## IV. Alternatives

In contrast to Irenaeus's attempt to present a collection of four Gospels in an expanded collection of writings, several editorial attempts were made at once to work the four Gospels criticised by Marcion together into one independent Gospel each.[[1]](#footnote-1) That these, as far as we can ascertain, were not always just Marcion-critical Gospel harmonies can already be seen in the singularity of the Jesus narrative, which corresponds to Marcion's one narrative. As opposed to four different narratives, one wanted to tell the story of Jesus in a single plot, just as Marcion did.

(1) A first example is the Gospel of Peter, a long fragment of which was rediscovered in the 19th century.[[2]](#footnote-2) Around the year 200, this Gospel evidently enjoyed recognition among the local community in Rhossos, a town near Antioch in Syria with an important ancient seaport on the Gulf of Issus.[[3]](#footnote-3) Bishop Serapion of Antioch, who visited the congregation of Rhossos, evidently had no objection at first to this Gospel attributed to Peter, although he knew of its pseudonymity. Only when he "learned by hearsay" that it would "seduce to the heresy of Marcian" (a mistake for Marcion?)[[4]](#footnote-4) did he write against the Gospel.[[5]](#footnote-5) Marcionite elements can indeed be discerned when the Petrine Gospel takes the Jewish Bible as an intertextual reference to make clear that the Jews are guilty, not because they transgress the commandments of the Jewish Scriptures, but by fulfilling them, just as they follow the leading figures, namely Herod, the Pharisees and the scribes who played a major role in the passion and crucifixion of Jesus (whose name is not mentioned in the preserved fragment).[[6]](#footnote-6) As in \*Ev, it is Mary of Magdala and her friends who receive the resurrection message, while Peter is relegated to being the bearer of news.[[7]](#footnote-7) Another moment that rings both Marcionite and Marcion-critical is the use of older gospels. Timothy P. Henderson was able to show that the Gospel of Peter uses the four Gospels, defended by Irenaeus,[[8]](#footnote-8) but it appears that this was done on the matrix of \*Ev.[[9]](#footnote-9) This underlines the intention, as already in the New Testament of Marcion, to replace a Gospel in four versions with a single Gospel that integrates not only elements of these four, but also those of the \*Ev. Whether this one Gospel of Peter was connected with other writings to form a larger collection is not known to us, but already its name indicates that it was probably not connected with the Pauline Epistles.

(2) Another harmony is also connected with the city of Antioch. Theophilus, bishop in this city, one of the predecessors of Serapion and author of a lost writing against Marcion (κατὰ Μαρκίωνος λόγος), is said to have established such a Gospelharmony. Eusebius reports:

"1. Of Theophilus, whom we have mentioned as bishop of the church of Antioch, three

elementary works addressed to Autolycus are extant; also another writing entitled Against the

Heresy of Hermogenes, in which he makes use of testimonies from the Apocalypse of John, and

finally certain other catechetical books. 2. And as the heretics, no less then than at other times, were like tares, destroying the pure harvest of apostolic teaching, the pastors of the churches everywhere hastened to restrain them as wild beasts from the fold of Christ, at one time by admonitions and exhortations to the brethren, at another time by contending more openly against them in oral discussions and refutations, and again by correcting their opinions with most accurate proofs in written works. 3. And that Theophilus also, with the others, contended against them, is manifest from a certain discourse of no common merit written by him against Marcion. This work too, with the others of which we have spoken, has been preserved to the present day.

Maximinus, the seventh from the apostles, succeeded him as bishop of the church of Antioch."[[10]](#footnote-10)

