TATIAN'S DIATESSARON: MISCHIEVOUS OR MISLEADING?

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In his work, Αἱρετικῆς κακομυθίας ἐπιτομή, a work directed against heresies in general, the Syrian Father, Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus (d. 457/58), stated his reasons why he withdrew Tatian's *Diatessaron* from public use in the churches of Syria. Of Tatian's work he said:

> He composed the Gospel which is called Diatessaron, cutting out the genealogies and such other passages as show the Lord to have been born of the seed of David after the flesh. This work was in use not only among persons belonging to his sect, but also among those who follow the apostolic doctrine, as they did not perceive the mischief of the composition, but used the book in all simplicity on account of its brevity. And I myself found more than two hundred such copies held in respect in the churches in our parts. All these I collected and put away, and I replaced them by the Gospels of the four Evangelists. [1]

The first reason Theodoret gave was that Tatian (ca. AD 110-170) had interfered with the material of the canonical Gospels which had been handed down from apostolic times; and the second was that he was not an orthodox believer. The inference of these two statements—that Tatian was a mischievous person and his *Diat.* a mischievous composition—was to prejudice the Syrian Church against Tatian and consequently against his work, the *Diat.*[2] Theodoret's

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[1]   *PG* 83, "Haereticarum fabularum compendium ad Sporacium," 1.20 (= pp. 370-71); more familiarly known by the title, "Treatise on Heresies." The quotation is taken from J. M. Fuller's article "Tatian" in W. Smith and H. Wace, *A Dictionary of Christian Biography* (4 vols.; London: John Murray, 1887) 4.795.

[2]   Theodor Zahn was the first to publish a verse-by-verse reconstruction of Tatian's Diatessaron in *Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur* (4 vols.; Erlangen: Andreas Deichert, 1881-93) 1.113-219. He concluded that the Syr Diat arose out of the oldest Syriac translation of the Gospels, namely syr[c]. W. Petersen has argued the opposite

action almost spelt the end for this early "Life of Christ." However, a century before the suppression of the *Diat.* came into effect (when it was still well received in the Syrian churches) two influential Syrian Fathers used it as the basis for their expositions. The first was Aphrahat, Bishop of St. Matthew (near Mosul) who produced a series of homilies ca. AD 336-345 based on the text of the *Diat.*[3] He was followed by Ephraem, a deacon of Edessa (d. 373), and the most famous of the Syrian Fathers. Both men wrote their expositions in Syriac, the presumed original language of the *Diat.*[4]

Today the *Diat.* as such is no longer extant but three-quarters of Ephraem's Syriac Commentary on it has been recovered.[5] This commentary quotes the text

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view, namely, that syr[c] and syr[s] [the Vetus Syra] have been influenced by the Syrian *Diatessaron* ("New Evidence for the Question of the Original Language of the Diatessaron," in *Studien sum Text und zur Ethik des Neuen Testaments. Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von Heinrich Greeven* [ed. W. Schrage; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1986] 325-43, esp. p. 331).

[3] For Aphrahat's gospel citations (Syriac, fourth cent.) see J. Parisot, *Aphraatis sapientis Persae demonstrationes* (PS 1; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1894). W. Wright, *The Homilies of Aphraates, the Persian Sage* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1869).

[4] Ephraem's commentary on the Diatessaron is preserved in two Armenian MSS, both dated AD 1195. G. Mösinger made a Latin translation of the Armenian Ephraemic commentary (*Evangelii concordantis expositio* [Venice: Libraria P. P. Mechitaristarum in Monasterio S. Lazari, 1876]) based on the two Armenian MSS and J.-B. Aucher's 1841 Latin translation.

[5] For Syriac and Armenian recensions (fourth cent.) of Ephraem's commentary see L. Leloir, *Saint Éphrem, Commentaire de l'Évangile concordant, texte syriaque* (Chester Beatty Monographs 8; Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1963); id., *Saint Éphrem, Commentaire de l'Évangile concordant, version armenienne* (CSCO

of the *Diat.* before commentating on it. There are also many translations of Tatian's original work extant even though these were made after its language had been vulgarized or assimilated either to the text of the Peshitta or to the Latin Vulgate. It was these two vulgarized versions of the *Diat.* that formed the basis of many translations. Vulgarization presents scholars engaged in the recovery of the text of the *Diat.* with its greatest problem.[6] However, the *Diat.* has two independent characteristics; it has a *text* and it has a *sequence* of pericopes. The problem of the exact form of the *text* of the *Diat.* does not affect the purpose of the present paper, which is concerned mainly with the *sequence* of the pericopes. It is through an investigation of the sequence and content of the *Diat.* that the truth of Theodoret's statements will be examined. The conclusion that

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137, 145; Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1954); and J. Rendel Harris, *Fragments of the Commentary of Ephrem Syrus upon the Diatessaron* (London: J. Clay, 1895). Between 1984 and 1986 forty-one folios of Ephraem's commentary were acquired by the Chester Beatty Library; see L. Leloir, "Le commentaire d'Éphrem sur le Diatessaron. Quarante et un folios retrouvés," *RB* 94 (1987) 481-518. A further single folio was published by P. Ortiz Valdivieso, "Un nuevo fragmento siríaco del Commentario de san Efrén al Diatésaron (PPalau Rib. 2)," *Studia papyrologica* 5 (1966) 7-17.

[6]   See Petersen, "New Evidence," 20-51, 55-67 and B. M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford: University Press, 1977) 10-36 for introductory material on the *Diatessaron*. Cf. also C. Peters, *Das Diatessaron Tatians. Seine Überlieferung und sein Nachwirken im Morgan- und Abendland sowie der heutige Stand seiner Erforschung* (Orientalia christiana analecta, 123; Rome: Pontifical institutum orientalium studiorum, 1939) 218-30; A. Jülicher, "Der echte Tatiantext," *JBL* 43 (1924) 132-71; A. Merk, "Die heutige Lage des Diatessaronproblems," *Oriens christianus* 3 (1927) 201-22 for older but useful bibliographical material. Cf. n. 55 below.

this paper will seek to demonstrate is that, though the *Diat.* was a misleading harmony of the Gospels as regards its arrangement of the pericopes, it was not a mischievous work as Theodoret alleges.

I. Witnesses to Tatian's Diatessaron

On the basis of language and provenance, the various translations of Tatian's ("vulgarized") Syriac *Diat.* are divided into Eastern and Western witnesses. Of the Eastern witnesses the most helpful for reconstructing the sequence (but not the text, see n. 12 below) of the Syriac *Diat.* (apart from the commentary of Ephraem) is probably the Arabic version.[7] The Arabic was translated directly from the Syriac[8] as late as 1195. A. S. Marmardji produced overwhelming evidence that the Arabic version was a direct translation from a

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[7]   Translations of the Arabic Harmony (twelfth-thirteenth cents.) were made by A.-S. Marmadji, *Diatessaron de Tatien* (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1935); A. Ciasca, *Tatiani Evangeliorum harmoniae arabice* (Rome: ex Typographia polyglotta S. C. de propaganda fide, 1888; repr. 1930); J. Hamlyn Hill, *The Earliest Life of Christ Ever Compiled from the Four Gospels, Being the Diatessaron of Tatian* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903); H. W. Hogg, "The Diatessaron of Tatian," in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Additional Volume* (ed. by A. Menzies; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897); and E. Preuschen, *Tatians Diatessaron, aus dem Arabischen übersetzt* (ed. A. Pott; Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchandlung, 1926). This last work was never completed but is said to be a very accurate translation as far as it goes. He attempted to reconstruct the Greek text behind the Arabic Diatessaron.

