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# Chapter 1

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# The New Testament as a Collection

Reading the New Testament as a book, or rather as a collection of books, is rather unusual and rarely happens in scholarship. Most Christians also perceive the texts of the New Testament differently. In the liturgy, passages from the so-called Old Testament and from the New Testament Epistles or Revelation are read as readings, following a selection and a sequence that is determined by the respective church community or denomination. Moreover, churches also express their higher appreciation of Gospelreadings in comparison to Old Testament and non-gospel New Testament texts by reserving the public reading of the Gospels to male people, members of the ordained clergy, as, for example, in the Catholic Church. The New Testament therefore only appears as a collection to people who continue to find the Bible or the New Testament frequently as reading material on hotel bedside tables or who purchase it via Kindle or in bookshops, either as a gift for confirmation or communion or for their own reading. Neither are students generally introduced to the New Testament as a collection. In my own department, we run a master's course on the canonical Gospels which, after the first introduction, immediately deals with the Gospels individually, without of course skipping the synoptic question, but there is not (yet) a course on the New Testament as a whole. Research in this area is even more atomised. Here, commentaries almost exclusively deal with individual books of the 27 writings that form the New Testament,[[1]](#footnote-1) and in studies, if they are not devoted to themes or methodological approaches that require a comprehensive view, scholars deal with individual sections, often only verses or individual terms. A scholarly commentary by a single author on the collection of the New Testament as a whole is lacking. Nor are there comments on the individual sub-collections of the four canonical Gospels, the Praxapostolos, Paul’s Letters (apart from Revelation, which is commented on as a single book, not as one of the four sub-units). Not even a scholarly synoptic commentary on the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke is available. And yet the collection bears a unifying title, "New Testament", and this entity was obviously understood as a complete work by those who brought together the books it contains in its four sub-collections. It is this full entity, the "New Testament", which corresponds and complements for Christians the "Old Testament", both forming their Christian Bible.

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So what about our evidence for the emergence of the New Testament collection? And how does research envisage the development of it? Already the famous researcher of the New Testament canon, Theodor Zahn, who in the 19th century presented a multi-volume "History of the New Testament Canon" on this subject,[[2]](#footnote-2) soberly admits at the beginning of his investigation that "with regard to the first fundamental facts, which have not been seriously called into question by any subsequent development", there is "no document” external to the New Testament which is "concerned with its transmission".[[3]](#footnote-3) This means that, in Zahn’s opinion, the history of this collection must be illuminated exclusively from within itself. On the one hand, this opens the gates wide for speculation, if justifications can only be gained from observations based on texts from within the collection; on the other hand, his finding warns against any exaggerated certainty, which can be found, for example, in the many historical introductions to the New Testament available to students and readers today. However, Zahn’s starting position already offers us a first indication that has hardly been seen so far. If the New Testament as a collection had undergone the above-mentioned organic development in the second century, and if book after book had slowly formed over time like rings of a tree around older rings, then this could hardly have happened without any of the many authors of this century pointing to such a collection, which gradually grew in size, importance and reputation. The criticism raised against the Trobisch-Klinghardt hypothesis of a canonical redaction thus also applies to that of the organic growth of the New Testament. Zahn's own investigation, in which he followed up every hint he could find at the time, starting with Justin Martyr, is a first counter-evidence - Justin in particular does not yet testify to the New Testament as a unified collection.[[4]](#footnote-4) Conversely, it is precisely Zahn's research that offers a further indication of how one can explain the emergence of this later collection, which was so important and indeed formed the very basis of Christianity, an explanation that differs both from the first of the above-mentioned positions of organic growth, but also alters the second of a conscious editorial decision.

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## I. The Collection in Irenaeus, Polycarp, Papias, Ignatius and Dionysius

If not with Justin Martyr (d. probably A.D. 165), whom we will briefly touch upon first, with whom as a witness should one begin the search for the beginnings of the New Testament collection? No one disputes that Irenaeus of Lyons in the late second century is considered the crown witness for the collection of writings we now identify with the New Testament. Before him, however, references to at least some of the books contained therein can also be found in other authors, some of whose works have survived in fragments only. We will encounter Polycarp of Smyrna and Papias of Hierapolis, also the famous, though abundantly obscure Ignatius of Antioch, and then the lesser known Dionysius of Corinth. While Polycarp is likely to be a contemporary of Justin, and Dionysius a contemporary of Irenaeus, Papias and Ignatius are unfortunately difficult to date more precisely than around the middle of the 2nd century. As the course of our investigation will show, however, we are not only dealing with big names or great individuals, but rather with an interwoven network or even a network of overlapping networks that result from the various writings of a variety of literary genera. Not only authors in different roles (teachers, presbyters, bishops, laymen, ascetics, martyrs, letter writers, commentators, etc.), but also different places, localities and regions (Rome, Antioch, Pamphylia, Galatia, Pontus), as well as historical events of the second century, especially the Jewish Bar Kokhba revolt against the Romans and its literary adaptations, are of outstanding importance. Not the only one, but an important node in all this is the capital Rome, among other things serving as a destination and place of refuge for educated teachers who settled in Rome in the aftermath of the aforementioned Bar Kokhba revolt from the year 135 AD onwards. We will have to speak particularly of one of these teachers who had moved to Rome after this revolt, because it was Marcion of Sinope who compiled the first tangible collection in history that carries the title "New Testament", coined by him. We will discover that Irenaeus of Lyon, our oldest witness of a larger collection of early Christian writings which, today, we know under the title of “New Testament”, was developed in response to Marcion’s “New Testament”, though Irenaeus never called his counter-collection by the title of his competitor.

### 1 Irenaeus of Lyons - Witness to an untitled collection with four Gospels, the Praxapostolos, Pauline Letters and Revelation

Irenaeus of Lyons (b. c. 135; ✝ c. 200) is the first witness to this collection, though not to all the writings it contains. About 20 years before him, Justin Martyr taught and wrote, who never once explicitly refers to Paul and his letters. And when Justin speaks of the Gospel (Dial. 10,2), he has this term reluctantly introduced by his Jewish interlocutor Trypho as the "so-called Gospel", or understands the term as "good news for the poor" (Dial. 12,2). At one point Justin seems to allude to a scripture (Dial. 100:1),[[5]](#footnote-5) but when he uses the term in the plural, he again speaks of "so-called gospels" (1Apol. 66:3), i.e. a description that marks these texts or their title being unusual and new to him. Indeed, he prefers a different title when it comes to referring to Jesus’ traditions, calling his source time and again the "memoirs of the apostles".[[6]](#footnote-6) However, he also admits in one place that these "memoirs" were not exclusively recorded by the apostles, but also by their disciples (Dial. 103).[[7]](#footnote-7) In this way he wants to make it clear that these memoirs, in their "written form", "are neither records for one's own recollection and use, nor collections of 'memorabilia' for posterity - that would be hypomneumata - but 'memories' of an important person".[[8]](#footnote-8) To be more precise, these memories do not recall Jesus’s deeds, but solely sayings of him.[[9]](#footnote-9)

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The somewhat younger Irenaeus reads differently when he opens his extensive, five-volume work *Adversus haereses*, which he himself calls "Refutation and Overcoming of the Falsely Called Gnosis", with a quotation from 1Tim 1,4 and immediately in his preface quotes extensively from Mt to draw not only on sayings, but also on the description of Jesus’s life, as reported by Matthew and the three other Gospels. In addition to these scriptures, which we know from the later canonical New Testament, Irenaeus quotes many other writings, some of them very extensively, and cites them as evidence for his fight against the “Falsely Called Gnosis”. As we will see in more detail below, according to the way he quotes various writings throughout Book III of his *Adversus haereses*, Irenaeus seems to have known not only the sub-collection of the four canonical Gospels, but also the further three sub-units, i.e. the "Praxapostolos", "Pauline Epistles", and the "Revelation of John".[[10]](#footnote-10) The only New Testament writings he does not cite in Books III and IV and about which he is silent are Paul's letter to Philemon, 2 Peter,[[11]](#footnote-11) 3 John and Jud.[[12]](#footnote-12) Irenaeus is aware of another letter, which according to him, was written by the Church in Rome to the brethren in Corinth and which he calls a "very suitable (in the Latin translation even: "very weighty") letter".[[13]](#footnote-13) However, he states as a note of caution that only those "who want to discern (the right from the wrong) can recognise the tradition of the apostolic church from this letter, especially since the letter is older than those who now teach the wrong thing".[[14]](#footnote-14) This statement makes it clear that Irenaeus distinguishes between the writings he cites and other works such as the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *First Epistle of Clement*. While he considers the latter to be appropriate or weighty, he does not see them in the same rank as the former. The distinction points to his double language use of "Scripture",[[15]](#footnote-15) indeed, he himself seems to be involved in the development of a hierarchy of scriptures. We will have to go into this in more detail in a moment. Irenaeus attributes Revelation to the evangelist John, uses the reference to the Nicolaitans whom it opposes (Rev 2:6. 15)[[16]](#footnote-16) and also takes up the theme of the future resurrection, which Justin had already read before him in this "revelation which came to a certain one among us named John".[[17]](#footnote-17) But while Justin insists that "those who believe in our Christ will live a thousand years in Jerusalem",[[18]](#footnote-18) Irenaeus does not commit himself to a specific number of years. And yet, precisely because of this teaching of the future kingdom, the Book of "Revelation" remained controversial as to whether or not it should belong to the collection, later called “New Testament”.[[19]](#footnote-19)

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However, it has already been noted that Irenaeus does not call the collection by the name we know for it.[[20]](#footnote-20) When he speaks in his writings of a "New Testament", Greek καινὴ διαθήκη (in the early Latin translation of Irenaeus: "novum testamentum"), which rarely happens, he follows two older meanings of this combination of terms, the first being known from the Greek translation of the Jewish Bible, in which διαθήκη stands for God's "covenant" (*berit*) with mankind. The second variant of meaning is found in colloquial and legal language, in which the Greek, like the Latin, "testament" denotes a testamentary disposition;[[21]](#footnote-21) we also find the latter, for example, in Gal 3:15. 17 and Heb 9:16-17. In Irenaeus, this use of language is clearly encountered in the following passage, clearly connecting "Gospel/Evangelical" and "Apostle/Apostolic",[[22]](#footnote-22) when it is said that the members of the human race

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"these are taken by the Spirit for an inheritance and brought into the kingdom of heaven. For this reason Christ also died: The testament of the Good News, which was to be opened and read throughout the world, was first to make His slaves free. It was then to make them heirs of his property, when the Spirit possesses them by inheritance. For the survivor takes possession of the inheritance."[[23]](#footnote-23)

Even though in other passages Irenaeus understands "testament" mostly in the sense of the Septuagint as "covenant", the term in this context has the obvious sense of inheritance law. Looking at Irenaeus’s entire work, we find the term "testament" in relation to a collection of writings in only two places, and both times they are in a reaction of Irenaeus against one of the two Roman teachers whom he criticises in his work, in this instance not as a response to Valentinus, his main opponent, whom he has in his sights most sharply, but twice exclusively attacking Markion, whom we will also discuss in more detail.

In both places, Irenaeus speaks of two testaments, whereby he calls one the "first" or the "former" testament, which he equates with the Law, and the other he calls the "Gospel". That he adopts the language of his opponent in these passages is obvious when he writes afterwards: "There are indeed more such commandments. But they all do not mean a contradiction ("*contrarietas*") and no dissolution of the old commandments, as the followers of Markion cry out".[[24]](#footnote-24) In fact, as we shall see, Marcion of Sinope had already entitled his collection of writings as the "New Testament" about 40 years earlier, which he had expressly set in contradiction, i.e. in antithesis ("*contraria*", "antitheses"), to the "Old Testament". Irenaeus does not seem to have encountered this information in direct recourse to Marcion, but, as the second passage proves, to have taken it from an anonymous report which he had received from a presbyter and which he cites in his work.[[25]](#footnote-25) In this report, immediately after speaking of the "testaments", "Marcion's teaching" is criticised.[[26]](#footnote-26) The same finding, that an author adopts the language of his opponent, is still encountered in Tertullian, who wrote 20 years after Irenaeus in the North African city of Carthage. Wolfram Kinzig has deservedly pointed out this phenomenon. In the work of Tertullian, the first writer, polemicist and apologist to write in Latin, whose writings - despite the loss of books in the course of time - still survives rather extensively, "testament" is used as the name of a collection of writings exclusively in the context of his polemic against Marcion.[[27]](#footnote-27) And in Tertullian, for the first time, not only the term "testament" is found, but also the full title of the collection of writings as "New Testament", attested by Tertullian for Marcion, a choice of title which Tertullian does not reject. Though, he is critical of Marcion’s use of this title, in order to refer to the Scripture of the Jews as “Old Testament”, and to, therefore, reject it as outdated for Christians, Tertullian is less reluctant towards the qualification of the Christian writings to be a novel testament which surpasses the old testament of the Jews.

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Irenaeus was considerably more sceptical than Tertullian against Marcion’s title of the collection. For Irenaeus, Marcion's slogan that Christianity was something "new" and different from the "old" Judaism was a thorn in his side. This explains why Irenaeus did not call the Christian collection of writings a "New Testament" and could not even have accepted such a designation.[[28]](#footnote-28) In this reluctancy he walks in the footsteps of Justin, who likewise did not use this title "New Testament" as the name for the collection, although "in Justin the juxtaposition of old and new testament plays a major role".[[29]](#footnote-29)

So, if we want to summarise briefly, we can state that although Irenaeus is considered our oldest witness to a collection of writings which, compared to the earlier one by Marcion, brought together more works and included revised versions of the ones that were included before, initially his novel collection did not carry the title of "New Testament". Which writings this collection comprised, will be examined below, after we have presented the other witnesses of the second century and especially the "New Testament" of Marcion.

