

**A New Testimonium to a Judaic-Christian Gospel Fragment from a Hymn of Romanos the Melodist**



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# A NEW TESTIMONIUM TO A JUDAIC-CHRISTIAN GOSPEL FRAGMENT FROM A HYMN OF ROMANOS THE MELODIST<sup>1</sup>

BY

WILLIAM L. PETERSEN

*For Gilles Quispel on his eightieth birthday*

## I

The Judaic-Christian gospels<sup>2</sup> rank high on any list of early Christian enigmas. Since none survives (our knowledge comes from fragments preserved in quotations, allusions, and—in a few New Testament manuscripts<sup>3</sup>—marginal glosses), their number, names, and scope are open to speculation.<sup>4</sup> Patristic reports are tantalizing. Jerome, for instance, says that he translated from Hebrew into Greek a Judaic-Christian gospel which was “called the original [or: ‘authentic,’ ‘autograph’] text of Matthew by a good many.”<sup>5</sup> The antiquity of the Judaic-Christian gospels is incontestable. Many distinctive passages in Justin Martyr († c. 165) agree with Judaic-Christian gospel fragments.<sup>6</sup> Both Clement of Alexandria<sup>7</sup> and Origen<sup>8</sup> quote a Judaic-Christian gospel—the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*—by name.

There is no agreement as to the number of fragments which survive or their assignation.<sup>9</sup> Erwin Preuschen (1901) collected 32 fragments and attributed all of them to a single Judaic-Christian gospel, the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*.<sup>10</sup> Alfred Resch (1906) assigned all 36 fragments he identified to the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*.<sup>11</sup> Erik Klostermann (1929) divided 46 fragments between two gospels,<sup>12</sup> while Philipp Vielhauer’s collection (1959, curated in its last edition [1990<sup>6</sup>] by Georg Strecker) apportioned 50 fragments among three gospels.<sup>13</sup> A.F.J. Klijn (1992) divided 36 fragments among three gospels<sup>14</sup> and classified another 20 as “Spurious and Doubtful.”<sup>15</sup> J.K. Elliott (1993) distributed 40 fragments among three gospels.<sup>16</sup> It is precisely because these gospels are such a riddle that any new evidence—especially early evidence—is so significant.

## II

In an unpublished fifteenth-century Latin<sup>17</sup> manuscript of German provenance, Bernhard Bischoff discovered a work titled the *Historia*

*passionis domini*. The most recent authority it cites is Nicholas of Lyra († 1340); from this Vielhauer/Strecker concluded that the *Historia* was composed during the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>18</sup> At six points, the *Historia* reproduces citations which it states were found “in ewangelio Nazareorum.”<sup>19</sup> While the *Historia*’s late date makes this seem improbable, one of its “Gospel of the Nazoraeans” citations agrees with a fragment from a “Hebrew Gospel” used by the Nazoraeans preserved by Jerome.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, despite its late date, there is no *a priori* reason for doubting the *Historia*’s traditions. Indeed, its agreement with Jerome suggests that its citations warrant careful attention.

#### According to the *Historia*,

In ewangelio Nazareorum ponitur causa unde Iohannes notus fuerit pontifici, quia cum fuerit pauperis piscatoris Zebedei, sepe portaverat pisces ad curias pontificum Anne et Cayphe. Exiit autem Iohannes ad ancillam hostiarum et ab ea impetravit quo Petrus socius suus *qui ante ianuam stetit plorans* fuit intromissus...

In the *Gospel of the Nazaraeans* the reason is given why John was known to the High Priest. As he was the son of the poor fisherman Zebedee, he had often brought fish to the palace of the High Priests Annas and Caiaphas. And John went out to the damsel that kept the door and secured from her the permission for his companion Peter, *who stood weeping before the door*, to come in...<sup>21</sup>

Vielhauer/Strecker assign this fragment (which they designate Frag. 33) to the *Gospel according to the Nazoraeans*. Klijn, however, places it among the “Spurious and Doubtful” fragments (as Frag. 54). His decision appears to turn on two facts. First, he remarks that the *Historia*’s fragment is “not known from any other sources”<sup>22</sup>; second, it is self-evident that the *Historia*’s date is late. On that basis, Klijn’s decision is not unreasonable.

