

The *Gospel of Barnabas* and the Diatessaron

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The so-called *Gospel of Barnabas* is attested by two textual witnesses, an Italian manuscript probably dating from the end of the sixteenth century and presently kept in Vienna, and a lacunar Spanish manuscript from the eighteenth century recently rediscovered in Sydney.¹ Very little is known, however, about the origins of the writing; dates assigned to it range from antiquity to the early seventeenth century.²

During the last twenty-five years or so, the hypothesis that the *Gospel of Barnabas* was created by a Morisco around the year 1600 in Spain has been gaining support.³ The Spanish context would explain the peculiar mixing of Islamic and Christian elements as well as some other particularities. Moreover, an explicit reference to

¹The Italian manuscript was edited with an English translation by Lonsdale and Laura Ragg, *The Gospel of Barnabas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907). A facsimile of the manuscript, with a French translation, is given in Luigi Cirillo and Michel Frémaux, *Évangile de Barnabé* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977). The Spanish manuscript is available in the edition of Luis F. Bernabé Pons, *El texto morisco del Evangelio de San Bernabé* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1998). For a description of this manuscript and its history, see John Fletcher, "The Spanish *Gospel of Barnabas*," *NovT* 18 (1976) 314–20.

²See the review of recent publications in Jan Slomp, "The 'Gospel of Barnabas' in recent research," *Islamochristiana* 23 (1997) 81–109. Online: <http://home.t-online.de/home/chrislages/barnarom.htm>.

³This hypothesis was essentially developed by a series of Spanish researchers, Emilio Garcia Gomez, Mikel de Epalza and Luis F. Bernabé Pons. A conspectus of the principal arguments can be found, with bibliographical references, in the introduction to Bernabé's edition of the Spanish text (Bernabé, *Texto Morisco*, 11–48). A special position is taken by Wieggers, who thinks the author of the *Gospel of Barnabas* may have been a Spanish Christian who converted to Islam, rather than a Morisco. See Gerard Albert Wieggers, "Muhammad as the Messiah: A comparison of the polemical works of Juan Alonso with the *Gospel of Barnabas*," *BO* 52 (1995) 245–92.

the *Gospel of Barnabas* occurs in a Morisco manuscript dating from 1634.⁴ This hypothesis is attractive, but there are several reasons to remain cautious.

Champions of the Morisco hypothesis have generally supposed the Spanish text to be the original from which the Italian is derived. As will be seen presently, the gospel text contained in the *Gospel of Barnabas* indicates rather that priority belongs to the Italian text. Another argument to this effect may be briefly rehearsed. As the first editors of the *Gospel of Barnabas* discovered, the Italian text alludes three times to Dante's *Inferno*, in its use of the phrase *dei falsi e bugiardi*, "false and lying gods."⁵ This reference to Dante is less prominent in the Spanish text: while the second instance, in chapter 78, is correctly rendered as *los dioses falsos y mentirosos*, the first instance, in chapter 23, is abbreviated to *los dioses mentirosos* and the third, in chapter 217 (ch. 218 in the Spanish text), is omitted and partially replaced by a different text. If the agreement of the two manuscripts in chapter 78 shows that the allusion to Dante belongs to the original writing, the two other occurrences in the Italian alone tend to show that this text stands closer to the original than the Spanish does. But if the Spanish text is the translation, this makes it difficult to give the writing a Spanish setting.

Another matter is that the late sixteenth century is probably too late a date for the *Gospel of Barnabas*.⁶ Although the arguments for a very early origin are unconvincing, the indications of a late mediaeval date cannot so easily be brushed aside.⁷ The connections with Dante (1265–1321) point to the fourteenth century, as does the reference to the centennial jubilee in chapters 82 and 83:

. . . the year of jubilee, which now cometh every hundred years, shall by the Messiah be reduced to every year in every place.

This statement bespeaks a date after the first jubilee of Boniface VIII in 1300 and before the shortening of the interval between jubilee years in 1350.⁸ Several

⁴See Bernabé, *Texto morisco*, 15.

⁵See Dante, *Inferno*, i 72: *e vissi a Roma sotto 'l buono Augusto / al tempo delli dei falsi e bugiardi*, "I lived in Rome under the good Augustus, in the time of the false and lying gods" (words of Virgil). Other points of contact with Dante are enumerated in Ragg and Ragg, *Barnabas*, xl.

⁶A consideration that has weighed heavily with researchers is the date of the Italian manuscript. Because of the watermark of the paper on which it is written, the Italian manuscript can be no earlier than the second half of the sixteenth century (see Ragg and Ragg, *Barnabas*, xiv; Cirillo, *Barnabé*, 41–42). It goes without saying, however, that the date of the manuscripts may not be used to date the writing. Nothing indicates that either the Italian manuscript or the Spanish archetype from which the Sydney manuscript was copied is to be identified with the original.

⁷See Ragg and Ragg, *Barnabas*, xxxvii–xl; Cirillo, *Bernabé*, 175–76. See also Theodore Pulcini, "In the Shadow of Mount Carmel: the Collapse of the 'Latin East' and the Origins of the *Gospel of Barnabas*," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 12 (2001) 191–209.

⁸This was pointed out by Ragg and Ragg (*Barnabas*, xli–xlii). Following massive arrivals of pilgrims in Rome at the turn of the century, Boniface VIII proclaimed the year 1300 a

other details gathered by the Rags are suggestive of the Middle Ages.⁹

Admittedly, none of these arguments amounts to proof, but they do show up the tenuous nature of dating the writing to sixteenth-century Spain. While the *Gospel of Barnabas* certainly came to be known in the Morisco milieu, and while the Spanish text may have come into being at this stage, nothing indicates that the writing itself was created there.

Basically, then, the *Gospel of Barnabas* is an orphaned text. In spite of its double attestation we know very little about its author, its date, or the circumstances of its creation.

The reverse is true of the Diatessaron, about which we know a great deal.¹⁰ It was composed by Tatian the Assyrian, author of the *Oratio ad Graecos* and onetime student of Justin Martyr; it was a gospel harmony based on the four canonical gospels (although integrating some apocryphal material as well); it was created around the year 170 C.E.; and it was in general use in the eastern churches until the beginning of the fifth century. All this and much else can be established with a wealth of background and detail. But there is no manuscript: every single fiber of Tatian's text must be reconstructed laboriously from a multiplicity of sources representing fragments, quotations, translations, and daughter translations of the original.¹¹

It may seem somewhat adventuresome, under these conditions, to seek a connection between the two writings named in the title of this study.¹² In the first

jubilee year matched with important indulgences. The papal bulla, called *Antiquorum*, expressly stipulated that the jubilee was to be repeated in another one hundred years. The whole happening made a deep impression, as described in the contemporary work by Jacobus Gaietani Stefaneschi, *De centesimo seu jubileo anno liber*. The original idea of a centennial jubilee was not to be maintained, however. Towards the year 1350, many of the faithful implored the pope to reduce the rhythm of the jubilee to every fifty years. In 1349 a bulla was duly published proclaiming the year 1350 a jubilee. After some uncertainty, with jubilee years in 1390, 1400 and 1450, the interval was in 1470 further reduced to twenty-five years, a number which has remained valid until today. See A. Bride, "Jubilé," *Encyclopédie Catholique* (1967), col. 1117–18; Heribert Smolinsky, "Jubeljahr," *TRE* 17 (1988) 282–83.

