

Christian Scholars Dispute the Authenticity of Biblical Books

By Various Contributors to www.IslamLife.com

The Bible is a unique source to use and rely on, to say the least. This is a book that was compiled over the span of several thousand years written by dozens, possibly hundreds of anonymous authors of unknown trustworthiness who altered various parts of the book and edited it at will. The current Christian Bible comprises of two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Jews generally call the Old Testament the Torah, but they vehemently and bitterly reject the Christian addition to it known as the New Testament.

During my debate with James White, I challenged every reference he quoted as being disputed by Christians themselves. The amazing response from White, who seems to be a Calvinist himself, was to challenge the fact I stated, even while he seemed to reject the validity of the most popular Bible in the world today: The Kings James Version of the Bible, the KJV.

By merely discounting the reliability of the KJV, an English translation of the so-called oldest manuscripts of various parts of the Bible, Christians agree with Muslims that there exists a bitter dispute between them on the reliability of their own Holy Book. When one says that the KJV is not completely accurate, then, brings his own new version, the dispute is already proven for all to see in favor of corruption of the Bible.

Following is a collection of articles written by various contributors to www.IslamLife.com; I ask Allah to reward them for their efforts.

This is but the tip of the tip of the iceberg, since the disputes between Christians on who wrote what in the Bible, in what time frame or original language, and who edited what, *is* the most kept/exposed secret of Christianity. Allah knows best, but this Christian secret may one day be fully exposed in the future when humankind finally gains direct access to the books Christian Popes hide in their Vatican libraries, so that humankind can have access to a part of the truth that Christianity strives so hard to bury in the old dark corridors of Papal secret book collections.

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Hebrews

Early Christians had no idea who authored *Hebrews*. Some claimed it was Paul while others denied it. Bart Ehrman writes: "Some wanted to include Hebrews on the grounds that Paul wrote it; others insisted that he did not" (Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 2000, 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press, p. 11).

Ehrman also writes (p 378): "The book [Hebrews] does not explicitly claim to be written by Paul; like the New Testament Gospels, it is anonymous. But it came to be included in the canon only after Christians of the third and fourth centuries became convinced that Paul had written it. Modern scholars, however, are unified in recognizing that he did not.

McDonald adds: "The attributing of Hebrews to Paul may have helped the book gain acceptance among the churches despite the rejection of its Pauline authorship by many" (Lee M. McDonald, *The Formation Of The Christian Biblical Canon*, Revised and Expanded Edition, 1995, Hendrickson Publishers, p. 231).

About the reception of *Hebrews* we read: "**Hebrews ... remained in dispute for several centuries. ... Origen solved the question by assuming that Pauline thought was here expressed by an anonymous author;** Eusebius and some others report the doubts of the West, but after Origen the letter was accepted in the East. It is noteworthy that the letter takes pride of place after Romans in the 3rd-century Chester Beatty papyrus (p46). **In the West doubts persisted from the earliest days : Irenaeus did not accept it as Pauline, Tertullian and other African sources pay it little regard, `Ambrosiaster' wrote no commentary upon it, and in this was followed by Pelagius.** The councils of Hippo and Carthage separate Hebrews from the rest of the Pauline Epistles in their canonical enumerations, **and Jerome reported that in his day the opinion in Rome was still against authenticity. The matter was not considered settled until a century or so later.**" (J. D. Douglas (Organizing Editor), F.F. Bruce, R.V.G. Tasker, J.I. Packer, D.J. Wiseman (Consulting Editors), *The New Bible Dictionary*, Inter-Varsity Press, London. pp. 197-198)

Based on the above, one can ask: how can we know that an author is "inspired" when we do not even know his name or know anything about him apart from his writing? This person could have been a liar, a deceiver, someone dishonest, or someone with a weak memory, a

common ignorant man etc. For instance, Eerdmans Bible Dictionary states: "Although Hebrews has consistently been attributed to Paul since antiquity, the internal evidence of the book **precludes authorship by the apostle**. Unlike Pauline Epistles, Hebrews is anonymous. The fact that the language and style of Hebrews is far superior to that of the Pauline correspondence is further evidence that the author of Hebrews was not Paul. Although numerous candidates for authorship have been suggested - e.g., Barnebas, Apollos, Silvanus, Priscilla - the book does not supply enough information about the identity of the author to make such speculation useful. We know from internal evidence only that **Hebrews is written by a skilled rhetorican** of the second Christian generation (2:3)." (*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, by David Noel Freedman, Allen Myers and Astrid B. Beck; Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing 2000, p. 569).

Alan C. Mitchell wrote: "The attempts at a precise identification of the author of Hebrews try to account for external and internal evidence to make best possible determination of who may have written the sermon. In the history of its interpretation as **many as thirteen individuals** have been suggested as the author (See Ellingworth, 3). ... **The consensus of contemporary commentators** indicates correctly that Hebrews is **non-Pauline and anonymous**." (Alan C. Mitchell, "Hebrews"; Liturgical Press, 2007, pp. 5-6)

As for the date, scholars agree that *Hebrews* must be placed between A.D. 60-96, but disagree on the precise date. Brown says (p. 684) that *Hebrews* is "more likely" to be written in the 80's; McDonald and Porter prefer a date between A.D. 60-70, before the destruction of the Temple (p. 523); Ehrman appears to prefer the "final quarter of the first century" (p. 384); Kummel concludes between A.D. 80-90 (p. 403); Metzger believes (p. 249) that a strong case be made for a date " ... prior to the destruction of the Temple in A.D.70." Though he does not specify *how* early. (James L. Mays (General Editor), *HarperCollins Bible Commentary*, 2000, Revised Edition, HarperSanFrancisco; W. G. Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 1975, Revised Edition, SCM Press Ltd; Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament, its background, growth, and content*, 1985, 2nd edition, enlarged, Abingdon Press Nashville; Lee Martin McDonald, Stanley E. Porter, *Early Christianity and its Sacred Literature*, 2000, Hendrickson Publishers; Raymond E. Brown, S.S, *An Introduction to The New Testament* (The Anchor Bible Reference Library), 1997, Doubleday; Bart D. Ehrman, *The*

New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings, 2000, Second Edition, Oxford University Press)

The Book of Revelation

1) “**Epistle to the Hebrews**, the second and third Epistles of John, the second Epistle of Peter, the Epistle of James, and the Epistle of Jude were by many disputed as to their apostolic origin, and **the book of Revelation was doubted** by reason of its contents.” (*History of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity from Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great, A.D. 311-600*, by Philip Schaff, vol. 3; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886, p. 608 - cited by Kerby F. Fannin in “*While men Slept.. A Biblical and Historical Account of the New Universal Christianity*”; Life's Resources Inc. , 2002 , p. 92)

2) “Most biblical scholars today **think that the author of the Book of Revelation was neither an apostle of Jesus nor the author of the Gospel of John**. The reasons for this view have to do with differences in the style of writing and the probable date of composition of this book. At most, we can say that the author of the book of Revelation was an early Jewish Christian prophet by the name of John, otherwise unknown in early Christian literature.” (*The Book of Revelation*, by Catherine A. Cory; Liturgical Press, 2006, p. 7)

3) “St. Cyril of Jerusalem in his Catechetical Lectures (A.D. 350) **excluded Revelation from the list of canonical books** read in the churches [Cyril Of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, 4:36]. Though Cyril frequently cited John's Gospel and epistles in his lectures, he nowhere alluded to Revelation. **The council of Laodicea (A.D. 360) did not include Revelation among its list of canonical books (Canon 60).**” (*A Second Look at the Second Coming: Sorting Through the Speculations*, by T.L. Frazier; Conciliar Press Ministries, 1999, p. 309)

4) Eusebius rejected the Book of Revelation: (Internet Source: http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Eusebius_Gospels.htm)

Acts of the Apostles

“Early Christian tradition argues that Luke the physician, the traveling companion of Paul (see Col 4:14, 2 Tim 4:11, Phlm 24), was the author of Acts (see Irenaeus, AdvHaer 3.14). Although this traditional view still has its ardent supporters (see Fitzmyer 1981, 35-51), **many scholars today are**

skeptical about identifying the author of Acts with any certainty. ... The identity of the author will probably remain a point of contention, but accepting **an anonymous author** in no way detracts from the message of the book. The name "Luke" is used throughout this commentary as a matter of convenience to refer to the implied author of Acts **without any assumptions about the identity of the real author.**" (Mikeal C. Parsons: "Acts of the Apostles" in *Mercer Commentary on the New Testament*, edited by Watson E. Mills & Richard F. Wilson; Mercer University Press, 2003, p. 1083)

The Gospel of John

The fourth gospel is most notably different from the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke). Most scholars regard it to be least reliable and full of inauthentic details, although it is quite possible that it also contains some reliable historical details. These quotations, with one exception (Sanders) are taken from evangelical conservative and moderate (Dunn) scholarly books.

