

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FOUR GOSPELS AS TESTIMONIES

S. KENT BROWN

The Gospel of John closes with the following important observation: “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen” (21:25; see also 20:30–31). This passage characterizes the heart of our discussion. To see how that is so, let me begin by making a few observations about the efforts to deal with all of the Gospel accounts from the New Testament.

As is well known, a familiar approach to studying Jesus’ life has been to harmonize the accounts of the four Gospels. It is natural to ask why this has been the case. One apparent reply is that, after a cursory review of the Gospels, we come to realize that each by itself does not compose a complete account of Jesus’ words and deeds. Rather, these narratives have included only a portion selected from the events of Jesus’ ministry. To be sure, there is frequent overlapping of materials among the Gospels. But it is equally true that many incidents are preserved by only one of the Evangelists. In the synoptic Gospels, of course, we find basically the same pattern of narrative. But in no single account do we see a complete picture. Hence, the need has arisen to seek to portray the ministry of Jesus as fully as possible by including every detail preserved by the Gospel writers. Even with this effort, we can be assured, we still do not have the entire view, an observation confirmed by John’s remark quoted above. But by

S. Kent Brown is a professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University and current director of the BYU Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies.

drawing together a harmony of the Gospels, we do gain a clear perception of many of the faint and dark lines in the sketch of Jesus' mortal career.

The earliest effort to assemble all of the Gospel accounts into some sort of order was made by Tatian, a native of Syria. After being educated in Greek rhetoric and philosophy, he was converted to Christianity in Rome at a date between AD 150 and 160. Although he was later rejected as a heretic, Tatian compiled what is known as the *Diatessaron*, a history of Jesus woven together from the four Gospels.¹ This work enjoyed official acceptance in eastern Christianity, having been employed in the Syriac Church until the fifth century after Christ, when it was finally replaced by the four Gospels. The language in which Tatian wrote the *Diatessaron* remains disputed, although champions have been found for Greek, Syriac, and Latin. Whatever the case, the fact that Tatian's work enjoyed "official" popularity in eastern Christendom illustrates the substantial appeal that this avenue to Jesus' ministry has carried.

One can see the continuing popularity of this approach in non-Latter-day Saint circles, a fact illustrated by the significant number of reprints of A. T. Robertson's widely-used *A Harmony of the Gospels*.² At the base of approaches like Robertson's has lain the concern to present Jesus' ministry as completely as possible. Like others, he has done this not only by giving order to the reports but also by placing parallel incidents side by side on the page for the sake of completeness and comparison. Moreover, as Dr. Robertson noted in his preface, "A harmony cannot give all the aid that one needs, but it is the one essential book for the serious study of the life of Jesus. . . . One who has never read a harmony will be amazed at the flood of light that flashes from the parallel and progressive records of the life of Jesus Christ."³

Efforts to harmonize the Gospel accounts have certainly not been lacking among Latter-day Saints. One of the most significant attempts, of course, remains James E. Talmage's work, *Jesus the Christ*.⁴ Although Dr. Talmage's work is by no means a harmony in any real sense, at its foundation Dr. Talmage has laid together the whole range of information available from the Gospels, interweaving all of the pieces into an order to make a complete whole. Thus, while Dr. Talmage's effort should be characterized properly as a "life of Jesus," both his braiding together of the various incidents and his placing of the Gospel stories in a chronological order do effectively what harmonies traditionally have done.

In addition to Dr. Talmage's enduring piece, other Latter-day Saint authors have contributed important works offering harmonies of the life of the Savior. After *Jesus the Christ*, the next to appear was J. Reuben Clark's *Our Lord of the Gospels*. In this work President Clark first provided a chronological framework for the Savior's ministry "based primarily upon the different missionary activities of his life,"⁵ arranging "the incidents in a chronological order that seemed generally to represent the majority view of the harmonists consulted."⁶ Second, he sought "to annotate these Gospel texts by reference to our own [modern] scriptures on important doctrinal matters."⁷ Third, as in other modern harmonies, President Clark placed parallel accounts side by side for easier comparison. Finally, at the center stood his effort to demonstrate that the accounts of Jesus' "conception, birth, life, death, and resurrection are as factual as any in all history."⁸

David H. Yarn, professor of philosophy at BYU, recently reissued a revised synthesis of the Gospel narratives entitled *The Four Gospels as One*. In this work, Dr. Yarn has linked together the accounts of Jesus' ministry as they appear in the four Gospels but without placing parallel incidents side by side as harmonies traditionally do. As he tells us in his preface, "The major objective in this work has been to provide a single, continuous, scriptural account of the life, ministry, and mission of the Lord. In other words, here the Four Gospels are synthesized as one Gospel,"⁹ much like Tatian's *Diatessaron*. In fact, his intent was "not to arrange another harmony but to make a synthesis of the Gospels."¹⁰ His work does provide cross-references to parallel accounts as well as to appropriate passages in 3 Nephi.