### 2 Polycarp of Smyrna and Papias of Hierapolis – A Non-Witness and the Oldest Witness

Papias of Hierapolis is repeatedly considered in the context of the formation of the New Testament and the few fragments that survive of his work are seen to be central for the history of it.[[30]](#footnote-30) But before we come to Papias in this section, we will first have to go back to Irenaeus to meet his teacher Polycarp. For Irenaeus is the first to tell us about Papias and to quote from his widely lost work. And Eusebius places Papias in close connection with Polycarp. Unfortunately, the dates of Papias' life are disputed, as much depends on how one reads the account of Polycarp and interprets Eusebius of Caesarea and his account in the "History of the Church".

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According to the chronology of Eusebius, reporting about Papias in Book III of his "History of the Church", the life and work of Papias seems to fall into the reign of the Roman Emperor Trajan (98-117 AD), since Eusebius had reported on this emperor last in chronological order following the emperors's terms of office.[[31]](#footnote-31) However, Eusebius opens the chapter on Papias with his own chronological reference. This is based on Irenaeus, namely, that what follows happened "at that time when Polycarp, a disciple of the apostles, was a man of eminence in Asia, having been entrusted with the episcopate of the church of Smyrna by those who had seen and heard the Lord".[[32]](#footnote-32)

According to Eusebius, Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna appointed by the apostles. We also read this in Irenaeus, at least in the Latin translation, since the original Greek text for this passage is lost and, apart from the Latin translation, only the Greek version of Eusebius exists for this. According to it, Irenaeus is said to have claimed that "Polycarp was not only instructed by the apostles and conversed with many who had seen our Lord, but was also appointed by the apostles in the church of Smyrna as bishop in Asia".[[33]](#footnote-33) However, this information does not rest on completely secure ground.[[34]](#footnote-34) It is at least surprising that in a letter received from Polycarp to the congregation in Philippi, he does not refer to himself as a bishop. In addition, we have a letter from Irenaeus to the Roman presbyter Florinus, which again has come down to us exclusively through Eusebius, but is found much later in his "History of the Church", namely in Book V in the account on Irenaeus[[35]](#footnote-35) - in which Irenaeus speaks several times about Polycarp, calls him a "blessed and apostolic presbyter", but does never refer to him as a bishop.[[36]](#footnote-36) According to this letter, Irenaeus was closely acquainted with Polycarp and twice refers to himself as a disciple of the same. Irenaeus, "for whom the monepiscopate is self-evident, reckons the bishop among the presbyters and calls . . . Polycarp as well as the Roman bishops and himself presbyters",[[37]](#footnote-37) a difference between presbyter and bishop is thus not tangible for him, while for Eusebius it could hardly be imagined that an outstanding personality as leader of a congregation could not be a bishop. In general, this letter and Irenaeus's relationship to Florinus and Polycarp are of importance for the chronology of Papias and highly informative for our overall context, as we will see. I will therefore quote Irenaeus's letter to Florinus, as far as it has been handed down by Eusebius:

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"These teachings, Florinus, to put it mildly, do not spring from clean reasoning. These teachings do not agree with the Church and lead those who convince themselves of them to the greatest impiety. These teachings had not even dared to be expounded by the heretics who were outside the Church. These teachings were not handed down to you by those who were presbyters before us and who also associated with the apostles.

5. When I was a young man, I saw you in the lower Asia with Polycarp, walking through the magnificent imperial assembly hall in an effort to win his approval. I remember what happened then better than what happened more recently.

6. For what one learns from childhood and grows with the spirit becomes one with one. So that I am even still able to determine the place where the blessed Polycarp sat to teach, and his going in and out, and his manner of life, and his physical appearance, also the speeches which he made to the people, and his close relationship with John, as he reported, and with the others, who had seen the Lord, and how he remembered their words (ἀπομνημόνευεν) and what he heard from them about the Lord, also about his powers and about his teachings, having received them from the eyewitnesses of the 'Word of Life', Polycarp proclaimed everything in accordance with the Scriptures.[[38]](#footnote-38)

7. These things, which I also then experienced through the mercy of God, I heard with eagerness, not writing them down on papyrus, but in my heart, and by the grace of God, I chew them again for ever, and can testify before God that if that blessed and apostolic presbyter had heard such a thing, he would have written it down and plugged his ears, saying according to his custom: 'O good God, for what times hast Thou preserved me, that I should endure such things'. He would have left the place where, sitting or standing, he had heard such words.

8 And these things may be proved from the letters which he sent either to neighbouring churches for their support, or to some brethren to exhort and encourage them."[[39]](#footnote-39)

This excerpt from the letter contains a veritable arsenal of information for our immediate and indirect context. On the one hand, it becomes clear that Florinus was a close confidant and fellow student of Irenaeus with Polycarp. We can probably even determine the time a little more precisely here, because the place is given as "the imperial assembly hall" (ἐν τῇ βασιλικῇ αὐλῇ). There is, however, no evidence of an imperial assembly hall or basilica in Asia Minor in the first half of the 2nd century, and the presence of emperors there falls too early for Florinus' and Irenaeus' studies. The famous Anglican Patristic scholar and bishop Joseph Barber Lightfoot[[40]](#footnote-40) in the 19th century, referring to the 18th century editor of Irenaeus, René Massuet, therefore, suggested that the term was used retrospectively here and referred to the court of the proconsul of Asia, Titus Aurelius Fulvus. From 136 AD, Fulvus was elevated to the imperial throne two or three years after his appointment as proconsul and succeeded the emperor Hadrian (117-138) as Antoninus Pius (138-161). Consequently, Irenaeus may have referred to the court of the proconsul and future emperor as imperial. The fact that Irenaeus writes the letter as an older man and places his period of study at the end of the reign of Emperor Hadrian and the beginning of that of Emperor Antoninus Pius also leads to about the middle of the second century.[[41]](#footnote-41)

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Similarly important to the temporal location of Florinus and Irenaeus is their relationship to each other and to Polycarp, as described by Irenaeus. Irenaeus's concern in this rhetorically charged letter, as the fourfold repetition at the beginning of "these teachings" shows, is to admonish Florinus with restraint, as Irenaeus immediately adds, i.e. not polemically, reminiscent of good old times. Even though the letter sounds less restrained right away, as its tone is passionate, overall it is irenic, due to the reminiscence of their study time together and also the fact that Irenaeus continues to refer to Florinus as a presbyter, just like himself. But Irenaeus wants to point out that the doctrines Florinus is currently advocating do not belong to the body of tradition they had learned from Polycarp. Consequently, to support his apparent point, Irenaeus refers to the "blessed and apostolic presbyter" Polycarp and his letters.

Now, letters in antiquity were often not private correspondence. This can also be seen in this case, since the letter of Irenaeus to Florinus is accessible to the librarian of Caesarea, Eusebius, so that he was able to include this letter excerpt in his "History of the Church". Epistolary texts are therefore not necessarily written solely to pursue a primary purpose, which in this case could well be the admonition of Irenaeus’s fellow student Florinus. Equally important, and apparently for Eusebius the real reason why he quotes this letter at this point in his work where he is dealing with Irenaeus, is rather to highlight Irenaeus's close relationship with Polycarp and to report on the intimate contact Polycarp had with John and with "the others who had seen the Lord". He is thus concerned with strengthening the authority of the latter's disciple Irenaeus. In this framework, it is easy for the reader to miss the fact that Irenaeus's letter pursues another aspect for the broader public, which has so far remained unconsidered, at least in research.

Irenaeus styles Polycarp as a teacher and representative of such "teachings", which he remembers (ἀπεμνημόνευεν) because of his relationship with John and the further "eyewitnesses of the ‘word of life'" (παρὰ τῶν αὐτοπτῶν τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ λόγου). Polycarp's recollections refer to "what he heard from them about the Lord, also about his powers and about his teachings", and which he "proclaimed" "in accordance with the Scriptures".

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In this passage the terms and expressions are carefully chosen. They must have electrified the contemporary readers of Irenaeus. When Irenaeus speaks of doctrines proclaimed by Polycarp "in accordance with the Scriptures", he implies a certain distance between Polycarp's teachings and the Scriptures. That is, Polycarp does not seem to have presented his opinion based on, in accordance with or with reference to the Scriptures. Perhaps Irenaeus wants to indicate that he had not even known them. It is also possible to take into account the only Scriptural quotation present in this letter excerpt which derives from the beginning of the First Epistle of John (1 Jn 1:1): "Word of life". John's letter begins: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life".[[42]](#footnote-42) Now, of course, Irenaeus was not there from the beginning, nor did he see with his own eyes what he knows, nor did he grasp it with his hands, but, according to his letter, the word of life was transmitted to him by Polycarp. And even if the latter shared the fate with Irenaeus of no longer being an eyewitness himself, he had at least learned the word from John and other eyewitnesses through their reports, but apparently not from their writings.

With the quotation from the beginning of the First Epistle of John, of course, the Gospel of John itself is also called up ("In the beginning was the Word" [Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος], Jn 1:1; "What was from the beginning" [Ὃ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς], 1 Jn 1:1), the spiritual Gospel which, according to Irenaeus, was placed first and opened the collection of the four Gospels and thus also stood at the beginning of Irenaeus’s larger collection of Scriptures in general.[[43]](#footnote-43) Immediately one is reminded that Irenaeus, in his detailed argument for the necessity of exactly four Gospels, considers them in the following order: John, Luke, Matthew and Mark.[[44]](#footnote-44) Indeed, in this passage Irenaeus emphasises that Polycarp is a guarantor not only of what John says, but also of what the others have seen with their eyes, looked at and touched with their hands. However, by making Polycarp a guarantor for John and the others, he places Polycarp above and before their writings, which supports the previous consideration that Irenaeus sees Polycarp as a bearer of oral tradition and one of the first advocates for written memories. Since Polycarp did both, teach orally and put words down in writing, Irenaeus places him at the transition between these two forms of transmitting tradition.

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At the same time, Irenaeus hints at another Scriptural reference, which refers to the beginning of Acts, a text which, as already said, is first encountered in both Irenaeus and his contemporary Dionysius of Corinth.[[45]](#footnote-45) For in Acts, about the election to replace Judas, it is said that one of the conditions of being an apostle is to have been present as an eyewitness from the beginning:

"21 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, 22 beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." (Acts 1:21-22)

It was with such witnesses, then, that Polycarp associated, according to Irenaeus. But this contact not only made him himself a witness for the right teaching, but also for the fact that such teachings were and are "proclaimed" "in accordance with the Scriptures". According to this testimony, Polycarp thus advanced to become a guarantor of both the content and the form in which this content was later transmitted in writings. Irenaeus succeeds in securing the guarantor in his letter on two levels, firstly on that of the literal sense of his letter, according to which Polycarp is portrayed in his authority, but secondly also through the quotation of 1 Jn 1:1, which allows both Jn and Acts to shine through. When Irenaeus finally points out that it is about "what he heard from them about the Lord, also about his powers and about his teachings", he first of all focuses on the life of Jesus, then on his miracles, powers, the many stories about him and on his words and hereby gives a good outline of what is contained in the four Gospels.

In summary, it can be said that Irenaeus stylises Polycarp as the source and at the same time as the authority of the later collection of writings of the Gospels, Acts, the catholic Epistles and perhaps even Revelation which plays a prominent role in Irenaeus.[[46]](#footnote-46) At the same time, he implicitly admits that Polycarp had not yet had any of these Gospels before him. This also corresponds to the findings that we can gather from the extant letter of Polycarp to the Philippians.[[47]](#footnote-47) For in this letter there are indeed a number of allusions and quotations that Polycarp himself attributes to Paul, and even 1 and 2 Timothy from the so-called Pastoral Epistles are also echoed,[[48]](#footnote-48) but there are no signs of any knowledge of Gospel narratives.[[49]](#footnote-49) The only echo that can be detected leads to an exhortation known from the Lord's Prayer ("Lead us not into temptation")[[50]](#footnote-50) (Matt 6:13), but here with the subsequent quotation identified as a saying of the Lord: "As the Lord said, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt 26:41).[[51]](#footnote-51) Among the clearest quotations and echoes are some Catholic Epistles such as 1 Peter (1:8; 2:12; 2:22; 2:24; 3:9), Polycarp's most used source,[[52]](#footnote-52) and 1 Jn (4:2-3). However, neither among these nor among the less likely echoes to be discerned are any that refer to Gospel accounts. Acts presents a special phenomenon. For in the opening of Polycarp's letter to the Philippians we find the formulation: "Whom God raised up after he had loosed the bonds of Hades" (ὃν ἤγειρεν ὁ θεὸς λύσας τὰς ὠδῖνας τοῦ ᾅδου), which immediately reminds us of Acts, where 2:24 reads: "Whom God raised up, having loosed the bonds of death" (ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἀνέστησεν λύσας τὰς ὠδῖνας τοῦ θανάτου). Even though the text shows variants, there is much to suggest that there is a direct dependence or that both writings draw on the same source. Since Polycarp's letter to the Philippians has no further quotation, not even a single other inkling to Acts, which is all the more astonishing since Polycarp so frequently refers back to Paul and the Catholic Epistles, there are two possibilities with regard to the direction of the dependency relationship, on the one hand that Acts depends on Polycarp, or also that Polycarp had recourse to Acts this one time and not otherwise.[[53]](#footnote-53)

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Yet another passage has attracted the attention of scholars, in which Polycarp speaks of the "Scriptures":

"I trust that you are well versed in the sacred writings; and nothing is unknown to you; to me it is not granted. Only this I say, as it is said in these Scriptures: ‘Be angry, but do not sin’ [Ps 4:5] ... ‘The sun shall not go down on your wrath’ [Eph 4:26]. Blessed is he who remembers this, as I believe it is done among you."[[54]](#footnote-54)

