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A Survey on the Impact of Catechesis on Disaffiliation from Eastern Orthodox Christianity

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Abstract: This article reports on a survey of catechetical methods used in English-language parishes in the ROCOR Diocese in Australia and their impact on disaffiliation. The survey identified higher disaffiliation rates correlating with whether the convert was received quickly, if the catechesis was self-directed, or if the convert was a young adult. The article makes a number of observations regarding catechetical processes and recommends a catechism that includes a curriculum of study undertaken over a period of about one year.

Keywords: Religious Disaffiliation, Orthodoxy in Australia, Catechetics, Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, Religious Conversion, Religious Education

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Question

Orthodox priests frequently are asked how a person can become Orthodox, a question which begins what is commonly known as catechism and which requires a significant time commitment for the teacher (frequently an already overburdened priest). However, minimal research has been conducted on the results of this labour. In seeking to establish the impact of catechism on converts,[1] this study

[1] 'Convert' refers to those who join the Orthodox Church after following a different faith tradition or none, especially during the catechetical process and until approximately a year after they are received into the Church. Sometimes this is used to refer to someone who had been received into the Church many years prior, though this is seen by some as infantilising: Andrew Phillips, "On Becoming and Remaining an Orthodox Christian," *Orthodox Christianity and the World: The Daily Website on How to be an Orthodox Christian Today* (24 June 2009), http://www.pravmir.com/on-becoming-and-remaining-an-orthodox-christian/ (accessed 01/06/2018).

evaluates its impact on disaffiliation.[2] In order to do so, a survey was sent out to a group considered to be an ideal place for seeking converts to begin their journey within Orthodox Christianity: current and former rectors[3] of English-speaking worshipping communities[4] of the Diocese of Australia and New Zealand in the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.[5] To answer the primary question, "to what extent does the catechetical process[6] impact on religious affiliation within English-language worshipping communities of the ROCOR Diocese in Australia?" the survey asked three sub-questions: (1) What are the factors of the catechetical process that are currently used in these worshipping communities?[7] (2) How many disaffiliate after baptism, and potential reasons for this?[8] and (3) If there were any factors to exclude?[9]

1.2 Outcomes and Application

It is anticipated that this research will be most beneficial for clergy serving in English-language communities—who are frequently bivocational and overworked in addition to the time-consuming process of catechising converts. It is also anticipated that this research will justify the effort currently put into the catechetical process, and may affect how catechisms are planned out. Finally, it is hoped that there will be

[2] 'Disaffiliation' refers to instances when an Orthodox Christian chooses to cease attending an Orthodox worshipping community. Due to Orthodox ecclesiology, this can include attending any non-Orthodox community instead, or simply choosing not to attend any community at all.

[3] This refers to the parish priest, the superior, or the abbot of a community (as appropriate).

[4] 'Worshipping community' denotes any organised Orthodox community officially recognised as being a part of the Diocese, including parishes, missions, communities, monasteries or sketes.

[5] Henceforth, 'ROCOR Diocese in Australia,' as all New Zealand parishes of the diocese use Slavonic and are predominantly comprised of recent migrants from Russia and other CIS countries, see Ignaty Shestakov, "Orthodoxy in the Land of the Kiwi: An interview with the Dean of parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in New Zealand, Archpriest Vladimir Boikov," *Australian and New Zealand Diocese (ROCOR)* (17 June 2011), http://www.rocor.org.au/?p=3098 (accessed 16/11/2018).

[6] Or 'catechesis.' This describes a time of preparation for a person to join the Orthodox Church, which includes instruction in Orthodox theology and practice, attending services, a length of time to elapse, and any other requirements prior to receiving the convert into the Church.

[7] Included the catechism curriculum (including topics, frequency, teaching methods and resources), length of time, expectations around services or other meetings and any other expectations on converts.

[8] Included details around service attendance, additional involvement in the community, and how long it took for disaffiliates to do so.

[9] Included questions around convert demographics, reasons for conversion, and the nature and parish life in the worshipping community in question.

applicable lessons for any parish that receives an influx or a stream of converts. However, due to the differences anticipated between English-language parishes and parishes that primarily use other languages in worship, further research is required to establish the level to which this research is immediately applicable beyond this particular context.[10]

1.3 Background Information

Orthodoxy has a history in Australia that dates back through the 1800s, with the first churches built in the 1890s. Australia's early experience with Orthodoxy was primarily as an ethnic chaplaincy, with no evangelistic aims and a limited impact on society at large. The 1980s saw the beginnings of change, including the first English-language parish in Australia, and the descendants of migrants requesting, and sometimes receiving, services (or part thereof) in the English language of their birth country at some established parishes.

Within the ROCOR Diocese in Australia, there appear to be two turning points for a receptiveness to converts.[11] First, the 1996 election of Bishop Hilarion (Kapral) of Manhattan to head the ROCOR Diocese in Australasia brought a new impetus to using English as a liturgical language;[12] and second, the addition of Australian-born clergy of Russian descent and of clergy who had converted. From 1996–2000, clergy who had converted included:

- Four transferred from other Orthodox jurisdictions,[13]

[10] An example of a difference would be the number of those who convert in order to marry an Orthodox spouse (who may not even be a practicing Orthodox Christian). Often such persons are given a diminished catechetical process, see John Edgar Parker III, "Radechesis: A Radical Return to the Roots of Christian Catechism with a Critical Analysis of Pre- and Post-Baptismal Catechesis of Adults in the USA and Canada," (DMin Thesis, St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 2017) 1. While this research indicates that those who converted at English-language parishes for reasons of 'family' remain affiliated, the combined impacts of a different context, the commitment of Orthodox spouse, and a diminished catechism are unknown and beyond the scope of this paper.

[11] It should be noted that, aside from isolated and brief exceptions, being hospitable when people attend services is generally the extent of what currently passes for evangelism.

[12] Michael Alex Protopopov, "The Russian Orthodox Presence in Australia: The History of a Church told from recently opened archives and previously unpublished sources" (PhD Thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2005) 350.

[13] Protopopov, "The Russian Orthodox Presence in Australia", 346; Paul Saliba, "Archbishop's Report 2007," *Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines* (2007), http://www.antiochianarch.org.au/Report-2007.aspx (accessed 08/06/2018). The three from the Antiochian Archdiocese, as well as another at an unknown time soon after, coincided with the

- Three Protestant clergy converted and were ordained soon after, and
- One other person who had converted was then ordained.[14]

Of the eight English-language worshipping communities operational in the ROCOR Diocese in Australia during the time of the survey, two monastic communities were founded in the mid-to-late 1990s, while five parishes or missions were founded between 2009 and 2011.[15]

Australian Orthodoxy is an exceptional sample area. At the time of the survey, the dominant pattern in Orthodox jurisdictions was to have English-language parishes and other-language parishes running in parallel, with the former in the vast minority. In the absence of research, one can only conjecture that individual conversions to Orthodoxy in Australia follow a similar pattern to that seen in the United States. On average, converts to Orthodoxy are:

- Coming from Catholicism, Mainline Protestantism or Evangelical Protestantism;[16]
- Tertiary educated;[17] and
- Western European in appearance, or the spouse or child of such.[18]

At present, there is no standardised catechetical process from any Orthodox jurisdiction in Australia, nor has any research on Orthodox catechism in Australia been conducted. Each parish is free to set whatever requirements, strict or lax, that

arrival of the newly-consecrated Metropolitan Paul (Saliba) in 1999. Establishing causation is beyond the scope of this paper.

[14] Protopopov, "The Russian Orthodox Presence in Australia," 349–51.

[15] The remaining worshipping community was opened in 2017. It is tempting to think that there must have been another factor that caused a significant rise in the number of English-language parishes. However, during the same period other communities closed due to the priest requesting retirement (e.g. St Stephan of Perm Parish, Queanbeyan), the priest transferring jurisdictions (Holy Trinity Monastery, Monkerai), the community leaving the diocese (Holy Cross Mission, Melbourne), or the priest leaving the country (the Western Rite missions in Perth, Hobart and Launceston connected with St Petroc's Monastery), and subsequent to this survey, the repose of a priest (St John of Shanghai and San Francisco Mission, Gunning).

[16] Alexei D. Krindatch, *The Orthodox Church Today: A National Study of Parishioners and the Realities of the Orthodox Parish Life in the USA* (Berkeley: Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute, 2008) 12. Krindatch uses figures from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Orthodox Church in America; however, the former is over five times larger, and these figures have been weighted as a result.

[17] Parker, "Radechesis," 3.

[18] Anecdotal, but surmised by viewing photos from Orthodox parishes.

they deem appropriate. This, combined with the research required to find Orthodoxy (due to a lack of evangelism), has resulted in catechetical processes that are either academic, or largely self-directed. Thus, the catechetical process in Australia has generally followed North American norms of "making people smarter, not necessarily more faithful."[19]

2. Literature Review

2.1 Literature

There are limited historical resources for Orthodox Christianity in Australia: three broad profiles, some jurisdictional works, and some that focused on migration or schism in the 1970s. Of these, only Fr Michael Protopopov's work addresses converts, and no work addresses catechism at all.[20]

The foremost survey of Orthodox catechetical methods in English-speaking countries was from Priest John Parker, who surveyed twenty-one of the leading catechists in North America to derive methods for contemporary catechism.[21] He also examines historical methods of catechism, from the Didache through the Patristic period, and then again for Russian catechisms through to the present, before making recommendations on a comprehensive catechetical method.[22] Relying on the strong sense of *lex orandi, lex credenda* in the Orthodox Church, Fr John also refers to Russian Orthodox liturgical prayers for making catechumens, which builds on Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemann's work and highlights both what baptism does and what it calls the newly-illumined to do.[23]

In the last decade, there has been worthwhile academic research on conversion to Orthodox Christianity in Western contexts. While Lucas and Archpriest Oliver Herbel focused on group conversions, Slagle gave the first research into individual conversions in America, and Krindatch's survey continues to be mined for insights.[24]

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[19] Parker, "Radechesis," 2. Fr John has since been elevated to Archpriest. Further, Fr John's thesis is that a catechism pitched at a pre-seminary level is both deficient for academically-minded converts and an insurmountable barrier for those whose love for Jesus is not matched by academic gifts.

[20] Protopopov, "The Russian Orthodox Presence in Australia," 347, 359–61.

[21] Parker, "Radechesis,"

[22] Parker, "Radechesis," 55–60, 108–17, 60–75, 118–41, A6–A11.

[23] Parker, "Radechesis," 34–54; see Alexander Schmemann, *Of Water & the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011).

[24] Phillip Charles Lucas, "Enfants Terribles: The Challenge of Sectarian Converts to Ethnic Orthodox Churches in the United States." *NovRel* 7 (2003): 5–23; Phillip Charles Lucas, *The Odyssey of a New*

However, Australia is a very different place: no jurisdiction has taken on the mantle of 'Orthodox Church in Australia', there is no legacy of local or national evangelism to call on, and aside from a handful of Anglican clergy in the 1990s, mass conversions have not occurred in Australia. Further contexts for comparison include Threadgill's 1987 ethnographic snapshot of Orthodoxy in New Zealand, including both 'ethnics' and 'converts', and Woodlock's research on female converts to Islam in Melbourne.[25]

A contemporary Orthodox missiology has been the work of Archpriest Edward Rommen, who brought many years of evangelism and missiological activity to construct an Orthodox theology of mission, while Archpriest Michael Keiser discusses both historical and modern methods of evangelism, and Archpriest Michael Oleksa discusses enculturation and evangelism within the Alaskan mission.[26]

2.2 Significance

The survey of literature evidences that while relevant research has been conducted on Orthodox Christianity in Australia, conversions to Orthodoxy outside Australia, and on Orthodox catechesis outside Australia, this article comprises the first item of research on Orthodox catechesis in Australia or on English-language Orthodox communities in Australia. It also serves as a comparison to existing American studies on catechism, converts, and English-language communities within an Orthodox

Religion: The Holy Order of MANS From New Age to Orthodoxy (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995); D. Oliver Herbel. *Turning to Tradition: Converts and the Making of an American Orthodox Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Amy Slagle, *The Eastern Church in the Spiritual Marketplace: American Conversions to Orthodox Christianity* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011); Alexei D. Krindatch, "Research and Statistics." Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America (n.d.), http://www.assemblyofbishops.org/ news/research (accessed 1 June 2018); and, Alexei D. Krindatch, *Research on Orthodox Christian Communities in the United States*. 2000–2016. http://www.orthodoxreality.org/ (accessed 01/06/2018).

[25] Steven A. Threadgill, "The Eastern Orthodox Church in New Zealand," MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1987; Rachel Woodlock. "Praying Where They Don't Belong: Female Muslim Converts and Access to Mosques in Melbourne, Australia." *JMMA* 30 (2010): 265–78.

[26] Edward Rommen, *Come and See: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective on Contextualization* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013); Edward Rommen, *Being the Church: An Eastern Orthodox Understanding of Church Growth*, (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2017); Edward Rommen, *Into All the World: An Orthodox Theology of Mission* (Orthodoxy & Mission 1; Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017); Michael Keiser, *Spread the Word: Reclaiming the Apostolic Tradition of Evangelism* (Chesterton: Conciliar Press, 2011); Michael J. Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992); Michael J. Oleksa, *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2010).

context. Consequently it is hoped that this research will be of broader significance to catechetical programs within Christian denominations in Australia.

3. Statement of Methodology

3.1 Methods

A mixed method of Quantitative Research, by means of a statistical census and archival research, was applied.

Despite the considerable potential scope for research in this area, research was focused on the English-language communities within the ROCOR Diocese in Australia. This was to eliminate variables that are not related to catechism, including liturgical language, parish demographics, varying countries and jurisdictional differences; however, it provides a diversity of location, surveying four states, including both urban and rural locations.[27]

The census was a survey sent to all current and former rectors of the English-language worshipping communities in the ROCOR Diocese in Australia, including monastic communities in Sydney and rural South Australia, and to parishes, missions and communities in Adelaide, Brisbane, Gunning, Melbourne, and Toowoomba.[28] Two of these worshipping communities share a rector, giving a potential total of seven rectors and two past rectors. Data would be derived from the worshipping community's Metrical Book and from the recollection of each specific rector.[29]

The census was formed in two parts. The first part comprised forty-seven questions:

- Six questions on personal information;
- Thirteen questions on details about the worshipping community;
- Five questions on background and timing of the Catechumenate Program;
- Eight questions on methods of Catechism;
- Four questions on the content of Catechism;

[27] Future research possibilities include other Orthodox parishes in Australia of different jurisdictions, and comparisons with catechism in other contexts.

[28] Various terms are often used to refer to size or infrastructure. A mission or community is generally a parish with minimal or no infrastructure and/or a small number of worshippers, while a skete is a small monastery (though a monastery is not necessarily large).

[29] All but one of the surveyed rectors were also the inaugural rector. Metrical books include data on each baptism, including names, dates, parents, godparents, and who the baptising priest was.

- Two questions on any delegation of Catechism;
- Three questions on care for those who had been received into the Church;[30]
- Three questions on the Catechetical Program preparing for an infant baptism; and
- Three concluding questions.

The second part of the Census asked questions about each adult convert (i.e. over 16 years of age):

- Ten questions about the convert;
- Five questions about the catechetical process undertaken by the convert; and
- Three to six questions about the convert's current worshipping status.

In addition, some data was taken from archival records – specifically, the Triennial Parish Reports, submitted for the triennial Diocesan Assemblies of 2013 and 2016. These are used for surrounding information about each worshipping community, including parish demographics, what parish education is conducted, and to compare English-language parishes to similarly-sized Slavonic-language parishes.

This research focuses on those who completed a catechetical process, in whatever format it was offered. This means that there are two notable limitations. First, because most Orthodox worshipping communities in Australia lack any active evangelism, those who discover Orthodoxy do so predominantly through their own research—thus, in a sense, the respondents are describing a pool that is somewhat self-selected. Second, only those who are received into the Church are recorded in metrical books—thus, the experience of any inquirers or catechumens who are not received were not included in the survey.

3.2 Ethics Clearance

Both the census and the archival research of parish reports required ethics clearance through the University of Divinity HREC, which was obtained on 3 August 2018. As the reports were written for dissemination to participants of the 2016 Diocesan Assembly, permission was requested from the Vicar Bishop of the Diocese (as Diocesan Administrator) for his permission to confidentially use the data from the parish reports for this research, and subsequently granted on 1 August 2018. Informed Consent forms were distributed along with the census.

[30] 'The Church', in this paper, refers to the Eastern Orthodox Church, of which the Russian Orthodox Church is a part. In the ROCOR Diocese in Australia, reception is normally done by baptism.

4. Data Received

4.1 Triennial Conferences 2013 and 2016

Every three years, rectors in the ROCOR Diocese in Australia are required to submit a report of their parish to the Diocese. Of the surveyed parishes, four responded to both surveys, while three responded only to one or the other.[31] Relevant responses for these surveys generally aligned with the responses received through the Survey.

From 2010–13, an average of 3.75 people were received into the Church (excluding one outlier with fifteen); while in 2013–16, there was an average of 5.6 people received into the Church (excluding the same outlier with twenty-two).[32] The 2013–16 survey also provided differentiation between children and adults, with an average of 2.2 adults received into the Church during that time (excluding the same outlier with 19). Usually, the number of adults received into the Church at a given community in a given year totalled zero or one (see Table 1(a)).[33]

In parishes, average attendance on Sunday mornings varied from 17 to 35–40, yet there was no obvious link between the size of the congregation and the number of adults received into the Church (see Table 1(b)).[34]

Table 1(a) **Adult receptions per parish (total 18), per year**

0 received	7
1 received	7
2 received	1
3 received	1
4–7 received	0
8–10 received	2

[31] The remaining community began in 2017.

[32] This is also an outlying parish for the entire Diocese, having more adult baptisms than any other responding parish for both the 2013 and 2016 responses. Discussion of potential factors causing this is beyond the scope of this paper.

