



A Test of Time: A Statistical Analysis of the Dating and Authenticity of The New Testament Canon

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Abstract:

This publication thoroughly examines a rigorous methodology of the dating of New Testament Texts. First, a variety of historical and exegetical methods were used to deduce traditional date ranges for all twenty seven sources of the New Testament. Next, a probability density method was used in order to statistically test for patterns akin to forged texts via fitting with theoretical models of forged and authentic sources alike. Ultimately, traditional dates for books of the canon were shown to match the authentic source distribution model (a negative linear exponential multiplied by lognormal fit) with no meaningful evidence of forged texts, due to a consistent scatter of negative and positive residuals throughout all date values. Multimodal analysis also demonstrated no changes in the skew of the graph, indicative of a sample consisting fully of authentic sources. Microsoft Excel was used to produce the probability density distribution graph, while the programming language Python was used to generate functions of fit and residual plots.

Intro:

The new testament canon is a list of 27 independent sources from the 1st century Jewish/Greco-Roman world, consisting of the four gospels, seven catholic epistles, thirteen Pauline letters, the Acts of the Apostles, and the book of Hebrews, centered around Jesus Christ - the core religious figure. Ranging from detailed historical narratives surrounding Christ's life and post-death missionary journeys of the apostles to advice on Christian living, the new testament spans eight or more authors. However, due to enormous historical and archaeological advancements in the past two centuries, - consisting of both increasing discoveries made such as the recovery of the Pilate Stone (1961), Gallio Inscription (1905), and the Rylands Papyrus (1935) as well as scientific and technological improvements such as radiocarbon dating (1946) which has given the biblical scholars far more information to work with, increasingly feasible

methods and tests have been discovered to test their authenticity, and proposed writing dates through historical, literary, and textual criticism.

Body:

Part 1: The Epistle of James

James (27-49 CE): The letter of James - a relatively small work of the new testament, spanning ~1750 words - is addressed to an early Jewish Christian audience (specifically to the “twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,” (James 1:1, NASB 1995) suggesting a very early time period before the gentile church had grown to a significant size. Extensive evidence from the book of Acts and the epistles demonstrates that the earliest Christian communities were composed primarily of Jewish believers. Language such as “scattered out” and “tribes” of Israel largely suggests an initially disorganized and less developed early church, while the church at the time of Philippians exhibits a more ordered system of “overseers” and “deacons” (1:1) ~60-62 CE, as well as a significant gentile population after the Council of Jerusalem [Galatians 2:7-9 (47-49 CE); Romans 15:15-16; 26-27 (55-57 CE)].

Additionally, it addresses no later formal/doctrinal heresies in the apostolic period such as that of the Judaizers present in the Jerusalem Council (49 CE). Considering the high degree of synoptic overlap of similar, albeit less developed concepts, the lack of combative theology towards these early heresies highly suggests the letter predates the council - a detail is especially notable when the Apostle James’s crucial role in the Jerusalem Council is considered -, and likely would have addressed these false teachings along with other encouragements to avoid certain lifestyles and doctrines [James 1:6-11; 1:19-25; 2:1-12; 2:14-26; 4:4-6; 4:11-16; 5:12] to a Jewish audience which would have been affected by them most. Likewise, a lower bound date for the epistle is easily established. While Mark 3:21 and John 7:5 suggests that James did not believe in Christ early in his ministry, 1 Corinthians 15:7 tells us that what was passed down by the apostles (including James) was that the resurrected Christ had appeared to James. This highly suggests his conversion occurred between 27-33 CE, or at the moment of the resurrection. Therefore, if the letter is authentic, it was most likely composed ~27-49 CE.

James's Synoptic Parallels

Blessed are those who undergo persecution for their reward is heaven.	J 1:2-4; 12	Matt 5:10-12	Mark 10:29-30
God is gracious to provide wisdom to those who ask.	J 1:5	Matt 7:7-11	Luke 11:9-13
But those who doubt ought to expect nothing from the lord.	J 1:6-8	Mark 11:23	Matt 21:21
Those who worship worldly/ material gain have a heart perishable and temporary like these goals.	J 1:9-11	Matt 6:19-21	Luke 12:33-34
The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.	(J 5:1-6)	Mark 12:40	Luke 20:47
Be doers of the word, and not just hearers.	James 1:19-20	Matt 5:21-22	
Committing partiality is becoming a judge with evil motives.	James 1:21-25	Matt 7:15-26	Luke 6:49; 8:14
Love thy neighbor as the royal law of scripture.	James 2:1-7	Luke 10:25-37	Matt 21:28-32
Everyone who stumbles on one point of the law is guilty of all.	J 2:8	Mark 12:29-31	Matt 22:37-40
Those who show no mercy will be judged mercilessly by God.	J 2:9-12	Matt 5:19	Matt 5:21-48
Those who claim belief must also have works to show.	J 2:13	Matt 6:15	Luke 6:37-38
Much required for those given more (such as teachers).	James 2:14-26	Matt 7:21-23	Luke 6:41-49
Tremendous power of the mouth and its consequences.	J 3:1	Luke 12:48	
Bad cannot come from a good source, and vice versa.	J 3:2-10	Matt 12:36-37	
Wisdom is shown through humility and gentleness	James 3:11-12	Matt 7:17-20	Luke 6:43-45
True wisdom isn't based on earthly or demonic motives.	J 3:13	Matt 11:29-30	Luke 14:11
Wisdom & righteousness from above leads to seeking peace.	James 3:14-15	Mark 8:36	Matt 6:19-21
Desire for sin is the source for quarrels, conflict, and evil.	James 3:17-18	Matt 5:9	
Ultior motives - ought to expect nothing in prayer (have already received reward in full).	J 4:1-2	Mark 4:19	Luke 8:14
One cannot serve the world and obey God at the same time	J 4:3	Matt 6:2-5	Luke 6:20-25
	J 4:4-6	Mark 8:34-38	Matt 6:24
		Mark 16:24	Luke 9:23
The devil fleeing when temptation is resisted.	J 4:7	Matt 4:10-11	
Drawing near to God will cleanse their hearts from anxiety and double-mindedness	J 4:8	Matt 6:25-33	Luke 11:9-10
The double-minded with ulterior motives will have their pleasure turn into suffering on judgement	J 4:9	Luke 6:24-25	
The self-humblers will be exalted.	J 4:10	Luke 14:11	Matt 23:12
Those who judge others are judged by the law.	J 4:11-12 (J 5:9)	Matt 7:1-5	Luke 6:37-38
Boasting on accomplishing Earthly plans is arrogance.	James 4:13-16	Luke 12:16-21	
Be spiritually prepared for the coming of the lord.	J 5:7-8; 15:10-11	Mark 13:32-33	Luke 12:40; 21:19
No promises or oaths	J 5:12	Matt 5:33-37	
Prayer and Confession of sins will lead to God forgiving him. Prayer of many will bring about that action from God.	James 5:13-20	Matt 18:15-20	

Figure 1 - Conceptual synoptic parallel passages from the epistle of James. Despite the fact that James 2:9-11 particularly succeeds James 2:8, which assigns "scripture" to an original old testament command, James 2:9-11 avoids this terminology altogether, ordering commands in the precise way Christ does in the synoptics, defaulting to "he." On non-synoptic/old testament allusions or quotations, the pattern of "scripture" resumes as usual (ex: 2:23; 4:5-6). Regardless, there is significant synoptic conceptual overlap in most of its verses, although boasting lower linguistic and structural complexity.

Why James Could Have Been Written in the Late-20s - 40s

One of the first instances where a “scattering” of the Jewish church is described is in Acts 8:1-4 - immediately after the martyrdom of Stephen ~33 CE - where the Jewish Christians were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Likewise, it could also reference the later diaspora in Acts 11:19-21 (expansion to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, but not Jerusalem) (42 CE), which is not to be confused with the later scattering of gentiles around similar provinces detailed in 1 Peter 1:1 (60-62 CE). However, immediately afterward, Luke discusses that the apostles undertook a gentile mission (Acts 11:22-24) juxtaposed with the epistle’s motive on consolidating reassurance of the faith and Christian living to a primarily Jewish-only audience who were believers for a longer period of time. It must also be considered that James, Peter, and John were considered key pillars of the church just before the time of the council, which would have possibly granted more authority to write such a letter. Therefore, both events remain reasonable contenders for the diaspora in the letter. However, there ultimately

remains a sparse degree of internal historical clues that can be used to narrow the date of the letter further.

Objections To the Authorship of James

In response to the lack of references to these early heresies, scholars will often point out that the epistle seems to share some literary dependence (or is written in response to) the Pauline epistles, which would make the letter's emphasis on the same heresies redundant. However, this completely misunderstands the soteriology of both letters. For example, while both Romans and James use Abraham as an example of faith being counted as righteousness in the context of the justification by faith, James talks about a type of faith that cannot save - i.e. one that is not working through love. This is not contradictory to Romans chapter 4-5, which instead deems the old/phariseetic law obsolete [Romans 3:3; Romans 4:9-12]. In doing so, he speaks to the Jews in the context of already having love for God, but not having faith in his sacrifice, while James speaks to those already believing in the gospel to demonstrate their faith through love by obeying the moral (and not ceremonial) laws. This can be seen in the fact that while the epistle to the Romans speaks in the context of the old ceremonial laws (i.e. circumcision, etc....), James speaks in context of the moral commandments of Christ under the new covenant (James 2:1-9), synonymous to the "law of the spirit" Paul speaks of. Additionally, Paul immediately associates faith with having works to proceed from it in the very next chapter (Romans 6:1-14), stating that believers are no longer dead to sin, and should not continue to dwell in it. This once again is spoken in the context of love, as 1 Corinthians 13 extensively rebukes faith without love, and Galatians 5 states that no ceremonial practices matter to Christ, but "faith working through love," [Gal 5:6; NASB 1995] implying two distinct qualities that both proceed from the same spirit. The parallel of the necessity of faith to be working through love indirectly aligns with James through the intermediate core teachings of the disciples that those who love God will also obey his commandments (Mark 12:33; Luke 10:25-27). Therefore, Paul and James merely demonstrate different aspects of the faith and its soteriology, but do not make contradictory claims regarding them. Additionally, Paul's immediate clarification against moral laxity directly in the next chapter (Ch. 6) largely removes the necessity for a later author to have responded to misinterpretations of the doctrine, as would have already been prevented or addressed by the letter itself. Finally, Abraham was a core figure in the old testament that multiple independent authors would have individually sourced as an example of the connection between faith and righteousness. This is shown through its occurrence in different texts as well - namely Hebrews 11:8-17 - which once again uses the example of Abraham's faith while deeming the sacrificial law obsolete (in contrast to the ceremonial laws in Romans). Therefore, the example of Abraham's righteousness was most likely a common traditional teaching, rather than one that simply hinges on the Pauline epistles particularly. Additionally, James's extensive parallel (but largely undeveloped) topics to the synoptic gospels most likely suggests it was based on the common circulatory tradition of Jesus's teachings rather than the Pauline epistles, which is a far simpler and therefore most likely correct explanation to its contents through Occam's Razor. This is also shown using linguistic elements within the epistle itself, since while the author consistently uses the term "scripture" when quoting or alluding to the old testament (ex: 2:8; 2:23; 4:5-6), he consistently avoids the term altogether when referencing concepts exclusive to the synoptic gospels. Among dozens of these instances, a particularly good example appears in James 2:9-11 - directly succeeding verse 8's quotation of a different

scripture - in which the author not only states the synoptic concept that stumbling at any point of the law makes one guilty (v. 10, Matthew 5:19), but simultaneously attributes the exact examples of the commandments (adultery and murder) that Jesus used in order to bolster the concept's significance in his Sermon on the Mount thereafter (v. 11, Matthew 5:21-48), instead speaking "For he who has said..." rather than "scripture" or "it says," (James 4:6; NASB 1995). In doing so, these teachings present themselves as common oral tradition rather than a direct synoptic dependence, which when coupled with less developed language implies a date earlier much earlier than the synoptics.

Additionally, many critical scholars comment on the high-level Greek of the epistle, stating that someone of James's demographic wouldn't have been able to compose such a letter. However, it should be important to note that since the writing style of James also matches his dialogue in Acts 15:13-21, and he is consistently portrayed throughout the work to have been around other Christians during his ministry, the possibility of scribal usage should not only be considered, but is most likely the correct explanation. This is shown in that the book of Hebrews holds a similarly high, if not far higher level vocabulary structure but is written pre-70s CE.

Part 2: Galatians

Galatians (47-49 CE): The dating of the epistle of Galatians can be traced back to his first missionary trip in the book of Acts. The work was written before the Jerusalem Council (49 CE), as Paul addresses the same core issue (Gentile inclusion/law) but doesn't mention the Council's definitive decree in Gal 2:1-10. Additionally, Paul mentions that he met Cephas (otherwise known as Peter) around three years after his conversion on the road to Damascus (Galatians 1:18). Since Galatians 2 posits a fourteen year time interval between his conversion (33-36 CE) and his second visit to Jerusalem, this places his second visit ~47-49 CE, during his first missionary journey. As will be explained later in the "Acknowledgement of The Ancient 'Corinthian Creed': 1 Corinthians 15:3-7" section, the fourteen year time interval could not have his first visit to Jerusalem with Peter (36-39 CE), since it would place his arrival in ~50-53 CE, which conflicts with his stay in Corinth between May 51st CE and January 53rd CE.

Part 3: First and Second Thessalonians

1 / 2 Thessalonians (49-52 CE): The letter talks about Paul's second missionary journey, which finished circa. 52 CE. Since Paul was present at the Council of Jerusalem, which took place in 49 CE, would put 1st (and potentially 2nd) Thessalonians at 49-52 CE. While the Jerusalem council occurs during Acts 15, Paul's subsequent arrival in Thessalonica is recorded in Acts 17:1-9, putting the lower end of the letter's writing at 49 CE. However, because Acts 18:12-17 places Paul on trial before the proconsul Gallio in Corinth during his 18 month stay, and the Delphi Inscription names him "Consul of Achaia" from the year 51-52 CE, the letters were most likely composed during 49-52 CE.

Objections To The Authenticity of 1 Thessalonians

Although scholarly consensus generally accepts 1st Thessalonians to be a work of Paul, a small handful of scholars have disagreed for a variety of reasons. Most of such arguments rest

merely on speculation, but have little to no concrete evidence. For example, many scholars have argued that 1 Thessalonians's language about a "wrath" that "has come upon them [the Jews] to the utmost"(1 Thess 2:16) is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. However, a closer analysis of the verse reveals something that clearly contradicts this very idea. This most likely isn't referring to a specific widespread event. In context, the letter also mentions that the gentile churches have been facing the same persecutions and rejection by "the Jews,"(1 Thess 2:14) noting that both suffered. This implies local tensions rather than a singular widespread event. Furthermore, Paul quotes prophetic writings in Romans 11 while explaining how the "others" in Israel "were hardened" (Romans 11:7-8) in his present situation. This reveals that Paul had the concept of God's wrath on Jewish people during the time of Romans (55-57 CE), still long prior to the Siege of Jerusalem. Furthermore, historical evidence reveals that long before the destruction of the city, there already existed various examples of widespread violence against the Jewish population. In the Passover Riots (c. 48-50 CE) recorded by Josephus such as the during the administration of the Roman procurator Ventidius Cumanus (Antiquities 20.103-108), one soldier from his regiment made a mocking gesture to the crowd, which quickly escalated into a full-scale insurrection that ended up eventually killing hundreds to potentially over twenty-thousand deaths. In another case, a famine swept over Judea during ~46-48 CE, further demonstrating the prior damage that occurred to Judean churches. Furthermore, unless the forged letter or interpolated verse was written long after the siege of Jerusalem, it most likely would've gone more in-depth if it was actually referring to an event on the scale of city's destruction. While some historians such as Tacitus recorded that around 600,000-700,000 were besieged in the city (*The Histories* 5.13 [1], 100-110 CE), others such as Flavius Josephus record a monumental death count of over 1.1 million (*The Jewish War* 6.420 [2], 75-79 CE). Whether Josephus's estimate was exaggerated or not, an event on this scale would most definitely have been too large for Paul to gloss over by writing a fraction of a sentence about it. Therefore, the verse 1 Thessalonians 2:16 likely refers to an escalating series of localized tensions and disasters occurring in the state rather than a massive cleansing event. Finally, interpolations in the text are tested by whether the line of thought right before the passage in question transitions smoothly into the topic right after. However, if verses 14-16 are removed, the shift from doom of unbelievers in verses 11-13 to the pastoral benediction in verse 17 creates an abrupt thematic leap, indicative of a missing and intermediate component of the text. Since skeptics would have to conclude that the verse's insertion within the broader context of the letter likely suggests that the passage's interpolation either points to a larger section of the text, or the entire letter being forged, 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 is most likely not a forgery due to extremely high structural and linguistic agreement of 1 Thessalonians with the other undisputed epistles (refer to "Objections to the Authenticity of 2 Corinthians" section). Therefore, neither the passage, nor the entire letter was likely forged.

Additional suspected interpolations include 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, which have gained increasing attention by scholars for what many argue is "deutero-Pauline" language. For example, 1 Thessalonians 4:15 states "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord,"(NASB 1995) which has sparked major contention due to the fact that Paul relies on his own theological authority instead of quoting what Jesus says, which is unlike his usual writing framework. However, considering that Paul gives sufficient divine authority to his own writings in his undisputed epistles (1 Cor 14:37-38), this occasional habit of his is highly unlikely to indicate a forgery. In other verses in 1 Corinthians such as 7:10-12, Paul also uses language such as

“...not I, but the lord,”(NASB 1995) when speaking about his letters, which further indicates this authentic writing style.

