

THE TITLES OF THE GOSPELS AS EVIDENCE OF AUTHORSHIP:

THE INTERSECTION OF TEXTUAL AND HISTORICAL DATA

CA. A.D. 200

Paul Birston
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Are the titles of the Gospels: 1) reliable evidence for identifying the authors,¹ 2) late additions² whose only purpose is to distinguish the work of one school of authors and editors from another and aid in public reading,³ or, 3) completely false and misleading?⁴

The answers to these questions involve many

¹The most exhaustive current research working toward this view is that of Martin Hengel, Studies in the Gospel of Mark, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 64-84, 162-183.

²"In my opinion it is beyond doubt that all the gospels were published anonymously....All titles and subscriptions in the gospel manuscripts are of a later period." Kurt Aland, "The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First two Centuries," in The Authorship and Integrity of the New Testament (London: S.P.C.K., 1965), 5.

³Theodor Zahn writes that, "The history of the Canon shows that by 130 at the latest our four Gospels were read in the Church services throughout the extent of the 'Catholic Church' of that time." Introduction to the New Testament, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, 1909), 386.

⁴With a reference to "Adam., *Dial.*, II, 12. ἐκήρυξαν ἀγράφως," Robert Smith Wilson writes, "Marcion thought, or he knew, that the apostles had written no gospels, therefore the titles *Matthew* and *John* were false and incidentally the whole gospels were false too." Marcion: A Study of a Second Century Heretic (New York: AMS Press, 1980; reprint, London: J. Clarke, 1939), 134. Lee M. McDonald, however, says, "We have no direct evidence that Marcion was aware of Gospels other than Luke, but it is likely that he had at least heard of the Gospel of Matthew." The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 157.

disciplines: text criticism, palaeography, papyrology, exegesis of the texts for internal evidence, early church history for external evidence, canon history, form, source and redaction criticism, studies of the Synoptic Problem, and more. Scholars have written volumes on the authorship of the Gospels. This paper delimits its focus to what we know for certain regarding the evidence of the titles in this larger debate, with particular emphasis on their status in the late second century A.D. Definitive conclusions on authorship are a much wider issue.

Text criticism and early church history provide a small window into the second century. Research reveals, however, that the aperture into the late first century is very small, often dependent on non-canonical writings.⁵

First priority in the search for the evidence of the titles belongs to the ancient manuscripts (MSS) themselves. These are the closest witnesses to the original autographs

⁵John Knox observes, "No period in the history of the church is so obscure as that which lies between the last decade of the first century and the middle decade of the second. And yet few periods have been more important. This half-century is thus both too significant to be ignored and too meagrely represented by extant documents to be adequately known." Marcion and the New Testament: An Essay in the Early History of the Canon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), vii.

of God's New Testament Word. Kurt and Barbara Aland provide a valuable short list of the oldest papyri MSS:⁶

Early 2nd century	p ⁵²
2nd Century	p ⁹⁰
About 200	p ³² , p ⁴⁶ , p ^{64/67} , p ⁶⁶
2nd/3rd century	p ⁷⁷ , .0189
3rd century	p ¹ , p ⁴ , p ⁵ , p ⁹ , p ¹² , p ¹⁵ , p ²⁰ , p ² , p ²³ , p ²⁷ , p ²⁸ , p ²⁹ , p ³⁰ , p ³⁹ , p ⁴⁰ , p ⁴⁵ , p ⁴⁷ , p ⁴⁹ , p ⁵³ , p ⁶⁵ , p ⁶⁹ , p ⁷⁵ , p ⁸⁰ , p ⁸⁷ , p ⁹¹ , p ⁹⁵ , 0212, 0220
3rd/4th century	p ¹³ , p ¹⁶ , p ¹⁸ , p ³⁷ , p ³⁸ , p ⁷² , p ⁷⁸ , p ⁹² , 0162, 0171

The Alands emphasize the importance of the papyri MSS:

Every manuscript of the earlier period, whether on papyrus or on parchment, has an inherent significance for New Testament textual criticism: they witness to a period when the text of the New Testament was still developing freely.⁷

In terms of manuscript types, the papyri are the oldest, followed by the uncials, then the minuscules. The papyri, though once thought an infringement on the place of the great uncial MSS, now occupy an important place in text

⁶Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and the to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism, trans. Errol F. Rhodes (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 57.