⁹See Ragg and Ragg, *Barnabas*, xxxvii–xxxix. Cirillo (*Barnabé*, 176) brings a number of striking parallels with the medieval compilation of apocryphal traditions known as *Historia passionis domini* (known from a manuscript dating to the fourteenth century).

¹⁰See the exhaustive history of scholarship in William Lawrence Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance and History in Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

¹¹The Greek fragment found on a piece of parchment in Dura Europos, in spite of its dating from around 220 C.E., is no exception. In addition to being brief (fourteen broken lines) it probably represents a translation from Syriac. See D. Plooiij, "A Fragment of Tatian's Diatessaron in Greek," *ExpTim* 46 (1934–35) 471–76; Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 199–203 (where, however, Plooiij's views are not presented accurately).

¹²A preliminary presentation of the hypothesis with some of the evidence can be found in Jan Joosten, "Jésus et l'aveugle-né (Jn 9,1–34) dans l'Évangile de Barnabas et dans le Diatessaron," *RHRP* 80 (2000) 359–69.

section, a review of the Diatessaron's posterity in the West will show how and to what extent it is nonetheless possible to detect the influence of Tatian's gospel text in late mediaeval writings. In the second section, a number of variant readings will be presented that are shared by the *Gospel of Barnabas* and textual witnesses of the Diatessaron. These variants make dependence of the former on the latter very probable. Finally, an attempt will be made to evaluate the relationship between the Italian and Spanish manuscripts of the *Gospel of Barnabas* from the perspective of the gospel text they employ.

■ The Diatessaron in Europe

Historical evidence situates the original Diatessaron in the East. Although Tatian may have drawn it up while still in Rome, and although the question of its original language—Syriac or Greek—has not yet been resolved to universal satisfaction,¹³ there is no question that early attestation of the harmony comes exclusively from the Syriac-speaking church. Whereas no Greek father before Eusebius ever mentions the writing (and even Eusebius seems to have no firsthand knowledge of it), and whereas the first reference to the Diatessaron in Latin occurs in Victor of Capua's preface to the harmony contained in the Codex Fuldensis (dated to the year 546 C.E.), the Syriac church knew no other form of the gospel text until the end of the fourth century.¹⁴

This led the first full-fledged investigator of the Diatessaron, Theodor Zahn, to the view that Tatian's harmony was originally an oriental document unknown in the West. According to Zahn, the introduction of Tatian's writing to the West occurred only in the fifth or sixth century.¹⁵ This implied that the western branch of Diatessaronic witnesses was thought to be of very limited value for a reconstruction of the original text of the Diatessaron. The earliest western witness, the Latin Codex Fuldensis, shows a textual form that has been thoroughly brought into line with the Vulgate gospels. Other western witnesses were thought to depend on this prototype or a close relative.

In 1923 Daniël Plooiij published the results of a preliminary study on a very late (by the standards of New Testament textual criticism) western Diatessaron, the so-called Liège harmony dating from around 1280.¹⁶ In this text Plooiij found a great

¹³The available evidence points to a Syriac origin. See William Lawrence Petersen, "New Evidence for the Question of the Original Language of the Diatessaron," in Wolfgang Schrage, ed., *Studien zum Text und zur Ethik des Neuen Testaments: FS H. Greeven* (BZNW 47; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1986) 325–43. Since no complete Greek or Syriac text has been preserved, absolute certainty is probably unattainable in this matter.

¹⁴See Theodor Zahn, *Tatians Diatessaron* (Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur, I. Teil; Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1881) 1–111.

¹⁵See Zahn, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 310–13.

¹⁶Daniël Plooiij, *A Primitive Text of the Diatessaron* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1923).

number of readings that did not conform to the Vulgate gospel text, some of which coincided more or less markedly with readings occurring in recognized witnesses of Tatian's original text such as Ephraem's commentary on the Diatessaron or the Old Syriac gospels. On the basis of such readings, Plooiij formulated two hypotheses: a) the Liège harmony does not depend on a "Vulgatized" Diatessaron of the type encountered in the Codex Fuldensis, but on an unattested Old Latin Diatessaron; b) the Old Latin harmony was directly translated at an early date (second or third century) from a Syriac original.

Plooiij's views, although presented very forcefully and with an admirable grasp of the principles of New Testament textual criticism, were at first much decried and rejected, particularly in regard to his second thesis.¹⁷ Plooiij tried to answer his critics;¹⁸ moreover, several authorities who had taken the time and the pains to reach a judgment on the basis of their own researches came to his defense.¹⁹ The most influential of these was Anton Baumstark. A towering figure in oriental studies, he eventually threw his full weight behind the theory, extending it to many other western witnesses such as the Old German harmony and the Middle Italian harmonies published a few years later.²⁰

After the war, the torch was carried further by Gilles Quispel.²¹ Quispel's interest in the then recently discovered *Gospel of Thomas* led him to investigate the text of the Diatessaron, a writing which was found to offer many noncanonical readings in common with *Thomas*. In the course of his research, Quispel came to embrace fully Plooiij's hypothesis of an Old Latin harmony going directly back to the original. A student of Quispel, William Petersen, the current leading expert on the Diatessaron, also defends this point of view.²²

In the narrow circle of Diatessaron scholars it may fairly be said that Plooiij's hypotheses are upheld by common consent.²³ This does not mean that they go

¹⁷See especially A. Jülicher, "Der echte Tatiantext," *JBL* 43 (1924) 132–71.

¹⁸Plooiij, *A Further Study of the Liège Diatessaron* (Leiden: Brill, 1925); idem, "Traces of Syriac Origin of the Old-Latin Diatessaron," *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Akademie voor Wetenschappen Afdeling Letterkunde* 63 (1927) 101–26.

¹⁹See the review of the debate in Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 178–87.

²⁰Petersen, *Tatians Diatessaron*, 494–95, lists sixteen studies by Baumstark directly addressing problems related to the Diatessaron. See also Baumstark's posthumous appendix on Diatessaronic readings in the Persian harmony in Giuseppe Messina, *Diatessaron Persiano* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1951) XCVII–CXI. At first, Baumstark had been skeptical of Plooiij's approach; see *OrChr* 23 (1927) 195.

²¹See Gilles Quispel, *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas: Studies in the History of the Western Diatessaron* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), and many articles collected in idem, *Gnostic Studies*, vols. 1–2 (Istanbul, 1974–1975).

²²See Petersen, *Tatians Diatessaron*.

