EDITED BY

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TUCKETT

The Oxford Handbook of
EARLY CHRISTIAN
APOCRYPHA

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PART I

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What is Early Christian Apocrypha?

CHRISTOPHER TUCKETT

THE *Oxford Handbook* series has grown considerably since its inception and now covers a very wide range of subject areas. Within 'theological' areas of study, there are already *Handbook*s on 'Jewish Studies', 'Biblical Studies', and 'Early Christian Studies'. In many ways it made sense to the overall editors of the series to have a *Handbook* devoted to the study of Christian 'apocryphal' literature. Delimiting and defining any individual subject area is difficult and runs the risk of overcategorizing, or delineating too narrowly, the area to be studied. On the other hand, some limitation is necessary if a subject is not to become so diffuse and imprecise that it includes everything and anything and thus becomes too vast to try to cover in a reasonable and finite compass. In the case of Christian apocryphal literature, this problem of defining terms and of having some reasonably well-defined limits of the texts and subjects to be included (which in turn might imply what is excluded) is particularly acute. The title chosen by the editors of this volume is 'Early Christian Apocrypha'; yet the problems of trying to pin down what one might mean by such a term, and whether alternative terms might be more appropriate, are by no means trivial; and the history of research in this broad area has shown some variety and developments since its inception.

   In one sense, the issues involved in trying to determine exactly what one means by 'Early Christian Apocrypha' are perhaps slightly less exacting if one is producing a *Handbook* such as the present volume, rather than producing a collection of specific texts under this category. If one has the latter end in view, with an aim of producing a potentially 'comprehensive' collection, then the problems of deciding precisely what to include, and also what to exclude, are particularly pressing. Most editors of such collections regularly say something to the effect that the precise boundaries of their collections are inevitably a little 'rough and ready'. The same applies even more to this *Handbook*, which seeks to provide a number of essays and studies to introduce readers to this material: the precise boundaries of what might be covered here, and what is not covered, are inevitably more than a little imprecise at times. Most would probably presume without question that texts such as the *Gospel of Thomas*, or the *Acts of Peter*, or the 'letter' known as *3 Corinthians*, would receive some coverage; texts such as Justin's *Apology*, or Augustine's sermons, would not be included (unless they witnessed to other texts which are in view), perhaps in part because they do not purport in any way to be written by (or about) New Testament characters. Other texts might be in a 'grey' area in between. Should one be seeking to cover texts such as *1 Clement*, the *Didache*, or the *Gospel of Truth* from Nag Hammadi? (We return to this broad issue later, particularly in relation to the so-called 'Apostolic Fathers'

and the Nag Hammadi texts.) Where then does/should one draw the line between what is to be considered within the category of 'Early Christian Apocrypha' and what should be excluded? Further, is the name the most appropriate one? In the past, some have used the term 'New Testament Apocrypha' instead. What then are the issues in the choice of 'Early Christian' rather than 'New Testament' as qualifying 'Apocrypha'?

Collections of 'apocryphal' literature have been made for some considerable time. One of the earlier ones dates back to the start of the eighteenth century with the *Codex apocryphis Novi Testamenti* of Fabricius (1703). Within the modern era, the seminal collection has perhaps been that associated with the name of Edgar Hennecke (1904), subsequently taken over by Schneemelcher: their *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* has gone through six editions (the most important changes occurred in the third edition (Schneemelcher 1959–64) and the fifth edition (Schneemelcher 1987–9)), with English translations now available of two of them (see Schneemelcher 1963–5 and 1991–2). The latest version of this collection, edited by Markschies and Schröter, has recently appeared, with a slightly changed title, *Antike christliche Apokryphen*, and a much enlarged scope (Markschies and Schröter 2012; the scope is enlarged by including material from a later period, as will be noted. For full discussion of the history of the Hennecke editions and other broader issues, see Markschies 1998.) In the English-speaking world, James's *The Apocryphal New Testament* appeared first in 1924, with a number of subsequent editions; that work was then updated and completely rewritten by Elliott (1993) in his larger volume of the same title. Within the French-speaking world, the two-volume work *Écrits apocyphes chrétiens* has appeared with an extensive range of texts covered (Bovon and Geoltrain 1997; Geoltrain and Kaestli 2002).

Most have taken the word 'Apocrypha', and/or the related adjective 'apocryphal', to be the other side of the coin of the term 'canon' or 'canonical', that is, belonging to the New Testament canon of scripture. What is 'apocryphal' is thus what is not 'canonical'. This serves in one way as a reasonable clarification (provided that it is clear and well defined what is 'canonical'!) but clearly also needs more specificity if it is to be anything like a 'definition': many texts were produced by early (and later) Christians which were not canonical but no one would thereby think of them as 'apocryphal'. Within (relatively) early Christianity, we have writings from church fathers such as Justin, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Augustine, etc. that are not 'canonical' (as being part of the NT canon) but no one would think of calling them 'apocryphal'. Thus many people have taken 'apocryphal' as referring not just to texts which were/are non-canonical, but which also might have had some claim to be canonical.

Whether the term 'apocryphal' should be taken as meaning 'non-canonical' is debatable. The English word 'apocryphal' arises as virtually a transliteration of the Greek word *apokryphos*, meaning 'secret' or 'hidden' (and some have suggested that this should be the primary meaning of 'apocryphal' today). The term only gradually made its way into the vocabulary of Greek writers as being virtually the same as 'not canonical'. In early writings, the word is used to refer to the 'secret' teachings and/or books of, for example, 'Gnostics', both (positively) by those claiming possessions of such traditions and (negatively) by opponents. Thus work known as the *Apocryphon of John* (clearly an important text for some: cf. the existence of multiple versions of the text in the Nag Hammadi library) uses the word 'apocryphon' positively as a quasi-title. The *Gospel of Thomas* speaks (positively) in its opening of the 'secret words' (*logoi apokryphoi*) spoken to Thomas and recorded here in the text. Negatively, Irenaeus uses *apokryphos* alongside *nothos* ('false') to refer to the (secret) books of the Gnostics (*Adv. Haer.* 1.20.1); Tertullian uses *apocrypha* and *falsa* as virtual synonyms (*Pud.* 10.12). Over the course of time, the adjective *apokryphos* comes to

be used in discussions of the NT canon to refer to books which were not included, though by no means uniformly. For example, Eusebius (*Hist*. *Eccl*. 3.25) has a number of categories and corresponding words or phrases: there are writings that are (universally) 'recognized' (*homolegoumenoi*), there are others which are 'disputed' (*antilegomenoi*), others which are 'spurious' (*nothoi*), and all these distinguished from the writings of the heretics which are to be seen not even as 'spurious' but as 'wicked and impious'. In his 39th Festal Letter of 367, Athanasius labels the books to be rejected as '*apokrypha*', though he also mentions alongside those in the canon various texts which are recent but nevertheless useful for reading. (Thus not all non-canonical books were regarded as reprehensible or 'bad'; see further Bovon 2012 and his essay in this volume, 185–95, on 'books useful for the soul'.) In the 'Gelasian Decree' at the end of the fifth century, the word *apokryphos* is first used to refer to all the books which are not to be included in the canon. (For fuller discussion, see Markschies in Markschies and Schröter 2012: 18–21.)

Yet whatever terminology might have been used by writers in antiquity in such discussions, it remains the case that the word 'apocryphal' in English, at least in academic circles, has generally come to mean something akin to 'non-canonical', albeit in discussions about the possibility of texts being considered canonical. And in terms of modern semantics, the meaning of words is determined primarily by their contemporary usage, not by their etymology! Hence not all non-canonical texts are apocryphal, but all apocryphal texts are non-canonical.

(The usage in more colloquial English, whereby 'apocryphal' can mean 'fictitious'—telling an 'apocryphal story' about someone can be taken as implying that the story is untrue—is perhaps less prevalent within academic/scholarly language. All those engaged in 'biblical' studies are familiar with the idea of an 'Old Testament Apocrypha' comprising essentially books which are included in Greek in the Septuagint but are not in the Hebrew Bible. There is no question that such books are 'fictitious' by virtue of this alone!)

Within the history of scholarship, one of the earlier attempts to try to define the category of what might count as 'Apocrypha' was that of Hennecke in his edition of the 'New Testament Apocrypha'. Hennecke proposed including within the category of 'Apocrypha' texts which (1) had been explicitly rejected as possible candidates for being included in the NT canon, but (2) were related in terms of their form and/or content to the NT texts, and (3) were to be dated to a period before the end of the canonizing process of the NT (Hennecke suggested the death of Origen in 254). Further, as already noted, Hennecke entitled his collection 'New Testament Apocrypha'.

For various reasons, all these supposed criteria have become somewhat problematic in subsequent discussion, though there is no clear alternative as to how one might define the category of 'New Testament/Early Christian Apocrypha'. (E.g. in an often-cited comment in the middle of a review of a later edition of Hennecke–Schneemelcher, Klijn wrote that 'it appears impossible to give a definition of these writings', Klijn 1988: 305.) The issue of the date is perhaps the criterion that has become the most questionable since Hennecke's initial proposal (and indeed was dropped by the time of the third edition of Hennecke's own work). Trying to date any of these works is enormously difficult in any case, but texts which many would regard as 'apocryphal' continued to be produced well after the time of the mid third century. (For example, literature about Mary and/or the infancy of Jesus abounded well into the Middle Ages: see e.g. Elliott's essay here, 269–88.) Thus we would be in an almost impossible situation if we tried to exclude texts which were (perhaps!) dated to a time after the mid third century.

On the other hand, the tendency to write texts that relate to the material covered in the NT, but perhaps expanding it and/or filling in gaps in the story as we have it from the NT

texts themselves, has never stopped. One has only to think of modern films, as well as other popular literature (some written for sensational purposes, some for genuinely devotional purposes), to realize that the production of 'apocryphal' material continues up to the present (see e.g. Burke's essay on Early Christian Apocrypha in popular culture, 424–40). In order then to retain some kind of proportion, and to prevent one trying to extend the range of attempted coverage beyond what is feasible, practical, or even possible, some time limit might be desirable. Hence, for example, the latest version of the Hennecke–Schneemelcher compendium (Markschies and Schröter 2012) has set a limit of including texts up to the end of the time of 'Late Antiquity' (which probably means up to about the eighth century). But the result is verging on the limits of the practical: Part 1 alone of the collection, containing only 'gospel' or related texts (so far the only Part published) comprises two large volumes and almost 1500 pages of closely printed text! Similarly, the combined length of the two Pléiade volumes (Bovon and Geoltrain 1997; Geoltrain and Kaestli 2002) is more than 4000 pages. Thus there may be value in distinguishing 'early' Christian Apocrypha from 'later' Christian Apocrypha. (For the purposes of this *Handbook*, the initial intention had been to seek to focus mostly on material stemming from a period up to the fourth century CE. However, a number of the essays here inevitably cover materials from a later date; and in any case, some texts that may have originally been written at a relatively early date are available now only in much later versions, many of which may be substantially different from earlier forms. Thus any time limit, or dividing line, is inevitably artificial, and should probably remain fluid.)

Whether the 'Apocrypha' should cover (only?) texts which claimed to be canonical, and/or were rejected by others as being canonical, may also be problematic if applied too rigidly. It remains unclear how many (if indeed any) of the 'apocryphal' texts were ever conceived explicitly to be competitors for inclusion in an NT canon. Certainly for the earliest texts, this would be all but impossible as there was no NT canon at the time for which any author or text might be vying for inclusion. Hence one should perhaps not talk about texts which 'were' apocryphal or canonical, but rather of texts which *became* apocryphal or canonical. (Cf. the carefully chosen title of the book of Lührmann 2004.) For other texts, their contents may indicate that not only may they not have claimed any 'canonical' status, they did not even claim to be universally available to all Christians. As noted earlier, some texts were apparently written to be deliberately 'hidden' and *not* accessible to all (cf. the *Apocryphon of John*, or the reference to the 'secret words' of Jesus contained in *Gospel of Thomas*). So too if we apply the criterion too strictly, we would exclude texts which made little if any impact: thus, for example, the *Gospel of Mary* is never mentioned by any other ancient writer (either positively or negatively), nor does it make any explicit claim to be rival to, or take a place alongside, the other canonical gospels within an NT canon. (Whether the title in its colophon ('The Gospel according to Mary') is implicitly staking such a claim by using the 'titles' similar to those given to the canonical gospels from a relatively early time is debated.)

Probably we should not insist too much on any demand that an 'apocryphal' text should be one that was staking a claim (or even was seen by others as staking a claim) to be accepted as a canonical text. Such a demand might be too restrictive, and would exclude, for example, texts that may have wished to try to expand some of the canonical texts, perhaps to fill in some of the 'gaps' there, but without ever claiming to be canonical.

Perhaps the criterion that has stood the test of time better than others has been the proposal that 'apocryphal' texts should be related in some way to NT texts with regard to their form and/or content. Thus, at least in very general terms, it has been assumed that an 'apocryphal' text will be similar in (very broad) genre to one or other of the NT texts, that is

that its genre will match one of four main genres of texts in the NT, viz. gospel, acts, letter, and apocalypse. Further, the contents of the text should be broadly comparable to what we find in the NT: thus apocryphal texts might include stories about Jesus, or accounts of 'apostolic' figures, or purport to be letters written by figures of the NT era.

On the other hand, one has to say that any such general rule of thumb has to be taken quite 'liberally'! Most readers of this *Handbook* will be well aware of the problems involved in trying to determine and define the genre of the four canonical gospels (if indeed there is one genre that covers them all). The problem is magnified many times over if one includes non-canonical texts which might claim for themselves the title 'gospel' (e.g. the *Gospel of Thomas*, or the *Gospel of Mary*), and/or other texts which modern scholarship might put into the category of a 'gospel'. Many might work with a very rough-and-ready, broad category of 'gospel' as meaning a text which purports to give information about Jesus and/or teaching by Jesus; but any attempt to determine genre at a more specific level might highlight as many differences between texts as any elements they might share in common. Texts such as the *Gospel of Thomas* provide only a series of sayings of Jesus, leading some to characterize this as a 'Sayings Gospel', which is generically very different from, for example, the Gospel of Mark with its mixture of teaching, narratives, and above all its focus on the passion narrative; some of the texts known now from Nag Hammadi provide teaching given by the risen Jesus to a chosen group of disciples after the resurrection, leading some to call these 'Resurrection Dialogues'. The text known today as the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC 1.3) derives its name from its opening sentence ('The gospel of truth is joy for those who have received from the father of truth … '), and is an extended meditation on the joy available to those with the knowledge of God, but it makes no claim as such to be providing any kind of (further) information about Jesus' life or teaching. Thus the 'gospels', whether self-styled or those labelled as such by modern scholarship, are a very 'mixed bag'. Similar considerations apply to so-called 'acts'. The canonical Acts of the Apostles gives an account of some 'apostles' (though it is notoriously the case that at least half of the book focuses almost exclusively on the activities of Paul, and yet Paul does not appear to be an apostle for the author of Acts); but it does so in a form that makes it at least akin generically to Jewish and/or Graeco-Roman historiographical texts. The (apocryphal) 'acts', usually linked to the name of a specific apostle (e.g. the *Acts of Peter*, the *Acts of Thomas*, etc.), are more akin generically to Graeco-Roman novels and romances. Thus while the later acts bear a superficial resemblance to the canonical Acts, the differences at the generic level are very considerable.

Nevertheless, this broad 'generic' criterion has stood the test of time (so far) with the result that many would still work with a very general idea that 'apocryphal' texts are (at least superficially) similar to canonical texts in being capable of being categorized into 'gospels', 'acts', 'epistles', and 'apocalypses'; further, they are all related in some way to New Testament figures, perhaps as claiming to be written by an NT character as author, or using on an NT figure as the focus of a narrative account. Thus the recent collection of Markschies and Schröter (2012) offer (on their cover sheet) the following 'definition' (or perhaps better rationale) for what is included in their volumes:

> 'Apocrypha' are texts which either have the form of biblical texts which became canonical, or tell stories about characters in the biblical texts which became canonical, or convey words purportedly spoken by these characters.

This assumption about the 'form' of apocryphal writings is reflected also in this *Handbook*: cf. the four main survey essays in Part I of this volume, focusing on 'gospels', 'acts', 'letters', and 'apocalypses'.

One other factor to be borne in mind is that the production of collections of works entitled 'New Testament Apocrypha', or 'Early Christian Apocrypha', for example, at the time of the production of a collection such as that of Hennecke, was with the overall aim of making available to a wider public texts which might otherwise have been unknown. It is in this context that decisions about what to include, and what not to include, were taken. Inevitably, one factor was that texts which are otherwise well known were not included. This means that decisions about what might be 'in' or 'out' are in part based on pragmatic reasons rather than on the basis of deep 'philosophical' ideas about the 'identity' of such texts! The fact is that a number of texts, which some might think qualify for inclusion in any collection of 'Apocrypha' on the basis of whatever 'definition' is concocted, are already very readily accessible for modern readers as part of other collections. For example, the collection of texts known as the 'Apostolic Fathers' is in one way a highly artificial, and relatively recent, collection. It includes a text such as the *Didache*, which purports to be teaching given by the twelve apostles, or by Jesus to the twelve apostles and then to be passed on to others. (There are two quasi-'titles' at the start of the current text, reflecting these possibilities.) Either way, it would seem to qualify for consideration as an 'apocryphal' text in that it purports to give either further teaching of Jesus (hence a 'gospel' text in a very broad sense) or further teaching of the apostles themselves (perhaps then similar to other 'acts'). Yet the *Didache* is readily available in all modern editions of the texts of the Apostolic Fathers and hence is not generally included in the so-called 'Apocrypha'. The same would apply to the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas*. Likewise a text such as the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which has always had a firm place within the 'Apostolic Fathers', is similar (in broad terms) to many apocalypses. Yet such texts are not generally considered as candidates for inclusion in a collection of 'Apocrypha', primarily on the pragmatic grounds that they are readily available for modern readers as part of another collection. Similar considerations apply to the Nag Hammadi (and related) texts. Many of these texts are clearly 'apocryphal' writings in some sense; yet since the discovery of the library, there have been a number of publications making the texts available, often as a corpus. Again, many would then exclude these texts from a possible collection of 'Apocrypha' for the pragmatic reason that duplication of effort in making the texts available to a wider public is unnecessary.

Nevertheless, others have taken a different view, at least in relation to the Nag Hammadi texts, so that one of the latest collections of Early Christian Apocrypha (Markschies and Schröter 2012) does include these texts (though it does not include any texts from the 'Apostolic Fathers'). In the present *Handbook* too, some of the Nag Hammadi texts are considered for detailed discussion. Certainly the *Gospel of Thomas* (the full text of which is only available to us through the Nag Hammadi library) has always been considered a quintessential part of early Christian 'Apocrypha', and is discussed here in some detail (see, e.g. Patterson's essay, 233–49, as well as references in other chapters); so too issues about possible encratite tendencies and attitudes to sexual activity in early Christian texts have often focused on some of the Nag Hammadi material as providing the most important evidence, and these issues too are explored here (see the essay by Hartenstein, 389–406). (Perhaps surprisingly, the (relatively) modern division of texts into groupings that are more than a little artificial still exercises a fairly powerful subconscious influence, so that a text such as the *Didache* gets little mention in this *Handbook*: maybe editors are primarily to blame!)

A final issue to be discussed here concerns the name we give to any such collection. Traditionally, the name 'New Testament Apocrypha' has been used. For example, this was the name used originally by Hennecke (1904, and also in the later editions of Hennecke–

Schneemelcher); it was also the name used by the English edition of James (1924), and retained in the complete reworking of that in the collection of Elliott (1993). The nomenclature has however been criticized heavily by some (see especially Junod 1983 and 1992).

The reasons given for questioning the use of such language are various. It is said that perhaps the language used may be misleading: 'the' New Testament is a reasonably well-defined body of texts with clear limits and boundaries set; does talk about 'New Testament Apocrypha', or even '*the* New Testament Apocrypha' suggest an equally well-defined group of texts with clear boundaries? Everything said so far in this Introduction should make clear that such an idea is a bit of a nonsense, and hence it might be better to find an alternative to the term 'New Testament Apocrypha'.

Another reason for questioning the term is that it might be taken as implying that all Christian 'apocryphal' literature relates primarily to NT figures and/or texts. This is clearly not the case. It is widely accepted that the so-called *Ascension of Isaiah* is a Christian text, but which takes as its starting point the figure of the OT prophet Isaiah. So too the expansions of the Jewish apocalypse known as *4 Ezra*, now present in the text generally known as 2 Esdras (chs 1–2 of 2 Esdras are often known as *5 Ezra*, chs 15–16 as *6 Ezra*), are both Christian 'apocalypses' now appended to *Jewish* 'apocryphal' writings. (See Bauckham's essay, 115–40.) *4 Ezra* and 2 Esdras are often assigned to the 'Apocrypha' of the Old Testament. In other cases, any attempt to distinguish clearly between Jewish and Christian materials in texts is extremely complex. Thus it is still debated whether the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* represent (a) Jewish text(s), or Jewish material which has been worked over subsequently by Christians, or represent (a) Christian text(s) throughout. Either way, the *Testaments* clearly belong in the category of 'apocryphal' texts; they do not relate primarily to New Testament figures or narratives, yet they may be part of Christian apocryphal literature.

With these factors in view, it is probably misleading and unhelpful to talk any more about 'New Testament Apocrypha'. Hence, the trend in recent years has been to move to talking rather about 'Early Christian Apocrypha' (cf. the new title given to the latest edition—Markschies and Schröter 2012—in the line of continuity reaching back to Hennecke: *Antike christliche Apokryphen*; also the work of French-speaking colleagues over a number of years: cf. the title *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* in Bovon and Geoltrain 1997 and Geoltrain and Kaestli 2002). The title chosen for this *Handbook* reflects this developing trend too in moving away from any mention of the 'New Testament' as such in the title and replacing this with the designation 'Early Christian'.

The editors are fully aware that even this new title may beg as many questions as it seeks to answer. (How early is 'early'? How can/should one define what is 'Christian'? How overtly 'Christian' does a text have to be to qualify for this description?) Nevertheless, it is believed that this title is perhaps more satisfactory than the older, traditional title. Further, the aim of this *Handbook* (as with all the OUP *Handbook*s) is not to provide the last word on any particular subject. Its primary aim is just as pragmatic as that of editors who have sought to compile collections of 'Apocrypha' to make the texts more easily accessible for readers (and who then had to decide what to include and what not to include). The purpose of this *Handbook* is to provide various essays which will enable people to be introduced to some of the relevant material (especially the essays in Part I here), and to the issues which are live ones in current debates about the texts concerned (the essays in Part II). The precise limits which are placed around the material are then not that important. What is perhaps more important is to realize precisely this! And it is also important to recognize that the

category of 'Early Christian Apocrypha' is a very fluid one, and that attempts to pin down the category with precise definitions are doomed to failure.

Much of this literature reveals a breadth and range of early Christian piety that almost inevitably has been in danger of being lost: the very fact that much of this literature has to take its place alongside the texts of the New Testament canon, along with the canonical status of the New Testament, has meant that this 'other' literature has often been swamped, ignored, at times even suppressed. Texts that were not canonical were copied far less frequently than their canonical counterparts, they were read less frequently, and as a result they were often 'lost' and/or forgotten—until sometimes emerging to the light of day in the modern era due to chance discoveries of previously lost manuscripts. It is hoped that this *Handbook* will provide a small contribution to making these 'lost' texts better known, and increase our understanding and appreciation of the wide range of Christian piety to which they give witness.

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CHAPTER 2

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TEXTS ABOUT JESUS

Non-canonical Gospels and Related Literature

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JÖRG FREY

INTRODUCTION

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Scholarly and Public Interest

FROM the earliest collections of Early Christian Apocrypha or 'New Testament Apocrypha' (on the history of such collections, see Markschies 2012a: 91–104), extra-canonical material about Jesus, or 'apocryphal gospels', have strongly fascinated not only scholars but also a wider public. More than other non-canonical texts, such as apocryphal acts of various apostles, pseudonymous apostolic epistles, church orders, or visionary and apocalyptic texts, the traditions concerning Jesus could be considered as a possible source for the very origins of Christianity, the life and teaching of its foundational figure, and thus providing a supposedly more original view of the truths and claims of Christianity. Since the Enlightenment, critics of Christian dogma have raised the suspicion that in the canonical Gospels, as collected, canonized, and transmitted by the church, the truth, most clearly seen in the original message of Jesus, was already contaminated by secondary elements, so that the pure truth had to be searched for behind or beyond the canon.

Good examples that illustrate the search for a more original truth 'beyond' the traditions and doctrines of the church include the speculations about a more original and non-Trinitarian 'Nazarene' Christianity in the works of the Deist John Toland (Toland 1718) and the more precise suggestion of a 'Nazarene source' behind the canonical Gospels in the writings of the Enlightenment theologian and philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (Lessing 1777/8), one of the pioneers of modern gospel research. Lessing could refer to the opaque tradition from Papias (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16) that Matthew had originally written his gospel 'in the Hebrew "dialect"', a tradition that has strongly stimulated (and also confused) the debate on Jewish–Christian gospel traditions. Thus Jewish–Christian testimonies in particular were often supposed to be less influenced by later church dogmatics and to represent a more original type of Christianity. In the late nineteenth century, collections of non-canonical sayings of Jesus were assembled with the underlying idea of reconstructing a more original gospel (Resch 1889: 40–75) or even a less Jewish image of Jesus (Chamberlain 1901). This was the scholarly context in which the first fragments from the papyrus treasures of Oxyrhynchus (P. Oxy. 1, 654 and 655, now considered manuscripts of the *Gospel of Thomas*) were first published and discussed. The discovery of the Coptic version of the *Gospel of Thomas* in Codex II from Nag Hammadi in

1945 gave a strong stimulus to the hope of discovering a more original image of Jesus; this was especially influenced by the fact that the Jesus of the *Gospel of Thomas* seems to represent a different concept of Christianity, which is less dogmatic and less eschatological than that of the canonical Gospels, which lacks their focus on Jesus' death and resurrection, and which does not contain miracle stories, but presents a more individualistic or even 'esoteric' message. The hope for such a 'new' and 'different' image of Jesus, or even a new possibility for reconstructing a different 'historical Jesus' on the basis of these 'other gospels' (cf. Cameron 1982; Crossan 1985 and 1991), has also accompanied the discovery, publication and discussion of numerous other apocryphal Jesus traditions, e.g. the *Gospel of Peter*, the *Secret Gospel of Mark*, the *Gospel of Mary*, the fragment from Papyrus Egerton 2, the 'Unknown Berlin Gospel Fragment' P. Berol. 22200, or, most recently, the *Gospel of Judas*. But contrary to the anti-dogmatic 'hidden agenda' of modern public debate and the provocative claims of some scholars (e.g. from the so-called 'Jesus Seminar') addressing present religious debates, especially in North America, scholarship has in most cases questioned the suggested early dates of these works and has cautioned against premature hopes for a 'revolutionary' discovery of the 'true' Jesus. Apart from a few exceptions, these apocryphal texts at best demonstrate the variety of perspectives on Jesus within early Christianity of the second and third centuries, the multifaceted reception of the figure of Jesus, and the tendencies in piety and theology of different groups of Jesus' followers in their different ethnic, social, regional, and doctrinal settings. Only in very few instances can we reasonably discuss whether there is some additional information about the historical Jesus or even possibly authentic testimony to his sayings to be found in any of these texts.

Gospel Genre and Gospel Titles

In published collections of 'New Testament Apocrypha', texts are usually grouped according to the genres of the writings of the New Testament: (a) gospels, (b) 'apostolic' material (epistles and acts of different apostles), (c) apocalypses, and (possibly as a further category, though not contained in the New Testament) (d) church orders. Such a distinction presupposes a clear idea about the genre 'gospel'. The ancient use of the term, however, shows great diversity and appears to have developed over time, so that the question 'What is a gospel?' has been the subject of intense debates. Some of the non-canonical texts called 'gospel' in the second or third century, or in later lists of 'disputed' texts, differ widely from the form of the four canonical 'gospels' or from their earliest example, Mark. On the other hand, other texts closely related to gospel materials were not called a 'gospel'. Thus, the genre 'gospel' cannot be defined formally from the ancient usage of the term, but is rather a modern scholarly concept, and the range of 'texts about Jesus' goes beyond what people in antiquity, or indeed modern scholars, call a 'gospel'.

How do 'gospels' fit into the range of ancient literature? Classical form criticism considered the canonical Gospels to be totally unliterary writings. Other scholars have studied the relationship between them (or primarily Mark) and other ancient literary genres, such as biblical and Hellenistic-Jewish historiography, so-called 'aretalogies' (accounts of the deeds of 'divine men'), Hellenistic novels such as the widespread story of Alexander the Great, and biographies of philosophers (cf. Lucian's *Demonax* or Philostratos' *Life of Apollonius*) or other figures. At present, scholars see the closest analogies in the Graeco–Roman *bios*, e.g. in Plutarch's or Suetonius' biographies (cf. Burridge 2004: 212); but they also point to the fact that Mark actually combines in a creative manner narrative,

biographical, historical, and even dramatic elements with a kerygmatic intention, thus creating a new genre of its own. Matthew in his expansion of Mark, Luke in extending the story by a second volume, and John by inserting more dialogical and dramatic elements, generally follow the genre pattern originally established by Mark and also the range of his story, from Jesus' encounter with John the Baptist until his death and resurrection (with Matthew and Luke adding birth stories and genealogies, and John adding a 'prologue'). From the non-canonical gospels, as far as we can see, only a very limited number consists of a similar narrative of Jesus' (life and) ministry: the majority seem to differ from the genre of the canonical Gospels and represent different kinds of 'gospels'.

From the second century onwards, the term *euaggelion* is used with reference to quite different types of texts: not only 'narrative gospels' (such as the canonical Gospels) but also collections of sayings (*Gos. Thom.; Gos. Phil.*), dialogues between Jesus (esp. the exalted one) and some disciples (*Gos. Mary; Gos. Judas*, etc.), and other texts somehow related with Jesus could be called a 'gospel'. Scholars have discussed whether these different 'gospel genres' already originated in the first century, even before the redaction of the canonical Gospels (Robinson and Koester 1971) or whether they actually represent a later development of the gospel genre and terminology. These debates are linked with the issue of the date of composition of some non-canonical gospels (especially the *Gos. Thom.*), and with the question whether apocryphal texts such as the *Gos. Thom.* can be assembled with pre-canonical sources (such as the Sayings Source Q) for reconstructing the genre of a collection of sayings or 'Sayings Gospel' as another original gospel genre that lacks narrative elements and thus especially the passion narrative. Some scholars have speculated even more daringly about early sources behind some non-canonical gospels (*Gos. Pet.; Dial. Sav.*), which were supposed to pre-date even the redactional stage of the canonical Gospels (Crossan 1985). But given the relatively late date of the preserved manuscripts, the assumption of first-century sources behind these texts is rather improbable. The gospel genre seems to originate in the composition of Mark's narrative, whereas the sources of the canonical Gospels (Q and possible early collections of miracles or an early account of the passion) cannot be called 'gospels' in the sense of the genre created by Mark.