### III

Romanos Melodos, whom Karl Krumbacher characterized as “den grössten Kirchendichter aller Zeiten,”<sup>23</sup> was born in Emesa, Syria, about 485 CE, reportedly of Jewish stock.<sup>24</sup> He rose to become court hymnographer to Justinian I in Constantinople.<sup>25</sup> There he composed intricately structured hymns known as *kontakia*<sup>26</sup> which revolutionized Greek poetry.<sup>27</sup> Considered the earliest example of chancel drama,<sup>28</sup> the

*kontakion* is credited with introducing the “accent” (or “Byzantine”) metric into Greek poetry.<sup>29</sup> The splendor of Romanos’ hymns—rhetorically elegant, artistically sublime, psychologically sophisticated, and theologically profound—accounts for their classification as “masterpieces of world literature.”<sup>30</sup>

Romanos did not compose his hymns *ex nihilo*. Investigation has shown that he drew heavily upon the hymnography, theology, and literature of his native Syria. His dependence upon Ephrem Syrus is especially profound.<sup>31</sup> Curt Peters<sup>32</sup> was the first to suggest that Romanos might have known Tatian’s Diatessaron, a gospel harmony composed c. 172 from canonical and extra-canonical materials.<sup>33</sup> Peters’ hypothesis was based on a single variant which cropped up in two of Romanos’ hymns.<sup>34</sup> The *First Hymn on the Epiphany* (XVI.14.7-10) states that πῦρ (“fire”) shown in the Jordan when Jesus was baptized,<sup>35</sup> and the *Second Hymn on the Epiphany* (XVII.1.1-4) states that φῶς (“light”) illuminated the Jordan during the baptism.<sup>36</sup> This distinctive variant is known to have stood in the Diatessaron.<sup>37</sup> Subsequent research has confirmed Peters’ intuition. More than a score of additional, often unique parallels between Romanos’ hymns and the Diatessaron have been found.<sup>38</sup>

Two remarks need to be made about this variant. First, it is a very ancient one, for it occurs not only in the Diatessaron, but also in Justin Martyr, who reports that πῦρ appeared in the Jordan when Jesus was baptized (*Dial.* 88.3),<sup>39</sup> and in the seventh *Sibylline Oracle*.<sup>40</sup> All three of these sources date from the second century. Second, a virtually identical tradition, telling of φῶς (“light”) in the Jordan at Jesus’ baptism, is cited by Epiphanius. He quotes the passage in his *Panarion* 30.13.7 and attributes it to a gospel which he calls τὸ Ἑβραϊκόν (= “the Hebrew [Gospel]” [= the *Gospel according to the Hebrews?*]).<sup>41</sup> Epiphanius states that this gospel, τὸ Ἑβραϊκόν, was used by a Judaic-Christian group, the Ebionites.

This reading is only one of several which occur in the Diatessaron and in fragments of Judaic-Christian gospels preserved in the Fathers.<sup>42</sup> They establish the incorporation of what were later defined as “extra-canonical,” Judaic-Christian traditions into the Diatessaron.<sup>43</sup>

Since the Diatessaron is known to have been one of Romanos’ sources, the route by which the tradition of the “light” or the “fire” in the Jordan at Jesus’ baptism reached the Mélode is clear: either directly or indirectly,<sup>44</sup> it was via the Diatessaron.

## IV

There is another reading in Romanos' hymns which, although unnoticed by previous scholarship, may well stem from the Judaic-Christian gospel tradition. The reading concerns Peter's denial.

In the canonical gospels, Peter "weeps" after the cock crows and the disciple realizes that he has, indeed, denied Jesus three times (Matt. 26.75; Mark 14.72; Luke 22.62 [although the Gospel of John contains Peter's denial (John 18.25-27), it omits the report that he wept]). This well-known detail is mentioned twice in Romanos' *Hymn on Peter's Denial* (XXXIV, at 18.1-2 and 19.2). But this same hymn also contains a detail unknown in the canonical gospels. According to Romanos, this is the *second* time that Peter wept, for he also wept earlier that evening, when he *first entered* the High Priest's house. This first, earlier episode of lachrymation is recounted in strophe 10, lines 1-5:

Ἵπὸ διαθέσεως πολλῆς ὁ ἀπόστολος τῷ ὄχλῳ προσπλέκεται  
καὶ εἰσέρχεται σπουδαίως, καὶ γενόμενος ἐντὸς τῆς αὐλῆς, βλέπει ἐκεῖ  
τὸ πῦρ δεδεμένον καὶ τὸν χόρτον καθήμενον,  
Χριστὸν παρεστῶτα τῷ ἱερεῖ  
καὶ μὴ βαστάσας τὸ κακόν, ἤδη δακρύνει.<sup>45</sup>

Through the great confusion, the apostle [Peter] was  
[carried along by the crowd  
And entered eagerly. And coming within the house he sees there  
The fire [= Jesus] bound and the fodder [= the High Priest] seated,  
Christ standing before the Priest.  
And not bearing [to see] the veil, already *he weeps*.

