The Formation of the Early Church

Edited by
JOSTEIN ÅDNA

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
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Preface

During June 14–18, 2003, almost 70 New Testament scholars from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden gathered for the Seventh Nordic New Testament Conference at Solborg Folkehøgskole in Stavanger, Norway. The topic of the conference was 'the Formation of the Early Church'[1], and the essays presented in this volume are adapted papers, either read in plenary sessions or presented in one of the five seminar groups during this conference.

The first in the series of these Nordic New Testament conferences took place at the University of Aarhus in Denmark in 1978, and ever since there have been organised conferences every fourth or fifth year, circulating between the five countries[2]. In 2003 the School of Mission and Theology acted as host, but the two other theological faculties in Norway, i.e., the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology in Oslo and the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo, as well as the Research Council of Norway, supported the conference financially. The generous invitations from the city of Stavanger to a dinner, and from the county council of Rogaland to an excursion, and from the bishop of Stavanger to a lunch reception, contributed to the well-being of the participants and helped bring about the kind of favourable atmosphere which good and profitable scholarly exchange depends on. As chairman of the hosting committee I am grateful for all these contributions that enabled us to organise the conference with its varied scholarly and social programme.

After the conference I have had the privilege of planning and preparing the publication of a selection of the conference papers. All fourteen contributors to the present volume have worked diligently in translating[3], enlarging and adapting their papers in order to comply with the demands and needs of this publication. For me as editor it is a pleasure and honour to be able to present to the scholarly world these fresh contributions from New Testament and

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[1] In Norwegian: 'Kirken tar form'.

[2] The original initiator and host of the first conference, Sigfred Pedersen, has written the history of the five first conferences, published in the volume of the fifth conference, cf. Sigfred Pedersen, "Scandinavian New Testament Conferences, 1978–1994", in *The New Testament in its Hellenistic Context* (Studia theologica islandica, 10; ed. Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson *et al.*; Reykjavik: Guðfræðistofnun, 1996) 15–36. For the sixth conference cf. *The New Testament as Reception* (JSNTSup 230; Copenhagen International Seminar 11; eds. Mogens Müller and Henrik Tronier; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

[3] At the conference in Stavanger most of the papers were presented in the Scandinavian languages Swedish, Norwegian and Danish.

Patristic scholars in the Nordic countries. However, my role as editor is limited to accepting and promoting the essays; each individual author carries full responsibility for her or his essay.

The School of Mission and Theology has generously supported this last phase of the conference work as well, and thanks to these financial resources it has been possible to employ some additional people to assist in different operations involved in preparing the book. Mrs. Ellen Crocker and Mr. Piers Crocker have done a marvellous job in correcting and polishing the language of the manuscripts, and stud. theol. Ivan Fjeld has done excellent editorial work in proof-reading and in preparing the indices.

Finally, I will express my deep gratitude to the publisher, Mr. Georg Siebeck, and to the series editor, Prof. Dr. Jörg Frey, for accepting this volume for publication in the series "Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 1. Reihe". Among those in the publishing house Mohr Siebeck who have been involved in preparing this book and who have assisted me in my work as editor, I want to thank in particular Dr. Henning Ziebritzki, Editorial director Theology and Jewish Studies, and Production manager Ms. Ilse König.

I hope that this book will stimulate debate and further work among biblical and patristic scholars on different aspects of the topic 'the Formation of the Early Church', and that in this work also insights will be gained which can be helpful and inspiring in responding to contemporary formative challenges which churches all over the world are facing at the beginning of the 21st century.

Jostein Ådna Stavanger, May 2005

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Abbreviations, of the names of biblical books and other ancient sources as well as of modern periodicals, reference works and serials, follow the rules recommended by the Society of Biblical Literature, as these are presented in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998) 555–579, and/or in *The SBL Handbook of Style For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (eds. Patrick H. Alexander *et al.*; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999).