[8]   Cf. A. Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1954) 276-84.

Syriac and not from a Greek version of the *Diat.*[9] There are at least seven copies of the Arabic *Diat.* extant.[10] The colophon to MSS B O E and S states that the translation was made by ⟨Abuμ⟨l Farag ⟩Abduμllaμh at\-T\ayyib.[11] MS E (dated AD 1795) was used by Marmardji in establishing his Arabic text which he followed up with a Latin translation. On the basis of MSS A (Vat. Arbo 14) and B (Vat Borg. Arbo 250) Agostino Ciasca made a Latin translation[12] which was translated into English by Hill.[13]

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[9] The substance of his evidence is presented by T. Baarda, "The Author of the Arabic Diatessaron," in *Early Transmission of Words of Jesus, Thomas, Tatian and the Text of the New Testament* (ed. J. Helderman and S. J. Noorde; Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, 1983) 233-46.

[10] For the details of these MSS see Baarda, "The Author of the Arabic Diatessaron," 207-49.

[11] A. J. B. Higgins made a special study of the colophons in an unpublished Ph.D. thesis, "Tatian's Diatessaron: Introductory Studies, with a portion of the Arabic Version" (University of Manchester, 1945). A summary of this thesis appeared in *Journal. Manchester University. Egyptian Oriental Society* 24 (1942-45, pub. in 1947) 28-32. Cf. also his article, "The Arabic Version of Tatian's Diatessaron," *JTS* 45 (1944) 187-199. ⟨Abuμ⟨l Farag ⟩Abduμllaμh ibn at\-T\ayyib was a prominent presbyter within the Nestorian church of his time, being a secretary of the Patriarch Elias I of Bagdad. He died AD 1043. For an extensive and detailed description of the translator and his work see G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur II* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1947) 160-76. Cf. also P. E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1959) 297-313, esp. p. 309.

[12] Ciasca, *Tatiani Evangeliorum.* The Arabic translates a Syriac Diatessaron which has been corrected in accordance with the text of the Peshitto according to F. C. Burkitt, *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe* (2 vols.; Cambridge: University

Hill and Leloir made independent studies of the contents of Ephraem's commentary and concluded that the Arabic *Diat.* followed substantially the same sequence of pericopes as the commentary. For the purpose of this paper the sequence of pericopes in the Arabic and Ephraem's commentary have been checked and found to be identical.[14]

Press, 1904) 1.200.

[13] Hill, *Earliest Life.* Hill has noted that MS A does not contain the two genealogies of Jesus in the text but in an appendix. MS B, however, has inserted the genealogies into the text (p. x). Leloir has noted that the Latin, Toscan and Persian harmonies have inserted both genealogies, whereas the Dutch and Venitian insert only Matthew's genealogy (*Commentaire de l'Évangile,* 19).

[14] James Hamlyn Hill, *A Dissertation on the Gospel Commentary of S. Ephraem the Syrian* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896). L. Leloir ("Le Diatessaron de Tatien," *Orient syrien* 1 [1956] 208-31, 313-34; especially the comparative table on pp. 216-27) divided Ephraem's commentary into 76 sections and the Arabic is there shown to follow the commentary order in 62 sections; Latin in 45, Dutch in 42, Italian in 38, and Persian in 15. In fact the Arabic is 76 sections because the whole of its order is there in the Commentary which has on fourteen occasions supplemented quotations from Tatian's text with Gospel texts from elsewhere and this misled Leloir. A comparison of the order in Leloir's work on Ephraem's Commentary (*Commentaire de l'Évangile*) with that in I. Ortiz de Urbina's article ("Trama e carattere del Diatessaron di Taziano," *Orientalia christiana periodica* 25 (1959) 326-57) only confirms Hill's earlier finding. Baarda ("To the roots of the Syriac Diatessaron TA 25:1-3," *NovT* 28 [1986] 1-25) and G. Howard (*The Gospel of Matthew according to a Primitive Hebrew text* [Macon, Georgia: Mercer UP, 1987] 189-90) make it clear that in the matter of sequence, as opposed to the actual wording of the text,

A Persian Harmony of the *Diat.* was made in 1547 from a thirteenth copy and is said to betray the influence of the Old Syriac.[15] These translations plus the commentary of Isho'dad of Merv[16] constitute the best Eastern witnesses to Tatian's *Diat.*

A surprising discovery was made in 1933 of a Greek fragment of Tatian's *Diat.* at Dura-Europos.[17] The parchment measured 9.5 x 10.5 cm., and the uncial (or majuscule) writing takes up fifteen lines and covers Matthew 27:56-57, Mark 15:40, 42, Luke 23:49b-c, 54, 50-51 and John 19:39. Below is a translation of the fragment. Unclear words have been put in square brackets, and the biblical source placed in curly brackets.

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the Arabic Diatessaron is a reliable guide to Tatian's original work.

[15] So Vööbus, *Early Versions*, 264. Cf. T. Baarda, "In Search of the Diatessaron Text," in *Early Transmission of Words of Jesus,* 65-78, esp. p. 69. A translation of the Persian Harmony (1547 AD, copy of thirteenth cent. MS) was made by G. Messina, *Diatessaron Persino* (BiOr 14; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1951). Cf. also B. M. Metzger, "Tatian's Diatessaron and a Persian Harmony of the Gospels," *JBL* 59 (1950) 261-80; id., *Chapters in the history of New Testament textual criticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1963) 103-20; and A. J. Higgins, "The Persian Gospel Harmonies," in *SE* (ed. K. Aland *et al;* Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1959) 793-810.

[16] Edited by M. D. Gibson, *The Commentaries of Isho'dad of Merv* (6 vols., in Horae Semitica, V-VII, X-XII; Cambridge: University Press, 1911-16) 6.

[17] Carl H. Kraeling, *A Greek Fragment of Tatian's Diatessaron from Dura* (London: Christophers, 1935). This was re-edited with very minor corrections by C. Bradford Welles et al, in *The Parchments and Papyri (The Excavations at Dura-Europos. . . , Final Report)* Vol. 2, part 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959) 73-74 and Pl. IV.

… [of Zebe]dee {Mt 27:56} and Salome {Mk 15:40} and women [which] had come up with him from [Gali]lee, seeing these things {Lk 23:49c} and it was [a day] of preparation and sabbath was coming [on] {Lk 23:54}. Now [ev]ening having come {Mt 27:57}, since it was the pr[eparat]ion, which is the day before the sabbath {Mk 15:42} [there came] a man {Mt 27:57} being a counsellor from {Lk 23:50} Arimathea, a city of the [Jew]s {Lk 23:51}, whose name was Jo[seph] {Mt 27:57}, a man [goo]d and ri[ghteous] {Lk 23:50}, being a disciple [of] Jesus but se[cre]tly for fear of the [Jew]s {Jn 19:38}. And he {Mt 27:57? 'this one'; or Lk 23:51b 'who'} was waiting for the ki[ngdom] of God {Lk 23:51b}. This man [was not ag]reeing with the co[unsel]… {Lk 23:51a}.

