

The Gospel- Notebook

Final Release. All Gospels
covered, 2nd Edition !

(Reformatted for Word 6 March 23,1995)

Course : NS500 of D. George Vanderlip

Date : 17.November 1991

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The Notebook has been revised after the midterm. Changes in the first part of the Paper will be marked by a bar to the left. The old Version is included after this paper.

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Introduction

This is a notebook to present the four gospels to a group of young adults, age 16-29 years. This is like the young-adult group ("Kreis junger Erwachsener") in my home church in Germany. I am using English as the language for this paper, because it is easier to communicate on the basis of the predominantly English terminology I have to work with and because I have to improve my English for the three years to come here. Of course I will have to translate everything into German, if I would actually present this before the group.

Since I was brought up to think rational and since my main interest before becoming a Christian was science, I have many questions concerning the bible and how to understand its authority. I was taught that every letter in the bible must be literally true and the bible free of any contradiction because it is God's word and God is perfect and cannot contradict himself. This caused some problems, since I could easily detect some contradictions. No one was able to give me satisfying answers to this problems, but they emphasized that this must be true. It was like if you believe in Jesus, you also have to believe that the bible must be perfect and is free of any contradiction. Some tried to show me to interpret passages in such a way that the sense was wholly different and that there was no contradiction anymore¹. One Seminary, which I first thought of attending, tried to influence me to believe in "verbal inspiration" by and in all their interpretations by hinting that I would be a heretic otherwise.

The lectures and especially the book "The Evidence for Jesus" (Dunn) gave me a different approach to inspiration without having to corrupt my logical thinking. I include Dunn's key-passage concerning the view of the Gospels here. This reflects the wrong way to view scripture by the bible-critics as well as by the bible-dogmatics (The term "scholars" includes bible-dogmatics here) :

Whoever looks for chronological accounts, detailed concisiveness in every episode, recorded, pedantic precision in reproducing Jesus' teaching as given, word for word, and such like, *will* be disappointed. But *not* because anything scholars have said or done. Rather because the evangelists themselves were not concerned with such matters. The fault here, if fault there be, lies not in the scholars or in their findings, but in the false expectations with which so many have come to the Gospels. The failure, if failure there be, is failure to take the Gospels as they are, on their own terms, the failure to recognize their own emphases and priorities and concerns.²

I have a great problem with the credibility of some of the authors of our required literature. My undergraduate majors were mathematics and physics. My first graduate masters' degree, I earned in computer-science. From this I am used to science and academic thinking as being of an exact nature. Some of the literature I had to read I felt was more like science-fiction. It seemed to me of a speculative nature, with people presupposing things and not analyzing carefully and weighing all evidence for the problems.

I mostly marveled about Kümmel, from his fame supposed to be an authoritative figure on the field. Just a couple of strange phenomena:

¹Example of a book for this Benedikt Peters, Bruno Schwengeler *100 Fragen zur Bibel, Schwierige Stellen und ihre Erklärung*. 1989 Schwengeler Verlag, CH-9442 Berneck.

²Dunn p.27-28

When Kümmel considers the synoptic problem³ he weighs the evidence of Papias' statement on it. He on and on refers to a "presbyter" avoiding the usage of his real name John. He questions outright without any deeper discussion the credibility of this "presbyter" : "Since the presbyter could scarcely have had independent knowledge ... of the events". This is outright propaganda technique, like recently seen in TV during the Thomas Hearing. He apparently consciously avoids using the real name "John the elder" and thereby damages his credibility to the reader, before he discusses this subject later, when he is concerned about the authorship of John⁴.

When Kümmel discusses the apocalyptic discourse in Luke⁵ he finds "contradictions" in Luke 21:20 against 21:21 and 21:27 against 21:28. Luke 21:20-21 says the following: "*When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.*". I have trouble finding any contradiction, he does not give any detailed explanation of his thoughts, but apparently thinks it to be so evident that there is no explanation needed. I suppose therefore, that he sees a contradiction in people entering and getting out of the city although besieged. Anyone knowing literature of the siege of Jerusalem⁶ and therefore knowing something of how warfare was done in that time, will not be able to find anything contradictory in this passage, because it was possible. This merely shows his inability to understand this text and his unwillingness of doing research in favour of the text.

In a Part of his book he is discussing the authorship of the Gospel of John⁷ and through ten pages gives statement after statement which establish a high probability for John being the author of John. Then he introduces a complicated theory of another John the Elder which was mistaken to be John the author (In spite of intensive communications between the Christian communities of that time) and finally concludes "we do not know who the author was"⁸.

When Kümmel considers the authorship of Matthew he says the following "... the systematic and therefore nonbiographical form ... of Matthew ... make this proposal [Authorship of Matthew] completely impossible"⁹.

He therefore presupposes the intelligence of Matthew to be very low, not considering the high probability that he doubtlessly¹⁰ must have been well educated, because of his position as a tax-collector. He is constantly battling with Papias and with the tradition and cannot offer any beneficial conclusions from his theories. If such a situation arises in normal science, usually one has to conclude that the axioms (foundation or presumptions) where not adequate for the problem and have to be reevaluated.

Kümmel's reasoning improves considerably when he gets away from the hot issue of the Gospels and the connecting facts about the life of Jesus to the letters of Paul. Therefore I conclude that this is the natural reaction of an unbeliever who is not wanting to see the obvious and willing to go quite a long way to defend his rejection of Christ¹¹. He is a danger for all new students in the field of theology because they naturally tend to trust on the reasoning of authorities like him and by that way are bound to become ineffective in their future ministry because their basic foundation of faith through scripture is taken away.

³Kümmel p. 53-54

⁴Kümmel p. 240f

⁵Kümmel p.134

⁶For Example Flavius Josephus *Geschichte des Jüdischen Krieges* Fourier Verlag Wiesbaden, 1988

⁷Kümmel p.234-244

⁸Kümmel p.245

⁹Kümmel p.121

¹⁰To use a famous vocabulary of bible-critics

¹¹See Matthew 13:14-16, According to Marshall (p.29) he cannot be called a Christian since he denies the supernatural origin of Christianity.

The most logical conclusion from this failure is, that traditional sources hold much more truth than the theories of the bible-critics. This is also partly the approach of Guthrie¹². I can identify with much he says, he also presents a theory on oral transmission of the Gospels¹³ in the very early years.

There is not much space to consider much of the theories of the bible-critics. Since the reasoning capabilities of lay persons are limited due to diverse circumstances, I will concentrate on giving a simple most plausible explanation for the development of the gospels. I will consider only the most important theories wherever there is space for it.

¹²Guthrie p.1029f Further reflection on the synoptic problem.

¹³Guthrie p. 139-141

The Gospel according to Matthew

Characteristics

This Gospel is the most noted for its being concise and systematic¹⁴. It seems to be arranged in a topical form and gives the feeling of completeness, of being a unit. The Greek language seems to be of better quality than that of Mark's Gospel.

It depicts Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. Its message seems to be especially for Jewish believer in Jesus to confirm their belief and defend it on the basis of the Jewish tradition and prophecies. It shows the connection to the Old Testament (Tenach) with over sixty references to Old Testament prophecy and about forty quotations¹⁵. Matthew mentions the very word "fulfillment" very often¹⁶.

Some fulfillments may appear to the modern mind to be forced. For example in Matthew 2:15 "*Out of Egypt I called my son*" is a reference to Hosea 11:1 "*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.*". The passage in Hosea seems not be intended to be used as prophecy and is a figurative talk about the people of Israel.

This seems not to be adequate for our modern academic world, but this was unquestionable authoritative to the people of that time and a logical connection was not necessary¹⁷. Therefore in the context of the Gospels this fulfillment is not forced at all but a legitimate fulfillment.