Part 4: First Corinthians

1 Corinthians (53-56 CE): After Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), he departs to Berea (Acts 17:10-14), Athens (Acts 17:15-34), followed by the city of Corinth (Acts 18:1-18). Following his stay in Corinth, Acts 18:18-23 mentions that Paul traveled to Ephesus, which is our key connection to the dating of the letter, since 1 Corinthians 16:8 mentions how he will “remain in Ephesus until Pentecost,” (implying that 1 Corinthians was written in Ephesus). Pivoting back on the Delphi Inscription (referenced earlier in “1 / 2 Thessalonians”), which dates Paul’s stay in Corinth to be at 52 CE at most, the setting of the letter’s composition in Ephesus establishes a firm lower boundary in the 1 Corinthians’s date range. Furthermore, the Acts of the apostles records that the apostle Paul was imprisoned by the Roman procurator Antonius Felix for two years before being replaced by Porcius Festus (acts 24:27). A distinct shift of coinage in Nero’s reign occurred at 59 CE, which was the moment right after Festus took office. Thus, Paul would’ve been imprisoned in 57 CE, placing the letter at 52-57 CE. Additionally, Acts 18:12-17 states that Paul was brought to Corinth during Gallio’s preconsulship. Since the inscription tells us that he began his reign in July of 51 CE (around the time Paul came to visit), this means that Paul most likely departed from Corinth around January 53 CE (Acts 18:11 specifies that he spent 18 months in Corinth, despite his original plan to stay until Pentecost).

However, this range can be shortened even further. According to Acts, Paul’s journey in Ephesus was cut short by “no small disturbance,”(Acts 19:23). While Paul tells the Corinthians that he is sending Timothy to them while writing the letter (1 Cor 4:17), Acts mentions this being around right before the time Paul experienced such disturbance (Acts 19:22). Considering that this was mentioned to be directly after the bulk of his journey (allegedly performing miracles and converting other nonbelievers), the letter was most likely written some time during the end of his stay in Ephesus. However, since his plans to settle in the city until Pentecost (occurring next year) were cut short by Demetrius the Silversmith’s riot, this suggests an earlier end date. Cycling back to the fact that Paul left for Ephesus in January 53 CE, Acts 20:31 mentions that Paul stayed approximately 3 years [referring in Ephesus], stating that, “Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears,”(Nqsb 1995). Even though this period of time is taken to be a general approximation rather than a definite amount of time, one thing it certainly does is remove the possibility of the 57 CE date. This is apparent since around three years after January 53 CE would have been ~ January 56 CE - almost a year before the beginning of 57 CE. Since Paul certainly wouldn’t have taken almost an entire year to journey from Corinth to Ephesus (~241 miles), this narrows down the possible date range of the writing to be 53-56 CE.

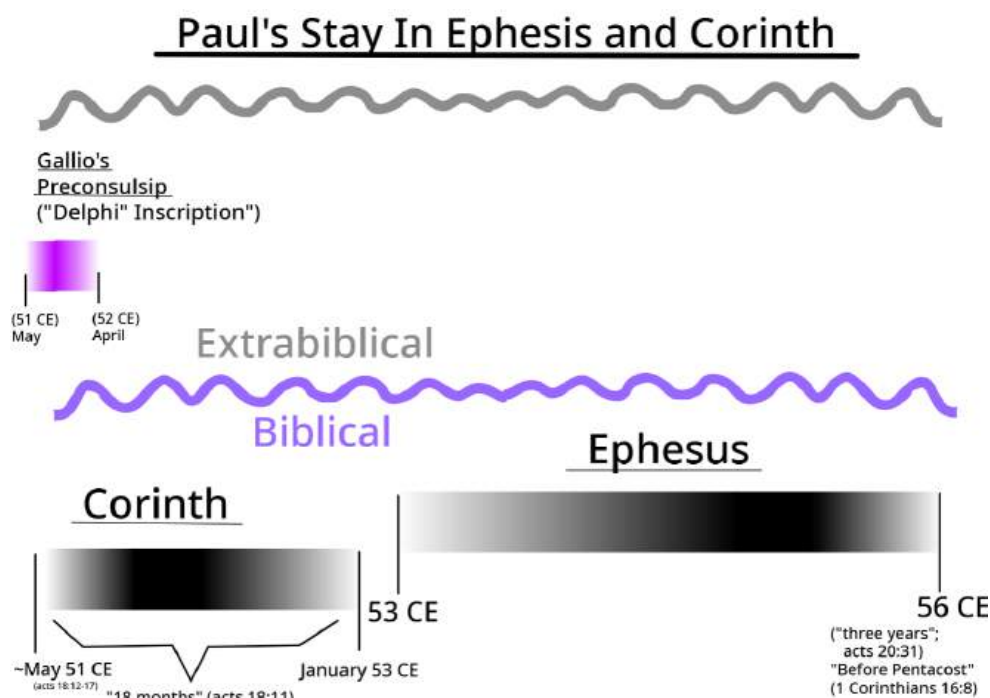


Figure 2

The apparent lack of description of the setting of 1st Corinthians gives birth to a notable nuance of when the letter was written during Paul's stay in Ephesus. For this reason, the final date range is narrowed no tighter than 53-56 CE.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

Ever since the dawn of modern biblical scholarship itself, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 has been one of the most heavily debated interpolations. With anomalous patterns in early surviving manuscripts, its controversial message only draws more attention to its mystique. To add even more confusion, while other interpolations to the bible such as John 5:4 and Acts 8:37 are universally agreed by scholars as additions due to their clear absence in the earliest texts, 1 Cor 14:34-35's consistent appearance in all early surviving manuscripts makes it a more nuanced passage that has drawn intense debate.

However, as the true message of the passage along with its history in early manuscripts are unpacked, the doubt regarding its authenticity largely fades into obscurity. As mentioned in the "Objections To Pauline Authorship of Pastoral Epistles (Rebutted)" section, no textual anomalies of the passage exist among the earliest manuscripts. However, critics that suspect an interpolation of the passage take note of two key details - its apparent contradiction to 1 Corinthians 11:5, and its notable "highlighted" markings in the Codex Vaticanus. However, as the latter of which is debunked in the "Objections To Pauline Authorship of Pastoral Epistles (Rebutted)" section, this leaves the only plausible suspicion for an interpolation to have occurred somewhere between the tight range of 53-100 CE, since the vast majority of the earliest surviving manuscripts contain the passage right after verse 33 (most likely interpolated when the text had little to no copies). Therefore, the remainder of this section will focus on its apparent contradiction to 1 Corinthians 11:5 - an earlier verse.

1 Cor 11:5 states, "But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved,"(NASB, 1995) implying that women are otherwise allowed to prophesy and preach.

However, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 was never historically understood as a complete ban on women prophesying on the church as a whole, but a rule for them to stay silent while simply attending formal church settings or assemblies (while not the ones being mandated to preach). For example, in Church Father Tertullian's treatise "Against Marcion" (207-212 CE) [3], he makes a notable distinction in the purpose and manner of communication between that talked about in 1 Cor 11:5 vs 1 Cor 14:34-35, stating, "In precisely the same manner, when enjoining on women silence in the church, that they speak not for the mere sake of learning 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (although that even they have the right of prophesying, he has already shown when he covers the woman that prophesies with a veil), he goes to the law for his sanction that woman should be under obedience," (Book V Ch. VIII). Therefore, this consolidates the idea that the verse wasn't historically interpreted as an outright ban of women speaking in the church as a whole, but rather as a decree to prevent interruptions or questionings during church services aside from when they weren't ordained to prophesy themselves. Therefore, the misinterpretation that the passage seemingly contradicts women speaking in the church as a whole is a modern one that doesn't align with how it was traditionally understood, invalidating the basis behind the forgery argument. Finally, many scholars suggest that the way the passage runs the pattern of the chapter suggests it was interpolated. For example, 1 Corinthians 14:31-33 speaks about instructions regarding prophecy, saying, "For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints," (NASB 1995). This passage is what seems to be an incomplete overview regarding prophets and prophecy, which can make it even more confusing for critics when the topic seemingly resumes right after 1 Cor 14:34-35 is concluded. 1 Corinthians 14:37-40 says: "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize *this*, he is not recognized. Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner," (NASB 1995). Therefore, this consequent passage seems to continue this very same topic, but finally finishing with a conclusion to the critique that is consistent with the Pauline structure ("Therefore...But...", [1 Cor 14:39-40] etc...). Additionally, while the topic break argument initially seems like a valid theory, a key detail that skeptics often miss is that "interruptions" in this manner were a customary practice in Paul's letters. For example, from Romans 5:12 to 5:18, after drawing a theological comparison between Adam and Jesus (when sin from one man brought death to the entire world), Paul immediately switches up the topic to law and sin, saying, "for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, ... much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ," (Romans 5:13-17) and then continues to conclude his core point (as condemnation was brought through one sin, one act of righteousness was brought through one sacrifice). Besides Romans, 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, and Colossians, most other "topic breaks" in Paul's writing style usually appear in the introduction of his letters - where he interrupts the greeting by going on a tangent about a certain topic, before returning to his original line of reasoning. Although the break present in 1 Corinthians chapter 14 is similar in the sense that he interrupts with another topic regarding a larger and general idea (i.e. within the church aside from just prophecy), this most likely isn't the same motive for why Paul inserted the verse where it was.



Paul's Undisputed Epistles

Book	Ch #s
Romans	16
1 Cor	16
2 Cor	13
Galatians	6
Philippians	4
1 Thess	5
Philemon	1

Figure 3

The chapter length of the seven undisputed Pauline epistles seems to limit to ~16 chapters.

If the usual “maximum” number of chapters that Paul usually writes is ~16, it can be seen how elaborating on an entirely different topic would have made his letter too long. This would explain why Paul himself might have inserted the verse without a broader context, which doesn’t necessarily suggest the passage was forged. Considering that the passage was also not historically interpreted by most early church fathers to be a complete ban on silence for all women in the church to speak (i.e. Tertullian) - but merely to ask questions or interrupt - coupled with the fact that Paul already established a hierarchy by drawing reasoning from the fall ([1 Corinthians 11:8-9]; implying that he believed the order was innate not to church-specific circumstances, but that the punishment and command of God during the fall hadn’t been reversed yet), this ultimately amounts to the fact that there would have been no reasonable motive for a forger to add in the verse, if it had already agreed with Pauline theology. Rather, the more likely explanation for the topic break is that Paul had already completed the vast majority of the letter, but decided not to make it too long.

However, it should be also noted that other theories (such as Paul quoting an outside source rather than giving a direct command) as well as others not mentioned in this publication hold significant merit in the field of biblical scholarship due to their potential connection to Paul’s line of reasoning regarding correcting false prophecy in the church.

Acknowledgement of The Ancient “Corinthian Creed”: 1 Corinthians 15:3-7

For a long time, a topic of major contention within the letter resides in a specific idea present in chapter 15. Within this chapter, is a passage parsimoniously dated by scholars to the early to mid 30s CE - around two decades before the original letter was written. The section of 1st Corinthians Chapter 15 (namely referred to as the Ancient “Corinthian Creed”) states:

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of

whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles," (1 Cor 15:3-7, NASB 1995).

Since wording such as "received" suggests the phrase was commonly recited prior to the apostle Paul's conversion, the dating of this idea largely hinges on his conversion date, aside from other theories regarding the ideas of the passage. This time frame is established by the undisputed letter of Galatians - where Paul gives information about the timeline of his conversion to his ministry. In Galatians 2:1, Paul notes that his second visit to Jerusalem had occurred 14 years after his first, in which he played his part in the council of Jerusalem (49 CE). Therefore, this would place his first visit to Jerusalem (described in Gal 1:18) in 35 CE at the latest, which was 3 years after his conversion on the road to Damascus (Galatians 1:13-18). However, placing his conversion at 32 CE poses issues related to the crucifixion. If Jesus was crucified in 33 CE, then this date would be impossible, and the 14 year time gap posed in Galatians 2 would likely count from his conversion date rather than his first Jerusalem visit. Therefore, another possible date is 35 CE, in which the council of Jerusalem would have occurred approximately 14 years after his conversion. Therefore, this gives the creed a broader range of 30-35 CE, assuming Paul meant that the information was relayed to him by other believers, and not by old testament scriptures.

However, one uncommon theory proposes that the mentioning of various prophetic hints such as "third day according to the scriptures" (Jonah 1:17) and Christ "died" for our sins ([Isaiah 53:7; Zechariah 12:10, Malachi 3:1]) in the old testament may insinuate that he's noting the fulfillment of prophecy, rather than an early Christian "creed." However, while this is a valid theory when considering parts of the passage on their own, it doesn't explain why Paul doesn't quote any scripture verbatim. An even bigger hole in the argument is the fact that verses 4-7 describe events not recorded in prophecy, such as his appearance to Cephas (Peter) and the twelve disciples. This is because the language (such as the continuation of the repetition of the word "that") in the first sentence suggests that the next idea continues the same line of thought of it being present "according to the scriptures." Instead, consensus argues that the passage is better understood as a combination of Paul appealing to the authority of old testament prophecy, as well as information he directly received through word of mouth.

Another theory is that the rest of the creed is from scripture as well, but simply early new testament "proto-gospels" or gospels that are theorized by many scholars to have contained a deficient, and nonchronological ordering of the "oracles"/sayings of Jesus (as church father Papias implies in a preserved account in Eusebius of Caesaria's *Ecclesiastical History* (3.39.16)[4]). Hinging on the idea that the gospel of Matthew has a textual dependence on the gospel of Mark ("Markan Priority"), many scholars suggest that since most church fathers (i.e. Papias and Irenaeus) ordered Matthew prior to Mark, that there was a prior "Hebrew" version of Matthew that was not yet fully constructed and translated into its final Greek form. Therefore, since these "oracles" mentioned by Papias (possibly written before 40-70 CE) might have contained contextual events related to the saying such as the resurrection of Christ, it would also have been possible for Paul to be quoting those "scriptures." If this is true, then the creed's specific wording is possibly dated later - as late as the mid-50s. However, it should be noted that a work as early as 1 Corinthians quoting another text would likely mean that the text in question is much older, which strongly suggests that this belief was also held by the majority of early Christian eyewitnesses. This ultimately amounts to the fact that either historical interpretation of the passage demands that a euhemeristic interpretation of Jesus's historical account is highly

implausible, considering mythologization usually occurs decades to centuries after events pre-antiquity.

Part 5: Second Corinthians

2 Corinthians (55-56 CE): Due to the fact that 2nd Corinthians describes the aftermath of several of the conflicts occurring in 1 Corinthians, scholars usually date the epistle 1-2 years later. In the previous “1 Corinthians” section, it was discussed that Paul’s departure from Ephesus occurred in approximately January of 56 CE, give or take some months. In Acts 20:2-3, it details how after Demetrius’s silver riot (Acts 19), Paul took refuge in Macedonia, where he spent 3 months in the Winter. Accompanied by Timothy and Gaius (Acts 20:4), Paul later waited for the other apostles in Troas (Acts 20:5). Finally, Acts 20:6 details that the next event occurred after the feast of the Unleavened Bread, which occurs late March/early April on the modern Calendar. This means that Paul’s roughly three month stay in Macedonia was tightly packed in between his departure from Ephesus and uniting with the other apostles in Troas. If Paul composed this letter after leaving Ephesus while traveling to Macedonia, the uncertainty in the departure date would place its writing around late 55 - early 56 CE. However, if this letter was composed during his 3-month stay, it would likely entail that the letter was composed in 56 CE - some time during the middle of the year. Elements within the letter strongly suggest this position, as events leading to his arrival to Macedonia are discussed, but not after he leaves. 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 states that Paul left for Macedonia after he didn’t find Titus in Troas. Although it’s possible the letter was written later, later events such as the Feast of the Unleavened Bread and Paul’s re-unity with the other apostles remain absent.

Objections To The Authenticity of 2 Corinthians

Among the various reasons scholars are uncertain with 2nd Corinthians’s authorship is the writing style. However, the structure seems to match almost seamlessly, not a style someone would get by copying Paul’s style word for word, but a seemingly flexible style that holds accurate when discussing other topics of the faith. For example, 1 Cor 1:1 models 2 Cor 1:1 in writing style, (the brother “Sosthenes” being replaced by “Timothy”, the “church of God which is at Corinth”(1 Cor 1:2 & 2 Cor 1:1 continued), “grace to you and peace from God our father and the lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:3 & 2 Cor 1:2). However, some may argue that this seamless and almost perfect replication of Paul’s writing style doesn’t prove anything, since the forger could have simply copied them outright. However, the next few verses reveal that this couldn’t be further from the truth.

Continuing 1 Corinthians 1, Paul begins the first point of his letter after going through an overview of God’s faith and the transformation of the gospel, followed by his first criticism. “Now I exhort you..... And there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgement,”(1 Cor 1:10). After Paul first introduces this talking point, he gives justification (“that there are quarrels among you” [1 Cor 1:11; the inciting event]), a clarification (“Now I mean this...”[1 Cor 1:12]), and a barrage of rhetorical questions to the reader (Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he?...[1 Cor 1:13]) further attempting to expose the illogicality of dividing the Church, followed by a final praise to God. This distinctive pattern is indicative of Paul’s writing before his first Roman imprisonment, also

noticed in the books of Romans and Galatians - which essentially have unanimous agreement on authenticity. However, the catch is that 2nd Corinthians also lays out the same style.

