.39.16), that Peter stands

(Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5), since the latter “would be redundant after ‘apostle’” (Gathercole, “Alleged Anonymity,” 466n71).

151. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 428–32, argues that the Muratorian Canon distinguishes between John as “disciple” and Andrew as “apostle,” and concludes that this “disciple John” is Papias’s John the Elder. This distinction, however, is overly subtle. The terms “disciple” and “apostle” are often used interchangeably in the period concerned.

152. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 452–71, argues that Irenaeus distinguishes between John the apostle and John the disciple, identifying the latter as the author of the Fourth Gospel. For a critique, see Zelyck, “Irenaeus and Authorship.”

153. Heard, “Old Gospel Prologues,” 7.

154. For Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.5–8a, as dependent on Papias, see note 93 above.

behinds Mark's Gospel (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 3.39.15), and that Paul and "the rest of the apostles" (τῶν λοιπῶν ἀποστόλων) provided the authority for the Gospel of Luke (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.15).<sup>155</sup> Papias further reports that John gave his "apostolic sanction" to the first three Gospels, even as he added his own written testimony to theirs (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.7).<sup>156</sup> Thus, as Hill concludes, Papias is concerned to show that each of the four Gospels is "essentially a written record of what was preached or taught by one (or in Luke's case, more than one) of the Apostles."<sup>157</sup> Significantly, since this concern predates the challenges posed by Maricon and the Gnostic sects, it cannot be explained as an apologetic response to those threats, but is intrinsic to the early Christian reception of the Gospels.

The same recognition of the apostolicity of the four Gospels is even more explicit in Justin Martyr. Justin knew the Gospels of Matthew,<sup>158</sup> Mark,<sup>159</sup> and Luke,<sup>160</sup> and probably also John;<sup>161</sup> there is no evidence that he considered any other "gospel" source to preserve authoritative testimony to Jesus.<sup>162</sup> It is therefore significant, as I noted in the introduction, that Justin repeatedly refers to "the memoirs of the apostles" (τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων),<sup>163</sup> and at one point explains that these "are called Gos-

155. For Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.15, as dependent on Papias, see note 133 above.

156. Hill, "What Papias Said," 616.

157. Hill, "What Papias Said," 617.

158. Justin regularly cites from, or alludes to, Matthew (1 *Apol.* 15, 16, 17, 19, 33, 38, 63; *Dial.* 17, 35, 49, 50, 76, 82, 88, 93, 96, 99, 100, 101, 103, 105, 107, 112, 120, 122, 125, 140). Note *Dial.* 100 "in the Gospel it is written" (ἐν τῷ Εὐαγγελίῳ δὲ γέγραπται), citing Matt 11:27. See Massaux, *Influence of the Gospel*, 10–88.

159. For Justin's knowledge of Mark, see *Dial.* 106 with Mark 3:16–17. See also note 111 above.

160. Justin regularly cites from, or alludes to, Luke (1 *Apol.* 15, 16, 17, 19, 33, 63, 66; *Dial.* 17, 76, 81, 88, 93, 96, 99, 100, 101, 103, 105). Note *Dial.* 103 (with Luke 22:44) and *Dial.* 105 (with Luke 23:46), identifying "the memoirs of the apostles" as his source for unique Lucan testimony. See Gregory, *Reception of Luke and Acts*, 211–92.

161. For Justin's knowledge of John, see (1) 1 *Apol.* 61 with John 3:3–5; (2) *Dial.* 88 and John 1:19–20; (3) *Dial.* 105 with John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; cf. Hill, "Was John's Gospel," 88–94.

162. See Zahn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte*, 1:463–560; Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus*, 310–29; Stanton, "Jesus Traditions and Gospels," 353–70.

163. See note 1 above. Justin's characterization of the Gospels as apostolic "memoirs" probably goes back at least to Papias (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.5 [see note 93]; 3.39.15). See also Heard, "ἀπομνημονεύματα," 122–33; Hengel, *Acts*, 27–28; Hill, "What Papias Said," 593; Verheyden, "Justin's Text of the Gospels," 313–35. For similar descriptions, see Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.22.3; 4.2.3; 4.10.1; 5.21.2; Clement of Alexandria in