His Gospel especially reflects the characteristics of a Jewish Christianity and seems to be especially targeted at them. Today it is again being used for evangelism of Jewish People in Israel and elsewhere¹⁸. His view is obviously a Jewish viewpoint. He confirms the validity of the law¹⁹ in Matthew 5:18 "... *I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah...*"²⁰ and the authority of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:2-3 "*The Teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, So you must obey them ...*". Jesus fulfills the commandments and to the author the whole Jewish world seems still to be there. He claims Jesus' mission is only for his people when quoting Jesus in Matthew 15:24 "... *I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.*". He constantly refers to Jewish customs and does not explain phrases for the Gentile believer, who cannot know the custom. For example in Matthew 23:5 "*They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long*". No explanation for these strange words "phylacteries" and "tassels" is given. Therefore this must be especially targeted at a Jewish audience.

At the same time the view for the Gentile mission²¹ and involvement is presented to the reader beginning with the offerings at the birth of Jesus in Matthew 2:1 through to the great commission in Matthew 28:16ff.

¹⁴Guthrie p. 28

¹⁵Thompson chain#4262

¹⁶Guthrie p.28-29

¹⁷Guthrie p.29. Here the text states that this differs from rabbinical methods of interpretation. But others hold that the rabbinical method was not established at that time (See Kee p.95-, Kümmel p.51). Probably the development of the rabbinical methods was in part being shaped by the opposition to Christianity.

¹⁸Jews for Jesus; Myself being involved in Israel.

¹⁹See also Stanton p.73

²⁰Stern p.6

²¹Guthrie p.28

Only Matthew records any direct teachings of Jesus concerning the church²². In Matthew 16:18 Peter is said to be the basis for the Church "*And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.*". In Matthew 18:17 the church is referenced as the authority for dealing with problems. In Matthew 18:20 the simplest form of a church is described "*For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.*".

Connected with the Messianic Passages, Matthew also is concerned with the kingdom of God. This was the hope of many Jewish people at that time, that God would send one ruler who would throw off the power of Rome and build the Jewish Kingdom. People sometimes expect Jesus to be this ruler, they seem tempted to use force to make him king (Joh 6:15). Matthew now sets out to show a different perspective of Messiah to the people of Israel. Passages concerning the Kingdom are in Chapter 2:2, 21:5, 22:11; 25:34 and 27:11+37+42. Finally in Matthew 27:54 even a roman soldier acknowledges him, when he exclaimed "*Surely ,he was the Son of God!*".

Authorship

The Book of Matthew has never circulated without its title. No dispute concerning its authorship is known²³ until scholarly criticism started. The evidence for Jewish writership is very dense through the covered topics of the book. But nowhere in the text there is a claim for his authorship. Actually none of the Gospels of the New Testament make any clear claims about authorship in their texts.

One hint for Matthews authorship is the use of the name "Matthew" in the lists of the twelve instead of Levi²⁴ . Scholars have no explanation for this when discussing about the possible authors. There is nothing special in the calling of Matthew in Matthew 9:9. Interesting is also the fact of his being called Matthew in Acts 1:13 but not in Lk 5:29.

The inclusion of the story of his calling is reflected in all the synoptic Gospels (Matthew 9:9-12, Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32) which probably reflects his importance in the early church.

Matthew was a tax-collector according to Matthew 9:9. Tax people must have been in contact with the authorities, the Romans, as well as the people who were taxed, the Israelites. This leads to the conclusion that he probably was at least bilingual. He must have been accountable for the taxes to the authorities, so he doubtlessly was a systematic and exact person. Therefore it can be concluded that he was a highly intelligent and educated person. Which is found in the characteristics of his gospel.

Papias (ca AD 130)²⁵ is quoted by Eusebius (4th century writer) concerning the development of the Gospels. He quoted to say the following²⁶: "*Matthew composed the Logia [Gospel] in the Hebrew tongue and everyone translated as he was able.*". Papias gives the following source of his knowledge²⁷: "*And again, if anyone came who had been a follower of the Elders, I used to enquire about the sayings of the Elders - what Andrew, or Peter, or Philip, or Thomas, or James, or John, or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples, said ,and what Aristion and the Elder John, the Disciples of the Lord, say. For I did not think that I could get so much profit from the contents of books as from the utterances of a living and abiding voice.*"

Papias is effectively saying this:

- He knew John the Apostle personally.

²²Guthrie p.30-31

²³Guthrie p.43

²⁴Kümmel p.121

²⁵Lecture-Notes Vanderlip NS500

²⁶Guthrie p.44

²⁷Guthrie p. 278-279

- He was familiar with their writings, but preferred personal contact.
- He carefully enquired as much as he could from people who knew the twelve.
- Matthew was first written in Hebrew as is also evident from the characteristics of the gospels.
- Matthew was commonly known as the author of Matthew (Seems to be a tautology).
- Matthew was the first gospel to be written down. This is also reflected in the characteristic dualism of Jewish and Gentile peoples.

Since this gospel is just available in Greek for us there was probably (this is **my** opinion) a translation at some time²⁸, which was very carefully done (possibly by himself), since many Old Testament citations follow the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) accurately²⁹ and expanding the text by explaining Jewish customs and special words was avoided³⁰. Stanton finds Matthews quoting "At times ... closer to the original Hebrew than to the Greek translation of the Old Testament"³¹ and sees "traces of the use of Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew text which are known as Targums".

With this approach, consistent with tradition and content, we have a plain explanation for the authorship. As has often been demonstrated and experienced the most plain solution is usually the best.

Occasion and Purpose

The writing of Matthew must be dated in the early church, because we have seen from the characteristics, that he is mostly concerned with Jewish matters. After AD 70 the emphasis shifted more to the Gentile-World because Jerusalem was destroyed³² and the Messianic Jews seem to have been integrated into Gentile Christianity³³ because they were treated as Traitors, after they left Jerusalem in the siege AD 70. Matthew is apparently still advertising for Jews to believe in Jesus the Messiah.

At the writing of this Gospel there was still evangelism going on in the Jewish villages and towns, and there was the expectancy of Jesus to return as they would finish it. In Matthew 10:23b Jesus said "*I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*". There are a number of other passages which speak of things of the present (when this Gospel was written) for example Matthew 27:8 "*... it has been called the Field of Blood to **this day.***".

There seems to have been a development of synagogue bans for messianic Jews later toward the year 63 AD³⁴, which speak strongly in favour of an early writing of Matthew, since he would not speak so advertising to them would this already have been the case.

Therefore the writing should be as early as 40 to 50 AD. At that time it must have become evident that a written basis must be laid, and certainly there was a demand for written material from educated people who came to believe in the Messiah. This demand also is evident in the writing of Luke. Since some Levites also came to Christ (Acts 4:36) it was the logical next step to write a gospel in Hebrew. Whoever could do it if not a well educated eye-witness, as Matthew seems to have been. Therefore he wrote as complete and systematic as possible to give a clear picture of Jesus for his fellow believers to confirm their belief, and for the doubting to persuade.

²⁸See also Guthrie p. 1038ff, Kümmel p.47-49

²⁹Kümmel p.110-111

³⁰Kümmel p.112

³¹Stanton p.72

³²Bibel-Lexikon p.686

³³Guthrie p.301, Dunn p.60

³⁴Guthrie p.301

This was most probably the first Gospel which became authoritative in the early Church because it was written by an eyewitness. Since there are agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark³⁵ the scholarly theory that Matthew reworked Mark cannot be upheld.

With the assimilation into the Gentile Christianity and the destruction of Jerusalem the basic Hebrew text has apparently been lost. Since Christianity was predominantly Gentile in later times no one cared a lot about it until modern times.

Because of the early writing date the gospel could only have been written in Palestine first. As also the characteristics of the gospels testify.

³⁵Marshall p.58, But he still upholds the hypothesis of Markan priority.

Central Theme: Sermon on the Mount

Historicity

The Sermon on the Mount covers Chapters 5 to 7 of Matthew. The Sermon is not found in this form in the other Gospels, but single phrases appear scattered in many places in Luke and Mark³⁶. Therefore it has been concluded that the Sermon on the Mount is constructed by Matthew to be able to join all teachings of Jesus together in one place³⁷.

Strictly speaking the Sermon on the Mount almost certainly has never been held in this form. But apparently Matthew chose a setting which Jesus customary used for teaching, a secluded place on a mountain. The Mountain is anonymous here, in other part of his gospel Matthew names places. For example the Mount of Olives in Chapter 21.