John Barton [Oriental and Laing Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture, University of Oxford, and Fellow of Oriental College, Oxford] states: **"The author of John's gospel is, as we have noted already, unlikely to have been an immediate disciple of Jesus,** if only because so much of the material in the synoptic gospels is missing from John. The likelihood is therefore that **all the historical books of the New Testament are not eyewitness accounts of the events described.** They are all written by people some time after the events, a fact that must affect one's assessment of the books concerned. **The authorship of the letters is also disputed.** Several are written in the name of the apostle Paul. However, it seems clear that not all the letters attributed to Paul are by Paul himself. Significant differences of style, language and at times important ideas make this extremely likely. ... **The authorship of other letters in the New Testament is also disputed.** The letter to the Hebrews (traditionally ascribed to Paul) is anonymous. ... The letters ascribed to Peter may also be pseudonymous. ... All in all, **large parts of the New Testament are not written by people directly connected with Jesus or the very earliest period of the Christian Church.** (This could apply even to Paul: Paul was 'converted' after the death of Jesus). Rather, many New Testament books stem from second- or third-generation Christians, writing a little time

after the foundational events of the Christian church and reflecting on them. Some of the authors would clearly like to be seen as earlier authoritative figures in that they write in the name of such figures. **But the fact remains that large parts of the New Testament were written by Christians after the initial period.**" (John Barton, *"The Biblical World"* (Routledge 2002) pp. 30-31)

Bruce Metzger believed that John recorded some "valuable historical data" and supplementary information (p. 95), he also proceeded to say that John was "guided by theological rather than simple historical interests" (p. 95) and implied that the synoptics are more historical, thus more reliable, when he wrote: While the synoptics preserve the sayings of Jesus more exactly in their original language and form, **the fourth evangelist employs more freely his own modes of thought and language in reporting and interpreting the discourses of Jesus** (Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament, its background, growth and content*, 2nd edition, enlarged, Abingdon Press Nashville, p. 96).

Next, consider the verdict of the late conservative Christian scholar and apologist F. F. Bruce, a favorite of conservative Christians and apologists. In his monumental commentary on John's gospel, he wrote: The Evangelist records words which were really spoken, actions which were really performed. His record of these words and actions **includes their interpretation**, in which their inward significance is disclosed and faith is quickened in Jesus as the Revealer of the Father and the Saviour of the world. The source of the Evangelist's interpretation of Jesus' words and actions is clearly indicated in his record. He reports Jesus' promise that the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, would come to guide his disciples into all truth, especially by bringing to their remembrance all that Jesus had taught them and making it plain to them. In reporting this promise, the Evangelist implies that he himself experienced a rich fulfilment of it, as he pondered the significance of what Jesus had done and said during his ministry, as he shared with others what he and his companions had seen and heard, and as he finally caused the contents of this gospel to be set down in writing. **If in this Gospel the words and deeds of Jesus appear to have undergone 'transposition into a higher key' than that with which we are familiar in the Synoptic Gospels, this is the effect of the Spirit's enabling the Evangelist to adapt the story of Jesus to a different public from that for which the earlier Gospels were designed. The Spirit was, among other things, to serve as a trustworthy interpreter; his**

interpretive ministry is clearly to be discerned in the Gospel according to John. Interpretation (which in the Gospels involved, at an early stage, translation from the Aramaic which Jesus normally spoke into Greek) may take a variety of forms. A word-for-word transcription or translation is scarcely an interpretation in the usual sense of the word. Today one would 'interpret' the words of Jesus by transposing them from the Hellenistic Greek in which they have been preserved into a late twentieth-century idiom (whether English or any other language). Interpretation may result in an abridgement or a summary (it is widely believed, for example, that the speeches in Acts are literary summaries of what was originally spoken at much greater length). It may, on the other hand, result in an expanded version of what was said; if so, it will probably include a good deal of paraphrase. If the effect of such an expanded paraphrase is to bring out the sense more fully, then the use of this form is amply justified. Plutarch, in his *Life of Brutus*, describes what happened in Rome on the morrow of Julius Caesar's assassination: Anthony and his supports demanded that Caesar's will should be read in public, and that Caesar's body should not be buried in private but with customary honours. ... Brutus agreed to these demands. ... The first consequence of this was that, when it became known that according to the terms of his will the dictator had presented seventy five drachmas to each Roman citizen and had bequeathed to the citizens the use of his gardens beyond the Tiber, ... a great wave of affection for Caesar and a powerful sense of his loss swept over the people. The second consequence was that, after the dead man had been brought to the forum, Anthony delivered the customary funeral oration over his body. As soon as he saw that the people were deeply stirred by his speech, he changed his tone and struck a note of compassion, and picking up Caesar's toga, stiff with blood as it was, he unfolded it for all to see, pointing out each gash where the daggers had stabbed through and the number of Caesar's wounds. At this his hearers lost all control of their emotions. Some called out for the assassins to be killed; others. ... dragged out benches and tables from the neighbouring shops and piled them on top of one another to make an enormous pyre. On this they laid Caesar's corpse and cremated it. ... As the flames began to mount, people rushed up from all sides, seized burning brands, and ran through the city to the assassin's houses to set fire to them. A vivid enough account, to be sure. But how was Caesar's will read, and what exactly did Mark Anthony say in his

eulogy? A satisfying answer to these two questions is provided in a well-known English interpretation of Plutarch's narrative – not a word-for-word translation but an expanded paraphrase in which it is Anthony who reads Caesar's will aloud *after* he has excited the indignation of the crowd by exhibiting Caesar's torn and blood-stained robe and exposing his wounded corpse. Anthony's whole speech, from its low-key exordium: Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him - to its ringing peroration: Here was a Caesar! When comes such an other? Is a translation of the freest kind, a transposition into another key; but Shakespeare's genius enables him to put the right words into Anthony's mouth, 'endeavouring as nearly as possible' (in Thucydidean fashion), 'to give the general purport of what was actually said'. **What Shakespeare does by dramatic insight (and, it may be added, what many a preacher does by homiletical skill), all this and much more the Spirit of God accomplished in our Evangelist.** It does not take divine inspiration to provide a verbatim transcript; but to reproduce the words which were spirit and life to their first believing hearers in such a way that they continue to communicate their saving message and prove themselves to be spirit and life to men and women today, nineteen centuries after John wrote – that is the word of the Spirit of God. It is through the Spirit's operation that, in William Temple's words, 'the mind of Jesus himself was what the Fourth Gospel disclosed'; and it is through the illumination granted by the same Spirit that one may still recognise in this Gospel the authentic voice of Jesus. (F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 1983, Eerdmans, pp. 15-17). In short, F. F. Bruce says that we should not view the fourth gospel as presenting the literal wording of Jesus.