²³Two other noteworthy specialists of the Diatessaron are Louis Leloir and Tjitze Baarda. See Leloir, "Le Diatessaron de Tatien," *OrSyr* 1 (1956) 208–31; 313–34, idem, *Le témoignage d'Éphrem sur le Diatessaron* (CSCO 227; Louvain: Peeters, 1962); Baarda, *Early Transmission of the Words of Jesus* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1983); idem, *Essays on the Diatessaron*

unchallenged. The idea that an Old Latin harmony lying at the basis of half a dozen or more mediaeval texts could disappear without leaving a trace is hard to sustain. And invoking variants in fourth-century Syriac texts in order to explain readings found in thirteenth-century Dutch or Italian texts is wont to appear far-fetched to scholars whose main domain is Middle Dutch or Middle Italian literature.

In a very well-informed study, Neville Birdsall set out to question the value of the Papyrusian harmony—regarded by many to be of the rank of the Liège text—as a witness to the original Diatessaron.²⁴ As Birdsall pointed out, many readings diverging from the Vulgate text of the gospels can be fully explained from mediaeval exegetical writings. Needless to say, such contemporary writings are a more obvious source than the second-century text of the Diatessaron when it comes to explaining those readings. A similar argument has more recently been mounted against Plooiij's treatment of the Liège harmony. August den Hollander and Ulrich Schmid subjected a number of readings discussed by Plooiij in his first study to renewed scrutiny.²⁵ Variants that had been claimed to occur in no other source but Ephraem's commentary or the Old Syriac gospels were identified either in mediaeval exegetical writings or, most interestingly, in interlinear or marginal glosses to Latin gospel harmonies with a "Vulgatized" text type. That a thirteenth-century Dutch cleric should have consulted such glosses while translating a gospel harmony from Latin into the vernacular surely is more likely than that he possessed a now lost Old Latin Diatessaron transmitting second-century readings.

Notwithstanding the excellent evidence of den Hollander and Schmid, the present writer would still uphold the Plooiijian view. Not all agreements between the eastern and western witnesses of the Diatessaron were mediated by exegetical writings; nor can they all be attributed to chance. Three arguments appear to carry particular weight.

Multiple Attestation in the West

First, agreements between western and eastern harmonies against the received Latin (and Greek) gospel text are at times attested in several western texts at once. A nice illustration is afforded by one of the cases discussed by Den Hollander and Schmid.

Mark 10:21 "And Jesus looking upon him **loved him**, and said" (Vg *dilexit eum*, Γ ἠγάπησεν αὐτόν)

(Kampen: Kok, 1994). Both scholars accept the main ingredients of Plooiij's approach.

²⁴See Neville Birdsall, "The Sources of the Papyrusian Harmony and its Links with the Diatessaron," *NTS* 22 (1975–76) 215–23.

²⁵See August den Hollander and Ulrich Schmid, "Middelleeuwse bronnen van het Luikse 'Leven van Jezus,'" *Queeste* 6 (1999) 127–46.

DLiège 26 *Doe sach ihc lieflec op hem eñ seide*, “Then Jesus looked upon him **lovingly**”

Pep. Harm.²⁷ *And Jesus bihelde hym amyablelich, and seide*

sy^s 28 (= DEphraem 29) ܕܝܫܘܥ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘܘܢܐ ܕܗܘܘܢܐ, “and Jesus looked at him **lovingly** and said”

While the received gospel text expresses Jesus’ love for the rich man by means of a verbal form, several texts in the Tatianic tradition use an adverb. The presence of this reading in Ephraem’s commentary, our very best witness of the Diatessaron, makes it practically certain that it occurred in the original. How did the western witnesses arrive at this reading? According to Hollander and Schmid, the reading in the Liège harmony may be explained as a correct rendering of the received Latin text. *Prima facie*, such an explanation is feasible. A free rendering into Middle Dutch could by accident have coincided with Tatian’s text. What makes this explanation hard to accept, however, is that the reading is also found in the Pepsian harmony. The Middle English text is certainly not dependent on the Middle Dutch one, nor vice versa. To invoke chance agreement one more time would strain one’s credulity. In a case like this, the more plausible solution is to suppose that the Liège text and the Pepsian harmony derive here from a common archetype. This practically amounts to postulating an Old Latin—i.e., non-Vulgate—Diatessaron.

As was shown by Plooiij and realized by many subsequent scholars, the constellation represented by the above test case is not at all rare. Western harmonies, not always the same ones, band together against the received gospel text in offering variant readings attested also in eastern witnesses to the Diatessaron. Some of the examples could be ascribed to the influence of western exegetical traditions, but others cannot. Particular significance, in this respect, is to be attributed to the large number of stylistic variants shared by several western sources and attested also in the East. Consider another example:

Matt 21:8 “and others cut branches from the trees and **spread** them on the road” (Vg *sternebant*, G εστρωσαν v.l. ἔστρωσαν)

DLiège *Eñ dandre hiwen riser van den bomen eñ worpense in den weghe*,
“And the others cut branches from the trees and **threw** them in the way”

²⁶Plooiij, et al., *The Liège Diatessaron* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers, 1929–70). This edition incorporates an English translation by Adriaan Jacob Barnouw, which has been followed in the present study.

²⁷Margery Goates, *The Pepsian Gospel Harmony* (London, 1922; repr. New York: Kraus, 1971).

²⁸The Syriac gospels are quoted according to the edition of George Anton Kiraz, *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels* (4 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1996).

²⁹Louis Leloir, *Saint Ephrem. Commentaire de l'évangile concordant. Texte Syriaque*. (Chester Beatty Monographs 8; Dublin, 1963) 144, 146.

D^{Ven} 30 *e altri taiava li rami nell' arbore e zetava ne la via*, idem
 Heb. Mat.³¹ וְאַחֵרִים כּוֹרֵתִים עֲנָפֵי הָעֵצִים וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ לִפְנֵי וְלִאֲחֵרָיו
 “and others cut branches from the trees and **cast** them before him
 and behind him”
 sy^p אֲתֵנָה הֵן פָּתְחֵי מִחַת פְּתָחָה תֵּן אֶלֶּלֶה הַזֵּה בְּרַחֲוֵהָ
 “And others cut branches from the trees and **threw**
 them on the way”³²

Against the received gospel text which has the crowds *spreading* branches on the road, several texts in the Diatessaronic tradition say that they *threw* them on the road.³³ This is probably a mere stylistic variant, introducing variation into a text where it has just been stated that the crowds spread their garments on the road. No exegetical point is at issue, which makes it difficult to invoke the influence of exegetical writings. The agreement between the three western witnesses, which could hardly be ascribed to chance, leads one to postulate a common Old Latin archetype. This Old Latin harmony appears to have agreed, here as in many other places, with the Syriac Diatessaron.³⁴

Unique Readings in Diatessaronic Witnesses

Multiple attestation is not a necessary condition for postulating that a variant reading harks back to the original Diatessaron. When a reading is striking enough, the mere fact that it is attested in one western source as well as in eastern witnesses may suffice. An interesting example is the following:

³⁰Venanzio Todesco, Albert Vaccari and Marco Vattasso, eds., *Il Diatessaron in volgare italiano* (Studi e Testi 81; Città del Vaticano, 1938).

