CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Paul's Witness to the Historical Integrity of the Gospels

RICHARD LLOYD ANDERSON

The fiftieth anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy was observed in June 1994.[1] Venturesome survivors revisited their beaches, and the daring parachuted again, reenacting their small part of the miraculous crusade to break apart an evil dictatorship. Do able minds match bodies of such surprising tenacity? I saw no article claiming that multinational veterans had invented exploits or misstated their experiences. Though these aging warriors believed deeply in their cause, modesty rather than exaggeration was the rule in published interviews. Their recollections were surprisingly in agreement with reports republished from a vanished era. Spontaneous stories dovetailed with each other, given a commonsense allowance for many points of view in many sectors. The parts had to be harmonized to repicture the whole operation. Certainly there were discrepancies in some details of sequence—exact times, precise numbers, and so forth. But no one doubts the blend of oral and documentary history that enables us to make a quality reconstruction of the most spectacular sea-to-land attack in history.[2]

Paul and the Concept of Late Gospels

Such living sources might inject caution into many armchair speculations on how the Gospels were written. Christianity invaded the Roman

Richard Lloyd Anderson is a professor emeritus of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.

Empire. Converts during Christ's life numbered in the hundreds, and scores passed on their experiences to writers of the Gospels. On their face, these narratives were written by eyewitnesses or embody memories of those who originally walked with Him in Galilee and Jerusalem. But what of the time lag? Jesus went to the cross about AD 30. Mainstream Christian scholars think the religious biographies of Christ came to their present form in about the last three decades of the first century: Mark no earlier than AD 65, Matthew and Luke around AD 80, and John AD 90 or beyond. These figures are out-and-out estimates; Christ's prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction is supposedly recorded so accurately by Matthew and Luke that their Gospels must have been written after the Roman siege in AD 70, prompting a well-informed critic to remark, "It is surprising that on such inconclusive evidence . . . there should be such widespread acceptance of a date between A.D. 75 and 85."[3] I agree with a minority that sees Luke as the third Gospel, written by the year 63. Matthew and Mark would necessarily be among the "many" who had already narrated the miraculous events of the days of Jesus (see Luke 1:1–2; Acts 1:1–2). These first full-scale Gospels would then fall between the expansion of the Church beyond Israel in the forties and the increase of urban, literate converts in the fifties. On this more compressed evaluation, fifteen to thirty years would separate the composition of the synoptic Gospels from the Crucifixion. On the more prevalent scheme, this gap would at least double.

According to ancient sources near the Apostle John, he wrote a fourth Gospel to add his recollections of events not already in the synoptic Gospels.[4] *Synoptic,* of course, refers to the first three accounts of Christ's ministry in the New Testament. Because they have interdependent characteristics, they "see together" (the Greek meaning behind *synoptic*). Paul's information about Jesus correlates mainly with the synoptic Gospels, so that relationship is under discussion here. But to return for a moment to the analogy of the Normandy invasion, there are hundreds of soldiers alive in 2006 who have memories that reach back accurately to the expedition sixty years before. Early Christian sources put the Apostle John in a similar situation, writing after other Apostles were gone.[5] So in terms of late authorship alone, John's Gospel has a minor relationship with Paul's letters. Yet in a long lifetime John would have widely shared his treasured knowledge of the Master. Some themes in John's writing have intriguing counterparts in Paul's letters and speeches, but that is a more subtle study.

How was the written history of Jesus formed between AD 30 and 90? Could His life and message have been accurately handed down through this period? The obvious solution is to read the Acts of the Apostles, which covers what the Galilean Twelve and Paul taught up to about 63. But mainstream professionals reshape Acts with the same technique they apply to the Gospels. Their theory is that both the history of the Savior and the history of the Apostles were written by later generations that inherited and enhanced faith-promoting legends. Yet in Acts, the Apostles personally testify of the divinity and doctrine of Christ right after the Resurrection.

But here the important perspective of Acts must be largely set aside for another focus—what Paul had learned of Christ's life and teachings from his conversion around AD 35 until writing his early letters fifteen or twenty years later. In other words, Paul wrote during the critical years when faith stories were supposedly replacing true history of Jesus. The convert-Apostle tells more about Christ's mission and teachings than is apparent. This field of study has been productive recently, though conduits of information from Jesus to Paul are minimized by theologically correct scholars.

My purpose is to review Paul's expressed knowledge of Christ in a fresh framework, paying attention to the difference between data and speculation that was defined by Stephen E. Robinson in profiling the work of faithful Latter-day Saint scripture scholars: "They accept and use most objective results of Bible scholarship, such as linguistics, history, and archaeology, while rejecting many of the discipline's naturalistic assumptions and its more subjective methods and theories."[6]

In the current models of the writing of the Gospels, Paul's Christian career matches the period of free growth of the stories about Jesus and the teachings attributed to Him. The Apostle to the Gentiles was converted soon after the Crucifixion and was an influential leader from about AD 38 until his death late in the reign of Nero, who took his own life in 68.[7] So Paul's life spans the three decades when the Jesus of history supposedly evolved into the Christ of faith. But to what else would this Pharisee be converted? No one was more consistent in his Christian career. His first known letters went to converts at Thessalonica and Corinth. In his first letters to those churches, he reviews how he stood before their synagogues in pure testimony that Jesus was the Christ and that he had determined to know nothing but Christ. Because every letter of Paul afterward repeats this message, the humbled Pharisee certainly made this declaration from

the time of his conversion, just as described in Acts 9. If this most visible spokesman had a fixed message of the divinity of Jesus from the first decade of the Christian Church, why assume the movement was then in ferment on the subject?

Theories on Origins of the Gospels

Most experts claim that literary evidence proves evolving historical accounts of Jesus: "It is evident from the several decades between the times when the texts were written and the times of the events recounted in them that we have to reckon with a period during which sayings and stories were orally transmitted before being written down either in our present texts or in their sources. The principal evidence for this process of oral transmission consists in multiple versions of sayings and stories that cannot well be accounted for by simply attributing them to the use of written sources."[8]

This quotation refers to the frequent individuality of stories and teachings in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Of course, chronology and description vary in many episodes reported by more than one Gospel. They were obviously not crafted by modern professionals who worried about minor discrepancies or proofread their quotations. Scholars today struggle with how approximations can be considered history. Yet until recent times, history was largely composed from approximations. That does not mean that we fail to have real events and many correct details. Nor are "the very words of Jesus" necessarily absent from the Gospels. Ancient collections preserve several hundred authentic letters from Roman emperors and senators and their correspondents. Many Greek and Roman historians incorporate well-copied documents in rather poor narrative. Yet today's analysts tend to overstate differences among the Gospels. For instance, a respected linguist downgrades a blending approach to the four Gospels, adding this observation about Jesus: "The one statement written about him during his lifetime, the 'title' on the cross, appears with *different* wording in each gospel (see Mark 15:26; Matt. 27:37; Luke 23:38; John 19:19)."[9] But the effect of this comment is hardly justified by the record. "The king of the Jews" is on the execution placard in every Gospel, with "Jesus" added in Matthew and "Jesus of Nazareth" added in John. The art of history normally reconstructs full events from partial reports, and summaries regularly omit details that are rounded out in more complete versions.

When two Gospels differ on the precise wording of a teaching of Jesus,

some analysts pronounce the sources unreliable rather than look for their essential agreement. Even if there are major differences in context or wording, rather than labeling both records nonhistorical, one could consider the option that one account may contain fuller data whereas the other may be a freer version from an eyewitness or reporter of responsible memories. Different events with loose resemblances in two Gospels are too often labeled variants of the same episode, with an arbitrary claim that one version was radically rewritten. But responsible history interprets its sources without changing them. In the case of differing details in accounts of the same event, one should avoid imposing standards of a technical era on the reasonable integrity of another period.