Geza Vermes, Jewish scholar and authority on the historical Jesus subject, writes: "The identity of the fourth evangelist is uncertain. He is held by Christian tradition to be identical with the apostle John, son of Zebedee, but this claim is not backed by any solid historical evidence. **This Gospel has little in common with Mark, Matthew and Luke and the doctrinal development contained in it points to a period after the Synoptics in the beginning of the second century AD (roughly AD 100–110).** The bulk of the long, rambling and repetitious speeches of Jesus included in John reflect the ideas of an author steeped in Hellenistic philosophical and mystical speculation, who reshaped the portrait of Jesus two to three generations after his death. This writer can scarcely be

identical with the apostle John who is described in the Acts of the Apostles as an 'uneducated, common man' (Acts 4:13). The violent antisemitism of the fourth evangelist makes it even questionable that he was a Jew. In consequence, apart from the small number of sayings which echo the Synoptics, the words of Jesus peculiar to the Fourth Gospel will not be taken into account in our investigation." (Geza Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel Of Jesus*, 2004, Penguin Books, pp. xii-xiii.)

In short, there are so many striking differences between the portrayals of Jesus in John and the synoptic gospels that it becomes far-fetched to suppose that these are merely innocent "complementary" accounts of Jesus. E. P. Sanders - one of the leading New Testament and historical Jesus (P) scholar - concludes after presenting some examples of differences between the synoptics and John that: **"It is impossible to think that Jesus spent his short ministry teaching in two such completely different ways, conveying such different contents, and there were simply two traditions, each going back to Jesus, one transmitting 50 per cent of what he said and another one the other 50 per cent, with almost no overlaps.** Consequently, for the last 150 or so years scholars have had to choose. **They have almost unanimously, and I think entirely correctly, concluded that the teaching of the historical Jesus is to be sought in the synoptic gospels and that John represents an advanced theological development, in which meditations on the person and work of Christ are presented in the first person, as if Jesus said them."** (E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure Of Jesus*, 1993, Penguin Books, pp. 70-71)

That the fourth gospel is historically less reliable and trustworthy when it comes to unearthing the historical Jesus is also readily acknowledged by conservative Christian scholars and is not a belief held by evil "liberal" scholars only. Mark Goodacre writes: "John - even by the most conservative scholars, e.g. N. T. Wright hardly uses John at all."

Jalal Abualrub added: In short, the Gospel of *John* is not what Jesus really did or said; it is what the author of *John*, whoever he really is, decided according to his own interpretation what Jesus meant, sort of helping the Holy Ghost express his revelation in a better way. Thus, Allah's statement that the Jews rewrote the Word of God with their own hands *still stands unchallenged against Judaism and Christianity.*

Another prominent conservative evangelical scholar, John Drane, a student of F. F. Bruce, likewise concludes: "... they [New Testament gospels] are certainly carefully crafted narratives aiming to tell the story of Jesus' life and teaching. **As such, they are not to be judged by the standards of scientific enquiry, but according to the practises of story telling, in which the 'truth' of a narrative is to be judged as a whole on its own terms, rather than in relation to notions of truth and falsehood drawn from some other sphere of human endeavour.** The early Christian communities clearly had no problem in accepting that within the gospel traditions there would be a subtle combination of factual and fictional elements. Had they not done so, they would certainly not have tolerated the existence of four gospels which, for all their similarities, are sufficiently different from one another as to defy all attempts at producing one harmonized, factual version of the life and teachings of Jesus from them. They knew that both artists and historians operate under similar constraints as they seek to balance fact with fictional elaboration, and that the telling of a good story ... depends on the coherent combination of both these elements. While all four gospels contain factual fictive elements, the fourth gospel appears to have a greater preponderance of the latter. (John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament*, Lion Publishing Plc. Revised Edition. 1999 pp. 210-211).

Evangelical scholar Richard Bauckham in his recent book on the gospels argues that the fourth gospel stems from an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus, namely, the disciple John. At the same time, however, Bauckham also acknowledges the differences between the fourth gospel and the synoptics and argues that John is a **more reflective** and a **highly interpreted** account of the life and ministry of Jesus. Regarding the canonical gospels in general, he concludes: In all four Gospels we have the history of Jesus only in the form of testimony, the testimony of involved participants who responded in faith to the disclosure of God in these events. **In testimony fact and interpretation are inextricable; in this testimony empirical sight and spiritual perception are inseparable.** (Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 2006, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 411).

Regarding the gospel of John specifically, Bauckham says: **All scholars**, whatever their views of the redactional work of the Synoptic Evangelists and of the historical reliability of the Gospel of John, **agree**

that the latter presents a much more thoroughly and extensively interpreted version of the story of Jesus (Ibid. p. 410).

Furthermore: The concurrence of historiographic and theological concepts of witness in John's Gospel is wholly appropriate to the historical uniqueness of the subject matter, which as historical requires historiographic rendering but in its disclosure of God also demands that the witness to it speak of God. In this Gospel we have the idiosyncratic testimony of a disciple whose relationship to the events, to Jesus, was distinctive and different. **It is a view from outside the circles from which other Gospel traditions largely derive**, and it is the perspective of a man who was deeply but distinctively formed by his own experience of the events. In its origins and in its **reflective maturation** this testimony is idiosyncratic, **and its truth is not distinguishable from its idiosyncrasy**. As with all testimony, even that of the law court, there is a point beyond which corroboration cannot go, and only the witness can vouch for the truth of his own witness (Ibid p. 411).

According to Bauckham, the eyewitness author of the gospel of John did not just simply rehash mere eyewitness reports, but he also offered his highly reflective interpretations and understanding of the events: "... we can also apply the contrast between Mark (or the Synoptics in general) and John more widely. The greater selectivity of events recorded, the more continuous narrative with its more strongly delineated plot, the lengthy discourses and debates - all these distinctive features of the Gospel of John, as compared with the Synoptics, **are what make possible the much fuller development of the author's own interpretation of Jesus and his story, just as comparable features of the works of the Greco-Roman historians enable the expression of their own understanding of the history, making their works more than mere reports of what the eyewitnesses said**. But in the case of the Gospel of John these characteristics are linked with its claim to be entirely the testimony of an author who was himself an eyewitness. In this case, the whole historiographic process of eyewitness observation and participation, interrogation of other eyewitnesses, arrangement and narrativization in the formation of an integrated and rhetorically persuasive work – all this was the work of an eyewitness, **whose interpretation was, of course, in play at every level of the process**, but in what one might think of as a cumulative manner, **such that the finished Gospel has a high degree of highly reflective interpretation**. The

eyewitness claim justifies **this degree of interpretation** for a context in which the direct reports of the eyewitnesses were the most highly valued forms of testimony to Jesus. In the case of the other Gospels it was important that the form of the eyewitness testimonies was preserved in the Gospels. **The more reflective interpretive Gospel of John** does not, by contrast, assimilate the eyewitness reports beyond recognition into its own elaboration of the story, but is, as it stands, the way one eyewitness understood what he and others had seen. The author's eyewitness status authorizes **the interpretation**. Thus, whereas scholars have often supposed that this Gospel could not have been written by an eyewitness because of its **high degree of interpretation** of the events and the words of Jesus, by contrast with the Synoptics, in fact **the high degree of interpretation** is appropriate precisely because this is the only one of the canonical Gospels that claims eyewitness authorship (Ibid. p. 410 – 411).

Note that Bauckham does not deny the "highly reflective interpretational" status of the gospel of John. He only justifies it by arguing that the author was an eyewitness, so the author of John claims. In light of the above, even if we are to accept the fourth gospel as a product of an eyewitness, it does not mean that we can simply read off from its surface the words attributed to Jesus as if Jesus literally uttered them in his historical ministry.

