

Text: Mk 3.14-15

This afternoon we return to our occasional series, *Orthodoxy*.

We are combatting an idea that rose in 1934 through Walter Bauer's book, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (that's the 1971 English translation title).¹

The idea was that what we call "orthodoxy" was the set of beliefs that "won" in an original competition between various Christian churches for supremacy. The idea didn't gain currency until after WW2, due to the breakdown of communications between Germany and the outside world.

It was accepted by many in the more liberal ranks but rejected and refuted by many in conservative Christianity.

"In more recent days, Bauer's thesis has received a new lease on life through the emergence of postmodernism, the belief that truth is inherently subjective and a function of power. With the rise of postmodernism came the notion that the only heresy that remains is the belief in absolute truth — orthodoxy."²

Despite the popularity of these ideas among some, we've shown how the Bible presents a central, consistent message that doesn't contradict itself. We found that "old Paul" doesn't contradict "young Paul" and Paul doesn't disagree with Jesus. We've pointed to Jesus Christ, his person and work as the central and orthodox view of the Bible, and hence of Christianity, right from the beginning.

One way that Bauer and others attack this message is to attack the date of writing for the New Testament books. They will often try to push them to late in the 1st century, or even into the 2nd century to distance them from the original apostles.

This effort has had little success.

Another way they attack the NT is to claim the churches had no idea of a *canon* of New Testament books until as late as the 4th century.

¹ "Walter Bauer," in *Wikipedia*, July 6, 2022,

https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Walter_Bauer&oldid=1096712701.

² James Edward McGoldrick, "Book Review: Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present. By Harold O. J. Brown. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988.," *Grace Theological Journal* 10 (Spring 1989): 39.

The next phase of our study will be to look into the canon, refuting some of the criticisms Bauer and others brought against it.

The word *canon* means “rule” or “standard.” If something meets the standard, then it is *canonical* and has determinative authority.

Today’s message will work on this idea, especially by showing how the Bible itself anticipates the canon. We start with this quote from Köstenberger and Kruger:

“The canon is not simply an idea created by fourth-century Christians or some ‘after-the-fact’ concept that the church devised to battle early heretics like Marcion. Rather, the canon is a concept that has been indelibly part of the life of God’s people from the very start of the nation of Israel, and thus continues to be part of his people in the life of the church.”³

Proposition: Jesus authorized the apostles who wrote their words as His spokesmen.

I. Jesus commissioned the apostles (Mk 3.14-15, Mt 10.1)

Mk 3.14-15 And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He *could* send them out to preach,¹⁵ and to have authority to cast out the demons.

Mt 10.1 ¶ Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

A. Jesus appointed twelve for training and authority

B. Jesus gave them authority to

1. Preach
2. Cast out demons
3. Heal diseases and every kind of sickness

Paul says this authority confirms apostleship (2 Cor 12.12)

³ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*, Kindle Edition (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2010), 113.

2 Cor 12.12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.

II. Jesus sent out the apostles (Jn 20.21)

Jn 20.21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace *be* with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

A. Chosen to preach the gospel (Ac 10.41-42)

Ac 10.41-42 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, *that is*, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.⁴² "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

B. Granted his authority and power (Lk 10.16)

Lk 10.16 ¶ "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

III. The New Testament is the word of Jesus through the apostles

A. 2 Pt 3.2

2 Pt 3.2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *spoken* by your apostles.

B. Heb 2.2-3

Heb 2.2-3 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty,³ how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,

IV. The mission of the apostles could only be perpetuated in writing

A. The mission is 'to the uttermost parts' Mt 28.19-20

Mt 28.19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

B. Compare Isa 30.8

Isa 30.8 Now go, write it on a tablet before them And inscribe it on a scroll, That it may serve in the time to come As a witness forever.

The logic: if the apostolic mission is worldwide, and they are finite men, there must be an expectation to preserve their words for the whole world: ergo, a written record, like Isaiah's.

Conclusion:

"In the end, the New Testament canon is not so much a collection of writings by apostles, but rather a collection of apostolic writings—writings that bear the authoritative message of the apostles and derive from the foundational apostolic era (even if not directly from their hand)."⁴

"In this way, a written New Testament was not something the church formally 'decided' to have at some later date, but rather it was the natural outworking of the redemptive-historical function of the apostles."⁵

The Lord Jesus gave us authoritative spokesmen, whose words naturally need preservation. That could only happen in an authoritative collection which is the New Testament.

⁴ Köstenberger and Kruger, 117.

⁵ Köstenberger and Kruger, 117.