Is this unusual detail the creation of Romanos' poetic imagination? Perhaps. But, as we have seen above (in II), a rather similar report is found in the *Historia passionis domini*, and attributed by the *Historia* to the *Gospel according to the Nazoraeans*.

The differences between the tradition found in Romanos in the sixth century and the version found in the fourteenth-century *Historia* must not be minimized. In the *Historia*, the entire episode is expanded and embellished. Peter's weeping is now part of a complicated explanation of how John, the High Priests' fishmonger,<sup>46</sup> secured Peter's entry. Compared with this, Romanos' account is much less developed and hews much more closely to the canonical account. Attention must also be drawn to the fact that there are differences even at the point of comparison upon which our study focuses: Peter's weeping. According to

the *Historia*, he weeps *outside* the High Priests' palace, while in Romanos' hymn he weeps only after he has *entered* the house.

Despite these differences, three parallels between Romanos' hymn and the *Historia* remain. First, according to both, Peter experiences an episode of weeping *before* denying Jesus. Second and third, in both accounts, this episode of weeping takes place at *approximately* the same time and place: it occurs at the time of Peter's entry into, and the place is the vicinity of, the door of the High Priest's residence. It must be pointed out that none of these three details (weeping, time, place) arises naturally from the context in the gospels; on the contrary, each is an entirely new item interpolated into the narrative.

Without attempting to disguise the differences between the two accounts, it must be pointed out that they are ameliorated to some degree when one realizes almost a millennium separates the two documents, and the later document (the *Historia*) presents the more elaborate version. This is as one would expect, for traditions—especially when not transmitted under the aegis of canonical status—tend to grow over time.

We conclude that while one cannot be sure of the precise contours, apparently a tradition existed in early Christianity according to which Peter wept *before* denying Jesus, either *while waiting for* (so the *Historia*) or *just after gaining entry* (so Romanos) into the High Priest's residence.

## V

Without the evidence of the *Historia*, one might think that the story of Peter's weeping upon entry into the High Priest's house in Romanos' sixth-century hymn was his own invention—an "artistic touch" or an instance of "poetic license."<sup>47</sup> But this idea founders upon the evidence of the *Historia*, which appears to know the same tradition—albeit in a much-expanded form—and which attributes it to a Judaic-Christian gospel.

Without the evidence of Romanos, one might be inclined to agree with Klijn that the *Historia*'s fragment from a "gospel of the Nazoraeans" is correctly classified as "Spurious and Doubtful." But now, with the identification of part of the *Historia*'s fragment in a sixth-century hymn of Romanos, both of Klijn's reasons for this classification are obviated. At least part—Peter's weeping—of the *Historia*'s

fragment is now confirmed by another source, and that source antedates the *Historia* by about 800 years.

## VI

In conclusion, the following points must be made.

(1) Only a small number (somewhere between approximately 32 and 50) of fragments from Judaic-Christian gospels survive. At least two<sup>48</sup> of them appear in the hymns of Romanos Melodos. (2) Romanos' hymns provide the first independent confirmation of the existence of the tradition of Peter "weeping" before his denial near the entrance of the High Priest's house, a tradition previously known only from the fourteenth-century *Historia passionis domini*. (3) Romanos' hymn provides a *terminus ante quem* for the genesis of the tradition: it must have originated before the early sixth century. (4) This dating and the fact that the tradition is attributed to a Judaic-Christian gospel by the *Historia* increase the probability that the reading does, in fact, come from an ancient Judaic-Christian gospel of the first or second century. Although it is a long jump from the fourteenth century (the date of the *Historia*) back to the first or second century, the chasm separating the time of Romanos from the first or second century is comparatively narrow: recall that less than a century before the birth of Romanos, Jerome claimed to have handled and translated a Judaic-Christian gospel.<sup>49</sup>

While the previous four points set out what Romanos contributes to our understanding of the Judaic-Christian gospel tradition, the next two points stipulate what this fragment means for our understanding of Romanos. (5) The fact that the only known source from which Romanos might have acquired this variant is a Judaic-Christian gospel is a signal indicator of the range and depth of the poet's erudition. Scholarship has long recognized that Romanos was dependent upon—among others—Amphilochius, Basil the Great, Basil of Seleucia, Chrysostom, the Greek Ephrem, Gregory of Nyssa, Proclus, Pseudo-Chrysostom (= Eusebius of Alexandria?), and Theodotus.<sup>50</sup> No one has dared suggest that Romanos' acquaintance with these writers was via oral tradition. Yet, curiously enough, when parallels between Romanos and *non*-Greek sources have been adduced, then it has been suggested that Romanos might be dependent upon oral tradition.<sup>51</sup> This unsubstantiated (indeed, how could one substantiate it?) speculation not only ignores the precision (often verbatim) and extent of Romanos'