It is peculiar that the writer claims of himself that it is "not granted" to him to be "well versed" in the Scriptures, indeed that he is content with a short moral saying from Ephesians (in which again Ps 4:5 is quoted[[55]](#footnote-55)). And indeed, Polycarp's letter proves how deeply he is versed in the writings of Paul, whom he mentions several times, but also in the other writings mentioned and also in those that will not later be in the canonical New Testament, such as 1 Clement. Either his statement of not being versed in the Scriptures is an expression of rhetorical modesty that can also be found in other authors of the time, or Polycarp wants to make it clear that he is not concerned with uncritical scriptural scholarship. For shortly before, he had pointed out that Paul says that "the saints will judge the world" (1 Cor 6:2), and added: "I have not noticed or heard anything of this kind among you".[[56]](#footnote-56) He is, indeed, really concerned that, even if the Scriptures say "be angry" and speak of "wrath", one should not sin by being angry. Conversely, he also does not want that judgement be eradicated from God's plan of salvation, when he writes against Marcion (among others)[[57]](#footnote-57): "Anyone who treats the Lord's words according to his own liking and claims that there is neither resurrection nor judgement is the firstborn of Satan".[[58]](#footnote-58)

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The Pauline Ephesian (also the psalm verse contained therein?) is regarded by Polycarp as "Scriptures" in the plural. This fits in with his idea according to which he refers almost exclusively to Christian texts as "Scriptures", but expands the range of texts by adding Acts and Catholic Letters (hence making use of what later becomes termed the Praxapostolos), compared to the more limited collection of Marcion where this sub-unit was not yet included. While for Marcion Paul is the only true apostle, Polycarp probably deliberately alters the quotation of Gal 2:2, a passage where Paul insists on his own authority ("I have not walked in vain"), and replaces the singular by the plural ("All these apostles have not walked in vain"), and adds the prophets as authorities.[[59]](#footnote-59) If Polycarp also took the verse from the Psalm to be part of the “Scriptures” – we have noted the plural of "Scriptures" – he may have regarded the Psalms as prophetic literature which is consistent with how this book was regarded at this time.[[60]](#footnote-60)

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Although Irenaeus styles Polycarp as an authority and guarantor for the Gospels and Acts, Polycarp in his own letter does not refer to these Gospels, but only to Pauline letters, writings from the Praxapostolos and the Psalms.

Let us return to Eusebius and his account of Papias of Hierapolis. As we have seen, he places Papias in the same period as Polycarp. From what has just been said, this may point to the time of Trajan, but from what has been learned about Irenaeus one could equally think of the end of Hadrian's time or the beginning of the reign of Antoninus Pius,[[61]](#footnote-61) that is, the time after the second Jewish war, which ended in 135. In fact,

Eusebius passes on the information he had read from Irenaeus about Papias in his work "Against the Heresies".[[62]](#footnote-62) Here Irenaeus reports that Papias was a confidant of Polycarp and even a fellow listener to the Apostle John, so according to Irenaeus he might not only have studied but also worked at about the same time as Polycarp. According to Irenaeus and Eusebius, Papias wrote five books of "Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord" (λογίων κυριακῶν ἐξηγήσεις), of which only a few fragments are extant, most of which preserved by Eusebius in his “History of the Church”.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Eusebius, too, reports that Papias was a bishop,[[64]](#footnote-64) but here the attribution of the episcopate is even more uncertain than in the case of Polycarp.[[65]](#footnote-65) For neither does Irenaeus report that Papias was a bishop.[[66]](#footnote-66) In fact, in the fragments of Papias handed down by Irenaeus and Eusebius we only find reference to presbyters; there is no mention of bishops. Papias obtained his information from presbyters,[[67]](#footnote-67) which Irenaeus underlines by pointing out that Papias carefully memorised what he heard from them.[[68]](#footnote-68) And these presbyters and their students are the guarantors of truth for Papias.[[69]](#footnote-69) Papias also emphasises that he only listened to certain presbyters, especially not to those who "mentioned foreign laws, but only to those who were saying what they had been given to believe by the Lord".[[70]](#footnote-70) Unfortunately, Papias does not specify what the source of these foreign laws was. However, he mentions quite a number of people who he had asked for information, men who had come "from the presbyters". Having met and spoken to Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, Matthew "or other disciples of the Lord, then with Aristion and John the presbyter", Papias believed that nothing written would serve him, but rather the "living, abiding voice".[[71]](#footnote-71) With this statement Papias confirms, firstly, that there had been books in his time in which he could consult to gather inform, second, that books existed, introducing "foreign laws" and not containing what the Lord wanted to convey, and further, that he had to embark on his own search for what he deemed to be the right tradition which he was only able to access in the oral tradition of presbyters and their disciples. This information he preferred to the neglect of books altogether, even though, he himself sat down to put into writing in five books what he had brought together. Schmithals, however, rightly cautions:

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“An oral tradition in living use is obviously not available to him (Papias, MV) in his congregations. At the same time, the written tradition is not rejected, but it is clearly devalued. This may also be due to Papias's specific theological interests, but the written tradition is not yet regarded as Holy Scripture by him either."[[72]](#footnote-72)

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However, it has long been noticed by scholars[[73]](#footnote-73) that the listed names of Papias’s witnesses are almost certainly taken from Jn,[[74]](#footnote-74) because Papias offers these in the order in which they are encountered in the reading of this Gospel. In Jn 1:35-51 we meet Andrew, Peter and Philip and in Jn 21:2 Thomas and the two Zebedaides (James and John[[75]](#footnote-75)). Papias therefore seems to have known Jn, but explicitly does not refer to it and does not read the Gospel as Scripture, but, as mentioned, prefers oral tradition to it. His knowledge of Jn is also confirmed by other testimonies of Papias. In a Gospel prologue that has found its way variously into Latin Bible translations and their manuscripts in the West, we read:

"The Gospel of John was published and delivered to the churches during his lifetime, as a Hierapolitan named Papias,[[76]](#footnote-76) John's trusted disciple, reported in his expositions (*exotericis*?), namely in the last five books. Marcion, the heretic, however, wrote a Gospel, while John dictated the true one. But after he (Marcion) was rejected by him (John), because he (John) had scruitinized the *Antitheses*. The latter (Marcion) had brought writings or letters to him (John) from the brethren,[[77]](#footnote-77) who were in Pontus."[[78]](#footnote-78)

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As can be seen from the question mark and the many brackets, this is not a text that is easy to interpret; it has also been called a "stylistically offensive and rough version".[[79]](#footnote-79) Because of the reference to Marcion and the chronological setting, according to which the writing of the Gospel of Markion (hereafter: \*Ev) is set at about the same time as that of John, older scholars either doubted the historicity of this text - Benjamin W Bacon calls it a "curious anachronism"[[80]](#footnote-80) - or, against the sound attestation of the text in the manuscripts and their widely agreed reading, replaced the name of Marcion with others. Moritz von Aberle, for example, thought that because Marcion, who is encountered in Rome after the second Jewish war, i.e. after the year 135, "was in any case not a contemporary of John or Papias either", replaces "Marcion" with "Kerinth" without any manuscript backing.[[81]](#footnote-81) Yet, there are additional witnesses from the ancient Church who confirm the statements of this Papias fragment, perhaps dependent on this text. Tertullian, for example, writes at the beginning of the 3rd century that the "Apostle John" had called Marcion or the Marcionites "antichrists",[[82]](#footnote-82) and the fourth century fighter against heresy, Philastrius, Bishop of Brescia, was also aware of Papias's information when he noted in his work "On the Various Heresies" (*Diversarum hereseon liber*) that Marcion, after he had been "convicted by the blessed evangelist John and by the presbyters and put to flight from the city of Ephesus, had sown his heresy in Rome".[[83]](#footnote-83)

Now it is clear from the note by Papias that the encounter between Marcion and John came to a bad end, for both sides. While Marcion obviously considered his gospel to be the right one, John, whom Papias agrees with, insisted on the truth of his. As a reminder, decades later a representative of the so-called Montanists, the Roman Gaius, also rejected John along with Revelation, calling them both creations of the heretic Cerinth and declaring them a forgery.[[84]](#footnote-84)

What is important, however, is the statement that there had obviously been an initial approach by Marcion to John, in which he brought "writings or letters" that came "from the brothers who had lived in Pontus". Pontus was the home region of Marcion, who came from the city of Sinope on what is now the Turkish coast of the Black Sea. In fact, we have further evidence of Christians in Pontus in the 2nd century. Acts in particular speaks repeatedly of such (2:9). Pontus is also regarded as the home of Aquila, who returned there together with his wife Priscilla after he had been expelled from Rome together with other Jews as a result of the edict of Emperor Claudius in 41 or 49 AD; 1 Peter is addressed to Christians in Pontus (1:1) and Robert M. Grant believes that the church in Pontus was already

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"fairly old ... for around the year 110 Pliny (the Roman governor of Pontus and Bithynia: *legatus pro praetore provinciae Ponti et Bithyniae consulari potestate*, MV) investigated Pontic Christians who claimed to have left the church twenty years earlier. At an uncertain date 1 Peter addressed Christians in Bithynia and Pontus who were undergoing persecution. After 132 the violent struggle between Roman troops and Jewish messianists in Palestine produced strong sentiment against Jews throughout the empire, and presumably led Marcion to try to separate the gospel from the Jewish Bible"**.[[85]](#footnote-85)**

When we speak here of writings or letters that Marcion had brought to John, meaning perhaps both the Gospel and the *Antitheses*, Marcion's preface to his collection, the note seems to refer to Marcion's collection of the New Testament, which, in addition to this preface and the Gospel, also contained a collection of ten Pauline letters.[[86]](#footnote-86) We are going to look more closely at this collection below. Here we will only note that, according to this testimony, Marcion submitted this collection to John, but John, precisely because of his reading of the preface of the *Antitheses*, rejected it together with the Gospel and instead dictated his own Gospel, here called the "true" one. In the 3rd century, the Alexandrians Clement and Origen also report John's activity in the creation of the Gospels. Clement writes according to Eusebius:

"7. And when Mark and Luke had already published their Gospels, they say that John, who had employed all his time in proclaiming the Gospel orally, finally proceeded to write for the following reason. The three Gospels already mentioned having come into the hands of all and into his own too, they say that he accepted them and bore witness to their truthfulness; but that there was lacking in them an account of the deeds done by Christ at the beginning of his ministry …

11. They say, therefore, that the apostle John, being asked to do it for this reason, gave in his Gospel an account of the period which had been omitted by the earlier evangelists, and of the deeds done by the Saviour during that period; that is, of those which were done before the imprisonment of the Baptist. And this is indicated by him, they say, in the following words: “This beginning of miracles did Jesus”; and again when he refers to the Baptist, in the midst of the deeds of Jesus, as still baptizing in Ænon near Salim; where he states the matter clearly in the words: “For John was not yet cast into prison."[[87]](#footnote-87)

And from Origen we read:

"There is a story that John, who still survived Nero's time, gathered together the Gospels which were written, recognised some of them as genuine and accepted them, but of those that were derived by the plot of the devil, rejected and condemned which he knew were not true."[[88]](#footnote-88)

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The content of these reports of the Alexandrian scholars comes so close to Papias' note that it is likely that both refer to it. He speaks not only of the acceptance of the Gospels brought together, but also of the rejection and condemnation of others. Since this statement is found in Origen's Homilies on the Gospel of Luke (albeit only in the Greek version, left out in Jerome’s translation), in which Origen also clearly contrasts himself with Marcion, the finding once again underlines the reference to that reported by Papias.

Eusebius in turn tells us of the same process a few decades later in his "History of the Church", quoting Clement, as we have seen before, albeit leaving aside the person of Marcion (note the omission in Jerome’s translation), who by his time had already become one of the arch-heretics,[[89]](#footnote-89) as quoted before.[[90]](#footnote-90) In another report about Clement, Eusebius comes back to the origin of the Gospels and states:

But, last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain in the Gospel, being urged by his friends, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.[[91]](#footnote-91)

In both excerpts from Clement, there is an agreement with the previously discussed excerpt from Papias in that John wrote his Gospel in knowing the previously written Gospels and in insisting that his was truthful or inspired by the Spirit, though we hear no longer anything of \*Ev as in Papias.

Now there is another significant testimony for our context, which has also been treated rather stepmotherly in research so far,[[92]](#footnote-92) and whose credibility was questioned in scholarship.[[93]](#footnote-93) It comes from the Acts of Timothy, which according to their editor Hermann Usener date from the years 320 to 340, according to Cavan Concannon around the year 356 (with further development in the late 4th and early 5th century),[[94]](#footnote-94) according to Emil Schürer with good reasons probably only after 374,[[95]](#footnote-95) and according to the latest considerations are to be dated to the time after the Council of Chalcedon in 451.[[96]](#footnote-96) According to the information provided by these Acts (in their Latin translation) they claim to have been written by Polycrates of Ephesus. In fact, this writing transmits more information about John in Ephesus than about Timothy. In it, we first read that John had ended up in Rome due to a shipwreck, which the author pretends to have read in Irenaeus of Lyons. The next thing he then tells us we read in the following passage:

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"The disciples who followed our Lord Jesus Christ also did not know how to bring together the papyri which they had in their possession from time to time, which reported in various languages the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ that were taking place at that time. When it happened that they were in the city of Ephesus, they brought them, as is generally known, to the famous theologian John. He studied them all, and inspired by them he compiled what they had presented into three Gospels, according to the order of Matthew, Mark and Luke, adding their names to the Gospels. But when he discovered that these told the story of the salvation history of the Incarnation, he theologised about the things that were not mentioned and of which he had received knowledge from the divine breast. Therefore, he added the things that were omitted by the others, especially the divine miracles. Then he put his own name on this book, namely the Gospel."[[97]](#footnote-97)

It is obvious that we are not dealing here with a mere embellishment of Eusebius' report. Certainly, this says nothing about the historical value of the note, but John, who is explicitly referred to here as "the theologian",[[98]](#footnote-98) is attributed in these Acts a considerably greater part in the creation of the Gospels than is the case in Clement’s report in Eusebius, for the Acts see him not only as the author of the fourth Gospel, but they even make him the editor of the Synoptics.[[99]](#footnote-99) Moreover, they consider the writings in codex form, since otherwise it would hardly have been possible to speak of pages that were not in order.[[100]](#footnote-100)

There is a further account in a collection of church fathers on John, the *Catena in Ioannem* edited by Corderius, which comes close to what we have just read in the Acts of Timotheus:

"About this time the publication of the other Gospels took place. The believers of Asia brought the books to John because they wanted to know what he thought of them, and he praised the authors for their truthfulness, but he explained that they had overlooked reporting some events."[[101]](#footnote-101)

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It is consistent with the Papias note that John was evidently seen as an authority in the process of writing the Gospels, even though all the testimonies admit that he was the last to take up writing and no longer simply gave oral testimony. If the Papias note gives us a little insight into history, then the Timothy note could represent a certain attempt at correcting it. As with Eusebius, there is no longer any mention of Marcion. In contrast to John's negative judgement on Marcion and John's truth judgement on the three Gospels in Papias, we find the rather critical judgement according to which the raw material first received a certain order through John, and that he gave his Gospel a more theological twist, a perspective of the economy of salvation through highlighting the Incarnation, because the other Gospels emphasized the the human side, which he complemented by providing the perspective of the divinity of Jesus. For it was precisely this theological emphasis that John was famous, beginning with the prologue, which speaks of the divine, pre-existent Logos, identified with Christ, and not, like Matt and Lk, of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, a human being.

