On the Marcionite Prologues to the Letters of Paul

Dirk Jongkind

1 Introduction

Many manuscripts of the New Testament text contain, alongside the main text, also introductions, lists of section headings, and various numbering systems.¹ Among these para-textual elements are the so-called “prologues,” short introductions prefixed to each separate book. Various sets of prologues are known, and in the Latin tradition we find prologues which are ascribed to authors such as Pelagius, Jerome, and Hilary.² One of these sets of prologues to the Pauline epistles has attracted attention because of their apparent age and their identification as being prologues that originally belong to the edition of Paul’s letters made by Marcion, which, of course, consisted only of the letters to the seven churches. This identification was first made in 1907 by Donatien de Bruyne,³ independently confirmed by Peter Corssen in an article published two years later,⁴ and almost immediately and enthusiastically accepted by Adolf Harnack and J. Rendell Harris.⁵ For a moment it seemed that textual scholarship had yielded yet another of its assured results.

However, the identification of the *Prologues* as originating from Marcion received its first criticism in the 1920s and the discussion continued up to the 1970s. In 1978, Nils Dahl published an article that pointed to an alternative

¹ Since Mike Holmes has worked in second-century church history, textual criticism, and all its related fields, I have tried to combine these elements in this essay as a token of my appreciation for his scholarship and encouragement.

² See J. Wordsworth and H.J. White, et al., *Novum Testamentum Domini Nostri Iesu Christi Pars Secunda—Epistolae Paulinae* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913–1941), 1–61. Hereafter W-W.

³ Donatien de Bruyne, “Prologues bibliques d’origine Marcionite,” *RBén* 24 (1907): 1–16.

⁴ Peter Corssen, “Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte des Römerbriefes,” *ZNW* 10 (1909): 1–45; idem, “Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte des Römerbriefes, Nachtrag,” *ZNW* 10 (1909): 97–102. By his own admission (97), Corssen assumed at the time of writing that he knew the literature up to 1906, but admitted generously in a postscript “daß aber inzwischen jemand ein Licht über eine Sache aufgegangen sein sollte, die so viele Jahrhunderte im tiefsten Dunkel gelegen hatte, das hatte ich für ausgeschlossen gehalten.”

⁵ A. Harnack, review of “Prologues bibliques d’origine Marcionite,” *TLZ* 32 (1907): col. 138–140; J. Rendel Harris, “Marcion and the Canon,” *ExpTim* 18 (1907): 392–394.

solution to the problem.⁶ Dahl goes carefully through all the arguments for and against the Marcionite character of the *Prologues* and suggests a way forward. If one assumes that the *Prologues* belong to an edition of Paul's letters similar in shape to that of Marcion, which circulated outside Marcionite circles, the result is "a more plausible explanation of the data than any current theory."⁷ For Dahl, neither the argument of the order of the *Prologues* nor their content compels one to accept Marcionite origins. Once the *Prologues* are freed from their dubious past, their inclusion into the Latin tradition becomes easier to explain.

Dahl's thesis has been received favourably. In Metzger's *Canon of the New Testament*, it gets the final say⁸ and, perhaps more importantly, it is accepted and refined by Ulrich Schmid in his monograph on Marcion's *Apostolikon*.⁹ Schmid's thesis is that the first Pauline collection was in existence already before Marcion, and that it is this non-Marcionite collection that should be identified with the collection as suggested by Dahl.¹⁰ Schmid's argument regarding this "earliest attested collection of Paul"¹¹ does not depend on the non-Marcionite character of the *Prologues* alone. For him, an important textual argument is that Marcion uses the 14-chapter version of Romans (without chapters 15 and 16), a version which, according to Schmid, is more likely received than created by Marcion.¹² As is often the case in the development of scholarship, a suggestion quickly turns into a fact. Beduhn boldly asserts that

6 Nils A. Dahl, "The Origin of the Earliest Prologues to the Pauline Letters," *Semeia* 12 (1978): 233–277. The discussion immediately before Dahl was mainly carried between Frede and Schäfer: Hermann Josef Frede, *Allateinische Paulus-Handschriften* (Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel 4; Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 159–178; K. Th. Schäfer, "Marius Victorinus und die marcionitischen Prologe zu den Paulusbriefen," *RBén* 80 (1970): 7–16. Idem, "Marcion und die ältesten Prologe zu den Paulusbriefen," in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten* (vol. 1; eds. Patrick Granfield and Josef A. Jungmann; Münster: Aschendorf, 1970), 135–150. Hermann Josef Frede, *Ein neuer Paulustext und Kommentar: Band 1 Untersuchungen*, (Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel 7; Freiburg: Herder, 1973), 157–158.

7 Dahl, "Origin," 262.

8 Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 94–97.

9 Ulrich Schmid, *Marcion und sein Apostolos: Rekonstruktion und historische Einordnung der marcionitischen Paulusbriefausgabe* (ANTF 25; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995).

10 Schmid (*Marcion*, 294n52) even holds that the *Prologues* were already part of this pre-Marcionite collection.

11 Schmid, *Marcion*, 296, "die älteste belegbare Paulusbriefsammlung."

12 So also Sebastian Moll, "Schmid has conclusively demonstrated the existence of a pre-Marcionite collection of Pauline letters which was in many ways very similar to the one of

“we now know that [Marcion’s] collection contained the same ten letters circulating among many non-Marcionite churches of his time.”¹³ In a somewhat curious move, though, Beduhn also affirms his conviction that the *Prologues* are Marcionite in origin based on their actual content.¹⁴ It seems that he has accepted Schmid’s proposal of a pre-Marcionite collection of Paul, whilst at the same time rejecting Schmid’s foremost argument in support of this proposal, namely, that the *Prologues* (non-Marcionite according to Schmid) testify to this alternative collection. It remains unclear therefore what Beduhn’s reasons are for accepting a pre-Marcionite 10-letter collection of Paul’s letters.