[33] In comparison, for the leading catechetical processes in the USA, 50% had 0–5 catechumens, while almost 30% had more than 10. Parker, "Radechesis," 90.

[34] What percentage of members attended, and what percentage of attendees were members, was not asked. However, the nature of each parish – newly-established, high percentage of converts, usually in cities with longer-established churches – suggests that most people associated with the surveyed communities would likely be attendees on most Sunday mornings.

Table 1(b) **Adult Receptions 2013–16 as % of Sunday attendance**

0–5%	2
10–15%	2
30%	1
~50%	1

4.2 Survey

The survey was in two parts. Part A asked for the perceptions of priests on a number of areas: the responding priests themselves; the worshipping community that they were leading; the catechetical process that they used in their worshipping community; and their perceptions on disaffiliation.

Part B of the survey asked for details on adults (defined as those over 16) who had been received into the Church. Responses included four worshipping communities, for a total of forty-six adults received into the Church. It is estimated that this is almost 70% of the total number of adults received into the Church at English-language worshipping communities across the ROCOR Diocese in Australia since 2009.[35]

4.2.1 Part A: On the Priests (7 responses; see below Figures 1–3)

The priests surveyed were of varying ages and experience levels, though the majority were serving in their current parish for 6–10 years. No formal instruction was given in how to catechise. Instead, each needed to develop a program and find resources on their own, with improvements made primarily through pastoral experience.[36]

A noteworthy finding was that the perceived impact of catechism on preventing disaffiliation was either low (0–40%) or critical (80–100%). Unsurprisingly, this correlated with the length and intensity of the priest's catechetical process; though curiously, it correlated inversely with the age of the priest. Rectors were also asked about reasons for converts converting, and found a variety of reasons centred around truth, authenticity and family; however, this only revealed a high rate of correlation

[35] Based on responses and statistics-based projections using the number of adult baptisms over 2013–16 and averaging this number from either 2009 or the founding of each worshipping community through to the present, it is estimated that approximately sixty-five adults have converted at English-language parishes of the ROCOR Diocese in Australia since 2009.

[36] Parker, "Radechesis," 106, found that 90% of priests who had the best catechetical processes were not instructed in how to catechise—and that nearly 70% wish that they had been.

between the respondent and the reason for conversion, and none with subsequent disaffiliation.

Figure 1

Perceived effect of catechism on preventing disaffiliation

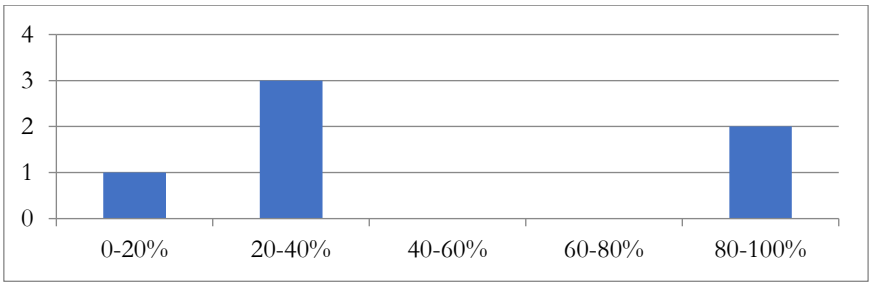


Figure 2

Catechetical methods of instruction

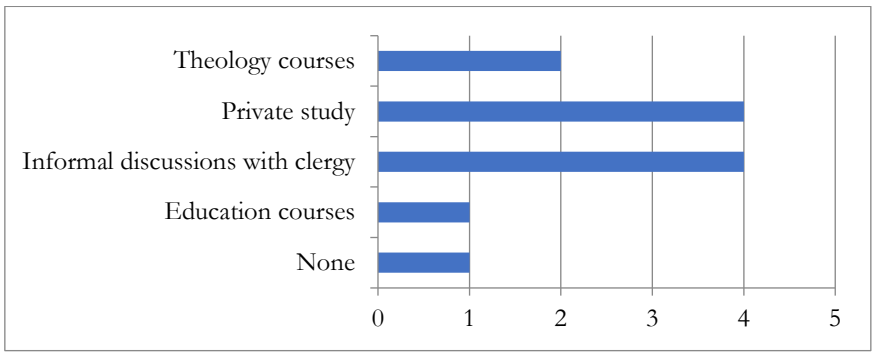
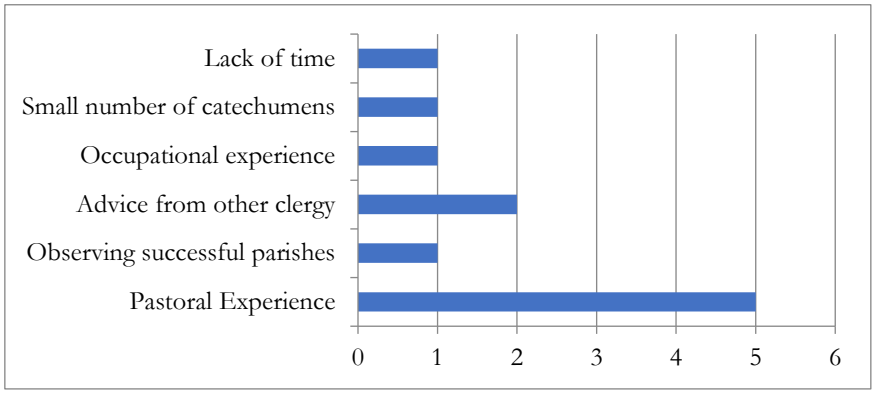


Figure 3

Factors influencing the catechetical process



4.2.2 Part A: On the Community (5–7 responses)[37]

The worshipping communities in this survey were small, with parishes ranging an average of 15–35 people on Sunday mornings. Aside from one outlier, they are currently preparing 0–3 people to be received into the Church: for two communities, this number constituted 0–5% of the Sunday congregation; while for three others, it constituted 13–18% (see Table 2).

Table 2 **People being deliberately prepared for baptism**

No. People	No. Communities	As % of Sunday congregation	No. Communities
0	1	0	1
3	1	1–5%	1
1	3	13–18%	3
10	1	~30%	1

A universal response was that people found out about each respective worshipping community through the internet, with the parish website, social media, and online parish directories all being mentioned. This serves to reinforce both the importance of a parish's online presence, and that there is currently little to no evangelising of the Australian population; however, responses included the clear desire to welcome newcomers.[38]

It is worth noting that there is clearly a 'type' for these parishes. 80% of these worshipping communities are comprised of converts, with the other 20% varying depending on the worshipping community. 58.2% are male, 63.3% are employed full-time, and 51.6% have an undergraduate degree—a number that rises to 65.2% when including holders of post-graduate and doctoral degrees.[39] Worship occurs in a variety of spaces, but each are permanent structures, with the majority resembling a

[37] The variation of responses are due to a combination of unusable answers, past rectors receiving a diminished survey, and, for the two communities that shared a rector, discarding duplicate answers (when appropriate).

[38] Parker, "Radechesis," 90–91, also found that a website was their leading source of converts, followed closely by 'Friend's Invitation' and 'Reading a Book'.

[39] Further examination of why this is the case is beyond the scope of this paper.

church from the outside, having choirs of less than twelve, possessing exceptional vestments, good iconography, and good ecclesiastical furniture.

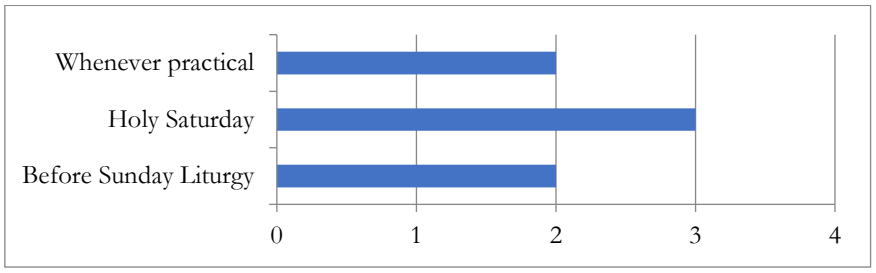
4.2.3 Part A: On the Catechetical Process and Disaffiliation (7 responses)

This research found considerable diversity in the catechetical process, consistent with Slagle's statement that there is "no uniform, cross-jurisdictional program for instructing and bringing new adult members into its fold" in the United States.[40]

The time taken between a visitor's first visit and when they were made a catechumen varied anywhere between a few weeks to almost a year. However, once a person had been formally made a catechumen, they were generally received into the Church in 3–6 months around scheduled services (Figure 4).[41]

Figure 4

When converts are received



It was discerned that there were three broad patterns of catechetical instruction: self-directed, a formal course of over twelve hours, and individual or small group instruction (sometimes with a formal catechetical component). Primary methods of teaching commonly focused on private appointments or informal discussions after services, with supplemental teaching commonly done by videos, podcasts, books, or informal discussions. Despite lacking a standardised curriculum, universal topics included Theology (including the Nicene Creed) and Church services, while other common topics included Church history, ecclesiology, living the faith, soteriology and spirituality. Surrounding this process were a number of common themes:

[40] Slagle, *The Eastern Church in the Spiritual Marketplace*, 66.

[41] Holy Saturday is the morning before Easter and the historical day for baptisms. Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2nd edition 1973), 76–77. A close link to the liturgical structure of the parish was also found in Parker, "Radechesis," 94, where 21% always received on Sundays, 58% sometimes received on Sundays, and ~25% received on Holy Saturday.

catechism was undertaken predominantly by the rector; a minimal background check was done (if any); and that generally rectors were satisfied with their catechetical process.[42]

Clergy were asked what converts were required to change about their life: they were expected to attend church services (9.71), change their religious identity (10), adopt ascetic practices such as prayer and fasting (8.57), have an ethically upright way of life (8.42), and would participate in parish life and stewardship. There was no requirement to change ethnic identity; that is, converts were able to be Orthodox without any pretence of adopting the ethnicity of their jurisdiction.[43]

For those who wished to become Orthodox in connection with marrying Orthodox spouses, the respondents who had experienced this indicated that the same catechetical process would be required.[44] This was in stark contrast with infant baptisms, where being a church-attending Orthodox Christian was the most expected of parent or godparent.[45]

Though the catechetical program varied, the post-catechetical program was predominantly non-existent—each were simply incorporated into the adult education that the parish provided for all parishioners.[46] Finally, respondents perceived a variety of reasons for disaffiliation, many focusing on areas unrelated to catechism (see Figure 5).

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[42] This correlates with Parker, "Radechesis," 100–01 & 104, who found that a clear majority of catechisms were taught exclusively by the rector and that a background check was not performed on converts. .

[43] This contrasts starkly with the article penned by a Fr Leonidas: "To convert or not to convert", *OrthodoxChristian.info* (formerly the website of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia), (Site updated 2 April 2010), http://www.orthodoxchristian.info/pages/convert.html (accessed 30/04/2018).

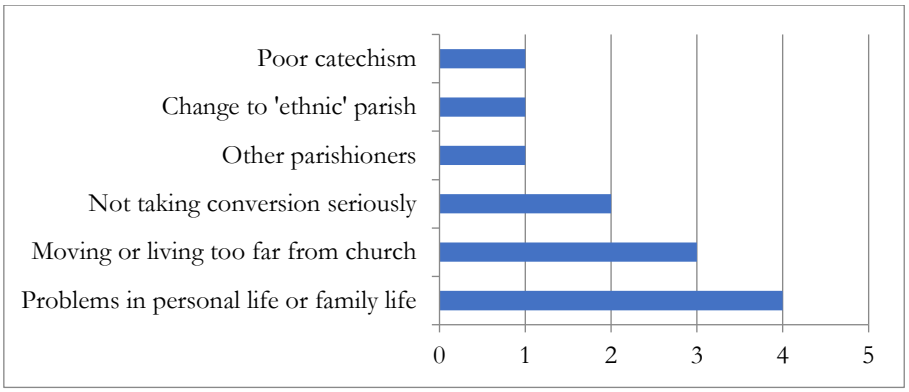
[44] There is a great differences between 'seeker converts' and 'intermarriage converts': Slagle, *The Eastern Church in the Spiritual Marketplace*, 40,53–58,73–76. However, only ten converts (of forty-six) had 'family' among their reasons for converting; it seems reasonable that intermarriage converts are predominantly converting at their spouse's parish (likely not an English-language parish).

[45] This broadly correlates with Parker, "Radechesis," 105, who found that one-third required the godparents be Orthodox Christians and the remainder wanting something extra (e.g. attending services, attending a single class, etc); yet contrasts with the early Church, where a sponsor was required to testify that the person had already changed their life sufficiently to become a catechumen (Parker, "Radechesis," 38).

[46] Parker, "Radechesis," 103–04, found similarly, with only 10% of his respondents intentionally arranging a post-baptismal appointment with the convert.

Figure 5

Reasons for disaffiliation



4.2.4 Part B: On Adults Received into the Church (4 responses, 46 data points)

While this section had a smaller response than Part A, the responses were significant, interesting, and from diverse sources.

Firstly, a profile of an adult convert can be built. Such as person is likely to be male (60.8%), working full-time (62.5%), be of Anglo-Celtic appearance (at least 66.6%), hold an undergraduate degree (60.7%), be in a committed relationship (63%), have either zero children (52%) or 2–3 children (30%), live within twenty minutes of the church (56%), have been previously Christian (96.2%—usually Protestant, 59.5%), be 36–50 when they attended their first service (47.7%), be received into the Church either the same year or the next year as they began attending (both 45.6%), and to still be at the same parish (60.8%).[47]

The Barna Group's research indicates that two-thirds of Americans who choose to be active Christians do so before they turn eighteen.[48] This research showed average converts to be double that age. Given that most converts were previously of a Christian denomination, this confirms that at present the perceived appeal of Orthodoxy is mostly confined to people who already identify as followers of Christ.

At present, only eight (17.8%) of the forty-six reported people received into the Church as adults are known to have gone on to disaffiliate, and all but one of these

[47] 'Committed Relationship' includes being engaged, married or de facto; where ethnicity was mixed, or where there was any doubt, then a person's ethnicity could be counted twice; and, travel time was sometimes approximated (e.g. 'local' was approximated as 'within 20 minutes').

[48] Barna Group, "Evangelism Is Most Effective Among Kids," *Barna Research: Family & Kids* (October 11, 2004), https://www.barna.com/research/evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids/ (accessed 16/11/2018).

occurred within two years. This gives some support to the hypothesis that the effect of the catechetical process on disaffiliation is no more than two years. Thus, of those who have been received into the Church for two years or more, 25.8% have disaffiliated.

Just as a profile of a convert can be derived, a profile of a disaffiliate can likewise be tentatively formed (see Table 3). A number of traits broadly follow the traits of converts in general; however, a disaffiliate is disproportionately more likely to be male, aged 18–20 years, of Anglo-Celt appearance, and be received in the same year they began attending services.

Table 3 **Comparison of disaffiliates to average convert**

	Average *(<=46)*	**Disaffiliates** *(<=8)*
Male	60.8%	75%
18–20 when received	31.7%	62.5%
HS or UG education	53.5%	83.3%
Look Anglo-Celt	66.6% +	87.5% +
Live >=40min away	28.2%	80%
Single	30.4%	75%
Childless	52.1%	87.5%
Same year attended and received	46.6%	75%
Catechetical Process 1	25%	28.5%
Catechetical Process 2	15.6%	0%
Catechetical Process 3	25%	42.8%
Catechetical Process 4	34.3%	28.5%
Community 2	8.8% (3)	0%
Community 3	17.6% (6)	0%
Community 5	20.5% (7)	*Total*: 25% (2) *Comm.*: 28.5%
Community 6	52.9% (18)	*Total*: 75% (6) *Comm.*: 33.3%

5. Critical Analysis of Catechetical Process Effects on Preventing Adult Disaffiliation

The survey has revealed several factors in the catechetical process influencing why some converts remain Orthodox Christians and others disaffiliate, thereby informing catechists of the need to implement strategies that may reduce the rate of disaffiliation within the first two years.

5.1 The Convert

There are a variety of factors from each convert which, taken separately, might be considered causes for concern (see Tables 4 and 5). However, two causes for concern are a 100% disaffiliation rate among those who were aged 18–20 at baptism, and that all disaffiliates were of Anglo-Celt appearance.[49] Other factors also coincided among those who disaffiliated, including being single, male, childless, with secondary or undergraduate levels of education. However, no demographic factor was nearly as conclusive as age and appearance.[50]

Table 4 **Catechetical process factors as risk factors**

	Total Converts	Total Disaffiliates	% of Converts Disaffiliated
Age 18–20	5	5	100.0%
Single	14	6	42.8%
Secondary/Undergraduate*	15	5	33.3%
Childless	22	7	31.8%
Anglo-Celt appearance	33	8	24.2%
Male	28	6	21.4%
Living 40min away*	9	4	21.4%

* = *diminished response for the question*

[49] Distance from the church could potentially be a third demographic risk factor—specifically, if the convert lives 40–45mins away. One possible explanation is that this distance seems feasible to travel, but is too distant to become part of the community, while greater distances may prevent conversion. Further research is required on this matter.

[50] Given the predominance of males, people of Anglo-Celtic appearance, and people of university education among converts, a worthwhile topic of further research would be to explore whether there are socio-economic factors that prevent conversion.

Table 5 **Catechetical process factors as risk factors after removing converts aged 18–20 years**

	Total Remaining Converts	Total Remaining Disaffiliates	% of Remainder Disaffiliated
Single	9	1	11.1%
High School or Undergraduate*	12	2 (of 2)	16.6%*
Childless	18	3	16.6%
Anglo-Celt appearance	29	4	13.7%
Male	24	2	8.3%
Living 40min away*	7	2 (of 2)	28.5%*

* = *diminished response for the question*

As stated above, priests surveyed gave various answers as to why converts disaffiliated (see Table 6). There was some disconnect between the perception of why people disaffiliated, and the reasons given for disaffiliation.