But it is all the more astonishing that Papias speaks of prefering the "living voice" which shows a critical distance to all Gospels, including that of John, even though it is described as the true one in the above note. Compared to all quoted accounts, the information that Papias provides seems of greater age. Moreover, it agrees with the further knowledge we gain from the statements about the Gospels of Mark and Matthew where Papias likewise expresses some appreciation, linked with criticism - Martin Hengel speaks even of Papias’ "devaluation" of these Gospels,[[102]](#footnote-102) and this critical stand might be the reason, why Papias does not apply the name "Gospel" to either of these two Gospels in the surviving fragments.[[103]](#footnote-103)

Eusebius quotes Papias about Mark and Matthew as follows:

"This also the presbyter said: Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord’s discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely.

These things are related by Papias concerning Mark.[[104]](#footnote-104)

In a subsequent fragment he writes on Matthew:

"But concerning Matthew he writes as follows: ‘So then Matthew wrote the oracles in the

Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able’.”[[105]](#footnote-105)

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Much ink has already flowed on these two fragments,[[106]](#footnote-106) and again Hengel seems to have got it right: "Papias, or rather his informant ... (knew) something of the problem of writing the Gospels and the competing claims and traditions connected with it."[[107]](#footnote-107) For our context, it is interesting to note first of all that Papias seems to pass on knowledge concerning the origin, the process of editing and collecting, as he did with John. While he is praising Mark and Matthew, he does not seem to be really satisfied with any of their products. Mark did not hear the Lord himself, but therefore - again the same hint! - he remembers exactly the words of his tradent Peter. On the basis of memory, however, Mark follows the order of the teachings of his source Peter, which is geared to meet the needs of his audience, apparently the explanation of an incoherent narrative.[[108]](#footnote-108) In Matthew's case, it is not the problem of the source that created the problem that the final text is burdened with, but that of the necessary translations that leads to vagueness.

Without being able to pass judgement here on the historical reliability of the details of the various testimonies listed, it can nevertheless be summarised that the entire early Christian tradition concerning John has at least one common denominator: the Gospels did not come into being by chance in the most diverse places and at the most diverse times and not by the production or growth of traditions within communities. Our sources portrait the creation of these texts as conscious and even professional products of writers who were searching for information, checked the reliability of their informants, and had an exchange with colleagues who produced competing writings. It even transpires that the beginning of writing gospels was somehow coordinated among the actors and carried out in knowledge of the writings of the others. All the testimonies speak for a roughly simultaneous writing process and for a knowledge network where mutual reaction of peers were made possible.

At this point, where we are dealing with the larger collection of the finally 27 individual writings, I do not want to go into the Gospels as such, a task that will be dealt with later in this study, but only state that, according to everything that the early Church has handed down to us in terms of external testimonies, the above-mentioned hypothesis of a consciously editorial creation of at least the sub-collection of the Gospels finds support. There is no hint in these sources that gave credit to the alternative hypothesis that these texts emerged from congregations and their liturgical use and ritual practice.

This says nothing about whether we can trust the testimonies presented here. A scepticism is already justified by the fact that in the witnesses of the 3rd and 4th century one, if not the main actor has disappeared from these reports of origin: Marcion of Sinope. Moreover, one only has to look at the further, later embellishment of the descriptions of the Evangelists, as we find them in the Latin Church of the West in the biblical codices, and to which we will come below to see, how the narratives of the beginning of Gospel writing has been shaped by the views of apologetic authors who claimed orthodoxy for themselves. We have already spoken of the Latin Prologue to John’s Gospel, and we will look at similar Prologues that are extant in the Western Church for Luke and Mark, which we will have to examine more closely below.

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We can also review the fragments of Papias to gain information about the further collection beyond the Gospels. According to Eusebius, Papias "uses testimonies from the first Epistle of John and from that of Peter likewise. And he relates another

story of a woman, who was accused of many sins before the Lord, which is contained in the Gospel according to the Hebrews".[[109]](#footnote-109) And in general, he credits Papias - the first reference in the history of the Church - with having communicated "certain strange parables and teachings of the Saviour, and some other more mythical things".[[110]](#footnote-110) Let us begin with the last element. Should Papias have known not only Mk, Matt and Jn - conspicuously Eusebius does not mention Lk, although we have testimony that Papias also knew this Gospel[[111]](#footnote-111) - but also the Gospel of Hebrews mentioned here? We also know of the latter from other sources of the early church, and yet its profile, content, origin and distribution remain largely obscure, especially since the sources also speak of an Ebionaean and a Nazarene Gospel.[[112]](#footnote-112)

The last narrative mentioned, however, is known to us as the passage about the adulteress in John (7:53 - 8:11), which, according to the absence of this passage in some manuscripts, was obviously only added to John later.[[113]](#footnote-113) For it is not found in the early papyri from the 3rd century (P66 and P75), nor in the two large codices already mentioned, the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus[[114]](#footnote-114) from the 4th century, but is only found in the Latin-Greek manuscript, the Codex Bezae, which, especially for Lk, offers a version that is very close to \*Ev, and in Acts, but also in other texts that the manuscript offers, has a wealth of smaller and also larger changes, additional texts and omissions.[[115]](#footnote-115) A later reader of Papias and his "interpretations", the Syrian Mahboub (= Agapius) of Hierapolis, who also lived and worked in Hierapolis, writes in his "Universal History" (Kitab al-'Un- van, written in Arabic around 942) of "a wise man", who came to Hierapolis and wrote five books - hence the identification with Papias by scholars[[116]](#footnote-116) - and presented "in his book on the Gospel of John the theme of the woman who was an adulteress", of which Mahboub finally gives a summary.[[117]](#footnote-117) What is striking in this summary is that although the stories differ in minor details (no mention in Mahboub of Jesus' writing to earth, no conversation between Jesus and the woman), they are recognisably based on the same narrative.[[118]](#footnote-118) It is difficult to combine Eusebius's account with that of Mahboub. For why would Papias, in his interpretations of John, refer to a narrative which, as Eusebius states, he would have taken from a Gospel of Hebrews? Rather, Eusebius seems to have known from the biblical codices he had access to that this passage mentioned by Papias was missing from his editions of John. He thus attempted to construct a non-canonical source for this narrative precisely because, as we know from Augustine, the narrative was not uncontroversial in the 4th and 5th centuries, and perhaps even earlier, because it could be read as a licence for adultery by women.[[119]](#footnote-119)

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The reference to Papias's use of 1 John, already encountered as a testimony in Irenaeus's letter, is striking. Let us not forget that Eusebius places Papias closely with Polycarp in his "History of the Church". And note, then, that for Irenaeus as for Papias, presbyters (and their disciples) are the sources of information to which Polycarp belongs, who in turn refers again to John as a source of authority.

Perhaps the reference to him and to 1 Peter implies that Papias already knew the further sub-collection of the Praxapostolos (the compilation of Acts and the Catholic Epistles). Be that as it may, Papias at least also shows knowledge of the last sub-collection of the later canonical New Testament, Revelation.[[120]](#footnote-120) Like Irenaeus, he is even said to have regarded this Scriptures as "inspired by God" (θεόπνευστος).[[121]](#footnote-121)

Let us consider the result from the study on Polycarp and Papias. While Polycarp shows no knowledge of the Gospels, Papias offers information about a Gospel writing process which he places, as far as John is concerned, in the time of Marcion, hence shortly before the middle of the second century, while he places Mk with Peter and possibly regards Matt as a revision of Mk. Perhaps he was familiar with Lk.[[122]](#footnote-122) He also shows evidence from the Pauline epistles, such as Rom,[[123]](#footnote-123) 2 Cor,[[124]](#footnote-124) though he also seems to have referred to the books of Gen[[125]](#footnote-125) and Dan[[126]](#footnote-126). Important is the remark by Ulrich H.J. Körtner, an editor of the Papias Fragments, according to which Papias "with his literary enterprise [does not resemble Paul, but] rather the Synoptics, not least Luke in particular",[[127]](#footnote-127) that is, he himself is to be located in the midst of the production process of these writings.

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### 3 Ignatius of Antioch - a Witness of a Special Kind

According to Irenaeus and Eusebius, the field of witnesses for the collection of what is later known as the New Testament is to be extended somewhat. For after Polycarp and Papias, as Eusebius states in his "History of the Church" (Book III, Chapter 36), we must reckon with another witness-bearer in addition to these two, Ignatius of Antioch:

"1. At that time Polycarp, a disciple of the apostles, was a man of eminence in Asia, having been entrusted with the episcopate of the church of Smyrna by those who had seen and heard the Lord.

2. And at the same time Papias, bishop of the parish of Hierapolis, became well known, as did also Ignatius, who was chosen bishop of Antioch, second in succession to Peter, and whose fame is still celebrated by a great many.

3. Report says that he was sent from Syria to Rome, and became food for wild beasts on account of his testimony to Christ.

4. And as he made the journey through Asia under the strictest military surveillance, he fortified the parishes in the various cities where he stopped by oral homilies and exhortations, and warned them above all to be especially on their guard against the heresies that were then beginning to prevail, and exhorted them to hold fast to the tradition of the apostles. Moreover, he thought it necessary to attest that tradition in writing, and to give it a fixed form for the sake of greater security.

5. So when he came to Smyrna, where Polycarp was, he wrote an epistle to the church of Ephesus, in which he mentions Onesimus, its pastor;912 and another to the church of Magnesia, situated upon the Mæander, in which he makes mention again of a bishop Damas; and finally one to the church of Tralles, whose bishop, he states, was at that time Polybius.

6. In addition to these he wrote also to the church of Rome, entreating them not to secure his release from martyrdom, and thus rob him of his earnest hope. In confirmation of what has been said it is proper to quote briefly from this epistle.

7. He writes as follows: “From Syria even unto Rome I fight with wild beasts, by land and by sea, by night and by day, being bound amidst ten leopards that is, a company of soldiers who only become worse when they are well treated. In the midst of their wrongdoings, however, I am more fully learning discipleship, but I am not thereby justified.

8. May I have joy of the beasts that are prepared for me; and I pray that I may find them ready; I will even coax them to devour me quickly that they may not treat me as they have some whom they have refused to touch through fear. And if they are unwilling, I will compel them. Forgive me.

9. I know what is expedient for me. Now do I begin to be a disciple. May naught of things visible and things invisible envy me; that I may attain unto Jesus Christ. Let fire and cross and attacks of wild beasts, let wrenching of bones, cutting of limbs, crushing of the whole body, tortures of the devil,—let all these come upon me if only I may attain unto Jesus Christ.”

10. These things he wrote from the above-mentioned city to the churches referred to. And when he had left Smyrna he wrote again from Troas to the Philadelphians and to the church of Smyrna; and particularly to Polycarp, who presided over the latter church. And since he knew him well as an apostolic man, he commended to him, like a true and good shepherd, the flock at Antioch, and besought him to care diligently for it.