The habit of Jesus to go into the mountains is continuously mentioned in all Gospels. One of the most impressing passage is John 6:15 "*Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew **again** to a mountain by himself.*"³⁸.

The Sermon on the Mount is therefore authentic for Jesus custom and sayings although not authentic in its specific setting and sayings. Which was evidently not intended by Matthew.

To say it academically: "The (strictly speaking) historical unreliability of the *framework* leaves the historical reliability of the *content* unaffected"³⁹.

One hint that it was customary to arrange the material for the best understanding and instruction of the reader is also found in the sayings of Papias: "*Mark, who was the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that he remembered ... but not in order ... he accompanied Peter, who **adapted his instruction as necessity required***"⁴⁰. Therefore arrangement was usual and did not reduce the required authenticity for the readers at that time.

Audience

The audience, which follows him on the mount, are his disciples and people, so interested in him that they have the energy to follow him up into the mountain. They are all disciples in a wider sense⁴¹, earnest followers of him, otherwise they would not have made that effort to follow him into the mountain. By withdrawing from the crowds Jesus effectively separates his earnest followers from people who are just hungry for sensation. That is why he is able to say in Matthew 5:14 "*You are the light of the world*".

The Sermon on the mount therefore is intended for believers and not for the sensation hungry crowds. These are lessons for the church for the people of his kingdom⁴².

³⁶Dunn p.8-9

³⁷Maier 1988 p.103

³⁸Maier 1988 p.102 other passages are Mk 1:35ff, Mk 1:45, Lk 6:12 emphasis mine.

³⁹Dunn p.8

⁴⁰Dunn p.9 emphasis mine

⁴¹Maier 1988 p.104

⁴²Maier 1988 p.104

Teaching

The teachings of Jesus given here, are of an very intimate kind. He would not have been able to give these teachings outside the group of earnest followers. Others would not be able to understand what is given here and may misinterpret⁴³ it.

The teachings can be categorized in the following groups:

The Children of Lights and their destiny (Mt 5:3-16)

In this passage we have the ad for discipleship which at the same time names the requirements⁴⁴. These are rewards for their wholly on Christ dependant life⁴⁵ in humility, love and hearing(obedience). At the end of the beatitudes (Verse 3-12) we come to an very earnest topic to the persecution of the disciples.

After describing the characteristics of the disciples he gives them their name "The Light of the world" and shows them their task here on earth (Verse 13-17).

Understanding God´s word (Mt 5:17-48)

Jesus shares here how to understand God´s word, not by only outwardly following the commandments but by letting the commandments judge the inner world of ourselves. He begins by affirming the validity of the Law. Six times Jesus then presents a false interpretation of God´s word and with the phrase "*But I tell you*" introduces the right meaning to the hearer.

Life under God´s Rule (Mt 6)

Here Jesus shows the basic characteristics of the believer and with which attitude they are done. Caring of the needy (Verse 1-4), Prayer (Verse 5-15), Fasting (Verse 16-18), Relationship to material goods (Verse 19-24) and worrying about future (Verse 25-34).

From a modern perspective it is popular to see these characteristics more like an advice for keeping good care of one´s own mental health⁴⁶.

Relationship to others and to God (Mt 7)

The first part of this shows how to relate to others (Verse 1-6). Forgive your brother, look first for your own faults do not judge.

In the second its how to relate to God (Verse 7-23). The disciple should dare to ask from God. He should go the difficult way. Advice is given how to discern a false prophet (Verse 15ff).

The Sermon on the Mount closes in Verse 24-27 with the parable of the house on a rock and on sand. In effect it says: Who hears Jesus stands firm and cannot be shaken.

⁴³Maier 1988 p.105

⁴⁴Maier 1988 p.107

⁴⁵Bibel-Lexikon p.204

⁴⁶See Dale Carnegie *Sorge dich nicht - lebe !* 1989 Scherz-Verlag München

The Gospel according to Mark

Characteristics

The Gospel of Mark was not regarded as important at all until modern times. It was the most neglected gospel due to the better quality of Matthew and because it was thought of as an abstract of Matthew⁴⁷. When modern biblical criticism⁴⁸ started, it developed to become the center of attention in the bible-critics attempt to solve the *synoptic problem*, which evolved when scholars tried to cope with inconsistencies encountered, when they used modern criteria and thought for analysis of the Gospels. Although almost two centuries have passed since then no satisfying solution to this problem is known. The scholars ended up questioning incrementally more and more the validity of the biblical text and finally the rest of the text said nothing valuable at all. Recently modern scholars⁴⁹ have begun to recognize this dilemma and try "to understand the gospels as they are - to recognize what they are"⁵⁰ and not carry something into the analysis of the Gospels⁵¹.

Mark's Gospel utilizes not a sophisticated Greek⁵² as the rest of the gospels, "rather everyday spoken language"⁵³. Another characteristic for his text is the influence of Latin on it⁵⁴. Aramaic expression and Hebrew customs are - unlike Matthew - explained to the reader⁵⁵. For example in Mark 7:3-4 "... *hands that were unclean, that is unwashed. The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders*". His text seems not well suited for the Jewish reader since it contains only a few references to the Old Testament⁵⁶.

The style of presentation is very vivid and action-oriented, word implying immediacy occur very often⁵⁷. For example in the story of the sick woman, who touched Jesus and gets healed in Mark 5:30 "*At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?'*". One can almost see Jesus reacting instantaneously, working his way back to the crowd and speaking. The author seems emotionally very fascinated by the material he presents.

Very frankly the failures of Jesus' family and the disciples are depicted⁵⁸. Mk 3:21 "When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said '*He is out of his mind*':" In Mk 8:33 Peter is rebuked "*Get behind me Satan !*".

Summarizing the gospel tries to answer the burning question "Who is Jesus ?" by describing him in terms of actions and feeling, in being human as well as being of God. His Gospel is "the Gospel of the Son of Man, as the Gospel of the Son of God"⁵⁹.

⁴⁷Guthrie p.61

⁴⁸See for example Kümmel

⁴⁹For example Dunn and Guthrie

⁵⁰Dunn p.1

⁵¹Dunn p.2 The Task of New Testament Scholarship

⁵²Kümmel p.107

⁵³Guthrie p.94

⁵⁴Kümmel p.97

⁵⁵Guthrie p.71

⁵⁶Thompson Topic#4263

⁵⁷Guthrie p.62

⁵⁸Guthrie p.62

⁵⁹Guthrie p.62

Some parts of the very human picture of Jesus⁶⁰. For example compassion in Mark 1:41 "*Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand, and touched the man ...*". Anger in Mark 3:5 "*He looked at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man....*". Sorrow in Mark 8:12 "*He sighed deeply and said...*". Love in Mark 10:21 "*Jesus looked at him and loved him...*"

The central focus though is the cross and the resurrection⁶¹. Some of this Gospel's concerns are also missions⁶², discipleship⁶³ and baptism.

Authorship

There is a very strong testimony of early Christianity that this is Mark's writing⁶⁴. To quote Papias again: "*Mark indeed, since he was the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately, but not in order, the things either said or done by the Lord as much as he remembered. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed Him, but afterwards, as I have said, heard and followed Peter, who fitted his discourses to the needs, but not as if making a narrative of the Lord's sayings; Consequently, Mark, writing some things just as he remembered erred in nothing; for he was careful of one thing - not to omit anything of the things he had heard or to falsify anything in them*"⁶⁵.

Mark is referenced in different parts of the New Testament⁶⁶. Acts 12:12 "*He [Peter] went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.*". Mark seems to be a son of an important family of the early church, where many believers gathered and visited, and therefore he had access to a multitude of information of the early church.

Mk 12:25 "*When Barnabas and Saul had finished their Mission [in Jerusalem], they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.*". Mark must have been also familiar with Paul and Barnabas, two central figures in early church life. Actually in Colossians 4,10 Paul refers to "*..Mark, the cousin of Barnabas..*". Very familiar, Barnabas belonged to his family !