Table 6 **Priests on why converts disaffiliate**

	Perception	For each convert	Overlap
Problems in personal/family life	4	--	No
Moving or living too far away	3	3	*Yes*
Not taking conversion seriously	2	--	No
Conduct of others in parish	1	3	*Some*
Changing to 'ethnic' parish	1	--	No
Poor catechism	1	1	*Yes*
Beliefs contrary to Church teaching	--	2	No
Perceived legalism	--	1	No

5.2 The Parish

By design, this study focused on parishes that were broadly similar, with the same language, jurisdiction and liturgical tradition. By coincidence, it also captured a number of other common traits, including parishes having 15–35 attendees at an average Sunday service, with a morning tea to follow, and having educational classes for adults.[51] However, because catechetical processes were inextricably intertwined with both the parish and the priest, it was not feasible to further compare the impacts of the parishes themselves on disaffiliation.

5.3 The Catechetical Process

Much like in the USA, catechists in Australia are expected to catechise in the best way they can work out.[52] Yet, while instruction is significant and necessary, other factors also significantly impact on disaffiliation. One such factor is the time that elapses between when a person first attends services, and when they are received into the Church (see Table 7). Of those who have disaffiliated, the majority were received in the same year as they began attending services.[53]

Table 7 **Correlation of period of time between attendance/reception and disaffiliation**

	Attended and received (*45 known*)	**Disaffiliated**
Same year	21	6
Next year	21	2
Year after	3	0

[51] One dissimilarity was the number of services in a month—most served 10–13 each month, with outliers as high as 92. Contrary to popular belief, there is no correlation between the number of services and the number of adults received into the Church.

[52] Slagle, *The Eastern Church in the Spiritual Marketplace*, 66; Parker, "Radechesis," 95–8. One difference is that the best catechists in the USA generally had a formal and structured catechetical component, while only 20% conducted monthly meetings with discussions and without curriculum.

[53] Parker, "Radechesis," 93, ponders the worthwhile question of the length of the inquiry period against the length of the formal catechumenate. Among those surveyed, until 2017, almost all converts were made catechumens in the same year that they were baptised, indicating a long inquiry process. This worthwhile question requires further research.

Reasons for this are difficult to establish as lack of data on people who decide not to be baptised eliminates potential answers on whether the catechetical process is too onerous or otherwise acts to prevent those who lose interest or commitment. While it is preferable within Orthodox theology that a person remain an unbeliever than to convert and apostatise, a middle ground is required so as to avoid preventing baptism for those who should be received.[54]

It is difficult to give perspective to rates of disaffiliation. Archpriest Josiah Trenham, a benchmark in rigorous catechism, claims a retention rate of 88% after five years;[55] while Fr John identifies that even in the best catechetical processes in the United States, 90% are retained in any given year, which given the "unprecedented mobility" of the twenty-first century, Fr John considers to be "nothing short of miraculous".[56]

5.3.1 Process One: Weekly Appointments

The most used process, used to catechise seventeen converts, included an informal catechism comprising weekly individual appointments between the priest and the catechumen. One community used this as its exclusive catechetical process (sixteen converts), reporting 9–12 months between a convert's first visit and being made a catechumen, and a further 3–6 months before the catechumen is received into the Church, with the census indicating the majority received into the Church in the year after they first attended. Of those received in 2016 or prior, eight were received, with two disaffiliating within six months.

5.3.2 Process Two: Biweekly Appointments with some Catechism

A closely related process, used to catechise five converts, included scheduling twice-weekly individual appointments, including a catechetical component of three hours. This was the predominant catechetical process of one community, which reported 3–6 months between a convert's first visit and when they are made a catechumen, and a further 3–6 months before being received into the Church. Currently, this method

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[54] Michael Prokurat, Alexander Golitzin and Michael D Peterson, *Historical Dictionary of the Orthodox Church* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 35.

[55] Fr Josiah has catechised 350 converts over eighteen years. Parker, "Radechesis," 75; Josiah Trenham, "Making Your Church a Catechetical Power House," *Ancient Faith Radio: Orthodox Institute 2015 – Adult Education* (November 8, 2015), https://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/orthodox_institute_2015_adult_education_building_on_the_foundation_of_faith/making_your_parish_a_catechetical_powerhouse (accessed November 5, 2018), under Q9.

[56] Parker, "Radechesis," 91–2.

catechised only 10.8% of all converts, but also has a nil disaffiliation rate after two years.[57]

5.3.3 Process Three: Self-Directed

The least involved catechetical process was a self-directed process, mostly used by one community to catechise eight converts.[58] While this method included 0–2 appointments with the priest, the onus for learning was on the convert, through books, movies or podcasts. Typically, people were then received within the same year that they had first attended a service. This method provided disaffiliates disproportionally. A curious outcome of this process is that those who disaffiliated are also all aged under 40, while all of those over age 40 remain, to date, affiliated.[59]

5.3.4 Process Four: Formal Catechism

The final catechetical process is to have a formal catechism, including a total of 12–18 hours of lectures. This was used by two worshipping communities, and has catechised thirteen converts, developing and enlarging over time. Despite its relative formality and high participation rate, it has had a low disaffiliation rate; with those disaffiliating being aged 18, were taught using the twelve hour course, and were received in the same year as they first attended. Of those who had a catechism of 15–18 hours, there have been no disaffiliates to date.

6. Review and Recommendations

Based on the data and subsequent analysis, some recommendations can be made. There are currently four types of catechetical instruction used in the surveyed communities. A self-directed catechism is not recommended as it is particularly correlated with disaffiliation for those under 40. Simply setting weekly appointments is not recommended as this provides too little structure. However, combining weekly appointments with a formal catechism would be a significant improvement.[60] Another successful option is to set biweekly appointments combined with catechism,

[57] In what is likely a statistical anomaly, four of the five (likely two couples) each had over five children, were previously evangelical Protestants, were aged between 38–46 when received, and remain frequent attendees.

[58] The community in question has since moved on to other methods.

[59] As might be expected, those over 40 were married and they usually had children, while those under 40 were usually unmarried and childless. Further research would be required to establish causation.

[60] This could be achieved through a 'flipped classroom' model, using existing catechisms on YouTube or elsewhere.

but this appears inefficient and difficult to scale. Finally, formal catechism has seen significant success.

Four primary factors especially contribute to disaffiliation: if the convert is between 18–20 years old, is received in the same year they first attend, lives 40 minutes away, or is given a self-directed catechism. To prevent against this, it is strongly recommended that a priest not receive a person into the Church until they have been attending for at least 9–12 months, that a convert is being deliberately integrated into the worshipping community in some way, and that a catechist incorporates a formal catechism as part of the catechetical process. Catechists are recommended to keep to these criteria more rigorously for young adults.[61] Moreover, further research is required to look at the influence of other demographic factors on the conversion process, including sex, children and appearance.

Catechists require support from their governing structure, including formal instruction in how to catechise, co-ordinating catechetical processes, and developing catechists. Further, the numbers of converts indicates that much more could be done to invite people to consider Orthodox Christianity.[62] At the diocesan level, it is strongly recommended that a central department (or similar) be established to support, encourage, educate and develop catechism and evangelism.

(Tables 8 and 9 follow on page 25)

[61] Catechists would do well to remember that a catechumenate in the early Church was "as long as three years" (Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*, 69), and to keep Fr Josiah's (Trenham, "Making Your Church a Catechetical Power House") words in mind: a convert who "can't endure a catechism" is certain to disaffiliate.

[62] Parker, "Radechesis," 98, indicates that this is a problem common to the United States.

Table 8 **Catechetical Process ('CP') and length of time between first service attended and reception**

	CP1 (weekly appts)	CP2 (biweekly appts and catechism)	CP3 (self-directed)	CP4 (formal catechism)
Same year	4	1	7	7
Next year	9	3	1	6
2 years after	2	1	0	0
Total Participation (*2016 and prior*)	**8** **26.6%**	**5** **16.6%**	**8** **26.6%**	**9** **30%**
Total Disaffiliation (*2016 and prior*)	**2** **28.5%**	**0** **0%**	**3** **42.8%**	**2** **28.5%**

Table 9 **Catechetical Process ('CP') and continued affiliation rates after being received into the Church (2016 and prior; 31 received)**

	CP1 (weekly appts)	CP2 (biweekly appts and catechism)	CP3 (self-directed)	CP4 (formal catechism)
Total people prepared via a given process	8	5	7	9
People retained via a given process	6 75%	5 100%	4 57.1%	7 77.7%
Proportion of total who underwent a given process (*29 known*)	27.5%	17.2%	24.1%	29.0%
Proportion of affiliated who underwent a given process (*22 known*)	27.2%	22.7%	18.1%	31.8%
Proportion of disaffiliates who underwent a given process (*7 known*)	28.5%	0%	42.8%	28.5%

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The Diatessaron: A Short Introduction

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Abstract: This article provides a description and discussion of Tatian's harmony of the Gospels, the Diatessaron, that while necessarily selective, provides greater detail than normally found in entry-level resources, and that cites a range of literature representative of contemporary scholarship. The title and author are treated first, after which the circumstances of the Diatessaron's composition are discussed. A survey of witnesses is followed by consideration of the work's structure, textual character, and influence. Finally, the article notes several factors that may have led Tatian to compose the Diatessaron, including the possibility that he intended the work to supplant the separate Gospels.

Keywords: Gospel harmonies, Tatian, New Testament versions, patristic interpretation, textual criticism

The Diatessaron, composed around AD 172, in either Greek or Syriac, harmonises the text of the Four Gospels into a single narrative. The original work has not survived, but through the analysis of various textual witnesses many of its distinctive readings may be recovered and its literary structure reconstructed. Based on copies of the Gospels circulating in the second century, the Diatessaron is of critical importance to the study of the textual transmission of the Gospels. As the oldest of the Gospel versions and the first known Syriac version, it had a formative role in the making of a number of early translations. Moreover, the Diatessaron provided the template for the crafting of numerous harmonies, both in the East and the West, and in often subtle ways has left its mark on historical biblical interpretation and Christian devotion.

Most students of the New Testament have heard of the Diatessaron, but few are conversant with the distinctive structure, textual features, and critical implications of the work. Understandably, there is some aversion to delving into a field of study that has the reputation of being notoriously complex and esoteric. Undoubtedly, the

Diatessaron can appear baffling: the text has to be reconstructed, piecemeal, from witnesses in a score of languages; the author remains an enigmatic figure; much of its history is indefinite; and though it gives rise to a plethora of questions and theories it admits of few certainties. Arthur Vööbus did not understate the matter when he wrote that the study of the Diatessaron is "one of the most difficult topics in all the field of New Testament textual criticism."[1] Still, it is mistaken to think that the topic is impenetrable, or that the findings of Diatessaronic scholarship are irrelevant to non-specialists. On the contrary, Diatessaronic studies impact in various ways on New Testament scholarship generally, as well as in fields such as history, patrology, philology, liturgics, and theology. Perplexing perhaps, but the work cannot be ignored.

Clearly, students and early-career researchers require a level of information that enables them to appreciate the significance of the Diatessaron, and to locate and comprehend the findings of its scholarship relative to their own fields of interest. The purpose of this article, then, is to offer something more substantial than what is found generally in New Testament Introductions, Bible dictionaries, and handbooks on New Testament textual criticism, by providing an accessible but comprehensive entry-level introduction to the Diatessaron and its scholarship.[2] Being introductory, the article is selective in its treatment and frequently touches on points deserving of a more detailed discussion. Hopefully, however, the information provided will orientate readers sufficiently to enable them to pursue topics of interest with reference to the relevant specialist literature.

1. Title and authorship

The origin of the Diatessaron is obscure as there is no contemporary report of its composition. Generally, however, it is accepted that the work was compiled by Tatian. Eusebius, the first writer to mention the Diatessaron, states in his *Ecclesiastical History* (*circa* AD 324) that "Tatian brought together, I do not know how, a combination and compilation from the Gospels, and he named this the

[1] Arthur Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament* (PETSE 6; Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1954) 3.

[2] The 'go-to' intermediate level introduction is Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) 10–36, dated but still valuable. Anyone wishing to engage in-depth with Diatessaronic studies requires William L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (VCSup 25; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1994). My indebtedness to Petersen's magisterial study is apparent throughout this article.

Diatessaron (τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων i.e. 'the From-the-Four') which is still extant among some."[3] Eusebius' statement suggests that he had no first-hand knowledge of the work,[4] but he acknowledges Tatian's authorship and the fundamental feature that the work combined "the Gospels" (τῶν εὐαγγελίων). The harmonistic and unitary nature of the Diatessaron is underscored by the Syriac writers who commonly refer to it as the *ewangeliyon da-meḥalleṭē* (ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܕܡܚܠܠܛܐ) or 'Gospel of the Mixed', as distinct from the canonical Four Gospels, the *ewangeliyon da-meparrešē* (ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܕܡܦܪܫܐ) or 'Gospel of the Separated'. Although later Syriac writers occasionally refer to the work by transliterating the Greek title (ܕܝܐܛܣܪܘܢ, *diyaṭessaron*), it is telling that the fourth-century Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* reads: "... and he called it Diatessaron; now this is [the Gospel] of the Mixed." As Petersen observes, "The fact that the Greek word 'Diatessaron' requires explanation ('now this is "of the Mixed"') suggests that the Syriac-speaking audience," at that time, was "unfamiliar with the Greek title."[5]

In Tatian's surviving tractate, *Oration to the Greeks* (*Oratio ad Graecos*), he declares himself born in "the land of the Assyrians" (a geographical reference that may refer either to Mesopotamia or Syria).[6] A student of philosophy, he converted to Christianity and eventually arrived in Rome, where he studied under a fellow

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[3] *H.e.* 4.29.6 (my translation). Also, in the 4th cent., Saint Epiphanius of Salamis (*haer.* 46.1.9) reports, "It is said that the Diatessaron, which some call 'According to the Hebrews,' was written by [Tatian]," (Frank Williams (trans.), *The* Panarion *of Epiphanius of Salamis (Book 1, Sects 1–46)* (2nd edition; NHMS 63; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009) 377).

[4] Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron,* 36.

[5] Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 37. Eusebius also described the Gospel synopsis by Ammonius as τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων εὐαγγέλιον, in his Letter to Carpianus (NA[28], 89*). Francis Watson ("Towards a Redaction-Critical Reading of the Diatessaron Gospel," *EC* 7 (2016): 95 n.2) observes, "the same expression can be used for 'fourfold' works in different formats – parallel columns in Ammonius's case, in contrast to Tatian's consecutive text." Matthew R. Crawford ("Diatessaron, a Misnomer? The Evidence From Ephrem's Commentary," *EC* 4 (2013): 362–85) develops the thesis that Tatian preferred to style his harmony simply as 'Gospel'. David Laird Dungan (*A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition, and the Interpretation of the Gospels* (New York/London: Doubleday, 1999) 40–41), recanvasses the theory that Tatian took the title from the Greek musical term, *diatessaron*, referring to the first four notes of the octave, which with the *diapente* (the second five notes, one note overlapping) made the eight-note *diapason*; a major concept in Pythagorean musical theory. However, Duggan's argument is speculative inasmuch as "no ancient author explains the title in terms of musical theory," Peterson, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 51.

[6] *Or.* 42. References to *Or.* follow Molly Whittaker (ed), *Tatian:* Oratio ad Graecos *And Fragments* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

'easterner,' the Palestinian-born Saint Justin the Philosopher. After Justin's martyrdom (about AD 165), Tatian fell out with the Roman Church, which expelled him in AD 172.[7] Saint Epiphanius reports that Tatian then returned to Mesopotamia, where he founded a school that had considerable influence in the regions of Antioch, Cilicia and Pisidia.[8] It is thought that he died about AD 185, perhaps in Adiabene. Saint Irenaeus, whose report is followed by the Fathers generally,[9] declares that Tatian adhered to Saint Justin's teaching until his martyrdom, after which Tatian "separated from the Church, and, excited and puffed up by the thought of being a teacher,[10] as if he were superior to others, he composed his own peculiar type of doctrine."[11] Most probably after he left Rome, Tatian "invented a system of invisible Aeons, like the followers of Valentinus," and "first introduced [the] blasphemy" of denying the salvation of Adam.[12] Irenaeus also maintains that Tatian rejected marriage as "corruption and fornication,"[13] and held other Encratite views propagated by Saturninus and Marcion.[14]

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[7] Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 71.

[8] *Haer.* 46.1.8. Tatian possibly spent time both in Alexandria and Athens. Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 1.1) may refer to Tatian when he describes a teacher he knew as, "from Cœle-Syria ... [who] was born in the land of Assyria ..." (William Wilson (trans.), *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria* (Vol. 1; ANCL 4; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868) 355); see Metzger, *Early Versions*, 33.

[9] E.g. Hippolytus of Rome (*refut.* 8.16); Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 3.13); Pseudo-Tertullian (*adv. omn. haer.* 7); and Epiphanius (*haer.* 46.1.7); see Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 71, 76–79.

[10] Eusebius (*h.e.* 5.13.8) identifies one Rhodon as a student of Tatian's in Rome, and as the author of several books, including anti-Marcionite treatises.

[11] *Haer.* 1.28.1 (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* (New edition; ANF 1; trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; n.p.: Ex Fontibus, 2010) 123–24).

[12] Irenaeus, *haer.* 1.28.1 (trans. Roberts and Donaldson, 123, and cf. 124).

[13] Irenaeus, *haer.* 1.28.1 (trans. Roberts and Donaldson, 124).