Although the following quotation pertains to overstating differences between Acts and Paul's letters, the same issues apply to perfectionism in comparing the synoptic Gospels: "In historical sources from other fields such discrepancies are no surprise to the scholar, nor do they make him doubt the historical reliability of the accounts except at a few points where they directly contradict each other. But many New Testament scholars adopt a very stringent attitude when no complete agreement exists among the different accounts, regardless of the fact that perfect agreement would be suspect or proof of artificial construction."[10]

Current theories project a period when stories of Christ evolved in major substance, a process supposedly discovered through form criticism. This procedure first classifies story and teaching patterns, and then similar episodes from different Gospels are compared to determine their direction of development. For instance, Matthew fully reports Peter's testimony of Christ and also Christ's promise of authority to Peter to lead the Church (see Matthew 16:13–20). Then settings and brief summaries are compared in Mark 8 and Luke 9, with the conclusion that the fuller account displays later creative development: "It seems likely that Matthew has followed his custom of adding things, in this case, to the sayings of both Simon Peter and Jesus."[11]

As a historian of Mormon documents, I see such analysis as unsupported theory. Differences in synoptic narratives are assumed by the form critics to be evidence for evolution of the narrative, but there are good alternative explanations for synoptic diversity, such as an author's habit of brevity, his particular interests, or his decision that certain events were adequately treated in a previous Gospel. Because Jesus adapted teachings to different audiences, a shift of emphasis in another setting may have

nothing to do with the growth of the "story unit." These double and triple accounts are a main focus for form criticism: "The purpose of NT FC [New Testament Form Criticism] as traditionally defined was to rediscover the origin and history of the individual units and thereby to shed some light on the history of the tradition before if took literary form, that is, to determine whether the various units are traceable to Jesus, to the early Church, or to the redactional (editorial) activity of the Gospel writers."[12]

Redaction has heavy connotations of question-begging. *Editor* in today's practice includes compiling, not just altering. But *redactor* in New Testament scholarship suggests modifying or shifting the point of the inherited story. Redaction criticism, which now supplements form criticism, is defined as "the evangelist's use, disuse, or alteration of the traditions known to him."[13] It is one thing to say that every writer reveals a personality and point of view—mind prints of the author are clear characteristics of each of the four Gospels. But the intense search for "alteration of the traditions" is regrettable. As just noted, accounts of the same event show commonality and also individuality, both of which can be explained in terms of the writer, his skills, his sources, his personal style. "They can't all be right," is essentially what we hear from form and redaction critics. Many aim for the one original account by peeling off its later developments. But that is a historical version of the either-or fallacy. Each Gospel may have had independent access to some original details, even when there is literary interdependence in the synoptic trio.

The norm in this reconstructive system is illustrated in a survey of scholarship on Jesus by Aramaic expert Joseph A. Fitzmyer, an intellectual of faith who concludes basically that Christ's portrait in the Gospels is severely overstated but early Christians were afterward led to his divinity through the Holy Spirit. Fitzmyer is used here because of his positive stance, and my evaluation is given with respect for his lifetime devotion to religious learning. Although he views the Gospels as fictionalizing the life of Jesus, he also thinks that they carry far more authentic information than do their apocryphal imitations, some of which are now touted as having equal validity to the four biblical records: "Despite the contentions of some modern scholars (H. Koester, J. D. Crossan), these apocryphal gospels are scarcely a source of real information about Jesus of Nazareth."[14]

Consistent with one point in this article, Fitzmyer finds the outline of the death and resurrection of Jesus validated by a dozen major allusions in Paul's letters.[15] So he sees the Gospels rooted in actual events but with such

lush overgrowth, mainly in regard to teachings, that the proportion of fully authentic incidents is small and the proportion of reliably recorded teachings of Jesus even smaller. He reviews this wisdom as the fruit of the twentieth century, which started with form criticism and then advanced to redaction-composition criticism and other types of literary analysis. The result is a "sophisticated mode of gospel interpretation [that] was unknown in earlier centuries of the church."[16]

With other New Testament scholars, Fitzmyer speaks of three stages: Jesus teaching, traditions expanding, and gospel authors freely adapting. Basically the first century is trisected, with story development in the middle third and editorial creativity in the final third. The system breeds a puzzling certainty. One may be sure that "none of the evangelists was an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry."[17] In this view unnamed authors sorted out stage-two folk traditions and created the four Gospels "by redactional modifications and additions."[18] In doing so they relied on stories produced with a slant by the unknown middle generation: "Yet none of these disciple-preachers ever sought to reproduce with factual accuracy the words and deeds of Jesus himself; they understood those words and deeds with hindsight and adapted them to the needs of those to whom they preached."[19]

Paul and Eyewitnesses

But the New Testament contains a different information model about Christ, and Paul is the first one known to state it. Because he never hints of personal experience with Jesus, the Apostle is clearly at the critics' stage two, the repeating of random stories about Jesus. In 1 Corinthians, Paul reviews the conversion of southern Greeks as he carefully argues for the Resurrection. He makes a sharp distinction between his vision and the first appearances of Christ to the Galilean Apostles and their associates, naming five occasions when the resurrected Lord was seen by them (see 1 Corinthians 15:5–7). Here Paul is really defining his mentors for the earthly Christ, as he stresses the Atonement and Resurrection: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Information about Christ's appearance to Peter certainly came from Peter himself, because Paul tells about spending two weeks with the chief Apostle three years after the conversion vision (see Galatians 1:18), and they counseled together at Jerusalem and Antioch afterward (see Acts 15; Galatians 2:11–14). Information about Christ's appearance to James clearly

came from James, because Paul tells about visiting James not very long after the conversion vision (see Galatians 1:19), and they counseled together at Jerusalem afterward (see Acts 15; see also Acts 21:18–25). Although Paul is an intermediary, he insists he has accurately relayed first-hand testimony on the Resurrection appearances (see 1 Corinthians 15:11–15).

In 1 Corinthians, Paul refers to his first preaching in Corinth about AD 50, the midpoint of the scholars' second stage, when disciple-preachers were supposedly expanding the words and deeds of Jesus. But historical constancy is Paul's message. The Corinthians are told that Christ appeared to Peter first and afterward to the eleven Apostles, James, and "above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present" (1 Corinthians 15:6). So Paul corrects current form critics: the original eyewitness stage existed simultaneously with their stage two. Speaking of the Galilean eleven, Paul insists that the leaders are united on the historical truth of Christ's suffering and Resurrection: "Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed" (1 Corinthians 15:11). These are not anonymous "disciple-preachers." Anyone speaking or writing at that point, or until the deaths of Peter and Paul nearly two decades later, would have had access to the testimony of those who walked with Christ and also to responsible conduits such as Paul who were scrupulously careful not to modify knowledge that came from the eyewitnesses.

This is exactly the viewpoint of the author Luke, honored in Paul's letters as a trusted companion. To remove his name from the Gospel that has his byline in the earliest manuscripts is equivalent to erasing authorship from the best Roman and Greek histories. Because later apocryphal writings falsely claimed to have been written by leading Christians, the traditional authors of many New Testament books are widely questioned today. But second-century papyrus copies exist of large sections of Matthew, Luke, and John with their names in head notes or endnotes.[20] There is also a major fragment of an important second-century list of approved books, broken at the beginning but naming Luke and John as writing the "third" and "fourth" Gospels. This list sought to clarify which books were historically authentic: "There are also many others which cannot be received in the General Church, for gall cannot be mixed with honey."[21] Luke has low New Testament visibility and is not a likely name for adding prestige to a pseudo-Gospel. Indeed, the apocryphal Gospels have obvious agendas or contents that do not integrate with events,

topography, geography, and culture in the New Testament world. The four Gospels are impressive for their factual framework accompanying the life and teachings of Christ.