Continuing 2 Corinthians 1, Paul begins the first point of his letter after going through an overview of God's faith and the transformation of the gospel. After giving praise to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the writer seamlessly transitions into the topic of affliction and suffering, followed by a justification ("For we do not want...even of life [the inciting event]), followed by no clarification or definition of what he means by "suffering" (contrary to the former letter), followed yet again by a barrage of rhetorical questions ("Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or that which I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh... yes and no, no at the same time?"), and finally a praise of God (2 Cor 1:18-19). Thus, even considering the passages which are written entirely differently, the authors of both epistles seem to possess virtually the same writing style - not what a forger would produce simply by copying Paul's introduction.

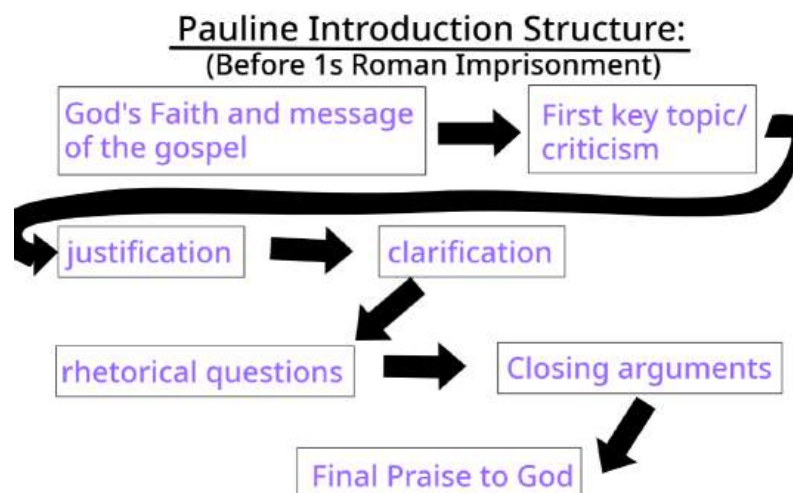


Figure 4
Pauline pre-1st Roman Imprisonment Introductory Letter Cycle

Furthermore, since its structure models that of 1 Corinthians, Romans, and Galatians, but differs significantly from Ephesians, Colossians, and the pastoral epistles, it most likely was written before Paul's Roman imprisonment in 60-62 CE. Small discrepancies exist with respect to the usual pattern, but this can be explained by the fact that while specific issues relating to division and spiritual elitism can be addressed with specific examples within the church (1 Corinthians), broader topics such as suffering (2 Corinthians) were likely directed at the entire church as a whole, explaining the lack of clarification of what examples of "suffering" he was referring to. Finally, replacing the authorship with a forger and not Paul leaves a massive void in the motive of a letter. Galatians and Philippians already detail a passionate defense of the ministry, its themes of suffering, leadership, and a hope for congregational reconciliation. Therefore, it's highly unlikely that a forger would put in so much time studying Paul's writings and practice impersonating them just to state core ideas already being proposed by Paul prior.

Clear Cut Line Between 2 Corinthians Chapter 9 & 10

While Paul resumes the usual writing style discussed in the "Objections to the authenticity of 2 Corinthians" section, the letter seems to approach a noticeably different,

“combative” tone against evil. Throughout Chapters 7-9, Paul seems to open up a “half doxology,” where he talks about how his brothers in the faith must “cleanse” themselves “from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,” (2 Cor 7:1). While intermediate commands in his epistles usually detail only the solution, Paul goes onto explain the process and the ultimate goal itself within the same sentence (“perfecting holiness in the fear of God”), partly embodying the style of doxologies that occur at the end of his letters. However, this statement still lacks conclusivity. As Paul speaks more encouragingly towards the end of Chapter 7-9, he seems to transition back towards giving the usual, concise style of commands found in the middle of his letters. By Chapter 9, Paul switches from more tame, encouraging language into more hopeful and joyous language, stating: “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written, “He scattered abroad, He gave to the poor, / His righteousness endures forever,” (2 Cor 9:6-8, NASB 1995). However, by the end of the Chapter, his cheerful attitude once again dies down to a verse that lacks the closure style of his previous letters. While other letters end with strictly doxology prayers, stating various forms of “may his [God the Father or the Lord Jesus Christ] be with you,” [Gal 6:18; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:18; 1 Cor 16:21-24; 2 Cor 13:14; Romans 16:25-27; Col 4:18; Eph 6:24; Phil 4:23; Philemon 1:25; 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 4:22; Titus 3:15] Paul simply states, “while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Cor 9:14-15) Ending with instruction language starkly different from the usual doxological style in all twelve of his other letters, followed by an informal and abrupt conclusion not only entails that the Chapter was most likely not the end of the letter, but that 2 Corinthians 10 was also most likely not the beginning of a separate letter. This is because while the Chapter opens up with Paul giving a declaration by name (2 Cor 10:1), - which is usually a habit at the beginning of his epistles - he words it in a style present in no other letter. For example, while virtually every other letter begins with a wordy introduction, followed by a thanks to God and a repetition of the message of the gospel in a declarative way, 2 Corinthians 10 immediately jumps straight into the first theological topic (2 Cor 10:2). Coupled with the fact that the previous chapters (7-9) heavily emphasized themes of courage, the immediate mentioning of his timidity in person and boldness in his letters (2 Cor 10:1-2), which was followed by his abrupt, informal mentioning himself strongly suggests that his name being stated is more likely to be a declaration of a fact regarding his faith - rather than a formal introduction to a new letter - denoting a continuation with the previous letters. Additionally, it’s also worth noting that 2 Corinthians 10 contains language such as “For” at the beginning of sentences, closely modeling the syntactic complexity of his vigorously formal language of the secondary, “message of the gospel” stage in the introduction of most his other letters [Gal 1:10-13; 1 Thess 1:5-9; 2 Thess 1:5-11; Romans 1:1-26; Eph 1:15-16; Col 1:3-19; Philemon 1:7; Phil 1:4-8; 1 Tim 1:6-8; 2 Tim 1:5-12; Titus 1:1]. However, an odd exception to this rule seems to stand out. While the other letters use this language shortly before diving into the first key, context-specific topic of the letter, 1 Corinthians in particular has this order swapped (i.e. “divisions” being discussed after the “for” part), signifying that the use of coordinating conjunctions is being repurposed to give reason to a context specific issue rather than a reason to follow the core gospel like most of his other letters. This suggests that although uncommon - Paul’s consistent use of this transition word long after the introduction of the letter is a repeating

occurrence to his prior letter. Finally, while most letters only continue this sequence in their introductions for less than two dozen verses, 2 Corinthians continues almost three entire chapters until 2 Cor 13:10, making it resemble more of an extended explanation or declaration of the faith - more consistent with a bold declaration from Paul, rather than an informal introduction. Finally, 2 Cor 13:10 is the only place in the letter with a formal conclusion (i.e. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,..."[2 Cor 13:14; NASB 1995]), since 2 Cor 1:2 is in the introduction of the letter. This suggests that Paul most likely changed his tone to build towards a stronger idea, or took multiple breaks from writing before coming back - both of which would have contributed to his writing style differences.

Part 6: Romans

Romans (55-57 CE): After leaving Macedonia on his third missionary journey, Paul came back to Corinth for a second time. Being written at the house of Gaius, this places the epistle at the very end of Paul's missionary journey - ~57 CE. Romans 15:26 clarifies that part of his journey in Macedonia had already occurred by the time of the letter's writing.

Part 7: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and First Peter

Ephesians / Philippians / Colossians / Philemon / 1 Peter (60-62 CE): after governor antonius Felix's imprisonment of Paul for 2 years, the throne was swapped with Porcius Festus (Acts 24:27), and Paul was finally released shortly after ~ 59-60 CE (Acts 25:12). According to facts, during a voyage to Rome, he experienced his first Roman imprisonment ~60 CE, which lasted for two more years (Acts 28:30). In all four letters of Paul, he speaks about being in chains [Eph 6:20; Phil 1:13; Col 4:18; Philemon 1:10]. Therefore, if the letters are authentic, this would place their writing date in either of these two-year spans, since the latter imprisonment resulting in his death would occur after Paul "had preached in the East and the West," (1 Clement 5:5 [5]) which had not occurred by the time of these imprisonments. If Clement of Rome were pulling off information from the pastoral epistles instead of word tradition, then this source could be seen to be less accurate. However, this cannot be the case since a large variety of church fathers also discuss Paul's journey to Spain - an aspect of his whereabouts not detailed within the pastoral epistles. Therefore, this evidence suggests that Paul was not executed during this specific stay in prison. Additionally, since Paul's imprisonment in Rome was the last historical event mentioned in Acts, and both authentic and pseudepigraphal interpretations of Acts suggest that the author would have lived after 62 CE, the source's omission of this key detail of Paul's time in prison would also further suggest that Paul was not executed after his first imprisonment in Rome. This implies that the four epistles were written in the date range of 57-62 CE, not during his final imprisonment in 64-67 CE. Additionally, several contextual clues imply that Paul wrote the letters during his time at Rome, and not Herod's prison from 57-59 CE. For example, Acts 25:11-12 states that during his holding in Caesaria, he exercised his right as a Roman citizen to appeal directly to Caesar, leading them to the conclusion that he had committed no crime resulting in death. However, he would not have had this option had it been the final, life or death type situation that Paul anticipated (Phil 1:19-26) in his letter, since no verdict threatening his life existed during his stay in Caesarea. Aside from this minor yet crucial detail, there appears to be few major clues indicating which of the two-year periods the letters were written. However, even if Paul could simply be using overly declarative/dramatic language not to be taken as the literal

situation, other internal inconsistencies between his stay in Caesarea and his letters point strongly to the fact that they most likely didn't occur during the same time period. In Philemon 1:22, Paul states for a room to be prepared for him in Colossae (modern-day Turkey). However, Romans and Acts tell us that Paul largely focused on traveling west to Spain and Rome after his release [Romans 15:23-24; Acts 19:21]. This brief, yet crucial inconsistency favors the idea that the letters were written during his first Roman imprisonment. Nevertheless, if the letter is authentically Pauline, this evidence would place its composition within Paul's first Roman imprisonment from 60-62 CE. Since the linguistic style of all four epistles appears to be the same, this ultimately amounts to the fact that all four were most likely written in the same conditions and setting. In 1 Peter, the term "Christian" is used, consolidating its writing period past 40 CE (as Acts 11:26 details the disciples first being called Christians in Antioch). Additionally, early church fathers mention an epistle by Peter. Works such as Clement of Rome's epistle to the Corinthians (1 Clement 49:5 [5]), Ignatius of Antioch's letter to the Ephesians Ch. 9 (107-120 CE [6]) and Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians Ch. 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, & 10 (110-140 CE [7]) directly elude to / quote verses as they are found in Peter's 1st epistle. For example, as John H. Elliot shows [8], 1 Clement 49:5 references 1 Peter 4:8 with the exact Greek wording, rather than the alternate Greek wording found in the Septuagint version of Proverbs 10:12. This places a loose range of 1 Peter to about 40-97 CE. However, additional details can be used to narrow down this range further. If the letter is authentic, then Paul would have addressed Luke in Romans as an acquaintance there. However, his absence suggests that Luke couldn't have been present in Rome until 58 CE. Since Peter was executed in 65-68 CE, this would place the letter on a broader range from 58-68 CE. Likewise, 1 Peter doesn't mention Paul anywhere in his writings in this stay, which raises questions to whether Paul was present to preach with them in Rome. Therefore, it's highly likely the letter was also composed during Paul's stay in 57-62 CE, excluding his short journey ~ 59-60 CE. Yet, the 58-60 CE isn't likely either, since the epistle demonstrates a robust literary dependence on the prison epistles such as the theological concepts exclusive to Ephesians and Colossians. If these four letters were written in prison and contained entirely new theological concepts centered around how hope and persecution coincides with the gospel message, then it's unlikely that 1 Peter derived these ideas from common tradition. This is unlike 1 Peter's similarities to the Christian and family life roles present in the pastoral epistles, which largely differ in language. For example, while 1 Peter 3:1-6 directly mirrors the domestic codes found in Ephesians 5:21-33, the pastoral epistles lack many of these codes and differ in language in any particular passage, making it strongly unlikely that the codes were sourced from 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, or Titus. For these reasons, the first epistle of Peter was likely composed ~60-62 CE, with dates extending till 68 highly possible due to Paul's absence in Rome after his release.

Objections To The Authenticity of 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, and Colossians (Rebutted)

Among the various reasons scholars reject the authenticity of Ephesians and Colossians is their writing style. For example, the first half of the letters are littered with ornate and decorative theological phrases. However, when it comes to Paul's usual writing style, three details must be considered. First of which, this writing style in Ephesians only persists for the first two chapters, with the remainder switching back to Paul's usual authentic/pre-prison writing style. However, there's no indicator that it was composed by two separate authors, or that it was composed of two distinct letters. Rather, this transition of Paul's initial burst of highly detailed

theologically decorative statements to his usual pre-prison writing habit signifies that Paul began these letters with a vibrant and expressive faith in Christ, which he mentioned was bolstered by his persecution in prison. Eventually however, as the letter continued, Paul defaults back to his writing style, which confirms the validity of this theory. This is unlike how a forger would write the letter, as the language shifts to a more critical structure which would most likely not be replicated if the distinctive writing style in the beginning alone was indicative of the forger's language. Second of all, this specific pleonastic style of Paul's isn't a mere speculation, as can be confirmed with the undisputed epistles. For example, the introduction to Romans (Romans 1:1-7) boasts a staggering 139 words in its original Koine Greek, similar to 2 Corinthians 6:3-10's 138 words (which discusses heavy themes of ministry, suffering, and integrity), both demonstrate examples of extremely long sentences in Paul's general epistles (examine table below). This side of Paul was most likely brought out of him most during his time of persecution in suffering, which most likely caused him to draw to Christ even more as his hope. Similar passages include Romans 8:28-39 as well as Romans 11:33-36 (being theologically similar to Eph 1:3-14).

Verse #	Greek Characters / Words	
Eph 1:3-14	1250	~202
Eph 3:14-19	920	~155
Col 1:15-23	960	~155
2 Thes 1:3-10	840	~135
2 Cor 6:3-10	710	~115
Col 1:9-14	730	~115
Romans 1:1-7	640	~110

Figure 5

Longest sentences in terms of Greek characters and words throughout all undisputed and disputed Pauline letters.

Third of all, in these two prison epistles, the author particularly speaks extensively about the significance of his imprisonment when it comes to being tested in the faith. This is highly mirrored in his sentence structure, as Paul repeats theological doctrines in their entirety to proudly proclaim his faith in Christ. Therefore, Paul's tendency to write longer in the beginning of Ephesians and Colossians is most likely also due to his conditions in prison.

Other examples of why skeptics deny the authenticity of Ephesians and Colossians are due to their alleged theological contradictions to the other letters. For example, in Bart Ehrman's (2011) novel titled, *"Forged: Writing in the Name of God--Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are,"* [9] he states:

"this doesn't sound like the Paul of the undisputed letters, who says that he had been 'blameless' with respect to the 'righteousness of the law' (Phil. 3:4). In addition, even though he is talking about the relationship between Jew and Gentile in this letter, the author does not speak about salvation apart from 'works of the law,' as Paul does. He speaks, instead, of salvation apart from doing 'good deeds'..."(Ch. 4: *Forgeries In The Name of Paul*).

If this same logic were to be applied to the epistle of Romans (Ch. 7) - where Paul mentions how he struggles with following the law - then by this basis, Dr. Ehrman would have to conclude that this letter was forged as well. However, modern scholarship doesn't deny the authenticity of Romans or Galatians. Therefore, this instead demonstrates a grave

misinterpretation of the verse of the verse in Philippians. Chapter 3 opens up by warning the recipients about false “dogs” (Phil 3:2) or evil teachers (Pharisees). Later on in the exact language of verses Philippians 3:4-6, it instead talks about how with respect to “righteousness of the law,” he would have been “found” blameless specifically in the old covenantal/pharisaic law, signifying an outward justification by the standards of men, rather than literal sinlessness in the eyes of God. In doing, so Paul doesn’t deny that works of the spirit are integral to salvation, as Galatians 5:6 details that “faith working through love” is what matters to Christ (in doing so, separating “faith” and “love” for God as necessary distinct and separate qualities of the spirit). Rather, the condemnation of the pharisaic law in Philippians 3 more closely mirrors that of Romans 4 - much less the emphasis on the different “works of the spirit” that Paul dichotomizes from the old covenantal/pharisaic “works” in Galatians 5:16-26, where Paul mirrors the concept of how Christians must “walk by the spirit” (Gal 5:25) / and be prepared in his “workmanship, created in Jesus Christ for good works,” (Eph. 2:10) once they abide in Christ. In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul talks about how this initial grace itself was not a result of “good deeds,” signifying how the deeds were the result of the spirit, and not the other way around. Furthermore, Ephesians continues on and states:

“by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace,” (Eph 2:15, NASB 1995).