The writing against Marcion, which was perhaps preserved until Jerome in the 4th century,[[11]](#footnote-11) could also have been known to Irenaeus. As we can see from the exant Three Books to Autolycus,[[12]](#footnote-12) Theophilus refers to the "sacred writings of the holy prophets"[[13]](#footnote-13) and describes a quotation from Prov 24:21-22 as coming from the law of God, thus, in contrast to Marcion, holding to the Jewish scriptures as the reference scriptures for Christians.[[14]](#footnote-14) In general, he sees Moses as God's prophetic instrument and also recognises what is laid down in the Book of Genesis as "sacred scripture".[[15]](#footnote-15) Indeed, apart from these Jewish writings, Theophilus knows no other sacred writings at all, even though he speaks of the "evangelical voice", of the "gospel" and sees the latter as inspired by the same Spirit as the prophets.[[16]](#footnote-16) From the Pastoral Epistles he quotes 1 Timothy 2:1-2, and then Romans 13:7-8 with reference to the "divine word".[[17]](#footnote-17) If one compares what Theophilus cites from the Gospels, the character of his harmony becomes clear:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Theophilus, Apol. ad Autol. III 13-4 | \*Ev 6,27-36 | Lk 6,27-36 | Mt 5,44 - 48; 6,1- 4 |
| But the Gospel: | 27 In the Law it is written, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, |  | 43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate your enemy.  |
|  | but to you that listen to me, I say,  | 27 But to you who are listening, I say: | 44 But I say to you:  |
| Love your enemies, | love your enemies | Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you! | Love your enemies |
| and pray for those who curse you. | 28 and pray for those who persecute you. | 28 Bless those who curse you; pray for those who curse you. | and pray for those who persecute you, |
|  | 29 If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, offer to him also the other, and if anyone takes away your coat, give him also your shirt. | 29 To him who strikes you on one cheek, turn the other also,and to him who takes away your coat, let him have your shirt as well. |  |
|  |  |  | 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. |
|  | 30Give to everyone who asks you;31And as you desire that people do to you, so you also do to them. | 30 Give to everyone who asks you; and if anyone takes what is yours away from you, do not ask for it back. 31 And as you would that men should do to you, do you also to them. |  |
| For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? |  | 32 If you love those who love you, what thanks do you expect? For even sinners love those by whom they are loved.  | 46 For if you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? |
| For this is also what the robbers and tax collectors do. |  | 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks do you expect in return? So do sinners. | Do not the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what special thing are you doing? Do not the Gentiles do the same? 48 Be perfect, then, as your heavenly Father is perfect. |
|  | 34 And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, of what kind is your gratitude? | 34 And if you lend money to those from whom you hope to get it back, what thanks do you expect in return? Sinners also lend to sinners in order to get back the same. |  |
|  | 35 But you shall love your enemies and do good and lend where you can expect nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of God, for he is kind toward the ungrateful and the wicked. | 35 But you shall love your enemies and do good and lend where you can expect nothing in return. Then your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind toward the ungrateful and the wicked. |  |
|  | 36 Be merciful as your Father is merciful to you! | 36 Be merciful, as your Father is merciful to you! |  |
| But it instructs those who do good not to boast, lest they strive to please men; for it says, Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. In addition, the divine word commands us to be subject to the rulers and authorities and to pray for them, so that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life. And it teaches us to give all to all, honour to whom honour, reverence to whom reverence, tax to whom tax; to owe nothing to any but to love all. |  |  | 1 Beware of doing your righteousness before men, to be seen of them; otherwise you have no reward to expect from your Father in heaven. 2 When you give alms, do not trumpet it before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, to be praised by the people. Amen, I say to you, they have already received their reward. 3 When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, 4 that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret also, shall reward thee. |

As the opening shows, Theophilus has used a harmony that first follows the common stock of \*Ev, Lk and Mt ("love your enemies and pray for those who curse you"), where "curse" (ἐπηρεαζόντων) follows Lk, while here \*Ev and Mt agree. These correspondences and divergences support Jerome's claim that Theophilus created a gospel harmony.[[18]](#footnote-18) According to this, the harmony omits \*Ev/Lk 6:29-31, but also skips Mt 5:45 and, while diverging from both, nevertheless follows Mt, Lk 6:32-33/Mt 5:46 more closely. This fundamentally greater closeness to Mt is also evident in what follows, where \*Ev/Lk is again passed over and the connection to Mt is sought, not without adding material of his own.

It can be seen that Theophilus created or used an independent harmonistic work, a gospel, to which, however, he did not ascribe the same authority as the sacred Jewish scriptures, the books of Moses and the prophets. According to this, Theophilus relied on the writings criticised by Marcion, makes use of Mt, which is somewhat more distant from \*Ev, than Lk, but certainly adopts formulations from Lk when the latter deviates from Mt, in the case that Mt agrees with \*Ev. Theophilus, however, does not subscribe to Irenaeus's idea of a fourfold Gospel, but rather follows Marcion's model of a single Gospel.

