



# Part Three New Testament 2

By

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We have recently looked at the discovered **Greek manuscripts that date to the 2nd century AD**, quotes from early Christian writers that date from the late 1st century to early 2nd century and at **translations of New Testament texts** into other languages that date to the 2nd century.

We move now to evidence for the Pauline epistles having been written in the middle of the 1st century.

[Just a reminder that we're only revealing the evidence available for investigation in early 1971 when I was an atheist. A future series will look at evidence that has been discovered since that time.]

The New Testament includes 27 writings and the Apostle Paul is credited with writing almost half of them. Much of the doctrine and practice of the Christian Church is based on Paul's writings. Did he write what bears his name?

- 1. Romans**
- 2. 1 Corinthians**
- 3. 2 Corinthians**
- 4. Galatians**
- 5. Ephesians**
- 6. Philippians**
- 7. Colossians**
- 8. 1st Thessalonians**
- 9. 2nd Thessalonians**
- 10. 1st Timothy**
- 11. 2nd Timothy**
- 12. Titus**
- 13. Philemon**

[Some Christians believe Paul also wrote Hebrews.]

We might also note that more than half of the Book of Acts is about the life, conversion and ministry of Paul (aka Saul of Tarsus).

Did Paul really write all those letters (known as the *Pauline corpus*) to 1st century Christians and churches? What's the evidence that he did?

## **What Paul Wrote and When**

Scholars who study such things seem to be in basic agreement that Paul did write Romans, 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon and 1 Thessalonians (known as *Proto-Pauline* letters).

They are somewhat divided about his authorship of Colossians and 2 Thessalonians, but many scholars do not believe Paul wrote Ephesians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy or Titus.

Ephesians, Colossians and 2 Thessalonians are sometimes referred to as *Deutero-Pauline Epistles*, meaning they lack scholarly consensus about authenticity. Some scholars believe Paul was the author, some believe he might have been the author, others doubt Paul was the author.

1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are often referred to as *pseudographs*, meaning that other people may have written the letters and claimed Paul's name as the author. Some scholars believe Paul was the author, but others doubt Paul was the author.

## **Determining Ancient Authorship**

How do scholars determine the authorship of ancient writings?

Good question!

- Internal evidence – what we find in the letter itself .. claim of authorship, historical information, geographical information, biographical information.
- Language and style – comparing writing style of other letters believed to have been written by same author (e.g. vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, idioms).
- Content – comparing the content with other letters believed to have been written by same author (e.g. theology, historical data).
- External evidence – ancient writers supporting claim of authorship, ancient writers quoting from writings in question.

## **Generally Accepted Letters**

Let's begin with the seven letters that have little scholarly pushback about Pauline authorship.

I began my investigation believing that nothing in the New Testament was legitimate. I believed Christians made up the writings of the New Testament after Constantine I made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in the early part of the 4th century AD. I didn't believe Jesus and His apostles ever existed (including Paul), so you might imagine my surprise when I discovered evidence that Paul did exist and some of the letters he wrote were from the middle of the 1st century AD. That didn't fit with my narrative that Jesus and His apostles were made up and Christians faked the New Testament 300 years after the "supposed" beginning of Christianity.

Though some atheists of the mid-20th century talked about Jesus of Nazareth as a mythical character (never existed or didn't exist in the way presented in the New Testament), I didn't find the same perspective about Saul of Tarsus (Apostle Paul). Scholarship of that time accepted Saul/Paul as a real person who wrote letters

that impacted the 1st century Christian movement. Even well-known Jesus mythicist Richard Carrier has written in favor of the historicity of Paul (*The Historicity of Paul the Apostle*, Richard Carrier, June 6, 2015, [richardcarrier.info](http://richardcarrier.info)).

## **Internal Evidence**

The seven letters generally accepted as legitimate include a greeting from the Apostle Paul:

- Romans – “Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God ... To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”.
- 1 Corinthians – “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth.”
- 2 Corinthians – “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia.”
- Galatians – “Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who

raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia.”

- Philippians – “Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”
- Philemon – “Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house.”
- 1 Thessalonians – “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Scholars compared Pauline epistles to secular letters from the 1st century and found that Paul’s followed the standard letter outline form from that time period:

- Opening (including prescript and *prooimion*)
- Body (including open, middle and end)
- Closing (including epilogue)
- Postscript (including greetings, wishes)

## **Content of Letters**

Was Paul consistent in his writings? Do people and locations match? Do timelines match? What about Theology and Christology? Do they match from letter to letter or are there contradictions?

- Paul consistently identified himself as a Pharisaic Jew
- Paul consistently proclaimed he was a monotheist
- Paul consistently proclaimed the Trinity (One God in Three Persons)
- Paul consistently proclaimed Jesus is the Son of God and that Jesus appeared to him as he was on his way to Damascus, Syria to persecute followers of Christ
- Paul consistently proclaimed that Jesus fulfilled prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures
- Paul consistently proclaimed the mystery of the Church: Christ creating in Himself one new man (Christian) from two (Jew and Gentile)
- Paul consistently proclaimed Jesus is God and Man

- Paul consistently proclaimed Jesus died according to the Scriptures and rose from the dead according to the Scriptures
- Paul consistently proclaimed Jesus loves His people
- Paul consistently proclaimed Jesus would return for His people and reward them for what they did for Him during their lives
- Paul consistently proclaimed Jesus would judge the unbelieving people in the world for what they had done

## **External Evidence**

The external evidence for the seven letters is strong. Many of the Apostolic and Church Fathers quoted from Paul's letters.

[Apostolic Father is a Christian leader who knew one or more of Christ's Apostles personally. They were alive in the 1st century and into the 2nd century An early Church Father is a Christian leader who knew an Apostolic Father. They were alive in the 2nd century. Other Church Fathers were Christian leaders who lived during the 2nd and 3rd centuries and may have known early Church Fathers.]

Four of the Apostolic Fathers who quoted from Paul were Clement of Rome, Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius of Antioch.

- Clement of Rome – Born in Rome in the early part of the 1st century AD .. knew some of Christ's Apostles personally (e.g. Paul, Peter) .. wrote a letter to the Corinthians in which he quoted from Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, 1 Corinthians, Philippians, Matthew and Luke.
- Papias of Hierapolis – Born in Hierapolis in the second half of the 1st century AD and reportedly knew John the Apostle and Polycarp personally .. authored five writings (*An Exposition of the Lord's Oracles* – only fragments exist today but quoted by other early Church leaders in the 2nd and 3rd centuries) .. reportedly quoted from Matthew and Mark's Gospels and 1 John and 1 Peter
- Polycarp of Smyrna – Born in Smyrna in the second half of the 1st century AD and reportedly disciplined by John the Apostle and may have known other apostles .. wrote a letter to the Philippians and quoted from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Acts, several of Paul's letters (e.g. Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy), 1 and 2 Peter, 1 John and Jude.

