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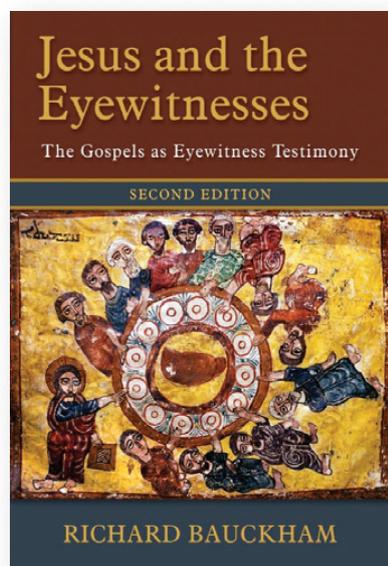
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# Book reviews



**Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*** (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017, 2nd edition). xiii + 704 pp. \$50.00 USD. ISBN 0802874312.

**A**fter its release in 2006, the first edition of Richard Bauckham's *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* made an impact in both academia and culture at large—winning the 2007 *Christianity Today* Book Award in Biblical Studies, and translated into five other languages. Released in April 2017, this second edition leaves the original eighteen chapters untouched and adds three new chapters.

The thesis of the first edition was that the 'Gospel traditions did not, for the most part, circulate anonymously but in the name of the eyewitnesses to whom they were due' (p. 8). Chapter 2 supports this thesis through Papias' testimony from the early second century. In chapter 3, Bauckham explores the many named and unnamed characters in the Gospels and suggests 'the possibility that many of these named characters were eyewitnesses who not only originated the

traditions to which their names are attached but also continued to tell these stories as authoritative guarantors of their traditions' (p. 39). Chapter 4 utilizes Tal Ilan's *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Antiquity* (2002) to show that the relative frequency of the names in the Gospels corresponds to the relative frequency of Palestinian Jewish names from the same period. This statistically improbable feature is best explained by the fact that the Gospels get the relative name frequency correct because they are eyewitness testimony. Chapter 5 suggests that '[i]f any group in the earliest community was responsible for some kind of formulation and authorization of a body of Jesus traditions, the Twelve are much the most obviously likely to have been that group' (p. 96). Chapter 6 argues 'that three of the Gospels—those of Mark, Luke, and John—make use of the historiographic principle that the most authoritative eyewitness is one who was present at the events narrated from their beginning to their end and can therefore vouch for the overall shape of the story as well as for specific key events' (p. 146). Chapter 7 contains a nuanced argument that 'Mark's Gospel not only by its use of the *inclusio* of eyewitness testimony, claims Peter as its main eyewitness source; it also tells the story predominantly (though by no means exclusively) from Peter's perspective' (p. 179). Chapter 8 argues that some of the anonymous persons in Mark's passion narrative such as the woman who anointed Jesus (Mark 14:3-9), or the one who cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest with a sword (Mark 14:47), or the young man who fled naked (Mark 14:51-52), were kept anonymous because the 'need for 'protective anonymity' may have overridden the convention of naming the eyewitnesses' (p. 201). Chapter 9 critically examines what Papias probably meant by

[t]he Elder used to say: Mark, in his capacity as Peter's interpreter [*hermēneutēs*], wrote down accurately as many things as he [Peter?] recalled from memory—though not in an ordered form' (p. 203; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.14); and Papias' comments on Matthew. Chapter 10 looks at three models of oral tradition: informal uncontrolled tradition (the form critical model), formal controlled tradition (Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Transmission and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* [Lund: Gleerup, 1961]), and informal controlled tradition (Kenneth E. Bailey, 'Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels,' *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 [1991] 34-51). In chapter 11, Bauckham looks at how the Jesus traditions were transmitted and chapter 12 furthers the case for eyewitness testimony over anonymous traditions. Chapter 13 examines the strengths and weakness of eyewitness memory. Chapter 14 argues that the Gospel of John is eyewitness testimony. Chapters 15 through to 17 contends that the witness of the beloved disciple is that of John the Elder – evidenced internally in the Gospel itself and how this fits externally with Papias, Polycrates and Irenaeus. Chapter 18, the last of the first edition, having argued that the Gospels are eyewitness testimony, argues that testimony 'is both the historically appropriate category for understanding what kind of history the Gospels are and the theologically appropriate category for understanding what kind of access Christian readers of the Gospels thereby have to Jesus and his history' (p. 473).

The second edition adds three new chapters, which respond to criticisms of the first edition and extend the argument. Chapter 19 revisits the eyewitnesses in Mark and responds to criticisms such as Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's *RB* 114 (2007), who thought Bauckham had not adequately shown the use of *inclusio* in relevant ancient literature. Bauckham now demonstrates this in the works of Polybius and Plutarch. Bauckham also

presents evidence from Josephus's *Jewish War*, Plutarch's *Life of Pompey* and *Life of Antony*, and Cornelius Nepos's *Life of Atticus*, that 'a literary device of "implicit eyewitnesses" that was employed by historians and biographers of the Greco-Roman world was a way of indicating the eyewitness sources of important events that the authors themselves could not claim to have witnessed, in a manner that did not disrupt the narrative flow of their stories' (p.534).

