

The Anonymous Source for Marcion's Gospel in British Library, Add. 17215: An Identification and Analysis*

PHILIP MICHAEL FORNESS 

*Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Campus Westend, IG-Farben-Haus,
Norbert-Wollheim-Platz 1, 60629 Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Email: forness@em.uni-frankfurt.de*

For over a century, studies on Marcion have cited a quotation attributed to him in a fragmentary Syriac manuscript: London, British Library, Add. 17215 (fols. 30–3). An English translation of the relevant passage appeared in 1893, but no subsequent study has returned to the Syriac text itself. While this text has hitherto been cited as an anonymous Syriac source, this article identifies it as a letter by Jacob of Serugh (d. 520/1) and offers preliminary remarks on the implications of this identification for future research on Marcion's Gospel and his thought.

Keywords: Marcion, Luke, Gospels, incarnation, Good Samaritan, Jacob of Serugh

1. Introduction

The reconstruction of the Gospel of Marcion has come under renewed scrutiny. To what extent was Marcion (d. 160) himself responsible for the Gospel? Was this Gospel a catalyst for the composition and redaction of the other Gospels?¹ Did it serve as a source not only for Luke but also for other early Gospels?² Such provocative questions have enlivened the debate surrounding

* I am grateful to Christopher Zeichmann for providing detailed feedback on this article, to Grigory Kessel for helping me access the manuscript, and to Mark Bilby for bibliographic suggestions. I would also like to thank the anonymous peer reviewer for help with the final revisions and the British Library Board for permission to publish an image of the manuscript. The research for this project was funded by the BMBF-Project 'Cultural Exchange from Syria to Ethiopia'.

1 M. Vinzent, *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels* (StPatr Supplement 2; Leuven: Peeters, 2014), especially 277–82.

2 M. Klinghardt, *Das älteste Evangelium und die Entstehung der kanonischen Evangelien* (2 vols.; Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 60; Tübingen: Francke, 2015¹, 2020²).

Marcion's Gospel and its implication for New Testament textual criticism.³ Several reconstructions of Marcion's Gospel have appeared since 2013,⁴ building upon the monumental work of Adolf von Harnack almost a century ago.⁵ Since polemical works form the primary witnesses to Marcion's activities, a thorough analysis of these sources forms a necessary foundation for any reconstruction of his writings and thought.⁶

The present article offers a new analysis of an enigmatic source used to reconstruct Marcion's Gospel and thought: a Syriac quotation found in the fragmentary manuscript London, British Library, Add. 17215 (fols. 30–3). This quotation states that Jesus 'came down and appeared between Jerusalem and Jericho'.⁷ Some have taken the quotation as evidence for the opening of Marcion's Gospel, which, like Luke 4.31, uses the language of 'coming down' (from Greek κατέρχεσθαι). Others have understood it as an allegorical interpretation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which also mentions Jerusalem and Jericho (Luke 10.30), and suggested that it derives from Marcion's *Antitheses* or the teachings of the Marcionites. There remains much uncertainty regarding the relationship of this quotation to the writings attributed to Marcion.

The first step in either affirming or rejecting the relevance of this quotation for the investigation of Marcion must be a thorough understanding of the text in which it appears. To this end, the present article first examines the various strands of scholarship on the quotation (section 2). The survey of scholarship reveals divergent views on the quotation's utility for reconstructing Marcion's Gospel. It also shows that, despite the use of this quotation for over a century, no study has returned to the original Syriac text since 1893. The remainder of the article offers a new analysis of the quotation, identifying the anonymous source as a letter by the Syriac author Jacob of Serugh (d. 520/1), contextualising the quotation within this letter and providing preliminary reflections on its relevance for research on Marcion (section 3). As a whole, the present study seeks

3 See, for example, the forums on the new literature on Marcion's Gospel in *NTS* 63 (2017) 318–34 and *ZAC* 21 (2017) 1–163.

4 J. BeDuhn, *The First New Testament: Marcion's Scriptural Canon* (Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2013) 99–200 (English translation with commentary); D. T. Roth, *The Text of Marcion's Gospel* (NTTSD 49; Leiden: Brill, 2015) 412–36; Klinghardt, *Das älteste Evangelium* (2015¹), II.455–1168; P. A. Gramaglia, *Marcione e il Vangelo (di Luca). Un confronto con Matthias Klinghardt* (Turin: Accademia University Press, 2017) 120–359 (Italian translation with commentary); C. Gianotto, ed., A. Nicolotti, trans., *Il Vangelo di Marcione* (Nuovo Universale Einaudi 22; Turin: Einaudi, 2019) 3–204; Klinghardt, *Das älteste Evangelium* (2020²), II.534–1317.

5 A. von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (TUGAL 45; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1921¹, 1924²).

6 As emphasised strongly in J. M. Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

7 A new translation of the text appears in section 3 below.

to offer a foundation for further studies of this quotation as a source for Marcion's Gospel and thought.

2. The Anonymous Syriac Source and the Study of Marcion

In the mid-nineteenth century, a fragmentary Syriac manuscript arrived in London that contained a short quotation attributed to Marcion. An English translation of part of this manuscript appeared within a few decades that has been quoted in subsequent studies on Marcion up to the present. Scholarly assessments of its position within Marcion's corpus can be categorised as follows: (1) seeing it merely as reflective of Marcion's or his followers' teachings; (2) viewing it as evidence for Marcion's Gospel; and (3) considering it irrelevant due to its irreconcilability with other sources for Marcion's Gospel. A brief history of scholarship on this quotation will both reveal the major points in favour of and against each approach and expose the thin evidentiary base on which these arguments have been constructed.

In 1845, the British Orientalist William Cureton commissioned Auguste Pacho to purchase manuscripts for the British Museum from the Monastery of the Syrians in Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt. The manuscripts arrived in London in 1847, and William Wright published a catalogue of the collection of Syriac manuscripts in the British Museum (now held in the British Library) from 1870 to 1872.⁸ Here he describes a fragmentary manuscript consisting of four folios that now has the reference number British Library, Add. 17215 (fol. 30–3; see Fig. 1):

Four vellum leaves, all more or less stained and torn, written in a good hand of the viith or viiith cent., with from 22 to 28 lines in each page They formed part of a theological treatise. The heresies of Marcion, Mani, and Bardesanes, are discussed on the first leaf, and the Gospel of the Hebrews is mentioned, *ܘܠܟܘܢ ܕܡܬܘܨܝܐ ܕܡܩܨܝܐ ܕܡܩܨܝܐ ܕܡܩܨܝܐ*. ['The account of Matthew which was for the Hebrews.']

The greater part of the writing on the verso of the last leaf has been effaced, to make room for the concluding words of the Gospel of S. Mark, ch. xvi. 19, 20.⁹

My own palaeographic analysis has suggested that the portion of the manuscript relevant for the present study could date to anytime between the late seventh and the ninth century.¹⁰ But Wright's description remains in general reliable. His

8 W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since the Year 1838* (3 vols.; London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1870–2), with a discussion of the acquisition history at iii.xiv–xv.