- Ignatius of Antioch – Born in Syria in the early part of the 1st century AD .. reportedly disciplesd by John the Apostle and knew Polycarp .. wrote seven letters and quoted from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Acts, and several of Paul's letters (e.g. Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians).

That was strong evidence to me that at least some of Paul's letters had external support from early Church leaders who knew the apostles. Other 2nd century Church fathers who quoted from Paul in their letters include Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Theophilus, Melito of Sardis and Athenagoras.

## **Collections of Letters**

Another powerful external evidence is the collection of Paul's letters from the 2nd century AD. Paul wrote his letters in the mid-1st century and they appeared as collections within a couple of generations.

Whereas the letters of early Church leaders quoted from Paul's letters, a *collection* included copies of the letters – multiple verses/chapters of Paul's writings.

Here are some of the earliest collections of Paul's letters:

### **Marcion – Mid-2nd Century**

- Galatians
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Romans
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
- Laodiceans
- Colossians
- Philippians
- Philemon

## **P46 – Late 2nd Century**

- Romans
- Hebrews
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Ephesians
- Galatians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians

## **Muratorian – Late 2nd Century**

- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- Galatians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians

- Romans
- Titus
- 1 Timothy
- 2 Timothy
- Philemon

## **What About Hebrews?**

Church leader Clement of Alexandria (lived during 2nd and 3rd centuries) believed that Paul wrote the letter to Hebrews. Clement spoke Greek and saw that the letter did not have the style of Paul's other writings. Clement believed Paul wrote the letter in Hebrew and that Luke translated it into Greek. Origen (lived during 2nd and 3rd centuries) believed Paul was responsible for the content in Hebrews, but that someone else composed the letter from that content.

## **Atheist's Conclusion**

My conclusion as an atheist at the time of my investigation was there was sufficient evidence to support the early Church (1st and 2nd centuries) viewing most, if not all, of Paul's letters to be authentic. Those who knew Paul in the 1st century or knew those who knew Paul viewed Paul's letters as authentic and used them as authoritative. The evidence supported Paul writing his letters in mid-1st century AD. That did not convince me to become a theist, but my investigation continued because of the evidence.

It's important to remember that the New Testament is not a "single" writing. It's a "library" of 27 individual writings by apostles who knew Jesus Christ personally or worked with apostles who knew Jesus (e.g. Mark, Luke). That's also true of the Old Testament. The Bible is a library of 66 different "writings" that are sometimes called "books" of the Bible.

The Old Testament was written over a period of about one-thousand years by more than 20 different authors. The New Testament was written over a much shorter period of time (about 50 years) by less than ten authors.

**The Apostle Paul** wrote almost half of all of the writings in the New Testament. They are known as the Church Epistles of the Apostle Paul. We saw that the majority of scholars have agreed through the years that Paul wrote at least half of the epistles that include his name as author: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon and 1 Thessalonians. Scholars are divided about Paul's authorship of the other epistles with his name [though we believe there is ample evidence for Pauline authorship for all the epistles attributed to him].

## **The General Epistles**

So what about the other epistles in the New Testament? They are often called the General Epistles –

1. James
2. 1 & 2 Peter
3. 1, 2 & 3 John
4. Jude

What evidence was available to me when I looked at these writings as an atheist? Do scholars come to any agreement about whether they are authentic? We will use a similar format to our investigation into the authenticity of Paul's writings.

## **James**

Several men in the New Testament are referred to as “James” –

1. The brother of John, son of Zebedee, and one of the Twelve Apostles – “He saw two other brothers, James *the son of* Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.” Matthew 4:21-22
2. The son of Alphaeus and one of the Twelve Apostles (Matthew 10:3)
3. The brother of Jesus according to the flesh – “Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?” Matthew 13:55
4. The father of Judas (not Iscariot) – Luke 6:16

How do we know which “James” wrote the Book of James?

## **Determining Ancient Authorship**

As we saw in our previous study about Paul, scholars determine the authorship of ancient writings through a specific process –

- Internal evidence – what we find in the letter itself .. claim of authorship, historical information, geographical information, biographical information.
- Language and style – comparing writing style of other letters believed to have been written by same author (e.g. vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, idioms).
- Content – comparing the content with other letters believed to have been written by same author (e.g. theology, historical data).
- External evidence – ancient writers supporting claim of authorship, ancient writers quoting from writings in question.

## **Internal Evidence**

*“James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.” James 1:1*

The author identifies himself as “James” and as a “bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The author addressed his letter to “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” From those clues we can determine his name, relationship to God and his Jewish audience.

Dating for the Book/Letter of James is about 48 AD. If that's true, it would be too late for the Apostle James, brother of the Apostle John and son of Zebedee, because he was killed years earlier (Acts 12:2). James son of Alphaeus is a possible candidate since he was also an apostle of Christ. James, the half-brother of Jesus, became a prominent leader in the Jerusalem church and is also a candidate for writing the Book of James.

The author of the James wrote as someone with authority to address Jewish followers of Jesus Christ living in various parts of the Roman Empire. James son of Alphaeus would have had that authority as an apostle, but do we have any external evidence that he ever took that type of position in the early Church? The same question can be asked about James the half-brother of Jesus.

The author of the Book of James did not make any personal references that would share more internal evidence about his identify, but he was knowledgeable of what Jesus said while He was on earth. James also wrote highly about wisdom, morals and ethics, favorite topics of Jesus Christ. He wrote from a Jewish Christian perspective that depended heavily on the teachings of Christ and the Old Testament.

## **Language and Style**

Some scholars find it difficult to believe that James son of Alphaeus or James the half-brother of Jesus could have written the Book of James because of the language and style. The koine Greek used in James is a high quality, which some scholars don't believe would be probable given that both James' were not highly educated. However, many Jews of the 1st century AD spoke and wrote Greek well as a second language. It's also possible that the author of James used a secretary (*amanuensis*) to write for him.

## **Content**

We can't compare the writings of the Book of James to another writing by James because there is only one. However, we may find some comparisons elsewhere in the New Testament.

## **External Evidence**

The external evidence for the authorship of James is strong. Many of the Apostolic and Church Fathers quoted from James' letters, but let's begin with other writings in the New Testament that might give us some indication about the identify of the author of James.

**James son of Alphaeus** is mentioned by name several times in the New Testament –

*“Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.” Matthew 10:2-4*

*“Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, ‘Sons of Thunder’; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.” Mark 3:14-19*

*“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.” Luke 6:12-16*

*“And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James.” Acts 1:13*

It's interesting to note that James son of Alphaeus is mentioned by name only in lists of Jesus' apostles and always in the ninth position on those lists.

James son of Alphaeus was also known as James the Less and that name is mentioned here –

*“There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.” Mark 15:40-41*

**James the brother of Jesus** is mentioned by name many times in the New Testament –

*“When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, ‘Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us?’” Matthew 13:54-56*

*“Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, ‘Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.’ And he departed and went to another place.” Acts 12:16-17*

[Peter’s being supernaturally freed from prison followed the murder of James son of Zebedee, so the James Peter mentioned could be the son of Alphaeus or the brother of Jesus.]

