

The Diatessaron, Canonical or Non-canonical? Rereading the Dura Fragment*

MATTHEW R. CRAWFORD

Australian Catholic University, Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry, Locked Bag 4115 DC, Fitzroy, VIC 3065, Australia. Email: matthew.crawford@acu.edu.au

Among those texts that vied for a position as authoritative Scripture, but were eventually rejected by ecclesiastical authorities, was the so-called Diatessaron of Tatian. Having been compiled from the four canonical gospels, Tatian's work occupies a liminal position between the categories of 'canonical' and 'apocryphal', since the majority of its content was common to users of the fourfold gospel, though this content existed in a radically altered form and was tainted by association with an author widely accused of heresy. In order to demonstrate the originality of Tatian's gospel composition, this article gives a close reading of the only surviving Greek witness to it, a fragment of parchment found in excavations at Dura-Europos. Dura's very location as a borderland between Rome and Persia corresponds with the fact that in this outpost garrison city Christians were using a gospel text that would have appeared markedly strange to those in the mainstream of the Christian tradition. The wording that can be recovered from the Dura fragment shows how Tatian creatively and intelligently combined the text of the four gospels to produce a new narrative of the life of Jesus, choosing to leave out certain elements and to make deliberate emendations along the way. However, it was precisely such originality that made his gospel appear problematic, so in order to rescue his text from censure, later scribes had to domesticate it by making it conform throughout to the canonical versions. Comparison of the Dura fragment with the medieval Arabic gospel harmony and with the Latin version in *Codex Fuldensis* illustrates well this process whereby Tatian's gospel went from being a rival to the fourfold gospel to a designedly secondary, and therefore acceptable, work.

Keywords: Diatessaron, fourfold gospel, Dura-Europos, canon, apocrypha, Tatian

* Earlier versions of this paper were presented in the New Testament Research Seminar at Durham University in October 2014, and in the Christian Apocrypha section at the SBL Annual Meeting in November 2014. I am grateful for the constructive feedback I received on both occasions. Special thanks go to Mark Goodacre, who read through the entire paper and provided useful suggestions. The research leading to this article was funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, as a part of the project 'The Fourfold Gospel and its Rivals'.

1. Introduction

It is now a scholarly commonplace to say that the distinction between canonical and apocryphal gospels is more complex than it might first appear, since both sets of texts may be subsumed under the broader phenomenon of gospel writing in early Christianity, in which the Jesus tradition was continually received anew by the rewriting of earlier texts.¹ Insofar as it even comes up in these discussions, Tatian's so-called Diatessaron² is often regarded as being a confirmation of the acceptance of the fourfold gospel in Rome by the 170s, since the four gospels that became canonical served as the bulk of his source material.³ There is, indeed, an element of truth in this assertion, insofar as Tatian's usage of these four must imply that they occupied a distinct place in comparison with other potential rival texts.⁴ Nevertheless, more must surely be said, since Tatian was not content to leave his source texts in the format that he found them, but radically altered their arrangement, creating a new, single narrative,

1 This point is highlighted at length in F. Watson, *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), chapters 3–7. See also Jens Schröter, *From Jesus to the New Testament: Early Christian Theology and the Origin of the New Testament Canon* (trans. Wayne Coppins; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), chapter 12.

2 I have argued elsewhere that in fact Tatian never gave his composition the title 'Diatessaron', but instead simply called it the 'Gospel', in a manner akin to the literary product of Marcion. In this way he sought to erase the memory of his source texts and supplant them with his own new creation, thereby preserving the unity and anonymity of the Jesus tradition. Cf. M. R. Crawford, 'Diatessaron, a Misnomer? The Evidence From Ephrem's Commentary', *Early Christianity* 4 (2013) 362–85.

3 So C. E. Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels? Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 104–12. Hill proposes that the Dura fragment of Tatian's work may not have served as the congregation's 'sacred text' but instead as 'a pastor's study tool' (p. 111), though he himself acknowledges that in many later Syriac churches Tatian's work was indeed treated as sacred scripture. If so, then it seems likely that it was used in a similar way at Dura. Hill does correctly draw attention to the fact that the Dura fragment is written on a roll, whereas all known manuscripts of the fourfold gospel take the form of codices, a feature which he takes as indicative of its non-authoritative status. However, since so much of our early manuscript evidence comes from Egypt, we should not automatically assume that the codex format was universally preferred for liturgical texts in other locales as well. On the relevance of manuscripts for reconstructing the history of early Christianity, see especially L. W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). Hill's interpretation of Tatian's work is largely a response to W. L. Petersen, 'The Diatessaron and the Fourfold Gospel', *The Earliest Gospels: The Origins and Transmission of the Earliest Christian Gospels – the Contribution of the Chester Beatty Gospel Codex P 45* (ed. C. Horton; Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 258; T&T Clark: London, 2004).

4 Though, as is well known, the witnesses for Tatian's work reveal lingering traces of what appears to be the influence of extra-canonical gospels. Nevertheless, these elements are slight in comparison with the prominent position he granted to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

whose meaning was not identical with any of the prior individual gospels alone, nor with the fourfold gospel in its standard format. Rather, his rewriting of his source texts was also a reinterpretation of them, and the resulting textual artefact created the potential for new interpretive possibilities on the part of its later users.⁵ In this article I intend to substantiate this claim by closely examining a short section of his gospel, drawing attention to the fact that, as Tatian drew upon his source texts, he sought to improve them in certain ways and omit unnecessary details, rather than merely slavishly reproducing them. As a result, his composition deserves to be seen as a gospel in its own right, that is, an original retelling which re-presented afresh the story of Jesus in an act of reception. Nevertheless, the later history of his work tended in the opposite direction. The reception of Tatian's gospel in its various daughter versions shows that later authors for whom the canonical/non-canonical divide was assumed to be inviolable sought to erase the originality of his composition by bringing it into ever closer alignment with the canonical accounts, thereby domesticating his text and ensuring its survival in modified form.

Despite the significant role played by Tatian's gospel in the Syriac churches of the East well into the fifth century, no complete text of it has survived. Our sources for reconstructing it are threefold, two indirect and one direct. First, there are the gospel citations of those authors who used this text, such as Aphrahat, from whose writings we can recover individual scattered verses and sometimes also the sequence of pericopae. The most significant witness in this category is the fourth-century commentary attributed to Ephrem the Syrian.⁶ Second, there are a bewildering variety of daughter versions, from the sixth-century Latin *Codex Fuldensis*, to a number of medieval versions in Arabic, Persian and a host of European vernaculars. It remains an open question whether all of these later harmonies in fact descend from Tatian, but some of them undoubtedly do, especially the Latin and Arabic ones.⁷ These first two sources are indirect witnesses, in contrast to the third, a small scrap of parchment uncovered in the 1930s at Dura-Europos in modern-day Syria, which, upon its discovery, was quickly heralded as the sole surviving Greek witness to Tatian's work. In a joint publication in

5 For an exploration of one such example, see M. R. Crawford, 'Reading the Diatessaron with Ephrem: The Word and the Light, the Voice and the Star', *Vigiliae Christianae* 69 (2015) 70–95.

6 See C. McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709* (Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 2; Oxford: Oxford University Press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993). On Aphrahat, see T. Baarda, *The Gospel Quotations of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage: Aphrahat's Text of the Fourth Gospel* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1975).

7 On the Latin tradition, see especially U. Schmid, *Unum ex quattuor: Eine Geschichte der lateinischen Tatianüberlieferung* (Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel 37; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2005).

1999, David Parker, David Taylor and Mark Goodacre offered an alternate perspective, arguing that in fact the fragment was *not* a portion of the Diatessaron, but in a 2003 study Jan Joosten defended the traditional view, convincingly reasserting the Tatianic character of the text.⁸ Despite its importance, scholarly discussion of the Dura parchment has been mostly limited to using it in attempts to identify the original language of the so-called Diatessaron,⁹ with little focus on how this text reveals the compositional principles Tatian employed in creating his text. The present paper is an attempt to fill this gap. As the largest portion