pels” (ἃ καλεῖται Εὐαγγέλια) (1 *Apol.* 66).<sup>164</sup> Further, in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin explicitly affirms that these Gospels “were composed by his apostles and those who followed them” (ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἐκείνοις παρακολουθησάντων συντετάχθαι) (*Dial.* 103). His doubly plural reference here probably intends the two Gospels written by “the apostles” Matthew and John, and the two other Gospels written by “those who followed them,” namely Mark and Luke.<sup>165</sup> The enormously high regard in which Justin and the church at Rome held these apostolic Gospels is revealed in the church’s regular practice of reading not only “the writings of the prophets” (τὰ συγγράμματα τῶν προφητῶν) but also “the memoirs of the apostles” (τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων) in their gathered worship on the Lord’s Day (1 *Apol.* 67).<sup>166</sup> Indeed, Justin affirms that in these memoirs “the apostles . . . delivered to us what was enjoined upon them,” namely, the teaching of the Lord Jesus himself (1 *Apol.* 66; cf. Luke 22:19; Mark 14:24).<sup>167</sup> Elsewhere, Justin declares that Christians have “believed God’s voice” (ἡμεῖς τῇ φωνῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ . . . πιστεύσαντες) not only as it was “proclaimed to us through the prophets” but also as it was “spoken by the apostles of Christ” (τῇ διὰ τε τῶν ἀποστόλων τοῦ Χριστοῦ λαληθείσῃ, πάλιν καὶ τῇ διὰ τῶν προφητῶν κηρυχθείσῃ ἡμῖν) (*Dial.* 119). In this way, Justin indicates that he recognizes two parallel sets of Scriptures, the latter

Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.15.1; cf. 3.25.4; 6.14.6; Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.2; *Res.* 33.5; *Carn. Chr.* 22.1; Eusebius, *Praep. ev.*, 3.6.2.

164. Justin uses the phrase ἃ καλεῖται (“which are called”) to introduce “insider terms”—Christian names for realities he otherwise describes in more general terms for his non-Christian audience. Compare (1) 1 *Apol.* 65 on “deacons” (οἱ καλούμενοι παρ’ ἡμῖν διάκονοι); (2) 1 *Apol.* 66 on the “eucharist” (Καὶ ἡ τροφή αὕτη καλεῖται παρ’ ἡμῖν εὐχαριστία). See Skarsaune, “Justin and His Bible,” 71. Justin also refers to a written “Gospel” on two other occasions (*Dial.* 10; 100).

165. Justin’s description of the memoirs being “composed by . . . those who followed them” (τῶν ἐκείνοις παρακολουθησάντων συντετάχθαι) reflects the language of Luke 1:1–4 (ἀνατάξασθαι . . . παρακολουθηκότι). He immediately recounts how these memoirs report “that his [Jesus’s] sweat fell down like drops of blood while he was praying,” which evokes a uniquely Lukan report (Luke 22:44 in  $\aleph$ , D, K, L,  $\mathfrak{W}$  and other mss). Justin thus certainly includes Luke in the category of “those who followed them,” and the plural naturally implies Mark also; cf. Stanton, “Fourfold Gospel,” 331.

166. Justin refers to “the memoirs” first, suggesting the priority of the Gospels in the church’s gathered worship; cf. Kruger, “2 Peter 3:2,” 20.

167. Cf. Rodriguez, *Combining Gospels in Early Christianity*, 134–40, esp. 135: “Justin traces a trajectory from prophetic ‘gospelizing,’ to Jesus’ ‘gospelizing,’ to apostolic oral ‘gospelizing,’ to written gospel.”

of which comprises authoritative—indeed, divinely inspired—apostolic testimony to Jesus.<sup>168</sup>

Irenaeus and Tertullian provide similar testimony. In the famous passage in book 3 of his *Adversus Haeresis*, Irenaeus—like Papias before him—distinguishes between the apostles’ oral proclamation of the gospel and their subsequent publication of written Gospels (*Haer.* 3.1.1; cf. 3.11.8).<sup>169</sup> Significantly—again like Papias—Irenaeus connects each of the four Gospels to a named apostle, assigning them respectively to Matthew, Peter (Mark), Paul (Luke), and John (*Haer.*, 3.1.1). Tertullian, similarly, presents explicit and extended testimony to the apostolic origins of the Gospels: “We lay it down as our first position,” he writes, that “the evangelical Testament has apostles for its authors (*evangelicum instrumentum apostolos auctores habere*), to whom was assigned by the Lord Himself this office of publishing the gospel” (*quibus hoc munus evangelii promulgandi ab ipso domino sit impositum*) (*Marc.* 4.2). Tertullian goes on to assert that “from the beginning” (*a primordio fuisse*) the four Gospels were recognized “as apostolic” (*qua apostolica*) since they were “dedicated with the churches themselves” (*ut cum ipsis ecclesiis dedicata*) (*Marc.* 4.5). Like Papias, Justin, and Irenaeus, Tertullian recognizes a distinction between the apostles Matthew and John, and the “apostolic men” (*apostolici*), Mark and Luke (*Marc.* 4.2). He nevertheless insists that all four Gospels are apostolic because Peter and Paul stand behind the Second and Third Gospels respectively (*Marc.* 4.5). Crucially, while these more extended affirmations of the apostolic origins and character of the Gospels are responses to Marcion and the Gnostic sects, they are entirely consistent with the earlier claims made by Justin and Papias, and indeed, by the Gospels themselves.