Moreover Acts 13:5 tells us that "*John [Mark] was with them [Paul and Barnabas] as their helper*" on their first missionary journey! Too sad, later in Acts 13:13 they are in "*Pamphylia, where John [Mark] left them to return to Jerusalem*". Why is not clear, the story continues in Acts 15:37. Paul and Barnabas prepare for their next missionary trip and "*Barnabas also wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left [to Syria] "*. Mark was perhaps afraid to go further and returned. Gospel writers are also human !

It must have been important to Luke to keep using both names Mark and John. Probably he was known by the Jews as John but to the Gentiles as Mark. Perhaps his writings were already known when Luke wrote Acts, so Luke is constantly reminding the reader who this person is, thereby also confirming why his writings are authoritative.

⁶⁰Guthrie p.62

⁶¹Guthrie p.65

⁶²Guthrie p.69

⁶³Guthrie p.67

⁶⁴Guthrie p.81

⁶⁵Guthrie p.83

⁶⁶Thompson Topic #4263

Later Paul has apparently restored his friendship with Mark, in 2 Timothy 4:11, he says "*Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.*". Actually if Mark really came to help Paul he must have met Luke ! A passage in Philemon shows that this actually happened, Philemon 23-24 "*Epaphras my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.*"

He is also mentioned by Peter in 1 Peter 5:13 "*She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.*".⁶⁷ Peter refers to him as his **son**. So there must have been a very deep relationship with Peter, too⁶⁸. This also was attested by Papias (See above).

So Mark is a knowledgeable person to write a gospel. Papias seems to try to excuse his lack of ability to communicate in Greek and his apparent emotionalism, which also became evident when he left Paul and Barnabas on their first Journey.

Occasion and Purpose

The Gospel seems explicitly to be addressed to the Gentiles, because it is explaining Jewish customs unknown to the Gentile believer. His sometimes evident lack of ability to handle the language gives us a hint to the assumption that this must have been a foreign language to him. Tradition holds that the Gospel was written in Rome⁶⁹.

Probably the necessity of a written gospel in Greek for the Gentile Christians drove Mark to write. Since there were people traveling around the Christian centers of the world, he has probably known of the Hebrew gospel of Matthew and probably used parts, he found fitting for his task. He integrated into it the material he knew from personal experience and what he knew from others especially his patron Peter. He seems to have done a quick job for he omits the childhood events and the genealogy, which would be of no direct benefit for the instruction, and a lot more for the sake of instructing by showing the example of Jesus in how he lived.

Since he looks upon Jerusalem as still existent, he must have written this before 70 AD.

The Ending of Mark

There is a dispute going on about the genuineness of the last part of Mark Chapter 16:9-20, because the oldest known manuscripts do not include this Ending. The Ending is attested for by others as early as the second half of the second century⁷⁰, so this ending must have existed a considerable time before. A few manuscripts give no ending at all, some contain this ending and another ending⁷¹.

Therefore it has been concluded that this ending was added at an very early time, or that a part of an early copy of the manuscript was lost. Other theories are that Mark intended the ending in verse 9 or that he was hindered to write the end of his gospel⁷².

⁶⁷emphasis mine

⁶⁸Guthrie p. 81-82

⁶⁹Guthrie p. 73

⁷⁰Guthrie p.93

⁷¹Guthrie p.90

⁷²Guthrie p.91-93

Anyway this cannot have been important for the authenticity of this passage, since it was accepted at an very early time, where inaccuracy could have been easily detected through eyewitnesses or people who knew what the eyewitnesses told. Therefore one has to accept this passage as authentic.

Central Theme: The Miracles

Purpose

In the Gospels Miracles are generally used to show the authenticity of the teaching. Paul for example sees miracles as a proof for his being an apostle (2 Cor 12:12) "*The things that mark an apostle - signs, wonders and miracles - were done among you with great perseverance.*". Likewise is valid for Jesus' purpose of miracles, it is to authenticate that he is the Messiah. It seems that his preaching, like the disciples preaching, was accompanied by miracles⁷³. For example Mark 6:12-13 "*They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*". Jesus himself used healing as a way to demonstrate his teaching. For example when he heals the paralytic in Mark 2, some Pharisees think that Jesus is blaspheming when he forgives the man's sins. He proves them wrong in the following way Mark 2:10 "*But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...*". Next thing he does is heal the paralytic instantaneously, to show his authority. Even in the Old Testament one mark of the messiah is clearly his performing miracles⁷⁴. Isaiah 35:5 "*Then will the ears of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer and the mute tongue shout for joy.*". Jesus himself alludes to this when asked by John the Baptist (Luke 7:22).

The miracles recorded in the Gospel are notably unique. There are other accounts for healings and other miracles in other literature at this time. But no one is said to have cured the lame, the dumb, the blind and the deaf. The first three evangelists have not full theological explanations of the miracles. Compared to other miracle stories the Gospels show restraint and do not heighten or exaggerate the miraculous. For example in the Infant Gospel of Thomas (Apocrypha) the child Jesus is able to make birds out of mud and to reassemble instantly the jug he just crashed⁷⁵.

Whoever lays the axe in one form or another to the miracles therefore does completely away with the message of Jesus. Consequently he must doubt the resurrection of the dead, which is the central message of the Kingdom. He is left with a frame in the form of a philosophy, maybe more advanced, maybe not.

Miracles confirm and verify the presence of the Kingdom of God⁷⁶, miracles and faith interact. For example in his hometown Jesus could not do much healing because of their lack of faith (Mark 6:5). At many healings Jesus praises the faith of the person (Mark 5:34; Mark 9:23; Mark 10:52). If there are no hints of Miracles there is reason for doubt whether there is any faith⁷⁷.

Authenticity

The Authenticity of the miracles is a major problem for biblical criticism. Before this evolved there has been almost no questioning of them⁷⁸, since miracles seem to have been customary. Jesus himself refers to other people who do miracles (Mark 6:7). Miracles were generally seen as a proof of Jesus' divinity by the

⁷³Stanton p. 215

⁷⁴Maier 1991,p.323

⁷⁵Stanton p.215

⁷⁶Bibel-Lexikon p.1544-1545

⁷⁷See also Stanton p.216

⁷⁸Stanton p.214

Christians⁷⁹. Nowadays it is often attempted to explain the miracles away by illustrating his miracles as caused by patients with physical disorders which have a psychological root . Another explanation is that the miracles are the product of early Christian invention or a result of a scriptural "development".

Bible criticism has done away with the miracles in the attempt to "demythologize" the Gospels. Bultmann explains them as coming from the environment of the early church⁸⁰. The result was "considerable uncertainty" about basic Christian Theology, for example Christ's resurrection. His influence on German Theology led to the secularism of nowadays churches in Germany and also to the strange appearance of ministers not being able to believe what their congregation firmly believes in⁸¹.

Paul himself was also faced with doubts of the resurrection from the Corinthian Church. He refers them to eyewitnesses⁸². In 1 Cor 15:6 "*After that he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.*" He says effectively "Well, you why don't you ask them ?".

He dramatically depicts the consequences for faith, would the resurrection not be true. 1 Cor 15:13-17 "*If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.*".

Since there were many eye-witnesses in that time and since there is only a short time of oral transmission of the Gospels, it is impossible that someone could have invented such stories. Early Christians were most noted for their truthfulness and honesty as even Pliny, a Roman, testified⁸³. Historical data from the Gospels has almost every-time be shown as accurate⁸⁴.

Therefore we have to conclude that the approaches to devalue the witness of the Gospel do reflect the religious presumptions of the person pursuing them, these do not necessary have any scientific basis or show any historical value.

⁷⁹Stanton p.215

⁸⁰Form-Criticism used to classify passages and reinterpret them (Bultmann). See Guthrie p.212

⁸¹Several personal experiences.

⁸²Guthrie p.221

⁸³Kee p.44

⁸⁴Stanton p.139f

The Gospel according to Luke

Characteristics

The Gospel of Luke is today's most attractive one. It tells superb stories and puts its stress on the personality of Jesus. Especially appealing today is the concern for social outcasts like the poor⁸⁵ or people who are judged as morally corrupt by the society like tax-collectors. Favorable to nowadays views is also his portrayal of women⁸⁶. He emphasizes Jesus' gracious attitude to social outcasts. "There is no doubt that Jesus' estimate of the individual greatly impressed Luke, who is obviously attracted to people himself."⁸⁷.