[14] 'Encratite' (Latin, *encratita*), cf. ἐγκράτεια, 'self-control'. Petersen (*Tatian's Diatessaron*, 79) observes that Eusebius (*h.e.* 4.28.2) "adds a new twist by calling Tatian the 'founder' (ἀρχηγός) of the Encratites," in which he is followed by Epiphanius and Jerome, whereas Irenaeus previously called "Tatian a *follower* of Saturninus and Marcion, whom he credits with the founding of Encratism" (author's emphasis). Eusebius (*h.e.* 4.29.2) clearly was aware of Irenaeus' testimony regarding Saturninus and Marcion, but perhaps mistook the statement that "Tatian first introduced [the] blasphemy," to mean that Tatian introduced Encratism; cf. Matthew R. Crawford, "The *Problemata* of Tatian: Recovering the Fragments of a Second-Century Christian Intellectual," *JTS*, NS 67 (2016): 556–57. Whatever the case, the notion that Tatian was the movement's founder stuck; for instance, in the 7th cent., Saint Isidore of Seville (*etym.* 8.25) reports, "The Tatianites are named from a certain Tatian; they are also called the Encratites, because they abhor meat," (Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis,

2. Composition

The Diatessaron was not the first Gospel harmony. Indeed, harmonisation of the Gospel accounts was a widespread practice in the second century. The *Gospel of the Hebrews*, known to Saint Epiphanius, was harmonistic;[15] Blessed Jerome reports that Theophilus of Antioch "put together into one work the words of the four gospels;"[16] Eusebius, in his Letter to Carpianus, observes that Ammonius of Alexandria (second or third century) prepared a harmony based on the Gospel of Matthew;[17] and the harmonised Fayyum fragment, Papyrus Vindobonensis Greek 2325, is also from this era.[18] Other second-century works such as the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Protoevangelium of James*, evidence harmonised features.[19] Moreover, certain of Saint Justin's Gospel quotations indicate that he used a harmonised source.[20] Hence, within its historical context, "Tatian's Diatessaron appears not so much an innovation but rather an example of a particular literary practice."[21]

J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof (trans.), *The* Etymologies *of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 176); and in the 13th cent., Bar Hebraeus in *The Candelabra of Holiness* refers to the heresy "of the Encratites, by a man named Tatian," cit. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 63.

[15] Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 30.

[16] *Ep. ad Algasiam* (121) 6, cit. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 32.

[17] NA[28], 89*.

[18] Dated to the early 3rd cent., but possibly 2nd cent., it blends Matt 26:30–34 and Mark 14:26–30. See Stanley E. Porter, "Early Apocryphal Gospels and the New Testament Text," in *The Early Text of the New Testament* (eds C. E. Hill and M. J. Kruger; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 362–63.

[19] See respectively, Joseph Verheyden, "Some Reflections on Determining the Purpose of the 'Gospel of Peter'," in *Das Evangelium nach Petrus: Text, Kontexte, Intertext* (TU 158; eds Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas; Berlin/New York, 2007) 281–99; and Thomas O'Loughlin, "The Protevangelium of James: A Case of Gospel Harmonization in the Second Century?" in *Papers Presented at the Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2011* (SPat 65/13; ed. Markus Vinzent; Leuven/Paris/Walpole: Peeters, 2013) 165–73.

[20]See William L. Petersen, "Textual Evidence for Tatian's Dependence Upon Justin's ΑΠΟΜΝΗΜΟΝΕΥΜΑΤΑ," *NTS* 36 (1990): 512–34; and M.-É. Boismard, *Le Diatessaron: De Tatien à Justin* (ÉB 15; Paris: Gabalda, 1992).

[21] Mina Monier and Joan E. Taylor, "Tatian's Diatessaron: The Arabic Version, The Dura Europos Fragment, and the Women Witnesses," *JTS,* NS (forthcoming, 2021): prepublication copy, 5. James W. Barker ("Ancient Compositional Practices and the Gospels: A Reassessment," *JBL* 135 (2016): 109–121), finds evidence of micro-conflation, or the reordering and combining of words and phrases from multiple sources in scriptural pericopes, going back to the Greek Minor Prophets (*kaige*) Scroll from Naḥal Ḥever (late 1st cent. BC).

There is no question that the Diatessaron was compiled from the canonical Gospels,[22] but the harmonisation required that Tatian should occasionally gloss terms and insert connecting phrases. Further, it is evident that the Diatessaron contained non-standard readings that were derived from sources other than the Four Gospels. Given that in some instances similar readings occur in works such as the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Gospel of the Hebrews*,[23] some scholars have suggested that Tatian may have used a written 'fifth' source, such as an Aramaic apocryphal Gospel.[24] Equally, these readings may reflect local oral traditions current in the second century.

It has long been debated as to whether Syriac or Greek was the original language of publication.[25] One point generally agreed is that it is unlikely that a Syriac translation of the Gospels was available to Tatian in the mid-second century, so it must be presumed that he worked from Greek sources. Possibly he first composed a draft of the harmony in Greek, and then made a Syriac translation that he published. As Ulrich Schmid observes, "It seems hardly conceivable to perform a close word-by-word harmonization from Greek Gospel texts and a Syriac translation simultaneously, without at least one intermediate Greek harmony stage during the compositional process."[26] But if the work was then first published in Greek, the

[22] The extent to which the Four Gospels might be considered as being invested with 'canonical' status in the mid-2nd cent. is a moot point. But for Tatian's teacher, Justin, the Gospels were the "Memoirs of the Apostles" (ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων), that were read in the services together with the Old Testament prophets (*1 apol.* 67.3). As Oskar Skarsaune ("Justin and His Bible," in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (eds Sara Parvis and Paul Foster; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 76) remarks, "Justin has an incipient canon in the way he refers to the Gospels, exactly as Memoirs, and he has a kind of implicit canon in the decisive role he accords to the apostles.".

[23] See Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 230–31, 292–94, 410–11 & 414–20.

[24] E.g. Jan Joosten, "Le Diatessaron syriaque," in *Le Nouveau Testament en syriaque* (ÉS 14; ed. Jean-Claude Haelewyck; Paris: Geuthner, 2017) 65–66; and see Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 28. But in Metzger's estimate (*Early Versions*, 36), "the amount of extra-canonical material that seems to have been present in Tatian's Diatessaron hardly justifies the opinion ... that Tatian made use of a fifth, apocryphal Gospel."

[25] E.g. in favour of Syriac, Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron,* 224–25 & 384–97; and Joosten, "Le Diatessaron syriaque," 56–64; in favour of Greek, Tjitze Baarda, "Tatian's Diatessaron and the Greek Text of the Gospels," in *The Early Text of the New Testament* (eds C. E. Hill and M. J. Kruger; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 337–38; and Ulrich B. Schmid, "The Diatessaron of Tatian," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (2nd edition; NTTSD 42; eds B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes; Leiden: Brill, 2013) 115–16 n.5.

[26] Schmid, "The Diatessaron of Tatian," 115 n.5.

problem remains that the earliest Greek mention of the work is from Eusebius, an 'easterner,' in the fourth century, while no Western (i.e. Latin) acknowledgement of the Diatessaron survives from before the sixth century.[27] It is the case that the Greek text of the mid-third century Dura Parchment (see below) may be earliest extant witness of the Diatessaron, but far from establishing that the work circulated first in Greek, there are grounds for concluding that the Dura text was translated from a Syriac source.[28] Moreover, research by Jan Joosten has demonstrated that Tatian took over Old Testament quotations in the Gospels from the Peshîṭta Old Testament.[29] Together these circumstances suggest that Tatian's harmony was originally published in Syriac.

If the original language of the Diatessaron was Syriac, then that reinforces the conclusion that the harmony was completed after Tatian left Rome and returned to the East. Still, Justin's use of a Gospel harmony presumably provided a model for Tatian, and one cannot rule-out entirely the possibility that the Diatessaron was completed in Rome prior to Justin's martyrdom. As was noted above, according to Saint Irenaeus, Tatian adhered to the teaching of the Church prior to Justin's death. So it is telling that apart from some indications of Encratite belief, there is nothing in the Diatessaron as reconstructed that reflects the other types of doctrinal deviation intimated by Irenaeus.[30] This is to be expected if the work was undertaken while Justin was still alive, and thus is an argument in favour of the work being completed

[27] Metzger (*Early Versions*, 32) notes that if the work originally circulated in Greek, it is telling that although well-informed figures such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Jerome, knew of Tatian and his *Oration to the Greeks*, they never mention his Diatessaron.

[28] *Editio princeps* by C. H. Kraeling, *A Greek Fragment of Tatian's Diatessaron from Dura* (SD 3; London: Christophers, 1935). Kraeling (18), with others, thought the fragment established that the Diatessaron was originally composed in Greek; a conclusion dismissed immediately in favour of a Syriac original by D. Plooij, "A Fragment of Tatian's Diatessaron in Greek," *ET* 46 (1934–35): 472–76; and see Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 196–203. However, on the basis of their analysis, D. C. Parker, D. G. K. Taylor, and M. S. Goodacre ("The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony," in *Studies in the Early Text of the Gospels and Acts* (SBLTCS 1; ed. D. G. K. Taylor; Atlanta: SBL, 1999) 216) conclude "that there is no linguistic or biblical text-critical evidence which may be best explained by the text's being derived from a Syriac original, or having undergone Syriac influence." Monier and Taylor ("Tatian's Diatessaron: The Arabic Version," prepub. 8) submit that even if the Dura text "does not constitute a Greek form of the Diatessaron, it would still be reasonable to presume that one existed, given the strength of Greek in the East."

[29] Jan Joosten, "Tatian's Diatessaron and the Old Testament Peshitta," *JBL* 120 (2001): 501–23.

[30] A generally positive assessment of the Diatessaron's Christology is made by Peter M. Head, "Tatian's Christology and its Influence on the Composition of the Diatessaron," *TynB* 43 (1992): 121–37.

in Rome. On balance, however, the circumstance that the Diatessaron first appears in the East, together with its probable composition in Syriac, and the lack of Western acknowledgement for centuries, make it more likely that the work was published after Tatian left Rome in AD 172.

3. Witnesses

As no copy of the original Diatessaron is known to exist, the text must be reconstructed through the exacting analysis of various textual witnesses. The principal witnesses are an array of derived harmonies, but also of importance are the early versions of the Gospels, and allusions and quotations found in the Fathers and other Christian writings. Witnesses are divided into Eastern and Western branches.

Eastern witnesses

The aforementioned Dura Parchment (Gregory-Aland 0212),[31] if Diatessaronic, is the oldest witness extant. The fragment dates to the third century and was discovered at the site of a Christian house-chapel during the excavation of Dura-Europos in March 1933. The legible Greek text covers fourteen lines, that commence partway through the account of the Witnesses at the Crucifixion and that break off after introducing Joseph of Arimathea. The Diatessaronic nature of the fragment has been contested, with some scholars maintaining that it comprises the remains of an unidentified Gospel harmony, and others that the fragment is from an original Greek Diatessaron or else from an *ad hoc* Greek translation of the Syriac Diatessaron.[32] Apart from the Dura Parchment, the earliest Eastern witness is found in a commentary on the Diatessaron attributed to Saint Ephrem,[33] extant in an Armenian translation,

[31] Also cited by its Yale University Library shelf-mark, Pg. Dura 10, and as Dura Parchment 24.

[32] Petersen (*Tatian's Diatessaron*, 199–200) incorrectly states that Daniël Plooij thought "it was less than certain that the fragment was from Tatian's Diatessaron," or that it came from an unidentified Passion harmony. On the contrary, Plooij ("A Fragment of Tatian's Diatessaron," 476) declared: "There is no reasonable doubt that the fragment is really Tatian," and posited that the fragment might be part of a Passion harmony extracted from the Diatessaron. More recently, Parker *et al.* ("The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony," 228) conclude that the fragment "is not a part of Tatian's Diatessaron." *Contra* Parker *et al.* see Jan Joosten, "The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron," *VC* 57 (2003): 159–75; also Matthew R. Crawford, "The Diatessaron, Canonical or Non-canonical? Rereading the Dura Fragment," *NTS* 62 (2016): 253–77. Monier and Taylor ("Tatian's Diatessaron: The Arabic Version," prepub. 28) suggest that the "Dura text conforms to other scribal exercises in being written on a small piece of parchment;" which may explain the sometimes idiosyncratic Greek of the fragment.

[33] Ephrem's authorship is called into question by Christian Lange, *The Portrayal of Christ in the Syriac Commentary on the Diatessaron* (CSCO 516, Subs. 118; Leuven: Peeters, 2005); cf. Carmel McCarthy,

preserved in two copies,[34] and in a Syriac copy from the late fifth or early sixth century.[35] Especially important is the Arabic translation of a Syriac harmony made by Abū l-Faraǧ ʿAbdallāh ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib al-ʿIrāqī (died 1043), a priest of the Church of the East, and noted exegete, philosopher, and physician. The attribution of the Arabic Harmony to Ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib has been challenged, and the work, in two main recensions, has its own complexities of transmission,[36] but it is recognised that the Arabic Harmony is one of the best sources available for reconstructing the original Diatessaron.[37] The Persian Harmony, translated from Syriac in the thirteenth century, is an idiosyncratic Eastern witness inasmuch as it displays a unique structure, notwithstanding that many of its readings appear to agree with the Diatessaron.[38] Further afield, Manichaean texts written in Parthian and found at Turfan in China, preserve distinctive Diatessaronic readings.

Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac 709 with Introduction and Notes (JSS Supp. 2; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 23–34; and Schmid, "The Diatessaron of Tatian," 126. Regardless, the work is of undoubted critical importance.

[34] Louis Leloir (ed.), *Saint Éphrem: Commentaire de l'Évangile concordant, version arménienne* (2 vols; CSCO 137 (text.) / 145 (vers.); Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1953–1954).

[35] Louis Leloir (ed.), *Saint Éphrem: Commentaire de l'Évangile concordant, texte syriaque* (CBM 8(a); Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1963); Louis Leloir (ed.), *Saint Éphrem: Commentaire de l'Évangile concordant, texte syriaque (Manuscrit Chester Beatty 709), Folios Additionnels* (CBM 8(b); Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1990); and McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary.*

[36] For a list of witnesses and literature see Timothy B. Sailors, "Tatian's Diatessaron as 'The Gospel': The Manuscripts and Translation of the Arabic Gospel Harmony and the Gospels in Arabic and Their Relation to the Second-Century Text," (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Faculteit Theologie en Religiewetenschappen, 2015), online at https://www.academia.edu/12008140/ (accessed 19/06/2017); on the manuscripts see also Monier and Taylor, "Tatian's Diatessaron," prepub. 13–20.

[37] The critical importance of the Arabic Harmony is demonstrated by Tjitze Baarda, *Essays on the Diatessaron* (CBET 11; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994) 111–32 (= Tjitze Baarda, "To the Roots of the Syriac Diatessaron Tradition (T^A 25:1–3)," *NovT* 26 (1986): 1–25); and see N. Peter Joosse, "An Introduction to the Arabic Diatessaron," *OrC* 83 (1999): 72–129; and John Granger Cook, "A Note on Tatian's 'Diatessaron', Luke, and the Arabic Harmony," *ZAC* 10 (2006): 462–71. Editions by Agostino Ciasca (ed.), *Tatiani Evangeliorum Harmoniae Arabice* (Rome: Propaganda Fide, 1888); and A.-S. Marmardji (ed.), *Diatessaron de Tatien* (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1935). English translations (based on Ciasca's edition) by J. Hamlyn Hill, *The Earliest Life of Christ Ever Compiled from the Gospels: Being the Diatessaron of Tatian* (Piscataway: Gorgias, reprint 2001); and Hope W. Hogg, "The Diatessaron of Tatian," in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Additional Volume* (ed. Allan Menzies; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896) 35–138.

[38] See Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 259–63; also N. Peter Joosse, "An Introduction to the So-called Persian Diatessaron of Iwannis ʿIzz al-Din of Tabriz: the Testimony of John 2:1-11 (the Wedding at

Deserving of mention, if only because so often overlooked, are the Syriac Passion Harmonies. These harmonies consist of a series of lections (variously from ten to twelve in number) for the Great Thursday of the Mystery to the eve of Holy Saturday. They are found in two versions: one, the Ḥarklean Passion Harmony, composed in the vicinity of Harran in the ninth century;[39] and the other, the rare Peshîṭta Passion Harmony that may date from the twelfth century. As the respective titles indicate, the text of the Ḥarklean Passion Harmony is conformed to the early seventh-century 'mirror' translation of the Greek made by Thomas of Ḥarqel, while the Peshîṭta Passion Harmony is conformed to the text of the venerable 'Syriac Vulgate'. There are marked differences between the copies of the Peshîṭta Harmony, but they also share many structural similarities with the Ḥarklean counterpart. The Ḥarklean Passion Harmony divides into three recensions.[40] The oldest, *D*, preserves the structure of the ninth-century composition, while *C*, from about the eleventh or twelfth century, and *E,* which derives from *C*, are characterised by extensive structural revision. In 1905, George Barton and Hans Spoer identified substantial sequential similarities between five sections of the Ḥarklean Passion Harmony (unknown to them, from recension *E*) and the Arabic Harmony, but found no evidence that the remainder of the harmony was Diatessaronic.[41] Seventy years later, Bruce Metzger concluded that the Ḥarklean Passion Harmony was unrelated to Tatian's composition;[42] an estimate that has seen the work generally bypassed in Diatessaronic scholarship.[43] However, Metzger's conclusion was based on partial

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Cana)," *OrC* 86 (2002): 13–45; and Bruce M. Metzger, "Tatian's Diatessaron and a Persian Harmony of the Gospels," *JBL* 69 (1950):261–80.

[39] The most recent study is Peter A. L. Hill, "The Ḥarklean Passion Harmony," *ParOr* 31 (2006): 213–30. My remarks here are informed by findings made in preparing an edition of the Passion Harmonies.

[40] Morris A. Weigelt ("Diatessaric Harmonies of the Passion Narrative in the Harclean Syriac Version," (ThD dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1969); 3 & 189–91), followed by Metzger, *Early Versions,* 75, identifies two 'Sequences' but does not explore their recensional nature or the extensive revisions found in the copies. Further, the 'Sequences' are conflated as a single text in his edition.

