

Codex or Scroll?

Why did the early Christian communities, who began as Jewish Christians, and whose Scriptures for the first few centuries were the scrolls of their Jewish friends and neighbors, choose the codex over the scroll for their own distinctly Christian writings?

Scholars have offered a number of conclusions, some of which are:

- The papyrus codex is better suited for travel, while the scroll is more easily read in settings like the synagogue. Christians were certainly on the move, and small codices were very portable!
- Christians, until the era of Constantine, had to make due with less. The two sided codex page, provided double the print space of a scroll.
- Think “Print on demand.” Any member who had basic translating skills, and knew Greek as well as the local language, would be pressed into the service of making copies of these codices. Might that help to explain the variety in the textual traditions of many of the manuscripts?
- Traders and crafts people, were early converts to Christianity. They would be familiar with, and perhaps carry with them, small notebooks or account books. To some extent the Christian codex may have become the de facto choice over the scroll format, when these same early converts used these notebooks for copies of letters of Paul, sayings of Jesus, or a Gospel.
- It is helpful to remember that after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70CE, the only two surviving Jewish groups were the Pharisees, who formed Rabbinic Judaism, and the early Christians. Both groups knew that only the Torah was written on scrolls. And they would also know that the scroll could not be used for later rabbinic sayings. Early Christians writings, such as collections of the sayings of Jesus would have seemed similar to collections of rabbinic sayings. Thus they would naturally have turned to using the new medium of codices.

Scholars have suggested that the ultimate success of the early Christian church was the result of its choice of a new social organization linked with a new tool of communication, namely the codex.

Firsts in the Formation of the New Testament

People:

(Alphabetical order)

1. Amphilochius - The bishop of Iconium, is the second (after Athanasius) to call the entire OT and NT a "canon." 380CE Since his usage was so close in time to that of Athanasius, I included his second place finish!
2. Athanasius is first to apply canon to the entire NT in 350 CE - excludes the Shepherd from the canon.
3. Athanasius – The first person to list our 27 books as the NT, in his annual festal letter in 367CE.
4. Chrysostom – The first person to call the collected Scriptures, The Bible.
5. Clement of Alexandria – He is the first known person to use the term "covenant" to describe the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. He is also the first person to state that the church has the same problem with the New Testament writings that it has with the Old Testament writings. Namely, both testaments need good teachers to make sure that the correct meaning is gleaned from them. Simply quoting passages from the New Testament doesn't solve anything, since their meaning isn't always clear.
6. Clement of Rome (@95CE) – He is the first Apostolic father to refer to Paul's letters. The ones he mentions specifically include: 1 Corinthians and Ephesians.
7. Eusebius is the first extant witness to all 7 Catholic Epistles.
8. Eusebius is the first person to categorize the NT books, rather than simply listing individual books. (approved, not approved, and disputed)
9. Eusebius – the first person to relegate "The Shepherd of Hermas" to the disputed category. Many Christians still held the book in high regard.
10. Gospel of Thomas – The first writing to actually claim to be a gospel! It ends with this phrase: "The Gospel according to Thomas."
11. Heracleon – The first person to write a commentary on a NT book, roughly the middle of the second century. He was a Gnostic, a disciple of Valentinus, and wrote it on the Gospel of John.
12. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, (d. 368) is the first person in the Western part of the church to cite James as Scripture.
13. Hippolytus – The first person to reflect a knowledge of 2 Peter, but not as Scripture, in the Western church (Rome). He was also the last Christian author in Rome to use Greek. All who followed used Latin. He was also the first "anti-pope." He was elected by a group that opposed the then bishop Callistus (217-222 CE) and his stance on ecclesiastical discipline. His commentary on Daniel (204CE) is the oldest commentary by an orthodox writer that we have.
14. Irenaeus – The first person to use the term "catholic" to mean universal church.

