
One of the many ironies of Diatessaronic studies is that the earliest complete exemplar of a text originally disseminated almost exclusively in the Near and Middle East should be a Latin manuscript copied in Italy. Another irony is that this early Latin text should have been relatively little studied by scholars of the Diatessaron. It was not always so. The gospel harmony contained in the famous Codex Fuldensis, dated 546, was a text of reference in Europe during the Middle Ages – copied, translated and commented upon from the 9th to the 14th Century. It is to this Mediaeval tradition of the Latin Harmony that Ulrich Schmid has devoted a monograph, revised version of his ’Habilitationsschrift’ presented in 2002 at the ’Kirchliche Hochschule Bethel’ in Bielefeld.

The first part of the book presents a concise history of research on the Latin Unum ex Quattuor tradition. The central question debated in Diatessaronic studies is whether later copies of the Latin harmony depend directly on the Codex Fuldensis (F), or were influenced by an ’Old Latin’ Harmony that has not been preserved. The latter hypothesis was defended by H. J. Vogels, A. Baumstark, G. Quispel and others while J. Rathofer and a few others argued for the alternative approach. The review of this discussion leads S. to the formulation of a few methodological rules. Firstly, in comparing closely related texts such as F and the later Latin harmonies, attention should be paid as much to paratextual elements, such as the lay-out and the system of chapter headings, as to the gospel text itself. Secondly, textual divergences in the later Latin harmonies should be studied first in comparison with the Latin gospel text of manuscripts coming from the same place and time: comparing those divergences with readings in Diatessaronic texts far removed in time, space and language should not be the first step. After these methodological considerations, the material is listed in Chapter 3 (pp. 51–56):

– Codex Fuldensis of the 6th C, a Vulgate manuscript of the entire New Testament containing a gospel harmony instead of the four separate gospels;
– Four manuscripts of the Latin Harmony from the 9th C (inter alia the bilingual, Latin – Old High German, Codex Sangallensis);
– 19 manuscripts from the 12th – 14th C, eight of which offer the gospel text with an array of interlinear and marginal glosses;
– The commentaries on the Latin Harmony by Zacharias Chrysopolitanus (Zacharie de Besançon) and Petrus Cantor both of the 12th C;
– Petrus Comestor’s Historia Evangelica;
– Three 14th C manuscripts of a Latin gospel harmony (the ’Münchener Harmonie’) whose relation to the other texts is not fully clear.

In the second part of the book, S. attempts to retrace the ’genealogy’ of all these manuscripts. He is able to show that, in spite of a number of differences, the four 9th C harmonies go back mainly to F. The Codex Sangallensis, with a system of 181 chapters depends directly on F, while the three other manuscripts, exhibiting a system of 184 chapters, derive from a single copy of F that has not been preserved. The Codices Sangallensis, Casselanus and the hypothetical A–184 were probably written in Fulda itself, whence they were taken to other places, like St Gallen and Reims, and copied there. There is no indication that F was ever copied between the 6th and 9th C.
The later texts all go back, directly or indirectly, to one of the two textual strands attested in the 9th C, Zacharias Chrysopolitanus' commentary to the 181-chapter-type of the Codex Sangallensis, most of the other witnesses to the 184-chapter-type represented by the manuscripts from Kassel, St Gallen and Reims. In fact, the Reims manuscript may itself have played a key role in the diffusion of this textual tradition. In the later stages, the two traditions may have influenced one another to a certain degree. Whether the Latin Harmony was copied between the 9th and the 12th C is difficult to say.

The third and final part of the book is devoted to the question of the function and use of the Latin harmony. In the 9th C, the main motivation for copying and translating the Latin harmony may have been a campaign to promote the veneration of St Boniface. Codex Fuldensis was known to have been in the possession of St. Boniface, as were the so-called Cadmug Gospels, an Irish manuscript of the 8th C whose text may have influenced some of the 9th C harmonies. In light of these facts, S. proposes to view the early copies of F as a kind of St Boniface ‘relic’. As such, the harmony may have been read at communal meals in some monasteries, and it may have been prized as a personal possession. The copies of the 12th C and later do not continue this earlier function of the harmony but serve a different goal, namely teaching, mainly in the schools of France (Laon, Reims and Paris). The harmony is subjected to comments and glosses, and commentaries on it are circulated. A third use of the harmony is suggested by the fact that some of the 14th C manuscripts are bound together with prayers and meditations. The harmony is here put into the service of personal piety. Several indications show that women, especially, showed an interest in this kind of text.

After a brief conclusion, the book closes with almost 100 pages of appendixes containing the textual material on which the genealogy in Part Two is based, a bibliography and indexes.

