

JACOB A. RODRIGUEZ

Combining Gospels in Early Christianity

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Jacob A. Rodriguez

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The One, the Many, and the Fourfold

Mohr Siebeck

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for Tessa

τερπέσθην μύθοισι πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐνέποντε

Preface

The present monograph is an edited version of my doctoral thesis, which I defended at Oxford University in September 2021. I am grateful to Prof. Jörg Frey for accepting my manuscript for publication in the WUNT II series, and for the helpful suggestions offered by the editorial team.

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I am deeply grateful to the Formation of Oxford Scholarship in Theology, Ethics, and Religion (FOSTER) Postgraduate Scholarship in New Testament, who funded my Oxford study and much of my living expenses. This current project would be impossible without their generosity. The subtitle for this project was inspired by Ronald A. Piper, “The One, the Four and the Many,” in Markus Bockmuehl and Donald Hagner, eds., *The Written Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 254–73.

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For those who have mentored me into the life of scholarship as faith seeking understanding, thank you: Prof. Jon Laansma, Prof. Douglas Moo, Prof. Greg Beale, Prof. Jane Beal, Prof. Karen Jobes, Dr. Steve Bryan, and Dr. Tim Green. The community at St. Ebbe's, Oxford, has been a source of spiritual and practical support for many years. Vaughan Roberts, Ben Vane, Glenn and Lizzy Nesbitt, Penny Wearn, and the Overseas Partners Support Group deserve special thanks. Before embarking on DPhil studies in Oxford, I had the joy of living, learning, and serving in Ethiopia with SIM and the Episcopal Diocese of North Africa. My studies in Oxford are very much indebted to what I learned there. The Ethiopian calendar coordinates the four-year leap-year cycle with the four evangelists. It is therefore fitting that it was in the Ethiopian highlands that the idea for this project was born. Special thanks are given to my Ethiopian *wolajoch*, Woldeamlak and Wetete, my dear Ethiopian *wendemoch* Desalegn Kebede, Temesgen Sahle, Esayas Mario, Abenezar Urga, Frew Tamirat, and many more than I could name here.

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kiber le-Eyesus yihun

Ethiopian Feast of Lidet (Christmas), The Year of St. Luke
January 7th, 2023, Gregorian Calendar
Church of the Resurrection, Washington, DC

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Abbreviations

Unless listed below, all abbreviations are according to *the SBL Handbook of Style: Second Edition* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014).

Ancient Christian Gospels and Other Jesus Books

ApJas

EpAp

GEbionites / GEb

GEgyptians / GEgy

GHebrews / GHeb

GJudas

GLuke / GLk

GMarcion

GMark / GMk

GMatthew / GMt

GNazoraeans / GNaz

GPeter / GPet

GPhilip

GSavior

GThomas / GTh

IGThomas / IGTh

LEMark

PJas

Apocryphon of James

Epistula Apostolorum

Gospel of the Ebionites

Gospel according to the Egyptians

Gospel according to the Hebrews

Gospel of Judas

Gospel according to Luke

Marcion's Gospel

Gospel according to Mark

Gospel according to Matthew

Gospel of the Nazoraeans

Gospel of Peter

Gospel of Philip

Gospel of the Savior

Gospel of Thomas

Infancy Gospel of Thomas

Longer Ending of Mark

Protevangelium of James

Patristic Sources and Relevant Abbreviations

Aphrahat, Dem.

Did. Apost.

Ephrem, CGos.

Ephrem, Serm. Fid.

Demonstrationes

Didascalia Apostolorum

Commentary on the Gospel

Sermones de Fide

Other

LDAB

TM

Leuven Database of Ancient Books

Trismegistos Number

Introduction: Focus and Method

Birds of a feather flock together; but was this true of ancient Christian gospels?¹ Irenaeus, the late-second century theological ornithologist, claimed that the gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John had wings of the same feather, and no other gospels flew within their flock. Scholarship is divided as to whether Irenaeus' taxonomy was a theological innovation, or whether Irenaeus was reflecting what was already commonplace. Many significant contributions have been made to this scholarly question, but there is still much more to be said.