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The Formation of the Early Church

An Introduction

by

JOSTEIN ÅDNA

Starting from the band of followers of the Galilean teacher and miracle worker Jesus of Nazareth in the late twenties of the 1st century A.D., the early church underwent a remarkable development during the following decades, spreading to vast parts of the Roman Empire by the end of the century[1]. There were definitely great variations between many of the groups belonging to this movement that had its origin with the adherents of Jesus, due to geographical, ethnic, social and cultural differences among them. The one common denominator that identified their interdependence and, at the same time, delineated them from all others, was their exclusive allegiance to Jesus. Most of them called him Jesus Christ and related to him as Lord (*kyrios*) and Son of God[2]. But even those who for some reason might have avoided these dominant Christological titles, considered him in one way or the other as the messenger or mediator of salvation.

New Testament and patristic scholars have, of course, addressed various aspects of the developments within the early church for a long time already. This volume presents a number of contributions from scholars in the Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, regarding different historical and theological questions related to *the formation of the early Church.*

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[1] This holds true even if the total number of Christians still was low around 100 A.D. RODNEY STARK, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) 7 estimates the number Christians at that time as less than 10 000, but computes a considerable growth to more than 40 000 by 150 A.D. and even more than 200 000 at the end of the 2nd century.

[2] Cf. now regarding the adoration and worship of Jesus LARRY W. HURTADO, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2003).

I. The Relationship between Christians and Jews, "Parting of the Ways" and Development of New Identities

For an entity like the early church, originating solely among Jews within Palestinian Judaism, but very fast transcending the borders of the Jewish people to include Gentile believers in Jesus within its ranks, the question of how to relate to other Jews became urgent. The New Testament contains ample evidence of what difficulties and tensions this delicate issue brought upon the first generation of Christians. There was clearly a wide-ranging agreement among early Jewish Christians that the messianic redemption provided by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was to have positive consequences not only for Israel, but for the Gentile peoples, as well. It was a hotly debated issue among them, however, whether or to what degree the inclusion of the Gentiles into the eschatologically renewed people of God implied a changed role or even an abolition of certain Jewish identity markers, like male circumcision and abstention from various kinds of food. These questions of circumcision and dietary laws, as well as further issues like Sabbath observance and the sacrificial cult in the Temple, have been extensively discussed within New Testament scholarship.

Much less attention has been paid to the annual, regular tax to the Temple in Jerusalem as a further Jewish identity marker and to early Christian attitudes to this tax. In his essay "The Temple Tax as a Pre-70 CE Identity Marker" (pp. 19–44), MIKAEL TELLBE addresses these questions. He clearly demonstrates the central role of the Temple tax for Jewish identity throughout the whole diaspora and discusses the implications of three New Testament texts, viz. Matt 17:24–27, Rom 13:1–10 and 1 Pet 2:4–17, in regard to how early Christians handled this issue. As a matter of fact, an important aspect of defining a viable self-understanding and identity for early Christians was to come to grips with typical Jewish practices as e.g. the Temple tax. Hence, Tellbe's essay contributes to the clarification of those aspects of *the formation of the early church* which have to do with its relationship to Judaism.

The parting of the ways has been a popular metaphor in recent scholarship for designating the break between Judaism and Christianity as mutually separate religious entities. ANDERS KLOSTERGAARD PETERSEN offers a meticulous methodological discussion of the appropriateness of this metaphor in his essay "At the End of the Road – Reflections on a Popular Scholarly Metaphor" (pp. 45–72). Petersen is well aware and appreciates how the model of conceiving the gradual differentiation and separation between Judaism and Christianity in terms of the road metaphor has

stimulated and been beneficial to much scholarship. However, it contains a danger and an inherent tendency of overemphasising certain historical data and drawing too generalised conclusions from them, at the cost of other empirical evidence pointing in another direction. Besides addressing certain theoretical problems related to the use of *the parting of the ways* metaphor, Petersen draws our attention to a vast amount of data from the first five centuries of the Christian era that testifies to a vivid and ongoing interaction between Jews and Christians, the latter both Jewish and Gentile with regard to ethnic identity. Actually, outspoken and even rancorous criticisms and rejections of Judaism and Jewish practices, e.g. in some of the letters of Ignatius of Antioch at the beginning of the 2nd century, in conciliar canons throughout the 4th century as well as in John Chrysostom's homilies from 386/7, are not testimonies of an already completed break between the two. On the contrary, data of this kind is ample evidence that elitist Gentile Christian groups saw a reason to react strongly against interaction and relationship between Christians and Jews that was still going on.

