

DATING LUKE AND ACTS

The New Testament's four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the only real sources of information about the alleged life of the historical Jesus. They are also the only accounts of this life that Christians consider divinely inspired. The other gospels that were excluded from the New Testament were written too late to be of any value. Considering the fanaticism that marks most forms of Christianity, it is remarkable that their precious gospels show no indication of having existed in their present form at least until more than a century after Jesus died.

The gospels could have been written a year after Jesus died and Jesus might still not have existed. Selective choice of the readership by the engineers of the Church could have ensured that Jesus would be believed in. But the longer the gospels can be proved to have existed after Jesus died the more likely it is that Christianity is a fake. Had the gospel writers not been ashamed of how late they wrote they would have given us dates for then as now people did not like late accounts or accounts that could be late.

Evidence of reasonable publication matters more than the date something was written. It will matter if you want to argue that society could contradict a pile of historical lies when it gets a read at them. If the date is late and the publication is late then we are entitled to refuse to take the gospels as gospel truth.

Authorship of the Gospel of Luke comes after the gospels of Matthew and Mark and Mark hails from 70AD at the oldest. Luke has more detail and information than they have. Indeed when Luke steals material from Mark he usually shortens it. Matthew's material was frequently rewritten for this gospel. It follows Mark's chronology and the Matthew material is used in such a way that Luke might have been using a book that Matthew was made out of rather than using Matthew. See the entry for Luke in the Biblical Dictionary. There is too much of Matthew and Mark in this gospel for it to have really been composed of what eye-witnesses said though it claims they were its source. The Prologue to Luke says that the whole point of the exercise was to show Theophilus that what he had been told was true and you don't do that by regurgitating what is old hat in all the main respects and which is little else than old hat. When Luke could not be sure exactly what age Jesus was when he started his ministry (Luke 3:23) he had no eyewitnesses.

Luke is supposed to have been the companion of Paul and a doctor. The medical references in the writings of Luke are not admitted to have been capable of being put in by anybody so they are not an indication that Luke the doctor was the author for they were known to everybody (page 153, Jesus and the Four Gospels). Obviously a book with two or three medical jargons need not have been written by a physician – but many Christians choose to forget this.

There are books written by people who were not physicians from that time that have more medical references (GA Wells Replies to Criticisms of His Books on Jesus). The Christians prove that Luke wrote the gospel through appealing to the "we" passages of Luke's book of Acts which indicates that the author claimed to be there. But the author could have been using the diary of the person who was there and was not there himself at all. And there is still no concrete statement that he claimed to be Luke. He would not even sign the gospel or Acts with his own name which is impossible to explain if he really was with Paul for he would have been well-known and like Paul would have been able to sign documents. Nor would anybody that had travelled with Paul be so ignorant of the Jewish Bible which Paul preached from all the time as to think that Jesus' death and resurrection were predicted by Moses when they were not (Luke 24:27). He was so desperate for evidence for the death and resurrection of Christ that his Jesus had to appear to the apostles to use the Bible prophecies to assure them this was a real resurrection (Luke 24:44). So Jesus was proclaimed as raised not because he appeared but because the Bible was supposed to have predicted he would. Luke's Jesus once said that the law and the prophets are more important than seeing a man coming back from the dead. The author would not have been that hard up had he really known Paul and had he really interviewed eyewitnesses like he claimed.

The gospel monger used a silly argument to defend the authority of Jesus Christ. He said that Jesus said that the student is not above his teacher and only gets on the teacher's level when he has all his studies done (Luke 6:40). This is nonsense for the teacher will necessarily know more than the students and will be able to teach more subjects than he teaches them. The student could know more than the teacher but be only at school for the sake of accreditation. But that is an exception to the general rule. The same foolishness is to be found at Matthew 10:24. This shows the author of the gospel was not Luke the physician for somebody who had been trained as a doctor would not have come out with such garbage.

The interest of the author of Acts in events in Paul's life and his not mentioning many other important events of his life such as Paul's war with Peter at Antioch and the war against the heretics who wanted circumcision stressed as necessary for salvation show that this man was not a companion of Paul's for what he knew about him was too sparse. The truth is nobody knows who wrote Luke or Acts. What kind of man bombasts about getting eyewitnesses and then fails to provide witnesses that he was telling the truth? What use are eyewitnesses then? He was a phoney.

