

If we have some other basis on which to believe that these books are the inspired Word of God, then we are safe in drawing from them the teaching that Paul was an apostle. But if we accept them on the ground that he was an apostle, and then find our belief that he was an apostle to be based only upon statements contained in the books, it is dangerously near to arguing in a circle. Our faith must have a stronger basis than this!

Of the twelve apostles actually appointed by the Lord Jesus while He was here on earth, only three have left books that are contained in the New Testament. If apostolicity determined canonicity, it would be very strange that we should have nothing from any of the remaining apostles. It would also be strange that we have no explicit statement from the apostolic group, or from individual apostles, setting the seal of their approval upon those books that were not written by one of their number.

Even when we take up the Gospels and the book of Acts we find ourselves in difficulty. If we are to base our faith upon these books as infallibly inspired of God and entirely free from error, we must be absolutely sure that we are right. We must run no risk of being wrong. We cannot gamble on the issues of life and death. If the individual believer must make a decision for himself as to whether these books are apostolic or not, he must insist on absolute certainty. What does he find?

Of these five books only two have ever been considered to be actually written by apostles. The other three, Mark, Luke and Acts, were written by men who were not apostles, either by original appointment of Christ, or by any subsequent appointment of the Holy Spirit, as far as any evidence goes. There is no claim in any one of these three books that the book was written under apostolic supervision, or with the specific approval of an apostle. There is a tradition that Mark was an associate of Peter, and the book of Acts tells us that Luke was closely associated with Paul. This, however, is very far from actual proof that these books were written under the supervision of the apostles, or received specific approval of apostles.