

## CHAPTER 2

# GENUINENESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

### **The Meaning of Genuineness**

Genuineness has the idea of the true, the real, the actual. With respect to the books of the New Testament, genuineness refers to the purported authors of their respective books. We wish to know if they were the products of the apostles and/or those who were associated with the apostles, or if they were written by someone else. Sometimes the word "authentic" is used in this area because we have in mind the idea that the books are trustworthy, and not counterfeit. As in Chapter 1 we wished to know if we had the original text, now we want to know who wrote that text.

### **I. The Reasons for the Discussion**

If the books of the New Testament were written through men inspired by God, the Christian is obligated to treat them as such (that is, as books in which God speaks to us). However, if they were not, then we should treat them as we do all other literature which is not inspired. Hence, the knowledge gained in our discussion about genuineness is of abiding importance to every Christian.

Throughout the centuries since the New Testament was written, the church at large has normally held to the position that the books

were written as follows: Matthew, (by) the apostle Matthew; Mark, John Mark; Luke and Acts, the physician Luke; John, I, II, III John and Revelation, the apostle John; Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, the apostle Paul; James, by James the apostle, or James the Lord's brother; I and II Peter, the apostle Peter; Jude, by Jude, the Lord's brother. As the following discussion will bring out, there have been those who did not hold the above views, but by and large, the above reflects the views of the church in the early years and throughout the Middle Ages, as to the authors and their respective books.

In the last two centuries, approximately, the end results of Scientism, Rationalism, etc., and/or various theological positions have caused some to question the traditional authorship(s). However, the evidence which caused the early church to generally unite on the various authors has not changed. It is the theological presuppositions (of the last two centuries), which have been and are being held by various theologians, which have caused different men to hold positions other than the traditional ones. (Included at the end of this chapter will be a number of books the student can read which will present the "newer" conclusions and the reasons for them.)

## II. The Evidence for Genuineness

The evidence for genuineness must be presented from two perspectives:

- a. The evidence for the existence of the books at the time when they could have been written by the supposed authors.
- b. The evidence to be considered for the supposed author.

Some of the available evidence will argue for one or the other of the preceding points, while some will argue for both of them (or against them as the case may be). The evidence available is from several sources (reference the chart, on page 55), that from:

- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| a. individuals | c. translations |
| b. canons      | d. councils     |

We will consider each of these various witnesses for genuineness in the order presented.

In addition, each book will have testimony, pro and con, from

sources external to itself (such as the above sources), and that testimony which comes from within it. We thus have *external* and *internal* testimony for or against each book. We shall consider external testimony, then internal testimony.

### III. External Evidence

#### A. INDIVIDUALS

As the chart will show, various individuals testify to the New Testament books in different ways. Though the ones we will mention were not united in their testimony, yet each of them testify to the existence of the book if nothing else. We did not include various authors who wrote against Christianity, though some could have been mentioned who testify in various ways about the New Testament books and their authorship. It is pertinent to point out that we do not have access to much of the material that was doubtless available at an earlier date in history. For instance, Eusebius mentions various sources of information which he used that are not now available to us, and even some of his work is not extant. Hence, were we closer to the years during which the New Testament books were composed, we could cite other testimony than what we do. However, the testimony available to us is thought adequate to sustain our case which concerns the books and their authors.

The testimony of some of the various individuals, which can be considered representative of all, is then as follows, beginning with Eusebius.

I. EUSEBIUS. With respect to this man's testimony, we should mention the fact that he made considerable effort to find out, not only for himself, but for those to whom he was writing, the truth about the books and their authors. He remarks in various places, such as in his *Ecclesiastical History* III. 3., that he had perused "ancient writers." For him, ancient writers would have, doubtless, encompassed those who wrote in the second century after Christ (A.D. 100 to 200), as well as those in the third century after Christ. Eusebius is clear that the 27 books considered to be scripture had preceded from the time of the apostles through the succeeding years to his time. He affirms that seven of the books,

Hebrews	II and III John
James	Jude
II Peter	Revelation

were disputed by some as deserving a place in the New Testament canon. The above books were often considered to be doubtful by the early church, though the reasons for their doubt differed from book to book. With respect to the testimony of Eusebius, the books are without exception considered to have originated in the age of the apostles. He mentions the books, even the disputed ones, so that they might be contrasted with the heretical books then in existence, such as *The Gospel of Peter*, *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Acts of Andrew*, and others of such nature.

2. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM. He, as with Eusebius, attempts to set forth the New Testament books which had been delivered to his generation from the age of the apostles. He mentions in connection with the books he considers scripture (all the 27 except Revelation) that other books were written which were not to be received as scripture. As to authorship, he like Eusebius, mentions that some few epistles were disputed by some, but most were accepted by the church as products of the apostles or their associates.

3. ORIGEN. This man certainly was the Bible scholar of the early centuries, just as Eusebius was the historian of the early centuries. His testimony concerning the 27 books of the New Testament is that they alone belong in the canon (the New Testament). He remarks about some of the disputed books but does not argue that they do not belong in the canon. He does mention that he considers the epistle of Hebrews not to be the work of Paul, though he considers it apostolic in origin. His testimony, then, is to be considered carefully, both as to the opinions he expresses about the various books and the relation of the 27 "accepted" books to those rejected by him.

4. TERTULLIAN. A contemporary of Origen and Clement of Alexandria, he mentions in a polemic against Marcion almost all of the New Testament books, omitting only James, II Peter, II and III John. He considers them all to be scripture, and asserts that they are to be received as such. This is of interest since Marcion had rejected all the Gospels except Luke (from which he excised the material he thought not in keeping with Christianity) and ten of Paul's epistles, rejecting I and II Timothy and Titus. Tertullian then accepts the Gospels as having originated from the apostles and their associates, such as Mark and Luke; and the other remaining books are ascribed to the traditional authors. He considers that Hebrews was not written

by Paul but by Barnabas. His remark that some churches yet possessed genuine copies of letters from apostles well indicates that the apostles had written to various churches (such as Corinth, Thessalonica, Philippi, Ephesus and Rome) and that the originals could still be seen.

5. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA. According to Eusebius, Clement discussed all the canonical scriptures as well as the disputed books (which included the General Epistles) as well as some disputed books not considered canonical. He gives citations from most of the books of the New Testament and asserts that he had received instructions from teachers who had received theirs directly from the apostles. Thus his testimony concerning the origin of the books in the age of the apostles is important. He seemingly accepts the traditional authorship of the New Testament books, though he considers that Hebrews was written by Paul through Luke.