⁷Ibid., 56.

criticism.⁸ This is so because of their age, the thought that they were codexes,⁹ and because they provide reasonable samples of their times.¹⁰ The oldest papyri we have are fragments. Carsten Peter Thiede claims that the Magdalen College Papyrus P⁶⁴ is from A.D. 66.¹¹ His views have not gained wide scholarly acceptance:¹² the Alands, Philip

⁸See Frank Pack, "One Hundred Years Since Westcott and Hort: 1881-1981," Restoration Quarterly 26 (Second Quarter 1983), 65-84. Eldon Jay Epp, "The Papyrus Manuscripts of the New Testament," in The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 3-21.

⁹It was thought codexes were late, but not so. See Sir Frederic Kenyon, The Story of the Bible: A Popular Account of How it Came to Us (London: John Murray, 1936), and T. C. Skeat, "Early Christian Book Production: Papyri and Manuscripts," in The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West From the Fathers to the Reformation, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 54-79.

¹⁰"There is no need to consume a whole jar of jelly to identify the quality of its contents - a spoonful or two is quite adequate!" Aland, The Text of the New Testament, 58.

¹¹"The comparative material yields a date of C. A.D. 66, with a distinct tendency toward an even slightly earlier date. Thus, the usual palaeographic 'margin of error' would allow for earlier, but not for later, dates: the fragments at Oxford and at Barcelona belong to a particular type of uncial writing that flourished in the mid-first century A.D., with precursors at the beginning of the century." Carsten Peter Thiede and Matthew d'Ancona, Eyewitness to Jesus: Amazing New Manuscript Evidence About the Origin of the Gospels (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 125.

Wesley Comfort and Smith date p⁶⁴ at ca. A.D. 200.¹³

With scholars accepting a date of c.a. 125 for p⁵², now in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, it holds an instant fascination as evidence. Because it is also fragmentary, however, containing John 18:31-33 and 37-38, it does not prove that its parent document had titles, nor does it exclude the possibility.

From the third century Chester Beatty papyri discovered in 1931, p⁴⁵, p⁴⁶, and p⁴⁷, p⁴⁵ contains Matthew 20:24-Acts 17:17. Though there are many gaps (lacunae) in the text, here we find whole pages containing titles. In confirming the stability of the text, it is interesting to note that Origen's quotations generally agree with p⁴⁵.¹⁴

In considering the evidence of the titles, the

¹²Mahlon H. Smith challenges Thiede's conclusion in, "p⁶⁴ & p⁶⁷," A Synoptic Gospel Primer [article on-line]; available from <http://religion.rutgers.edu/nt/p64.html>; Internet; accessed 16 September 1998. This article claims that p⁶⁴ is part of P⁴, a third century MS.

¹³Aland, The Text of the New Testament, 57; Philip Wesley Comfort, The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 106; Smith, "p⁶⁴ & p⁶⁷."

¹⁴Comfort, The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament, 76. Epp and Fee see Origen as "the first to apply critical canons to the NT text," in Studies in the Theory and Methods of New Testament and Textual Criticism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 17.

Bodmer papyri p⁶⁶ surpass Beatty in: 1) age, ca. A.D. 200, 2) completeness, with far fewer lacunae, and 3) in condition, with sewing almost intact and some pages with no damage.¹⁵ In p⁶⁶, we have the oldest MS containing Gospel titles, given with the term "gospel" in Greek. The title for John reads, EYΑΓΓΑΛΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ. One page of p⁷⁵ from the third century contains the end of Luke and the beginning of John with a space between them:

EYΑΓΓΑΛΙΟΝ
ΚΑΤΑ
ΛΟΥΚΑΝ

EYΑΓΓΑΛΙΟΝ
ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ¹⁶

The Chester Beatty and Bodmer papyri suggest the consistency in use of the titles in their time. Along with the MSS that follow them, they play an important role in establishing the continuity of the text. The third century p⁷⁵ is very close to the fourth century Codex Vaticanus.

