

The Origins of Christianity

I. Gospels as Historical Source

A. Skeptical Approach

1. Hermann Reimarus (1694–1768), *Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger*, 1778
2. David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874), *Das Leben Jesu*, 1835
3. Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1906

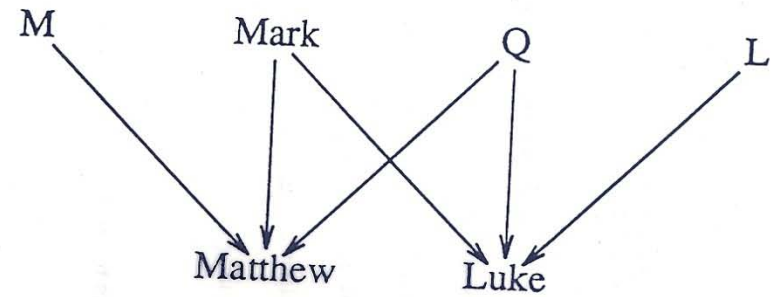
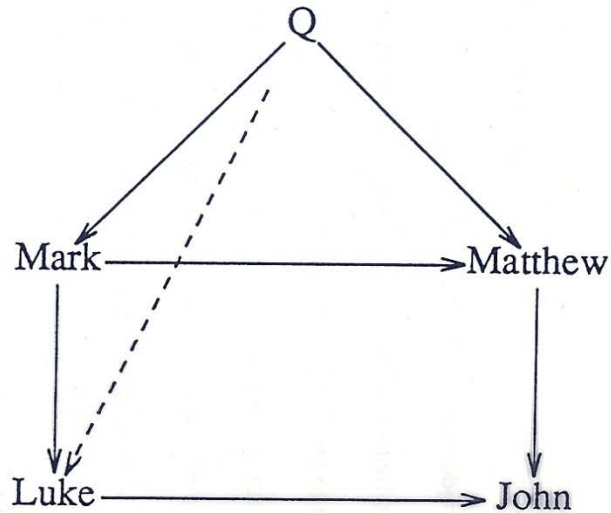
I. Gospels as Historical Source

B. Synoptic Problem

1. Q = *Quelle* (oral tradition of Jesus' sayings)
2. Stemmata for relationship of Synoptic Gospels

I. Gospels as Historical Source

Synoptic Problem



I. Gospels as Historical Source

Matthew 28:1-7

Now after the sabbath toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo, I have told you."

Mark 16:1-8

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salomé, bought spices so that they might come and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb where the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you." And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid.

Luke 24:1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel; and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of man must be delivered unto the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles; but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

I. Gospels as Historical Source

John 20:1–13

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

I. Gospels as Historical Source

C. Relationship of Other Early Texts to New Testament Texts

1. Nag Hammadi

a. Gnostic Gospels

b. *Hypostasis of the Archons*

2. Secret Gospel of Mark

a. Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel According to Mark*, 1973

b. Clement, Archbishop of Alexandria (d. 215)

I. Gospels as Historical Source

D. Recent Interpretations

1. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, 1974
2. Thomas Sheehan, *The First Coming: How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity*, 1986
3. Wilhelm Reich, *The Murder of Christ*, 1953
4. Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 1978
 - a. Carpocratians
 - b. Apollonius of Tyana (d. 96 A.D.?)
5. Dead Sea Scrolls

II. Textual Criticism of the New Testament

A. General Principles

1. a shorter reading is preferred to a longer reading
2. a more difficult reading is preferred to a smoother reading
3. the original may have contained mistakes
4. common readings in copies from diverse geographical areas are more likely to have been in the original than a reading common in copies from only one area
5. a stemma (genealogical relationship of the copies of a text) can be constructed on the basis of simple variants and then use to help determine the primacy of more complex variants
- 6. Choose the reading that explains the others.

II. Textual Criticism of the New Testament

B. Specific Problems

End of Mark

The Ascension of Jesus

ST. MARK, 16

3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll the stone back from the entrance of the tomb for us?"

4 And looking up they saw that the stone had been rolled back, for it was very large.

5 But on entering the tomb, † they saw a young man sitting at the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were amazed.

6 He said to them, "Do not be terrified. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him.

7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he goes before you into Galilee; there you shall see him, ^u as he told you."

8 And they departed and fled from the tomb, for trembling and fear had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Apparitions of Jesus

9 Now ^v when he had risen from the dead early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

10 She went and brought word to those who had been with him, as they were mourning and weeping.

11 And they, hearing that he was alive and had been seen by her, did not believe it.

12 After ^w this he was manifested in another form to two of them, as they were walking on their way into the country.

13 And they went and brought word to the rest, and even then they did not believe.

Commission of the Apostles

14 At length he appeared to the Eleven as they were at table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and hardness of heart, in that they had not believed those who had seen him after he had risen.

15 And he said to them, "Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned.

17 And these signs shall attend those who believe: in my name they shall cast out devils; ^x they shall speak in new tongues;

18 they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands upon the sick and they shall get well."

4. THE ASCENSION OF JESUS

19 So then the Lord, ^y after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God.

20 But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the preaching by the signs that followed. Amen.

† John 20, 11.—^u Mark 14, 28.—^v John 20, 16.—^w Luke 24, 13-31.—^x Acts 2, 4.—^y Luke 24, 50-53.

III. Reasons for Christianity's Success

A. Composite Character

1. Judaism (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots)

a. Dead Sea Scrolls

(1) International Team (4) Lawrence Schiffman

(2) Edmund Wilson (5) Norman Golb

(3) John Strugnell (6) Robert Eisenman

b. Qumran—Roman fortress? Monastic community? Country villa? Pottery factory?

2. Zoroastrianism (< Zoroaster, ca. 628 B.C.—ca. 551 B.C.)

3. Manichaeism (< Mani, 216–276 A.D.)

4. Stoicism

6. Greek Philosophy (esp. Neoplatonism)

5. Mithraism

7. Gnosticism (Iadalbaōth)

III. Reasons for Christianity's Success



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B. Appeal to Various Groups

1. The Poor and Downtrodden—"My kingdom is not of this world"
2. Appeal to Middle-Class Young Professionals of the Roman Empire?—Paul (Saul of Tarsus)—You don't have to be Jewish to become a Christian

III. Reasons for Christianity's Success

Mt. 5:38–48

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you. Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Lk. 6:27–36

“But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your cloak do not withhold your coat as well. Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods, do not ask them again. And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

Neoplatonism