Hence, in spite of its noted fruitfulness for much scholarship, Petersen advocates a careful and reserved use of *the parting of the ways* metaphor because it turns out to be inadequate in reflecting the diverse and multiple varying realities of relationships, co-existence and encounters as well as numerous partings of ways between different Jews and Christians long after 150 A.D.

Notwithstanding the centrality of the relationship between Jewish and Gentile backgrounds, there are, of course, a number of other elements as well that were significant with regard to developing new identities for early Christians. In her essay "New Voices in Biblical Exegesis – New Views on the Formation of the Church" (pp. 73–90), HANNA STENSTRÖM draws attention particularly to the question of gender construction, exemplified by the portrait of "the 144 000" in Rev 14:1–5 as male virgins. Besides the essay by Anders Klostergaard Petersen this is the most explicit methodological contribution in the volume. Stenström puts her emphasis on theoretical and methodological aspects of recent feminist biblical scholarship, discussing both its critical and constructive tasks. She regards feminist criticism as an important part of a wider movement of critique of traditional historical-critical scholarship, unmasking as invalid its claim for value-neutral objectivity. Actually, both the biblical texts themselves and traditional biblical scholarship provide androcentric constructions of Christian identity. Hence, traditional biblical scholarship has under the pretension of objectivity predominantly served the power interests of certain groups. Stenström offers an overview presentation of how feminist

research, alongside other approaches within the new, alternative paradigm, such as post-colonial criticism, challenges and criticises the established institutions of biblical scholarship.

II. Developments of and Contacts between Early Communities and Authority and Power Structures within them as Reflected in the New Testament

Within the broad topic of *the formation of the early church,* studies of the developments of Christian communities in their early phases and of authority and power structures within them throughout this formative period, naturally take up a central position. A number of essays in this volume address questions of this kind.

JON MA. ASGEIRSSON discusses the character of the hypothetical document Q and of the Gospel of Matthew as well as the character of the communities to which these two writings are related in his essay "Complex and Community: From the Prophets of Q to the Scribe(s) of St. Matthew or Vice Versa" (pp. 93–122). Providing extensive information about the recent scholarly debate on Q and the alleged group behind it, Asgeirsson makes a strong case for Q as a written document with a recognisable complex composition produced by skilled scribes. This document traces and reflects the development of a new religious movement in Galilee at a fairly early stage after the career of the figure to whom it adheres, i.e., Jesus of Nazareth. When it comes to St. Matthew, who has used both Q and the Gospel of Mark as sources for his gospel, his text seems to reflect a further stage in the process of community formation compared to Q. The Matthean group is likely to be compared with contemporary voluntary associations like *collegia* or *philosophiai*, because this gospel contains an "agenda" and such regulations as an established community of this kind is in need of.

In his essay "All Those Who in Every Place Call on the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ: The Unity of the Pauline Churches" (pp. 123–143), REIDAR HVALVIK investigates what contacts and connections actually existed between the communities founded by Paul and his co-workers. Paul's letters clearly bear witness to his eagerness to establish an awareness of unity among his churches. Evidence for this commitment on his part are references within the letters to other churches and to an ecumenical tradition shared by all of them, as well as conveyance of greetings from other churches to the addressees.

Without rejecting the occasional character of the Pauline letters, Hvalvik also draws attention to the fact that they demonstrate an ecumenical character that goes beyond the mere relationship between the author and the receiver of each individual letter. E.g. the prescript of 1 Corinthians, a part of which is cited as the title of the essay (i.e., 1 Cor 1:2b), expresses this intention. Paul's letters were not private; actually, based on his strong conviction of writing as the apostle of Jesus Christ, he wanted his letters to be read not only once, but to be reread in the communities to which they were addressed, as well as to be exchanged and read also in other Pauline churches.

Further, Paul stimulated contacts between the communities when he travelled between them and wrote his letters from various locations. In this way the host church at any time was witnessing his care for other churches, and some times representatives of the host church functioned as the courier delivering a letter to the addressee in another place. Whenever delegates from another church came to see Paul, they definitely also met their fellow believers there. Generally, as the numerous admonitions concerning hospitality reflect, Christians on a journey would often look up the church in the localities they were passing through and be warmly received there. Finally, Paul's collection for Jerusalem[3] contributed in a specific way to the unity between his churches by involving all of them in this project of bringing their common gift to the mother church in Jerusalem, delivered by a delegation of representatives from the different communities that travelled with Paul.