We should also note the view of I. H. Marshall, a leading modern conservative evangelical New Testament scholar. Writing in the *New Bible Dictionary* – a major volume representing purely the work of top notch conservative scholarship – Marshall, like Bauckham, defends the thesis that the disciple John authored the fourth gospel and he also defends the general historicity of the gospel of John. At the same time, however, he too acknowledges that John presents a more interpreted and theologised narration of Jesus. To quote Marshall: "The teaching ascribed to Jesus in John **differs markedly in content and style from that in the Synoptic Gospels**. Such familiar ideas as the Kingdom of God, demons, repentance and prayer are missing, and new topics appear, such as truth, life, the world abiding and witness. At the same time, there are close and intricate connections between the two traditions, and common themes appear, e.g. Father, Son of man, faith, love and sending. **The style and the vocabulary also differ**. There are no parables in John, and Jesus often speaks in long discourses or dialogues **which are unparalleled** in the Synoptic Gospels. **Many scholars, therefore, believe that John gives us his own thoughts**

or his own meditations upon the words of Jesus rather than his *ipsissima verba*. This conclusion is strongly supported by the fact that a very similar style and content is found in 1 Jn. Nevertheless, it must be carefully qualified. First of all, the Gospel of John contains many sayings which are similar in form and content to Synoptic sayings ... and which have equal right to be regarded as authentic. Second, there is, on the other hand, at least one famous 'bolt from the Johannine blue' in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt. 11:25-27) which is a standing warning against the facile assumption that the Synoptic Jesus did not speak the language of the Johannine Jesus. Third, the same traces of Aramaic speech and the same conformity to Jewish methods of discussion are to be found in John as in the Synoptic Gospels. Thus, we can say with considerable confidence that the sayings recorded in John have a firm historical basis in the actual words of Jesus. **They have, however, been preserved in a Johannine commentary from which they can be separated only with great difficulty. ... This is no radical conclusion. So conservative a scholar as Westcott saw, for example, the words of John rather than of Jesus in 3:16-21.**" (I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. J. Packer & D. J. Wiseman (Consulting Editors), *New Bible Dictionary*, 1996, Third Edition, Inter-Varsity Press, p. 602.)

Despite Marshall's insistence that Jesus did speak the language of the Johannine Jesus and that there is a "firm historical basis" to the sayings attributed to Jesus in the fourth gospel, he also states that the author presents his own thoughts and meditations on the words of Jesus and that the sayings of Jesus have been preserved in a "Johannine commentary."

Jalal Abualrub added: In simple human language, uncorrupted by complex Christian terminology that is meant to confuse human-beings, *'John' is the Gospel according to John's personal interpretation, not the Gospel according to Jesus, which is a statement nowhere to be found in any Gospel.*

Further, it is said that the separation of Jesus' words from this "Johannine commentary" can only be accomplished with "great difficulty." What then does it mean to say that the sayings of Jesus in the gospel of John have a "firm historical basis"? This confusing language and explanation is often applied by conservative scholars when they attempt to adopt two contrasting positions at the same time: defend John's "basic/general"

historicity and also admit that not everything attributed to Jesus is historical.

Finally, note should be made of James D. G. Dunn, one of the leading New Testament scholars, a no "anti-supernatural liberal," who writes: "... **few scholars would regard John as a source for information regarding Jesus' life and ministry in any degree comparable to the Synoptics.** It is worth noting briefly the factors which have been considered of enduring significance on this point. One is the very different picture of Jesus' ministry, both in the order and the significance of events ... and the location of Jesus' ministry. ... Another is the striking difference in Jesus' style of speaking (much more discursive and theological, in contrast to the aphoristic and parabolic style of the Synoptics). As Strauss had already pointed out, this style is consistent, whether Jesus speaks to Nicodemus, or to the woman at the well, or to his disciples, and very similar to the style of the Baptist, as indeed of 1 John. The inference is inescapable that the style is that of the *Evangelist* rather than that of *Jesus*. Probably most important of all, in the Synoptics Jesus' principal theme is the Kingdom of God and he rarely speaks of himself, whereas in John the Kingdom hardly features and the discourses are largely vehicles for expressing Jesus' self-consciousness and self-proclamation. Had the striking 'I am' self-assertions of John been remembered as spoken by Jesus, how could any Evangelist have ignored them so completely as the Synoptics do? **On the whole, then, the position is unchanged: John's Gospel cannot be regarded as a source for the life and teaching of Jesus of the same order as the Synoptics** (James D. G. Dunn, *Christianity In The Making Vol. 1, Jesus Remembered*, 2003, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, pp. 165-166).

Other conservative Christian scholars who have similar types of verdicts to offer regarding the historicity of the gospel of John include: Bruce Stein, Craig A. Evans, and Martin Hengel, to name a few.

Validity of the Bible as an Authentic Source

Pastoral Epistles: *Titus*; *1 Timothy*; *2 Timothy*

These three letters have been authored (most probably) by the same author. According to the late Catholic scholar, Raymond Brown, "**80 to 90 percent of critical scholarship**" regards them to be "**pseudonymous**" and

places them "toward the end of the 1st century (Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction To The New Testament*, 1997, Doubleday, p. 639).

Briefly, "**pseudonymous**" are those writings which claim to have been authored by a particular person but which probably were not authored by the named individual. In other words, the author pretends to be someone else when he is writing. In the case of the Pastorals (*Titus* included), the author claims he is none other than Paul. But, based on a variety of reasons, it is very unlikely that the author was Paul. Therefore, the pastorals are pseudonymous writings.

Pseudonymity: The practice of writing under a fictitious name, evident in a large number of pagan, Jewish, and Christian writings from antiquity (Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 2000, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, p. 458).

This raises a theological problem: essentially, it means that the author was telling a **lie** when he claimed to be Paul in the above writings. Over the years, Christian scholars have come up with a number of "solutions" to this difficult problem.

Pseudonymous is different from **anonymous**. In the latter, an author has not been named. For example, the Gospels, *Hebrews*, *1 John* and a few other New Testament writings, are **anonymous** and not **pseudonymous**, since they do not name their authors.

The following quotes have been extracted from some evangelical conservative as well as catholic sources which conclude that Paul is very unlikely to be the author of the Pastorals. Do note that there are quite a few conservative scholars who argue in support of Pauline authorship, but the New Testament scholarly consensus is to dismiss Pauline authorship.

Rev. Wainwright was quite familiar with the arguments back and forth pertaining to the authorship of the Pastorals. While he was quite critical of certain arguments to dismiss Pauline authorship, carefully note his conclusion: "The authorship of these letters [Pastoral Epistles] has been questioned more than that of the other Pauline letters. Some of the reasons brought forward against the Pauline authorship are not very convincing in themselves. It is pointed out that both the Church order and the doctrine of the Pastoral Letters would be well suited to a situation at the end of the first century or the beginning of the second. But it is not

impossible that the order and the doctrine could belong to Paul's time. Another argument is that it is difficult to fit the historical information given in the letters into the known life of Paul. But it is possible that Paul was released from Rome after the events recorded in *Acts 28*, and that he made another missionary tour before he was finally imprisoned and put to death. It is noteworthy too that the Pastoral Letters treat *Timothy* and *Titus* as inexperienced young men, while the other Pauline letters give the impression that they were Paul's tried and trusted assistants. But an argument of this nature cannot decide the question of authorship. The most cogent reasons for doubting the Pauline authorship of the letters are based on a close examination of their vocabulary and style, which show important and striking differences from those of the other Pauline letters. It is chiefly on these linguistic arguments, which cannot be discussed here, that the question must be decided. The linguistic arguments against the Pauline authorship are so strong that the majority of modern scholars, apart from Roman Catholics and those who presuppose the inerrancy of the scriptures, believe that these letters were written some time after Paul's death by one of his followers, who wished to give the Church of his day the teaching which he imagined that Paul himself would have given, if he had been alive. Many of the scholars who reject the Pauline authorship believe that *Titus 3* and several parts of *2 Timothy* are fragments of genuine Pauline letters which have been incorporated into the Pastoral Letters. These passages contain typical Pauline language and have a spontaneity and artlessness which suggests they are genuine. Some of the scholars who accept the Pauline authorship suggest that Paul was in prison when the letters were written, and dictated their main themes to an unknown companion who was responsible for their present form and style. If Paul wrote the letters, they must have been written late in his life between A.D 63 and 64. But if he did not write them, they would have been written at any time between A.D 70 and 125. Many scholars argue that they were written early in the second century, but there can be no certainty about the matter. **The view which is accepted in this book is that Paul himself did not write these letters.** Once the Pauline authorship is rejected, the question arises of the morality of composing a letter in the name of a man who has not himself written or dictated it. In modern times such a procedure would be regarded as morally wrong, but in the ancient world different customs of authorship prevailed. A modern author might write a book about the

message of Paul for the twentieth century, and in it he might apply what he believed to be Pauline teaching to modern problems. This is what the writer of the Pastoral Letters was doing. He was trying to state what he believed to be Paul's message for a later generation, and, by the literary custom of his age, he put it into the form of letters by Paul. (Rev. Arthur W. Wainwright, *A Guide to the New Testament*, 1965, London, The FP WORTH PRESS, pp. 238-240)

Catholic scholar Raymond Brown also concluded: **"I agree with the vast majority of scholars that Paul is already dead and that, by writing in Paul's name, the unknown author is assuming the mantle of Pauline authority in order to meet post-Pauline problems"** (Raymond Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind*, 1984, Paulist Press, footnote no. 45, p. 31).