Given that Dahl’s proposal has had a considerable influence on recent scholarship, and since the nature of these Latin prologues is of obvious interest to Marcionite studies, the earliest reception of Paul, and early Christian corpus formation, it is worthwhile to reassess the strength of Dahl’s case. Has Dahl’s thesis that the *Prologues* belong to a non-Marcionite Pauline corpus of similar shape as Marcion’s *Apostolikon* a greater explanatory power than de Bruyne’s thesis that these are Marcionite? In this essay we will argue that though Dahl’s proposal is possible, it is to be rejected. Our discussion will centre around four issues: that of (1) the order of Paul’s letters in the *Prologues*; (2) the shape of Romans; (3) the content of the actual prologues; and (4) the entering and subsequent survival of the *Prologues* in the Latin transmission.

One brief remark on methodology needs to be made. In this essay it is assumed rather than argued that Marcion actually edited letters he received. I am fully aware that Marcion’s editorial activity is much debated and increasingly questioned, yet the surviving manuscript evidence of the Pauline corpus points firmly to a single point of origin (the *Ausgangstext*) without a noticeable trace of Marcion’s edition having made any substantial impact. If there was a “Marcionite-type” of text before Marcion, one would have expected more of this to survive. Most of the discussion below, though, remains unaffected by whichever view on Marcion’s edition one takes. As a start to actual weighing of the evidence relating to the *Prologues*, it will be useful to remind us of what there is.

the arch-heretic” (Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* [WUNT 250; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010], 87).

13 Jason D. Beduhn, *The First New Testament: Marcion’s Scriptural Canon* (Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2013), 29.

14 Beduhn, *First New Testament*, 42–43.

2 The Text and Content of the *Prologues*

The oldest positive testimony to the *Prologues* is found in the commentaries by Marius Victorinus, who betrays knowledge of the *Prologues* in the phraseology that he employs when introducing the Pauline letters.¹⁵ The *Prologues* themselves first appear in the *Codex Fuldensis* (6th century) and after that in many Latin manuscripts. Though they are in the manuscripts found immediately before the letter which the individual prologue introduces, their wording supposes that originally all the individual prologues constituted one short narrative that was split up over the individual letters at a later stage.

The text of the *Prologues* assumes a different order of the Pauline corpus than that found in the actual manuscripts. It was one of de Bruyne's initial and most powerful arguments that the *Prologues* reflect the order in which Tertullian discusses Marcion: Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, Thessalonians, Ephesians/Laodiceans, Colossians, Philippians. In his 1978 discussion, Nils Dahl finds no issue with the order as reconstructed by de Bruyne and rejects the prologue to 2 Cor (*Prol 2 Cor*), *Prol 2 Thes*, and *Prol Phlm* as being part of the original undivided text.¹⁶ *Prol Eph* as found in the Latin manuscripts is likely to be secondary¹⁷ and, according to Dahl, may be the third stage in a process that started with a prologue to Laodiceans as reconstructed by de Bruyne. The name "Laodiceans" was replaced with "Ephesians" in the version which Marius Victorinus used, but since the content of this prologue did not seem to fit the content of Ephesians itself, it was replaced with a new prologue.¹⁸ The oldest text of the *Prologues*, therefore, in Dahl's final assessment, contained only seven prologues, corresponding with the seven Pauline churches. The text printed here is that found in Wordsworth-White,¹⁹ with some changes that might reflect the original Marcionite version as suggested by de Bruyne.

Prol Gal Galatae sunt Graeci. Hi verbum veritatis primum ab apostolo acceperunt sed, post discessum eius temptati sunt a falsis apostolis ut in

15 This was first pointed out by Corssen ("Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte," 40–41), and elaborated upon by Schäfer in "Marius Victorinus."

16 Dahl, "Origin," 246–248.

17 Dahl, "Origin," 249, "Even Frede seems now to concede that *Prol Eph* may indeed be secondary."

18 Dahl, "Origin," 250.

19 W-W, 41–42, 153, 355, 455, 490, 523.

legem et circumcisionem verterentur. Hos apostolus revocat ad fidem veritatis, scribens eis ab Epheso.

Prol Cor Corinthii sunt Achaei, et hi similiter ab apostolo²⁰ audierunt verbum veritatis, et subversi multifarie a falsis apostolis, quidam a philosophiae verbosa eloquentia, alii a secta legis Iudaicae inducti; hos revocat apostolus ad veram et evangelicam sapientiam, scribens eis ab Epheso per Timotheum.²¹

Prol Rom Romani sunt in partibus Italiae. Hi²² praeventi sunt a falsis apostolis, et sub nomine Domini nostri Jesu Christi in legem et prophetas erant inducti. Hos revocat apostolus ad veram evangelicam fidem, scribens eis ab Athenis.²³

Prol Thes Thessalonicenses sunt Macedones.²⁴ Hi accepto verbo veritatis perstiterunt in fide etiam in persecutione civium suorum, praeterea nec receperunt ea quae a falsis apostolis dicebantur. Hos conlaudat apostolus scribens eis ab Athenis.

Prol Laod Laodicenses sunt Asiani. Hi praeventi erant a falsis apostolis (pseudoapostolis?). . . . Ad hos non accessit ipse apostolus . . . hos per epistolam recurrit. . . .²⁵

Prol Col Colossenses et hi sicut Laodicenses sunt Asiani; et ipsi praeventi erant a pseudoapostolis, nec ad hos accessit ipse apostolus, sed et hos per epistolam recurrit. Audierant enim verbum ab Archippo, qui et ministerium in eos accepit. Ergo apostolus iam ligatus scribit eis ab Epheso.²⁶

Prol Phil Philippenses sunt Macedones. Hi accepto verbo veritatis perstiterunt²⁷ in fide, nec receperunt falsos apostolos. Hos apostolus conlaudat, scribens eis a Roma de carcere per Epaphroditum.