The Focus of this Study

The focus of my study is to present an account of how and when the four proto-canonical gospels began to keep exclusive company with one another. At the end of the 20th century, Theo Heckel and Martin Hengel made strong cases that the four-gospel collection was early, inevitable, and based on intrinsic characteristics.² More recently, their arguments have been significantly challenged by Francis Watson, Chris Keith, and Matthew D. C. Larsen.³ Foremost among these challenges is Francis Watson's thesis that all gospel writing until ca. 200 CE was a single process of interpretive rewriting, and that the canonical boundaries were a late second-century theological construction, rather than a natural outworking

¹ The term "ancient Christian gospels" is used here to describe gospels that were written and used by Jesus followers in antiquity. While recent scholarship has emphasized the diversity of early Christian identities, a strong case can be made for a network of family resemblances coalescing around the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Lampe 2003; Behr 2013: 1–12; Markschies 2015: 335–45; Ayres 2017). I use this broad definition of "Christian" to encompass the proto-orthodox, Marcionites, Encratites, and Gnosticizing sects such as the Valentinians, and those residing on the overlap between Judaism and Christianity. This definition also allows for these identities to be "nested" (simultaneously held) by an individual or group in lived social patterns.

² Heckel 1999; Hengel 2008; in anglophone scholarship Stanton 2004, Hill 2010b, and Bird 2014 have developed their arguments. For a less maximalist approach, but still concluding that the four proto-canonical gospels gained pride of place early in the Christian movement, see Kelhoffer 2000, Schröter 2007; 2010; 2018a; 2019a; Markschies 2012; Bockmuehl 2017; Gathercole 2021.

³ Watson 2013; 2018; 2019; Keith 2020; Larsen 2018b. For other arguments against an early fourfold gospel canon, see Campenhausen 1972, Koester 1990; 2005; Hahneman 1992; Petersen 2004; Lührmann 2004; Robinson 2004; and McDonald 2017b.

of properties intrinsic to the gospels. Indeed, Watson argues that the fourfold gospel “remained a work in progress well into the fourth century.”⁴ By demonstrating the thoroughgoing intertextual relationships among most gospels of the first two centuries, and by showing that the same patterns of literary composition and interpretive rewriting exist in both canonical and noncanonical gospels, Watson has effectively reshaped the entire debate regarding the how and when of the fourfold gospel.

Given the rich intertextual relationships bridging the canonical/noncanonical divide, we cannot simply ask, “how and when did the four become a fourfold collection?” There is a more fundamental question: “how and when did two or more gospels of any kind, proto-canonical or apocryphal, begin to keep company with one another?” It is within this broader phenomenon of gospel combinations that we will most likely find the origins of the fourfold gospel. Furthermore, recently published canonical and noncanonical gospel fragments,⁵ and current advances in the interrelations of gospels,⁶ the compositional techniques of Marcion and Tatian,⁷ the scribal habits behind gospel manuscripts,⁸ and the role of the materiality of the written gospel call for a fresh analysis of the fourfold gospel through the lens of gospel combinations.

In the present study, I will define a gospel combination as a collocation of two or more distinct, written gospel traditions in a single text, artifact, or conceptual category. No book-length study has yet examined the specific dynamics behind gospel combinations and interactions in the second-century process of reception.⁹ This wide-angle account is the aim of the present monograph. I will seek to uncover which gospels tended to congregate in webs of relationships, both conceptually and artifactually. I will also investigate how gospels interacted with one another within these webs of relationships. The goal of my study is to identify the patterns, habits, and strategies of gospel combinations from the late first

⁴ Watson 2013: 454.

⁵ For a recent list, see Chapa 2016.

⁶ E.g. Foster *et al.* 2011; Poirier and Peterson 2015; Watson and Parkhouse 2018; Heilmann and Klinghardt 2018; Schröter *et al.* 2019.

⁷ On recent advances in Marcion studies, see Moll 2010; Beduhn 2013; Vinzent 2014; Roth 2015; Lieu 2015; Klinghardt 2015; on recent advances in Diatessaronic studies, see Watson 2016; Crawford 2013; 2016; 2017; 2018; and Crawford and Zola 2019.

⁸ E.g. Kannaday 2004; Royse 2007; Jongkind 2007; Mugridge 2016; Pardee 2019.

⁹ Several essays in the recent volumes edited by Watson and Parkhouse 2018, and Schröter *et al.* 2019, have given preliminary assessments of the interactions between gospels in the combinations found in 2 *Clement* and Justin Martyr (Kloppenborg 2019), the *Epistula Apostolorum* (Watson 2018; 2019; 2020), the *Protoevangelium of James* (Goodacre 2018), Irenaeus (Mutschler 2019), and Tatian (Crawford 2018). However, no study has yet attempted to give a big-picture account of the dynamics of gospel combinations in the process leading up to the *tetraevangelium*.

century to the late second century, as Christianity gradually moved toward distinguishing a fourfold gospel canon.