Another leading Evangelical and conservative scholar, I. Howard Marshall, author of a mammoth commentary on the Pastorals, also denies Pauline authorship and after thoroughly discussing the issue concludes: "They [the Pastorals] are examples not of pseudonymity **but of allonymity**. Their composition was accordingly in no sense deceptive, in that it was known that that **these were fresh formulations of Pauline teaching to take account of the changing situation. Nevertheless, with the passage of time the origins of the letters were forgotten and they were assumed to be from Paul himself.** (I. H. Marshall, Philip H. Towner (Collaborator), *The Pastoral Epistles: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (International Critical Commentary Series), 2004, T. & T. Clark International, p. 92).

Marshall suggests that the Pastorals are *allonymous* - that is, according to Marshall, "...writing in another person's name without intent to deceive..." (ibid p. 84).

Jalal Abualrub wrote: In Islam, this is called, *Tadlees*, but this Christian method is worse. The *Mudallis* ascribes a narration to someone while hiding the contact or link between him and that someone, because the hidden person is not reliable, so it appears he heard the narration from that someone while in fact he heard it from the unreliable undisclosed link between him and that someone. The *Mudallis* also mentions an unreliable narrator using an unknown title or nickname to hide the narrator's true identity. Here, a narrator lies and ascribes to Paul what Paul did not write. Yet, Christians still insist that this forgery is inspired. David White, for example, claims there is no dispute about the Bible. He

is saying the truth since there is no dispute that this is blatant lying and corruption of the Bible, ascribing to 'God' what He did not reveal.

Ben Witherington also denies the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. Though he says that it could be "possible" that *2 Timothy* was dictated by Paul: "In my view it seems likely that these documents [the Pastoral Epistles] were composed at or just after the death of Paul, perhaps by his sometime companion Luke or another such companion, based on authentic notes and/or oral comments from Paul while he was in Mamertine prison in the mid-60s. The person who penned these letters did so in his own hand style (there is a uniform style that these letters share), not attempting really to imitate the Pauline style, though at times (e.g., in *2 Timothy*) we seem to hear the voice of Paul directly. ... the more conservative character of some of the ethical advice in these letters may reflect the fact that **the author knows that the apostolic era is about over, and the Church leaders that were to follow apostles like Paul would not have the same authority as those who had either known Jesus during his earthly life or had seen the risen Lord.** These letters could be said to help Pauline coworkers make the transition to a situation beyond the time of Paul. They are certainly closer in length and in character to other ancient personal letters than the rest of the **Pauline corpus**. It appears they were written from Rome in the mid to late 60s (Ben Witherington III, *The New Testament Story*, 2004, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, pp. 69-70).

Bruce M. Metzger, a conservative Evangelical scholar, wrote: "Because the three Pastoral Letters differ from the generally acknowledged Pauline letters in literary style and vocabulary, as well as doctrinal emphasis, most scholars believe that they either were written by an amanuensis to whom the apostle gave great freedom in their composition, or, **more probably**, were drawn up toward the end of the first century by a devoted follower of Paul, who incorporated some fragmentary letters of the apostle that otherwise would have been lost (Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament, its background, growth and content*, 2nd edition, enlarged, Abingdon Press Nashville, p. 214).

Jalal Abualrub wrote: Sadly, these writing were not lost but instead were preserved, so as to complete the Jewish job and plot designed by the enemies of Jesus and perfected by Paul to completely destroy the true message of Jesus and bring a creed never known to Jesus or his disciples.

Acts

Authorship: *Acts* (like the gospel of *Luke*) is an **anonymous** document; it doesn't identify an author for itself. It is, however, quite possible that the Christian traditions are correct in attributing it to a follower of Paul, Luke, who was, nonetheless, not an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus.

According to Raymond Brown: "In summary, it is not impossible that a minor figure who had traveled with Paul for small parts of his ministry wrote *Acts* decades after the apostle was dead, if one makes the allowance that there were details about Paul's early life he did not know, that he simplified and reordered information ... and that as a true theologian he rethought some of Paul's emphases that were no longer apropos. We have no way of being certain that he was Luke, as affirmed by 2-nd century tradition; but there is no serious reason to propose a different candidate ... There is nothing to contradict Luke's having been with Paul in the places and times indicated by the "we" passages, and he fits the profile of a minor figure. This proposal of authorship has more to recommend it than other theories, but "not impossible" is all that should be claimed. (Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction To The New Testament*, 1997, Doubleday, pp. 326-327)

Similarly, Lee Martin McDonald and Stanley Porter accept traditional Lucan authorship but not wholeheartedly. They write (p. 295): "We are inclined to accept Lucan authorship, but not without some reservation" (Lee Martin McDonald, Stanley E. Porter, *Early Christianity and its Sacred Literature*, 2000, Hendrickson Publishers).

For a more critical assessment, see Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, who dismiss the traditional authorship claims about the gospels in their, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, 1998, SCM Press Ltd. See also W. G. Kummel, *Introduction to The New Testament*, 1975, Revised Edition, SCM Press Ltd. Helmut Koester also discusses gospel authorships in his *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development*, 1990, Trinity Press International. Also Vincent P. Branick, *Understanding the New Testament and its Message: An Introduction*, 1998, Paulist Press.

Bart Ehrman, summing up the stance of critical scholars, writes: "Proto-orthodox Christians of the second century, some decades after most of the New Testament books had been written, claimed that their favorite Gospels had been penned by two of Jesus' disciples - Matthew, the tax

collector, and John, the beloved disciple - and by two friends of the apostles - Mark, the secretary of Peter, and Luke, the travelling companion of Paul. Scholars today, however, find it difficult to accept this tradition for several reasons. ... none of these Gospels makes any such claim about itself. All four authors chose to keep their identities anonymous." (Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 2000, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, p. 52)

Luke-Acts

The date of Luke-Acts: most scholars place it in the 80-100 AD Period. For instance, Paula Fredriksen places Luke between c. 90-100 (Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus To Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Christ*, Second Edition, 2000, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, pp. 3-4, 19). E. P. Sanders dates the final form of the gospels between the years 70 and 90 (E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure Of Jesus*, 1993, Penguin Books, p. 60). Theissen and Merz place Luke anywhere between 70 C.E to 140/150 C.E - more in the first half of this period (p. 32) (Gerd Theissen, Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, 1998, SCM Press Ltd). The late Catholic scholar and priest, Raymond Brown, placed Luke in the year 85 - give or take five to ten years (p. 274) (Raymond E. Brown, S.S, *An Introduction To The New Testament* (The Anchor Bible Reference Library), 1997, Doubleday). Similar dates are also proposed in the following sources: Gerd Ludemann, *Jesus After Two Thousand Years: What he really said and did*, 2001, Prometheus Books; Graham N. Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, Second Edition, 2002, Oxford University Press; James L. Mays (General Editor), *The HarperCollins Bible Commentary*, 2000, HarperSanFrancisco; Donald Senior, *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait*, New and Revised Edition, 1992, Paulist Press; W. G. Kummel, *Introduction To The New Testament*, 17th Revised edition, 1975, SCM Press Ltd; Vincent P. Branick, *Understanding the New Testament and its Message: An Introduction*, 1998, Paulist Press; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus: The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, Vol. 1, 1991, 1st Edition, The Anchor Bible reference library, Doubleday; Geza Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel Of Jesus*, 2004, Penguin Books. These dates are accepted by the vast majority of New Testament scholars.