Dr. Yarn's book was followed by Elder Bruce R. McConkie's *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*. Of this three-volume set, the first consists essentially of a harmony of the four Gospels.¹¹ But rather than simply plow old ground, Elder McConkie regularly pointed his readers to pertinent passages from the Joseph Smith Translation that are illuminating. If we were to highlight this feature alone, it would be apparent that it represents a significant advance over earlier works. It is worth noting that he also provided extensive and helpful commentary, including relevant statements from Church leaders.

In 1976 Thomas Mumford published his *Horizontal Harmony of the Four Gospels in Parallel Columns*. The format consisted of the traditional harmonizing arrangement of the four Gospels in columns so that parallel accounts could easily be consulted, because, as he noted, "the greater

message of the life of Jesus can only be seen when all four are arranged together."¹² Naturally, any incident preserved by only one of the four appears separately in its own column. Of the reason for his composition, Mumford wrote, "Since each writer has his own unique style and emphasis, any effort to truly study the life of Christ must include the complete study of all four gospels."¹³ While the two parts of this statement may not necessarily go together, as we shall see below, the arrangement of Mumford's work is useful since he has provided a basic chronological framework throughout his harmony.

Eldin Ricks, professor emeritus of ancient scripture at BYU, published a book entitled *Story of the Life of Christ*.¹⁴ He has since updated and revised this work, entitling it *King of Kings: The New Testament Story of Christ*. Like Dr. Yarn, Dr. Ricks has sought to improve on the harmonizing method of A. T. Robertson and others by providing a "single, connected narrative freed from the repetitious elements that necessarily attend the reading of the four gospels separately."¹⁵ Throughout, he has followed the "most detailed" of the narratives when more than one Evangelist wrote about an incident. His work grows out of many years of teaching the life of Christ and has specific merit not only in the manner it presents the material but especially in its inclusion of helpful outline maps and geographical notations.

Although it is not a harmony, we should mention the most recently published treatment of the four Gospels, authored by Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the New Testament: The Four Gospels*.¹⁶ Dr. Ludlow's work follows the order of the New Testament Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Like Elder McConkie's work, it includes statements from Latter-day Saint Church leaders and helpful references to the Joseph Smith Translation, in addition to quotations from non-Latter-day Saint sources and illuminating citations from modern scripture. Probably its greatest strength lies in the fact that it is cross-referenced to the Latter-day Saint edition of the Bible, specifically to its topical guide and Bible dictionary.

If there is any weakness in the harmonizing avenue, it will lie in the fact that occasionally the Gospel writers differed from one another both in their sequence of Jesus' ministry and in their emphasis, making it difficult both to learn the precise order of events and to remain sensitive to the nuances preserved in each record. On chronological questions, each harmonizer had to make judgments based on personal perceptions of the

order of events of Jesus' ministry.¹⁷ The obvious strengths of harmonies are that we are offered (1) a more thorough overview of Jesus' ministry than that available in any one of the Gospel accounts and (2) a broader sense of continuity and sequence among individual occurrences.

Bearing this in mind, I wish now to review what I consider a significant idea linked directly to the work of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Moreover, I want to note that the Prophet's view has influenced my approach to studying and teaching the life of the Savior. While each of the first four works of the New Testament is called a "Gospel," the Prophet changed the titles of two Gospels in the Joseph Smith Translation to "testimony." Thus we have the Testimony of Matthew and the Testimony of John.¹⁸

What I have just noted was not isolated. That this titular change goes back to the Lord Himself can be seen in the last verse of Doctrine and Covenants 88. There, in a discussion concerning the School of the Prophets, the Lord made reference to the ordinance of the washing of feet, noting that this was to be administered by the President of the Church "according to the pattern given in the thirteenth chapter of John's testimony concerning me" (D&C 88:141). In this revelation, received in stages during the latter part of 1832 and early 1833, it becomes clear that the Lord Himself could and did characterize the Gospel accounts as testimonies, for He specifically referred to the Gospel of John in this manner.¹⁹