15. Irenaeus – The first person (@180CE) to assert the necessity of our canonical 4 gospels, and only them.
16. Irenaeus – The first person to call the different parts of Scripture, the NT and OT. Some scholars suggest it was Tertullian. Tertullian certainly popularized the use of the terms.
17. Irenaeus – The first person to refer to passages from Acts as if they were Scripture. Others had referenced Acts (Justin Martyr) but didn't refer to it as Scripture.
18. Irenaeus – The first person to reference 1 Peter by name!
19. Macarius Magnes – The first person to use the exact phrase "Canon of the NT." @400CE
20. Marcion – (@140 – 144) The first person we know of to reference a collection of Paul's letters and use them as Scripture. He quite possibly was also the first person to call one of our four canonical gospels "a gospel" (Luke).
21. Origen – The first person to reference 2 Peter and James.
22. Papias – The first person (that we know about) to refer to the Gospel of Mark.
23. Philoxenian – Early 6th century. For the first time, a Syriac version of the NT included the minor Catholic Epistles and Revelation.
24. Pantaeus – He started the first school similar to what we'd call a seminary, in Alexandria, Egypt, in 180CE.
25. Tertullian – Invented 982 new Latin words to defend/describe the Christian faith. Thus he is known as the father of Latin Christianity.
26. Theophilus – The first person to include a NT writing among "Holy Scriptures." (John)
27. Council of Carthage (397 CE) – The first early church council to officially name the documents that comprise sacred Scripture for both testaments.
28. Council of Trent (16th century) - First time that the Roman Catholic Church achieved total unity on the shape of the Bible. However, the Protestants had already left, so it never achieved total agreement in the Western Church. The Ethiopian and Orthodox communities have always included different numbers of books in their canon, than the Roman Catholic Church. The Ethiopian church has a canon of 81 books, dating back to 330CE (46 OT and 35 NT)!

Manuscripts:

1. P46 (200CE) – The earliest surviving manuscript of Paul's letters. Scholars note that it does not include the Pastorals or Philemon, which has implications for dating the Muratorian Fragment, which does include them.)
2. P52 – Oldest manuscript fragment we have extant today. Shows part of the Gospel of John. It is from the early 2nd century, and found in Egypt. That means that the Gospel of John, written near the end of the 1st century, probably in Ephesus, was already known and used at the beginning of the second century in Egypt!
3. P72 – Early 3rd century. Our earliest copy of Jude, and 1 & 2 Peter.
4. P75 – The earliest extant manuscript that contains more than one gospel. Late 2nd or early 3rd century. It is also the earliest copy of Luke that we have.

5. Mommsen Catalogue - This is the earliest extant catalogue we have from North Africa and the Western Church. Mid 4th century. It omits Jude and James, and questions 2nd and 3rd John and 2nd Peter. It also places John before Luke.
6. Codex Vaticanus – Mid 4th Century CE. It is the oldest existing manuscript that contains both the Old and New Testaments. It is missing some of the final books, and includes some books that aren't in your Bible today!
7. Codex Alexandrinus (A)– Early to mid 5th century. It contains our earliest example of dividing the gospels in chapters.
8. Codex Sinaiticus - It is the oldest, and only, known complete copy of the entire Greek NT written in the uncial script. No chapters are missing from any of the 27 canonical books.
9. For the first 3-4 centuries, all manuscripts were written with capital letters, with no spaces between words. The reason was the cost of the writing materials. The first manuscripts written in lower case letters, called minuscules, appear @8th century. It is at this time that spacing between words also appears in the manuscript evidence.
10. Despite Athanasius 367CE 39th Festal Letter, listing exactly our 27 book NT (and our OT), it isn't until 1116CE that another extant manuscript contains the exact same OT and NT books in the order that Athanasius listed!

How We Got the New Testament Short Bibliography

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Lions Three, Christians Nothing

Persecution and the Formation of the New Testament Canon
(Data taken from W.H.C. Frend's *The Rise of Christianity*)

What effect, if any, did the persecutions by various Roman emperors and governors have on the formation of the New Testament canon?

The timeline that follows highlights the major persecutions of Christians from the time of Nero (54CE) until that of Constantine (313CE).

At what point did Christians refuse to hand over Christian books from their book boxes to the authorities, even if it meant imprisonment or death? Which books did they refuse to hand over? Did the various parts of the church react in the same way to those who turned over Christian books?

All dates are CE (*Common Era, formerly known as AD – the year of our Lord*).

54 – 68 Nero

Nero needed a scapegoat to deflect the anger of the Roman people for the burning of Rome in 64CE. He blamed the Christians, which led to a general persecution in Rome itself, but it didn't spread across the empire.