The inscriptions or titles of the canonical Gospels ('according to [Greek *kata*] Mark/Luke/Matthew/John') still point to the fact that originally the term 'gospel' (Greek *to euaggelion*) was not used to refer to a book but to the content of the message of salvation, the 'good news' about the God's eschatological salvation (thus, e.g., in Paul: Rom 1.16–17). This means that there was not a plurality of 'gospels', but only *one* gospel (about, or of, Jesus Christ), which was then presented according to the testimony of different authors, as the later gospel titles phrase it. Mark 1.1 ('The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ …') still preserves the original meaning of 'gospel' as message of salvation but probably implies a double reference to the message (*about* or *preached by* Jesus Christ) *and* the book that begins with this verse and communicates the salvific message. Thus Mark 1.1 is the point of departure for the use of the word *euaggelion* to refer to a 'book' containing 'the' gospel or (later) also more generally to material about Jesus.

The *subscriptions and inscriptions* '*euaggelion kata Markon*' etc. or simply '*kata Markon*' etc. were probably added later to the original text. At the end of the second century, e.g. in Irenaeus, these titles are already well known, and slightly later, around 200 CE, the subscription of Luke occurs together with the inscription of John in a manuscript, the Bodmer Papyrus P[75]. Hengel (1985) argues that the gospel titles should not be dated too late, because some kind of 'inscription' was required as soon as there were different gospels in the 'shrine' of a community. Thus the inscriptions probably originated in the early second century. Their form ('the gospel *according to* …', not 'the gospel of …') still preserves the

idea of one gospel according to different witnesses. Even when these texts were collected in the second century, the gospel was still considered *one*. It is significant that, when Irenaeus refers to non-canonical gospels, he uses the genitive 'the gospel of …', not the form 'the gospel according to' (cf. Aune 2013: 19).

'Texts about Jesus' and the Classification of the Material

The range of non-canonical 'gospels', mentioned in patristic authors or in lists of accepted and rejected works, is very wide. The titles of works mentioned include gospels attributed to various apostles (Peter, Thomas, Bartholomew), to all of them collectively (*Gospel of the Twelve*), or to other early witnesses (*Gos. Mary; Gos. Judas*). Other references point to gospels attributed to particular groups (e.g. *Gospel according to the Hebrews; Gospel of the Egyptians*), or mention gospel writings supposedly used, or even forged, by deviant groups (e.g. Ebionites) or under the name of a certain teacher or heretic (e.g. the *Gospel of Basilides*, mentioned by Origen). Other titles express a particular claim (e.g. *Gospel of Truth*; also by use of the word *apokryphos* in the *Apocryphon of John*). From some works, only the title is known; other preserved titles have been linked with texts or fragments discovered from ancient manuscripts (such as *Gos. Thom., Gos. Judas*, and *Gos. Pet.*).

The material is difficult to classify, and the editions and selections of texts follow different criteria. Traditionally scholarship distinguishes between a number of corpora or (somewhat arbitrary) collections, such as 'New Testament Apocrypha', 'Apostolic Fathers', Early Christian Apologists, and Patristic Literature. Often the corpus from Nag Hammadi is also considered separately, although some of the Nag Hammadi texts (e.g. *Gos. Thom.; Gos. Phil.*) are usually also included in collections of the New Testament Apocrypha or the apocryphal gospels. The earlier definition of 'New Testament Apocrypha' has been increasingly questioned in scholarship. In his update of Hennecke's collection, Schneemelcher (1987: 1) still kept the traditional criteria: 'New Testament Apocrypha' are writings of an early date (second/third century CE) before the supposed closure of the New Testament canon that maintain the form and genre of New Testament writings. The completely new edition of 'Ancient Christian Apocrypha' by Markschies and Schröter practically abandoned these criteria (cf. Markschies 1998 and 2012a: 2–9): with regard to genre and contents, the diversity among the non-canonical 'texts about Jesus' is acknowledged, and in view of the continuing tradition and the late date of most of the manuscripts, it is often impossible to establish the date of a particular text in the second or third century, or to set a chronological limit at any point in this period. With respect to many of these 'apocryphal' texts, it would be quite odd to assume that they were originally intended to be accepted for public reading in the church, or that they were thought to become part of a collection of 'canonical' writings. Some of them were simply written for 'entertainment' or as 'literature for the soul' (cf. Bovon 2013), and many simply mirror the piety of the average church rather than that of marginal or deviant groups (cf. Markschies 2013) whereas others do represent a particular ideological viewpoint. In view of these observations, any definition or limitation of the collection according to corpora, genre, or date is thus somewhat arbitrary.

Within the framework of a handbook on Early Christian Apocrypha, a survey on 'texts about Jesus' can omit the classical non-Christian testimonies about Jesus (cf. Evans 1994; Gemeinhardt 2012), and for practical reasons I will include only a small selection of texts from Nag Hammadi (cf. Franzmann 1996). With regard to *genre*, I will adopt the basic

distinction between narrative gospels, dialogue gospels, and sayings collections, but take into consideration that there is much variety within these groups of texts, and that the 'related literature' has to be included as far as possible. With regard to *contents* it is quite interesting that only a few narrative texts apparently cover the whole range of Jesus' ministry (as do the canonical Gospels), whereas others focus on filling particular lacunae in the tradition, e.g. Jesus' ancestry, infancy stories, particular aspects of the crucifixion, or discourses or dialogues of the risen Jesus. The latter often focus on a reinterpretation of Jesus' earthly appearance, thus representing a particular theological (sometimes 'gnostic') viewpoint. With regard to the *ideological framework* of the text, scholars have often singled out 'Jewish–Christian' and 'gnostic' gospels, although both categories are strongly debated and the particular viewpoint has to be discussed separately for any given text. With regard to the *form of preservation*, we have to consider material of very different character: scattered sayings from patristic authors and texts or from particular gospel manuscripts (the so-called agrapha), fragmentary texts from quotations or references in patristic authors and texts, fragmentary texts from ancient papyri and parchment codices discovered in modern times, and rather few 'complete' texts in some stage of the (more or less fluid) textual development.

The following presentation will combine some of the aspects mentioned above. Starting with the scattered sayings of Jesus and the fragmentary 'gospels' on newly discovered papyri, the relevant texts will be grouped according to genre, contents, and particular viewpoints. Extensive information and discussion together with presentation of the texts can be found in the most recent and comprehensive work, *Antike Christliche Apokryphen* vol. 1, edited by Markschies and Schröter (in German), which replaces the earlier vol. 1 of the fifth/sixth edition of Hennecke and Schneemelcher's standard work (Schneemelcher 1987), which is also available in an English translation (Schneemelcher 1991). Other English translations, with some introduction and commentary, may be found in the work of Elliott (1993) and more briefly in Ehrman and Pleše (2011). Other standard collections include the French edition by Bovon and Geoltrain (1997) and the very comprehensive Spanish edition by de Santos Otero (2006), which also includes some original texts.

SAYINGS, FRAGMENTS, AND TEXTS ABOUT JESUS AND THEIR PROBLEMS: A SURVEY

Scattered Sayings of Jesus ('agrapha')

One category of the apocryphal Jesus tradition consists of the large number of scattered sayings attributed to Jesus in texts other than the canonical Gospels. They are called 'agrapha', 'unwritten (sayings)' (cf. Schröter 2013: 32–8), although they are not taken from an unwritten, oral tradition but mostly from other literary contexts. Although the distinction is not always clear, scholars usually include only sayings attributed to the earthly Jesus in this category: words of the risen or heavenly Jesus are usually excluded.

In an early collection of these sayings, Resch (1889) brought together 194 examples from New Testament manuscripts or patristic texts, thereby hoping to reconstruct an 'original gospel' from these sayings. The collection was extended by others, including a collection of numerous sayings of Jesus in Arabic from later Muslim authors (Asín y Palacios 1919, 1926; cf. Eißler 2012). Some of the sayings assembled by Resch were later identified as part of newly discovered gospels such as the *Gos. Thom.* (e.g. the saying about the fire, *Gos. Thom.* 82).

The wide range of the agrapha shows the distribution of Jesus tradition all over late antiquity. However the category is somewhat unclear, since it encompasses sayings from very different sources: not only from biblical texts (e.g. Acts 20.35) and manuscript variations (cf. Luke 6.5 Codex D), non-canonical gospel fragments, 'apostolic' texts, liturgies, and church orders, but also from Manichaean and Mandean writings, Rabbinic and other Jewish traditions, the Koran, and later Muslim texts. Using various criteria for authenticity, some scholars have critically reduced the collection to a very small number of possibly early and authentic sayings (Jeremias 1963; Hofius 2012), whereas others present the whole range of sayings without regard to their date. As a consequence, the collections differ between minimalist (Hofius 2012: seven sayings) and maximalist (Stroker 1989: 266 sayings; Berger and Nord 1999: 1112–62: 270 sayings) approaches.

Among the agrapha we find, e.g., a variation of the Golden Rule (1 Clem. 13.2), the prophecy of schisms and heresies in the end time (Justin, *Dial*. 35.3), an apocalyptic teaching of eschatological fertility (Irenaeus, Haer. 5.33.3–4), the metaphorical exhortation to be good money-changers (Origen, *Comm. Jo*. 19.7.2; *Ps.-Clem. Hom*. II 51:1), and the philosophical saying about the world as a bridge (transmitted as an inscription at a mosque in India). Many of the sayings are transformations of earlier (canonical) material. The sayings demonstrate the variety in the reception of the figure of Jesus and his teaching in different contexts and the 'productivity' of even later communities. Some sayings were probably transmitted independently, without being related to Jesus' appearance and history, as scattered sayings for meditation, like other 'classical' sayings of wise men, desert fathers, and spiritual teachers. With a literary context lacking, the interpretation of many sayings remains somewhat obscure. It seems unwise, however, to limit the presentation according to the issue of authenticity. Although most agrapha do not contribute anything to the image of the Jesus of history, they offer fascinating perspectives on the reception of Jesus and the sayings tradition in a wide range of texts and contexts.

Fragments of Unknown Gospels on Papyrus or Parchment

Interpreters are in only a slightly better situation in relation to works fragmentarily transmitted on papyrus or parchment manuscripts discovered since the late nineteenth century. Time and again, new papyri with canonical or possibly non-canonical gospel texts are discovered, sometimes in storage boxes from purchases decades ago (thus P. Berol. 22200), others are released after a long 'rest' in the anonymity of a bank safe (thus Codex Tchacos with the *Gos. Judas*). So the material has grown considerably and is still growing. Most of the texts are extant in only one (fragmentary) copy, and from the codicological evidence we can get some insight about the manner in which the text was used and about its status in a given community. But often the fragmentary state of preservation precludes any clear decision about the literary character of the work. Some works discovered on papyrus fragments have later been identified with works known from other ancient sources or canon lists, thus *Gos. Pet*. (fragmentarily preserved in P. Cair. 10759), *Gos. Thom*. (with three fragmentary Greek papyrus manuscripts P. Oxy. 1, 654, and 655, and the Coptic version from Nag Hammadi), *Gos. Mary* (P. Ryl. 463 and P. Oxy. 3525). In some cases, there is an open discussion whether other papyri can be linked with a known text. Thus, for example, P. Oxy. 2949 and 4009 have been proposed as comprising parts of the *Gos. Pet*. This may be true for P. Oxy 2949 where there are some textual overlaps with the text of *Gos. Pet*. 3–5 (from the later Akhmim Codex), whereas the suggestion remains quite speculative for P.

Oxy. 4009. Thus, most of the papyrus manuscripts listed in this category are the only and quite fragmentary remains of otherwise unknown writings. The literary character of those works is therefore quite difficult to determine.

(a) *P. Oxy. 840* (Kruger 2005 and 2009; Nicklas 2012), edited in 1908 by Grenfell and Hunt, is a parchment sheet with a miniature writing (fourth or fifth century) on both sides, and some characters in red ink (therefore it was supposed that it was used as an amulet). The otherwise unknown text is possibly part of a narrative text of unknown length and structure. It contains the end of a section of teaching by Jesus and a subsequent scene with Jesus taking his disciples into the temple and debating with a leading priest about purity rites: Jesus (always called σωτήρ, 'saviour') and his disciples do not need to undergo purification rites when entering the sanctuary because they are pure (through baptism?), in contrast with the Pharisees and priests who are called blind (cf. John 9.39–41) and accused of practising merely external purity while being morally impure. Drawing on the use of σωτήρ, Kruger (2005) called the text 'Gospel of the Savior', thus providing confusion, as a different text preserved in Coptic in P. Berol. 22220 (the 'Berlin Gospel Fragment') had been given the same title by its first editors (Hedrick and Mirecki 1999). The frequent use of the title σωτήρ for Jesus, however, merely reflects the language in some Christian communities since the second century, but it is not specific enough to provide the name for a particular text.

The text on P. Oxy. 840 shows detailed knowledge of purity rites around the temple, but presupposes that Jesus' followers did not practise them, due to a metaphorical understanding of purity. While the canonical Gospels remain silent about Jesus' own practice of purity when visiting the temple, although pointing to his free attitude concerning table fellowship and food purity (cf. Mark 7.1–23), the present text is the earliest explicit testimony that Jesus did not practise purity rites when entering the temple. The theme and some phrases are paralleled in the canonical Gospels and fragments of *Gos. Heb.*, but it is hardly possible to prove any direct dependence. The polemics against temple purity might still suggest a Jewish–Christian milieu. The predominant christological title *soter* points to a date no earlier than the second century. But in spite of that, the text could be one of the earliest extant non-canonical gospels (Schröter 2013: 44–9). But there is another possibility that should be considered: the text could also represent a discussion between later different early Christian groups (cf. Bovon 2000), addressing debates on Christian initiation (Buchinger and Hernitscheck 2014), and in that case the text is not necessarily part of a narrative gospel. The fragmentary character does not allow any further conclusions, and the example shows how uncertain our speculations actually are.

(b) *P. Egerton 2* (Nicklas 2009; Porter 2012a), first published by Bell and Skeat in 1935, consists of four papyrus sheets written in the second half of the second century with some particular short forms for sacred names. The same text is also apparently attested in P. Cologne 255. The extant text contains parts of an unknown narrative gospel (sometimes called the 'Egerton Gospel') of unknown structure with several episodes paralleled by Synoptic and Johannine passages: a debate about Moses and the law (cf. John 5.39, 45), followed by the attempt of the Jewish leaders to arrest Jesus (with the significant note that the 'hour' of his deliverance had not yet come; cf. John 7.30, 8.20), the healing of a leper, a debate on taxes, and a miracle performed near the Jordan. There has been extensive debate whether the text is independent of the canonical Gospels or even provides a source of John, or whether it is dependent on the Synoptics and on John. As usual in the second century,

canonical texts are not yet formally quoted, but there is strong reason to assume that the author knew and used them, especially John (Zelyck 2013).

(c) The difficulties are more evident when we consider the state of preservation of other texts:

P. Berol. 11710 (Kraus 2009: 228–39) consists of two papyrus sheets written sloppily on both sides (with a Coptic text on the back of the second sheet) and was possibly used as an amulet. The Greek text is part of a dialogue between Jesus and Nathanael, alluding to John 1.49 and 1.29, but unlike in John, Nathanael addresses Jesus as Rabbi, and John 1.29 is apparently part of the dialogue with Nathanael as well. The text might have been taken from an apocryphal gospel or represent another free form of reception of John 1, but the small fragments do not allow any further conclusions regarding date and text type.

P. Vindob. G. 2325, the 'Fayum Fragment' (Kraus 2009: 219–27), written in the third century on only one side, gives a brief dialogue between Jesus and Peter, paralleled with Mark 14.26–30 or Matt. 26.30–4, but it is unclear whether it is an excerpt, a paraphrase, or a part of an unknown gospel.

P. Oxy. 210 (first edited by Grenfell and Hunt in 1899) is a papyrus leaf written on both sides in the third century and was first supposed to represent a part of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. The fragmentary narrative text provides a dialogue between Jesus and some others, drawing on the canonical Gospels and other biblical traditions (cf. Porter 2012b).

P. Oxy. 1224 comprises two papyrus fragments written in the fourth century on both sides. Page numbers indicate that the sheets were part of a larger codex. The text contains variations of Synoptic sayings, apparently in a narrative context, but any further conclusions are impossible due to the brevity and fragmentary character of the text.

P. Merton II 51 is a very fragmentary papyrus sheet from the third century with a text paralleled by Synoptic sayings from an unknown gospel text or a sermon.

P. Cair. Cat. 10735, a papyrus sheet written on both sides in the sixth or seventh century, contains text related to Jesus' birth, the flight to Egypt (Matt. 2.13), and the annunciation (Luke 1.36), but it remains uncertain whether it is part of a gospel or rather part of a sermon or commentary.

(d) Some other papyrus fragments (*P. Ryl. 464, PSI XI 1200*, and others) are too small and too fragmentary to allow for any clear conclusions.

Fragmentary Quotations from Lost Jewish–Christian Gospels

The next group of testimonies poses quite different problems, because they are almost entirely taken from quotations and references in patristic authors, not directly from any ancient manuscript of these gospels. Church authors from the late second until the fifth century CE refer to a *Gospel according to/of the Hebrews* ('Hebrews' probably as a term for 'Jewish Christians' outside of Palestine) or other texts said to be used by Jewish–Christian groups, such as Ebionites or Nazarenes/Nazoreans, and in some cases it is explicitly noted that the text is written in Hebrew letters or in the 'Hebrew' (which often means Aramaic) language. Especially Jerome, who was eagerly looking for the *hebraica veritas*, presents quotations or variant readings from such sources. The introductory remarks vary, but generally Jerome gives the impression that there was only one Jewish–Christian gospel writing which he calls the gospel 'of the Hebrews', 'used by the Nazoreans'. He even considers that work to be the original Hebrew Gospel of Matthew (as authors assumed from Papias' note in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16). It is uncertain, however, how much of these

text(s) Jerome actually knew. His later references are more cautious, possibly due to a growing awareness of the differences with canonical Matthew and also between the sources to which he was referring (Frey 2012a: 581–7).

While Jerome's views were the source for medieval and early modern authors, including Lessing's reference to the 'Nazarene' original gospel as the source of the Synoptics, critical scholarship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries came to the conclusion that things are more complicated and that there was not only *one* Jewish–Christian gospel text. At first, Epiphanius' quotations from a gospel writing used by fourth-century Ebionites were distinguished from quotations from other sources and are today usually assembled under the title *Gospel of the Ebionites*. Furthermore, scholars felt the need to distinguish between the quotations Jerome apparently took from Origen who had attributed them to the (Greek) *Gospel of the Hebrews* and other quotations apparently taken from a Semitic source or giving variant readings from Aramaic. Due to Eusebius' note that already the Jewish Christian teacher Hegesippus quoted from the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and from the 'Syriac' (which probably means Aramaic) Gospel, the majority of scholars also distinguish between a Greek *Gospel of the Hebrews* (as quoted by Clement, Origen, and Didymus) and an Aramaic gospel writing that might have existed already in the late second century (so used by Hegesippus) and was then accessible (at least in parts) to Jerome and Eusebius in the fourth century, although we cannot be certain about the textual status of those traditions which were possibly never definitely 'edited' but were rather fluid and variable from community to community (Frey 2010). Thus the testimonies about ancient Jewish–Christian gospel texts come from between the late second century (Clement) and the fifth century (Latin version of Origen's commentary on Matthew). Later and medieval notes can be left aside because they are dependent on the earlier references, especially on Jerome, and do not show any first-hand knowledge of the Jewish–Christian groups and their texts.

It follows therefore that we have to distinguish between at least three 'works', with considerable uncertainty whether the different authors referring to the same work really had access to the same textual form (cf. Frey 2012a: 593–660):

(a) A *Gospel of (*or *according to) the Hebrews*, quoted by authors from Egypt (Clement, Origen, Didymus) since the late second century, mentioned by Eusebius in his list of disputed texts, and also quoted by Jerome, who adopts some of Origen's quotations but probably presents quotations from another source under the same label. The title *Gospel according to/of the Hebrews* is the only title of a Jewish–Christian gospel preserved from antiquity (the other titles are medieval or modern). Its name may point to its original use among Jewish Christians, possibly in Egypt. The lost work is the only Jewish–Christian gospel writing we can safely date to the second century. From Clement and Origen, we can conclude that its text was Greek and that at least some of their readers had some knowledge of the work and did not reject it, so that it could be used at least as a secondary testimony in their argument.

Only very few of the fragments to be attributed to this work are paralleled in the canonical Gospels, and even those differ widely from their parallels. Thus the lost gospel was quite different from the canonical Gospels, even if the church fathers probably selected primarily deviant traditions for their quotations of it. The fragments include a subtly shaped saying on the way to ruling and rest; a fragment on Jesus' baptism with the Spirit longing for 'rest' upon Jesus and addressing him as 'my Son'; a fragment about Jesus' rapture to Mount Tabor (by 'his mother, the Spirit'); a possible reference to the story of the calling of Matthew/Levi; and a fragment of a legendary account of the risen Christ appearing first to

his brother James (which would rival the tradition in 1 Cor. 15.7 that Jesus appeared to James only after he had appeared to Peter and to many others). Didymus also mentions the story of a sinful woman, which may be a tradition parallel to John 7.53–8.11. The work was thus probably a narrative gospel, encompassing Jesus' baptism and temptation, parts of his ministry, and also his (passion and) resurrection, with a story covering roughly the same range as the canonical Gospel story, but told quite differently and with non-Synoptic material. Not all traditions are visibly shaped from a Jewish–Christian perspective, but the first resurrection appearance to James, influences from Jewish wisdom theology, and the idea of the Spirit as Jesus' 'mother' might be significant for Jewish–Christian circles, especially in Egypt. After the crisis of Egyptian Judaism and the disappearance of Jewish–Christian circles in Egypt, the *Gos. Heb.* was probably lost.

(b) From the quotations of the gospel writing used by the Ebionites in Epiphanius' chapter on that Jewish–Christian group (*Pan*. 30), scholars have inferred a *Gospel of the Ebionites*. There is no reason to connect the seven fragments with fragments quoted elsewhere, so Epiphanius is our only testimony for this work. It is, unclear, however, how the Ebionites described by Epiphanius in the fourth century are related to the Ebionites described (in various ways) by earlier authors such as Irenaeus (who said they only used the Gospel of Matthew) and Origen. The fragments that Epiphanius presents include two pieces on Jesus' baptism, and some sayings, one of which is a command to cease from sacrificing. One (possibly opening) passage narrates (in the first-person singular of Matthew) the calling of the disciples in which Matthew is commissioned to narrate the gospel and the disciples are called to be 'twelve apostles for a testimony unto Israel'. Ephiphanius is particularly eager to demonstrate the forgeries of the Ebionites, who are accused of subtle alterations in the wording of the gospels in order to create scriptural legitimation for vegetarianism (as widely practised by Jewish Christians). Thus, according to the Ebionites' gospel, John the Baptist did not eat locusts but cake, and Jesus did not eat from the Passover lamb.

If these changes in relation to the canonical Gospels are reported correctly, the work was clearly a Greek composition, with a clear Jewish–Christian perspective, which is confirmed by the discussion about sacrifices and the topic of the testimony for Israel. The fragments presuppose canonical Matthew and Luke, and the fragment on Jesus' baptism seems to harmonize all three Synoptic accounts so that the work can be characterized as a harmony of the Synoptics which is now attributed to the 'eyewitness' Matthew. This might point to an origin within the second century, before Tatian, but uncertainties remain.

(c) The so-called *Gospel of the Nazarenes/Nazoreans*—a title only used in medieval sources—is generally considered a gospel written in Aramaic, used by Jewish Christians at the time of Jerome, who frequently quotes it (but unfortunately mixes it up with the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and the 'original Hebrew Matthew'). Probably the same work is also cited in two fragments by Eusebius. There might be an early trace of this writing when Hegesippus is said to quote from a 'Syriac' gospel, but this is uncertain. We do not really know how the fourth-century Nazoreans are related to other Jewish–Christian groups described earlier by second- and third-century authors, nor do we know when the traditions were translated and how they were transmitted. But the idea (which was maintained avidly by scholars ranging from Jerome to Lessing) that the Nazarene gospel traditions provide access to the earliest Jesus tradition is clearly an illusion.

It is disputed which fragments can be attributed to this work, and some scholars (Mimouni 2012; Luomanen 2012) generally reject the distinction between the *Gos. Heb.*

and the *Gos. Naz.*, thus reconstructing only one *Gospel of the Hebrews*; but in spite of the difficulties, the question cannot be dismissed which fragments or quotations may reasonably go back to a Semitic version or tradition. There are also a number of marginal glosses in some NT minuscule manuscripts which point to a '*Ioudaikon*' (= 'Jewish Gospel') and were confidently attributed by some scholars to the *Gos. Naz.*, but this attribution (still present in Hennecke and Schneemelcher 1963 and 1987 and Elliott 1993: 13–14) cannot be maintained (cf. Frey 2003 and 2012a: 655–60), and the variants are of no help in reconstructing the *Gos. Naz.* The remaining fragments include different versions of the parable of the talents (where it is not the servant who hid the talent who is rebuked but another servant who spent his talent on whores and flute players), of the rich young man (who is exhorted to help the poor sons of Abraham), and of the healing of the man with the withered hand (who is explained to be a mason who wants to work, rather than needing shamefully to beg). Furthermore, there are a number of otherwise unknown sayings: an alternative tradition about the sign at the moment of Jesus' death, and some variants and explanations from Aramaic, most importantly the petition for bread in the Lord's Prayer as 'our bread for tomorrow'. Not all of the fragments or references are ideologically Jewish–Christian, some of them rather point to a marginalized social milieu. The majority are paralleled in the Synoptic gospels (although some are mentioned only because they provide a varying tradition), but others are unknown from the canonical Gospels. The work was probably a narrative gospel: it contained Jesus' baptism and death and possibly a large part of his ministry in between these two events, but its narrative sequence and structure remain unclear. It was probably dependent on Matthew, but certainly not simply a targumic version of canonical Matthew. It is uncertain whether there was ever an edited version or only a rather fluid textual tradition. It is also unclear whether it was only translated late (as the translation of the gospels into Syriac) or whether it is based on a continuous Aramaic tradition in Aramaic (or Syriac) that goes back to the second (but probably not to the first) century.

THE *GOSPEL OF THE EGYPTIANS*

Some analogous problems are posed with the *Gospel of the Egyptians* which is also preserved only in testimonies and fragments from patristic authors (see Markschies 2012b). In a list of apocryphal gospels, Origen mentions a 'Gospel according to the Egyptians' (*Hom. Luc.* 1.2), but gives no further information. The work is further mentioned with brief (polemical) descriptions of its contents by the heresiologists Hippolytus (*Haer.* 5.7.8–9) and Epiphanius (*Pan.* 67.2.4–5) who link it with heretical groups, the gnostic Naasenes (Hippolytus) and the Sabbelians (Epiphanius), who are each said to use it. Our only real source is Origen's teacher Clement who provides eight citations, but even those are not from first-hand reading, so the work was probably already difficult to access in Alexandria as early as the end of the second century. It should be noted that the text has nothing in common with a Coptic text from Nag Hammadi (NHC III.2 and IV.2) which is sometimes also called 'Gospel of the Egyptians' (Plisch 2012).

The eight fragments are found in the third book of Clement's *Stromata* where Clement is in debate with advocates of asceticism and encratism. Presupposing that the gospel is used by the encratites, he at least partly quotes from their usage, admitting once that he only thinks that the phrase is part of that work (*Strom.* 3.61.1–2). So the precise text of the gospel remains unclear even in view of the fragments. All quotations are linked and point to a dialogue between Jesus and Salome (for reconstructions, see Petersen 1999: 209 and

[Markschies 2012b](#): 673) about death, sin, and redemption, with the core saying 'I have come to destroy the works of the female', and another saying about the end of sexual distinctions: 'When you have trampled on the garment of shame, and when the two become one and the male with the female, to be neither male nor female'. The second saying is also paralleled in *2 Clem*. 12.1–2, *Gos*. *Thom*. 22, and some other texts. From the very scarce sources we can only say that there was a work in second-century Egypt (Alexandria) with the title 'Gospel according to the Egyptians'. The title (like 'Gospel according to the Hebrews') probably points to the circle in which the gospel was known, here to Egyptian Gentile Christians. It is hardly possible to determine its further contents and whether it was merely a 'dialogue gospel' or included other narrative or discourse parts. If the present passage is characteristic, the choice of Salome, who was among the women under the cross and at the empty tomb (Mark 15.40; 16.1) and the idea of the eschatological abolition of sexual distinction rather point to a gnostic text ([Markschies 2012b](#): 681), composed in Egypt at some point in the second century.

Texts about the Jesus' Birth and Infancy

One of the most fertile fields for the production of apocryphal texts was that of Jesus' birth, his family, Mary and her parents, and also Joseph and his role (on which see also [Chapter 3](#)), and his infancy up to the age of twelve. In order to fill the lacunae left in the birth stories of Matthew and Luke, and also due to the interest in Jesus' mother and her purity, texts were composed, combined, and spread in numerous languages and countless manuscripts through the Middle Ages, with great influence on Christian art and piety. We can only briefly characterize the most important texts, the *Protevangelium of James* and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, and provide some information as to the further development (cf. [Pellegrini 2012a](#)).

 (a) Probably the earliest text is the narrative called the *Protevangelium of James*, with 'protevangelium' in the sense that it tells the story before the gospel story. In ancient manuscripts, it was entitled 'Birth of Mary, Revelation of James' (thus, e.g., in P. Bodmer V) or similar, pointing to the birth of the mother of Jesus (cf. [Pellegrini 2012b](#)). Two thirds of the work ([chs 1–16](#)) is about Mary's life: her parents Joachim and the infertile Anna, her birth, the purity of the child at home and her upbringing in the temple, the miraculous divine election of the widower Joseph as husband to protect her, Mary's participation in weaving the temple curtain and the annunciation by the angel, her pregnancy that causes Joseph to abandon her, the accusation of the priests against Joseph, and the testing of both by the water of the ordeal. A brief second part ([chs 17–20](#)) is about Mary's giving birth in a cave, the testimony of the midwife and the unbelief of Salome who investigates Mary's virginity, but is immediately punished: her hand is consumed by fire and only healed when she stretches out to touch Jesus. The final part ([chs 21–4](#)) then tells of the visit of the Magi and the murder of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, who dies to protect his son. In the end, James the (step)brother of Jesus presents himself as the author, so that the narrative appears as family tradition that provides the prehistory of the canonical birth story. Even in the second part, where Jesus' birth is narrated, the christological interest is very limited. Jewish piety and purity concerns are strongly present, yet Mary herself functions as a symbolic temple sacrifice ([Vuong 2011](#)). Numerous biblical references shape the narrative, cf. e.g. the parallel between Anna and biblical Hannah (1 Sam. 1), but there is also a

'doubling' of Jesus' miraculous birth by an earlier miraculous (though not explicitly 'virgin') birth of his mother.

The text is preserved in numerous manuscripts and later translations and expansions. It was already known (at least in its first two parts) to Origen and was probably composed in Greek in the last quarter of the second century. Important motifs, such as Jesus' birth in a cave, the virginity test, and the 'brothers' of Jesus as stepbrothers, were adopted by early church fathers. Although the work was often attributed to a Jewish Christian author, the text shows little knowledge of Palestinian Jewish practice and can be sufficiently explained from a good knowledge of the Old Testament and the canonical birth stories, so that a composition in Syria or Egypt is more plausible. The text became very popular and was widely received (and incorporated into larger compositions) in the Christian East, so that it became influential for liturgy and Mariology (Van Oyen 2013: 298–302; see also Chapter 3). In the West, instead, it was rejected due to the debates about the status of Jesus' 'brothers'. Their interpretation as stepbrothers (i.e. sons of the widower Joseph from an earlier marriage) was later contested by Jerome (who interpreted them as merely cousins), so that the *Protevangelium* was condemned in the *Decretum Gelasianum* (cf. Markschies 2012a: 133–8). Yet in spite of that condemnation, its motifs strongly influenced later piety, and through a reworked version in the *Infancy Gospel of (Ps.-)Matthew*, which was also adopted in the collection of the Golden Legend, the story also became the legendary basis of the nativity cycle in the West (and in Western art).