A book on Luke's preface (see Luke 1:1–4) would of course do it more justice than the few comments possible here. That preface contradicts redactional theory by subtracting the evolutionary second stage in forming the Gospels. First for Luke are the "eyewitnesses," the Galilean Twelve who shared events with Jesus "from the beginning." Luke's second stage is preserving the Christian epic from sources and participants. The following phrases come from Luke's preface in the New Revised Standard Version, which reflects most current translations: because the eyewitnesses "handed on to us" their knowledge of Christ's ministry, "many have undertaken to set down an orderly account." Luke then writes "after investigating everything carefully from the very first." The result is what the King James Version correctly calls "certainty" that the record of Christ is reliable (Luke 1:4).

In my view, Luke penned this preface no later than AD 63, less than a decade after 1 Corinthians. Even if Luke wrote later, this missionary companion of Paul stood in his shoes as having had contact with important witnesses of the ministry of Jesus, which is a great part of the meaning of "investigating everything carefully from the very first" (NRSV, Luke 1:3). As Paul's associate, Luke here names Paul's sources of information about Christ—observers and some early records.

Luke's preface leads away from speculative models and straight to basic biography. Paul's letters from Rome mention Luke's being there with him in the early sixties, which verifies the Acts picture of Luke's going to Rome with Paul after two years in Israel.[22] That underlines the critical insight from 1 Corinthians 15 already discussed. Prominent Apostles and brothers of the Lord mingled with converts during the middle third of the founding century. Writing 1 Corinthians about AD 57, Paul appeals to common knowledge that "other apostles" were traveling with their wives, naming Peter and "the brethren of the Lord," a term that undoubtedly includes James and Jude (see 1 Corinthians 9:5; Matthew 13:55). Peter was slain about 67; James, the Lord's brother, was slain in 62; his brother Jude wrote his letter perhaps a decade later; the originally prominent James of Zebedee was killed about 44; and responsible Christian sources report his brother John exercising apostolic supervision in Asia Minor at the end of the century.[23]

Besides those documented Apostles, other leading Christians, including relatives of the Lord and prominent women, lived to see some or all of the synoptic Gospels written. If one survived childhood in the ancient world, one's longevity would on average trail current levels by ten years or so. Yet the question of sources for the Gospels continues to be discussed in a vacuum. A recent book by Utah scholars estimates that Mark's Gospel was composed about AD 65 to 70, admits that not all "personally acquainted" with Jesus had died but muzzles anyone remaining: "A generation had passed and firsthand information was no longer available."[24]

Paul would not have written such depressing lines. From known beginnings about AD 50, his epistles have a constant theme of "get it right," with occasional appeals to Jesus. As we have already discussed, Paul basically told the Corinthians that he was reviewing Resurrection appearances that he "received" from the Galilean eleven (see 1 Corinthians 15:3–7). History from those who saw and heard is being preserved before our eyes in the Corinthian correspondence. To settle insensitivity about the sacrament, the Apostle reviews how Christ established that ordinance, with narrative and words very close to those reported by Luke and a statement of Paul's source: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you" (1 Corinthians 11:23). This rather full record is evidently not "received of the Lord" from direct revelation, but from the Lord through Apostles present in the upper room—the pattern of "that which I also received" from observers in the later Resurrection chapter (1 Corinthians 15:3). At a minimum, the Apostle is in contact with other Apostles and writing bits of their oral history.

In my judgment, Hebrews is from Paul and was definitely written before the destruction of the temple in AD 70.[25] Referring to the earthly teachings and trials of Jesus, this book confirms the observer-to-author process in Luke's preface. In Hebrews, the things "spoken by the Lord" came face to face from "them that heard him" (Hebrews 2:3).

Written between AD 50 and 63, Paul's epistles are a public block against changes. They refer to Christ's Davidic credentials, the Last Supper, Jewish and Roman trials, Crucifixion, burial, and Resurrection appearances. Because references to Christ's life are spontaneously given throughout the Apostle's letters, they indicate that Paul had a working knowledge of the Lord's ministry. Further, the Apostle merely refers to events rather than explaining them, expecting his readers to understand incidental references to the career of the Savior. This point is pivotal in understanding why the

Apostle does not more often name Jesus as his source. A common body of knowledge makes powerful allusions possible without the clumsy ritual of naming the Lord and designating a given teaching. Today's public writings, for example, are filled with catchphrases on human rights without naming the Constitution or the Fifth or Fourteenth Amendments. Similarly, Paul's direct references to Christ show that there is a constant between-the-lines appeal to Christ's authoritative message when the Savior's words are loosely paraphrased or even condensed as concepts. Mentioning Christ as source could indicate apostolic revelation instead of Jesus' Jewish ministry, but major doctrinal revelations were well known and openly described (see Galatians 1–2). So when Paul names the Lord for authority, the Apostle generally alerts modern readers to look for teachings given during Christ's preaching in Israel.

Paul's Direct Citations of Jesus

Paul's intent to quote or paraphrase teachings from Jesus' mortal ministry is clearer in some examples than others. More skeptical scholars subtract a half dozen of the traditional fourteen letters, but most of Paul's important references to Christ's teachings are in the earlier epistles not generally challenged: Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Thessalonians. My approach, however, is documentary, relying on second-century manuscript evidence and second- and third-century acceptance of books that were later challenged. This external evidence favors Paul as author of the traditional fourteen letters. The following passages are examples of Paul's references to Jesus' teachings.

First Corinthians 15:3–7. The micro gospel of 1 Corinthians has already been discussed, with Paul's retrospect on first teaching his converts "that which I also received" about Christ's Atonement and Resurrection. By mentioning the Lord's appearance to Peter, James, and the Galilean eleven, Paul discloses major sources of information, and it is known that he had contact with them. This appeal to firsthand evidence indicates reliable oral history, though Paul might have possessed early lists of Resurrection appearances. Luke's Gospel also contains the first appearances on Paul's list—to Peter and then to the Twelve (see Luke 24:33–36). Moreover, part of "that which I also received" was "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." This wording is close to Christ's own explanations in Luke on how the suffering and Resurrection fulfilled scripture (see Luke 24:26–27, 45–46). This also connects with Paul's Corinthian narrative of

the Lord's words in the upper room: "My body, which is broken for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24). "Died for our sins" agrees with the synoptic account of the Last Supper (see Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20) but is closest to Matthew's wording of the cup representing Christ's blood "shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Not only does Paul testify that Church leaders agree on Christ's sacrificial Atonement, but the Apostle may be relaying the Lord's own words.

First Corinthians 11:23–25. As detailed earlier, in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul reviews Christ's actions and words in establishing the sacrament and says that these "I have received of the Lord." Because Paul's account is so particularized, he is likely presenting narration originating from the Apostles rather than from personal revelation. He is tapping the synoptic record at an early point, with Christ's words in establishing the sacrament almost identical to those appearing later in Luke's Gospel: "This is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. . . . This cup is the new testament in my blood" (1 Corinthians 11:24–25; see also Luke 22:19–20).

This correlation indicates that either Paul carefully memorized Christ's words or had documentation of them. Luke's preface explains that such words were obtained by his contact with those present at the Last Supper. Yet Paul wrote them down much earlier as common knowledge, "received" in the same process as the apostolic testimony of the Resurrection that Paul relayed in the same letter.