20 Dahl reads *ab apostolis*, but see below for a discussion of this variant.

21 W-W omit *per Timotheum*, but see their apparatus for the manuscript support for the phrase.

22 W-W have *qui* for *hi*.

23 W-W have *a Corintho* for *ab Athenis*. The reading *ab Athenis* is likely to be original, see Dahl, "Origin," 244, and Schmid, *Marcion*, 288n28.

24 W-W add *in Christo Iesu*.

25 *Prol Laod* does not appear in this particular form in Latin or in W-W but is reconstructed on the basis of *Prol Col*. De Bruyne, "Prologues," 14.

26 W-W, 490, include *per Tychicum diaconum*, but note the wide-spread omission in the apparatus (as does de Bruyne, "Prologues," 14).

27 W-W have *persteterunt*, but see their apparatus.

Williams gives the following translation (adapted to the Latin text above):²⁸

Galatians are Greeks. These accepted the word of truth first from the apostle but after his departure were tempted by false apostles to turn to the Law and to circumcision. The apostle recalls these men to the faith of truth, writing to them from Ephesus.

Corinthians are Achaeans. These also likewise heard the word of truth from the apostle and were perverted variously by false apostles, some by the wordy eloquence of philosophy, others led on by the sect of the Jewish Law. The apostle recalls these men to the true and evangelical wisdom, writing to them from Ephesus [by Timothy].

Romans are in the region of Italy. These were reached beforehand by false apostles and under the name of our Lord Jesus Christ had been led on to the Law and the Prophets. The apostle recalls these men to the true and evangelical faith, writing to them from Athens.

Thessalonians are Macedonians in Christ Jesus, who having accepted the word of truth, persevered in the faith even under persecution from their own citizens; and moreover they did not accept what was said by false apostles. The apostle congratulates these men, writing to them from Athens.

Laodiceans are of Asia. They had been reached beforehand by false apostles . . . The apostle himself does not come to them . . . He corrects them by letter . . .

Colossians; these also, like the Laodiceans, are of Asia. They too had been reached beforehand by false apostles, and the apostle himself does not come to them; but he corrects them also by a letter; for they had heard his word from Archippus, who also accepted a ministry to them. So the apostle, already in bonds, writes to them from Ephesus.

Philippians are Macedonians. These having accepted the word of truth persevered in the faith and they did not receive false apostles. The apostle congratulates these men, writing to them from prison at Rome by Epaphroditus.

The following Prologues are rejected as not belonging to the earliest strand:²⁹

Prol 2 Cor Post actam paenitentiam consolatorias scribit eis a troade et conlaudans eos hortatur ad meliora.

28 C.S.C. Williams, "The History of the Text and Canon of the New Testament to Jerome," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: Volume 2, The West from the Fathers to the Reformation* (ed. G.W.H. Lampe; Cambridge: University Press, 1969), 45–46.

29 I agree with the judgement of Dahl ("Origin," 247–248) and Schmid (*Marcion*, 294n53) that *Prol 2 Cor* and *Prol 2 Thes* are secondary. This was already suggested by de Bruyne ("Prologues," 8).

Prol Eph Ephesii sunt Asiani; hi accepto verbo veritatis persteterunt in fide. Hos conlaudat apostolus, scribens eis a Roma de carcere per Tychicum diaconum.

Prol 2 Thes Ad Thessalonicenses secundam scribit epistulam et notum facit eis de temporibus novissimis et de adversarii detectione. Scribit hanc epistulam ab Athenis.

Prol Phlm Philemoni familiares litteras facit pro Onesimo servo suo. Scribit autem ei a Roma de carcere.³⁰

Prol 1 Tim Timotheum instruit et docet de ordinatione episcopatus et diaconii et omnis ecclesiasticae disciplinae.

Prol 2 Tim Item Timotheo scribit de exhortatione martyrii et omnis regulae veritatis et quid futuram sit temporibus novissimis et de sua passione.

Prol Tit Titum commonefacit et instruit de constitutione maiorum natu³¹ et de spiritali conversatione et haereticis vitandis qui in scripturis iudaicis (iudaicis fabulis)³² credunt.

Dahl rejects any theory that calls for a gradual development from the original to the expanded set. It is more likely that this expansion took place in a single editorial move: “the data are adequately accounted for if we assume that the

30 Schmid (*Marcion*, 288) is not convinced by Dahl’s contention that *Prol Phlm* is not part of the original Prologues, despite the different pattern of this prologue. Schmid explains this difference by the nature of the letter itself, which does not lend itself for a prologue in the same vein as that of the prologues to the letters to the churches. Williams (“The History of the Text and Canon,” 46) likewise includes Philemon in his translation of the Marcionite Prologues: “To *Philemon* he composes a private letter by Onesimus his slave. But he writes to him from Rome out of prison.” W-W, 668, add *per Onesimum acolitum*.

31 Dahl rightly points out (“Origin,” 245) that this is the older reading, replacing *de constitutione presbyterii*. He tentatively suggests that the original reading must go back to the middle of the third century (“possibly to the time of Cyprian”).

32 Corssen (“Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte,” 99–100) rejects de Bruyne’s version of *Prol Titus*, which reads in the final clause *qui iudaicis fabulis credunt* (the reading found in Vulgate manuscripts). The two alternative readings are *qui in scripturis iudaicas credunt* and *qui traditionibus iudaicas credunt*. The second reading (adopted in our text) explains the origin of the two other readings. Corssen believed that Marcion did not incorporate the Pastoral Epistles in his canon because he did not know them. Harnack accepts the prologues to the Pastoral Epistles as coming from the Marcionite school, because of the denouncement of the OT *in scripturis iudaicis credunt*. However, he places their origin in the stage when the Marcionite church had lost their battle with orthodoxy, and used whatever Latin manuscripts of Paul they could find (*Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott: eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche—Beilage*, TU 45 [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924], 140–141).

secondary prologues were added on the same occasion on which the prologues were distributed among the individual letters in the order which, with minor variations, is found in all existent manuscripts. . . . The data do not call for any more complicated theory of expansion.”³³ However, as noted already, Dahl is correct in making an exception for *Prol Eph*, in which he distinguishes the versions from before and after Marius Victorinus. This expanded set of prologues, including prologues to the Pastoral Epistles, was made to conform with the now standard number of 13 letters of Paul. Dahl dates this event to around the middle of the 3rd century.³⁴

In the subsequent discussion we will consider the seven prologues confirmed by Dahl as the original set. The question whether or not *Prol Phlm* belonged to this set does not materially affect the following argument.

