

## **The Fourfold Gospel and the Gospel of Jesus Christ**

1. The Problem of Four Diverse Gospels
  - a. All claim to be the one gospel of Jesus Christ
  - b. All diverge from one another in various ways.  
Examples:
    - i. The passion narrative
    - ii. The resurrection narrative
2. Efforts to Solve the Problem by Adopting a Single Gospel
  - a. The focus on one gospel: Marcion
  - b. Efforts to harmonize the four gospels
    - i. Justin
    - ii. Theophilus of Antioch
    - iii. Tatian
  - c. Efforts to smooth over the differences
3. The Response of the Early Church
  - a. The response itself
  - b. The reasons for this response
    - i. The importance of truthful history and the widely acknowledged antiquity of the four gospels.
      1. Justin Martyr
      2. Quotations and Allusions to the Four
      3. Apocryphal Gospel Titles
        - a. *Gospel of Peter*
        - b. *Gospel of Thomas*
    - ii. The unity of the four gospels on the fundamental principles of the one gospel
      1. Evidence that early Christians agreed on the one gospel
        - a. Evidence from 1 Thessalonians
        - b. Evidence from Galatians
      2. Evidence from the titles of the gospels
      3. Explicit evidence from the second and third centuries
        - a. Muratorian canon
        - b. Origen
        - c. Irenaeus
          - i. The one gospel in four
          - ii. The importance of Acts
- iii. The theological point of a pluriform witness

(over)

1. A pluriform witness prevents erroneous overemphasis on certain theological themes to the exclusion of others.
2. The pluriform nature of the gospel record itself witnesses to the grandeur of the one gospel.
4. The Relevance of the Early Church's Approach to the Modern and Post-Modern Quest for the Historical Jesus
  - a. The importance of history, then and now
  - b. The importance of the fourfold witness to Jesus, then and now

*The following resources were especially helpful in the preparation of this lecture:*

- Blomberg, Craig. *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001
- Fuller, J. M. "Tatianus (1)" pp. 927-33 in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*. Edited by Henry Wace and William C. Piercy. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994 [1911].
- Green, Joel B. "Peter, Gospel of." Pp. 927-29 in the *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997.
- Hengel, Martin. *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000.
- Martin, R. P., "Lord's Supper, The." Pp. 707-709 in the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. Edited by J. D. Douglas. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1982.
- von Harnack, Adolf. *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*. Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth, 1990.
- Wilken, Robert L. *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*. New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1984.