From Interpretive Rewriting to Discrete Juxtaposition

My thesis will build upon Watson's premise that all gospel writing up to ca. 200 is in some way interpretive rewriting within a broad milieu of social memory.¹⁰ There is a web of intertextual relationships between all gospels simply because they exist in the same ecosystem of social memory of Jesus tradition.¹¹ In this sense, it is no surprise that *GMatthew* and *GLuke* both develop *GMark*, *GThomas* seems to be "borrowing" from *GMatthew* and *GLuke*, *GEgerton* from *GJohn*, or P.Oxy. 840 from all four canonical gospels.¹² It is probable that these relationships existed through literary borrowing of some kind, even if this borrowing took place through secondary orality. This interconnectedness resulted from Christians remembering and retelling the same stories about Jesus even two centuries after they happened. From the early second century, gospels constituted a widespread and influential source for this communal recollection.

Given that interpretive rewriting characterized all gospel writing for our period of enquiry, another question we must ask is, "When and how did Christians begin to read gospels in parallel, as distinct versions of the same phenomenon, rather than merely rewriting prior versions?" To put it another way, when did Christians begin to categorize gospels and group two or more into the same family? When did gospel combinations shift from an act of composition (e.g. *GLuke* taking material from *GMark* and *GMatthew*) to an act of discrete juxtaposition

¹⁰ While my thesis is greatly indebted to Watson's seminal thesis, I do not presuppose his contention that, because all gospel writing was interpretive rewriting, there is therefore no intrinsic distinction between the "canonical" and "noncanonical" gospels (cf. Watson 2013: 609–616); rather, I will query this contention in my study. The present monograph is an appreciative critique of Watson's trailblazing work on gospel writing and reception.

¹¹ For a recent history and appraisal of the "social memory" approach to the study of early Christianity, see Buttica 2020 and Schröter 2018b, with their bibliographies. I use the term "social memory" to describe "the way in which a community adopts its past as history... the process of oral transmission, literary shaping and adaptation to new contexts of the Jesus tradition" (Schröter 2018b: 79), that is, the "multiple and selective narrative of the Nazarene" chronicled by Jesus-followers of antiquity (cf. Buttica 2020: 310). This process of recollection was a communal rather than an individualistic phenomenon, extending across the entire spectrum of Jesus-following social networks, and evolving from the generation of the apostles (ca. 1–70 CE) to the generation of those who followed the apostles' disciples (ca. 130–200 CE); cf. Bockmuehl 2006; 2007. Gospel literature is like a variety of trees growing within this ecosystem of social memory, diverse yet interconnected. For a superb description of gospel writing as a subset of the larger phenomenon of communal memory, see Knust and Wasserman 2019: 49–95.

¹² It is possible that *GMark* contributed to this process of interpretive rewriting by combining a passion narrative with pre-existing sayings collections.

(e.g. a four-gospel codex)? At some point in early Christianity, recognition of the integrity of the textual “other” paved the way for a set of textual “others” to congregate rather than conflate or absorb one another. This emergence of the textual “other” and the mutual coexistence of a plurality of “others” runs against the view that gospel writing is merely the development of an amorphous, unfinished, and fluid textual tradition that is constantly mutating with each new rewriting.¹³ To borrow an analogy from Paul Ricoeur, just as the self is defined in distinction from and in relation to the “other,”¹⁴ so an individual gospel finds self-definition as a correlate of a collective body of other gospels, sharing the same conceptual or artifactual space. *GMark*, *GMatthew*, *GLuke*, *GJohn*, and dozens of gospels that were later declared noncanonical, did indeed crystallize into textual traditions that could be distinguished one from another, juxtaposed next to one another, set in competition with one another, or placed within a hermeneutically rich, mutually interpreting relationship. The present study will contribute to scholarly understanding of this textual crystallization.