[41] G. A. Barton, and H. H. Spoer, "Traces of the Diatessaron of Tatian in Harclean Syriac Lectionaries," *JBL* 24 (1905): 181–82. See also H. H. Spoer, "Spuren eines syrischen Diatessarons," *ZDMG* 61 (1907): 850–59. Conversely, D. Wiley ("A Fragment of Tatian's Diatessaron," *ET* 25 (1913): 31–35), thought the incomplete text of a 9th/10th cent. copy of the Ḥarklean Passion Harmony (recension *D*) was "infinitely nearer" than the Arabic Harmony or Codex Fuldensis to "the original order of Tatian."

[42] Metzger, *Early Versions,* 75.

[43] The Syriac Passion Harmonies receive only a passing mention in Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 200. Parker *et al.* ("The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony," 217 n.71) though dismissing any connection

information. Rather, the recensional history, the data provided by the Peshîṭta Harmony, and the many instances of structural conformity with the Arabic Harmony, provide clear indications that the Syriac Passion Harmonies initially were derived from, and later revised against, Diatessaronic sources.

Several ancient Gospel versions in the East were influenced by the Diatessaron, and accordingly, preserve readings from Tatian's text. The Diatessaron was the first version of the Gospels in Syriac, and indeed, substituted for the separate Gospels until replaced by the Old Syriac version and then the Peshîṭta. The Old Syriac, in turn, informed the translation of the Georgian and Arabic Gospels, while the first Armenian Gospels may have been based on "a Syriac *tetraevangelion*, more deeply imbued with Diatessaronic readings than the two Old Syriac [manuscripts] known today."[44]

Western witnesses

First among the Western branch of witnesses is Codex Fuldensis, a Latin copy of the New Testament but with the Gospels in the form of a harmony.[45] The copy was made for Bishop Victor of Capua in Italy and completed 19 April 546. In the Preface, written by Victor, he describes how by chance he came across "the one composite gospel out of the four," and deduced (correctly) from Eusebius' description that the work was Tatian's harmony.[46] While the text of the harmony has been assimilated to that of the Latin Vulgate (i.e. has been 'vulgatised'),[47] of all the Western witnesses

between the Diatessaron and the Ḥarklean Passion Harmony, thought it "prudent to keep an eye on it," and adduce its data in their analysis (218–19 & 222–23). Unfortunately they had recourse to the "Évangéliaire diatessarique syriaque," appended to Marmardji (ed.), *Diatessaron de Tatien*, in which the text of Lections 35–40 (63*–75*) represents a truncated and late revision of recension *E.*.

[44] William L. Petersen, "The Diatessaron of Tatian," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (SD 46; eds B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 83.

[45] Editions by Ernest Ranke, *Codex Fuldensis: Novum Testamentum Latine interprete Hieronymo, ex manuscripto Victoris Capuani* (Marburg /Leipzig: Elwert, 1868); and Nicholas J. Zola, "Tatian's Diatessaron in Latin: A New Edition and Translation of Codex Fuldensis" (PhD dissertation, Baylor University, 2014).

[46] The first part of the Latin Preface and English translation in Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron,* 45–48.

[47] 'Vulgatisation' properly describes the conforming of a Latin scriptural text to the reading of the Latin Vulgate, but the term has come to denote more generally the conforming of the text of any early version to that of the common biblical text familiar to a later copyist or editor.

its sequence is the most closely aligned with the Arabic Harmony and Ephrem Commentary.

An extensive body of evidence is supplied by an array of Western harmonies that derive, albeit in varying measure, from the Diatessaron.[48] They include: Codex Sangallensis (AD 830, Latin and Old High German); the Venetian Harmony (13th/14th cent., Middle Italian); the Tuscan Harmony (14th/15th cent., Middle Italian); the Liège Harmony (about 1280, Middle Dutch); the Stuttgart Harmony (1332, Flemish dialect of Middle Dutch); *L'Estoire de L'Évangile* (mid-13th cent., Anglo-Norman),[49] and many others. Also of note are poetic compositions such as the *Heliand* (9th cent., Old Saxon); the Bavarian *Vita Beate Virginis Marie et Salvatories Rhythmica* (or *Vita Rhythmica*) (early 13th cent., Latin); and the rhymed *Rijmbijbel* of Jacob van Maerlant (1271, Middle Dutch).

What was the textual source behind this remarkably rich Western harmony tradition? One theory is that a now lost Old Latin Diatessaron, dating to before AD 200, was the fountainhead from which the Western vernacular harmonies descended. This source may also account for many of the Diatessaronic readings found in copies of the Old Latin Gospels. In broad terms, the theory is predicated on the circumstance that the Western harmonies exhibit agreed readings with the Eastern witnesses that are not shared with the vulgatised Codex Fuldensis. This would be explained if an early Latin Diatessaron was the link between the Western and Eastern textual traditions.[50] Still, other influences such as the pre-Tatianic Gospel harmonies also may account for shared readings.[51] Writing in the 1990s, Petersen could state that the hypothetical Old Latin Diatessaron "constitutes the basis for all current research into the Western witnesses."[52] Now, however, that hypothesis is rejected by proponents of the so-called 'new perspective' in Diatessaronic scholarship. In their

[48] For the copies and editions of the listed Western witnesses (and others), see "Appendix I. A Catalogue of Manuscripts of Diatessaronic Witnesses and Related Works," in Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron,* 445–89.

[49] The recently published English edition is by Brent A. Pitts, *The Anglo-Norman Gospel Harmony: A Translation of the* Estoire de l'Evangile (MRTS 453 / FRETS 7; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2014). Pitts (14–18) establishes that *L'Estoire de L'Évangile* was the source of the Middle English, Pepysian Harmony; cf. Schmid, "The Diatessaron of Tatian," 132.

[50] The Old Latin harmony hypothesis is helpfully surveyed by Ulrich B. Schmid, "In Search of Tatian's Diatessaron in the West," *VC* 57 (2003): 178–81.

[51] Petersen, "The Diatessaron of Tatian," 91.

[52] Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 112.

view the Old Latin Diatessaron is an unnecessary postulate that detracts from a proper assessment of the textual environments in which the vernacular harmonies developed.[53] For instance, one does not need to resort to the putative Old Latin Diatessaron to explain many of the readings found in the textline and margin of the Liège Harmony, given that the same readings occur in works such as the medieval *Glossa Ordinaria.*[54] Similarly, they argue that other harmonies can be shown to have shared material from non-harmony traditions, including local Gospel texts. Further, recent studies tend to affirm the influence of Codex Fuldensis in the West, to the extent that "until better evidence is available, Codex Fuldensis should be viewed as the ultimate archetype of the entire harmony tradition that has, broadly speaking, the same sequence and is extant in Latin and other Western vernacular languages."[55]

4. Structure and character

Essentially, Tatian combined the separate Gospels by lemmatising the source texts and then reordering the materials to arrange both single-source and multi-source pericopes as a harmonised narrative. The product of his procedure can be discovered only by evaluating the diverse evidence of the Diatessaronic witnesses with a view to determining structure and distinctive readings.

Structure

Harmonising the Gospel materials required Tatian to proceed by a series of steps.

> First, he had to find which passages in the Gospels were parallel to one another. In some instances, this would be fairly straightforward, though in other cases, where two passages were similar but had notable differences, he would have had to decide whether to treat them as separate accounts or combine them into one. Second, Tatian had to decide how to combine and order the individual elements he drew from his source texts to create a new, single pericope. Third, he had to determine how to arrange all of his individual pericopae into a continuous running narrative, perhaps at one point privileging the narrative order of one of his source texts and following another at a later time, as he saw fit for the

[53] The new perspective does not contend that there never was an Old Latin Diatessaron, rather, "It is simply not needed to explain the background of the readings that traditional Diatessaron scholarship has harvested from late medieval vernacular gospel harmonies in the West," Schmid, "The Diatessaron of Tatian," 137.

[54] I.e. a commentary consisting of interlinear and marginal glosses taken mostly from the Fathers and extant in medieval Latin manuscripts.

[55] Schmid, "The Diatessaron of Tatian," 137; but compare the analysis made by Zola, "Tatian's Diatessaron in Latin," 153–68.

> purposes of his new composition. Fourth, Tatian needed to go back through and stitch together the individual episodes using appropriate transitional phrases to produce a work possessing an organic wholeness.[56]

The result of the process was to create a double-layered macrostructure and microstructure. The macrostructure of the Diatessaron consists of the successive ordering of pericopes to advance the narrative. Sequences range from the connection of relatively large blocks of material, taken from one and then another Gospel, to series of pericopes created by the elaborate interweaving of short lemmata,[57] sometimes consisting of just one or two words, taken from two or more Gospels.[58] The multi-sourced pericopes tightly integrate the component parts and give the work its distinctive microstructure. However, while a general sense of the Diatessaron's structure is obtained from evaluating the witnesses, also there are significant differences between them, many of which can be attributed to independent reworkings of the tradition. Structural revisions included the fragmentation of blocks of single Gospel material by the intercalation of lemmata from the other Gospels, and the reordering of sequences for stylistic reasons.

The complex structure of the Diatessaron reflects Tatian's resolve to comprehensively integrate the four-fold Gospel narrative. Allowing for parallel accounts, it is estimated that he incorporated just over seventy per cent of the text provided by the separate Gospels.[59] On the evidence of a number of witnesses, the harmony commenced with John 1:1–5. It did not include the *Pericope Adulterae* (John 7:53–8:11), most likely because the text was unknown to Tatian, but did incorporate material from the longer ending of Mark (16:9–20), and thereby provides the earliest attestation of that text. On the evidence of Codex Fuldensis and the Arabic Harmony, the longest, uninterrupted, single-source blocks were John 8:12–12:2; Matt 25:1–26:5; and John 14–17.

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[56] Crawford, "The Diatessaron, Canonical or Non-canonical?" 261.

[57] 'Lemma' (plural: lemmata) in this context denotes an extract from a Gospel text. Some witnesses include marginal (e.g. Arabic Harmony, Syriac Passion Harmonies) or inline (e.g. Codex Fuldensis) sigla to denote the Gospel source of each lemma. However, such sigla were subject to the vagaries of the copying process and cannot be accepted simply at face value.

[58] Barker ("Ancient Compositional Practices," 117) notes, "In the vast majority of cases, Tatian actually works phrase by phrase from one Gospel to another—oftentimes tacking back and forth, even among three or four Gospels."

[59] Leslie McFall, "Tatian's Diatessaron: Mischievous or Misleading?" *WTJ* 56 (1994): 95.

Did the Diatessaron include or omit the genealogies of Christ (Matt 1:1–17; and Luke 3:23–37)? All major Western harmonies, apart from *L'Estoire de L'Évangile* and the Pepysian Harmony, include the genealogy of Christ; but the Venetian Harmony, with some others, has only the Matthean genealogy, while in Codices Fuldensis and Sangallensis, the Liège and Stuttgart Harmonies and others, the sequence is: Matt 1:1–16 – Luke 3:34b–38 – Matt 1:17. In the East, the first recension of the Arabic Harmony contains the genealogies, while the second recension, generally considered the more reliable, places the two genealogies in an appendix at the end of the harmony.[60] The Persian Harmony places the Lucan genealogy first and then the Matthean genealogy between Luke 2:40 and 2:41. Moreover, while the Ephrem Commentary does not explicitly cite the text of the genealogies, it expressly refers to them.[61] Based on these data, the case can be made that in some form or other the Diatessaron included the genealogy of Christ. But if so, then it is necessary to account for the statement made by Theodoret of Cyrrhus in his *Compendium of Heretical Accounts* (*Haereticarum fabularum compendium*), written in AD 453:

> This [Tatian] composed the gospel called Diatessaron by cutting out the genealogies and whatever goes to prove the Lord to have been born of the seed of David according to the flesh. And this work was in use not only among his own party but also among those who follow the Apostolic teachings, who used it somewhat too innocently as a compendium of the Gospels, because they did not recognise the wickedness of its composition.[62]

If Theodoret meant that the Diatessaron omitted all references to Christ's Davidic descent, the available evidence does not support his characterisation. Louis Leloir notes that the Ephrem Commentary contains several passages where Jesus is either called the Son of David or His Davidic descent is otherwise confirmed,[63] while Leslie McFall finds well over sixty places in the Arabic Harmony where the Davidic descent of Christ is explicitly stated or inferred.[64] Was it the case, then, that Theodoret's

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[60] David Pastorelli, "The Genealogies of Jesus in Tatian's *Diatessaron:* The Question of Their Absence or Presence," in *Infancy Gospels: Stories and Identities* (WUNT 281; eds Claire Clivaz, Andreas Dettwiler, Luc Devillers, and Enrico Norelli; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) 223.

[61] See Pastorelli, "The Genealogies of Jesus," 225.

[62] *Haer. fab. comp.* 1.20, cit. Peterson, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 42.

[63] Louis Leloir, *Ephrem de Nisibe: Commentaire de l'evangile concordant ou Diatessaron. Traduit du syriaque et de l'armenien. Introduction, traduction et notes* (SC 121; Paris: Cerf, 1966) 18–19, cf. 58 & 60, cit. Pastorelli, "The Genealogies of Jesus," 225.

[64] McFall, "Mischievous or Misleading?" 104.

knowledge of the Diatessaron's text was cursory, at least with respect to its treatment of Christ's Davidic descent,[65] and that his characterisation was more a case of guilt by association ("this work was in use ... among his own party") than a fair assessment of the actual contents? Or was it, as has been suggested, that Theodoret purposefully misrepresented the Diatessaron to bolster his own doctrinal credentials?[66] He had been condemned by the 'Robber Council' of Ephesus in AD 449 for holding to heretical views concerning the nature of Christ, but restored by the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. Thus, some two years later, to report that he had removed a version of the Gospels that lacked the Christologically essential genealogies and other evidence of the Davidic descent, might be construed as an opportunistic signalling of his Orthodox credentials. However, given that the Diatessaron had been used extensively in his diocese, and undoubtedly remained in use elsewhere, it is implausible that Theodoret should have supposed that such a blatant misrepresentation of specific content in the work would pass unchallenged.

David Pastorelli offers a more satisfactory hypothesis by proposing that rather than taking Theodoret's use of the participle περικόψας (verb, περικόπτω) to mean 'cutting out,' it should be rendered as 'mutilating' or 'trimming'. Theodoret's complaint, then, is not that the genealogies were 'cut out' but rather that Tatian 'mutilated' them, presumably by harmonising them as one list. In support, Pastorelli adduces the testimony of Agapius (Mahbub) of Hierapolis, who in his Arabic *Universal History* (about AD 948) states that "[Tatian] altered and reversed the order of the tribes (the genealogy), which had been fixed: he said that the Lord Christ, may he be glorified, is of David's race."[67] On this reading of Theodoret, his objection was that "the wickedness" of Tatian's harmony lay in its hashing of the genealogies and certain statements concerning the Davidic descent of Christ.[68] If Pastorelli is correct, then it must be assumed that in due course Tatian's 'mutilated' genealogy was rejected, with the consequence that the major witnesses resorted to supplying the deficiency by

[65] Undoubtedly, in his North Syrian diocese the Syriac Diatessaron was in use, posing the issue of how well the Greek Theodoret understood the Syriac text, cf. Joosten, "Le Diatessaron syriaque," 58.

[66] McFall, "Mischievous or Misleading?" 99.

[67] Pastorelli, "Genealogies of Jesus," 226.

[68] The difficulty remains that it was accepted widely that Tatian omitted the genealogies and Davidic descent: e.g. Ishoʿ Bar Ali in his Syriac/Arabic Lexicon (9th cent.), "And in it are not mentioned the physical genealogy, nor the exalted one, of our Lord Christ," cit. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 54; and Bar Hebraeus (13th century), in *The Candelabra of Holiness*, "he cut out the genealogies and all which demonstrated that Christ was from the seed of David," cit. Peterson, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 63.

various means of incorporating, or appending, one or both of the canonical genealogies.

An important factor in determining content, and thus sequence, was the elimination of apparent contradictions where the Gospels differ from one another in respect of the details of an event or teaching. Tatian sought to resolve such differences by selecting the wording of one Gospel and adding points of detail from the others. For example, when narrating the Healing of the Blind Man at Jericho, the Arabic Harmony (31.25–35) combines the accounts in Mark 10:46–51 and Luke 18:35–37, and reports only that Jesus healed blind Bartimaeus when leaving the city. Thereby the harmony omits any mention of the two unnamed blind men healed when Jesus leaves Jericho (Matt 20:29–34)—although a lemma from Matt 20:34 is incorporated near the end of the pericope—and the healing of a single unnamed blind man when Jesus entered Jericho the previous day (Luke 18:35–43).[69]

Tjitze Baarda maintains that Tatian had an apologetical interest in eliminating discrepancies to counter the claims of dissident groups and pagans that the Christian sources were contradictory. For example, taking the second-century polemics of Celsus as indicative of the type of anti-Gospel criticism levelled by Tatian's contemporaries, Baarda cites Celsus' criticism of the number of angels at the Tomb: "... furthermore they say that an angel came to the tomb of this very man—some say one (angel), but some two—who replied to the women that he was risen."[70] Referring to the data of the Arabic Harmony (52.48–55), Baarda observes that

> Tatian prevents such criticism by harmonizing the sources in this way. First—after Jesus had risen—the angel descends from heaven, rolls away the stone, and sits upon it; by his appearance he scares the guards (Matt 28:2–3); but in contrast to Matt 28, he does not speak to the women. Next, Tatian adds a textual element, namely, "after this angel had departed"; only then do the women proceed and enter the tomb. There they find the youth (Mark 16:5) who addresses them; then stupefied by his words, two other men appear and give them the 'Lucan' message (Luke 24:4ff.). With this sequence Tatian tries to

[69] However, the Arabic Harmony earlier includes (12.30–39) the healing of the two blind men at Capernaum, recorded only in Matt 9:27–31 and which is very similar to Matt 20:29–34.

[70] Origen, *c. Cels.* 5.52.10–11, cit. Tjitze Baarda, "ΔΙΑΦΩΝΙΑ—ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ: Factors in the Harmonization of the Gospels, Especially in the Diatessaron of Tatian," in *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century* (ed. W. L. Petersen; Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame, 1989) 153.