Luke binds the story in secular history and views the Gospel as integrated and actually making World-History. He gives accurate dates for important incidents, for example 3:1-2 " *In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar - when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philipp tetrarch of Itura and Tracoenitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene - during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.*"

The accuracy of Hellenistic and Roman geography and Roman provincial administration has been surveyed and found to be very reliable⁸⁸.

Mainly he fixed dates to Roman origins. And throughout the Gospel, he pictures the Romans in a favorable way, at the end of the Gospel even a Roman centurion (Luke 23:47) "*Seeing what had happened, praised God and said, 'Surely this was a righteous man.'*"⁸⁹. He mentions Roman authorities in a positive way, like Cornelius or Theophilus⁹⁰. In contrast to them the Jews are trying to plot against him. For example Luke 23:5 "*But they [the Jews] insisted, ' He stirs up the people all over Judea, by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.'*"

He is integrating the Gospel in Roman History. Since the Acts are a sequel to Luke's Gospel one can see a development to the Center of the World of that days, Rome. Acts reaches its Climax when Paul arrived in Rome⁹¹. Presupposed is that the presented facts are well known, for example the disciples when they meet a stranger (which happens to be Jesus) in Luke 24:18 say " *Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?*"⁹². Luke is the longest writing of the New Testament ⁹³ and gives many details, especially of Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem.

Some scholars suggested that Luke and Acts are to be seen as a unity. But since the size of a scroll was limited, Luke had to separate them into two accounts and use two different scrolls for it⁹⁴. Luke and Acts together make up almost a quarter of the New Testament writings⁹⁵.

⁸⁵Guthrie p.104

⁸⁶Stanton p.81, Guthrie p.103

⁸⁷Guthrie p.103

⁸⁸Marshall p.69, One Scholar was convinced to give up this claim of second century authorship by study of the historical facts mentioned in Luke's writing.

⁸⁹Kümmel p.140, Stanton p.83

⁹⁰Stanton p. 85

⁹¹Guthrie p.110

⁹²Stanton p.82-83

⁹³Guthrie p. 102

⁹⁴Stanton p.81

⁹⁵Stanton p.82

The style of Greek which Luke uses is much better than the style of the other gospels, but often he chooses to adapt the style of the Septuagint (an early translation of the Old Testament into Greek by Jewish Scholars)⁹⁶ and therefore his language is often "flavoured with Semitisms". Perhaps this was intended to suggest a link to the Old Testament. Especially the preface though shows his ability to produce classical Greek⁹⁷. In the course of his writing he uses quite complex Greek phrases, suggesting that he was a very educated man writing for educated people⁹⁸. He avoids the use of Aramaic Words. Stanton says "Many Greek writers would have been proud of Luke's elegant style" and compares Luke as a quality writing to Mark as a mass-circulation newspaperstyle⁹⁹.

Very often there is a verbal agreement in accounts included in Mark and Matthew¹⁰⁰. He apparently is using Mark a lot¹⁰¹.

Luke has some Hymns included. They were and are used widely in Worship¹⁰² especially by the catholic church :

Magnificat	Praise-Song of Mary when she visits Elizabeth	Luke 1:46-55
Benedictus	Song of Zechariahs at the birth of John the Baptist	Luke 1:68-79
Nunc Dimmittis	Simeon's Praise when he holds the child Jesus	Luke 2:29-32

Authorship

As normal for a Gospel, the Book itself does not mention an author. There is an ancient foreword to Luke given in the Muratorian Canon (An ancient collection of scripture) which says the following: "*The third gospel according to Luke. After the ascension of Christ, Luke, whom Paul had taken with him as an expert in the way, wrote under his own name and according to his own understanding. He had not, of course, seen the Lord in the flesh, and therefore he begins to tell the story from the birth of John on, insofar as it was accessible to him*"¹⁰³.

Another writer of the early church Eusebius tells us that Luke was from Antioch. Luke is mentioned in some of the Letters of Paul: Colossians 4:14 "*Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.*". Luke was apparently a Physician, a man of education. After other greetings in Philemon 24 "*And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.*". Luke and Mark knew each other. When Paul is deserted by all others in 2 Tim 4:11 he writes "*Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you because he is helpful to me in my ministry.*".

It has been conjectured that Luke was of Gentile origin, because in Colossians 4 he is separated from the Jews in the greetings¹⁰⁴. He was a companion of Paul but no eyewitness of the proceedings in the

⁹⁶Kümmel p 138, Stanton p.83

⁹⁷Stanton p.84

⁹⁸Guthrie p.131

⁹⁹Stanton p.83-84

¹⁰⁰Stanton p.80

¹⁰¹Kümmel p.33-34, Stanton p.100

¹⁰²Stanton p.81

¹⁰³Kümmel p.147

¹⁰⁴Kümmel p. 147

Gospels¹⁰⁵. Often he is referred to as the "beloved Physician"¹⁰⁶, he was present when Paul was imprisoned¹⁰⁷.

Luke presents a wholly different style from other writers later in that period who claim also to write a Gospel, and generally have amazing stories of what Jesus did and claim authorization by some famous disciple. Luke does not exaggerate and claims no connection with any famous disciple of Jesus. This also is a hint for the authenticity of him and that he did not make up something as many scholars have postulated¹⁰⁸.

Occasion and Purpose

The Purpose of the Gospel is clearly mentioned in the prologue to Luke. Luke 1:1-4 "*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*".

He mentions his intend to make a historical survey and give an precise account. Often Scholars have suggested different intents, but as Guthrie says "Where an author specifically states his own intention, that must always be given more weight than any scholarly conjectures"¹⁰⁹.

He speaks of "among us" because later in Acts he actually took part in some of Paul's missionary voyages. This is signified by him changing the narrative style to "we". Perhaps to further affirm the validity of his account.

The Gospel is dedicated to Theophilus, who is given a honored description. which looks like a social rank. It is assumed that Theophilus was a Gentile, probably a person which supported the writing of the Gospel.¹¹⁰

The Gospel is clearly written for gentile Christians because the struggle with the Pharisees is omitted, and seems not to have been important¹¹¹.

Luke's aim in writing is primarily evangelistic, to present salvation to his readers. Secondly he wished to confirm the faith of the person addressed in the prologue, Theophilus. He was driven to this because he had a lot of knowledge about the development in the early church, because of his companionship with Paul.¹¹²

¹⁰⁵Guthrie p.116

¹⁰⁶Guthrie p.118

¹⁰⁷Kümmel p.148

¹⁰⁸Guthrie p. 112

¹⁰⁹Guthrie p. 105

¹¹⁰Guthrie p.109

¹¹¹Guthrie p.109

¹¹²Marshall p.219-222 Motivation of Luke

Many Gospels were written before Luke and he seems to have used as much as was accessible to him. This suggests that he must have had access to Mark and Matthew¹¹³, since - as we know from Acts - there was intensive communication going on between the churches, especially sharing of scripture (See also Paul's letters). Therefore a fictitious Source Q as postulated by the scholars in the past is redundant¹¹⁴.

The Gospel and Acts have been written certainly before the end of the first century¹¹⁵. The lower Date is the year 55 AD, the year Paul arrived in Rome. Since Luke could hardly picture the Roman Empire in such a positive way after the fall of Jerusalem and the persecution of the Christians through Nero, the Date was before 64 AD¹¹⁶. This is also suggested by the fact that the death of Paul and any events after 61-63 AD are not mentioned. The prophecy of the siege of Jerusalem is also only described in very vague terms¹¹⁷. To quote Marshall "there is nothing in the evidence to suggest a date of composition for Luke-Acts much later than the last events recorded in the book."¹¹⁸

¹¹³Kümmel p.150, Maier 1991 p.12

¹¹⁴Stanton p.88

¹¹⁵Guthrie p. 125

¹¹⁶Stanton p.99-100

¹¹⁷Guthrie p.129 Extensive material.