3 The Order and Extent of the *Prologues*: Marcionite or Not?

Dahl contended that neither the order of the *Prologues* nor the inclusion of *Prol Laod* constitutes an argument that favours a Marcionite over a non-Marcionite origin. The reason is that if one postulates a collection of epistles which shows these two features and which exists parallel to the edition Marcion, the data have received an explanation that is equally satisfying. It is worthwhile to have a look at each of these two arguments, first that of order, secondly that of the inclusion of *Prol Laod*.

Dahl, following others before him, sees traces of the order found in the *Prologues* in the Old Syriac version of Paul's letters. A wider distribution of the order of the *Prologues* diminishes the likelihood of an exclusively Marcionite origin. The evidence for this order in the Old Syriac rests on two pieces of information. Dahl, following Frede,³⁵ who in turn acknowledges Mundle,³⁶ mentions the order as found (1) in Ephrem's commentary on Paul, and (2) in a

33 Dahl, "Origin," 251.

34 Dahl, "Origin," 252.

35 Frede, *Altlateinische Paulus-Handschriften*, 166. Besides crediting Mundle ("Zu diesen von W. Mundle ins Feld geführten Tatsachen . . ."), Frede also independently refers back to the Latin translation of the Armenian Paul-commentary, see below, (*S. Ephraemi Syri commentarii in epistulas D. Pauli* [Venice: Typographi Sancti Lazari, 1893], 201), and to Zahn's article from 1900 (see below, n. 39), also referred to by Mundle. The first one who pointed out the Old Syriac order assumed in Ephrem's commentary in relation to the Marcionite Prologues was not Mundle but J. Rendel Harris, "Marcion and the Canon," 393.

36 Wilhelm Mundle, "Die Herkunft der 'marcionitischen' Prologe zu den paulinischen Briefen," *ZNW* 24 (1925): 59.

9th century canon list. No actual Old Syriac manuscripts survive of the Pauline letters and therefore the argument cannot be anything but indirect. The commentary of Ephrem on Paul is preserved only in a late Armenian manuscript.³⁷ As far as can be gauged from Molitor's introduction, the text of the commentary follows the normal order Rom, Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, Thess, Heb, followed by the Pastorals. However, in the actual commentary, as J. Rendel Harris points out in his discussion of the commentary, it may be that a different order of the letters is assumed.³⁸ Harris translates from Ephrem's commentary on Rom 1:1, "... imparting to you some spiritual grace, as I have done to your companions the Galatians and Corinthians." Also, Harris points to a comment from the opening passages of Hebrews, where Ephrem "discusses the question why, if the Epistle were St. Paul's, he had concealed his name, seeing that he made no such concealment in writing to the Galatians, or the Corinthians, ... or to the Romans."³⁹ Both passages mention the letters in the order Gal, Cor, Rom. But is this evidence that Ephrem used a Pauline corpus which contained these letters in this particular order? Did Ephrem have a manuscript in front of him with the letters in that order, or was he recounting the letters in their chronological order? It seems hazardous to infer too much from Ephrem, but the case may be strengthened if additional support is found. Such additional support might come from a 9th century Syriac manuscript preserved in St. Catherine's on Mt. Sinai.⁴⁰ This manuscript contains homilies and extracts from various church fathers, followed by a list of the books of both Testaments listing their length.⁴¹ The list is attributed to Irenaeus. It should be noted that this manuscript does not contain the actual text of Paul's letters. In the list, the first three letters of Paul are indeed listed in the Marcionite order: Gal, Cor, Rom, but

37 According to Molitor, the Armenian translation was published in 1836 and seemed to have been based on a manuscript written in AD 999 or a later copy containing a colophon mentioning this year (Joseph Molitor, *Der Paulustext des Hl. Ephräm: Aus seinem armenisch erhaltenen Paulinenkommentar untersucht und rekonstruiert* [Monumenta Biblica et Ecclesiastica 4; Rome: Päpstliches Bibelinstitut, 1938], 5–7).

38 Harris, "Marcion," 393.

39 These are the same two passages discussed some years earlier by Th. Zahn, "Das Neue Testaments Theodors von Mopsuestia und der ursprüngliche Kanon der Syrer," *NKZ* 11 (1900): 798. Zahn gives the Latin translation of the Armenian: "... quum nec in epistolis scriptis ad Galatas, ad Corinthios et ad proximos, quos viderat, id fecerit, neque in epistolis ad Romanos datis et ad ceteros, quos non viderat, tale quoddam egerit."

40 Agnes Smith Lewis, *Catalogue of the Syriac MSS. in the Convent of S. Catharine on Mount Sinai* (Studia Sinaitica 1; London: Clay, 1894), 4–16.

41 The stychometric length of each book is also often included in the subscription of full-text manuscripts.

then follows Heb, Col, Eph, Phil, Phil (*sic!*), Thess, 2 Tim (*sic!*), Titus, Phlm.⁴² Zahn noted⁴³ that as by the 9th century the Peshitta was already the standard text for a long time, the deviating order in this manuscript must reach back to a time in which the Peshitta had not yet become the dominant version. This means that it might well reflect the Old Syriac order of the Pauline collection. Therefore, there are indications from both Ephrem and the Syriac canon list that the Old Syriac had the letters of Paul in the order Galatians, Corinthians, Romans. However, both the Sinaitic canon and Ephrem also agree on placing Hebrews after Romans, which reinforces the suggestion of a shared order that underlies Ephrem's commentary and the canon list.