First Corinthians 7:10–11, 25. The frequent possibility that Christ's words are behind Paul's words is shown when the Apostle gives his own command but quickly clarifies that it is really the command of the Lord: "Let not the wife depart from her husband . . . and let not the husband put away his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:10–11). Between these two directives there is a caution about remarriage not necessarily from Jesus, because Paul jots ideas within ideas. As he does in the passage on the sacrament, the Apostle gives an early form of synoptic teachings. These interrelated Gospels summarize Jesus' direction on divorce, with Luke lacking a context but Matthew and Mark reporting the situation when Jesus answered the Pharisees' question on the subject. Only Matthew gives a permitted divorce initiative for males in cases of adultery, and only Mark gives a generalized rule against divorce for men and also women (see Mark 10:11–12). Paul's dual instruction from the Lord resembles the male-female warning in Mark.

Finally, Paul drops the question of divorce and addresses the problem

of when to marry, about which the Apostle remarks, "I have no commandment of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:25). The four Gospels are also silent on this point, which underlines Paul's broad knowledge in directly citing Jesus—when the letters directly refer to Christ's teachings, we usually find the equivalent words of Jesus in the Gospels. This practice suggests that the Apostle designed his Church messages to remind Christians of a fairly defined body of information about the Lord.[26]

First Corinthians 9:14. The New Testament contains several equivalent command terms. Paul uses one of them in a long answer to faultfinding Corinthians as he insists that he has the right to be supported as a missionary but does not demand it: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14).

Paul first quoted Old Testament scripture on support of the priests and then evidently added the directions of Jesus about missionaries. These words broadly summarize the charge to the Seventy to rely on the people for food (see Luke 10:5–7) and the short form of this same instruction to the Twelve in Matthew (10:10), with only a terse suggestion in Mark (6:8).

But Paul's main argument is the authority of the apostleship (see 1 Corinthians 9:1)—he is probably appealing to knowledge that Jesus directed support for the Twelve, as indicated in Matthew, where Christ's missionary instructions close by saying that he "made an end of commanding his twelve disciples" (11:1).

First Thessalonians 4:15–5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–15. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord" opens a series of Thessalonian parallels to Jesus' most featured discourse in the Gospels, the prophecy of the Second Coming and of extended events that would precede it. On the Mount of Olives, the original Twelve asked about the time of Christ's return. The importance of Jesus' long answer is shown by every synoptic Gospel reporting it in detail, though Matthew's version has more words and components, plus several long parables afterward that were part of the Savior's response.

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians unwittingly fed expectations of an early second coming in explaining the accompanying resurrection. So Paul wrote again to clarify prior events. Both letters follow distinct blocks of material in Jesus' Olivet discourse. These correlations show that the introductory "by the word of the Lord" really means His known teachings. "By" correctly translates the Greek preposition *en,* usually a simple "in" in the sense of location, but the New Testament very often displays an

"instrumental" meaning—here "by means of the word of the Lord." The context of dependence is so strong that the New Jerusalem Bible clarifies the idea: "We can tell you this from the Lord's own teaching" (1 Thessalonians 4:15).

A broad pattern links Matthew 24 to the Thessalonian letters. Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians counters their confusion on personal immortality by describing what would come: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven . . . with the trump of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16), which follows Matthew's version of the Olivet prophecy: "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven . . . with a great sound of a trumpet" (24:30–31). Although the trumpet is mentioned only in Matthew, it is part of detail shared with Mark on the angels calling forth God's "elect" from heaven and earth when Christ appears (see Matthew 24:30–31; Mark 13:26–27). Paul uses this as the essential message: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Paul continues by reminding the Thessalonians that discussion of "the times and the seasons" is unnecessary: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:1–2). Though Luke has this comparison elsewhere (12:39–40), the Olivet discourse begins with questions on the time of the Coming and ends in Matthew with several parables, one of which pictures the thief coming in the most unexpected vigil (24:43–44). In each synoptic Gospel, Jesus closes the prophecy with the warning to stay awake and "watch," adding the counterexample of drunkenness in Matthew and Luke. And Paul closes his minidiscourse by these verbal reflections of "watch," adding that drunkenness is for the worldly (see 1 Thessalonians 5:4–7). The sequence of the synoptic prophecy and Paul's survey is the same. And Paul starts with "the word of the Lord" and reminds them that they already "know perfectly" how the appearance of Christ will surprise the world (1 Thessalonians 4:15; 5:2). It seems the basic Olivet discourse was available to Paul and his converts, probably in written form because of the duplicated detail and order, together with several striking words. Luke's "unawares" (21:34) is the same word in Greek as Paul's "sudden" (1 Thessalonians 5:3), though the idea is vivid in each of the triple Gospels. Significant parallels to Paul's writings appear in more than one Gospel or in Matthew alone.

Second Thessalonians settles the false expectation of Christ's quick return, and evidence of Paul's authorship follows the first letter closely.

Though Paul's follow-up letter is questioned, that debate has much to do with academic shock at the vivid picture of Satan's approaching power. To correct false enthusiasm for an immediate Second Coming, the Apostle again parallels the Olivet prophecy for major events preceding the Lord's return. Thus Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians concentrates on the era of wickedness that Jesus predicted before coming again.

Removing some important misconceptions will highlight the parallels. First, Paul's labels for the coming evil power are too spectacular for mere mortals—the high titles for the ruling "man of sin . . . , the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:3) resemble terminology for Satan at that period, and they should be seen as naming God's chief competitor behind the scenes. Second, Paul's image of the arrogant pretender in God's temple has little to do with the Jerusalem temple, which was destroyed two decades after the Apostle wrote. Paul has the temple takeover last until Christ's return, which he insists is not in the near future (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3–8). Satan aims to possess not one building but all of Christ's church, which is regularly called God's temple in Paul's letters and early Christian literature (see Ephesians 2:21).[27]

As Paul explains what must precede the Second Coming, the parallels are striking, especially in Matthew. Though conservative commentators tend to see a compressed period of evil just before the Second Coming, Christ in Matthew predicts the era of "false prophets" right after the Apostles were killed (24:9–11) and restates the point by positioning "false Christs, and false prophets" right after the first-century fall of Jerusalem (24:24). Then "iniquity shall abound" (24:12), and Paul uses the same word for the beginning of fulfillment in his day: "The mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

So Paul follows the substance and timetable of the Olivet prophecy. With allowance for Paul's imagery, the processes are the same: "Many," Jesus said, would aspire to take His place, "saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:5; see also Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8). The evil one, Paul said, would aspire to take the place of God, "shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Paul's forthcoming "signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9) match Christ's predicted "signs and wonders" from counterfeit prophets in the Olivet prophecy (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22).

This does not exhaust the interplay of words and ideas between Matthew 24 and the Thessalonian correspondence. They are full counterparts in

event and stage, once it is seen that Paul has extracted the religious future without repeating Christ's extensive commentary on persecution, wars, and signs of His coming. These earliest known letters of the Apostle were sent about twenty years after Jesus outlined the stages between the first and the second comings. And Paul quite certainly used a full record of the prophecy corresponding to the present Matthew 24. It is even possible that Matthew's Gospel was already written and carried by certain leaders. Moreover, the Olivet discourse is not derived from Paul, for he introduced the advent theme by relying on the existing "word of the Lord."