Schmid’s monograph is an important contribution to a neglected sub-field of Diatessaronic studies. Anyone wishing to work on the Latin harmony in the future will be grateful to him for charting out the field, identifying relevant manuscripts and tracing the main lines of textual evolution. His conclusions in regard to the Unum ex Quattuor tradition are globally convincing. Notably, his demonstration of the unlikelihood of an ‘Old Latin’ Diatessaron’s influencing the later manuscripts of the Latin harmony is persuasive.

In spite of this positive evaluation, it is necessary to take issue with the author on the implications of his study for Diatessaronic studies in general. In several places all through the book, S. wishes to generalize his conclusions beyond the domain in which they were reached. In his view the influence of an ‘Old Latin’ harmony should not only be excluded for the Latin tradition, but for all other western witnesses of the Diatessaron as well. This further conclusion is not warranted by the research he presents.

Diatessaronic research is a complicated field. Tatian composed his harmony, almost certainly in Syriac, around 170 AD. The Syriac version was in official use in Syrophonic churches until the 5th C at least. It was commented upon by Ephrem and quoted abundantly by Aphrahat, both of the 4th C; it also influenced later Syriac versions of the separate gospels. In later times, the Syriac Diatessaron was banned by church authorities. Not a single copy of it is known to exist to-
day. It must have continued to be copied in some circles, however, for an Arabic translation of the Syriac text (much revised in the meantime) surfaces in the 10th C. A Persian harmony attested by a single manuscript of 1547 AD is not directly related to the Tatianic tradition.

In the West, the oldest witness to the Diatessaron is the Codex Fuldenis, as was stated above. Since F offers a gospel text that is entirely 'vulgarized', i.e., adapted to the Vulgate gospels, early investigators of the Diatessaron tended to neglect it: although F holds information regarding the sequence of Tatian's original, it can contribute nothing to the recovery of its text. The later European tradition was estimated to depend on F and to share its limitations. The attitude to the western tradition changed, however, with Daniel Plooij in the 1920ies. Plooij did not base his researches on F, nor on the later Latin harmonies, but on a Middle Dutch version from the 13th Century, the Liège Diatessaron. In this very late text, he found scores of variant readings unattested in Greek gospel manuscripts and in the textual tradition of the Vulgate, but shared with early Syriac gospel quotations or the Old Syriac gospels (and in some cases with the Old Latin gospels). Plooij hypothesized that Liège went back to a lost 'Old Latin' Diatessaron that had no direct relation to the Codex Fuldenis. In the following years, several other western texts were discovered with a profile more or less similar to Liège: harmonies in Middle Dutch, Middle Italian, Middle English and other languages.

Plooij's proposals initially elicited some vehement responses. Many scholars rejected his ideas as being far-fetched and improbable. Little by little, however, his hypothesis gained ground. Today, the Plooijan view commands widespread acceptance among specialists of the Diatessaron. William Petersen, until his recent passing away the undoubted primus inter pares of Diatessaron scholars, presented a meticulous, well documented and even-handed defence of this approach in his book: Tatian's Diatessaron. Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance and History in Scholarship, Leiden, 1994. Of course, the regnant consensus must remain open for discussion. And even a gifted and experienced scholar such as Petersen may make mistakes. But if one wishes to turn an entire field of research upside down, reversing positions that have come to be adopted over three quarters of a century, one should come with arguments that are at once strong and relevant.

In this respect, the monograph cannot be called a success. S. effectively demonstrates that the later Latin harmonies are unlikely to be influenced by an 'Old Latin' Diatessaron. He is right, too, in pointing out that Rathofer showed many years ago that the Old High German column of the Codex Sangallensis does not afford evidence for the existence of an 'Old Latin' harmony. Petersen might have conceded this more wholeheartedly than he did. But the conclusions of Rathofer and S. do not affect Plooij's approach, which was developed on the basis of other texts. If S. thinks the Liège Diatessaron and other vernacular harmonies of the 13th and 14th C go back to the later stages of the Latin tradition, and that they were at most enriched with readings taken from Old Latin codices circulating in the late Middle Ages, then he should demonstrate this on the basis of the vernacular texts.

It is not sufficient to show, as S. does by the help of one single example (p. 262–263), that the Liège Diatessaron incorporated glosses attested in contempo-
rary exegetical writing on the Latin harmony. All Diatessaronic witnesses, eastern or western, exhibit a mixed text, where one has to count with the following potential ingredients: a) original Tatianic readings; b) ‘vulgatized’ readings, taken from the local standard text of the four gospels and substituted for the Tatianic original; c) local peculiarities: embellishments, exegetical elements, linguistic idioms, corruptions and mistakes. Plooij, Baumstark, Quispel, Baarda, Petersen and several other scholars amassed a great amount of evidence showing that the vernacular harmonies transmit genuine Tatianic elements. Until S., or someone else, confronts this evidence and shows that it can be explained otherwise, the established view ought to be maintained. The constant alignment of peculiar readings in the vernacular harmonies, notably Liége and Venice, with Ephrem’s gospel quotations and the Old Syriac gospels is not a mirage: it is a fact.

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