6. JUSTIN MARTYR. In his principal writings, which were generally written to substantiate the correctness of the Christian faith, he quotes, oftentimes, from the Gospels, designating them by such titles as *The Gospels*, *The Memoirs of the Apostles*, *The Memoirs Composed by the Apostles called Gospels*, etc. Such use by Justin shows that our Gospels were not only known to him but were in rather wide circulation over the Roman Empire, since he expected the recipients of his letters to know them (at least in some ways). One recipient was the Emperor Antonius Pius, and another letter was addressed to the Roman Senate. He makes mention of the writings of Marcion and, like Origen, he asserts the apostolic authorship of the Gospels as well as Paul's epistles, apparently including those he knew Marcion had rejected. His testimony, which basically confirms that of the previous individuals, asserts that the books which he mentions came from the age of the apostles and apparently from the authors traditionally associated with the respective books.

7. IRENAEUS. He, like Justin Martyr, is a witness who lived among people who could remember the apostles, thus his testimony reflects the thinking of people who were then recipients of the apostles' teaching. Not only is this true but the man who preceded him at Lyons was named Pothinus, whose knowledge spanned the years between Irenaeus and the apostles.

In reference to the books themselves, he often refers to them as the

“Sacred Scriptures” or “The Oracles of God,” or refers to the New Testament itself as “The Writings of the Evangelists and the Apostles.” As the chart shows, he was acquainted with almost all the 27 books of the canon and not only places them with the age of the apostles but assents to their traditional authorship, insofar as he makes mention of the fact.

Among the remaining individuals on the chart, Polycarp, Clement of Rome and the author of the epistle of Barnabas reference most of the books of the canon, and certainly place such books well within the age of the apostles. By their usage of such terms as “it is written” or use of quotations from the various books, they unite in their testimony as to the character of the writings which they quote, ascribing to them the quality of scripture.

#### B. CANONS.

Among the seven canons which the chart lists, we would present the following as representative of the rest. Actually the canons presented are the work of individual people, whose testimony does not materially differ in importance from the preceding list of individuals. Perhaps the essential difference is that the men listed as having left canons (sometimes called catalogs) did so to state specifically which books they considered to be scripture (that is, having been written by apostles or under the auspices of apostles).

1. ATHANASIUS. In writing to Christians in his area, he lists the books which he considered to be the ones which belonged in the New Testament. He remarks that the books he listed were “delivered to the fathers” by those who were “eye witnesses and ministers of the word” and that he had learned these things “from the beginning.” He concluded his list by writing a warning concerning the books that they were not to be added to or taken away from. It is of interest that the books which he lists had apparently existed a long time and had a considerable reputation as being scripture. His list of books that were to be received as scripture was identical to the 27 books we now have in our New Testament. It is of interest, then, that he actually considers scripture some of the books considered doubtful by others. Not only is this fact true, but apparently his predecessors had imparted this general conclusion to him.

2. MURATORIAN CANON. This list of books was drawn up ca. A.D. 170. It is apparently the earliest catalog of New Testament books now

extant. The canon was discovered in 1740 by an Italian named Muratori in an old library in Milan. The catalog is to some extent fragmentary, some of it having been lost. It originally listed the books that were to be in the New Testament, beginning with Luke, John, etc. It seems to be apparent from the opening sentence that the part lost had listed Matthew and Mark as preceding the Gospel of Luke. All the other books of the New Testament are then listed except Hebrews, James, I and II Peter and I John. Since it contains Philemon, II and III John, it is probably that the list included the epistles which seem to be omitted. If this supposition be true, then the canon lists the 27 books as we now know them to be in the New Testament. Whoever the author was of the original list, his personal knowledge of the books could easily have spanned most of the second century after Christ. Certainly older acquaintances could have lived when John the apostle lived. These as possible sources of information are rather good.

3. MARCION. This man was a disciple in the church at Rome before he became a leader of the sect known as the Marcionites, after his own name. Marcion believed that the New Testament should not reflect any Jewish thought but should be completely free from such influence. Hence, he accepted only Luke's Gospel (and excised all Jewish thought from it) and ten of Paul's epistles. He thus rejected the other books such as Matthew, Mark and John, Acts, etc. because he considered such books to contain "anti-Christian" thought. Obviously, he could not reject books not in existence, which shows the existence of other books (such as he rejected). Moreover, the reason he rejected books which others received was not because he considered them non-genuine, but rather because he denied the apostolic authority of their authors. Marcion's position then produces the following result: the 27 books of the New Testament were in existence. Even those which he rejected were accepted by others such as Irenaeus, etc.

The above canons actually witness to all the books which we have in our New Testament, both as to their existence and their character. This witness is extended back to the second generation from the apostles.

### C. TRANSLATIONS

The evidence to be obtained from translations is of interest in our

inquiry because of the nature of translations themselves. Consider the following: when the New Testament began to be put into writing, though Christians were scattered throughout the Roman Empire, most of them probably could read Greek, which was the trade language throughout the Empire (even though Latin was the official language). Hence, it seems to be the case that the New Testament began to be written in Greek, and apparently was circulated throughout the churches in Greek manuscripts. Since most could read the Greek language, at least to some extent, the demand for a translation in another language would be much less than might otherwise be the case.

Then, a translation is not made unless the need for the translation is felt. Stated differently, there must be people in another culture, who speak a different language, who not only know of the existence of the New Testament but who also feel the need for that New Testament in their own language. It is also significant that the spread of the Gospel literature probably was not so easily done as is the case today. Remember: There were no rapid means of communication, such as radio, airmail, etc. Hence, it might be sometime before people in countries other than Palestine learned of The Faith, let alone know that there were books written which related to The Faith. Further, some language groups did not possess a writing system, which would impede translation processes, or, if they did possess such, would need someone who could and would do the translation work. With this in mind, the information we present on the evidence from translations ought to be considered carefully.

We have chosen to briefly describe all three of the translations mentioned on the chart. We think the translations which were made in Egypt are also worthy of being considered by us. We will mention these first.

1. THE COPTIC TRANSLATIONS. The Gospel soon spread to Egypt and to surrounding areas. It was not long then until people wanted the books of the New Testament in their own dialect, even though they might be able to understand Greek. Hence, two early translations in Egyptian dialects were made. They began to be made probably before the end of the second century after Christ (A.D. 150-200).