9 Wright, *Catalogue*, ii.1016.

10 The same or a similar hand is used on all the first three folios, although the writing is thicker on folios 31 and 32 than on folio 30. The script on folio 33 is in a different hand. My analysis of folios 30 to 32 focused on the following three features: an Estrangela *'ālap* in all positions, a *Serto hēh* with a closed left loop and a *semkaṭ* with the left loop angled upwards and higher

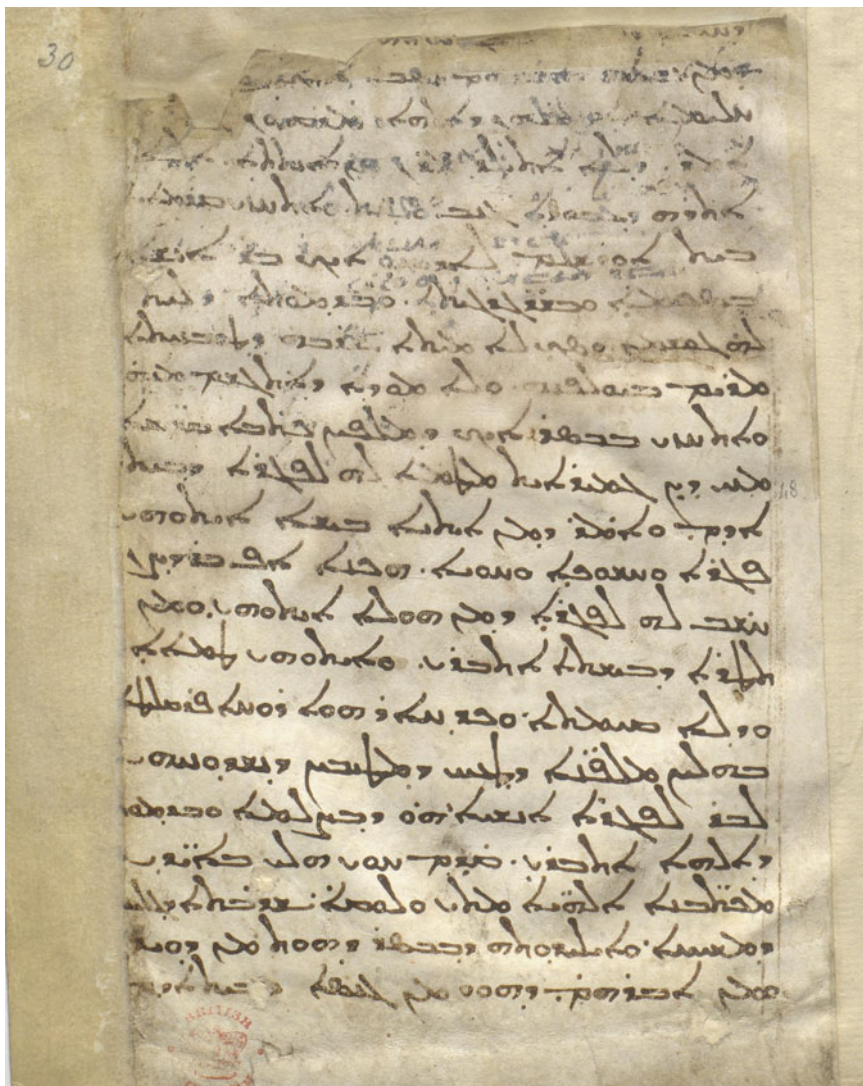


Figure 1. London, British Library, Add. 17215 (fol. 30–33), fol. 30r. © British Library Board

than the right loop. On this basis I could find four comparable manuscripts, all dating between the late seventh and the ninth century: (1) London, British Library, Add. 17134 (674/5); (2) Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs, 309 (CFMM 00309) (8th/9th cent.); (3) London, British Library, Add. 14485 (823/4); and (4) London, British Library, Add. 12138 (899). The second manuscript is described as an example of ‘Usual Estrangela’ in A. C. McCollum, ‘Syriac Paleography’, Hill Museum & Manuscript Library: School, accessed 23 February

sketch of the contents of the manuscript applies only to folios 30 and 33 (the first and last leaves). The catalogue entry appears in a section on anonymous theological works, and the reference to Marcion here would shortly inspire much interest in the contents of this manuscript.

About two decades after Wright published his description of this manuscript, William Emery Barnes issued a brief notice on the manuscript in the 21 October 1893 issue of *The Academy*, a weekly review of literature, science and art based in London. The opening section highlights the potential interest this fragment may hold for readers:

I venture to think that the enclosed translation from a Syriac MS. in the British Museum may prove interesting to some readers of the ACADEMY. Dr. Wright, in his Catalogue, assigns the MS. to the seventh century, and says that it contains a reference to the Gospel according to the Hebrews. I do not think that the reference to the apocryphal Gospel is probable; but the fragment is still interesting, from the statement attributed to Marcion that our Lord first appeared in human form between Jerusalem and Jericho. Can anyone illustrate this statement, or suggest a probable author for the fragment?

The pages of the MS. are injured, especially at the top. It is a mere fragment, bound up with other fragments. I showed it to Prof. Bensly during his last visit to the Museum.¹¹ He said at once that it was 'ancient,' and turned from his MS. of the Peshito to read the word 'nkheth' (*came down*) for me.¹²

After these introductory words, Barnes provides a translation of the recto and verso sides of the first folio (fol. 30). This includes the quotation of Marcion to which he had alluded:

... Marcion ... said that our Lord was not born of a woman, but stole the place of the Creator and came down and appeared first *between Jerusalem and Jericho*, like a son of man in form and in image and in likeness, yet without our body. And he in no wise brings the history of the Blessed Mary into his teaching, and does not confess that he received a body from her and appeared in flesh, as the Holy Scriptures teach.¹³

2021, online at www.vhmmsschool.org/syriac. I identified the remaining three manuscripts by utilising the following database: M. P. Penn, 'Digital Analysis of Syriac Handwriting', 2019-, online at <http://dash.stanford.edu/>. While the hand mostly conforms to the Syriac Estrangela script, it does have some features reflecting developments associated with Serto script, as explored in K. Bush *et al.*, 'Challenging the Estrangela / Serto Divide: Why the Standard Model of Syriac Scripts Just Doesn't Work', *Hug* 21 (2018) 43–80.

¹¹ That is, Robert Lubbock Bensly, who had died earlier in the year.

¹² W. E. Barnes, 'A Syriac Ms. (Add. 17215) in the British Museum', *The Academy* 1120 (21 October 1893) 344 (emphasis original).