(b) A very different text is the so-called *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, a sequence of episodes about the child Jesus until the age of twelve from the later perspective of his ministry and divine identity (see Aasgaard 2009; Kaiser 2011). The text is transmitted in numerous languages and recensions, with a complicated textual history. The narrative is attributed to 'Thomas' who is sometimes called 'the Israelite' or 'the Apostle', but there are no close links with other works of the Thomasine tradition, and the text has nothing in common with the *Gos. Thom.* from Nag Hammadi and the Oxyrhynchus fragments (discussed later: see 'Sayings Gospels', section (a)). The text, which was written originally in Greek, was probably composed not earlier than the fifth century, although church fathers such as John Chrysostom polemicize against stories of miracles of the child Jesus before that date (Kaiser and Tropper 2012: 936). Filling the lacuna in Luke between Jesus' birth and his presentation in the Temple, and drawing on numerous other biblical traditions (Van Oyen 2011), the text presents anecdotes about the child Jesus and his miraculous power that are arranged in a loose structure. The miracles are related to the works or sayings of the adult Jesus according to the Synoptics: at the age of five, he makes a model of twelve sparrows from clay, but it is the Sabbath; therefore when Joseph is informed about this incident he rebukes him, but Jesus claps his hands, and the sparrows fly away, so that the Jews are amazed. This well-known episode not only gives a reason why the divine child is allowed to violate Sabbath laws, but also shows that even as a child Jesus had the power of the creator. Furthermore, it symbolically prefigures the commission of the twelve apostles. The child Jesus is helpful to his parents. At the age of six he fetches water for his mother, and when the pitcher breaks, he spreads out his garment, fills it and brings the water home safely. Likewise he assists his father Joseph who has to make a bed for a rich man, but one piece of wood is too short. So the boy Jesus stretches the shorter piece of wood to make it fit, so that Joseph can finish the furniture. But the image of the miracle-working child is also problematic, e.g. when Joseph's attempts to educate him are openly rejected, or when Jesus ridicules a teacher who wants to teach him the alphabet, telling him that he does not know

anything about the first letter. Even more so in the episode when the boy plays in the sand with the son of a certain Annas who scatters Jesus' gathered water, so that Jesus makes him wither like a tree for punishment. In another episode a child dashes against his shoulder, and upon Jesus' curse, the child falls down and dies. With these punitive miracles, the Jesus of the *Inf. Gos. Thom.* strongly differs from the canonical image of Jesus.

(c) In later traditions, the *Inf. Gos. Thom.* was often combined with the *Protevangelium of James* and other material to form larger compositions in various languages.

A large compilation of material of the *Prot. Jas.* and the *Inf. Gos. Thom.* with numerous other miracles and legends, especially from the journey of the holy family to Egypt, is the *Arabic Infancy Gospel*, which was composed, probably from an earlier stage (partly from the Syriac tradition) in the fifth or sixth century, i.e. in pre-Islamic times (Josua and Eißler 2012; Horn 2010: 597–602). Here, the miracles of the child during the flight of the holy family to Egypt and after their return are extensively narrated. The body of the child Jesus, and even his bathwater, has healing power, and a number of figures of the later story of Jesus appear already in his childhood. For instance, the three-year old child already meets the two criminals who would later be crucified with him. Another interesting tradition is the *Armenian Infancy Gospel* from the seventh century (cf. Dorfmann-Lazarev 2010) in which the traditional material is further expanded, e.g. with names of the three Magi as royal brothers, Melqon, king of Persia, Balthasar, king of India, and Gaspar, king of Arabia. Perhaps the most influential compilation was the *Infancy Gospel of (Ps.-)Matthew*, which was called 'The Book about the Origin of the Blessed Mary and the Childhood of the Saviour'. Composed rather late, probably in the seventh or even eighth century, it was spread with the fiction that Jerome had translated a writing of the apostle Matthew. Actually, the work is a combination of an edited version of the *Prot. Jas.*, an account of the flight to Egypt, and a freely edited version of the *Inf. Gos. Thom.*, now integrated together with other canonical and legendary material into one comprehensive story. Included in the Golden Legend, the work influenced pious imagination surrounding the nativity, and also the pictorial cycles of the Life of Mary (cf. Cartlidge and Elliott 2001: 32). Here, we find the source for the widespread image of an ox and an ass at the manger, worshipping the child, but also the legends about the child in Egypt with lions and leopards accompanying the holy family in the desert and the palm tree bending down its branches. The three-year-old child Mary is depicted as an ideal monastic ascetic, studying the law, and the child Jesus is described as a perfect, wise, and almighty being. The traditions about Jesus' birth in a cave and in a stable are combined here by a transfer from cave to stable.

Texts and Traditions about Jesus' Trial, Passion, and Resurrection

Another field for additions and expansions of the canonical tradition was Jesus' passion and resurrection. Whereas the *Gospel of Peter* was probably a larger narrative work, which preserved only a fragment on Jesus' passion, other works focused particularly on expanding the last part of the Jesus story and especially speculations about the underworld, based on the narration of Jesus' descent to Hades.

(a) The *Gospel of Peter*

The *Gospel of Peter* is one of the most vividly discussed apocryphal gospels (cf. Foster 2010; Frey 2013), although the textual basis is slim. Although mentioned by Origen

(*Comm*. *Matt*. 10.17), known to some later fathers, and discussed in a letter by Bishop Serapion of Antioch about 200 CE (in Eusebius, *Hist*. *eccl*. 6.12.2–6), the work is preserved only in fragmentary form in a papyrus codex (P. Cair. 10759) from the sixth century, found in a monk's tomb, where a the text is bound together with fragments of *1 Enoch* and the *Apocalypse of Peter* (Kraus and Nicklas 2004). Attempts to identify some fragments from Oxyrhynchus with the *Gospel of Peter* (Lührmann 2000: 72–95) have been critically discussed, and at least one papyrus manuscript (P. Oxy. 2949) might testify to the existence of the *Gos*. *Pet*. in second/third-century Egypt (Kraus and Nicklas 2004: 55–8). It is uncertain, however, how far the sixth-century text resembles the text known and discussed in the second/third century. The preserved fragment only includes parts of the passion and resurrection narrative, narrated in the first-person singular (of Peter), but the text begins and ends in the middle of a sentence, so it was copied either from a fragmentary manuscript or without attention to the contents of the passage. That the work was probably not very widespread or well known around 200 CE is suggested by the letter of Serapion which shows that the bishop of Antioch did not know the text but only took the opportunity to read it when the community at Rhossus asked him for permission to use it, and then gave the advice not to read it because he had learnt that it was used by some 'docetists'.

Although some scholars have suggested the independence of the work or its sources (Crossan 1985: 125–81), recent research has established the view that it presupposes the Synoptics and John (Foster 2010) and 'rewrites' their material quite freely (Henderson 2011) for particular purposes. According to the ending of the text, the narrative is told from the perspective of Peter as an eyewitness (although Peter also narrates scenes where he could not be present), but it is rather unlikely that the author had any first-hand knowledge of the Palestinian Jewish situation.

The tendencies of the *Gos*. *Pet*. have been noticed and discussed extensively. There is first the tendency to blame the Jews for all hostility against Jesus and to exculpate the Romans: contrary to all canonical Gospels (and to the legal situation) Jesus is sentenced not by Pilate, but by 'King' Herod (*Gos*. *Pet*. 2; it is unclear which Herod is actually in mind); the Jews do not wash their hands (as Pilate did in Matthew), i.e. they are guilty of Jesus' death; and finally Jesus is mistreated and crucified by Jews, not by Roman soldiers. After his death, 'the Jews, elders and priests' acknowledge their responsibility and mourn, but without further consequences. A second aspect is the elaborated resurrection account with Roman soldiers and Jewish elders and scribes as eyewitnesses, camping in front of the sealed tomb of Jesus. At night, a heavenly voice goes forth, the heavens open, two men in shining garments descend, the stone moves aside, the tomb opens, and three men come out, with their heads touching the heaven, but the middle one is taller than the other two. A cross follows, and upon the question from heaven 'Did you preach to the deceased?', the cross answers 'Yes!' This is probably the first fictional eyewitness account of the resurrection as such, with the cross speaking as if it was as a living being, and with Jewish and Roman eyewitnesses who utter the confession of the centurion from Mark 15.39, though this does not mean that they come to faith. The obvious tendency here is to present an 'objective' account of the resurrection as a miracle, with 'neutral' witnesses (but no women) at the tomb. Probably the episode was followed by another scene of Jesus' appearance to his disciples in Galilee. A much-discussed aspect is whether *Gos*. *Pet*. is 'docetic' (as suggested by Serapion's epistle) or not. The fact that Jesus (also called *kyrios* and *soter*) is silent, 'as if he felt no pain' (*Gos*. *Pet*. 10), and that his last word on the cross is 'my strength (*dynamis*), my strength you have left me' (*Gos*. *Pet*. 19) could point either in that direction, or towards a concept according to which the Spirit or 'the Christ' leaves Jesus before his death. On the other hand, Jesus' dead body touching the earth causes an earthquake (*Gos*. *Pet*. 21), and

even Jesus' resurrection is conceptualized in a quite bodily manner, so *Gos. Pet.* appears not very consistent in its christology, and the label 'docetic' cannot be applied without further qualification.

For the history of 'gospels', the work shows how the gospel story could be freely narrated afresh in a 'popular' manner in the second half of the second century. Our inclusion of this text in the chapter on apocryphal passion traditions is only due to its fragmentary state of preservation. Other works or traditions actually focused on the end of the Jesus story and intended to fill its lacunae.

(b) Traditions about Jesus' Trial and Descent into Hades: The *Acts of Pilate* or *Gospel of Nicodemus*

A complicated tradition, focused only on Jesus' death and resurrection, is preserved in the so-called *Gospel of Nicodemus* or the *Acts of Pilate*. Already in early Christian apologetic literature, there are some references to documents about Jesus' trial (Justin, *Apology* 1.35.9; 48.3; Tertullian, *Apol.* 21.24; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.2.1), but it is not clear which work they actually refer to. Possibly these references might have contributed to the development of the tradition (cf. Schärtl 2012: 234–5). Another reason for the composition might have been the need to answer to a pagan version of Pilate's account circulated under the emperor Maximian. This points to a process of composition of the text in the fourth or fifth century. Scholars have identified a first recension (Greek A) and a later second one (Greek B) that includes an extensive account of Jesus' descent into Hades. A later recension (Latin A), now entitled the 'Gospel of Nicodemus' was then widespread in the Middle Ages, part of the Golden Legend and translated into all popular languages.

The work claims to tell the truth about Jesus' trial, taken from official Roman records, and composed in Hebrew by Nicodemus (cf. John 3.1–2 and 19.39) who serves as the eyewitness. The text is obviously dependent on all four canonical Gospels, but fills numerous gaps and lacunae in the earlier accounts. The argument between Jesus' accusers and Pilate (John 18.28–19.18) is broadly elaborated, numerous figures are now given names, so the other high priests and scribes, Pilate's wife (Procla/Procula), the two criminals crucified with him (Dysmas and Gestas), the woman healed from the flow of blood (Berenike, later Veronika), and the soldier piercing Jesus' side (Longinus). Jesus is accused of being born from fornication, and against that supporters such as Lazarus declare that they were present at the wedding of Joseph and Mary. Miracles confirm Jesus' dignity, so the Roman standards bow and worship him. Nicodemus, the paralytic healed in John 5, the blind man healed in Mark 10.46–52, and Berenike testify to Jesus' works. Joseph of Arimathea is seized by the Jews for burying Jesus, but in jail he has a vision of the risen Jesus, and three Jews from Galilee testify to Jesus' appearance and ascension. The account closes with the whole people praising God.

A later recension adds a long report about Hades, attributed to the two men (later called Karinus and Leucius), who were raised from the dead at the time of Jesus' death. They describe the underworld, with the patriarchs and prophets, John the Baptist teaching, and Seth proclaiming the healing of Adam, while Satan and Hades discuss how they can keep Jesus firmly with them. Then Jesus enters, defeats Satan, hands him over to Hades and liberates the prophets, patriarchs, Adam, the one crucified with him, and also the two brothers giving testimony after their resurrection.

The fact that there was a first-hand account about Jesus' trial, witnessing his divine dignity, and even more a first-hand account of the underworld, confirming the reality of redemption, explains the wide reception of the tradition. The great interest in the figure and fate of Pilate created a large number of additions or separate works related to Pilate (cf.

Klauck 2003: 96–8; Ehrman and Pleše 2011: 491–568), including letters to Claudius (!), Tiberius, and Herod, his defence in Rome before the emperor (with strong anti-Jewish accents), or his final suicide (in the *Death of Pilate*). In the *Vengeance of the Saviour* a Roman soldier named Volosianus gets the portrait of Jesus from Veronika (= Berenike), the woman healed from the flow of blood, takes it to Rome, and the emperor Tiberius is healed when worshipping the image (cf. Ehrman and Pleše 2011: 491–568).

(c) Other traditions about Jesus' death and resurrection are linked with the name of Bartholomew (cf. Markschies 2012c). Although a 'Gospel of Bartholomew', as mentioned by Jerome and in the *Decretum Gelasianum*, is not preserved, we have the 'Questions of Bartholomew', a fluid tradition, preserved in various recensions, of uncertain date (Markschies et al. 2012d: 709: after the fourth century), which already comes close to the 'dialogue gospels' (see later discussion), and the *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. The 'Questions' comprise a conversation of the disciples with Jesus, and Bartholomew (= Nathanael) is the one who poses the decisive questions. In fulfilment of John 1.51, he sees the angels descending at the time of the crucifixion, one of them splitting the temple curtain. He asks Jesus about what happened in the underworld at that time, and (in contrast with the *Acts of Pilate*) it is now Jesus himself who reports about his descent (from the cross, before the resurrection), and the defeat of Hades and Beliar (= the devil), before he departs for paradise. Bartholomew asks Jesus' mother about the virginal conception, and the answer adopts elements from the infancy gospel tradition. A last, and in some versions expanded, part is about Beliar, who is described in size (1600×40 cubits) and appearance, and who then explains how he, the first of the angels, became what he now is, because he did not accept and venerate Adam as the image of God. Here, the devil gives extensive information about angels and the underworld, and in one version he narrates all his evil deeds of deception and affliction, including the confession that he deceived Eve by stimulating her fleshly desire. The *Book of the Resurrection* (Westerhoff 1999; Schenke 2012a), preserved in different Coptic manuscripts and fragments, contains numerous traditions about elements and figures of the gospel story (scenes in the underworld, a sermon of Jesus to Judas after his suicide, nine women at the tomb) and encounters with the risen Christ. Mary is identified with Mary Magdalene and presented as Mother of God (*theotokos*), Jesus' death brings universal forgiveness with three individual exceptions: Cain, Judas, and Herod. In one fragment a cock that is slaughtered for the meal of Jesus and the disciples, is raised from the dead, in order to be able to crow at Peter's denial. Bartholomew appears as eyewitness, ascends to the seventh heaven, and follows the heavenly liturgy. Here we can see how Jesus traditions are continued as traditions about particular apostles.

(d) Another complex of (late) traditions is attributed to Gamaliel. Being more of a 'gospel meditation' than a 'gospel' (Markschies 2012e; Schenke 2012b), the *Gospel of Gamaliel* is preserved in Coptic fragments and in Arabic and Ethiopic texts. Expanding the lament of the mother of Jesus, the text aims at excusing Pilate and blaming the Jews and especially Herod for Jesus' death (cf. also *Gos. Pet.*).

Sayings Gospels

In recent research, non-narrative gospels, composed mostly from mere sayings (or small dialogue scenes) of Jesus, are considered a subgenre of the gospel genre, although it is still open to discussion whether this is one of several 'primitive' gospel genres from the first century (thus Robinson and Koester 1971) or a later development, deliberately selecting and

arranging sayings. The issue is whether the Synoptic sayings source (Q) and the *Gospel of Thomas* represent the same genre and, if so, whether the shape of a 'Sayings Gospel' can support a very early date of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

(a) The *Gospel of Thomas*

A 'Gospel of Thomas' is mentioned in patristic texts dating from the early third century (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.7.20; Origen, *Hom. Luc.* 1.2), and already the first references to it consider it heretical, either because of its contents or—as often—due to its use by heretics, e.g. Manichaeans. Its contents and text were unknown until the discovery of three fragmentary Greek Papyri from Oxyrhynchus with unknown 'Sayings of Jesus' (P. Oxy. 1, 654 and 655), published in 1897 and 1904, but in the early discussion it was still unclear where those 'Agrapha' belonged (Frey 2008: 124–7). Only since the discovery of a complete Coptic version in Codex II from Nag Hammadi in 1945 has the attribution of the Greek fragments as parts of the *Gos. Thom.* been deemed certain. Based on the Coptic text, its literary character and, even more, its relationship with the Synoptic Gospels and its value as a source of possibly independent, early Jesus tradition have been fiercely debated. The views vary between a late (mid or late second-century) gnostic transformation of canonical traditions (Schrage 1964; Perrin 2002; Popkes 2007), and an independent witness of the earliest (mid first-century) period (Koester 1990: 75–128) that allows glimpses at the 'real' Jesus (Patterson 1993; DeConick 2005). The debate is obviously influenced by 'dogmatic' interests on both sides: one faction seeks to confirm the legacy of the traditional image of Jesus or the priority of canonical text; the other is interested in a 'different' (non-apocalyptic, sapiential, mystic) image of Jesus.

Methodological discussions have led more recent scholarship to a number of cautious observations: the Coptic text (from the fourth century) differs from the Greek fragments from the early third century, and in view of the changes here, it seems quite daring to draw conclusions about the textual form in the early period (Frey 2008; Schröter and Bethge 2012: 488–92). The lack of a narrative or redactional framework makes it difficult to identify overall tendencies but also to isolate 'traditional' material, and there is the question how such a form can be explained or whether it is an intentional reduction or selection (Popkes 2007; Goodacre 2012). The text is most probably a composition in Greek, while alleged Semitisms cannot stand as an argument for an early composition (Gathercole 2012). Recent research has made a detailed case for the dependence of the work on the Synoptics (Gathercole 2012; Goodacre 2012), although this does not preclude that some traditions may represent a more original form than the canonical Gospels.

The work is a collection of 114 units or 'sayings', mostly introduced by the phrase 'Jesus says'. The opening calls them the 'hidden words' (*logoi apokryphoi*) of Jesus, 'the living one', and points to the process of meditation and interpretation that is required in order 'not to taste death'. Here the term 'apocryphal' is used in a positive sense (secret = deeper, more spiritual), so that the work rather appears as a (deliberate) 'mystification' in contrast with the 'open' word of Jesus. The implied author is Judas Thomas, called Didymus ('twin'), as frequent in the Syriac tradition (Frenschkowski 2013), who is also prominent in some dialogue scenes (*Gos. Thom.* 13). The units are pure sayings, small dialogues, or apophthegms and parables, but no narrative elements (as e.g. miracle stories)—the majority of 'sayings' paralleled in the Synoptics (and some also in John). But in contrast with the canonical Gospels, Jesus' passion and resurrection are almost completely passed over in silence, even in the sayings (Popkes 2005), and where the kingdom of God (here only 'the kingdom') is mentioned, it is purely present and internal or non-local. The idea of the community is replaced by the ideal of the single ones (*monachoi*) who are praised in *Gos.*

Thom. 49 (Popkes 2007). The readers are called to deny the world, leave behind sexuality, and in the end there is a rather harsh word about women (*Gos. Thom*. 114). So it is not only the image of Jesus but also anthropology and eschatology that differ markedly from the canonical Gospels, and the debate is whether this can be considered 'encratite', 'mystical', or to a certain degree gnostic (although the gnostic myth is not narrated here). The incipit, however, suggests that the collection is a deliberate selection of the gospel material, making it mysterious and enigmatic. The suggestion by the members of the North American 'Jesus Seminar' (cf. Funk, Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar 1993; Patterson 1993; also DeConick 2005), that *Gos. Thom*. might serve as a primary source for the historical Jesus (i.e. for an originally non-eschatological, non-miraculous, and non-dogmatic Jesus), appears unsubstantiated.

(b) The *Gospel of Philip*

Another non-narrative gospel is the *Gos. Phil*., preserved (only) in Coptic in Nag Hammadi Codex II, just after the *Gos. Thom*. When the church fathers mention a *Gos. Phil*. (thus Epiphanius, *Pan*. 6.13.2–3), they quote sayings that are not contained in the Nag Hammadi text, but this may be due to the fluidity of the tradition rather than the existence of another *Gos. Phil*. (Schenke 2012c: 529–30). Philip is the only apostle mentioned in the text (*Gos. Phil*. 73.8). The Coptic is translated from the original Greek. With regard to genre, the text is not a mere sayings gospel but a kind of florilegium or anthology (Schenke 2012c: 532) of 127 independent units (aphorisms, parables, brief polemics, narrative dialogues, exegeses, etc.). Some of them are linked by link words or common aspects, but as in the *Gos. Thom*., the composition is often unclear. A few sayings correspond to or reflect sayings of Jesus from the canonical Gospels, while other sayings, introduced by an introductory formula, are rather enigmatic and represent a gnostic perspective. The text mirrors a Valentinian viewpoint, as is obvious in the teaching about the Saviour as bridegroom of the lower Sophia, and in the recurring idea of the mystery of the bridal chamber (Schenke 2012c: 535). It was probably composed in Syria in the late second or third century.

Prominent themes of the sayings and reflections are the sacraments of baptism, chrism, eucharist, redemption, and the mystery of the bridal chamber (cf. Schmid 2007). Their mutual relationship, however, is unclear: are they distinct acts or simply steps of a single initiation? Especially the image of the bridal chamber seems to be a metaphor for the unity between God and humankind or the individual soul with Christ. In an interesting interpretation, the most important effect of Jesus' death is considered the tearing of the temple curtain (which is taken as a symbol of the heavenly temple, or bridal chamber, or *pleroma*; Schenke 2012c: 536). One (rather minor) element that has found particular interest in public discussion: the prominence of Mary Magdalene as a kind of 'beloved disciple'. In *Gos. Phil*. 19, there is mention of three Marys who walked with Jesus (his mother, her sister, and Mary Magdalene; cf. John 19.25), and the latter is called his companion. In *Gos. Phil*. 55b, it is even said that he loved Mary more than all the disciples, and that he kissed her. In the text it is unclear where he kissed her: on her hand, mouth, or feet. Furthermore, it is probable that this expression should not be understood naively in an erotic sense (contrary to popular speculations about Mary as Jesus' 'wife'; cf. Brown 2003), but is embedded in the imagery of the bridal chamber, spiritual unity, revelation, and understanding. Thus, apart from the interesting fact that Mary appears here more prominently than all (male) apostles, the text provides no basis for the novelistic speculation about Jesus' sexual life.

Dialogue Gospels or Conversations of the Disciples with the Risen Jesus

A particular genre of gospel material are those texts that contain neither narratives, nor just sayings, but dialogues between the disciples and the risen Jesus. Prefigured in canonical discourses (e.g. John 13–17; but there the dialogues take place before the resurrection) and in textual expansions of canonical texts (e.g. the Freer Logion in Mark 16.14–15 Codex W; cf. Frey 2012b), these texts present instructions or additional revelations of Jesus situated in the period after Easter. Such a setting was particularly appropriate for gnostic circles that sought to give an explanation of the 'true' value of Jesus' earthly appearance (Hartenstein 2012a), beyond the canonical tradition. It is significant which apostles (Mary Magdalene, James, Judas) are given prominence in those dialogues.

   (a) An important non-gnostic example is the *Epistula Apostolorum* (Müller 2012; Klauck 2003: 152–60), preserved partly in Coptic and in a fuller Ethiopic version, which includes a letter of the eleven apostles (with John mentioned in the first place) to the churches in the whole world and a subsequent dialogue in which the Saviour answers to the apostles' questions. The form of a revelatory dialogue is utilized here for refuting gnosticizing views, probably in adoption of a literary form that had already been introduced among Gnostics. From the date of the end of the world 120 years after Pentecost (*Ep. Ap.* 17), a composition shortly before 150 CE is implied (with a later revision).

   The work uses all four canonical Gospels and Acts. In the opening epistle, the apostles confirm their testimony about Jesus as God, his incarnation, miracles, cross, and bodily resurrection. Against Cerinthus and Simon (Magus) the human suffering of the Son of God is stressed. The risen one is touched by all, not only by Thomas. In the following revelatory dialogue, Jesus explains his descent in the likeness of an archangel, he talks about the Passover as remembrance of his death, and, asked about his final coming, Jesus' descent to the heroes of the Old Testament is explicitly mentioned, and the resurrection of the flesh is emphasized again. When talking about the mission of the apostles, Jesus also mentions Paul who is thus confirmed as a legitimate apostle. After the dialogue, Jesus ascends to heaven, accompanied by signs such as thunder and earthquakes.

   (b) Some gnostic texts present revelations to a plurality of the apostles: the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* (Hartenstein 2012b), preserved in two Coptic versions (NHC III.4/BG 3) and composed in the late second century, already adopts the Platonic (?) *Epistle of Eugnostos* (NHC III.3 and V.1) from the mid second century (Wurst 2007). It includes an appearance of the risen Jesus and a dialogue with twelve male and seven female apostles, teachings about the heavenly world, and the gnostic myth of the Sophia, before Jesus disappears and the apostles begin to preach. The *Dialogue of the Saviour* (NHC III.5), probably also from the second century (Petersen and Bethge 2012) is a post-Easter dialogue of Jesus with his disciples (Matthew, Judas, Mary), that adopts elements from John and Matthew and provides a gnostic teaching about the *archontes* as hostile powers, the strife for redemption, the role of insight, and the role of women. The phrase 'destroy the works of womanhood' (*Dial. Sav.* 92) aims at the refusal of human reproduction which grants redemption from the structure of the world.

   (c) A number of dialogue gospels are attributed to James, the hero of Jewish Christianity (who is also prominent in the *Gos. Thom.*). *The First Apocalypse of James* (cf. Funk 2012a), in Coptic translation preserved in two slightly different versions (NHC V.3 and

Codex Tchacos 2), was possibly composed in the late second century, and presents a special revelation of Jesus to James, with a first dialogue before the passion and a second after the resurrection, when the risen Lord first appears to James 'the Just' (cf. *Gos. Heb.*). In the post-Easter setting, Jesus explains that he actually did not suffer, nor die (NHC V 31,18–20). The main topic of the work is redemption in terms of the liberation of the gnostic from the earthly sphere, with 'passwords' and formulae for the ascent. The text ends with the martyrdom of James. The *Second Apocalypse of James* (Funk 2012b), only preserved in one Nag Hammadi version (NHC V.4), presents a discourse of James (recorded by a certain Mariam), in which James—as a prototype of the gnostic—narrates the appearance of the risen Lord with an embedded revelatory discourse of Jesus, and finally the martyrdom of James and a last prayer. The *Letter of James* (NHC I.2) describes in an epistolary framework an appearance of Jesus after his resurrection, in which Peter and James receive special instructions. The writing from the end of the second century is explicitly designed as 'secret' teaching (*apokryphon*), to be given only to few people. Gnostic mythological views are presupposed but not presented here.

(d) In the *Book of Thomas*, preserved in Coptic (NHC II.7) and possibly composed in Greek in the third century in Syria, Judas Thomas is the dialogue partner of the risen Jesus. The dialogue about ethical and eschatological questions, however, leads to a monologue of Jesus and a collection of sayings. As in the Syriac tradition, Thomas is Jesus 'twin' and only true friend, but in spite of that, he severely misunderstands Jesus' words, in this rather obscure text.

(e) The *Apocryphon of John*, preserved in two versions (long and short) in four Coptic manuscripts, develops the Johannine tradition where John is the 'beloved disciple', who is in dialogue with the revealer, but the dialogue framework is probably a later addition to mythological treatise on the creation account. The short version might be composed around 200 CE, the long version somewhat later (Klauck 2003: 169–75). In the narrative framework, John the son of Zebedee is the protagonist: he is asked by a Pharisee where his teacher has gone, and in his grief he goes to a mountain where he receives the appearance of Christ ('polymorphic', first as a child, then as an old man). Then, the revelatory discourse gives teaching about the *pleroma*, 'Jaldabaoth' (a gnostic malapropism of Jahwe Zebaoth) and the gnostic myth of the creation of humans. In further dialogues, John is informed about the true meaning of the story of Gen. 1–7, before he is commissioned to write down the secret for those who are of the same spirit. The work is one of the main sources for the gnostic (more precisely, Sethian) myth with the distinction between the demiurge and the true transcendent God, but the negative exegesis of Genesis and the reception of the Wisdom myth also point back to a Hellenistic-Jewish milieu. It is questionable, thus, how far *Ap. John* is a 'tradition about Jesus' or rather a gnostic reading of the Old Testament adopting the authority of the Johannine tradition.

(f) Mary Magdalene is the 'beloved disciple' in the *Gospel of Mary* (cf. Hartenstein 2012c) which is fragmentarily preserved in a Coptic codex (BG 1) and two even more fragmentary Greek papyri. It may be asked whether the second-century work is gnostic or rather Platonic or merely 'esoteric' (King 2003; De Boer 2004). The beginning is lost. In the preserved part, probably situated in the period after Easter, Jesus responds to philosophical questions of his disciples, and thereafter they discuss the issues among each other. Here, Mary, most probably Mary Magdalene, of whom it is said that the Saviour loved her more than all others (cf. *Gos. Phil.*), takes a prominent role: she comforts the disciples and is asked by Peter to share the special teaching she has received. She recounts her vision and her dialogue with Jesus. In the end she is attacked by Andrew and Peter who doubt that the Lord actually said these things and are offended that he should have talked to

her secretly. So the text openly addresses not only the issue of the validity of visions but also debates about the position of women in the church and a struggle between orthodoxy (represented by Peter and Andrew) and esoteric revelations. Mary's position as 'beloved disciple' rivals similar claims for Peter (1 Cor. 15.5), John (John 13.23), or James (*Gos. Heb*.).

(g) The most recent 'sensation' in the field has been the *Gospel of Judas* (cf. Wurst 2012; Popkes and Wurst 2012). A Coptic version of the work, which is already mentioned by Irenaeus (*Haer*. 1.31.1), is preserved in Codex Tchacos, and its publication in 2006/7 and further fragments (Wurst 2010) have caused lively debates. Here, it is *Judas Iscariot* who receives a special revelation (in contrast with his very negative or even diabolic characterization in the New Testament). It is debated whether Judas is actually a positive figure (who alone knows Jesus' true origins), or whether he is still regarded as a severe sinner. The text is introduced as a 'secret' (*apokryphos*) revelation to Judas, which is, of course, situated before Jesus' (and Judas') death. The other disciples as a group are described negatively as followers of the Jewish cult, which might suggest a critique of the majority church and also of particular views on the Eucharist. Due to the latter, the present textual form might originate rather in the third than in the second century.