The earliest complete MSS of the NT are uncials. These date mainly from the fourth to the ninth centuries. Among the most well known are the codexes Sinaiticus (ⲛ), Alexandrinus (A), Vaticanus (B) and Bezae (D). Codex A

¹⁵Aland, The Text of the New Testament, 57.

¹⁶Ibid., 91.

illustrates a common pattern in placing the full title, such as EYΑΓΓΛΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΘΑΙΟΝ at the head of the book, but through the body of the text, EYΑΓΓΛΙΟΝ appears on the left leaf with ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΘΑΙΟΝ on the right.¹⁷

Minuscule 461 from A.D. 835, the earliest dated minuscule, exhibits the full title, for example EYΑΓΓΛΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΘΘΙΟΝ in uncial form.¹⁸ This indicates a remarkable scribal faithfulness to the titles over the centuries.¹⁹

Rather than becoming shorter, many titles actually became longer. According to Metzger:

In the oldest manuscripts of the Greek Bible the titles of the several books tend to be short and simple....In later copies these titles became longer and more complex, τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον ἄγιον εὐαγγέλιον (Gregory-

¹⁷C. G. Woide, Codex Alexandrinus (London: David Nutt and Williams & Norgate, 1860), 1-3.

¹⁸Aland, The Text of the New Testament, 147. A colophon provides the date.

¹⁹Metzger points to the copying of errors and difficult readings as an indication of how serious later scribes were about staying faithful to the text. The Text of the New Testament, 206. He also writes "It is widely agreed that in general scribes have bestowed more care, and have achieved a higher standard of accuracy, in the copying of the holy Scriptures than they were accustomed to do in transmitting other literature." New Testament Studies: Philological, Versional and Patristic (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 185.

Aland 209 and many others).²⁰

A brief survey of more recent approaches to the titles of Matthew reveals the following:

KJV	The Gospel According to St. Matthew
NRSV	The Gospel According to Matthew
NIV	Matthew
NASB	The Gospel According to Matthew
NA 26	KATA MAΘΘION ²¹
UBS	KATA MAΘΘION ²²

Over the centuries scribes and publishers have modified the titles attached to Bible books, some diminishing them, some expanding. Scribes added subscriptions, colophons, etc.

Metzger illustrates the lengths to which this practice went with a long title of Revelation.²³ This appears to point to a looser regard for the titles than for the content of the Gospels.

²⁰Bruce M. Metzger, Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 40.

²¹Nestle-Aland 26 cites evidence for the shorter title, but Hengel say it is weak, Studies in the Gospel of Mark, 66.

²²It is interesting to note that the editors of the UBS make no comment in the footnotes about the source or variants of the titles they use for the Gospels.

²³"The Revelation of the all-glorious Evangelist, bosom friend [of Jesus], virgin, beloved to Christ, John the theologian, son of Salome and Zebadee, but adopted son of Mary the Mother of God, and Son of Thunder," Manuscripts of the Greek Bible, 40.

On the importance of the title, "Gospel According to...", Brevard S. Childs observes that, "The canon has preserved four distinct literary entities, which are similarly entitled, as bearing witness to the one Gospel."²⁴ His comments on the titles and use of the preposition κατά are worth quoting at length:

Each of the four now bears the title 'the Gospel according to (κατά) so-and-so'. These titles do not form part of the original Gospels, but stem from the collectors of the gospels who used the titles to provide the material with a unified shape. The Greek preposition, κατά, does not designate simply a genitive of authorship, although authorship is not excluded, but rather it implies a conformity to a subject which has been treated by others. Accordingly, there is only one Gospel, but it has been rendered by four different evangelists. The collectors therefore provided this material with a new context which allowed for its diversity, yet laid claim also on its unity.²⁵

Burnett Hillman Streeter and Hengel identify Mark as the source of the title "Gospel" that unites the four portraits of the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.²⁶

²⁴Brevard S. Childs, The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International), 154.