The language used for the translations is called Coptic, which was the form of Egyptian writing at the time of the New Testament



writings. This Coptic writing was used for several dialects in Egypt, especially the dialects known as Bohairic and Sahidic. Northern Egypt (Lower Egypt), the area around the Nile Delta, and close to the city of Alexandria (where Clement and Origen taught), was the area where the Bohairic dialect was spoken. Southern Egypt (Upper Egypt) was the area where the Sahidic dialect was spoken. Probably this dialect was the first of the Egyptian dialects to have parts of the New Testament to appear in it.

2. SYRIAC TRANSLATIONS. The Syriac people spoke a dialect of Aramaic, which was the language spoken by Jesus and the people in Palestine (though the dialect which was spoken differed from the one in Syria). With the early activity of the Christians in Syria, as in Antioch, it is no surprise that the New Testament began to appear in the Syriac dialect by the middle of the second century after Christ. There are two versions in the Syriac dialect which are of interest for our study. They are the versions known as the Old Syriac and the Peshitto Syriac. The Old Syriac was apparently made at or about A.D. 170-200. The only direct testimony which we have from this version is with respect to the four Gospels. Indirectly, some of the church fathers make reference to the books of Acts and Paul's epistles which it apparently contained. The Peshitto version was probably made around the early fifth century after Christ. This version is considered to be a recension from a text that dates much earlier than the time of its production. These two Syriac versions witness to all the books of our New Testament except II Peter, II and III John, Jude and Revelation. Obviously these versions represent the thinking of people who were closely related in time to the apostles and their contemporaries.

3. OLD LATIN TRANSLATIONS. Africa soon came to be a major area where Christianity was spreading, especially along the Mediterranean Sea coast. Hence, along with the demand in Egypt, others in Africa wanted the New Testament in their language. Therefore, the New Testament in Latin began to appear in various places throughout the Roman world, and specifically in Northern Africa, around the city known as Carthage. There were several different versions of the Old Latin, since the dialect of Latin spoken in Africa differed somewhat from that in Italy and/or other areas of the Roman world. The probable appearance of the Old Latin versions was ca. 150 to 200. It is distinctly possible that Tertullian and Cyprian

both quoted the Old Latin which circulated in Northern Africa. The only books excepted from this version were Hebrews, James and II Peter. Otherwise, it bears testimony to the books which are now in our New Testament.

#### D. COUNCILS.

As the church grew and spread throughout the world, people were as interested in knowing what books were canonical as we are today. In fact, many of them had to make a choice between their life and the scriptures, since persecution sometimes centered around the possession of the New Testament. If one were going to keep New Testament books in one's possession, at the risk of his physical life, such a person would be rather interested in determining just which books were scripture and which were not. Hence, the church soon began to meet in councils to determine which books were and which books were not sacred. As the chart shows, four councils are of interest in our study of genuineness. The council of Carthage is representative of these meetings. In this council, which met to determine the canonical scriptures to be read in the churches, they named the books of the New Testament as follows:

"Four books of the Gospels	Three of John
Acts of the Apostles	One of James
Thirteen Epistles of Apostle Paul	One of Judas
One of the same to the Hebrews	One book of the
Two Epistles of Apostle Peter	Apocalypse of John."

They also make it clear that such information had been given to them from their "fathers".

Thus the council decided in favor of the books which we presently consider to be inspired and which comprise the New Testament. By the same action they decided against many other books which were then in vogue in certain areas of the world. It needs to be stated that the councils and others whom we have considered did not make the books canonical. Rather, they simply recognized the books as belonging in the canon because of their inherent nature. The books were authoritative and canonical when they were written by the author. It took sometime, however, for the church at large to recognize which ones were so, and thus to be received as such.

## IV. Internal Evidence

In the preceding paragraph, we mentioned the testimony that is to

be gleaned from the books themselves. We call this internal evidence. We will now consider the individual testimony from within each of the books which we now receive as being canonical, as to its testimony for or against the traditional authorship. We shall include with this information some additional external testimony as it applies to each of the books individually. We surely encourage additional reading in this area, since much of the internal evidence is subtle, involved and open to question at times. Again, one's individual presuppositions will play a prominent part in the decisions made. Moreover, to have considered all the internal evidence, arguing it pro and con, would have demanded a greatly extended book. We have included various books at the chapter's end to give the student more information in this area. Use it! We also encourage the student to read each of these books as they are studied, considering whether the said author could or could not have written it. Don't rely only on someone else's words — study for yourself!

It is pertinent now to remark as follows: whether one considers the evidence for a book from the external or internal point of view, he will give the various bits of testimony certain values. This presents the problem which faces each one who considers the various kinds of testimony: what value should be placed upon each separate part? For some people the external testimony is considered far better. For other people the external evidence is conflicting and the internal evidence is considered much better. Regardless of which position one holds, whether these or a combination of them, the subjectiveness of the appraisal cannot be eliminated by anyone. When the internal evidence is considered, whether one weighs the factors of various styles, syntax used, historical remarks or allusions, all these and others will be evaluated in various ways. As an illustration, the early church differed as to the author of the Hebrew letter. Some thought Paul could not have written it. Others thought that Paul dictated the thoughts but that the actual writing was that of someone else. It is certainly possible to consider all of these in respect to that book. It is not an impossibility that Paul was the author, even though the style of presentation or the theme presented differs somewhat from other epistles written by him. Such is the story with every book of the New Testament. Thus when we come to consider each book, keep these things in mind.

Each book carries a certain amount of internal evidence which must be considered. For instance, is something stated within the

book that the author could not have written? Is something in the contents which the author would not have written (meaning that he would not be guilty of such; or, that it is obviously a forgery)? If, on the other hand, the book contains the author's name or something of the nature, and has no contrary evidence within it against the supposed author, then that must be considered as presumption in favor of the supposed author. Obviously, one must be careful with the evaluation of such material. Yet it certainly deserves to be appraised for its evidential value.

In our situation, being far removed from the time of writing, we must accept some testimony on the authority of others. This is basically what we have presented in the preceding pages which involved external evidence. We will now weigh that testimony as it is compared with what the books have to say for themselves. An exhaustive study is not intended, since the students may peruse various commentaries and/or introductions for such treatment. We will attempt to present at least some of the evidence in each book. Obviously, we have been selective in the material presented.