It is worth noting here that the Prophet's insight predated by almost a full century the efforts of modern scholars to study the Gospels as highly individualized texts that reflect the point of view of each Evangelist, whatever that may have been. It has only been in recent decades that interest has focused on the Gospels as whole pieces, each with a certain integrity of its own.²⁰ Before that, much non-Latter-day Saint interest in the Gospels focused on the individual sayings and events of Jesus' ministry, with a consequent disregard of the fact that these brief accounts had been integral parts of a whole record.²¹ To be sure, there was already a good deal of commentary literature seeking to elucidate the distinctive features of each of the Gospels.²² But specific interest in what is now known as redaction criticism—the study of each individual Gospel as an entire composition—manifested itself only in the 1940s.²³

The flaw submerged in the modern study of the redactional, or editorial, activity of the Evangelists consists of highlighting the compositional work of each Gospel writer with an unfortunate corresponding deemphasis on the information that concerns the Savior. This line between the two

concerns, in my view, is to be balanced in favor of the latter. One must be wary of overdramatizing—say, what and how Luke wrote—at the expense of minimizing what Jesus said and did. This major pitfall—and minor chuckholes besides—impels us to place warning signals. But with all this, there is some value in such an approach. And the Prophet was the first to erect the signpost. In the first place, one is invited to treat each Gospel as possessing a certain integrity in its story of the Master. Secondly, one can come to sense how four authors—each from a different background and each needing to address a different audience—met the sacred task of writing about the Savior. Thirdly, one comes to realize that it was the concerns of the Evangelists that frequently influenced what they included in their accounts, a notion which leads us to perceive how much poorer we would have been, for example, had not Luke taken pen in hand and detailed for us the wealth of information about Jesus which he alone preserved. But more on this below.

In my own teaching, I now study with students at least one of the synoptic Gospels followed by a thorough review of the Gospel of John. There is a certain basic core of material which the synoptics share, recording similar instances in like sequence. Consequently, I have felt free to feature any one of the three in my classes. When one moves to the Gospel of John, however, one immediately encounters quite a different portrayal of the Savior, a perception that can be gained by surveying in the same course these very different but complementary views of the Savior.

Before reviewing a few cameos that may help to characterize each Gospel's witness of the Master, let me note something that derives from our common experiences as Church members. It is a true observation that different persons have varying perceptions of the same event. In instances that involve our deepest religious convictions and feelings, one has only to listen to the testimonies of people who have been to the same place, heard the same sounds, and seen the same sights. The testimonies almost always diverge in a number of ways, for what was important to one was not to another. Seemingly, the perception of each person has varied because of each one's personal inner situation at the shared moment. Consequently, to observe that the Gospel writers—possessing different backgrounds and addressing different audiences—would naturally emphasize different aspects of Jesus' ministry should not surprise us. Further, instead of coming to insist that one Gospel's view must be more trustworthy than another's, as is often assumed by modern scholars,²⁴ one must be

willing to entertain the possibility that all taken together provide an amazingly rich tapestry of varying hues and shades. (That is what harmonies are all about.) But the integrity of each Gospel record, I submit, will produce its own special feeling for the Savior, something missed when all four are woven together. And it is this which I now wish briefly to address.

Modern scholarship generally accepts the conclusion that the Gospel of Mark was the first written.²⁵ While this is not beyond dispute,²⁶ for our purposes we can begin with this shortest record. Several features are striking. First, Mark opened his Gospel at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. For him, apparently all that had gone before was simply a preface. The main event—the one worth one's attention—began in earnest with the appearance of Jesus where John was baptizing and preaching. Mark was more interested in the words and deeds of Jesus' ministry—including His death and Resurrection—than in the Savior's origins.²⁷ For him, the proof apparently lay in what Jesus finally said and did, not in the signs of His wondrous birth. In this sense, Mark shows himself to be interested in the practical, hard evidence of what Jesus came to teach and to do. Secondly, as an extension of the first point, we note the high frequency of the word "immediately." Mark's inclination to use this word often, especially in his narrative connecting the incidents of Jesus' life, underscores his impression that Jesus was a person who acted decisively, always taking the initiative.²⁸ Third, within Mark's record of Jesus' teaching stands an undergirding plea that disciples be patient in persecution. When one becomes sensitive to it, one sees a substantial amount of Jesus' preaching concerned with enduring hard times for the sake of the kingdom.²⁹

The last point which I shall mention is the so-called Messianic secret. One notes at key turns of the narrative that the disciples—even those most closely associated with Jesus—did not seem to understand Him until after His Resurrection. Simply stated, they perceived neither that He was the Messiah nor the nature of His messiahship.³⁰ Naturally, one asks why Mark has emphasized this in his narrative. In reply, one can surmise that Mark and his Christian readers had faced rather harsh critics who had asked, "Why was it not apparent to us that this Jesus was the promised Messiah?" Part of Mark's response, I suggest, consisted of the point, subtly made, that not even Jesus' closest associates gained full understanding until after His Resurrection.