11. And the same man, writing to the Smyrnæans, used the following words concerning Christ, taken I know not whence: “But I know and believe that he was in the flesh after the resurrection. And when he came to Peter and his companions he said to them, Take, handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit. And immediately they touched him and believed.”[[128]](#footnote-128)

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After the two bishops, Polycarp and Papias, the third witness is Ignatius, "the second successor of Peter on the episcopal see of the Church in Antioch".[[129]](#footnote-129) What Eusebius knows to report about Ignatius, his transport under heavy military guard through Asia to Rome, does not seem to have been taken from any reliable source which even Eusebius himself admits (λόγος δ' ἔχει, i.e., "as it is said"[[130]](#footnote-130)). This supports the possibility, which I had already noticed earlier, that Eusebius did not have the famous letters of Ignatius that support this journey in more detail in the more extensive Seven Letters Collection, but that he only had access to the older Three Letters Collection (Ignatius to Polycarp = IgnPol, Ignatius to the Ephesians = IgnEph, Ignatius to the Romans = IgnRom).[[131]](#footnote-131) For it is only from these letters that he quotes with reference to a recognizable source, whereas the reference to Ignatius's letter to the Smyrnaeans (= IgnSm), which belongs to the Seven Letters Collection, is given without quotation. In fact, Origenes, writing in the 3rd century, cites a passage from the same letter, but does not give the quotation as being derived from this letter of Ignatius - although he knows Ignatius and his letters, while only quoting from Ignatius’s Three Letters Collection[[132]](#footnote-132) - but attributes the quote to the *Doctrina Petri*, a writing unfortunately lost except for a few fragments.[[133]](#footnote-133)

Consequently, Eusebius, like most of his predecessors who report on and quote Ignatius, has no historical sources other than Ignatius’s Three Letters Collection and what they heard about the Seven Letters Collection. Even Irenaeus quotes only from the Three Letters Collection, and even if he knew the Seven Letters Collection, it is more than doubtful that he had read it.[[134]](#footnote-134) The only closer parallels that exist, we find in the work of a contemporary of Irenaeus, the Greek-writing sophist and satirist Lucian of Samosata (c. 120 -180).[[135]](#footnote-135)

44

Since the letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyon from 177, which is connected with Irenaeus, also points to knowledge of both collections of Ignatian letters, and since Theophilus of Antioch (c. 183) also knows both collections of letters, the Seven Letters Collection seems to have originated at the latest around 170-177, presumably near Smyrna in Asia Minor, and shortly before 180 became known in Asia Minor, Syria and also in Gaul, and later, as Clement of Alexandria attests, by whatever means in Egypt.[[136]](#footnote-136) Support for both the dating and the localisation of this collection of seven letters has recently been presented by Jan N. Bremmer, who has examined the proper names cited in these letters and concludes:

"Thus, one could imagine a scenario in which a martyr Ignatius, whose existence I do not doubt, wrote some letters which were combined with Polycarp’s Letter to the Philippians. We do not know the precise time or content of these letters, but they may be related to or have consisted of the short recension if we follow Vinzent.[[137]](#footnote-137) This combination became expanded in the 160s (?) to contain the seven Ignatians, just as the authentic letters of Paul became expanded with the Pastorals, which happened not that long before the appearance of the *Ignatians*".[[138]](#footnote-138)

Indeed, in a recent study I had tried to show that while Ignatius's Three Letters Collection had slipped from the radar of scholars for over 150 years,[[139]](#footnote-139) this Three Letters Collection had probably been the earliest pseudonymous production of such letters, credited to an otherwise little known martyr, in the years after 150, which was later expanded into a Seven Letters Collection in the years after 170 not far off from the canonical redactions of Irenaeus’s broadened collection, later known as the New Testament.[[140]](#footnote-140)

If this chronological sequence were to be assumed for the works of (Pseudo)Ignatius,[[141]](#footnote-141) what kind of collections of Christian writings are reflected in these letters? Do we find quotations of or allusions to Gospels, Pauline Epistles, to Acts with the Catholic Epistles, to Revelation?

45

If we read through Ignatius' Three Letters Collection, we find three traces, two for Matt and one for Jn, for it says in IgnPol 2,2: "Be wise in all things as the serpent, and without guile ever as the dove", which sounds like a quotation from Matt 10:16 ("Be wise as the serpent, and innocent as the doves"). Even before that, in the same letter IgnPol 1,3 it is said, "Bear the infirmities of all men", which is reminiscent of Matt 8:17 ("He bore the infirmities" - itself again a quotation of Isa 53:4[[142]](#footnote-142)). In addition, the mention of the star hidden from the ruler of this world is encountered, which could be an allusion to the star of the magi (Matt 2:9). In IgnRom 7,3 we read of the "bread of God", an expression found in Jn 6:33 ("For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world").

Certainly, these scanty traces do not have great probative force, as Christian Carl Josias Bunsen rightly remarked as early as the 19th century: "It follows, then, from this difference as little against Ignatius having had our text of Matthew before him, as we may infer something in favour of it from the literal agreement of the same".[[143]](#footnote-143) Perhaps we can cautiously say that, if at all, only the later canonical Gospels attributed to the apostles, Matt and Jn, could have been known to the letter writer, since no other traces are found in the three Ignatian letters.

The style of the letters themselves is reminiscent of the Pauline letters; compare, for example, the opening of Paul's letter to the Philippians ("Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with their overseers and helpers. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ')[[144]](#footnote-144) with IgnPol: 'Ignatius, [also Theophorus[[145]](#footnote-145)], to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, or rather to him who was sought out by God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord, many greetings', and IgnEph: "Ignatius, [also Theophorus], to the Church blessed by the greatness and fullness of God the Father" and IgnRom: "Ignatius, [also Theophorus], to the Church received in mercy by the greatness of the Father Most High".

Once we find the following phrase in IgnRom 5: "... but I am not yet justified by it", which is literally identical with 1 Cor 4:4. Then in IgnEph there is the expression: "You are imitators of God", which perhaps not by chance can also be found literally in Paul's letter to the Ephesians (Eph 5:1). But all in all, hardly any other reference can be found between the Three Letters Collection and the Pauline letters.[[146]](#footnote-146)

46

An allusion to Pauline letters in general and perhaps also to 1 Peter is found in IgnRom 4,3, where it is said that "Peter and Paul" gave "instructions" to the Romans, which he, Ignatius, did not do, since he was not an apostle.

Neither do the three letters provide parallels or hints to Acts or the Catholic Epistles or Revelation.

However, this picture changes considerably if we take the Seven Letters Collection which came about perhaps 20 years later, particularly the four supplementary letters in this collection that were added to that of the Three Letters Collection:

It is still the two Gospels of the Apostles Matthew and John to which we find parallels in the Seven Letters Collection and not to the other two Gospels by Mark or Luke:

First, the examples of the echoes of Matt:

IgnEph 14,2 offers: "No one who confesses faith sins, and no one who possesses love hates. The tree is known by its fruit".[[147]](#footnote-147) This text provides, at least in content, an echo of Matt 12:33: "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit".[[148]](#footnote-148)

IgnPhilad 3,1 states, "Beware of the bad plants that Jesus Christ does not cultivate, because they are not a planting of the Father", a theme repeated in IgnTral 11,1, "For these are not the Father's planting", reminiscent of Matt 15:13, "He replied, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots".

Then in IgnSm 6,1: "He who can lay hold of it, let him lay hold of it",[[149]](#footnote-149) which is almost verbatim in Matt 19:12: "... The one who can accept this should accept it".[[150]](#footnote-150)

Then, there are also examples with echoes of Jn:

IgnPhilad 7,1: "For he [the Spirit] knows whence he comes and whither he goes, and the hidden things he searches", and Jn 3:8: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit".

IgnMag 7,1: "How then the Lord, being one with Him, did nothing without the Father, either by Himself or through the apostles..." which can be compared to Jn 5:19: "… the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does", also with Jn 8:28: "So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me", and Jn 10:30: "I and the Father are one", and Jn 14:11: "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me…"

47

IgnMag 6,1: "We are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father from eternity and appeared at the end", compare with Jn 1:1-2: "1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning".

Moreover, a parallel is encountered not only with words of Jesus, but also with a verse from the narrative on John's baptism:

IgnSm 1,1: "Truly born of the virgin and baptised by John, that all righteousness might be fulfilled by him", which again is to be compared with a passage in Matt 3:13-15:

"13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” 15 Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented."

IgnEph 7,1: "the gift of God", the same expression is found in Jn 4:10.[[151]](#footnote-151)

IgnPhilad 9,1: "the Father's door", the term door for Christ is found in Jn 10:7,9.

An important passage is IgnPol 5, which not only mentions the "gospel" three times, but also the prophets, explicitly stating that this gospel had already been proclaimed by the prophets, that they had put their hope in Jesus and were waiting for him, even therefore saved by him as holy men, worthy to be loved and admired, calling the gospel a "common hope". Similarly, IgnSm 5 adds:

"these could not be persuaded by the prophecies, nor by the law of Moses, nor even to this day by the gospel, nor by the sufferings of any of us. 2 For they also think the same of us. What good is a man to me if he praises me but reviles my Lord by not admitting that he appeared in the flesh? He who does not affirm this has utterly denied him and carries his own corpse. 3 But their names, the unbelieving, I think not to record. Yea, far be it from me to remember them, until they be converted unto the suffering which is our resurrection."

Similar things are read in IgnSm 7,2:

"So it is fitting to keep away from such, and not to speak of them singly or together, but to keep to the prophets, and especially to the gospel, in which the suffering is revealed to us and the resurrection is clearly set forth."

To this one could also add the even more detailed passage in IgnPol 9,2,[[152]](#footnote-152) which comes from the revision of the Seven Letters Collection into a Thirteen Letters Collection from the 4th century.

48

And indeed, the Seven Letters Collection also quotes a verse taken directly from a prophet. In IgnTral 8,2 we read, "Woe to him who is to blame, that to some my name is blasphemed for no reason", to which compare Isa 52:5, "All day long, my name is blasphemed". There are two references to the book of Proverbs in the Bible with the formula "it is written" (γέγραπται), IgnEph 5,3: "For it is written: God resists the arrogant", a verse found literally in Prov 3:34,[[153]](#footnote-153) but also in Jas (4:6) and 1 Peter (5:5).[[154]](#footnote-154)

An important passage is also IgnPhilad 8,2, where a discussion is given as to whether the written Gospel is sufficient, or whether what is written there does not first require confirmation by "the antiquities". As the further explanations at this point show, the antiquities refer to the Jewish Scriptures, and in particular to the prophets:

"When I heard some say, if I do not find something in the antiquities (ἐν τοῖς ἀρχείοις), in the Gospel, I do not believe; and when I answered them that it was written, they answered me, this is in question. But to me the antiquities are Jesus Christ; to me the untouched antiquities are his cross, his death, his resurrection, and the faith established by him; in these I will be justified by your prayer."

Moreover, in the Seven Letters Collection there are not only further testimonies from the Pauline Epistles that increase the number of quotations compared to those in the Three Letters Collection,[[155]](#footnote-155) but it is even more striking that in the Seven Letters Collection we encounter for the first time quotations and echoes of the so-called Pastoral Epistles, i.e. the two Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus, which are no longer attributed to Paul in scholarship today, but which run under Paul’s name:

IgnEph 10,3: 1Tm 5:2;[[156]](#footnote-156) IgnEph 14,1: 1Tm 1:5;[[157]](#footnote-157) IgnTral 8,2: 1Tm 6:1 and Tit 2:5[[158]](#footnote-158); IgnPhilad 11,2: 1Tm 1:1;[[159]](#footnote-159) IgnSm 1,1: 2Tm 2:8,[[160]](#footnote-160) cf. also Rom 1:3-4; Jn 7:42; 1:13. Only in the Seven Letters Collection do we read the reference to "all Paul's letters" (IgnEph 12,2; cf. also IgnTral 3,3; IgnEph 3,1).[[161]](#footnote-161)

Just as important as what we find in the Seven Letters Collection, at least as hints and quotations to canonical literature, are those canonical texts which have left no trace in Ignatian letters, so the Gospels of Mark and Luke as well as Acts and Revelation.

In summary, it can be stated: Of the four sub-collections of the later canonical New Testament, the Gospel collection is encountered, but only with the two of the Apostles' Gospels (Matt and Jn), then the Pauline Epistle collection with Rom, 1 Cor and Eph, also the Pastoral Epistles, but without reference to Heb, whereas the other two sub-collections (Praxapostolos and Rev) are without echoes in either the Seven Letters Collection.

49

In order to complete the external witnesses that Eusebius offers us and from which we then want to draw a first summary account from which we try to conclude the possible process of the creation of the collection of writings which becomes later known as the New Testament, we still need a look at the report that Eusebius gives us about Dionysius of Corinth.

### 4 Dionysius of Corinth - Witness to the Revision of Collections

Eusebius gives an account of Dionysius of Corinth after having written about Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch and Hegesippus in the fourth book of his "History of the Church". This means that Eusebius places life and work of Dionysius in the period after 170 AD.[[162]](#footnote-162) He also reports that Dionysius was a bishop and that he presided over the Church of Corinth, but that he reached out beyond his own diocese. According to Harnack, Dionysius was "the bishop of one of the first Christian communities" who "conducted an 'ecumenical' correspondence".[[163]](#footnote-163) In fact, his letters are directed to a geographically wider area than that of Ignatius of Antioch.[[164]](#footnote-164) Eusebius mentions a total of eight letters that Dionysius wrote at the request of brothers. Dionysius also seems to have collected them himself, for "how else could the letter of Pinytus (to Dionysius) have been included"?[[165]](#footnote-165) Moreover, we learn from the letters that this collection (recall the collections of Paul's letters and the Ignatians) underwent a corruption by "the apostles of the devil" during Dionysius' lifetime.[[166]](#footnote-166) Unfortunately, except for the few excerpts Eusebius shares with us, the collection is lost today. According to Eusebius' testimony, Dionysius wrote the letters listed below:

50

- to the Lacedemonians (a name for the inhabitants of Sparta in the south of the Peloponnese), in which are contained "instruction in the orthodox faith and an admonition to peace and unity";

- one “also addressed to the Athenians” (hence being also addressed to unknown other communities), “exciting them to faith and to the life prescribed by the Gospel”, because they had "almost fallen away from doctrine after the martyrdom of their bishop Publius”, even though they had "awakened to a new life of faith" because of their new bishop Quadratus. Moreover, he testifies to know of Acts, for he informs "Dionysius the Areopagite, who was converted to the faith by the apostle Paul, according to the statement in the Acts of the Apostles [17:34], first obtained the episcopate of the church at Athens."

- to the inhabitants of Nicomedia in Asia Minor (today's Izmit), "in which he attacks

the heresy of Marcion, and stands fast by the canon of the truth";

- to the church at Gortyna in Crete and at the same time to the other churches in Crete. In it he praises their bishop Philip for the virtuous life of the area, but "warns against seduction by the heretics";

- to the church in Amastris in Paphlagonia, the coast of the Black Sea, 300km west of Sinope, and to the churches of Pontus. In it "he gives explanations of passages of the divine Scriptures, and mentions their bishop Palmas by name. He gives them much advice also in regard to marriage and chastity, and commands them to receive those who come back again after any fall, whether it be delinquency or heresy."

