

The Attackers: Luke's Investigative Reporting: Research Included Writings & Eyewitness Accounts of Those Who Knew Jesus in the Incarnation; Luke's Personal Attributes Related to the Doctrine of Inspiration; Prologue in Luke 1:1-4 Reveals Classical Education; Recognition of Available Resources, v. 1

Luke's Investigative Reporting

1. Luke provides us with an excellent example of how investigative reporting enabled him to research his Gospel utilizing techniques that are still considered essential in reconstructing past events.

Luke 1:1 - Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,

v. 2 - just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,

v. 3 - it seemed fitting for me as well ["also" in KJV], having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus \the-ōf'-ī-lūs\

v. 4 - so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. (NASB)

2. An analysis of Luke's process for gathering information for his Gospel is revealed in this excerpt:

Luke in the prologue to his gospel makes the claim that he used both secondary narratives and firsthand accounts by eyewitnesses of the life of Christ (Luke 1:1-2). In the third verse he describes how he did research upon the data to write his gospel in a manner similar to that of the modern historian. If history is defined as literary reconstruction of the past to record the events by the study of documents, Luke, in 1:4, suggests that this is his objective. The Bible seems to emphasize history as events relating the acts of God to the acts of men, but history as document, research, or reconstruction is also given consideration. (p. 162)

Luke and other Biblical writers give attention to the method of the historian. Luke's prologue is a summary of much of what one finds concerning historical methodology in the best modern manuals on that subject. He points out in verse 2 of his prologue that he used several secondary narratives of the life of Christ. His use of the word "us" in verses 1 and 2 and "also" in verse 3 suggests that he thought these were valid documents.

Like modern historians in verse 3 he emphasized his use of firsthand information of eyewitnesses. Mary's story of the birth of Christ in Luke 1 and 2 must have been one of these eyewitness sources.

He would agree also with other Biblical writers that one should have two independent witnesses to an event to guarantee truth (Deuteronomy 19:15; John 8:17; 2 Corinthians 13:1). His material was therefore empirical as well as revelational. (pp. 162–63)

His use of the word *parakolouthéō*¹ in verse 3 suggests the idea of careful personal investigation of documents and eyewitnesses to reconstruct the events. Paul uses the aorist *historēsai* in Galatians 1:18² to suggest that like Luke he carefully queried Peter to get exact information about the life and deeds of Christ. These things suggest that Biblical writers were as careful as modern writers in their methodology in writing history.

These writers recognized that, while God claims that some truth is His alone, other truth concerning historical events has been given to men (Deuteronomy 29:29; Amos 3:7). Luke, especially in verse 4 of his prologue, believed that facts from records of the events should be related in an orderly synthesis which would yield meaning, certainty, or truth concerning the matter under investigation.³ (p. 163)

3. This excerpt gives us information that is valuable to our better understanding of the doctrine of inspiration:

God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human writers of Scripture, that without waving their human intelligence, vocabulary, individuality, literary style, personality, personal feelings, or any other human factor, His complete and coherent message to mankind was recorded with perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture, the very words bearing the authority of divine authorship.

¹ "... pursuing or investigating a matter" (Gerhard Kittel, ed., "παρακολουθέω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964], 1:215).

² I went up to Jerusalem to *visit* [ἱστορήσαι (*historēsai*)] Peter, and remained with him fifteen days (Galatians 1:18, NASB). "ἱστορέω, *historéō*: To ascertain by inquiry and personal examination. This is the verb from which the English word "history" is derived. In the New Testament, to consider and observe attentively and gain knowledge" (Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., "ἱστορέω," in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. [Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992], 787).

³ E. E. Cairnes, "History," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 3:162–63.

4. Note how Luke displays an inquisitive “human intelligence.” As a physician he has learned to think in terms of research and investigation. He was used to considering the writings of other medical practitioners and hearing personal testimonies related to the treatment of illnesses, diseases, and injuries.
5. Luke was obviously well-educated having been trained as a physician, but there is also conjecture that he may have been a classmate with Paul at the University of Tarsus. These academic accomplishments would most definitely have affected positively his vocabulary and literary style.
6. Luke is believed to have been a Greek and the only non-Jew to contribute to the New Testament canon. This brought a different perspective to his Gospel since he was not oriented to Jewish culture.
7. His individuality, personality, and personal feelings were from a Gentile mind-set and no doubt contributed to his desire to thoroughly research his subject before putting anything in writing.
8. The definition of inspiration includes the asset of “human intelligence,” and intelligence is defined as “the ability to learn or understand; the ability to apply knowledge; mental acuteness; the act of understanding; comprehension.”⁴
9. Luke’s individuality and personal feelings included a professional approach to documenting the “exact truth” about what Theophilus had been taught about Christ.
10. To accomplish this task, Luke makes clear that he had investigated the writings of others plus eyewitness accounts before putting pen to papyrus.

⁴ *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v.: “intelligence.”

11. Luke was greatly influenced by Greek culture and its literature. The prologue in verses 1–4 is one sentence. This follows the tradition among the great classical writers to express the intent of one’s writings and to establish credibility and reliability by mentioning their exhaustive research.
12. Verse 1 opens with a hapax legomenon: the conjunction **ἐπειδήπερ (epeidēper)**, correctly translated, “Inasmuch,” or “In view of the fact.”

Luke 1:1 - **Inasmuch** as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,

13. The very first word of the Gospel betrays Luke’s classical training since it is commonly used by Greek writers to introduce their prologues, e.g., Thucydides, Philo, and Josephus and also by Hippocrates and Galen in introductions to their medical writings.
14. Likewise, Luke acknowledges extent writings on the life of Christ that he referenced in order to “compile an account.”
15. The word *compile* is the verb **ἀνατάσσομαι (anatássomai)**: to put things in their proper order; to organize sequentially.
16. In his research, Luke gathered the writings of others on the subject of the Lord’s public ministry, had perused them, and then proceeded to write an orderly narrative.
17. Having done this he constructed an *account*, the noun **διήγησις (diēgēsis)**: a history, an account of events; a comprehensive treatment. “The word is found from the time of Plato and simply denotes an oral or written record” (Buchsel, *TDNT*, 2:909).
18. The major effort behind Luke’s Gospel is to present facts that have been “accomplished among us.”

19. The word *accomplished* is the perfect passive participle of the verb **πληροφορέω (plērophoréō)**: to achieve an objective; to be fully persuaded; to have full assurance.
20. The perfect tense indicates that Luke's research has been completed and is a finished result. The collection consulted by Luke received the action of completion. Luke asserts that these resources have accumulated in the public domain.
21. There is an uncertain conclusion as to when Luke wrote his Gospel but it is largely considered that it and the Acts of the Apostles were written around A.D. 60. The consensus is that among the sources he consulted were the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.
22. It is argued by some that Luke's inclusion of the writings of other men in preparation to write his Gospel brings human viewpoint into Scripture and in doing so contaminates the canon.
23. We will explore this subject in more detail later, but there is a marked difference between Luke informing himself of others' research and the guidance of the Holy Spirit during the time Luke composed his Gospel.
24. Here is an expanded translation of verse 1:

Luke 1:1 - In view of the fact that many [a group of writers] have undertaken to organize a written record of things in their proper sequence [including the Gospels of Matthew and Mark] and carried to completion among us, (EXT)