Reliability of Luke-Acts

The author is often historically accurate but also makes errors and mistakes. Some of his well-known mistakes: Luke mentions a census under Quirinius during the birth of Jesus which is almost universally recognized as a major historical blunder on Luke's part.

Furthermore, "In addition to the difficulties raised by a detailed comparison of the two birth narratives found in the New Testament, serious historical problems are raised by the familiar stories found in Luke alone" (Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 2000, Oxford University Press, p. 109.).

In Acts, Luke has Gamaliel referring to a revolt by Theudas, which in fact took place years later after his speech. Again, there is widespread agreement among Christian scholars that Luke is in error on this occasion. There is also general agreement among New Testament scholars that the speeches found in Acts are either the creations or adaptations of Luke.

"*Inspired*" Luke lifted 50% of his gospel from Mark - a secondary source authored by a none-eyewitness. Why would Luke do this if we are to suppose that he was accurately researching the issues and shifting through reliable first hand sources? It is known from Luke's opening words that he did not have a high regard for the previous narratives. Evangelical scholar Donald Guthrie writes: Luke's preface is illuminating in regard to his own approach to his task. He claims to have made a comprehensive and accurate survey over a considerable period, which throws a good deal of light on his seriousness of purpose. Moreover, Luke admits that others had previously attempted the same task, **but his words imply that he found them unsatisfactory.** (Donald Guthrie, B.D., M. Th., *New Testament Introduction. The Gospels and Acts*, 1966, Inter-Varsity Press, p. 87)

W.G. Kummel, in his classical introduction to the New Testament, writes: "With his historical work Luke joins their ranks [ranks of his predecessors who composed gospel narratives], though he was not himself a witness from the beginning, **because he feels the works of his predecessors to be in some way inadequate.** (W. G. Kummel, *Introduction To The New Testament*, 17th Revised edition, 1975, SCM Press Ltd, p. 129]

Jalal Abualrub added: this does not only respond effectively to the Christian fallacy that the Gospels were 'inspired' *since the Gospels have*

tremendous and horrific contradictions between each other and between them and facts of history, science and sound religion, but also responds to the fact that the anonymous authors of the Gospels did not respect each other's work. They never claimed that they were receiving inspiration from the same source as a team, even though Christians claim that they were inspired by the same source and thus defend their work as if they were a team. Gospel authors did not even mention their full names or where they got their stories from. Yet, Christians build their entire religion on such shakiest of grounds.

The late Raymond Brown writes: "Neither evangelist [Matthew and Luke] liked Mark's redundancies, awkward Greek expressions, uncomplimentary presentation of the disciples and Mary, and embarrassing statements about Jesus. When using Mark, both expanded the Markan accounts in the light of post-resurrectional faith. (Raymond E. Brown, S.S, *An Introduction To The New Testament*, 1997, The Anchor Bible Reference Library, Doubleday, p. 115)

Yet Luke, the so-called "*reliable*" historian, copies no less than 50% of his book from Mark, an *unsatisfactory* source! Raymond Brown mentions some of the ways how Luke has used Mark:

- Luke improves on Mark's Greek, bettering the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, e.g., in 4:1, 31, 38 and passim by omitting Mark's overused "immediately"; in 20:22 by changing a Latinism like *kensos* (census) from Mark 12:14; in 20:23 by substituting the more exact "craftiness, treachery" for the "hypocrisy" of Mark 12:15.
- Luke states at the beginning his intention to write carefully and in an orderly manner (1:3); accordingly he rearranges Marcan sequence to accomplish that goal, e.g., Jesus' rejection at Nazareth is put at the opening of the Galilean ministry rather than after some time had elapsed (Luke 4:16-30 vs. Mark 6:1-6) in order to explain why his Galilean ministry was centered at Capernaum; the healing of Simon's mother-in-law is placed before the call of Simon and companions (4:38-5:11 vs. Mark 1:16-31) in order to make more logical Simon's willingness to follow Jesus; Peter's denials of Jesus are put before the Sanhedrin trial in preference to Mark's complicated interweaving of the two. At times Luke's orderliness is reflected in avoiding Marcan doublets (Luke does not report the second multiplication of loaves) whereas Matt likes to double features and persons. Yet Luke has a double sending out of the apostles/disciples (9:1-2; 10:1).

- Because of changes made in material received from Mark, Luke occasionally creates inconsistencies, e.g., although in Luke 5:30 the partners in the conversation are "the Pharisees and their scribes," 5:33 speaks of "the disciples of the Pharisees," as if the Pharisees were not present; although in 18:32-33 Luke takes over from Mark the prediction that Jesus will be mocked, scourged, and spit on by the Gentiles, Luke (unlike Mark 15:16-20) never fulfills that prediction; Luke has changed the Marcan order of the denials of Peter and the Jewish mockery of Jesus but forgotten to insert the proper name of Jesus in the new sequence, so that at first blush Luke 22:63, in having "him" mocked and beaten, seems to refer to Peter, not Jesus.
- Luke, even more than Matt, eliminates or changes passages in Mark unfavorable to those whose subsequent career makes them worthy of respect, e.g., Luke omits Mark 3:21,33,34 and (in 4:24) changes Mark 6:4 in order to avoid references detrimental to Jesus' family; Luke omits Mark 8:22-26 which dramatizes the slowness of the disciples to see, and Mark 8:33 where Jesus calls Peter "Satan"; in the passion Luke omits the predicted failure of the disciples, Jesus' finding them asleep three times, and their flight as reported in Mark 14:27,40-41,51-52.
- Reflecting Christological sensibilities, Luke is more reverential about Jesus and avoids passages that might make him seem emotional, harsh, or weak, e.g., Luke eliminates: Mark 1:41,43 where Jesus is moved with pity or is stern; Mark 4:39 where Jesus speaks directly to the sea; Mark 10:14a where Jesus is indignant; Mark 11:15b where Jesus overturns the tables of the money changers; Mark 11:20-25 where Jesus curses a fig tree; Mark 13:32 where Jesus says that the Son does not know the day or the hour; Mark 14:33-34 where Jesus is troubled and his soul is sorrowful unto death; Mark 15:34 where Jesus speaks of God forsaking him.
- Luke stresses detachment from possessions, not only in his special material ... but also in changes he makes in Mark, e.g., followers of the Lucan Jesus leave everything (5:11,28), and the Twelve are forbidden to take even a staff (9:3).
- Luke eliminates Mark's transcribed Aramaic names and words (even some that Matt includes) presumably because they were not meaningful to the intended audience, e.g., omission of Boanerges, Gethsemane, Golgotha, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani. 78
- Luke may make Marcan information more precise, presumably for better story-flow, greater effect, or clarity, e.g., Luke 6:6 specifies that the

next scene (Mark 3:1: "again") took place "on another Sabbath"; Luke 6:6 specifies "the right hand" and 22:50 "the right ear"; Luke 21:20 clarifies or substitutes for Mark's "abomination of desolation:"

(Raymond E. Brown, S.S, *An Introduction to The New Testament*, 1997, The Anchor Bible Reference Library, Doubleday, pp. 263-265).

It should be noted here that Luke used Mark and made a number of changes to its contents. New Testament scholars compare Luke and Mark to see how Luke is using his source (Mark) and adapting it. Mark is obviously not the only source employed by Luke, but since he has altered the Markan stories in a variety of ways, it is only logical and reasonable to conclude that Luke must have done the same with the other sources at his disposal - he must have altered them as well to suit his agenda and presuppositions.