81 – 96 Domitian

Domitian developed the foundations for the imperial cult early in his reign. It wasn't until 95CE that he began to persecute Christians. This persecution was the hardest for those living in Asia Minor (*modern day Turkey*), since that was where most Christians were living at the time.

98 - 117 Trajan

Trajan, unlike the end of Domitian's reign, wasn't interested in persecuting Christians. However, during his reign, Pliny, who was his special ambassador to Bithynia (*south of the Black Sea*), wrote to Trajan asking for clarification concerning Christians, whom he considered a nuisance.

On what grounds, he asked Trajan, should Christians be tried and/or punished?

Trajan's reply became the foundation for future persecutions. Trajan said:

1. Christians were to be tried only if they were openly accused. They were not to be ferreted out as other common criminals. He did not make Christianity illegal. It was not open season on Christians.
2. They weren't to be tried for rumored crimes such as cannibalism or incest.
3. If they were denounced for legitimate reasons, and they refused to recant, offer a sacrifice to the emperor and denounce Christ, then they could be punished.
4. If they did recant, they were to be immediately released.
5. Trajan makes no mention of forcing Christians to hand over any sacred books/Scriptures.

110 – 250

During these years, while Christians angered the Romans due to the exclusive nature of Christianity, they didn't suffer widespread persecution. The most common label they were called was "atheists" because they didn't believe in the vast pantheon of Greco-Roman gods.

Individual governors, much more than the emperors, played the key role in enforcing persecution of atheists. I'll use the governor of Lyon, Gaul (*modern day France*) as an example of a persecution during this period.

Irenaeus, a presbyter in Lyon was sent by his bishop, Pothinus, to visit Bishop Eleutherus of Rome in the summer of 177 CE. While Irenaeus was in Rome, Christians in Lyon were banned from the public baths and the public market places. Then they were excluded from all public spaces. Finally, while the governor of the territory was gone, a mob beat and killed the Christians it could lay hands on.

When the governor returned, he was furious. Not that Christians had been killed, but that it had taken place in such an unorganized and unruly manner! The governor decided to handle this in a proper Roman fashion. He had the Christians who could prove they were Roman citizens beheaded. He had all the other Christians rounded up, and tossed into the amphitheater with wild beasts.

Incidentally, bishop Pothinus was one of those killed, leading to Irenaeus being selected as the next bishop upon his return. During these periods of local persecution, no mention is made about penalties for refusing to hand over sacred Scripture.

On the other hand, several of the emperors flirted with Christianity during this period, such as Alexander Severus (ruled 222-235) and Philip the Arabian (ruled 244-249). It is instructive to note that in both cases, their successors chose to blame Christians for the deteriorating condition of the empire.

235 – 238 Maximin

The Roman empire was in tough shape. The Germans, Goths, and Persians were all in arms against Rome. Since the previous emperor had been soft on the Christians, and at the same time had lost battles against these "barbaric hords", Maximin decided to blame the Christians for all of Roman's problems.

Maximin ordered the leaders of the Christian churches (*important to note that this happened mainly in Rome and not empire wide*) to be executed! This prompted Origen to write his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*. Bishop Pontian and his rival bishop Hippolytus (*yes, there were two bishops claiming to be the true bishop of Rome*) were both exiled to Sardinia where they died.

Serenianus, governor of Cappadocea, (*located in modern day Turkey*) ordered churches in his territory to be burned, forcing the Christian community there to flee until the heat died down.

249 – 251 Decius

Rome celebrated its 1000th anniversary in 247CE.

The Goths attacked Rome itself in 248CE.

In 249CE Decius ordered every capital city in the Roman empire to enforce the worship of the traditional Greco-Roman gods, hoping to avert the collapse of the empire. It didn't begin as a specifically anti-Christian persecution.

Bishop Fabian of Rome was executed, January 20, 250CE.

Bishop Babylas of Antioch was executed, January 24, 250CE.

Alexander of Jerusalem died in prison.

Dionysius of Alexandria escaped, aided by peasants.

Cyprian of Carthage went into hiding (*undermining his authority, which he had to work hard to regain*).

The result of this empire wide persecution of Christians was the near collapse of the church. When confronted with the choice of an easy annual sacrifice to the gods or death, most chose the Greco-Roman gods. Why? Christianity was filled with recent converts, and the faith didn't go very deep in most. They were Christian in name only, only recently separated from their traditional worship life of the Greco-Roman gods and emperor worship.