Judging from his preserved books, he also knew passages from John (1:1-3), whose author John he considers to be divinely inspired.[[19]](#footnote-19) And yet he also separates this work from the "Holy Scriptures". Should this Theophilus be the addressee of Lk and Acts?[[20]](#footnote-20)

(3) Another, comparable attempt at a Gospel harmony, attributed to Tatian - incidentally the most historically successful in the church history of the Latin West,[[21]](#footnote-21) also of Syria, Arabia and many other countries, and one of the most important texts of early Christianity[[22]](#footnote-22) -, possibly originated before the Gospel of Peter. The harmony is present in the work that probably bore the same simple title as that of Marcion, namely "Gospel". This title is suggested in particular by Ephrem the Syrian, who commented on this text in the 4th century.[[23]](#footnote-23) Unfortunately, the original text has been lost, indeed, we do not even know in which language - Greek or Syriac - this harmony was initially composed. On the other hand, such eminent authors as Ephrem, our main source,[[24]](#footnote-24) his disciple Mar Aba, as well as an anonymous Arab author of the 11th century, have written commentaries on this text.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Whether commissioned by Justin, developed by Tatian from a harmony[[26]](#footnote-26) or created out of his own mind, Justin's disciple Tatian had created a harmony, similar to the author of the Gospel of Peter, in which he had compressed several Gospels into a single narrative. This attempt also shows Marcionite as well as anti-Marcionite characteristics. Marcionite is already the one Gospel narrative, as recognized by Martin Hengel: "Tatian's attempt to create a Gospel harmony indicates ... that the plurality of the Gospels was perceived rather as a problem in the confrontation with Marcion's counter-church and its single Gospel."[[27]](#footnote-27)

Moreover, Tatian evidently had before him a form of Lk that was even closer to \*Ev than the canonical form we know, which provides a reason why, for the reconstruction of \*Ev, scholars have long drawn on text-critical comments by interpreters of Tatian's harmony.[[28]](#footnote-28) Both works also have in common that they were published without any indication of an author with the simple title "Gospel",[[29]](#footnote-29) and Tatian was no less sceptical of the pseudonymous names of authors, given to gospels, than Marcion.[[30]](#footnote-30) Ephrem then also calls his author simply "evangelist".[[31]](#footnote-31) Eusebius of Caesarea, however, was the first to report that Tatian had called the work “Diatessaron” ("The sound of four"),[[32]](#footnote-32) probably because Eusebius considered the construction of the fourfold Gospel according to Irenaeus to be correct and wanted to propagate it critically in relation to Tatian. Author designations only became necessary when it became clear that differing texts bearing the name "Gospel" were not identical or were to be distinguished from other Gospels.[[33]](#footnote-33) From this, scholars have rightly deduced that the designation "Gospel according to …"[[34]](#footnote-34) which is "unusual"[[35]](#footnote-35) for an ancient book, is secondary to the simple, authorless title "Gospel".

Unlike his teacher Justin, who had Jesus-material more reminiscent of the Synoptics, Tatian added mainly Johannine material to his harmony[[36]](#footnote-36) - perhaps because, as we shall see, this Gospel was more distant in its lexic from \*Ev, though much closer in content than the Synoptics. Moreover, Tatian must have approved of the pronounced asceticism and abstinence (Greek: ἐγκράτεια, abstinence) taught by Marcion, for in the first place where Irenaeus introduces Tatian in his anti-heretical work he refers to Tatian’s proximity to Satorninus[[37]](#footnote-37) and Marcion:

"Springing from Saturninus and Marcion, those who are called Encratites (self-controlled) preached against marriage, thus setting aside the original creation of God, and indirectly blaming Him who made the male and female for the propagation of the human race. Some of those reckoned among them have also introduced abstinence from animal food, thus proving themselves ungrateful to God, who formed all things. They deny, too, the salvation of him who was first created. It is but lately, however, that this opinion has been invented among them. A certain man named Tatian first introduced the blasphemy. He was a hearer of Justin's, and as long as he continued with him he expressed no such views; but after his martyrdom he separated from the Church, and, excited and puffed up by the thought of being a teacher, as if he were superior to others, he composed his own peculiar type of doctrine. He invented a system of certain invisible Aeons, like the followers of Valentinus; while, like Marcion and Saturninus, he declared that marriage was nothing else than corruption and fornication. But his denial of Adam's salvation was an opinion due entirely to himself."[[38]](#footnote-38)

