

For years I agreed with those scholars who claim that we have very early “evidence” that the Gospel of Matthew was actually written by Matthew, the tax-collector who was a disciple of Jesus. I no longer think so. Let me give some of the relevant information.

The anonymity of this author - as is true for the other three NT Gospels as well, was respected by Christians for decades. When the Gospels of the New Testament are alluded to and quoted by authors of the early second century, they are never entitled, never named. Even Justin Martyr, writing around 150-60 CE, quotes verses from the Gospels, but does not indicate what the Gospels were named. For Justin, these books are simply known, collectively, as the “Memoirs of the Apostles.” It was about a century after the Gospels had been originally put in circulation that this book was called Matthew, and the others were called Mark, Luke, and John. This comes, for the first time, in the writings of the church father and heresy-hunter Irenaeus, around 180-85 CE.

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