Therefore, the fact that Luke accurately mentions certain ordinary details, such as naming cities correctly etc., does not follow that his story in its entirety can be trusted blindly. Thus the statement that "honest skeptics are now forced to agree that the Bible is historically accurate and reliable" is nothing more than nonsense. Critical scholars certainly do not regard Luke, or any book of the Bible, in its entirety to be "historically accurate and reliable" just because certain ordinary details are recorded accurately within them. Raymond Brown said that Luke would have been a fitting candidate for membership in the brotherhood of Hellenistic historians, but he would never be made the president of the society.

Marshall talks about the "essential" reliability of *Acts* regarding historical matters and not its *complete* reliability. Sherwin-White, for instance, believes that "Luke makes mistakes, but the main thrust of his book is to demonstrate that for the most part Luke portrays the first-century Roman scene accurately" (I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries), 1980, Inter-Varsity Press, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, pp. 36-37).

Note this does not mean that we can accept *all* of Luke's stories blindly. So while many modern scholars do not outright dismiss *Acts* and consider it to be more accurate than was previously thought, it is nonetheless recognized that its author is not without mistakes and does color sources at his disposal for theological and apologetic reasons, which means that not everything within his books is historically accurate.

Marshall also believes that most of the speeches in *Acts* are based on traditional material, but he adds that they were never meant to be verbatim reports and that Luke has provided us with nothing more than brief summaries. Hence he leaves room for at least some Lucan creativity (I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries), 1980, Inter-Varsity Press, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, p. 41).

Moreover, Marshall acknowledges that Luke could not have known what Festus and Agrippa said to each other in their private apartments (25:13-22; 26:30-32), nor could the Christians have learnt what exactly was said by the members of the Sanhedrin in closed sessions (4:15-17; 5:34-40). Nonetheless, he speculates that *perhaps* Luke *could have* expressed the things that the public behavior of rulers indicated that they had *probably* said in private (so some invention of speech by Luke did take place!) and that it is *possible* that some sympathizer from the Sanhedrin may have given Christians the gist of the conversation (I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries), 1980, Inter-Varsity Press, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, p.42).

1, 2 and 3 John

According to Brown (p. 384, see also pp. 389-391) *1 John* was written after the Gospel of *John*, ca. AD 100, by a writer in the Johannine tradition, probably not the one responsible for the fourth gospel. The author does not identify himself and some scholars believe that the author of the fourth gospel was perhaps also responsible for this work based on certain similarities between the two writings. Moving on to *II John*, the author is anonymous, but probably from the Johannine community and was also responsible for *III John* and probably *I John* as well (p. 396). Although the author does not reveal his personal name, he does offer his designation - presbyter. Nothing besides is known about this author. For details see Raymond E. Brown, S.S, *An Introduction To The New Testament*, 1997, The Anchor Bible Reference Library, Doubleday.

McDonald and Porter write (p. 549): "All three Johannine writings are formally anonymous. *Second* and *third John* are said to be written by the "elders," but without any designation of who this elder might be."

Most scholars place the Johannine writings in the last decade of the first century and some as late as the first decade of the second century. According to evangelical scholar Metzger, the three letters are thought to

be composed "about the end of the first Christian century" (p. 261). R. Allan Culpepper writing in the *HarperCollins Bible Commentary* under the heading "1, 2, 3 John," puts the three letters in the period "about A.D. 100" (p. 1178). Kummel considers the period between A.D. 90 and 110 as the "most probable time for the origin of 1 John" (p. 445) and supposes that 2 and 3 *John* were written around the same time as well (p. 452). Branick places the Johannine epistles "toward the end of the first century" (p. 260). Desilva, an evangelical scholar, places the Johannine epistles between A.D. 85-110 (p. 454).

See James L. Mays (General Editor), *HarperCollins Bible Commentary*, 2000, Revised Edition, HarperSanFrancisco; W. G. Kummel, *Introduction To The New Testament*, 1975, Revised Edition, SCM Press Ltd; Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament, it's background, growth, and content*, 1985, 2nd edition, enlarged, Abingdon Press Nashville; Lee Martin McDonald, Stanley E. Porter, *Early Christianity and its Sacred Literature*, 2000, Hendrickson Publishers; Vincent P. Branick, *Understanding the New Testament and its Message: An Introduction*, 1998, Paulist Press; David A. Desilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation*, 2004, InterVarsity Press.

Revelation

The first evidence of Christian usage of *Revelation* comes in Justin (160 AD) Dial. 81.4. Justin believed that the apostle John was the author of *Revelation*. But this view was not shared by all Christians. For example, Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, in the mid-third century wrote (as quoted by the Church historian Eusebius in the fourth century in *Ecclesiastical History* 7.25): "The one who write these things (i.e., the book of *Revelation*) calls himself John, and we should believe him. **But it is not clear which John he was.** For he doesn't call himself the disciple whom the Lord loved - as happens often in the Gospel - nor does he say that he was the who leaned on Jesus' breast or that he was the brother of James, who both saw and heard the Lord. But surely he would have described himself in one of these ways if he had wanted to make himself clearly known. ... I think [therefore] that there must have been another John living among the Christians in Asia Minor ..." [Quoted in Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 2000, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, p. 431]

Dionysius accepted *Revelation* merely because "many brethren hold it in esteem", though he acknowledged that *Revelation* was incomprehensible to him (H. E. 7.25.4-5). After Dionysius' criticism of *Revelation*, eastern writers generally rejected it. See Harry Y. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning*, 1985, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p. 52.

New Testament scholars generally agree that *Revelation* was authored by a certain "John" (a common name among Christians), about whom, however, nothing at all is known. Richard Heard writes: "The great majority of modern critics agree that the John who wrote the Revelation cannot also have written the gospel or the epistles." (Richard Heard, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1950, Harper & Brothers - Chapter 25: The Revelation of John)

Brown writes: "... the conclusion that does the most justice to the evidence is that the seer of Rev was an otherwise unknown John." (Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *An Introduction To The New Testament*, 1997, The Anchor Bible Reference Library, Doubleday, p. 803)

McDonald and Porter conclude: "The best explanation may simply be that we do not know who John the author of Revelation is" (Lee Martin McDonald, Stanley E. Porter, *Early Christianity and its Sacred Literature*, 2000, Hendrickson Publishers, p. 558).

Most scholars place *Revelation* near the end of the first century - Brown (p. 774) says *Revelation* was written "probably" between AD 92 and 96; McDonald and Porter (p. 554) believe it was "most likely" composed "probably late" during emperor Domitian's reign (A.D. 81-96); Kummel informs us (p. 466) that according to the "oldest tradition", *Revelation* was written toward the end of the reign of Domitian. Kummel writes: "In all likelihood, therefore, Rev was in fact written toward the end of the reign of Domitian, i.e., ca. 90-95, in Asia Minor" (W. G. Kummel, *Introduction to The New Testament*, 17th revised edition, 1975, SCM Press Ltd, p. 469)

David Aune, writing in the *HarperCollins Bible Commentary* under "Revelation," says (p. 1187) that there are indications that *Revelation* was written "...toward the end of the first century..." (See James L. Mays (General Editor), *HarperCollins Bible Commentary*, Revised Edition, p. 1187)

Metzger says (p. 269) that it appears that *Revelation* was composed at the close of Domitian's reign in A.D. 81-96 (Bruce M. Metzger, *The New*

Testament, its background, growth, and content, 1985, 2nd edition, enlarged, Abingdon Press Nashville).

Desilva says (pp. 897-898) that the final form of *Revelation*, which emerged in the late first century (between A.D. 93-95 - p. 393), may incorporate earlier material composed during the first Jewish Revolt (before A.D. 68-69) (David A. Desilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation*, 2004, InterVarsity Press).