In this report, too, Irenaeus's tendency to attribute contemporary dissenters to older school leaders, whom he names as opponents and combats in this work - usually Valentinus and Marcion, at this point Saturninus is also mentioned, of whom little is known apart from this information here - becomes clear. At the same time, Irenaeus wants to keep Justin harmless, which is why he reports from Tatian that he only came to his blasphemies after Justin had already died a martyr's death. This would presuppose that Tatian would have joined the teaching of Marcion (and possibly Saturninus) even after Justin's death. It is much more likely, however, that the usual practice of a student-teacher relation applies to him, too, according to which, as already noted, students heard more than one teacher and went to different schools, just as Justin did himself. Justin reports in his autobiographical sketch at the beginning of his Dialogue with Trypho,[[39]](#footnote-39) that he moved from school to school, a similar journey that we also encounter in reports about the school of the Platonic teacher Plotinus around the middle of the 3rd century.[[40]](#footnote-40)

If one summarises the observations on the alternative format to that of Irenaeus's fourfold Gospel collection, one is surprised at the clear result: not the fourfold Gospel, i.e. Irenaeus's counterportfolio to Marcion, but rather the one Gospel had been the standard during the second century (and for a long time still later), since Marcion had written and later published \*Ev. All the Gospel harmonies known to us follow this principle; moreover, they all have a reference to Marcion's model, whether explicitly (Justin, Tatian, Theophilus) or implicitly (Gospel of Peter). This observation explains why Irenaeus had to fight so hard to impose a fourfold Gospel, an innovation which people apparently had not waited for. Had it not been for Irenaeus’s readers in the 3rd century in the West, such as Tertullian and his reader Cyprian, also Victorinus of Pettau and in the 4th century Jerome,[[41]](#footnote-41) and in the Greek-speaking world Origen and the authors in his tradition, such as Eusebius of Caesarea and his successors, Irenaeus's proposal would probably not have gained acceptance.[[42]](#footnote-42) In the 2nd century, at any rate, Irenaeus forms an outsider position, even if we are hardly aware of it today. How much Irenaeus was regarded as marginal at that time and even later is shown by the extremely thin tradition of his works. Not a single complete Greek copy of any of them has survived.

## V. Result

With regard to chapter 1 as a whole, it can be stated: For the time before Marcion we have no written evidence for the description of Jesus's life to which he could have referred,[[43]](#footnote-43) indeed there was not even the need or necessity to compose and hand down such a biographical sketch.[[44]](#footnote-44) Hans von Campenhausen opens his chapter on “the emergence of the New Testament” with the following statement:

"The common feature characterising the the whole epoch ... is the lack of any formal authentication of the tradition which derives from and witnesses to Christ, in short, the lack of a New Testament. To this extent the pre-Marcionite church still belongs to the era of ‘primitive Christianity’. Her Bible is the Old Testament, which apparently suffices her for the demonstration and confirmation of her faith. The Christian knows, and imagines that he always will know Christ himself exactly as he was known and attested by the first disciples. Indeed, it seems obvious that this must be so … What is taught, preached, and believed in the congregation is therefore accepted without question as authentic and original, even when, as occasion demands, it is expounded, amplified, abbreviated or supplemented … Christians just ‘know’ the original truth; no one refers in support of it to texts and documents, regarded as an acknowledged and established norm."[[45]](#footnote-45)

Against the "impatient fancy" of scholars, von Campenhausen argues that the "actual course of development" should not and cannot simply be corrected and reconstructed to suit ideological or religious reasons and needs:

"What is decisive is the witness of the extant sources, not the conjectural extrapolations we may like to make from them. And their witness is unambiguous. … We have shown that the idea of a normative Christian canon, of a new collection of writings, or ‘scripture’, is as yet nowhere to be found, we must now explain why it was that this idea came into existence at one stroke with Marcion and only with Marcion, and, what is more, why all its logical implications were there from the start in his presentation. The way in which the Church reacted to this development by creating a New Testament makes the proof complete. From every side we converge on the same result: the idea and the reality of a Christian Bible were the work of Marcion, and the Church which rejected his work, so far from being ahead of him in this field, from a formal point of view simply followed his example."[[46]](#footnote-46)

If I see correctly, the view drawn here by von Campenhausen needs only to be refined somewhat, but in principle he has given the right assessment of the extant sources.