¹¹⁸Marshall p.220

Central Theme: The Resurrection

Introduction

The fact of the Resurrection is of utmost importance to Christianity as Paul already expressed when he said in 1 Corinthians 15:14 "*If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.*". The importance of this has already been discussed in the special Section on Miracles in the Chapter concerning the Gospel of Mark. Paul refers the doubting ones to go and see eyewitnesses. He was absolutely sure of it !¹¹⁹

Therefore if anyone can prove (we have had too much speculation already) we better give up being a Christian, because according to our teaching we should honestly speak the truth, yet we assert a fact which has not been, we are lying.

Since we do not have any eyewitnesses left nowadays, we can only decide this issue by looking at our available evidence.

Scriptural Evidence

In all four Gospels we have the consistent report that the tomb of Jesus was found empty¹²⁰. These reports are found in Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-11 and John 20:1-10.

In all Gospels we have again reports of the appearing of the risen Jesus, found in Matthew 28:8-10,16-20 , Mark 16:9-19, Luke 24:13-43 and John 20:11-21:23 (the most extensive)¹²¹.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthian we have another list of appearances of Jesus after the resurrection in Chapter 15:3-8 which breaks all records in listing appearances for he gives us six: "*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter [First], and then to the Twelve [Second]. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time [Third], most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James[Fourth], then to all the apostles [Fifth], and last of all he appeared to me also [Sixth], as to one abnormally born.*"¹²².

Another thing are the disciples, they are in constant trouble believing what is happening around them and are more likely to give up than to cling to what Jesus has said. What a bunch of frightened men they were ! They were covering inside. John 20:19 "*... The disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews ...*". How can their bold statement openly before their authorities just 40 Days later be explained, if they were such a bunch of cowards ?¹²³

The only logic answer to this is that they saw the resurrected Jesus, and began to acknowledge his real power over everything, so that they were sure that even the highest authorities could not do anything against them.

¹¹⁹See also Dunn p.53

¹²⁰Dunn p.56

¹²¹Dunn p.58

¹²²Dunn p.59

¹²³Dunn p.60

How can the rapid development be explained ? 3000 Believers in 50 Days, 5000 soon after, then fiercest persecution. But after 300 years the greatest power on the World at that time, the Roman Empire, is conquered (spiritually) and Christianity becomes the state religion¹²⁴.

Who is able to argue against this unique development, if not the one who just cannot allow it to be true ?

Who can explain the divine terms¹²⁵ with which Jesus was spoken of, evidently, just a few years after his resurrection ? People who knew him must have still been alive, and surely would have been able to silence the bold "claims" of the Christians instantaneously.

Notable is also that he was labeled God by Jewish people, who were known to resist any God besides their own. Abandoning their God was the worst treason for them, yet they held Jesus as God.

What is the cause of all this effects ? Any "development" as postulated by scholars is not possible in this short timespan and would have been able to be identified and resisted by the Christians themselves, since they were known for their truthfulness and honesty¹²⁶.

Historical Evidence

Some excerpts from a letter of Pliny to the Emperor Trajan (98-117 AD) characterizing Christians: "*they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never falsify their word, nor deny a trust, when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food - but food of an ordinary and innocent kind. Even this practice, however, they had abandoned after the publication of my edict, by which, according to your orders, I had forbidden political associations. I judged it so much the more necessary to extract the real truth, with the assistance of torture, from two female slaves, who were styled deaconesses: but I could discover nothing more than depraved and excessive superstition. I therefore adjourned the proceedings, and betook myself at once to your counsel. For the matter seemed to me well worth referring to you - especially considering the numbers endangered. Persons of all ranks and ages, and of both sexes are, and will be, involved in the prosecution. For this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread through the villages and rural districts; it seems possible, however, to check and cure it. Tis [Sic] certain at least that the temples, which had been almost deserted, began now to be frequented [After methods still to be mentioned] ; and the sacred festivals, after a long general demand for sacrificial animals, which for some time past have met with but few purchasers. From hence it is easy to imagine what multitudes may be reclaimed from this error, if a door be left open to repentance.*"¹²⁷.

Pliny used the following "methods" with Christians: "*Meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been denounced to me as Christians is this: I interrogated them whether they were Christians; if they confessed it I repeated the question twice again, adding the threat of capital punishment; if they still persevered, I ordered them to be executed. For whatever the nature of their creed might be, I could at least feel no doubt that contumacy and inflexible obstinacy deserved chastisement. There were others also possessed with the same infatuation, but being citizens of Rome, I directed them to be carried thither.*

These accusations spread as is usually the case from the mere fact of the matter being investigated and several forms of the mischief came to light. A placard was put up, without any signature, accusing a large number of persons by name. Those who denied they were, or had ever been, Christians, who repeated

¹²⁴Dunn p.60

¹²⁵Dunn p.61

¹²⁶Kee p. 44, Pliny's Letter to the Emperor Trajan.

¹²⁷Kee p.44-45

*after me an invocation to the gods, and offered adoration, with wine and frankincense, to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for that purpose, together with those of the gods, and who finally cursed Christ - none of which acts, it is said, those who are really Christians can be forced into performing - these I thought it proper to discharge. Others who were named by that informer at first confessed themselves Christians, and then denied it; true, they had been of that persuasion but they had quitted it, some three years ago, others many years, and a few as much as twenty-five years ago. They all worshipped your statue and the images of the gods, and cursed Christ."*¹²⁸

Now we have sure knowledge about the Christians of that era, because it is knowledge from their enemies the Romans.

It was customary for Jewish people to return to the tomb were a loved one has been laid after about a year to gather up the bones and put them in a bone box (ossuary). The bones should be kept so God could use them in the resurrection. In that time resurrection was associated with re-use of the dead body. That is why the dead body was very important at that time. Would anybody have been able to show the bones or body of Jesus, Christianity would soon have been abolished. Two passages confirm this popular view at that time Matthew 27:52-53 and John 5:28-29, both speak of the dead coming out the their tombs¹²⁹. So no one would believe in Christianity had it been possible to locate the body of him. What an easy task for the enemies of Christianity!

But apparently they were not able to produce his body. Contrary the Jews affirmed the empty tomb of Jesus by claiming that his disciples stole the body (Matthew 28:13-15).¹³⁰

Another historical consideration is the Jewish custom of worshipping at the tomb of a dead prophet (See also Matthew 23:29). It would have been contrary to their custom, they would not have honored the dead prophet Jesus, had they not held worship at his tomb. But there is no evidence of any tomb-veneration whatsoever in early Christianity.¹³¹

Objections

Some Scholars have claimed that Paul never mentions the tomb being empty, and, because they judge Paul's writings to be the earliest, doubt the resurrection. Contrary to that Paul affirms the resurrection as we have seen above. Since the tomb was of no significance to his readers (first almost all are directed to Hellenistic readers, secondly there was nothing significant about the tomb, **because it was empty**) there was no reason of telling anything about it. Of course he implied in almost all his references to the risen Christ that the tomb was empty.

The most common view is that of a "development". There has been already too much material discussed, so it is evident that this view cannot be held.

Most objections rise from speculation of the validity of the scriptures and why this and that was written. **There is no evidence whatsoever to support the view that Christ did not rise from the dead, except by presupposing that no supernatural things happen.**

¹²⁸Kee p.44

¹²⁹Dunn p.66-67

¹³⁰Dunn p.67

¹³¹Dunn p.67

The Gospel according to John

Characteristics

The Gospel of John is the most theological of all the Gospels¹³². It shows that the author has done a great deal of thinking about the incidents he was a witness of in the life of Jesus. He touches great Themes like the light, life, love and abiding in the truth¹³³. He does so in large saying complexes¹³⁴, the largest ones citing Jesus directly in the New Testament. He shows detailed knowledge of situations¹³⁵ and of the emotions associated with them.

This Gospel shows 3 years of Jesus ministry¹³⁶ it mentions 3 Passovers, the other Gospels just mention one.

Of the contents of this Gospel 92% present information not found in the other Gospels. But this Gospel definitively has its contacts with the Synoptic Gospels¹³⁷. It appears that the Author knew Luke and Mark from memory¹³⁸ and cites sometimes freely from them. Often in the telling of a story, knowledge of a situation in the other Gospels is expected¹³⁹. For example John does not cover the Baptism of Jesus but in Chapter 1:32 knowledge of Jesus' Baptism is presupposed when John the Baptist says "*I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me....*". The imprisonment of John the Baptist in John 3:24 "*This was before John was put in prison*". John never tells us of the imprisonment. He mentions "The Twelve" in Chapter 6:67 supposing this term is known.: "*You do not want to leave too, do you ? Jesus asked the twelve.*".