This fragment is made up entirely of words from the canonical Gospels. Tatian (if it is his work) has nowhere introduced new vocabulary. Given that this is an example of Tatian's method it would appear that he has followed the same procedure throughout the entire *Diat.*

The chief Western witnesses to the *Diat.* are the Latin, represented by the sixth century Codex Fuldensis,[18] and—based upon another (non-extant) intermediary Latin harmony—various harmonies in Middle Dutch,[19] Old High

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[18] This was edited by Ernst Ranke, *Codex Fuldensis. Novum Testamentum Latine interprete Hieronymo; ex manuscripto Victoris Capuani* (Marburgi & Lipsiae: Sumtibus N. G. Eliverti, 1868). See also R. van den Broek, "A Latin Diatessaron in the 'Vita Beate Virginis Marie et Salvatoris Rhythmica'," *NTS* 21 (1974) 109-32.

[19] A critical edition of the Dutch text was made by D. Plooij on the basis of the Liège manuscript (AD 1280) who stated that it is a translation of an Old Latin Diatessaron which in turn rendered the (original) Syriac (D. Plooij, D. Phillips and A. Bakker, eds., *The Liége Diatessaron* (Parts I-VII, VNAW 19 & 21; Amsterdam: Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1929-70). The most recent edition is by C. C. de Bruin, *Diatessaron Leodiense* (Corpus sacrae

German,[20] Middle German,[21] Middle Italian,[22] the Old Saxon dialect[23] and Middle English.[24] Petersen states that all the evidence points away from a Greek

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scripturae neerlandicae medii aevi, series minor, 1: *Harmoniae Evangeliorum,* Vol. 1; Leiden: Brill, 1970).

[20] Edited by E. Sievers, *Tatian. Lateinsch und Altdeutsch* (2nd ed.; Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1872). The Latin text depends on a Fuldensis-type text.

[21] The Theodiscum Harmony (Middle German, fourteenth cent.; it is related to the Liège text) was edited by C. Gerhardt, *Das Leben Jesu* (Corpus sacrae scripturae neerlandicae medii aevi, series minor, 1/5; Leiden: Brill, 1970).

[22] The Tuscan Harmony (Middle Italian, thirteenth-fourteenth cent.). M. Vattasso and P. A. Vaccari, *Il Diatessaron,* Pt. 2 of *Il Diatessaron in Volgare Italiano* (Studi e Testi 81; Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1938). The Venetian Harmony (Middle Italian, 13-14th cent.). V. Todesco, *Il Diatessaron Veneto,* Pt. 1 of *Il Diatessaron in Volgare Italiano* (Studi e Testi 81; Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1938). The underlying Latin text is akin to Fuldensis.

[23] Known as *HeΔliand*, it is an alliterative poem of Codex Fuldensis commissioned by Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious, after it had been translated into the Eastern Frankish dialect in the ninth century. It was published at Munich in 1830. O. Behaghel (ed.), *Heliand und Genesis* (ADTB 4; Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1948). See the introductory study by Juw fon Weringha (= J. von Weringh), *Heliand and Diatessaron* (Studia Germanica 5; Assen: van Gorcum, 1965).

[24] The Pepysian Harmony (Middle English, c. 1400 AD). M. Goates (ed.), *The Pepysian Harmony* (Early English Text Society o. s. 157; London: OUP, 1922; repr. New York, 1971). The work was translated from the French. This anonymous work was discovered in Pepys collection (hence its name) in 1902 in Magdalene College, Cambridge. A cursory comparison with Groates' analytical outline on pp. 114-22 shows that this work is not related to Tatian's

original behind these translations. The Dutch, German, and Italian Diatessaronic witnesses can be retranslated back into perfect Syriac, replete with suffix pronouns, conjunctions in the proper places, and the proper verb forms. But they *cannot* be retranslated back into Greek agreeing with any known form of the Graeco-Latin NT manuscript tradition. This evidence, he says, compels one to conclude that Tatian composed the *Diat.* in Syriac.[25]

Of these witnesses Codex Fuldensis is the oldest extant translation.[26] It came into the possession of Victor of Capua by chance and he tells us that he was

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Diatessaron. It is an independent work. It omits Jesus' genealogies and Luke's prologue as irrelevant. He compresses and abbreviates the canonical material more drastically than Tatian ever attempted to do, and he adds more explanatory material and definitions in order to convert the past in terms of the life of his own day.

[25] Petersen, "New Evidence," 325-43, esp. p. 343. This does not rule out the possibility that Tatian did his *Diatessaron* in Greek first. He may then have translated this work into Syriac and it was the Syriac work which survived and was translated into other languages. The discovery of a fragment of such a Greek work only confirms what one would expect in a complicated harmony such as Tatian's was. A. Vööbus (*Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac* [Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 128. Subsidia 3; Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1951] 11, 13) and D. Plooij (*A Further Study of the Liège Diatessaron* [Leyden: Brill, 1925] 73) argue that the *Diatessaron* was translated into Latin before Tatian left Rome and before the four Gospels existed in that tongue. How far Tatian made use of the Old Syriac Gospels is discussed by G. A. Weir, "Tatian's Diatessaron and the Old Syriac Gospels. The Evidence of MS Chester Beatty 709" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1969).

[26] Victor, Bishop of Capua (d. 554), was given the anonymous Codex and

puzzled by its text. He examined the literature of the Fathers, Latin and Greek, and discovered that they were aware of only two harmonies of the Gospels, those of Theophilus of Antioch[27] and Tatian. He concluded he had a copy of Tatian's *Diat.* A study of this Codex has revealed that it is not a faithful copy of Tatian's work. Rather some scribe after the appearance of Jerome's Vulgate in AD 383 took a copy of Tatian's work and reworked its structure in so drastic a manner that it constitutes a new work in its own right.[28]

A comparison with the commentary of Ephraem and the Arabic *Diat.* is instructive. If we take the Arabic *Diat.* as the standard and number the blocks of material that comprises it in a natural sequence (from 1 to 52) then it will be seen that Codex Fuldensis has rearranged the blocks of material in the following

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published it with a preface of his own. It was brought to Fulda (W. Germany) in 745 by Boniface, the apostle of Germany, and edited by Ranke (*Codex Fuldensis).*

[27] Theophilus of Antioch (AD 180) compiled a harmony in preparation for his commentary upon the Gospels according to Jerome, *Epist.* 121, 6, *PL* 22.1020: "Theophilus Antiochenae Ecclesiae septimus post Petrum apostolum episcopus, quatuor evangelistarum in unum opus dicta compingens, ingenii sui nobis monumenta dimisit." The work of Ammonius of Alexandria (5th cent.) was probably not a harmony but rather a synopsis.

[28] In 1881 Zahn indicated that in Codex Fuldensis we have a poorly planned and poorly executed revision of the Diatessaron in the language of Jerome's Vulgate (AD 383) (*Forschungen*, Vol. I: 293-310, esp. pp. 308-9). Fuller suggested that in the fifth or sixth century some Latin scholar, who had the Syr Diat and Jerome's Latin translation, could have worked out the harmony in the Codex which Victor of Capua was the means of preserving for posterity ("Tatian," 797).

sequence with some additional material of its own which has been placed inside
<> brackets.