*“Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, ‘Men and brethren, listen to me.’” Acts 15:12-13*

*“And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.” Acts 21:17-19*

*“After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.” 1 Corinthians 15:6-8*

*“Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.” Galatians 1:18-19*

*“... and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.”*

*Galatians 2:9*

*“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.” Galatians 2:11-12*

*“Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James ...” Jude 1:1*

Notice that the Apostle Paul identified the James he visited in Jerusalem three years after his conversion as “the Lord’s brother.” That would seem to rule out James son of Alphaeus. Paul mentioned James several verses later in Galatians 2:9 as one of the “pillars” in the Jerusalem church, along with Peter and John. Given the proximity of the sentences in Paul’s letter, it would seem that the James in Jerusalem was the same in both of Paul’s visits – “the Lord’s brother.” It would seem that Paul would have

mentioned if the James of Galatians 2 was different from the James of Galatians 1.

Something of interest to us as we look at which James wrote the Book of James is that James at the Acts 15 council both spoke and wrote. First what James said as the obvious spokesperson for the council –

*“James answered, saying, ‘Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: ‘After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the Lord who does all these things.’ ‘Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him*

*in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”*

*Acts 15:13-21*

Following James' speech at the council, the apostles, elders and others from the Jerusalem church wrote a letter to the Gentiles in Antioch. Though we don't know if James was a primary author of the letter, his being a chief spokesperson might indicate that he played a strong role in writing the letter.

*“Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, ‘You must be circumcised and keep the law’—to whom we gave no such commandment— it seemed good to us, being assembled with one [i]accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore*

*sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”*

*Acts 15:22-29*

## **Apostolic and Church Fathers**

[Apostolic Father is a Christian leader who knew one or more of Christ's Apostles personally. They were alive in the 1st century. An early Church Father is a Christian leader who knew an Apostolic Father. They were alive in the 2nd century. Other Church Fathers were Christian leaders who lived during the 2nd and 3rd centuries and may have known early Church Fathers or those who knew early Church Fathers.]

Most of the early Church Fathers did not mention the letter from James in their writings (e.g. Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Tertullian), though some scholars believe Irenaeus **may have** alluded to James in *Adversus Haereses* (4.16.2 and 5.1.1). Also, possible allusion to James from Clement of Rome in *Epistle to the Corinthians* and Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians*.

The first Church Father to mention the letter of James is Origen (writing in the early 3rd century). However, he mentioned the letter as 'the Epistle of James that is in circulation', which may have meant he had some doubt about it. However, Origen did quote

from the letter of James in other places without commenting on the authenticity of authorship.

Church historian Eusebius, writing in the early 4th century AD, referred to the letter of James as a “disputed writing” –

*“Among the disputed writings, which are nevertheless recognized by many, are extant the so-called epistle of James and that of Jude, also the second epistle of Peter, and those that are called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person of the same name.” Church History, Chapter XXV, 3*

Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, also writing in the 4th century –

*“Continuing, I must without hesitation mention the scriptures of the New Testament; they are the following: the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, after them the Acts of the Apostles and the seven so-called catholic epistles of the apostles — namely, one of James, two of Peter, then three of John and after these one of Jude. In addition there are fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul written in the following order: the first to the Romans, then two to the Corinthians and*

*then after these the one to the Galatians, following it the one to the Ephesians, thereafter the one to the Philippians and the one to the Colossians and two to the Thessalonians and the epistle to the Hebrews and then immediately two to Timothy , one to Titus and lastly the one to Philemon. Yet further the Revelation of John.” 39th Festal Letter, 367 AD*

Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, both compiled in the 4th century AD, include the Epistle of James as part of the New Testament.

Augustine wrote Jerome in the early part of the 5th century and quoted from James. He called James “the apostle” –

*“... but the question which I now submit to you from the writings of the Apostle James is intimately connected with the course of conduct in which we live, and in which, with a view to life eternal, we endeavour to please God.”*

## **Atheist's Conclusion**

My conclusion as an atheist at the time of my investigation was that the Book of James might not be authentic, even though it was included in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. The lack of mentioning or quoting from James by many early Church Fathers, Origen's cautious mentioning of the letter and Eusebius's reference to the letter of James as a "disputed writing" led me to look at James with caution.

[I do not have that caution now as a Christian, but am reporting my conclusion as an atheist almost 50 years ago.]

# 1 Peter

Peter was one of the first men Jesus chose to become a disciple and apostle.

*“And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him.” Matthew 4:18-20*

*“One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, ‘You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas’ (which is translated, A Stone).” John 1:40 42*

Peter's name is mentioned in the New Testament more times than any other apostle, except for Paul. Peter was a fisherman with a strong personality. He often spoke first among the apostles and made many boasts prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter was also the first apostle to speak to the crowds in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost.

*“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words...’” Acts 2:14ff*

So, is the man named Peter found in the Gospels and the Book of Acts the same man who wrote the New Testament letter known as 1 Peter?

## **Internal Evidence**

*“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.” 1 Peter 1:1-2*

The letter begins with a greeting that is similar to other letters of the 1st century AD. The author identifies himself as “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.”

He writes to the “pilgrims of the Dispersion.” The Greek words here are interesting:

εκλεκτοις παρεπιδημοις διασπορας (*eklektois parepidēmois diasporas*)

εκλεκτοις – chosen out, elect, choice, select

παρεπιδημοις – sojourning in a strange place, “one who comes from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there by the side of the natives” (Thayer)

διασπορας – scattering of seed, scattering of Jews into Gentile nations, dispersion of Jews

We would expect Peter, apostle to the circumcision (Jews – Galatians 2; Acts 15), to write his letter(s) to Jews even as we would expect Paul, apostle to the uncircumcision (Gentiles – Galatians 2; Acts 15), to write his letters primarily to Gentiles.

The author of 1 Peter addressed the issue of how these believing Jews should behave in foreign countries.

*“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for*

*the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.” 1 Peter 2:11-17*

The author calls himself a “fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ” (1 Peter 5:1). We know from the Gospels and Acts that Peter was both an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ.

The author wrote at the end of the letter that “Silvanus, our faithful brother” helped write the letter. We know from Acts 15 that Silvanus (also known as Silus) was one of the Jewish members of the Jerusalem church who accompanied Paul and Barnabas to deliver the council’s letter to the Gentile believers in Antioch. Silvanus (Silas) would have been someone Peter knew well.

The author also mentioned “Mark my son” at the end of the letter. We know from Acts 12 that Peter visited the house of Mark’s mother. We also know from Acts that Peter knew Barnabas well (Acts 4; 11; 15) and that Mark was Barnabas’ cousin (Colossians 4:10).

The internal evidence seems to point to the Apostle Peter as the author, but what about external evidence?

## **External Evidence**

Several leaders in the early Church either quoted from or mentioned 1 Peter as being written by the Apostle Peter.