A Letter and an Image of Jesus—the Legend of Abgar

According to the earliest Jesus tradition, Jesus did not write. Only in the secondary tradition of the story of the woman taken in adultery, he writes some cryptic letters in the sand (John 8.6). In Eusebius' *Church History* (1.13 and 2.1.6–8), however, there is the tale of King Abgar of Edessa and his exchange of letters with Jesus (Horn and Phenix 2009; Wasmuth 2012). Having heard of Jesus' miraculous power, Abgar sends a letter to Jesus, asking him for healing, and Jesus answers also in a letter, telling Abgar that he himself is not able to come but that he will send his servant to heal him and bring him life. After Jesus' ascension, Judas Thomas (who is considered as a 'double' of Jesus in some Syriac traditions) sends the disciple who heals the king and many others in Edessa and forcefully preaches the gospel. According to Eusebius, the account is based on documents from the archive of Edessa. A similar tale of the mission in Edessa is presented in the Syriac *Doctrina Addai*. Here, Jesus' answer is transmitted only orally, and the disciple is called Addai. But there is also mention of a portrait of Jesus painted by the messenger Ananias and the discovery of the cross of Jesus by Protonike, the wife of the Emperor Claudius. These legendary elements show that the *Doctrina Addai* in its present form is a recension of the early fifth century, but there was probably a common Syriac source of the recensions given in Eusebius and in the *Doctrina Addai* (Wasmuth 2012: 223–4). The legend of Abgar was translated into many languages and most prominently adopted in the Armenian national history. In the West, Rufinus's Latin translation of Eusebius made the legend well known. Jesus' letter was also copied as a single document, without the whole story, and as such it is already mentioned in Egeria's pilgrim account.

The motif of the image of Jesus is further developed in the late *Acts of Thaddaeus*: here, Ananias is unable to paint a true image of Jesus, so that Jesus takes a piece of cloth and puts it upon his face, so that his image (which is then said to be made not by a human hand) can be brought to Edessa (Wasmuth 2012: 227).

A Modern Forgery or an Ancient Text? The So-called *Secret Gospel of Mark*

One of the fiercest and most hostile debates in scholarship has taken place over the so-called *Secret Gospel of Mark*. The circumstances of its 'discovery' are as strange as are the hypotheses of its supporters and the suspicions of its adversaries, and it is almost impossible to take a 'neutral' position. The text was first presented in 1973 by Morton Smith (1973). In that book Smith claimed that in 1958, when working in the library of Mar Saba monastery, he had discovered on the last pages of an edition of Ignatius' works from 1646 the handwritten fragmentary copy of a letter of Clement of Alexandria in which this author acknowledged the existence of a longer 'spiritual' version of the Gospel of Mark and gave some quotations. Smith presented black and white photographs of the letter, and coloured photographs from a later time were presented in 2000, without providing improved evidence. It is reported that the two relevant pages were cut out from the volume in order to be photographed, but were then lost, hidden, or even destroyed for unknown reasons (cf. Rau 2009a: 145–6). At present, the volume seems to be lost as well. Apparently no scholar apart from Smith had the opportunity to work with the original.

In his *editio princeps*, Smith added a philological analysis and commentary of the letter to demonstrate the (Clementine) authenticity. But suspicions were raised early by numerous historians, partly on philological grounds, partly due to the use made of the so-called 'Secret Gospel of Mark' among the public and to the consequences drawn by Smith and others from that text. The doubts whether the letter is an authentic work of Clement (based on certain contradictions with Clement's other works) led to the question of its true origin and, finally, to the idea that it might actually be a forgery, ancient, early modern, or modern, possibly even by Smith himself. Here, scholarship turns into criminological investigations to the effect that other scholars emphatically deny the possibility of such a 'scandal' among scholars and accuse the critics of extreme malevolence (Rau 2009a): what is at stake here is not only issues of the hermeneutics of apocryphal writings and their reception among a wider public but also issues of scholarly envy or rivalry and the psychology of scholarship. The recent debate about forged archaeological artefacts from Palestine has at least shown that the possibility cannot totally be denied.

The contents of Clement's letter, if authentic, provide complicated problems as well. Clement writes to an otherwise unknown Theodore who is in dispute with the Carpocratians, a gnostic group, who refer in support of their libertine views to an altered version of the Gospel of Mark. He explains to his addressee that there is in fact a second version of Mark created by the evangelist in Alexandria after he had originally written the (canonical version of the) gospel in Rome for catechumens. The existence of a more spiritual or mystical version should, however, remain secret, so that it is only read to those who will be introduced into the 'great Mysteries'. Only by enslaving a presbyter could Carpocrates get a hold of that version which was further extended and falsified according to his heresies. In defence of the true doctrine, genuine Christians should therefore deny the existence of the true spiritual gospel, even by oath. Then the author gives an example of the 'spiritual' gospel of Mark, which appears to be a mixture of the scene of the 'rich young man' (Mark 10) and 'Lazarus' (John 11): in Bethany (cf. Mark 8.22 Cod. D and especially John 11–12), a woman pleads for the resurrection of her brother. Jesus raises him, the young man 'loves him' (Mark 10.21) and asks him to stay with him. Jesus enters his house, commissions him after six days, and in the evening, the young man comes to him, only with the shirt on his naked body (Mark 14.51). 'And he stayed with him that night' (cf. John

1.39), 'because Jesus taught him the secret of the kingdom of God'. Having narrated the scene, the author states that the phrase 'a naked with a naked one', spread by the Carpocratians was not part of the 'real' secret gospel of Mark.

In his commentary, Smith suggested that Mark and John had a common Aramaic source, and while canonical Mark omitted parts of that source, Secret Mark added those elements. Thus, he claimed, the additions were rather old and could shed light on the historical Jesus and his rites, among them also a secret initiation rite, possibly including homosexual practices. This bold speculation fits within Smith's larger hypothesis that Jesus was actually a magician and that the gospel authors tried to conceal this in their works: Smith held a very negative view of the historical value of the canonical Gospels while being prepared to develop daring hypotheses about the 'historical' truth behind the texts. Thus, as a historian of early Christianity, he was an isolated figure. The question was, then, whether he had the skills to introduce such a subtle forgery, and what motive could explain such an act. Did he want to mock scholarship or to influence contemporary society, precisely with a 'source' for Jesus being homosexual? Is the 'insight' to be gained through Secret Mark a contribution to liberalizing society, and is the battle against that text merely an attempt to oppress such insights? Severe suspicions were also raised by his student, the famous Rabbinic scholar Jacob Neusner, who called Secret Mark 'the forgery of the century' (Neusner 1994: 115), albeit in an article full of personal attacks against his former teacher who had died in 1991. Recently, the criticisms have gathered force, with a book-length 'forensic' analysis resulting in the view that the text is a hoax (Carlson 2005), also an explanation of the 'invention' of Secret Mark from the context of the debates of contemporary American society (Jeffery 2007), and an increasing number of scholars consider the text a modern forgery (Watson 2010). On the other hand, the analysis of the photographs by graphologists has not led to a unanimous result, so that the issue is still undecided.

Scholars who have accepted the antiquity of 'Secret Mark' have made various suggestions how to explain the text within the history of early Christian literature. Whereas Crossan and Koester interpreted canonical Mark as a secondary revision of the earlier Secret Mark (Crossan 1985: 108; Koester 1990: 295–302), some authors have taken the text as an intermediate stage between Mark and John and as a source for John's figure of the Lazarus who is then considered the 'Beloved Disciple' (Nordsieck 1998), whereas others have seen Secret Mark as dependent on the Synoptics and on John. More recently, Rau (2003 and 2009b) has tried to explain the text as a product of Alexandrian Christianity in the early second century. Due to the still uncertain issue of whether the text is authentic or a forgery, it seems unwise to put forward too many assumptions based on such an uncertain construction. From the debate, we can rather see how closely ideological and public interests are linked with the evaluation and interpretation of non-canonical texts about Jesus.

PERSPECTIVES

Things became even more difficult, with economic interests involved, as can be seen in the publication story of the *Gospel of Judas* and also in the brief media excitement when Karen King, a well-respected expert in Gnosticism from Harvard, presented in 2012 a Coptic papyrus with Jesus purportedly speaking of his 'wife' (called 'The Gospel of Jesus' Wife'). But immediately after, scholars adduced evidence that the text had been composed on the basis of sayings from the Coptic *Gos. Thom.* from Nag Hammadi, i.e. the text of the so-called 'Gospel of Jesus' Wife' is probably a modern forgery (Watson 2012). Any

publication of new fragments today is embedded in a complex set of legal issues (claims of property or national heritage), economic interests (to make money with sensations or to launch the media interest with overstatements), personal interests of scholars (regarding their own careers or scholarly reputations), and dogmatic or anti-dogmatic interests (to use a new discovery to discuss the validity of canonical texts or the traditional or scholarly image of Jesus). Scholarship has to be aware of these issues and hold on to the cautious and methodologically responsible approaches that have been developed in the course of the last hundred years of research on apocryphal gospels.

FOR FURTHER READING

For extensive information and discussion and for a presentation of the texts (in translation), the most recent and comprehensive work is by Markschies and Schröter (in German), replacing the earlier vol. 1 of the fifth/sixth edition of Hennecke and Schneemelcher (and the English translation edited by McL. Wilson); cf. also other English works by Elliott (1993) and by Ehrman and Pleše (2011). Useful introductions are those by Klauck (2003) and Foster (2008).

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APOCRYPHAL TEXTS ABOUT OTHER CHARACTERS IN THE CANONICAL GOSPELS

CHARLOTTE TOUATI AND CLAIRE CLIVAZ

INTRODUCTION

MOST texts that might be described as non-canonical gospels are focused to a greater or lesser degree on the person of Jesus. This is the case whether they are concerned with the circumstances of his birth and infancy, with his public ministry and death and resurrection, or with his post-resurrection teaching. The same might be said of other texts about Jesus, even if they are not described or referred to as gospels (see Chapter 2). Yet even if these texts are focused on Jesus, they often include other figures who play a lesser role in the narrative. Prominent among them are Jesus' parents, named in the Gospel according to Matthew and the Gospel according to Luke (cf. Matt 1.18–25; Luke 1.26ff.); the Magi, found only in Matthew (Matt 2.1–12); John the Baptist, who features in all four canonical accounts, and his father Zechariah (Luke 1.5–23, 1.67–79); Mary Magdalene (cf. Mark 15.40, 15.47, 16.1; Luke 8.2, 24.10; John 19.25, 20.1–18); and Pontius Pilate (in all the canonical passion narratives), whom all four Gospels depict as the person who takes the decision to crucify Jesus, albeit under pressure from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (cf. e.g. Matt 27.24–5; Mark 15.15; Luke 23.25; John 19.12–16). Also of note is James, the brother, who is mentioned only in passing alongside other members of Jesus' family (Mark 6.3; Matt 13.55), but who takes on great prominence in the history and literature of the early Church (*Apocalypse of James, Protevangelium of James*, etc.). All these figures feature only briefly in canonical texts, but are given much more attention in apocryphal writings, as the following discussion will show on a character-by-character basis.

These characters are portrayed in a range of narrative texts, but what all these writings share in common is an interest in building on details found in canonical texts, or shedding light on areas on which those canonical writings were silent. Thus they appear to have been written to supplement and not to supplant other Christian writings (whether or not the texts that came to be regarded as canonical had already taken on that significance when the texts discussed here were written). As this chapter will show, the way in which these characters are variously depicted sheds light on theological developments that are reflected in other early Christian texts: for example, the increasingly prominent role of Mary (on which see also Chapter 15) and on anti-Jewish tendencies, as seen especially in the developing role of Pilate, who is distanced even further than in the canonical Gospels from responsibility for Jesus' death.

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

The apocryphal writings dealing with Mary, the mother of Jesus, can be grouped around two themes which concern two moments of her life: her motherhood (Elliott 2006) and her death (Mimouni 1995). Both have crucial theological implications, in particular the former, since everything about the conception or birth of Jesus affects his nature and has obvious christological consequences.

From a strictly literary point of view, we can say that the characterization and role of Mary may be shaped at least in part by Christian readings of Jewish scripture that understood certain texts as prophecies about the birth of the Messiah. Some of these texts, so-called *testimonia*, seem to have circulated in the form of a compilation at the turn of the Common Era (see Albl 1999). They predict that the mother of the Messiah will be a virgin, although their testimony to the literal physical nature of the birth is ambiguous. See, for example, the *Ascension of Isaiah* (11.2–10), a composite Jewish writing, Christianized in a second phase (Norelli 1995: 59–67) which develops the *testimonia* found at Isaiah 7.13–14 and 66.7–8 in a way that emphasizes Mary's virginity (Norelli 2009: 36–47). Mary is described as a pregnant virgin. A second miracle is the fact that she does not reach the full term of her pregnancy. After two months, while alone, she finds a small child at her side, and that her womb has returned to the way that it was before she conceived (*Ascension of Isaiah* 11.8–9).

The *Protevangelium of James*, another story based on *testimonia*, fits into a similar theme of a quest for purity (Norelli 2009: 55–63). Mary is a consecrated virgin in the Temple, precisely because she herself was born in a miraculous way. This passage is used as one of the textual sources for the later dogma of the Immaculate Conception, promulgated by the Roman Catholic Church in 1854: the woman who received God must be without sin which, given the doctrine of original sin, means that she herself must not have been naturally conceived.

Anna and Joachim are already old and childless. They go to the Temple and vow to dedicate their children to God if they have any children (4.1). Yet Anna becomes pregnant and gives birth to a daughter, Mary, who begins to serve in the Temple at the age of three (7.2). Over the years, she proves to be exemplary, but as puberty approaches, she must leave the Temple, before soiling the sacred space (8.2).

The priests begin to seek a husband for her among widowed Jews in order to maintain her chastity (8.3). Joseph is chosen (9.1); he is already the father of several children, and is rather reluctant to bring the girl home (9.2). His reluctance increases when he discovers that she is pregnant (13). As a good man, he attempts to come to an arrangement and finally keeps his wife (14), but the high priest suspects that the couple have consummated their union (15). He subjects them to an ordeal, which they overcome (16). Then they go to Bethlehem for the census (17.1). En route, Mary feels the first signs of labour (17.2). Joseph then puts his spouse in a safe place and looks for a midwife (18). When he returns with her, he finds that the birth has already taken place, without witnesses (19.2). The midwife leaves and tells a friend named Salome of what has happened. Incredulous, Salome wants to verify the virginity of the young mother, but her hand is paralyzed as punishment for the sacrilege (20.1). She understands what this means, and begs the newborn child himself to forgive her. She immediately recovers (20.3).

During the rest of the story, Mary plays a role during the massacre of the innocents by hiding her son in a manger (22.2). Jesus then sleeps in a crib, but was not born there. At the

end of story, the narrator reveals his identity (25.1): he is James, Joseph's son by a previous marriage and just like Jesus he is also hidden.

James, the 'brother of the Lord', is a well-known character in the New Testament (see Mark 15.47; Gal. 1.19; for other 'brothers' cf. Matt. 13.55–6; Mark 6.3; 1 Cor. 9.5) and in other early Christian texts. Family relationships are sometimes difficult to define in ancient writings, but in this case the content of the text makes clear that its author, namely 'James', can be only a half-brother of Jesus. He is not Mary's son, but the son of Joseph, born from a prior marriage. The text states that Joseph is a widower with sons (9.2). The intention is probably to make it clear that Mary had no other children and that she remained a virgin throughout her whole life (*post partum* virginity).

This brings us to another feature of the character: Mary's *in partu* virginity. Purity is not only a spiritual notion; the *Protevangelium* also presents it as a medical fact, as demonstrated by the episode of Salome. Mary's hymen is intact even after Jesus' birth. It is also possible that the author wishes to suggest that there was no normal humanly assisted delivery. The similarity with the *Ascension of Isaiah* is clear; the reader is in the same position as Joseph who suddenly discovers a miraculously clean and quiet baby, as well as a new mother who has not even screamed in the course of childbirth. Special effects are arranged: the eyes of Joseph 'open' in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, while a cloud of mist dissipates when he returns to Mary with the midwife in the *Protevangelium*.

The issue of Mary's virginity undoubtedly fascinated Christians during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (and has continued to do so), since no less than 140 Greek manuscripts of the *Protevangelium of James* have been identified. This text has also been the subject of translations (Kaestli 1996) and rewritings (Norelli 2009: 96–102), including the Latin *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* through which it continued its path to Ireland (McNamara 2001). Note that the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* adds the flight to Egypt, not present in its source, the *Protevangelium of James*. As included in the pseudo-Matthean writing, this short narrative, which seems to have already circulated independently from the second century on, shows Mary alone in her Egyptian exile to take care of Jesus (Tischendorf 1876: 93–112; Norelli 2001).

If the first series of writings on Mary's virginity was prompted by Christian readings of Jewish prophetic texts, later texts were written in response to attacks from Jews and pagans about her chastity, as reflected in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (2.3–5). According to the author, the Jews accuse Mary of having conceived Jesus in fornication (Norelli 2009: 84–91). Third-century Christian apologists such as Tertullian (*De Spectaculis* 30.6) and Origen (*Contra Celsum* I. 28, 32) also report such beliefs.

In the second half of the fourth century, Epiphanius of Salamis (*Panarion* 78) attributes defamatory words to some Christian heretical groups. On the other hand, he also claims that other groups worship Mary as a goddess (*Pan*. 79; see Shoemaker 2008). This is probably an exaggeration; nevertheless Mary is indeed much respected within 'gnostic' circles, probably not as a divine being but as a leader (master) or a prophet. Indeed, who better than she had access to the divine mysteries? Thus, in the second book of the *Questions of Bartholomew*, a dialogue between the risen Christ and the apostles, questions are actually directly addressed to Mary and concern the conception of Christ. Nevertheless most texts that report Mary's revelations do not concern the main part of her life (the *Life of Mary* attributed to Maximus the Confessor—edition in Van Esbroeck 1986—was not written before the seventh century: see Shoemaker 2011), but only its end.

As Epiphanius notes, the canonical scriptures say nothing about the death of Mary. Rather than admit their ignorance, Christian writers compensated for the lack of written information by writing 'further' apocryphal texts in which they document the end of Mary's

life. These writings are said to be 'secondary' because they are used to overcome the silence of an already established scriptural canon.

For example, they take into account the Immaculate Conception, which is not attested in the canonical Gospels. As a consequence of her incorruptibility, Mary's body could not decay. Rather than experiencing death, the tradition asserts the 'Dormition' or the 'Assumption' of the Virgin Mary. Assumption (Latin *assumptio*), which literally means her elevation by Christ at the end of her life, is the term used by the Catholic Church, while the Eastern churches emphasize the Dormition (Greek κοίμησις) to indicate that Mary was alive at the time of her elevation, but plunged into a kind of sleep. (For the definitions of terms and dogmas, see Mimouni 1995: 13–21.) The word *transitus* (passage) adopted by philologists is used as a generic term to designate the end of Mary's life (cf. Geerard 1992: 71–96).

The storyline is similar in the East as in the West, but appears to have started in the Middle East (cf. Gregory of Tours, *Miraculorum Libri Septem* I.4, which seems to depend on a version now preserved in Syriac (*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis*, p. 142, 6): see Jugie 1944: 103–71). We will therefore begin with the Dormition. With regard to the evidence, the textual tradition proves to be exceptionally complex.

The literature can be divided into two major groups: the 'Palm Tree' tradition and the 'Bethlehem' tradition (cf. Van Esbroeck 1981; Shoemaker 2002b; Norelli 2009: 103–47). The oldest texts belonging to the Palm Tree tradition are preserved in Syriac, Ge'ez, Georgian, Greek, and Gaelic (parallel English translations of the Syriac and Ge'ez versions are in Shoemaker 2002b: 290–350; synopsis of all the fragments on pp. 415–18), which all rely on a fourth-century text that was lost (see Bauckham 1998: 344–6; Shoemaker 2002b: 42–6; Norelli 2009: 115).

The Palm Tree tradition owes its name to the branch given to Mary by an angel a few days after the ascension of Christ. The messenger tells her that she has to teach the apostles about the mysteries and to offer them the palm on this occasion (*Greek Transitus R* 2–3.8, translated by Wenger 1955: 210–41). This is also an opportunity for her to learn how she will disappear in three days' time (2). Immediately, the whole apostolic group surrounds her, each apostle transported on a cloud (22).

The Virgin, her close friends, and the apostles spend all night listening to Peter's sermon (30). Christ arrives, takes his mother's soul, and entrusts her to the angel Michael (35). Once body and soul have parted, Mary's corpse must be placed in a tomb (36). The Jews who tried to prevent the entombment are struck with blindness (39). Some of them repent, convert to Christ, and finally recover their eyesight thanks to a leaf of the celestial palm (43–4). Then Christ and a cohort of angels come to elevate the body to paradise and to reunite it to the soul of Mary (47–8). The apostles are also invited for a tour of the hereafter (47), before each of them returns to his mission land (48).

The *Dormition of Pseudo-John* (Tischendorf 1866: 95–112), widely distributed in the Greek East (see Wenger 1955: 17), and the Syriac *Six Books Dormition* attributed to James, the brother of Jesus (Wright 1865; Smith Lewis 1902: 22–115), form the oldest writings from the Bethlehem tradition. Many versions depend on them (see Norelli 2009: 117; Shoemaker 2002b: 375–96 translates the Ge'ez version into English from Chaine 1909: 21–49).

The story begins by evoking the time of Mary living in Jerusalem. She goes every day to the tomb of Christ to pray him to come back (*Pseudo-John* 1). On one occasion she is visited by Gabriel who tells her that mother and son will soon be reunited (3). Immediately afterwards Mary moves to Bethlehem (4) to prepare her own wake. According to her wish (5), she is soon joined by the apostles who are also miraculously transported (6–25). So

many miracles arise in the city, the people of Jerusalem hear about them (26–8). The Jewish priests send men to arrest the small community, but they fail in their mission (29). Wild with anger, the Jews urge the governor to take action, which he does reluctantly (30), sending an emissary to Bethlehem. In the meanwhile, Mary and her friends have flown to Jerusalem on a cloud (31–2). As the population hear about the presence of Mary in the holy city, a large crowd besiege her house, but is soon won over by the miracles happening before their eyes (35). Even the governor summons the Jews and urges them to confess Christ and his birth from a virgin (36). But time is running out for Mary. Christ appears in the midst of the apostles. Together they pray and the soul of Mary parts from her body (38–44). The apostles proceed to her entombment (45). En route, a Jew named Jephonias tries to overthrow the stretcher, but he loses his arms. Suddenly convinced, he confesses the virginity of Mary and he recovers (46–7). The apostles finally leave Mary's body in a cave in Gethsemane. An angelic choir is heard for three days before the voices fall silent. The apostles understand that Mary's body has been taken up into heaven (48). They are seized by the vision of Mary surrounded by prominent figures from the past (49). Finally John concludes with a final prayer claiming the actual power of Mary's intercession (50).

The writings of the Bethlehem tradition put more stress on the liturgy than does the Palm Tree tradition (Van Esbroeck 1981: 269). The texts function as etiological narratives to legitimize the practice of pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, the organization of the liturgical year, as well as to confirm Marian devotion by presenting all the miracles that take place around her, especially the healings, and the intercessory prayers.

Writings from the Palm Tree tradition and those from the Bethlehem tradition differ formally by their use of different literary genres, but also by their impact. The Bethlehem tradition concerns more the everyday life and duties of Christians, while the Palm Tree tradition focuses on their post-mortem fate. This difference provokes an interesting adaptation of the role of Mary. Indeed, in the two groups of texts, she appears as a mediator between her son and guilty but repentant human beings. In the Palm Tree tradition Mary prays for the dead subjected to torture in the hereafter, while in the Bethlehem tradition, she argues in favour of living Jews.

JOSEPH, THE FATHER OF JESUS

In the canonical Gospels and in apocryphal stories, Joseph is present but not prominently. For example, he certainly plays an important role in the canonical infancy stories, but only in Matthew: cf. the account of the annunciation in Matt. 1.18–25, the flight to Egypt (Matt. 2.13–15), and then the return (Matt. 2.19–23). He always holds a position related to the idea that an author has about Jesus, and perhaps even more about Mary. Thus, the *Protevangelium of James*, which gives the most detailed account of Jesus' childhood, portraits Joseph as an old man, a widower with children, in order to exalt the purity of Mary. With this in mind, she first appears as a miraculously born little girl, who is thus consecrated to the Temple service (7.2–8.1). Since she must leave the shrine at the age of twelve (8.2), the priests decide to find her a husband who will ensure that the union will not be consummated. That is why they summon the widowers, that is to say old men, who moreover already have descendants and do not want more (8.3). Joseph is chosen (9). He had children (9.2), including James. This detail confirms the fact that Jesus had a family, at least one brother, and that Mary remained a virgin all her life. However, James is the half-brother of Jesus only if Joseph is considered as Jesus' biological father. In fact James and Jesus have no blood ties in this story, but relations of kinship in a culture such as that of

ancient Judea may differ from modern Western conceptions. However this raises the question of the paternity of Joseph. In the canonical as well as apocryphal writings, he is 'only' considered as Jesus' nursing father. He performs all his duties with care and even tries to preserve the reputation of his wife while he believes she is adulterous (14.1). In connection with this he will listen to God telling him that Mary's honour is safe (14.2). Joseph usually always remains in the background, but there is a text, the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* (see Peeters 1924), which is entirely devoted to him.

This text, probably written in Egypt between the sixth and eighth century (see Lefort 1953), was produced to confirm the idea that Christ had a human nature and not just a divine one. This is why the author focuses on Jesus' human family (see Boud'hors 2005: 27–9). The *History of Joseph the Carpenter* is actually the story of his death at the age of 111. In literary terms, this text is similar in genre to that of the testaments of the patriarchs, which report the last moments of godly men and their instructions for those who survive them. The *History of Joseph the Carpenter* then continues with the description of the afterlife, but on the whole it is a sermon delivered by Jesus to his disciples assembled on the Mount of Olives.

The master shows affection for the man whom he says to be his earthly father (9.2), a righteous worker, a carpenter from Bethlehem. Joseph married at a young age and had four sons and two daughters from this union, before losing his wife. Some years later Mary, the consecrated virgin, was entrusted to him and she immediately surrounded James with a mother's love. Joseph travelled often on construction sites, but one day, after two years of marriage with the young Mary, he returned and found her pregnant. He wanted first to repudiate her secretly, but Gabriel the archangel spoke to him while he was asleep. He was told that the child will be a boy, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and will be called Jesus. Then follow the story of the birth and the flight to Egypt. Jesus continues the story of his family life in Nazareth, describing his father as a worker who does not seem to age. However, Joseph becomes ill and on his deathbed Jesus mourns his earthly father and then brings his soul to his heavenly Father. Joseph's body is finally placed in a tomb in the presence of prominent Jews while Jesus remembers the trouble that he caused to him.

THE MAGI

In the canonical texts, the Magi appear only in the Gospel of Matthew (2.1–12). Their identity and characteristics are only described briefly. This is however the starting point for the later tradition, developed in apocryphal writings, which ascribes some personality to these three figures who become kings in the Christian imagination (for extracts about the Magi, see Elliott 2006: 95–104).

At the turn of the Christian era, the Jews expected a Messiah who would rise like a star (Num. 24.17). This messianic expectation is therefore accompanied by astrological prophecies (cf. *Test. Jud.* 24.1; *Test. Lev.* 18.3–5: cf. Bériou et al. 2000: 9, 26–31). This can explain the origin and the 'business' of the three Magi. Μάγοι may have a pejorative connotation, but the term refers here to the actual Zoroastrian priests of Persia, who were renowned astrologers (see *Syriac History of the Virgin* 330–1, cited in Bériou et al. 2000: 21–2). The arrival of the three men from the East combines the motif of the prophetic star and of the Gentiles who will join the Messiah as their new king. That the Magi become kings could be explained by their reduction to a symbol. Since all nations are expected to pay tribute to the Messiah (Isaiah 60), who better than the king alone can represent an entire nation?

Another text that depicts the Magi is the Syriac text, the *Cave of Treasures* which was translated into Arabic and widely distributed by the eighth century (see Ri 1987: xvii–xviii, 2000: 63), and thereafter extremely popular among Arab Christians (see Battista and Bagatti 1979). According to this text (45.18–19, 46.3–4) the three wise men are actually kings and conveyors of the *Testament of Adam* concealing all the secrets entrusted to his son Seth. The writer even gives the names of the Magi, but they are not the ones who are remembered by the tradition. It is in the *Armenian Gospel of Childhood* that the names Caspar, Balthasar, and Melchior [sic] appear for the first time.

The Magi soon become very popular because they represent the good Gentiles, quicker to recognize Christ than the Jews. They are converted foreigners, as are ultimately all Gentile Christians. Considering them as kings goes in the same direction, since the conversion of a sovereign is equivalent to the conversion of all his subjects. Such developments, as well as the interpretation of the symbolic gifts (gold, frankincense, and myrrh), belong to the mainstream Christian literature, patristic and medieval. In relation to apocryphal literature, two texts must be mentioned.

The first is the *Protevangelium of James* (21.1–4), which focuses exclusively on the infancy narratives of Jesus. This text of the second century does not provide much more information than the Gospel of Matthew; it is nevertheless important because of its subsequent influence, spread to the West through the translation of *Pseudo-Matthew* (for texts, see Elliott 2006: 95–104). The *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* is essentially a rewriting of the *Protevangelium of James*. Concerning the visit of the Magi, it should be noted that *Pseudo-Matthew* (13.6–7, 16.1–2) states there was a two year gap between Jesus' birth and the coming of the Magi (see Gijsel 1997: 426–9, 438–45).

The other text that is of crucial importance is the Syriac *Revelation of the Magi*. Although it is relatively early, it has had little subsequent influence as it was forgotten until the recent discovery and translation of a copy that had been languishing for centuries in the Vatican Library (*Codex Vaticanus Syriacus 162*) (Landau 2010).

This text presents twelve kings described as 'wise men'. Each of them is individualized with a name and lineage. They come from the Eastern part of the known world next to earthly paradise. That is why they inherited the knowledge initially transmitted by Adam to his son Seth, which justifies the title given to the story: the motif of a secret revelation offers the opportunity to explain what the teaching is about (3.6–10). As a consequence, the story ends in an apocalyptic style, about human history and salvation.

The *Revelation of the Magi* continues with the prophecy of the star, which is assimilated to the light of truth based on a column in the cave of hidden mysteries and treasures (4). The influence of Matthew's Gospel may be seen: this light is like the star above the cave of the Nativity. From this point of view, the Adoration of the Magi to whom Christ appears, can be called an epiphany (13–14, 19). Christ enjoins them to disseminate the mystery they have seen and reminds them that he is everywhere, even in the most remote countries (26). The Magi leave and become like apostles.

In the liturgy, there is a tension between two feasts, the Epiphany and Christmas. Literally epiphany means 'appearance'. It can be thought that the birth of Christ is a kind of 'manifestation' and indeed there was a time when both feasts took place on the same day, 6 January in the West and 25 December in the East (Trexler 1997: 9–10). In the Byzantine Synaxarion, it is clear that the coming of the Magi is commemorated on 25 December (Bériou et al. 2000: 53–66). Only later did Latin Christians bring forward the date of their celebration of Jesus' birth so that it was celebrated on the same day as in the East. Moreover, what the Eastern Churches call 'epiphany' does not designate the arrival of the

Magi to the Holy Family; it is the baptism of Jesus by John because of the appearance of the Spirit in the form of a dove.