- 8 D. C. Parker, D. G. K Taylor, M. S. Goodacre, 'The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony', in *Studies in the Early Text of the Gospels and Acts* (ed. D. G. K. Taylor; Text-Critical Studies 1; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999); J. Joosten, 'The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron', *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003) 159–75.
- 9 See a survey of this debate in W. L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 25; Leiden: Brill, 1994) 196–203, who summarises the earlier contributions of A. Baumstark, 'Das Griechische "Diatessaron"-Fragment von Dura-Europos', *Oriens christianus* 32 (1935) 244–52; F. C. Burkitt, 'The Dura Fragment of Tatian', *JTS* 36 (1935) 255–9; C. H. Kraeling, *A Greek Fragment of Tatian's Diatessaron from Dura* (Studies and Documents 3; London: Christophers, 1935) 15–18; M.-J. Lagrange, 'Deux nouveaux textes relatifs à l'Évangile', *Revue biblique* 46 (1935) 321–7; D. Plooiij, 'A Fragment of Tatian's Diatessaron in Greek', *The Expository Times* 46 (1935) 471–6; A. Merk, 'Ein griechisches Bruchstück des Diatessaron Tatians', *Biblica* 17 (1936) 234–41. Petersen follows Plooiij in seeing the Dura fragment as 'a very early Greek translation of a Syriac Vorlage'. See, however, the recent reassessment in Parker, Taylor and Goodacre, 'The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony', 209–16, who conclude that there is no evidence that the text was translated from Syriac, and suggest instead that it was composed in Greek. Debate over the original language of the Diatessaron has been going on since the contributions of Adolf von Harnack and Theodor Zahn in the late nineteenth century. For recent discussions of this issue, see W. L. Petersen, 'New Evidence for the Question of the Original Language of the Diatessaron', *Studien zum Text und zur Ethik des Neuen Testaments: Festschrift Heinrich Greeven* (ed. H. Greeven and W. Schrage; Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 47; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986); id., *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 384–97; T. Baarda, 'Tatian's Diatessaron and the Greek Text of the Gospels', *The Early Text of the New Testament* (ed. Charles E. Hill and M. J. Kruger; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 337–8; U. Schmid, 'The Diatessaron of Tatian', *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (ed. B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes; New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents 42; Leiden: Brill, 2013) 115 n. 5. Schmid astutely remarks that 'the bare mechanics of composing a gospel harmony appear to require sources and end product to be in one and the same language. It seems hardly conceivable to perform a close word-by-word harmonization from Greek gospel texts and a Syriac translation simultaneously, without at least one intermediate Greek harmony stage during the compositional process.' See also F. Millar, *Religion, Language and Community in the Roman Near East: Constantine to Muhammad* (The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 114: 'Tatian will also have been a subject of the Roman Empire, and we have no reason to think that, in the second century, there was anywhere within that Empire where literary composition in Syriac took place. What Ephrem read will have been a Syriac translation of the original Greek.'

of continuous text that we can recover of Tatian's composition, this small fragment demonstrates with particular clarity the originality of his gospel, as well as the efforts of later scribes to erase this originality by making it merely a secondary gospel harmony that conformed throughout to the canonical texts.

First, however, it will be useful to lay out the basic details about the parchment. Residing now in the papyri collection of the Beinecke Library at Yale (Pg. Dura 10),¹⁰ it was discovered on 5 March 1933 during the excavations at Dura-Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy. Out of the entire collection of papyri uncovered during the excavations, this is the only one with discernibly Christian content. As is well known, a Christian house-church was also unearthed, including a baptistery decorated with extensive paintings, and it remains plausible that this fragment was used by the Christians who attended the church, though it is of course impossible to confirm this supposition.¹¹ Because the fragment was buried in the embankment made by the Roman garrison to defend the city from the Persians in the siege of 256/7, this gives us a definite date *ante quem*. In his publication of the *editio princeps*, Carl Kraeling dated it, on the basis of its script, to the first half of the third century, and further suggested that the presumed connection with the Christian building two blocks away implied a date around 222, roughly the time when the house was

10 An image of the fragment may be accessed at <http://brbl-legacy.library.yale.edu/papyrus/oneSET.asp?pid=DPg%2024> (accessed on 13 June 2014). Higher resolution images of the recto and verso may be downloaded from my personal page at www.academia.edu, reproduced with the kind permission of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University.

11 On the Christian house-church and its artwork, see D. E. Serra, 'The Baptistery At Dura-Europos: The Wall Paintings in the Context of Syrian Baptismal Theology', *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 120 (2006) 67–78; L. Dirven, 'Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained: The Meaning of Adam and Eve in the Baptistery of Dura Europos', *Eastern Christian Art* 5 (2008) 43–57; D. Korol and M. Stanke, 'Gehen die David- und Goliathdarstellungen im "Baptisterium" von Dura-Europos sowie im Vatopedi Psalter "auf den gleichen Archetyp" zurück? Neues zum ursprünglichen Aussehen und zur Deutung der Darstellung im "Baptisterium"', *Syrien und seine Nachbarn von der Spätantike bis in die islamische Zeit* (ed. I. Eichner and V. Tsamakda; Spätantike, Frühes Christentum, Byzanz, Reihe B: Studien und Perspektiven 25; Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2009); U. Mell, *Christliche Hauskirche und Neues Testament: Die Ikonologie des Baptisteriums von Dura Europos und das Diatessaron Tatians* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); D. Korol and J. Rieckesmann, 'Neues zu den alt- und neutestamentlichen Darstellungen im Baptisterium von Dura-Europos', *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (ed. David Hellholm et al.; Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 176; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011); M. Peppard, 'Illuminating the Dura-Europos Baptistery: Comparanda for the Female Figures', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20 (2012) 543–74. On Dura-Europos more generally, see especially F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) 131–3, 445–52, 467–71; T. Kaizer, 'Religion and Language in Dura-Europos', *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (ed. H. M. Cotton, R. G. Hoyland, J. J. Price, D. J. Wasserstein; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 235–53.

converted into a church.¹² In 1999 Parker, Taylor and Goodacre argued on the basis of new comparative papyrological evidence that the parchment could be as early as the second half of the second century.¹³ The prior history of the fragment is unknown. It has apparently been cut along three sides and presumably discarded, but there is no way of knowing for what reason.¹⁴ Only one side has writing, implying that this was once part of a roll. In its present form it measures 9.5 × 10 cm and preserves portions of fifteen lines of text, of which fourteen are legible. The portion of text preserved contains the end of one pericope and the start of a second, and the break between the two is marked by a large space in the middle of the third line. Here, then, is the text of the fragment, following the reconstruction of Parker *et al.*, which diverges in a few instances from the *editio princeps* as well as the version in the final report of the Dura excavations.

- 1 [ζεβεδ]αίου καὶ σαλώμη κ[α]ὶ αἱ γυναῖκες
- 2 [ἐκ τῶ]ν ἀκολουθησάντων αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τῆς
- 3 [γαλιλαί]ας ὀρώσαι τὸν στ(αυρωθέντ)α. ἦν δὲ
- 4 [ἡ ἡμέρ]α παρασκευῆ. σάββατον ἐπέφω-
- 5 [σκεν. ὁ]ψίας δὲ γενομένης ἐπὶ τ[ῆ] π[α]ρ[α]-
- 6 [σκευῆ], ὃ ἐστὶν προσάββατον, προσ-
- 7 [ῆλθεν] ἄνθρωπος βουλευτῆ[ς] ὑ[π]άρ-
- 8 [χων ἀ]πὸ ἐρινμαθαία[ς] π[ό]λεως τῆς
- 9 [ἰουδαί]ας, ὄνομα ἰω[σήφ], ἀ[γ]αθὸς δι-
- 10 [καιος], ὧν μαθητῆς τ[ο]ῦ Ἰη(σοῦ), κε-
- 11 [κρυμ]μένος δὲ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν
- 12 [ἰουδαίω]ν, καὶ αὐτὸς προσεδέχετο
- 13 [τὴν] β[ασιλείαν] τοῦ Θε(ο)ῦ. οὗτος οὐκ
- 14 [ἦν συνκατα]τιθέμεν[ος] τῆ β[ουλη]

12 See Kraeling, *A Greek Fragment of Tatian's Diatessaron From Dura*, 5–7. Cf. C. B. Welles, R. O. Fink, J. F. Gilliam, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters: Final Report 5, Pt. 1: The Parchments and Papyri* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959) 73–4.

13 Parker *et al.*, 'The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony', 194–9.

14 Parker *et al.* question the connection with the house-church in light of the cutting apparent on the fragment, which suggests that the original scroll was not simply haphazardly destroyed along with the house-church as a part of the Roman defensive preparations. Moreover, they argue that if the scroll had been cut into scraps for reuse because it had simply ended its useful life, the period between the founding of the church and its destruction would have been an insufficient amount of time for a scroll to wear out ('The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony', 197–8). However, there are other plausible explanations that would not militate against the connection of the parchment with the house-church. For example, the scroll might have been used in some other location before coming to Dura, in which case it might well have ended its useful life as a result of usage at the house-church. It seems to me unduly sceptical not to assume some connection between the only two surviving pieces of material evidence for Christianity in Dura-Europos, especially when they were discovered only two blocks apart.