³¹George Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1995), with an English translation followed in this study. The dependence of this gospel of Matthew on the Diatessaronic tradition has been demonstrated by Petersen, “The Vorlage of Shem-Tob’s ‘Hebrew Matthew,’ ” *NTS* 44 (1998) 490–512. Contrary to Petersen, the immediate textual source of Hebrew Matthew is likely to have been a Catalan, not Latin, version of Matthew, as is argued convincingly by Jose Vicente Niclós, “L’*évangile en hébreu de Shem Tob Ibn Shaprut*,” *RB* 106 (1999) 358–407. For Diatessaronic readings in the earliest Catalan and Provençal versions of the Gospels, see nn. 33, 62, 63, and 69 below.

³²The reading is found also in sy^c (sy^a is not extant here) and in the Arabic Diatessaron.

³³The reading is found also in a late medieval Provençal version of the gospel of Matthew; see S. Berger, “Nouvelles recherches sur les bibles provençales et catalanes,” *Romania* 19 (1890) 505–61, in particular 545: *et los autres talhavon dels rams et gitavon los per lo camin*. The Catalan manuscript quoted by Berger, which generally depends on the Provençal, here diverges and reads *joncaven*, “they strewed.”

³⁴Several lists of Tatianic readings have been drawn up. The most extensive collection of possible Diatessaronic readings in the western tradition is contained in the notes to Plooijs’ edition of the Liège text (n. 26 above).

The readings in Luke 23:15 are no exceptions. All western harmonies contain, in different proportions, variants not found in any Latin or Greek manuscript but attested in the eastern Diatessaronic tradition. The following are a few such readings gleaned from the Venetian harmony:

John 3:36 “the wrath of God **rests** upon him” (Vg *manet*, Greek μένει)

D^{Ven} *sarà*, “**will be**” = sy^s ܠܘܡܐ

Matt 6:17 “anoint your head and wash your face”

D^{Ven} inverts the order of the clauses: *lava la faça tua et onçe lo cavo tuo*
= sy^{cp}, D^{Arab}

John 11:38 “Then Jesus . . . came to the tomb, it was **a cave**” (Vg *spelunca*, Greek σπήλαιον)

D^{Ven} *E Yesu . . . venne al monumento. El monumento era ch(i)avato nel monte*, “And Jesus . . . came to the tomb. **The tomb** was **hewn out** in the mountain” cf. ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ . . . ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ “And Jesus . . . came to the tomb, and **the tomb** was **hewn out** as a cave”

John 14:26 “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit” (Vg *Paraclitus autem, Spiritus sanctus*, G ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον)

D^{Ven} *Ma lo Spirito Consoladore* = sy^s ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ

John 16:21 “when she is delivered of the **child**” (Vg *puerum*, Greek τὸ παιδίον)

D^{Ven} *quando ella à partorido mascolo*, “when she is delivered of a **son**”
= sy^s ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ ܠܘܡܐ

Syriacisms in Western Texts

At times, the agreement between a western Diatessaron and the eastern sources extends beyond the textual level to linguistic specifics. The argument for Syriacisms in the Western harmonies was first made by Plooiij.³⁹ It has often been disparaged:⁴⁰ the idea that the linguistic form of a text should have left traces in a translation of a translation, centuries removed from the original, does seem extravagant. Some of the examples are hard to explain otherwise, however.

Syriacisms come in different varieties. The most convincing cases are those where a rendering diverging from the received gospel text can be explained by the constraints of the Syriac language. An unobtrusive example is the following:⁴¹

³⁹See Plooiij, *Primitive Text*, 70–71; idem, *Further Study*, 45–69; *ibid.*, 70–71; Charles Augustine Phillips, “Note on Mt. II. 16”; Plooiij, “Traces.” See also Hans Lietzmann, “Ein neuer Tatiantext,” *ZNW* 22 (1923) 151–52 and n. 45 below.

⁴⁰See, e.g., Birdsall, “Sources,” 215–16.

⁴¹The phenomenon is noted in D. Plooiij, “Die Heutige Lage des Diatessaronproblems,” *OrChr* 23 (1927) 201–22, esp. 214. Plooiij provided only two instances, however.

to prove from these examples that the tendency goes back to Tatian, although the free translational attitude they embody does make that probable.⁴⁵ Moreover, the tendency surfaces in D^{Arab} in Luke 21:11 and in D^{Pers} in Luke 21:11 and John 6:30. It also appears to have left some traces in western harmonies, particularly in D^{Liège}:

Matt 11:20 “mighty works **had been done**” (Vg *factae sunt*, G ἐγένοντο)
 D^{Liège} *hi . . . hadde ghetogt, “he had shown* (many of his miraculous works)” = sy^{sc} ܐܘܠܐ “**he had shown**”

Matt 24:24//Mark 13:22 “they will **give** great signs” (Vg *dabunt*, G δώσουσιν)
 D^{Liège} *selen toegen, “will show* (great signs)”
 D^{Tosc} *mosterranno, “will show* (great signs)”

Luke 21:11 “**there will be** . . . great signs” (Vg and G, cf. above)
 D^{Liège} *selen come grote tekene die men sien sal, “shall come great signs* which **shall be seen,**” cf. sy^{cs} above

Luke 21:25 “**there will be** signs” (Vg *erunt*, G ἔσονται)
 D^{Liège} *sal men sien tekene, “one shall see* signs”

John 6:30 “what sign do you **do**” (Vg *facis*, G ποιῆις)
 D^{Liège} *wat teekene togs du ons, “What tokens showedest* thou us” (cf. Old Latin *l, ostendis*); cf. D^{Pers} *che segno mostri*

John 20:30 “Jesus **did** many other signs” (Vg *fecit*, G ἐποίησεν)
 D^{Liège} *vertoeigde ihc uele andre teekene, “Jesus showed* many other signs”
 = sy^s ܐܘܠܐ ܐܘܠܐ ܪܘܘܢܐ ܪܘܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܐ

The agreement between D^{Liège} and the eastern texts in Matt 11:20; Luke 21:11; John 6:30; 20:30 is not likely to have come about by accident. The attestation in western sources suggests that the tendency we have investigated does indeed derive from the original Diatessaron. By the same token, it appears that the Liège Diatessaron reflects Tatian’s text in a form unmediated by the Codex Fuldensis. The presence of the tendency in D^{Liège} in Luke 21:25 and Matt 24:24 (here also in the Tuscan), where the eastern witnesses agree with the received gospel text, raises the possibility that, in these passages, this late mediaeval source has preserved the original Diatessaron better than any other source.

Other Syriacisms could be enumerated.⁴⁶ These examples must suffice to show their contribution to the problem at hand.