- To the inhabitants of Knossus in Crete. "In this he exhorts

Pinytus, bishop of the parish, not to lay upon the brethren a grievous and compulsory burden in regard to chastity, but to have regard to the weakness of the multitude". "In a reply to this letter, Pinytus admires and commends Dionysius, but exhorts him in turn

to impart some time more solid food, and to feed the people under him, when he wrote again, with more advanced teaching, that they might not be fed continually on these milky doctrines and imperceptibly grow old under a training calculated for children";

- to the Romans and their bishop Soter. It says: "For from the beginning it has been your practice to do good to all the brethren in various ways, and to send contributions to many churches in every city. Thus relieving the want of the needy, and making provision for the brethren in the mines by the gifts which you have sent from the beginning, you Romans keep up the hereditary customs of the Romans, which your blessed bishop Soter has not only maintained, but also added to, furnishing an abundance of supplies to the saints, and encouraging the brethren from abroad with blessed words, as a loving father his children." Eusebius adds that in this letter Dionysius "makes mention also of Clement’s epistle to the Corinthians, showing that it had been the custom from the beginning to read it in the church. His words are as follows: ‘Today we have passed the Lord’s holy day, in which we have read your epistle. From it, whenever we read it, we shall always be able to draw advice, as also from the former epistle, which was written to us through Clement’";

51

- to the "most faithful sister Chrysophora ... in which he writes what is suitable, and imparts to her also the proper spiritual food".[[167]](#footnote-167)

For our context, it is first of all important that Dionysius wrote the first six letters, i.e. all with the exception of the letter to the Romans and to Chrysophora, on the theme of "peace and unity" or, conversely, to ward off "heresies". Here, obviously, Acts plays a certain role, when on its basis Paul is introduced as the one who had won Dionysius, the Areopagite, to the faith, so that the latter was chosen as the first bishop of the Church in Athens. From Athens, Dionysius first turns his gaze to Asia Minor to name the only name of a heretic in these letters as they have come down to us in the report by Eusebius: Marcion. The letters address communities that are close to Marcion’s home, the city of Sinope in the Pontus. Sinope is situated to the east of Nicomedia, and halfway between these two cities we find Amastris in Paphlagonia, which borders Pontus to the east. Unfortunately, Eusebius reports nothing more from the letter to the Nicomedians than that in this letter Dionysius combats "the heresy of Marcion" and places himself on the ground of the true faith. What is meant by this becomes a little clearer from the letter to the community in Amastris, because in this letter it is said that Dionysius explained biblical passages with admonitions concerning marriage and virginity.[[168]](#footnote-168) Now we know from the teaching of Marcion that he held a decidedly ascetic attitude in which sexual abstinence was demanded. Tertullian reports on Markion at the beginning of the 3rd century in his five-book work against him:

"For you do not permit the union of man and woman, nor do you admit to the sacrament of baptism and the Eucharist to persons who had married elsewhere, unless they had agreed with each other to abstain from sexual intercourse."[[169]](#footnote-169)

Elsewhere, Tertullian writes: "No flesh is immersed unless it is virginal or widowed or unmarried or has purchased baptism by separation."[[170]](#footnote-170) Marcion had thus admitted spouses only under ascetic renunciation. If Marcion’s teachings provided the background of the letter to Amastris, which is already geographically likely, then this also seems to explain the content of the letters to Crete. For in Knossus, too, Dionysius admonishes that one should not impose heavy burdens as indispensable duties with regard to abstinence, thus contradicting precisely what Marcion had demanded. It is all the more astonishing that Bishop Pinytus describes the position of Dionysius as the administration of baby food and an opportunity to weaken Christianity, i.e. that he wants to adhere to the attitude as we know it from Marcion.[[171]](#footnote-171) The "seduction by the heretics" of which the other letter to Crete, namely to the church at Gortyna, speaks, therefore, does not seem to have been unjustified, because Marcion’s position was presumably in view again, even if heretics are spoken of here in the plural.[[172]](#footnote-172) Moreover, we know from Eusebius that the addressee, Bishop Philip, "according to the words of Dionysius himself, also wrote a very zealous book against Markion".[[173]](#footnote-173) If Marcion is present as such a central and sensitive topic in these letters to Asia Minor and Crete, perhaps the letters to Sparta and Athens dealt with him, too. This would explain that the reference to Paul in the letter to the Athenians, which is made explicit by mentioning Acts, suggests a Pauline image of Dionysius, in which Paul was not presented to the congregations from his letters, read ascetically by Marcion, but through the way he has been profiled in Acts.

52

If these considerations are correct, it follows for the question of the collection of writings that Acts appears for the first time in the history of Christianity within a context of a discussion and partly rejection of Marcionite ascetic demands and the interpretation of Pauline authority. Still other letters are mentioned in the Letter to the Romans, one from the church of Rome to the Corinthians and an earlier letter sent through Clement to Rome, which are read in Corinth on the "holy day of the Lord". This would suggest that the two letters - at least one of which seems to be the so-called 1 Letter of Clement known to us - were considered to be texts used with a Sunday gathering. Whether this may also apply to Acts cannot be ascertained from the letters.

Eusebius's remarks and quotations from Dionysius contain yet another piece of information that is of importance for our topic. For Dionysius mentions that the letters he had written at the request of brethren were forged:

"As the brethren desired me to write epistles, I wrote. And these epistles the apostles of the devil have filled with tares, cutting out some things and adding others. For them a woe is reserved. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at if some have attempted to adulterate the Lord’s writings also, since they have formed designs even against writings which are of less account".[[174]](#footnote-174)

The "apostles of the devil" again seem to refer to the same heresy that had already preoccupied Dionysius in the Letters, namely that of Marcion.[[175]](#footnote-175) Polycarp, as we have noted before, had called Marcion “the firstborn of Satan”.[[176]](#footnote-176) Eusebius, citing Irenaeus in his account of Polycarp, repeats this statement and goes on to quote Irenaeus:

53

" Such caution did the apostles and their disciples exercise that they might not even converse with any of those who perverted the truth; as Paul also said, ‘A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself’ (Tit 3:10-11)."[[177]](#footnote-177)

Both the encounter between Polycarp and Marcion and Irenaeus' explanation from Tit (3:10-11), picked up by Eusebius, are noteworthy. Marcion is described here, not unlike in Papias's fragment, as someone who had sought contact and closeness with the authorities of tradition, but who was rejected by them and even equated with Satan or the devil. Marcion and his followers are therefore probably also to be subsumed by Dionysius under the invective "the apostles of the devil". Conversely, Dionysius, as well as Irenaeus after him and perhaps following him, accuse Marcion of falsifying writings. Due to competing versions of his letters - which speaks for a close interweaving of author and readers or editors - Dionysius obviously felt compelled to prepare a volume of his own letters, which were still accessible to Eusebius.[[178]](#footnote-178)

In order to defend themselves against Marcion, Irenaeus and Eusebius, not unlike Dionysius, refer to writings which, as we shall see in a moment, were not to be found in Marcion's collection of writings, i.e. they rely neither on Paul's letters, which are still regarded as authentic today, nor on \*Ev, which has the closest relationship to Lk, but instead primarily on Acts, on the Pastoral Epistles, to which Tit belongs, and on the Apostles' Gospels Matt and Jn. In order to better understand this strategy and to see how it presumably led to the creation of a new collection of early Christian writings to compete with Marcion’s New Testament, a novel collection that was not exclusively, but primarily directed against Marcion, the genesis of Marcion’s New Testament will be presented next.