The gospel was meant to be private for it was addressed to a most excellent, or His Excellency, Theophilus. This man must

have been very important if Luke went to so much trouble for him. He must have been at least a prospective convert to Christianity and a powerful influence and maybe he was a Roman Governor for Luke makes his characters call them Most Excellent. Luke would have chosen a very well known person. But Theo seems to have been forgotten. But how could he have been forgotten? He was too important and Rome kept records of important people. It is more likely that Luke made him up to give his book importance and to make it seem that people in the know took him seriously as a historian than that he was forgotten. (I hate the suggestion that Theophilus stood for the Church and was not a person. It is absurd for it is unlikely and Luke would not patronise the Church by telling it that he wanted it to know the instruction it got was accurate. And it is unwarranted.) Or was he forgotten? The Catholic Encyclopaedia says that the gospel was written for Bishop Theophilus of Antioch who was made bishop in 169 AD. How could the Church forget the man who received and gave them a precious gospel? However, the fact that we don't know the man's name and he has not signed his books despite mailing them to a friend is a strong hint that the author was a deceptive person or that the people who first had the gospel were ashamed of who the author was and thought him shifty.

We know that Luke was kept private for there is evidence that somebody was able to hack pieces off it. For example, in Luke 4:21-30 we are told first that Jesus made a great impression in a synagogue where he was speaking. Next we are told that they said, "This is surely Joseph's son", meaning that they supposed that he was good for nothing seeing as who his father was and meaning that Jesus' life before that had been too normal. Then Jesus tells them that the saying, "Physician heal yourself", applies to him meaning that there was something the matter with him and he could not cure himself. Then he tells them that they will not accept him and he deliberately provokes them showing that he was a troublemaker who encourages sin and ends up nearly being murdered by them by being fired over a cliff. But there was nothing in what Jesus said that could have made them react so strongly so something was excised. The reason why Jesus quoted the saying is also excised.

Some say that since Paul mentioned something that was said in the gospel that he meant the Luke gospel. They come to that conclusion that Luke was written by then for Luke was Paul's companion so Luke is the gospel he means (Eusebius, The History of the Church, 3:4). But Paul said his epistles were his gospel book. Luke was written a long time after Paul left the scene for it does not embody much of Paul's spirit. There is no stress on salvation by faith despite being an unrepentant sinner or on the death and resurrection to the exclusion of everything else. It would have taken Luke a long time to change when he was such a trusted soul and friend. He would have named himself as author in case people would think he did not seem to be the Luke who was by Paul's side.

The gospels were written in different places so Matthew and Luke would have been composed long after Mark was written for it would have taken a long time for the book to circulate so that they could steal its stories.

Luke says that Jesus was descended in a direct line from David (3). This could only be written after the Temple was destroyed because the records in it say otherwise. We know they did for Pilate and the people were sceptical about Jesus' royal status as heir to the throne.

But the gospel says Pilate put up a king of the Jews sign over Jesus' head on the cross. The historical Pilate might have put it up for sarcasm. Or perhaps some gospeller decided Pilate would have done something like that for sarcasm though it is very unlikely that he would have and that Pilate did not tell the Jews he was being sarcastic when they confronted him for putting that wording on the sign. Had his sign not been sarcastic then he would have been slaughtered by the Romans. It is obvious nobody would believe the sign was sarcasm if the gospel allegation that Israel regarded Jesus as king were a true story!

Jesus tells his disciples, not necessarily just the twelve, that they will desire to see a day of the Son of Man and will not see it (Luke 17:22). Luke was written after they were all dead which was how he knew they would see Jesus no more some day.

Luke 22:36-38 has Jesus telling his men to buy swords. The fact that the author made no effort to explain this episode away and keep presenting Jesus as a man of peace suggests that this was written at the time of the Bar Kochba revolt in the second century when it was thought that there would be nothing to fear from either the intolerant Jews or the equally intolerant Romans. It also suggests that the gospel was written for people outside the Empire and away from the Jews. It could be taken as a sign that the gospel was hidden but it is more an indication of publication for the gospeller would not have wanted anything controversial to leak out.