Marcion did not create a New Testament right away or from the beginning. Indeed, one may assume that it would never have occurred to him to create such a collection and publish it if his first writing, the "Gospel", had not quickly experienced an outstanding reception, but at the same time also corrections and unauthorised published plagiarisms, which Marcion had to counter. What Marcion had initially written was a testimony to the work and message of Jesus, setting down in writing the traditional oral tradition, which he had already created in Pontus and, after coming to Rome after the end of the second Jewish war (after 135 AD), presented there in his house of learning. In addition, he had probably already compiled a collection of ten Pauline letters, which he probably brought with him to Rome. After his work, which he called "Gospel", had reached other teachers who - perhaps with the exception of the author of Jn - had all taught in Rome, it was used by various teachers, changed and, as Marcion regrets, especially robbed of its actual content, namely to give Christians their own basis for the new law. Instead the plagiarisers had reconnected the new law with the old law, the novel message with the Jewish tradition. Perhaps after Marcion’s unsuccessful attempts to come to an understanding with John and Polycarp despite all their similarities,[[47]](#footnote-47) he decided, knowing the plagiarisms closest to his Gospel, to give his Gospel a preface, the *Antitheses*, and to append ten Pauline letters as a sub-collection. As such, he published his text after finding that plagiarisms of his writing were being circulated under apostolic pseudonyms. The Gospels closest to his text were those four, two of which bore the pseudonyms of two apostles, Matthew and John, and two those of disciples of apostles, Mark and Luke. Marcion named them explicitly in his *Antitheses*. It may be that the four Gospels had already been compiled beforehand in reaction to Marcion in the circle of Polycarp or Papias, who play a prominent role in this context among our witnesses. If these four Gospels had already been brought together as a collection, this happened in response and reaction to the criticisms that Marcion in his *Antitheses* raised precisely against these four Gospels. If in the circle of Polycarp and Papias the four Gospels had been bound together, this would explain why from their inception they became known under identical titles ("Gospel according to ..."). In any case, the process of sharing texts between Marcion and other teachers at this time seems to have established the core of the sub-collection of the Gospels, integrating \*Ev under the name of Lk with the editorial alterations and additions.

Perhaps the ten Pauline letters were also taken over at this stage, since Polycarp and Papias know Paul's Epistles and show traces of Ignatius's collection of three letters. Yet, only slightly later, with the editorial work at the times of Irenaeus and Dionysius of Corinth (shown in the revision of Dionysius’s letter collection, too) were not only the Ignatian three letters revised and broadened to a seven letters collection, but also Paul’s ten letters grown into a fourteen letter collection, now including the Pastoral Epistles and Hebrews. To these were added a further sub-collection, Acts and the so-called Catholic Epistles, a sub-collection that in Byzantine times became known as the *Praxapostolos*, on which we will say more below. Irenaeus not only appears as the first defender of these literary activities, he also seems, as von Campenhausen has already intimated, to have been one or perhaps even the mastermind behind this production, which, as he describes in Book III of Adversus haereses, was to be a New Testament collection of writings, principally directed against Valentinian and Marcion.

If this interpretation of the origin of the New Testament as a collection were to be correct, then not only would traces of the conscious redaction by Irenaeus have to be found in the various writings of the expanded collection, but the texts would also have to be read and interpreted in the light of the first and second half of the second century. The following chapters are devoted to this twofold complex of topics by looking at examples from the four sub-collections (The Gospels; the Praxapostolos; the Pauline Epistles; Revelation) in order to show such traces and interpretive contexts.

