It is generally assumed by scholars that among the sources of John are (the) other Gospels, at least in the sense that the author of the Fourth Gospel wrote knowing the Synoptics, in addition to the materials that are peculiar to John. This can already be seen in the early patristic tradition, which will be analyzed critically and comparatively in the first part of this essay. But another virtually unstudied tradition from the patristic age assigns to John the Evangelist a more “invasive” role in the redaction, not only of the Fourth Gospel, but also of the three others. This tradition will be assessed here in conjunction with Origen and the Muratori Fragment. The result of the analysis indicates that we might be dealing here with quite an early tradition.

In particular, the first patristic reconstructions of the origin and composition of the canonical Gospels came from Papias, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Eusebius. The Papias–Clement line of tradition was later received by Origen, and by Eusebius, who also integrated it with that of Irenaeus. Theodore of Mopsuestia, following the exegetical tradition of the “school of Antioch,” provides an interesting and scarcely studied account of the origins of the Synoptic Gospels and John. His version does not contradict the Papias–Clement–Irenaeus tradition received by Origen and Eusebius. However, in this version, John is presented as one who first read and evaluated the other three Gospels, before writing his own as a supplement to them. A passage from the Martyrdom of Timothy presents John the Evangelist, not only as the reader, but also as the final redactor of the other three Gospels. This is a redaktionsgeschichtliche reconstruction ante litteram. It is necessary to analyze it and investigate its roots, meaning, and relation to the other accounts of the origin and composition of the canonical Gospels. Important convergences, which I shall point out, with a passage of the second-century Muratori Fragment, and with a contemporary tradition reported by Origen, suggest an early origin of this theory.

1 I am very grateful to Dieter Betz and Jörg Frey for our conversations about this issue in Metochi in 2013 and in Kiel in 2012, and to the editors of this volume for receiving my chapter, which profoundly honors me.
The Papias-Clement Version of the Origin and Composition of the Gospels, Received by Origen and Eusebius—A Comparison with Irenaeus

A report on Mark the Evangelist from Clement’s *Hypotyposeis* 6 is preserved by Eusebius, *HE* 2.14–16, and confirmed, according to him, by the second-century church father Papias. Eusebius deemed this report so trustworthy that he relied on it also in his *Chronicon*. Clement reported on Mark’s activity in Rome and, next, in Alexandria, probably based on an Alexandrian tradition that situated the composition of the Gospel of Mark in Rome during the reign of Claudius, at the time of Peter’s coming to Rome (traditionally AD 42 or twelve years after the Ascension, when Peter, liberated from prison, went “to another place”; Acts 12.17): “During the reign of Claudius, the same (during which Simon the Magician had come to Rome), universal Providence, supremely good and full of love for the human beings, led Peter to Rome ... here he repeatedly announced the Good News of the Kingdom of Heavens, Light itself and the Logos that saves the souls” (*Hist. eccl.* 2.14.6). Clement then recounts that Mark, pressed by his hearers, after Peter’s departure from Rome wrote down his preaching. This seems to refer again to the reign of Claudius:

> With every kind of supplication, they implored Mark, whose Gospel is in circulation and who was the companion of Peter, to leave them also a written account [διὰ γραφῆς ὑπόμνημα] of the teaching that had been handed down to them orally [διὰ λόγου παραδοθείσης]. They did not give up before persuading him, and thereby became the cause of the writing [γραφῆς] called “Gospel according to Mark”. They say that the apostle learnt what was done by means of a revelation of the Spirit and rejoiced in the zeal of those people, and approved of that writing [τὴν γραφὴν] for reading in the churches.

Mark’s Gospel, according to this tradition, was composed in Rome, but Peter’s approval of this tradition took place somewhere else. In *Hist. eccl.* 2.15.2, Eusebius details his sources: Clement and Papias:2 “It is Clement, in Book 6 of his *Hypotyposeis*, who relates this story; moreover, the bishop of Hierapolis named Papias attests to it, agreeing with him. According to Clement and Papias, Peter mentions this Mark in his first letter (1 Pet 5:13). They also say that this letter

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