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND HIS FATHER ZECHARIAH

The traditions about John the Baptist are quite numerous in ancient Christian texts, and are often interrelated with traditions about his father Zechariah: the latter will be presented in the second part of this section. Three groups of traditions about John the Baptist can be identified. A first group consists of brief references, often closely related to the canonical traditions or developing them, as for example *Gospel of Thomas* 46 (NHC II, *c*.400 CE). The logion records, in the same way as the Synoptic tradition, that 'there is among the children of women none higher than John the Baptist' (Schneemelcher 2003: 124; see Matt. 11.11; Luke 7.28). But it asserts also that one has to become higher than John in order to know the kingdom. In this first group, one can mention as other examples later texts such as the gnostic *Exegesis of the Soul* 135.23–4, which refers to John and his proclamation of repentance, or the *Arabic Life of Jesus* 45.1–2 that is a rewriting of Luke 7.18–22 (Bovon and Geoltrain 1997: 231; Mahé and Poirier 2007: 484). Such passages testify to a memory of John, but they do not present any content that differs significantly from canonical accounts.

A second group of traditions occurs in texts often associated with 'Jewish Christianity', even if this category is debated today (see Clivaz 2010a: 502–8). The ancient *Protoevangelium of James* gives an important place to the stories about John the Baptist and his parents, Elisabeth and Zechariah. This text relates important traditions on the family: at the time of the massacre of the innocents by King Herod, Elisabeth runs away with the infant John to the mountains and asks a mountain to protect her and the child (22.1–3). Herod looks for him (23.1–2), and finally has Zechariah murdered in the Temple (23.3). That is the final story of this apocryphal gospel, apart from a last colophon (25.1–2): it is presented as an important final episode, putting the emphasis on the Baptist and his parents. Other Jewish Christian traditions provide various stories about John and his movement in ancient Christianity: the *Gospel according to the Nazareans* refers to John in relationship to the necessity of a 'baptism for ignorance' (Jerome, *Con. Pelag.* 3.2); according to Epiphanius, the *Gospel according the Ebionites* shows vegetarian tendencies among John's circles (*Pan.* 30.13.6). (See Bovon and Geoltrain 1997: 102–4, 439, 451.)

A third group is represented by two texts focused on John the Baptist. They appear to be independent of each other, and quite late. The first one is the Garshuni *Life of John the Baptist*, written in Arabic with Syriac letters. It looks like a homily, and is said to have been written by the Egyptian bishop Serapion at the end of the fourth century CE. It survives in two manuscripts of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, edited and translated by A. Mingana (1927). This *Life* (which Mingana presents without chapters or paragraphs) begins by telling the episodes narrated in Luke 1, then offers the story presented at the end of the *Protoevangelium of James* up to the death of Zechariah. It continues with further episodes: Elisabeth and John stay in the desert until the death of Elisabeth, when John is seven years old. The child Jesus, who is able to 'see' his cousin at a distance from Egypt, joins him with Mary, transported on a luminous cloud. They bury Elisabeth, then John remains alone in the desert, helped by Gabriel sent by God. The last pages narrate the adult life of John the Baptist, including the story of his relics, even some centuries after his death and the miracles related to him.

The second text is a Coptic homily, known as the *Praise of John the Baptist*. It should probably be dated no earlier than the sixth century CE, and was first edited and translated by Budge from a manuscript dated at the end of the tenth century CE (Budge 1913). An unedited Arabic version is also available in three manuscripts from the sixteenth century CE (Bovon and Geoltrain 1997: 1558). The text gives a brief account of John's childhood (129.23–130.5) before focusing on his ministry, until it comes back to the infancy and narrates Elisabeth's flight in the desert with John (136.5–137.4). The most distinctive features of this text are the discovery by the narrator, James the brother of the Lord, of a later 'ancient book' written by the apostles (138.18–19), and its presentation of Christ teaching about the Baptist on the Mount of the Olives, found at the end of the book (145.11). The point of this speech is to underline that nobody is comparable to John on earth. The perspective is here contrary to that of *Gos. Thom.* 46; the general pattern is reminiscent of the end of the *Protevangelium of James*, but the discourse of Christ about John is a distinctive feature of this text.

The figure of Zechariah appears in various apocryphal traditions in Jewish and early Christian writings; the existence of an 'Apocrypha of Zechariah' seems also to be attested (Verhelst 1998). The two memories, sharing the motif of Zechariah's murder in the Temple, testify to some confusion between different figures called 'Zechariah' (see Dubois 1978, 1994; Clivaz 2010b: 304–8). On the Jewish side, stories link the post-exilic prophet Zechariah (Zech. 1.1), Isaiah's witness (Isa. 8.2), and the prophet Zechariah in 2 Chron. 24 around the motif of prophetic blood in the Temple; this blood cries out for vengeance and could explain the Temple's destruction (cf. *b. Git.* 57a-b; *j. Ta'an.* 4.5; Dubois 1994: 36). Such traditions could go back to the second century CE or even as early as the end of the first century CE (Dubois 1978: 304). On the Christian side, memories of the death of different Zechariahs in the Temple are further expanded by this one of Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, mentioned by the *Protevangelium of James* 22–4, or by the Garshuni *Life of John the Baptist*, as indicated already, and also by Tertullian (*Scorp.* 8.3). Matt. 23.35 and Luke 11.51 show some confusion between the 'Zechariahs': the mention of 'Zechariah, son of Barachiah' in Matt. 23.35, 'murdered between the temple and the altar', is simply paralleled by 'Zechariah' in Luke 11.51, and by 'Zechariah, son of Jojada' in the *Gospel of the Nazaraeans*, according to Jerome (*Comm. Matt.* on 23.35), a tradition that follows the Hebrew text of 2 Chron. 24.20–2.

As the post-exilic prophet Zechariah is not known to have been killed in the Temple, the *Gospel of the Nazaraeans* follows here the tradition of Zechariah, son of Jojada. The Septuagint, however, relates this episode to 'Azarias, son of Yehoyada', not to a 'Zechariah'. Consequently, Origen chooses to follow some 'apocryphal traditions' and relates Matt. 23.35 and Luke 11.51 to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, murdered in the Temple next to the altar (see *Comm. Matt.* 10.18; *Letter to Africanus* 14) (Dubois 1994: 32–6). Regarding the importance of such traditions, Dubois supposes that Luke 11.51 speaks simply about 'Zechariah', not about 'Zechariah, son of Barachiah', because it refers precisely to Zechariah, father of John the Baptist (Dubois 1994: 23). But nothing allows us to specify which 'Zechariah' is understood in Luke 11.51: the author left the question open.

MARY MAGDALENE

There are two types of apocryphal writings associated with Mary Magdalene. The first are narrative biographies, such as the *Life of Mary Magdalene* (*BHG* 1161x; Halkin 1987; Coquin and Godron 1990), where she plays the central part, or the *Acts of Pilate* (entitled

Acts of Pilate (redaction B) 11.3.2c in Tischendorf 1876: 314, or the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (redaction byzantine M) in Bovon and Geoltrain 1997: 280–1), where she is only a secondary character, but in a surprising role: during the burial of Jesus by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalene says that she wants to go to Rome, in order to tell the Emperor about the error committed by Pontius Pilate. This episode is developed in another apocryphal text, the *Response of Tiberius to Pilate* (Tischendorf 1876: 433–4; James 1897: 79), in which the Emperor writes that Mary Magdalene, disciple of Christ, has informed him about what happened in Judea (Geerard 1989–90).

The tradition of Mary Magdalene's journey to the West is documented in southern Italy from at least the ninth-century *Ascetic Life* and later developed to justify the presence of the relics of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Gaul (Saxer 1959; Auberger 2006).

The confusion between the three Marys is another feature of the Latin tradition (see Scopello 2006: 88–9) rejected by the Eastern Fathers who refuse such shortcuts. Gregory the Great is one of the main witnesses of a portrait which is generally apocryphal even if the material is canonical: the sister of Martha and Lazarus is actually Mary of Bethany (Luke 10.38–42; John 11–12). (See *Hom. Ezek.* [*CPL* 1710] 8.21.589; *Hom. Gosp.* [*CPL* 1711] 25.6, 29.1.) In Luke 7.36–8, an anonymous sinner pours perfume on Jesus' feet and wipes them with her hair. In John 12.1–8, it is indeed Mary of Bethany who is the sinful woman, but the reader does not know whether she is repentant or not. Judas makes a remark about wasting such precious material, to which Jesus replies, 'Leave her alone: she has bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial' (John 12.7). It does not take long to identify Mary of Bethany (and through her the repentant sinner) with Mary Magdalene going to the tomb as presented in the four canonical Gospels, since she has bought spices (Mark 16.1) to embalm the body of Jesus. This assimilation is probably reinforced by the fact that Luke (8.2) refers to Mary Magdalene healed of the seven demons, just after the episode of the repentant sinner.

Mary Magdalene was among the women who witnessed Christ's resurrection. According to Matthew (28.9), she and her companions kneel and hug the feet of the risen Christ in a similar gesture to the anointing at Bethany, which provokes the assimilation between the repentant sinner Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala.

In contrast, John 20.14–18 describes the *Noli me tangere* ('Do not touch me') episode after the reply of Jesus to Mary Magdalene at the tomb, as she stands alone and tries to approach her resurrected master. In both cases, however, Mary Magdalene has priority in the revelation and proclaims the resurrection to the apostles.

'Gnostics' appreciated characters that would have had direct access to mysteries and knowledge so much that they developed many specific literary genres to stage them. Mary Magdalene appears in a type of texts called 'dialogues with the risen Christ', namely in the *Gospel of Mary*, attested in two Greek fragments and in Coptic (see Lührmann 1988; Pasquier 1983), the *Questions of Mary* and the Coptic *Pistis Sophia*. This kind of didactic literature can convey esoteric teaching supposed to come directly from Jesus, transmitted to privileged disciples and then propagated through alternative channels, parallel to the dominant Christian communities. These latter claimed the exoteric 'official' teaching of the apostles.

In these dialogues, Mary Magdalene shows great intelligence, sometimes to the point of conducting debates. Nevertheless, as the didactic literature finally delivers little biographical data (sometimes only the name is mentioned), it is not always easy to distinguish which Mary is being written about, because, in addition to the three Marys we mentioned, Mary the Virgin was also a popular figure among the 'gnostics'. They did not

venerate her as the fleshly mother of Jesus, but as a mistress of wisdom (Shoemaker 2001, 2002a).

PONTIUS PILATE

The character of Pontius Pilate features in a number of apocryphal texts from the fourth century onwards (Dubois 2005). These texts adopt various literary forms. They may be interdependent, or autonomous and even slightly conflicting with each other. Sometimes there are parallel versions, i.e. independent rewritings of a single source. The end result of this process of rewriting can sometimes be a new work which must be treated as such, and not as a distortion or corruption of its source. Finally, to complicate the situation further, all these texts have fluctuating titles: two manuscripts with the same text or a nearly similar one can bear different titles, some of them in turn resembling titles of clearly different texts.

This is the case with the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (see Gounelle and Izydorczyk 1997: 215–17; for a survey of the sources, see Izydorczyk 1997). This is the ancient title, but scholarly literature sometimes calls it the *Acts of Pilate*, because ancient authors identified it as the report drawn up by order of the governor of Judea during Jesus' trial (see Justin, *Apol.* 1.35,9; 48.3; Tertullian, *Apol.* 5.2–3, 21, 24; Gregory of Tours, *Story of the Franks* 1.21, 24). Referring to this text as the *Acts of Pilate* (*Gesta Pilati*) also serves to indicate that Pilate is not the author, since the text is explicitly attributed to Nicodemus. In contrast, the title *Gesta Salvatoris* 'Acts of the Saviour' is well attested in the manuscripts, but rather obsolete.

The *Gospel of Nicodemus* can be divided into three main parts: Jesus' trial, the story of Joseph of Arimathea, and the descent of Christ into hell. This last part is sometimes separated from the first two, which then form together the *Gesta Pilati*. Note that Pontius Pilate appears only in the first part, i.e. the trial. His behaviour during the trial is much more developed than in the canonical Gospels, and even though he does not directly act in the rest of the story until ch. 27, everything happening from then on is the consequence of the initial scenes.

Jesus' trial purports to report what has been said in Pilate's court. The chief priests and Jewish leaders take on the role of accusers. The author depicts them in such a way that he demonizes them. Pilate, the Roman magistrate, does not understand what crime the accused (Jesus) has committed. He even shows concern for this man who allegedly cured poor people. Pilate tries to negotiate, in vain. He finally summons elders, the priests, and the Levites to serve notice of his disagreement on them and to announce that he does not accept any responsibility, whatever the judgement of Jesus might be. The Jewish accusers say, 'His blood be on us and on our children' (cf. Matt. 27.25). Such a claim is used as a kind of self-cursing from Jews for the centuries to come. This altercation aims to demonstrate that Pilate, constrained by his role as governor, is only the executor of the will of the Jews. Finally, the earliest version of the text (the Latin redaction A, edited by Kim 1973) distinguishes between the Jews 'in the synagogue' and other Jews, receptive to the word of Jesus, who agreed with the governor. Nicodemus, the putative author of this gospel, turns out to be in their midst. As soon as the sentence has been executed, Pilate disappears from the story.

As we pointed out, the title of this text varies according to the manuscripts, but it is not only the title that changes: the authorship also shifts. (Numerous manuscripts have a title implying that Pontius Pilate is the author, even though they keep the following sentence: 'Everything that Nicodemus has noted after the Crucifixion …'.) Gradually, Pilate is

presented as the author of the former *Gospel of Nicodemus*, which is significant. The figure of Nicodemus, an emblem of the good Jew, is cancelled for the benefit of the two remaining categories: the Roman (Pilate) who eventually receives the gospel and the hardened Jews.

Enhancement of the figure of Pilate is therefore used for exacerbating the guilt of the Jews. As rewritings happened, and even more with the emergence of new apocryphal texts featuring the Roman governor, Pilate is relieved of his responsibility in condemning Jesus to death. The character development illustrates one of the functions of the developing apocryphal tradition: a desire to exploit the silence of scripture. In a certain manner, scribes tried to embroider the narrative of Jesus' trial. That means there was already an established canon, which shows that stories about Pontius Pilate are not apocryphal writings from the first Christian generation when the New Testament was not 'closed' yet. They do not document presumably historical episodes, of which they pretend to be witnesses, but rather reflect their own historical context, in this case Christian communities, whose anti-Judaism is growing (Gounelle and Isdorczyk 1997: 18–20).

The new writings that arise not only focus on Pontius Pilate, but directly involve him as the sender or the recipient, probably in order to reinforce the validity of the account, as Pilate was a direct witness of the trial and the passion of Jesus. This is why these texts have a documentary form: the *Report of Pilate to Tiberius*, which is sometimes copied together with the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, is actually attested in two versions possessing in turn their own continuation, the *Appearance of Pilate* (for the redaction A) and the *Response of Tiberius* (for the redaction B) (Tischendorf 1876: 435–55). In these documents Tiberius is presented as the avenger of Christ, who punishes Pilate for his weakness in having executed a man in whom the emperor himself recognizes God and who castigates the Jews as the instigators of the crime.

The *Letter of Pilate to the Emperor Claudius* (sometimes directly inserted in the *Gospel of Nicodemus*: see Tischendorf 1876: 413–16; Kim 1973: 49–50) as well as the pseudo-correspondence between Pilate and Herod (James 1897: xlv–l, 66–81) suggest that Pilate converted to Christ and, what is more, became a saint. Indeed there is a *Martyrdom of Pilate* describing him tortured and crucified by the Jews and Tiberius. This text is preserved in Coptic, Arabic, and Ge'ez (Beylot 1993). The linguistic coherence of this corpus betrays a Coptic Church specific cult (Luisier 1996). However, the number of manuscripts of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and *a fortiori* all written Pilate cycles demonstrate the undeniable popularity of the subject in all Christian areas, which is confirmed by the iconographic record (Hourihane 2009).

CONCLUSION

As we have set out in this essay, several characters who are depicted only briefly in the canonical texts are presented at much greater length in a number of non-canonical texts. This is the case with Jesus' parents, the Magi, John the Baptist and his father Zechariah, Mary Magdalene, Pontius Pilate, and James, the brother of the Lord. Some of these texts focus mainly on particular periods in the life of these figures: for example, the motherhood and later the end of Mary's life. The literary forms of the texts in which these traditions are presented may vary significantly, as can be seen in the case of Pontius Pilate. A chronological order between canonical and apocryphal traditions cannot always be assumed, as for example in the case of John the Baptist. Some figures are presented in particularly complex ways: a case in point is Mary Magdalene, whose depiction draws on traditions that originally referred to different characters in the canonical Gospels.

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NARRATIVES ABOUT THE APOSTLES

Non-canonical Acts and Related Literature

RICHARD I. PERVO

WORKS entitled 'acts' (*praxeis*) that focused upon the exploits of apostles were produced into the sixth century. The title is appropriate for accounts of the careers of notable persons (see Pervo 2009: 29–30). Although applied to the canonical Acts no later than *c*.180 (by Irenaeus), it could not have been original, for the major character, Paul, is not, by the definition accepted by the narrator, an apostle. The standard pattern follows an apostle from the time of his call/conversion/commission to his death. The latter was preferably not by natural means. By this criterion, the canonical Acts is deviant, for although it begins quite properly with a group commission (1.8), and reports general activity by apostles (chs 2–5) and specific activity by Peter and John (chs 3 and 8), it also takes notice of missionary activity by the non-apostles Stephen, Philip (chs 6–8), Barnabas and Paul (chs 13–28). Paul has left all the others behind by Acts 16. Moreover, he does not die in the end. Nonetheless, the canonical Acts is the ground of and inspiration for the apocryphal books. Its structure resembles that of Mark. All of the acts derive from the canonical Gospel genre(s) (Bovon 1988), in particular Mark, which is not biographical in plan.

Although the acts manifest substantial variety, they possess a loose generic identity. 'Acts' is a much better indicator of form and content than is the title 'gospel'. The most apt Graeco-Roman genre for comparison to Mark and the acts is the monograph. Monographs comprise a single book and often focus upon a major figure. The best-known examples are in Latin: *Cataline* and *The Jugurthan War* by Sallust and *Agricola* by Tacitus, both of whom also issued historical works. In the matter of historical accuracy, monographs were generally even less faithful to 'pure truth' than other historical genres and were comparable to biographies in this regard. Monographs could be pure fiction (*3 Maccabees*). The acts constitute a broad subclass of monographs, with open hands toward biography.

The specific genre most proximate to the acts is the ancient novel, a category that includes a range of subtypes. Historical novels about national and cultural heroes and popular prose epics emerged after *c*.300 BCE. The best and most complete examples feature Alexander the Great, versions and offshoots of which spanned Eurasia. These stories might —in one of the evidently perennial tendencies of romance—treat their heroes as persons who wrestle with ordinary concerns. Fragments of a novel about the Assyrian conqueror Ninus depict him as a fumbling adolescent lover. Similar changes can be seen in contrasting the 'bourgeois' orientation of Athenian New Comedy (e.g. Menander, third century BCE) with the vigorous social and political wit of the earlier Aristophanes. Romantic novels flourished *c*.150–250 CE, contemporaneously with the apocryphal acts. As Tomas Hägg (1983) aptly noted, these books reacted to kindred social and cultural phenomena. Those

who read both the *Acts of Paul* and the romantic novel *An Ephesian Tale* will note many points and levels for comparison. Romantic novels demonstrate that the acts sought to entertain; changes over time reflect changes in taste, as well as in theology. Whereas the romantic novels tend to affirm conventional views of civic and family life, their Christian counterparts invert it. Apostolic wonders upset the natural course of things while their view of marriage threatens to rend the fabric of the social order. The apostolic lifestyle reflects the 'radical' pattern exemplified in the hypothetical sayings gospel Q and in *Thomas*. As homeless itinerants, these preachers proclaim world renunciation in varied theological packages. This illustrates one feature of deviance and 'heresy': the continuation of a later discarded primitive model. Although apostles and romantic heroes and heroines may undergo similar adventures and traverse roughly the same landscape, the latter do not teach. This is to say that the acts also merit comparison with political and philosophical biographies. Philostratus' story of Apollonius is a smorgasbord of genres, offering substantial servings of gospel, travel novel, philosophical life, and religious quest. Philostratus stood at the cultural apex of his day. *Apollonius of Tyana* illustrates the progress of the novel up the literary ladder.

The acts represent a similar journey. Literary sophistication improves from Luke to Acts and into its successors. Four decades ago this claim would have amazed scholars, who expected no more than a loose, rambling structure and found what they expected. But each of the major acts exhibits careful planning—in so far as their incomplete state permits secure judgement. Theologically, the acts represent a mixed picture. The *Acts of Paul* is less sophisticated than the canonical book, and the *Acts of Peter*, with a couple of exceptions (20, 38–9), is robustly unreflective in its theology. The *Acts of John*, on the other hand, displays a profound intensification of the Johannine theological tradition and was deemed worthy of an injection of proto-Valentinian thought (Pervo 1992). The *Acts of Andrew* reaches, from the Western perspective, an intellectual culmination, for it is thoroughly immersed in the Middle Platonic tradition. Although indebted to Western thought, the *Acts of Thomas* is based upon an original Eastern synthesis of dualistic thought. The later acts generally exhibit a rather unreflective, popular theology that does not consistently eschew the crude. One general theological trend is the proclivity for apostles to become saviour figures who recruit disciples to follow them. This tendency—an offshoot of the gospel tradition—appears in varied forms and is strongest where the emphasis is upon revelation rather than atonement by a saviour figure. See Pervo (2010).

The theology comes in at least ostensibly attractive packages. 'Profit with delight' is characteristic of the acts as a whole. What elevates spiritually can appeal without adding entertainment, but the acts sought to engage their readers with entertaining narrative. This did not stand them in good stead from the time of Renaissance and Reformations onward, which proclaimed that edification should be taken neat. Sugar-coated learning was for children. The popular character of this material is apparent from its repetitious quality. Those who cater for broad audiences prefer general to elite approval. They know what the public wants and supply it, regardless of the clucking tongues and raised eyebrows of the cultured. Since the criteria for entertainment vary according to age, culture, and other factors, ancient novels provide valuable criteria for determining what was viewed as entertaining.

Oratory constituted an important element of Graeco-Roman culture; even those without much formal education learned through experience to appreciate the structures and techniques of speeches. The speeches in the apocryphal acts have suffered at the hands of censors, who took exception to much of their theological content and/or abbreviated or eliminated them to 'cut to the chase', i.e. the miracles and adventures. The quality ranges in

accordance with the literary level of the work. Two common types are the defence speech, which often assumes the character of a missionary sermon, and the farewell address (see Pervo 1997). The *Acts of Thomas* contains some poetry of fine quality; the *Acts of John* includes the famous 'Hymn of Jesus', set to music in the twentieth century by Gustav Holst (who prepared his own translation).

The various acts are Christian novels that participate in a broad and flexible tradition that absorbs features of various genres. 'Novel' is appropriate both because of their form and because, despite borrowings from various texts, they represent the products of their authors' imaginations. They became a primary medium for continuation of the narrative features of the canonical Gospels. (Others were the 'infancy gospels' and 'passion gospels'; see Chapters 2 and 3.) Several important reasons for studying these books may be noted. Their theologies, which cover a broad range, supplement the generally learned perspective of most surviving early Christian theologians. In this respect they have a good deal in common with the Apostolic Fathers. As a popular genre, the less sophisticated acts illustrate features of the taste of average believers. Their success is confirmed by the imitations produced by sophisticated writers and theologians. As scholarly labours of the last generation have shown, these acts are rich sources for data about early Christian social thought. Finally, none who pass a little time in the crannies and corridors of the Christian Apocrypha can doubt that early followers of Jesus lacked imagination.

A SURVEY OF TEXTS

A summary and analysis of the five major apocryphal acts from the second and third centuries, two related narratives, and some later acts and other texts follow. English translations of the five major acts are readily accessible in the standard collections of Schneemelcher (1992) and Elliott (1999), where they appear with introductory material and bibliography. Further bibliography for both the major acts and these other texts may be found in Geerard (1992) and in Klauck (2008), who also provides a useful summary and discussion of many of these texts.

THE MAJOR APOCRYPHAL ACTS OF THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURY

The *Acts of Andrew*

See Geerard (1992: §§ 225–40); Klauck (2008: 113–40). The *Acts of Andrew* is probably the worst-preserved item in a poorly preserved group. Its philosophical orientation suggests that it appeared in Alexandria, perhaps *c*.215. Materials for reconstructing the *Acts of Andrew* are Gregory of Tours' epitome (which is a collection of miracle stories in succinct form, like Mark 1.29–31); various Greek manuscripts that derive from the final sections of the work; a Coptic Papyrus, Utrecht 1, corresponding to ch. 18 of Gregory's abridgment; an Armenian martyrdom, which offers the best available text of the closing chapter; and various summaries. Only Gregory's epitome gives a sense of Andrew's itinerary. Andrew is allotted Achaea (Greece) as his mission field, but after some deviation he is found on the Black Sea coast (modern Turkey) at Amasea, Sinope, Nicaea, and Nicomedia, each stop marked by a miracle. He sails to Byzantium, stilling a storm and thence travels by foot to Thrace (§§ 1–9). From Perinthus 'they' sail, according to an angelic direction, to

Macedonia. Sections 11–21 summarize detailed missions to Philippi and Thessalonica, followed by another voyage (with storm) to Patras in Achaea (§§ 22–5). Corinth was the next stop (§§ 26–9), after which Andrew returns to Patras and eventual martyrdom (§§ 30–8). For the section on marytyrdom, the full texts available reveal the extent of the Bishop of Tours' abbreviation and bowdlerization. Andrew becomes involved with the proconsular family. Had Andrew been familiar with the various acts, he would have realized that such entanglements usually brought mortal danger, but no acts had yet been written and mortal danger was his heart's desire. After converting Stratocles, brother of the governor Aegeates, because he has healed a slave of the former, he induces one Maximilla to absent herself from the conjugal bed. Since she is the wife of the proconsul, her husband Aegeates can find the means to channel his rage against the source of this impudent abstinence: the apostle. Prior to that, however, comes a scene that would suit New Comedy: Maximilla inserts her slave Euclia into her husband's bed. When Aegeates learns of the deceit he has Euclia killed. That action suited no comedies. Maxmilla's continued celibacy lands the apostle in jail, where he continues to proclaim his message. Crucified, Andrew holds forth from the cross for four days. The public persuade Aegeates to release him, but the apostle will not have it. Maximilla and Stratocles frame this story by burying their teacher. The proconsul takes his own life.

Gregory's epitome begins with the adventures of Andrew and Matthias in a city whose denizens have elected a cannibalistic lifestyle. The extant *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*, which offers another version of this story, is a late text (note the apostolic pair, a feature of secondary productions) that differs sharply from the rest of the *Acts of Andrew* in style and theology. In his 1994 study *Christianizing Homer*, Dennis MacDonald set forth a proposal that launched a new discipline: mimesis criticism. By arguing that the *Acts of Andrew* parodies the *Odyssey* he shattered the barriers that had separated Jewish and Christian from other texts. MacDonald's hypothesis postulates that the cannibal story opened the *Acts of Andrew*. He has found few followers, but it remains possible that an earlier edition of the text once existed. Contemporary Christian readers would have regarded the story as an allegory and, if it stood at the beginning of a book, as an invitation to look beneath the surface of the text. Against the idea of the *Odyssey* as a literary model stands the argument that fantastic and gruesome stories are characteristic of later works.

Presentation of a popular, occasionally crude narrative in an elegant style to showcase a Middle Platonic theology that includes a few splashes of Stoic ethics lightly seasoned with Christian Gnosis suggests the milieu of Alexandria in the first part of the third century. Middle Platonism flourished roughly in the first two centuries of our era. This revival of dogmatic Platonism was especially congenial to theological thinkers. Representatives include Philo, Plutarch, Apuleius, and most early Christian theologians. Stoics, despite their deterministic system, made substantial contributions to the field of ethics. Adherents of other systems gladly utilized their contributions. Valentinian 'Gnosticism'—the noun is questioned today—shifted the Platonic paradigm so that, rather than providing a dim reflection of ultimate reality, the material world was irredeemably corrupt. See, for example, *Acts of Andrew* 47 (14). On the philosophical background of this work, see Prieur (1989: 370–9). Clement and Origen would have understood but not recommended such a book. Another possible place of composition would be Athens, but Alexandria remains more likely. A fascinating cultural parallel is the *Metamorphoses*, a novel by the Middle Platonist Apuleius of Madaura, who also packaged philosophical and religious ideas in a racy narrative.

The *Acts of John*

See Geerard (1992: §§ 215–24); Klauck (2008: 15–45). Perhaps two thirds of the ancient *Acts of John* survived theological condemnation. A later, quite conventional text transmitted under the authorship of Prochorus (Acts 6.5) preserved parts of the early work. Other than the later interpolations in chs 94–102, 109, the theology of the *Acts of John* could be as early as 150, but its ecclesiological orientation suggests a date *c*.200. Irenaeus of Lyons (*c*.180) probably made the identification of the 'Beloved Disciple' of John 13–21 as the author of the gospel. In any case, none before him make that attribution. This John was located at Ephesus, where the Johannine corpus, interpreted in a proto-orthodox manner, was a useful weapon against various rival teachings. The *Acts of John* inverts this picture, kidnapping the notion of John the apostle at Ephesus to serve a non-orthodox position. The book offers data about the continuation of 'deviant' Johannine thought and the use of characteristic Johannine techniques until *c*.200.

The lost beginning evidently opens at the Sea of Galilee, where the Risen Christ appears to the youthful John and convinces him to embrace celibacy. The first extant portion finds John returning to his base at Ephesus. Lycomedes, the chief magistrate, begs him to succour his wife Cleopatra, but she perishes from illness before John can intervene, whereupon Lycomedes dies from grief. After raising her, the apostle has Cleopatra restore Lycomedes to life. As a pious polytheist he commissions a portrait of John and places it in a shrine. Exposure of this error allows John to contrast appearance to reality. Images are but shadows of the former. In the *Acts of John* resurrection is the standard miracle; it represents the gift of true life (chs 18–29).

Chs 30–7 relate a mass healing of ill and decrepit elderly women in the Ephesian theatre, a vexatious place for Paul (Acts 19; *Acts Paul* 9). Some events in the ensuing gap can be reconstructed from later parts of the narrative. John wins over Drusiana, wife of a prominent citizen, Andronicus, who objects to her withdrawal from conjugal relations. John and Drusiana are incarcerated. Here the husband converts, evidently ending the conflict. In this scenario, as in all of the acts, which represent the continuation of the literary tradition of the canonical book, persecution drives the plot, introducing peril that ends in greater success—in this case, Andronicus' conversion.

After their release it transpires that Drusiana finds a polymorphic manifestation of Christ disturbing. John delivers a sermon containing an 'embedded Gospel' (cf. *Acts Paul* 13; *Acts Pet*. 20) that focuses upon the passion. The last supper includes the 'Hymn of Christ' with its accompanying dance. The true Christ reveals himself to John in a cave as Jesus is being crucified. If 1 John serves to provide the tradition with an anti-docetic twist, the *Acts of John* thrusts it in the opposite direction. The interpolated material already mentioned (94–102, 109) has a proto-Valentinian character, indicated by the cosmological terminology in that section (see Junod and Kaestli 1983: 589–632).