*“... and Peter says in his Epistle: “Whom, not seeing, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, ye have believed, ye shall rejoice with joy unspeakable ...” Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book IV, Chapter IX.2*

*“And for this reason Peter says ‘that we have not liberty as a cloak of maliciousness,’ but as the means of testing and evidencing faith.” Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book IV, Chapter XVI.5*

*“And this it is which has been said also by Peter: “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom now also, not seeing, ye believe; and believing, ye shall rejoice with joy unspeakable.” Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter VII.2*

*“Accordingly, Peter says, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” Origen, Against Celsus, Book VIII*

*“For occasionally the mind, when watchful, and casting away from it what is evil, calls to itself the aid of the good; or if it be, on the contrary, negligent and slothful, it makes room through insufficient caution for these spirits, which, lying in wait secretly like robbers, contrive to rush into the minds of men when they see a lodgment made for them by sloth; as the Apostle Peter says, ‘that our adversary the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.’” Origen, de Principiis Book III*

*“Wherefore also Peter says: ‘Laying therefore aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisy, and envy, and evil speaking, as new-born babes, desire the milk of the word, that ye may grow by it to salvation; if ye have tasted that the Lord is Christ.’” Clement of Alexandria, Book I – Paedagogus (The Instructor), Chapter VI*

*“For,’ says Peter, ‘the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.” Clement of Alexandria, Book III – Paedagogus (The Instructor), Chapter XI*

*“For as it is enjoined on them, ‘to be subject to their masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward,’ as Peter says; so fairness, and forbearance, and kindness, are what well becomes the masters. For he says: ‘Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be humble,” and so forth, ‘that ye may inherit a blessing,” excellent and desirable.”*

*“Besides, Peter says, “Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house;” meaning the place of the angelic abode, guarded in heaven. “For you,” he says, “who are kept by the power of God, by faith and contemplation, to receive the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” Clement of Alexandria, Fragments, I*

*“Was it because Christ was both a rock and a stone? For we read of His being placed “for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence.” Tertullian, Against Marcion Book IV, Chapter XIII*

*“Even as also the Apostle Peter laid down, saying, ‘Thus also shall baptism in like manner make you safe.’ Cyprian, Epistle LXXIV*

*“But he follows Christ who stands in His precepts, who walks in the way of His teaching, who follows His footsteps and His ways, who imitates that which Christ both did and taught; in accordance with what Peter also exhorts and warns, saying, “Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that ye should follow His steps.” Cyprian, Treatise X On Jealousy and Envy*

*“One epistle of Peter, that called the first, is acknowledged as genuine. And this the ancient elders used freely in their own writings as an undisputed work.” Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 3*

There may also be parallels to some of the text in 1 Peter in some of these early Church writings:

- *Epistle to the Corinthians*, Clement of Rome
- *Barnabas and Hermas*, Ignatius
- *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians*, Polycarp
- *On Prayer*, Tertullian
- *De Corona*, Tertullian
- *Epistle of Ignatius to the Antiochians*, Ignatius
- *The Instructor Book III*, Clement of Alexandria
- *Against Heresies Book I*, Irenaeus
- *Cyprian Epistles LXXIII & LXXV*, Cyprian
- *Epistle of Ignatius to the Antiochians*, Ignatius

The external evidence seems to point to the Apostle Peter as the author.

## **Language and Style**

One of the arguments against the Apostle Peter writing 1 Peter is that Peter was an illiterate fisherman who wouldn't have strong Greek writing skills.

There does not seem to be a strong argument that Peter was illiterate. He ran a fishing business in Galilee that included doing business with people of different ethnic backgrounds (e.g. Greeks, Romans and Jews). We also have the author's own words that "By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand" (1 Peter 5:12). We know from Paul's letters to the Corinthians and Thessalonians that Silvanus traveled with him into Greek territories. Silvanus could certainly have taken Peter's words and written them in the Greek language.

## **Content**

The comparison of content between 1 Peter and 2 Peter is one of the reasons that some scholars do not believe that the Apostle Peter wrote 2 Peter.

## **2 Peter**

### **Internal Evidence**

The author identifies himself as “Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ.” However, the difference in writing style and Greek usage is one internal problem with accepting 2 Peter as written by the apostle.

One explanation is that Peter used an *amanuenses* (secretary e.g. Silvanus) to write 1 Peter, but wrote 2 Peter himself. Another explanation is that Peter used different *amanuenses* for each letter, though 2 Peter doesn't mention the author using a secretary.

The author identified the letter as the second one he had written.

*“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.” 2 Peter 3:1-2*

In addition to identifying himself as the Apostle Peter, the author also mentioned a situation that Peter would have experienced personally as an eyewitness to Jesus' earthly ministry.

*“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.” 2 Peter 1:16-18*

The author also expressed an understanding that his death was close, which might fit with the apostle's personal situation.

*“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.” 2 Peter 1:12-15*

## **External Evidence**

While there is not a lot of external evidence for the Apostle Peter being the author of 2 Peter, there may be parallels to some of the text in some of these early Church writings:

- *Stromata Book I*, Clement of Alexandria
- *1 Clement*, Clement of Rome
- *An Answer to the Jews*, Tertullian
- *Against Heresies Book V*, Irenaeus

Some of the early Church fathers supported the belief that the Apostle Peter wrote 2 Peter: including Jerome, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasus, Augustine and Gregory of Nazianus.

Some of the early Church fathers disputed Peter's authorship of 2 Peter: including Origen of Alexandria, Cheltenham and Eusebius.

## **Atheist's Conclusion**

My conclusion as an atheist at the time of my investigation was that while there was sufficient internal and external evidence to support the Apostle Peter authoring 1 Peter, there was not enough evidence to support the Apostle Peter authoring 2 Peter.

[I now accept Petrine authorship of 2 Peter based on further study of the New Testament since becoming a Christian, but this series is about my conclusions as an atheist in 1971.]

We move now to the letters of the Apostle John.

## 1 John

*“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” 1 John 1:1-7*

## **Internal Evidence**

The opening to 1 John is similar to the opening of the Gospel of John and other portions. That is one reason many scholars believe the same author wrote both.

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1*

*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14*

*“Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” John 16:24*

*“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the*

*light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” John 3:19-21*

1 John does not identify the author. He does refer to his readers as “little children” nine times in the letter, which may go to the author’s advanced age and the type of relationship he had with his readers. The Apostle John may have been the last apostle alive toward the end of the 1st century AD, so the reference to “little children” may have been a demonstration of his apostolic position and deep love for them as the last representative of the original apostles of Christ.

The style of the the Gospel of John and 1 John is similar in many ways. The author wrote in simple Greek and used similar contrasting figures (e.g. life and death, love and hate, truth and lies, light and darkness).