1 of [Zebed]ee and Salome a[nd] the women
 2 [amongst] those who followed him from
 3 [Galil]ee watching the cr(ucified one). Now, it was
 4 [the day] Preparation, Sabbath was dawn-
 5 [ing.] And as it was becoming evening on the Prep-
 6 [aration,] that is the day before the Sabbath, there app-
 7 [roached] a man, being a member of the council
 8 from Erinmathaia, a city of
 9 [Jud]ea, named Jo[seph], a good, right-
 10 [eous man,] being a disciple of Je(sus), but hid-
 11 [de]n for fear of the
 12 [Jew]s, and he was expecting
 13 [the] k[ingdom] of Go(d). This one was not
 14 [consent]ing to the c[ounsel]¹⁵

Before moving into a detailed analysis of this short text, a final introductory word about methodology is needed. The significance of the Dura parchment is not only that it is the sole surviving evidence that Tatian's work ever circulated in Greek. The dating of the fragment is also crucially important. As noted by one scholar, 'it is ... one of the very few ancient literary texts which date to within a century of the time of composition.'¹⁶ In fact, if the new dating put forward by Parker *et al.* is correct, the fragment could even be contemporary with Tatian himself, who according to Eusebius and Epiphanius established his school in the East in 172.¹⁷ The reason why this dating is particularly important lies in the nature of the so-called Diatessaronic tradition. The universal tendency in the later reception of Tatian's gospel was to bring his edition increasingly into line with authorised fourfold gospel editions also in use, a process usually termed 'Vulgatisation'.¹⁸ In this manner, the textual transmission of his work was malleable to a far greater degree than that of the canonical gospels, making it all the more difficult to reconstruct his original composition.¹⁹ Yet the process of

15 Parker *et al.*, 'The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony', 200–1. I have slightly altered their translation in a few places.

16 Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 460.

17 Cf. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 71. So the date is given in Eusebius' *Chronicle*. To obtain the same date from Epiphanius one has to substitute the name of one emperor for another.

18 See e.g. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 127–9; Joosten, 'The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron', 163–5. The term 'Vulgatisation' originally was used to describe *Codex Fuldensis*, whose text largely conforms to the Latin Vulgate, while retaining a harmonised format. However, the term is now widely used to refer to this same tendency as it occurred in the entire history of the reception of Tatian's text, in both the Western and Eastern traditions.

19 For this reason, the study of Tatian's work is encumbered with unusually complex debates over methodology. For one influential proposal, see Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 357–77.

'Vulgarisation' would have required sufficient time to occur, and would only likely have happened in a context in which readers of Tatian's edition were also well familiar with other versions. Both of these conditions had been fulfilled by the second half of the fourth century among Syriac-speaking Christians,²⁰ but probably had not yet taken place in Dura-Europos at the time of our fragment. Seen in this light, the Dura fragment is of the utmost significance in that it probably represents the purest form of Tatian's text yet available to us.²¹

2. The Dura Fragment and the Canonical Gospels: Tatian's Compositional Principles

I have argued in another publication that Tatian's primary motivation for composing his so-called Diatessaron was his sense of the rhetorical deficiency of the four canonical gospels.²² Among the dominant themes of his *Oratio to the Greeks* are right 'order' and 'adornment', rhetorical categories that for him had taken on philosophical and theological connotations. As has been pointed out by others,²³ Tatian also has much to say about 'history' and 'truth' in the *Oratio*, though the fruitful parallel with his contemporary Lucian has not been sufficiently appreciated. In 166, perhaps when Tatian was still in Rome, Lucian produced an important treatise on historiography titled *How to Write History*.²⁴ In it he, like Tatian, stresses the centrality of truth and accuracy, but Lucian also

However, since Petersen's writing, a methodological shift has occurred, represented especially in the following studies: U. B. Schmid, 'In Search of Tatian's Diatessaron in the West', *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003) 176–99; id., 'Genealogy by Chance! On the Significance of Accidental Variation (Parallelism)', *Studies in Stemmatology II* (ed. P. van Reenen, A.A. den Hollander, M. van Mulken; Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004); id., 'The Diatessaron of Tatian'; A. den Hollander and U. Schmid, 'The Gospel of Barnabas, the Diatessaron, and Method', *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 1–20.

20 Cf. M. R. Crawford, 'The Fourfold Gospel in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian', *Hugoye* 18 (2015) 3–46.

21 As also recognised by Lagrange, 'Deux nouveaux textes relatifs à l'Évangile', 325; Merk, 'Ein griechisches Bruchstück', 239–40.

22 M. R. Crawford, "'Reordering the Confusion": Tatian, the Second Sophistic, and the so-called Diatessaron', *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 19 (2015) 209–36.

23 T. Baarda, 'Διαφωνία-Συμφωνία: Factors in the Harmonization of the Gospels, especially in the Diatessaron of Tatian', *Essays on the Diatessaron* (ed. T. Baarda; Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 11; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994).

24 On Lucian's treatise, see G. Avenarius, *Lukians Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung* (Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1956); H. Homeyer, *Lukian: Wie man Geschichte schreiben soll* (München: W. Fink, 1965); B. Baldwin, *Studies in Lucian* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1973) 75–95; M. Fox, 'Dionysius, Lucian, and the Prejudice against Rhetoric in History', *JRS* 91 (2001) 76–93.

presses home the point that a good historian must give ‘order’ and ‘adornment’ to his narrative (§48). A bare, dry account, as might be had in a soldier’s diary, will not suffice, since this is only the first step of proper historiography (§16). The real historian must go on to imbue his work with the ‘virtues appropriate to narrative’ (§55), the kind of virtues that characterise good rhetoric as well. Tatian, who probably had as good a rhetorical education as Lucian, most likely agreed with his contemporary regarding the elements necessary for good history, and as we proceed in analysing the Dura parchment, we need to consider the possibility of not only theologically motivated redactions, but also rhetorically minded ones.

In composing his gospel, Tatian had to follow basically four steps. First, he had to find which passages in the gospels were parallel to one another. In some instances this would be fairly straightforward, though in other cases, where two passages were similar but had notable differences, he would have had to decide whether to treat them as separate accounts, or combine them into one. Second, Tatian had to decide how to combine and order the individual elements he drew from his source texts to create a new, single pericope. Third, he had to determine how to arrange all of his individual pericopae into a continuous running narrative, perhaps at one point privileging the narrative order of one of his source texts and following another at a later time, as he saw fit for the purposes of his new composition. Fourth, Tatian needed to go back through and stitch together the individual episodes using appropriate transitional phrases to produce a work possessing an organic wholeness. The text we can recover from the Dura fragment sheds light on the first, second and fourth of these steps, but is not sufficiently extensive to speak clearly to the third issue. In what follows I will analyse the text from our parchment in terms of these stages to see how far we can go in reconstructing Tatian’s compositional principles.

2.1 *Female Witnesses to the Crucifixion*

As mentioned before, the fragment of text we have comprises two episodes: the end of the account of the events that happened after Jesus’ death on the cross, and the beginning of the story of Joseph of Arimathea’s burial of Jesus’ body. With respect to the first episode, our portion of text only covers the final part of the post-crucifixion scene, which narrates the presence of the women who witnessed his death. This is a parallel account that occurs in all three synoptics, but is noticeably absent in John. Mark mentions a crowd of women, out of whom he identifies only three: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Younger and of Joseph, and Salome (Mark 15.40). Matthew likewise refers to a group of ‘many women’, but slightly alters Mark’s account by singling out for special attention Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the anonymous mother of the sons of Zebedee (Matt 27.55–6). In contrast, Luke more severely redacts Mark by mentioning no women explicitly, merging them into a general reference to ‘his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee’ (Luke

23.49). The text that we have from the Dura parchment picks up in mid-sentence, and so does not include the naming of the two Mary's, which presumably has just occurred. We do, however, have an explicit mention of the mother of the sons of Zebedee, drawn from Matthew, and Salome, drawn from Mark, along with the larger group of women from all three synoptics. Already, then, we can see here a combination of distinct elements from multiple gospels. It is notable that Tatian apparently did not choose to identify Salome with the mother of the sons of Zebedee, as the parallel accounts of Matthew and Mark might imply, but instead regarded them as separate characters in his narrative. Moreover, we should observe that he has not followed Luke's decision to merge the named women into the larger anonymous crowd of followers, implying that he regarded it as important to preserve details from his source texts such as named individuals, perhaps in an effort to present as vivid a narrative as possible.²⁵

There are, however, some elements that notably appear to be missing, as well as some deliberate redaction of the synoptic tradition. First, whereas both Matthew and Mark provide this group of women with a double description as those who had both 'followed' and 'served' Jesus in Galilee, Luke reduces this to a sole description of the women as those who had 'followed him from Galilee'. Tatian does not reproduce the Matthean and Markan doublet and instead opts for the Lukan singular version ('amongst those who followed him'). Second, all three synoptics specify that the larger group of women were either 'looking on' or 'standing' 'at a distance' (ὄπρὸ μακρόθεν). Tatian does not reproduce this detail in his text, unless he did so in the first half of this sentence, which is not available to us. These are minor details, but they are revealing in that they imply Tatian did not exhaustively make use of every small element that his source texts provided to him. Moreover, he apparently felt free to emend even those details that he did include. Whereas the three synoptics all simply describe the women as 'those who followed Jesus', Tatian has introduced an additional layer of complexity by making this crowd of women a part of a larger group of followers. In the *editio princeps* Kraeling reconstructed the beginning of line 2 as τῶν συνακολουθησάντων αὐτῷ, leading to the reading 'the wives of those who followed him', but in their 1999 reassessment Parker *et al.* argued

