

The Gospels and Apostolic Authorship

A popular misconception holds that the four New Testament Gospels were written by apostles—earthly followers of Jesus who were among his twelve disciples. But the church has always maintained that this was not the case for two of the Gospels (Mark and Luke), and Augustine thought that this was theologically significant:

The Holy Spirit willed to choose for the writing of the Gospels two who were not even from those who made up the Twelve, so that it might not be thought that the grace of evangelization had come only to the apostles and that in them the fountain of grace had dried up. (*Sermon 239.1*)*

The great majority of scholars today would want to apply Augustine's thinking to all four Gospels, since Matthew and John were also probably not composed by members of the Twelve, at least in the finished editions that we now possess.

*Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and Henry Wace eds., *The Early Church Fathers* (1867; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 38:244.