Christians in the late first and second centuries combined gospels in a variety of ways. One way was to draw material from already existing gospel books and rework them into a fresh composition, contributing a substantial amount of special material. This is what is properly termed “interpretive rewriting”. Another method was pericope interpolation –grafting a free-floating tradition into an already established gospel book (e.g. the *Pericope Adulterae*). Yet another way was gospel orchestration, where the composer adds little to no additional special material but rather combines and rearranges materials from two or more existing gospels into a meaningful sequence, oftentimes ironing out discrepancies.¹⁵ Still

¹³ Schäfer 1986 advocated this view of textuality for Rabbinic literature in his seminal 1986 article, and Eva Mroczek 2016 has applied this theory to ancient Jewish writings in general, with special reference to the Psalter and Ben Sira. Larsen 2018b has situated gospel writing into this narrative of open, unfinished, and fluid textuality. This narrative does not fully appreciate the early crystallization of textual traditions into distinct books, which I will address in my study.

¹⁴ Ricoeur 1992.

¹⁵ I have chosen to use the term “orchestration” rather than “harmony” here. Recently, scholars of Tatian’s *Diatessaron* have suggested that we abandon the language of “harmony” when describing Tatian’s composition and similar gospel-combining projects in early Christianity (Watson 2019a; Crawford 2013). The term “harmony” best describes a work whose main aim is to resolve the discrepancies between two or more gospels without compromising their claims of authenticity (I will continue to use “harmony” to describe this phenomenon). These scholars argue that this was not Tatian’s main objective (if it even was an objective). Rather, Tatian sought to create his own *gospel*, albeit constructed from the building blocks of the proto-canonical gospels (and possibly other sources). In light of these concerns, I have chosen the term “orchestration” in order to preserve the sense that a composer was *coordinating* pre-existing gospel narratives rather than creating a gospel from new material, even if harmonization was not the composer’s aim. I am grateful to Jeremiah Coogan for suggesting this term, which we have chosen to use in Coogan and Rodriguez 2023.

another way was scribal harmonization, where no new gospel text is created, but two or more discrete gospels intermingle in the minds and pens of the scribes who copy them. Finally, gospels could be combined by discrete juxtaposition, wherein two or more gospels preserve their own integrity while sharing the same conceptual or physical space. These five kinds of gospel combinations are laid out in Table 1.

Table 1 – The Characteristics of Gospel Combinations

Type	Characteristics	Special Material	Examples
Interpretive Rewriting	Prior material is combined and reworked into a fresh composition with its own integrity	New composition substantially contributes its own <i>Sondergut</i>	<i>GMatthew</i> , <i>GThomas</i> , P. Eger-ton 2, P.Oxy. 5.840
Pericope Interpolation	A free-floating tradition is situated into an already established gospel book	Special material juxtaposed next to already stable textual tradition	<i>Longer Ending of Mark</i> , <i>Pericope Adulterae</i>
Gospel Orchestration	Two or more written gospels are combined, original wording is mostly preserved, material is rearranged into a coherent sequence	New Composition contributes minimal <i>Sondergut</i> but bears its own mark on the sequencing and omissions	<i>Diatessaron</i> , P.Dura. 10
Discrete Juxtaposition	Two or more written gospels preserve their own integrity while sharing the same conceptual or physical space.	No new <i>Sondergut</i> added	Irenaeus' discussion of four gospels, physical juxtaposition of four gospels in P45.
Scribal Harmonization	Two or more established written gospels overlap in the mutual cross-pollination of wordings as scribes – intentionally or unintentionally – conformed the wording of one discrete gospel to that of another, indicating that both gospels shared the same conceptual space in the expectations of the scribe.	No new <i>Sondergut</i> added	Harmonizing variants in GA 0171, P4+P64+67, P45, and P75

As one moves down the table from interpretive rewriting to scribal harmonization, gospels gradually begin to behave as discrete parallel entities rather than merely absorbing previous written traditions into fresh composition. This movement is not necessarily chronological. While gospel combinations, as interpretive

rewriting, are an early phenomenon (e.g., *GMatthew* combining *GMark* and *Q*, or *GLuke* combining *GMatthew* and *GMark*), gospel combinations as discrete juxtapositions could also have early origins. It is entirely possible that the Lukan evangelist had both *GMark* and *GMatthew* in front of him as he was drawing from both to write his fresh, re-interpretive gospel composition. Or, as Martin Hengel would argue, it is possible that the church in Rome had a *Bücherschrank* containing all four proto-canonical gospels by the first quarter of the second century.¹⁶ In either of these cases, discrete juxtaposition of two or more gospel books could be an early phenomenon. Furthermore, interpretive rewriting occurred well into late antiquity with numerous Christian apocrypha.