*Matthew.* This book is without an expressed statement of its author or date within the body of the text. The earliest manuscript copies of the Gospel have "according to Matthew" affixed to them. The "title" as such represents the considered opinion of the early copiests that the traditional authorship is correct (the same general truth is applicable to almost all of the rest of the New Testament books). Though the chart at the end of the chapter does not show it, Papias writes that Matthew composed a Gospel (the Logia), which is rather probably our Matthew. Hence, when we consider the contents of the book, we must consider if the traditional author (Matthew the apostle) could have written it; both from the viewpoint of when it was written and what it contains. In consideration of what the book includes, some things within it could be considered as testimony for Matthew. For instance, when Matthew was called to be a disciple of Jesus (Matthew 9), he states that the feast was in "the" house, (Mark and Luke's account states that it was in "his" house, which they would do in speaking about Matthew). He writes from the viewpoint of it being his own house in which the feast was held — quite natural! He alone calls himself the "publican" (or the tax collector). The other Gospel writers do not do so.

It seems to have been written before A.D. 70, since the prophecy

which Jesus made concerning Jerusalem (Matthew 24), is not mentioned as having been fulfilled. It seems more likely that if the book had been written after A.D. 70, the author would have mentioned the fact of the prediction and its fulfillment.

On the other hand, it seems to have been written sometime after the death of Jesus, since the remark concerning Judas (Matt. 27:8) must be viewed from the perspective of the passing of time. The same thing is true of Matthew 28:15.

Considering the total book, Matthew could have written the book as it stands. There is nothing which would be proof positive that he did not write it. The various attempts to present material from a Jewish point of view to Jewish readers (such as "kingdom of heaven" rather than "kingdom of God," the extensive quotations from the Old Testament, both from the Septuagint and the Hebrew text, the recurring phrase "son of David," and of various other pieces of evidence that would be persuasive to a Jewish mind) seem to indicate a person like Matthew, the apostle. The writer very often "assumes" his readers will know Jewish customs or thought. For instance, the Law is often mentioned in various ways, traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, various Jewish scruples, and Jewish history, etc. The rather obvious presentation of Jesus as the Messiah and, as such, the fulfillment of prophecy, is the major emphasis throughout the book. The most reasonable choice for author is Matthew Levi.

*Mark.* As with Matthew, the book does not name the author nor the time of writing within the body of the text. But the same facts are true of it as were stated about Matthew (see above). Hence, we will consider what evidence there is that Mark could have written it. The author of the book, like Matthew, related the prophecy of Jesus concerning Jerusalem (Mark 13) without relating its fulfillment. Hence, it is probable that book was written before A.D. 68-70.

There is some external evidence (from Papias) that (John) Mark wrote under the apostle Peter's direction. Others, such as Irenaeus and Origen, bear witness to this same idea. In reading the book, it seems to be apparent that Peter is less conspicuous than he is in Matthew or Luke, at least from the viewpoint of things that would be complimentary to him. However, some of his failures are mentioned, including his denial of Jesus (Ch. 14) and his rebuke of Jesus (Ch. 8). But this is somewhat true of the accounts of any of the apostles in the book. The author does not present them as perfect, but rather as

fallible, unbelieving at times, misunderstanding at times. It must be stated that the Gospel is always styled "according to Mark" and not according to Peter, however. This leads us to say that even if Peter is "behind" the writing, Mark was yet considered as "the" author. It is noticeable that early church fathers made much out of apostolic authority. Any consideration of an author such as Mark (or Luke) indicates careful consideration by them. Any acceptance of such persons as authors speaks forcibly that the authorship has been carefully weighed before any such departure from the norm was made.

The text in 14:12-16 seems to indicate the viewpoint of someone at the house, familiar with it, as Mark would be if it were his mother's house (which was later used by the Christians, Acts 12). Many consider that 14:51-52 is an incident involving Mark himself, though not specifically stated as such.

There is no good reason why the early fathers would assign the book to someone like Mark if the evidence were not rather strong for him. Indeed, the supposition that Mark wrote in Rome, primarily for Gentiles, is borne witness by the several different ways that show the book was written to Gentiles rather than Jews. The lack of many things "Jewish" (such as the genealogies, and unexplained Jewish customs, and frequent references to the Old Testament Scriptures), coupled with the presentation of Jesus as a man of power (cf. the centurion's conclusion: "Certainly this man was the Son of God") to be preached throughout the whole creation gives some validity to the argument for Mark writing in Rome (though other possibilities exist, of course).

Internally then we do not have any evidence that rules John Mark out or that conclusively shows him to be the author. However, he is certainly more likely than anyone else.

*Luke – Acts.* Any consideration of this Gospel necessarily includes the evidence for the author of Acts, since both are rather obviously written to the same person by the same person.

Historically speaking, the books were written close to the year A.D. 63, since this is approximately the year with which the book of Acts ends, concluding with Paul's imprisonment in Rome for two years. The two year period can hardly be later than A.D. 63. It was written at a time when the readers would know the various personalities mentioned in the two books, such as various rulers (like

the "Herods") during that period (Though there are five different personalities mentioned in the New Testament who are named Herod, the uninformed reader would not know but what the same person is in mind each time, since the author does not identify them). Like Matthew and Mark, the author mentions the prophecy of Jesus concerning Jerusalem (Ch. 21) but without its fulfillment.

The author of the books lived at such a time that he could search out various facts from others who knew them, though some years had passed since some events had occurred. In the opening verses of the Gospel, he mentions talking with eye witnesses, which would necessarily circumscribe the time in which it could have been written. Some of the events in Acts were apparently recorded through the testimony of others. But beginning with chapter 16, he himself is an eye witness of part of the events thereafter recorded.

The above facts argue for Luke, Paul's traveling companion, being the probable author. He certainly lived at a time when he could converse with eye witnesses, and at a time when he could participate in some of the recorded activities.

From the viewpoint of the Acts' account, only Luke is any real possibility. Other traveling companions (such as Timothy, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundis, Gaius, Tychicus, and Trophimus) of Paul, known from his writings, are eliminated for one reason or another. Silas and Titus are possibilities, but there is no external testimony for them, but much for Luke.

In respect to his material, the gospel is clearly intended for a person, Theophilus, and the selection is in keeping with its recipient who was most likely not Jewish, but Greek. The cosmopolitan flavor of both books, which show that Jesus was "good tidings for all people" and to be preached unto the "uttermost part of the world" bears testimony to this idea. As there is no evidence which is proof positive against Luke, the traditional author is the most likely one for each of the books.

In addition to these facts, the earliest testimony for the books (for they were customarily regarded as a unit) is unitedly for Luke. No one else is mentioned except him. Since there were other possibilities, it is of no small significance that Luke was considered to be the author in question. As previously stated, only in "modern" times have these traditions been challenged, but no-compelling reasons have been cited to disapprove Luke as author of the Gospel and Acts. Hence, we so believe as did the early church.