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The textual evidence favoring a connection between the western harmonies and the original Diatessaron is abundant and multifarious. The western sources do not just represent free, vernacular paraphrases of the vulgatzed Diatessaron known

⁴⁵See Jan Joosten, *The Syriac Language of the Peshitta and Old Syriac Versions of Matthew: Syntactic Structure, Inner-Syriac Developments and Translation Technique* (Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 22; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 9 n. 12.

⁴⁶See also Petersen, “New Evidence,” 340–43.

from the Codex Fuldensis; patient study shows them to attest a single, well-profiled text often diverging from the Vulgate and the Greek received text. Time and again, the western Diatessaronic text, whether attested by several sources or by only one, goes hand in hand with the Syriac gospel text or, where it can be had, with the Syriac Diatessaron (as quoted by Ephraem or Aphrahat). Occasionally, the Western harmonies even seem to duplicate the wording itself of the Syriac texts.

The hypothesis proposed by Plooij explains these facts well. An Old Latin Diatessaron was translated early on from a Syriac exemplar. The Western harmonies echo this Old Latin text, although each writing also incorporates local corruptions and embellishments. Moreover, at all stages of the tradition, the Diatessaronic text tended to be corrected toward the received gospel text.⁴⁷

In this view the western tradition is a precious asset to the study of Tatian's harmony. In spite of much dross, the western texts often give access to the authentic text of the Diatessaron. Where a Western harmony offers a reading unattested in any Latin or Greek manuscript of the gospels but confirmed by an eastern source, the probability that the variant goes back to Tatian is high.

This brief survey of the Diatessaron's history in the west provides the backdrop against which it becomes meaningful to ask about a possible connection between the second-century gospel harmony and the so-called *Gospel of Barnabas*.

■ The Text of the Gospels in the *Gospel of Barnabas*

Large extracts of the canonical gospels, and of many other biblical books, are incorporated into the *Gospel of Barnabas*. Treatment of the biblical text varies from approximately verbatim citation to extremely loose paraphrase. With regard to the gospels, the claim of the writing is not, of course, to be quoting from existing sources but to give an independent account—indeed the true account—of the words and deeds of Jesus. The fact, however, that whole passages correspond to extracts from each of the four gospels including large parts of John leaves little doubt as to the secondary nature of the *Gospel of Barnabas*. The apocryphal material concerning Jesus and the apostles is quite outlandish.

The text underlying the passages taken from the Bible was identified as the Vulgate by the Ragg.⁴⁸ They found no meaningful agreements with the earliest thirteenth- to fifteenth-century Italian translations. But many striking coincidences with the Vulgate are in evidence, both in quotations from Old Testament books and in the gospels.

⁴⁷See Petersen, *Tatians Diatessaron*, passim (cf. the *Index rerum*, s.v. Diatessaron, "Vulgatization" of, 550). A similar process affected the eastern Diatessaronic witnesses.

⁴⁸Ragg and Ragg, *Barnabas*, xxiv.

The Raggs' conclusions were in the main adopted by Cirillo.⁴⁹ In his view, however, the influence of the Vulgate belongs to a secondary, western stratum. The core of the *Gospel of Barnabas* originated much earlier—though not before the advent of Islam—and in the East.⁵⁰ In arguing for the antiquity of a proto-*Gospel of Barnabas*, Cirillo draws a comparison with Tatian's Diatessaron.⁵¹ He dwells at length over agreements and disagreements regarding the sequence of gospel passages in *Barnabas* and in different witnesses of the Diatessaron. The agreements with eastern witnesses of the Diatessaron, among which Cirillo counts the Persian harmony,⁵² led him to the conclusion that the “base writing” (*écrit de base*) of the *Gospel of Barnabas* came from the East and was influenced by the Diatessaronic tradition.⁵³

Several years before Cirillo, the possible dependence of *Barnabas* on the Diatessaron had been envisaged by Jan Slomp.⁵⁴ In the course of a polemic against the Muslim view of the *Gospel of Barnabas* as the true account of the Gospel, Slomp pointed to a number of characteristics shared by *Barnabas* and the Diatessaron. Many of the parallels cited are quite general: both texts combine elements from the four gospels, both are longer than any single gospel, etc. Other observations are more acute, however. Slomp notes a few readings common to *Barnabas* and the Venetian harmony as well as similarities of sequence. His conclusion is nonetheless rather modest: while it is difficult to prove that the author of *Barnabas* used an existing harmony, it seems certain that he tried to make or imitate a gospel harmony.⁵⁵

Slomp and Cirillo share the merit of first having pointed to a possible link between the *Gospel of Barnabas* and the Diatessaron. The evidence they present is not strong, however. Similarities in sequence are at most partial, and many of them, particularly in the account of Jesus' birth and childhood, are to be attributed to the nature of the events recounted. General considerations merely suggest that the author of *Barnabas* may have followed the model of an existing harmony, not that he did so. Moreover, it is perhaps fair to state that neither of the scholars mentioned was thoroughly acquainted with Diatessaron scholarship. These reasons may help to explain why their views, on this precise matter, had little impact.

⁴⁹Cirillo, *Barnabé*, 175–76, 210–12.

⁵⁰Ibid., 177–83.

⁵¹Ibid., 185–205.

⁵²The Persian harmony does not stand in a direct relationship to Tatian's work. Its sequence is different and seems to derive from an independent effort at harmonizing the gospels; see Messina, *Diatessaron Persiano*.

⁵³Cirillo, *Barnabé*, 204.

⁵⁴See Jan Slomp, *Pseudo-Barnabas in the Context of Muslim-Christian Apologetics* (Rawalpindi: Christian Study Centre, 1974) 121–26.

⁵⁵Slomp, *Pseudo-Barnabas*, 126.

Other evidence exists, however, showing that the intuition of these scholars was correct: the *Gospel of Barnabas* really is based on a gospel harmony of the Tatianic tradition.

Variants Exclusively Attested in Barnabas and the Italian Harmonies

We shall start our demonstration by listing a number of readings found only in the *Gospel of Barnabas* and in the Venetian or Tuscan harmonies. A few select examples should suffice to establish a connection between these texts:

Matt 6:24//Luke 16:13 “No one can serve two masters”

GBI *non si polle amoddo ueruno seruire dui signorj inimici luno de lo altro*,⁵⁶ “No man can in any wise serve two masters **that are at enmity one with the other**”

GBS *No se puede servir bien a dos señores siendo enemigo el uno del otro*, idem

D^{ven} *Nessuno è che possa servire a duo signori che sieno contrarij intro si*, “There is no one who can serve two masters **that are contrary to one another**”

The addition in the *Gospel of Barnabas* of the relative clause “who are enemies the one of the other” is clearly related to that in the Venetian harmony. The expansion seems to be without other textual support.