> disarm such historical criticisms as those found in Celsus' refutation of Christianity.[71]

To appreciate the extent to which Tatian's microstructure might elaborately interweave the source materials, the pericope of the Witnesses at the Crucifixion serves as an example. The Arabic Harmony (52.21–23) reads:[72]

> And there were in the distance all the acquaintances of Jesus standing, and the women that came with him from Galilee [Luke 23:49a–c] those that followed him and ministered [Mark 15:41b–c]. One of them was Mary Magdalene [Matt 27:56a]; and Mary the mother of James the Little and Joses [Mark 15:40c–d], and the mother of the sons of Zebedee [Matt 27:56d–e], and Salome [Mark 15:40e], and many others (i.e. 'other women') which came up with him unto Jerusalem [Mark15:41c–e] and they saw these things [Luke 23:49e].

A detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this article, but four points may be noted:

(i) Occasionally the narrative order of a Gospel source was rearranged to achieve the desired harmonisation. This is especially the case with the intercalation of Marcan material. In this pericope, the inverted lemmatisation of Mark 15:40–41—namely, v. 41b–c; v. 40c–d; v. 40e; and v. 41c–e—acts to align Mark's material with Matthew's structure.[73]

(ii) In the Arabic Harmony the pericope is directly preceded by John 19:31–37 (Jesus' Side Pierced), but other harmonies (e.g. Codex Fuldensis, the Liège and Tuscan Harmonies, *L'Estoire de l'Évangile*, and the Syriac Passion Harmonies), place John 19:31–37 after the pericope. Thus, in the Arabic Harmony, it follows that what the witnesses observed ("they saw these things"),[74] included the piercing with the spear of Christ's side (John 19:34). This makes for a significant contrast with the Synoptic Gospels which do not record the piercing, and especially with John's insistence (19:35) that the narrator testifying to the event is the one who witnessed the piercing.[75]

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[71] Baarda, "ΔΙΑΦΩΝΙΑ—ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ," 153.

[72] Hogg (trans.), "The Diatessaron of Tatian," 124 (altered).

[73] Codex Fuldensis places material from Mark 15:41 prior to a single lemma from Mark 15:40.

[74] The Dura fragment is more explicit, reading, ὁρῶσαι τὸν στα (στα being an abbreviation (*nomen sacrum*) of σταυρωθέντα), "watching the crucified one," see Crawford, "The Diatessaron, Canonical or Non-canonical?" 263–65; and Parker *et al.*, "The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony," 206–08.

[75] Most likely, the Dura Harmony placed John 19:31–37 prior to the Witnesses, as it follows by introducing Joseph of Arimathea (and then breaks off), presumably then proceeding to Joseph's

(iii) By commencing with Luke 23:49a–c, the Arabic Harmony is able to include the location of the witnesses ("in the distance"), the Lucan expansion, "all who knew Him" (πάντες οἱ γνωστοὶ αὐτῷ), and "the women." Matt 27:55 and Mark 15:40 mention only the women, who view "from a distance." Although Codex Fuldensis commences the pericope with Luke 23:49b, "From a distance also (were)," it omits "all who knew Him." As a result, Fuldensis keeps the focus solely on the women. As either the Matthean or Marcan texts might have been used for the witnesses' location, the one exclusively Lucan datum used by Fuldensis is the final lemma (Luke 23:49e), "seeing these things." Hence, it seems that Fuldensis resorts to Luke 23:49b to ensure, as is the case with the Arabic Harmony, that material from Luke 23:49 commences and concludes the pericope. This 'bookending' of the pericope with the Lucan material in both the Arabic Harmony and Codex Fuldensis presumably reflects the sequence of the original Diatessaron. But if so, then either the Arabic Harmony expands, or else Codex Fuldensis condenses, Tatian's original lemmatisation of Luke 23:49.

(iv) The Arabic Harmony, with other Diatessaronic witnesses, brings together all the women disciples named in the Synoptic Gospels who were present at the Crucifixion. The Matthean order of names is followed, but with recourse to Mark's text which provides "the mother of James the Little (or 'Less')," and concluding with Mark's "and Salome" placed after Matthew's "and the mother of the sons of Zebedee."[76] Thereby, the Arabic Harmony distinguishes the figure of the mother of Zebedee's sons from Salome. Codex Fuldensis, however, conflates the two, equating Salome with the mother of Zebedee's sons.[77]

As the example of the Witnesses at the Crucifixion helps to demonstrate, the critic requires to distinguish primitive affinities between comparative sequences from the secondary intercalations and rearrangements occasioned by the reworking of the harmony witnesses and their subsequent revisions. Where a harmonistic sequence can be clearly delineated and is shared by Eastern and Western Diatessaronic witnesses, there is a definite probability that it matches Tatian's initial sequence. For

request for Jesus' body. The Persian Harmony follows with Matt 27:3–10 (Judas' Remorse) and then John 19:31–37. Codex Fuldensis places John 19:31–34, 36–37 (i.e. omits v.35) after the Witnesses.

[76] The Arabic Harmony reading, "the mother of the sons of Zebedee, and Salome," occurs also in the Syriac Passion Harmonies. Possibly this also was the reading of the Dura Harmony, but the defective text admits of some ambiguity, see Parker *et al.*, "The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony," 218.

[77] Codex Fuldensis 171.41 (Zola, "Tatian's Diatessaron in Latin," 132) reads: "*et salomae mater filiorum zebedaei.*" The Liège, Stuttgart, and Tuscan Harmonies place Salome before, and differentiate her from, "the mother of the sons of Zebedee."

this reason, increased attention is being given to the comparative study of the structures adopted by witnesses. The strength of this approach, as Schmid observes, is that it "aims at the macroperspective of narrative sequence rather than the microperspective of individual Gospel readings that might or might not be traced back to Tatian's Diatessaron," and thereby has the potential of producing "new insights into harmonies as gospel narratives."[78]

Distinctive readings

Not only the diversity of witnesses but also the state of their respective texts complicates the identification of preserved Diatessaron readings. Because texts frequently have undergone vulgatisation, Tatian's use of a standard Gospel text rarely can be established. The textual critic must resort to readings of the Diatessaronic witnesses that differ from standard readings and ascertain the likelihood that they reflect the text of Tatian's composition. Probable Diatessaron readings include the following exhibits ((a) – (d)):

(a) In the account of the Rejection at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30), the enraged synagogue congregation forced Jesus "out of the city, and ... led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff" (Luke 4:29), but then the Lord "passing through the midst of them...went His way" (Luke 4:30). However, in the *Demonstrations* of Aphrahat it is said that Jesus "showed the power of His majesty when He was cast down from the height into the depth and was not hurt."[79] Similarly, in the Ephrem Commentary, and in Ephrem's *Carmina Nisibena* hymn cycle, it is stated, "When they cast Him down from the hill, He flew in the air."[80] These sources reflect a Gospel text that indicated "Jesus *was* thrown from the hill, and *flew* away."[81] Corroboration of such a text is found elsewhere, such as in the Middle Dutch *Rijmbibel* that reports, "our Lord jumped ... [and] went down (or 'descended');"[82] and from the Manichean Faustus as cited by Augustine, "[He was] thrown down from the height of the mountain ... He went away unharmed."[83] With reference to some twenty texts, Tjitze Baarda reconstructed the Diatessaron's reading of Luke 4:30–31a as follows:

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[78] Schmid, "The Diatessaron of Tatian," 138.

[79] Aphrahat, *Dem.* 2.20, cit. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 312.

[80] *Carm. Nisib.* 35.16, cit. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 313. Cf. *Carm. Nisib.* 43.22.

[81] Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 313 (author's emphasis).

[82] Cit. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 313.

[83] *C. Faus.* 26.2, cit. Petersen, Tatian's *Diatessaron*, 313.

> [When?] they cast Him down from the height into the depth [and?] He did not fall and was not hurt/harmed, through their midst He passed [and] He flew [in the air?] and He descended [from above] to Kapharnaum ...[84]

(b) Isho'dad of Merv, with reference to the Lord's Baptism (at Matt 3:15–16), says that the Diatessaron testifies that "straightway ... a great light shone, and the Jordan was surrounded by white clouds."[85] Isho'dad's report is corroborated by references to fire and/or light at the Baptism that occur in a number of texts in the Diatessaronic tradition. For instance, Saint Romanos the Melodist has the Forerunner marvel at "... the fire in the Jordan, / Shining, springing forth, the unapproachable Light;"[86] the Latin *Vita Rhythmica* declares, "the heaven was opened, and a great light shone in Jesus as well as shining about all those present;"[87] and *L'Estoire de L'Évangile* states, "there came a heavenly brilliance; and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove."[88] Further, there is no doubt that Tatian was familiar with the idea that a great fire or light rested on the Jordan at the Baptism, because his teacher, Justin, refers to the phenomenon.[89]

(c) The Arabic Harmony and number of Old Latin witnesses at Matt 28:7 read, "tell his disciples and Cephas (or 'and Peter')."[90] Saint Matthew does not mention Peter by name after his denial of Christ (Matt 26:69–75), and clearly the Apostle's name was interpolated into the Matthean text to harmonise with Mark 16:7.

(d) Matt 2:23 states that Jesus "came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene'." The problem is that the statement, "He shall be called a Nazarene," is not a verbatim citation from the Old Testament. The difficulty was partly alleviated in the

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[84] Petersen, Tatian's *Diatessaron*, 313. For details of the reconstructed reading see Baarda, *Essays,* 59–85, (= T. Baarda, "The Flying Jesus. Luke 4:29–30 in the Syriac Diatessaron," *VC* 40 (1986): 313–41).

[85] Margaret Dunlop Gibson (ed.), *The Commentaries of Isho'dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha: In Syriac and English* (3 vols; HSem V–VII; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911) 1.27.

[86] *First Hymn on the Epiphany* 16.14.9–10, cit. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 19.

[87] *Vita Rhythmica* lines 3686–87, cit. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 19. Also, the Latin Codices Vercellensis (*a*) and Sangermanensis primus (g^1) add in the Matthean text: "And when Jesus was being baptised a great light flashed (or 'a tremendous light flashed around') from the water ..."

[88] *L'Estoire de L'Évangile* 7 (trans. Pitts, 60). Similarly, the Pepysian Harmony 7.

[89] *Dial. c. Trypho* 88. Epiphanius (*haer.* 30.13.7) states that the 'Gospel of the Hebrews' also referred to the phenomenon. See Metzger, *Early Versions*, 35; Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 14–18; and Petersen, "Textual Evidence for Tatian's Dependence," 516–18.

[90] Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 163; Latin copies, "*et Petro*," the Arabic Harmony, "and Cephas."

Diatessaron by changing "prophets" to the singular: "which was spoken by the prophet," the reading of the Arabic, Liège, Stuttgart, Tuscan, Venetian and Persian Harmonies, as well as the Old Syriac Gospels, the Peshîṭta, and the Christian Palestinian Aramaic version.[91] The alteration of the plural "prophets" may have come about because Tatian thought that Matthew meant the Prophet Isaiah, and that the Evangelist had taken the "branch" (Hebrew, *nēṣer*) of Isa 11:1 to refer to Christ and thus used 'Nazarene' (Ναζωραῖος, *nazōraios*) to make a word play on *nēṣer*.[92]

As exhibits (a)–(d) demonstrate, the Diatessaron contained some remarkable readings. Still, there is no reason to suppose that doctrinally Tatian undertook "any consistent, thorough and vigorous re-interpretation of the Gospel texts,"[93] notwithstanding instances of isolated readings that appear to reflect Encratite leanings,[94] as in exhibits (e) and (f).

(e) Encratite opposition to drinking wine may account for a number of readings that remove or vary references to its consumption, such as the Armenian version of the Ephrem Commentary omitting "when they have drunk freely" in John 2:10.[95]

(f) Seemingly conceding to the Encratite belief that marriage equates with defilement, a number of witnesses alter Luke 2:36, "Anna ... was of great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity," to read "with" (Persian Harmony) or "in" (Stuttgart and Zürich Harmonies) "her virginity," while the Old Syriac (Codex Sinaiticus), with Saint Ephrem's *Hymn on Abraham,* read "and seven days only with a husband."[96]

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[91] Metzger, "Tatian's Diatessaron and a Persian Harmony," 275–76.

[92] It is unlikely that Tatian was familiar with the Hebrew text of Isaiah, and both the Septuagint (ῥάβδος) and the Peshîṭta OT (ܐܝܟܪܐ) read 'staff ' or 'rod', rather than 'branch' or 'shoot.' But the Fathers saw Isa 11:1 as a signal prophecy of Christ, and some were aware of the supposed word play by Matthew on *nēṣer*. E.g. Blessed Jerome (*Com. Isa.* 11:1–3) says that "Learned men of the Hebrews" thought Nazarene in Matt 2:23 originated from *nēṣer*, but rejects that explanation on the grounds that in Hebrew 'Nazarene' is spelt with the letter *zayin* (perhaps confusing נָזִיר 'Nazarite', with נָצְרִי 'Nazarene') and *nēṣer* (נֵצֶר), with the letter *tsade* (Robert Louis Wilkin (ed.), *Isaiah: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators* (CB; Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007) 137).

[93] Head, "Tatian's Christology," 137.

[94] Petersen, (*Tatian's Diatessaron*, 79–83) surveys thirteen possibly Encratite readings.

[95] For other examples (Matt 11:19; 27:34) see Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 82.

[96] Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 81; and Metzger, *Early Versions*, 34. Compare also the Western harmonies that have Adam, not God, declare, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother

As the listed exhibits demonstrate, an array of diverse witnesses is adduced in support of proposed Diatessaron readings. How, then, can one be assured of the probability that a particular witness has preserved the reading of the Diatessaron, or that the critic has not been misled by the nature of the evidence assessed? Concerns such as these were canvassed from the early nineteenth century onwards, and although the study of the Diatessaron has never lacked gifted scholars, until well into the twentieth century it was hampered by a lack of methodological consensus. However, building on previous scholarship, in 1983 William Petersen proposed three criteria that now meet with general approval. As Petersen points out, these criteria are intended as benchmarks to help "gauge the *probability* that a given reading is Diatessaronic; they are not meant as hard and fast rules."[97] The criteria are:

> (1) To be considered Diatessaronic, a reading should be found in *both* Eastern *and* Western branches of the Diatessaronic tradition;
>
> (2) The reading should *not* be found in any non-Diatessaronic texts, from which the Diatessaronic witnesses might have acquired it;
>
> (3) The genre of the sources should be the same type. All should represent harmonized 'Lives of Jesus,' or traditions (e.g., the Vetus Latina, the Peshitta) which are acknowledged to have come under the influence of the harmonized tradition.[98]

The first criterion acts to eliminate readings that may have arisen from, or were circulated within, a local tradition. The second and third criteria do not exclude adducing the evidence of a non-Diatessaronic witness, but act to filter out readings potentially derived from non-Diatessaronic sources. On the basis of Petersen's criteria, of the exhibits listed, (a), (b), (d), and (f) evidence the greatest probability of being Tatianic.[99]

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and be joined to his wife" (Matt 19:5), reflecting the idea that God intended only spiritual union between spouses and that conjugal union was an invention of Adam; see Metzger, *Early Versions*, 34.

[97] Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 373 (author's emphasis).

[98] Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 373–74 (author's emphasis).

[99] However, it is often difficult to give a final verdict about the text of the Diatessaron, and more so to identify the precise Greek *Vorlage* employed by Tatian. For this reason, Baarda ("Tatian's Diatessaron and the Gospels," 345) advises that "we should be very cautious in using the name Tatian or Diatessaron in any apparatus to the Greek New Testament."

5. Influence

Nowhere was the influence of the Diatessaron more pronounced than in Syriac Christianity where it occupied a preeminent position in the late second to fourth centuries.[100] As we have noted, it occupied a pivotal position in the formation of the Syriac versions of the separate Gospels. Mention has been made of the commentary attributed to Saint Ephrem, while Aphrahat the Persian Sage often appears to cite the Gospels in the form of the Diatessaron. Later commentators such as Theodore bar Koni and Dionysios bar Ṣalibi (West Syriac), Ishoʿdad of Merv and ʿAbdishoʿ bar Brikha (East Syriac), treat the work respectfully.[101] The Diatessaron enjoyed liturgical use in Syriac Christianity into the fifth century. *The Teaching of Addai* (*Doctrina Addai*), dating from about AD 400, relates that when Christianity was introduced into Syria, the faithful would gather daily for prayer and readings from "the Old Testament and the New, that [is] the Diatessaron."[102] We have noted Theodoret of Cyrrhus' opposition to the Diatessaron, and that stance led him to confiscate more than two hundred copies that were in use in the churches of his diocese.[103] Similarly, in the mid-fifth century, Canon 43 of Rabbula of Edessa appears to be directed against the Diatessaron by requiring that "priests and deacons should exercise care that in all the churches a copy of the Gospel of the Separated shall be present, and shall be read."[104]

Elsewhere in the East, the *Gospel of Thomas*, largely preserved in Coptic, may evidence some dependence on the Diatessaron;[105] though any direct relationship, and the direction of the relationship, between the two works is contested.[106] Frederick Conybeare proposed that a number of variant readings in Gospel citations found in Armenian texts of the fifth century were Diatessaronic.[107] Robert Casey concluded that the fourth, anti-Marcionite, book of a treatise by Eznik of Kolb, composed AD

[100] On the extent, but also the limits, of Tatian's ideological influence on Syriac Christianity, see the discussion and the literature cited in Crawford, "The *Problemata* of Tatian," 570–75.

[101] For the testimonies of various Syriac and Arabic writers, see Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 51–65.

[102] Cit. Peterson, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 38.

[103] *Haer. fab. comp.* 1.20, cit. Peterson, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 42.

[104] Peterson, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 42–43.

[105] Most recently surveyed by Nicholas Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship Between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (AcaBib 5; Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2002).

[106] See Peterson, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 292–300.

[107] F. C. Conybeare, "An Armenian Diatessaron?" *JTS* 25 (1924): 232–46.