*John*. This book does not specifically name its author, nor specifically the date of composition. It is then like all the books of history in this respect. Yet, as stated about Matthew and Mark (and as is true of Luke), the early appellation "according to John" on the various manuscripts must be considered by anyone who disputes the traditional authorship of the apostle John.

In consideration of the material within the book, it is a rather obvious fact that it does not cover the same ground as Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is also rather obvious that it was written with these three books in mind. Hence, we conclude that the probable date of composition was sometime after A.D. 70. The traditional time of writing is ca. A.D. 90-96.

Yet, the author claims to be one of the disciples of Jesus (note "we" in 1:14) and further identifies himself as one whom Jesus loved. Since there are only three disciples who were that close to Jesus, the author is necessarily Peter, James or John. James was beheaded earlier than the book was apparently written. Peter is differentiated from the author, leaving only John. Since the book recounts part of the ministry of John the Baptist, who is designated in this book as John, it seems clear that the author is the other John (that is, John the apostle).

Other events in the book indicate that it was written by someone who knew Jesus and his ministry rather well. It also seems to have been written by someone who knew Jewish customs well and detailed geographical facts about the land of Palestine, yet was written when such things might not have been so well-known to his first reader(s). The author clearly shows that Jesus was Jewish, and sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Jesus is often shown to be intimately involved in Jewish things, such as quoting Scripture (cf. Ch. 3, 5, 6, 8, etc.), yet rejected by his own people, 1:11, though the lamb of God, sent to take away their sins, 1:29, and finishing that which God sent him to do (19:30).

The previous conclusion that John the apostle wrote it toward the end of the first century, and in or about Ephesus, would fit these facts as well as any, and better than most. Irenaeus specifically states that John, the apostle, wrote it, from Ephesus, and that such information had been received from Polycarp, a follower of the apostles (so Eusebius).

Thus, as with the other books, there is no evidence that would



insist John could not write it. There is considerable evidence that points to John the apostle, who thus appears to be the author.

*Paul's Epistles.* All of the epistles, beginning with Romans and ending with Philemon, purport to come from the apostle Paul whose name is at the beginning of each of the letters. Hence, we begin with that fact clearly attested.

In consideration of each of these books, we ask if they contain material which Paul (the purported author) either would not have written or could not have written. We attempt to find if they bear other testimony for his authorship, especially in light of knowledge we have about him from the book of Acts. We attempt to discover if the information in each of them is of such nature the apostle (Paul) could not have written it, or events occurred at such a place and time that would rule him out. It is fair to say that Paul used Tertius, and perhaps others to write for him, but such does not negate apostolic authorship as such. It is of some interest in considering syntax, style, etc.; however, since some of the problems noted in the various arguments may be traceable to this factor.

Over the centuries men have argued about these various books from the viewpoint of style, content, syntax, destination and other things. Generally speaking, they have all been questioned or disputed with reference to Paul's apostleship, excepting Romans, Galatians, I and II Corinthians. Most of the rest have been asserted to be forgeries or written by someone else other than Paul. In reviewing the proposed arguments against Paul's authorship of these various books, it seems rather apparent the arguments have normally been founded upon differences in style or content (note Harrison, pg. 306), or such things as vocabulary and/or syntax, which really stem from the negative critics of later centuries (cf. Guthrie, pg. 11-13, *The Pauline Epistles*). As we have before suggested, all of these are rather subjective in nature. We do not think any of them can be proof positive against Paul's authorship. Rather, each book contains allusions and/or evidence that can (easily) agree with what we know of Paul. Hence, the internal evidence is generally for Paul's authorship (though not absolute proof), and certainly not antithetical to it. Finally, only three (I and II Timothy, Titus) have remained in dispute. The other ten (excluding Hebrews) are considered as Paul's "undisputed" works.

Taking the books in the order they appear in our Bibles, some of the evidence is as follows (remembering that all claim to be from Paul):

*Romans* is early ascribed to Paul, and consistently so. The allusions in 11:13 and 15:15-20 certainly show its author to be Paul. Some few have rejected it as such, saying that either 1) no such church was in Rome, or 2) Paul could hardly have known all the people mentioned in Ch. 16. Neither of these objections, which are typical, carry enough weight to be convincing. Conversely, this is a letter which Paul wrote to a congregation where he had not been, and the various greetings are understandable. They show how much Paul cared for the group in Rome even though he had not been there in person. As to subject matter, and treatment thereof, in comparison with other epistles from Paul, we find no reason not to consider Paul as the writer.

*I and II Corinthians* are both quoted and asserted as being epistles of Paul very early. Though the epistles differ from each other, yet both have the "ring" of Paul, the apostle. Both have enough internal likenesses to Acts or Paul's other writings that few attempt to argue against them, as, for instance, I Cor. 4:6-13; 9:3-7; II Cor. 11:21ff., coupled with Acts 9:22-26; 13:2, etc. The second letter appears to be a rather natural response of Paul to the good information brought to him by Titus (note here Ch. 7).

*Galatians* is so much quoted early, and always referred to as Paul's epistle, that it often is considered to be the one epistle most likely Paul's. Internally, the historical references, such as Ch. 2 with Acts, and the similarity of subject matter with Paul's preaching as seen in Acts, all bear so heavily for Paul that it is rather useless to argue otherwise.

*Ephesians*, as the above books, was very early quoted as being Paul's (cf. Marcion's "New Testament"). Internally, it appears to be written at the same time as Philippians, Philemon and Colossians, especially the latter. The great amount of internal reference to Paul, his work, and close relationship to the readers, all combine to testimony in behalf of Paul. Moreover, in all four, his status as a prisoner, as in Eph. 3:1, 13; Phil. 1:7; 2:17; Col. 1:24; 4:3; Phile. 1, 9-13, 23, and the various persons mentioned, correlate with such texts as Acts 20:4-5 and Ch. 28 to show Paul as the likely author, as

well as to argue for the time and place of writing (which was most likely in Rome, A.D. 61-63). Tychicus delivered Ephesians and Colossians; Onesimus accompanied him and took Philemon his letter. These are rather strong links in the argument for Paul. It may be added that some consider this epistle was originally written to Laodocia, not Ephesus. There is some manuscript evidence against the phrase "in Ephesus," 1:1. Col. 4:16 refers to a letter to Laodocia. However, as Harrison points out (pg. 310-311), said letter may well not be the letter we know as Ephesians. In either case, though, Paul's authorship is not in question. Others have argued that the (apparent) Docetic background of some statements in the book show a time later than Paul's time. But that argument, if such it be, is based on our ignorance of the situation to which Paul wrote. The point attempted is, then, not convincing.