Luke 11:15//Matt 12:24 “He casts out demons by Beelzebul”

GBI *in uertu di belzebu . . . scazia li demonij*, “**In the power of** Beelzebub . . . he casteth out the demons”

GBS *En virtud de Bercebú . . . saca los demonios*, idem

D^{ven} *In vertude de Belçebul . . . ello descaça li demonij*, “**in the power of** Beelzebub . . . he casts out the demons”

D^{Tosc} *Egli caccia li demoni in virtù de Belzebul*, “he casts out the demons **in the power of** Beelzebub”

In excess of the received gospel text, the *Gospel of Barnabas* and the Italian harmonies speak of the *power* of Beelzebub.⁵⁷ No other witnesses contain this addition.⁵⁸

Luke 2:47 “all who heard him were amazed at his **understanding** and his answers”

⁵⁶An Arabic gloss in the Italian manuscript reads: “It is not possible that a slave can serve two masters who are enemies one to another.” This agrees in substance with the Italian and Spanish texts but adds the element “slave” from Luke. The relation of the Arabic glosses (found only in the Italian manuscript) to the writing itself is not clear.

⁵⁷See the paraphrase of this same passage in chapter 153: *in uirtu di satana ha fato quessto* “**in the power** of Satan hath he done this.”

⁵⁸In the Liège Diatessaron a similar addition is made: *in belsebucs name* “**in the name of** Beelzebuc.”

GBI *he ogniuno si stupiua sopra le dimande e rissposte sui*, “And everyone was amazed at his **questions** and answers”

GBS *cada uno se espantava viendo sus demandas y respuestas*, idem
 D^{Ven} *e tutti quelli ch'erano nel templo si maravegiavano de le so domandagioni et resposioni*, “and all those who were in the Temple were amazed at his **questions** and answers”

Instead of “his understanding,” the *Gospel of Barnabas* and the Venetian harmony read “his questions,” a variant unattested elsewhere.

The Spanish manuscript of the *Gospel of Barnabas* has a large lacuna between chapters 120 and 200. Two of the most remarkable cases of coincidence between the *Gospel of Barnabas* and the Venetian harmony occur in these chapters, where only the Italian text is attested:

Matt 13:28 “an enemy has done this” (Vg *inimicus homo*)

GBI *il nemicho del homo uene he semino lo holgio*, “the enemy of **man** came and sowed tares”

D^{Ven} *Lo nimico de l'homo à fato ciò*, “the enemy of **man** has done this”

D^{ToscSR} *Il nemico dell'uomo fece questo*, idem

The *Gospel of Barnabas*, the Venetian harmony, and two manuscripts of the Tuscan offer the highly original reading “the enemy of man.”

John 9:2 “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents . . . ?”

GBI *maestro chi pecho in chostui il padre ouero la madre*, “Master, who sinned **against this one**, his father or his mother . . . ?”

D^{Ven} *Maestro, chi peccò en costui . . . peccò ello, o lo pare so, o lla mare soa*, “Master, who sinned **against this one** . . . did he sin, or his father, or his mother?”

The *Gospel of Barnabas* shares the striking, and otherwise unattested, addition “against him (i.e., the man born blind)” with the Venetian harmony.

The five variant readings shared by *Barnabas* and the Italian harmonies show that there must be a link between these texts. While due account must be taken of the liberty taken with the gospel text in these sources, particularly in the *Gospel of Barnabas*, the shared variants are simply too remarkable to be ascribed to chance. Note should also be taken of the verbal coincidence between the Italian texts in some of the examples.

It is highly unlikely that the gospel text contained in the *Gospel of Barnabas* should have influenced the text of the Middle Italian harmonies. It would have been hard for the scribes of the harmony to even find the relevant passages in the *Gospel of Barnabas*, where they appear in a different order and are interspersed with much other material. Also, there are no indications that the *Gospel of Barnabas* was at all well known in Italy in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, when the har-

mony must have come into being.⁵⁹ On the other hand, dependence of the *Gospel of Barnabas* on an Italian harmony related to the Venetian and Tuscan texts is entirely probable. The harmony must have been widely available, and perhaps even popular, during the late Middle Ages. More than twenty manuscripts of the Tuscan harmony have been preserved until today. An author wishing to compose a revised “Life of Jesus” in a vernacular language would naturally have consulted an existing “Life of Jesus” as one of his sources.

The contention here is not that the author of the *Gospel of Barnabas* used the Venetian or Tuscan harmonies as we have them today. As we will see, the source employed must have contained many readings not found in either of the existing Italian texts. But the presence of the five readings listed above gives clear evidence that the *Gospel of Barnabas* depends partially on a gospel harmony of the Middle Italian family, closely related to the Venetian and the Tuscan harmonies.

Variants Attested in Barnabas and Western Harmonies

Further proof that it is the *Gospel of Barnabas* that depends on the Italian harmonies and not vice versa is given by a number of readings found also in other western sources of the Diatessaron. These show that shared readings really are at home in the Diatessaronic tradition, and that the *Gospel of Barnabas* is on the receiving side. Note the following:

Matt 13:28 “do you want us to go and **gather** them (the weeds)?”

GBI *ti piazze che noi andiamo ha chauare lo holgio fuori del grano*, “Wilt thou that we go and **pull up** the tares from among the corn?” (GBS *hiat*)

D^{Ven} *Voi tu, messer, che nui andiamo et chavaimo fuora questa herbaria*, “Do you want, Master, that we go and **pull out** these bad weeds?”

D^{Liège} *weltu dat wi gaen eñ trekken vt die nacht crokkê mett' wortelen*, “Wilt thou that we go and **pull out** the night-tares with the roots?”

Instead of the canonical “to gather,” several western harmonies, as well as the *Gospel of Barnabas*, read “to pull up.” This reading is also found in the Persian harmony and in the *Gospel of Thomas*.⁶⁰

Matt 21:34//Luke 20:10 “When the season of **fruit** drew near” (Vg *tempus fructuum*)

GBI *uenuto il tempo di racholgere il uino*, “when the time was come to **collect the wine**”

GBS *venido il tiempo de recoger el vino*, idem

⁵⁹For the date of the Italian Diatessaron, see Vaccari in Todesco et al., *Il Diatessaron*, 176.

⁶⁰See Baarda, *Early Transmission*, 43.

D^{Tos} *approssimandosi il tempo di ricogliere i frutti*, “when the time came near to **gather** the produce”

D^{Liège} *alse de tyt naekde dat men din wyn soude lesen*, “when the time approached that one should harvest (lit. **gather**) the **wine**”

Heb. Mat. לַעַת אֲסוּף הַתְּבוּאָה, “at the time of the **gathering** of the produce”

The *Gospel of Barnabas* and the western sources listed agree in adding a verb “to gather” to the temporal expression. A similar addition is found in the Persian harmony, but not in any Greek or Latin manuscripts of the Gospel. A further agreement, the substitution of “wine” for “fruit” (or “produce”), occurs exclusively between the *Gospel of Barnabas* and the Liège Diatessaron.⁶¹

Other noteworthy variants are shared by the *Gospel of Barnabas* and western witnesses to the Diatessaron without being attested in the Italian harmonies. This phenomenon does not militate against the hypothesis that the *Gospel of Barnabas* depends on a Diatessaron of the Middle Italian family. As can easily be observed from a cursory glance at the apparatus of the Tuscan harmony, or from a comparison of the Tuscan with the Venetian text, the Italian texts must have been exposed to a long process of correction toward the received gospel text. Nothing stands in the way of the claim that the *Gospel of Barnabas* depends on an Italian text containing Diatessaronic variants which have disappeared from the existing manuscripts of the Venetian and Tuscan harmonies. Such variants might also be preserved in other western sources, leading to the said agreements. Note the following examples:

Matt 15:2//Mark 7:5 “the tradition of the elders”

GBI *le traditioni de nosstri uechij*, “the traditions of **our** elders”

GBS *los preceptos de nuestros viejos*, “the precepts of **our** elders”

D^{Liège} *de ghebode onser vordren*, “the commandments of **our** ancestors”

What is presently of interest is the addition of the possessive “our (ancestors)” in the *Gospel of Barnabas* and the Liège text, which is found in no Greek or Latin gospel manuscript. It is absent also from the Venetian and Tuscan harmonies. But it is found in the Old Syriac version in both Matthew and Mark.