²⁵Ibid., 152.

²⁶Burnett Hillman Streeter, The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins: Treating of The Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship, & Dates (New York, Macmillan, 1925), 497-8. Hengel, Studies in the Gospel of Mark, 72-4. Streeter's treatment draws on the Jewish practice of identifying Old Testament books by their opening verses.

While not conclusive as evidence, it is noteworthy that scholars consider the papyri fragments as part of codexes. Script occurs on the front (recto) and back (verso) and strands of papyrus are run at right angles to one another.²⁷ As codexes, it is possible that the earliest books from which the fragmentary papyri come could also contain titles to identify their contents, possibly at the top of each leaf, as is the case with some later MSS.

Many authors say that the titles are not part of Scripture, in the sense that the salutations of Paul and Peter are where their names are found in the text of the letters.²⁸ The MSS place the titles above the body of text, not within it. The MSS provide one very important piece of evidence supporting the authenticity and general acceptance of the titles. What we know for certain is that, apart from the fragments where it is impossible to tell, all of the fuller MSS contain titles in one form or another. It is possible to date the titles reliably back to at least A.D.

²⁷J. Harold Greenlee, Scribes, Scrolls and Scripture: A Student's Guide to New Testament Textual Criticism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 7-9.

²⁸Childs, The New Testament as Canon, 152.

200.²⁹ Given that scholars identify papyri fragments as coming from codexes it is highly probable that the titles appeared earlier, but how much earlier is difficult to say.

Moving from text criticism to the discipline of early church history, it is instructive to observe that many writers in the second century refer to the Gospels by the names the titles establish. While the reliability of their testimony is the subject of ongoing debate,³⁰ there is valuable recurring evidence to the identification of the Gospels in the late first and early second century.

In the late first and early second centuries, it appears that writers more often than not quoted or alluded to the Gospels without referring to their authors. Ignatius (d. ca. 115) is said to have known Matthew, and perhaps

²⁹Streeter suggests that this date corresponds with the "maximum divergence of local texts." Four Gospels, 27.

³⁰For an overview of issues and suggestions for future research, see Gordon D. Fee, "The Use of the Greek Fathers for New Testament Textual Criticism," in , The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael C. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 191-207." Fee argues for the importance of evidence from these sources. M. J. Suggs also supports this view in "The Use of Patristic Evidence in the Search for a Primitive New Testament Text," New Testament Studies 4 (1957-8): 139-47.

John.³¹

According to J. Stevenson, Papias of Hierapolis flourished ca. A.D. 130.³² Eusebius records four important observations from Papias:³³ 1) he identified Mark as "the writer of the gospel" and "Peter's interpreter," in which role "he had one purpose only - to leave out nothing that he had heard, and to make no misstatement about it,"³⁴ 2) he credits Matthew with compiling "the *Sayings* in the Aramaic language,"³⁵ and 3) he knows a John associated with the disciples of Jesus and another John, the "presbyter," 4) he is familiar with Polycarp who knew John in Ephesus. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to enter into the debate on the integrity of Papias' testimony, it is reasonable to assume that Papias knew the Gospel associated

³¹Robert A. Spivey and D. Moody Smith, Anatomy of the New Testament: A Guide to Its Structure and Meaning (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 456.

³²J. Stevenson, ed., A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church to A.D. 337 (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), 405.

³³A lengthy treatment of Papias' comments occurs in Robert H. Gundry, Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 1026-45, and a concise summary in Hengel, Studies in the Gospel of Mark, 69-70.

³⁴Eusebius The History of the Church 3.39.15. (Trans. G. A. Williams.)

³⁵Ibid., 3.39.16.

with Mark for certain, and likely Matthew and John. Unlike Irenaeus, who later in the century perceived the canon as fixed, the situation in Papias' day appears more fluid.