251 – Decius killed by the Goths and the persecutions stop!

Once stopped, a controversy erupted in the Western parts of the church over those who had abandoned the faith, and offered sacrifices. These are known as the lapsed. Others, simply bribed Roman officials and received the required certificate of sacrifice, and went on with their lives. Now that the heat had died down, and it was safe to be a Christian, the lapsed sought readmission to the church.

The debates revolved around who had the moral authority and thus the right, to forgive these renegade Christians, and allow them back into the church? The bishops and the clergy, some of whom had fled to save their skins or were lapsed themselves, or those spirit empowered Christians who had refused to sacrifice, professed their faith, and lived to tell about it (*known as confessors as compared to martyrs who died for doing this*).

Some felt that anyone who had lapsed should be banned forever while others believed that after offering some sort of penance, lapsed Christians could be allowed back into the church.

The resolution to both questions came swiftly. The power to allow lapsed Christians back into the church after doing penance remained in the hands of the bishops and clergy. Cyprian of Carthage was the critical figure that led to this decision, and his support of bishop Cornelius of Rome, enabled Cornelius to enact similar readmittance policies in his territory.

The western church's preference for the Shepherd of Hermas over Hebrews can be in part traced to this controversy, since Hebrews can be read to deny readmission to lapsed Christians, whereas the Shepherd of Hermas specifically allows for repentance and forgiveness, followed by readmission.

As mentioned previously, this persecution was empire wide, including the Eastern part of the church, centered in Alexandria, Egypt. Interestingly, this conflict about what to do with the lapsed who sought readmission to the church was not a serious issue for the church in the East. In fact, those who had purchased their certificate of sacrifice, were considered wiser, albeit poorer, Christians than those who had fled.

253 – 260 Valerian

This persecution, which began in 257CE, was the first, specifically anti-Christian, persecution. Valerian, unlike the author of the books Luke/Acts, believed that the empire and Christianity were mutually exclusive.

His persecution zeroed in on key Roman civil servants, senators and knights who had converted to Christianity. They were stripped of their titles and their property. In addition, bishops and all higher clergy were required to perform the sacred Roman sacrifices or die.

Bishop Cyprian of Carthage didn't flee this time. After refusing to offer the Roman rites, he was exiled in August 257CE, and then on Sept. 13, 258CE, beheaded.

In some areas there were major blood baths, such as Utica, Africa, where over 300 Christians were killed. The persecution ended when the Persians defeated the Roman army at Edessa, and captured emperor Valerian in June 260CE.

260 – 297 Empire and Christians Coexist

By 275, the Roman empire was back on its feet, and expanded back into its former territories as far north as the Rhine, east as the Euphrates and south to the Sahara. Traditional Greco-Roman gods experienced a resurgence, fully supported by emperor Aurelian and emperor Probus. Pagan philosophers, such as Amelius and Porphyry, wrote scathing books pointing out the weaknesses of Christianity and the superiority of the Greco-Roman gods and the empire.

In November, 284, a soldier named Diocles seized power, and by the spring of 285 had defeated all other contenders to become sole emperor, taking the name of Dominus Diocletian. (*Lord Diocletian*)

Diocletian set out to reform everything about the empire. He instituted 6 major reforms prior to 303, which included:

1. Tetrarchy established
 - a. Diocletian – emperor in the east
 - b. Galerius – Diocletian's Caesar (= military general) in the east
 - c. Maximian – Diocletian's appointed co-emperor in the west
 - d. Constantius – Maximian's Caesar in the west (father of Constantine)
2. Provinces decentralized
3. Currency reformed
4. Army reformed
5. Prices stabilized
6. Taxation reformed

297 – 303 Path to Persecution

In 296, Rome was at war with the Persians again, but this time there was more at stake than military victory. Manicheism, a Persian heretical version of Christianity, was spreading rapidly across north Africa. In 297, Diocletian ordered all Manicheans to hand over their sacred writings to be burned, and their leaders to be executed. It paid off, because later that year, Galerius defeated the Persians. *This is the first time that the burning of sacred writings was a part of official persecution. It won't be the last.*

Between 298 and 302, Diocletian ordered all Christians in his legions to resign. He then dismissed Christians from all civil service.