It is therefore helpful to depict the different types of gospel combinations in a Venn diagram (Figure 1.1), to demonstrate that these various forms of gospel combinations are not chronologically sequenced but rather conceptually graded based on the level of novel *Sondergut*. Moreover, the Venn diagram also shows how one form of gospel combination might involve the dynamics of another. For example, the interpretive rewriting known as *GLuke* might involve the discrete juxtaposition of *GMark* and *GMatthew* in the mind, if not the physical writing space, of *GLuke*.

The reason I am engaging these five dimensions of gospel combinations is to discover what kind of momentum may have led to the discrete fourfold juxtaposition that we see in the discourse of Irenaeus or the pages of P. Chester Beatty I. Perhaps the origins of fourfold discrete juxtaposition lie in the patterns of material combinations in interpretive rewriting. If the same patterns of gospel combining emerge in interpretive rewriting, gospel orchestration, scribal harmonization, and discrete juxtaposition, then we will be able to speak of momentum leading to the fourfold gospel collection. If these *patterns* exude a distinct consistency, we may even be able to speak of early Christian *habits* of gospel combinations. Finally, if early Christians speak explicitly about how and why they created such gospel combinations in the ways they did, we can speak of the *strategies* of early Christian gospel combinations.

¹⁶ Hengel 2008: 197–237.

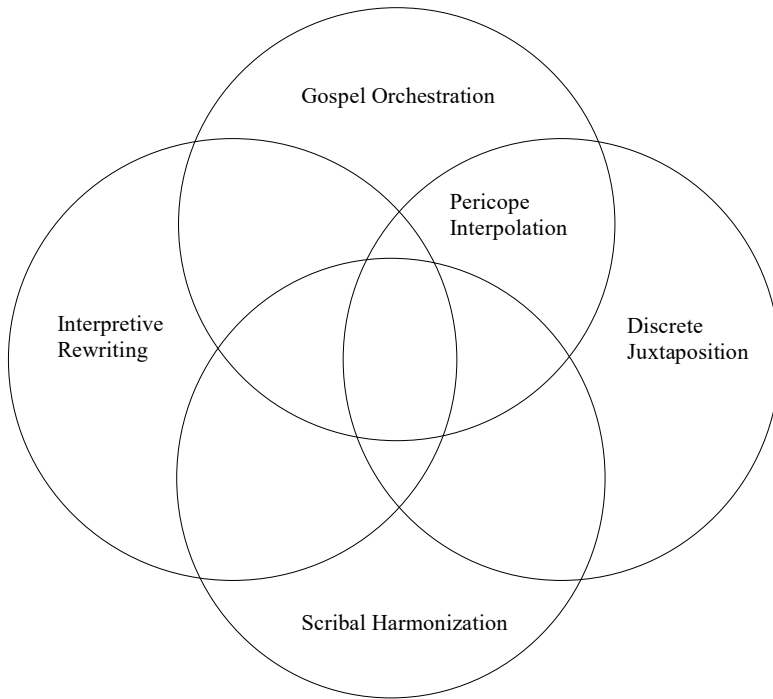


Figure 1 – The Interrelatedness of Gospel Combinations

The Method of this Study

In order to determine the patterns, habits, and strategies of gospel combinations in early Christianity, I will pose five diagnostic questions for investigating gospel combinations in the second century (and slightly later for artifactual combinations). These questions, summarized below in Table 2, pertain to 1) source identity, 2) mode, 3) integrity, 4) interactions, and 5) authority.

Table 2 – The Dynamics of Gospel Combinations

	Dynamic	Question
1	Source Identity	Which written gospels?
2	Mode	Secondary oral or written consultation?
3	Integrity	Discrete or conflated?
4	Interactions	Primary architecture or epiphenomena?
5	Authority	Authoritative status for written gospels in combination?
		Difference in authority between written gospels and the text combining them?