## PART 2. FOUR ADVANTAGES OF RECOGNIZING THE GOSPELS AS APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY TO JESUS

More than a century ago, the Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck affirmed that “[t]he Synoptic Gospels are no less apostolic than the letters of Paul.”<sup>170</sup> The foregoing analysis has demonstrated that this assessment

168. Cf. Kruger, “2 Peter 3:2,” 20.

169. For discussion of Irenaeus’s argument here, see Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 175–77.

170. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:269.

is correct, and that the same must be said for the Gospel of John. I quote a theologian at this point, however, because this historical reality also has at least four important implications for Christian theology, and for the use of the Gospels in the worship, proclamation, and life of the church.

*(1) Jesus and His Apostles: the Gospels as Jesus's Self-commissioned Testimony*

First, recognizing the Gospels as apostolic testimony to Jesus allows us to account for Jesus's own role in shaping the written testimony to himself. As I noted already, modern scholarship has tended to drive a wedge between Jesus's original proclamation of "the kingdom," and the early church's proclamation of Jesus (above §1.2). The effect of this reconstruction is to distance the Gospels from Jesus, and so undermine Christian confidence in them, and him. The recognition that the Gospels present apostolic testimony to Jesus, however, enables us to see that the supposed contrasts between Jesus's "gospel" and the written Gospels have been significantly overdrawn. If the Gospels took shape under the primary influence of the apostles, it is no surprise to find a strong continuity—in both form and content—between Jesus's original proclamation of the gospel, the apostolic preached gospel, and the written Gospels. Jesus interpreted the "gospel" of his own life and work, and commissioned the apostles to promote and extend that interpretation.<sup>171</sup> The apostolic origins of the written Gospels thus provide a powerful explanation for why they take the form, and express the message, that they do: the Gospels were profoundly shaped by Jesus's own "gospelling."

*(2) Apostolicity, History, and Theology: Meeting Jesus in the Gospels*

Second, recognizing the Gospels as apostolic testimony to Jesus enables us to overcome the false dichotomy between the "Jesus of history" and the "Christ of faith."<sup>172</sup> This dichotomy has its roots in the Enlightenment opposition between history and theology, reason and faith. It undermines Christian readings of the Gospels by forcing a choice between what "really happened" and what Christians believe, between what Jesus "really said" and what the Evangelists wanted him to say, between his

171. Cf. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 303.

172. For the history of this dichotomy, see Bendemann, "Historischer Jesus," 66–74.

moral teaching and his purported miracles, his real humanity and his supposed divinity. This dominant modern approach further undermines Christian readings of the Gospels by seeking the real Jesus not *in* the Gospels but *behind* the Gospels—the “authentic Jesus” stripped bare of all the trappings of early church “dogma.”<sup>173</sup>

Once we recognize, however, that the Gospels are apostolic testimony to Jesus, this false dichotomy disappears. The Gospels do not offer us access to Jesus in some bare, uninterpreted form—as if that were possible—but present the gospel *according to* (εὐαγγέλιον κατά. . .) Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Thus, over against the modern search for “the very words of Jesus” (*ipsissima verba Jesu*), the Christian church has long affirmed that the Gospels “speak truth” about Jesus without expecting of them “a kind of *pedantic precision*.”<sup>174</sup> They offer us not verbatim reports of Jesus’s speech, but “the very voice of Jesus” (*ipsissima vox Jesu*),<sup>175</sup> or—perhaps better—“the substance of Jesus’s words” (*substantia verba Jesu*).<sup>176</sup> Indeed, their testimony—not only to his words but to his entire life—is, by its very nature, an “inextricable combination of fact and interpretation,” event and ascribed meaning, history and theology.<sup>177</sup> Crucially, however, this inextricable combination comes to us as the personal testimony of those men whom Jesus specifically chose, trained, and commissioned for the task. This frees us from the need to search for the “authentic” words and deeds of Jesus *behind* the Gospels, and allows us to meet Jesus through the testimony of his apostles *in* the Gospels.

### (3) Apostolicity and Inspiration: the Gospels as God’s Word

Third, recognizing the Gospels as apostolic testimony to Jesus grounds a theological account of the Gospels as divinely-inspired, “self-authenticating” (αὐτόπιστος), Scripture.<sup>178</sup> The Christian church universally

173. Cf. Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 10: in modern study of the Gospels, the “criteria of authenticity” have been wielded as the scholarly “winnowing forks for separating the ecclesiastical chaff from the pre-Easter wheat.”