¹³ Barnes, 'A Syriac Ms.', 344 (emphasis and both ellipses original). Barnes indicates that the word 'Marcion' is a conjecture suggested to him by Francis Crawford Burkitt, who had also examined the manuscript.

Barnes assumed that the phrase ‘between Jerusalem and Jericho’ originated with Marcion and highlighted this part of the quotation with italics. This point would spark controversy as the known quotations of the opening of Marcion’s Gospel contain language of ‘coming down’ but do not refer to Jerusalem and Jericho.

Theodor Zahn published at least three studies of this fragment after encountering the English translation in Barnes’ article. In 1896, he briefly discussed the discovery of the fragment and argued that Marcion could not have written that Christ ‘came down and appeared between Jerusalem and Jericho’. This would not fit with what was known of Marcion’s Gospel from one of Tertullian’s (d. after 220) works,¹⁴ which seems to suggest that the opening of Marcion’s Gospel referred to Jesus coming down in Capernaum (see Luke 4.31).¹⁵ Zahn repeated the same argument about the incompatibility of the Syriac source with Tertullian in another work in 1907.¹⁶

Zahn’s most comprehensive treatment of the fragment appeared in the *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift* in 1910.¹⁷ Here he seeks to answer the two questions posed by Barnes: ‘Can anyone illustrate this statement, or suggest a probable author for the fragment?’¹⁸ Zahn admits that he can only provide a partial answer to the second question about the authorship, suggesting that the source is probably an anti-heretical writing such as that of Eznik of Kołb (*fl.* 429–50).¹⁹ But he offers a much deeper investigation of the first question regarding how this fragment fits into Marcion’s thought. After translating Barnes’ English translation into German,²⁰ he develops his argument as follows. The only really new aspect of this Syriac source, Zahn maintains, is the statement that Christ appeared between Jerusalem and Jericho.²¹ Since this cannot refer to the beginning of Marcion’s Gospel, which consists of Luke 3.1 and 4.31, it must allude to another

14 See Zahn’s own reconstruction of this part of the text: T. Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* (Erlangen: Andreas Deichert, 1889–92), II.II.455–6. Here he refers to Tertullian, *Marc. 4.7* (E. Evans, *Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem* (OECT; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 274.28–9).

15 T. Zahn, ‘Neue Quellenforschung zum Diatesseron’, *Theologisches Literaturblatt* 17 (1896) 1–4, 17–20, at 19.

16 T. Zahn, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1906–7³) II.396 n. 18. The second volume appeared in 1907.

17 T. Zahn, ‘Ein verkanntes Fragment von Marcions Antithesen’, *NKZ* 21 (1910) 371–7.

18 Quoted in German translation in Zahn, ‘Ein verkanntes Fragment’, 371.

19 Zahn, ‘Ein verkanntes Fragment’, 371 n. 2.

20 Zahn, ‘Ein verkanntes Fragment’, 372: ‘Denn Marcion ... sagt, daß unser Herr nicht von einem Weibe geboren wurde, sondern das Gebiet des Schöpfers stahl und *herabkam und zum erstenmal zwischen Jerusalem und Jericho erschien*, gleich einem Menschensohn in Gestalt und Bild und Gleichheit, aber ohne unseren Leib. Und er (Marcion) bringt in seiner Weise die Geschichte der ebenedeiten Maria in seiner Lehre vor und bekennt nicht, daß er (Jesus) einen Leib von ihr empfing und im Fleisch erschien, wie die heiligen Schriften lehren’ (emphasis original).

21 Zahn, ‘Ein verkanntes Fragment’, 374–5.

biblical passage. The quotation could well come from Marcion's *Antitheses* or, more likely, from another anti-heretical work that quotes the *Antitheses*.²² In a further step, Zahn proposes that the quotation reflects an elaboration of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, in which both Jerusalem and Jericho are mentioned (Luke 10.30). Since Christ was often interpreted as the Good Samaritan, Marcion may have incorporated this parable into his teaching about Christ's appearance.²³ Zahn's interpretation of this quotation as reflective of Marcion's teaching and perhaps derived from his *Antitheses* forms one influential approach to this anonymous Syriac source. Like all who followed him, Zahn did not consult the original Syriac text but relied on the English translation found in Barnes.

The next substantial discussion of the anonymous Syriac source came with Adolf von Harnack's monumental treatment of Marcion.²⁴ In the first edition from 1921, Harnack reconstructs the Gospel's opening line as follows: '[Luke 3.1a] In the fifteenth year of Emperor Tiberius, at the time of Pilate, [Luke 4.31] Jesus (Christ?) descended (from heaven?) to Capernaum, (a city of Galilee [of Judea]?) and was teaching (them?) in the synagogue.'²⁵ In the extended apparatus, he lists the various witnesses to the beginning of the Gospel and includes the following quotation from the English translation of the anonymous Syriac source:

Marcion said, that our Lord was not born of woman, but stole the place of the creator and cam [*sic*] down and appeared first between Jerusalem and Iericho, like a son of man in form and in image and in likeness, yet without our body.²⁶

22 Zahn, 'Ein verkanntes Fragment', 375.

23 Zahn, 'Ein verkanntes Fragment', 377 states that Marcion's teaching must have been similar to the following: 'Unser Gott und Heiland ist nicht einer der vom Weibe Geborenen, sondern ist im 15. Jahr des Tiberius als ein *spiritus salutaris* vom Himmel herab in diese arge Welt des Schöpfergottes gekommen und in Menschengestalt erschienen, um, wie jener Samariter im Evangelium an der StraÙe, die von Jerusalem nach Jericho führt, die von Räubern überfallenen, mißhandelten und dem Tode nahgebrachten Menschen, als ein Fremdling seiner Herkunft nach, aber ihr Nächster durch seine barmherzige Liebe, vom Tode zu erretten, ihre Wunden zu lindern und in freigiebigster Weise für ihre völlige Heilung Sorge zu tragen.'

24 References to Zahn's discussion of the passage do appear before Harnack, but they do not offer any further treatment of the anonymous Syriac source. A summary of Zahn's article appeared in *BZ* 8 (1910) 411. Zahn's interpretation of this quotation is also briefly mentioned in J. Schäfers, *Eine altsyrische antimarkionitische Erklärung von Parabeln des Herrn und zwei andere altsyrische Abhandlungen zu Texten des Evangeliums mit Beiträgen zu Tatians Diatessaron und Markions Neuem Testament* (NTAbh 6; Münster: Aschendorff, 1917) 34 n. 1.

25 Harnack, *Marcion* (1921¹), 165*-166*: 'III, 1a 'Εν τῷ ιε' ἔτει Τιβερίου Καίσαρος ἐπὶ τῶν χρόνων Πιλάτου IV, 31 κατέλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς (Χριστός[Ἰησοῦς]?) (ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ?) εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ, (πόλιν τῆς Γαλιλαίας [Ἰουδαίας]?) καὶ ἦν διδάσκων (αὐτοῦς?) ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ.' There are no differences in the text in the second edition: Harnack, *Marcion* (1924²), 183*-184*.