Marcion, originating in Pontus, came to Rome in A.D. 140. For his heretical opinions, the church excommunicated him in A.D. 144.³⁶ Though some think that Marcion's Gospel was an adaptation of proto-Luke, what is helpful for this investigation is that before the middle of the second century Marcion knew Luke by its common name. Robert McL. Wilson comments, "That Marcion's Gospel was an adaptation of one of the Church's gospels shows the prestige they were already beginning to enjoy even at this early period."³⁷ Some believe that his heretical perspectives inspired others to rally in defense of the other canonical Gospels.³⁸

Justin (d. A.D. 165) was one of the great apologists of the second century. His Apology, written c.a. 155, contains quotations based on Lk. 6:29 and Mt. 5:22, 41,

³⁶Joseph Wilson Trigg, Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 46-51.

³⁷Robert McL. Wilson, "Gospel of Marcion," in The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. 4, ed. Merrill C. Tenny (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 72.

³⁸Knox, Marcion, 150-7; Streeter, Four Gospels, 5-7.

16.³⁹ He refutes Marcion's practice of drawing away disciples by espousing another god who created the universe and is greater than God the Father of Jesus Christ.⁴⁰

Speaking of the Lord's Supper, he says, "For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined on them."⁴¹

Justin's student Tatian wrote a harmony of the four Gospels, called the Diatessaron, ca. A.D. 170, possibly as an attempt to resolve felt contradictions in the Gospels. What is significant for this inquiry is that the Diatessaron recognizes the four Gospels as a unit. This implies that the church acknowledged the existence and the importance of the four above all others.⁴² Some believe that the MSS

³⁹Tracing Justin from Ephesus to Rome, Streeter suggests that all four Gospels reached Rome by A.D. 155. Four Gospels, 13.

⁴⁰Justin Apology 1.26.

⁴¹Ibid., 1.66.

⁴²Childs cites the Diatessaron as evidence of a corpus of four by the end of the second century and points out that neither it, nor Marcion's Gospel, nor the Gnostics, could supplant the importance of the four. The New Testament as Canon, 152. Arthur G. Patzia says it "lends further proof to the circulation of all four Gospels by the middle of the second century." The Making of the New Testament: Origin, Collection, Text and Canon (Downers Grove IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1995), 64.

Tatian used must have been from the early second century.⁴³

Irenaeus, bishop of Lugdunum (Lyons), lived ca. A.D. 130-200.⁴⁴ He knew the four Gospel collection and wrote an allegorical defence of its paramount place in the universe.⁴⁵ Whether or not Irenaeus' conception of the reason for the four-fold Gospel is correct, it is important that he recognized this collection in his life time.⁴⁶ Again the testimony of an early writer pushes the date of the titles back before A.D. 200.

There are many suggestions for the authorship and date of the anonymous Muratorian Fragment.⁴⁷ It is generally thought to come from the late second century and

⁴³William L. Petersen, "The Diatessaron of Tatian," in The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 77.

⁴⁴J. Stevenson, ed., A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church to A.D. 337 (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), 402.

⁴⁵Irenaeus III.II.II.

⁴⁶John McCray asserts that Irenaeus viewed Scripture as authoritative, though he did not yet restrict himself to the 27 canonical books. "Scripture and Tradition in Irenaeus," Restoration Quarterly (First Quarter 1967): 9-10.

⁴⁷For a summary of references, see Bruce M. Metzger, "Documents and Lists Relating to the Canon," in Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge: An Extension of The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955), 205.

identifies the third and fourth Gospels as Luke and John.

Here the trajectories from text criticism and early church history data converge and agree. By the end of the second century there are four Gospels with titles the church recognizes above all others. The more fluid relationships of ca. A.D. 100 acquire a degree of fixity by ca. A.D. 200.