25 Ulrich Mell has argued that Tatian's version must have included as witnesses to the resurrection four named women, plus a larger anonymous crowd of women. Mell then connects this to the baptistery artwork in which one scene is understood to be a depiction of the women at the tomb, showing five female figures (the four named women plus an additional figure representing the anonymous crowd). He therefore thinks that the baptistery preserves images of scenes drawn directly from Tatian's work (*Christliche Hauskirche*, 253–9). This strikes me as too speculative an enterprise, because it requires one figure to represent a group of persons, and especially because alternate interpretations of the scene are possible, which do not view it as a depiction of Easter morning. Cf. Peppard, 'Illuminating the Dura-Europos Baptistery', 556–71.

persuasively that a more probable reconstruction is ἐκ τῶν ἀκολουθησάντων αὐτῷ, that is, ‘the women among those who followed him’.²⁶ It is possible that this change was inspired by Luke who narrates the presence of two groups, the women as well as Jesus’ ‘acquaintances’ (οἱ γνωστοί, Luke 23.49), but even so the construction in the Dura fragment is unique. Why would Tatian make such a change? One possible answer is that the new reading produces a smoother transition to the introduction of Joseph of Arimathea, which will follow shortly. If the women are presented as but a part of a larger group of followers from Galilee, the reader will naturally assume that Joseph was one among this group, a rhetorical improvement over the rather abrupt entrance that he makes in the narratives of the four canonical accounts. This is, therefore, an admittedly slight change, but it is one that might be regarded as a literary improvement upon Tatian’s source texts.

With respect to the second step, the combining and ordering of these elements into Tatian’s new text, we can assume that he has followed the lead of Mark and Matthew in first naming the two Mary’s, after which he mentions the Matthean ‘mother of the sons of Zebedee’, followed by the Markan ‘Salome’. After these proper names comes the reference to the larger group of women, which represents the order of Mark, but notably differs from that of Matthew, who mentions the larger group earlier. Finally, Tatian includes a uniquely Lukan element in describing the activity of the women after the crucifixion. Both Matthew and Mark, in opening this scene, use the participle θεωροῦσαι to refer to the women’s ‘looking’ (Matt 27.55; Mark 15.40), but Luke alone use participial clause ὁρῶσαι ταῦτα, ‘watching these things’ (Luke 23.49) to conclude the scene. Tatian follows Luke in using the participle ὁρῶσαι to state the action of the crowd of women in the moments after the crucifixion, and with this uniquely Lukan phrase draws to a conclusion the first episode.

At this point we encounter undoubtedly the most striking feature of the text of the fragment. Whereas Luke has simply ὁρῶσαι ταῦτα, ‘watching these things’, Tatian has given ὁρῶσαι τὸν σ(α)ρ(ω)θέν(τ)α, ‘watching the crucified one’.²⁷ It is possible that the canonical gospels themselves gave Tatian the idea for this change. In the post-resurrection scenes in both Matthew and Mark, the angelic visitor refers to Jesus as ‘the one who was crucified’, using the perfect passive participial form (Ἰησοῦν τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον, Matt 28.5; τὸν Ναζαρηνὸν τὸν

26 Kraeling, *A Greek Fragment of Tatian’s Diatessaron*, 28–30; Parker *et al.*, ‘The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony’, 201–5. Cf. the similar use of ἐκ in Luke 24.13: δύο ἐξ αὐτῶν.

27 The participial form is presented as a *nomen sacrum* (σ(α)), on which see Parker *et al.*, ‘The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony’, 206–8. Parker *et al.* point out that the same type of contraction is found twice each in Codex Bezae and P46, and they conclude that the contraction with only σ(τ)- is a primitive version that was abandoned in favour of σ(τ)ρ-. Similarly, Merk, ‘Ein griechisches Bruchstück’, 237, called this ‘die einzige wichtigere Abweichung vom herkömmlichen Evangelientext, die im ganzen Fragment zu beobachten ist’.

ἔσταυρωμένον, Mark 16.6).²⁸ Still, Tatian has the aorist passive, rather than the perfect passive, and he uses the participle substantivally rather than adjectivally, a more striking usage. The precise usage of Tatian does, however, have close parallels in two other second-century sources that we can link with him. Justin Martyr is particularly fond of using the aorist passive participle of σταυρόω. For example, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, he says that God has had compassion on all humanity ‘through the mystery of this crucified one’ (διὰ τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ σταυρωθέντος τούτου),²⁹ and later that Christians have faith and hope ‘from the Father himself through the crucified one’ (παρ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς διὰ τοῦ σταυρωθέντος).³⁰ Even more similar to the Dura fragment is his statement that those ‘who were gazing upon him who was crucified’ (οἱ θεωροῦντες αὐτὸν ἔσταυρωμένον) were shaking their heads at him in mockery.³¹ In *1 Apology*, Justin similarly says that all races are now ‘waiting for the one crucified in Judea’ (προσδοκῶσι τὸν ἐν Ἰουδαίᾳ σταυρωθέντα).³² In addition to these occurrences, he uses the passive participial form in over two dozen instances as an adjective to describe the proper name Jesus or an equivalent.³³ Another second-century source that employs this participial usage is Tatian’s student Rhodon. In a fragment preserved by Eusebius, Rhodon refers in passing to ‘those who hope in the crucified one’ (τούς ἐπὶ τὸν ἔσταυρωμένον ἠλπικότας).³⁴ Aside from these three figures and Irenaeus, who also occasionally demonstrates this kind of usage, the passive participle of σταυρόω is rare in other second-century texts,³⁵ so it can hardly be a coincidence

28 See similar constructions in Paul at 1 Cor 1.23; 2.2; Gal 3.1.

29 *Dial.* 106.1 (P. Bobichon, *Justin Martyr, Dialogue avec le Tryphon: Edition critique* (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2003) 470).

30 *Dial.* 110.3 (Bobichon, 478).

31 *Dial.* 101.3 (Bobichon, 456).

32 *1 apol.* 32.4 (D. Minns and P. Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 168).

33 See *1 apol.* 13.3, 14; 21.1; 35.6; 53.2; 61.13; *2 apol.* 6.6; *Dial.* 10.3; 35.2; 11.4, 5; 30.3; 34.8; 38.1; 46.1; 49.8; 67.6; 71.2; 73.2; 76.6; 85.2; 89.3; 91.4; 93.4; 95.2; 96.1; 111.2; 112.2; 116.1; 117.5; 131.5; 132.1; 137.1.

34 Eusebius, *HE* 5.13.5 (G. Bardy, *Eusèbe de Césarée: Histoire Ecclésiastique, Livres v–vii* (Source Chrétienne 41; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1955) 43). Rhodon is here actually summarising the teaching of Apelles, Marcion’s student, but his expression in this passage may reflect his own speech pattern, rather than that of his opponent.

35 In Irenaeus, see *Haer.* 2.32.4 (= fr. gr. 9) (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σταυρωθέντος ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου = *in nomine Christi Iesu crucifixi*) (A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irenée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre II* (Sources Chrétienne 294; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1982) 342–3); 3.12.4 (= fr. gr. 16) (τὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν ἔσταυρωμένον = *Iesum qui crucifixus est*) (A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irenée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre III* (Sources Chrétienne 211; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1974) 192); 4.23.2 (*Iesum crucifixum hunc esse Christum Filium Dei*) (A. Rousseau et al., eds., *Irenée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre IV* (Sources Chrétienne 100ii; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1965) 698). The only other

that the phrase shows up in the writings of Justin, Tatian and Rhodon, among whom there was a clear teacher–student relationship.³⁶

Why then would Tatian change Luke’s ταῦτα to σταυρωθέντα in his gospel composition? It might at one level be seen as a sort of updating of his text, given that this was a designation common to him and his community. His gospel text thus reflects the appellations for Jesus current within Justin’s school in Rome and, presumably, carried forward by Tatian, who passed it on to his disciples. Yet, even if this were true, such an editorial decision also makes good sense of Lucian’s historiographical principles. Employing a classical rhetorical trope, Lucian said a historian should portray the events so vividly that the reader can, as it were, see them occurring before his eyes.³⁷ Tatian’s usage of ‘the crucified one’ in place of Luke’s rather generic ‘these things’ is precisely the sort of editorial work that would add colour to the text, drawing the reader into the narrative by focusing his attention upon the body still affixed the cross.³⁸ This change may, therefore, be viewed as Tatian’s improvement of his source text, in both a theological and rhetorical sense.