26 Harnack, *Marcion* (1921¹), 166*-167*.

Harnack cites the quotation as found in Barnes's article, but modifies the orthography and removes the uncertainty about the opening words. One brief comment on the source follows the quotation: 'I have not been able to determine where the information that Jesus first appeared between Jerusalem and Jericho originates.'²⁷ He suggests in a later part of the study that the anonymous Syriac author may have been Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373).²⁸

A review of Harnack's work published in 1922 criticised his use of the anonymous Syriac source as insufficiently founded.²⁹ Nevertheless, Harnack included the source in the second edition from 1924 without further comment.³⁰ Harnack's incorporation of this quotation into the apparatus to his reconstruction of Marcion's Gospel forms a second approach to the quotation: taking it as a possible witness to the opening of Marcion's Gospel. But like Zahn, Harnack based his use of the source only upon the English translation found in Barnes' article. His study did not represent a new investigation of the Syriac text.

Over the remainder of the twentieth century, the anonymous Syriac source primarily attracted attention in investigations of early exegesis of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In 1967, Werner Monselewski pointed to the anonymous Syriac source as a potential witness to an early interpretation of the parable.³¹ After quoting Zahn's German translation of the passage, he points out a parallel between the rejection of Christ's embodiment from Mary in the quotation and a Greek fragment of one of Origen's (d. 253/5) homilies that refers to an interpretation of the Samaritan 'as Christ who bore the flesh from Mary'.³² Monselewski further argues that Origen's homily has an underlying anti-docetic, and thus an anti-Marcionite, perspective. To this end, he identifies certain parallels with Tertullian's anti-Marcionite polemic and defends the authenticity of the quotation as reflective of Marcion's thought.

The reception of Monselewski's arguments proved mixed. In 1972, Antonio Orbe followed Monselewski by assuming the authenticity of the quotation. He offered a

27 Harnack, *Marcion* (1921¹), 167*: 'Woher die Kunde stammt, Jesus sei zuerst zwischen Jerusalem und Jericho erschienen, habe ich nicht ermitteln können.'

28 See Harnack, *Marcion* (1921¹), 283*: 'Ein unbekannter Syrer (Ephraem?).'

29 H. von Soden, 'A. von Harnacks Marcion', *ZKG* 40, n.F., 3 (1922) 191–206, at 199.

30 Harnack, *Marcion* (1924²), 185*, 362*.

31 W. Monselewski, *Der barmherzige Samariter: Eine auslegungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Lukas 10, 25–37* (BGBE 5; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967) 18–21.

32 Origen, *Hom. Luc.* 34 (M. Rauer, ed., *Die Homilien zu Lukas in der Übersetzung des Hieronymus und die griechischen Reste der Homilien und des Lukas-Kommentars* (Origenes Werke 9; GCS 49; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1959²) 190.21–191.1 (Greek): εἰς Χριστὸν τὸν ἐκ Μαρίας σάρκα φορέσαντα. In Jerome's Latin translation, this section of the homily is attributed to 'one of the presbyters' (*quidam de presbyteris*) (Rauer, *Die Homilien zu Lukas*, 190.14 (Latin)). While the mention of the presbyter does appear in the Greek fragment, the reference to 'Christ who was born of Mary' does not appear in the Latin.

Spanish translation of the quotation,³³ and identified a wide range of parallels in second-century writings on the Good Samaritan.³⁴ But in 1978, Giulia Sfameni Gasparro argued against Monselewski's conclusion that the anti-docetic tendencies of the Greek fragment should be attributed to Origen.³⁵ After offering an Italian translation of the quotation based upon Zahn,³⁶ she suggests that the anonymous author probably did not have access to Marcion's own works, given the difference between the quotation in this source and the opening of Marcion's Gospel. She concludes: 'Therefore, the Syriac polemicist would have recorded not the original doctrine of Marcion but the creed of contemporaneous Marcionites.'³⁷ The teachings found in the quotation are, as she emphasises, a common part of the Marcionite patrimony.

A further study of the anonymous Syriac source related to the Parable of the Good Samaritan appeared in 2004.³⁸ Riemer Roukema first offers a translation of Marcion's quotation into English based, again, upon Zahn.³⁹ He then summarises the various opinions on whether this supposed quotation should be seen as an authentic teaching by Marcion from his *Antitheses*. Roukema concludes that Marcion's teaching that Jesus first came down from heaven to Capernaum cannot be harmonised with the quotation in the anonymous Syriac source. Moreover, Marcion's rejection of allegorical interpretation in general would not support an interpretation of Jesus as the Samaritan.⁴⁰ A summary of

33 A. Orbe, *Parábolas evangélicas en San Ireneo* (2 vols.; BAC 331-2; Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1972) I.105: 'Decía Marción que Nuestro Señor no nació de una mujer, sino que arrebató el puesto del demiurgo y descendió y apareció por vez primera entre Jerusalén y Jericó(?), como un hijo de hombre en forma y aspecto y semejanza, mas sin nuestro cuerpo.' Orbe (I.105 n. 2) cites Barnes' article in *The Academy* but seems to indicate that he only knows of this article through Harnack ('según A. Harnack'). It is unclear whether he relied on Zahn or Harnack for his translation. But the language of 'de una mujer' seems to correspond to Zahn's 'von einem Weibe' more than Harnack's 'of woman'.

34 Orbe, *Parábolas evangélicas*, I.105-8.

35 G. Sfameni Gasparro, 'Variazioni esegetiche sulla parabola del buon Samaritano. Dal "Presbitero" di Origene ai dualisti medievali', *Studi in onore di Anthos Ardizzoni* (ed. E. Livera and G. Aurelio Privitera; 2 vols.; Filologia e critica 25; Rome: Ateneo & Bizzarri, 1978) II.951-1012, at 966-7.

36 Sfameni Gasparro, 'Variazioni', II.966: 'Marcione (...) disse che nostro Signore non fu generato da una donna ma rubò il campo del Creatore e scese giù e per la prima volta apparve tra Gerusalemme e Gerico, simile a un figlio dell'uomo in figura e immagine e somiglianza, ma senza il nostro corpo.' The origin of the quotation in Zahn's article is noted on Sfameni Gasparro, 'Variazioni', II.999 n. 118.

37 Sfameni Gasparro, 'Variazioni', II.968: 'il polemista siriano avrebbe registrato allora non la dottrina originaria di Marcione ma una credenza dei marcioniti contemporanei'.

38 R. Roukema, 'The Good Samaritan in Ancient Christianity', *VC* 58 (2004) 56-74, at 57.

39 Roukema, 'The Good Samaritan', 57: 'Our Lord was not born from a woman, but stole the domain of the Creator and came down and appeared for the first time between Jerusalem and like a human being in form and image and likeness, but without our body.' Roukema (57 n. 8) notes that the English translation is based upon Zahn.