< Lk 1:1-4> 1 <Mt 1:1-17 & Lk 3:34-38> 2 4 3 5 7 10 13 9 14 17 6 8 15 11 23 16 20 18 22a 21 22b 12 24 26 25 27 32 29 31 30 28 33 35 42 36 43 37 39 <Jn 7:53—8:11> 38 40 34 41 44 47 46 48 45 49 51 50 52.

This picture of Fuldensis does not tell the whole story because it only shows the rearrangement of the blocks of Matthew's text and the non-Matthean sections which link these blocks. It does not tell us how he rearranged the material in the other Gospels.

The anonymous scribe of Codex Fuldensis has shown a strong tendency to restore Tatian's disarranged text of Luke to its canonical order. He has also restored the missing genealogies of Jesus and Luke's prologue; though Hill suggested that these additions were probably the work of Victor himself because the original table of contents of the Codex does not include these additions.[29]

II. Omissions from the Four Gospels in Tatian's Diatessaron

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[29] *Earliest Life*, xi-xii. This was also the conclusion of F. H. Blackburne Daniell, "Victor Capua" in *A Dictionary of Christian Biography* (eds William Smith and Henry Wace; 4 vols.; London: John Murray, 1877-87) 4.1123-1126. Daniell also presents some evidence that the original order of the text behind Fuldensis was closer to the Eastern version. His conclusion was that the whole MS. had been carefully revised and corrected by Victor, in whose own hand are three notes, one at the end of the Acts, and two at the end of the Apocalypse, respectively recording that he had finished reading the MS on May 2, AD 546, and a second time on April 12, AD 547. In the same hand are other glosses.

That Tatian was expelled from Rome for holding heretical views—chiefly for his Encratic views—is not in dispute. What is in dispute is whether he became heretical before or after he composed his *Diat.*[30] Apart from Tatian's other extant work—his *Oration to the Greeks*—there are three witnesses to his theological views; these are Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Jerome. Irenaeus believed that Tatian adopted unorthodox views *after* the death of his teacher Justin, who died between 162 and 167. L. W. Barnard argued that they began well before the death of Justin *if* the *Oratio* was written before AD 160, as he supposes. R. M. Grant on the other hand favoured Irenaeus' view and has portrayed Tatian as a Valentinian Gnostic.[31] Of Tatian's views Irenaeus wrote:

> This man, who had been a hearer [ajkroath‰"] of Justin, as long as he was in company with him, exhibited nothing like this, but after his martyrdom, having apostatized from the Church, and elated with the conceit of a teacher, and vainly puffed up as if he surpassed all others, he established a peculiar characteristic of his own doctrine, by inventing certain invisible aeons, similar to those of Valentinus. Marriage also he asserted, with Marcion and Saturninus, was only corruption and

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[30] L. W. Barnard, "The Heresy of Tatian," in *Studies in Church History and Patristics* (Analecta Blatadon 26; Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, 1978) 181-193; id., "The Heresy of Tatian—Once Again," *JEccH* 19 (1968) 1-10. Luigi Leone ("Due date della vita di Taziano," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 27 [1961] 27-37) confidently dates Tatian's conversion to AD 155-160 and his *Oratio* to AD 160-161.

[31] R. M. Grant, "The Heresy of Tatian," *JTS* 5 (1954) 62-8; id., "Tatian (Or. 30) and the Gnostics," *JTS* n. s. 15 (1964) 65-9; id., "Studies in the Apologists. I: Tatian's Theological Method," *HThR* 51 (1958) 123-8.

fornication. And he also devised arguments of his own against the salvation of Adam.[32]

According to the testimony of Clement of Alexandria, Tatian said that women were punished on account of their hair and ornaments by a power placed over those things. This was radical Christianity indeed, and such extreme views were bound to elicit a backlash from the faithful. Jerome says that Tatian rejected not only marriage but also meat and wine and taught that the flesh of Christ was imaginary.[33] Barnard has sought to ameliorate the force of these charges, especially the latter, by placing Tatian's views within the cultural and religious milieu of his day. He prefers to see him as an eclectic radical Christian to whom an ascetic-encratite explanation of life appealed from the outset of his career as a Christian. Tatian was an Assyrian (he tells us) and in such a country his extreme asceticism and encratism would not have been regarded as suspect.[34] This may explain why he went back there after his expulsion from Rome. It was there that he in all probability produced his *Diat.* since it was written in Syriac.

The hard and fast distinction between canonical and noncanonical Gospels was probably not observed as sharply among the Syrian Fathers as it was in later ages of the Church and so the *Diat.* gained in circulation. Tatian is alleged to have used the Syriac *Gospel of Thomas* as a "fifth source" in his *Diat.*[35]

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[32] *Adv. Haer.* 1.26.1.

[33] *Adv. Jovin.* 1.3, and *Com. in Ep. ad Gal.*, 3.6.8.

[34] Grant, "The Heresy of Tatian," 191.

[35] So A. Baker, "The Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron," *JTS* 16 (1965) 449-54; and G. Quispel, "L'Évangile selon Thomas et le Diatessaron," *Vigiliae Christianae* 13 (1959) 87; id., *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas; studies in the history of the Western Diatessaron* (Leiden: Brill, 1975). Cf. Barnard, "The Heresy of Tatian," 192.

If Tatian was branded as a heretic in the West but accepted in the East, what does this tell us about the criterion for detecting possible heretics in the second century? Clearly Tatian was no heretic in the East where his work was accepted. But by the time Theodoret arrived in Syria in the middle of the fifth century East and West had come to view Tatian as a heretic.

There is the possibility that the omissions in Tatian's *Diat.* were due to his alleged heretical views. If a heretic leaves out what is incompatible with his theology then a careful collection of everything that he has omitted from the four Gospels should show up his theological bias. In the case of Marcion we know that he cut out of Luke's Gospel those parts that did not agree with his theological views. Tatian did indeed cut out the genealogies of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23b-38), the prologue to Luke's Gospel (Luke 1:1-4)[36] and the pericope of the adulteress (John 7:53—8:11), to mention just the major omissions. On the surface, then, Theodoret's allegation that he was a heretic looked strong. The omission of the genealogies was incriminating for it could not be denied. Theodoret goes on to allege that Tatian cut out the genealogies "and such other passages as show the Lord to have been born of the seed of David after the flesh." The inference is either that Tatian denied the humanity of Jesus or, more likely, that Jesus was not descended from Davidic. To test the truthfulness of Theodoret's statement we would need to establish the facts concerning the total amount of the four Gospels that Tatian has omitted; and secondly, we would need to examine closely every passage in the four Gospels that prove directly or indirectly that Jesus was "born of the seed of David after the flesh" to see how Tatian has handled these texts.

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[36] Hogg (*Diatessaron*, p. 43) noted that on the margin of MS A of the Arabic Diatessaron (fol.1a) opposite Luke 1:5 are written by a later hand these words, *The first of his Gospel. The first of the Evangel (is) the Gospel of Luke;* followed by the text of the missing first four verses of Luke.