Romans 14:14. Paul appeals for more charity for Jewish converts with rigid dietary convictions and then insists, "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself." The Apostle adds that a thing is unclean if one thinks it is so, his explanation of the idea he attributes to the Lord. "Nothing unclean of itself" is quite close to Mark's report of the Savior's judgments on ritual purity: "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him" (7:15). The parallel is closer in Greek, where *defile* is the verb meaning "to make unclean or common." Current translations of Romans 14:14 favor "persuaded in the Lord Jesus," though the Greek preposition *en* ("in") is regularly instrumental, meaning here "through" or "because of the Lord Jesus." In any event, Paul's idea is quite clear—reflection on Jesus' viewpoint, which is learned through Jesus' words, has convinced the Apostle that objects do not cause impurity of themselves. Paul could be brief on this sensitive subject only if it was well known that the Lord took a strong stand on overdone purification. In this central clash of opinion between Paul and defenders of the Mosaic dietary law, one of Paul's weapons was paraphrasing Jesus.

Romans 12:14–19; 14:10. In addition to the Olivet prophecy and John's discourse on the Last Supper, one very significant address should resonate in New Testament letters—the Sermon on the Mount. It has the lead location in Matthew as Jesus' declaration of Christian standards for those who became "disciples" (Matthew 5:1) by repenting and accepting "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23). For this purpose, restatements would be necessary for waves of converts.

The teachings in Matthew's chapters 5 through 7 are primarily found in the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6, but other fragments appear in Luke in different settings. This arrangement leads some to assume that Matthew

assembled scattered sayings of Jesus. Yet Luke is a skilled writer by ancient standards that stressed logical as much as chronological order. For the interest of the reader, he perhaps reported a concise version of this important sermon and placed some sections elsewhere by topic. Or did the Master Teacher use repetition so regularly that both views are true—an original broad manifesto of principles followed by systematic segments in various teaching moments? Christ's unsurpassed mind was perfectly capable of organizing an effective moral overview instead of leaving that task to chance.

A unified image of the Sermon on the Mount emerges through the lens of the letters, particularly Romans: "The ethical admonitions of this and other New Testament letters, whether Paul's or not, bear a marked resemblance to the ethical teaching of Christ recorded in the Gospels. They are based, in fact, on what Paul calls 'the law of Christ' (Gal. 6:2; *cf.* 1 Cor. 9:21). In particular, an impressive list of parallels can be drawn up between Romans 12:3–13:14 and the Sermon on the Mount. While none of our canonical Gospels existed at this time, the teaching of Christ recorded in them was current among the churches—certainly in oral form, and perhaps also in the form of written summaries."[28]

Paul closes his epistle to the Romans with several chapters of personal instruction instead of the briefer admonitions found in other church letters. But Romans is the one epistle sent to an important area where Paul had not preached. That explains his obvious drive to review authoritative standards with Saints who had not heard him. The closing chapters of Romans use Christ's teachings and Christ's example in several ways; the strongest of Paul's indirect allusions to Christ's teachings, the summary of the Lord's laws of love, is recorded in Romans 13:8–10.

The last part of Romans 12 corresponds to the last part of Matthew 5 with a series of admonitions on the subject of nonretaliation. Although some content also reflects Luke's Sermon on the Plain, the style of expression follows that of Jesus as reported by Matthew. Paul opens the subject with: "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not" (Romans 12:14). In the longer traditional text of Matthew, the parallel is: "Bless them that curse you . . . and pray for them which . . . persecute you" (5:44), which is closer to Paul's key words than Luke's similar report, "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you" (Luke 6:28). In Romans 12:17, the Apostle restates this theme, which is clearer in literal translation: "Returning evil for evil to none, providing good

things before all men." "Providing good things" has a close parallel in 1 Thessalonians: "See that none render evil for evil . . . ; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (5:15). In a word, repay those doing you evil, not with evil, but with good. Matthew has the close model for the above negative command: "Resist not evil" (Matthew 5:39); this form is lacking in Luke, though both Gospels give examples from Jesus on how to return good for evil. And other key words of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount are in this section of Romans. Paul's "live peaceably" (Romans 12:18) could also be translated "bring peace" and correlates with Jesus' beatitude for "peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9); Paul's warning against anger (see Romans 12:19) is closely related in Greek to Jesus' warning against anger (see Matthew 5:22). This subtle coloring supplements the correlations to a well-defined section of the Sermon on the Mount.

Luke and Matthew place Jesus' caution against judging near the end of their versions of this sermon. Paul uses a similar location and a form close to Christ's speech: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10). As already discussed, these questions are embedded in a long correction about being overcritical because of Jewish dietary rules, with Jesus cited on nothing being unclean of itself (see Romans 14:14). Here the Sermon on the Mount parallel is strongly felt: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (Matthew 7:1–2). This phrasing corresponds to Paul's dual form just quoted—caution on judging now, as well as a prophecy of future judgment. But in Luke's pattern, one technically will not be judged if he does not judge (6:37), a step away from the coming judgment found in Matthew and Romans. Moreover, Paul confronts his readers with questions in the same style as Jesus, who follows "Judge not" with cross-examination on why we see only the faults of others (see Matthew 7:3–5).

Romans 13:8–10. "Love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. . . . And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8–10). Though Paul does not name Christ in this passage, he reasons from the teachings of Jesus that love is the overarching precept. Paul's own evaluation of love begins and ends this pointed passage on charity: "Love is the fulfilling of the law." *Fulfilling* in Greek

essentially means "completion"—love is the purpose of all revealed laws and the crowning result of obeying them. Then Paul backs up this main concept with two silent citations of Jesus. In full form, Romans 13:8–10 names five of the Ten Commandments, adding that loving one's neighbor permeates the rest.[29] The Apostle did not need to identify the Savior's use of this Old Testament imperative. Nor did he need to mention Christ behind his second supporting saying: "Love one another" was given at the Last Supper as a "new commandment" by which all would "know that ye are my disciples" (John 13:34–35).

Although John's Gospel was not yet circulated, the eleven Apostles at the Last Supper were morally obligated to share Christ's instruction on this supreme principle. This was done afterward in the letters of Peter (see 1 Peter 1:22) and John (see 1 John 3:11). But those faithful stewards no doubt declared Christ's "new commandment" to "love one another" in the churches long before Paul used those phrases in Romans. And the same is true for "love thy neighbour as thyself," Jesus' revitalized injunction from Leviticus 19:18. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus said no commandments were more important than loving God and loving neighbor (12:28–31). But Matthew reported the more profound perspective found in Romans. Jesus had concluded: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40). Jesus did not merely list the two in top position; He said the entire law reflected or expressed them. That is Paul's meaning in explaining the second commandment: his Greek says literally that "every other commandment is summed up" in the saying to love one's neighbor as oneself. The summary of charity in the epistle to the Romans brings together Christ's two main instructions on love.

Paul as a Historian of Jesus

The preceding eight examples are segments of letters, and there are several instances of Paul explicitly referring to Christ's teaching. Yet such a reference is not always required for us to be confident that Paul relies on sources from Christ. Today's writer may quote Shakespeare and squarely say so or simply quote phrases that educated people will recognize. Thus Paul's pattern of openly quoting the Lord should alert us to many silent references to Jesus' teachings that were commonly known and appear in our Gospels. On balance, Paul's mention of Jesus does not always indicate quotation. Paul may name the Lord because the Apostle speaks with

Christ's authority (see 1 Corinthians 14:37) or also because the Lord's life is a model to follow (see Romans 15:3–7).

The preceding eight examples are impressive, however, partly because they name the Lord or indicate an authoritative source and partly because they mirror Jesus' teaching with some complexity. Shared words may reflect only a common culture; however, relationships are shown not by terms alone but by shared phrases, sentence syntax, and sequence and uniqueness of idea. After that, the direction of the relationship must be assessed. And Paul answers that question several times by insisting that knowledge of Jesus has come down to him.