Hence, Hvalvik points out a number of factors within the Pauline churches, operative already during the time of Paul's work in the midst of the 1st century and in the following years, that reflect a regular contact and an ambition for and a consciousness of ecumenical unity among communities spread out over a vast geographical area.

A New Testament text which has had a tremendously strong formative impact on the church throughout its whole history, is the authorization of Peter in Matt 16:17–19. I am pleased to be able to present a contribution on this text of such a high significance for *the formation of the early church*, viz., HANS KVALBEIN's essay "The Authorization of Peter in Matthew 16:17–19: A Reconsideration of the Power to Bind and Loose" (pp. 145–174). Kvalbein focuses primarily on a synchronic reading of these verses, but, at the same time, he emphasises that he considers this

[3] In addition to the literature on the collection referred to by Hvalvik, let me point to the (unpublished) M.Phil. thesis of my Cameroonian student JEAN-MARC BABA TONGA, *Paul's Collection to the Poor in Jerusalem: An Attempt to Unify the Early Church* (School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, and the University of Bergen, 2003).

text, like the whole Gospel, to reflect and preserve towards the end of the 1st century A.D. Jewish-Christian traditions with a basis in history.

According to Kvalbein's analysis the pericope 16:13–20 introduces a section within the Gospel that concentrates on the church and discipleship as its main themes, ending in 20:34. It follows from how the three verses 17–19, that address Peter in the 2nd person singular, are posited and interrelated into their immediate surrounding context, that Peter is not important as an individual, but as a spokesman for the disciples. Hence, the blessing of Peter in verse 17 is grounded in the confession of Jesus as the Messiah which Peter on behalf of all the disciples had expressed in his reply to Jesus' question (cf. vv. 15–16), and in verse 18 the new name *Petros* and the function as the foundation, upon which Jesus will build his church, are granted to him because he has become the father of all believers through his confession to Christ.

As hinted at by the title of his essay, Kvalbein's major concern is the understanding of verse 19. He opposes the dominant interpretation of the authorization to "bind" and to "loose" as the granting to Peter of the authority to make binding halakhic decisions on what is prohibited and permitted, as in rabbinic tradition, and interprets instead the "binding" and "loosing" to be the authority to forgive and retain sins, as in Matt 18:18 and as validated by the Gospel of Matthew as a whole, where the remission of sins takes up a prominent role as a most central part of the mission of Jesus and the church. Thus, the primacy of Peter as the rock, as expressed in Matt 16:17–19, is exclusively a matter of him being the first to confess Jesus as the Messiah, and it does not in any way imply that the power to retain and forgive sins is given only to a limited group of ministers in the church.

Whereas the Gospel of Matthew, according to Hans Kvalbein, presents an image of the church as the fellowship of brothers and sisters without any decisive human or ecclesial authority inside or above it, things look quite diffent in the Pastoral letters. This is the definite conclusion in LONE FATUM's study "Christ Domesticated: The Household Theology of the Pastorals as Political Strategy" (pp. 175–207). With church order and internal consolidation as a primary concern, the author of the Pastorals some time in the early 2nd century A.D. lets a revised and idealised Paul appear as a champion of social and political conformity. The immediate goal is to establish an outwardly recognisable household order for the whole church in accordance with the *paterfamilias* institution of the Graeco-Roman social order and culture in order to achieve recognition for the church as an institution characterised by order and a well-organised leadership.

In the Pastorals Paul is portrayed in his authoritative role as preacher, apostle, and, with particular emphasis, as teacher. Through the vicarious personifications of both Timothy and Titus the author ascribes to himself the role of trusted agent of Paul's legacy and, consequently, he claims for himself the exclusive status of rightful teacher of Pauline "sound teaching". In this capacity the author teaches believers to reject ungodliness and wordly passions and instructs them to live a life of reason, justice and piety in this world, trusting in the hope of the parousia.