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1. Exceptions are rather introductory works usually written by a plurality of authors responsible for individual scriptures which only highlights the fragmented approach to the New Testament, such as M. Black and H.H. Rowley, Eds., Peake's Commentary on the Bible (1962). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. T.v. Zahn, Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons, 1, 1-2 Das Neue Testament vor Origenes (1888); T.v. Zahn, Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons 2,1 Urkunden und Belege zum ersten und dritten Band, erste Hälfte (1890); T.v. Zahn, Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons 2,2 Urkunden und Belege zum ersten und dritten Band, zweite Hälfte (1892). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. T.v. Zahn, Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons, 1, 1-2 Das Neue Testament vor Origenes (1888), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Matthias Klinghardt, who in 2015 still had assumed that Justin witnesses a unified New Testament of 27 writings, has since moved away from this view of Justin's attestation of the collection, cf. the different final chapters in M. Klinghardt, Das älteste Evangelium und die Entstehung der kanonischen Evangelien (2015); M. Klinghardt, The Oldest Gospel and the Formation of the Canonical Gospels (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Perhaps he is alluding to the Gospel of Marcion, a harmony or his own collection, cf. on this W.L. Petersen, ‘The Diatessaron of Tatian’ (1995), 90-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Twice he speaks of these 'memories' in his first Apology (66:3; 67:3; cf. also 33:5) and thirteen times in the dialogue with Trypho, so L. Abramowski, Die "Erinnerungen der Apostel" bei Justin (1983), 341. L. Abramowski, The 'Memories of the Apostles' in Justin (1983), 341. Reed is of the opinion that Justin avoids the term 'gospel' because of Marcion, who seems to have been the first to use the term euangelion to refer to a book, so A.Y. Reed, ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ: Orality, Textuality, and the Christian Truth in Irenaeus’ Adversus haereses (2002). In this she follows Tert., Adv. Marc. III 5,4 and the interpretation of H. Köster, Ancient Christian gospels their history and development (1990), 35 -37; O. Cullmann, The Early Church (1956), 48; H.f.v. Campenhausen and J.A. Baker, The formation of the Christian Bible (1972), 153 -156. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. T.v. Zahn, Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons 1,2 Das Neue Testament vor Origenes (1889), 469-475. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. L. Abramowski, Die "Erinnerungen der Apostel" bei Justin (1983), 345. 347. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. So already noticed by E.F. Osborn, Irenaeus of Lyons (2001), 125-126; L. Abramowski, Die "Erinnerungen der Apostel" bei Justin (1983), 349. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. M. Vinzent, Resetting the Origins of Christianity. A New Theory of Sources and Beginnings (2023), 170-172. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This letter is echoed in Iren., Adv. haer. V 23,2 and 28,3.12 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 3 John, though this epistle remains unmentioned, and Jud are hinted at in Iren., Adv. haer. IV 36,4. On Irenaeus’s use of the canonical Gospels, Acts and Revelation see J. Hoh, Die Lehre des hl. Irenäus über das Neue Testament (gekrönte Preisschrift) (1919), 189-197. On his use of Paul and the Catholic letters see R.M. Grant, The Formation of the New Testament (1966), 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Irenaeus, Adv. haer. III 3,3: ἱκανωτάτην γραφήν , "potentissimas litteras". [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid: "qui velint discere possunt, et apostolicam Ecclesiae traditionem intelligere; cum sit vetustior epistola his qui nunc falso docent." [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See the nuanced and important study byD.J. Bingham, Senses of Scripture in the Second Century: Irenaeus, Scripture, and Noncanonical Christian Texts (2017). Bingham builds on equally important contributions by M.C. Steenberg, Irenaeus on Scripture, *Graphe*, and the Status of *Hermas* (2009); D. Farkasfalvy, Theology of Scripture in St. Irenaeus (1968). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Irenaeus, Adv. haer. III 11.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Justin, Dial. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid. See on this C.R. Smith, Chiliasm and Recapitulation in the Theology of Ireneus (1994), 316. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Cf. J. Stettner, Veränderte Endzeitvorstellungen. Die Rezeption der Offenbarung des Johannes beim ersten christlich-lateinischen Dichter Commodian (2019); M. Meiser, Before Canonisation. Early Attestation of Revelation (2016); G. Kretschmar, Die Offenbarung des Johannes. Die Geschichte ihrer Auslegung im 1. Jahrtausend (1985); G. Maier, Die Johannesoffenbarung und die Kirche (1981). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Cf. also M. Vinzent, Resetting the Origins of Christianity. A New Theory of Sources and Beginnings (2023), 158-162. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. W. Kinzig, Καινὴ Διαϑήκη: The Title of the New Testament in the Second and Third Centuries (1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Iren, Adv. haer. I 3,6; I 27,2 (with reference to Marcion); IV 3,31. Cf. J. Hoh, Die Lehre des hl. Irenäus über das Neue Testament (gekrönte Preisschrift) (1919), 3. 80-82. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Irenaeus, Adv. haer. V 9,4 (here and later own trans., except otherwise noted). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Iren, Adv. haer. IV 13,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The report can be found in Iren., Adv. haer. IV 27-32, cf. M. Vinzent, Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels (2014), 52-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. In Iren., Adv. haer. IV 33,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. W. Kinzig, Καινὴ Διαϑήκη: The Title of the New Testament in the Second and Third Centuries (1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *Pace* D. Trobisch, Die Endredaktion des Neuen Testaments: Eine Untersuchung zur Entstehung der christlichen Bibel (1996), 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. W. Kinzig, Καινὴ Διαϑήκη: The Title of the New Testament in the Second and Third Centuries (1994), 528. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See J. Kürzinger, Papias von Hierapolis und die Evangelien des Neuen Testaments: gesammelte Aufsätze, Neuausgabe und Übersetzung der Fragmente, kommentierte Bibliographie (1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 36,1 (Papias, fr. 2 Hübner) (trans. Here and later NPNF altered). On Papias cf. now also U. Huttner, Early Christianity in the Lycus Valley (2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Thus Iren., Adv. haer. III 3,4. On this passage and further information on Polycarp that follows what has been quoted, cf. below pp. xxx. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. The testimony of IgnPol, however, is a support for the assumption that Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna, since this title is encountered not only in Ignatius's 7 -letters collection, but also in his 3 -letters collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. v 20,4 - 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. In Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. V 20,7. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. R.M. Hübner, Kirche und Dogma im Werden. Aufsätze zur Geschichte und Theologie des frühen Christentums (2017), 50-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. 1Jn 1,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. V 20,4-8 (own translation). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. J.B. Lightfoot, Supernatural Religion (1875), 833-834. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See W. Ameling, Smyrna von der Offenbarung bis zum Martyrium des Pionius - Marktplatz oder Kampfplatz der Religionen? (2018), 413. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Trans. here and later NIV, unless otherwise stated. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. So at least in Iren., Adv. haer. III 11,8. For other arrangements of order of the four gospels, see next note. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Iren., Adv. haer. III 11,8. Cf. on this further below pp. xxx, since this is not the only order in which Irenaeus knows the four Gospels, indeed it even emerges from his work that his concept of the collection of Scriptures rather suggests the other order, namely Matt, Lk, Mk, Jn, as is shown in Book III of Adv. haer. Cf. on this already M. Vinzent, Resetting the Origins of Christianity. A New Theory of Sources and Beginnings (2023), 164-173. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. On Irenaeus and Acts cf. J.N. Lüke, Über die narrative Kohärenz zwischen Apostelgeschichte und Paulusbriefen (2019); C. Howe, Establishing Orthodoxy: Irenaeus' Use of Apostolic Kerygma and the Acts of the Apostles in *Adversus haereses* (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Cf. M. Vinzent, Resetting the Origins of Christianity. A New Theory of Sources and Beginnings (2023), 164-167. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. J.B. Bauer and Polycarpus, Die Polykarpbriefe (1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. For instance, the combination of 1 Tim 6:10 with 1 Tim 6:7 in Pol, EpPhil 4:1 and 2 Tim 4:10 in Pol, EpPhil 9:2 are illuminating, cf. on these K. Berding, Polycarp and Paul. An analysis of their literary & theological relationship in light of Polycarp's use of biblical & extra-biblical literature (2002), 67- 68, 100; H.v. Campenhausen, Aus der Frühzeit des Christentums. Studien zur Kirchengeschichte des ersten und zweiten Jahrhunderts (1963), 197-252. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. K. Berding, Polycarp and Paul. An analysis of their literary & theological relationship in light of Polycarp's use of biblical & extra-biblical literature (2002); P. Hartog, Polycarp and the New Testament. The Occasion, Rhetoric, Theme, and Unity of the Epistle to the Philippians and its Allusions to New Testament Literature (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Identical in the Gospel of Marcion (\*Ev 11:4). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Pol, EpPhil 7:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. P. Hartog, Polycarp and the New Testament. The Occasion, Rhetoric, Theme, and Unity of the Epistle to the Philippians and its Allusions to New Testament Literature (2019), 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. That Poykarp is certainly dependent on Acts does not seem to me to be a clear given, *pace* K. Berding, Polycarp and Paul. An analysis of their literary & theological relationship in light of Polycarp's use of biblical & extra-biblical literature (2002), 37-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Pol, EpPhil 12:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Cf. P. Hartog, Polycarp and the New Testament. The Occasion, Rhetoric, Theme, and Unity of the Epistle to the Philippians and its Allusions to New Testament Literature (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Pol, EpPhil 11:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. That Polycarp has Marcion in mind is also noted by P.N. Harrison, Polycarp's Two Epistles to the Philippians (1936), 197; R.J. Hoffmann, Marcion. On the restitution of Christianity: An essay on the development of radical Paulinist theology in the second century (1984), 54. Good reasons for as well as objections against the possible anti-Marcionite tendency of the letter, which also mentions the many similarities between Polycarp and Marcion, are offered by C.M. Nielsen, Polycarp and Marcion: A note (1986). It remains a mystery to me how one can treat this passage and deny that it is at least also directed against Marcion - even though standard anti-Heretical accusations are admittedly used here and the title "firstborn of Satan" was assigned to Cain, for example, in the Jewish Haggadah, and other heads were also put under this heretical hat - *pace* P. Hartog and Polycarpus, Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp. Introduction, Text, and Commentary (2013). One cannot fail to mention Irenaeus, who explicitly tells us that Polycarp explicitly called Marcion "the firstborn of Satan", Iren., Adv. haer. III 3,4; repeated by Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. IV 14,7; both are perhaps disregarded by Hartog, because he has elsewhere described this story of the encounter of Marcion and Polycarp as a legend, cf. P. Hartog, Polycarp and the New Testament. The Occasion, Rhetoric, Theme, and Unity of the Epistle to the Philippians and its Allusions to New Testament Literature (2019), 92-94. If one follows that Irenaeus was influenced by Polycarp's letter, one must nevertheless admit that at least Irenaeus reads the statement in the letter as directed against Marcion, cf. G. Salomon, Polycarpus (1911), 425. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Pol., EpPhil 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Pol., EpPhil 6; 9. For a list of echoes and quotations, see P. Hartog, Polycarp and the New Testament. The Occasion, Rhetoric, Theme, and Unity of the Epistle to the Philippians and its Allusions to New Testament Literature (2019), 174-177. Even if Polycarp consequently knew the Jewish Bible, any references to the Torah are missing. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. J.S. Subramanian, The synoptic Gospels and the Psalms as prophecy (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. This is how the dating ranges in scholarship; for the time before 110 CE cf. E. Gutwenger, Papias. Eine chronologische Studie (1947), 416. Much later, between 140 and 150 CE is the dating by A.v. Harnack, Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius 2. Theil Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius 1. Band Die Chronologie der Litteratur bis Irenäus: nebst einleitenden Untersuchungen (1897), 357. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Iren., Adv. haer. V 33,3-4; Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 39,3-4 (Papias, fr. 1 Hübner). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. I have been dealing with Papias since my student days under the guidance of Reinhard M. Hübner, in whose text edition (and translation) of the fragments of Papias, edited together with Josef Kürzinger, I contributed (together with Elisabeth König) an annotated bibliography of recent Papias research: J. Kürzinger, Papias von Hierapolis und die Evangelien des Neuen Testaments: gesammelte Aufsätze, Neuausgabe und Übersetzung der Fragmente, kommentierte Bibliographie (1983). Cf. also the edition of the fragments by U.H.J. Körtner, Papiasfragmente (2004); E. Norelli, Papias. Esposizione degli oracoli del Signore. I frammenti (2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. II 15,2; III 36,2; in his Chron II anni Abrahae 2114 he does not seem to call Papias a bishop, cf. on this ambiguity T. Witulski, Papias episkopos? - Zur Frage nach dem Bischofsamt des Papias von Hierapolis (2015), 556. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Cf. similarly ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Cf. on the criticism of the attribution of the episcopate to Papias T. Witulski, Παπίας ἐπίσκοπος? – Zur Frage nach dem Bischofsamt des Papias von Hierapolis (2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 39,3 (Papias, fr. 4 Hübner). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Ibid.: ὅσα ποτὲ παρὰ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καλῶς ἔμαθον καὶ καλῶς ἐμνημόνευσα. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ibid.: διαβεβαιούμενος ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἀλήθειαν. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ibid.: οὐδὲ τοῖς τὰς ἀλλοτρίας ἐντολὰς μνημονεύουσιν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς τὰς παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου τῇ πίστει δεδομένας. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 39,4 (Papias, fr. 4 Hübner): εἰ δέ που καὶ παρηκολουθηκώς τις τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ἔλθοι, τοὺς τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἀνέκρινον λόγους, τί Ἀνδρέας ἢ τί Πέτρος εἶπεν ἢ τί Φίλιππος ἢ τί Θωμᾶς ἢ Ἰάκωβος ἢ τί Ἰωάννης ἢ Ματθαῖος ἤτις ἕτερος τῶν τοῦ κυρίου μαθητῶν ἅ τε Ἀριστίων καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης [τοῦ κυρίου μαθηταὶ] λέγουσιν. οὐ γὰρ τὰ ἐκ τῶν βιβλίων τοσοῦτόν με ὠφελεῖν ὑπελάμβανον ὅσον τὰ παρὰ ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενούσης. The section [τοῦ κυρίου μαθηταὶ] is set in brackets because L. Abramowski has shown that it is a later gloss, the intention of which aimed at promoting Aristion and the presbyter John to be disciples of the Lord, cf. L. Abramowski, Die "Erinnerungen der Apostel" bei Justin (1983), 348 n. 328. I would like to thank Reinhard M. Hübner for this reference during the review of my manuscript for the German version of the present book. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. W. Schmithals, Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien (1985), 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. J.H. O’Connell, A Note on Papias’s Knowledge of the Fourth Gospel (2010); M. Hengel, Die johanneische Frage. Ein Lösungsversuch (1993); R.A. Culpepper, John, the son of Zebedee. The life of a legend (1994), 111-112; R. Bauckham, Did Papias write history of exegesis? (2014), 463, n. 461; A.J. Blasi, Social Science and the Christian Scriptures: Sociological Introductions and New Translations (2017), III 111. Recently, the statistical certainty of 99% proposed by O'Connell that Papias used John has been questioned, but has not shaken the principled judgment of the research: N. Climenhaga, Papias’s Prologue and the Probability of Parallels (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. In Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 39,4 (Papias, frg. 4 Hübner); cf. also Hier., De vir. inl. 18 (Papias, frg. 7 Hübner) and Philippus Sidete, Hist. christ. (?), epitome (Papias, frg. 16 Hübner). [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. These two perhaps also in reverse order. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. That the term "episcopus" inserted here in the α-tradition is supposed to be an indication of the greater reliability of this manuscript tradition does not make sense to me. Rather, one would expect that Papias, who was not designated as a bishop by Irenaeus but stylised as such by Eusebius, would also be marked as a bishop in this text by later witnesses in dependence on Eusebius, *pace* O. Zwierlein, Die antihäretischen Evangelienprologe und die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments (2015), 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Here, again, the α-tradition inserts "erant fideles in Christo Iesu Domino nostro" which seems to me to be secondary. Because of these two secondary additions, it also seems to me that the change in sentence structure from "descripsit vero evangelium dictante Iohanne recte verum Marcion haereticus ... abiectus est a Johanne" to the text "qui hoc evangelium Johanne sibi dictante conscripsit verum Marcion haereticus proiectus est [a Johanne]", which is found in the α-tradition, seems to be a secondary editorial change in order to stamp Marcion alone as a condemned man. Consequently, I also consider the biographical introduction to John, which parallels the other prologues of Luke and Mark, to be just as secondary as this one. Even in these two versions, the tendency of the α-tradition is to extend the shorter account of the β-tradition in an anti-Marcion way. In addition, the passage under discussion here is marked as an addition in the α-tradition ("hoc igitur"), cf. below more on John. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. For the Latin text with a new edition, M. Vinzent, Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels (2014). For a new edition with different punctuation and translation, also other variants, see O. Zwierlein, Die antihäretischen Evangelienprologe und die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments (2015), 7. 23-30. Cf. also Papias, fr. 21 Hübner. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. O. Zwierlein, Die antihäretischen Evangelienprologe und die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments (2015), 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. B.W. Bacon, The Anti-Marcionite Prologue to John (1930), 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. M.v. Aberle, Beiträge zur neutestamentlichen Einleitung. 1. Ein directes Zeugniß des Papias für das Johannesevangelium (1864), 20-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Tert., Adv. Marc. III 8,1: "Marcionitas, quos apostolus Ioannes antichristos pronuntiavit." [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Philastr., Diu. her. lib. 45: "Qui devictus atque fugatus a beato Joanne Evangelista, et a presbyteris de civitate Ephesi, Romae hanc haeresim seminabat." [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Cf. Dionysius Bar Salibi, Comm. in Apoc. (CSCO Syr. 101, 1f.): "Hippolytus Romanus dixit: apparuit uir nomine Gaius, qui asserebat Euangelium non esse Iohannis nec Apocalypsin, sed Cerinthi haeretici ea esse. Et contra hunc Caium surrexit beatus Hippolytus et demonstrauit aliam esse doctrinam Iohannis in Euangelio et in Apocalypsin et aliam Cerinthi." [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. R.M. Grant, Heresy and criticism. The search for authenticity in early Christian literature (1993), 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Thus the suggestion „perhaps it refers to Marcion’s Bible. ‘Scripta vel epistulas’“, in E. Gutwenger, The Anti-Marcionite Prologues (1946), 407. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. In Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 24. On the Clement note, see below pp. xxx. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Orig., Hom. in Luc. (GCS, Origenes IX 5). Interestingly, as mentioned in the main text, this text is only preserved in the Greek fragmentary version, but left out in Jerome’s Latin translation, unfortunately also discarded by the English translation Origen and J.T. Lienhard, Homilies on Luke ; Fragments on Luke (1996), 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. See J.M. Lieu, Marcion and the making of a heretic: God and scripture in the second century (2015); S. Moll, The arch-heretic Marcion (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 24 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. VI 14 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Cf. the older literature in C.W. Concannon, In the Great City of the Ephesians: Contestations over Apostolic Memory and Ecclesial Power in the Acts of Timothy (2016). Now, however, cf. with further literature J.N. Bremmer, John, Timothy and Ephesus in the Acts of Timothy (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. So R.A. Lipsius, Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden 2. Band, 2. Hälfte (1884), 379. Lipsius hält sie für eine simple „Ausschmückung“ des Berichts des Eusebius. Wegen der offenbar fabrizierten erwähnten Prokonsulnamen, die sonst nicht belegt sind, äußerte sich auch Theodor Zahn kritisch, so T. Zahn, Rezension zu Acta S. Timothei edidit H. Usener, 1877 (1878). Ähnlich auch H. Delehaye, Les actes de Saint Timothée (1939), 300-303; R. Syme and E. Badian, Roman papers (1979), IV 361; T.D. Barnes, Early Christian hagiography and Roman history (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. See the older lit. in C.W. Concannon, In the Great City of the Ephesians: Contestations over Apostolic Memory and Ecclesial Power in the Acts of Timothy (2016); C.W. Concannon, The Acts of Timothy: a new translation and introduction (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. E. Schürer, Rezension von Hermann Usener, Acta S. Timothei, Bonn 1877 (1877). [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. J.N. Bremmer, John, Timothy and Ephesus in the Acts of Timothy (2021), 221-222. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Acta Timothei 8-10 (own trans.). On the text with trans. cf. C. Zamagni, Passion (ou Actes) de Timothée. Étude des traditions anciennes et édition de la forme BHG 1487 (2007). A revised version can be found in C. Zamagni, Recherches sur le Nouveau Testament et les apocryphes chrétiens (2017), 257-301. Cf. on this also below (pp. xxx) the Latin Prologue on John. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. See on this with further lit. J.N. Bremmer, John, Timothy and Ephesus in the Acts of Timothy (2021), 224-225. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Rightly seen in ibid. 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Cf. ibid. 227. Here also further lit. on the topic of the use of the Codex in early Christianity, cf. also J.N. Bremmer, From Holy Books to Holy Bible: An Itinerary from Ancient Greece to Modern Islam via Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. The original text (own trans.) from the Catena is printed in J.H. Crehan, The Fourfold Character of the Gospel (1959), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. M. Hengel, Die Evangelienüberschriften, vorgetragen am 18. Oktober 1981 (1984), 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Hengel mentions this fact in ibid. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 39,15. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 39,16. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. See, for example, the numerous entries in the annotated bibliography in J. Kürzinger, Papias von Hierapolis und die Evangelien des Neuen Testaments: gesammelte Aufsätze, Neuausgabe und Übersetzung der Fragmente, kommentierte Bibliographie (1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. M. Hengel, Die Evangelienüberschriften, vorgetragen am 18. Oktober 1981 (1984), 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. How to determine the relationship of Papias to 1 Peter 5:13 ("Greetings to you from the fellow church in Babylon and Mark, my son") will be addressed below. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 39,17. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 39,11. Cf. on this O. Hofius, Unbekannte Jesusworte (1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Cf. Andrew of Caesarea, Comm. in Apc. 12,7- 9 (Papias, fr. 23 Hübner). [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Cf. J. Frey, Fragmente des Hebräerevangeliums (2012); A.F. Gregory, Jewish-Christian Gospel Traditions and the New Testament (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Vardan Vardapet, Erläuterungen aus der Heiligen Schrift (Papias, fr. 25 Hübner). [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. However, research has pointed out that the Codex Vaticanus records an **umlaut** at the end of chapter 7, indicating that an omission existed here. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. D.C. Parker and C.-B. Amphoux, Codex Bezae : studies from the Lunel Colloquium June 1994 (1996); D.C. Parker, Codex Bezae : an early Christian manuscript and its text (1992). [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. W.L. Petersen, ΟΥΔΕ ΕΓΩ ΣΕ [ΚΑΤΑ]ΚΡΙΝΩ. John 8:11, the Protevangelium Iacobi, and the History of the Pericope adulterae (1997), 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. The edition (with slightly different translation) in Papias, fr. 22 Hübner. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Also in a quotation of the central saying of Jesus in the middle of the narrative, which we know in the canonical form ("Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her", Jn 8:7), but which here reads: "Let him among you who is sure of himself, that he is innocent of the sin of which she is accused, bear witness against her with proof of his innocence." The text (in English translation) is given in W.L. Petersen, ΟΥΔΕ ΕΓΩ ΣΕ [ΚΑΤΑ]ΚΡΙΝΩ. John 8:11, the Protevangelium Iacobi, and the History of the Pericope adulterae (1997). For the Arabic text see A.M.d. Menbidj, Kitab al-'Unvan. Histoire universelle (1909), 504-505. See further J. Linder, Papias und die Perikope von der Ehebrecherin (Joh 7,53-8,11) bei Agapius von Mambig (1916). [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Aug., De adulterinis conjugiis 2,6 -7: "But this manifestly terrifies the impression of unbelievers, so that some people of modest faith, or rather enemies of the true faith, as I think, fear that their wives have been granted impunity from sinning, so that they erase from their codices of the Lord forgiveness towards the adulteress, as if they ascribed permission to sin to him who said 'Sin no more'." (own translation). [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Cf. Andrew of Caesarea, Comm. in Apc. 12,7- 9 (Papias, fr. 23 Hübner). [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Cf. Andrew of Caesarea, Comm. in Apc. praef. (Papias, fr. 12 Hübner); cf. also ibid., sermo XII 34 (Papias, fr. 13 Hübner). [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Cf. Andrew of Caesarea, Comm. in Apc. 12,7- 9 (Papias, fr. 23 Hübner). [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Cf. Andrew of Caesarea, Comm. in Apc. 12,7- 9 (Papias, fr. 23 Hübner). [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Cf. Andrew of Caesarea, Comm. in Apc., sermo XII 34 (Papias, fr. 13 Hübner); ibid. (Papias, fr. 23 Hübner). [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Cf. Anastasius Sinaita, In hex. I (Papias, fr. 14 Hübner) and ibid. VII (Papias, fr. 15 Hübner). [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Cf. Andrew of Caesarea, Comm. in Apc. 12,7- 9 (Papias, fr. 23 Hübner). [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. U.H.J. Körtner, Papias von Hierapolis. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des frühen Christentums (1983), 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 36,1-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Ignatius were not the great unknown as which he is treated in research, and we would possess many historical facts, if this account of Eusebius as well as the Ignatian letters would be historically reliable documents, which in my opinion is incorrect, see on this the cynical article by R. Eystettensis, Ignatius Theophorus. Bischof von Antiochia und ganz Syrien, Papst der Syrisch-orthodoxen Kirche (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Most of the time Eusebius uses λόγος δ' ἔχει in his “History of the Church” (11 times in total) he indicates information about which he is unsure, something that goes back further in history, that has been passed on orally, or that he cannot attribut to a specific source. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. On these two and other collections of letters by Ignatius, cf. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 266-464. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. On the Seven Letters and the Three Letters Collection of Ignatius, and of more collections of his letters, cf. Ibid. 282-283. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Orig., De princ. praef. 8. On this text and the *Doctrina Petri*, cf. M. Vinzent, 'Ich bin kein körperloses Geistwesen'. Zum Verhältnis von *Kerygma Petri*, "Doctrina Petri" und *IgnSm* III (1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Only the one passage is encountered, which offers a proximity in wording: Compare Iren, Adv. haer. IV 33,5 to IgnTral 10 and IgnSm 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. On this topic, cf. J.N. Bremmer, Peregrinus and Marcion (2018); J.N. Bremmer, Lucian on Peregrinus and Alexander of Abonuteichos: A sceptical view of two religious entrepreneurs (2017); J.N. Bremmer, Peregrinus’ Christian Career (2007); M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 280-281. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 284. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. He refers here to my publication ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. J.N. Bremmer, The Place, Date and Author of the Ignatian Letters: An onomastic approach (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. One milestone in the history of oblivion of the Ignatian Three Letters Collection is that Harnack merely touches on the Three Letters Collection in his contribution to the Ignatian Letter Collection, A.v. Harnack, Die Briefsammlung des Apostels Paulus und die anderen vorkonstantinischen christlichen Briefsammlungen. Sechs Vorlesungen aus der altkirchlichen Literaturgeschichte (1926), 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 266-464. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. With Jan N. Bremmer, I do not doubt that there was a martyr named Ignatius, but I still consider the identification of this martyr with a letter writer to be a pseudonymous construction. While it were not the first martyr known to us to write letters (cf. on this J.N. Bremmer, Maidens, Magic and Martyrs in Early Christianity. Collected Essays I (2017).), he would be the only one who, on his way to martyrdom, would have had the leisure to write literarily sophisticated letters and, if one takes into account the Seven Letters Collection, he would also have been able to receive delegations, make plans for writing another book, and so on – and all of this under heavy military guard. All of this sounds most unlikely, but then, in history a lot is possible. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Bunsen already pointed out that IgnPol 1:3 does not resemble the Septuagint version of the Isaiah verse, but the passage in Matt 8:17: C.C.J. Bunsen, Ignatius von Antiochien und seine Zeit, 7 Sendschreiben (1847), 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. This epistolary opening is most closely imitated in the pseudo-Paulines Eph and Col. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. The presence of this epithet “Theophorus” in the Three Letters Collection is disputed, even though the manuscripts have it, cf. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 301-302. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Bunsen still wants to find echoes of 1 Cor 7:20-24 in IgnPol 4 on the subject of slavery and of 2 Tm 2:4 in IgnPol 6 on the subject of soldiers, but both comparisons offer neither literal nor substantive parallels, cf. C.C.J. Bunsen, Ignatius von Antiochien und seine Zeit, 7 Sendschreiben (1847), 173-174. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. οὐδεὶς πίστιν ἐπαγγελλόμενος ἁμαρτάνει, οὐδὲ ἀγάπην κεκτημένος μισεῖ. φανερὸν τὸ δένδρον ἀπὸ τοῦ καρποῦ αὐτοῦ. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Ἢ ποιήσατε τὸ δένδρον καλὸν καὶ τὸν καρπὸν αὐτοῦ καλόν, ἢ ποιήσατε τὸ δένδρον σαπρὸν καὶ τὸν καρπὸν αὐτοῦ σαπρόν: ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ καρποῦ τὸ δένδρον γινώσκεται. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. ὁ χωρῶν χωρείτω. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. χωρεῖν χωρείτω. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ θεοῦ. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Cf. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 307. However, the reference to this Thirteen Letters Collection still needs to be added there for IgnPol 9,2. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Ὑπερηφάνοις (ὁ θεὸς, IgnEph 5,3) ἀντιτάσσεται. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Jas 4:6: Ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται; 1 Peter 5:5: θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. So, for example IgnRom 5,1: 1 Cor 4:4; IgnEph 18,1: 1 Cor 1:29–31 and Rom 3:27; IgnEph 16,1 and IgnPhilad 3,3: 1 Cor 6:9–10. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. ἐν πάσῃ ἁγνείᾳ. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. τέλος δὲ ἀγάπη. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. τὸ ὄνομά μου … βλασφημεῖται. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. τῇ κοινῇ ἐλπίδι ἡμῶν. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. ἐκ γένους Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Cf. H. Rathke, Ignatius von Antiochien und die Paulusbriefe (1967), 20-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. On Dionysius of Corinth, cf. the older work by A.v. Harnack, Die Briefsammlung des Apostels Paulus und die anderen vorkonstantinischen christlichen Briefsammlungen. Sechs Vorlesungen aus der altkirchlichen Literaturgeschichte (1926), 36-40; P. Nautin, Lettres et écrivains chrétiens des IIe et IIIe siècles (1961), 13-32. Cf. most recently C.W. Concannon, Assembling early Christianity: Trade, networks, and the letters of Dionysios of Corinth (2017); J.N. Bremmer, Early Christians in Corinth (A.D. 50–200): Religious Insiders or Outsiders? (2020), 196-201. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. A.v. Harnack, Die Briefsammlung des Apostels Paulus und die anderen vorkonstantinischen christlichen Briefsammlungen. Sechs Vorlesungen aus der altkirchlichen Literaturgeschichte (1926), 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Cf. C.W. Concannon, Assembling early Christianity: Trade, networks, and the letters of Dionysios of Corinth (2017), xi. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. A.v. Harnack, Die Briefsammlung des Apostels Paulus und die anderen vorkonstantinischen christlichen Briefsammlungen. Sechs Vorlesungen aus der altkirchlichen Literaturgeschichte (1926), 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. PolPhil 1,9; cf. Ibid. The extent to which Eusebius is at pains to paint Dionysius (probably unjustifiably according to Eusebius' own criteria) as orthodox is shown by C.W. Concannon, Assembling early Christianity: Trade, networks, and the letters of Dionysios of Corinth (2017), 14-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. IV 23,2-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Concannon sees the letter to the church of Amastris as dealing with the Marcionite theme of asceticism, cf. C.W. Concannon, Assembling early Christianity: Trade, networks, and the letters of Dionysios of Corinth (2017), 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Tert, Adv. Marc. IV 34.5: „Quomodo tu nuptias dirimis, nec coniungens marem et feminam,