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1. See F. Watson, Harmony or Gospel? On the Genre of the (So-Called) Diatessaron (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. POxy 4009; PCair 10759; POxy 2949; Fragment M18 (Turfan); Ostrakon J.v. Haelst, Catalogue des papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens (1976), 738, no. 741. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. VI 12,3–6. M. Vinzent and T. Nicklas, Das Petrusevangelium (2012); T. Nicklas, Studien zum Petrusevangelium (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This mistake already occurs in Justin, Dial. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. IV 12; on Serapion see ibid. IV 11,4. The note in Serapion’s writing that the heresy of Marcion who „contradicts himself and did not know what he was saying“ might be a hint at Marcion’s preface, the *Antitheses* or ‘contradictions’. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See T. Nicklas, Die ‘Juden’ im Petrusevangelium (PCair 10759): Ein Testfall (2000); T. Nicklas, Studien zum Petrusevangelium (2021), 224-240. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This gospel, hence, makes no special claim for Peter as an authority (at the expense of Mary) and thus concurs with Marcion’s Gospel, *pace* A.G. Brock, Mary Magdalene, the first apostle : the struggle for authority (2003), 68-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. T.P. Henderson, The Gospel of Peter and Early Christian Apologetics. Rewriting the Story of Jesus' Death, Burial, and Resurrection. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2 Reihe 301 (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. M. Vinzent, Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels (2014), 273-275. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Euseb., Hist. eccl. IV 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See Hieron., De vir. inl. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Parallels between Theophilus und Tertullian’s Adv. Marc. are collected by G. Quispel, De Bronnen van Tertullianus' Adversus Marcionem (1943), 37-46; W.L. Petersen, The Genesis of the Gospels (2002), 39-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Theoph., Apol. ad Autol. I 14; see also II 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Theoph., Apol. ad Autol. I 11; see II 10 quoting Prov 8:22 and Gen 1:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Theoph., Apol. ad Autol. II 10; und III 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Theoph., Apol. ad Autol. III 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Theoph., Apol ad. Autol. III 14. See 1 Tim 2:1-2; Rom 13:7-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Hieron., Ep. 121,6. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Theoph., Apol. ad Autol. II 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. So the suggestion of Laurie from California at my blog: http://www.markusvinzent.com. Interestingly, recent scholarship discusses the riddle of who Theophilus was without mentioning Theophilus of Antioch, so J.M. Creamer, A.B. Spencer and F.P. Vijoen, Who is Theophilus? Discovering the original reader of Luke-Acts (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The oldest latin codex of the New Testament in the West from the sixth century, the Codex Fuldensis, does not contain the four canonical Gospels, but a Gospel harmony that has been closely related to Tatian’s harmony, see E. Ranke, Codex Fuldensis Novum Testamentum Latine interprete Hieronymo (1868); U.B. Schmid, In Search of Tatian's Diatessaron in the West (2003); H.J. Vogels, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Diatessaron im Abendland (1919). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. So the judgement by U.B. Schmid, In Search of Tatian's Diatessaron in the West (2003), 176. On the history of the text in Syria, see P.J. Williams, The Syriac Versions of the New Testament (2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ephrem, Comm. in Ev. I 7. This commentary is preserved in two slightly differing versions, one in Syriac, the other in Armenian. See Ephraem, Kommentar zum Diatessaron Teilbd. 1 (2008), 56-59. The simple title „Gospel“ is still preserved in Chester Beatty Papyrus 709 (5./6. Jh.), „Commentary on the Gospel of Mar Ephrem, the teacher“; Aphrahat, Dem. I 10 (4. Jh.); Mar Aba, frg. (4. Jh.); Moses bar Kepha, Comm. in Ev. (9. Jh.); Dionysius bar Salibi, Comm. in Ev. (12. Jh.); finally, we find the title „Gospel of the Separated “ in Rabbula of Edessa (5. Jh.); Florilegium as an appendix to a letter by Andrew of Samosata seaks of the “Gospel of the Separation” (Diastarun) (5. Jh.); Victor of Capua, praef. Codex Fuldensis (6. Jh.), calls it a „Diapente“, though the text is given without author ascription: „Cum fortuito in manus meas incideret unum ex quattuor euangelium conpositum et absente titulo non invenirem nomen auctoris, diligenter inquirens