Generally he is used to the language in the synoptic gospels, and includes some bits from them but often expands them.

He is also citing the Old Testament in a very free manner sometimes from his memory¹⁴⁰.

Since the discovery of the Qumran-Scrolls notable similarities in thought with the Qumran sect have been discovered¹⁴¹. The type of thought expressed here seems to be widespread an that time¹⁴². This was not expected by the scholars, and often in the past a different type of thought has been presupposed.

This gospels shows a very detailed knowledge of Jewish customs, as well as history and geography¹⁴³ of Palestine.

¹³²Bibel-Lexikon p.711

¹³³Guthrie p.250

¹³⁴Kümmel p.200

¹³⁵Kümmel p.203

¹³⁶Kümmel p.200

¹³⁷Kümmel p.199

¹³⁸Kümmel p.204

¹³⁹Kümmel p.201

¹⁴⁰Kümmel p.211

¹⁴¹Kümmel p.199

¹⁴²Guthrie p.267

¹⁴³Guthrie p.261

Authorship

Nowhere is the author mentioned in the text, as the habit of the Gospel-Writers is. But he has left traces. In the prologue it is written " *We have seen his glory*" (John 1:14) indicating that the author was an eyewitness.

Similar in John's Letters, 1 John 1:1-4 where the first person plural has a similar function. 1 John 1:1-4 "*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*"¹⁴⁴.

This clearly asserts John being an eyewitness. The use of the word "see" is physical and not spiritual sight evidently from the way of using in Greek¹⁴⁵.

Another passage concerning the authorship is 19:35 "*The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth.*". And yet another in Chapter 21:24 "*This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down.. We know that his testimony is true.*"¹⁴⁶.

There is a title, the "beloved disciple", which the author gives to himself. Often bible critics have trouble identifying this term with John. Chapter 21 talks about a group of disciples under which the "disciple whom Jesus loved" was. The possible group to which this "disciple" could belong here is restricted by the sons of Zebedee and two others. This "disciple" is announcing the presence of the Lord to Peter. In John 13:23 Peter is using the "beloved disciple" to ask Jesus something.

The close association of Peter and John (who is one of the sons of Zebedee) is repeatedly asserted in Scripture (For example at the preparation of the Passover in Luke 22:8; The resurrection of Jairus' daughter in Mark 5:37; The Transfiguration in Mark 9:2; Gethsemane in Mark 14:33; Delegation to Samaria in Acts 8:14; Mentioned as pillar apostles in Galatians 2:9).

Mary Magdalene when she comes running from the tomb comes running to "*Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved*" (John 20:2). So it is natural to assume that the "beloved disciple" is John the son of Zebedee¹⁴⁷.

Several passages in John mention things about the "beloved disciple" which show very intimate knowledge of this disciple himself, which only he could tell of himself. For example when the "beloved disciple" sees the empty tomb he "believed" (John 20:8). The burden to care for Jesus' mother is assigned to him (John 29:26)¹⁴⁸.

Nowhere in the Gospel of John is "John" himself mentioned by name, although the other Gospels do this frequently. John the Baptist is referenced to as "John", which gives rise to the thought that John must be referenced to under another name¹⁴⁹ and that John thought it not to be fitting to mention his name.

¹⁴⁴emphasis mine

¹⁴⁵Guthrie p.253

¹⁴⁶Guthrie p.255

¹⁴⁷Guthrie p.256

¹⁴⁸Guthrie p.256-257

¹⁴⁹Guthrie p.257

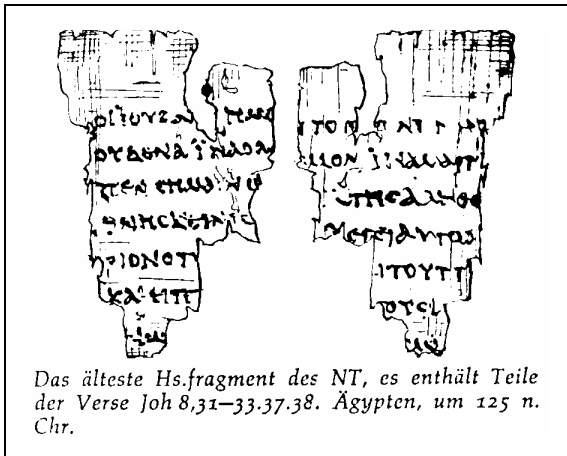
In John 1:35-42 in the story of the first two disciples, one is Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, and the other one is unnamed. The author has very specific knowledge of this situation, which leads to the thought that John must have been the other disciple. He most probably had been a very early eyewitness. Actually the first two disciples were first disciples of John the Baptist, and changed to Jesus when John (the Baptist) testified to them that this is the one to come. There is very specific knowledge of this situation too. Often a connection of John the Baptist to Qumran has been suggested. Since John "the beloved" was associated for some time with him, this would also explain that some characteristics of the language and terminology used in the Gospel are the same as in the scriptures of Qumran.

It has been suggested that the phrase "the beloved disciple" is a very humbling way to refer to himself as somebody, who has grasped something of the significance of God's love in Christ. To cite Guthrie "He will not mention his name but will rather draw attention to what he owes to the love of Jesus"¹⁵⁰. The phrase may have been in usage for the aged apostle since it is also attested in early epistles of the church. Other terms which are often used for him "The disciple" or "The elder" as in the Epistles of John or the writings of Papias (See Chapters on the other Gospels).

Occasion and Purpose

Clement of Alexandria tells why "*Last of all John perceiving that the bodily (or external) facts had been set forth in the (other) Gospels, at the instance of his disciples and with the inspiration of the Spirit composed a spiritual Gospel*".¹⁵¹ Clement believed that the Gospel of John was supplemental to the other gospels¹⁵². As it's contents also testify of. John seems to share memory of Jesus which was in danger of getting lost.

He definitely wrote for believers, because he presupposes the knowledge of the synoptic Gospels. The target audience also is definitely gentile Christianity.



Early Manuscript-Fragment of John ca. 125 AD¹⁵³.

Today "the assumption that John was written probably in the last decade of the first century is ... almost universally accepted."¹⁵⁴ Fragments from 125 AD of this Gospel have survived (See picture on left). Therefore it must have circulated long before. This makes extensive development by "tradition" as often postulated, impossible¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵⁰Guthrie p.259

¹⁵¹Guthrie p.285

¹⁵²Guthrie p.286

¹⁵³Bibel-Lexikon p.383

¹⁵⁴Kümmel p.246

¹⁵⁵Marshall p.24

There are also witnesses before that. Before 110 AD Ignatius in his writings gives evidence of John. Most Scholars nowadays acknowledge a date of 90-110 AD, but this seems almost too late. Attempts to date it later in the second century have been silenced since the discovery of early fragments of manuscripts¹⁵⁶. Since the Dead Sea Scrolls are from 200 BC, there is some tendency to date this Gospel very early, before 70 AD.

There is some common terminology (for example "Light") with the Gnostics. But the Gnostics have rejected the Gospel of John as the discovery of the Naq Hammadi-Scrolls¹⁵⁷ have shown. Today no evidence of developed Gnosticism is supposed as has been earlier assumed.¹⁵⁸

It is almost impossible to deny that the author was a native of Palestine, since it would be no reason for him to include topographical details if not because he recalls even other memories which he associated with this places. (See below).

Even critics like Kümmel grant at least : "It must be acknowledged either that the author thought in Aramaic while writing in Greek, or at least that he came from a bilingual area"¹⁵⁹.

John has unique material different from the other Gospels. John has apparently known of the other Gospels and wanted to provide additional information from viewpoints which the other were not able to see. This would only have been possible if the author had enough authority to be heard after the other gospels. This could just have been an apostle¹⁶⁰.