303 – 311 The Great Persecution under Diocletian and Galerius

The last empire wide struggle between the old pagan Greco-Roman gods and Christianity began in February, 303, and developed in 4 stages. The first three edicts were put in place while Diocletian was emperor, while the final edict came after he had voluntarily abdicated in favor of his Caesar, Galerius, who assumed the title emperor.

They were:

1. All sacred books had to be surrendered. Christian buildings were destroyed. Full scale discrimination against Christians sanctioned.
2. The bishops and clergy were imprisoned.
3. The bishops and clergy were forced to sacrifice, and then were freed upon compliance.
4. All Christians were ordered to sacrifice to the Greco-Roman gods in the spring of 304, or die! (*Galerius, unlike Diocletian who had not wanted to repeat the same mistake that Decius had made, wasn't worried about shedding Christian blood.*)

Following the example of the persecution of the Manicheans, handing over sacred texts was a part of the requirements to avoid imprisonment and/or death. Which books could be safely turned in without renouncing the faith? Would the Roman authorities be able to tell sacred books from those that weren't?

Another interesting difference emerges between the Eastern and Western parts of the church during the Great Persecution. In the West, Christians who handed over sacred books (*we don't know which ones were considered sacred*) were called apostates (*=a person who has separated himself/herself from the church*). Not so in the East, where handing over sacred books was not a religious offense.

For the first time, persecution was longer/more intense in the East (*10 years*) than in the West (*2 years*). The 4th edict was enforced primarily in the East, where Galerius and his Caesar, Maximin, required roll calls in order to ensure that all Christians were forced to sacrifice. Those who refused, in the East, were put to death, imprisoned, or sent to the mines.

311 Edict of Toleration

Galerius was dying, and he knew that he had lost in his attempt to stamp out Christianity once and for all. His Edict of Toleration, in 311CE, was an attempt to have it both ways. It allowed Christians to practice their faith, as long as they weren't denounced by their neighbors.

Christians were released from prison, and sent home from the mines. Rome would now have two religious systems: Christianity and the old Greco-Roman gods, wrapped up with emperor worship.

311-313 Maximin

Galerius died, and was succeeded by Maximin. He refused to give up the fight against Christianity. Twisting the intent of the Edict of Toleration, Maximin encouraged local towns to petition against Christians, which would allow his soldiers to move in and arrest them.

This time around, Christians in Egypt fared the worst. Thousands of Christians died between November 311 and January 312, including most of the Christian leadership. It ended in the summer of 313, when Maximin was killed.

313-337 Reign of Constantine

313 Edict of Milan

This edict granted universal toleration to all faiths in the Roman Empire. But when you read between the lines, it really granted most favored status to Christianity. The battle between the old Greco-Roman gods and Christianity was decided. While there would yet be a few feeble attempts to go back to the glory years they never had a chance to succeed. (*an example would be Julian the Apostate 360 – 363*)

Here are some of the details included in the Edict of Milan:

- Perceiving long ago that religious liberty ought not to be denied, but that it ought to be granted to the judgment and desire of each individual to perform his religious duties according to his own choice, we had given orders that every man....both Christians and all men should have the freedom to follow the religion which they choose, that whatever heavenly divinity exists may be propitious to us and to all that live under our government.
- And we decree still further in regard to the Christians, that their places, in which they were formerly accustomed to assemble...shall be restored to the said Christians, without demanding money or any other equivalent, with no delay or hesitation...In all these things you are to use the utmost diligence...
- Families of martyrs were given money from the state treasury
- Special gifts were given to the “confessors”
- Provincial governors were to permit those who had gone into exile to return and to get all their property back at no expense
- Church property was to be restored
- Certain “approved congregations” were to receive money to build large worship centers
- Provincial governors, along with the catholic bishops in major centers, were to figure out a system to provide salaries to all catholic clergy
- The money to pay them was to come from the state treasury
- Catholic clergy thus became salaried officials of the Roman government, just as priests of the various pagan religions had been previously

Summary of Constantine’s impact:

- Built churches and paid clergy salaries
- Intervened in church disputes
- Convened Regional Councils of bishops
- Made Council decisions the law of the land

- Hastened the process to agree on date of Easter
- Made Sunday universal day of worship
- Outlawed “heresies”
- Hastened creation of the Canon – request for 50 copies of the Scriptures

Persecution Post 313

Within 10 years of the Edict of Milan, the tables would be turned completely. The orthodox Christian church, with the full support of the Roman government, would begin to persecute pagans, and heterodox Christian groups.