The author identifies himself as an eyewitness of Christ –

- “which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled” 1 John 1
- “that which we have seen and heard we declare to you” 1 John
- “we beheld His glory” Gospel of John

The author wrote with authority –

- “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God.”
- “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”
- “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”
- “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”
- “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death.”
- “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

The author wrote with a purpose –

- “These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.”
- “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”

Gnosticism was a problem in the 1st century AD. Paul addressed it in some of his letters (e.g. Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus) and the author of 1 John also took on the problem facing the early Church (e.g. early **Cerinthianism**, **Docetism**).

The ending of the letter also demonstrates the author's purpose –

*“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” 1 John 5:19-21*

## **External Evidence**

The mention of keeping themselves from idols brings up the issue of when the author wrote 1 John and from where. Would the author have mentioned the keeping of oneself from idols if he had written the letter from Israel to an audience living in Israel?

Leaders in the early Church wrote that John the Apostle moved to Ephesus before the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in 70 AD. Ephesus was well-known for its devotion to the goddess Artemis (Diana), which may be the reason for the “keep yourselves from idols” mention at the end of 1 John.

Some of the earliest Church leaders knew John the Apostle personally. Papias, Ignatius and Polycarp are three examples.

Papias was born in the 1st century AD and became bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia. Most of Papias' writings have been lost, except for brief excerpts from 2nd century bishop Irenaeus of Lyons and 4th century Church historian Eusebius.

Irenaeus wrote this about Papias –

*“And these things are bone witness to in writing by Papias, the hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp, in his fourth book; for there were five books compiled by him.” Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter XXXIII, Section 4*

Eusebius wrote this about Papias –

*“And the same writer uses testimonies from the first Epistle of John ...” Church History, Book III, Chapter XXXIX, 16*

Ignatius was born in the 1st century AD and became bishop of Antioch, Syria. He died about 110 AD. Ignatius wrote what appears to be a reference to 1 John 3:7a and alludes to 1 John 3:10 –

*“None of these things is hidden from you, if ye be perfect in your faith and love toward Jesus Christ, for these are the beginning and end of life — faith is the beginning and love is the end — and the two being found in unity are God, while all things else follow in their train unto true nobility. No man professing faith sinneth, and no man possessing love hateth. \_The tree is manifest from its fruit;\_ so they that profess to be Christ’s shall be seen through their actions. For the Work is not a thing of profession now, but is seen then when one is found in the power of faith unto the end.” Ignatius to the Ephesians, Chapter 14*

Polycarp was born about 69 AD and lived until about 155 AD. He was the bishop of Smyrna. Polycarp wrote what appears to be a portion of 1 John 4:3 –

*“For every one who shall not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is antichrist: and whosoever shall not confess the testimony of the Cross, is of the devil; and whosoever shall pervert the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts and say that there is neither resurrection nor judgment, that man is the firstborn of Satan.” Polycarp to the Philippians, 7:1*

Irenaeus was a student of Polycarp and wrote about Papias and Polycarp in the 2nd century AD –

*“Now testimony is borne to these things in writing by Papias, an ancient man, who was a hearer of John, and a friend of Polycarp, in the fourth of his books; for five books were composed by him.”*  
*Fragments of Papias from the Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*

Irenaeus also wrote about the Apostle John living in Ephesus –

*“But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time,- a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth, than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the heretics. He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus caused many to turn away from the aforesaid heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles,-that, namely, which is handed down by the Church. There are also those who heard from him that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, ‘Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is*

*within.’ And Polycarp himself replied to Marcion, who met him on one occasion, and said, “Dost thou know me? “I do know thee, the first-born of Satan.” Such was the horror which the apostles and their disciples had against holding even verbal communication with any corrupters of the truth; as Paul also says, ‘A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.’ There is also a very powerful Epistle of Polycarp written to the Philippians, from which those who choose to do so, and are anxious about their salvation, can learn the character of his faith, and the preaching of the truth. Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles.” Against Heresies, Book 3, Chapter 3, Section 4.*

Tertullian, another 2nd and 3rd century leader of the Church, quoted from or alluded to several verses in 1 John –

*“But if there be any (heresies) which are bold enough to plant themselves in the midst Of the apostolic age, that they may thereby seem to have been handed down by the apostles, because they existed in the time of the apostles, we can say: Let them produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that [that first bishop of theirs] bishop shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor some one of the apostles or of apostolic men,—a man, moreover, who continued stedfast with the apostles. For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John; as also the church of Rome, which makes Clement to have been ordained in like manner by Peter. In exactly the same way the other churches likewise exhibit (their several worthies), whom, as having been appointed to their episcopal places by apostles, they regard as transmitters of the apostolic seed. Let the heretics contrive something of the same kind. For after their blasphemy, what is there that is unlawful for them (to attempt)? But should they*

*even effect the contrivance, they will not advance a step. For their very doctrine, after comparison with that of the apostles, will declare, by its own diversity and contrariety, that it had for its author neither an apostle nor an apostolic man; because, as the apostles would never have taught things which were self-contradictory, so the apostolic men would not have inculcated teaching different from the apostles, unless they who received their instruction from the apostles went and preached in a contrary manner. To this test, therefore will they be submitted for proof by those churches, who, although they derive not their founder from apostles or apostolic men (as being of much later date, for they are in fact being founded daily), yet, since they agree in the same faith, they are accounted as not less apostolic because they are akin in doctrine. Then let all the heresies, when challenged to these two tests by our apostolic church, offer their proof of how they deem themselves to be apostolic. But in truth they neither are so, nor are they able to prove themselves to be what they are not. Nor are they admitted to peaceful relations and communion by such churches as are in any way connected with apostles, inasmuch as they are in no sense themselves apostolic because of their diversity as to the mysteries of the faith.” Prescription against Heretics, Chapter XXXII*

*“Read the testimony of John: ‘That which we have seen, which we have heard, which we have looked upon with our eyes, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.’” A Treatise on the Soul, Chapter XVII*

*“John, in fact, exhorts us to lay down our lives even for our brethren, affirming that there is no fear in love: “For perfect love casteth out fear, since fear has punishment; and he who fears is not perfect in love.” What fear would it be better to understand (as here meant), than that which gives rise to denial? What love does he assert to be perfect, but that which puts fear to flight, and gives courage to confess? What penalty will he appoint as the punishment of fear, but that which he who denies is about to pay, who has to be slain, body and soul, in hell?” Scorpiace, Chapter XII*

Clement of Alexandria was a bishop in the late 2nd century and early 3rd century. He quoted from 1 John many times in his writings, but what we have today are fragments of those writings. Here are two examples from his comments on 1 John –

*“Chap. i. I. ‘That which was from the beginning; which we have seen with our eyes; which we have heard.’ Following the Gospel according to John, and in accordance with it, this Epistle also contains the spiritual principle. What therefore he says, ‘from the beginning,’ the Presbyter explained to this effect, that the beginning of generation is not separated from the beginning of the Creator. For when he says, ‘That which was from the beginning,’ he touches upon the generation without beginning of the Son, who is co-existent with the Father. There was; then, a Word importing an unbeginning eternity; as also the Word itself, that is, the Son of God, who being, by equality of substance, one with the Father, is eternal and uncreate. That He was always the Word, is signified by saying, “In the beginning was the Word.” But by the expression, ‘we have seen with our eyes,’ he signifies the Lord’s presence in the flesh, ‘and our hands have handled,’ he says, ‘of the Word of life.’ He means not only His flesh, but the virtues of the Son, like the sunbeam which penetrates to the lowest places,—*