After a gap the story resumes with the apostle's destruction of the temple of Artemis, yet another improvement upon Paul (*Acts John* 37–47; cf. Acts 19). A priest of Artemis is killed in the ruins, and raised to join his brother, who is already a convert. Next comes a grim and gritty tale about a young man who murders his father because of his disapproval of the son's adulterous affair. Out of remorse the young man plots to do away with the woman, her husband, and himself. John dissuades him from this action and then restores his dead father, who is not pleased. The young man then castrates himself, to John's considerable displeasure (chs 48–54).

Most of the subsequent journey, which includes stops at Smyrna and Laodicea, has been lost. An exorcism at Smyrna belongs here; it is also a customary location for the symbolic

story of John and a partridge. (Both are numbered chs 56 and 57.) Returning to Ephesus with a large party (cf. Acts 20.3), John draws a lesson from some obedient bedbugs (chs 59–61). Matters in Ephesus take a turn for the worse when a prominent citizen, Callimachus, falls in lust with Drusiana, who prefers death to being a source of temptation. Her wish is fulfilled. For his part the apostle preaches an uplifting homily, but her thwarted lover is determined to have his way—with the corpse. The normal means—bribing a slave —gets him into the sepulchre, where he begins undressing the body. Just as Drusiana is down to the last flimsy garment, a serpent appears, dispatches the slave with a bite, and perches upon the prostrate Callimachus. When John and others arrive for a requiem Eucharist, he has to open the doors miraculously. At the tomb is a handsome smiling youth, a form of Christ, who speaks to the host. After inspecting the underdressed Drusiana, the dead slave (named 'Lucky'), and the discomfited Callimachus, the people realize that the latter's lascivious ambitions have been thwarted. John raises Callimachus, who relates the entire story and accepts the faith. Andronicus then asks after Drusiana, and the apostle agrees to raise her. Fortunatus the slave, whom Drusiana raises, remains unrepentant and soon perishes (chs 62–86).

This episode has disappointed many critics who find it of questionable taste; few think it is ameliorated by the apostle's subsequent peaceful and natural death (chs 106–15). Granting the base and vulgar nature of much of the material, and not overlooking its misogyny, the author utilizes surrealistic narrative to illustrate the deceptive nature of apparent reality. Theological message and narrative technique cohere. Inspired by the fourth Gospel, the *Acts of John* views no myth or symbolic system as sufficient to present transcendent truth. (An illustration of this thesis is the difficulty of making logical and linear sense of the episodes in John 20.) Pluralism helps show the way toward truth, but it also shows the limits of every method and the shortcomings of all systems. Then, no less than now, the faithful tended, in general, to prefer clear and essentially simpler answers. Emergent orthodoxy addressed their concerns; but whenever the need arises to question the utility of simple answers derived from a single system, the *Acts of John* will remain of use.

The *Acts of Paul*

See Geerard (1992: §§ 211–14); Klauck (2008: 47–79); Pervo (2014). Although the most 'catholic' of the apocryphal acts in its theology, the *Acts of Paul* is no more than about two thirds complete. The martyrdom material (ch. 14), separated for liturgical use, is well-attested, as are the adventures of Paul and Thecla (chs 3–4), used in her cult. Several witnesses exist for *3 Corinthians* (chs 10–11), a secondary (third-century) addition to the *Acts of Paul*. The beginning is almost entirely lost, and much of the middle exists in fragmentary Coptic and Greek papyri (Pervo 2014: 59–60).

The *Acts of Paul* is generally viewed as the earliest of the non-canonical acts and was probably circulating in Asia Minor *c*.175. Until the 1990s the prevailing view was that the author did not know or ignored the canonical Acts. This raises the question of how someone came up with the idea of writing an acts. In any event, scholars in the closing decade of the last century demonstrated with a number of methods and from differing viewpoints that the author of the *Acts of Paul* knew Acts. The relationship between the two texts is disputed, options ranging from a rival to a sequel. In addition to Acts, the author may have known some traditions about Paul's martyrdom. Taking up a story about Thecla in Antioch, he expanded it to make her a passionate follower of Paul, producing what are now chs 3 and 4.

Also used were Pauline letters, in particular 1 Corinthians. Other than these materials, it is difficult to identify local or other sources. The original shape can be construed with some certainty. The story began with Paul's conversion at Damascus and proceeded from one location to another, climaxing with his execution under Nero at Rome. Only limited interest emerges in the formation of new communities. The focus is upon Paul the pastor, in accordance with a strong Deuteropauline trend: post-Pauline texts, taking their cue from the letters, showcased the apostle as a solver of community problems more than as a missionary. See Pervo (2010).

While carefully conforming Paul's practices to 1 Corinthians, the author firmly opposed those recommended in the Pastoral Epistles (see MacDonald 1983). Paul's balanced views on marriage set forth in 1 Corinthians 7 were often absolutized by his followers. The *Acts of Paul* forbids sexual relations, even within marriage; marriage and childbearing is expected in the Pastorals. Although his demand for celibacy lands Paul in some hot water, he is executed because of his rejection of the absolute claims of the imperial state. The theology is unremarkable, exhibiting some features of a 'Spirit Christology' and touches of Monarchian expression characteristic of popular thought before the development of Trinitarian doctrine. ('Spirit Christology' tends to identify the glorified Christ with the Holy Spirit. It is effectively binitarian. See, for example, *Acts of Paul* 13.5. 'Modalistic Monarchism' views the 'persons' of the Trinity as different manifestations of the one God. See, for example, *Acts of Paul* 2.2.) In general, the theology stands between that of the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists, but closer to the former. Spiritually, the *Acts of Paul* has some affinities with the intensely apocalyptic and charismatic movement that erupted in rural Asia and founder sympathizers in Africa, Italy, and Gaul ('Montanism,' the New Prophecy; for a sympathetic treatment of the phenomenon see Tabernee 1989).

The book evidently opened with Paul's conversion, possibly reflected in a small Coptic fragment. As in the canonical book (Acts 22 and 26), Paul later recounts his encounter with Christ in a sermon (*Acts Paul* 9). Chapter 2 was set in Syrian Antioch, where Paul raised the son of Anchares and was run out of town. Two well-attested chapters tell the story of Thecla, whom Paul converted in Iconium, causing her to dismiss her fiancé. He, in league with her mother, brings the two to trial. Paul is flogged and expelled. His protégée, Thecla, is condemned to be burned at the stake. A miraculous rainstorm leads to her release and pursuit of Paul. *Acts Paul* 3 is the only chapter in the various acts where a heroine has a crush upon an apostle, complete with lovesickness, declarations of eternal devotion, and the like. This characterization has evidently been imposed upon the independent Thecla, who travels to (Syrian, originally) Antioch with Paul in ch. 4, only to be assaulted by a magistrate and condemned to the beasts for resisting his advances. Paul elects the better part of valour. The females of every species ally with Thecla, who overcomes various deaths by predatory animals and wins her release. After a brief reunion with, and authorization by, Paul she goes off to pursue her own career.

Chapter 5 takes place in Myra, to which one would walk from Pisidian Antioch and sail from the Syrian city. There a family is torn apart by Paul's healing of one Hermocrates. In due course the rift is healed and he heads for Sidon (reversing the voyage of Acts 27.3–5). Chapter 6 tells of conflict with the cult of Apollo, which climaxes with the collapse of his temple. The paired city of Tyre is the location of the fragmentary chapter 7. An exorcism touches off the action. Chapter 8 is a collection of fragments involving Jerusalem and intra-Christian speeches reminiscent of the circumstances of Acts 15.

Ephesus is the next stop after Smyrna. This essentially complete chapter is one of the more interesting in the book, as is chapter 19 of the canonical Acts. *Acts Paul* 9 has been expanded by a later editor. In the house-church of Aquila and Priscilla, Paul preaches a

sermon in which he recounts his experiences after leaving Damascus. Walking in the wild, he encounters a lion that requests and receives baptism, thereupon embracing celibacy. In due course his mission leads to confrontation with the authorities and condemnation to the beasts. It transpires that the lion elected to have Paul for lunch is none the other than the creature he had initiated. The parallel with Thecla is not difficult to discover, nor is the symbolic nature of the lion story. This all sounds nearly too good to be true, but there is more, a subsequently added subplot involving the baptism of the proconsul's wife, Artemilla. That governor is injured in the hailstorm that broke up the execution, then healed by heavenly instruction.

Chapters 10 and 11 are set at Philippi. At this point, *3 Corinthians* was somewhat ineptly inserted. Paul raises Frontina, evidently a condemned convert. Chapters 10–14 constitute a unit, reasonably designated 'The Passion of Paul'. Acts 20–7, shaped by the passion story of Jesus, inspired this arrangement. The apostle goes first to Corinth, where dire prophecies erupt. On the voyage to Rome (ch. 13) he encounters Christ. In its present form this Christophany appears to be a borrowing from the famous *Quo Vadis* story in the *Acts of Peter*. Chapter 14 brings the apostle to Rome, where he raises a boy, Nero's cupbearer Patroclus, who fell from a window while Paul was preaching (cf. Acts 20.7–12). Discovery that this lad has changed his allegiance to another king, along with some members of the court, leads to a ferocious persecution that includes Paul. The account of his execution incorporates several Christ parallels, including an empty tomb scene and post-mortem appearances.

The *Acts of Paul* is particularly noteworthy in its close. The apostle does not go to Rome as a prisoner ensnared by a Jewish plot (the *Acts of Paul* has little conflict with Jews) but of his own free will. Luke did not view the Empire as utopia, but, in contrast to the *Acts of Paul*, his criticism of it was tepid. The author of the *Acts of Paul* wished to bring the story of Paul to a proper close and have him die in a good cause.

The *Acts of Peter*

See Geerard (1992: §§ 190–207), Klauck (2008: 81–112). The surviving manuscripts of the *Acts of Peter* probably include at least two thirds of the original. The beginning is, as usual, lost. The bulk of the surviving material, except for the account of the martyrdom, is found in a Latin version that does not antedate the fourth century. On the witnesses to the *Acts of Peter*, see Stoops (2012: 3–12). Northern Asia Minor is the most likely (but not the only possible) place of composition and the final decade of the second century the most probable time. Relationships between the *Acts of Paul* and the *Acts of Peter* are complex. If one holds that the extant texts of both represent (parts of) their original forms, then determination of which has borrowed from the other will determine priority. I think it more likely that they have contaminated one another. The extant *Acts of Paul* includes borrowings from the *Acts of Peter*, and the latter shows the influence of *Acts of Paul*. Whereas the extant *Acts of Paul* has borrowed entire episodes from the *Acts of Peter*, the influence of the *Acts of Paul* upon the *Acts of Peter*, particularly in its final chapter, is more general and subtle. For a discussion of the *Acts of Peter*'s influence upon other writings, see Stoops (2012: 31–8). One matter is quite clear: the author of the *Acts of Peter* did not rely, directly or indirectly, upon Tacitus' or any other historical account of the Neronian persecution to construct the martyrdom. See Barnes (2010: 1–41). The Latin text has experienced considerable editing. Thomas (1999) is an excellent discussion of its complexities. Note also Baldwin (2005).

The events of the *Acts of Peter* are divided into two locales: Jerusalem (probably not including other parts of Judea, as in Acts 8–10 and the Clementines) and Rome, in both of which the apostle encountered Simon Magus. The Jerusalem component was excised from the source of the Latin Vercelli edition (Ver.) because that section was preceded by the Clementine *Recognitions* and thus constituted a single, large novel about Peter. The first three chapters of the Vercelli edition are secondary. They rely upon the presumption that the flock is secure so long as it is shepherded by an apostle. (In November 2013, F. Stanley Jones advised me orally that the Syriac Epitome of the *Acts of Peter*, which he has translated, lacks the material about Paul in chs 1–3.) Paul's successful ministry at Rome, where he enjoys the loosest form of custody, is terminated by a heavenly mandate to go to Spain (cf. Rom 15.24). This leaves the door open for Simon, who quickly seduces all but a few of the believers. Whereas Simon and Peter debate theology in the Clementines, the contest in the *Acts of Peter* involves which has the greater miraculous power and is therefore the agent of the greater god. In the background is the competition between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians. The contest is highly entertaining, with suspense, humour, and spectacular events, including a talking dog (Ver. 9), an exorcism leading to a shattered imperial likeness, miraculously mended (Ver. 11), a revivified smoked fish (Ver. 13), and a loquacious infant (Ver. 15), all of which take place before the contest proper even gets under way. These accounts have long generated considerable critical fury. A sense of humour is helpful even for scholars, as is an appreciation of symbolism. Could a fish have symbolic value? If so, what about restoring a dead fish to life? But one is getting ahead of the story. Before he can come to grips with Simon, however, Peter must get to Rome, which he does, in response to a mandate delivered in a vision, a voyage that includes the baptism of the captain in the Mediterranean, a Christophany, and pastoral care (chs 5–6). Interweaved into the story are two informative subplots that raise suspense and convey useful instruction. Both relate to hosts of Simon. Eubola who lived in Jerusalem, is the subject of a homiletic flashback (Ver. 17). Simon, it transpires, was a greedy and larcenous rascal. After he has, with the help of some equally greedy suborned slaves, absconded with Eubola's fortune, Peter is, through the aid of supernatural revelations, able to recover this treasure, of which the repentant lady made proper disposition, giving it to the poor. The other host is Marcellus, of senatorial standing (Ver. 8–22). This once generous patron and benefactor had been led astray by Simon, a grievous loss to the community's needy. After some effort, Peter pulls Marcellus back into the fold. In the case of Eubola the message is not opaque: treasures are best stored in heaven, where thieves cannot break in and steal (cf. Matt. 6.19–20). In her case, patronage does not convey leadership. For the male Marcellus, however, it does. One conclusion is that wealth does not per se qualify for leadership. (Marcellus was not the last rich person to try to run a non-profit organization by donation. The solution: gifts are made to the church and praise given to God was subversive of the social system.) Chapter 30 relates the contribution of Chryse ('Goldie'), a person with more means than morals. Peter does not judge the morality of gold. Earlier, chapter 2 shows the punishment meted out upon Rufina, who tries to receive communion in a state of mortal sin (adultery). Restoration is possible for her if she repents. The *Acts of Peter* illustrates in these varied ways a generous approach to those who have erred or lapsed and to the pastoral issues raised by stewardship. In these matters the work is far from rigorous or absolute, contrasting favourably with some other texts of its time. Peter uses his own denial as an example of the power of forgiveness (Ver. 7.18–20; cf. 35).

The contest proper opens in chapter 23. Before a large crowd of officials who pay a premium price for admission, the two offer polemical speeches (Peter, Simon, Peter). Power would settle the question (Ver. 23–4). Simon is to do and Peter undo. The (presumably

urban) prefect brings forth a boy for Simon to kill. He does so via a secret formula. The boy is raised by the prefect, Agrippa, following Peter's directions (Ver. 26). Other sons are raised, Simon discomfited, and the community enriched (Ver. 27–9). Simon makes one last desperate attempt, promising an ascension (Ver. 31; cf. Matt. 4.5–7). Simon does, in fact fly —until he is brought down by a Petrine prayer and finds himself with a badly fractured leg and a bouquet of flying stones from the outraged spectators. He soon perishes, disgraced and outside of Rome (Ver. 32).

Then comes Peter's turn, a famous passion story with the *Quo Vadis* encounter and inverted crucifixion. For the first time in the story sex enters the picture. The apostle wins the hearts of four concubines of the prefect Agrippa, who withdraw their favours. He soon discovers the reason behind their conduct and is not pleased (Ver. 33). This reflects Christian disapproval of sex outside of legal, monogamous marriages. Cf., for example, Justin, *2 Apology* 2. Chapter 34 introduces their friend Xanthippe, the lovely wife of Albinus, who accompanies the concubines and also elects chastity. 'Many other women' (34.5) join them. This sex strike leads the highly placed but deprived men to plan action against Peter. The scenario is quite common in the apocryphal acts, but, to this point, Peter has not drawn attention to sexual abstinence. One possibility is that the Latin translator edited demands for celibacy from the earlier portions of the text.

Two episodes belonging to Peter's Judean ministry, one preserved in Coptic, the other in Latin, offer a misogynistic picture of female virginity. The former (BG 8502, which also contains 'gnostic' texts) tells why Peter, who had healed multitudes, left his gorgeous daughter in a crippled state. After demonstrating that he could heal her, the apostle returns the girl to her former condition. She had become an object of sexual attraction by the age of ten. The wealthy Ptolemy had seen her in the bath and proposed marriage. Rebuffed, he had her kidnapped. She was recovered as a cripple. Ptolemy repented. The Latin story, found in Ps.-Titus' *De Dispositione Sanctimonii* (*On the Nature of Religiosity*), which is not universally accepted as deriving from the *Acts of Peter*, is similar. A gardener asks Peter to petition for what was best for his unmarried daughter. She drops dead. When requested, Peter raises her. Shortly thereafter she elopes with a guest. Although we are likely to see the message of these accounts as 'better dead than wed', their purpose was to show Providence: apparent misfortune may be what is best for the faithful. That perspective is consistent with the larger text. These episodes may well have belonged to the original *Acts of Peter*.

In general, the theology of the *Acts of Peter* is rather unreflective and popular, with Monarchian tendencies and fairly distant links to the apologists. (On monarchianism, see p. 72.) The sermon in Ver. 20 initially seems an exception, with its description of a polymorphic Christ, but this is coherent with the notion of a godhead that can appear in various forms, less to dazzle than to condescend. Peter's long address to and upon the cross (Ver. 37–9) is a purple patch, quite probably borrowed from a treatise or sermon. Its picture of true reality as the near opposite of appearance lies between Middle Platonism and radical dualism. The learned reader may suspect that the author selected this address because of its rhetoric and its exposition of the paradox of the cross by a perfect martyr.

The *Acts of Thomas*

See Geerard (1992: §§ 245–9); Klauck (2008: 141–79). The *Acts of Thomas* is the only instance of a major apocryphal acts of which the complete text survives. It was apparently composed in Syriac (Klijn 2003: 8–9; Attridge 2010: 3–4). Both the Greek and the Syriac

must be consulted, however, as the latter has undergone editing of a more mainstream character. On the witnesses see Attridge (2010: 1–3). The original environment was the culturally rich, bilingual region of East Syria, possibly Edessa. The *Acts of Thomas* derives from East Syrian Christianity, where the authoritative name was Thomas, i.e. Judas, promoted as the twin brother of Jesus. (The Greek name 'Thōmas' is quite similar to the Aramaic word for 'twin', the Greek for which is *didymos*. Cf. John 11.16. In West Syria Peter was the principal authority. Both competed for the authority of James and disdained that of Paul.) Those who read the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Odes of Solomon* will experience some of the rich and distinctive elements of Syrian theology. East Syria had a different baptismal rite from that which became normal in the west, utilized the *Diatessaron*, and long required celibacy after initiation, all features present in the *Acts of Thomas*. The book is divided into thirteen acts and 171 chapters.

Conventional criticism views the first six acts as a loose and picaresque collection, while Acts 7–13 constitute a coherent narrative. This structure is quite like that of the *Acts of Philip*. The pattern evidently comes from Mark. All the canonical Gospels and Acts display a much tighter structure as they move to a climax. A peculiar feature of the *Acts of Thomas* is the presence of two lengthy poems, a bridal song (chs 6–7) and the Hymn of the Pearl/Soul (chs 108–13). As in the case of the Gospels and, more noticeably, Acts, the absent structure has received critical scrutiny and been found wanting. For the biblically literate, the first acts are a rich intertextual confection. In Act 1, for example, Thomas declines his assignment to India, is sold as a slave, and taken to India as a servile carpenter. This evokes the story of Judas, who sold out Jesus, thus suggesting a passion theme. The sale of Joseph the carpenter's son brings to mind the sale of Joseph by his brothers, introducing the story of Israel in Egypt. Finally, Judas's reluctance parallels that of Jonah, another 'type' of Jesus. Acts 1–6 take place on two levels: surface adventure and symbolic infrastructure (see Drijvers 1992: 326–7). This hermeneutical pattern is established when Thomas goes, by compulsion, to a royal wedding (cf. Matt. 22.1–14). There he sings a bridal song (chs 6–7) that evokes the union of Christ and the church, followed by a night-long exhortation to the newlyweds that ends happily (as they elect celibacy). Sexual continence both symbolizes and constitutes the life of purity that brings redemption and its benefits.

Act 2 brings the apostle to India, where he contracts to build a palace for the king. He diverts the funds to the poor. Not amused, King Gundafar incarcerates him. His brother Gad dies and receives a personal tour of the heavenly edifices built with royal charity. Upon his return to life and subsequent report, the royalty repent. In Act 3 Thomas detects a snake of Edenic ancestry and has it die by the poison it once injected into a young man. The next act features a talking donkey of Balaamic descent, symbolizing the bestial nature of the body. Act 5 is built around an exorcism. The apostle has shown his mastery of diabolic, animal, and demonic realms. Act 6 deals with a young man crippled while taking communion. He had sought to persuade a prostitute to embrace celibacy. Rebuffed, he kills her. Thomas has him raise the woman, who (chs 55–7) reports what she saw in hell, a poor place to visit and a worse place to live. This forms an *inclusio* with the celestial vision of Act 2.

The balance of the story is unified and less symbolic. The theme of celibacy, scarcely wanting in the earlier acts, will become the exclusive subject. Act 7 introduces Sifor, a soldier in the service of King Mizdai, whose wife and daughter are possessed. In Act 8 they travel, making use of articulate wild asses (cf. Act 4). Act 9 begins a lengthy drama with the usual triangle: apostle, prominent woman converted to celibacy, and furious husband. Mygdonia, the wife of Carish, will not relent. Thomas is whipped, then jailed. She remains firm. Chapter 108 opens with a request for prayer from his fellow prisoners. This is the

setting of Acts 16.25, where the prayers of Paul and Silas lead to liberation. In the *Acts of Thomas* the prayer takes the form of the beautiful Hymn of the Pearl/Soul, which reads like a fine fairy tale but is an allegory of the story of liberating salvation. Extant in but one Greek and one Syriac manuscript, the poem may be a secondary addition. If so, few authors have been so well served by a subsequent editor.

In Act 10 Mygdonia, with her nurse, receives a visit from the apostle, who baptizes the two women and offers the Eucharist. This episode evidently inspired an addition to *Acts Paul* 9. After a further confrontation with the monarch, Thomas goes home with Carish and, at his urging, advises Mygdonia to be obedient (ch. 130). This somewhat surprising event may have been a test. She prefers to obey God rather than a man. Sifor's family is baptized. With act 11 the plot thickens, as the king's wife, Tertia, not only fails to convince Mygdonia but also follows Thomas (who has somehow got out of jail). Act 12 brings in the king's son, Vizan, and an attempt to torture Thomas, thwarted by a flood that threatens catastrophe until quelled by apostolic prayer. Cf. *Acts Paul* 3. In Act 13 all of the characters assemble. After the believers have been baptized, Thomas has a final interview with the king (cf. John 18–19), makes a farewell address, and is executed by spear. Post-mortem appearances follow. The king sought to find the apostle's bones, but had to settle for dust, evidently a later endorsement of relics of the third class. An appearance to Gundaphor (cf. *Acts Paul* 14) secures his conversion and the end of persecution.

The *Acts of Thomas* is dualistic but not an offshoot of a 'gnostic' system. Gnostics could, however, read it as quite congenial with their views. Christ is a revealer, but not a redeemer in the classic sense of redemptive death. Divinity includes father, mother, and son. Anthropology is central. The Fall brought mortality, leaving procreation as a substitute for immortality. Celibacy prepares for recovery of the original, asexual person. Well-managed bodies can transport the faithful to the gates of the heavenly city (chs 39–41). The soul is a heavenly 'twin' of the self. As twin of Jesus, Judas can present this concept as a trope. The hymnic and liturgical material makes the *Acts of Thomas* both engaging to read and a useful source for historians of liturgy. (The translation of Attridge 2010 displays these passages in verse form.)

INTERMEDIATE WORKS

Two texts do not fit readily into the categories of 'major' or 'minor' Acts. These are the *Acts of Philip* and the *Pseudo-Clementines*, each discussed in turn.

The *Acts of Philip*

See Geerard (1992: § 250); Klauck (2008: 232–43). *The Acts of Philip* lies on the boundary between the major acts of the second and third century and the reception of these texts in the 'minor acts'. Among features that are characteristic of later acts are the presence of other apostles with the eponymous subject, graphic descriptions of torture, and ecclesiological concerns. The chief character here combines Philip the evangelist, known from Acts 8 and 21, with Philip the apostle (cf. Mark 3.18 and John 1.43–8, etc.). The evangelist was associated with Hierapolis, according to Papias, Clement, and Polycrates of Ephesus (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.30, 31, 39). (See Bovon et al. 1999: 15–22.)

This text is not complete. As it stands, the book belongs to the fourth century. The first seven 'acts' are a composite of various sources, some as early as the second century. Acts

8–15 and the Martyrdom constitute a unified narrative. The original theology must be disentangled from layers of revision. *The Acts of Philip* will yield to no apocryphal acts on the question of celibacy; Philip preaches sexual abstinence, and it is his success in converting Nicanora, the wife of the governor Tyrannognophos, that leads to his arrest, trial, and martyrdom. The dominant christological image is medical: the saviour and the Christian message provide healing for the soul.

Act 1 begins with a departure from Galilee (cf. e.g. John 1.43), and no description of a commission. The one incident here is modelled upon Luke 7.11–17, which tells how Jesus raised from the dead a widow's son. After converting the polytheist mother to dietary and sexual 'purity', Philip raises the corpse of her son. The boy then relates to Philip what he had seen in hell, where he witnessed the punishments of those who had doubted virgins, slandered clergy and committed religious and kindred dreadful offenses.

Act 2 plunges Philip without transition into 'the city of the Athenians, called Hellas', where he is encountered by three hundred philosophers who, unable to vanquish him, show what Athens has to do with Jerusalem by writing to the high priest, who heads for Athens with five hundred thugs. His efforts to seize Philip are thwarted. An epiphany of the risen Christ does not sway him, nor do gradual immersions in the earth. An unhappy demon kills a boy, supplying the opportunity for a faith-inducing resurrection. The high priest declines to abandon his ancestral faith and is plunged into the abyss. His five hundred minions repent. After establishing a community, with clergy and building, the apostle sets out for Parthia.

Having arrived in a Parthian city (Act 3) Philip encounters women 'imitating the male faith' (3.1), as well as Peter and others, including John, who provide spiritual refreshment for the journey, on which he is accompanied secretly by Jesus (compare and contrast Luke 24.13–35). The Lord's spirit transforms this inept speaker into an eloquent apologist. Evidence of this is promptly forthcoming, for the chapter is mainly prayer and hymn, including an adaptation of the hymn of Christ (*Acts John* 94–6). The act evokes Acts 8: Peter and John (Acts 8.14–25), the Candaceans (Acts 8.26–39), and Azotus (Acts 8.40). Peter and John 'confirm' Philip rather than Samaritans, and the rapture of 8.39 is now a journey to revelation.

Act 4 fills a gap. Women in general find Philip's message appealing; some view him as a magician (cf. Acts 8). Jesus appears as a handsome boy (*puer speciosus*). The centrepiece is the healing of Charitine, the disfigured daughter of Nikokleides, an official, which leads to the conversion of this entire prominent household. Rather than take advantage of her recovered beauty, Charitine takes on a male appearance and follows Philip.

Acts 5–7 are a unit set in the unknown city of Nikatera and the household of the prominent Ireos, who defends the apostle and his entourage from the animosity of hostile Jews. In a reversal of the usual situation, his wife Nerkella opposes the message and prefers to leave. With no apparent reason her objections vanish and she converts, with her beautiful daughter Artemilla. Philip debates the Jewish leader Aristarchos about Jesus. The climax arrives with the customary dead son of a rich person on a bier. Aristarchos could not raise him. Philip does, after insisting that Jews not be harmed. Hundreds of slaves receive manumission; converts are numerous. In Act 7 a church (*synagōgē*) is erected. Jesus summons Philip to a waiting ship. This material exhibits a number of contacts with the *Acts of Peter*.

Acts 8–15 (10 is missing) form a connected whole. This section begins with an apostolic lottery, in which each apostle will take one portion of the world. Like Thomas, Philip demurs. The saviour deems him reckless and unduly feminine. Fortunately his sister Mariamne (a form of 'Miriam', usually 'Maria' in Greek and Latin, who represents the

Magdalene, as well as the sister of Martha (Luke 10.38–42)) is equipped with the proper masculine mind, and will, in male attire and style, accompany Philip, as will Bartholomew. Her dress is important because Orpheorymos, glossed as 'Promenade of the Serpents', will be their goal. Snakes, needless to say, are inimical to women, witness Eve. Behind the serpent city probably stands Hierapolis (as mentioned above) or another city associated with Cybele, mistress of the animals. Jesus' commission speech, which runs from §§ 8 to 14, borrows from Matthew 10, Luke 10, and other passages, commends returning evil with good, and extols the beneficence of providence.

While they are traversing the wilderness of female dragons (oversized snakes), a large leopard dashes up, prostrates himself, and, in a human voice, explains that he had captured a kid, but, before he could eat it, the creature spoke of the advent of the apostles and urged the leopard to put off his beastly nature. He did. The group goes to visit the kid. Philip and Bartholomew pray that the animals receive human hearts and eat what apostles consume. These creatures symbolize the eschatological restoration of peace among species (e.g. Isa. 11.6–9), provide an example for humans, and represent the overthrow of bestial polytheism.

In Act 9, Philip and his companions are confronted by a dragon and a multitude of serpents. They pray and sprinkle in the air the sign of the cross, thus destroying the dragon and serpents, and continue forward unharmed, praising Christ as they go. Act 10 is missing, as is the beginning of 11. This was due to intentional mutilation, probably because it recounted the baptism of the animals (Bovon and Matthews 2012: 20). As the text resumes, the party, on the verge of receiving communion, is interrupted by an earthquake. Fifty demons inhabit the cave, from which they are about to flee. In response to Philip's demand, they trace back their lineage to the serpent in paradise, the angel marriages, and the fifty serpents vanquished by Moses (Exod. 7.8–13). A huge dragon appears, oozing poison and spewing fire. Like the legion of Mark 5.1–20, the demons bargain to go to a place of their choosing. In turn they offer to build a church in six days (not a number picked at random), a skill previously demonstrated in their work upon Solomon's temple. After being compelled by Philip to reveal their unpleasant, hermaphrodite form, they complete the temple, with the seven promised streams, and depart. Three thousand worshippers begin to pray there. Philip begins distributing communion.

Continuing directly, Act 12 reports the petition of the two animals to receive communion. Noticing their sorrow, Philip asks why, to which the leopard makes a speech in support of their request. In response the apostle draws the correct conclusion about providence and prays that the creatures might assume human appearance. After being sprinkled with water, they take on human form or the semblance thereof and praise God. The beginning of Act 13 states that the creatures 'appeared as human beings to themselves', which accords with Philip's prayer in 12.7. Nothing, however, is said about communion, nor does the leopard appeal to their prior baptism. The ambiguities of this chapter suggest that it may have been modified.