(1) The question of source identity. Which gospels tended to cluster in combinations? To answer this question, I will use the criterion of textual distinctiveness to identify the use of a gospel by a second-century author. In many cases, I will follow Helmut Koester's redactional criterion, which identifies a specific gospel by the unique redactional elements of that gospel author.¹⁷ However, I will not apply Koester's now obsolete form-critical standards that argue for priority or posteriority based on relative primitivity. Instead, I will pay attention not only to redactional lexical choices, but also to the way these redactions are situated. For example, Koester's penchant for form-critical methods convinced him that *GThomas* was not dependent on the Synoptics.¹⁸ But the recurring propensity of *GThomas* to tweak Markan *logia* exactly the same way as Matthean and Lukan redaction sufficiently demonstrates that *GMatthew* and *GLuke* can be identified as sources for *GThomas*, and are therefore in some sense combined in its composition.¹⁹

Koester's method has significant shortcomings.²⁰ Therefore, in some cases I will identify textual distinctiveness of a gospel based on frequently occurring lexemes and themes favored by the respective evangelist,²¹ or narrative accounts distinct to that evangelist,²² even if an exact redactional quotation is absent. I will also use the explicit exegesis of named gospel sources in later authors such as Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen as *comparanda*. If a second-century text contains gospel material that resembles a particular gospel but neither names the source nor cites it word-for-word, and if a later second-century author handles the said gospel material in the same way while naming the suspected gospel as the source, then the case is fortified that the earlier second-century text is drawing from that gospel.²³

¹⁷ Koester 1957: 3.

¹⁸ Koester 1990: 84–128.

¹⁹ For fuller arguments, see Gathercole 2010; 2012a; 2014a; 2014b; Goodacre 2012; 2014; 2019. I will make this case in greater detail in Chapter 1 below.

²⁰ Significant critiques of Koester's method have been made by Kelhoffer 2004: 7–10; Hill 2010a: 235–42; Zelyck 2013: 14–20. Even scholars sympathetic to Koester's method have cautioned that the absence of redactional material does not necessitate the certainty of a written gospel's non-usage (cf. Köhler 1987: 2–5; Gregory and Tuckett 2005: 71–72; and Kloppenborg 2019: 46). Koester's strict method, while producing tidy results, imposes unnecessary standards on ancient Christians, who did not follow twentieth century redactional criteria in their citations but rather mimicked the flexible citational habits of the Greco-Roman philosophical and literary milieu (cf. Hill 2012, building on Blumenthal 1981, Whittaker 1998, and Inowlocki 2006).

²¹ E.g. the clusters of Johannine language in Justin Martyr; see Section 4.4 below.

²² E.g. *EpAp*'s reference to the Johannine miracle at Cana in Galilee (5.1), and the Matthean miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth (5.14–16); cf. Justin Martyr's reference to the Matthean account of the Magi in *Dial.* 78.1–2.

²³ This method has recently been proposed by Zelyck 2013: 13–24. Zelyck presents as an example the pairing of *GJn* 5:39 and 5:45 in P.Egerton 2 (omitting 5:40–44), which strongly

Two factors caution against strict adherence to Koester's redactional method: the geographical mobility of early Christian texts and the phenomenon of secondary orality. The trans-local nature of early Christian identity, and the speed at which Christians could traverse the Roman Empire in the first two centuries CE strongly suggest that gospels did not stay parochial, especially if their narrative impulse envisaged a global outreach.²⁴ A manuscript could be carried by messenger from Ephesus to Rome in less than twenty days.²⁵ It is therefore not wise to assume, for example, that a second-century author in Rome, who makes frequent use of Johannine lexemes but never explicitly quotes that gospel, had no access to *GJohn* on the basis that *GJohn* was originally published in Asia Minor.

Furthermore, rather than proving the absence of a gospel's influence, the lack of a direct quotation from a gospel could instead be the result of hearing the gospel text read out loud and reproducing the gospel material in a re-oralized form that does not cite it word-for-word.²⁶ Jürgen Becker makes the crucial observation that the Christian understanding of Scripture began with Jesus' secondary-oral interpretation of Torah, and the subsequent reception of written gospel material in the second century followed the same interplay between oral and textual authority.²⁷ The dynamic interplay between oral and textual authority via secondary orality in the early Jesus tradition is displayed in the ἡκούσατε ὅτι ἐπρέθη sayings in *GMatthew* 5.21–48, which occur right after Jesus declares

resembles Irenaeus' (*Haer.* 4.10.1), Origen's (*Comm. Jo.* 6.109), and Cyprian's (*Test.* 1.18) citations of the same Johannine sayings; cf. Zelyck 2013: 36–37.

²⁴ On the trans-local identity of the early Christian movement, see Tellbe 2009: 241–47. On the efficient travel of Christians in the Roman era, see Thompson 1998. Furthermore, since texts like *GMt* 28.19–20, *GLk* 24.47–48, and *GJn* 20.21 envisage a global mission, it seems likely that the tradents of these texts would distribute them widely.