445–448, referred to a version of the Diatessaron used by Armenian Marcionites, observing that "We must, therefore, reckon in the East with a form of Marcionism which found the popularity of Tatian's harmony too great to be set aside."[108]

The Diatessaron made little impression on the life of the Greek Church. Diatessaronic readings found their way into Greek copies of the Gospels, but other than Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, all 'easterners,' no Greek writer expressly mentions the Diatessaron. However, the Greek hymns composed by the Syrian-born Saint Romanos the Melodist cite distinctive Diatessaron readings, presumably reflecting resort made to Syriac sources.[109] Also, the Greek homilies attributed to the mid-fourth century 'Pseudo-Macarius,' a native of Syria or Mesopotamia, and who appears to have been a Messalian,[110] preserve Diatessaron readings.[111] In the Latin West the situation was different, as evidenced by the array of vernacular harmonies across Europe. One reason for the multiplication of harmonistic works in the late medieval period may have been that the dominance of the Latin Vulgate in Roman Catholicism was supported by an active discouragement of vernacular translations, whereas the non-official status of the Gospel harmonies meant that there was no prohibition on their translation. As a result, Michael Bird suggests, the Diatessaron "became a para-liturgical text and provided a template" for the vernacular Gospel harmonies used by "the burgeoning middle classes."[112]

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[108] Robert P. Casey, "The Armenian Marcionites and the Diatessaron," *JBL* 57 (1938): 192. It might be expected that they would have used Marcion's redaction of Luke, but as Casey (192) says, "It may be that a Marcionite version of the Diatessaron was issued to meet the need of Eznik's group."

[109] Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 342–43.

[110] This Macarius is not to be confused with Saint Macarius the Great of Egypt. 'Messalian' comes from the Syriac, *mṣallyānā* (ܡܨܠܝܢܐ), 'one who prays'. The Messalians' "discipline consisted in seeking to pray always, even to the exclusion of fasting or of any other practices. They also sought to avoid manual labor in order to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They minimized the efficacy given to the sacraments, especially to Baptism and the Eucharist, and they opposed the clerical hierarchy," George A. Maloney, "Introduction," in Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (CWS; ed. George A. Maloney; Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992) 8.

[111] Gilles Quispel, "Macarius and the Diatessaron of Tatian," in *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus: Studies in Early Christian Literature and Its Environment, Primarily in the Syrian East* (ed. Robert H. Fischer; Chicago: The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1977) 203–09; cf. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron,* 327–28.

[112] Michael F. Bird, *The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) 306.

6. Purpose

Most likely several factors combined to prompt Tatian's undertaking. To the fore was his concern with the unity of truth, a concept that is emphasised in his *Oration to the Greeks*. He had been struck by the lack of intellectual unity among the Greeks, their differences, whether in language or local laws, and the incoherency of, and contradictions in, their doctrines and myths.[113] In Tatian's view, "Disharmony belongs to the realm of the Evil one; harmony is from God."[114] Consequently, the circumstance that there were Four Gospels, plus other apocryphal Gospels, each with their own differences, must have seemed to obscure the unity that he took to be the mark of truth. From that perspective the advantage of a harmony is apparent as it provides a unified narrative that conflates parallel accounts, excises duplications, and resolves conflicts. In tandem with a commitment to the unity of truth, apologetical concerns were a factor, as in the example of the number of angels at the Tomb mentioned earlier. In the face of an anti-Christian opposition that fixated on differences and inconsistencies to ridicule the Gospels, a blended harmony served to tacitly underscore the essential compatibility of the multifaceted Gospel narratives.

Further, Tatian had an interest in historical accuracy. Baarda argues that Tatian regarded the Four Gospels as memoirs, the source material for "a single, complete historical 'Life of Jesus'," serving "his concept of unity both in a philosophical and in an historical sense."[115] As an historical-literary artifact, the Diatessaron implies the rejection on Tatian's part of allegorical exegesis, as developed by the Alexandrian exegetes who viewed 'spiritual' interpretation as a means of countering the literal disagreements of the Gospel texts by transposing "the essential unity from the letter to the Spirit."[116] But in the *Oration* one of Tatian's complaints is that the pagans reject the veracity of the Christian story yet valorise their myths by recourse to allegorisation.[117] It is unlikely, then, he would have thought that inconsistencies might be resolved by the layered hermeneutics of 'spiritualising'. For Tatian, the unity of truth was to be discerned at the surface of the text.

Another possible factor is that Tatian sought to provide a comprehensive Gospel document suitable for catechetical and missionary purposes. Indeed, the widespread

[113] See *Or.* 1, 25.5, 26.2, 8.5, 28.1, 32.1, and 35.2.

[114] Baarda, "ΔΙΑΦΩΝΙΑ—ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ," 147.

[115] Baarda, "ΔΙΑΦΩΝΙΑ—ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ," 143.

[116] Baarda, "ΔΙΑΦΩΝΙΑ—ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ," 138.

[117] *Or.* 21.

distribution of the Diatessaron and its daughter harmonies may be due in some measure to their evangelical and devotional utility.[118] There also is the suggestion that the Diatessaron was more economic to produce than a codex of the Four Gospels. Being over a quarter shorter than the Four Gospels combined, there was potential for some cost saving. Yet cost was contingent not just on length, but also on factors such as the dimensions of the codex, medium (papyrus, parchment), decoration and binding, and by whom and where the manuscript was copied.[119] A finely produced copy of the Diatessaron will have been more expensive than a modest copy of the Gospels. Accordingly, there is little reason to suppose that considerations of economy markedly affected the uptake of the harmony.[120]

The factors just mentioned support the view that Tatian intended the harmony to supplement the Four Gospels. Equally, they may indicate that he meant his harmony to replace them. Whatever status he afforded the separate Gospels it must be conceded that

> Tatian was not content to leave his source texts in the format that he found them, but radically altered their arrangement, creating a new, single narrative, whose meaning was not identical with any of the prior individual gospels alone, nor with the fourfold gospel in its standard format."[121]

The desire to have a unified Gospel account was, as Baarda says, "in the air" in the second century,[122] and we noted earlier a number of documents from this period that evidence the harmonistic unification of Gospel texts. Moreover, it is in this period that Marcion attempted to resolve the differences between the Gospels by rejecting three in favour of one: his recension of St Luke. The Marcionites so emphasised inconsistencies between the Gospels that they concluded "because of the differences of the other Gospels from their own Gospel, these other Gospels were unreliable."[123] Faced on the one hand with the attacks of the pagan critics, and on the other with dissidents who dismissed the Four Gospels by privileging one, the creation from the separate Gospels of a unified 'fifth' Gospel may have seemed to Tatian an effective

[118] Cf. Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem,* 39.

[119] On the book trade and copying generally, from around the 1st cent. BC to the 2nd cent. AD, see Harry Y. Gamble*, Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1995) 82–95.

[120] Cf. Baarda, "ΔΙΑΦΩΝΙΑ—ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ," 143–44.

[121] Crawford, "The Diatessaron, Canonical or Non-canonical?" 254–55.

[122] Baarda, "ΔΙΑΦΩΝΙΑ—ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ," 140.

[123] Baarda, "ΔΙΑΦΩΝΙΑ—ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ," 137.

strategy both to preserve the substance of the apostolic writings and to disarm the arguments of the polemicists.

Certainly, Tatian's harmony was described as a single Gospel, whether as the 'Gospel of the Mixed' in Syriac usage or as "the Gospel called Diatessaron" by Theodoret. Matthew Crawford adduces a number of instances from the Ephrem Commentary, Aphrahat's *Demonstrations*, and from other Syriac sources, where the text of the Diatessaron is equated with "the Gospel."[124] Functionally, the Diatessaron was the Gospel for early Christian communities in Syria. It is telling that it stood in the place that would be later occupied by the Four Gospels, by virtue of being read liturgically as related by the *Doctrina Addai*. Presumably it was used liturgically in at least some of the churches from which Theodoret confiscated the copies, as also in the churches instructed to switch to the separate Gospels by Rabbula. If, as it appears, it was the scripture of the Armenian Marcionites described by Eznik of Kolb, it was also the Gospel for certain Latin Christians, for on the evidence of the exemplar of Codex Fuldensis there were Old Latin copies of the New Testament in which the separate Gospels had been replaced by the Diatessaron.

As Francis Watson astutely observes, "where the composite work functions liturgically as gospel, and where most churches do not possess, need, or even know the separate gospels, then the work in question is no longer a gospel harmony but simply 'the gospel'."[125] Yet if the Diatessaron was the Gospel for some early Christians—in certain instances, perhaps, more by circumstance than choice—then for others it served only to supplement the separate Gospels. Theodoret may have such people in view when he wrote of "those who follow the Apostolic teachings, who used [the Diatessaron] somewhat too innocently as a compendium of the Gospels." Moreover, historically it is as a 'Life of Jesus,' not as a replacement Gospel, that the Diatessaron had broad influence by giving rise to numerous derived harmonies. In any case, the Church could not discard the separate Gospels because they are the apostolic memorials, the "four pillars" as Saint Irenaeus describes them, whose fourfoldness is mystically integral to the revelation they convey.[126]

Whether or not Tatian intended the Diatessaron to replace the Four Gospels, the work is predicated on the presumption that whatever their differences the separate

[124] Crawford, "Diatessaron, a Misnomer?" 362–85.

[125] Francis Watson, "Harmony or Gospel? On the Genre of the (so-called) Diatessaron" (paper delivered to the SNTS Christian Apocryphal Literature Seminar, Perth, 2013) 6.

[126] Irenaeus, *haer.* 3.11.8.

Gospel accounts still comprise an essential unity. Tatian may have meant to eliminate perceived contradictions and inconsistencies, but equally, harmonisation is built on the underlying conceptual coherence of the source texts. That the Diatessaron conveyed the integral message of the Gospels, albeit in a different garb, helps to explain why, in the early centuries of the Church, it found a place among the Orthodox of the Latin West and Aramaic East. As Victor of Capua observed, "although involved in profane errors, [Tatian] nevertheless, placed before savants an example which is not useless, and arranged this gospel—as it seems to me—with skilful composition."[127] The Diatessaron had some dubious associations, but in Victor's estimate that was no reason to dispense with its "skilful composition," for as he testifies, therein "I recognize and embrace with pleasure the words of my Lord."[128]

[127] Preface to Codex Fuldensis, cit. Peterson, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 47.

[128] Preface to Codex Fuldensis, cit. Peterson, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 47.

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Paul and the Foolishness of Boasting

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Abstract: This article looks at the vexed question of Saint Paul's boasting in the so called "Fool's Speech" in Second Corinthians. It investigates the background, motivation for and nature of boasting as understood by the Apostle and his audience. To Christians today boasting of any kind seems inconsistent with Christian ethics. This article aims to draw out the biblical understanding of boasting, its legitimate usage, as well as the limits of acceptable boasting as understood by the wider (non-Christian) community of Paul's day.

Keywords: boasting, foolishness, ministry, rhetoric

The reader of the Second Letter to the Corinthians cannot help but be struck by the change of direction the letter takes at the beginning of chapter ten, and maintains for most of the rest of the letter, with its discourse on boasting (*kauchēsis*). This section does not contain the Apostle Paul's sole references to boasting in his letters, but the combination of irony, reproof and equation of foolishness with boasting is striking. As Ben Witherington observes, for many people today 2 Cor 10–13 "seems not only in tone but also in substance to be antithetical to certain key Christian values such as humility and tolerance."[1] Although this may be a common reaction, a more nuanced assessment is possible.[2] It is instructive to analyse some of the aspects of boasting in this part of Second Corinthians, and for my purposes I will concentrate on chapters ten and eleven. The motivation behind Saint Paul's boasting needs to be considered and analysed with an eye to its power

[1] Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 432.

[2] E.g. Averky Taushev, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament.* Volume 3: *The Epistles and the Apocalypse* (trans. Nicholas Kotar; ed. Vitaly Permiakov; Jordanville: Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2018) 48: "The tone of forceful authority and a sense of anger tempered with love give these chapters unique power and expression."

and expression, in order to see how and why Paul employs this kind of rhetoric in his dealing with the Corinthians.

In the lead up to 2 Cor 10, Paul has been discussing the general collection for the church at Jerusalem, to which he expects the Corinthians, like the other Christian communities, will contribute generously in accordance with the idea of mutual giving (8:13–15). He wants their generosity and faith to be on display to the brethren. "Therefore, show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf." (8:24 NKJV (and hereafter)). The Greek verb 'to boast' is *kauchaomai*, which occurs frequently in LXX and Christian Greek, but rarely in Classical Greek. In the NT it occurs thirty-seven times, and its cognate nouns *kauchēsis* and *kauchēma* eleven times each, mostly in the Pauline corpus.[3]

In the Bible, boasting and its synonyms 'glorying' and 'rejoicing' are legitimate when someone takes pride in someone else or in another's accomplishments. For example, it is fine for a father to take pride in his children, and for his children to boast in their fathers (Prov 17:6). If a person is to be praised it should be done by another, not by the person in question (Prov 27:2). Ultimately, though, all boasting should be in the Lord.[4] That Saint Paul recognises this proper boundary of boasting is evident, for on two occasions he quotes Jer 9:23, "He who glories (*ho kauchōmenos*), let him glory (*kauchasthō*) in the Lord." The first is 1 Cor 1:31, where he is encouraging the Corinthians to rely on God and to remain faithful to the Lord. The second is 2 Cor 10:17.[5] On the other hand, inflated self-praise is manifestly illegitimate boasting in scripture. "But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil" (Jas 4:16). It is reprehensible because such self-praise reflects ingratitude towards God, a misunderstanding of how our salvation is achieved, and a lack of humility.[6] Pointedly, Paul rebukes the Corinthians for their failure to punish the man engaged in an incestuous relationship, who in their pride have not removed

[3] See Michael Wojciechowski, "Paul and Plutarch on Boasting," *JGRChJ* 3 (2006): 101, for discussion of *kauchaomai* in Greek. The figures for frequency are from Verlyn D. Verbrugge, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (abridged edition; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000) 298.

[4] Prov 27:2: "Let your neighbour praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips." Sir 25:6: "The crown of old men is great experience, For their boast is the fear of the Lord."

[5] Likewise, at Rom 5:11: "but we also rejoice (*kauchōmenoi*) in God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

[6] At Eph 2:9 Paul reminds his audience that we are saved by grace through faith, "Not of works, lest anyone should boast." Paul is also alert to the need for humility. E.g. Phil 2:3: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself." Verbrugge (*NIDNT,* 298-99): "The theological basis for rejecting all self-praise," is "that those who boast focus attention on themselves and no longer look to God, the Creator and Redeemer."

him from the community. "Your glorying (*kauchēma*) is not good." (1 Cor 5:6) is Paul's terse condemnation.

Before analysing the nature of Paul's boasting, it is crucial to establish the motivation behind it. Paul outlines eloquently what it means to be a true apostle of the Lord (2 Cor 6:4–10),[7] and throughout the letter one of Paul's concerns is to reaffirm to the Corinthians his authority as an apostle.[8] Paul refers to a campaign among certain people at Corinth to undermine his status as an apostle: "I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh" (2 Cor 10:2). Ambrosiaster tells us that these opponents—the false brethren—were those overzealous for the law who out of animosity slandered and undermined Paul's work.[9] Walking according to the flesh also suggests that the opponents had judged him by rhetorical criteria and found him wanting. "'For his letters,' they say, 'are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech is contemptible'" (2 Cor 10:10). Paul's frank retort is that he is the same in person as he is in his letters (10:11), and it is now his intention to deal with these opponents who have in effect called him a coward and questioned his fitness as an apostle.[10]

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[7] 2 Cor 6:4-10: "But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

[8] Cf. Chrysostom, *hom. in 2 Cor.* 21.1 (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians* (NPNF (1) 12; The Oxford Translation, ed. Talbot W. Chambers; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889) 655: "And one would not be wrong in styling the Epistle an eulogium of Paul; he makes such much mention of his grace and patience."

[9] Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians* (ed. Gerald L. Bray; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009) 255: "Some of them were Christians and some of them Jews, neither fully mature, who used to stir up ill will against the apostle because of their zeal for the law. This was because Paul was saying that the law was now giving way to Christ, the subject of his preaching ... it was under pressure from these people that he was forced to circumcise Timothy. Only a fake Christian would persecute anther Christian out of zeal for the law. This is what a false brother is."

[10] So *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* (ed. and abridged Ralph Earle; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967) 1145. Witherington (*Conflict and Community,* 457) suggests that Paul's authority at Corinth was compromised because he was being judged by rhetorical and pedagogical criteria.

Although it is not his desire to wage war according to the flesh—with the skills and means a person might normally use to defend or attack (2 Cor 10:3)[11]—Paul assures his listeners that, when compelled, he can wield these fleshly weapons to effect (2 Cor 11:16). And a man of his education had all the tools of the orator at his disposal,[12] including self-praise.

Classical rhetoric delimited acceptable self-praise. It was permissible when the speaker was attempting to establish the quality of his character before the audience. The most famous Roman orator Cicero advocated inoffensive self-praise to win an audience's goodwill. According to Plutarch (2nd cent. AD), self-praise could be employed to stop the impertinent or to counter praise of evil deeds.[13] It was also warranted if the speaker sought to arouse the audience to emulate his virtues or achievements, but it had to be indirect or mixed with praise of the audience. We know that Paul was not averse to invoking his hearers to imitate his example, as at 1 Cor 11:1: "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ;" a rhetorical device coupled with the Christian acknowledgment that we all ought to imitate the Lord.[14] So it should not surprise us if he employs the established rhetorical device of self-praise.[15] However, it is vital to note that Paul is resolved to control himself in what he says; he "will not boast beyond measure" (2 Cor 10:13). Even if he has something worth boasting of, such as his authority, he makes it clear that this was given to him for the Corinthians' edification (2 Cor 10:8), not for his personal glory. And this authority,

[11] Chrysostom, *hom. in 2 Cor.* 21.2 (NPNF (1) 12, 657 (altered)): "By 'worldly weapons' he means wealth, glory, power, loquaciousness, cleverness, half-truths, flatteries, hypocrisies and so on."

