

Evidence from Early Church Fathers

The Gospel of Matthew

Papias - "Matthew composed the sayings in Hebrew and each person interpreted them as best he could."

Justin Martyr - "For in the memoirs (i.e. Gospels) of the apostles and their successors it is written..."

Irenaeus - "Matthew published among the Hebrews a written gospel in their own tongue while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and founding the church."

Clement - "Of all those who had been with the Lord, only Matthew and John left us their recollections, and tradition says they took to writing perforce. Matthew had first preached to the Hebrews, and when he was on the point of going to others he transmitted in writing in his native language the Gospel according to himself, and thus supplied by writing the lack of his own presence to those from whom he was sent."

The Gospel of Mark

Papias - "The elder (John) used to say, 'Mark, having become Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately everything he remembered, though not in order, of the things either said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward followed Peter, who had no intention of giving an ordered account of the Lord's sayings. Consequently Mark did nothing wrong in writing down some things as he remembered them, for he made it his one concern not to omit anything he heard of make any false statement in them.'"

Irenaeus - "After their (Peter and Paul's) departure, Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter."

Clement - "A great light of godliness shone upon the minds of Peter's listeners, and they were not satisfied with a single hearing or with his oral teaching. So, with all kinds of exhortations, they begged Mark, since he was Peter's follower, to leave behind a written record of the teaching given to them verbally, and did not quit until they had persuaded the man, and thus they became the immediate cause of the scripture called 'The Gospel according to Mark.' And they say that the apostle, aware of what had occurred because the Spirit had revealed it to him, was pleased with their zeal and sanctioned the writing for study in the churches."

The Gospel of Luke

Irenaeus - "Luke also, who was a follower of Paul, put down in a book the gospel which was preached by him."

Muratorian Fragment - "The third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke. Luke, the well-known physician, after the ascension of Christ, when Paul had taken him with him as one zealous for the law, composed it in his own name, according to the general belief. Yet he himself had not seen the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain events, so indeed he begins to tell the story from the birth of John."

Tertullian - "Luke was not an apostle, but only an apostolic man ... not a master, but a disciple, and so inferior to a master - at least as far as subsequent to him as the apostle Paul whom he followed ... was subsequent to the others. Even Luke's form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul."

Origen - "Thirdly, that according to Luke, who wrote for those who from the Gentiles came to believe the Gospel that was praised by Paul."

The Gospel according to John

Justin Martyr - "In the memoirs, which I say have been composed by the apostles and those who followed them."

Irenaeus - "Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who had even rested on his breast, himself also gave forth the Gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia."

Muratorian Canon - "The fourth of the Gospels is that of John, one of the disciples. To his fellow disciples and bishops, who had been urging him to write, he said, 'Fast with me today for three days, and what will be revealed to each one let us tell it to one another.' In the same night it was revealed to Andrew that John should write down all things in his own name while all of them should review it."

Clement - "John, it is said, used all the time a message which was not written down, and at last took to writing for the following cause. The three gospels which had been written before were distributed to all including himself; it is said he welcomed them and testified to their truth but said there was only lacking to narrative the account of what was done by Christ at first and at the beginning of the preaching ... They say John was asked to relate in his own gospel the period passed over in silence by the former evangelists."

Tertullian - "We lay it down as our first position, that the evangelical Testament has apostles for its authors ... Of the apostles, John and Matthew first instill faith into us; and of apostolic men, Luke and Mark renew it after."