quis gesta vel dicta domini et salvatoris nostri euangelica lectione discreta in ordinem quo se consequi videbantur non minimo studii labore redegerit“, so E. Ranke, Codex Fuldensis Novum Testamentum Latine interprete Hieronymo (1868), 1. – I thank Matthew R. Crawford for the list of witnesses which have been more nuanced here, M.R. Crawford, Diatessaron, a Misnomer? The Evidence from Ephrem’s Commentary (2013); M.R. Crawford, The Fourfold Gospel in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian (2015), 12; M.R. Crawford and N.J. Zola, Introduction (2019). It is of interest that Ephrem keeps to the Gospel of Tatian, even though he knows the four Gospels of Irenaeus, see Ephrem, Serm. de fide 2,39-40 (Beck, CSCO 212, Scr. Syr. 88, 8-9); Hym. in virg. 51,2 (Beck CSCO 223, Scr. Syr. 94, 162). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. M.R. Crawford, The Fourfold Gospel in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian (2015), 4; W.L. Petersen, Tatian's Diatessaron. Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship (1994), 115-116. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ephraem, Commentaire de l'évangile concordant ou Diatessaron traduction du syriaque et de l'arménien (2008); Ephraem, Kommentar zum Diatessaron Teilbd. 2 (2008); Ephraem, Kommentar zum Diatessaron Teilbd. 1 (2008); C. McCarthy, St. Ephrem's commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: Reflecting on Chester Beatty Syriac Manuscript 709 (1993). The commentary by Mar Aba is only preserved in fragments, see G.J. Reinink, Neue Fragmente zum Diatessaronkommentar des Ephraem-schülers Aba (1980). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. So N. Perrin, What Justin's Gospels Can Tell Us about Tatian's. Tracing the Trajectory of the Gospel Harmony in the Second Century and Beyond (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. M. Hengel, Die Evangelienüberschriften, vorgetragen am 18. Oktober 1981 (1984), 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. See, for example, T. Baarda, C.E. Hill and M.J. Kruger, Tatian's Diatessaron and the Greek Text of the Gospels (2012); T. Baarda, Early Transmission of Words of Jesus. Thomas, Tatian and the Text of the New Testament. A Collection of Studies (1983). See also T. Baarda, Marcion’s Text of Gal. 1:1 (1988). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See F. Watson, Harmony or Gospel? On the Genre of the (So-Called) Diatessaron (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Crawford shows that Ephrem does not mention the four evangelists, even though later interpolators tried to rectify this omission, see M.R. Crawford, The Fourfold Gospel in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian (2015), 20-25. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See ibid. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Euseb., Hist. eccl. IV 29,6: “Their original founder, Tatian, formed a certain combination and collection of the Gospels, I know not how, to which he gave the title Diatessaron” (ὁ μέντοι γε πρότερος αὐτῶν ἀρχηγὸς ὁ Τατιανὸς συνάφειάν τινα καὶ συναγωγὴν οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως τῶν εὐαγγελίων συνθείς, Τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων τοῦτο προσωνόμασεν); Epiph., Pan. 46,1 is already less sure about the title, although he has read Eusebius’s report and partially copied it, when he writes: λέγεται δὲ τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων εὐαγγέλιον ὑπ' αὐτοῦ γεγενῆσθαι, ὅπερ κατὰ Ἑβραίους τινὲς καλοῦσι (4th c.); Euseb’s note is copied then by the Doctrina Addai (5th c.); Theod., Haer. I 20 (5th c.); the Chronicle of Se’ert (11th c.). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. So already M. Hengel, Studies in the Gospel of Mark (1985), 74; C.W. Müller, Rezension E. Schmalzriedt, ΠΕΡΙ ΦΥΣΕΩΣ. Zur Frühgeschichte der Buchtitel (Munich, 1970) (1978), 628-629; M. Hengel, Die Evangelienüberschriften, vorgetragen am 18. Oktober 1981 (1984), 28-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Compare the list of titles of gospels within the first five centuries in S.J. Gathercole, The Titles of the Gospels in the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts (2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. M. Hengel, Die Evangelienüberschriften, vorgetragen am 18. Oktober 1981 (1984), 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. T. Baarda, The Diatessaron and Its Beginning. A Twofold Statement of Tatian (2019), 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. About Saturninus we only know what is reported by Justin, Hegesippus and Irenaeus, see on these R.M. Grant, The Earliest Christian Gnosticism (1953), 88-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Iren., Adv. haer. I 28,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Justin, Dial. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See N. Spanu and Plotinus, Plotinus, Ennead II 9 [33] "Against the Gnostics" a commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Hippol., In Dan. I 18; Cypr., Ep. 73,10,3; Vict., In Apoc. IV 4; Hieron., Comm. in Matth. prol. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. On Eusebius’s relatively late impact on the change from a one-gospel format to the fourfold Gospels during the 5th and 6th, see M.R. Crawford, The Fourfold Gospel in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian (2015), 18-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. The recent counter-examples also come to nothing. Quoted are sometimes 1 Clem. 13:2 ("For thus he said, Be merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; forgive, that ye may be pardoned; as ye do, so shall it be done unto you; as ye give, so shall it be given unto you; as ye judge, so shall ye be judged; as ye exercise clemency, so shall ye be shown clemency; with what measure ye mete, with that measure ye shall be measured", which can indeed be compared with Mt 6:14: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you"; 7:1-2. 12: "1 Judge not, lest ye be judged. 2 For as you judge, so you will be judged, and according to the measure with which you measure, you will be measured. 12 All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. This is what the Law and the Prophets consist in"; \*Ev 6:31, 36 -38 and Lk 6:31, 36 -38: "31 And as you would that men should do to you, do you also to them. 36 Be merciful, as your Father is merciful to you! 37 Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive one another's trespasses, and your trespasses will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you! A good measure, full, heaped up, overflowing, will be placed in your lap; for acc ording to the measure with which you measure, it will also be measured to you." 1 Clem. 46:8: "Woe to that man, it would have been better for him if he had not been born, than that he should give offence to one of my elect; it would be more profitable for him if a millstone were put upon him, and he were sunk into the depth of the sea, than that he should deceive one of my elect"; see Matt. 26:24: "But woe to that man, by whom the Son of Man is delivered up! It would be better for him if he had never been born"; Mk 14:21: "But woe to the man through whom the Son of Man is delivered up! It would be better for him if he had never been born"; \*Ev 17:1-2 (Lk 17:1-2): "But woe to him by whom the offence comes!". 2 It would be better for him if he were never born or if a millstone was hung around his neck and he was thrown into the sea than that he causes one of these little ones to fall". First of all, 1 Clem. cannot be dated more precisely than to the 2nd century, so the writing may have been written before or after Marcion. The parallel passages can therefore come from \*Ev as well as from Lk, Mk or Mt. The same applies to parallels from the Didache, whereby here it is made even more difficult by the fact that the oldest text we have for this work comes from the same manuscript, the Hierosolymitanus, which offers us the long version of the Ignatian Letters, revised and strongly evangelised in the 4th century, i.e. the manuscript does not reliably provide versions of the 2nd century; 1 Clem. could have undergone a similar revision as the Ignatian letters underwent, which is indicated by the variant readings in the passages quoted above. In addition, all the examples here relate to sayings of the Lord, not a single one narration is to be found in them. The result is that the so-called objections against the absence of gospel narrative is only strengthened by the aforementioned examples. A further objection has been raised against the absence of gospels before Marcion with reference to Justin, 1 Apol. 67,3, where he describes a reading practice "which was already in use before the time of Marcion". This interpretation, however, is pure speculation, we hear of such readings only towards the end of Marcion’s life or even after his death. In contrast, as we can see from Papias that he still relies on oral tradition. When scholars claim that Papias is referring to the Gospel of Mark, again, we are confronted with eisegesis as Papias does not mention the term "Gospel" at all and, again, we do not know whether Papias’s work is to be dated before or after Marcion. Consequently, one should not immediately take Tertullian's sarcasm at face value. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. So T. Baarda, The Diatessaron and Its Beginning. A Twofold Statement of Tatian (2019), 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. H.f.v. Campenhausen, The Formation of the Christian Bible (1972), 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Ibid. 147-148 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. This has already been noted, too, by ibid. 148. See also U. Bianchi, Marcion: théologien biblique ou docteur gnostique? (1967), 141-142. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)