*Philippians*, in addition to the above general information, is replete with evidence for Paul's authorship. Though more of a personal letter than a doctrinal treatment (as is Ephesians and Colossians), it clearly shows Paul, the tender-hearted apostle, writing to friends who had supported him. The references to Timothy in 1:1; 2:19-24; and that to Caesar's household in 4:22, coupled with 4:15-16 and Acts 17 point directly to Paul.

*Colossians*, besides the above discussion under Ephesians, and like it, purports to be Paul's letter. Early external sources, placed with such as 4:10-14 and Philemon 23-24; 4:17 and Philemon 2, declare its writer to be Paul. Similarity in the discussion of Christ, 1:14ff., with Philippians 2:5-11 and Ephesians 1:3-23 directs the reader to Paul. Some have considered Colossians genuine, and Ephesians a later work, embodying words and concepts from Colossians. However, there is not enough evidence to substantiate this position; while the remaining evidence rather convincingly points to Paul. Additionally, many argue for dependance of Colossians upon Ephesians, or that both were written in the same time span. The last seems the best solution to the obvious relationships between the two books, and also argues for the same author; in this case the apostle Paul.

*I and II Thessalonians* have, generally, as early attestation as other epistles of Paul, and there is no good argument against them. The combined evidence is so much for Paul that very few, and those in

modern times, have held for another author than Paul. Those who translated the Old Latin and Old Syriac versions included these books, thus giving evidence of the esteem in which these epistles were held. Guthrie shows in a footnote, pg. 185, that few attempt to dispute Paul's authorship of II Thessalonians, let alone I Thessalonians. Internally, the likeness of subject matter, such as the Second Coming, the obviousness that the same group is addressed in both books, the inclusion of the same persons in the greetings, and comparison of texts such as I Thess. 2:2 with Acts 16:22-23 combine to place these letters under Paul's name as author.

*I and II Timothy* are both so clearly linked together that to argue for one is to argue for the other. Some have tried to do otherwise, but without success. In fact, the three "pastoral epistles" are of such nature that they are normally considered together (cf. Harrison, pg. 330). Their acceptance by the early writers is as good as that of Galatians or Philipians, and some think better than that of I and II Thessalonians.

Marcion did not include them, but Tertullian says that he did so because he (Marcion) was opposed to their Jewish bias. Such action on Marcion's part attests to their early age and accepted authorship by the Church generally. If Polycarp actually used I Timothy, his testimony is greater than that of Marcion. Moreover, if the internal evidence is rejected, there is no testimony for another author in the early writings of the church, which rather bears witness to Paul. Internally, the various personal references to the writer, Paul, or to the recipient, Timothy, show the unity within. The lack of any corroboration with other historical records (such as Acts) does not necessarily prove Paul couldn't have written them, or the events mentioned could not have happened. Some argue that as Paul expected to be released from prison, Phil. 1:25 and Philemon 22, such release came, since the charges were not convincing. He then visited, among other places, Spain. Later imprisoned again, he wrote Timothy, then laboring at Ephesus, and Titus, in Crete. If such be so, then the "apparent" differences vanish. Then, some charge that the seeming differences in subject matter and vocabulary between these and other epistles of Paul, along with the (apparently) "advanced" church organization, combine to disprove Paul as their author. Yet the letters themselves, if taken at face value, show that the various congregations were "advanced", all disclaimers notwithstanding.

Acts 14 shows that Paul established elders in congregations which he established, many years before these epistles were written. However, some subject matter is the same as well as some vocabulary, and with no plain historical evidence to the contrary, the arguments are not sustained. We will again point out that too much subjective evaluation, while ignoring external testimony, causes such arguments to be futile. As further examples, the church organization shown in Acts 14:23; Eph. 4:11; Phil. 1:1; I Pet. 5:1ff.; etc., show that Paul could have written as he did in I Timothy 3, etc.

*Titus.* The arguments for I and II Timothy also are valid for this book. The same general objections of recent years, and the same wide acceptance of the early church, are true of all three books.

*Philemon.* As previously stated under the discussion of Colossians, the close connection of these two epistles, plus the clear evidence for Paul as the writer rather preclude much argument for another author. The epistle has been resisted by some because Paul apparently does not advocate freedom of slaves. The text of I Cor. 7:17-24 is similar in tone to this epistle. But Paul also treats the subject in Eph. 6:5-9 and Col. 3:22-4:1, and yet does not "encourage" slaves to rise in revolt. In fact, however, he does show the true relationship of each person to the other (regardless of cultural status) and of each in Christ to God. Such teaching, if understood and accepted, would have dispelled any such stations in life as master/slave. Hence, the epistle, and Paul's authorship, are not to be rejected on such grounds.

As a sort of summary of these thirteen epistles, by the year A.D. 180, these were all held to be books by Paul throughout the churches generally. The testimony for Hebrews was mixed, but the same was not true for these books now in question.

*Hebrews.* This epistle has been an enigma with respect to its authorship and date from the earliest known time. It is not even addressed to anyone particularly, though its contents seem to have Jewish readers in mind. It was addressed to people who would know the author, as Ch. 13 shows, as well as his friends and present state in life. Hence, though we may be unsure of its writer, the recipients were not so.

As may be seen from the discussion of external evidence, the early church was divided about its authorship, some arguing for Paul, others against Paul. Internally, there is nothing that would necessarily

militate against his authorship. Though the mode of presentation is somewhat different than that of II Corinthians, for instance, it is not any more deliberate in style than Romans or Ephesians. The subject matter of it, being the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament, is certainly not foreign to Paul's writings, as evidenced by such epistles as Galatians and Philippians, though it is dealt with in a different manner. Some argue that 2:3 rules Paul out. Yet depending upon the interpretation of it, the apostle could have included himself (note I Pet. 5:1; Peter is a "fellow-elder"). It is rather difficult to decide how the Eastern churches rather early held to Pauline authorship (Clement of Alexandria, for instance) if there were no good reasons for it. Hence, whatever may be said about the book in toto, the apostle Paul cannot be ruled out.

Whoever wrote the book certainly knew the law specifically and the Old Testament generally. It cannot be argued that the Timothy of chapter 13 or the allusion to the author's imprisonment definitely pinpoint Paul as the author. These things do fit into what we know of Paul, however.