In mild contrast to the emphasis and major themes of Mark stand the

interests apparent in Matthew's Gospel. One need only recall that Matthew—himself a Jew—was writing to a Jewish audience skeptical of the claims made for Jesus by His followers.³¹ To these Matthew came with a special message about his Master, a message designed to meet the criticisms of his Hellenistic Jewish readers. Like Mark, Matthew seems to have faced the question why the hearers of Jesus had not recognized Him as the Messiah. The reply, Matthew found, was on Jesus' lips at Caesarea Philippi where of His messiahship Jesus had told Peter, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). To those who did not accept Jesus as the Messiah, then, the answer was that this knowledge could come only by revelation, not by having merely observed Jesus' activities or His physical characteristics. In addition, Matthew seems to have faced a second question: Why was Jesus killed? In reply, Matthew has judiciously included in his narrative several accounts of Jesus' confrontations with Jewish leaders who eventually brought about His death.³²

A third major object of Matthew was to demonstrate that Jesus was rightfully king of the Jews. To underscore this notion, Matthew opened his book by tracing Jesus' lineage back to King David and to Abraham, in a genealogy consisting of three parts with fourteen generations each. It is highly probable that Matthew knew his Jewish readers would perceive immediately that the number fourteen represented the numerical sum of the letters of David's name in Hebrew.³³ In the same pattern of stressing Jesus' royal connections stands the confrontation with Herod that Jesus and His family escaped by fleeing to Egypt, an incident in which the usurping king recognized a legitimate heir and sought to destroy him. Another incident, shared by Matthew with the other Gospel writers, is the triumphal entry. On that occasion, of course, Jesus was hailed as the "Son of David" (Matthew 21:9), tantamount to calling Him king.³⁴

The last emphasis which I shall notice here is that Jesus was to be viewed as the new lawgiver. Two elements in Matthew's record accentuate this trait. The first is the Sermon on the Mount. Note that Matthew specifically says that Jesus went "up into a mountain" (Matthew 5:1). So had Moses. But unlike Moses, who went to receive the word of God, Jesus as the lawgiver is found in the organization of the book. In five places, at the end of major teaching segments before introducing more narrative, Matthew says of Jesus' activities, "When Jesus had ended these sayings" (Matthew 7:28).³⁵ As others have observed, this repeated statement neatly

divides the teaching of Jesus—as preserved by Matthew—into five segments. By this means Matthew has apparently imitated the five-part division of the law of Moses, albeit in miniature form.³⁶ Thus Matthew highlighted Jesus as the lawgiver who brought the teaching that was to replace the Mosaic code.

When one comes to the Gospel of Luke, one notices first that Luke stressed the compassionate side of Jesus, a feature that may well have been attractive to him because of his own experience as a physician. Luke doubtless had seen a great deal of suffering caused by disease and accident. The stories of Jesus' compassion must have impressed him deeply, for he has preserved a great many.³⁷

Connected with the notion of Jesus' compassion is a second observation that Luke sensed Jesus to be a man for all people. For instance, we read of Jesus being welcomed in the rich man's palace as well as in the most humble hovel in the village, meeting the needs of all there.³⁸ The additional fact that Luke chose to feature the shepherds who came at Jesus' birth indicates his interest in the one person who attracted all people to Himself (see Luke 2:8–18).

Third, Luke stressed that from the beginning, everyone connected both with the family of Jesus and with the movement that He later led—including John's family—were law-abiding people.³⁹ At the time of Luke's writing, authorities of the Roman Empire did not distinguish between Christians and Jews.⁴⁰ Luke was determined to point out that whatever troubles Jews had caused in the Empire—and they were considerable⁴¹—Christians were not to be implicated. From the very beginning, they had always been observant, both to their religious law and to the emperor. For Luke, Christians stood for law and order, and he gathered stories to illustrate his case from the very beginning of the Christian movement.

Fourth, as a Gentile, Luke was interested in the Gentile mission. We recall that it is only in Luke that we read of the commissioning of the seventy disciples. The number seventy, as I shall demonstrate below, ultimately goes back to the table of the Gentile nations listed in Genesis 10. Jesus' calling of the seventy reflects the number of the names listed there.⁴² And as we know from modern scripture, the seventies are specifically commissioned to go to the Gentiles (see D&C 107:25).

The last accent of Luke that I shall mention concerns property and money. Having been a physician, Luke occupied a lofty place in society and very likely enjoyed what money could bring him. Interestingly, his

Gospel includes more stories and sayings from Jesus which concern this matter than any other account.⁴³ I have consequently become convinced that after his conversion, Luke inverted his values so that no longer were property and money of primary concern. Rather, his loyalty to the Lord had replaced his former interests. As he prepared to write his record, he must have been pleased to learn what Jesus had said on the matter and how closely it matched his own priorities, after conversion.