Therefore, Dr. Ehrman’s (and other scholars’) faulty interpretation of the verse stems from a lack of discerning the clear distinction between the types of works Paul talks about extensively in the previous undisputed epistles of Galatians and Romans, as well as the lack of understanding in Paul’s core soteriology. Later in Chapter 4, Ehrman states how due to the language of Ephesians and Colossian mentioning Christ’s already being “resurrected with Christ,” it seems to contradict the previous language in Romans 6:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 15 - in which salvation and resurrection with God is spoken in the future tense. However, this is yet again a word concept fallacy, since Ephesians emphasizes the figurative resurrection of the soul of being “dead” in sin, while Romans and 1 Corinthians focus on the future resurrection and salvation in Christ. In fact, Romans 6:1-4 closely mirrors the type of “transformation” emphasized by Paul in Ephesians 2:10. However, the author of Ephesians doesn’t deny the idea of a future physical resurrection. In fact, Colossians 3:4 states how Christ will be “revealed” (in the future tense), consolidating the key concept that these letters aren’t mistaking the true physical resurrection of the physical dead with the figurative spiritual resurrection of those who were previously “dead” in the desires of their flesh (Ephesians 2:1-5). Additionally, undisputed epistles such as Romans describe how believers are to be glorified in Christ in the present tense (Rome 8:30), despite the mentioning of awaiting future resurrection that believers “hope,” but do not see (Romans 8:25).

Critical scholars often argue that 2 Thessalonians is a forgery primarily due to its apparent eschatological (details relating to the end times) contradiction to 1 Thessalonians. While 1 Thessalonians states that Jesus will return like a “thief in the night,” (1 Thess 5:2), 2nd Thessalonians states that there will be clear, imminent warning signs for his coming (2 Thess 2:3-12). Nonetheless, this is likely not a contradiction, since it was not uncommon for other individual writers of the New Testament to include both aspects of Christ’s coming when predicting the end times. For example, while Matthew 24:33 states that there will be signs when he arrives, Matthew 24:44 states that believers won’t be aware of the specific hour when Jesus

will arrive, despite these historical markers. Dr. Ehrman also argues that 2 Thessalonians's remarks of clarifying its own authenticity (due to other widely circulated Pauline forgeries at the time) is a rhetorical tactic that a forger would use to try to paint the letter as more authentic. The habit of Paul to clarify/identify himself as a writer to attempt to verify his authenticity is not uncommon as well, since examples such as Philemon 1:18-19 ("I Paul, am writing this with my own hand,"[NASB 1995] as a promise that he will pay any financial debt or damages that Onesimus owed to his master Philemon), Gal 6:11, 1 Cor 16:21, and Col 4:18 demonstrate that Paul often remarked similar statements in his other letters to serve as a token of genuineness. However, even to assume this logic is counterintuitive. If the forger was willing to attempt prove their authenticity with an authentic signature of Paul at the end of the letter (2 Thess 3:17), and the text states earlier that he had "already spoke these things" in previous conversations (speaking of end times eschatology specifically [2 Thess 2:5; 2 Thess 2:15]), then this would likely draw even more suspicion from the Church of Thessalonica had these prior conversations not occurred. According to Dr. Ehrman's logic, Paul himself would've never spoken of the end times as having "clear" warning signs of Christ's return. Therefore, these details only make it more unlikely that the epistle is forged. Yet, if the letters had been composed decades after the first epistle when the original first generation church wouldn't have been able to call out this lie, it contradicts Dr. Ehrman's claim that the forger only created the letter due to the fact that the original people of the church had become too morally lax due to Paul's prior assurance of salvation in 1 Thessalonians. Even the idea that 1st Thessalonians conditioned laziness of the church to prompt the forger to write the second epistle, and was morally lax on obedience and works to God is also a misconception. In fact, Paul spends nearly an entire chapter discussing love and sanctification of the spirit (1 Thessalonians 4:1-13), specifically commanding believers that they ought to "walk and please God"(1 Thess 4:1) and follow the commandments (1 Thess 4:2). Additionally, Paul urges believers to "excel" more in the faith before finally providing reassurance for dead believers in 1 Thess 4:13-17. Needless to say, Dr. Ehrman tends to discard this critical passage of the epistle, instead skipping directly over it and discussing "assurance" end of the chapter, implying that the epistle made believers more "comfortable" due to its lack of emphasis on works (despite the hard emphasis on sanctification and Christian living in 1 Thess 4:1-13). Additionally, two of the three earliest church fathers (Ignatius of Antioch (107-120 CE) & Polycarp (110-140 CE)) allude to the letter in their works "Letter to the Romans" (10.3 [10]) and "Epistle to the Philippians" (11.1-3 [7]) with the exception of Clement of Rome. Yet, there remains no early church discussion disputing the authenticity of the letter. The first ever written source disputing the epistle's authorship occurred in 1801 by J. C. Chr. Schmidt - over 1700 years after its writing.

Objections To The Authenticity of 1 Peter

Many skeptics often take note of Acts 4:13's details of Peter and John being untrained, concluding that the apostle Peter would have been illiterate and unable to write the attributed epistle. However, this is most likely not the case for various reasons. The verse itself states, "Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus,"(Acts 4:13, NASB 1995). The religious authorities are commenting on the high level of confidence and talent of the apostles, despite their lack of formal education. The Greek roots for "uneducated" and "untrained" in the passage are *agrammatos* (ἀγράμματος) and

idiōtēs (ἰδιώτης). The first term means “without letters”/“unlettered,” which doesn’t necessarily signify illiteracy, but rather a lack of formal rabbinic training as laypeople. Modern scholars estimate that while the literacy rate was <3% of non-rabbinically trained people during early 1st century Judea, concentrations would have reached as low as 1% in rural areas. While this still certainly weakens the argument that the apostle himself hand-wrote 1 Peter, it should also be taken into consideration that not only does Peter and John’s known talent in preaching demonstrated in the responses of early verses in Acts 4 reveal his ability to convey complex ideas, but also that it closely resembles the language structure of 1 Peter. For example, the language structure when conveying complex ideas regarding the themes of the basic gospel and Christian living in Acts 2:22-24, Acts 2:29-33, Acts 2:36, Acts 3:12-26, and Acts 5:3-4 closely resemble 1 Peter [1 Peter 1:10-12; 1 Peter 1:17-21; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 1 Peter 3:6]. The lengthy and decorative allusions to the old testament stories coupled with a wide variety of words makes the writing style unique to only these books of the new testament. Hebrews and Paul’s letters lack the vocabulary complexity, while the gospels also demonstrate yet again a distinct, unique language structure to them. For reasons relating to the complexity of his dialogue in Acts as well as letters, most scholars would likely agree that a mimicry of it when expanded to new topics, lines of reasoning, as well as entirely different old testament stories as allusions would have been an extremely tedious and skillful task, which makes forgery all the more unlikely. Additionally, the consistency of Peter’s preaching style through these chapters in Acts supports that a letter written by him even decades later would have likely embodied this same structure. This high level linguistic agreement between Acts and 1 Peter suggests that even if Peter never learned complex writing in the 27-32 years between the event in Acts 4 (30-33 CE) and when the epistle would have been written (60-62 CE), the possibility of the usage of a scribe is not out of the question. This explanation would reconcile both problems of how the letter could match Peter’s dialogue in a way unlikely for a forger to replicate, as well as the extremely low literacy rates for the apostle’s demographic. As 1 Peter 5:12 states:

“Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard *him*), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!”(Nasb 1995)

The Greek work “dia” for “through” denotes an agent by which an action is being performed (in this case either the “writing” or bringing the writing to the audience), identically matching the English usage of the same word. This suggests that either Silvanus might have served as the letter’s carrier, his secretary in writing it down, or even both. Out of these three options, the first and third are seriously considered among the consensus of biblical scholarship. If the first and third possibilities are correct, then the apostle’s literacy at the time wouldn’t be a contributing factor to the letter’s authenticity due to having a secretary to write the letter down for him. This composition choice wouldn’t be unusual for new testament writers during the apostolic era, as Paul dictated to Tertius to write Romans (Romans 16:22). While this is a likely explanation behind the letter’s writing, the possibility of Peter learning writing decades later isn’t completely out of the question. As Mark 1:20 notes, Peter’s previous involvement in a fishing enterprise involved employing servants and owning property. Daily transactions such as tax disputes, receipts, and other contracts suggest that Peter might have possibly been familiar with basic Greek writing, which would have grown into more complex Greek as future missionary journeys practiced his writing.

Additionally, many scholars argue that the usage of “Babylon” in 1 Peter 5:13 signifies a later, post-70 CE date for the epistle. However, Bockmeuhl shows using pre-70 CE texts that the oppressive Roman government system in the events leading up to the siege could have allowed early Christians to draw early parallels between old testament end time prophecies and the current system they were living under [11]. Additionally, the epistle yields the term “Babylon” in a neutral/positive light, as the author places its usage at the very last sentence of the letter in greeting in the audience a farewell. On the other hand, most post-70 CE texts paint the Roman imperial system in a negative light [4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, Sibylline Oracles, etc...]. For these reasons, the early usage of the term “Babylon” most likely does not denote the post-70 CE authorship of 1 Peter.

Part 8: The Epistle of Jude

Jude (33-200 CE): Due to the extremely common themes throughout all components of Jude (abusers of God’s grace, divisions in the church, helping other believers out of the hellfire), determining whether the earliest church fathers quote or allude to the epistle demonstrates a largely infeasible task. Additionally, coupled with a lack of internal clues within the letter to consolidate the time period of writing presents a unique challenge in dating the epistle. Jude is appears in one of the earliest biblical canons (The Muratorian Fragment) ~180-200 CE. Therefore, this produces an unsatisfyingly large range of 33-200 CE. If Jude’s preference to identify himself by the name of James in the first verse suggests that James was significantly known or alive at the time of its writing, it could place its writing date between 40-70 CE. However, this methodology produces too much uncertainty to deduce a definitive date of the epistle, since the author could have arbitrarily mentioned James at a later time, or a forger simply placed in the name to make it seem like Jude wrote it, based on his relationship as James’s brother in the gospels (See *Antiquities* 20.9 [12] regarding the apostle James’s martyr). Many scholars such as Bart Ehrman argue this date can be narrowed down due to late 1st/early 2nd century due to the fact that the Greek represents a more developed vocabulary yet less polished than the majority of new testament books, and that it touches on earlier prophecies foretold by the apostles (v. 17-18). However, Peter’s dialogue in the book of Acts once again marks striking similarities around an even earlier time of the apostolic era (~30-33 CE). If the vocabulary was used in speaking, then the language itself certainly didn’t have to have origins in a later time period of a more developed church. However, questions of whether Jude himself would have been able to write fluently in advanced Greek during his lifetime still remains a topic of future debate. While Jude v.17-18 talks about prophecies “previously spoken” by the apostles, it’s illogical to assume that the passage itself implies the apostles’ death by the time of its writing. The verse simply talks about their prophecies in the past previously, not necessarily implying that they have no whereabouts at the time of the writing. This is also because if a forger was attempting to fake a letter in Jude’s name, they most likely wouldn’t have included such an obviously suspicious detail in their eyes regarding the letter’s composition. Likewise, if Jude was the real writer, it would also be illogical to assume that the verse implies their passing at the time of the letter unless it was written between 65-66 CE, which is a very tight range. Therefore, if the letter was composed by the forger, they most likely meant another interpretation for the passage than implying their previous deaths.

Does v.17-18 Imply Jude's Forgery?

		Is the Letter forged?	
		Yes	No
The Passage Implies the Death of the apostles?	Yes	Illogical (too obvious of a slip for building the "Jude" narrative in the eyes of a forger.)	Possible (The epistle takes place in the narrow range between the previous apostles' and Jude's death.)
	No	Logical (The forger meant to speak about past prophecies of the apostles, so the passage itself can't be used to argue for a late date.)	Logical (Jude meant to address prior prophecy, not implying their deaths.)

Figure 6 - A logical wager concerning the forgery implications of Jude 1:17-18, ultimately showing it to be irrelevant to the forgery discussion.

On The Literary Dependence of 2 Peter

However, Jude’s precise sequence of topics as well as letter structure is extremely similar to that of 2 Peter chapters 2-3, implying one of the two used the other as a source. According to the scholarly consensus 2 Peter takes from Jude, based on the idea that more complex texts usually get inspired by their simpler variants. However, the linguistic detail of each letter largely invalidates this theory. According to 2 Peter 2-3, these attributes of the end times are seen as a future prophecy, while Jude states them as aspects of the present time. Additionally, the argument that literary dependence flows from complex to simpler variants is largely unreliable. For example, the epistle of Jude could have included simpler old testament allusions and vocabulary in order for his audience to understand the concept more easily. This is supported by the fact that 2 Peter 2-3 contains a more original, baseline reasoning that is unlikely to have been copied from Jude. Despite elevated vocabulary differences, the letter seems to flow continuously forward based on those vocabulary and sentence-specific prior specified concepts, not just the general themes in Jude (which is the backbone of the letter according to believers in Jude priority). Therefore, there is sufficient evidence that 2 Peter holds priority over Jude. Yet, this counter idea also relies on a niche analysis of human intuition that falls short of the accuracy standards required for the final statistical analysis of this paper. Therefore, the final date range remains broad for the sake of computational accuracy.

Part 9: First Timothy

1 Timothy (63-66 CE): Since Paul already anticipated his execution in 2 Tim 4:6-8, this implies that 1 Timothy was composed before his execution in 68 CE. In 1 Timothy 3:14, he states that he hopes to “come to” the apostle Timothy, suggesting this was a time long before his final imprisonment - an event most scholars date to ~66 CE. Therefore, if the letter is authentic, it was most likely written ~63-66 CE. Many conservative scholars argue that the letter could have been written before 60 CE. However, the fundamentally different linguistic structure of 1 Timothy to Paul’s pre-1st imprisonment epistles as well as its group similarities to the rest of the pastoral epistles (2 Timothy and Titus) consolidates the idea that it most likely wasn’t written in the same era.

Part 10: The Gospel Attributed To Luke The Evangelist

Luke (33-66 CE): In 1 Tim 5:18, the author formally quotes two concepts as “scripture,” the latter of which is only found in Luke 10:7 throughout the bible. Intense scholarly debate on this subject has suggested due to Markan priority, that this internal clue invalidates the authenticity of the pastoral epistles. However, early records of Hebrew Matthew’s mentioning (discussed earlier in the “Acknowledgement of The Ancient “Corinthian Creed”: 1 Corinthians 15:3-7” Section) suggests that this early saying was likely one that existed as an “oracle” of Jesus from the source. Coupled with Markan priority, this theory would likely allow the possibility of Luke to be written much after 66 CE. However, other theories along with a sequel to acts consolidate that the letter was likely composed prior to 66 CE anyway. Early church fathers don’t provide an exact date for Luke’s writing, even though they specify an order. Among all of these accounts, Matthew seems to be first, Mark next, Luke somewhere in between, and John is stated as the last. There have been theories to suggest that Mark’s writing time is placed ~late 60s - early 70s CE due to similarities in 1 Peter. However, this can be attributed to the fact that Mark served as the interpreter of Peter’s account in order to write his gospel, according to Papias of Hieropolis (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15 [4]). Therefore, the most likely date for Luke is sometime between the death of Jesus and the writing time of 1 Timothy.

Part 11: Second Timothy and the Epistle to Titus

2 Timothy / Titus (62-68 CE): This dates similarly among Paul’s post-first Roman imprisonment. However, 2 Timothy 4:6-8 speaks of an imminent end, suggesting the letter could have been written as late as 68 CE. While Paul specifies his whereabouts in prison in 2 Timothy, he doesn’t do the same in Titus. This raises more questions in regards to Titus’s date, yet comfortably places 2 Timothy between 64-68 CE.

Objections To Pauline Authorship of Pastoral Epistles (Rebutted)

Hierarchical Rules, Structure, Male Ordination and Distinct Vocabulary

Many scholars argue that 1 Tim, 2 Tim, and Titus could not have been written by Paul due to the very established language and system of deacons, bishops, and a hierarchy of the church. These skeptics generally fall into two categories - those that believe it was forged in the 3rd century, and those that believe it was forged in the late 1st/early 2nd century (the former of which is easily debunked). In Polycarp of Smyrna’s epistle to the Philippians (100 - 140 CE)

Chapter 4, he formally quotes 1 Tim 6:18 - a verse that is not repeated in any earlier book of scripture along with 1 Tim 6:7 in the context of a chapter regarding Pauline history. Therefore, this forces its date to be 140 CE at the latest, since the argument now rests on whether Polycarp's letter was interpolated, while Chapter 4 is generally agreed upon to be authentic by most scholars. Second of all, singling out the pastoral epistles from the undisputed seven letters based on the "established church hierarchy" is illogical, since Philippians 1:1 - one of said "undisputed" letters - clearly refers to "overseers" and "deacons" with functionally the exact same Greek terms as those used in 1 Tim, 2 Tim, and Titus ("episkopos" and "diakonos" respectively). Therefore, this claim largely lacks basis for concluding the letters were forged.