As to the time of its composition, it seems to have been written to a people who had some problems with the law system. Apparently this would be especially true if the temple were yet in existence. Thus the evidence probably shows it to have been written prior to A.D. 68-70. So, internally we have no evidence that Paul could not have written it. Externally the evidence is divided, generally for Paul or someone unknown. The fact that the Western churches could not disprove the position of the Eastern churches, but rather finally accepted Paul's authorship, lends support for Paul as the writer.

*James.* This epistle begins with a claim for authorship, being ascribed to James. The author is further described as a "bondservant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ" and to have written to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. Such are the facts. The problem is this: "James" is too common, and the descriptions too general, to pinpoint anyone definite. Yet, the writer obviously writes expecting to be obeyed. Besides this, the name James (or Jacob) could only be used if its owner would undoubtedly be known in distinction to many other "James". The only person on the New Testament pages who fits this description is the Lord's brother, James. Note Acts 15; I Cor. 15:7; Gal. 2. It is worthy of consideration that the book shows similarity of

thought to James' expressed thoughts in Acts 15; and to the "Jewishness" seen in Matthew's gospel; along with general ideas found in the Sermon on the Mount. Some also consider that the epistle reflects the thought and history in the Old Testament, which would be natural if someone as James, the Lord's brother, were the author.

Of the men mentioned in the New Testament who could most likely have written the book, we would think of James the apostle or James the Lord's brother, who was in the church at Jerusalem. The apostle was killed by Herod in A.D. 44, and the latter James was killed in A.D. 63. Either of the men could have written it (assuming the author to be one of these two), though the apostle is not too likely. There are many allusions to Old Testament history or scripture, and either of the men could have so written. From some of the references in the book (such as those in 3:12 and 4:7), it seems to be written to people who were acquainted with the land of Palestine, as well as by someone who knew that land. There is no internal evidence that would preclude either of the men being its author. The "dispersed" people coupled with the apostle's early death rather point to the Lord's brother, however. Considering his position in the congregation(s) at Jerusalem, and the lack of any specific destination for the epistle, he is the more probable choice.

*I and II Peter.* These two books claim to have been written by Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. In each of them, evidence is rather strong for Peter's authorship. As illustrations of the foregoing fact, the first epistle speaks of the author as being a witness of the sufferings of Christ (5:1). The second epistle speaks of the author as being present at the transfiguration of Christ (1:16ff.) and having written a prior epistle to the same disciples (3:1). These facts, coupled with some likenesses between both epistles as to subject matter and characteristic expressions, seem to show the fact that they were written by the same author.

There are some similarities to Paul's epistles as to subject matter, since the author certainly had read some of them (II Peter 3:16). This fact indicates something of the time of writing.

There is no evidence in either of the books that would forbid the fact of Peter's authorship, though they vary somewhat in subject matter treated. However, one would not expect the same subjects to

necessarily be treated twice, or even the same subjects treated in the same way twice. Hence, it cannot be said that Peter could not have authored either or both of the books.

For the first epistle, the evidence is about as strong and certainly as early as that for any epistle. It was attributed to Peter and thus considered canonical as far back as our evidence takes us. Going the other way, the book was readily and widely considered to be Peter's handiwork.

The second epistle, though purportedly from the same pen as the first, was not nearly as accepted as it, nor is it now. Outside the book itself, little early acceptance is found, though outright rejection is absent. Origen regarded it as Peter's. Perhaps the fact that several epistles "from Peter" were in circulation made the churches choose very cautiously. In point of fact, it was finally held to be authentic.

When we turn from this view to the epistle's own testimony, it is plain and abundant that Simon Peter is the writer. So strong is the evidence, that the book is either authentic or a forgery of the first order. One of the reasons why some reject it as genuine, however, is these very plain claims for Peter. Another reason is the obvious relationship of Ch. 2 to Jude, though wide disagreement exists in that regard. It is right to add that parallels to other books are evident, not only here but in other books, but such facts do not militate against apostolic authorship. The only thing necessarily proved is that there are similarities, whether small or great. The conclusion still is best that this epistle belongs to Andrew's brother, Simon.

*I, II and III John.* These three epistles are not ascribed to any author by name (only "the elder"), nor are they dated as to composition. Hence, we must consider them from that viewpoint. The last two are among the group sometimes referred to as the "anti-legomena". One of the major reasons for this is doubtless their brevity; as well as their late composition in comparison with other New Testament books, and their anonymity.

The first epistle rather obviously points to the apostle John or whoever the author of the Gospel of John was. The first few verses of chapter one clearly show the author to have been an eye witness of the Lord. In consideration of the remaining subject matter and style of the book as compared with the Gospel of John, we draw the same conclusion. Some now reject this position, but presuppositions about the Gospel (of John) cause this. There is certainly not anything within



the books which John could not have written. Early testimony to it (Polycarp, Irenaeus, etc.) definitely ascribes it to the apostle John. Internally, the evidence is evidently most favorable to him. We see no reason to disagree.

The remaining two epistles, very short in nature, are enough like the first epistle to favorably point to the same author. Again, it cannot be said that John could not have been the author. However, disagreement stems over the identification of the person called "the elder." Most critics hold this person is not the apostle, but another person. Nothing conclusive is given however, and Peter's use of the term in 5:1 argues against their position, as does that of Paul, Phile. vs. 9.

As to dates of composition, there are no historical facts that would keep us from considering them to have been written by the apostle John. We thus concur with the early views that all three were produced by John.

*Jude.* This book claims to be written by Jude, who is further designated as a brother of James. This reference is so obviously pointed at James of Jerusalem, that the conclusion is almost foregone. However, there was an apostle named Jude, Lk. 6:16. Whether the author was an apostle or one of the Lord's brothers (see Luke 6:16 and Mark 6:3), we know not for certain. The epistle could have come from either of these men. Generally speaking, the author is considered to be the Lord's brother, not an apostle, nor the brother of an apostle. He perhaps distinguishes himself from the apostles by the reference in verse 17.

As to the contents of the epistle, there is nothing within it that is of such nature that either of the purported authors could not have written it. It seems to have been written at a time when The Faith had been proclaimed for some years but men had infiltrated the church with false doctrine. However, we are not sure just what time this might have been. The reference to the book of Enoch (verse 14) does not mean that an apostle could not have written it, or anyone inspired, since the inclusion of such a quote does not preclude inspiration of the author (note Paul's usage in Acts 17:28b). The likeness to II Peter 2 does not mean that either of the authors copied from the other, though it would be no sin if such they did. Even if one did, that still does not mean the respective traditional authors could not have written the respective books. The book was used early, and

the author considered to be as just presented. There are no good reasons to demur from this position.