Luke 15:13 “he squandered his property in loose living”

GBI *sconsumo tutta la faculta sua chon meretrice uiuendo lussoriosamente*, “he wasted all his substance **with harlots**, living luxuriously” (GBS *hiat*)

D^{Liège} *so yaegde hi ouer syn deel goeds in ouertolligheden eñ met quaden wiuen*, “he squandered his portion of the property in luxuries and **with bad women**”

⁶¹The reading “was come” instead of the received text’s “drew near” agrees with sy^p.

The addition “with harlots,” due to contamination with verse 30, substantially agrees with the addition in the Liège harmony. It is not found in any Greek or Latin manuscripts of the gospel. The addition is found, however, in the Old Syriac version (sy^{cs} ܐܬܠܥ ܕܡܪܝܩܝܢ, “with harlots”).⁶²

Luke 15:22 “bring quickly the **best** robe”

GBI *portate quiui uestimenti noue*, “Bring hither **new** robes”

D^{Liège} *ghaet vollec eñ haelt hem en niwe cleet*, “Go at once and fetch him a **new** robe”

The reading “new” instead of “best (lit. first)” is not found in any Greek or Latin manuscripts of Luke.⁶³ It seems to be unattested in eastern witnesses to the Diatessaron.

Variants Attested in Barnabas and Eastern Sources

Several readings listed in the preceding section turn up in eastern as well as in western Diatessaronic witnesses. In view of what has been said above on the history of the Diatessaron in the West, such agreements are not unexpected. Some of the agreements between the *Gospel of Barnabas* and the Italian harmonies, too, enjoy eastern support. Note the following example:

Luke 15:18, 21 “I have sinned against heaven and before you”

GBI *io ho pechato in ciello chontra di te*, “I have sinned in heaven against thee”

D^{Ven} *io ho peccato en ziello ennanzi à te*, “I have sinned in (or against) heaven before you”⁶⁴

D^{Pers} *O padre, peccai in cielo davanti a te*

The omission of the conjunction “and” is highly remarkable here, and unlikely to be the result of an accident. In any case, it is attested only in these three texts.

Other readings are shared by the *Gospel of Barnabas* and eastern sources without other western support. Such agreements do not show that the *Gospel of Barnabas* was influenced directly by an eastern Diatessaron. The Venetian and Liège harmonies, and Hebrew Matthew also contain eastern variants not known from other western texts.⁶⁵ Such readings derive from the Old Latin harmony standing at the origin of the western Diatessaronic tradition, which was closely related to the Syriac

⁶²The reading also turns up in the earliest Provençal, Catalan, and French versions of Luke; See Samuel Berger, “Nouvelles recherches,” 542; idem, *La Bible française au moyen âge* (Paris: H. Champion, 1884) 139. See n. 31 above.

⁶³The reading is found in the French *Bible Historiale*. See Samuel Berger, *Bible française*, 174: *une nueve reube*, “a **new** robe.”

⁶⁴In v. 21: *io ho peccado en zelo, avanti ti*.

⁶⁵See above on the Diatessaron in Europe.

Typologically, the Diatessaronic source used in the *Gospel of Barnabas* was closely akin to the Venetian and the Liège harmonies in the sense that all three of these texts transmit a rich harvest of variant readings that must have been contained in the Old Latin Diatessaron. Although some of these may have been created in the West, others agree with readings attested in the East in a way that suggests that they are genuine Tatianisms stemming from the original Diatessaron. Like the Venetian and Liège harmony, the Middle Italian Diatessaron used by the author of the *Gospel of Barnabas* transmits a number of Tatianisms without other western support.

■ Divergences between the Italian and Spanish Manuscripts

Where the text of the *Gospel of Barnabas* is attested in the two manuscripts, they usually correspond fairly closely. The majority of Diatessaronic readings occur in both. In a few cases, however, a variant that appears to derive from the Diatessaron is found in only one of the manuscripts while the other gives a different reading. This phenomenon may perhaps shed some light on the relationship between the two manuscripts. Consider the following case where the Italian text is the closest to the Diatessaron:

John 5:7 “and while I am going another steps down before me” (Vg *dum venio enim ego, alius ante me descendit*)

GBI *he pero quando uolgio hentrare uiene uno piu pressto di me he ui hentra*, “and therefore when I want to enter, one faster than I **comes and enters therein**”

D^{Tosc} *inperò che quando io vo, l'altro viene prima di me e entravi*, “so that when I go (?), another **comes** before me **and enters therein**”

GBS *y si quiero entrar viene otro más presto y me toma la mano*, “and when I want to enter, another faster than I **comes** and takes my hand (?)”

The Italian text of *Barnabas* stands fairly close to that of the Tuscan harmony. Some of the modifications are found in the Spanish manuscript too, thus showing that it derives from a similar text. But the end of the verse is transformed, whether due to an accident or to invention. It is probable, in view of our earlier remarks, that a version close to that of the Tuscan harmony lies at the basis of this passage in the *Gospel of Barnabas*. The diverging text contained in the Spanish manuscript appears to be secondary to the Italian. In several other passages the Italian text stands closer to what appears to have been the Diatessaronic base text of the *Gospel of Barnabas*.

The opposite also happens, however. Sometimes the Spanish text contains a reading known from Diatessaronic sources while the Italian reads differently. Note, for instance:

Matt 2:12 “and being warned in a dream”

GBI *dormendo loro furno da il fanciulo confortati*, “while sleeping, they were warned **by the child**”

GBS *ellos estando durmiendo fueron avisados por el Angel*, “while sleeping, they were warned **by the angel**”

D^{Ven} *l'angelo la note in sonio disse a loro*, “**the angel**, at night, said to them in a dream”

Heb. Mat. וַיִּצְווּ בַחלֹם מִהַמַּלְאָךְ, “they were commanded in a dream **by the angel**”

Pep. Harm. *com the angel to hem in a visioun & seide*

The addition of the motif of the angel is found in the Venetian harmony, Hebrew Matthew, and in the Pepsysian harmony, but not in other witnesses of the gospel text. It probably represents a secondary reading—an assimilation to Matt 1:20; 2:13, 19—in the western Diatessaron. Here the Spanish text of the *Gospel of Barnabas* stands closer to this Diatessaronic basis. The Italian text is perhaps the result of a mistake, or of secondary embellishment.⁶⁸ Again, this constellation, with the Spanish manuscript standing closer to the Diatessaron, can be observed in a few other passages.