Marcellinus, emperor Julian’s historian, wrote: *“Wild beasts are not such enemies to mankind as are most Christians in their deadly hatred of one another!”*

In a single morning in 366, 137 Christians were slaughtered in the basilica in Rome after a fight between supporters of rival popes Damasus and Ursinus. When one compares this to the total of 14 martyrs (*8 of whom volunteered to die*) in the first two years of the Great Persecution in all of Palestine, you can see how things have changed!

Mark and Peter

The first two generations of Christians preferred oral to written traditions about Jesus. However, this preference couldn't be maintained as the delay of the expected return of Jesus stretched into the third generation.

As the importance of written gospels grew, so did the necessity to emphasize their connection to one of the apostles.

This trend can be seen most clearly in the growth of the traditions surrounding Peter's connection with Mark, the first gospel written.

This is a summary of an article by my professor, Everet Kalin, who encouraged me to study the formation of the NT canon as a seminary student (1973-1977).

@100CE: Papias

Papias recounts what he was taught by "the elder," who believed that since Mark was Peter's interpreter, his gospel was an accurate account of Peter's preaching and teaching about Jesus life, death and resurrection. We can only guess, but it seems as if Papias imagined Peter preaching/teaching in Aramaic, and Papias translating it into Greek. It also seems as if there was at least a fair amount of criticism of Mark's ordering of the story of Jesus. Apparently it didn't align very well with the order in the tradition that Papias' readers/hearers knew.

The elder also said the following: Since Mark was Peter's interpreter he wrote accurately – though not in order – as many of the things said and done by the Lord as he remembered. For he had neither heard the Lord nor followed him; rather, as I said, he later was Peter's follower. Peter gave the teachings, as the occasion demanded, not giving the Lord's sayings any orderly arrangement. And so Mark did nothing wrong in thus writing some things, as he remembered them. For the one concern he had was to omit none of the things he had heard nor to falsify any of them.

@160CE: The Prologue to Mark's Gospel

This is also known as the "Anti-Marcionite Prologue" and is found primarily in Old Latin manuscripts. While Mark is described as Peter's interpreter, which matches Papias, these prologues add that Mark is called "stumpy fingered" and that he wrote in Italy after Peter had died.

...Mark declared, who is called "stumpy-fingered," since he had short fingers in proportion to the rest of his body. He was Peter's interpreter. After Peter's death he wrote this gospel in Italy.

@180CE: Irenaeus

In his "Against Heresies," Irenaeus says that Mark was both Peter's interpreter and disciple. He believes that Mark wrote his gospel, summarizing Peter's preaching, after Peter died.

Matthew also produced a written version of the gospel written among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and

establishing the congregation there. After the death (of Peter) Mark, Peter's disciple and interpreter, delivered to us in writing the things Peter had preached.

@200CE: Clement of Alexandria

Eusebius, quoting from Clement's book "Hypotyposesis," wrote in his Ecclesiastical History, that the Gospel of Mark had this occasion.

As Peter had preached the Word publicly in Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that Mark, who had followed him for a long time and remembered his sayings, should write them out. And having composed the Gospel he gave it to those who had requested it. When Peter learned of this he neither directly forbade nor encouraged it.

390CE: Jerome

Jerome updated Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, which had ended in 325CE. Based on the information Eusebius had included, Jerome noted this in his work titled: "Lives of Illustrious Men:"

When Peter heard of this (the composition of Mark's gospel at the request of Peter's Roman hearers), he approved it and published it on his authority for reading in the churches.

Conclusions

The church had come a long way since the time of Papias, who preferred oral tradition to anything written. Origin could say "the four gospels which are indisputable in the church of God under heaven."

Tradition surrounding the composition of Mark's gospel had grown from Papias' defense of a disorganized and inferior, since it was written and not oral, source of the good news, to one of the four gospels in the rapidly closing Gospel canon of the New Testament. Better yet, it was authorized and approved by no less than Peter himself.

This series of snapshots over time, highlights the role that apostolicity played in a book's acceptability in the church. A book had to be apostolic. Therefore, Peter had to either have authorized Mark's gospel for use in the church, or actually dictated it to Mark.