*Revelation.* This book claims its author to have been John, written on the island of Patmos, and written at such a time that the various churches mentioned were in existence and had been so for sometime. According to the statement of Irenaeus, the book was written by John who was exiled to Patmos near the close of the reign of Domitian (who died in A.D. 96). Thus we begin consideration with these facts in mind.

Various arguments have been presented by people as to the possible authorship. Since the book is highly figurative, at least generally, it is difficult to decide who could not have been the author. The many allusions to Old Testament history, facts and scriptures, seem to point to a Jewish author. There is nothing that would keep the apostle John from having been the author. This is stated even though the syntax and style somewhat differ from the Gospel and the three epistles. However, the subject matter is rather different in Revelation, and the time and place of writing are doubtless different. These considerations may well account for the differences which are more or less obvious. On the other hand, likenesses in words used, in the contrastive thought patterns, and the fact that the early church (second and third centuries) conclusively held to the apostle John as the writer make the case much stronger for John. Any other man named John may have written it, but there is no evidence for such, only speculation. The apostle is rather surely the author.

### SUMMARY

Having considered the internal evidence of the various New Testament books and weighing that in light of the external evidence previously presented, it cannot be said that the traditional authorship of these books has been ruled out. If anything, the traditional authorship from the various external sources is enhanced by the internal testimony within the various books. We thus conclude that the various books were written by the respective authors as are ascribed to them above, and properly form our New Testament.

We then consider that 1) the text is firmly established, thus providing the various statements of fact about times, places, events, etc., and 2) that the information concerning the several authors points rather clearly to the traditional writers.

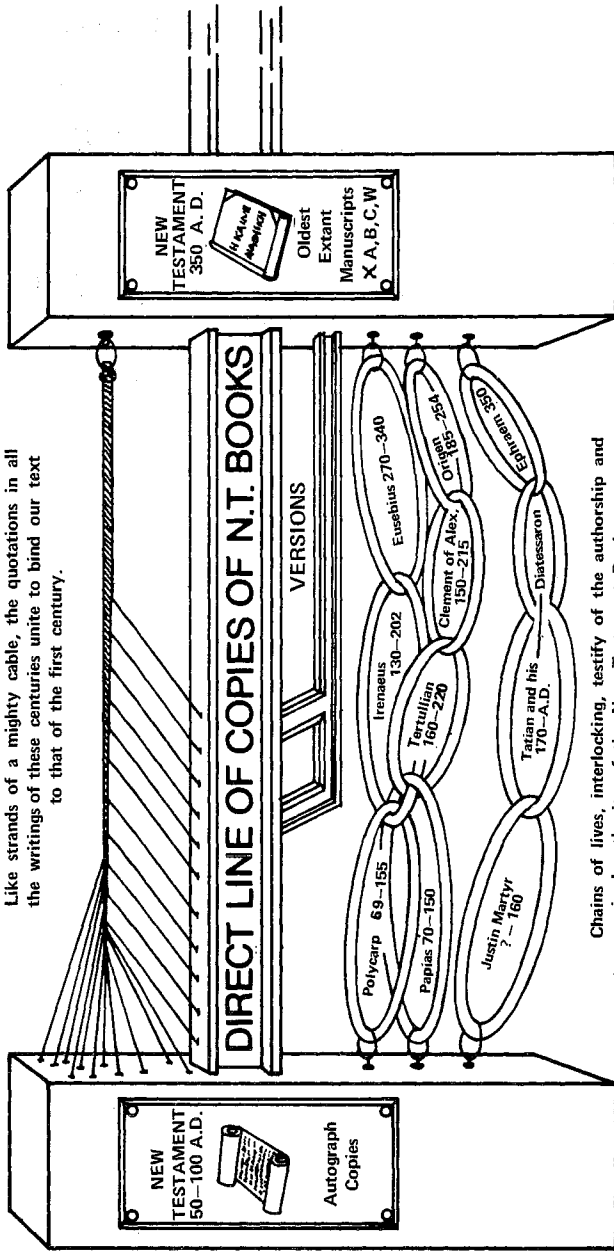
It is pertinent to remember here that the early Christians were just as anxious to know which books were to be considered Scripture as we are, and in considerably better position to find out the truth about them. Further, many books were rejected because they were not able to bear the close scrutiny to which the early Christians put them. Hence, we consider the early testimony in behalf of the various books of greater worth than the "modern" criticism, especially since some of it is based on presuppositions often antagonistic to the Scriptures.

From this basis, we move to chapter 3 for a study of credibility, which, if it adds evidence for more trustworthy documents, will prepare us for Ch. 4 (on Inspiration).

### COLLATERAL READING

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4. Feine, Paul and Behm, Johannes. *Introduction to the New Testament*, Abingdon Press, ed. Kümmel, Werner Georg, 1966.
5. Geisler, Norman L. and Nix, William E. *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Part II, chs. 10-15, Moody Press, 1968.
6. Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction, Gospels and Acts*, The Tyndale Press, 1965. Recommended.
7. ———. *New Testament Introduction, The Pauline Epistles*, Inter-Varsity Press, second edition, 1964. Recommended.
8. ———. *New Testament Introduction, Hebrews to Revelation*, Inter-Varsity Press, second edition, 1964. Recommended.
9. Harrison, Everitt F. *Introduction to the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964. Recommended.
10. Kümmel, Werner Georg. *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, Part I, ch. 1; Part II; Part III, chs. 1-2; Part V and VI, Abingdon Press, second edition, 1972.
11. Pinnock, Clark H. *Set Forth Your Case*, Craig Press, 1967.
12. Souter, Alexander. *The Text and Canon of the New Testament*, chs. II-VII (1st section), revised edition, C.S.C. Williams, 1954.
13. Theissen, Henry Clarence. *Introduction to the New Testament*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1943. Recommended.
14. Wenham, John W. *Christ and the Bible*, Ch. 6, Intervarsity Press, 1972.

In addition, various commentaries will be helpful, especially those of the old *International Critical Commentary* series and those of the *Expositors's Greek Testament*. The *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* and the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* have helpful articles on the various books.



Like strands of a mighty cable, the quotations in all the writings of these centuries unite to bind our text to that of the first century.

Chains of lives, interlocking, testify of the authorship and received authority of the New Testament Books.