But what could be the reason why the Old Syriac order only reflects the order of the *Prologues* for the first three letters? In order to explain this limited similarity, Dahl has to take refuge to an additional redactional stage. He suggests that "the arrangement of the letters in the Old Syriac version seems to be due to an amalgamation of an order like that of Marcion and the Prologues for the first four letters and an order more like that of our Greek manuscripts for the others."⁴⁴ Though possible, the actual evidence for such hypothesis is still very slim, there is not enough known about the Old Syriac order or its organising principle besides what we have discussed here. Therefore, the conclusion that Dahl draws from the Old Syriac, sounds rather optimistic (my emphasis), "The Syriac evidence, therefore, *proves* that it was not Marcion's preference for Galatians which gave this letter the first place in the collection."⁴⁵ At best it suggests that Marcion's preference may not have been unique. However, from this discussion it is difficult to argue that the Old Syriac depended on either Marcion's collection of Paul or on a parallel collection of similar shape; both possibilities are fraught with uncertainty.

The second problem to be discussed here is that of *Prol Laod*, which must have stood before *Prol Col*, but has been replaced in the manuscript tradition with *Prol Eph*. There are two elements which the *Prol Col* takes up from the pre-

42 Metzger seems to stretch the evidence of what we know of Ephrem's Pauline corpus beyond what is warranted by stating that "this is the order in which Ephraem commented on them" (*Canon of the New Testament*, 221). Compare what Zahn wrote ("Das Neue Testament Theodors von Mopsuestia," 799), "Die Übereinstimmung zwischen Ephraim und dem sin. Kanon ist demnach zwar eine höchst charakteristische, aber keine vollständige."

43 Zahn, "Das Neue Testament Theodors von Mopsuestia," 797.

44 Dahl, "Origin," 254.

45 Ibid.

vious prologue: first, *Prol Col* presupposes the earlier mention of *pseudoapostoli* (et ipsi praeventi erant a pseudoapostolis), and second, it presupposes an earlier mention of the need for correction (sed et hos per epistolam recorrigit). *Prol Eph*, as it stands, contains neither of these elements, which is why a reconstructed but unattested form of *Prol Laod* is used. Schäfer attempted to draw out the consequences of the use Marius Victorinus made of the *Prologues*. Victorinus displays knowledge of the *Prologues* and, more specifically, knowledge of a prologue to Ephesians that mentions false apostles, which means that he knew this prologue in a different form than the preserved one.⁴⁶ Combining these two elements it follows that he knew the *Prol Laod* under the name of a prologue to Ephesians. Up to this point Dahl and Schäfer are in agreement, but then two different conclusions are drawn.⁴⁷ Schäfer argues that Marius Victorinus provides additional reason to believe that the original *Prol Laod* is evidence for a sequence of Laodiceans—Colossians, a sequence only positively attested with Marcion. Therefore, it follows that the *Prologues* are most likely Marcionite of origin.⁴⁸ Dahl avoids this Marcionite identification. He believes that the only thing that is needed to explain the evidence is that an unknown parallel Pauline edition had Ephesians under the title of Laodiceans.

Thus, little progress is made by Dahl in this part of our discussion in advancing the argument. An unknown attested collection with a similar order as Marcion (with Ephesians under the name of Laodicean) is a possibility, but it is also a less economical explanation.⁴⁹

46 Schäfer, "Marius Victorinus," 10–13.

47 Dahl, "Origin," 255.

48 Schäfer, "Marius Victorinus," 11, "Mit der Existenz eines Prologs zu einem dem Kolosserbrief vorhergehenden Laodicenerbrief aber wäre etwas *unbezweifelbar* und *spezifisch* Marcionitisches nachgewiesen; denn einzig und allein Marcion hat in seinem Corpus Paulinum vor dem Kolosserbrief unter dieser Überschrift den Brief gehabt, der sonst Epheserbrief heißt."

49 Dahl himself provides an example of how a possibility turns into a likelihood ("Origin," 255), "If the Prologues are not of Marcionite origin, they would provide evidence that this [i.e. Laodiceans as a characteristic of the unknown edition; DJ] was indeed the case." From here Dahl moves effortlessly to, "It is more likely than not that a lost prologue treated Ephesians as a letter to the Laodiceans, but it is also more likely that the Laodicean address goes back to an early edition of Paul than that Marcion invented it."

4 The Shape of Romans

The textual history of the final chapters of Romans is a notorious problem in the textual criticism of the NT.⁵⁰ Although there is only one extant manuscript that lacks any of the final two chapters,⁵¹ there are indications that at one stage shorter forms of the letter to the Romans may have existed. The stronger arguments for this suggestion are the absence of any *capitula* (short summary statements for each section) for text from Romans 15 and 16 in many Latin manuscripts, as well as the placement of the doxology 16:23–27 immediately after 14:23.⁵² Therefore, a form of Romans may have existed that contained only the text of the first 14 chapters with the doxology 16:23–27 following Romans 14. Moreover, Origen mentions explicitly that Marcion did not have the text of Romans from 14:23 onwards. Besides these indications for a 14-chapter Romans, a version containing the first 15 chapters followed by the doxology had been long conjectured⁵³ and was made more plausible by the evidence of P⁴⁶ (early 3rd century), which has the doxology after 15:33.⁵⁴ But how do the early forms of Romans relate to the question of the source of the *Prologues*? The argument runs as follows: since the shorter form of Romans has influenced the textual tradition of the letter, and since none of Marcion's other textual changes has affected the tradition, it is more likely that the shorter form of Romans did not originate with him. However, since Marcion evidently has the shorter form but did not create it, he must have received it as such. And since the *Prol Rom* was

50 Kurt Aland labelled this even “das schwierigste Problem, welches der neutestamentlichen Textkritik überhaupt gestellt ist” (Kurt Aland, “Der Schluss und die ursprüngliche Gestalt des Römerbriefes,” in *Neutestamentliche Entwürfe* [München: Kaiser Verlag, 1979], 284–301, cited from 284). Besides the discussion in Schmid, *Marcion*, 289–294, see for example Harry Y. Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans: A Study in Textual and Literary Criticism* (SD 42; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977); Peter Lampe, “Zur Textgeschichte des Römerbriefes,” *NovT* 27 (1985): 273–277.