Tradition for the life of John is, that he lived until Trajans time¹⁶¹ when persecution had started. Irenaeus a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, tells us that this Gospel was written when John lived in Ephesus¹⁶².

¹⁵⁶Guthrie p.297

¹⁵⁷Lecture Notes

¹⁵⁸Guthrie p.298

¹⁵⁹Kümmel p.216

¹⁶⁰Guthrie p.266

¹⁶¹Guthrie p.299

¹⁶²Bibel-Lexikon p.711

Central Theme: Historical Accuracy

Validity of Dates, Persons and Locations

Because of the highly developed theology, accuracy in terms of historical facts has often been denied to the Gospel of John. This assumption has been shaken since excavations near the temple have revealed a pool with five porticos - as mentioned in the Gospel of John - with inscriptions suggesting the healing properties of the water, the pool of Bethesda.

The Gospel also proved accurate in the knowledge of the Hebrew name of a paved area outside the Praetorium "Gabbatha". Also the Pool of Siloam (9:7) and the brook Kidron (18:1) is known to the Gospel¹⁶³.

Frequently topographic details are given which are not mentioned in the synoptic Gospels. Two Bethanias are mentioned (1:28;12:1), Aenon near Salim (3:23), Cana in Galilee (2:1;4:46;21:2), Tiberias as an alternate name for the Sea of Galilee (6:1;21:1), Sychar near Shechem (4:5), Mount Gerizim near a well (4:21), Ephraim near the wilderness (11:54).

No other Gospel gives such a detailed view of Palestine.

Validity of the ending of John

There are doubts concerning the validity of Chapter 21. This is purely based on conjecture, since "John never circulated without Chapter 21"¹⁶⁴. It is held that this passage is not of the author. because it deals with the death of John and in Chapter 21:24b "*And we know that his witness is true*" is from a different group of people, probably his disciples or at an early time his fellow disciples of Jesus.

Since this originated from the same time as the Gospel, this passage has to be treated as authentic, since the manuscript never circulated without it. Therefore it has to be held that the author permitted this addition, if it was not from his hand. Anyway it is a further assertion that his work is authentic. Conjecture that there were "redactors" who changed John without his consent is therefore without any basis, although it could be that John had assistance to writing the Gospel, as also Paul had for writing his Epistles.

In beginning of Verse 24 he says "*This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down.*". This is enough for me¹⁶⁵.

Intimate Knowledge

The Gospel shows such an accuracy in details, which make it very improbable that this details were created purely from fiction.

Examples of details: Six waterpots at Cana (2:6). Twenty-five or thirty stadia as the distance rowed by the disciples across the Sea of Galilee (6:19). The number of fish caught. The distance of the boat from shore (21:8+11).

¹⁶³Guthrie p.262

¹⁶⁴Kümmel p.207

¹⁶⁵Maier J1 p.8-9

Some have suggested a purely symbolic meanings for this details but the pursuit of this idea gave no satisfactory conclusions¹⁶⁶. Vanderlip views almost every miracles in John as having a two-level meaning, one historical, and evolving from this, a spiritual meaning¹⁶⁷.

Even when criticism of the Gospel started in the 19th century, some authorities on this field (For example Schleiermacher) still attributed the Gospel to an eyewitness¹⁶⁸.

Doubts concerning Gospel and Author

All sources of the early church speak with one voice, that this is John's writing. After some time it has been challenged by people which could not fit the Gospel into their system of belief, but they did not succeed¹⁶⁹. There was widespread acknowledgement afterwards.

In the eighteenth century bible-criticism started and started to doubt the authorship of John, mainly because they saw differences to the synoptic Gospels. They claimed that the Gospel of John had a non-Jewish character expressing non-Jewish thoughts, and together with the late date suggested a non-apostolic authorship¹⁷⁰.

Though the finding of the Qumran-Scrolls and other information this claim has clearly been disproved and more and more the accuracy of the Gospel has been acknowledged.

The attempts to show contradictions within the text has also consequently been identified as misunderstandings by the surveyors.

The claim was made that John has no historical information but purely theological, that it is a more developed form of a "myth" ¹⁷¹. It was held that John did not aim to give an historical account, but sought to present an "idea". This also has clearly been done away with since the discovery of the accurate historical and geographical information mentioned earlier.

It has been "proved" that John contains a polemic goal against John the Baptist¹⁷². Since John uses a sort of Qumran-style language and shows detailed knowledge of John the Baptist, it is to be assumed that he actually draws an accurate positive picture of John the Baptist.

The view has been made public that John did not know the synoptic Gospels¹⁷³. Since he often expands on topics of the synoptic gospels which he does not explain it is difficult to hold this. Another important argument is the known exchange of Scripture and the communication between the communities. One must assume that the communities were isolated to be able to hold this view.

¹⁶⁶Guthrie p.263

¹⁶⁷Vanderlip p.45

¹⁶⁸Kümmel 197

¹⁶⁹Kümmel p.196-197, Guthrie p. 271, Maier J1 p.8-9

¹⁷⁰Kümmel p.197

¹⁷¹Kümmel p.197

¹⁷²Kümmel p.199

¹⁷³Kümmel p.202

There are theories that the writings of John have been rearranged, because breaks of thought occur quite frequently in the text¹⁷⁴. It is often the case that John seems to use this breaks to communicate important thoughts to the reader, so again attempts to rearrange the gospel might only be a expression of the inability to understand the writers intends. Even Kümmel confirms that "no one has shown convincingly that the Gospel has been disarranged"¹⁷⁵.

¹⁷⁴Kümmel p.205-207

¹⁷⁵Kümmel p.206

Conclusion

In this Paper I assert the validity and truth of the Gospels against a lot of speculative conjecture ideas from scholars. And I firmly believe that the Bible is true. But since the coming of bible-criticism and its "proofs" of contradictions in the bible there has been an eroding of the basics of Christian beliefs (Development to liberalism, best example Bultmann). Believing Christians have seen this and counter-reacted by asserting the truth of the Bible.

Naturally some have overreacted and instigated a new dogma of the Bible :

1.	That every letter in the Bible has its exact meaning and that there cannot be any contradiction in the bible, because God is perfect, so also must the bible be perfect.
2.	Some Churches have gone so far as to say the Bible is their only Truth and that the Bible is the only way of communication with God.

I see a certain danger in this that we build up a new Idol, the bible. We hold it so sacred that we lose its from God intended use, and again go away from God the creator of all the earth to the dead use of the Bible as a rule-book.

God intended the Bible to be Scripture that communicates the Truth about him to us. It is not itself the Truth, but tells of the Truth. If we follow the Bible we will follow Jesus and have the Holy Spirit in us *which will lead us into all truth (John 14:26)*. It is impossible to understand God just by interpretation of the Bible, God can only be understood, if we own a part of him, the Holy Spirit, in ourselves ! Many people have attempted to use the Bible, but did not let themselves be led by him, and therefore have done much harm and mislead people, who have been earnestly seeking for God. I think the harm done through this is of the worst kind possible.

Therefore I believe, God - in all providence - has equipped the Bible with some contradictions, so that no one can use this book in that way without corrupting their intellectual integrity. I do not have any trouble with conflicting passages, because they are of a very minor nature and do not affect the overall Truth of the Bible. For example, how did Judas die ?

Judas before the priests in Matthew 27:3-8 *"When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned, he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?", they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day."*.
So Judas hanged himself and the Priests bought the Blood-Field.

Acts 1:15-19 *"In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus - he was one of our number and shared in this ministry." With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood."*.
Hey, here Judas bought the field and fell to his death when he was there !

Many people try to explain this away. Why not just take it as it is a misunderstanding on a minor point in the Gospels ?¹⁷⁶ Perhaps in this incident Luke's investigation was not as thoroughly as possible. But does this matter for the understanding of the whole New Testament ? Only if somebody insists on the perfect bible, and sets this standards for the Bible, which it does not set for itself. (For further material: Start over again and read the introduction).

I will conclude with a passage, which illustrates this (2 Cor 3:6):

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the **letter** but of the **Spirit**; for the **letter** kills, but the **Spirit** gives life.

¹⁷⁶See how Dunn p.64 treats this matter

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