In the Gospel of John, we find a text very unlike the synoptic Gospels both in style and in tone. At its heart stands the idea that Jesus came as God's gift, a concept mentioned in various places and ways.⁴⁴ Another overarching theme is that Jesus was Jehovah. One thinks, for example, of the end of the prologue, which says that Jesus "was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The word "dwelt" translated means literally "to live in a tent."⁴⁵ As Jehovah had anciently dwelt in His tent among His people at the time of the Exodus, so Jesus came as the great Jehovah to tent again among His people. John further illustrated this in Jesus' discourse in which He called Himself the good shepherd (see John 10). There can be no doubt that every Jew within the sound of Jesus' voice had read or heard Ezekiel's prophecy that Jehovah Himself would become the shepherd of His people (see Ezekiel 34). Third, John stressed in obvious ways that one must be truly commissioned by the Lord in order to undertake a divine errand. He used the verb "to send" repeatedly in this sense. For instance, John the Baptist was sent from God (see John 1:6–7), whereas the priests and the Levites were sent by the Jews (see John 1:19). Jesus Himself spoke frequently of the one who sent Him,⁴⁶ implying clearly that those who carry only a human commission do not bear the same authority as those who wear the mantle of the Lord. Fourth, more openly than in any other Gospel, John bore his witness that Jesus came as the Son of God. During His mortal ministry, Jesus' own mind and heart were not clouded with doubts or questions. He knew who He was and what God expected Him to do. Finally, it has been noted by modern students that John made use of a variety of language in describing Jesus, employing both philosophical terminology and language appropriate for Hellenistic religion, in addition to phraseology at home in Jewish thought.⁴⁷ By so doing, it is naturally inferred, John was stating that no matter what we say about Jesus—or how we say it—we cannot really describe Him. In some way, He transcends our ability to describe Him with mere words. He was God. In saying more, we cannot do justice to Him.

From what I have said here all too briefly, one cannot hope to gain a full sense of the richness of the individual testimonies of the four Evangelists. But our review may offer a starting point from which we can study the solemn witness of the Master borne by each of the four writers. In his own way, each accentuated those features of Jesus' ministry which were both personally appealing and important to emphasize for his audience. Each took up the task of inscribing a history of his Lord. Each was obliged to choose what he would employ in his account. None could be entirely thorough. But they did write, they did testify, and in doing so they blessed all of our lives and made us richer.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, J. Quasten, *Patrology* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1966), 1:220–28, especially 224–28 for bibliography.
2. A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (New York: Harper and Row, 1922). Robertson's harmony was based on the work of J. A. Broadus, *A Harmony of the Gospels in the Revised Version* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1893).
3. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, viii.
4. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1963); this work was first issued in September 1915.
5. J. Reuben Clark Jr., *Our Lord of the Gospels* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), v; second printing in 1974.
6. Clark, *Our Lord of the Gospels*, vi.
7. Clark, *Our Lord of the Gospels*, vii.
8. Clark, *Our Lord of the Gospels*, viii.
9. D. H. Yarn, *The Four Gospels as One*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), vii.
10. Yarn, *The Four Gospels as One*, viii.
11. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 1:v.
12. Thomas M. Mumford, *Horizontal Harmony of the Four Gospels in Parallel Columns* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), v.
13. Mumford, *Horizontal Harmony of the Four Gospels in Parallel Columns*, v.
14. Eldin Ricks, *Story of the Life of Christ: A Harmony of the Four Gospels* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Press, 1977).
15. Eldin Ricks, *King of Kings: The New Testament Story of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1982), 7.
16. Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the New Testament: The Four Gospels* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982).
17. Note, for instance, the remark of D. H. Yarn, *The Four Gospels as One*, viii:

- “The principle idea [was] . . . to include what in my humble judgment appeared to be the most complete or best expressed account of events or teachings.”
18. Joseph Smith Jr., *Inspired Version: The Holy Scriptures* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1961), 1085, 1131, 1160, and 1207; as will be seen, all the Gospels are renamed “testimonies” in current editions of the Joseph Smith Translation.
 19. According to the chronology of the Prophet’s work on the Joseph Smith Translation detailed by Robert J. Matthews, in *A Plainer Translation: Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible, A History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 36–37, Joseph Smith was working through the New Testament when Doctrine and Covenants 88 was revealed; see also 256.
 20. Luke–Acts has received significant attention in recent years. See, for instance, the collected essays in the following two works: L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn, eds., *Studies in Luke–Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966); C. H. Talbert, ed., *Perspectives on Luke–Acts* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978).
 21. The most influential publications concerning *Formgeschichte* or Form Criticism have been M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935), translated from the revised second German edition of *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (1933); and R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), translated from the second German edition of *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*.
 22. See, for example, *The International Critical Commentary* series first published by T. & T. Clark in Edinburgh, Scotland, between 1895 and 1921.
 23. The first major work was that of H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of Saint Luke* (New York: Harper, 1961), translation of the German *Die Mitte der Zeit* (1954); but Conzelmann’s study was not the first, as N. Perrin points out in *What Is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 21–33.
 24. Among many others, see the reliance on Mark by A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), especially 330–97; N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teachings of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1967); G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1960).
 25. Almost all standard introductions—both conservative and liberal—accept this conclusion. See, on the one hand, W. D. Davies, *Invitation to the New Testament* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 198–200; and W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1966), 35–60.
 26. Consult the challenge of W. R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem* (New York: Macmillan, 1964); also H. C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 241–45.

27. The question, of course, is whether Mark knew of Jesus' birth and youth. Nothing in the text points decisively one way or the other. If one could show clearly that Mark was written after one of the other Gospels, then we would be reasonably sure that he was aware of Jesus' earlier life but chose not to write about it. But attempts have so far remained unconvincing.
28. Mark used the word "immediately" (*eutheos*) a total of forty times, thirty-four in narrative sections and six in sayings of Jesus. We compare this figure to a total of fifteen times in the Gospel of Matthew, eight in Luke, and four in John.
29. References to persecution—both against Jesus and against his (future) disciples—in Mark can be found in the following passages: 2:6–7; 3:2, 6; 8:31, 34–37; 9:31, 42; 10:28–30, 35–40; 13:9, 13, 19–20; 14:18, 27; 15:10.
30. Notice of the so-called Messianic secret, or *Messiasgeheimnis*, was published by William Wrede in *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1901). See the following examples: 3:20–22; 4:10–13, 39–41; 5:16–17, 43; 6:51–52; 7:36–37; 8:14–21, 31–33; 9:32. Wrede's radical conclusion that absolutely no one had an inkling of Jesus' messiahship until His Resurrection has often been challenged; see, for example, W. Barclay, *The First Three Gospels* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 183–89.
31. Matthew's ethnic origins remain a matter of dispute among the commentators. But the questions he addresses, in addition to major emphases in his record, lead me to view him as a Jew. See the observations of W. Barclay, *First Three Gospels*, 200, 211–20; and W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew*, in *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), CLXXVII–CLXXXI.
32. The most vividly portrayed confrontation between Jesus and Jewish leaders in all the Gospels occurs in Matthew 23:1–35; see also 9:11; 12:2, 24, 38–39; 15:1–9; 16:1–4; 19:3–4; 21:15–16, 23–27; 22:34–35, 41–42.
33. See, for instance, Barclay, *First Three Gospels*, 222; W. C. Allen, *The Gospel According to S. Matthew*, *The International Critical Commentary*, 3d ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 6–7; see also Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 5; and J. C. Fenton, *Saint Matthew* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1963), 40–41, 54.
34. See the comments of Barclay, *First Three Gospels*, 226–27; Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, CLI–CLVII, 252; Allen, *Gospel According to St. Matthew*, lxvi, 2; Fenton, *Saint Matthew*, 36–37, 328.
35. The five passages in which this notation closes sections of teaching and reintroduces the narrative are 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; and 26:1.
36. The five major discourses thus framed are the Sermon on the Mount (5–7), charge to the Twelve (10), parables of the kingdom (13), discourse on personal relationships in the kingdom (18), and the last days (24–26).