Whereas the "sound teaching" is expressed in the believers' unobtrusive life and obedience, the devious teaching that is vigorously fought by the Pastorals, leads to disobedience and moral disorder. Even though it is hardly possible to gain any precise impression of what the adversaries of the author of the Pastorals actually taught, Fatum draws our attention to certain identifiable aspects of special interest and relevance in the context of her investigation, viz., the participation of women, the teaching of an ascetic spirituality in demonstrative anticipation of the heavenly existence, and the chosen strategy of the author of the Pastorals to fight these adversaries through social discrimination, even accusing them of being in league with the Devil. It is likely that the adversaries also appealed to Paul, and that this competing reception and development of the Pauline tradition is preserved in some apocryphal writings, among which the *Book of Thecla* is the most obvious and prominent example.

Consistent with the author's rejection of his charismatic adversaries and their agenda is his own concern for transforming his church from an apocalyptic eschatological sect, vertically defined, to a socially respectable institution which is horizontally reintegrated and which conforms to and is a fully accepted part of society. Corresponding to this shift is the author's substitution of the authentic Pauline concept of the community of Christ-believers as the body of Christ with the static model of house and household in the Pastorals. He urges his addressees to accept and conform to the present-day conditions of their social and political world. For the sake of public recognition Christian identity is reconstructed in accordance with the values of the Graeco-Roman household, with an emphasis on the obligations of marriage and procreation and on the qualifications of the good patron and his exemplary household management as a consequence. These shifts of focus have major implications for Christology and soteriology: Paul's emphasis on the suffering and death of Christ is replaced by the moral example of suffering Paul, and Christ crucified is substituted by Christ domesticated.

In order to obtain his goal of a patriarchal household organisation, the author of the Pastorals engages the authority of the legendary Paul in contradiction to the apostolic Paul of the authentic letters. Whereas Paul

had a preference for spiritual asceticism and ascribed a remarkable degree of social freedom and personal authority to unmarried Christian women, the author of the Pastorals, due to his changed focus, opts exclusively in favour of married life and defines the status and social activities of women solely on the basis of household conventions. Through their institutionalising project the Pastorals propagate a contextual construction which has had a very strong formative effect on the church throughout the centuries. Fatum's critical assessment is that many, not least women, have paid a high price for the official Christian standards of 'normal' family life and the 'natural' gender roles and sexuality as defined by the Pastorals.

III. Issues Relating to the New Testament Canon

Questions about the status of writings that were produced within different Christian groups during the first and second centuries A.D. have a bearing on *the formation of the early church.* Those writings which were widely accepted and gained a canonical status became, of course, influential in shaping both theological convictions and practice in the congregations. This volume does not offer any fully-fledged account of the history of the canonisation of the New Testament. However, a number of essays address issues related to the canon.

As Lone Fatum in her essay, presented above, claims that there is a profound contradiction between the authentic letters of Paul on the one hand, and the Pastorals on the other hand, also OUTI LEPPÄ addresses the issue of theological contradictions within the canon of the New Testament in her essay "Debates within the New Testament Canon" (pp. 211–237). In opposition to the common approach of locating and identifying the adversaries referred to and condemned e.g. in Colossians, the Pastorals, Jude and Revelation 2–3 as someone outside the frame of the New Testament, Leppä sets out to demonstrate that the opponents of the above-mentioned letters might just as well be found within the New Testament canon itself.

Colossians, 1 Timothy and Titus, all of them deutero-Pauline letters to be dated towards the end of the 1st century A.D. and located in Asia Minor, reject any restrictions on food and drink more categorically than Paul himself had done (cf. Col 2:16; 1 Tim 4:3; Titus 1:15). This line of Christian freedom from Jewish dietary laws is also represented by the Gospel of Mark (cf. 7:15, 18–19). Next, Leppä draws our attention to the presence of a competing position on food regulations in other New Testament writings, viz., in Revelation 2–3 (cf. 2:14, 20). Thus, Revelation

seems to represent apocalyptic strains of Christianity that observed Jewish food laws and strongly condemned those who tolerated the eating of idol meat. A similar stand is expressed by Jude (cf. v. 12), and probably also by the Gospel of Matthew. In addition to the controversy about food regulations, these two types of Christians also seem to have had different attitudes toward angels and marriage.