40 Roukema, 'The Good Samaritan', 58.

Roukema's article appears in Joseph Tyson's monograph on Marcion and Luke-Acts,⁴¹ and at least one recent biblical commentary mentions the quotation – both in relation to the Parable of the Good Samaritan.⁴² But Roukema's article forms the last publication known to me that takes up Zahn's approach to the quotation as an authentic source for Marcion's thought or his *Antitheses*.

In addition to Zahn's and Harnack's use of the quotation, a third approach emerged in studies regarding the reconstruction of Marcion's Gospel. As the inadequacy of Harnack's reconstruction became apparent, calls for a more methodologically rigorous approach to the sources for its reconstruction emerged.⁴³ Two new editions of Marcion's Gospel appeared in the 1980s and 1990s, and both editors decided to focus on a more limited range of sources, thus eliminating the need to consult the anonymous Syriac source.⁴⁴

In the wake of questions that arose about Marcion's role as editor of the biblical text and the relationship of his Gospel to the four canonical Gospels,⁴⁵ several new reconstructions of the Gospel have been published in the last ten years. The editors of two of these editions explain their use of different sources for reconstructing the Gospel. Jason BeDuhn includes some of the minor sources in his study,⁴⁶ and he commends the use of such sources in a more recent article.⁴⁷ He does not, however, attend to the anonymous Syriac source in his reconstruction of the Gospel. In the first edition of his reconstruction, Matthias Klinghardt concludes that the minor sources are too scattered and uncertain to use for reconstructing the text of the Gospel and only regards using them as appropriate when they complement the three main sources of Tertullian, the *Adamantius Dialogue* and Epiphanius of Salamis (d. 403).⁴⁸ Responding to criticism on this point, the second edition incorporates several

41 J. B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006) 156–7 n. 48.

42 F. Bovon, *L'Évangile selon saint Luc* (4 vols.; CNT 3; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1991–2009) II.91 n. 55 mentions Zahn's article.

43 B. Aland, 'Marcion/Marcioniten', *TRE* 22 (1992) 89–101, at 89–90.

44 The first reconstruction is summarised in D. S. Williams, 'Reconsidering Marcion's Gospel', *JBL* 108 (1989) 477–96. Williams only takes into account quotations of Marcion's Gospel that have direct parallels in Tertullian and Epiphanius, thus excluding the anonymous Syriac source. The article is based upon a Master's thesis by the same author that I have not been able to consult. The second reconstruction appears in K. Tsutsui, 'Das Evangelium Marcions: Ein neuer Versuch der Textrekonstruktion', *AJBI* 18 (1992) 67–132. Tsutsui focuses on the three primary witnesses of Tertullian, Adamantius and Epiphanius and does not engage the minor sources at length. For the opening of the Gospel, Tsutsui (77) refers readers to '[w]eitere Bezeugungen und Anspielungen' in Harnack, which would include the anonymous Syriac source.

45 W. Löhr, 'Markion', *RAC* 24 (2012) 147–73, at 151.

46 BeDuhn, *The First New Testament*, 40–6.

47 J. BeDuhn, 'New Studies of Marcion's *Evangelion*', *ZAC* 21 (2017) 8–24, at 9–10.

48 Klinghardt, *Das älteste Evangelium* (2015¹), 1.55; (2020²), 1.62.

additional minor sources but the anonymous Syriac source is not among them.⁴⁹ Two other new reconstructions of Marcion's Gospel do not comment on this source.⁵⁰ The similarity in the language of 'coming down' in the opening of Marcion's Gospel and the anonymous Syriac source seems to have convinced Harnack of the relevance of this quotation as a witness to the Gospel. It did not persuade all of his followers, who took a third approach to this source by excluding it from their studies.

In his reconstruction of the Gospel from 2015, Dieter Roth takes a different approach by incorporating the anonymous Syriac source. In fact, Roth attends to all three major and fifteen minor sources used to reconstruct Marcion's Gospel.⁵¹ He mentions the anonymous Syriac source as a witness to the opening of Marcion's Gospel, citing Roukema's translation of the passage. Roth agrees with Roukema's conclusion that this is probably an allusion to the allegorical reading of the Parable of the Good Samaritan in which Jesus is understood as the Samaritan. Since the passage is not attested elsewhere, he concludes that it is doubtful whether the passage preserves a statement of Marcion and that it should only be used with utmost caution.⁵² In this way, Roth reflects the approach taken to the source by Harnack by including it as a possible source for Marcion's Gospel but not letting it influence his reconstruction of the text.

In summary, scholarship on Marcion has taken several different approaches to the anonymous Syriac source. Zahn initiated a trajectory of seeing it as an authentic teaching of Marcion, perhaps reflective of the content of his *Antitheses*. Harnack drew attention to the similarity of the language found in this quotation to the opening of Marcion's Gospel. Later reconstructions of the Gospel either excluded this source or recommended using it only with extreme caution. Despite a good number of studies that incorporate the source into their research on Marcion, no publication known to me has engaged with the original Syriac text since 1893. Indeed, there are several secondary and tertiary translations of the quotation: Zahn based his German translation upon Barnes' English article; later studies translated Zahn's German into Italian or English. The only recent reconstruction of Marcion's Gospel that takes this source into account takes over an English translation based upon Zahn, which itself was based on Barnes' English article.⁵³ Here we are at four levels removed from the original Syriac, with two English translations in between. A return to the Syriac source itself is

49 Klinghardt, *Das älteste Evangelium* (2020²), 1.450–3.

50 Gianotto, *Il Vangelo*, lxxvii, does not list it among the minor sources. The source does not appear to be referenced in Gramaglia, *Marcione*.

51 The discussion of the sources appears in Roth, *The Text*, 46–78. For a convenient listing of these sources, see BeDuhn, 'New Studies', 9 n. 7.

52 Roth, *The Text*, 399.

53 Roth, *The Text*, 399 n. 13 states that the translation he used came from Roukema, while Roukema, 'The Good Samaritan', 57 n. 8 cites Zahn's translation as the source.

thus a major desideratum in order to clarify what importance this source may hold for research on Marcion.

3. A Quotation of Marcion in a Letter of Jacob of Serugh

This section offers a fresh analysis of the Syriac manuscript in which the quotation attributed to Marcion appears. After identifying the source as a letter of the Syriac author Jacob of Serugh, I will describe the literary context in which this quotation is found. This will lead to three preliminary remarks on the relationship between the quotation and the study of Marcion. An ultimate judgement about whether this source should be incorporated into investigations of Marcion's Gospel and thought seems, on my view, best reserved for a more extensive study that can put it into conversation with a wider range of sources. The observations offered here are meant to serve as a foundation for future research.