nec alibi coniunctos ad sacramentum baptismatis et eucharistiae admittens nisi inter se coniuraverint

adversus fructum nuptiarum“. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Tert., Adv. Marc. I 29,1: „Non tinguitur apud illum caro nisi virgo, nisi vidua, nisi caelebs,

nisi divortio baptisma mercata“. Cf. on thisM. Vinzent, Marcion’s Roman Liturgical Traditions, Innovations and Counter-Rites: Fasting and Baptism (2014), 201-202. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Pinytus is seen more irenic by P. Nautin, Lettres et écrivains chrétiens des IIe et IIIe siècles (1961), 23-24. Yet, a reference to Marcion by Pinytus is also seen by C.W. Concannon, Assembling early Christianity: Trade, networks, and the letters of Dionysios of Corinth (2017), 145-154, 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. „The specter of Marcion on Crete“, so C.W. Concannon, Assembling early Christianity: Trade, networks, and the letters of Dionysios of Corinth (2017), 136-144. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. IV 25: Φίλιππός γε μήν, ὃν ἐκ τῶν Διονυσίου φωνῶν τῆς ἐν Γορτύνῃ παροικίας ἐπίσκοπον ἔγνωμεν, πάνυ γε σπουδαιότατον πεποίηται καὶ αὐτὸς κατὰ Μαρκίωνος λόγον. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. IV 23,12. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. So also P. Nautin, Lettres et écrivains chrétiens des IIe et IIIe siècles (1961), 17-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Pol., EpPhil 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. IV 14,7; see Iren., Adv. haer. III 3,4. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. P. Nautin, Lettres et écrivains chrétiens des IIe et IIIe siècles (1961), 13-14.. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)