Act 13 brings the company to 'the city', guarded by men with snakes that would ignore co-religionists and bite those deemed inimical. Since the snakes do obeisance to the apostolic band, the guards conclude that they share the true faith. Two large dragons protect the gates by breathing upon entering strangers to blind them. Like Medusa, Philip glares back and slays them with divine light (13.1–3). They enter the city, take over an abandoned clinic, and prepare to engage in healing, invoked by a prayer of Philip.

Act 14 centres on the healing of Stachys, blind for forty years, a wealthy head of the snake cult and former persecutor of 'strangers and Christians', who, like Thecla (*Acts Paul* 3), had heard Paul while sitting in a window. Stachys has attempted to heal himself by anointing his eyes with liquid from the serpents' eyes, only to make things worse (14.3). He

has a recurring vision that begins with a voice summoning him to the city gate, where he sees the 'likeness of a handsome young man with three faces'. The 'faces' are *prosōpa*, a Greek term for the 'persons' of the Trinity. The three are a beardless youth, a woman with a brilliant dress, and an old man. The youth carries a pitcher and the woman a torch. He baptizes the residents. Behind this depiction is the polymorphous god familiar in gnostic texts, notably the father–mother–son trinity of 'Sethian Gnosis' (e.g. *The Apocryphon of John*, NHL II,1, p. 2, where 'Monad' is also found). Philip responds with a prayer of thanksgiving, followed by a descriptive invitation to Stachys (14.5–6). He then puts a finger in Mariamne's mouth and anoints [*Stachys on the eyes and restores his sight*]. The italics represent another kind of restoration because our despicable censor—or another of his ilk—has torn out the page. Cf. Mark 7.33, 8.23; John 9.6. This is an apt foil to Stachys' self-unction. When the text resumes Stachys is giving a banquet (cf. Luke 5.29) for his benefactors that ineptly features a meat stew and good wine. The error of his ways will be noted later (15.2–3); present attention is upon those drawn by the wonder (cf. Mark 1.32–4). Philip baptizes the men and Mariamne the women. The crowds admire the animals' participation in the liturgy.

Act 15. At the height of missionary success the narrator's eye turns to governor Tyrannognophos ('tyrant of gloom'). His wife, Nicanora, has arrived by shipwreck. One blemish to her endless marital bliss is the nasty proclivity of the local snakes to bite strangers. Having heard of Stachys' cure, she has herself transported to his house. The narrative reports Philip's injunctions to the wealthy Stachys, followed by an account of his miraculous provision of food for the poor. Nicanora withdraws out of fear of her husband.

Hereafter the witnesses provide different martyrdom stories. That preferred by Bovon and Mattthews (2012: 94) is followed here. The martyrdom opens with a reference to the regnal year of Trajan (*c*.105) and restates the entrance into Ophioryme, equated here with Hierapolis, and his lodging with Stachys. Mariamne sits at the entrance, urging passers-by to enter and hear. Nicanora's suffering is relieved by appeal to Christ. She has her slaves carry her to Stachys' home, where she encounters Mariamne, who addresses her in 'Hebrew'. This brings relief. Philip also prays.

Her husband (now called Tyrannos) arrives and demands the name of her benefactor. She replies with a speech urging repentance and promising cohabitation on the condition of celibacy. He declines and orders the three missionaries to be flogged and dragged through the city to the temple and incarcerated there. Their courage draws admiration (15.14–16). This news further enrages Tyrannos, while the prayer of the missionaries threatens the temple. The proconsul has the three brought to the tribunal and successively stripped to betray the presence of magical devices. Mariamne is to be stripped last. Philip is hanged upside down from a tree in front of the temple, with his ankles pierced and iron rods driven through his knees. Bartholomew is pinned by the hands to the temple gate, facing Philip. They smile through it all. When stripped, Mariamne is surrounded with a cloud of fire (cf. *Acts Paul* 4.9).

Just as Philip and Bartholomew raise his name, John (cf. 3.1) appears, lectures the people, and urges Philip not to retaliate (ironically, cf. Luke 9.54), joined by the other two believers, who note the example of Jesus. Not to be denied, Philip prays that the mob would fall into Hades. Swallowed up they are. Their voices can be heard repenting and pleading for mercy. The voice of Christ promises to grant their request.

The saviour appears to admonish Philip against retaliation. He stands his ground. For this he will have to serve forty days of penance outside of paradise. Bartholomew is destined for martyrdom in Lycaonia; Mariamne will be buried in the Jordan. Christ then performs a mini-harrowing of hell, raising all condemned by Philip. The apostle urges them to avoid

retaliation. He delivers a speech from the tree, followed by a testamentary deposition dealing with the other apostles, the building of a church, and allowing the animals to enter it and be buried there. His farewell includes elements of a church order, especially the conduct of virgins. Bartholomew is to instruct Stachys and appoint him bishop. Philip tells how he is to be buried in the church and predicts growth from his blood (15.34–7). After a final prayer Philip expires. Matters transpire as he had predicted (15.38–42).

Around the middle of the fourth century a synod at Gangra in Paphlagonia denounced a radical asceticism that utterly rejected marriage and family, separated from other Christians, conducted their own liturgies, and rejected meat. This sounds like a list of items that the *Acts of Philip* recommends (see Klauck 2008: 242). Polemic against the cult of Cybele is also apparent (see Bovon and Matthews 2012: 23). Modern readers who may not share these values are nonetheless likely to be charmed by the *Acts of Philip*'s view of paradise restored, its use of animals as characters, and its fierce rejection of retaliation.

The *Pseudo-Clementines*

See Geerard (1992: § 209); Klauck (2008: 193–229). The title *Pseudo-Clementines* is cumbersome and should be discontinued. No genuine Clementines exist. (*1* and *2 Clement* do not claim to have been written by the semi-legendary Roman Clement.) The texts themselves are somewhat cumbersome and raise some nearly intractable scholarly problems. The original, a compendious blend of *Bildungsroman*, family novel, and an Acts of Peter, evidently appeared in West Syria *c*.225–50. The overall framework is a family novel, a type with several representatives (Szepessy 1985, who notes a number of parallels between the Clementines and *Apollonius of Tyre*, which survives in Christianized Latin editions; see also Klauck 2008: 198–9).

Two editions exist. The Greek *Homilies* appeared in the fourth century with an Arian colouration. The title reflects the numerous sermons, dialogues, and debates that provide some of the impetus for the plot and most of the message. *Recognitions* exists in Syriac and Latin versions. That title comes from the plot, which relates the recognition of the true faith to the reunion of a family and the spiritual reunion of soul with object. The two works have much in common, as well as differences. One of the major challenges to scholarship is the task of attempting to reconstruct the earliest layers of this material.

The plot is quite complex. See the summaries of Klauck (2008: 200–25) and Pervo (2010: 177–84). Prefacing *Homilies* are three interesting authenticating documents: a letter from Peter to James, a novitiate concluded with a solemn covenant to preserve the teachings undefiled, and a letter from Clement to James, with a church order and a well-developed picture of the church as a ship. The *Homilies* proper begins with the Roman Clement's quest for the meaning of life. After rejecting the philosophies, he hears of Jesus' ministry and sets out for Palestine, but unfriendly winds land him in Alexandria, where he meets Barnabas, whom he follows to Caesarea. (The locus is coastal Palestine, the area of Peter's ministry in Acts 9–10.) There he becomes a disciple of Peter, who explains the binary history of salvation: each true prophet has an antithetical false prophet, from Cain and Abel to Simon the magician and Simon Peter. The chief negative principle is female, the positive male. The woman of Mark 7.24–30, Justa by (Roman) name, has converted to Judaism, left her husband, and acquired two slaves, the twins Nicetas and Aquila. As former followers of Simon, they tell Clement his story. The Samaritan had received the best of magical educations at Alexandria, endowed himself with lofty titles, followed then succeeded John

the Baptizer, and acquired a consort, deemed both the Greek Helena and heavenly wisdom. His magic is impressive but lacks the humanity of Jesus' miracles. Scripture, it transpires, has been interpolated by the Evil One. After a debate lasting three days, Simon flees to Tyre. Peter ordains Zacchaeus (Luke 19.1–10) bishop and follows.

In Tyre, Simon having absconded to Sidon, the group encounters some friends of the Magus. Clement engages in a classic dialogue with Apion (against whom Josephus wrote), an old friend of the family, who seeks to restore Clement to the bosom of polytheism. Peter then returns to continue his pursuit of Simon through the coastal cities. At Tripolis he preaches a number of interesting sermons. In Syrian Antioch, without the twins, Peter and Clement exchange life stories. The latter came from imperial roots. His father, Faustus, his mother Matthidia, had two earlier sons, twins Faustinus and Faustinianus (the names vary). In response to a vision Matthidia had moved from Rome with the twins. All disappeared, followed in time by his father, who also vanished. Twenty years have elapsed. On Arados, a popular spot for recognitions (*Callirhoē* 7.5), an elderly beggar woman appears. Peter extracts her history: she is Matthidia.

An orderly and important four-day debate in Laodicea follows, after which Faustus is magically transformed. At this point *Homilies* fails. *Recognitions* opens at Rome, from which Clement follows Barnabas to Caesarea. Peter supplies a revisionist view of salvation history. The three-day debate with Simon takes place in Caesarea. Simon removes to Rome. Tripoli follows in *Rec*. In Laodicea the faithful engage in debate with an old man. He is fatalistic, using the story of his wife's attempt to evade fate as proof of astrology's validity. Peter can refute him because he is, of course, the missing father.

The theology of the Clementines is as intriguing and complicated as the plot. Unlike all of the apocryphal acts, it strongly favours marriage and sex for procreation. The intellectual level is often high. Peter spends more time attacking astrology and magic than in denouncing idolatry. Jewish features, including a purity code, are important. The doctrine of the 'pairs' of good and evil prophets and the notion of diabolic interference with scripture call to mind 'gnostic' notions and Marcion. The unnamed enemy is Paul, many of whose ideas are promoted by Simon. These texts expose the limits of our categories.

SOME LATER ACTS

One feature of later acts is assimilation to a biographical pattern (e.g. the *Acts of Barnabas* and *Acts of Titus*), as the acts dissipate into the realm of 'Lives of the Saints'. Like much hagiography, later acts tend to present gruesome accounts of horrible torture, none of which appears to perturb the victims. Ecclesiastical and ritual features also increase in prominence. These include the construction of churches at the sites of apostolic martyrdoms, attention to elements of church order (e.g. rules for clergy and religious; the due ordination of qualified successors), and ecclesiastical politics, such as claims for metropolitan (archepiscopal) status for cities that can claim an apostolic martyr. Later acts tend to focus upon a single city. This factor has also influenced the preservation of the major acts, e.g. *Acts of John* (Ephesus) and *Acts of Andrew* (Patras). Many of the heroes (e.g. Barnabas and Titus) do not belong to the traditional lists of apostles. Four examples will illustrate the range. On these works see the surveys of de Santos Otero (1992) and Klauck (2008: 243–53).

The *Acts of Barnabas*

See Geerard (1992: §§ 285–6), Czachesz (2007: 184–207), and Pervo (2010: 170–1). Translation: Walker (1978). This late fifth-century work is a defence of the autonomy of the church at Cyprus. Another concern is to defend Barnabas in his conflict with Paul (Acts 15.36–9). The narrator is John Mark, who writes in the first-person singular and whose story frames the work. Mark was from a polytheist background and served a high priest of Zeus prior to baptism at Iconium. The missionaries combat polytheism. In the background may be the reluctance of believers to abandon old customs and holidays.

Barnabas's martyrdom is the result of the machinations of Paul's old rival Barjesus (Acts 13.6–12), who foments 'the Jews' to incarcerate and ultimately execute Barnabas. Mark and his companions escaped by the skin of their teeth, landing in Alexandria. Both Mark and Barnabas require rehabilitation from the account in Acts 13–15. Paul does not come off well in this story, which evidently uses the status of Mark as founder of the church in Alexandria to bolster Barnabas and his foundation. This sample is representative of *Acts of Barnabas* and many of the later acts. In Curium (?):

> And we found that a certain abominable race was being performed in the road near the city, where a multitude of women and men naked were performing the race. And there was great deception and error in that place. And Barnabas turning, rebuked it; and the western part fell, so that many were wounded, and many of them also died and the rest fled to the temple of Apollo, which was close at hand in the city, which was called sacred. And when we came near the temple, a great multitude of Jews who were there, having been put up to it by Barjesus, stood outside of the city, and did not allow us to go into the city; but we spent the evening under a tree near the city, and rested there. (§19, trans. Walker 1978: 495)

Barnabas rebukes pagans and is menaced by Jews. The memory of religious festivals is dim. Greeks raced naked, but not in mixed groups. Evidently a theatre or hippodrome collapsed, but the text is mangled. The author has evidently picked up a number of poorly understood motifs from here and there and blended them into this untidy package.

The *Acts of Titus*

See Geerard (1992: § 298), Czachesz (2007: 208–23), and Pervo (2010: 331–7). For a translation see Pervo (1996). The *Acts of Titus* is similar to the *Acts of Barnabas* but more competently organized. This is not an 'acts' (although it may have been based upon such a text), but a biography that follows the subject from birth to death and beyond (see Czachesz 2007: 210–15). Titus was of prominent lineage; his uncle, the proconsul, heard of Christ and sent Titus to investigate. (Cf. the Clementines.) He was among the 120 (Acts 1.15) and thus not converted by Paul. Ordained by the apostles, he laboured with and under Paul. The first mission to Crete took place prior to Paul's work in Ephesus (Acts 19). After the apostle's death, he returned to Crete, vanquished the pagans, protected the Jews during the revolt (66–73), erected a hierarchy, and, like his sister, lived a pure and thoroughly ascetic life. With such a patron Crete certainly deserved archepiscopal status. Historians of early Christianity attend to the *Acts of Titus* because it utilized the *Acts of Paul*, including some portions no longer extant.

The *Doctrine of Addai*

See Geerard (1992: § 89). This text was probably composed *c*.400 in Syriac by Labuubna. Translation: Howard (1981). (Numbers refer to the MS pages.) The scriptures mentioned

include the *Diatessaron*, which fell into disuse beginning *c*.425, but not the Catholic Letters. 'Antiochene' exegesis is preferred to 'Alexandrian'. The *Doctrine of Addai* expands the story of Abgar (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.13), which sought to establish the antiquity of 'orthodoxy' in Edessa (Bauer 1971: 1–43; McCullough 1982: 24–6). The text ends with the consecration of Palut. At one time the catholic Christians of Edessa were called 'Palutians', i.e. members of a faction named for its founder (Bauer 1971: 21). Formally *the Doctrine of Addai* is a (fictitious) historical monograph, equipped with a generous apparatus of authenticity, including an elaborate opening synchronism, frequent references to archival material, and lists of trustworthy witnesses. Either the implied reader was utterly uninformed about Jewish and Roman history—including what one might infer from the Gospels and Acts—or to be amused by a fantastic narrative. In view of the attempt to demonstrate apostolic succession the latter seems unlikely. In content *the Doctrine of Addai* could be described as an expanded cult foundation legend (on which see Pervo 2009: 389–90).

The story opens with King Abgar Ukkama's (9–46 CE) report to Sabinus (cf. Masurius Sabinus, a Roman legal expert), who governed the Middle East. The reporting envoys return via Jerusalem and see what Christ did. After their report Abgar wishes to see Christ, but has to content himself with a letter, which Christ receives in the house of Gamaliel. Abgar is praised for believing without seeing (cf. John 20.28–9); blessings are promised for Edessa. At that time a portrait of Christ is made (the Mandylion). After the ascension Thomas sends Addai (= Thaddaeus), one of the seventy (Luke 10.1–9). When in due course (7) Abgar receives the missionary, Addai is transfigured (cf. *Acts Paul* 3.3). The king notes his desire to punish the Jews who crucified Christ, but refuses to invade Roman territory. A mission follows the healing of the monarch and others (10).

The narrator shifts attention to Rome, where Protonice, wife of Claudius, the deputy of Tiberius (!) is converted after witnessing the miracles of Simon [Peter]. She sets out on pilgrimage to Jerusalem with two sons and her virgin daughter. James reports to her quarters in the palace of Herod and performs some miracles to establish his bona fides. (11) Upon learning that she wishes to be shown Golgotha, the cross, and Jesus' tomb, James regrets that 'the Jews' control these places and prohibit believers from visiting the sites. Moreover they forbid missionary activity and imprison the faithful. (12)

Protonice puts a quick end to all that, transferring the material to James. Upon visiting the tomb, they find three crosses. Protonice's daughter drops dead. Things are not looking too promising (cf. 'An Act of Peter'). Fortunately, the narrator seems to have been familiar with the story of Cinderella. A son of Protonice proposes that matters will end well. A cross is selected and applied, with prayer, to the girl. Dead she stays. Cross two changes nothing. With the ritual application of the third cross, the girl returns to perfect health. Because of this death, Protonice is able to authenticate the true cross. She has a church constructed at the tomb (13). The author has clearly transferred the story of Helena (mother of Constantine) to the first century. Returning to Rome, Protonice reports to Claudius, who expels the Jews (16. cf. Acts 18.2).

Meanwhile, back in Edessa, Abgar assembles the people, who hear Addai preach (18–30. This is the 'doctrine' of the title). Conversions are numerous (31). The king builds a church; Addai ordains clergy. They read the OT, the NT, the Prophets, and Acts. Rules for clergy are promulgated. Many attend daily prayer and readings from the OT, the NT, and the Diatessaron (33–4). Abgar writes to Tiberius, advising him of Jewish infamies. In his reply the emperor notes that his hands are tied because of the Spanish rebellion. He has dismissed Pilate in disgrace (37).

Pages 39–45 contains a long farewell and pastoral charge (cf. Acts 20.17–35), features of which include injunctions against finding hidden meanings in scripture or reading other books than those approved. The remainder of the text deals with the succession of leaders: Addai names Aggai, who is unable to ordain Palut, who thus has to go to Antioch for ordination by Serapion, who has been ordained by Zephryinus (*c*.198–217), the successor to Peter.

As is characteristic of many later acts, the *Doctrine of Addai* strives to trace the origins of a local community back to the apostles. In this instance it is possible to check the factual evidence. Christians who held allegiance to Thomas traditions and followers of Marcion preceded the labours of Palut.

OUTSTANDING TASKS

The sumptuous CCSO editions of the *Acts of Paul*, the *Acts of Peter*, the *Acts of Thomas*, and the Clementines are awaited. These will be a rich resource and a point of departure for future debate. All long for new discoveries. Two sources are remnants of ancient acts embedded in Byzantine hagiography and versions in languages known by few. More may yet be found in art, which can reveal the existence of hypothesized or unknown episodes (see Cartlidge and Elliott 2001). Most critics agree on the following order and dates: *Acts of Paul, c*.175, *Acts of Peter, c*.185, *Acts of John, c*.200, *Acts of Andrew, c*.215, and *Acts of Thomas, c*.225. The final two are the least certain. The fact of intertextual relationships among the Acts is indisputable, but their nature is extremely difficult to untangle. The canonical Acts inspired both the *Acts of Paul* and the *Acts of Peter* and may have influenced others. Since mutual contamination is so general, the establishment of intertextual relationships is quite difficult.

Literary studies have made immense strides. More could be accomplished in the realm of theology, particularly if historians of Christian thought ventured into this arena. The Clementines are receiving more attention. F. Stanley Jones has been casting fresh light upon these large, fascinating, and complicated texts with a history of baroque proportions. The various acts have come out of the basement of patristic studies, into the living room of cultural studies and off the sidelines of church history.

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CHAPTER 5

NON-CANONICAL EPISTLES AND RELATED LITERATURE

ANDREW GREGORY

INTRODUCTION: APOCRYPHAL LETTERS IN THEIR LITERARY CONTEXT

THE ancient letter is a broad and flexible literary form that accommodates texts of 'widely varying character, including documentary letters, fictional letters, letters in verse, philosophical letters, open letters and letters meant only to be read by their recipient' (Gibson and Morrison 2013: 1). To this list may also be added state correspondence (Radner 2014), which might perhaps be compared to early Christian letters in so far as each might be intended to facilitate the successful delegation of power from a central authority to a far-flung community that identified with it. A useful description of the ancient letter form is that of Trapp, who is clear that he offers not a 'water-tight definition' but an 'explanation' that appeals to a 'combination of contextual and formal characteristics':

> A letter is a written message from one person (or set of people) to another, requiring to be set down in a tangible medium, which itself is to be physically conveyed from sender(s) to recipient(s), by the use at beginning and end of one of a limited set of conventional formulae of salutation (or some allusive variation on them) which specify both parties to the transaction. One might add also, by way of further explanation, that the need for a letter as a medium of communication normally arises because the two parties are physically distant (separated) from each other, and so unable to communicate by unmediated voice or gesture; and that a letter is normally expected to be of relatively limited length. (Trapp 2003: 1)

As Zeiner-Carmichael observes, 'letters resist precise classification and categorization, and strict definitions are limiting'. Yet a general description of the form, purpose, and function may be given. The ancient letter

> is a written message between two individuals who are physically apart from each other and thus unable to communicate through speech or gesture … [it] possessed the power to connect individuals through time and space, affirm and solidify social networks, and assert both political and cultural control across large geographical expanses. The letter is a speech act in written form, a conversation maintained across temporal and geographical distances, whether in the ancient Roman Empire, or between the ancient and the modern world. (Zeiner-Carmichael 2014: 3)

A culture of letter writing was deeply embedded in the Hellenistic world (Stowers 1986; Rosenmeyer 2001: 19–35; Klauck 2006) and continued to be important in Late Antiquity and beyond. Letters of different kinds were a widely used and common literary form not only among pagans (Rosenmeyer 2001, 2006; Trapp 2003; Morello and Morrison 2007; Zeiner-Carmichael 2014) but also among Jews (Klauck 2006: 229–97; Doering 2012), and

came to be particularly prominent in early Christian literature, including the New Testament (Klauck 2006: 299–434). Of the twenty-seven texts included in the New Testament, twenty-one either purport to be letters, or were labelled as such at an early stage in their transmission. Of the remaining six books, two contain letters embedded in their texts (Acts 15.22–31; Rev. 1.4–3.22). The letter is the most common literary form in the body of texts known as the Apostolic Fathers (Jefford 2012: xix), and Eusebius quotes or refers to many letters by Christian authors in the second and third centuries CE (Nautin 1961), among whom Dionysius of Corinth is worthy of particular note (Eusebius, *Eccl*. *Hist*. 4.23.1–13; Nautin 1961: 13–32; Klauck 2006: 440–1). Other Christian letters that survive from the period before Constantine include letters written by Origen and Cyprian, although neither appears to have written as many letters as later authors such as Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Jerome, and Augustine (Trapp 2003: 18–22; Klauck 2006: 439–40). According to one scholar, 'We possess more than nine thousand letters written by Christians in antiquity' (Stowers 1986: 15).

Given the very large number of letters that Christian authors wrote both before and during Late Antiquity, and the large numbers that survive, it seems surprising that letters make up such a small proportion of early Christian apocryphal texts. Furthermore, this apparent paucity of apocryphal letters may seem all the more striking when we note that it was in precisely this period, during the second and third centuries of the Common Era (often referred to as the Second Sophistic (Whitmarsh 2005)) that the majority of known pseudonymous or fictional letters written by non-Christian authors were composed (Costa 2001: xi–xviii; Rosenmeyer 2006: 97–103). Thus the question of why Christian authors appear to have written relatively few apocryphal letters, in comparison to narrative forms such as apocryphal gospels, acts, and apocalypses can hardly be avoided, even if no definitive or compelling answers may be given. At least four factors may be noted.

First, it is important to acknowledge the essentially arbitrary way in which various early Christian writings have come to be assigned to particular collections of texts. Thus, for example, there is one letter attributed to Clement of Rome, and preserved as part of the Pseudo-Clementine writings, that is usually counted among the Apocrypha. However, there are two further letters that are also attributed to Clement, but are usually counted among the texts known as the Apostolic Fathers. Had these two texts been counted among the Apocrypha, and with them the *Letter of Barnabas* (which is also among the Apostolic Fathers), then the balance between the number of letters in each of these essentially arbitrary categories of texts might seem quite different.

Second, one reason that some early Christian letters are not considered apocryphal texts is that they were included at an early date in collections that would become part of the New Testament. Thus this second factor might be considered a variant of the first. But whereas the distinction between the collections of texts that would become known as the Apostolic Fathers and as Early Christian Apocrypha was not made until the early modern period, the process by which some letters came to be regarded as canonical and others as non-canonical began either very soon after these texts were written, or possibly at approximately the same time. This may be seen most clearly in the case of letters attributed to Paul, among which are not only the earliest surviving Christian written texts, but also the earliest texts to have been collected together. For, as Porter observes, if Paul did not write all the letters in the New Testament that bear his name, then it seems clear that the period during which these letters were written was an extended period that overlapped with the period during which these letters were gathered (Porter 2004). In other words, if letters attributed to Paul were collected at an early stage (first or second century? the precise date does not matter) and widely regarded as authentic texts, written by Paul, then it would be as a result of the

success of their various authors' decisions to write under the assumed name of Paul that these letters came to be considered canonical long before they might have come to be regarded as apocryphal (or even as pseudonymous or inauthentic). They may well have been written under a false name, but the relatively early decision to consider them part of a collection of authentic Pauline letters (whenever that decision may be thought to have been made) resulted in a greater number of letters being included among canonical texts, and a smaller number among the Apocrypha. Thus there is much to be gained by reading them together, as a corpus of Pauline texts, quite apart from whether or not they are considered canonical scripture (Harding 2004; Pervo 2010).

Furthermore, a similar process may have taken place at a later stage, with similar results, when some early Christians recognized a collection of seven letters now referred to as the catholic epistles (James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, 1–3 John). Once again, some letters that might later have been considered apocryphal were instead recognized and collected as canonical texts at a relatively early date (third or fourth century?), thus adding to the numbers of letters included as part of the collection that came to be known as the New Testament. In each case, the decision to accept what each text claimed about the identity of its author contributed to the imbalance between the number of letters attributed to apostles in the New Testament and the number of letters attributed to apostles but not included in the canon.

A third factor concerns the form and function of the letter, and helps to explain why, with the passage of time, it may have been more difficult to write letters attributed to apostles or other figures of authority from the past than it was to write narratives about, or attributed to, such individuals. Whereas narratives such as gospels, acts, and apocalypses might be written some time after the events that they describe, and still claim to draw on authoritative traditions, they need not make any claim to have been written by any of the characters that they portray. But a letter that purports to have been written by a named author must have been written in his or her lifetime, unless, as seems very unlikely (Ehrman 2013), its recipients read it in the knowledge that it was not written by its fictive author, and they were content with this. Letters that first became known long after their claimed date of writing may have required more complicated 'discovery narratives' (Ehrman 2013: 123–6) than other types of text. As a consequence, they may have been harder to pass off as authentic if they were 'discovered' long after they were supposed to have been written. Therefore it may have been much more difficult to write letters attributed to apostles and to convince other people of their authenticity from an earlier date than it became difficult to write gospels, acts, or apocalypses for similar reasons (Bauckham 1988: 487); and the difficulties will only have increased with the passage of time. Furthermore, it will likely have become increasingly difficult to write letters set in the past that were intended to address contemporary concerns, although a number of examples that I shall discuss show that this goal was by no means impossible to achieve.

Fourth, and finally, it may be the case that the relative paucity of letters among early Christian apocryphal writings has been overstated. We do not know how many such letters may have written but lost, and the number of surviving letters may be greater than is sometimes acknowledged. For example, both M. R. James and J. K. Elliott, in their influential collections of texts, introduce their translations of apocryphal letters by noting that they are not only few, but also unimpressive (James 1924: 476; Elliott 1999: 538). Yet James includes in his section on letters five texts or bodies of texts that might be considered apocryphal letters, notes that he has considered another letter elsewhere, and refers to several more that he might have included. Likewise, in his section on letters, Elliott includes five texts or collections of texts to which he refers as shorter epistles, along with the longer *Epistle of the Apostles*, and refers to two other letters that he includes elsewhere

in his collection. This means that Elliott includes or refers to a total of eight texts that might be considered apocryphal letters, and the total may be increased to eleven if we include the two letters embedded within the Pseudo-Clementine writings to which Elliott also refers elsewhere in his collection (Elliott 1999: 431), and also the *Letter of Pseudo-Titus* (Elliott 1999: 532). The total length of these texts may not be considerable, but the total number of texts is hardly insignificant, especially when compared to the fact that Elliott includes or lists five major and eight other apocryphal acts (one of which is often referred to as a letter), and fourteen apocryphal apocalypses in his collection.

Also relevant is the fact that in Schneemelcher's (1992a) influential collection of texts not only is there a smaller selection of apocryphal letters than is found in Elliott (1999), but also that there is no section devoted specifically to them. Schneemelcher does list the *Letter to the Laodiceans*, the correspondence between Seneca and Paul, and also the *Letter of Pseudo-Titus* in his table of contents, but they are in a section entitled 'Apostolic Pseudepigrapha' which also includes the *Kerygma Petri*. Elsewhere he includes the two letters found in the Pseudo-Clementines and also *3 Corinthians* as part of the *Acts of Paul*, but there is no reference to either text in his table of contents, which obscures the number of letters that his collection contains. Readers must look to the more expansive collections of Moraldi (1971), Erbetta (1981), and the editors of the Pléiade edition (Geoltrain and Kaestli 2005), or to the forthcoming More Apocrypha Project (Burke 2012; <http://www.tonyburke.ca/apocryphicity/category/more-christian-apocrypha/>) if they are to find more attention paid to a larger number of letters.

Given that Paul's letters were written and collected so early, it should perhaps come as no surprise if there are relatively few apocryphal letters attributed to him, despite (and possibly at least partially because of) the number of Pauline letters contained in the New Testament. Two of the apocryphal letters attributed to Paul not only look very like the letters that he wrote, but may have been written at least in part because of references in the earliest collections of his works. One is *3 Corinthians*, which may have been written by someone who was familiar with Paul's references to another letter to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 5.9). The other is the *Letter to the Laodiceans*, which may well have been written because of the reference at Col. 4.16 to a letter from Laodicea. (The Muratorian Fragment describes the *Letter to the Laodiceans* as Marcionite in origin, which may raise the question of whether it is referring to the same *Letter to the Laodiceans* now extant; the fragment also mentions it in conjunction with an otherwise unknown letter to the Alexandrians.) Two other letters or collections of letters, each probably written some time after the *Letter to the Laodiceans* and *3 Corinthians*, demonstrate the continuing influence of Paul and his correspondence. The first is a collection of fourteen letters in which Paul and Seneca engage in correspondence with each other. The other is the *Letter of Pseudo-Titus*, attributed to Titus, sometime companion of Paul, and recipient of a letter attributed to the apostle.

Only three texts attributed to individual New Testament authors other than Paul are extant as further examples of apocryphal letters. The clearest examples are both attributed to Peter. One is the *Letter of Peter to James*, which survives as part of the Pseudo-Clementine literature, where it serves as a preface to the homilies of Clement, which Peter commends to James. The other is the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, which survives as part of the collection of texts discovered near Nag Hammadi in 1945. Another text that professes to be a letter, in that it begins with an epistolary greeting, is the *Apocryphon of James*, also found near Nag Hammadi, which consists mainly of an account of post-resurrection teaching by Jesus. It may be compared with the *Epistle of the Apostles*, which also begins as if it were a letter, and which is also better understood as a form of revelation dialogue or apocalypse. This claim to be written by more than one apostle may also be found in the *Didache*, which

is another text that might be said to begin with a greeting influenced by epistolary conventions, depending on how the longer (and probably not original) title with the words 'to the Gentiles' is understood.