- See the comments of Barclay, *First Three Gospels*, 221–23; Allen, *Gospel According to St. Matthew*, lxxv, 70.
37. Concerning Luke's profession, see Barclay, *First Three Gospels*, 267–69; L. Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 17–18; J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, in *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 36, 40, 51–53. One central theme appears in the saying, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (19:10). In light of this, stories of Jesus' compassion—present or promised—can be found in Luke 4:18, 38–39, 40; 5:12–13, 24–25; 6:6–10, 19; 7:13; 8:48, 49–56; 9:13–17, 37–42; 13:11–13; 17:12–19; and 18:35–42; sayings of Jesus concerning compassionate acts are recorded in 6:27–36; 7:22; 9:56; 10:25–37; 13:34; 16:19–31; 18:2–5; and 23:34, 43.
 38. Compare Luke 7:34–50. For illustrations of the universal effectiveness of Jesus' mission, consult 1:37; 2:30–32; 3:14, 38; 4:25–27, 43; 5:27–31; 6:20–23; 7:9, 29, 34; 8:1–3; 15:1–2, 11–32; 18:10–17, 27; and 19:8–10. See the remarks of Barclay, *First Three Gospels*, 284–91; G. B. Caird, *Saint Luke* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1963), 36–37; Morris, *Gospel According to St. Luke*, 36–37, 40–42; Fitzmyer, *Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, 187–92.
 39. Among passages in Luke which stress following law or custom are 1:6, 50, 59; 2:4–5, 21–24, 25, 39, 41, 51–52; 4:16; 5:14; 6:9, 45; 8:15, 21; 12:59; 18:20; 19:46; 22:7–8, 25–27; and 23:47.
 40. This seems to be Luke's point in writing to Theophilus (see Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), whom he addresses as if he were an official of the Roman Empire. (Compare the same term of address in Acts 23:26; 24:3; and 26:25.)
 41. For example, Jews were driven from Rome for rioting in AD 49 by an edict of Claudius. Depending on the date of Luke's composition, he might have had one or both of the following two events in mind: First, in AD 64 Rome was burned and Nero blamed the Christians who had doubtless been understood simply as a Jewish sect. Second, within two years the Jewish revolt against Rome erupted in Judea in AD 66 and was not brought under control until the late summer of AD 70 when the temple went up in flames. Some have argued that Luke wrote late enough that he had these later two events in mind (see, for instance, G. B. Caird, *Saint Luke*, 13, 231).
 42. The case is made not by the number 70 but by the number 72; for seventy-two names are listed in Genesis 10 in the Septuagint (Greek) account: an extra name is added in both verses 2 and 22. Early Christian scribes, knowing that the call of the seventy was linked back to Genesis 10 and assuming that Luke had made a mistake, "corrected" the text to read 72 in Luke 10:1, 17 (see the note in Morris, *Gospel According to St. Luke*, 181). Regarding Luke's interest in Gentiles, see also 2:30–32; 3:14, 38; 4:25–27; 7:9; 8:26–40 (the setting was in Gentile territory); and 24:47.
 43. Sayings of Jesus which concern property and money appear in 6:24–25,

- 38; 12:13–30, 33–34; 14:12–14; 15:4–9; 16:1–15; 17:33; 18:22–25, 28–30; 19:8, 12–26; 20:22–25; and 21:1–4; consult Barclay, *First Three Gospels*, 286–88.
44. John 3:16; compare 1:12; 3:27, 34–35; 4:10, 14–15; 5:22, 26–27, 36; 6:27, 31–34, 37, 39, 51; 10:28–29; 11:22; 12:49; 13:3, 34; 14:16, 27; 15:16; 16:23; 17:1–2, 4, 8, 14, 22, 24; 18:11; and 19:11.
45. The Greek infinitive is *skenoun*; but see the cautioning remarks in G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 7:385–89.
46. John employs the Greek verbs “to send” (*apostello* and *petno*) 61 times. Of these only one instance does not reflect a sense of commissioning (see 9:7); see J. Seynaeve’s study, “Les verbes et dans le vocabulaire theologique de Saint Jean,” *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 44 (1977): 385–89.
47. One is impressed by the volume of recent studies, whether summaries or particularized studies, which focus on the seemingly unending variety of contacts between John’s Gospel and the religious and philosophical milieu of the first century after Christ. Among recent specializing essays, one can consult Raymond E. Brown, “‘Other Sheep Not of This Fold: The Johannine Perspective on Christian Diversity in the Late First Century,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978): 5–22; Edwin D. Freed, “Theological Prelude to the Prologue of John’s Gospel,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 32 (1979): 257–69; T. Korteweg, “The Reality of the Invisible: Some Remarks on St. John XIV 8 and Greek Philosophic Tradition,” in M. J. Vermaseren, ed., *Studies in Hellenistic Religions*, E. J. Brill: Leiden (1979), 50–102; *idem*, “‘You Will Seek Me and You Will Not Find Me’ (John 7:34): An Apocalyptic Pattern in Johannine Theology,” *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 53 (1980): 349–54; Judith M. Lieu, “Gnosticism and the Gospel of John,” *The Expository Times* 90 (1979): 233–37; V. C. van Unnik, “A Greek Characteristic of Prophecy in the Fourth Gospel,” *Text and Interpretation, Festschrift for Matthew Black* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 211–29. Although uneven in quality, recent summaries of various aspects of the theological currents apparent in the fourth Gospel include Ramond F. Collins, “The Search for Jesus: Reflexions of the Fourth Gospel,” *Laval Theologique et Philosophique* 34 (1978): 27–48; Jean Gibley, “Developpements dans la theologie johannique,” *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 44 (1977): 45–72; David John Hawkin, “The Johannine Transposition and Johannine Theology,” *Laval Theoiogique et Philosophique* 36 (1980): 89–98; James McPolin, “Studies in the Fourth Gospel—Some Contemporary Trends,” *Irish Biblical Studies* 2 (1980): 3–26; Leon Morris, “The Composition of the Fourth Gospel,” *Scripture, Tradition and Interpretation, Festschrift for E. F. Harrison* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 157–75; R. Schnackenberg, “Entwicklung und Stand der johannischen Forschung seit 1955,” *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium*, 44 (1977): 19–44.