often unique agreement with Eastern sources, but also presents no evidence to show why, if Romanos' *Western* sources were regarded as documentary, then, *mutatis mutandis*, his *Eastern* sources should not also be regarded as documentary. Had the tradition of Peter's weeping at the door of the High Priest's house reached Romanos by means of oral tradition, then one would expect its dissemination to be quite broad and its visibility in early Christian literature to be high. But that is not what we find. Earlier parallels are not rare; they are non-existent. The singularity of the evidence suggests that Romanos was exceptionally well-versed in antique Christian literature, had ferreted out a distinctive but forgotten (or suppressed?) source—which, until proven otherwise, must be regarded as a *written* source—specifically, a Judaic-Christian gospel, and cited it.<sup>52</sup> (6) Finally, this reading identifies a new source for Judaic-Christian gospel fragments: Romanos the Melodist. Future collections of *fragmenta*—such as those of Vielhauer/Strecker or Klijn—will have to take into account readings from the “greatest church poet of all time,” ὁ ταπεινὸς Ῥωμανός.<sup>53</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Research for this article was conducted in part during a leave funded by the William J. and Charlotte K. Duddy Endowed Fellowship, administered by the College of Liberal Arts, The Pennsylvania State University, in the spring semester of the 1992-93 academic year.

<sup>2</sup> On the Judaic-Christian gospels, see: P. Vielhauer and G. Strecker, 'Jewish-Christian Gospels' in W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* (trans. from the 6th German edition: Cambridge/Louisville [Kentucky] 1991), Vol. I, 134-78 (in the German edition [*Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* (Tübingen 1990<sup>6</sup>)], Vol. I, 115-47); P. Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin 1975), 648-61; and A.F.J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, VigChrSuppl. 17 (Leiden 1992). The articles on the individual Judaic-Christian gospels (the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, the *Gospel according to the Nazoraeans*, and the *Gospel according to the Ebionites*) in the *ABD*, *ANRW*, and *RGG* are useful, as are the articles by Klijn ('Jerome's Quotations from a Nazoraean Interpretation of Isaiah,' *RSR* 60 [1972], 241-55; 'Jérôme, Isaïe 6 et l'Évangile des Nazoréens,' *VigChr* 40 [1986], 245-50) and S.P. Brock ('A New Testimony of the 'Gospel according to the Hebrews', *NTS* 18 [1971/72], 220-22).

<sup>3</sup> The so-called 'Zion Gospel Edition'; the manuscripts were first described by W. Bousset, *Textkritische Studien zum Neuen Testament*, TU 11.4 (Leipzig 1894); the name was given by A. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente und Untersuchungen zu den Judenchristlichen Evangelien*, TU 37.1 (Leipzig 1911), 1-302. Cf. the article 'Zion Gospel Edition' in the *ABD*, VI, 1097-98.

<sup>4</sup> Although most current scholarship (e.g. Vielhauer/Strecker, Klijn) divided the fragments among three gospels, titled the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, the *Gospel*



according to the Nazoraeans, and the *Gospel according to the Ebionites*, near the turn of the last century A. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente* (*supra*, n. 3), argued that there had been only one Judaic-Christian gospel, namely, the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*. Indeed, that is the only title transmitted from early Christianity (e.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* V.14.96). The title *Gospel of the Nazoraeans* first appears in Haimo of Auxerre (ninth cent.); the title *Gospel of the Ebionites* is entirely the creation of modern scholars. The inclination of the present writer is to agree with Schmidtke, for fragments which scholars disperse among the three Judaic-Christian gospels all occur in a single source: the Diatessaron. This suggests to him that there is a single source, which both Epiphanius and Jerome name as the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*; see W.L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship*, *VigChrSuppl.* 25 (Leiden 1994), 29-31.

<sup>5</sup> Jerome, *Comm. in Mattheum* II, apud 12.13 (*S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera*, Pars I, 7, CChr.SL 77 [Tvrnholti 1969], p. 90, lines 366-369): "In euangelio quo utuntur Nazareni et Hebionitae, quod nuper in graecum de hebraeo sermone transtulimus et quod uocatur a plerisque Mathei authenticum...."