Luke finishes with the ascension and starts his sequel the Book of Acts with a new ascension story. Did he forget he already wrote about it? If he did then Acts was written a long time after Luke and that Luke was hidden when the author could not read it. But Luke's purpose is to add more detail to the story of the ascension. Jesus tells the apostles in Acts that it is not for them to know when the kingdom will be delivered back to Israel from the Romans. Jesus trusted them and would have told them but if they were never going to see it there would have been no point. This suggests that the apostles were dead and John the last of them died in the nineties. Luke would not have put in such an unedifying saying except to give a clue of the time of writing. Acts was probably written soon after Luke. Theophilus needed these books for he was a sceptic and

needed to be sure. When Luke went to such trouble as to give him a Gospel he was more than keen to convert him and fast. But a second book was needed for the man was still dissatisfied. So it would have been written soon after Luke.

In an interesting Christian book, *Answers to Tough Questions* (page 18), it is argued that since the Book of Acts records the life of Paul and ends abruptly without describing his death which took place in 64 AD it must have been written when Paul was alive. Acts was the sequel to the Lucan gospel which would imply that Luke was a little while older than it. This is called "strong testimony" by the crafty writer to an early date but it is strongly weak. The end of Acts could have been lost or perhaps Luke could not finish the book for some reason. Luke wrote his gospel with a beginning and an end. He wrote a beginning for Acts. He wrote an introduction to Acts for his friend, Theophilus. He was so professional with writing starts and finishes and he would not have sent his friend a book that just stops abruptly and does not end anyway. The rest of Acts is missing. Probability is against the notion that the abrupt end proves that the book was composed when Paul was alive. What happened "Luke" that he could not write any more?

Some say that the ending is not abrupt for it just ends by saying that Paul had two years of peace and welcomed all who wanted to listen to his preaching about Jesus. But it is for it won't go on to tell us what happened to Paul after the two years. It says the two years are past so what happened to Paul after the two years of peace ended. A man who wanted us to know about Paul and who went to the trouble of giving us a lot of surplus detail about him would not have finished like that.

The abruptness suggests that there were so few copies of the book that when somebody lost the ending it was gone forever.

Also, note that one of Pilate's successors, Festus, said that Paul was mad for saying Jesus rose and appeared to him (Acts 26:24). Festus wished Paul no harm and Paul never told him to check him and his Jesus tale out. This shows that the author thought that Festus could not study the Roman records about Jesus and the happenings at the tomb. The real Luke would have known about them if they existed. If Luke had been much of a Christian, he would have thought of saying there were records even if there were none so the author was not Luke. Whoever wrote the Luke gospel, did so many years after many of the records were destroyed in the Bar Kochba revolt in the second century and misunderstood why he could not locate any. Why were there none? The real reason could have been that the stories about Jesus were lies.

Acts says that King Agrippa was scared of being turned Christian by Paul when he said that everything he preached about Jesus was in the Law and the Prophets. That is a lie for it is appalling evidence and if there were historical affidavits Agrippa would have been more interested in them. These lies are about events that allegedly took place in 60 AD. So, Acts was written a long time after that to get away with the lies. And Festus is portrayed as stupidly thinking that he couldn't get Paul charged (Acts 25:27) though there was a way according to Acts 23:26-10. After his years of experience! Read the note on Acts 25:27 in the New American Bible. A lie like that could only be told decades after the alleged event.

The introduction to Luke in the NAB Catholic Bible says that the early traditions declare that Luke and Acts were written about 75 AD. The books are hard to date (*Biblical Dictionary, Luke, Gospel of*) so tradition is the only real help in that it gives us a date that we can't go any earlier from. It is good for nothing else. Tradition is simply saying it is not older than 75 AD but it could be a lot younger. We have no reason to question that Luke is definitely not older than 75 AD.

Marcion, who edited a gospel thought to be Luke's in the second century, is not relevant to the dating question concerning Luke. There is no proof that Marcion rewrote or revised Luke near the middle of the second century for what he used was most probably the forerunner of Luke.