2.2 *Joseph of Arimathea and Jesus’ Burial*

Let us now move on to consider the beginning of the next pericope preserved in our fragment, the report about Joseph of Arimathea’s handling of the body of Jesus. Nothing about the actual burial survives, but we do have a very full description of Joseph that begins the account. Walking again through our reconstructed steps of Tatian’s method, we should observe that he has succeeded

second-century occurrences I have found are: *Gospel of Peter* 13.56; letter from the churches of Gaul, *apud* Eusebius, *HE* 5.1.41; Hegesippus, *apud* Eusebius, *HE* 2.23.12. Mark Goodacre has suggested that the famous walking and talking cross of the *Gospel of Peter* may have arisen in the text through a scribal misunderstanding of an original abbreviation στα (<http://ntweblog.blogspot.co.uk/2010/10/walking-talking-cross-or-walking.html>; accessed on 11 November 2014). On this idea, which in one form goes back to Adolf von Harnack, see most recently P. Foster, ‘Do Crosses Walk and Talk? A Reconsideration of Gospel of Peter 10.39–42’, *JTS* 64 (2013) 89–104.

36 The strongest argument against this interpretation of the evidence is that the designation does not occur in Tatian’s only other surviving work, the *Oratio*. This, however, is not really a problem, since the *Oratio* is mostly an attack on Greek παιδεία and makes only one passing allusion to the crucifixion, calling Jesus τὸν διάκονον τοῦ πεπονηθότος θεοῦ (*Or.* 13.3, M. Whittaker, *Tatian: Oratio ad Graecos and Fragments* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) 28). On this unusual phrase, which differs from Justin’s linguistic usage, see R. Hanig, ‘Tatian und Justin: Ein Vergleich’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 53 (1999) 61–3.

37 Lucian, *How to Write History* 51.

38 Lagrange, ‘Deux nouveaux textes relatifs à l’Évangile’, 325 came to a similar conclusion with respect to the στα: ‘il est plus sûr de reconnaître dans Tatien un trait de génie que de fidélité, puisque nous venons de voir qu’il en prenait à son aise’.

in finding all four parallel descriptions of Joseph in the canonical gospels and has drawn distinct elements from each one.³⁹ As has already been demonstrated by Jan Joosten, the description in the Dura parchment comprises nine distinct elements:

- (1) ἄνθρωπος from Matt 27.57 (cf. ἀνὴρ in Luke 23.50)
- (2) βουλευτῆς ὑπάρχων from Luke 23.50 (cf. εὐσχήμων βουλευτῆς in Mark 15.43)
- (3) ἀπὸ Ἐρινμαθαίας πόλεως τῆς Ἰουδαίας from Luke 23.51 (cf. ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας in Matt 27.57; Mark 15.43; John 19.38)
- (4) ὄνομα Ἰωσήφ; closest parallel is τοῦνομα Ἰωσήφ in Matt 27.57 (cf. ὄνόματι Ἰωσήφ in Luke 23.50)⁴⁰
- (5) ἀγαθὸς δίκαιος; closest parallel is ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος in Luke 23.50⁴¹
- (6) ὃν μαθητῆς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ from John 19.38 (cf. αὐτὸς ἐμαθητεύθη τῷ Ἰησοῦ in Matt 27.57)
- (7) κεκρυμμένος δὲ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων from John 19.38
- (8) καὶ αὐτὸς προσεδέχετο τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ; closest parallel is ὃς προσεδέχετο τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ from Luke 23.51 (cf. ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν προσδεχόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ in Mark 15.43)
- (9) οὗτος οὐκ ἦν συνκατατιθέμενος τῇ βουλῇ from Luke 23.50

In terms of the possible elements Tatian may have drawn from his sources, everything from his source texts is present, with two exceptions. Matt 27.57 has the additional adjective πλούσιος ('rich'), and Mark 15.43 says that Joseph is not only a 'member of the council' but also a εὐσχήμων ('respected') one. Therefore, as in the previous episode, Tatian has not felt the need to make full use of all the details present in his sources. It is of course possible that he has simply overlooked these two adjectives, but we should consider if there might have been other motivations for excluding them.

One hypothesis that has been put forward is that Tatian omitted the mention of Joseph's wealth due to his supposed encratite tendencies.⁴² On this reading, it would be problematic to portray a wealthy individual as a disciple of Jesus

39 On this point Lagrange, 'Deux nouveaux textes relatifs à l'Évangile', 324 remarks, 'Il faut une fois de plus rendre hommage à l'extrême habileté de l'harmoniste.'

40 According to Parker *et al.*, 'The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony', 226, Codex Bezae also has τὸ ὄνομα, against the standard Matthean τοῦνομα.

41 As noted by Parker *et al.*, 'The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony', 227, the καὶ is also omitted by Codex Vaticanus.

42 A possibility raised by Lagrange, 'Deux nouveaux textes relatifs à l'Évangile', 326. On Tatian's encratism, see most recently N. Koltun-Fromm, 'Re-Imagining Tatian: The Damaging Effects of Polemical Rhetoric', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008) 1–30 and M. R. Crawford, 'The *Problemata* of Tatian: Recovering the Fragments of a Second-Century Christian Intellectual', *JTS* (forthcoming).

because this would conflict with a rigorously ascetic perspective on wealth. Jerome reflected a similar concern two centuries later when he stated that the evangelist Matthew mentioned Joseph's wealth not simply for the purpose of boasting, but in order to give the reason why Joseph was able to procure Jesus' body from Pilate.⁴³ Jerome, of course, does not envision the possibility of revising the text of the gospels to suit his ascetic tendency, but he does, it seems, express some discomfort with it, especially since he goes on to use the simple burial of Jesus to condemn the ostentatious burials of the rich.⁴⁴ If the reports of Tatian's extreme asceticism are to be trusted, then he might have had a reaction similar to Jerome's and so felt the need to emend his source texts in this manner. There is, however, at least one further possibility as well, one more literary in nature. The description of Joseph as a βουλευτής may have made it redundant to call him πλούσιος in addition, since to be a βουλευτής, that is, a member of a town council (βουλή), required a significant amount of personal wealth.⁴⁵ Excluding the redundant adjectives might then have been an attempt to produce a less cluttered text, given the very full description of Joseph that is present. Indeed, the mention of Joseph's membership in the βουλή means that Tatian's text still contains an implicit reminder of Joseph's wealth. Nevertheless, the absence of both εὐσχήμων and πλούσιος does serve to downplay Joseph's social standing, so both these changes may have been made so as to bend the text towards Tatian's own proclivities, whether ascetic or rhetorical ones.⁴⁶

As for the sequence of the elements in Tatian's text in this section, Joosten has already pointed out that 'one could not have predicted the order adopted by Dura

43 Jerome, *Comm. Mt.* 27.58. In the same paragraph Jerome also notes that another evangelist calls Joseph a βουλευτής, which he equates with a *consiliarius*. Augustine's gospel text translated βουλευτής with *decurio* (*De consensu evangelistarum* 3.22), and he similarly points out that it was Joseph's *fiducia dignitatis* which granted him access to Pilate. On the reception history of Joseph, see W. J. Lyons, *Joseph of Arimathea: A Study in Reception History* (Biblical Refigurations; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), who, in keeping with Jerome and Augustine, remarks, 'Mark's description of Joseph as an esteemed member of the Sanhedrin responsible for Jesus' death was more probably intended to help illuminate Pilate's decision to grant his request for the body' (p. 11).

44 Jerome, *Comm. Mt.* 27.59.

45 On this point, see R. Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire: Quantitative Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982²) 82–8 (on North Africa), 147–55 (on Italy). As noted by J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) 85 n. 269, 'by the 2nd cent., perhaps the largest source of a city's "public" money was *summae honorariae*, the required payments made to the city upon election to the city council, a magistracy, or a priesthood'.

46 Cf. Joosten, 'The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron', 172: 'The harmonist may have judged that the notion of wealth was sufficiently expressed in the description of Joseph as a member of the council (βουλευτής). More importantly, Tatian was an advocate of evangelical poverty who despised riches. He may well have been tempted to underplay this characteristic in his description of the man who gave Jesus a dignified burial-place.'

from a simple consideration of the four gospels'.⁴⁷ Is it nevertheless possible to discern some rationale for the sequence? I believe that, if we look closely, there is. Tatian begins with the most generic description of Joseph as a 'man', then mentions his political role as a βουλευτής, after which he transitions to describing Joseph with the generic ethical terms 'good and just' before finally presenting his relation to Jesus. As a narrative sequence, this makes good sense, moving from general considerations to the specific role that Joseph will play in Tatian's story.⁴⁸ Interestingly, the one gospel whose sequence is undisturbed is that of Matthew. As has already been noted, Tatian has omitted the Matthean πλούσιος, and he moreover has added in distinct elements from the other gospels at appropriate points, but the Matthean account is otherwise preserved intact, unlike the rather radical inversion that takes place with the sequences of the other three source texts. Within this individual pericope this clearly betokens a preference for the Matthean sequence, though it would be hazardous on this basis alone to generalise this observation as an overall claim about the nature of Tatian's text.⁴⁹

This shifting of sequences creates a new meaning for at least one of the elements in the new account. In the context of both Mark and Luke, it is usually assumed (with good reason) that when the evangelists call Joseph a βουλευτής they mean he was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin.⁵⁰ However, it is possible that Tatian understood the appellation in a different sense. In customary usage, a βουλευτής was simply a member of the municipal council, the βουλή, which was responsible for overseeing the affairs of a local city and engaging in such activities as collecting taxes. In none of the canonical accounts is it made explicit that the βουλή to which Joseph belongs is the ruling Jewish council, so Tatian may well have misunderstood the sense of the term in his source texts. Or, even if he was aware of the sense in which the evangelists used the term, he may have wanted to alter its meaning anyway. In Mark, Joseph is first introduced as being 'from Arimathea' and is then said to be a 'respected member of the Council'. In Luke's redaction of Mark, the description of Joseph as a βουλευτής is followed

47 Ibid., 167.

48 So also Lagrange, 'Deux nouveaux textes relatifs à l'Évangile', 324.

49 According to J. G. Cook, 'A Note on Tatian's Diatessaron, Luke, and the Arabic Harmony', *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 10 (2007) 471, 'Tatian's harmony ... give[s] priority to Luke and John in the beginning and ending sections - although Matthew dominates most of the rest'.