Although the text in British Library, Add. 17215 has been known as an anonymous Syriac source for over a century, the identification of the text is actually quite clear. My original examination of the Syriac text has uncovered that the quotation attributed to Marcion appears in a known letter of the Syriac author Jacob of Serugh, specifically *Letter 23*.⁵⁴ The three folios that preserve portions of *Letter 23* correspond to the following sections of the critical edition of Jacob's epistolary corpus:

- Folio 30r: Olinder, *Epistulae*, 201.1–22
- Folio 30v: Olinder, *Epistulae*, 201.23–202.13
- Folio 31r: Olinder, *Epistulae*, 183.7–29
- Folio 31v: Olinder, *Epistulae*, 184.5–27
- Folio 32r: Olinder, *Epistulae*, 185.1–27
- Folio 32v: Olinder, *Epistulae*, 186.2–26

As this summary of the contents makes clear, the current order of the folios would not have corresponded to the original manuscript. Folios 31 and 32 directly follow one another, while folio 30 would have appeared later in the manuscript. Folio 33 contains fragments from a work attributed to Gregory Thaumaturgus (d. ca 270) that only survives in Syriac.⁵⁵

54 The critical edition of Jacob of Serugh's letters appears in G. Olinder, ed., *Iacobi Sarugensis epistulae quotquot supersunt* (CSCO 110, Scriptores Syri 57; Leuven: Peeters, 1937). But a few studies have corrected Olinder's text, two of which are relevant to *Letter 23*: G. Olinder, *The Letters of Jacob of Sarug: Comments on an Edition* (LUÅ, n.f., avd. 1, 34.1; Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1939); M. Albert, trans., *Les lettres de Jacques de Saroug* (Patrimoine Syriaque 3; Kaslik, Lebanon: Parole de l'Orient, 2004). In addition to the critical edition, I have cited the pages in Albert's French translation, which is the most accessible of the published translations of the corpus.

55 This work has been published on the basis of other manuscripts and the fragments correspond to the following sections: Gregory Thaumaturgus, *To Theopompus, on the Impassibility and*

Now that we have identified the text from which this quotation derives, a brief description of its author and an analysis of its contents are in order. Born in the mid-fifth century, Jacob received his education in the city of Edessa (Şanlıurfa, Turkey) at a time where Greek exegetical works were being translated into Syriac.⁵⁶ By the early sixth century, he had risen to the ecclesiastical rank of *periodeutēs*, assuming some of the functions of a bishop in rural areas. In 518 or 519, he became the bishop of Batnae of Serugh (Suruç, Turkey) and died shortly thereafter in 520 or 521. Jacob's surviving corpus forms one of the largest in the Syriac tradition, including over 300 homilies and forty-two letters by him as well as a letter addressed to him.⁵⁷ His writings discuss a wide range of topics, but the majority of his homilies and a good number of his letters focus on biblical exegesis. This is also the case with *Letter 23*, which is the largest letter in his corpus, covering around thirty-five pages in the critical edition.

Jacob addressed this letter to a Greek-speaking ecclesiastical leader named Maron from the city of Anazarbus (Anavarza, Turkey) who had the rank of lector.⁵⁸ Maron had written a letter with a list of questions on difficulties in the biblical text. On the basis of Jacob's reply, it appears that Maron did not originally

Passibility of God (J.-B.-F. Pitra, *Analecta sacra spicilegio solesmensi parata* (7 vols.; Paris, 1876–91) IV.118.22–119.9 (= fol. 33r), 119.20–1 (= fol. 33v); M. Slusser, trans., *St. Gregory Thaumaturgos: Life and Works* (FC 98; Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998) 171, 172). I am grateful to Roger Akhrass and Boško Erić for helping me identify this work.

56 On Jacob, see S. P. Brock, 'Ya'qub of Serugh', *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (ed. S. P. Brock et al.; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2011) 433–5, now published in an electronic edition at <https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Yaqub-of-Serugh>. The brief description of Jacob's life offered here is based on his own writings or other sixth-century writings. For the sources and further details, see P. M. Forness, *Preaching Christology in the Roman Near East: A Study of Jacob of Serugh* (OECs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) 4–9.

57 For the most comprehensive listing of the homilies by incipit, see R.-Y. Akhrass and I. Syryany, eds., *160 Unpublished Homilies of Jacob of Serugh* (Damascus: Department of Syriac Studies – Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate, 2017) I.xiv–xxiii. A useful thematic description of the homilies appears in S. P. Brock, 'Jacob of Serugh: A Select Bibliographical Guide', *Jacob of Serugh and his Times: Studies in Sixth-Century Syriac Christianity* (ed. G. A. Kiraz; Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies 8; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2010) 219–44, at 221–35.

58 Maron of Anazarbus also corresponded with Jacob's contemporaries Philoxenus of Mabbug (d. 523) and Severus of Antioch (d. 538). On his correspondence with these figures, see A. de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbug. Sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie* (Leuven: Imprimerie orientale, 1963) 211–14; F. Alpi, *La route royale. Sévère d'Antioche et les églises d'Orient (512–518)* (2 vols.; Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 188; Beirut: Institut français du Proche-Orient, 2009) II.149.

address his letter to Jacob but it reached him through others.⁵⁹ The letter had to be translated from Greek to Syriac before Jacob could respond, and he alludes at one point to the differences between the Greek and Syriac biblical texts.⁶⁰ Jacob's letter is organised around six questions on biblical exegesis:

1. On how God is said to have rested on the seventh day (Gen 2.2-3);⁶¹
2. On Noah's age when the flood came (Gen 7.6);⁶²
3. On the duration of time that Abraham's seed would be subjugated (Gen 15.13);⁶³
4. On the bread of the presence that the priest Ahimelech gave David (1 Sam 21.3-6);⁶⁴
5. On God's regret for making Adam and for crowning Saul king (Gen 6.6; 1 Sam 15.11);⁶⁵ and
6. On the differences in the genealogies of Jesus (Matt 1.1-16; Luke 3.23-8).⁶⁶

The quotation of Marcion appears in Jacob's response to Maron's sixth question, which addresses the differences in the genealogies of Jesus found in the Gospels.

Jacob responds to Maron's question about the genealogies in two different ways. First, he points to the audiences of the accounts: Matthew wrote to the Hebrews, Luke to the gentiles.⁶⁷ Thus, Matthew started his genealogy with Abraham, while Luke traced it back to Adam to include all of humanity.⁶⁸ Jacob's second approach consists of a theological reading of the genealogy in Luke. He argues that this genealogy served as proof of the incarnation of Christ. This section immediately precedes the section of the letter translated by Barnes and merits quoting in full:

59 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 169.3-5; Albert, *Les lettres*, 220).

60 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 184.4-7; Albert, *Les lettres*, 238).

61 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 169.19-21 (Question); 170.17-178.10 (Response); Albert, *Les lettres*, 221, 222-31).