51 According to NA²⁷, Greek minuscule 1506 lacks Rom 16:1–23, but has the doxology 16:24–27.

52 For full discussion of this evidence see Gamble, *Textual History*, 16–28. Schmid rightly sounds a cautionary note as to Gamble's confidence in the absence of explicit citations from chs. 15–16 by various church fathers (Schmid, *Marcion*, 290). Schmid also discusses the argument made by Frede that chapter 15 shows a transition in textual character from ch. 14 to 15 in the Old Latin.

53 Gamble, *Textual History*, 33.

54 Gamble seems to have missed the evidence of minuscule 1506. The “15-chapter” form of Romans is therefore actually attested. That this feature of 1506, dated to 1320 AD may be more than just a single idiosyncrasy, follows from its numerous old readings in Romans (see the data provided in Kurt Aland et al., *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments 11: Die Paulinischen Briefe, Bd.1: Allgemeines, Römerbrief und Ergänzungsliste* [ANTF 16; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991]).

written for a 14-chapter Romans, it could have been written for the collection that Marcion received.

There is a problem here in the sequence of the logic. Ever since de Bruyne published his thesis on the Marcionite origin of the *Prologues*, the *Prol Rom* has been read as belonging to a 14-chapter Romans, because it was known that Marcion used this version of Romans. But in the argument outlined above, the order is reversed: starting from the *Prol Rom*, a 14-chapter Romans is inferred; a move which is much more problematic.

Prol Rom mentions that the letter was written “from Athens,” from which it follows that this prologue could only have been written for a version of Romans that did not contain chapters 15 and 16—the two chapters that seem to exclude an Athenian origin for the letter. Assuming that “from Athens” is indeed the original reading of *Prol Rom*, is this enough to conclude that it was written for a 14-chapter Romans? Hardly so, it appears, especially since the 15-chapter Romans is also a real possibility. The Corinthian connections of Romans come from chapter 16 and there is very little in chapter 15 that would preclude an Athenian provenance. Of course, if one accepts that Marcion produced the *Prologues*, then the conclusion that *Prol Rom* was written for a 14-chapter Romans is most likely, but if one argues the other way around, from *Prol Rom* to a 14-chapter Romans, any inference should only be made with due caution.

The question remains, though, whether Marcion received Romans in the 14-chapter format or whether he actively excised the text after Rom 14:23. Schmid argues that Marcion received Romans without the last two chapters, as part of a collection of Paul that contained only the letters to the seven churches.⁵⁵ Schmid observes rightly that if Marcion were responsible for excising chs. 15–16 it is remarkable that this is the only large excision in Romans that influenced the textual tradition of this letter.⁵⁶ In itself this is not an argument that is strong enough to settle the question, yet, since it is the only argument brought to bear on the question, the balance of probabilities favours a Marcion reception of 14-chapter Romans. However, that Marcion found this form of Romans as part of a pre-Marcionite collection depends solely on Schmid’s acceptance of Dahl’s claim that the *Prologues* are of non-Marcionite origin

⁵⁵ Schmid, *Marcion*, 293–294.

⁵⁶ Marcion did not accept Rom 2:3–11, ch. 4, and large parts of ch. 9. To put the influence of the omission of chs. 15–16 (which originated accidentally, in Schmid’s opinion) in perspective: it has only left traces through the various placements of the doxology and through para-textual elements.

and stem from a collection that predates Marcion, and this is exactly the point under contention.⁵⁷

5 The Content of the *Prologues*

If Dahl's thesis for a parallel collection of Paul has any hope of positive support, it must come from the actual content of the *Prologues*. Dahl does indeed find this evidence in two of the Prologues. The first of these is found in *Prol Cor*, the second in *Prol Rom*.

In the *Prol Cor*, two different groups of false apostles are described. On one hand, there are those who lead the church astray by their eloquence and philosophy; on the other hand, there are those who introduce the Jewish law. Dahl argues that the distinction of two groups of false apostles is less likely to have been made in Marcionite circles than in orthodox.⁵⁸ However, Dahl's argument fails to convince. After all, the first group of false apostles is the topic of much of 1 Cor 1–2 and any mention of false apostles in an introduction to the Corinthian letters is bound to mention these. However, the second group of false apostles reflects Marcionite concerns and their mention in a prologue to the Corinthian letters is perhaps somewhat surprising. The existence of a group that was “led on by the sect of the Jewish law” is not obvious from the text of the letters themselves, with the clear exception of the Jewish super-apostles of 2 Cor 11. But there is no explicit warning in the Corinthians correspondence against a group that aims to introduce the Jewish law. That this group of false apostles is mentioned in *Prol Cor* at all, seems rather a reinforcement of the impression that this prologue is Marcionite than a weakening of it, as Dahl suggests. But then Dahl continues by explaining that *Prol Cor* assumes a more complicated relationship between Paul and all other apostles than allowed for by Marcion, because the text reads *ab apostolis audierunt* (“they heard from the apostles”). The mention of more apostles besides Paul might indeed be

57 I am not convinced (*contra* Schmid) that it is more likely that this accidentally-shortened Romans was only able to exercise influence on the textual tradition because a single defective exemplar was incorporated into a collection, which was subsequently widely distributed, as opposed to Gamble's position that it is likely that a deliberately shortened Romans had a considerable circulation before it was included into Paul *corpora*.