Recent publications show how much this subject interests religious scholars, but I have cut my own path and will simply compare another researcher's conclusions: "We have ascertained over twenty-five instances where Paul certainly or probably makes reference or allusion to a saying of Jesus. In addition, we have tabulated over forty possible echoes of a saying of Jesus. These are distributed throughout all of the Pauline letters, though 1 Corinthians and Romans contain the most. . . . Echoes of Jesus' sayings are discernible in all the major themes of Paul's theology. . . . Paul also provides hints of his knowledge of the narrative tradition of Jesus' passion, his healing ministry, his welcoming sinners, his life of poverty and humble service, his character and other aspects."[30]

In short, there is a "Gospel according to Paul" embedded in his letters. Like Luke's, it stems from contact with the Galilean "eyewitnesses" (Luke 1:2), who answered Jesus' call, marveled at His miracles, and intently listened to His public sermons and private dialogues. The historic ministry of prominent Apostles to Mediterranean lands shows both motivation and capability in communication.[31] Were they articulate enough to carry knowledge of Jesus to new areas but lacking in power to write memoirs of Him or see that such were written? Paul knew the Apostles who knew Jesus. And Paul's presentation of Jesus' life and teachings in his letters has the scope, if not the detail, of the Gospels. This Apostle's comments combine to make up an abstract of Jesus' ministry. It is unedited and forms a blueprint of the synoptic Gospels, reflecting their own stress on the final days—the sacrament as the key to the meaning of Christ's suffering, the condemnation and His Crucifixion, the reality of His Resurrection, with names of witnesses to whom He appeared. Paul's framework includes Christ's comments on Jewish practices of ritual cleanliness and on divorce as well as a fragment of Jesus' missionary instruction to the first Twelve.

And there are salient parts of the Sermon on the Mount, the laws of love, and Christ's testimony of His return in power as part of two main segments of the Olivet prophecy. For details one reads the Gospels, but Paul authenticates their overall narrative of Jesus and His basic teachings.[32]

The early "Gospel according to Paul" can be compiled as a document because the Apostle occasionally says he is reporting what Jesus said or did, furnishing written evidence that is far stronger than literary inferences behind widely accepted theories like the precise limits of assumed source "Q," the priority of Mark, or a pre-Gospel oral period circulating highly volatile stories of Jesus. But the "Gospel according to Paul" is historically sound because it is datable. Paul's paraphrases and explicit references to Christ's teachings begin as early as his correspondence is preserved—in the Thessalonian letters from about AD 50, followed by recurrent references to Jesus' ministry in 1 Corinthians about AD 57, and the parallels in Romans about AD 58. Furthermore, Paul's first inside knowledge of the Jewish Jesus came not long after conversion, a decade earlier than the Apostle's first known epistles. It is glibly said that Paul transformed the historic Jesus into the divine Christ, but that view is contradicted by Paul's own letters. The Apostle's testimony is consistent—he first learned of the resurrected Christ through the vision on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9; 1 Corinthians 9:1). This event of about AD 35 marked the beginning of a natural education about Jesus for a man of more than usual curiosity. Paul next visited Jerusalem and talked with Peter and other early disciples (see Galatians 1:18–19). Then and afterward, they taught Paul about the Last Supper (see 1 Corinthians 11:23) and about Christ's first appearances as a resurrected being (see 1 Corinthians 15:3). So Paul's letters document the churchwide knowledge of the basics of the synoptic Gospels before AD 50. In fact, all New Testament Gospels were not necessarily composed after Paul sent the epistles. Paul's letters and the Gospels produce comparable versions of what Jesus said and did. Whether information available to Paul was preserved in manuscript or in shared memory or in both does not matter much for the big picture, though many of Paul's matching patterns seem too intricate for memory alone.

Matthew, James, and the Book of Mormon

Matthew unexpectedly emerges in my analysis with the greatest number of specific equivalents to Paul's words of the Lord. In the New Testament lists of the Apostles, only one appears by profession, "Matthew

the publican" (Matthew 10:3). His career in Galilee required multiple languages, as well as practice in accounting and making reports. Such facts are impressive when he is early named as author of a Gospel. Moreover, the writings of the Christian historian Eusebius record an amateurish but guileless investigation of what the Church knew about the writing of the Gospels while John the Apostle was still available at the end of the century. Papias, an early second-century bishop, talked to the elders of the previous generation, including John, who seems to have been the Apostle, because Papias calls him the Lord's disciple, a known title of the Apostle (see John 21:24). This bishop's goal was to learn anything handed down from Christ's Apostles, and among those attracting his interest, he names Peter, John, and Matthew.[33]

Papias said this about the publican-Apostle: "So then, Matthew compiled the oracles in the Hebrew language; but everyone interpreted them as he was able."[34] Commentaries widely discount this early reference because Matthew's Gospel seems to have been written in Greek rather than translated from Hebrew or its cousin language of Aramaic. Details cannot be discussed here, but the early Church went through a Hebrew period before reaching out to Greek-speaking converts in the eastern Mediterranean basin. These two stages are reflected accurately in the quotation from Papias—"interpreted" is the usual Greek word for "translated," apparently indicating that the many Gentile converts had difficulty reading Matthew's original record in Hebrew or Aramaic, which contained the "oracles" (singular, *logion*), a term that in the Greek New Testament means "sayings" in the sense of revealed or sacred words. Paul and Barnabas opened the era of Gentile predominance with their mission to Cyprus and central Asia Minor soon after AD 44 (see Acts 13–14). So Papias understood that Matthew kept records of Christ's ministry in a Hebrew dialect before a Greek version was composed for Gentile Christians, whose needs became intense by mid-century. Someone genuinely bilingual could start fresh and produce a Greek record without obvious Semiticisms. Most current critics discount Matthew as the writer or rewriter but on virtually ideological grounds: "The most powerful reason today for denying even the possibility of apostolic authorship is bound up with an entire array of antecedent judgments about the development of the gospel tradition, about the shape of the history of the church in the first century, about the evidence of redactional changes, and much more."[35]

Evidence of early records of Jesus is not strange to Book of Mormon

readers, where the resurrected Savior said on His first appearance: "And I command you that ye shall write these sayings after I am gone" (3 Nephi 16:4). This instruction was repeated throughout His American advent: "Write the things which ye have seen and heard, save it be those which are forbidden" (3 Nephi 27:23). And much as He did in the early ministry recorded in Matthew, the American Christ descended, first proclaimed His divinity, called for repentance and baptism for entrance to "the kingdom of God," and immediately afterward gave the law of the kingdom, the American counterpart to the Sermon on the Mount. As is well known, the Book of Mormon (see 3 Nephi 12–14) correlates with Matthew's version (see Matthew 5–7), though it is independent in many verses. Sidney B. Sperry long ago warned against assuming the two are one sermon: "The text delivered to the Nephites did not in all respects follow that given in Palestine."[36]

Some, however, claim that the Book of Mormon cannot be ancient because the Sermon at the Temple (see 3 Nephi 12–14) too closely resembles the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5–7), even adopting textual errors found in the King James Version. But though the Prophet Joseph Smith evidently followed his Bible when satisfied that it mirrored Christ's message to the New World, phrase-specific translation is not indicated in Joseph Smith's discourses, where he shows a broad interest in scriptural doctrine instead of textual technicalities. Indeed, many Bible translators today favor idea equivalents over literalism, as consistently illustrated by the New Jerusalem Bible or the Revised English Bible. And as already mentioned, Jesus' most important message must have been restated by Him and His disciples with minor variations during the Jewish ministry, a significant insight that Joseph Smith added to the Sermon on the Mount in his inspired version of Matthew: "Now these are the words which Jesus taught his disciples that they should say unto the people" (JST, Matthew 7:1).