First, a close examination of the *Diat.* reveals that Tatian has omitted only 56 verses of the entire four Gospels. The omissions are as follows:

1. Matthew 1:1-17   The genealogy of Jesus (17 verses)
2. Matthew 18:4   On humility (1 verse)
3. Mark 1:1a, 2   Opening words (1 verse)
4. Mark 6:53   Geographical itinerary (1 verse)
5. Mark 15:25   Time of the crucifixion (1 verse)
6. Luke 1:1-4   Prologue (4 verses)
7. Luke 3:23b-38   Jesus' genealogy (15 verses)
8. Luke 7:6a, 7   Centurion's servant healed (1 verse)
9. Luke 24:12   Peter at the tomb (1 verse)
10. John 1:6   Notice about the Baptist (1 verse)
11. John 2:12-13a   Geographical itinerary (1 verse)
12. John 7:53—8:11   Woman taken in adultery (12 verses)

The total of 56 verses or 1114 words omitted by Tatian is calculated according to Hill's English translation (KJV style) of the *Diat.,* which is approximately 62,440 words long so that Tatian has omitted only 1.8 per cent of the contents of the four Gospels—a remarkable achievement. (It would be only 0.7 per cent if the omission of the genealogies was discounted.) The word count for the four Gospels in the KJV is approximately 86,320. Thus the *Diat.* is about 72 per cent of the entire contents of the canonical Gospels.[37] Omissions made by Tatian which were below verse level, i.e., half-verses and introductory clauses, have been omitted from the above list because the nature of Tatian's seamless joins would require smooth transitions. All of Tatian's additions are below verse level and were usually explanatory, or expansions, or transitional remarks.

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[37] G. F. Moore ("Tatian's *Diatessaron* and the Analysis of the Pentateuch," *JBL* 9 (1890) 201-15) using a different basis for his calculation arrived at 73 per cent.

Hill appears to have been impressed with the way Tatian went about his composition: "As regards internal harmonisation, the *Diatessaron* leaves little to be desired. It has been carried out in the fullest detail, and the greatest care has been taken not to omit the slightest comment of any one Evangelist, unless it was substantially preserved in the words of another."[38] After a thorough examination of the Greek fragment, Kraeling expressed his view of the *Diat.* thus:

> In by far the largest proportion of its words and constructions the Dura fragment appears to agree not only with the best critical *Diatessaron* text one can construct, but also with the separate Gospels . . . the agreement with the Greek of the Gospels is so exact, both in vocabulary and constructions, as to imply a word for word comparison between the harmony and all its sources, a specific decision concerning the particular source of each phrase and clause, a painstaking combination of the words and constructions selected in the process, and a minimum of editorial emendation.[39]

It is the present writer's view that Tatian must have adopted something akin to a literal cut-and-paste approach to the text of the four canonical Gospels in order to achieve such near perfect results.[40] Of the twelve omissions listed above it is doubtful if no. 2 is of any great consequence as Tatian has covered the subject of humility pretty thoroughly elsewhere under T25:8-13; T29:42; 31:4 and T40:39. The letter T stands for Tatian's *Diat.* as divided into chapter and verse by Hill (see table 2 at the conclusion of this article).

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[38] *Earliest Life*, xiii-xiv.

[39] Kraeling, *Greek Fragment of Tatian's Diatessaron,* 18.

[40] Metzger (*Early Versions*, 12) suggested that Tatian had the four Gospels on separate manuscripts and crossed off what he extracted as he proceeded with his continuous text of the *Diatessaron.*

Concerning no. 3 it should be noted that part of Mark 1:1 probably formed the original title of Tatian's *Diat.* as the Borgian MS (or MS B) has the title: "The Gospel of Jesus, the Son of the living God," words which probably come from Mark 1:1. Tatian has included the prophecy of Mark 1:2 at T13:47 (=Matthew 11:10=Luke 7:27), so that in effect he has not lost the words of Mark 1:2 even though he has omitted them in their right location.

No. 4 was substituted by Matthew 14:34 and hence regarded as repetitious. This was an oversight(?) by Tatian as Mark 6:53 is not a chronological parallel to Matthew 14:34.

No. 5 was omitted because it could not be harmonized with the sixth hour of John 19:14.[41]

No. 8 was omitted because Tatian had attempted to unite two distinct events and found he could not fit in all the details.

No. 9. This verse is omitted in MS D, some Old Latin MSS, syr^{pal} and Marcion. It is placed among the nine "Western non-interpolations." It is possible that Luke 24:12 was regarded as a summary of John 20:3-10, in which case it would qualify—being a repetition—for omission on Tatian's working criterion.

No. 10 was undoubtedly considered superfluous by Tatian.

No. 11. Though Tatian never uses the exact words of these verses the information is probably included in the *Diat.* under T6:36. In any case John 2:11 is placed in the first weeks of Jesus' ministry and 2:13b is placed in his last weeks, so anywhere in between would be covered by 2:12-13a. No significance can be attached to this omission.

After due allowance is made for eight out of the twelve omissions there remain a hard core of four omissions (nos. 1, 6, 7, and 12) which must be

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[41] See B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London-New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 118, 252, for attempts in Greek MSS to alter the "third hour" to the "sixth hour."

considered deliberate, for there is no parallel material to them in the Gospels. No. 12 might, however, be discounted if Tatian used one of the many Greek texts which omitted John 7:53—8:11.[42] Hill has noted that MS W^d has a unique reading at Mark 7:33 which Tatian has picked up.[43] Baarda[44] concluded from the use of the name Gadarenes in the *Diat.* that Tatian used a Greek text of the type a B C D.

III. Why Did Tatian Omit the Genealogies of Jesus?

Even if we eliminate the pericope of the adulteress as a deliberate omission, this still leaves the omission of Jesus' genealogies (nos. 1 and 7)[45] and Luke's

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[42] The UBS^3 apparatus for John 7:53—8:11 shows Diatessaron^f (i.e. Codex Fuldensis) in support of the omission of these verses. This is an error. The verses are included between chaps. 120 and 121 of Ranke's edition.

[43] *Earliest Life*, 86 n. 1.

[44] "Gadarenes, Gerasenes, Gergesenes and the 'Diatessaron' Traditions," in *Early Transmission of Words of Jesus, Thomas, Tatian and the Text of the New Testament* (ed. by J. Helderman and S. J. Noorde; Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, 1983) 85-101, esp. p. 89.

[45] Hogg, (*Diatessaron*, pp. 38, 129 n. 3) states that in the Borgian MS [=MS B] the text ends on folio 353a. On folios 354a-355a are found the genealogies, with the title, *Book of the Generations of Jesus*, that of Luke following that of Matthew without any break. The subscription follows on folio 355b. In the Vat. arab. No. XIV MS [=MS A] the genealogies form part of the text (See Hogg's notes at §1, 81, and §4, 29). Ranke, (*Codex Fuldensis,* p. 32) has Lk 1:1-80 followed by Mt 1:1-16 (the genealogy is given in its normal descending order), and then Lk 3:34-38 (from Terah up to Adam) is followed by Mt 1:17-25. A reversed (or ascending) order of Mt is found at Luke 3:23 in MS D (*Codex*

prologue (no. 6) to account for. One innocuous explanation for the omission of no. 6 might be that since Luke's prologue was personal it might have been deemed unsuitable for incorporation into a work that was planned for public reading. If so this explanation might also account for the omission of the genealogies or for their place in an appendix (there must always be the possibility that Tatian put them there originally).