58 Dahl, “Origin,” 258–259, “Marcionites could possibly have engaged in polemics against philosophical gnostics as well as against Catholic Judaizers.” But the notion of two different types of heresy, one Judaizing and the other rhetorical and philosophical (i.e., gnostic?), corresponds more to what we would expect from an anti-heretical spokesman for Catholic orthodoxy.”

seen as problematic for a Marcionite origin of the *Prologues*. However, Dahl follows here a variant reading which, though clearly being more wide-spread, is also more likely to be secondary.⁵⁹ A good case can be made that the singular *ab apostolo* is the original which explains the creation of the plural *ab apostolis*. The opening of 1 Cor claims that the letter is sent by Paul and Sosthenes, while 2 Cor mentions Paul and Timothy. In addition, 1 Cor mentions the names of Apollos and, possibly, Cephas as people who worked in Corinth, culminating in “us apostles” in 1 Cor 4:9. In addition, Titus is given a special role in 2 Cor. In this context, the change from the singular to the plural is easier to understand than the other way around.⁶⁰ However, regardless of the original reading of *Prol Cor* at this point, it may well be that Marcion retained the reference to ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀποστόλους in 1 Cor 4:9, and if he did so, then the objection by Dahl against a possible Marcionite origin of *ab apostolis* becomes void. The closest Tertullian comes in citing Marcion’s version here is in *contra Marc.* 5:7, where he quotes the second half of the verse “we have been made a spectacle . . .,” leaving the actual referent of “we” undeclared. We cannot infer from Tertullian’s failure to mention an excision by Marcion earlier in the verse, that the whole verse (including “us apostles”) stood intact in Marcion’s edition. Yet it is clear, though, that 1 Cor 3 and 4 in Marcion’s text followed the canonical version in a similar argument and flow. It seems likely, therefore, that Marcion accepted the plural “we” in 1 Cor 4:9. Even if the text of the Prologue originally read the plural *ab apostolis* instead of the singular *ab apostolo*, the reference would be to Paul and the others with him, irrespective of Marcionite or non-Marcionite authorship of the Prologue.

In Dahl’s discussion of *Prol Rom*, he fairly admits that this prologue provides the strongest argument in favour of the “conjectured Marcionite origin.”⁶¹ Dahl employs two arguments why *Prol Rom* is not from the hand of Marcion. The first is that the Latin verb *praevenire*, as a passive perfect (*praeventi sunt*), does not necessarily mean that “they had been reached beforehand” but can be translated “they had been overtaken.” In the Marcionite scheme of events, it

59 Corssen, “Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte,” 41.

60 Frede, who does not hold to a Marcionite origin of the *Prologues*, thinks the plural is original on the basis of its much wider attestation (Frede, *Ein neuer Paulustext*, 157n3). He rightly rejects Schäfer’s criticism of the reconstruction of *Prol Cor* in 86 as *ab apostolis*, as its closest relatives read similarly.

61 Dahl, “Origin,” 259. Even after his discussion of *Prol Rom*, Dahl shows signs of some discomfort with his reading of *Prol Rom* (260), “The proposed interpretation of the Prologue to Romans may not be entirely satisfactory, but a ‘Marcionite’ interpretation hardly solves the problem. On the balance of evidence, it is easier to ascribe the Prologue to Romans to a Catholic author than to ascribe the Prologue to the Corinthian letters to a Marcionite.”

would only be the apostle Paul who preached the true Gospel, a message that did not have any place for the Jewish God of the Hebrew Scriptures. The letter to the Romans records Paul's attempt to bring the church back from the teaching of the false apostles (such as the Twelve), and reveal the true Father and God.⁶² Although in a more mainstream view the founding of the Roman church goes back to orthodox Christians, Marcion would hold that any non-Pauline origin equals a founding by false apostles. If *Prol Rom* conveys the message that the Romans "were reached beforehand" by false apostles, the Marcionite understanding of this would be that the Roman church was built on corrupt foundations. However, if Dahl's suggestion holds, then the church would have been founded by people from within the wider apostolic circles, and only afterward been overtaken by the *pseudoapostoli*. Schäfer⁶³ did not attempt to hang too much on the precise meaning of the verb. Rather, the most striking claim of *Prol Rom* is that the false apostles were the cause of why the church *sub nomine domini nostri Jesu Christi in legem et prophetas erant inducti* ("under the name of our Lord Jesus Christ had been led on to the Law and the Prophets"). The meaning of *praevenire* is materially irrelevant to the question.⁶⁴ Beduhn, who, as mentioned in the introduction, accepts the *Prologues* as coming from Marcion, finds a strong confirmation for his conviction in the *Prol Rom*: "[C]oncern with 'Judaizers' is one thing, but speaking of Christians being 'led astray into the Law and Prophets,' as the prologue to Romans does, puts the author beyond the pale of 'orthodox' Christian sentiments, and pretty squarely into a Marcionite world view."⁶⁵

Dahl has another consideration that "further weakens the case for a Marcionite origin."⁶⁶ The prologue must have taken the reference to the false apostles from somewhere in the letter to the Romans. The reference in Rom 16:17f cannot be accepted as this was not part of the text which the author of the *Prologues* had before him. But likewise the other sections where Paul corrects a wrong understanding of the law and prophets have been excised

62 Marcion worked with a double corruption theory: both the early church in Rome as well as Paul's letter to them were corrupted by the false apostles.