Parts rephrased by the Master or His disciples would easily collect slight variations of equal authority. For instance, early Greek manuscripts and early church writers are divided between Jesus commanding no anger, the Book of Mormon reading (see 3 Nephi 12:22), or the traditional no anger "without a cause" (Matthew 5:22). Did the Savior give both forms, one a clarification of the other? Because no first-century copies of the Gospels are known, it is intellectual cheating to claim to give Christ's original words by using much later manuscript readings in Matthew.

Yet the Book of Mormon supports the structural integrity of this sermon as recorded in Matthew. Stated another way, the Sermon on the Mount in the first Gospel is a significant test of the Nephite record. If a "Matthew-editor" created a late, nonhistorical speech, as some experts suppose, one might argue that Joseph Smith copied a faulty model. But Paul's letters in the fifties are a major test. We have seen that Romans 12 reproduces the thoughts and distinctive vocabulary of a section near the close of Matthew 5; Romans 14 does the same thing with the faultfinding warnings at the beginning of Matthew 7. In addition, the Epistle of James paraphrases many more thoughts and phrases of the mountainside sermon in Matthew.

For authenticity of the letter of James, one can choose between the positive judgment of ancient Christians, who were highly sensitive about forgeries, or modern assumptions that a lack of early quotation by name throws doubt on its authorship. But the pioneer Christian historian Eusebius wrote about AD 325 and preserved documents and data from the subapostolic era. He says that the author of the New Testament letter is James, the brother of the Lord, and adds very early information on his martyrdom in AD 62.[37] A number of scholars accept this identification, are impressed with the absence of Jewish-Gentile problems, and therefore think James composed his letter before the beginning of Paul's Gentile missions in about AD 44. Thus James's extensive use of the Sermon on the Mount shows it was available in some form even before Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans. James shows strong individuality and piety, with constant use of the Old and New Testaments: "There are more parallels in this epistle than in any other New Testament book to the teaching of our Lord in the gospels."[38]

The goal of James is clarifying the righteousness that is the thrust of the Sermon on the Mount. Though not naming Jesus as his source, this quotation-oriented author heavily uses Jesus' teachings found in the synoptic Gospels. About two dozen parallels impressed W. D. Davies, and about three dozen impressed Peter Davids.[39] Two dozen parallels from their combined lists strongly reflect Jesus' teachings, based on correlations of phrasing and distinctive idea, and they follow the trend observed by Davids—James mirrors the structure of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount more than Luke's Sermon on the Plain.[40] In my calculations, the impressive verse-resemblances between James and the Gospels fall into these categories: thirteen are shared by Matthew and Luke; eight are unique to

Matthew; two are shared by Matthew and Mark; one is unique to Luke.[41] James does use some striking language found in the short sermon in Luke, but more often he follows Christ's language in Matthew. For instance, there is close quotation by James (5:12) of the Lord's command (see Matthew 5:33–37) not to make daily honesty depend on special oaths—not to swear by heaven or by earth but to make promises with a simple yes or no. And James closely reflects Christ's beatitude on the merciful receiving mercy (see Matthew 5:7), switching to negative phrasing that those showing no mercy will receive judgment instead of mercy (see James 2:13).

What emerges is the early authority of the extensive discourse in Matthew over Luke's compressed counterpart. In my calculations, twenty verses correlate in James and Matthew's Sermon on the Mount: ten in chapter 5, three in chapter 6, and seven in chapter 7.[42] So James has used representative sections of Christ's full sermon in Matthew. How much of the epistle reflects the sermon? The answer is implicit in Massey Shepherd's conclusion that James depended on Matthew "for the presentation of his themes."[43] But these views should be read with awareness that James cites little else in Matthew but the Sermon on the Mount: "The number and extent of the Matthean parallels to James . . . are impressive; for they relate to every single section of the Epistle, and to almost every major theme."[44]

Though current scholars tend to see only "the unwritten Jesus tradition" behind these correlations,[45] James uses words, distinctive thoughts, and selection from all parts of Christ's discourse. More than spontaneous memory is at work here. Scholars favor oral tradition because of the loose nature of many parallels. But casual rephrasing is also consistent with using a well-known record. Structure and particulars in James indicate he is basically following the same version of the Sermon on the Mount used in the Gospel of Matthew. This and the Romans-Matthew correlations make memory alone an unlikely tool for these agreements of language, concept, and structure. Because Paul and James independently point to a record of the sermon made before their epistles were written, credibility is added to Papias's information that Matthew kept a Jewish-language record of the "oracles," the "authoritative words" of the Lord. The Savior's thorough explanation of the moral law of His kingdom was preserved in historical systems on both hemispheres. There is great integrity in the literary structures and the doctrines within them in the Book of Mormon.

Paul's Witness in Summary

Paul's visions of Christ become an either-or trap for those who claim the Apostle paid no attention to the Lord's earthly life. But at every period of writing, the epistles speak of both the mortal ministry and the exalted Jesus. An example precedes the Savior's words on the sacrament: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Paul has just explained his empathy for others in a context of exempting Greeks from the Jewish dietary code and here makes the point that he is following the doctrinal model of his Master. Christ's example has not faded in the next sentence: "Hold to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:2; literal translation mine). Paul soon repeats "delivered" in restating his earlier public preaching about the Savior's appearances after the Resurrection: "For I delivered unto you . . . that which I also received" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Such language throughout 1 Corinthians calls up both doctrines and deeds of Jesus—in chapter 15, atonement for sin as well as resurrection of the body. And Paul insists on common preaching: "Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed" (1 Corinthians 15:11). This fifties headline reveals corporate teaching about the close of Jesus' mortal ministry—Jesus' suffering at the end and His physical return afterward.

The convert-Apostle periodically draws on general knowledge of the man of Galilee: "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:1). Moreover, the Apostle's later letters repeat the Corinthian pattern of defending doctrine by the Lord's known earthly words. Nonetheless, any survey of Paul faces modern redefinitions of which of his letters are authentic. As earlier mentioned, there is a canonical list of the Christian books recognized at about AD 170, and its partially preserved text accepts all but one of the New Testament letters attributed to Paul. This early list includes Ephesians, probably written during Paul's Roman imprisonment about AD 62, and the messages to Timothy but a few years afterward.[46] Like 1 Corinthians, Ephesians reviews what converts first heard, though Paul is more general in what seems to be an area letter. Christians had been called out of the world—they had "learned Christ" with complete directness: "Ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:21). Paul means they know Christ's teachings, because the Apostle follows with standards of putting away lust and anger that correspond to those recorded in Matthew 5 (see Ephesians 4:22, 31), and with the message, similar to that

in Matthew 6, that Saints should freely forgive because God's forgiveness is freely offered them (see Ephesians 4:32). The expressed and unexpressed message of Paul's ministry is that faithfulness is measured by "wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 6:3). They are always in the background and are readily brought forward when stumbling Saints need explanation or refutation.[47]

The corporate apostleship carried the burden of preserving authentic knowledge of the Lord. Paul is early, accessible, and an example of the teaching methods of his colleagues. He periodically makes Christ the teacher, giving glimpses of the Savior's ministry to inspire or solve problems. This documented process has no time slot for anonymous teachers tinkering with the real Jesus. The New Testament Church operates by administrative and doctrinal authority. Most of the Galilean Twelve yet lived in Paul's period, and when observed, they are using Christ's earthly ministry as the norm in conversion and correction, though their preserved letters are few. James essentially adapts the Sermon on the Mount. And other Apostles stress Christ's ministry, as shown by Peter's challenge to "follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21) and John's repeated segments of the Last Supper discourse (see 1 John). While the Apostles lived, wandering preachers with wandering stories were not in control. The full origin of proto-Gospels and present ones is not known, but by using facts about Jesus that reliably came to him, Paul has inserted datable history in his letters. These show that the mid-century Church had stable and specific knowledge of Jesus' major teachings—that its testimony that Jesus was the divine Christ was already firm and founded on broad information from witnesses who walked with Him.