<sup>6</sup> Compare, e.g., Justin, *Dial.* 88.3-8 (*Die ältesten Apologeten*, ed. E.J. Goodspeed [Göttingen 1914; reprinted: idem 1984], 202-03) with Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.13.7-8 (*Epiphanius I, Anacrotus and Panarion (1-33) I*, ed. K. Holl, GCS 25 [Leipzig 1915], 350). Justin's account of Jesus' baptism states that (1) a "great light" shone about the place; (2) the "Holy Spirit" descended "in the form" (ἐν εἰδει) of a dove (against the canonical text's "in the likeness of" or "like" a dove); and (3) the voice from heaven additionally proclaims, "This day I have begotten thee." All three of these extra-canonical details appear in Epiphanius' quotations from a "gospel used by the Ebionites."

<sup>7</sup> *Stromateis* II.9.45.5. (*Clemens Alexandrinus II*, ed. O. Stählin, L. Früchtel, U. Treu, GCS [Berlin 1985\*], p. 137, lines 4-6).

<sup>8</sup> *Comm. in Johannem* II.12 (*Origenes Werke IV*, ed. E. Preuschen, GCS [Leipzig 1903], p. 67, lines 19-21).

<sup>9</sup> This confusion is a reflection of the fragile nature of the evidence, the contradictory reports of the Fathers, and the lack of a scholarly consensus. It is worthwhile pointing out that no scholar has ever stipulated the criteria by which he apportions the fragments.

<sup>10</sup> E. Preuschen, *Antilegomena. Die Reste der ausserkanonischen Evangelien und urchristlichen Ueberlieferung* (Giessen 1901), text: 3-12; translation: 106-12 (pp. 3-13 and 136-44 in the second edition: Giessen 1905). Although he presents 32 fragments under the title *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, Preuschen divided them into two categories. The first consisted of 24 fragments which he attributed directly to the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*; the second consisted of eight fragments—all from Epiphanius—which he listed in a separate subcategory titled "Reste der Evangeliums der Ebioniten." Preuschen's arrangement makes it clear that he regarded Epiphanius' citations from a "Hebrew gospel" used by the Ebionites as coming from the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*; nevertheless, his separation of the fragments betrays a certain reserve. Finally, it must be pointed out that Preuschen also attributed six fragments cited by Hippolytus to a gospel used by the Naassenes and—correctly, to the present writer's mind—included these citations among the Judaic-Christian gospel fragments. Virtually all later critics treat these fragments separately from the Judaic-Christian gospels. (To facilitate comparison with

the number of fragments and classifications of other scholars, these Naassene fragments have been excluded in the figures given above in the text.)

<sup>11</sup> A. Resch, *Agrapha. Ausserkanonische Schriftfragmente*, TU 30.3/4 [N.F. 15.3/4] (Leipzig 1906<sup>2</sup>), 215-52.

<sup>12</sup> E. Klostermann, *Apocrypha II. Evangelien*, KIT 8 (Berlin 1929<sup>3</sup>); 40 fragments were assigned to the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* and six to the *Gospel according to the Ebionites*.

<sup>13</sup> Vielhauer/Strecker, 'Jewish-Christian Gospels,' Vol. I, 134-78 (in the sixth German edition, Vol. I, 115-47); see also Vielhauer, *Geschichte*, 648-61. Vielhauer/Strecker assign seven fragments to the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, seven to the *Gospel according to the Ebionites*, and 36 to the *Gospel according to the Nazoraeans*.

<sup>14</sup> Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 47-115, assigns seven fragments to the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, seven to the *Gospel according to the Ebionites*, and 22 to the *Gospel according to the Nazoraeans*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-146; these include citations from Jerome, Eusebius, and various medieval sources.

<sup>16</sup> *The Apocryphal New Testament*, ed. J.K. Elliott (Oxford 1993), 3-16. He assigns seven fragments to the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, seven to the *Gospel according to the Ebionites*, and 26 to the *Gospel according to the Nazoraeans*.

<sup>17</sup> Klijn (*Jewish-Christian*, p. 23, n. 61) cites correspondence with B. Bischoff (see *infra*, n. 21) in which the latter indicated that the Latin may well be a translation *from* (sic!) "oberdeutsch." Bischoff's opinion rests upon the presence of a very few—but otherwise inexplicable—German words in the Latin manuscript's text.

<sup>18</sup> Vielhauer/Strecker, 'Jewish-Christian,' I, 151.

<sup>19</sup> In Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, these are Fragg. 20 (p. 95), 42 (p. 129), and 52 through 55 (pp. 142-45). In Vielhauer/Strecker, they are Fragg. 31 through 36 (I, 163-64 [German ed.: I, 137-38]).