*this sunbeam coming in the flesh became palpable to the disciples. It is accordingly related in traditions, that John, touching the outward body itself, sent his hand deep down into it, and that the solidity of the flesh offered no obstacle, but gave way to the hand of the disciple.”*

*“Chap. ii. I. ‘And if any man sin,’ he says, ‘we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ.’ For so the Lord is an advocate with the Father for us. So also is there, an advocate, whom, after His assumption, He vouchsafed to send. For these primitive and first-created virtues are unchangeable as to substance, and along with subordinate angels and archangels, whose names they share, effect divine operations. Thus also Moses names the virtue of the angel Michael, by an angel near to himself and of lowest grade. The like also we find in the holy prophets; but to Moses an angel appeared near and at hand.”*  
*Fragments of Clement of Alexandria, III, Comments on the First Epistle of John*

## **Atheist's Conclusion**

My conclusion as an atheist at the time of my investigation was that 1 John was most likely an authentic letter written by the Apostle John in the latter part of the 1st century AD.

## 2 John

*“The Elder, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.” 2 John 1:1-3*

### Internal Evidence

The author of 2 John did not identify himself as the Apostle John, but as ‘the Elder’ (*ho presbyteros*). The term was used for someone of advanced age and was used in Jewish and Christian groups for an older person who had a position of authority or influence. They were also an example of strong moral character. In the case of the Apostle John, he would have been the last of Christ’s Apostles and an elderly man at the time of the writing of 2 John (believed to be late 1st century AD).

The greeting, 'To the elect lady and her children,' does not give a specific identity to the recipients of the letter. The author may have written to a woman and her children or to a local church (elect lady) and members of that church (her children). The Greek word for 'lady' is *kyria*, which is the feminine of *kurios* (lord, master, sir). The Greek word for 'children' is *teknois* (child, descendant, inhabitant).

The author ends the short letter with –

*“Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.” 2 John 1:12-13*

The term 'elect sister' may have referred to the sister of the woman the author was writing to or another church. It may be that the author lived near the woman or the church he mentioned as 'elect sister.' His desire was to visit and share more thoughts with the 'elect lady' and her 'children.'

The term 'elect' is the same word the Apostle Paul used in his letters – *eklektē* (chosen out, select out, elect by personal choice). The Greek word translated 'sister' is *adelphēs* (sister, woman in an assembly).

## **Major Points in 2 John**

The author included three major points in his letter which are similar to what we read in 1 John –

1. walk in Christ
2. obey His commandments
3. beware of deceivers

The “walk in Christ” the author mentioned in 2 John is “in truth” and “in love.”

The commandments the author mentioned in 2 John are similar to the 'walk':

*"I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it." 2 John 1:4-6*

That is similar to what the author of 1 John wrote:

*"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." 1 John 2:3*

In that context the author of 1 John mentioned the importance of loving the 'brethren,' not just in word or tongue, "but in deed and in truth."

The author of 1 John also wrote – “Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him.” (1 John 3:24)

Another major point in 2 John is to “beware of deceivers.” That is also similar to what the author of 1 John wrote –

*“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.” 2 John 1:7-11*

*“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.*

*But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” 1 John 2:18-23*

The theology of 2 John is consistent with that of 1 John and the Gospel of John.

## **Language and Style**

The language and style of 2 John are similar to 1 John and to the Gospel of John. However, some scholars believe the person who identified himself as ‘the Elder’ in 2 John was not John the Apostle.

## External Evidence

Early Church Fathers quoted from 2 John and credited the Apostle John with authorship –

*“These are they against whom the Lord has cautioned us beforehand; and His disciple, in his Epistle already mentioned, commands us to avoid them, when he says: “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Take heed to them, that ye lose not what ye have wrought.” And again does he say in the Epistle: “Many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit which separates Jesus Christ is not of God, but is of antichrist.” These words agree with what was said in the Gospel, that “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” Wherefore he again exclaims in his Epistle, “Every one that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, has been born of God; ” knowing Jesus Christ to be one and the same, to whom the gates of heaven were opened, because of His taking upon Him flesh: who shall also come in the same*

*flesh in which He suffered, revealing the glory of the Father.”*  
*Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, Book III, Chapter 16.8*

*“And John, the disciple of the Lord, has intensified their condemnation, when he desires us not even to address to them the salutation of “good-speed; “for, says he, “He that bids them be of good-speed is a partaker with their evil deeds; ” and that with reason, “for there is no good-speed to the ungodly,” saith the Lord. ”* *Against Heresies, Book I, Chapter 16.3*

The Seventh Council of Carthage was called by Cyprian of Carthage in the mid-3rd century to consider the baptism of heretics (*Lapsi* – excommunicated church leaders and members because of heretical beliefs). 87 bishops voted on the baptism of heretics. One of them quoted from 2 John –

*“Secundinus of Cadius said: Since our Lord Christ says, ‘He who is not with me is against me;’ and John the apostle calls those who depart from the Church Antichrists-undoubtedly enemies of Christ-any such as are called Antichrists cannot minister the grace of saving baptism. And therefore I think that those who flee from the snares of the heretics to the Church*

*must be baptized by us, who are called friends of God, of His condescension.”*

Tertullian had an allusion to 2 John 1:7-10 – “But you affirm it is ‘a human Antichrist;’ for by this name heretics are called in John.”

Tertullian, *On Fasting*, Chapter XI

## 3 John

*“The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.” 3*

*John 1:1*

### Internal Evidence

The opening to 3 John is similar in that the author identified himself as ‘the Elder.’ What is different from the greeting in 2 John is that the author of 3 John identified the recipient – ‘beloved Gaius.’ Could this be the same Gaius mentioned in the Book of Acts and two of Paul’s letters?

*“So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions.” Acts*

*19:29*

*“And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.”*

*Acts 20:4*

*“Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother.” Romans 16:23*

*“I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius ...” 1 Corinthians 1:14*

We don't know for sure from internal documents. The name Gaius (Caius) was a common name in the 1st century AD. Some scholars believe the New Testament mentions multiple men by that name:

- Gaius of Corinth
- Gaius of Macedonia
- Gaius of Derbe
- Gaius of John 3

There are several similarities between 2 and 3 John –

- Author calls himself ‘the elder’ (2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1)
- Recipients are called those whom the author ‘loves in the truth’ (2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1)
- Recipients ‘walk in the truth’ (2 John 1:4; 3 John 1:3)

- Recipients are an occasion of 'great rejoicing' (2 John 1:4; 3 John 1:3)
- The elder received good reports about them (2 John 1:4; 3 John 1:3, 5)
- Warnings in both letters (2 John 1:8; 3 John 1:9)
- Elder wants to visit them (2 John 1:12; 3 John 1:14)
- Other people also sent their greetings (2 John 1:13; 3 John 1:14)

The author of 3 John also mentions two other men:

*"I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true."*

*3 John 1:9-12*

The name 'Diotrephes' is found only once in the New Testament – in 3 John. The 'elder' wrote to 'the church', but Diotrephes did not receive him. Diotrephes also refused to receive other 'brethren' and even put some out of the church. Diotrophes also prated against the 'elder' "with malicious words." Diotrephes may have been a leader in one of the 1st century churches. The 'elder' said he should "call to mind" the deeds of Diotrephes when he visited the church.