Second Peter

This is widely believed to be the latest New Testament writing. Many scholars place it in the early 2nd century or in the late 1st century. It should be noted that scholars almost universally believe that this letter was not composed by Peter the disciple of Jesus. Many conservative and evangelical scholars also deny the Petrine authorship of this letter. While in the case of *1 Peter* and the Pastoral Epistles you will find a number of conservative scholars defending their traditional authorship, in the case of *2 Peter* not many conservative Christians are willing to do the same.

John Calvin rejected Second Peter: "Calvin applies philological tests as to authorship of various books ... The style of 2 Peter differs from that of 1 Peter and was therefore **probably not written by the apostle himself.**" (*The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*, by Bruce M. Metzger; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987)

The conservative Christian scholar Arthur Patzia shows just how eagerly conservatives are willing to defend Petrine authorship of *II Peter*: "Even an elementary study of 2 Peter ... introduces us to a bewildering number of theories regarding authorship, date and composition. Although the letter professes to be written by Simon Peter (1:1), someone who was an eyewitness of the transfiguration (1:16-18) and refers to Paul as his beloved brother (3:15), a majority of commentators seriously doubt that it was written by the apostle and consider it a pseudonymous letter. Now while I readily acknowledge that a "majority opinion" may not necessarily be a "correct opinion", **even such a conservative** and thorough scholar as Guthrie admits that 2 Peter "is the most problematical of all the New Testament epistles because of early doubts regarding its authenticity and because internal evidence is considered by many to substantiate those doubts." (Arthur G. Patzia, *The Making of the New Testament: Origin, Collection, Text & Canon*, 1995, InterVarsity Press, pp. 94)

Patzia is certainly no "liberal" by any means but clearly inclines towards non-Petrine authorship. Patzia goes on to conclude: "Ralph Martin's suggestion that a disciple from the Petrine circle "has been at work in assembling and publishing, in his master's name, a testament of that teaching in response to the pressing needs in the church" seems a reasonable solution to the questions of composition." (Arthur G. Patzia, *The Making of the New Testament: Origin, Collection, Text & Canon*, 1995, InterVarsity Press, pp. 94-95)

Bruce Metzger is an authority on the New Testament, its text, transmission as well as its canon. More importantly, he is a well-known conservative Evangelical scholar, whose books are used by Christian apologists throughout in their apologetic tracts. The following passages are extracted from an apologetic book authored by Metzger, written from an Evangelical conservative perspective, in which he discusses the authorship of *II Peter* as follows: "Although the author of this letter calls himself "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1), and makes reference to his being present at the transfiguration of Jesus Christ (1:18), several features of its style and contents have led **nearly all modern scholars to regard it as the work of an unknown author of the early second century who wrote in Peter's name.** Unlike the style of I Peter, which is written in fluent koine Greek, the style of II Peter is almost pseudo-literary. The wording is unusual, artificial, and often obscure; it is the one book in the New Testament which gains by translation. Though some have suggested that the marked difference in style between the two letters might be accounted for by supposing them to be the work of different amanuenses, **several passages of II Peter point to a date long after Peter's lifetime.** Thus, the section dealing with the delay of the second coming of Christ (3:3-4) **presupposes that the first generation of Christians -to which Peter belonged- had passed away.** Furthermore, the letters of Paul, it appears, have not only been collected but are referred to as "scripture" (3:16), **a term that was not applied to them until some considerable time after the apostle's death.** The second chapter of II Peter embodies most of the little letter of Jude, which probably dates from the latter part of the first century. **Moreover, II Peter is not definitely referred to by early church writers until the third century, when Origen speaks of its disputed authenticity. In the light of such internal and external evidence one must conclude that II Peter was drawn up sometime after A.D. 100 by an admirer of Peter who wrote under the**

name of the great apostle in order to give his letter greater authority. The letter is a general one addressed to all Christians in all places (1:1). An analysis of the contents shows that the author had two main purposes in writing: (a) to counteract the teaching of false prophets and heretics, and (b) to strengthen the faith of Christians in the second coming of Christ and make them living accordingly." (Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament, its Background, Growth and Content*, 2nd edition, enlarged. Abingdon Press Nashville, pp. 258-259)

Ben Witherington, denies the Petrine authorship of *II Peter*: "It does seem possible or even likely that 2 Peter quotes an earlier Petrine source, for the style and substance of 2 Peter 1:12-18 is consistent with what we find in 1 Peter, and a reasonable case can be made that Peter is the author of, or mind behind, 1 Peter. **It is highly probable that 2 Peter is one of the latest if not the latest New Testament document, written at a time when there had already been for some time a collection of Paul's letters being used by various churches. I would judge it comes from near the end of the first century A.D.**" (Ben Witherington III, *The New Testament Story*, 2004, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, pp.67)

Conservative scholar David A. Desilva, who provides a vigorous defence of the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, is not at all impressed with the defences of Petrine authorship of *2 Peter* and writes: "Although the authenticity of 2 Peter continues to have its defenders ... **it is the New Testament text for which a theory of pseudonymous authorship has the most to commend itself.**" (David A. Desilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation*, 2004, InterVarsity Press, pp. 876)

He also writes: "**In 2 Peter an anonymous Christian leader has sought to preserve and defend the apostolic message for a new generation. In the voice of Peter, this author defends the apostolic teaching he has received against rival teachers who promote their own innovations and threaten the churches' hold on the heritage that Peter and his peers bequeathed to them.**" (David A. Desilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation*, 2004, InterVarsity Press, pp. 878)

The late conservative scholar J.N.D Kelly, who offered one of the most authoritative defence of the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, had this to say about *2 Peter*: "**By contrast no NT document had a longer**

or tougher struggle to win acceptance than 2 Peter. In the west, notwithstanding the illustrious name it bore, it seems to have been unknown or at any rate ignored until the second half of the 4th cent., and even then Jerome reports (*De vir. ill.* i) that many discarded it because of its difference of style from I Peter. Recognition first came to it in the east, for its presence in the early Coptic version (c. 200) and in Greek in Papyrus 72 (early 3rd cent.) suggests that it belonged to the canon that was taking shape there. Yet even Origen, while frequently citing it (if we can trust Rufinus's Latin translation) under the name of Peter, frankly admits (*In Ioann.* v. 3) that it is a disputed work. Eusebius is aware of these doubts and himself treats it (*Hist. eccl.* iii. 3. 1-4; 25. 3) as inauthentic and so uncanonical. The recension of Lucian of Antioch did not contain 2 Peter, and classic Antiochenes like John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia made no use of it. Again it was the Alexandrian Athanasius who set the seal of approval on it by listing it in his festal canon (367), and following him Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus and Epiphanius cite it as authoritative. Its clear teaching about 'sharing the divine nature' (i. 4) and about the Church as the proper custodian of scripture (i. 20 f.) may have helped to secure it a passport. It appears in the Latin canon of the synod of Carthage (397), **but the hesitations of the Syrian churches were not overcome until the start of the 6th cent.**" (J N D Kelly, *A Commentary on The Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (Black's New Testament Commentaries), 1977, Adam and Charles Black London, pp. 224)

Catherine M. Murphy, under the heading "Things Jesus Didn't Talk About", writes: "**His own divinity: One of the cardinal principles of historical Jesus research is that the belief in Jesus's divinity is a post-resurrection phenomenon.** During his life, his acts of power were understood as signs that God (or Satan) was working through him - **not that he was God.**"

Jalal Abualrub added: Remove all the typically complex Christian terms and their playing with words and the bear fact will be exposed that the Jews and Christians do not know who wrote what in their holy books, when they wrote it, who authorized the authorship or translation, who translated it from which original language, the trustworthiness of the story-tellers, or just about anything else. How is it that billions of Christians embraced a religion that is based on such unestablished, unsubstantiated holy books written by, 'Authors Anonymous,' and

worshipped a man, Jesus, who never called to their faith and never claimed divinity for himself, or affirmed trinity, or the Original Sin or that he was sent to die for the sins of Christians?