62 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 169.22-5 (Question); Albert, *Les lettres*, 221).

63 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 169.25-7 (Question); 178, 11-182.8 (Combined Response to Questions 2-3); Albert, *Les lettres*, 221, 231-6).

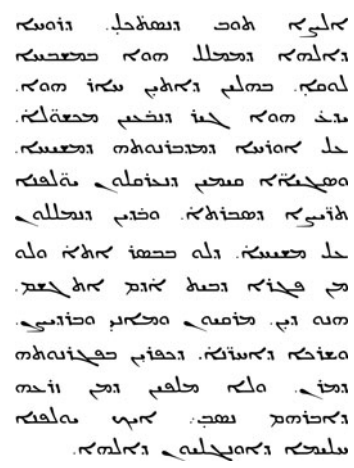
64 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 169.28-170.3 (Question); 182, 9-190.11 (Response); Albert, *Les lettres*, 221, 236-45).

65 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 170.4-7 (Question); 190.12-195.31 (Response); Albert, *Les lettres*, 221, 245-52).

66 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 170.8-11 (Question); 196.1-203.11 (Response); Albert, *Les lettres*, 221-2, 252-61).

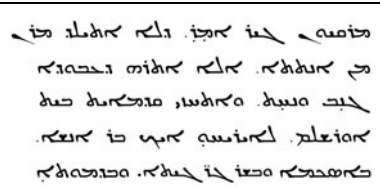
67 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 196.24-197.1; 198.28-9; Albert, *Les lettres*, 253, 255).

68 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 196.27-197.2; 199.11-14; Albert, *Les lettres*, 253, 256).

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| <p>It is then necessary to understand that the Spirit of God, who spoke through the glorious Luke, was looking towards the things to come, for it knew that stumbling blocks would spring up on the path of Christ's economy. There were many standing ready to entangle the orthodox doctrines of the gospel and feigning to speak about Christ, 'He did not come in the flesh, nor did he become incarnate with a body of the house of Adam' - that is, Marcion, Mani, Bardaisan, and the others who deny the incarnation of our Lord and do not teach that he received from the seed of Abraham⁶⁹ according to the sound teaching of the divine Gospel.⁷⁰</p> |  |
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Two aspects of this passage stand out. First, Jacob's argument focuses on the incarnation and for this reason invokes the heretical trio of Marcion, Mani (d. ca 276) and Bardaisan (d. 222). Second, he attributes the same view to the three of them, suggesting that they each share the same perspective on the incarnation.

The passage that follows has been translated by Barnes as cited above, but deserves a fresh translation based upon the critical edition and the text in British Library, Add. 17215:

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| <p>For Marcion said, 'Our Lord was not born from a woman but rather stole the place of the maker,⁷¹ came down, and appeared first between Jerusalem and Jericho as a human being through a pretence, through illusions and in a likeness, for he did not</p> |  |
|---|---|

69 The phrase 'that he received from the seed of Abraham' (ܘܢܗ ܘܘܨܬܐ ܡܢ ܨܝܕܐ ܕܐܒܪܗܡ) is admittedly difficult to bring out in English. Olinder, *Comments*, 93 proposed adding ܨܝܕܐ as the understood object of ܘܘܨܬܐ 'he received [his beginning] from the seed of Abraham'. This seems too strong an emendation, especially since there are now two witnesses to the text. My translation of this phrase parallels that found in Albert, *Les lettres*, 258.

70 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter* 23 (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 200.25–201.4; Albert, *Les lettres*, 258). The legible text on British Library, Add. 17215, fol. 30r begins with the word ܨܝܕܐ (201.1; probably spelled ܨܝܕܐ). Although the text is sometimes difficult to read for the remainder of the passage, there do not appear to be any deviations from the critical edition.

71 If there is a Greek text behind the Syriac quotation, the Syriac word 'maker' (ܨܝܕܐ) may well correspond to Greek δημιουργος (see Orbe's translation in n. 33 above), although this word is also used to translate ποιητής. See R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1879) II.2775.

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| <p>have a body.’ In no way does he bring in the story of the blessed Mary in his teaching nor does he confess that he received a body from her and appeared in the flesh, as the Holy Scriptures teach. As for Mani, he completely defiles the body of the house of Adam and says, ‘From the [divine] being came the evil one, the body, darkness and the serpent.’ Bardaiṣan regards the body in the same way, ‘It is from matter, was created from the filth of wickedness, is unclean and does not have a resurrection.’⁷²</p> | <p>ܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܠܗܘܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ</p> |
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This quotation of Marcion appears in a new light when put in its context. Each of the quotations from the three maligned teachers relates to the overarching topic of the incarnation. The quotation attributed to Marcion denies the incarnation and offers an alternative explanation for Christ’s appearance. The quotations attributed to Mani and Bardaiṣan disparage the body as something unworthy. The remainder of Jacob’s response turns away from the polemic and seeks to use the genealogies themselves to demonstrate the incarnation. His discussion of Marcion, Mani and Bardaiṣan has effectively ended here.

We have now both identified the source from which the quotation attributed to Marcion derives and examined the context in which it appears. What might this tell us about the relevance of the quotation for the study of Marcion’s Gospel or thought? Here I will offer three preliminary remarks in this regard.

First, an analysis of the letter offers one basis for determining whether Jacob of Serugh manipulated the quotation. As Zahn pointed out over a hundred years ago, the reference to the Lord appearing between Jerusalem and Jericho forms the major novelty in this quotation. While each of these locations appears elsewhere in Jacob’s letter,⁷³ neither recurs in Jacob’s discussion of the genealogies.

72 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 201.4–15; Albert, *Les lettres*, 258). Olinder, *Comments*, 94 recommends two changes to the punctuation that I have not adopted here on the basis of my examination of the primary manuscript witness (London, British Library, Add. 14587, fol. 70r–v). There are only four differences in the consonantal text between the critical edition and the text in London, British Library, Add. 17215, fol. 30r: ܡܪܝܢܐ for ܡܪܝܢܐ (201.7); ܡܠ for ܡܠ (201.8); ܡܪܝܢܐ for ܡܪܝܢܐ (201.8); and ܡܪܝܢܐ for ܡܪܝܢܐ (201.11). Only the second of these (ܡܠ for ܡܠ) affects the translation: rather than ‘for he did not have a body’, the passage would be translated as ‘which [i.e. the likeness] did not have a body’.

73 Jerusalem appears in a summary of the stations in Jesus’ life in response to the first question: Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 177.13; Albert, *Les lettres*, 230). Jericho appears in response to the fourth question when describing the stations in Elijah’s life: Jacob of Serugh, *Letter 23* (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 185.15, 19, 22; Albert, *Les lettres*, 240).