The name 'Demetrius' is found three times –

*"For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen." Acts 19:24*

*"Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another." Acts 19:38*

*"Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true." 3 John 12*

There is no evidence from 3 John that the Demetrius mentioned in Acts and the Demetrius mentioned in 3 John are the same person, though that is possible since John ministered in the same city where Demetrius lived (Ephesus). It certainly would be a powerful demonstration of God's love and grace if the enemy of Christ in Acts 19 was the same person mentioned in 3 John.

The theology of 3 John is consistent with that of 1 and 2 John and the Gospel of John.

## **Language and Style**

The language and style of 3 John are similar to 1 John and 2 John and to the Gospel of John. However, some scholars believe the person who identified himself as 'the Elder' in 3 John was not John the Apostle.

## **External Evidence**

Early Church Fathers did not quote from 3 John. That doesn't necessarily mean the letter was not authentic to 'the elder,' but it is interesting that nothing in 3 John was quoted. One of the earliest New Testament Canons also did not mention 3 John. The Muratorian Canon Fragment (approx. 170 AD) also did not include Hebrews, James or 1 and 2 Peter.

Some scholars believe Tertullian may have had an allusion to 3 John 1:11 in *On Monogamy* and Origen may have had an allusion to 3 John 1:14 in his *Commentary on Matthew Book XI*.

## **Atheist's Conclusion**

My conclusion as an atheist at the time of my investigation was that 2 John was most likely an authentic letter written by an 'elder' of the early Church – maybe even the Apostle John. However, the evidence for 3 John was not conclusive because of the lack of early Church Fathers mentioning it in their writings and not being included in the Muratorian Canon Fragment.

[I now accept Johannine authorship of 3 John based on further study of the New Testament since becoming a Christian, but this series is about my conclusions as an atheist in 1971.]

## Revelation

*“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.” REVELATION 1:1-2*

### Internal Evidence

The author of Revelation identifies himself as **John** from the beginning of the writing to the end of the same writing –

*“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:” Revelation 1:4*

*“I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 1:9*

*“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Revelation 21:2*

*“Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.” Revelation 22:8*

The author clearly portrays the writing as being a ‘revelation’ (*apokalupsis*) of Jesus Christ that God gave Him to ‘show’ (*deiknumi*) His ‘servants’ (*doulos*). The author then identified himself as Christ’s ‘servant’ (*doulos*), named John. The author identified himself as someone who was a ‘witness’ (*martureó*) to the ‘word’ (*logos*) of God and to the ‘testimony’ (*marturia*) of Jesus Christ.

That wording is similar to the opening words of 1 John –

*“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” 1 JOHN 1:1-3*

The author of Revelation describes himself as both a servant and witness of Jesus Christ. The fact the author made clear that his name is “John” would seem to have some internal evidential importance. What other men named John would have been in a position in the 1st century AD to describe themselves as both a servant of Jesus Christ and a witness of the testimony of Jesus Christ? John the Baptist died decades before the writing of Revelation. John Mark was usually denoted as Mark in the New Testament.

Other internal evidence is that John located himself on “the island that is called Patmos.” Patmos is a small island in the Aegean Sea. The Roman government used Patmos and other similar islands to relocate political exiles. John said he was on the island “for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ,” which would seem to be the reason he was on Patmos – for preaching the Gospel of Christ.

John wrote that he was “in the Spirit” (*egenomēn en pneumatī*) on the Lord’s Day and heard behind him a “loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.’” That is a statement heard multiple times in Revelation (1:8,

11; 21:6; 22:13). Jesus Christ clearly identifies Himself as the Alpha and Omega –

*“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.’ Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. ‘I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.” REVELATION 22:12-16*

Jesus told John to write to “the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.” (Revelation 1:11b) As we will see in the external evidence, John the Apostle spent the last years of his ministry in Asia. Leaders and members of the seven churches in Asia would have known him personally, so the use of the name ‘John’ would have meant one person to them – the Apostle John.

It would seem internally that John the Apostle is the best candidate for being the writer of Revelation.

## **Language and Style**

The language of Revelation has some differences from other Johannine writings (e.g. Gospel of John, 1 John), but that may be explained in that John was writing what Jesus told him to write to the seven churches and describing what he saw in visions of Heaven and the future.

The description of Jesus as the Word of God and the Lamb (John 1:1; Revelation 19:13) also point to John the Apostle being the writer. The use of the term 'witness' may also point to the Apostle John being the author. He used the term more than any other New Testament writer.

The author of Revelation demonstrated a strong understanding of Old Testament prophecy. Jesus Christ had personally taught John and the other apostles about Old Testament prophecies, especially as they related to Him (Luke 24:44-45).

The Apostle John may have identified himself by name in Revelation because the letter was unusual in its apocalyptic language and style. It's interesting that after introducing himself at the beginning of the letter as "John" three times, he continues throughout Revelation to emphasize the personal pronouns "I" and "me" as a way of drawing the reader back to the earlier name identification. Here are several examples from dozens of "I" and "me" usages –

*"I, John, both your brother and companion ..."* Revelation 1:9

*"Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands ..."* Revelation 1:12

*"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven."* Revelation 4:1

*"And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals."* Revelation 5:1

*“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne ...” Revelation 5:11*

*“Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals ...”  
Revelation 6:1*

*“After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth ...” Revelation 7:1*

*“And I saw the seven angels who stand before God ...”  
Revelation 8:2*

*“I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. ” Revelation 10:1*

*“Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod.” Revelation 11:1*

*“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven ...” Revelation 12:10*

*“Then I stood on the sand of the sea.” Revelation 13:1*

*“Then I looked, and behold ...” Revelation 14:1*

*“Then I saw another sign in heaven ...” Revelation 15:1*

*“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels ...” Revelation 16:1*

*“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me ...” Revelation 17:1*

*“After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven ...” Revelation 18:1*

*“After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven ...” Revelation 19:1*

*“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven ...”  
Revelation 20:1*

*“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth ...” Revelation  
21:1*

*“And he showed me a pure river of water of life ...”*

*Revelation 22:1*

What I found from the beginning to the end of Revelation was an unbroken chain of internal authorial evidence. John wrote from his own personal knowledge and experience. He saw those things and heard those things. That evidence would have been powerful for the Christians in the seven churches in Asia that the Apostle John was the author of the Lord's Revelation.