50 So Lyons, *Joseph of Arimathea*, 10–11. Cf. V. A. Tcherikover, 'Was Jerusalem a 'Polis'?', *Israel Exploration Journal* 14 (1964) 61–78, at 72: 'We thus arrive at the conclusion that, although Josephus uses the Greek noun βουλή to designate the supreme institution of the Jewish people under Roman rule, and its members are referred to as *bouleutai* not only in Josephus but also in other sources, actually this was not a new municipal institution on a Hellenistic pattern, but the traditional Jewish body that had existed under different names throughout the period of the Second Temple'.

by statement that he was a ‘good and just man’, then by the assertion that he refused to go along with the Jews. Only then does the phrase ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας occur. Tatian follows the order of neither of these sources, but instead places the prepositional phrase ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας immediately after the words βουλευτῆς ὑπάρχων, a new and original sequence.⁵¹ What this rendering allows for is the reading that Joseph was a ‘councillor from Arimathea’, in other words, a member of the βουλή of the city of Arimathea rather than a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Not only does Tatian’s sequence allow such a reading, but it is almost certainly what the new sequence would have suggested to a second-century reader of this text who had little knowledge of Palestinian geography and politics, and who accordingly would have assumed that Arimathea had a town council akin to all other πόλεις throughout the Empire.

The narrational effect implied by this redefinition is a further distancing of Joseph from the Jews responsible for Jesus’ execution, a trajectory already apparent in Luke’s redaction of Mark,⁵² as well as in the *Gospel of Peter*, which makes Joseph the ‘friend of Pilate’ (2.3), and clearly distinguishes him from ‘the Jews’ (6.23). In fact, this may be the reason for another minor difference between the Dura fragment and the canonical gospels. Whereas Luke calls Arimathea a ‘city of the Jews’, the Dura text says it is a ‘city of Judea’.⁵³ If Joseph was a member of the Arimathean βουλή and Arimathea was a ‘city of the Jews’, then Joseph himself would presumably be a Jew. However, in the rendering in the Dura text, the possibility exists that Arimathea was a Hellenistic city within the territory of the Roman province of Judea.⁵⁴ Although Joseph’s name would still be left as a lingering sign of his Jewish identity, he would otherwise appear almost entirely distinct from the Jews of Jerusalem responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion. The only other implicit trace of Joseph’s identification with the Jewish people is the comment in lines 13–14 of the fragment, taken from Luke 23.51, that Joseph

51 The Dura text actually reads Ἐρινμαθαία for Ἀριμαθαία, with the shift in the initial vowel and the addition of an internal nu, a feature that was taken as evidence for a Syriac original by Baumstark, ‘Das griechische “Diatessaron”-Fragment von Dura-Europos’, 249–50. However, Parker *et al.*, ‘The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony’, 211–13 point out that these changes may be plausibly explained by similar shifts that occur in other Greek manuscripts though these particular changes for this specific word do not appear in the rest of the textual tradition of the New Testament.

52 So Lyons, *Joseph of Arimathea*, 17.

53 Joosten, ‘The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron’, 171 points out that this variant is not found in the entire Greek tradition, though it does occur in the Arabic harmony, Codex Fuldensis, the Old Syriac, the Peshitta, the Old Latin and the Vulgate.

54 Though by this point the province of Judea had been renamed Syria Palaestina, following the Jewish revolt of the 130s. Cf. Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 107–8, 374ff. So also Parker *et al.*, ‘The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony’, 222: ‘The change of Luke’s text to “of Judaea” may be the consequence of the political situation in the time of Tatian. With the dispersal of the Jews, the town is simply in a Roman province called Judaea’.

‘was not consenting to the counsel’. In Luke’s version this statement forms half of an ironic contrast based on the fact that Joseph is a member of the βουλή, but does not go along with their βουλή. On the reading proposed here, Tatian disrupts this parallelism by redefining the βουλή of which Joseph is a part. In this case, Joseph’s unwillingness to go along with τῆ βουλῆ would be a generic reference back to the ‘Jews’ mentioned in line 12 of the fragment, rather than specifically to the Jewish βουλή, that is, the Sanhedrin. We should not too quickly jump to the conclusion that this redaction reveals an anti-Jewish bias on Tatian’s part. Though such a tendency cannot be ruled out,⁵⁵ this editorial change may also have been due to literary judgements regarding the most natural way in which to construct a plausible narrative of the events Tatian wished to describe.

2.3 *Transitional Phrases*

The one part of the Dura text we have not yet examined is the transition between the two pericopae. Here is the text connecting the two:

ἦν δὲ ἡ ἡμέρα παρασκευή. σάββατον ἐπέφωσκεν. ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης ἐπὶ τῆ παρασκευῆ, ὃ ἐστὶν προσάββατον, προσῆλθεν ἄνθρωπος ...

Here again we have a pastiche of elements taken from each of the gospels. The opening ἦν δὲ ἡ ἡμέρα παρασκευή finds its closest counterpart in the ἡμέρα ἦν παρασκευῆς of Luke 23.54a. Similarly, σάββατον ἐπέφωσκεν is identical to the same phrase in Luke 23.54b. These temporal markers occur in Luke’s gospel after the narration of Joseph’s burial of Jesus, since Luke, unlike the other three gospels, does not have a corresponding temporal marker to introduce this pericope. Tatian, recognising this difference in sequence amongst his sources, has apparently decided to bring forward Luke’s temporal indicator in order to combine it with those of his other three sources at the start of the pericope. This shift demonstrates a deliberate editorial choice made in order to produce a more unified, less repetitive narrative. The following genitive absolute ὀψίας γενομένης occurs in Matt 27.57, but the remainder of the sentence clearly shows the influence of Mark 15.42, which has the fullest introductory formula for this episode: Καὶ ἤδη ὀψίας γενομένης, ἐπεὶ ἦν παρασκευή, ὃ ἐστὶν προσάββατον.

In addition to moving the Lukan sentence from its original location, Tatian has made two further minor changes to these lines. First, the Lukan genitive παρασκευῆς has been changed to the nominative παρασκευή. This presumably has the effect of making the word function as a proper noun, in the sense of ‘the day was Preparation’. Such a rendering might make the sense of the passage more

55 Joosten, ‘The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron’, 171 n. 33 notes that the phrase ‘the Jews’ is also missing or transformed in the Old Syriac and Old Latin at John 4.22 and 9.22b; and at John 7.13 of the Old Syriac, perhaps under the influence of Tatian’s version.

apparent to Hellenistic readers unfamiliar with Jewish calendrical systems. Second, the Markan subordinate clause ἐπεὶ ἦν παρασκευὴ has seemingly been modified to the prepositional phrase ἐπὶ τῇ παρασκευῇ, now dependent upon the preceding genitive absolute. This change makes the text read somewhat more smoothly, in contrast to the piling up of three subordinate clauses in the Markan version. It could, therefore, be taken as a stylistic improvement upon the source text. This might, however, be seen as problematic, since LSJ reports that ἐπί with the dative is ‘never’ used ‘in good Att[ic]’ to indicate time, whereas Tatian is regarded as an author highly trained in rhetoric.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the temporal sense of ἐπί with the dative is present in Justin Martyr, Tatian’s teacher, as well as in other patristic authors, so it might not be too strange to find it also here.⁵⁷ Moreover, LSJ also points out that even in good Attic the construction can carry the sense of temporal ‘succession’,⁵⁸ in which case we should perhaps translate the preposition in the Dura text as ‘after the Preparation’. Finally, it is also possible that the text has simply been reconstructed wrongly in this instance. Indeed, the phrase ἐπὶ τ[ῇ Π]αρε[α]σκευῇ] is one of the most heavily reconstructed passages in the entire fragment, and in their reassessment in the late 1990s, Parker *et al.* highlighted the uncertainty of any letters after the initial επ, and further raised the possibility that επι may have been a scribal mistake for επει, since other texts from Dura exhibit a confusion of ι and ει.⁵⁹ We should, therefore, not too quickly assume that this is a scribal blunder or poor Greek on Tatian’s part, since it could instead even be another instance of a rhetorical improvement of his sources.