Additionally, other arguments for the trio's forgery include the strict requirements to become leaders in said letters, as well as the commands for women to be silent in the church. However, the former of which could easily be debunked by the fact that 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 already outlined that leaders should prove their faithfulness in God. Since Galatians 5:22-23 mentioned the fruits of the faith prior to be "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control," claiming a discrepancy in church order appears to be illogical once noted that the specific examinations for determining each leader specifically test for these exact same "fruits" in 1 Tim 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. Finally, skeptics must consider that according to the alleged time frame of the pastoral epistles, they were written years after 1st Corinthians and about a decade at most after Galatians. Since it's unlikely that the church took decades to simply reflect the same requirements that past scripture had already laid out for them, it's unreasonable to assume it would've taken decades for said developments to occur. Meanwhile, on the latter question of female authority, many skeptics argue that the presence of female prophetesses and preachers in the early church are evidence the pastoral epistles were written much later (due to their strict regulation of female voice in the church [1 Tim 2:12 ; Titus 2:3-5]). However, these arguments are made on a faulty basis, since the verses never refer to them as deacons in the first place. For example, while Romans 16:1-2 calls Phoebe a "deacon" in broader message translations such as NIV, more accurate word-for-word translations such as NASB, NKJV, and ESV all refer to Phoebe as "servant." Considering the Greek word "diakonos" was used in the passage - which refers to either "servant" or "minister" - this ultimately means that Phoebe could've simply been referred to as a helper at the church, and not actually a deacon or minister. Verse 2 also bolsters the "servant" translation by referring to Phoebe as a "helper/benefactor" using a Greek term "*prostatis*" (προστάτις) or "patroness," indicating her role as a supporter financially. Additionally, it's illogical to single out the pastoral epistles as forgeries for this rule when the seven "undisputed" epistles contain it as well. 1st Corinthians 14:34-35 outlines the rule that women must "be silent" in church, which debunks the idea that it's new and exclusive to the pastoral epistles. However, many skeptics argue that these verses were also an interpolation to the Pauline letter due to various textual anomalies associated with its presence in early manuscripts. For example, the Codex Vaticanus includes a double-dot marking (known as "distigmai") around the verses. However, this doesn't necessarily mean the scribe was noting a suspected textual addition to the section, since the absolute earliest fragment (Papyrus 46; 175-225 CE) containing chapter 14 of 1st Corinthians places these two verses precisely where they need to be - right after verse 33. Every canon prior to the 4th century contains the verse. Additionally, it should be noted that recent breakthroughs in scientific analysis of the Codex has revealed that said "distigmai" were specifically added by a scribe in the 16th century - over 1100 years after the Codex was originally composed. At this point, there had already existed numerous later (6th-12th century) manuscripts that had completely omitted

the verse. This, likely causing the scribe to doubt the passage, may have either caused them to highlight the verse to demonstrate their doubt of its authenticity in the manuscript, not knowing how much later the compared Western texts were composed, since this historical discipline did not exist in those times. Furthermore, the fact that other passages in the Codex were highlighted with distigmai but demonstrate no textual anomalies in the earliest text likely suggests that it wasn't exclusively used to mark a "suspicious passage." Considering that Papyrus 46 included the section right after verse 33, it's also highly likely that the scribe was denoting theological uncertainty to their own beliefs. Other suspicions for the passage's interpolation rely on the idea that it was moved around to other parts of 1 Corinthians in later texts (similar to the "adulterous woman" story in John), but these can be dismissed as later scribal placement errors (much after 1 Cor 14:34-35 was originally written), since these mistakes only appear 4th century texts onward (Ambrosiaster [4th century], Codex Bezae [5th century], Codex Claromontanus [6th century], etc...). Coupled with prior evidence, this ultimately to one final skeptical view - that in order to be present in virtually every one of the earliest manuscripts, the text had to have been interpolated in its extremely early years (66-100 CE) - during a time when there were only a few copies of 1 Corinthians. However, due to its high presence in virtually all later manuscripts (175-400 CE), the interpolated letter would have either had to have been copied at a disproportionately higher rate than the other copies, or written by one of the first scribal copiers of Paul. While this is a plausible explanation, there's no concrete evidence to support this theory as of the time of this paper's writing beyond suspected discrepancies in the verses' writing style. However, this additional argument was discussed earlier in the "1 Corinthians 14:34-35" section. Furthermore, dating the pastoral epistles differently based on the singular rule appears illogical, since this law already pre-existed long before the new covenant. However, male ordination doesn't appear in the Mosaic Law, but is rather rooted in the creation order itself. In Genesis 2:18, the bible says God will make man a "helper" (Eve). The Hebrew root for this word is "ezer" (עֲזָרָה), meaning a helper. Coupled with the next word "kenegdo" (matching counterpart) in the phrase, the overall meaning corresponds to an equal and opposite "suitable helper." However, after the fall, God says to Eve in Genesis 3:16: "...Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you," (NASB 1995) suggesting that ever since the fall, this hierarchical order has always biblically applied. However, denying this passage's relevance in Paul's theology with the assertion that "early Christians would have believed Christ reversed these effects of original sin by defeating it at the cross" is also illogical, since they would have had to believe that other consequences of the fall (i.e. Pain from childbirth) were also reversed, which is yet to be demonstrated by any early Christian sources (let alone the apostles). Rather, early Christian texts such as Romans talk about the legal justification of sin being paid off by Christ's sacrifice, not the Earthly punishments of the fall. Therefore, it stands that Paul would have taken this prior rule to its logical conclusion. Furthermore, the exact same reasoning of the rule in 1st Timothy ("For Adam was formed first, then Eve"[1 Tim 2:13]) is reflected almost exactly in 1 Corinthians 11. For example, while 1 Cor 11:3 states that "...Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman," (NASB 1995) 1 Cor 11:8 gives reasoning for this through commanding men not to use head coverings, saying, "For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;" (NASB 1995). Therefore, coupled with the fact that earlier "undisputed" letters such as 1 Corinthians already include this very rule and its establishment all the way back to the fall in Genesis (1500-500 BCE) consolidates this hierarchical rule long before the pastoral epistles even appeared, this fact in addition makes the rule of male ordination a faulty basis for claiming the pastoral epistles were forged.

The Presence of a Vocabulary Discrepancy

Additionally, a variety of skeptics also claim that the vocabulary of the pastoral epistles model a more developed “2nd century” structure, but these arguments are simply made in an oversimplified way that leaves out other, more likely explanations. For example, in Bart Ehrman’s (2011) novel titled, *“Forged: Writing in the Name of God--Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are,”* [9] he states:

“In books such as Romans and Galatians, faith refers to the trust someone has in Christ to bring about salvation through his death. In other words, the term describes a relationship with another; faith is a trust ‘in’ Christ. The author of the pastorals also uses the term ‘faith.’ But here it is not about a relationship with Christ; faith now means the body of teaching that makes up the christian religion...”(p. 113).

However, this is flat out wrong. Not only do earlier undisputed epistles such as Galatians clearly refer to the “faith” as a body of teaching (by saying “...He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy”[Galatians 1:23, NASB 1995] - referring to the faith as an idea “being preached”), but also in the “undisputed” epistle of 2nd Corinthians. For example, 2 Cor 13:5 specifically commands believers to “...see whether you are in the faith,”(NASB 1995). This verse is clearly not referring to “trust alone” as well, since the following verses talk about doing what is right (2 Cor 13:7) and also defending the “truth” specifically (2 Cor 13:8). Coupled with the prior verses of Galatians 1:23 - which specifically consolidates “faith” as a concept/doctrine “being preached” - the grounding of this same definition in prior epistles such as 2nd Corinthians furthermore nullifies the basis of calling the trio a forgery based on these differing definitions alone, since such “undisputed epistles” already define faith as not just trust, but also a doctrine of beliefs long before the 2nd century. Finally, scholars contend that the large number of new non-name Greek words present in the pastorals with respect to the other epistles indicates the presence of a different writing style, and thus a forge. However, when the contents of what these new words mean are actually analyzed given the differing topic of the pastoral epistles (Christian living and ecclesiastical structure rather than addressing theological disputes to entire communities or clarifying the concept of the gospel), it’s no surprise that Paul would’ve changed up his word choice a bit. For example, a variety of Greek words relating to “righteousness” transition from indicating a “justification by God’s grace” into a quality of “righteous living.” However, this is to be expected, as 1 Timothy 1:3-7 already clarified that Paul’s purpose in writing this was specifically to address “Godly” conduct within the church (1 Tim 1:5). In doing so, Paul doesn’t deny that such administration is done through faith alone (1 Tim 1:4), but only to show what proper fruits of the faith look like. Therefore, it’s not a surprise that a letter solely dedicated to clarifying “sound doctrine” contains fundamentally different terms than the other epistles (which focus on faith, the gospel, and church-specific disputes), specifically relating to righteousness or “righteous living.” Additionally, examples of “new” said words include *Sophronismos* (σωφρονισμός; Meaning “self-discipline” or “sound mind” [2 Timothy 1:7]), *Nephalios* (νηφάλιος; Meaning “temperate,” “sober,” or “clear-headed” [1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 3:11; Titus 2:2]), and *Kosmios* ((κόσμος / κόσμιος): Meaning “respectable,” “orderly,” or “well-behaved” [1 Timothy 2:9; 3:2]). As can be seen, the said “new” words found in these pastoral epistles connote a context related to Christian living rather than those focused

deep in theology like the other Pauline epistles. Therefore, there isn't much reasonable suspicion for why Paul would've used a plethora of new words when dedicating entire epistles on this new topic.

Why "Undesigned Coincidences" Make Forgery Unreasonable

Finally, a variety of "undesigned coincidences" seem to point to the fact that there are elements of the pastoral epistles that a forger couldn't have feasibly faked, such as a variety of niche references to Acts and the other epistles. For example, in 2 Timothy 3:14-15, the forger tells us that Timothy knew scripture from childhood, coupled with 2 Timothy 1:5, which tells us that Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice were faithful. Finally, Acts 16:1 specifically tells us that while Timothy's father was Greek, his mother was a Jewish believer. Meanwhile, Acts 16:3 also tells us his Father wasn't a believer. Since this information isn't found anywhere else in scripture, skeptics would have to conclude that the epistle either has a literary dependence on Acts, or that the writer was someone close to Timothy. Additionally, Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12 to not let others look down on him because of his youth. Furthermore, Paul's specific command to the Corinthians for them not to treat Timothy with contempt in 1 Corinthians 16:10-11 suggests that the forger would've also had to have read 1 Corinthians, since no other book in scripture suggests any mistreatment of Timothy by his own fellow Christians. Furthermore, 2 Timothy 4:10 mentions Demas, a figure that only appears in Philemon 1:24 and Colossians 4:14 as a worker of Paul. Thus, the forger would've had to have read these books too in order to base the narrative that he eventually deserted Paul in 2 Timothy 4:10. Finally, 2 Timothy 4:20 tells us that Erastus stayed in Corinth. However, even though Acts 19:22 mentions the name "Erastus," he only mentions him as a helper while Paul travels to Ephesus. Out of the other books, Romans is the only one that hints that Erastus was ever even at Corinth. However, the missing puzzle piece lies in the next information. Romans 16:23 tells us that Erastus was the city treasurer, but doesn't mention exactly which city. Therefore, since modern scholars suspect that Paul most likely wrote Romans while in the city of Corinth, this is the only evidence a forger could've actually used in order to tell us that Erastus ever visited Corinth. However, the subtle hint in 1st Corinthians only obscures this detail more that ties this narrative together, adding confusion for how a forger would have tied all of these barely noticeable details together. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, Paul states that after collecting donations from Jerusalem, he swings by Corinth in order to pick it up. This minute detail hinting at the treasurer being at Corinth, coupled with the fact Romans says Erastus was at Corinth connects the dots together almost too perfectly, as if the forger had pulled off one of the most well-played moves that dwarfs virtually every other forgery attempt in early church history. Additionally, even if scholars assumed the forger was just well-versed in Colossians, Philemon, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Acts, this presents one massive detail that collapses the entire forgery model - which was the motive. The catch is that if the forger had really read all of these letters to find these small missing details to "complete" in order to add authenticity to their letter, then they would've just as easily noticed that Paul's letters already discussed male ordination (1 Cor 11:3-8; 1 Cor 14:34-35), had prior established a system of deacons and ministers (Philippians 1:1), keeping near to "sound doctrine" (Gal 1:6-8; 2 Cor 2:17; 2 Cor 11:3-4), and that leaders must prove their faithfulness in God (1 Cor 4:1-4; Gal 5:22-23), deeming such a scheme obsolete. There seems to be no apparent goal that the writer would have to gain from pouring in mountains of time to impersonate Paul's writing style, since 1 Tim, 2 Tim, and Titus

merely expand on those exact same topics, with no new agendas. One of the biggest misunderstandings in modern day biblical scholarship is that an unknown person (someone close to Timothy or a later forger) decided to undergo rigorous preparation to impersonate Paul, mentioning virtually every extremely minute detail of his personal life, all so they could “put words in his mouth” that he already said himself in prior letters - which was carried out with such a level of calculated precision that virtually every scholar in the next 1800 years wouldn’t have realized that the populus had been fooled. Even Marcion - who is regarded by scholars as one of the most highly skilled and intelligent writers at the time - still couldn’t push forth his interpolations of Luke’s gospel and the Pauline letters for a decade, let alone trick scholars for almost two millenium. Yet, after the forger’s highly calculated plan was complete, they vanished into obscurity with no separate written contributions to the early Church, despite such a high level of linguistic skill. This is apparent due to the lack of church father writings during a time when the pastoral epistles had to have been written very close to Paul’s death. Either that, or Paul wrote letters to Timothy after he got out of jail to expand more about the topics of Christian living and church order that were briefly discussed in earlier letters, demonstrating small changes to his personal life along the way.

Part 12: The Acts of The Apostles

Acts (62-68 CE): The book abruptly ends with the end of Paul’s 1st Roman imprisonment in 62 CE (Acts 28:30-31), which implies the work’s writing date to be finished shortly after 62 (no mention of Paul’s future missionary journeys are mentioned). However, some scholars argue that acts could have been written much later due to the fact that such post-jail missionary journey from Paul never occurred. However, if this were true, and Paul was executed in jail, there isn’t reason to believe that the author wouldn’t have recorded this significant martyr, considering that the mentioned timescale of the imprisonment in the letter implies that the verse was written down after his prison time was finished. Therefore, Paul was most likely never executed during his 1st Roman Imprisonment in the first place (Check “Ephesians / Philippians / Colossians / Philemon / 1 Peter” section for more evidence against the early execution theory.) Since acts it did not mention his death during his prison time, and all records of Paul’s post prison-experience talk about his preaching in asia minor (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 Clement, etc...), there would have been no reason for the author to have left out this future missionary journey had the work been written after 68-70 CE. Finally, the ending seems to be abrupt, lacking in a formal conclusion. If the author was unsure of Paul’s life after his imprisonment, they would likely have mentioned it at the end of the letter, unless the author was cut short in writing the account. This is due to the fact that the author gives historical details surrounding the context of his writing during the beginning of the letter. Therefore, this major end detail consolidates that the work was most likely composed shortly after 62 CE, before Paul’s final imprisonment or journey preaching. Since these internal details date the book comfortably between 62-70 CE, the letter is addressed to Theophilus (an acquaintance of Paul according to Luke’s gospel), and internal clues of the introduction match the writing style of the gospel attributed to Luke, there’s little doubt concerning its traditional authorship. Therefore, since Luke’s execution falls between 64-68 CE, the work falls in the range 62-68 CE.

On The Literary Dependence of Josephus

A minority of scholars have proposed a literary dependence of Acts on Flavius Joseph's work *Antiquities of the Jews* [12], largely stemming from specific historical similarities in each of their writings, such as Theudas and Judas "the Galilean" in Gamaliel's speech [Acts 5:36-37; *Antiquities* 18.1-2; 20.5.1 [12]] as well as the false prophet rebel "Egyptian" that Paul is mistaken for according to Acts 21:38 (*The Jewish War* 2.258-263 [2], *Antiquities* 20.169-171 [12]). However, the historical details surrounding the event are rather vague to say the least, especially for something so bold as a direct textual dependence. For example, while Acts 5:36-37 describes the Council of Gamaliel more in detail by citing specific names (Theudas and Judas of Galilee), Josephus speaks less specifically and more broadly on these series of events in Judea being "cleared of robberies by the care and providence of Fadus," (*Antiquities* 20.5.1 [12]). Since Luke's account is higher in specificity and contains fundamentally unique historical attributes that were tied to the specific false prophets by notable figures in the early church, this most likely suggests that either the textual dependence is the other way around (Josephus sourcing information partly from Acts), or that they both draw from a more common census of eyewitness tradition. This is also because Acts contain unique elements which have no other purpose in being mentioned when divorced from their broader historical context (what agrees with Josephus).

Likewise, while *The Jewish War* 2.258-263 (75-79 CE) [2] and Acts both discuss "the Egyptian" (Acts 21:38), Josephus mentions a total count of 30,000 while Acts mentions 4,000. In the biblical source, the information is given as the Roman commander questions Paul if he was the rebel due to his ability to speak Greek. This inconsistency raises red flags when it comes to a textual reliance to *The Jewish War* [2], although it's highly possible that the 4,000 number in Acts may have simply been due to a scribal error in recording the number 30,000 (due to the fact that "4" and "30" have similar numerical appearances in Ionic numeral system). This subtle, yet noteworthy detail is difficult to overlook as a coincidence, and may seem to reveal additional clues regarding their textual dependence.