One telling admission by Bauckham is that he states: 'I know of no comprehensive study of the ways in which ancient historians indicated their eyewitness sources' (p.514). So, while the evidence he has presented is suggestive, a final verdict will await such a comprehensive study.

In an additional note Bauckham corrects some misunderstanding of his argument on onomastic analysis by Jens Schröter ('The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony? A Critical Examination of Richard Bauckham's *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*,' *JSNT* 31 [2008], 195-209) and Christopher M. Tuckett ('Review of Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*,' in *RBL* [online at [www.bookreviews.org/pdf/5650\\_6184.pdf](http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/5650_6184.pdf)]) stating that his argument was not based on the mere occurrence of common names but on their relative frequency. Consequently, the notion that 'the names were added in oral tradition, as the form critics tended to suppose' (p.544) is statistically unlikely.

Chapter 20 continues the discussion on who was the Beloved Disciple? Responding to Andreas Köstenberger (*Review of Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, [www.biblicalfoundations.org/jesus-and-the-eyewitnesses/](http://www.biblicalfoundations.org/jesus-and-the-eyewitnesses/)) Bauckham argues that 'the internal evidence of the Gospel itself does not support the identification of the Beloved Disciple as John the son of Zebedee' (p.551). The internal evidence was something Bauckham felt was already sufficiently demonstrated by others and hence not detailed in the first edition. Bauckham's internal reasons for thinking why the Beloved Disciple is not John the Son of Zebedee are: (1) the focus on Jerusalem and Judea rather than

Galilee suggests '[t]hat the Beloved Disciple was a Jerusalem resident who did not usually travel with Jesus in Galilee' (p.563); (2) Different disciples are prominent suggesting a different 'circle in which the Beloved Disciple moved' (p.564); (3) The twelve are not prominent; (4) John's brother, James the son of Zebedee is only indirectly mentioned (John 21:2); (5) The Beloved Disciple is an eyewitness at the cross and '[w]hy should Mark resort to the women for testimony if one of the Twelve could have supplied it?' (p.570); (6) Jesus' preferential love for the Beloved Disciple 'despite the prominence of John the son of Zebedee in the Synoptics, there is no hint that he, unlike Peter or his brother James, was the disciple for whom Jesus had special affection. Yet precisely this is what characterizes the Beloved Disciple in the Fourth Gospel' (p.570-571); and (7) The distinctiveness of the Gospel of John is better explained 'if one of them is written from a perspective outside the circle of the Twelve' (p.571). Furthermore, Bauckham counters three alleged evidences for thinking the Beloved Disciple is John the son of Zebedee. Bauckham argues that the Gospel of John is still broadly of apostolic authority, and gives an interpretation of Polycrates that fits with his view. Finally, with respect to the death of John son of Zebedee Bauckham argues that 'it may be that in Papias and the martyrologies we have the surviving evidence that John the son of Zebedee suffered a violent death in Jerusalem long before his namesake wrote a Gospel' (p.589).

Chapter 21 confirms the end of form criticism. Responding to David Catchpole ('On Proving Too Much: Critical Hesitations about Richard Bauckham's Jesus and the Eyewitnesses,' *JSHJ* 6 (2008) 169-81) Bauckham states that one does not need form criticism to explain the differences between the Gospels.

While the second edition is a useful addition

it is a little disappointing that one has to pay full price for only three additional chapters, especially when parts of those chapters have already appeared in some of Bauckham's published works since the first edition (such as: 'The Eyewitnesses in the Gospel of Mark,' *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 74 [2009], 19-39; and 'The Gospel of Mark: Origins and Eyewitnesses,' in M.F. Bird & J. Maston (eds.) *Earliest Christian History: Essays from the Tyndale Fellowship in Honor of Martin Hengel* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012], 145-69). In addition, some of Bauckham's existing responses to his critics go into more detail than the new chapters, and as such one will still need to consult these (such as: 'In Response to My Respondents: Jesus and the Eyewitnesses in Review,' *JSHJ* 6 [2008], 225-253). In responding to the accusation that eyewitness memory is unreliable from Judith C. S. Redman ('How Accurate Are Eyewitnesses? Bauckham and the Eyewitnesses in the Light of Psychological Research,' *JBL* 129 [2010], 177-97); and Dale C. Allison (*Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* [London: SPCK, 2010], chapter 1), Bauckham defers to his article 'The General and the Particular in Memory: A Critique of Dale Allison's Approach to the Historical Jesus,' *JSHJ* 14 (2016), 28-51, and states more is forthcoming. Finally, in the preface to the second edition Bauckham states, 'I have not been able to put all my further thinking about the Gospels and the eyewitnesses into the additional chapters of this edition. Other work is in progress and will, I hope, be published in due course' (p.xix). So, while I am both glad for the new edition and that more work is coming, it isn't obvious why the three present chapters were published at this stage.

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