It is hardly likely that Tatian took Paul's advice to Timothy literally: "Neither give heed to . . . endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith" (1 Tim 1:4), and so deleted the genealogies from the Gospels as tending only to confuse the unwary faithful. That the presence of two different genealogies of Jesus' descent in the Gospels did give rise from time to time to speculation we can have no doubt once the original explanation for their differences was lost. Another unlikely cause must be the suggestion that Tatian understood Jesus to be repudiating his descent from David when he questioned how the Messiah could be called the *son of David* when David calls the Messiah "my Lord" (T35:18-21).

Second, whatever the explanation is for the omission of the genealogies, it can not be for the reason that Theodoret alleges. His previously cited allegation that Tatian omitted "other passages as show the Lord to have been born of the seed of David after the flesh" is not borne out by the facts. The following places in the *Diat.* bear directly, or by implication, on Jesus' Davidic connection: T1:27, 32, 43-44, 70; 2:3, 6, 12, 19; 3:2, 6; 4:29; 5:14; 12:33; 14:42; 17:40; 19:36; 20:49; 21:34, 46; 23:35; 28:32; 31:29-30; 34:48; 35:5-7, 18-21; 36:31; 37:24; 38:11; 39:24, 32-33, 35; 40:2, 19, 38; 41:37; 42:10-14; 45:23; 47:21; 49:31-34, 47, 50-51, 53-54; 50:23, 27, 31, 41, 51; 51:3, 31, 33, 39, 42, 44, 47; 53:47, 52-53; 54:8-10, 24. In no single instance does Tatian play down or omit any reference to Jesus' Davidic

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Bezae Cantabrigiensis, 2 vols. Cambridge, 1899, 1.) replacing Luke's list as far as Abraham.

connection as recorded in the four canonical Gospels. He has faithfully incorporated every canonical reference except the actual lists of ancestors. The single omission of the genealogies can hardly constitute evidence to sustain Theodoret's allegation that Tatian deliberately corrupted the Gospels in his *Diat.*

Zahn, indeed, has argued that the omission was theologically motivated as a protest against a Christology which saw Jesus as a mere child of Joseph who was born in the natural way. He noted that Tatian is careful to point out that Mary did not become the wife of Joseph until after the birth of Jesus.[46] If true this is the exact opposite to Theodoret's argument. If we bear in mind that Theodoret was one of the main defenders of Nestorius in the controversy concerning the nature of Jesus' manhood and deity, then we may attribute his confiscation of the *Diat.* to an over-zealous desire to root out anything that even *appeared* to question the two natures of Jesus. It was sufficient that Tatian was regarded as a heretic for his works to be suppressed. Indeed, Theodoret did not have any choice given the theological cauldron he was living in. He himself had been found guilty of heresy over the nature of Jesus' nature at the Council of Ephesus in AD 449 and deposed. In 451 he was restored and in 454 he was requested by Pope Leo to be his spy in the east and encouraged to guard Christ's nature against all forms of heresy(!); only in this way would he demonstrate that he was orthodox in his beliefs was the clear implication. It was following his restoration to his bishopric that he wrote his *Treatise against Heresies* at the request of Sporacius (one of the Imperial Commissioners at Calcedon); this work lists the many ways in which he rooted out heresy wherever he found it in his 800 churches and thereby demonstrated how loyal a son of the Church he was and always had been. Just at what point in his bishopric he banished the *Diat.* is difficult to discover. Future research into the life and theology of Theodoret may well suggest that the banning of Tatian's *Diat.* had more to do with one man's concern with his own

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[46] Zahn, *Forschungen*, 1.264-7, cf. pp. 116-7.

self-image as the defender of Christ's two natures than the alleged faults of the *Diat.* deserved.

However, if we take the results of our analysis of the way Tatian has handled the Gospel material as the only solid grounds on which to form an opinion, then a plausible explanation for the omission of the genealogies is that Tatian may have viewed their contribution as already covered in those texts which supported Jesus' descent from David. After all, the operation of this same principle has governed the exclusion of 28 per cent of the text of the four Gospels in the final text of his *Diat.*

We may conclude this section by noting that as far as Tatian's omissions go there are not sufficient of them to see any theological bias at work which might explain their omission.[47] If he was a heretic when he composed the *Diat.* he has not allowed his mischievous views to influence his compilation. P. M. Head concluded his study of Tatian's christology with the comment:

> While the omission of the genealogies . . . does (with Theodoret) serve to obscure Jesus' connection with the Davidic line, there is little other evidence of a rejection of the humanity of Jesus. Indeed, in some ways Tatian goes out of his way to highlight the humanity of Jesus: the use of 'Jesus' throughout; Jesus' fear in Gethsemane . . . . Thus Tatian was able not only to integrate separate theologies of the four gospels, but to do it without sacrificing the real humanity of Jesus . . . . For this reason it is perhaps most likely that the omission of the genealogies should be regarded as a subset of Tatian's encratitic alterations. . . . evidence is

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47 Metzger (*Early Versions*, 34) gives a list of only six texts which *might* have been altered in the interests of Tatian's ascetical bias. Such a paucity of evidence is hardly sufficient to convict Tatian of ascetical bias.

certainly lacking that he carried out any consistent, thorough and vigorous reinterpretation of the Gospel texts."[48]

IV. Tatian's Diatessaron: Was It a Misleading Life of Jesus?

If Theodoret could chide the faithful for being naive to accept the work of a heretic (the *Diat.*) on the grounds that "they did not perceive the mischief of the composition," the question arises whether he was also expressing a fundamental objection to abbreviating the Gospels when he chided the people for going after the *Diat.* "on account of its brevity." What was wrong with the concept of reducing the contents of the four Gospels when so much of it was repetitious? The answer must in part be that before the four Gospels became the only recognized and authoritative records of what Jesus said and did there were in circulation many "diatessarons" and works purporting to give the life of Christ containing a sizeable corpus of apocryphal material, and it was this misleading element that caused all such "diatessarons" to be neglected.[49] However, between the time Tatian composed his *Diat.* and its removal from the churches of Edessa in the fifth century these misleading gospels had faded away and what emerged were four authoritative Gospels and only four. The survival of Tatian's *Diat.* was probably viewed as a rival to the dominant position of the four and had to be eliminated—hence Theodoret's actions. It had survived "on account of its

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[48] Peter M. Head, "Tatian's Christology and its Influence on the Composition of the Diatessaron," *Tyndale Bulletin* 43.1 (1992) 121-37, esp. p. 137.