We have the great privilege of interviewing Richard Bauckham to talk about his book, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Eerdmans, 2006). First of all, can we really get to first-century events through the documents that we have? In my book I argue that the Gospels are *not* *The Four Gospels as Authentic Testimony*. Published Friday, February 29, 2008 By Richard Bauckham. Become a subscriber to unlock this content. You can get access to our full archives by subscribing to the *Modern Reformation Magazine*. Or, check out our web-exclusive articles, which are free for everyone. Why are there four gospel accounts that cover so much of the same material? Are the records harmonious or do they conflict? Mark is a strong advocate of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. To that end, he records the testimony of God (Mk. 1:11; 9:7), the Lord himself (Mk. 13:32; 14:61, 62), the demons (Mk. 16:7). The testimony of the four Gospels concerning Jesus Christ. by. Voysey, Charles. Read 7. Four Gospels commentary using A Testimony of Jesus Christ. Study the bible online using commentary on 7. Four Gospels and more! Multiple Witnesses Multiple independent eye-witness accounts establishes the reliability of the testimony concerning the life and ministry of Jesus. Varied Perspectives Each author recorded the events of Jesus's life and ministry from a different perspective with different goals and objectives. Both of these answers explain why there are four gospels. It is to the second of these reasons that we now direct our attention. Throughout history, students of Scripture have recognized a correlation between the four gospels and four different roles of Christ. For example, no harmony of the four Gospels can provide a complete account of Christ's life because the Gospels were essentially individual testimonies written for different audiences and were not intended to be all-inclusive accounts of Christ's life and teachings. Significantly, the Joseph Smith Translation designates the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of John as "testimonies" rather than "gospels." [3] Elder McConkie stated, "It is apparent . . . that each inspired author had especial and intimate knowledge of certain circumstances not so well known to others, and that each felt impressed

We have four gospels because during the early church period, four people found it necessary to tell the story of Jesus from four different perspectives. Each gospel was written for a different (original) group of people, by a different author, who was trying to accomplish a different purpose. Let's take a closer look at each one: The Gospel of Matthew. Traditionally penned by the apostle of the same name, Matthew is the first gospel of the four. Luke is the historical, journalistic Gospel: a thorough account of the episodes in Jesus' life arranged in chronological order. This gospel was written to establish believers in the teachings of Jesus (Lk 1:1-4). Church tradition recognizes the first-century physician Luke as the author and editor of this book, which is how it gets its name. Read 7. Four Gospels commentary using A Testimony of Jesus Christ. Study the bible online using commentary on 7. Four Gospels and more! Multiple Witnesses Multiple independent eye-witness accounts establishes the reliability of the testimony concerning the life and ministry of Jesus. Varied Perspectives Each author recorded the events of Jesus' life and ministry from a different perspective with different goals and objectives. Both of these answers explain why there are four gospels. It is to the second of these reasons that we now direct our attention. Throughout history, students of Scripture have recognized a correlation between the four gospels and four different roles of Christ. Testimonies. agodman on Twitter. In each of the four Gospels we see the Lord Jesus revealed as a particular kind of person preaching the gospel and commissioning us, His people, to proclaim the gospel for a particular goal. In the Gospel of Matthew Christ is the King-Savior who, after passing through death and resurrection, has received all authority in heaven and on earth for the establishing of the kingdom of the heavens. Wow, what a gospel! There's no place in the Bible that tells us that we need to be saved to be spared from hell and go to heaven; rather, in the four Gospels we see that we become the people of the kingdom of God (Matthew), we become God's new creation (Mark), we partake of God's blessing (Luke), and we build up the Body of Christ as His increase (John). Why are there four gospel accounts that cover so much of the same material? Are the records harmonious or do they conflict? Mark is a strong advocate of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. To that end, he records the testimony of God (Mk. 1:11; 9:7), the Lord himself (Mk. 13:32; 14:61, 62), the demons (Mk.