<sup>20</sup> In his *Comm. in Matt.* IV (at 27.51 [CChr.SL 77, p. 275, lines 1801-1803]), Jerome speaks of the "lintel" of the Temple breaking when Jesus is crucified; he repeats the tradition in his *Epistle* 120 (*ad Hedybiam*), 8.1, where he writes: "In euangelio autem quod Hebraicis litteris scriptum est, legimus non uelum templi scissum; sed *superliminare templi mirae magnitudinis conruisse*" (*Saint Jérôme. Lettres*, ed. J. Labourt, Vol. 6 [Paris 1958], p. 139, lines 7-9). This same tradition is found on f. 65<sup>r</sup> of the *Historia passionis domini*, where it is ascribed to the *Gospel according to the Nazoraeans*: "Item in euangelio Nazareorum legitur *superliminare templi infinitae magnitudinis in morte Christi scissum*." The texts are reproduced as Fragg. 20 (and parallels) in Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 93-97.

<sup>21</sup> The Latin text is from Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 144 (Frag. 54), italics added; the English translation is adapted from Vielhauer/Strecker, I, 164 (Frag. 33). Apparently Bischoff has not published the text; this fragment comes from folio 35<sup>r</sup> of the MS—but neither Klijn nor Vielhauer/Strecker identify it further. Vielhauer/Strecker reference it as a "Theolog. Sammelhandschrift," and state that the *Historia* occupies ff. 8-71, but they inexplicably fail to name a library or catalogue number—a situation which has remained unchanged in the more than thirty years since the third German edition (1959) and, dependent upon it, the first English edition (1963)!

<sup>22</sup> Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 144.

<sup>23</sup> K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches* (München 1897<sup>2</sup>), 316.

<sup>24</sup> “Γένος μὲν ἕξ Ἑβραίων” (“One of the Hebrew race”); so the Byzantine hymn for his feast day, most readily available in J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de la poésie religieuse à Byzance* (Paris 1977), 169.

<sup>25</sup> For the most comprehensive study of Romanos’ life and work, see Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos* (see *supra*, n. 24.).

<sup>26</sup> From the Greek *κοντόξ*, a rod around which a scroll was rolled; for a discussion of the term, see P. Maas and C.A. Trypanis, *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica. Cantica Genuina* (Oxford 1963), p. xi.

<sup>27</sup> C.A. Trypanis, *Greek Poetry from Homer to Seferis* (London/Boston 1981), regards the *kontakion* as “the greatest achievement of Byzantine literature” (p. 416), and Romanos as “the greatest of all Byzantine poets” (p. 420); on their importance in the history of Greek poetry, see pp. 416-24.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., the remarks of G. La Piana, *Le rappresentazioni sacre nella letteratura bizantina* (Grottaferrata 1912), *passim*, and A.C. Mahr, *Relations of Passion Plays to St. Ephrem the Syrian* (Columbus [Ohio] 1942), *passim*.

<sup>29</sup> It replaced the “quantitative” (or “Hellenic”) metric. For definitions and distinctions, see 1-6 in P. Maas, *Greek Metre* (Oxford 1962), 1-5.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Romanos, St.’, in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edd. F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (Oxford 1983<sup>2[rev]</sup>), 1196.

<sup>31</sup> See W.L. Petersen, ‘The Dependence of Romanos the Melodist upon the Syriac Ephrem: Its Importance for the Origin of the Kontakion,’ *VigChr* 39 (1985), 171-87; S.P. Brock, ‘From Ephrem to Romanos,’ in *Studia Patristica* 20, ed. E.A. Livingstone (Leuven 1989), 139-51; L. van Rompay, ‘Romanos le Mélode. Un poète Syrien à Constantinople’ in *Early Christian Poetry*, edd. J. den Boeft and A. Hilhorst, *VigChrSuppl.* 22 (Leiden 1993), 282-96.

<sup>32</sup> C. Peters, ‘Die Entstehung der griechischen Diatessaronübersetzung und ihr Nachhall in byzantinischer Kirchenpoesie,’ *OrChrP* 8 (1942), 474-6.

<sup>33</sup> On the Diatessaron, see Petersen, *Tatian’s Diatessaron* (*supra*, n. 4).

<sup>34</sup> The hymns are cited from the *Sources Chrétiennes* edition: *Romanos le Mélode. Hymnes*, ed. J. Grosdidier de Matons, 5 vols., SC 99, 110, 114, 128, 283 (Paris 1964, 1965, 1965, 1976, 1981). Roman numerals designate the hymn number in the SC edition; the first Arabic number designates the strophe; the second Arabic number(s) gives the line(s) within the strophe.