[49] Cf. R. Cameron, *The Other Gospels: non-canonical Gospel texts* (Guildford: Lutterworth, 1983). B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt (eds.), *New Sayings of Jesus and Fragment of a lost Gospel from Oxyrhynchus* (London: H. Frowde, 1904). A useful synopsis and bibliography of the apocryphal literature of the NT is that by J. Quasten, *Patrology* (2 vols.; Utrecht, Brussels: Spectrum, 1950).

brevity" (said Theodoret), but more likely for its clarity, and for the incorporation of all the material of the four canonical Gospels into its composition, it would seem.[50]

Was Tatian's concept of a continuous text of the four Gospels for the needs of the Syrian Church of his post-apostolic day wrong? Or was it wrong because it was not compiled by an orthodox bishop of the Syrian Church? If Tatian had been an orthodox believer would that have secured a lasting place for his work in the literature of the Church? The concept surely was right though Tatian left much to be desired in his execution of it.

Did Tatian, however, intend his *Diat.* to replace the four Gospels? Hill has no doubt that Tatian carefully arranged all the *events* and the *movements* of Jesus in what he believed to be their chronological order, but did not consider it necessary in all cases to record parables and other discourses in their strictly historical places, preferring sometimes to insert them where they would best serve to illustrate the narrative, or to bring out points of comparison or contrast in the teaching of Jesus. Hill justifies this procedure only if Tatian intended his work to be used along with the Gospels, not to supersede them.[51] Plooij suggested that the *Diat.* was meant for missionary purposes and private use, and was used officially in worship only as long as no rival editions of the Gospels

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[50] On the wider issue of non-canonical material in the *Diatessaron* see W. L. Petersen, "Textual Evidence of Tatian's Dependence Upon Justin's APOMNHMONEUMATA," *NTS* 36 (1990) 512-34. See esp. p. 533 n. 96 for the evidence that Tatian used a 'fifth source,' and compare Metzger's *Early Versions*, 35 n. 3. His conclusion on the matter is that on the whole the evidence for a fifth source is so small that it does not qualify as a source on a par with the canonical Gospels (p. 36).

[51] *Earliest Life*, xiv. Cf. F. C. Burkitt, "The Dura Fragment of Tatian," *JTS* 36 (1935) 255-58, who suggests it was not a rival text but the first of the versions.

were available.[52] Baarda, on the other hand, contends that Tatian deliberately intended his *Diat.* to supersede the four Gospels for apologetic reasons.

Apparently Tatian held as a theological tenet that disharmony and contradictions belong to the realm of the Evil One, but that harmony and unity are from God. The Gospels had to be shown to be free from disharmony.[53] Consequently Tatian was under an inner compulsion to replace the four Gospels and their contradictions with a new document that would surpass all his sources and would avoid the criticisms of pagans and so-called Christian dissidents made on the basis of the existing Gospels. A radical way to solve all the disharmony among the Gospels was to create a single new Gospel—the *Diat.* Of course this argument has no weight if the text of the four Gospels already existed in the Old Syriac and was widely disseminated. Tatian's *Diat.* appears to have circulated before the Old Syriac Gospels could occupy the place of reverence, devotion and affection that was reserved for Holy Writings alone. It is inconceivable that the faithful would have exchanged the four Gospels for the *Diat.* if the former were regarded as Holy Scripture. The fact that the affection and devotion that is normally accorded only to Scripture was channelled toward a layman's production is strong presumptive evidence that the *Diat.* was first in the field and Tatian put himself there when he could just as easily have given way to the four Gospels.

V. How Faithful Is the Diatessaron to the History of the Gospels?

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[52] D. Plooij, *A Primitive Text of the Diatessaron* (Leyden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1923) 73.

[53] T. Baarda, "DIAFWNIA—SUMFWNIA: 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 Press, 1989) 133-54, esp. p. 155.

The question whether Tatian has constructed a faithful integration of the contents of the four canonical Gospels is easily answered. There is overwhelming evidence that Tatian has committed many blunders (and not a few howlers) in the course of piecing together his patchwork of texts from different parts of the four Gospels. Tables 1 and 2 (at the close of this article) show that he dissected the four Gospels into approximately 990 pieces. (A separate table showing the order in which he arranged these 990 fragments would occupy twenty pages of this journal. Table 2, therefore, is a condensed summary of this twenty-page table.)

We must distinguish two levels in Tatian work. There is the pericope level which has to do with the individual pericope and how Tatian has reordered the material *within that pericope* and then there is the sequence level where he has arranged the individual pericopes in a definite, predetermined chronological order. This study cannot hope to deal with the scores of textual adjustments that Tatian has made to the Gospel material at the individual pericope level.[54]

Rather than attempt to reconstruct a critical edition of the sequence of Tatian's material using the Eastern and Western witnesses, the sequence of the Arabic *Diat.* (which is, as noted above, identical with Ephraem's commentary) is taken as a fair indication of the structure of the original *Diat.* Metzger noted that Fuldensis and the Arabic represent more or less closely the framework of Tatian's *Diat.*[55] The inclusion of Fuldensis in this statement is not borne out by

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[54] For bibliographic sources on Tatianic studies see B. M. Metzger, *Annotated Bibliography of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament 1914-1939* (Studies and Documents, 16; Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1955) 73-81; id., *Early Versions*, 10-36. Cf. note 6 above.

[55] *Early Versions*, 26. Leloir attempted a synoptic view of six versions of the *Diatessaron* in "Le Diatessaron de Tatien," 216-27.

the facts as presented above. The Arabic sequence is much superior to Fuldensis as it follows the sequence of pericopes in Ephraem's commentary exactly.

The main factor influencing Tatian when he was composing his continuous text of the *Diat.*—to go by his results—was the need to remove repetitious material common to two or more of the four Gospels. When one considers that all but a handful of verses in Mark's Gospel are repeated in Matthew and Luke then one can appreciate the rationale behind the *Diat.* The weakness in Tatian's work is most discernible at the sequence level when he has to place individual pericopes in chronological order. At times, due to his fixed policy of avoiding repetitions of any kind, he shows complete disregard for the original occasion on which an event or teaching occurred. Thus similar but different events/-pericopes are quite arbitrarily combined.

Table 2 shows blocks of Gospel material (which are marked with a dagger [†] against the relevant verses in the left-hand column) where Tatian has introduced a drastic rearrangement into the chronological sequence of the Gospel history. This is particularly noticeable in his plundering of Luke's gospel in order to supplement the narrative of Matthew and/or Mark. A close examination of these instances will leave the reader in no doubt that Tatian has distorted the life, work, and sometimes the words of Jesus in a significant manner.

It is an assumed fact that the synoptic Gospels present the life of Jesus through a similar sequence of events, starting with his birth (or baptism) and ending with his resurrection (or ascension).[56] There has always been some

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[56] One of the main synoptic problem is the coincidence in the sequence of the narrative units in each of the three synoptic gospels. It is assumed that it is unlikely that three different authors working entirely independently would have followed narrative sequences so strikingly alike (so John S. Kloppenborg et al., *Q-Thomas Reader* [Sonoma, California: Polebridge Press Inc., 1990] 8). Cf. the helpful table in B. H. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels: A Synopsis of*

diversity of opinion, however, among harmonists of all ages, as to the exact sequence of events in Jesus' ministry and also the identification of those events (e.g., is a particular event in one Gospel the same or a different event in another Gospel?).