63 According to Dahl ("Origin," 259), "Schäfer 'more hesitantly [than Harnack; DJ]' accepted that *Prol Rom* assumed that the false apostles reached Rome as the first missionaries." This is not how I read Schäfer ("Marcion," 143) "[*Praevenire*] ist ein relativer Begriff. Gemeint ist immer ein dem Eingreifen Pauli vorhergehendes Stadium, aber nicht notwendig die *erste* Missionierung der Adressaten. Möglicherweise ist diese im Prolog zu Rm gemeint;..." Compare *Prol Col*.

64 Interestingly, the Oxford Latin Dictionary does not list Dahl's suggestion.

65 Beduhn, *First Testament*, 43.

66 Dahl, "Origin," 260.

by Marcion (such as Rom 1:17b, 3:31–4:25, most of 9–11). As the *Prol Rom* must have taken its reference to false apostles from these places which Marcion had removed, it follows that *Prol Rom* was written for a non-Marcionite version of Romans.

In his discussion, Dahl seems to have lost sight of the goal and function of the *Prologues*. Their aim is to ensure that the letter is read in the correct context. Statements in Marcion's version of Romans such as "then the law, now the righteousness of God through faith in Christ"⁶⁷ are to be read in the context of the apostle's polemic against that teaching which brought the church under the law and the prophets. Marcion believed that a correct reading of the law and prophets as Christian Scripture was impossible, hence his removal of parts of Romans. But Marcion did not remove every reference to the law in Romans, and retained even, according to Epiphanius, phrases such as that the commandment is *ἀγία καὶ δικαία*, in Rom 7:11.⁶⁸ Marcion retained enough of Romans not only to allow but even to encourage a polemical mirror-reading.

The content of the *Prologues* remains one of the strongest arguments in favour of Marcionite origin. *Prol Cor* presents no problem that would exclude its creation by Marcion—regardless of one's take on the textual issue—and Dahl's attempt to demonstrate that it is a problem to locate the origin of *Prol Rom* in Marcionite circles is far from persuasive.⁶⁹ Again, nothing is gained by assuming a parallel collection of Paul's letters. Which leaves us with the final argument, how could these *Prologues* ever have entered the Latin tradition?

6 The Entering and Transmission of the *Prologues* in the Latin Tradition

If the *Prologues* come from the hand of Marcion, why have they become so widespread and why were they not recognised for what they are? What sort of process could have led to their acceptance into the Latin textual tradition? How much *naïveté* in early transmissional practice can be tolerated?⁷⁰ Frankly,

67 Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.13.8: tunc lex, nunc iustitia dei per fidem Christi.

68 Epiphanius, *Pan.* 42.11 (43.12).

69 Dahl ("Origin," 261) also discusses *Prol Titus* and its apparent rejection of the Jewish scriptures. Here I agree fully with Dahl that the reference to *scripturae iudaicae* is unlikely to refer to the Old Testament and that the author of this prologue "did not belong to the same time and environment as the author of the original set of prologues."

70 Schmid, *Marcion*, 280, "Und das wiederum würde eine ziemliche Naivität und Unbedarftheit bei nichtmarcionitischen Kreisen in verschiedenen Teilen des Imperium

we simply do not know how the *Prologues*, presumably originally written in Greek, managed to survive in Latin manuscripts which have a different order of the Pauline letters than that which the *Prologues* assumes. Likewise, we do not know why the Syriac or Greek tradition does not know anything of these *Prologues*, or why there is, to date, not a single manuscript extant in these two traditions that has the order of the letters as assumed in the *Prologues*. We do know, however, that manuscript traditions, and especially the Latin, tend to collect and transmit introductory and para-textual material, whilst ignoring their origin. Wordsworth and White give, as parallels the Monarchian prologues to the gospels, the Donatist headings in Acts, the Pelagian prefaces to the epistles, and the Priscillian canons,⁷¹ none of which can lay much claim of having originated in orthodox circles. To add the Marcionite *Prologues* to this list does not violate the nature of what we know about the Latin tradition.

7 Conclusion

We set out to investigate Dahl's claim that the *Prologues* are easier to explain if we assume that they belong to a collection of the Pauline letters that has a similar order as Marcion's, contains the same shortened form of Romans, has Laodiceans as the addressee of what we now know as the letter to the Ephesians, and has an attitude to the law and prophets that comes very close to that of Marcion. Yet, our critical evaluation of the evidence and arguments has shown, I believe, that there is no advantage to assume such a parallel and unknown letter collection. The internal order presupposed in the text of the *Prologues* is still only found with Marcion and in no other source, the shape of Romans—with or without chapters 15 and 16—does little to move the argument either way, and the content of the *Prologues*, especially *Prol Rom*, remains a positive argument for Marcionite origin. Admittedly, the riddle of how these prologues entered the Latin manuscript tradition remains unsolved and forms part of the many riddles and unexplained features of the textual tradition of the New Testament. Though Dahl was right in raising and investigating the possibility of the existence of the parallel, unknown collection of Paul, it turns out that, as things stand, this possibility has not turned into a more plausible

Romanum nahezu gleichzeitig voraussetzen. Auch das ist nicht vollkommen ausgeschlossen, aber doch eher unwahrscheinlich."

71 W-W, 41. Not all of these are universally accepted as going back to non-orthodox authorship.

or a more economical explanation for the *Prologues* than was suggested back in 1907 by de Bruyne.

Commenting on whether the Muratonian canon presumed a differently shaped collection of Paul's letters, David Trobisch writes, "Fragt man nach der Wahrscheinlichkeit der beiden Vermutungen, so meine ich, daß eine Interpretation, die ohne die Annahme einer einzigartigen, anderweitig nicht bezeugten Ausgabe auskommt, unbedingt der Vorzug zu geben ist."⁷² To me it seems that these words are equally applicable to the discussion of the origin of the Marcionite prologues to the *Corpus Paulinum*.

72 David Trobisch, *Die Entstehung der Paulusbriefsammlung: Studien zu den Anfängen christlicher Publizistik* (Freiburg; Göttingen: Universitätsverlag; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 44.