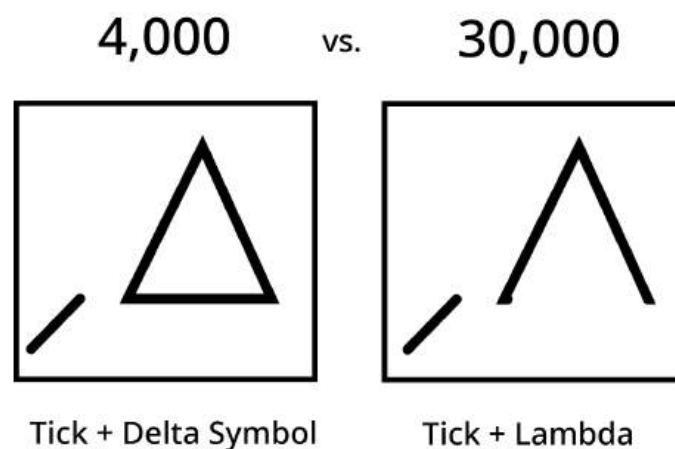


Figure 7
Written difference between the numbers "4,000" and "30,000" in the Greek Ionic Numeral System

While this theory holds some rationality, most scholars agree that 4,000 is far a more accurate description for the damage of the riot noted in *Antiquities* 20.169-171 [12] (400 killed and 20 injured, which would reach a historically feasible death count of ~10% rather than ~1.3%

- more customary of the group's final disbanding and retreat), making it more likely for the rather exaggerated account from Josephus to not have contributed to the value in Acts (refer to the "Objections To The Authenticity of 1 Thessalonians" section for more information regarding Josephus's inflated number bias). This most likely suggests that Acts simply recorded information from a separate eyewitness, or derived the numerical value from a different source entirely. Additionally, it's important to note that this specific, Ionic writing system was far less common for historians (such as Josephus) in the era than the Myriad notation, in which the two numbers would differ highly in writing shape. It would most likely not have been possible for *The Jewish War* [2] to have taken this number from the book of Acts, since the work by Josephus was originally written in a non-Greek language. Due to Acts' high historical congruency with the Pauline epistles, a potential textual dependence most likely suggests that the entire story trip wasn't fabricated using the historical details in Josephus's writings. The second possibility as a result of this theory being true is that an early manuscript error corrupted the pool of Acts manuscripts despite it originally containing the correct number value, but this is most likely false as well since early manuscripts most likely did not operate under the Ionic numbering system. Ultimately, these number contradictions most likely discredits the theory of a textual dependence on any of the two sources by Josephus.

Part 13: Second Peter

2 Peter (64-68 CE): Throughout early church history, 2 Peter was among the most disputed books before its usage and canonization. Due to the vast array of Petrine forgeries at the time, even the well regarded 1 Peter took its time - being initially absent from the Muratorian (2nd Century) Canon.

However, the authenticity of the books of James, Hebrews, and 1 Peter has been demonstrated in previous sections, despite their notable absence in the canon. Origen of Alexandria was first to explicitly identify the epistle of 2 Peter by name, quoting it as scripture at least six times [*Homilies On Leviticus* 4:4 [13] (1); *Homilies On Joshua* 7:1 [14] (1); *Commentary On Romans* 4.9 [15] (2); *Homilies On Exodus* 12 [16] (1); *Homilies On Numbers* [17] (1)]. Over 100 years earlier, 1 Clement 23:3-4 (95-97 CE [5]) states: "Far from us be that which is written..." going on to warn against double-mindedness, doubting, and mentioning how certain people in the church respond to a lack of signs of the end times prophecies. Since there is no passage in scripture which verbatim matches this quote, this implies that Clement of Rome likely took multiple ideas from scripture and mashed them together into his core reasoning. While the first half of the quote strongly resembles James 1:8 or James 4:8 linguistically (no other works at the time mentioned the term "double-mindedness"), the second half shares high similarity with 2 Peter 3:3-4 in particular. This subtle detail to associate this passage with "for it is written" (implying scripture) draws questions to what Clement of Rome is quoting, if not for 2 Peter. Due to the quote's verbatim style to the widely regarded pseudonymous work of 2 Clement (2 Clement 11:2-4 [18]), many scholars have suggested that this passage wasn't paraphrased, but part of a prior, apocalyptic work that was later discarded. However, this theory largely cracks under scrutiny. In Robert Picirilli's *Allusions to 2 Peter in the Apostolic Fathers* [19], he notes that it would have been abnormal for Clement to have quoted from a largely unknown work that was seen to be a non-authoritative apocryphal work, even less so a work that died due to a lack of copying, despite being quoted by reputable fathers like Clement. However, critical scholars have fired back, stating that various works such as the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Apocalypse of

Peter were lost works extensively quoted by the early fathers, but ultimately fell into obscurity once a rigorous canon was established around the early 4th century. However, these same apocryphal works were rediscovered later from ancient manuscripts. Since the same couldn't be said for the lost books 1 Clement was quoting, it only raises more questions as to why a book so important to have been quoted by one of the most famous fathers in history was not only not copied enough to preserve ancient manuscripts, but also left behind no archaeological evidence for its existence from any era. Additionally, considering that 2 Peter was ultimately canonized as scripture, this demonstrates that it was far more similar to the New Testament works in composition than forgeries or other apocryphal writings in the time period. It boasts a far more dominant influence in the theology of the early church fathers than any of the apocryphal books. Saint Fermilian (pre-268 CE), Irenaeus of Lyons (180 CE), and Justin Martyr (140-165 CE) all allude to the specific theological concepts found exclusively in its writing. These early fathers in question had a rigorous, extensive process in ruling out false writings as well as other methods in order to determine the authenticity of works, which eventually ended with the work's acceptance. Therefore, the high thematic and vocabulary overlap of 1 Clement 23:3-4 alone most likely amounts to being a quotation of 2 Peter 3:3-4 due to Occam's Razor. It should also be noted that the epistle of Clement contains numerous other allusions to 2 Peter. Additionally, an apocrypha known as the Apocalypse of Peter contains various shared elements of 2 Peter. Since 2 Peter holds greater theological complexity, suggesting that it laid the basis for this apocrypha's writing. The other widely circulated Petrine forgeries at the time explain early doubts and disputes regarding its authorship. This consolidates its composition before the 2nd century once again. Scholarly arguments against 2 Peter's authorship also point towards its language regarding the end times in chapter 3. 2 Peter 3:3-9 states that there were mockers who professed that Jesus would never return since the world still seems to be running the same way long after the death of the apostles. This hinges on the idea that early Christians believed that the end times would come within a generation, but had to defend against said "scoffers" once this time had not come, using reasoning such as one day being a thousand years for the Lord (2 Peter 3:9). However, the language "our fathers [who have 'fallen asleep']" 2 Peter 3:4 most certainly does not refer to the apostles, but Jewish patriarchs. This aligns with the passage's context as well, since 2 Peter 3:5-8 talks about these same scoffers overlooking the flood and other "evidence" of God's judgement as well. Additionally, letters as early as James (5:7-11) and 1 Thessalonians (4:13-18) demonstrate worries and patience regarding Jesus's coming (pre-60 CE), and the majority of the synoptic gospels predict this doubt and struggle among believers despite their scholarly consensus dating to before the 2nd century (Mark 13, Luke 12, and Matthew 24). Therefore, this argument lacks consistency with the other New Testament works. 2 Peter 3:16 also suggests that the author of 2 Peter considered at least some of Paul's writings to be divine scripture. Once again, this doesn't suggest an extremely late date due to the fact that Paul himself explicitly notes how some of his own letters were divinely inspired [1 Thess 4:15, 1 Thess 2:13, 2 Thess 2:15, 2 Thess 3:14, 1 Cor 2:13, 1 Cor 7:10-12, 1 Cor 14:37, 2 Tim 3:10-16]. As discussed in the "Luke" section, the early citation of Luke 10:7 by 1 Timothy 5:18 suggests that the practice of the apostles associating each others' writings as scripture was not uncommon. By the time of Peter's journey to Rome (60s CE), these letters would have ranged from 3-10 years in age. Strong historical evidence indicates that following Paul's release from prison in 62 CE (refer to "Ephesians / Philippians / Colossians / Philemon / 1 Peter" section for further information), he traveled to Rome for his fourth missionary journey. Since Paul was most likely in close proximity with Peter, Peter would have

likely known about this inspiration within his letters. Additionally, it should also be noted that the epistle of 1 Peter (holding more robust evidence for authentic authorship) holds a direct textual dependence with Ephesians and Colossians (60-62 CE), confirming the concept that the apostle Peter was most likely fond of quoting ideas from his epistles and warning believers with an allusive reference to them part of the divine law, without a more firm and explicit declaration of Paul's letters being scripture. For objections regarding whether Peter had the writing skill to compose such letters, readers are encouraged to look at the "Objections to the Authenticity of 1 Peter" section. As 2 Peter 1:13-16 states, the apostle Peter expects his imminent end during the writing of the letter, suggesting a date of ~64-68 CE.

Part 14: The Book of Hebrews

Hebrews (33-70 CE): Hebrews 10:1-2 indicates that at the time of the work's writing, sacrifices were still being offered "continually, year by year" in the present tense. Since sacrifices were only permitted to be performed in the Temple of Jerusalem (Lev 17:3-4, Deut 12:5-7) until this practice ceased (after the Siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE), this consolidates its writing to pre-70 CE. Since the author makes no claims regarding their own identity (although referring to Timothy as a "brother"/"acquaintance" [Heb 13:23]), it would be difficult to quantify a motive behind why these subtle details would have been inserted if the work had been written post-70 CE. Many other scholars narrow down this date to 60-70 CE due to details such as Christian persecution, and Timothy's release from prison. However, considering that the author the work is not known or is explicitly stated, and that Acts 16:1-2 (49 CE) demonstrates that Timothy was already a well regarded as a disciple in Lystra, it's highly plausible that the work was not constructed by Paul, but another brother of Timothy during one of his earlier possible missionary journeys that could have occurred before he met Paul. This is highly consistent with the fact that the work deviates from Paul's regular writing style - no formal introduction/conclusion - as a work that claims "greetings from Italy" (implying it was addressed to a particular group of Christians, without clarifying where or who they were). These highly vague details juxtaposed with Paul's formal writing style, suggesting that it might not have been written by Paul. However, it's entirely possible (although unlikely) that Paul wrote the letter, but simply adopted a different style in writing in the work (similar to the highly pleonastic style of Ephesians discussed in the "Objections to the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, and Colossians (Rebutted)" section). This endeavor would have been far more ambitious, and suggests a highly distinct and lengthy structure than his usual epistles. However, Hebrews 13:7 notes:

"Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith...", (NASB 1995).

The way the author speaks about all of the works of their predecessors may suggest that the letter was composed after the apostles' deaths, and embodies a more mild, yet highly theologically complex structure in order to comfort believers following the passing of most of the apostles. If this were true, then the work could have been written ~64-70 CE - shortly after the deaths of Peter and Paul, yet before the destruction of the temple. However, considering that the overall style of the work seems to embody flowery and exaggerated language at times, and Hebrews 2:3 speaks of the word being first "spoken through the lord," and then "confirmed by those who heard," (NASB 1995) as opposed to explicitly stating many generations of oral

tradition, Hebrews could have just as well been written closer to the 33 CE era of the early church long before the deaths of the apostles (Acts 1-4 records missionary journeys of the firsthand apostles to the Jewish Christians). The writing style also differs from both Paul and Luke, and other notable figures inside of their missionary circle. Therefore, its high theological complexity makes a time prior to Paul's missionary era with Timothy highly plausible. It also allows for a time period shortly after their deaths. Needless to say, doubts regarding the author's identity explain its late acceptance into the Muratorian Canon, and the canon of scripture as a whole.

Some may argue that the language in Hebrews 10:1-2 doesn't necessarily suggest that the literal temple was still standing, since talmudic texts going into the 3rd-6th century preserve this same ritualistic language of sacrifices being brought to the temple in the present tense. However, this argument is largely counterintuitive. When it taken into consideration that the rabbis had a clear motive to preserve temple laws textually, while Christian authors would have the opposite motive, this most likely suggests that the text likely upheld a literal description of the sacrifices being made rather than the belief that the old covenant had not been fulfilled or ended after the early 70s. This is especially supported by the fact that virtually the entirety of Hebrews 10 is dedicated to showing the temple's offerings as obsolete, and not something that held spiritual significance after the crucifixion. Therefore, the idea that an early Christian text such as Hebrews would portray sacrifices in a similar way as later Talmudic texts is highly unlikely.

Part 15: The Gospel Attributed To Matthew

Matthew (33-95 CE): Due to shared material only found in Luke and Matthew (before the writing of John's gospel, which has a textual dependence on Luke), this highly suggests that Matthew was written after Luke, or that Luke was written after Matthew. Since There is no successfully lower-bound date for Luke's writing beyond the crucifixion of Christ than potentially the theory of Markan priority (refer to the "Acknowledgement of The Ancient 'Corinthian Creed': 1 Corinthians 15:3-7" section), this defaults Matthew's lower bound date to be the crucifixion of Christ just the same. Although source Q's existence is a possibility, other factors such as Matthew and Luke simply pulling from the same eyewitness samples or a direct textual dependence between them explain these linguistic similarities. Additionally, Didache 8:2 [20](a work ostensibly dated to the mid-90s CE according to scholarly consensus) directly alludes to the form of the lord's prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, with substantial yet insignificant changes. At the very least, this suggests the gospel was written before 95 CE. Due to the patristic consensus order of John's gospel being written after Matthew's, this makes a date beyond this all the more unlikely.

Part 16: The First Epistle of John, Gospel of John, and Revelations

John/1 John/Revelations (81-96 CE): Later, Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* 3.1.1 (180 CE) [21] states, "Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia." This is bolstered by the letters of Polycrates of Ephesus to Pope Victor I (2nd century) and Eusebius of Caesaria's Ecclesiastical history, that state not only that the apostle John died in Ephesus, but that this was where he spent the last of his days [*Ecclesiastical History* 3.31.2-3 [4]; *Ecclesiastical History* 5.24.2-3 [4]; *Ecclesiastical History* 3.1.1 [4]]. The idea that Irenaeus would have fabricated the

historical context of the gospel to seemingly bolster its authority for polemical purposes is not out of the question, but it leaves questions as to why this account is unanimously agreed upon and rarely contested among the early fathers - who often derived their historical information from independent branches of the apostolic lineage. Justin Martyr (100-165 CE) who lived in Ephesus before his conversion ~130 CE (as stated in his *Dialogue With Trypho* (c. 155 CE) [22]) attributed the book of Revelation and the gospel to John the apostle, and confirms John's whereabouts in Ephesus nearing the end of his life. Additional fathers such as Theophilus of Antioch (180 CE), Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE), and Tertullian (155-240 CE) all attributed the fourth gospel to the apostle John. While many state that Martyr may have been referring to a different figure named John, this is unlikely once again due to a lack of adequate contestation of the authorship of the gospel directly after Irenaeus's writing. Additionally, Irenaeus states that the book of Revelation - which was likely written after the gospel of John - was written by John's hand during the end of Domitian's reign (81-96 CE) in *Against Heresies* 5.30.1-3 [21]. Since the author of Revelation claims to be the apostle John writing from the island of "Patmos" in Asia (Revelation 1:9), this is not only adjacent to the authorship claims of the early fathers, but also largely confirms his whereabouts near Ephesus during the last moments of his life. Due to the high internal consistency of the letter with external extrabiblical sources that also have high agreement with one another, there is little room to doubt the claim regarding the dating of Emperor Domitian's reign. Therefore, the Rylands Papyrus (P52) of John (the oldest surviving New Testament copy fragment ~100-150 CE) unfortunately doesn't hold relevance in narrowing it down further, despite its remarkable discovery, as the clear historical evidence already narrows the range much further.

That being said, there is reasonable evidence to believe segments of the gospel may have been written prior 70 CE, rather than the entire gospel in one session. Littered throughout the early chapters of John are numerous details that are packed to fit the real, and descriptive historical setting of the pre-70 Roman empire. Due to the abnormally high historical accuracy within dialogues early on in the gospel coupled with its writing date before 96 CE, it was incredibly unlikely for it to have taken from historical censuses of non-Christian historians - whose accounts were written post-93 CE. For instance, in a dialogue between the Jews in Jerusalem with Jesus in John 2:20, they state: "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days..." (NASB 1995). In *Antiquities of the Jews* 15.380 [12] (c. 93 CE), Josephus states that Herod began to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem during the 18th year of his reign specifically. Since various independent ancient sources date the beginning of King Herod's reign to ~37 BC, the 18th year of his reign would amount to ~27-28 CE, which marks the beginning of Jesus's ministry. Therefore, this brief yet highly historically accurate detail early on in the gospel coupled with the fact that it couldn't have been written long enough for the wide distribution of Josephus's antiquities suggests that the aspect of the conversation as a whole was most likely a historical event that the apostle John himself recorded. Due to the unlikelihood that John would have remembered this detail more than 60 years later largely suggests that parts of the account were composed long before the pre-70 era - likely after Christianity began to take off post-33 CE. This detail couldn't have been taken from other prior sources either, since none of the synoptic gospels or texts earlier than Josephus transmit information that could have led to the calculation of the number. Additionally, some historical details in the pre-70s Jerusalem are described in the present tense that many historians believed were simply fabricated allegorical elements for a long time. For instance, John 5:2 talks about a pool called "Bethesda" (in the present tense), specifying that it had "five porticoes," (NASB 1995). Since

these details couldn't have been accurately recorded if John hadn't been a direct eyewitness of Christ's missionary period in the late 20s, critical scholars believed they were false. However, when archaeological evidence of the pool was excavated in the late 19th century, scientists confirmed the account's accuracy. Once again, with no matching ancient sources or synoptic gospels to relay the detail, this most likely suggests that John began to compose the first part of his gospel before the fall of the temple, finally finishing the account under Domitian's reign. Other examples such as Jesus's conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4 demonstrate these niche historical details that would most likely have come from a direct eyewitness source.