<sup>35</sup> John the Baptist, approaching Jesus in the Jordan to baptize him, marvels at “seeing in the middle of the streams...*fire in the Jordan, / Shining*, springing forth, the unapproachable *Light*” (θεωρῶν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ῥείθρων... πῦρ ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ/λάμπων, πηγάζων, τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀπρόσιτον [*Hymnes II*, ed. Grosdidier de Matons, SC 110, 254]).

<sup>36</sup> “In the waters of the Jordan...and unquenchable *light* has dawned” (Ἰορδάνου τοῖς ὕδασιν...φῶς ἀνέτειλεν ἄσβεστον [*ibid.*, 270]).

<sup>37</sup> It is found in five Diatessaronic witnesses. In the East: Ephrem Syrus’ *Commentary* on the Diatessaron (in the Armenian version [Syriac *deest*]); Isho’dad of Merv’s *Commentary* on the gospels (*ad loc.*) specifically states that this was the reading of the Diatessaron. In the West: two Vetus Latina manuscripts (MSS *a* and *g* [fourth and eighth cent., respectively] tell of a “*lumen*” shining; the Middle English “Pepysian Harmony” speaks

of the “*bri3thnesse* of heuene” shining in the river when Jesus was baptized. For a full presentation of the evidence with references, see W.L. Petersen, *The Diatessaron and Ephrem Syrus as Sources of Romanos the Melodist*, CSCO 475 [Subs. 75] (Louvain 1985), 76-80, or idem, *Tatian’s Diatessaron*, 14-22.

<sup>38</sup> See Petersen, *The Diatessaron and Ephrem Syrus* (*supra*, n. 37).

<sup>39</sup> See *supra*, n. 6.

<sup>40</sup> *Die Oracula Sibyllina*, ed. J. Geffcken, GCS 8 (Leipzig 1902), p. 137, lines 81-84.

<sup>41</sup> See *supra*, n. 6.

<sup>42</sup> See: C.A. Phillips, ‘Diatessaron—Diapente,’ *BBC* 9 (February 1931), 6-8; C. Peters, ‘Nachhall ausserkanonischer Evangelienüberlieferung in Tatians Diatessaron,’ *AcOr* 16 (1937), 258-294; J.H. Charlesworth, ‘Tatian’s Dependence upon Apocryphal Traditions,’ *HeyJ* 15 (1974), 5-17; G. Winkler, ‘Das Diatessaron und das Hebräer-Evangelium, ihr Verhältnis zueinander,’ *III<sup>e</sup> Symposium Syriacum 1980. Les contacts du monde syriaque avec les autres cultures*, ed. R. Lavenant, OrChrP 221 (Roma 1983), 25-34. The findings are summarized in Petersen, *Tatian’s Diatessaron*, 252-53, 257-59.

<sup>43</sup> The relative importance of this “fifth,” extra-canonical source in the Diatessaron has been debated. A. Baumstark, ‘Der Tatiantext von Lk. 24,13,’ *OrChr* 36 (1939), 20, concluded that it was Tatian’s “bedeutungsmässig vielleicht sogar erste Quelle,” while L. Leloir, ‘Le Diatessaron de Tatien,’ *OrSyr* 1 (1956), 317, suggested that it was “[une] source occasionnelle et secondaire.”

<sup>44</sup> Since the variant also occurs in another of Romanos’ known sources, Ephrem’s *Commentary* on the Diatessaron (see *supra*, n. 37), he might have acquired it from the *Commentary*. Direct dependence upon a Judaic-Christian gospel is also possible, but less likely.

<sup>45</sup> *Hymnes IV*, ed. Grosdidier de Matons, SC 128, p. 122.

<sup>46</sup> Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 144, remarks that the *Heliand*, an Old Saxon poem dating from the early ninth century, also knows the tradition that it is John who knows the High Priest and secures Peter’s admission, although the *Heliand* does not explain *why* he knows the High Priest (*Heliand*, LIX, lines 4948-4954 [*Heliand und Genesis*, ed. O. Behaghel and B. Taeger, ADTB 4 (Tübingen 1984), 169-70]). The genesis of the tradition that it is “the other disciple” who secures Peter’s admission is, of course, John 18.15-16, but there the disciple is unnamed (“ἄλλος μαθητής”) and no reason for his acquaintance with the High Priest is given. (The *Heliand* is a witness to the Diatessaron, which here and there contains—probably via the Diatessaron—bits and pieces of the Judaic-Christian gospel tradition. See Petersen, *Tatian’s Diatessaron*, 105-10, 288-292, 319-326, for the evidence and a summary of scholarship.)