## **External Evidence**

John the Apostle was well known in the Christian world of the 1st century AD. It's believed he was the last apostle alive after the martyrdom of James, Paul, Peter and other apostles. Some of the early Christian leaders of the 1st and 2nd century wrote about John, so we may learn from their writings what the early Church thought about the identity of the author of Revelation.

Early Church tradition says that Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch were both disciples of the Apostle John. We learn something about their relationship in their letters –

*“I exhort you all therefore to be obedient unto the word of righteousness and to practice all endurance, which also ye saw with your own eyes in the blessed Ignatius and Zosimus and Rufus, yea and in others also who came from among yourselves, as well as in Paul himself and the rest of the Apostles.” Polycarp 9:1, Translated by J.B. Lightfoot*

*“The letters of Ignatius which were sent to us by him, and others as many as we had by us, we send unto you, according as ye gave charge; the which are subjoined to this letter; from which ye will be able to gain great advantage. For they comprise faith and endurance and every kind of edification, which pertaineth unto our Lord. Moreover concerning Ignatius himself and those that were with him, if ye have any sure tidings, certify us.” Polycarp 13:2, Translated by J.B. Lightfoot*

*“Ignatius, who is also Theophorus, unto Polycarp who is bishop of the church of the Smyrnaeans or rather who hath for his bishop God the Father and Jesus Christ, abundant greeting.”*

*Introduction, Ignatius to Polycarp, Translated by J.B. Lightfoot*

*“I salute your most worthy bishop Polycarp, and your venerable presbytery, and your Christ-bearing deacons, my fellow-servants, and all of you individually, as well as generally, in the name of Christ Jesus, and in His flesh and blood, in His passion and resurrection, both corporeal and spiritual, in union with God and you. Grace, mercy, peace, and patience, be with you in Christ for evermore!” Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans, Chapter XII, Translated by Roberts-Donaldson*

*“The Ephesians from Smyrna (whence I also write to you), who are here for the glory of God, as ye also are, who have in all things refreshed me, salute you, along with Polycarp, the bishop of the Smyrnaeans.” Ignatius to the Magnesians, Chapter XV, Translated by Roberts-Donaldson*

*“My soul be for yours and theirs whom, for the honour of God, ye have sent to Smyrna; whence also I write to you, giving thanks unto the Lord, and loving Polycarp even as I do you.”*  
*Ignatius to the Ephesians, Chapter XXI, Translated by Roberts-Donaldson*

Another important connection for us to see is that of Irenaeus to Polycarp. Irenaeus was born in or near Smyrna about 135 AD while Polycarp was bishop there. Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John and Irenaeus is believed to have been a disciple of Polycarp. We have Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* (Books I-V) and some fragments of other writings.

*” For, while I was yet a boy, I saw thee in Lower Asia with Polycarp, distinguishing thyself in the royal court, and endeavouring to gain his approbation. For I have a more vivid recollection of what occurred at that time than of recent events (inasmuch as the experiences of childhood, keeping pace with the growth of the soul, become incorporated with it); so that I can even describe the place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit and discourse—his going out, too, and his coming in—his general mode of life and personal appearance, together with the discourses which he delivered to the people; also how he*

*would speak of his familiar intercourse with John, and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord; and how he would call their words to remembrance. Whatsoever things he had heard from them respecting the Lord, both with regard to His miracles and His teaching, Polycarp having thus received [information] from the eye-witnesses of the Word of life, would recount them all in harmony with the Scriptures. These things, through, God's mercy which was upon me, I then listened to attentively, and treasured them up not on paper, but in my heart; and I am continually, by God's grace, revolving these things accurately in my mind." Irenaeus, Letter to Florinus, Translated by Roberts-Donaldson*

Irenaeus also wrote about another apostolic father who knew the Apostle John. His name was Papias. Irenaeus wrote that Papias was a hearer of John and friend of Polycarp.

*"But I shall not be unwilling to put down, along with my interpretations, whatsoever instructions I received with care at any time from the elders, and stored up with care in my memory, assuring you at the same time of their truth. For I did not, like the multitude, take pleasure in those who spoke much, but in those who taught the truth; nor in those who related*

*strange commandments, but in those who rehearsed the commandments given by the Lord to faith, and proceeding from truth itself. If, then, any one who had attended on the elders came, I asked minutely after their sayings,—what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the Lord's disciples: which things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say.”* *Fragments of Papias from the Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord, Translated by Roberts-Donaldson*

So, what do we learn about John being the author of Revelation from apostolic and early Church fathers?

*“On this account also does John declare in the Apocalypse, ‘And His voice as the sound of many waters.’ For the Spirit [of God] is truly [like] many waters, since the Father is both rich and great. And the Word, passing through all those [men], did liberally confer benefits upon His subjects, by drawing up in writing a law adapted and applicable to every class [among them].”* *Irenaeus, Against Heresies IV, 14.3, Translated by Roberts-Donaldson*

*“Now John, in the Apocalypse, declares that the ‘incense’ is ‘the prayers of the saints.’ Ibid, 17.6*

*“The altar, then, is in heaven (for towards that place are our prayers and oblations directed); the temple likewise [is there], as John says in the Apocalypse, “And the temple of God was opened: ” the tabernacle also: ‘For, behold,’ He says, ‘the tabernacle of God, in which He will dwell with men.’” Ibid, 18.6*

*“John also, the Lord’s disciple, when beholding the sacerdotal and glorious advent of His kingdom, says in the Apocalypse: ‘I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And, being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks One like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle; and His head and His hairs were white, as white as wool, and as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if He burned in a furnace.’” Ibid, 20.11*

*“And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place. Just as our Lord also said, ‘They shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be equal to the angels, the children of the God of the resurrection.’” Justin Martyr, Chapter 81, Translated by Roberts-Donaldson*

*“John, however, in the Apocalypse is charged to chastise those ‘who eat things sacrificed to idols,’ and ‘who commit fornication.’ There are even now another sort of Nicolaitans.” Tertullian, The Prescription Against Heretics, Chapter 33, Translated by Roberts-Donaldson*

*“And although here upon earth he be not honoured with the chief seat, he will sit down on the four-and-twenty thrones, judging the people, as John says in the Apocalypse.” Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, Book VI, 13, Translated by Roberts-Donaldson*

*“And John too, indeed, in the Apocalypse, although he writes only to seven churches, yet addresses all.” Muratorian Canon, Translated by Roberts-Donaldson*

## **Atheist's Conclusion**

My conclusion as an atheist at the time of my investigation was that the Apostle John was most likely the author of the Book of Revelation.

## **Next eBook**

In the next part of our report we will look at the evidence for the authenticity of the Letter of Jude, Luke's authorship of the Book of Acts, along with how all of the evidence I researched led me from atheism to Christianity.

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