1 John shares high linguistic agreement with the gospel of John, making it likely written by the same author. Eusebius gives insights into the lost works of Papias, particularly in the ten preserved fragments of his "Expositions and Sayings of the Lord" (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.16 [4]), in which fragment VI alludes to specific theological elements present in 1 John. This early allusion along with a similar literary structure with the gospel of John highly suggests that the first epistle of John is authentic. This is once again bolstered by high early church agreement. Additionally, the themes of the epistles revolve around combatting false teachings, which is consistent with the late 1st century era.

Part 17: The Gospel Attributed To Mark

Mark (33-140 CE): The earliest attestation to the gospel of Mark comes from Papias of Hieropolis (110-140 CE), as stated earlier in *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15 [4]. Besides this, there is little to narrow down the range. Many theories can be drawn based on the literary dependence of the gospels. Popular scholarship favors Markan priority (stating that Mark was the first of the four gospels), since it is the least complex and Luke, Matthew, and John seem to progressively add to it with more elements (though there is sufficient reason to believe it may not have been the case). For example, while the four certainly hold a literary dependence, it's unclear whether this is direct, or simply through other non-written sources such as the witnesses these gospels used to garner information. This would solve the issue of the apparent literary connection while also accounting for omitted details found in the other three gospels. For example, while Luke and Mark have near-verbatim Greek in certain passages, minute details seem to be added, with some of them missing, suggesting that the literary dependence may have been far more complex - involving theories suggesting that the eyewitness pool Luke used to construct his gospel may have simply overlapped with Mark's, since Papias notes that Mark served as the Apostle Peter's interpreter. This is due to the fact that since Luke 1:1-2 implies that there were many before Luke who attempted to compile an account of the gospel (Luke 1:1), as well as those "handed down" by the eyewitnesses (Luke 1:2). Therefore, Luke likely had a diverse pool of sources to compile an account from - some of which may have included Simon Peter, even if the Greek gospel of Mark was not yet constructed at the time. This would just as well explain the near-verbatim textual similarities between passages of Luke and Mark as the Markan priority theory, raising questions to whether Markan priority would have been the simplest explanation for the increasing theological complexity according to the historical context regarding the construction of the gospels. Likewise, a gospel written later not by Mark could have simplified elements of John and Luke in order to cater to a lay audience. Therefore, much like the relationship between 2 Peter and Jude's textual dependence, the one between the four gospels has little application for their dating. Due to the gospel's high emphasis on bridging cultural gaps, explanations of Jewish cultural beliefs whereas Matthew or John focus on higher

theological elements such as his Christology and resurrection. In addition to these details, it's also highly probable that Mark simply focused on Christ's teachings, and not his miraculous events. This is supported by the fact that while the Ancient Corinthian Creed (33-35 CE) in 1 Cor 15:3-7 describes Christ's appearance to Peter and the resurrection account, it would be difficult to explain why an account based on Peter would not have contained these elements if the author's goal was not to focus on events after Christ's death. In the pentecost sermon of Acts 2:22-36, Peter preaches the physical resurrection (v. 32-34), suggesting that Mark (who served as Peter's interpreter) may have deliberately chosen to exclude the detail. Consequently, many scholars that accept Markan gospel priority also argue that the absence of the resurrection witness accounts suggests that the idea of the belief in the resurrection didn't originally exist among early Christians. However, coupled with the prior information stated in the pentecost sermon, the large abundance of pre-Markan resurrection sources invalidates this unreasonable scholarly position. As stated once again in the "Acknowledgement of The Ancient 'Corinthian Creed': 1 Corinthians 15:3-7" section, the idea that Christ had risen from the dead, and appeared to many witnesses was already widely accepted among the early Christian community as early as Paul's conversion period in 33-35 CE. However, if Papias was wrong about the conditions surrounding the gospel's construction, it could have been written as late as 140 CE, though extremely unlikely.

Part 18: The Second Epistle of John

2 John (33-180 CE): 2 John contains certain theological elements expressed in 1 John - particularly themes related to "deceivers" in the world. Besides this, there is little internal evidence that the precise date of composition can be traced. Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria explicitly attributed 1 and 2 John to John the apostle, which would once again suggest a most likely date ~50-99 CE if true. This once again produces a wide and loose range of 33-180 CE due to a lack of adequate and robust contextual certainty.

Part 19: The Third Epistle of John

3 John (33-265 CE): While 1 and 2 John were accepted among early church fathers by the late 2nd century, the first explicit mention of 3 John comes directly from Dionysius of Alexandria (c. 200-265 CE) (*Ecclesiastical History* 7.25.11 [4]). However, this seemingly unnatural late most likely doesn't threaten the authorship case, since the entire letter spans less than one fifth of that of 2 Peter's in terms of Greek words, and as little as one sixth in terms of Greek characters. Additionally, the majority of its contents cover context and situation disputes topics much like 2 John. Throughout the letter, John encourages Gaius to be faithful and re-informs him about the attitude of certain members of the church. Therefore, with an early church environment mainly focused on combatting false teachings and establishing the fullness of Christian doctrine, it can be easy to see why most early fathers wouldn't have been fond of quoting the epistle. Since the audience of the epistle was also restrictive (focused on giving personal advice to Gaius), it's unlikely it would have been in wide circulation or accessible to the early fathers. However, the possibility of its forgery (although once again unlikely due to a significant lack of plausible motive) extends the potential range, despite a most likely composition date of 40-99 CE (less developed vocabulary than 2 John, suggesting a possibility of composition during infancy of the church's development).

Results and Discussion:

Statistical Analysis

The Peculiar Properties of Log Normal Distributions

In nature, when quantities (such a pool area in forests, and the time it takes popcorn to pop in a microwave) are limited by a minimum value of zero but not restricted by any maximal value, the various factors determining the size of a sample of such quantities form a lognormal distribution - taking the form of a normal distribution when a logarithmic scale is applied to the x-axis.

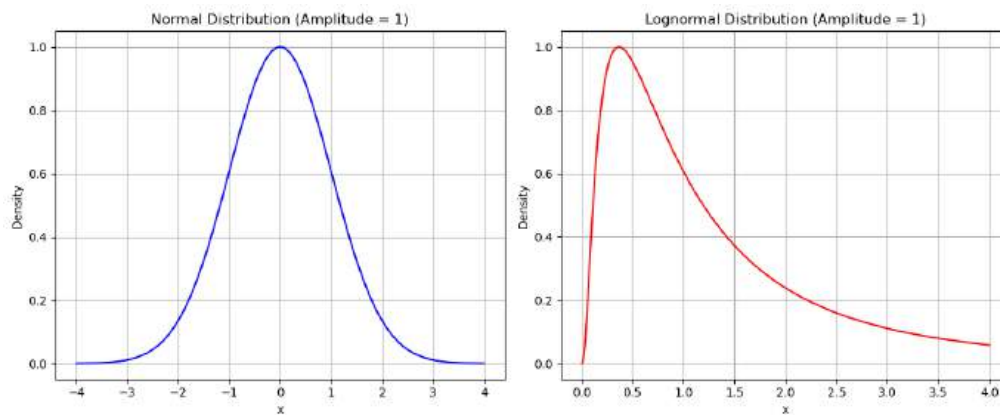


Figure 8 - Normal vs Log Normal Distribution Difference

Within the realm of ancient text writing, this models a few quantities particularly well, such as cases when the time taken for an author to get access to paper (i.e. lower class citizens in ancient times) or the time taken to first write things down after spreading the word is significant. Another highly useful property of lognormal functions is their multiplicative identity, as multiplying them together results in another lognormal function. This is important because there might be hundreds or even thousands of variables that determine when primary eyewitnesses may begin writing their works, but these variables can ultimately be ignored due to the fact that they would still be able to be modeled by a lognormal distribution over shorter timescales.

Considering Boundary Conditions

Lognormal distributions often assume no longer term limit to their slow decay. Therefore, with this model alone, we wouldn't be able to account for other factors such as the eventual death of witnesses. Therefore, we will use other scenarios in history where environmental factors (such as accessibility to paper) are limited in order to model our right end boundary conditions. According to the model introduced by Igarashi [23], the collective historical memory of a society over time from the moment of an important historical event follows two phases - an initial negative linear exponential drop off (by the primary witnesses) followed by a gradual power law increase that is attributed to future references. Since it's fair to assume that most sources of important events in history came from the elites who had ready access to paper and

authors needed more time to implement said memory on paper, and that the “gradually increasing” later second phase can be ignored due to the fact we are only interested in the accounts of the primary authors, the end behavior for our function should match a negative linear exponential decay ($a + be^{(-kt)}$) - which also exhibits a similar closure under multiplication. Therefore, an improper fit with this eyewitness prediction model would expose any inaccuracies of our textual composition predictions earlier in the publication, as well as potential forgeries (non-authentic eyewitness accounts).

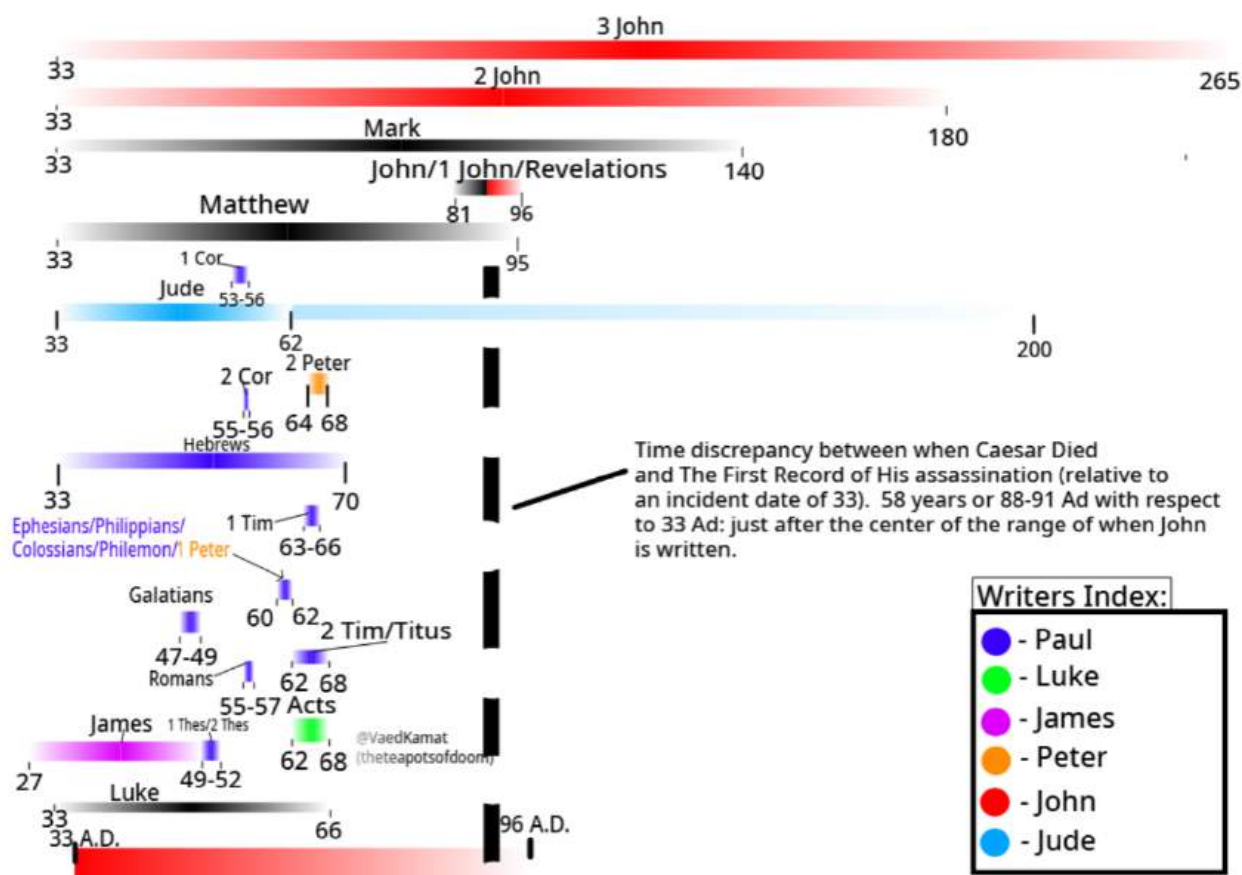


Figure 9 - Final Dating of This Publication's Analysis On The New Testament

With this consideration, the next thing we do is find some way to turn our graph from earlier into a probability density plot to determine if it follows this trend. If it does, our sample is deemed to be authentic as it follows the conventional historical pattern with no forged texts. This is a fairly good methodology since our sample size conveniently happens to be moderately high (20-30 texts), so we can expect the results to give us a relatively accurate conclusion of the nature of these texts. But how is it possible to convert a graph with broad date ranges into a discrete plot of sources over time?

The Rationale of The Methodology

This is where some criticism of this methodology is to be expected, since this paper's methodology is going to operate on the crude assumption that the probabilities of any given text

are relatively linear across all dates. If in doubt of this method, readers are encouraged to repeat this experiment with different distributions (Gaussian/normal, skewed, etc...) and share their findings. However, most early texts (James and Luke) and later texts (Mark / 2 John / 3 John) have a large enough date range that other variables we didn't account for would roughly be uniform over all dates. By the end of this paper, downsides of the model will also be discussed. Assigning each text a total area value of 1, we can divide it by the date range of each text to get a "text frequency" value for every year. Adding these values up for every year from 27 CE to 265 CE, the follow graph below is derived:

Results

Probability Density Distribution

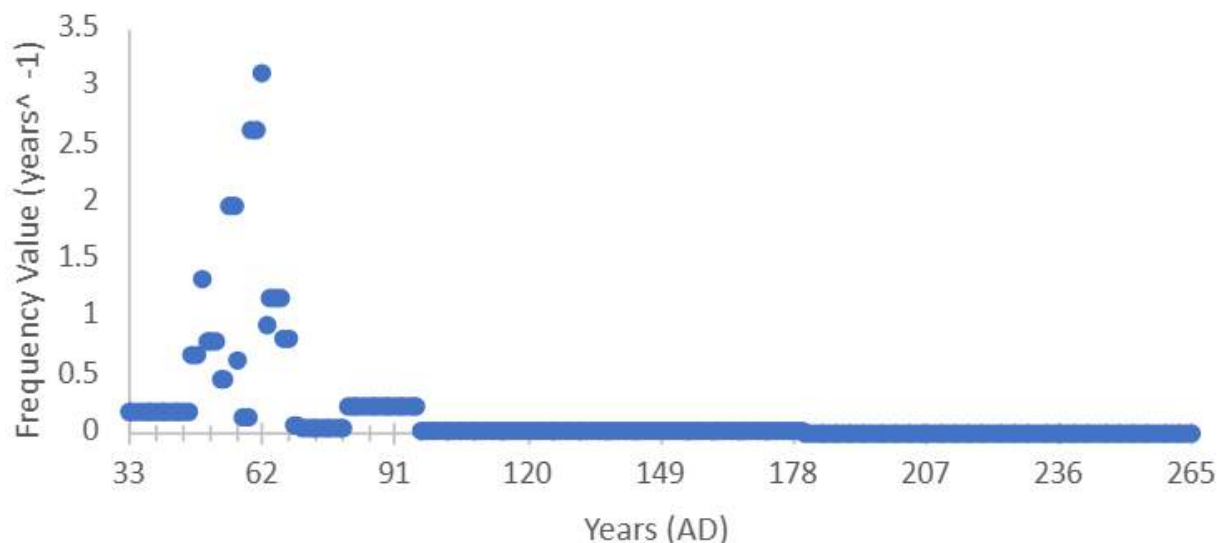


Figure 10

The inverse textual frequency value graph derived from assuming an even distribution of textual probabilities throughout all date ranges and adding them together.

As can be seen, the sharp increase until 20-30 years after the crucifixion followed by the gradual decay until the post-apostolic/church father era closely models the trend of a lognormal decay function. However, as predicted from our earlier theory, a lognormal function of best fit alone with no exponential decay would poorly model an authentic source dataset:

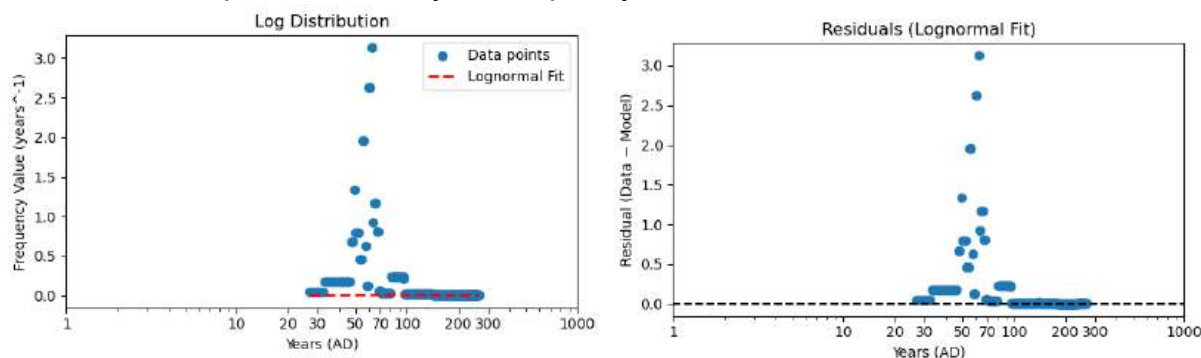


Figure 11 - Usual Log Normal Function of Best Fit To The Data (Poor)

Normally, a residual plot confirms the presence of a good model by demonstrating no clear pattern of dots above and below the line. But in this case, the model did so poorly that the pattern still remained almost identical to our original data points.