In short, there was no reason for Jacob to mention these places other than to elucidate Marcion's thought. On the other hand, Jacob's response to this question centres around the doctrine of the incarnation. Just before the quotation attributed to Marcion, he assigns the same general teaching to all three maligned teachers as follows: 'He did not come in the flesh, nor did he become incarnate with a body of the house of Adam.' The inclusion of statements such as 'our Lord was not born from a woman' and 'for he did not have a body' in the quotation attributed to Marcion served Jacob's argument well. While the reference to Jerusalem and Jericho does not seem suspect, the description of Marcion's views on the incarnation reflects polemical discourse against him and is less likely to be reliable.⁷⁴

Second, Marcion's quotation can now be investigated as a part of the Syriac heresiological tradition. Zahn suggested that the quotation probably belongs to a heresiological work such as that of Eznik of Kolb, while Harnack had suggested that the author may have been Ephrem. We can now confidently attribute this quotation to an author who belonged to the learned Syriac cultural circles of the late fifth and early sixth centuries. It should thus be interpreted as a part of the Syriac heresiological tradition in which Marcion, Mani and Bardaisan played important roles.⁷⁵ Jacob himself lists the three of them together in one of his christologically focused letters.⁷⁶ He may well have inherited the polemic against Marcion found in *Letter* 23 from another source. Further, if one wishes to take the attribution of the quotation to Marcion seriously, one should consider the process of transmission from Greek to Syriac. In his review of recent reconstructions of Marcion's text, BeDuhn criticised Roth for his silence 'on the method by which he derives Greek text from non-Greek sources'. He argued that one must investigate 'the possible Greek variants that might lurk behind a Latin or Syriac or Armenian translation'.⁷⁷ With the knowledge that the present quotation appears in a Syriac work, one could begin to consider what Greek text – beyond the phrase 'came down' – may have stood behind the Syriac text.

Third and finally, Jacob's quotation of this passage in the context of a question regarding the genealogies of Matthew and Luke could be significant for an investigation of Marcion's Gospel and the polemic against him. As the previous section

74 On the attribution of this view to Marcion, especially in the works of Tertullian, see C. Marksches, *Gottes Körper: Jüdische, christliche und pagane Gottesvorstellungen in der Antike* (Munich: Beck, 2016) 380–2.

75 The literature on heresiology is vast and rapidly expanding. On the broader field, see F. Ruani, ed., *Les controverses religieuses en syriaque* (Études Syriaques 13; Paris: Geuthner, 2016). On Marcion in Syriac, see L. Van Rompay, 'Marcion', *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (ed. S. P. Brock et al.; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2011) 266–7, electronic edition at <https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Marcion>.

76 Jacob of Serugh, *Letter* 17 (Olinder, *Epistulae*, 113.23; Albert, *Les lettres*, 158).

77 BeDuhn, 'New Studies', 11.

has shown, the phrase ‘came down’ prompted Harnack to associate the passage with Luke 4.31 and thus the beginning of Marcion’s Gospel. According to Epiphanius, Marcion’s Gospel did not include a genealogy of Jesus.⁷⁸ The letter’s reference to Marcion’s omission of ‘the history of the Blessed Mary ... as the Holy Scriptures teach’ could form an additional connection to the same place in Epiphanius’ work, which mentions the lack of an account of ‘the angel proclaiming the good news to the virgin Mary’.⁷⁹ It would be a stretch to consider this as evidence that Jacob himself was directly familiar with Marcion’s Gospel. It does, however, at least seem plausible that a polemical tradition against Marcion connected the lack of a genealogy in his Gospel with a criticism of his view on the incarnation.

These three observations are meant as a potential starting point for a more detailed investigation of the witness of this quotation to Marcion’s Gospel or his thought. Here we have briefly evaluated the extent to which the quotation may have been contrived, how one should attend to the fact that it survives only in Syriac, and finally the provocative correlation between the lack of a genealogy in Marcion’s Gospel and Jacob’s invocation of this quotation in a discussion of the genealogies. These brief reflections have thus highlighted caveats for working with Jacob’s letter and identified a few points of reference for its integration into research on Marcion and the heresiological discourse surrounding him and his followers.

4. Conclusion

This article has investigated the origin of a quotation regularly cited for reconstructing Marcion’s Gospel and understanding his thought. The identification of Jacob of Serugh’s letter to Maron as the source of the quotation offers a much stronger foundation for considering its potential relevance for research on Marcion and the discourse surrounding him. Scholars may ultimately conclude that Jacob of Serugh’s letter to Maron does not contain a quotation of Marcion worth considering in investigations of his Gospel or his thought. It may rather prove useful only for the study of the development of the rhetoric used against Marcion. Either would be a welcome outcome of the present study. If scholars working on Marcion are now in a better position to evaluate this quotation, the principal goal of the present article has been achieved.

The examination of the history of scholarship regarding this quotation in the second section proves perhaps just as relevant. The survey exposed several shortcomings in the study of Marcion’s Gospel and thought. Scholars who have

78 Epiphanius of Salamis, *Pan.* 42.11.4 (K. Holl, ed., *Epiphanius (Ankoratus und Panarion)* (GCS 25, 31, 37; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915–33), GCS 31.107.22). As noted by Roth, *The Text*, 286.

79 Epiphanius of Salamis, *Pan.* 42.11.4 (Holl, *Epiphanius*, GCS 31.107.21): τοῦ ὀγγέλου εὐαγγελιζομένου Μαρίαν τὴν παρθένον.

reconstructed the Gospel, from Harnack to the present, have expressed due caution when using such minor sources, and hesitancy regarding the quotation attributed to Marcion in Jacob's letter seems justified. Yet, as my research has shown, no one has commented upon the original Syriac text since 1893. This means that evaluations of this quotation – whether correct or not – have not been based on a thorough investigation of the source itself.

In a recent discussion of the state of research on Marcion, Winrich Löhr remarks that it may be prudent for the time being to separate the study of Marcion as an editor of the Bible from the investigation of Marcion as a Christian teacher.⁸⁰ The quotation of Marcion from the letter of Jacob of Serugh is an interesting text that stands somewhere in between these two areas of research. At the very least, Jacob seems familiar with a polemical tradition that criticised Marcion's teaching on the incarnation. This tradition may well have associated his views on the incarnation with the lack of a genealogy – and perhaps Marian content – in the beginning of his Gospel. In this way, Jacob of Serugh's letter would stand in a long tradition of criticising Marcion's teachings by referring to the text of his Gospel.⁸¹

80 W. Löhr, 'Problems of Profiling Marcion', *Christian Teachers in Second-Century Rome* (ed. H. G. Snyder; Supplements to VC 159; Leiden: Brill, 2020) 109–33, at 130.

81 Klinghardt, *Das älteste Evangelium* (2020²), 1.453 identifies the principal difference between the three major and many of the minor sources as 'ihr expliziter Anspruch, die marcionitische Theologie aus dem Text der marcionitischen Bibel zu widerlegen'.