Notes

1. My memories of Sidney B. Sperry reach back nearly to the end of World War II, how he went out of his way to welcome a searching student to Brigham Young University and took time for counseling and personal tutoring in Hebrew years afterward. He left a legacy of commitment to research and faith in the restored gospel.
2. See the weaving of recollections in Gerald Parshall, "Theirs But to Do and Die," *U.S. News and World Report,* May 23, 1994, 71–81.
3. Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction,* 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 128–29.
4. See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History,* 3.24.5–8, quoting specific earlier information on this point.
5. For the dating of John's Gospel near the end of the first century, see

Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The First Presidency of the Early Church: Their Lives and Epistles," *Ensign,* August 1988, 20, and references.

6. Stephen E. Robinson, "Bible Scholarship," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* ed. Daniel Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:112.
7. For approximate dates in Paul's life, see Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 393–97.
8. Norman R. Petersen, "Introduction to the Gospels and Acts," *Harper's Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 948.
9. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *A Christological Catechism,* 2d ed. (New York City: Paulist Press, 1991, 15.
10. Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles, The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), xxxiii–xxxiv.
11. Fitzmyer, *Christological Catechism,* 66.
12. Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism,* 2d ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 73.
13. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism,* 165.
14. Fitzmyer, *Christological Catechism,* 21.
15. Fitzmyer, *Christological Catechism,* 14.
16. Fitzmyer, *Christological Catechism,* 23.
17. Fitzmyer, *Christological Catechism,* 25.
18. Fitzmyer, *Christological Catechism,* 25.
19. Fitzmyer, *Christological Catechism,* 25.
20. "The Gospel according to" is the title formula in the manuscripts noted. For data on Luke and John, see Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Testimony of Luke," in *Studies in Scripture, Volume Five: The Gospels,* eds. Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 88. For data on Matthew, see Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 66n3.
21. Daniel J. Theron, *Evidence of Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1958), 111. Theron gives the full translation of the Muratorian Canon, which is well dated by reference to second-century individuals and shows Christian hostility to invented books by naming several and criticizing their heretical sources.
22. For specifics on contact with James, the Lord's brother, and others in Israel, see Anderson, "Testimony of Luke," 93–94.
23. Acts 12:1–2 gives the execution of James, John's brother, as just before the death of his persecutor, Herod Agrippa, which is dated at AD 44 in Josephus; for the stoning of James, the Lord's brother, soon after the death of the governor Festus at 62, see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History,* 2.23; for the deaths of Peter and Paul near the end of Nero's reign at 68, see Anderson, *Understanding Paul,* 362–65; for the historical ministry of John at the end of the century, see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* 3.1.1; 3.3.4, and Anderson, "First Presidency of the Early Church," 20–21.

24. Obert C. Tanner, Lewis M. Rogers, and Sterling M. McMurrin, *Toward Understanding the New Testament* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 31.
25. See Anderson, *Understanding Paul,* 197–201, including the photograph of the last page of Romans in the second-century collection of Paul's letters, in which Hebrews is copied between Romans and 1 Corinthians.
26. Yet no record was made of all of the Lord's words, as the close of John's Gospel says. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35) is directly attributed to the Lord by Paul, though it does not appear in the Gospels. For non-Gospel words of Jesus, early citations are far more reliable than the apocryphal collections of sayings that were compiled and colored to support deviant doctrines.
27. For fuller discussion, see Anderson, *Understanding Paul,* 85–87.
28. F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans,* 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 212–13.
29. When the rich young ruler asked about requirements for salvation, Jesus quoted several of the Ten Commandments, those with social obligations. Although the three synoptic Gospels agree thus far, in Matthew Jesus adds the Leviticus 19:18 direction to love neighbor as self (see Matthew 19:18–19). Paul does the same thing in the Romans passage under discussion, another of the many ties to Matthew's Gospel.
30. Seyoon Kim, "Jesus, Sayings of," in Gerald F. Hawthorn and Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 490. For the chart "Possible Echoes of Sayings of Jesus," see 481. The considerable recent bibliography on 491–92 shows that the topic of Paul's historical access to Jesus' ministry is to be taken seriously. For instance, the studies of David Wenham are listed, some of which have intriguing insights.
31. For comments on the writing environment of early Christianity, see Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Types of Christian Revelation," in Neal E. Lambert, ed., *Literature of Belief* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1981), 64–65.
32. For the similar judgment of a scholar trained in classical sources, see F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents,* 5th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), "The Importance of Paul's Evidence," 76–79.
33. Eusebius had Papias's writing and quotes the material summarized here in *Ecclesiastical History,* 3.39.1–4. Eusebius adds his own theory that Papias names two Christians named John and could not have known the Apostle. Yet Papias lived in the area and period of the Apostle.
34. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History,* 3.39.16. The translation is literal and agrees with my reading of the Greek text; it comes from the edition of Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John Ernest Oulton, *Eusebius* (London: SPCK, 1954), 1:101.

35. D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 73.
36. Sidney B. Sperry, *Our Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, 1947), 185.
37. For this identification of Eusebius and his quotation of early history of James's martyrdom, see Anderson, "First Presidency of the Early Church," 18, 21.
38. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction,* 729.
39. For lists of verses in James modeled on Jesus' teachings in the synoptic Gospels, see W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), 402–3; and Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James, New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 47–48.
40. "Of the 36 parallels listed, 25 are with the Sermon on the Mount and 3 others with the Sermon on the Plain" (see Davids, *Epistle of James,* 48).
41. Matthew-Luke parallels: James 1:2 with Matthew 5:11–12 and Luke 6:23; James 1:5 with Matthew 7:7 and Luke 11:9; James 1:17 with Matthew 7:11 and Luke 11:13; James 1:22 with Matthew 7:24 and Luke 6:46–47; James 1:23 with Matthew 7:26 and Luke 6:49; James 2:5 with Matthew 5:3, 5 and Luke 6:20; James 3:12 with Matthew 7:16 and Luke 6:44–45; James 4:2 with Matthew 7:7 and Luke 11:9; James 4:9 with Matthew 5:4 and Luke 6:25; James 4:10 with Matthew 23:12 and Luke 14:11 and 18:14; James 4:11–12 with Matthew 7:1 and Luke 6:37; James 5:2 with Matthew 6:19–20 and Luke 12:33; James 5:10 with Matthew 5:11–12 and Luke 6:23.

    Unique Matthew parallels: James 1:4 with Matthew 5:48; James 2:10 with Matthew 5:19; James 2:13 with Matthew 5:7; James 3:18 with Matthew 5:9; James 4:8 with Matthew 5:8; James 4:13–14 with Matthew 6:34; James 5:9 with Matthew 5:22; James 5:12 with Matthew 5:34–37.

    Matthew-Mark parallels: James 1:6 with Matthew 21:21 and Mark 11:23–24; James 2:8 with Matthew 22:39 and Mark 12:31.

    Unique Luke parallel: James 5:1 with Luke 6:24–25.
42. See previous note for chapter numbers in Matthew.
43. Massey H. Shepherd Jr., "The Epistle of James and the Gospel of Matthew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 75 (1956): 47.
44. Shepherd, "The Epistle of James and the Gospel of Matthew," 47.
45. Davids, *Epistle of James,* 49.
46. See Theron, *Evidence of Tradition,* 111, and note 21.
47. For an important and careful study of Paul's references to Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, see Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, "Early Accounts of the Story," in *From the Last Supper Through the Resurrection,* ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 401–21.