Factoring In Exponential Decay

However, once we add in the negative linear/quadratic exponential decay to accurately account for the death of witnesses and other factors, we get an exceptionally well fit:

Linear:

Best-fit parameters:
a = 0.09076254033078741
b = 9.546410329562884
c = 0.122932282771554
Amplitude A = 273.128038959746
mu = 4.095004505021102
sigma = 0.11563477860608733
R^2 = 0.6159963774966466

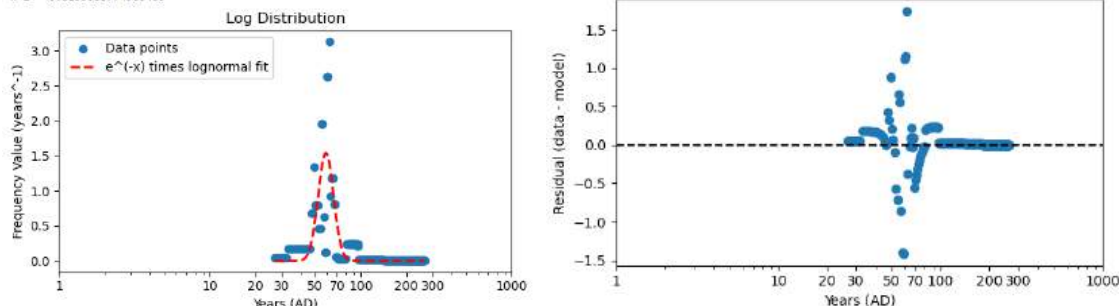


Figure 12 - A negative linear exponential multiplied by the log normal function of best fit to account for other factors.

Quadratic:

Best-fit parameters:
a = 0.1206182052513185
b = 8.266688127828123
c = 0.00205828713578713
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mu = 4.099116700954744
sigma = 0.11210090851447881
R^2 = 0.6159963774966466

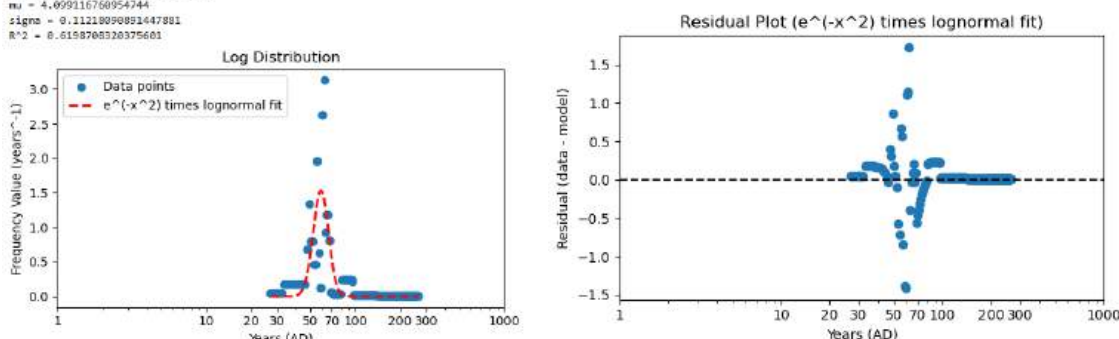


Figure 13 - A negative quadratic exponential multiplied by the log normal function of best fit to account for other factors.

Besides the high error in the early-middle date ranges which is far more likely due to the fallibility of our methodology for shorter, overlapping date ranges of the latter Pauline epistles rather than the inauthenticity of the epistles themselves (which is discussed in future analysis), these residual plots demonstrate little to no ordered patterns and are mostly random error (there is a consistent scatter between positive and negative residuals throughout all observed x-values).

The plots taper off at the extremes of our graph due to our method's higher accuracy for longer date ranges. Thus, an authentic historical pattern is shown to accurately model our samples.

A bimodal plot was also chosen to test the data. This will be used to determine the presence of forged texts/pseudepigraphas in future analysis:

Bimodal Plot

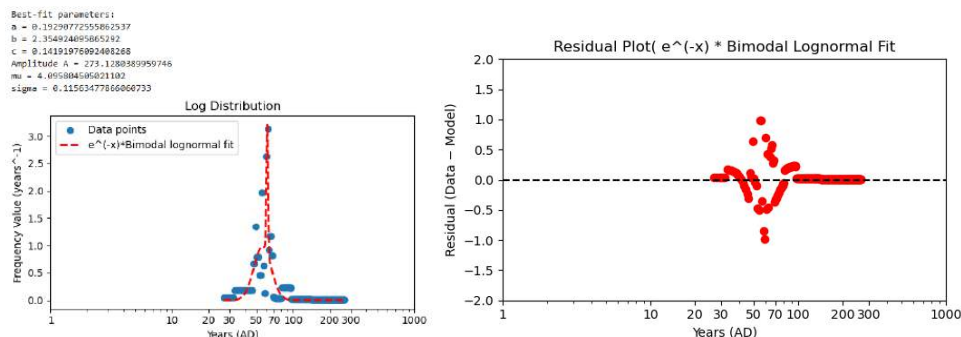


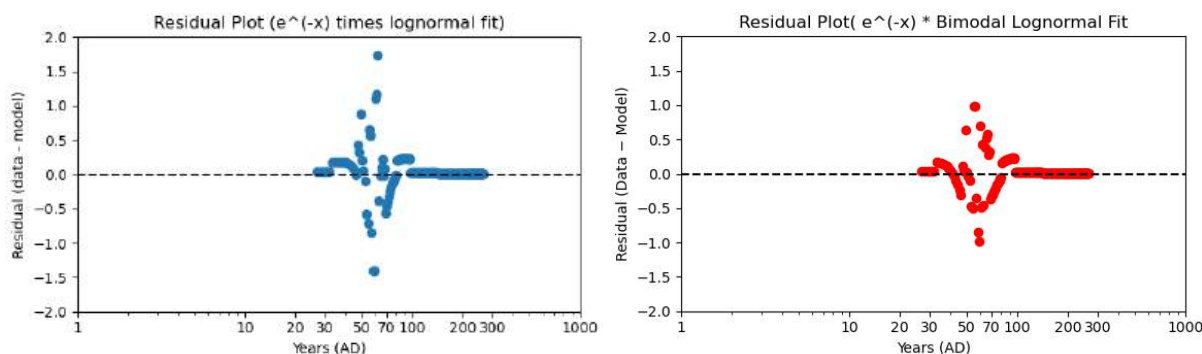
Figure 14 - A bimodal negative linear exponential times lognormal function of best fit to the data.

Comparative Analysis: Testing For Pseudepigraphas

A Statistical Intuition of Forged Texts: If the implementation of a second lognormal parameter in the fit function skews the residual variance more on the right side, it would most likely demonstrate the presence of forgeries New Testament, since the construction pseudepigraphal texts would be characterized by a secondary “lobe” of text formation - responsible for a second lognormal distribution at a later date. Therefore, the model would potentially expose any meaningful fraction of forged texts if disproportional skewage is observed from the right side of the plot.

However, if no change is observed in certain residual points across both models, it would reveal that the specific text is most likely non-pseudepigraphal.

Monomodal vs Bimodal Fit



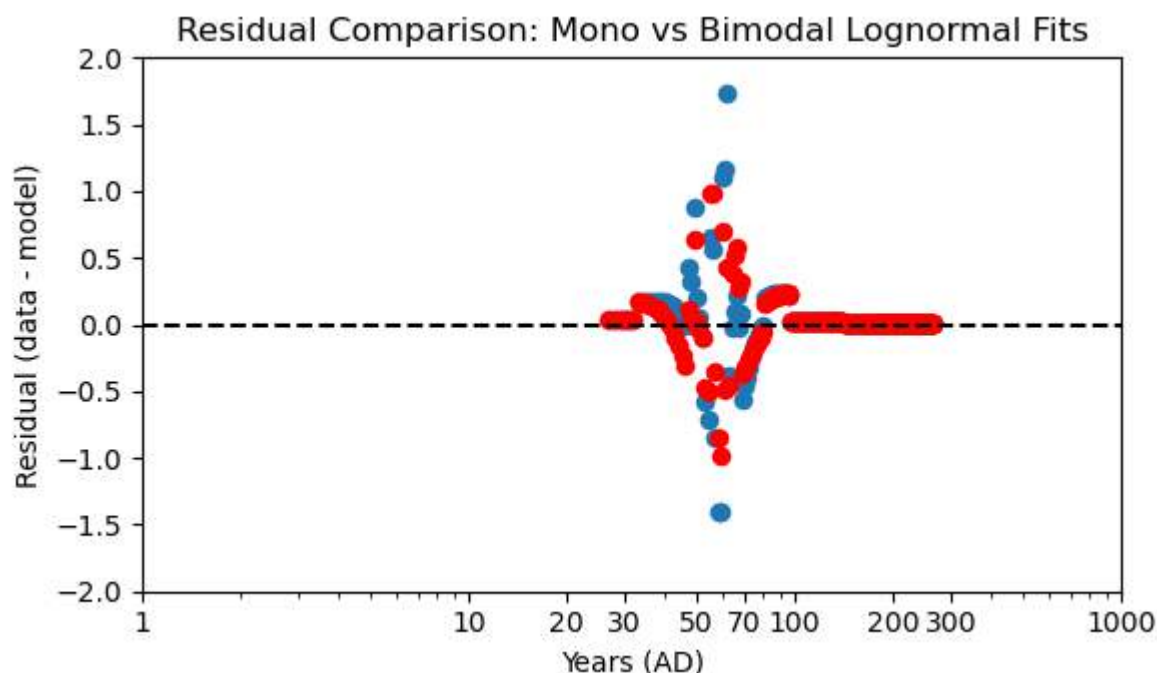


Figure 15 - Comparative analysis of monomodal and bimodal fits to test for Pseudepigraphas.

Surely enough, it can be seen in the overlay that the right side is almost identical, while the left has gotten slightly smaller if any change at all. Instead, most correlation improvements seem to originate from the middle (mode) of the graph (~62 CE). However, this was expected to begin with due to the nature of the study's methodology in graphing text frequency - since "year by year" divisions of values would've produced the greatest textual overlap errors in the contribution of the Pauline epistles (which have much smaller and inconveniently overlapping date ranges), while being far more accurate in texts with larger determined date ranges such as James, the gospels, 1/2/3 John, and Revelations (which were either written very early or very late). Therefore, these results are not to be misinterpreted as to conclude that the paper's dating for the early Pauline epistles were wrong - just that our methodology of developing the frequency values was engineered in a way that resulted in sizeable heteroscedasticity (non-constant variance) near the middle of the graph.

Having noted this, something that's not likely obvious at first is that the comparative graph also revealed an unintended result - that despite the high expected error due to the low sample size, dates for James (27 - 49 CE), Galatians (47 - 49 CE), the latter Pauline epistles (1/2 Tim, Titus, acts, and 2 Peter), and Revelations (81-96 CE) were shown to be remarkably accurate, since their values were almost identical to the theoretical approximation. Demonstrating that the residual error is purely random and has no correlation with the development of pseudepigraphal texts, this unveils an important discovery, since it also reveals that the intuition of many scholars were most likely incorrect due to the statistical unlikelihood that James, 1/2 Tim, Titus, 2 Peter, or Revelations were inauthentic or pseudepigraphal.

References:

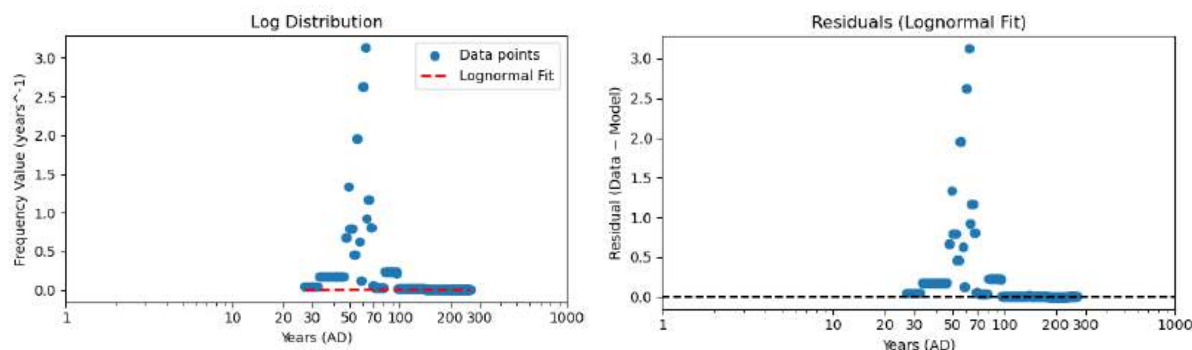
- In-Text Citations:
- [1] - Tacitus. *The Histories*. (c. 100 CE).

- [2] - Josephus F. *The Jewish War*. (c. 75-79 CE).
- [3] - Tertullian. *Against Marcion*. New Advent, 1885.
- [4] - Eusebius of Caesarea. *Ecclesiastical History*. New Advent, 1885.
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- [6] - Ignatius of Antioch. *Epistle to the Ephesians*. New Advent, 1885.
- [7] - Polycarp of Smyrna. *Epistle to the Philippians*. New Advent, 1885.
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- [14] - Origen. *Homilies on Joshua*, trans. B. J. Bruce, ed. C. White. The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. (2002).
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- [23] - Igarashi N., Okada Y., Sayama H., Sano Y. A two-phase model of collective memory decay with a dynamical switching point. *Nature Scientific Reports* **12**, 21484 (2022).

Appendix:

- Code & Graphs A (Regular Lognormal Fit)(Figure 11):

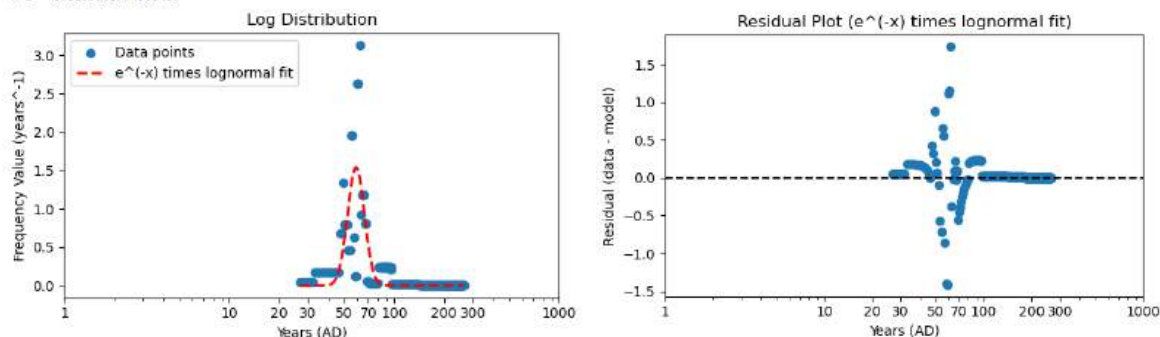
[https://github.com/Chalcopyrite-obesity/Code-Graphs-A-Regular-Lognormal-Fit/blob/main/Code%20%26%20Graphs%20A%20\(Regular%20Lognormal%20Fit\).txt](https://github.com/Chalcopyrite-obesity/Code-Graphs-A-Regular-Lognormal-Fit/blob/main/Code%20%26%20Graphs%20A%20(Regular%20Lognormal%20Fit).txt)



- Code & Graphs B (Regular Lognormal * e^{-kx} Fit):

[https://github.com/Chalcopyrite-obesity/Code-Graphs-B-Regular-Lognormal-e--kx-Fit/blob/main/Code%20%26%20Graphs%20B%20\(Regular%20Lognormal%20e%5E-kx%20Fit\).txt](https://github.com/Chalcopyrite-obesity/Code-Graphs-B-Regular-Lognormal-e--kx-Fit/blob/main/Code%20%26%20Graphs%20B%20(Regular%20Lognormal%20e%5E-kx%20Fit).txt)

Best-fit parameters:
a = 0.09076254833678741
b = 9.546416329562864
c = 0.122932283771554
Amplitude A = 273.128038959746
mu = 4.095804505021102
sigma = 0.11563477866068733
R² = 0.6159963774966466



- Code & Graphs C (Bimodal Lognormal * e^{-kx} Fit):

[https://github.com/Chalcopyrite-obesity/Code-Graphs-C-Bimodal-Lognormal-e--kx-Fit/blob/main/Code%20%26%20Graphs%20C%20\(Bimodal%20Lognormal%20e%5E-kx%20Fit\).txt](https://github.com/Chalcopyrite-obesity/Code-Graphs-C-Bimodal-Lognormal-e--kx-Fit/blob/main/Code%20%26%20Graphs%20C%20(Bimodal%20Lognormal%20e%5E-kx%20Fit).txt)



Best-fit parameters:
a = 0.19290772555862537
b = 2.354924695865292
c = 0.14191976992408268
Amplitude A = 273.1289389959746
 $\mu = 4.095804505021102$
 $\sigma = 0.11563477866060733$