²⁵ This calculation is taken from ORBIS: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World, www.orbis.stanford.edu, accessed 4 April 2019.

²⁶ Since the ground-breaking and controversial work of Kelber 1983, who appropriated the term “secondary orality” from the media studies of Ong 1982, secondary orality has been increasingly emphasized in the study of second-century gospel reception (e.g. Byrskog 2000; Kruger 2005; Kirk 2007; Becker 2012; Gathercole 2012a; Watson 2013; Bockmuehl 2017). Goodacre 2012: 135–40 notes well how Kelber 1983: 197 has not used “secondary orality” in the same sense in which Ong coined the term but has re-appropriated it to mean the recycling of textual material into oral medium (e.g. hearing a gospel manuscript read out loud). Furthermore, Goodacre soundly critiques an unnuanced use of this term in the study of Christian origins, wherein “secondary” orality presupposes “primary” orality as inherently more primitive than the textualized form of Jesus tradition. Goodacre advocates a more nuanced model in which textuality and orality are always in mutual interaction in the development of the Jesus tradition in the early centuries CE. I use the term “secondary orality” in this more nuanced fashion to describe the process of written texts feeding back into the communal memory of Jesus through re-oralization without presupposing a sharp polarity between “orality” and “textuality”.

²⁷ Becker 2012: esp. 1–24.

emphatically in *GMatthew* 5.18: ἰῶτα ἐν ἧ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου. Because secondary orality was central to the earliest Christian movement, we cannot assume that second-century authors, even when they resembled the parlance of a particular gospel, were not influenced by that gospel simply because they show no redactional elements or word-for-word citations.

(2) The question of mode: Does a particular gospel come to be combined with another gospel by consultation of a manuscript or by another means, such as secondary orality? In some cases, it can be demonstrated that the author of a gospel combination drew from written sources. For example, it is obvious that the gospel-combining scribe of P75 had physical exemplars of *GLuke* and *GJohn*. Similarly, the way that Tatian draws from all four proto-canonical gospels, while scarcely reduplicating any pericopes, makes it virtually certain that he was consulting physical manuscripts of the four gospels, perhaps even using a technological mechanism to annotate what material he had already used from each manuscript in front of him.²⁸

Secondary orality, on the other hand, is practically impossible to identify with certainty. There are, however, clues that a particular author might be drawing on sources through hearing them rather than consulting a manuscript. For example, an author may depict instances of re-oralization of these gospel sources.²⁹ One can also detect secondary orality when a second-century author does not cite a gospel word-for-word but consistently shows thematic and lexical parallels across several pericopes from a particular gospel, and then combines this material with parallels that imitate other gospels, uniting them by a common theme. In such cases, the absence of a word-for-word citation on the one hand, and the confluence of material from diverse sectors of ancient Christianity on the other, makes it likely that the second-century author is drawing from the re-oralization of pericopes from several gospels, based on a common theme.³⁰ In most cases,

²⁸ Cf. Metzger 1977: 11-12. Barker 2016: 109–21 and Mattila 1995 hypothesize a scenario in which Tatian had four lectors seated around him, crossed-legged, reading to him from the relevant portions of each gospel as he sought to harmonize them in his Diatessaronic composition.

²⁹ E.g. Justin Martyr refers explicitly to re-oralization in *1 Apol.* 67, when, after the lector finishes the public reading of the apostolic memoirs, the presider over the congregation exhorts the congregation to the imitation of their teaching. *2 Clement* begins with the call to listen well (1.2), and it alludes to a re-oralization of Jesus traditions in 13.3–4. *Ad Diognetum* 12.1 also describes both the reading and hearing of “these truths,” which probably refers to the Law, the Prophets, the gospel, and the tradition of the apostles mentioned in 11.6.

³⁰ Kruger 2005: 145–205; 2009: 156–58 makes this observation about P.Oxy. 840, which does not cite any gospel word-for-word, but it makes consistent parallels with unique material from *GLk* 11.37–52, *GMt* 23.1–39, *GJn* 7.1–52, *GJn* 13.1–30, and *GMk* 7.1–23. The only other alternatives are that the second-century author is drawing from diverse oral traditions, or from a lost harmony. These alternatives are unnecessarily complicated, and, given the trans-local mobility of Christian texts in the first two centuries CE, the easier explanation is that the author is drawing from gospels through secondary orality.

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