174. Poythress, *Inerrancy and the Gospels*, 62. Poythress offers a collection of statements to this effect (62–65).

175. Jeremias, *Proclamation of Jesus*, 37.

176. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, 45–50. Pitre (47n157) acknowledges the similarity of this formulation to (1) Augustine, *Cons.* 2.12.28; (2) the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels, *Sancta Mater Ecclesia*.

177. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 3, 411.

178. For the category of “self-authenticating” Scripture, see Westminster Confession

recognizes the Gospels as Holy Scripture, but has often struggled to provide a coherent rationale for this recognition. On what basis do we receive these four texts as God's inspired and infallible Word? The category of apostolic testimony provides an important part of the answer. It helps us to see that the church's reception of the Gospels as God's Word is rooted in the claim made by the Gospels themselves—that God's authority, manifested in his Son, and mediated through his apostles, is now set forth in their written testimony to Jesus, testimony which Jesus himself commissioned, and promised to enable by his Spirit (Matt 10:20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12; 24:48–49; John 14:17, 26; 15:26–27; 16:13; 20:22; cf. Acts 1:8). The church thus rightly receives the Gospels as dominically-authorized, Spirit-enabled, apostolic testimony to Jesus. In this way, the category of apostolic testimony enables us to see *how* the Gospels claim to participate in the divine economy, and so grounds a theological account of their nature as self-authenticating Holy Scripture.

*(4) Apostolicity and the Church: the Gospels and Christian Worship, Proclamation, and Life*

Finally, recognizing the Gospels as apostolic testimony to Jesus provides a key to their role in the worship, proclamation, and life of the church.

Fundamentally, since God has provided testimony to his Son through the apostles, the Gospels—together with all the Scriptures—are necessary and sufficient for our knowledge and worship of him. We dare not create our own images of the Son of God incarnate—whether in our imaginations, through scholarly constructs, or in physical forms—but rightly worship him as he is revealed to us in the Scriptures, centered in the Gospels.<sup>179</sup>

Further, since the Gospels are God's own testimony to his Son, through his apostles, their testimony must always be primary in the church's proclamation. Their proclamation of Jesus is "the norm of norms" (*norma normans*); ours must always be normed by them.<sup>180</sup> While Christian believers rightly bear personal testimony to what the

of Faith 1.4–5; Belgic Confession 5. The classic discussion is Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1.7.2, 4–5; cf. Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 88–124.

179. Cf. Westminster Confession of Faith 21.1; Westminster Larger Catechism 108–9.

180. For this distinction in relation to the church's confessions, see Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:421.

Lord has done for us, “[w]e have no liberty to preach Jesus Christ according to our own fantasy, or even according to our own experience”; our testimony is always “secondary and subordinate,” ordered under, and ruled by, the testimony of Scripture as a whole, centered in the apostolic testimony of the Gospels.<sup>181</sup>

Yet further, since the Gospels were designed not only to aid and augment the apostolic proclamation of the gospel, but to enable the catechesis of new converts, the Gospels ought still be used in this way today. The Gospels not only proclaim the drama of redemption, but are rich in doctrine, designed for discipleship, and lead to doxology.<sup>182</sup> They communicate God’s truth and wisdom for life in a distinctly Christological form.<sup>183</sup> They are “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16).

We therefore do well to receive the Gospels, and to make use of them—as the church did from the beginning—as the written, apostolic, presentation of “the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1), so that “by believing” in him we “may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

## CONCLUSION: RECEIVING THE GOSPELS AS APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY TO JESUS

My primary goal in this article has been to demonstrate that the Gospels are fundamentally apostolic in their origins and character. We have seen that the Gospels: (1). have their historical origins in Jesus’s commissioning of the Twelve to bear witness to him, and in his promise of the Spirit to enable them for that task; (2). reflect the gospel preached by Jesus and the apostles in both their form and their content; (3). claim apostolic authority for themselves; (4). served to aid and augment the oral proclamation of the gospel in the four major apostolic missions of James, Peter, Paul, and John, and; (5). were from the beginning received and recognized in the church as divinely-authorized apostolic testimony to Jesus. The early church’s affirmation of the Gospels as apostolic testimony to Jesus was not a late apologetic conceit foisted on the Gospels from the outside, but a recognition of their original composition and character. Crucially, this

181. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 48.

182. This alliterative summary—“drama, doctrine, doxology, and discipleship”—is borrowed from Horton, *Christian Faith*, 13–27.

183. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 289: “The Gospels are nothing less than Christology in narrative form.”

recognition of the apostolicity of Gospels provides not only the most historically satisfying account of their origins, but the foundation for their reception as the center of the Christian canon of Scripture, with all that entails for the use of the Gospels in the worship, proclamation, and life of the church.

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