Hence, according to Leppä, at the end of the 1st century there existed Christian groups, likely to be located in Asia Minor, with mutually contradictory views on certain theological matters. These groups vehemently condemned each other, and writings representing both positions have found their way into the New Testament. It follows that the New Testament canon contains theological positions which oppose each other. An attempt to mediate between the two strains is, however, also to be found within the canon, represented by the Letter to the Ephesians.

Whereas Outi Leppä and Lone Fatum discuss theological tensions and contradictions among writings which all belong to the established New Testament canon, the next two essays address other aspects in the history of the New Testament canon. ANTTI MARJANEN asks in his essay "Montanism and the Formation of the New Testament Canon" (pp. 239–263) whether, and in what ways, the Montanists' favourable reception of certain early Christian writings affected their possibility of gaining canonical status.

The Montanist movement originated in Asia Minor just after the middle of the 2nd century as a new prophetic current. Although it was condemned as a heresy at the end of the 2nd century, it continued to flourish throughout the whole 3rd century and was only successfully fought and reduced from the time when Catholic Christianity was supported by Roman imperial power as the chief religion of the empire. Marjanen assumes that the most important reasons why the Montanists were declared heretics, were the ecstatic character of the Montanist prophecy, the major role of women within the movement as well as the rigorous emphasis on holiness in living. With regard to the holy scriptures no anti-Montanist heresiologist accuses them of not accepting those used by "mainstream Christians". However, they were convinced that Jesus' promise of the Paraclete Spirit, who would both assist the believers in interpreting the earlier scriptures and provide them with new prophetic insight (cf. John 16:12–13), had been materialised among them. Therefore the Montanists considered it possible and necessary to complement and expand the incomplete work of the evangelists and the apostles with new writings.

To what extent did the Paraclete texts, found exclusively in the Gospel of John and to which the Montanists appealed to legitimise their prophetic

activity, harm the recognition of this gospel among "mainstream Christians"? Marjanen's scrutinizing investigation of the available sources leads to the conclusion that a rejection of the Gospel of John based on its use among the Montanists only occurred in Rome and even there only among a limited number of Christians. He reaches a similar result for the Apocalypse of John and the Epistle to the Hebrews. The well-known opposition towards the Apocalypse in the East and towards Hebrews in the West was mostly motivated on other grounds than the popularity of these two writings among Montanists. As was the case with the Gospel of John, only in the circle of the presbyter Gaius in Rome was the alleged linking of the Apocalypse and Hebrews with Montanist thinking a decisive argument for not granting to them an authoritative position in the church. Finally, even regarding the two apocalyptic writings the Shepherd of Hermas and the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which in spite of significant popularity among early Christians were not taken into the New Testament canon, there is no justification for the assumption that a particular interest for these writings among the Montanists played any decisive role in their nonacceptance. Marjanen concludes that the significance of the anti-Montanist polemic has been overestimated in dominant scholarly assessments of why there during the canonisation process was opposition against including the Gospel of John, the Apocalypse and Hebrews into the New Testament canon.

The last essay in the section on the New Testament Canon is PETRI LUOMANEN's "On the Fringes of Canon: Eusebius' View of the 'Gospel of the Hebrews'" (pp. 265–281). In his *Ecclesiastical History*, the early 4th century historian Eusebius classifies the "Gospel of the Hebrews" among the so-called *antilegomena*, and he makes three more references to it in his writings, two of which are taken from Papias and Hegesippus. Even though Eusebius seems to rely completely on second-hand information in Greek with regard to the "Gospel of the Hebrews", he also makes references to a gospel in Hebrew characters/language. Luomanen considers it likely that these gospels were related, although Eusebius himself does not explicitly connect them with each other. Generally, the passages referred to and quoted by Eusebius from these sources cohere with other Jewish-Christian gospel fragments. The surviving fragments seem to combine phrases from different synoptic gospels. Therefore, the original "Gospel of the Hebrews" as well as other Jewish-Christian gospels might have appeared as some kind of gospel harmonies. If so, it is plausible that they were dismissed like Tatian's *Diatessaron* was. As a matter of fact, by the time of Eusebius the "Gospel of the Hebrews" was no longer available to the writers within "mainstream" Christianity, and the main reason why Eusebius placed it in the second category in his list of canonical writings

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