What then are we to make of Tatian’s stitching together of these two pericopae? Joosten classified these temporal markers as ‘non-Tatianic’ features since the relocation of Luke 23.54 does not show up in the rest of the ‘Diatessaronic’ tradition, and since it ‘creates an impossible chronology’ and an ‘unfortunate doublet’. The whole passage, in his estimation, ‘gives an impression of clumsiness and confusion’ and is likely to be a scribal mistake.⁶⁰ As to its non-appearance in other supposed witnesses to the Diatessaron, we should observe that doubt has

56 LSJ s.v. ἐπί B.ii.1. So also Joosten, ‘The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron’, 173, who sees this construction as a ‘probable sign of ineptness’ since it does not occur in NT Greek with this sense. He suggests it might therefore be ‘an erroneous transformation of the Markan phrase’.

57 Justin, *1 apol.* 13.3 (Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν σταυρωθέντα ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, τοῦ γενομένου ἐν Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐπὶ χρόνοις Τιβερίου Καίσαρος ἐπιτρόπου) (Minns and Parvis, 110). See the other examples of ἐπί plus the dative for time in G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. ἐπί II.E.

58 LSJ s.v. ἐπί B.ii.2.

59 Parker *et al.*, ‘The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony’, 205–6.

60 Joosten, ‘The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron’, 172–3. He is here following the prior analysis of Parker *et al.*, ‘The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony’, 220–1, who compared the Dura text with the following supposed witnesses for the Diatessaron: Fuldensis, Tuscan, Venetian, Zacharius, Pepsian, Heiland, Arabic and Persian.

now been cast on whether the so-called Western witnesses really contribute significantly to the reconstruction of the original text.⁶¹ Moreover, it is equally possible that later scribes copying Tatian's work recognised the apparent mislocation of the Lukan temporal marker and decided to restore it to its proper position, thereby erasing any trace of its Tatianic location. Alternatively, they may have felt that the introduction of this episode was overloaded and so simplified it by the removal of the Lukan phrase. In other words, the text before us has a good claim for being original to Tatian, especially since the relocation of the Lukan phrase does represent the sort of change we would expect from a compiler creating a new text from multiple source texts by collecting all of the similar elements into a single place in his new composition. Nor is the chronology impossible, so long as the phrase *σάββατον ἐπέφωσκεν* is understood in the sense of an event in progress – a sense it already carried in Luke's usage as well as in the *Gospel of Peter* – rather than something already past.⁶² It is true that the passage as it stands does at first seem to be a repetitious piling up of temporal markers, but this might be due to Tatian's own lack of familiarity with the Jewish manner of reckoning the days of the week, as well as the fact that he had to work with four source texts that were not always consistent amongst themselves.

3. The Dura Fragment and the Diatessaronic Witnesses: Erasing Tatian's Originality

In the preceding analysis we have seen a number of ways in which the text of the Dura parchment reveals editorial choices on the part of its author, suggesting that this is a creative reworking of source materials, rather than merely an exact reproduction of them. In the final section of this article I want to consider the daughter versions of Tatian's original composition in order to highlight the way in which later scribes systematically worked to remove these editorial

61 See especially the recent summary in Schmid, 'The Diatessaron of Tatian'.

62 The difficulty of the text was also recognised by Lagrange, 'Deux nouveaux textes relatifs à l'Évangile', 326, who nevertheless regarded it as authentically Tatianic. He remarked, 'Je croirais plutôt qu'il n'a su que faire de cet ἐπιφώσκω qui embarrasse encore les modernes.' Michael Goulder argued that the phrase *σάββατον ἐπέφωσκεν* in Luke 23.54 arose from Luke's misreading of the unusual phrase *ὄψε δὲ σαββάτων τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων* in Matthew 28.1, taking the participle in the sense of 'drawing on' rather than 'dawning' (*Luke: A New Paradigm* (JSNT Supplement Series 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989) ii.772–3). I am grateful to Mark Goodacre for pointing me to this reference. Similar phrases occur in the *Gospel of Peter*: *σάββατον ἐπιφώσκει* (2.5); *Πρωῖας δὲ ἐπιφώσκοντος τοῦ σαββάτου* (9.34); *Τῇ δὲ νυκτὶ ἣ ἐπέφωσκεν ἡ κυριακὴ* (9.35). The usage at 2.5 is a statement of Herod made before the crucifixion has even begun, so the author of the text clearly intended it in the sense that the Sabbath was impending, rather than having already begun.

changes. As noted previously, since the Dura text is not only the earliest, but probably also the most accurate, Tatianic text available to us, the divergences between it and later versions are particularly revealing of the kinds of changes that took place in the textual tradition. There is admittedly an apparent tension here. The greater the divergence of the later witnesses from the Dura text, the less likely it may seem that the Dura text represents Tatian's work. However, Joosten's aforementioned argument on the basis of the sequence of the text leaves no room for doubt regarding the existence of a literary relationship between these diverse witnesses. I therefore proceed on the assumption that, however divergent they may appear, the later witnesses represent further stages in the rewriting that took place in the reception of Tatian's gospel. The two most important witnesses that may be compared with our text are the sixth-century Latin *Codex Fuldensis* and the medieval Arabic harmony, itself a translation of an earlier Syriac version.

3.1 *Codex Fuldensis*

Although *Fuldensis* and the Arabic version preserve almost precisely the same sequence of descriptions for Joseph of Arimathea, there are also changes that are evident. First, here is the text of *Codex Fuldensis*:

(Matt 27.55) et mulieres multae (Mark 15.41) quae simul cum eo ascenderant a galilaea hierosolymis (Matt 27.56) Inter quas erat maria magdalene et maria iacobi (Mark 15.40) minoris et ioseph mater. et salomae (Matt 27.56) mater filiorum zebedaei (Mark 15.41) Et cum esset in galilaea sequebantur eum. (Luke 23.49) Haec uidentes [*next follows John 19.31-4, 36-7*] (Matt 27.57) Cum sero autem factum esset. uenit quidam homo diues (Mark 15.43) nobilis decurio (Luke 23.51) ab arimathia ciuitate iudae. (Mt 27:57) nomine ioseph (Lk 23:50) uir bonus et iustus. (Matt 27.57; John 19.38) qui et ipse occultus discipulus erat ihesu. propter metum iudaeorum. (Luke 23.51) qui expectabat et ipse regnum dei. Hic non consenserat concilio et actibus eorum.⁶³

Several features of this text are strikingly similar to the Dura fragment. There is a mention of named women, followed by a reference to a larger crowd of followers. The reference to this group is rounded off by the participial phrase *Haec uidentes*, a close counterpart to the ὁρῶσαι ταῦτα of Luke 23.49, and notably in the same position as the ὁρῶσαι τὸν σ(α)ρ(ω)θ(έ)ν(τ)α of the Dura parchment.

Nevertheless, significant differences also appear. In *Fuldensis* Salome is identified with the mother of the sons of Zebedee, whereas in the Dura parchment they remain distinct figures. Furthermore, John 19.31-4 and 19.36-7 have been inserted between our two pericopae.⁶⁴ These changes represent further

63 E. Ranke, *Codex Fuldensis* (Marburg and Leipzig: Elwert, 1868) 156-7. A new edition of *Codex Fuldensis* is in preparation by Nicholas Zola. None has been published since Ranke's version.

64 Interestingly, the sequence of Ephrem's gospel text seems to agree with that of *Fuldensis* in inserting the Johannine verses between the two pericopae of the Dura fragment. See

harmonisations on the part of later scribes who continued to make changes that they thought would better unite the four canonical gospels. Moreover, the unique phrase τὸν σταυρωθέντα in our text has been changed back to the ταῦτα of the canonical version. Although the sequence of the descriptions of Joseph is identical to that in the Dura text, the two missing adjectives have been added back in: *diues* and *nobilis* representing the πλούσιος and εὐσχήμων of the canonical tradition. Finally, the rather overloaded temporal transition markers of the Dura passage are here reduced to the much simpler *Cum sero autem factum esse*, which is a fairly close rendering of the genitive absolute Ὁσίως δὲ γενομένης of Matt 27.57.⁶⁵

3.2 Arabic Harmony

Here now is the corresponding passage in the Arabic harmony, quoted from the French translation that accompanied the most recent edition of the text:

(Luke 23.49) Et au loin, se tenaient toutes les connaissances de Jésus, et les femmes qui vinrent avec lui de la Galilée: (Mark 15.41b) Celles-là qui le suivirent et (le) servaient. (Matt 27.56a) L'une d'elles, Marie Madeleine, (Mark 15.40b) et Marie la mère de Jacques le mineur et de José, (Matt 27.56c) et la mère des deux fils de Zébédée, (Mark 15.40c) et Salomé, (41c) et d'autres nombreuses (qui) étaient montées avec lui à Jérusalem. (Luke 23.49b) Et ils virent cela. (Mark 15.42) Et lorsque fut arrivé le soir du vendredi, à cause de l'entrée du sabbat, (Matt 27.57b) vint un homme riche, (Luke 23.50b) notable d'Ar-rama, ville de Juda, (Matt 27.57d) nommé Joseph; (Luke 23.50c) et il était un homme bon, juste. (John 19.38b) Et il était le disciple de Jésus, et il se cachait par crainte des Juifs. (Luke 23.51b) Et il n'était pas d'accord avec les calomnieurs dans leur [passion] volonté et leurs actions. Et il attendait le royaume de Dieu. (Mark 15.43b) Et eut le courage (p d) celui-ci (43c) et entra auprès de Pilate et demanda le corps de Jésus (p d) à lui.⁶⁶

Ephrem, *Commentary on the Diatessaron* XXI.8–21. The onlookers at the cross are mentioned at XXI.8, the piercing with the lance is interpreted in XXI.10–13, and the burial is discussed at XXI.20–1. The Arabic agrees with the Dura fragment, against Ephrem and *Fuldensis*, in that it includes the piercing with the lance at Tat^{AR} 52.14–20, just before the report of the women watching the crucifixion, which is followed directly by the burial account. This division in the textual tradition is curious and implies that further rewriting must have already occurred between the date of the Dura fragment and the date of Ephrem's commentary, perhaps in conjunction with the translation of the text from Greek into Syriac. If so, the Arabic might represent further editing involving the relocation of the Johannine scene to earlier in the text.

65 Luke 23.54 does not appear at all in the version of these episodes in *Codex Fuldensis* (cf. Ranke, pp.156–7).

66 Tat^{AR} 52.21–7 (A.-S. Marmardji, *Diatessaron de Tatien* (Beyrouth, 1935) 501). On the Arabic version, see further P. Joosse, 'An Introduction to the Arabic Diatessaron', *Oriens Christianus* 83 (1999) 72–129.

Again, there are many points of contact with the Dura text. In the Arabic, as in Dura, Salome is distinct from the mother of the sons of Zebedee, in contrast to their identification in *Fuldensis*. Moreover, as in *Fuldensis*, the mention of the group of followers is concluded with the phrase ‘Et ils virent cela’, again in the same location as the ὀρῶσαι τὸν στ(αυρωθέντ)α in our Dura fragment, though once again corrected to the ὀρῶσαι ταῦτα of Luke 23.49. The listing of attributes of Joseph closely follows that in the Dura text, though once again the missing πλούσιος has been added back in, and the final two elements in the sequence have been inverted, probably under the influence of the ordering of these descriptors in the Peshitta version of Luke 23.51.⁶⁷ As for the transition between the two episodes, we have ‘Et lorsque fut arrivé le soir du vendredi, à cause de l’entrée du sabbat ...’, which is closest to Mark 15.42, and represents a likely simplification of the complex temporal markers of the Dura text.⁶⁸

These changes we see in *Codex Fuldensis* and in the Arabic harmony may all be interpreted as attempts to bring Tatian’s version back into line with the standard gospel text. The distinct phrase τὸν σταυρωθέντ α is corrected to the canonical version, the descriptions of Joseph of Arimathea that were absent are inserted, and the dislocated Luke 23.54 is either removed or relocated, thereby smoothing out the complicated transition between the two passages in the Dura fragment. These kinds of changes reflect a scribal milieu very different from that of Tatian. Writing in the late second century, Tatian felt free to emend and improve his sources as he combined them, omitting some elements and transposing others in an attempt to make a rhetorically pleasing narrative. For the later scribes responsible for the daughter versions of Tatian’s text, such emendations and omissions were problematic and had to be written over so as to preserve as closely as possible the wording and order of the now canonical source texts.

4. Conclusion: Vulgatisation as Domestication

What this analysis of the Dura fragment reveals is that Tatian’s work was not intended as simply an addendum to the established, fourfold, canonical form, but should instead be regarded as a deliberate rewriting of this tradition to produce a new and, at least in the eyes of its author, better edition of the life of Jesus.⁶⁹ As such, Tatian provides supporting evidence for the claim that ‘the

67 So also Joosten, ‘The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron’, 167–70, who points out that in the Old Syriac the three elements in Luke 23.51 are inverted in precisely the same manner as in the Dura fragment, while the Peshitta partially corrects this inversion, presenting the same order as is found in the Arabic harmony.

68 Luke 23.54 does not show up at all in the Arabic harmony. See the table at Marmardji, *Diatessaron de Tatien*, cxxxv.

69 Pace Nicholas Perrin, who argues that Tatian’s rewriting of the canonical gospels was merely a sign of his esteem for them as authoritative texts (‘Hermeneutical Factors in the

reception of the Jesus tradition in the second century [shows that] here too neither the scope nor the wording of the traditions that were traced back to Jesus or to “the gospel” were fixed’.⁷⁰ Just as Irenaeus, with his insistence on the *τετράμορφον εὐαγγέλιον*, attempted to bring some definitional clarity to the ambiguity of this situation, so also Tatian was probably attempting to use his grammatical and rhetorical training to bring stability to the textual and oral fluidity of the Jesus tradition. Hence, if, with Irenaeus, we restrict the category of ‘canonical’ to the fourfold gospel, then Tatian’s version must be regarded as non-canonical, since it was something other than an exact reproduction of the content of the four, and was probably intended to supplant these prior accounts with a superior edition. However, the question of canonicity is necessarily perspectival, since what counts as canonical is always a matter of reception, or function within a given community. For many Syriac Christians, and probably Greek-speaking believers at Dura, Tatian’s version certainly was canonical, since it was used liturgically, and in the fourth century even garnered the honour of having a commentary written on it.

Recently François Bovon has argued for the existence of a third category of books beyond the canonical and apocryphal: books that are ‘useful for the soul’. While canonical writings enjoyed official ecclesiastical approbation and the apocryphal suffered ecclesiastical proscription, the ‘books useful for the soul’ sat in the middle, continuing to be widely used by Christian readers, though without any official endorsement or prohibition.⁷¹ This distinction

Harmonization of the Gospels and the Question of Textual Authority’, *The Biblical Canons* (ed. J.-M. Auwers and H. J. de Jonge; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003) 599–605). Though his choice to use these texts suggests that he regarded them as suitable sources, he also thought himself capable of improving upon and surpassing them! Perrin presents this trend to rewrite previous texts as a Jewish phenomenon. That it surely was, but not exclusively so, and Tatian would have been operating more from a Hellenistic rhetorical background than a specifically Second Temple Jewish one. For further discussion of the process of *μετάφρασις* (‘paraphrase’), see S. F. Johnson, *The Life and Miracles of Thekla: A Literary Study* (Hellenic Studies 13; Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2006) 67–112. Johnson cites Tatian’s work as a ‘fascinating, if elusive’ indication that early Christian authors were already aware of the ‘metaphrastic relationships among the synoptic gospels’ (p. 110). Further evidence to that point may be found in the *Diatessaron-Gospel* of Ammonius of Alexandria, on which see M. R. Crawford, ‘Ammonius of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, and the Origins of Gospels Scholarship’, *NTS* 61.1 (2015) 1–29.

70 Schröter, *From Jesus to the New Testament*, 270, who follows D. C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

71 F. Bovon, ‘Beyond the Canonical and the Apocryphal Books, the Presence of a Third Category: The Books Useful for the Soul’, *HTR* 105 (2012) 125–37. Bovon’s description of texts in this category is particularly apt to the Diatessaronic tradition: ‘The destiny of books in the third category, by way of contrast, was very different. Their text is so flexible that it is often impossible to publish a single critical edition. Multiple forms of the text – each having different titles and

brings clarity to the process of reception of Tatian's edition of the life of Jesus. If his gospel had been left in a state that deviated too severely from the canonical versions, then it would have appeared as a threatening rival to the fourfold collection and its fate would have been the same as other apocryphal texts – proscription and destruction. Indeed, this is precisely what the fifth-century bishops Theodoret and Rabbula attempted to do. However, if Tatian's gospel conformed to the canonical gospels throughout, it might instead be seen as a simple 'repackaging' of the canonical material, and, as such, could function as a 'useful text', though never again a canonical one. Hence, the demotion of Tatian's Gospel from being a canonical text to being a merely 'useful' one required that its originality be erased by scribes in an attempt to domesticate his work. For this reason, the Dura parchment remains invaluable as a window into the earliest history of the textual tradition of Tatian's gospel.

being recorded in a wide variety of manuscripts – orient one's attention to evidence of a situation where each scribe achieved an individual performance' (p. 134). See also pp. 129–30, where Bovon describes Victor of Capua's attempt to rescue Tatian's work from shipwreck. Cf. what Johnson says about saints' lives: 'authors often sought, or felt compelled, to reclassify, reorient, and purify the textual past for the sake of their audiences and readers-to-come' (*The Life and Miracles of Thekla*, 106).