Although the examples are relatively scarce and admit to different explanations, they do suggest that neither the Italian nor the Spanish manuscript represents the original text of the *Gospel of Barnabas*. Both would seem to derive from an older archetype, where the Diatessaronic text was followed more faithfully. An instructive example underscoring this possibility is to be found in the story of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt 21:1–9//Mark 11:1–10//Luke 19:28–38). In the Italian *Barnabas*, Jesus commands his disciples to go to where they will find an ass with her colt, and bring him the ass (*sciolgetella he menatella*, “loose *her* and bring *her*,” cf. Matt 21:2). If someone protests, they will explain what they are doing, and he will let them take the ass (*laserano menarlla*, “they will suffer thee to bring *her*,” cf. Matt 21:3). This is at variance with the received gospel text where the disciples are told to bring both the ass and the colt (in Mark and Luke they are to bring only a colt). The Spanish manuscript, on this point, follows the received text throughout (*desataldos y traeldos*, “loose *them* and bring *them*”; *los llevemos*, “we should take *them*”).

Both versions have the disciples bringing the ass and the colt to Jesus. Then, however, the texts diverge once more. In the Italian text, the disciples place their mantles upon the *colt*, and Jesus rides thereon (*sopra il polledro sopra del quale chaulco iessu*, cf. Luke 19:35). Here it is the Italian that is close to the received text. The Spanish version diverges from the canonical text in that the mantles are put on the *ass*, and Jesus rides on it (*sobre la asna y subió en ella*).

⁶⁸See Cirillo, *Barnabé*, 263 n. 3.

Although there is no real internal contradiction, neither version is entirely consistent in its focus: if Jesus were to ride the colt, why have him charge his disciples to fetch an ass? and if he were to ride the ass, why mention the colt at all? The problem of consistency is cleared up when we consider the text of the Venetian harmony. Here, the focus is on the ass throughout: the disciples will find an ass with her colt and are charged to bring the ass (*desligela et menemela*, “loose her and bring her,” cf. GBI);⁶⁹ anyone who protests will let her be taken away (*el ve la lassarà menare*, “he will let you bring her,” cf. GBI). The disciples, having brought the ass with the colt, put their clothes on the ass and Jesus rides on it (*sovra l’asena, e meterolo poi a sseder sò*, “on the ass, and they made him sit on it,” cf. GBS).⁷⁰ The picture drawn in the Venetian harmony finds a few echoes in witnesses standing close to the Diatessaronic tradition,⁷¹ but it is quite independent from the canonical account. If, as seems likely, it is this version which underlies the *Gospel of Barnabas*, then both the Italian and Spanish texts have in part been corrected toward the received gospel text.

■ Conclusion

The objective of the present study has been to demonstrate a textual connection between the Diatessaron—more specifically its Middle Italian branch—and the *Gospel of Barnabas*. Although only a selection of the evidence could be presented, the existence of such a connection appears to be practically certain. Since dependence of the Middle Italian harmony on the *Gospel of Barnabas* is improbable for several reasons, the influence must have run in the opposite direction. The author of the *Gospel of Barnabas* used a Middle Italian harmony, closely related to the existing Venetian and Tuscan texts, as one of the sources for his revised “Life of Jesus.”

This hypothesis accounts not only for the variant readings common to *Barnabas* and the Venetian or Tuscan harmonies, but also for variants shared with other western or eastern witnesses belonging to the Diatessaronic tradition. Since the existing texts in the Italian family of witnesses clearly have undergone correction towards the Vulgate text, it is only natural that the *Gospel of Barnabas* should preserve readings representative of the Old Latin harmony that are not preserved in the Venetian or Tuscan texts. As a matter of fact, the profile of the Diatessaronic source used in *Barnabas* seems to have been not unlike other western harmonies

⁶⁹This reading is found in manuscripts of the Old Latin in both Matthew and Luke. It also turns up in the Provençal and Catalan versions of Matthew, cf. Berger, “Nouvelles recherches,” 545.

⁷⁰One Old Latin manuscript of Matthew reads likewise, as do Hebrew Matthew and the Persian harmony.

⁷¹See nn. 69 and 70.

as the Venetian or Liège texts. These also transmit a great number of striking variant readings many of which are authenticated as Tatianic by other sources in different constellations.

If the dependence of the *Gospel of Barnabas* on a Middle Italian harmony can thus be established, this constitutes an interesting contribution to both writings. On the side of the *Gospel of Barnabas*, our results tend to confirm that the Italian version was the original and the Spanish a translation. Indeed, while the Italian harmony was well-distributed in Italy there is no reason to think that it was ever read in a Spanish-speaking area. Also the many verbal coincidences between the Italian harmonies and the Italian *Gospel of Barnabas* are more easily explained if we submit that the literary contact between the two occurred in an Italian milieu. Of course, this does not mean that the existing Italian manuscript is the original *Gospel of Barnabas*. In fact, close study of the gospel text contained in the *Gospel of Barnabas* shows that neither manuscript is entirely faithful to the original.

The connection with the Italian harmony also lends some weight to a fourteenth-century date for the *Gospel of Barnabas*. All twenty-six of the extant manuscripts of the Venetian and Tuscan harmonies stem from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Clearly this was the period during which these texts were most widely known, and could thus most easily have been used as a source for a revised gospel. This argument ties in nicely with other internal evidence for a date in the fourteenth century, notably the mention of a centennial jubilee and the allusions to Dante.

On the side of the Diatessaron, the *Gospel of Barnabas* ought to be given a place among the Western harmonies and related documents as a witness to its text. Readings that are found only in *Barnabas* will as a rule contribute nothing to the reconstruction of Tatian's text—but on this point, the value of our source does not really differ from that of other western witnesses. Readings found in *Barnabas* and in one of the Middle Italian harmonies also contribute little, since the former is, in that case, not to be regarded as an independent witness. However, when a variant is attested by the *Gospel of Barnabas* and a western text of a different branch—such as the Liège harmony or Hebrew Matthew—or by the *Gospel of Barnabas* and an eastern source, *Barnabas* becomes an important witness to the Old Latin harmony or even to the original Diatessaron. Some of the readings recorded above (see in particular Luke 2:4; 15:18, 21; Matt 17:7) show that its value in this respect is far from negligible.

In short, while we are still far removed from restoring parenthood to the *Gospel of Barnabas*, at least it has been possible to provide this orphaned text with a semblance of family background. While full recovery of the original Diatessaron is certain to elude us for a long while, the identification of a new witness is sure to contribute something towards a dependable reconstruction of its text.