[12] His assertion that he is "untrained in speech" (11:6) is surely born out of humility.

[13] On self-praise in ancient rhetoric see David A. De Silva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Context, Methods and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 578–80, especially his statement: "An orator's success...rests on his ability to secure the good will of the hearers and to convey an impression of complete reliability, that is, establish the right ethos. It follows that an orator whose ethos, whose character, was called into question could not present his case effectively until those doubts about his behaviour or motives were cleared up." For Plutarch see Wojciechowski, "Paul and Plutarch", 104–05. See Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 334–35) for his general discussion of how ancient rhetoric engaged with the audience to establish the speaker's moral character and to sway their emotions to sympathy; and 433 on Cicero.

[14] See also Gal 4:12: "Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you."

[15] Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 333) goes so far as to argue that 2 Corinthians, taken as a compositional whole, is an example of forensic or judicial rhetoric.

which enables him to address them sternly, comes from his having established them in the faith originally and having ministered to them (2 Cor 10:15).[16]

The hallmark of this type of boasting is that it is foolishness. Boasting which comes from pride is a form of madness. Paul says as much earlier in the letter: "For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you" (2 Cor 5:13). He is reassuring them that even if it looks like he is indulging in the madness of self-praise, it is rather legitimate praise of God. Moreover, any appearance of madness is only going to fuel misconceptions about his bodily and mental unfitness.[17] Likewise here Paul prepares the Corinthians for the foolishness of boasting by asking them to bear with him "in a little folly" (2 Cor 11:1).[18] His aim is to keep them from being led astray—he has a "godly jealousy" to preserve them, so he may present them as a "chaste virgin to Christ" (11:2), not corrupted from "the simplicity that is in Christ" (11:3). By referring to his divine jealousy for his flock, the Apostle is again asserting his authority over the Corinthian faithful, though openly and honestly out of love and with no ulterior motive to ensnare them; unlike the false brethren.[19] Paul recognises the potentially fatal attraction of rhetoric. But if another gospel is preached it will be empty and insubstantial eloquence, which "may even cast a shadow over the glory of the cross, which is anything but superficially attractive."[20]And the teaching of these false apostles, the "deceiving workers" who "transform themselves"—as opposed to receiving a divine call—into apostles of Christ (2 Cor 11:13), is unquestionably destructive. False preaching is hollow rhetoric; it is complete foolishness, and indeed nothing less than satanic in its effect (2 Cor 11:14).

This leads Paul to the heart of the folly of boasting: "let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool that I may boast a little" (11:16). Paul equates

[16] Also 1 Cor 4:15: "For in Christ, through the gospel, I begat you." See also Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries*, 247 on 2 Cor 10:15, and 248: "A person who has not received power from God cannot glory in the Lord, because he is seeking his own glory."

[17] On this verse see Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries*, 225, with his summation: "For all pride is a kind of insanity." See James L. Scott, *2 Corinthians* (NIBC; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011) 121–22, on the risk of exacerbating the opponents' views on Paul's mental infirmity.

[18] On how Paul prepares his audience in chapter 11 see Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 203.

[19] On Paul's divine jealousy see Chrysostom, *hom. in 2 Cor.* 23.1 (NPNF (1) 12, 699 (altered)): "For God is said to be jealous, not in a human way but so that everyone may know that he claims sovereign rights over those whom he loves and does what he does for their exclusive benefit. Human jealousy is basically selfish, but divine jealousy is both intense and pure."

[20] Chrysostom, *hom. in 2 Cor.* 23.3 (NPNF (1) 12, 673).

boasting with foolishness. The inference is that those who engage in such boasting, like his opponents, are fools. If Paul were to engage in such folly, he would have just as much to show for his boasting as anyone else.[21] This reinforces what he said earlier, that those like his opponents who commend themselves by measuring themselves against themselves (which is no true measure) demonstrate thereby that they are not wise (2 Cor 10:12).[22]

Nevertheless, however misguided boasting out of pride may be, yet Paul is prepared to adopt the tactics of his adversaries, to "boast according to the flesh" (2 Cor 11:18); that is, to use one of the worldly weapons that he would normally eschew. That is what he means when he confesses candidly, "What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting" (2 Cor 11:17).[23] Perhaps this is one moment where Paul lets his guard down, or maybe such rhetoric reflects not only concern for his flock, but the fact that he is up for this fight, which is understandable given he is under personal attack. Moreover, it is the attitude of the Corinthians that has compelled him to participate in boasting.[24] Paul teases them, when he tells them with sarcasm that they suffer fools gladly since they themselves are wise (2 Cor 11:19). If they can tolerate such foolishness from his adversaries, then a little bit of folly on his part ought not to perturb them. But the sad reality is that, despite this "wisdom" of theirs, they have allowed false brethren to rob, cheat and abuse them with impunity (2 Cor 11:20). There is great irony in Paul's playful inversion of wisdom and folly as exhibited in the false brethren and in

[21] So Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 204: "By calling his own boasting foolishness, Paul indirectly characterizes the opponents' self-praise as foolishness as well." Also Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries*, 252: "Paul is not really boasting but merely wants to show that others who boast have nothing more to show for themselves than he has, so that if they are worthy of praise so is he."

[22] At most, all they could claim in modesty was that their ministry was following the groundwork done by St Paul. Taushev (*The Epistles*, 48–49): "Paul's adversaries praise themselves, imagining themselves to be the most important preachers in Corinth, although they only tilled the field that Paul had planted."

[23] Here I follow the interpretation of Ambrosiaster (*Commentaries*, 252): "Paul is not speaking here with the Lord's authority, because these things have to do with being puffed up with regard to the flesh. God does not approve of boasting because what counts with him is humility."

[24] I owe this observation to Scott (*2 Corinthians*, 212): "[Paul] is willing to engage in boasting because knows that the Corinthians regard him as a fool. They have forced him into boasting." As Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 438) points out, Paul's ministry and his person are inextricably bound up: "The attacks from the opponents are on his person and on his ministry, and so in chs 10-13 he must answer both kinds of charges."

the Corinthian believers.[25] At its heart, the Christian understanding of true wisdom is utterly at odds, diametrically opposed to what the world considers wisdom. Consequently, in the eyes of the world Christian wisdom must appear as folly, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing..." (1 Cor 1:18). However, his reproachful tone is adopted not to offend, but rather to admonish and bring them to their senses

Saint Paul is careful in this discourse to remain modest and he reminds the Corinthians that he has not overreached himself, even forgoing payment for his ministry to them (2 Cor 11:7). The implication is that in this respect too he is unlike the false brethren, for they have charged for their ministry; indeed, they have robbed the flock. Here he is rhetorically and pastorally positioning himself. It is pastorally prudent to refuse payment from those he is ministering to so that he may have the freedom to criticise and reprove them without any sense of being under obligation to them.[26] The rhetorical effect here has received much comment, picking up on Paul's use of this and his other disclaimers as reassurance to his flock that he seeks their benefit, not his personal gain. A variation on the Roman patron-client relationship has also been identified as in action here, whereby Paul is acting as an intermediary between the Corinthians and their benefactor, Christ.[27] There is merit in this view; however, the rhetorical force of such a disclaimer is surely to set up a contrast between his own behaviour and that of the false apostles. Paul has received no material aid from Corinth—he has not been "burdensome" to them (2 Cor 11:9;

[25] Irony can, however, be put to devastating use in invective. Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 443) observes, "Irony was especially appropriate in contexts of invective and forensic oratory, hence its omnipresence in this Pauline discourse." See Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 213, on the irony behind Paul calling the Corinthians wise. He compares this to the defective understanding of "wisdom" which led the Corinthians to boast improperly in spiritual gifts and leaders (1 Cor 1:10-4:21).

[26] Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries*, 250: "For the person who accepts payment from sinners loses the authority to be censorious of them." For a similar view see Barbara Pappas, *First and Second Corinthians: A Study of Paul's Letters,* (Salisbury: Regina Orthodox Press, 2005) 402.

[27] Taushev (*The Epistles*, 49) comments on Paul's careful use of disclaimers and concern at all times to speak for the benefit of his listeners and not to praise himself. On the patron/client model potentially at work in this passage, Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 456) observes that "[Paul] is also trying in 2 Corinthians to convince his converts to see his apostleship as entailing a sort of patronal-kinship relationship, by which Christ becomes the Corinthians' benefactor through Paul." In fact, Witherington (especially 341–32) identifies the root cause of the crisis of authority in the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians as a disagreement over who was the client and who the patron.

12:13), taking wages from other churches to minister to them.[28] In fact, he has been so careful of the Jerusalem collection that he sent others for it instead of collecting it himself (2 Cor 9:5). This is in stark contrast to the false brethren, who have abused and robbed the Corinthians while in their midst (2 Cor 11:20).[29] In this way, Paul the preacher gains his listeners' confidence and reassures them of his honesty.

What is also pertinent in the Fool's Speech is the issue of pedigree. The appeal by the false apostles to their ethnic heritage as the basis of their authority at Corinth is certainly behind Paul's indignant series of rhetorical questions at 2 Cor 11:22. "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I." At first glance this may seem simply a proud boast on Paul's part acknowledging his heritage.[30] But this is not simply a nod to his Jewishness. He is emphatic that his heritage as a Jew is above question.[31] Even as Paul establishes his pedigree—he is in no way inferior to his accusers who prided themselves on their Jewishness—he proceeds to make little of it, to say in effect, so what? "Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more" (2 Cor 11:23).

Paul's calling to be an apostle of Christ is not about racial superiority. We should understand "of the seed of Abraham" additionally as a reference to the true meaning of being a son of Abraham: being a son of the promise through faith in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom 9:6-11). This term could therefore be applied not only to those born Jews but also to the Gentiles who were entering the Church. This is key in preaching the gospel, and why true pedigree is not a matter of birth but of faith in Christ. However much he could "boast according to the flesh," Paul is fully aware that for one who is

[28] Indeed, he proclaims with hyperbole that he has *robbed* other churches to fund his mission to the Corinthians (2 Cor 11:8).

[29] See Pappas, *Corinthians*, 421, who points out that any money Paul collected was for the church in Jerusalem, not for him. See Chrysostom, *hom. in 2 Cor.* 24.1 (NPNF (1) 12, 682) on the false apostles as robbers of souls and money.

[30] Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 214, comments that Paul emphasises his Jewish heritage here to show that he has not neglected his "people".

[31] William Barclay (*The Mind of Saint Paul,* (London/Glasgow: Fontana Books, 1958) 11) analyses the three aspects of Jewishness brought out here: "A *Hebrew* was a Jew who could still speak Hebrew in contradistinction to Jews of the Dispersion who had forgotten their native language for the Greek of their adopted countries. An *Israelite* was specifically a member of the covenant nation. To be *of the seed of Abraham* was to have absolute racial purity. Paul's claim was that there was nowhere in the world a purer Jew than he is." Pappas (*Corinthians*, 405) explains that *Israelite* is the title reserved for those dedicated to God.

commended by God such boasting is meaningless and unwarranted.[32] And (with a continued sense of irony) he is happy to be a fool and boast of that very truth.

This leads us to the final aspect of boasting for consideration, that of its relationship to weakness. "If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity." (2 Cor 11:30). Paul has not forgotten the charge of bodily weakness levelled by his opponents (2 Cor 10:10). He is determined to prove not only that this is unfounded, but that such a perception arises from a superficial view of infirmity and affliction. "Do you look at things according to the outward appearance?" (2 Cor 10:7). Far from being marks of disgrace and unworthiness, anyone looking at such signs of weakness with spiritual eyes would see that they are signs of approval, and this is why Paul now gives a list of the hallmarks of a genuine apostle, which include sufferings, afflictions and punishment (2 Cor 11:23–27).

Paul sets up a "double foolishness,"[33] a conscious inversion on his part of the natural understanding of foolishness. Paul knows that it is foolish boasting in the eyes of his opponents to boast of bodily afflictions. And whereas an ancient orator might boast of endurance, character and self-sufficiency, there is nothing to be gained by taking pride in punishments like the scourging and stoning Paul mentions receiving. [34] The tally of diverse punishments—the thirty-nine lashes from the Jews, the three beatings with rods (a Roman punishment) and the stoning (a Jewish punishment)(2 Cor 11:24)[35]—and the various perils he has faced among Jews, Gentiles and even the false brethren (2 Cor 11:26) read like an especial mark of honour that he withstood the opprobrium of the world, among whom the false

[32] Chrysostom, 24.2 (NPNF (1) 12, 684 (altered)): "What are these worldly things Paul will boast of? His birth, his wealth, his wisdom, his being circumcised, his Hebrew ancestry and his popular reputation? Of course he knew that none of these things mattered in the slightest, which is why he called this way of speaking foolish."

[33] See especially Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 214–16.

[34] Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 214: "These boasts prove doubly foolish, since boasting itself is foolish, and, by the opponents' standards, suffering and weakness do not count as meritorious qualities." For the disgrace brought by punishment and suffering according to Greek and Roman standards see Wojciechowski, "Paul and Plutarch," 107–09.

[35] Mosaic law (Deut 25:3) prescribed forty lashes (which was often administered minus one). See Pappas, *Corinthians*, 406 on rods and stoning.

brethren are numbered.[36] He bears the marks of true apostleship, some of which they have inflicted on him.[37]

As further evidence that Saint Paul embraces this foolishness of boasting in weakness, in contradistinction to his opponents and the world in general, he cites the anecdote of his escape over the wall of Damascus in a basket (2 Cor 11:31–33). No one trying to rehabilitate their character in front of an ancient audience would make this embarrassing confession. If a Roman were to boast, he might boast of being the first over the wall *into* a city, the prize for which in the Roman army was the *corona muralis.* On the other hand, Paul has scriptural warrant for his behaviour in the story of Rahab, who assisted the Israelite spies to escape over the wall of Jericho (Josh 2:15), which was a righteous action on her part.[38] Again Paul upends a worldly social standard, replacing it with what is approved of God. And if it is commended by God then he is justified to exalt in it, no matter how much it looks like cowardice in the eyes of the world and in spite of the established principles of rhetoric. Expanding on this, in 2 Cor 12 Paul recognises that tribulation and infirmity is allowed by God. Indeed, the Lord tells him so during the heavenly vision: "My strength is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). Paul's opponents pass him off as defective because of his bodily weakness. Inverting this, Paul wants the Corinthians to understand that it in fact shows the opposite; that he is commended by the Lord and that this weakness is permitted by the Lord. And if this is so, then boasting of it is completely within the bounds of legitimate boasting, since he is glorying in the Lord.

It must be hoped that Paul's skilful handling of boasting in Second Corinthians played a part in achieving a reconciliation with his flock. The Apostle returned to

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[36] Cf. Ambrosiaster (*Commentaries*, 259): "Paul is clearly teaching that the time for boasting is when one is being humiliated for unjust injuries."

[37] If Paul is in danger from opponents, then this must reinforce that he is the approved servant of Christ whereas they are not. See Scott (*2 Corinthians*, 219), who concludes: "The seemingly ridiculous nature of such a proposition would not be out of character with the irony of the "Fool's Speech."

[38] On the winning of the *corona muralis*, one of the highest of Roman military honours, see Witherington, *Conflict and Community* , 458–59. For the connection between the Damascus episode and Rahab and the Israelite spies see Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 220–21. That Rahab is righteous in God's eyes, e.g. Jerome (*hom. in Pss.* 18 (Ps 86), (Marie Liguori Ewald (trans. and ed), *The Homilies of Saint Jerome (1–59 on the Psalms)* (Vol. 1; FOTC 48; Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964) 139): "Later, indeed, Jericho is overthrown, but this harlot alone is preserved untouched; hence, the Lord says, "I will be mindful of Rahab"; that is, on the day of judgment, I will be mindful of her who welcomes my messengers."

Corinth where he wrote his letter to the Romans, so there are positive signs that the relationship was restored.[39] Repeatedly, Paul disclaims boasting in these chapters, is reluctant to use it and adamant that he only does so in the exigencies of the apologetical situation. It should be noticed that Paul reserves his harshest words for the false brethren, not for his flock.[40] Surely it speaks of a desire to reconcile that Paul keeps his discourse general. He refrains from singling out individuals for condemnation; even the false apostles are mentioned as a group, not individually by name. This is compassionate and modest, the sign of a man who does not want to create bitter and long-lasting enemies. Still, the fact remains that the Corinthians have been foolish. They have forced Paul to adopt his own kind of foolishness: "I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you..." A stern, but not devastating reproach. The Corinthian church, which owed its beginning to the Apostle's labours, ought to have praised him and commended him in the face of the false apostles' criticism.[41] Had it done so, the slander might have been nipped in the bud.

Fundamentally, the Corinthian Christians have been ungrateful and disobedient, and this is reflected distressingly in the moral mess they find themselves in, which Paul spends two letters addressing.[42] Paul assures the Corinthians that "we do all things, beloved, for your edification" (2 Cor 12:11) His hope is that they really will clean up their act morally in time for his next visit (2 Cor 12:20–21). At all times throughout the Apostle's discourse on boasting his rhetoric is under control and evinces great generosity of spirit, in line with his aim to persuade and reclaim for Christ, not to offend needlessly.[43] Paul keeps his commitment not to boast beyond measure.

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[39] This is Witherington's optimistic view in *Conflict and Community*, 351.

[40] See Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 194.

[41] That this is what Paul expects from them is clear at 2 Cor 5:12: "For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart." So Pappas (*Corinthians*, 419): "The Corinthians benefitted from his ministry and should have been quick to praise him."

[42] On Corinthian ingratitude see Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries*, 260: "It is obvious that these people, among whom he founded a church and showed miraculous signs of his apostolic calling, should have given him a testimonial to show to his defamers, and so defended him, the man whom they had as their father in the gospel of Christ, without his having to say anything."

[43] Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 327): "perhaps 2 Corinthians more than any of Paul's other letters reveals his largeness of soul."

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