The justification for Tatian's scheme arose out of the general observation that many events, parables, miracles, and teachings, of Jesus are duplicated across the four Gospels. The observation cannot be denied and constitutes the foundation and justification for his attempt. Proceeding on the simple criterion that *similar* equals *same* Tatian reduced the bulk of the contents of the four Gospels by around twenty-eight per cent. This figure is based on Table 2 which shows in some detail how Tatian pieced together his work. Did Tatian take the observation too far and apply his criterion in too simplistic a manner to situations where *similar* is not the same as *identical*? Opponents of Tatian's scheme (and there are at least forty-six rival schemes) could—with considerable justification—argue that he has done just this. Because of the lack of agreement among harmonists and others over what constitutes parallel material it is not possible to compare Tatian's arrangement against any agreed standard with any assurance that he has got it right or wrong. Every rearrangement of the text that he has made could be justified apart from a chronological arrangement. His results show that he clearly rejected the idea that any of the four Gospels was in chronological order.

VI. Tatian's Chronological Difficulties

Tatian mentions three passovers explicitly at T18:24 (=John 6:5), T30:31 (=John 5:1), and T38:39 (John 11:55). Another passover is implied at T7:38 (=John

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the First Three Gospels (2nd edn., rev.; New York-Edinburgh-Toronto: T. Nelson & Sons, 1957) xx-xxvi.

2:13?) where it is springtime and Jesus and his disciples go through the cornfields plucking ears of corn. Tatian mentions a visit of Jesus to Judea before this event (see T6:5, 20).

It would take this paper beyond its limits to enter into a detailed account of Tatian's chronology. The following notes illustrate the way he handled a wide range of difficult chronological problems.

(1) T2:47. Joseph and Mary "returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth" after their return from Egypt. T3:1 then records the visit of the wise men who visit Jesus in Nazareth, not in Bethlehem(!). Joseph flees into Egypt *from Nazareth.* This scheme was adopted in order to accommodate the difficulty of assigning a place to Luke 2:39 in his text. Unfortunately he had to jettison Matthew 2:1a in the process.

(2) T5:1. "On the next day." The point of reference refers to a particular day when the Pharisees publicly challenged John's baptism (Jn 1:29). The "next day" of John 1:35 and "the day following" of John 1:43 are sequential to that event. However, the notice: "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana . . . ." (Jn 2:1) has a difference point of reference which John has not stated. This time the numeration is from the day that John the Baptist publicly pointed out Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. John has given us a four-day sequence of events here, not three days, using two time reference points. Tatian has not understood this and in order to reduce the four days to three he merges the first two days and puts the baptism and John's identification of Jesus as the Messiah into the same day. To achieve this he had to alter John 1:29 from "The next day…." to "Now….". This dubious ploy allowed him to harmonize John 2:1 ("And the third day….") with John 1:29, 35, 43.

(3) T5:34. From Cana Jesus goes to Nazareth where he had been brought up. In the course of one sermon in his home synagogue Jesus appears to have been a hero and a villain. The sudden change of mood ended in an attempt to throw him over the cliff. This may have puzzled Tatian. He felt he needed to give the

people of Nazareth time in which to build up a reputation of respect for Jesus and his teaching before they rejected him. Consequently he split Luke 4:22 into two halves and placed a gap of indeterminate length between them. Luke 4:22b is continued at T17:40 where it is fused with a similar event in Jesus' third year (Mt 13:53b-58=Mk 6:1-6a for which there is no Lucan parallel).

(4) T21:1-7 places Jesus in Galilee and this is followed by a visit to Samaria (T21:8-46) after which he returns to Galilee (T21:47). This is in direct contradiction with John's statements, who states: "He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria . . . . " (Jn 4:3-4). Tatian inserts a gap of many months after the clause "He left Judea" (=T6:22) and then resumes the narrative at T21:8 (="And he was passing through the land of Samaria") by conveniently omitting the clause "and departed again into Galilee." This means that fourteen chapters of material must be fitted in between John 4:3a and 4:4.

(5) T30:31 states that the passover was near. Jesus entered Jerusalem, cleansed the Temple and went out to Bethany with the Twelve (T32:1). The next morning he curses the fig-tree (T32:24). The next surprising event in Tatian's narrative is the visit of Nicodemus to Jesus at night (T32:27). As Jesus returns to the Temple the next morning the disciples notice the fig-tree dried up (T32:2). We are then suddenly pitched into the middle of the last great day of the Feast of Tabernacles (T35:1), followed by the Feast of Dedication (T37:25). Then follows the event of the raising of Lazarus (T38:1) after which Jesus departs into a hermitage called Ephraem (T38:38). He follows this with a notice of another passover being near (T38:39). At T39:1 we read: "Jesus therefore six days before the passover came to Bethany" followed by the rest of the events of Passion Week. A more glaring example of a howler would be hard to find in any other harmony of the Gospels.

VII. Conclusion

The evidence from an objective study of the composition of Tatian's *Diat.* is that Theodoret's allegation that Tatian omitted passages which show Jesus to have been born of the seed of David after the flesh has no solid basis in fact.[57] The omission of Jesus' genealogies plus the fact that Tatian ended his life in disgrace in the West as a heretic probably accounts for the rash assessment of Tatian's *Diat.* In itself, as regards theological bias, the *Diat.* did not deserve to be called a mischievous work.

On the other hand, if Theodoret had examined the contents of the *Diat.* more closely he would have been on surer grounds in having it withdrawn as a misleading representation of the life of Jesus Christ when compared with the picture presented in each of the other four Gospels.

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[57] The article by E. A. Johnson ("The First Harmony of the Gospel: Tatian's Diatessaron and its Theology," *JETS* 14 [1971] 227-38) is based on the assumption that Theodoret's statement is correct, such is the mischief that an uncritical acceptance of an historical smear can keep alive. Johnson alleges that Tatian deliberately tailored the text to fit his theological notions (p. 237). The same assumption lies behind A. A. Hobson's work (*The Diatessaron of Tatian and the Synoptic Problem* [Chicago: The University Press, 1904]) on which Johnson was dependent for his "evidence." J. Rendel Harris (*The Diatessaron of Tatian* [London: J. Clay, 1890]) has quite rightly debunked the assumption of theological bias in the *Diatessaron*.

Explanatory Notes for Table 1.

The presumed text that Tatian is treating as his central text is placed inside a box. Where there is a gap between these blocks of texts this is indicated by a gap between these boxes. For example, it can be seen that between Matthew 28:10 and 28:16 there are five verses missing/displaced. If there had been no verses missing then the two boxes would have been merged. Where, however, a block of text is given and Tatian has rearranged the verses within that block this is noted by diagonal marks in the four corners.

Blocks of text which are displaced from their canonical order are placed to the left and right of the boxed text, and are unboxed. Texts on the left indicate blocks of text that Tatian has brought *forward*; texts on the right indicate blocks that he has inserted *later* than their canonical order.

An asterisk indicates the arbitrary repetition of some canonical text and a diamond indicates that Tatian failed to include the missing verses in his *Diat.*

In the Arabic MSS., and probably in the Syriac exemplar, the work is divided into fifty-four almost equal chapters, followed by one short one--a feature that agrees well with the lectionary of the Syrian church.

[Insert here Table 1. Tatian's rearrangement of the Gospels (2 pages)]
[Insert here Table 2. Tatian's Diatessaron (7 pages)]

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