Brevard S. Childs writes that though our knowledge of the process is "fragmentary," there is consensus about several things, including that, "At least by the end of the second century, the four canonical Gospels had acquired an authoritative status in the ancient church, replacing an earlier practice of local churches being dependent on individual Gospels."⁴⁸ He goes on to say that this collection implied an apostolic connection, and limiting the authority of other books. Source criticism confirmed a literary connection between the Synoptics that galvanized their authoritative status in the four,⁴⁹ though, early on,

⁴⁸Childs, The New Testament as Canon, 145.

⁴⁹Childs, The New Testament as Canon, 149.

the order of the four varied.⁵⁰ Though scholars point to the plethora of gospels in the second century, we need not fear this phenomena because Luke 1:1-4 confirms it:

Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.⁵¹

Knox notes:

The earliest external evidence for the existence of the several Gospels is to be found within the Gospel corpus itself. Thus Mark was clearly known to the authors Matthew and Luke (even in the Marcionite or other early form) and was probably know to the maker of the Fourth Gospel.⁵²

Scholars have written volumes on the internal evidence of authorship.⁵³ While beyond the focus of this paper, it is

⁵⁰The common alternative cited is: "Matthew, John, Mark, Luke," according to the weight of apostolicity, Aland, The Text of the New Testament, 189; Everett F. Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament, new rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1971), 142.

⁵¹All biblical references in this paper are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, unless noted otherwise, or quoted by authors cited.

⁵²Knox, Marcion, 142.

⁵³The Introductions by Brown, Carson, Moo, and Morris, and Guthrie contain overviews of these matters.

clear, if not yet conclusive, that the names of the evangelists are not inconsistent with the textual content.

There is a tendency on the part of many to reject or discount the importance of the titles. The fact remains, however, that they occur on the earliest MSS we have with intact leaves. This evidence keeps open the possibility that they have very early origins.

In summary, the intersection of textual and historical data ca. A.D. 200 leads to several conclusions:

1. Near the end of the second century there is a convergence of textual and extra-biblical historical evidence for the consistency and acceptance of the titles which remain in place to the present day.
2. MSS with full pages have the titles; from what we know about the history of the codex, it is very possible that early MS fragments came from MSS that had titles.
3. Notwithstanding minor variations, such as the inclusion or exclusion of ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ, the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John stand over the four Gospels at least from the late second century to the present.
4. Early church writers knew the Gospels by these names at least from around the turn of the first century.
5. Factual data from the late first century is not conclusive against the validity of the titles as genuine evidence of the authors' names.
6. What we know about the evangelists is reasonably consistent with the contents of the Gospels we associate with the names that stand over them.
7. Whatever scholars decide about authorship, the titles remain, almost universally, the point of departure for debate and abide to be reckoned with.
8. The discoveries of major ancient textual sources in the last 67 years (e.g. Chester Beatty, the Dead Sea

Scrolls, and Bodmer) indicate that the search is not over and we must keep our minds open to possibilities that new discoveries could uncover new evidence.

9. The presence or absence of titles does not diminish the saving power of the gospel of Christ.

We do not possess Gospel autographs or the testimony of those unknown early scribes who first copied the titles over the text, nor, if it were the case, the testimony of those who instructed them to do so. Where we would like to hear their voices, there is silence. But their devotion to God's Word is clear. Perhaps it is fitting that a final word comes from the colophon of a later scribe:

ἡ μὲν χεὶρ γράψασα σήπεται τᾶφῳ·
 γραφὴ δὲ μένει εἰς χρόνους πληροσιτάτους.
 ('The hand that wrote [this] moulders in a tomb, but
 what is written abides across the years [lit. to fullest
 times]')⁵⁴

⁵⁴Metzger, Manuscripts of the Greek Bible, 20.

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Over the centuries scribes and publishers have modified the titles attached to Bible books, some diminishing them, some expanding. Metzger illustrates the lengths to which this practice went with a _____ title of Revelation: quote about scribes adding subscriptions, colophons, etc.

(POLYCARP d. 155 references to Gospels, Clement of Alexandria)

Three major discoveries within the last 67 years, Chester Beatty, Dead Sea Scrolls and Bodmer Papyri, indicate that we must keep open minds to the possibility that new finds will shed further light on the place of the titles.