<sup>47</sup> This line of argumentation (which, it must be pointed out, is strictly rhetorical) has been offered before, in parallel situations (when it was asserted that poetic sources could preserve Diatessaronic readings). Time and again, however, the empirical textual evidence, independently assembled in different cases, has contradicted this position: see Petersen, *Tatian’s Diatessaron*, 113-114, 282-292, 319-324, 341-343. Therefore, such arguments deserve no further consideration.

<sup>48</sup> It is possible that a detail from a third fragment also entered Romanos’ hymns, but the case is impossible to prove. In his *Second Hymn on the Resurrection* (XLII.19.1), Romanos speaks of Jesus’ place of burial as a σπήλαιον (“cave”). This same word is used in a gloss in a “Zion Gospel Edition” MS (Gregory MS 1424: Chicago, Chicago Lutheran

Theol. Seminary, MS Gruber 152, IX/X cent.) at Matt 27.65. (On the ‘Zion Gospel Edition,’ see *supra*, n. 3. The gloss is assigned to the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* by Klostermann [Frag. 20b]; Vielhauer/Strecker [Frag. 22] and Klijn [Frag. 36] assign it to the *Gospel according to the Nazoraeans*.) The problems here are multiple. (1) Since Romanos has already used the other canonical terms for Jesus’ burial place (τάφος [“tomb” at Matt 28.1, etc.]; μνημεῖον [“monument” at Mark 16.3, etc.]; μνήμα [“memorial” at Mark 16.2, etc.]), might he simply be using another Biblical term (cp. the use of σπήλαιον at John 11.38 and, in the LXX, at Gen. 25.9) for variety? (2) Since Romanos (cp. any of his four *Hymns on the Nativity*) knows the widespread and very early tradition that Jesus was born in a cave (cp. Justin, *Dial.* 78.5; the *Protevangelium Iacobi* 18.1, 19.1, 19.2 [twice], 19.3, 21.3; and Ephrem Syrus, *Comm.* XXI.20 [Syr. & Armen.], *Sermo I* (ed. Beck, CSCO 363, p. 36, line 821 [text] and CSCO 364, p. 47 [trans.]), *Sermo II* (ed. Beck, CSCO 363, p. 39, line 55 and 40, line 55 [text] and CSCO 364, p. 50, line 32 and 51 line 55 [trans.]), and Ephrem’s *13th Hymn on the Nativity* (CSCO 186, p. 75, strophe 10, line 3 [text], CSCO 187, p. 67 [trans.]), might the poet simply be closing a huge *inclusio* which begins with Jesus’ birth in a “cave,” and therefore must also end with his burial in a σπήλαιον? (3) The tradition that Jesus was buried in a cave also appears in the *Acta Pilati* (Greek recension A), at 12.1, 13.1, and 15.6 (I owe these references from the *AcPil* to the kindness of Prof. dr. Tj. Baarda, of Amsterdam). Since the genesis of the Romanos’ reading might rest with any of these three possibilities—or with dependence upon a Judaic-Christian gospel—no argument can be mounted.

<sup>49</sup> Cp. Jerome, *De vir. inl.* 2 (*Hieronymus, Liber de viris inlustribus*, ed. E.C. Richardson, TU 14.1 [Leipzig 1896], p. 8, lines 11-14): “...Evangelium quoque quod appellatur secundum Hebraeos et a me nuper in Graecum sermonem Latinumque translatum est, quo et Origenes saepe utitur...”; also *Comm. in Matt.* II, apud Matt 12.13 (see *supra*, n. 5).

<sup>50</sup> Th. Wehofer noted the agreements with the Greek Ephrem; Karl Krumbacher and Paul Mass with Gregory of Nyssa; Maas and J.E. Bickersteth with Basil of Seleucia and Basil of Caesarea; R.J. Schork with Amphilochius, Chrysostom, Proclus, Pseudo-Chrysostom (Eusebius of Alexandria?) and Theodotus. For references and specific examples, see Petersen, *The Diatessaron and Ephrem Syrus*, 169-71.

<sup>51</sup> So D. Bundy, in a review of *The Diatessaron and Ephrem Syrus* in *The Second Century* 8 (1991), 181 (italics added): “Another assumption...is that the allusions refer to *texts*.”

<sup>52</sup> Since this episode of Peter’s weeping *before* the denial is absent from all known Diatessaronic witnesses (with the exception of Romanos), it seems unlikely that the Diatessaron was the medium by which this tradition reached Romanos. The possibility cannot, however, be totally excluded, for Romanos might be the sole Diatessaronic witness to correctly preserve its text.

<sup>53</sup> “The humble Romanos”: in the genitive, this is the Mélode’s favourite acrostic, each successive letter being the first letter of the first word of a strophe.

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