Other letters may also be noted, although it is difficult to argue with conviction that they should be classified as apocrypha. These include the *Letter from Clement to James*, preserved in the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* shortly after the opening letter from Peter, as well as two other letters attributed to Clement, but conventionally considered among the Apostolic Fathers. A letter concerning the resurrection, often referred to as the *Letter to Rheginos*, should not be ignored, although it is usually presented alongside other texts discovered at Nag Hammadi. Also to be noted is the *Letter to Flora*, written by Ptolemy, and preserved only by Epiphanius.

Better contenders to be described as apocryphal letters (if we may take an 'apocryphal' text to be one that purports to fill in a gap within New Testament accounts, or otherwise to expand upon them) are letters attributed to Pilate and to Herod which touch on the circumstances of Jesus' crucifixion, and the *Letter of Lentulus*, which includes a description of Jesus' physical appearance. Finally, there are certain letters attributed to Jesus. These are Jesus' letter to Abgar, King of Syria, in which he responds to Abgar's request for healing, and a letter in which Jesus teaches about the Sabbath.

As may be seen, the total number of texts that might be considered apocryphal letters is hardly as small as some editors have sometimes claimed. These letters vary considerably from one another, not only in the extent to which they draw on the admittedly flexible letter form, but also in terms of their content and likely date of writing. Therefore it seems important to consider the various texts on their own terms before attempting to draw any wider conclusions.

LETTERS ATTRIBUTED TO PAUL

3 Corinthians

The text known as *3 Corinthians* consists of two letters that often circulated with a short narrative section inserted between them that describes how the first letter (from the Corinthians) was delivered to Paul, the circumstances in which he received it, and his reaction to its content. The first, and much shorter, of the two letters is written by Stephanas (cf. 1 Cor. 16.15–18) and four fellow-presbyters from Corinth, who ask for Paul's help in responding to false teaching that they attribute to two visitors to Corinth. The second is Paul's response. The correspondence is readily available in standard collections of translated texts such as Schneemelcher (Schneemelcher and Kasser 1992), Elliott (1999), and Bovon and Geoltrain (Rordorf and Kasser 1997). Useful discussions of the text include Pervo (2010) and Hovhanessian (2000).

3 Corinthians provides a good example of how certain churches reached different views at different times about the status of certain books. Ephraem appears to have included *3 Corinthians* among the authentic letters of Paul, as is evident from his commentary on the canonical letters of Paul, now extant only in a classical Armenian translation, although the text is not included in later Syriac commentaries (Hovhanessian 2000: 5–6, 11–12). *3 Corinthians* is also found in certain Armenian biblical manuscripts, and may have been considered a canonical text by at least some Armenian Christians between the fifth and eighteenth centuries (Hovhanessian 2000: 12–16); in 1805 it was included in an appendix at the end of the New Testament in Zohrapian's critical edition of the Armenian Bible

(Metzger 1988: 223; Hovhanessian 2000: 5). Western scholars first encountered the text via Armenian texts that they translated into Latin, and it was not until 1890 that the first of five Latin manuscripts were discovered. Whereas the majority of the Armenian witnesses contain the narrative bridge that links the two letters, it is found in only two of the six Latin witnesses, and is also absent from the single Greek manuscript, Papyrus Bodmer X, which was published in 1959. This manuscript may be dated to the third century, so it pre-dates all the other witnesses by some way. The other witness to *3 Corinthians* is the sixth-century Coptic Heidelberg Papyrus, published in 1905. It too sheds light on how some Christian readers framed these letters, for it not only includes a narrative bridge between the two letters, but prefaces them with an otherwise unknown introductory narrative, and incorporates them within the much larger literary context of the narrative of the *Acts of Paul* (and also, in this manuscript, the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, which otherwise was transmitted independently of the *Acts of Paul*).

It is impossible to be certain, but there are good reasons to suppose that the letters originally circulated independently of the *Acts of Paul*, and without any narrative framework, as transmitted on Papyrus Bodmer X (Testuz 1959; see also Klijn 1963; Rordorf 1993; Hovhanessian 2000). Thus its most likely original form—a pair of two letters—meant that it was easy for *3 Corinthians* to be transmitted as a quasi-biblical or apocryphal text, since it was formally similar to other letters attributed to Paul. This is borne out by the fact that the Armenian and Latin witnesses are full or partial texts of the Bible, and the Syriac witness is preserved in translation as part of a commentary on the Bible. Only Papyrus Bodmer X and the Heidelberg Papyrus preserve *3 Corinthians* in another context, and it is reasonable to suppose that a free-standing version such as is found in the former came to be included in the latter, rather than removed from it. If so, the person responsible for the compilation of texts that the Heidelberg Papyrus contains may have considered *3 Corinthians* (together with other texts concerning Paul) an important part of Paul's legacy and a useful source for Pauline theology, yet known that it was not part of the canonical scripture of his church. If so, the compiler of the *Acts of Paul*, as preserved in the Heidelberg Papyrus, presumably appreciated and endorsed the presentation of Paul in *3 Corinthians* as a letter-writing opponent of heretical ideas. Thus we are reminded that the literary classification of a text as apocryphal need have little bearing on the assessment of the orthodoxy or otherwise of the theological ideas that it contains.

Scholars have offered various suggestions as to which identifiable individuals may have been responsible for the theological claims to which Stephanas and his fellow-presbyters draw Paul's attention, and which Paul addresses in his response to them. But it may be more helpful simply to note what the issues were, and that they all appear to have been matters of debate in the second century, which is when the letters were most likely written: the claims that Christians should not appeal to the prophets, that God is not almighty, that there is no resurrection of the flesh, that God did not create man, that the Lord neither came in the flesh nor was born of Mary, and that the world was made not by God but by angels (see the Corinthians to Paul, 10–15; cf. Paul to the Corinthians, 5–35). In *3 Corinthians*, Paul's authority can be invoked to address issues that were of contemporary concern, but were not addressed in the required manner in other letters that bore his name. The fact that the Corinthians had written to him with concerns on an earlier occasion (1 Cor. 7.1) makes it plausible to believe that they could do so again, and the identification of their leader as Stephanas and his fellow-elders is in keeping with earlier correspondence between Paul and the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16.15–18). Likewise Paul's response succeeds not only in addressing the issues to which the Corinthians invited him to respond, but does so in a way that is reminiscent of and consistent with other letters attributed to Paul: the Paul of 1

Corinthians and *3 Corinthians* are very much alike, not least in the significance that each attributes to the resurrection (Gregory 2011: 184–7).

The *Letter to the Laodiceans*

The text known today as the *Letter to the Laodiceans* is a short letter that survives in many Late Antique and medieval Latin witnesses and in a number of western vernacular manuscripts of the New Testament. The letter is readily available in standard collections of translated texts such as Schneemelcher (Schneemelcher 1992b), Elliott (1999), and Geoltrain and Kaestli (Backus 2005a). Useful orientations to the text include Anderson (1992), Pervo (2010), and Tite (2012, 2013).

There seems no reason to doubt that its author was motivated at least in part by a desire to fill the gap in the collection of Paul's letters whose existence is implied by Col. 4.16. However the likelihood that this was an attractive cue for forgers means that we cannot be sure that all ancient references to a letter of this name are references to the text that remains extant today. If the Muratorian fragment may be dated to the second century, then it is the earliest text to refer to a letter of this name. If the fragment is dated to the fourth century, then its witness is approximately contemporary with authors such as Jerome and Theodore of Mopsuestia, each of whom refers to a letter to the Laodiceans and denies that it was written by Paul (Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, 5.11; Theodore, *Commentaries on the Minor Epistles of Paul*, commenting on Col. 4.16). Neither author's opinion appears to have been decisive in undermining the use of this letter. In the East, at the Second Council of Nicaea (787 CE) it was found necessary to warn against this 'forged epistle' which was still found in some copies of the Apostle (i.e. the collected letters of Paul), and in the West it continued to be found in many biblical manuscripts until in the sixteenth century it was rejected first by the Reformers, influenced by Erasmus, and then by the Council of Trent.

The original language of the letter is uncertain. Although the earliest witnesses are Latin, and it appears to have been more popular in the Latin West than the Greek East, internal evidence favours composition in Greek. As Lightfoot observes, not only is there evidence of Greek influence throughout the letter, but also none of its allusions to or quotations from earlier letters attributed to Paul appears to depend on Latin versions of his letters (Lightfoot 1879: 289–92).

As Philip Tite has documented, the *Letter to the Laodiceans* 'has almost universally been the subject of scholarly disdain'; most scholars have regarded it as no more than a pastiche of excerpts from Paul's letter (mainly Philippians and Galatians), randomly arranged with no purpose other than to fill the gap of Col. 4.16, and therefore of little interest except in so far as it has a bearing on other areas of research (Tite 2012, 2013: 289–91 and *passim*). Tite, however, has demonstrated that it does have a purposeful structure, and makes good use of epistolary conventions to serve its purpose, which (he argues) is to present an appeal for its readers to remain firm to the 'true gospel' in the face of opposing or competing understandings of Christian teaching, although neither the nature of the opposing teaching nor the occasion for writing the letter is easily discernible from the text (Tite 2013, 2012; see also Pervo 2010: 105–9). Specific details may be elusive, but the letter certainly presents Paul as someone who may be evoked as an authoritative founding figure by those in later generations who wished to uphold his teachings. Thus, as Tite argues, the *Letter to the Laodiceans* fits well with other pseudo-historical letters from the Second Sophistic, for it picks up from where the historical record left off, and provides an opportunity to develop

the portrait of a heroic figure from the glorious past (Tite 2012: 109, 2013: 315, in each case citing Rosenmeyer 2006: 97–129). Furthermore, it not only fills a gap in the historical record, to which our attention is drawn by Col. 4.16, 'but goes on to create a fresh literary work in the very re-presentation of Paul as an historical figure for second-century Christians' (Tite 2012: 109–110) to whom they may look as a stabilizing force and around whom they may seek to ensure a stable social identity (Tite 2012: 112–20, 2013: 315–16).

The Letters of Seneca and Paul

The correspondence of Seneca and Paul consists of a collection of fourteen short letters, one or two of which may have been interpolated sometime after the other letters were composed. They survive in a large number of Latin manuscripts, the earliest of which may be dated to the ninth century, but the letters themselves are usually dated to the fourth century, both on stylistic grounds (Liénard 1932) and because they were known to Jerome (assuming that they are the letters to which he refers in his entry on Seneca in his *On Illustrious Men* 12, where he notes that they were widely read) but apparently not to Lactantius (*Divine Institutes* 6.24.13–14). They were considered authentic until the Renaissance, and were often transmitted with the works of Seneca. Thus they played an important part in the developing Christian admiration for Seneca, although it seems clear that they were written in order to garner support among educated Latin readers not for Seneca but for Paul; Seneca warmly praises the content of Paul's letters, and the correspondence as a whole draws on aspects of epistolary theory and practice that are designed to secure proper status in society not only for Paul but also for the Christian faith that he proclaims (Malherbe 1991). The correspondence is readily available in standard collections of translated texts such as Schneemelcher (Römer 1992), Elliott (1999), and Bovon and Geoltrain (Kappler 1997). There are critical editions by Barlow (1938) and Bocciolini Palagi (1978, 1985), the latter with introduction and notes in Italian.

This concern to position Paul as a letter writer whose voice and status were to be respected not only by a philosopher such as Seneca but also by an emperor may be seen in Seneca's claim that he had read Paul's letters to Nero (to whom he refers variously as Caesar and as Augustus). Modern readers might balk at such a claim, but it is worth pausing to reflect on the power of such a claim for an audience in a time when rulers were Christian and might listen to bishops or other Christian teachers. Likewise the letters of Seneca neatly deflect objections to Christian faith on the grounds of the crude and unsophisticated style of the New Testament. They recognize and acknowledge the problem, but make the point that if poor style need not prevent Seneca from admiring Paul and his writings, it need not prevent other educated readers from drawing the same conclusion, nor need Christians feel inferior to those who looked down on them (Pervo 2010: 115).

A similar concern may also be reflected in Luke's portrayal of Paul in the canonical Acts. Luke implies that Paul will have a hearing before the emperor, albeit as a prisoner (Acts 25.10–12, 25, 28.19), and he presents Paul addressing a client king and Roman governors (Acts 9.15, 23.23, 26.32), one of whom comments on his intellectual stature (Acts 26.24). The correspondence between Seneca and Paul may therefore be usefully compared with how other authors presented Paul, as well as with Paul as he is reflected in his letters. The author of Paul's correspondence with Seneca is certainly more interested in specifically literary and stylistic issues than the author of Acts, who neither refers to Paul as a letter

writer nor draws explicitly on any of his letters, but both authors share a concern to present Paul as a person whose voice should be heard among the social and political elite.

The concern to ensure for Paul an audience among educated Romans seems somewhat removed from the more inward-looking and theological or ethical concerns that appear to have prompted *3 Corinthians* and the *Letter to the Laodiceans*. The letters of Paul and Seneca are written without any need to fill a gap in the earlier Pauline tradition, and are quite different from earlier letters attributed to Paul. Thus it may come as no surprise that they appear never to have circulated as part of any biblical manuscript, or to have been considered canonical texts. Although Christian authors may have been very glad to consider these letters authentic, they appear not to have felt any need to conclude that there was therefore any reason to circulate them alongside other letters attributed to Paul.

The *Letter of Pseudo-Titus*

Although not strictly a Pauline apocryphon, since it makes no claim to be written by Paul, the fact that the *Letter of Pseudo-Titus* is attributed to a follower of Paul, to whom Paul is said to have written, means that it seems appropriate to consider it alongside letters attributed to Paul. This Latin text survives only in a single eighth-century manuscript, which was found in 1896 among the Homilies of Caesarius of Arles, and first published in full in 1925 (de Bruyne 1925). An English translation, with introduction and notes, may be found in Schneemelcher (de Santos Otero 1992) and a French translation with introduction and notes in Geoltrain and Kaestli (Cottier 2005). Other studies include Harnack (1925), de Santos Otero (1963), and Sfameni Gasparro (1988).

The text argues at some length in favour of chastity, and draws on a wide range of canonical and apocryphal texts to support its ascetic aims. Although it is referred to as a letter, *Pseudo-Titus* neither begins nor ends with an epistolary greeting, but the manuscript includes both an introduction ('Here begins the letter of Titus the disciple of Paul') and a colophon ('Here ends the letter of Titus, the disciple of Paul, on the estate of chastity'). This way of framing the text clearly demonstrates the continuing importance of Paul and his disciples as figures of authority, whose teaching was conveyed by letters, at least for the copyist whose text is our sole witness to this document, but the body of the text might be more naturally considered a homily than a letter.

LETTERS ATTRIBUTED TO PETER, JAMES, AND OTHER APOSTLES

The *Letter of Peter to James*

The *Letter of Peter to James* is one of three introductory texts that preface the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*. The others are an account of how James implements what Peter's letter requires, and a letter of Clement to James. All three have been preserved in their entirety in Greek in two late codices, one of which may be dated to the tenth century and the other to the sixteenth. Another manuscript that may be dated to the tenth century also includes the *Letter of Peter to James* (Jones 2012: 8–10). The letter is now readily accessible both in standard collections of apocryphal texts in translation such as those edited by Schneemelcher (Irmscher and Strecker 1992) and by Geoltrain and Kaestli (Le

Boulluec et al. 2005) and in a critical edition (Rehm 1992). A full but necessarily brief account of scholarly discussion of this letter is provided by Bovon (2013), who also offers an exegetical analysis that considers the content, vocabulary, style, and concepts of the letter which he dates tentatively to the second century (Bovon 2013: 168).

Peter's letter begins with brief epistolary greetings to James, whom he addresses as lord and bishop of the holy church, and ends with a simple epistolary farewell. In it he asks James to hand over another text, the record of Peter's preaching (often known as the *Kerygma Petrou* or *Preaching of Peter*) only to readers who have been tested and may be trusted to use them properly. At the beginning of the letter Peter excludes Gentiles altogether from those to whom James may convey his books; at the end he is willing to include Gentiles as well as Jews who have been tested and approved to receive them. His concern is clearly to protect his own teaching, which includes observance of the Jewish Law, from being misappropriated or distorted by those whom he characterizes as seeking to abolish the Law.

Peter's claim that 'some from among the Gentiles have rejected my lawful preaching and have preferred a lawless and absurd doctrine of the man who is my enemy' is sometimes taken as an attack on Paul, although this identification of Peter's opponent is uncertain. It is also possible that the enemy (cf. Matt. 13.26, 28) to whom he refers is to be identified with another historical figure such as Marcion, or is a rhetorical foil for Peter's reference to his own teaching. Certainly there are other parts of the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* that may be read as anti-Pauline polemic (*Hom*. 2.17, 11.35, 17.17–19; cf. Smith 1985: 59–61), but continuing uncertainty as to whether or not the letter was written independently of the rest of the *Homilies* means that it is important to interpret the letter on its own terms before reading it in the light of the wider text. If the letter is to be considered anti-Pauline then it is one of only a small number of apocryphal texts that might be thought to have been written with the intention of subverting rather than supplementing canonical texts. If so, it is interesting to ask to what extent any anti-Pauline rhetoric in this text might be considered qualitatively different from traditions found in the canonical Gospel according to Matthew or the canonical Letter of James that might be considered anti-Pauline. Passages in Matthew include not only Jesus' teaching about the importance of continuing observance of the Law (Matt. 5.18, quoted in the letter), but also the gospel's emphatically pro-Petrine perspective, as seen in passages such as Matt. 16.13ff., and in Petrine apocrypha which draw on that text (*Acts of Peter, Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles, Apocalypse of Peter*; cf. Smith 1985: 61). Passages in James include its affirmation of both faith and works (James 2.14–26). In addition, we should not forget that Paul himself testifies directly to tension between himself and Peter (Gal. 2.11–14).

The way in which Peter is portrayed as being self-consciously concerned to protect the transmission and interpretation of authoritative texts is of interest. Also worthy of note is the fact that his letter and James's letter are included alongside a letter by Clement, who does not feature in the New Testament, as part of a larger body of texts that give a prominent role to Clement as well as to Peter and James. Here we see not only the overlap of canonical and apocryphal texts, but also the overlap between early Christian Apocrypha and other early Christian texts. This serves as a reminder that such designations are artificial categories, imposed by later readers, which may be useful as heuristic tools, but should not be allowed to determine or to limit the way in which historians might approach these texts.

The *Letter of Peter to Philip*

The *Letter of Peter to Philip* is among the texts discovered near Nag Hammadi in 1945, where it survives as the second and final text preserved in Codex VIII. This witness to its text was first published in 1976, and is now readily accessible in standard translations of the Nag Hammadi Library (Meyer and Wisse 1996; Meyer 2007b) and in critical editions (e.g. Meyer and Wisse 1991). It is also included in Schneemelcher (Irmscher and Strecker 1992). A second witness to the text has subsequently come to light, as the opening tractate of Codex Tchacos, published in 2007 (Kasser and Wurst 2007). The recent English translation by Marvin Meyer draws on both witnesses to the Coptic text (Meyer 2007b).

The body of the text begins but does not end with an epistolary greeting, so it is presented only in part as a letter, although each version refers to it as such. In Nag Hammadi Codex VIII, 2 there is a superscribed title that reads '*The Letter of Peter that he sent to Philip*'. In Codex Tchacos there is a titular subscript that reads '*The Letter of Peter to Philip*'.

Its content and the setting in which it is presented—secret teaching given by the risen Jesus first to the twelve disciples and then to James and to Peter—mean that, generically speaking, it may be better to think of it as a 'dialogue gospel' (see Koester 1990: 173–200; Hartenstein 2012: 1051–8; Frey, this volume, 35–7) than as a letter. This is how it is presented by Bethge in Schneemelcher (Bethge 1991) and in Markschies and Schröter (Bethge and Brankaer 2012).

The *Letter of Peter to Philip* is one of three 'revelation dialogues' or 'dialogue gospels' (see the following sections on the *Apocryphon of James* and the *Epistle of the Apostles*) that include some epistolary features, so it may be worth considering what they have in common. In each case the epistolary features may be considered secondary or incidental; their presence underlines the importance in early Christian literature of the letter form, but it is quickly left aside in favour of the main interest of each text, which is to present teaching given by Jesus to his disciples after his resurrection. Thus the epistolary features are functional in that they provide a particular format in which this teaching can be shared with other Christians. Otherwise, however, they have little bearing on the interpretation of the texts themselves, which build on canonical references to Jesus appearing to his disciples after his resurrection (cf. Matt. 28.18–20, John 20.19–21.25, Luke 24.13–49, Acts 1.3–8), and present a range of sayings of Jesus, some of which draw on the canonical Gospels (or less often on canonical letters and on the Acts of the Apostles).

One striking feature of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* is the extent to which it draws on the canonical Acts of the Apostles; not only are there many parallels with the early chapters of Acts, especially in regard to its portrayal of Peter (Smith 1985: 122–5), but also its interest in Philip provides a fuller account of his missionary preaching than the very brief mentions of his ministry in Acts (Acts 6.5, 8.4–40, 21.8–9. But note also references to Philip as a disciple of Jesus: Mark 3.18; John 1.43–8, 6.5–7, 12.21–2. It is possible that the Philip portrayed in the letter is intended to be a conflation of both these characters.) The text has Jesus speak about the myth of Sophia and the Demiurge, so on that basis it may be characterized as 'gnostic' (Pearson 2007: 244–6). Some of its material has parallels in the *Acts of Philip*.

The *Apocryphon of James*

Another dialogue gospel that takes the form of a letter, and was also found at Nag Hammadi, is a tractate attributed to James (NHC 1,2). There is no title, superscript or

subscript in the manuscript, but the author (who identifies himself as James) refers to it as an apocryphon or secret book, which is why most modern scholars call it the *Apocryphon of James*. However, the opening of the text, although lacunose, is clearly in the form of the prescript to a letter, so it might just as easily be called the *Letter of James* (so Elliott 1999: 673; Hartenstein and Plisch 2012) or even (to distinguish it from the canonical Letter of James) the *Secret Letter of James* (Rouleau 1987). It was first published in 1968, and is now readily accessible in standard translations of the Nag Hammadi Library (Robinson 1996; Meyer 2007a) and in critical editions (e.g. Williams 1985). It is also included among dialogue gospels in standard collections of apocryphal texts in translation, such as Schneemelcher (Kirchner 1991) and Markschies and Schröter (Hartenstein and Plisch 2012). Elliott (1999: 673–4) notes the strength of categorizing it as a 'Dialogue of the Saviour' but presents the text among apocryphal apocalypses, and notes its similarities both in form and in content to the *Epistle of the Apostles*.

The text begins with an epistolary greeting and closes with a statement in which the author prays for his readers and encourages them to pray for themselves. Thus an epistolary framework provides a literary context for the main part of the book, which consists of the apocryphon to which its sender refers; the formal epistolary features are secondary, and have little bearing on the substance of the text. In the apocryphon sayings of Jesus are brought together in a series of discourses and dialogues that are placed in the context of a post-resurrection appearance, which in turn is presented within the secondary framework of a letter. The content of the text suggests that it was written for (and/or by) Christians who distinguished themselves from the 'mainstream' or 'Catholic' church, so the text is often regarded as a 'heretical' or 'non-Catholic' work. There is some debate as to whether it should be considered a 'gnostic' text; although it emphasizes knowledge as the basis of salvation, it makes no reference to the myth of Sophia or the Demiurge (Pearson 2007: 218–21; cf. Williams 1996).

Of particular interest is the text's reference to remembering the words of Jesus (Cameron 1984: 91–124). The appeal to remember the words of Jesus is found in a number of other early Christian texts, and may suggest that the *Apocryphon of James* should be dated no later than the second century.

The *Epistle of the Apostles*

Another text that may be considered a 'revelation dialogue' but is usually referred to under the title of a letter is the *Epistle of the Apostles*. It survives entirely only in Ethiopic, where it is still read as an authoritative text, and partly in Latin and in Coptic. The standard edition was published in 1919, and translations are readily available in standard collections of apocryphal texts in translation such as Schneemelcher (Müller 1991) and Markschies and Schröter (Müller 2012), where it appears alongside other dialogue gospels, and also Bovon and Geoltrain (Pérès 1997). Elliott prints his discussion and translation in his section on apocryphal epistles, following the example of M. R. James, but notes emphatically that the text 'cannot really be described accurately as a letter', since very quickly it 'changes from the form of a letter to that of an apocalypse' (Elliott 1999: 555). Hills (2009) offers another recent English translation with useful introductory material and notes; a more substantial edition is due to appear in the series Oxford Early Christian Gospel Texts.

The title *Epistle of the Apostles* is inferred from the text; the Latin (but not necessarily the Ethiopic; see Hills 1990: 11–12, 2009: 21) witness to its opening refers to its content as

what Jesus revealed to his disciples as a letter, and which the disciples heard, kept, and wrote for the whole world. There is then an undoubtedly epistolary greeting in which eleven named disciples (Judas's absence is implied) address churches throughout the world (1–2), and there is further reference to their testimony being written and sent as if it were a letter in the Coptic, but not in the Ethiopic (7). There is no epistolary closing as such, although the text ends with the risen Jesus telling his hearers to go in peace.

Unlike the *Apocryphon of James* and the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, the *Epistle of the Apostles* is usually considered an 'orthodox' text that uses the form of the revelation dialogue to respond to the 'gnostic' or 'gnosticizing' ideas found in other examples of this genre. It draws extensively on the four canonical Gospels and Acts, and also on other biblical texts. If it dates to the mid second century, it may be considered the earliest witness to the fourfold Gospel canon (Hannah 2008).

As Hills observes, 'among the NT apocrypha the Epistula enjoys a rare distinction: as part of the "Book of the Testament of our Lord" this "Epistle of the Apostles" is still copied and read in the Ethiopian Church. Accordingly it is one of the few non-canonical texts to have in the twentieth century an enduring communal existence as a witness to Christian faith and life, and thus to continue the fulfilment of its primary, confessional role' (Hills 1990: 172).

LETTERS ATTRIBUTED TO OTHER CHARACTERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In addition to letters attributed to the authors of letters included in the New Testament, there are also apocryphal letters attributed to other characters in New Testament texts. In each case they appear to have been written to supplement or otherwise embellish narratives found in the New Testament, so in that respect they perform a similar function to other apocryphal texts.

The Letters of Jesus and Abgar

In the canonical Gospels, Jesus is depicted writing nowhere except in the sand, in the story of the woman taken in adultery; and the status of that story, usually printed in modern bibles at John 7.53–8.11, is itself disputed. However, according to Eusebius and later authors, Jesus wrote to Abgar, King of Edessa, in response to a letter that Abgar had sent to him. Eusebius's account is found in his *Ecclesiastical History* 1.13, 2.1.6–8, where he presents both letters and explains how Edessa was converted to Christianity when Abgar was healed by the apostle Thaddaeus, whose journey to Edessa after Jesus' resurrection fulfilled Jesus' promise in his letter that he would send one of his disciples to Abgar. The legend also exists in other versions; in the Syriac *Doctrina Addai* (the Syriac equivalent for Thaddeus) the story is told without reference to any letter of Jesus to Abgar.

Abgar's letter to Jesus and Jesus' letter to Abgar may be found in the standard editions and translations of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, and also in standard collections of apocryphal texts in translation such as Schneemelcher (Drijvers 1991) and Elliott (1999). For a fuller discussion, see Chapter 4, 'Narratives about the Apostles' by Pervo.

The Letter of Jesus on the Sabbath

This relatively late apocryphal letter text purports to have been written by Jesus himself, and to have fallen to earth from heaven. It commends strict observance of Sunday as a day of rest. The earliest reference to it is found in an exchange of letters, towards the end of the seventh century, between Vincentius, Bishop of the Balearic island of Ibiza, and Licinianus, Bishop of the Spanish city of Carthage. Licinianus rejects the letter's claims to be the words of Christ, denying that Christ would add to what was written, and argues that scripture (with the exception of Moses's stone tablets) did not fall from heaven but was inspired by the Holy Spirit (PL 72, columns 699–700, 'Liciniani, Carthaginensis episcopi, Epistola III, ad Vincentium episcopum, Ebositanae insulae'; the Latin text is quoted in full by Priebsch 1936: 1–2). Many of the ideas that Licinianus attributes to the letter are also found in other late sixth-century texts from Spain and southern Gaul, which might suggest that the letter originated there, in western churches which were then proposing rigorous sabbatarian views (Priebsch 1936: 26–9; Haines 2010: 54–7). However, the letter may also reflect particular circumstances in Jerusalem between 451 and 453, under the anti-Patriarch Theodosius, which might favour a fifth-century origin in the East (Van Esbroeck 1989: 281–4).

A western origin of the text would favour original composition in Latin, although the Latin text appears to have circulated in three distinct recensions (Priebsch 1936; Van Esbroeck 1989: 270–5; Haines 2010: 43–54). If it originated in Jerusalem or elsewhere in the East, Greek seems more likely to have been the original language in which the text was composed, although the earliest surviving witnesses date to the fifteenth century: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, gr. 925, and Vatican, Barberinus, gr. III 3. The former is the basis for the translation of the Greek tradition in the Pléiade edition, which also includes a translation of the Latin tradition (Backus 2005c), and is printed and translated in de Santos Otero (1996: 664–76). Other early eastern versions beside the Greek include Armenian, Syriac, Garshuni, Arabic, and Ethiopian (Bittner 1905; Van Esbroeck 1989: 275–81), as well as Georgian (Van Esbroeck 1989: 275). It was also translated into Slavic and into various eastern and western vernaculars, and was clearly very well known in the medieval West (Haines 2010). The author of a twelfth-century text on Jerusalem can refer to the letter as having been spread throughout the whole world; it appears to have been known as far west as Ireland and as far north as Iceland, as well as in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the East.

Given that the letter argues that Christians should observe Sunday as a Sabbath-style day of rest it should come as no surprise that it makes extensive use of texts from the Old Testament, which sets it apart from other early Christian apocrypha. Its author presents Jesus in a way that associates him with the Hebrew prophets whose words he echoes or adapts, but also draws on the canonical Gospels in its use of the phrase, 'truly I tell you' ('Amen dico vobis'). The letter's very Jewish portrayal of Jesus is worthy of note, but the most likely explanation for this is that it is simply a consequence of its subject matter.

Letters Associated with Pilate

A number of texts are attributed to or associated with Pilate. The longest consists of a body of material known variously as the *Gospel of Nicodemus* or the *Acts of Pilate*. The titles are not original, but are taken from some medieval Latin manuscripts. They reflect the fact that the material purports to be written by Nicodemus, but shows a great deal of interest in

Pilate's role at Jesus' trial. There are also four letters that purport to be written by or sent to Pilate: one to the emperor Tiberius (preserved also in Greek in the *Acts of Peter and Paul*, but in that context addressed to Claudius, and one to Herod, each with a reply to Pilate. Translations of the letters from Pilate, together with introductory material, commentary, and bibliography on the wider body of Pilate literature, may be found in the collections edited by Schneemelcher (Scheidweiler 1991), Elliott (1999), Geoltrain and Kaestli (Gounelle 2005), and Markschies and Schröter (Schärtl 2012). Original texts are available in Tischendorf (1876) and de Santos Otero (1996).

As Elliott observes, 'As with many apocryphal writings, the motive for the original composition was to satisfy the curiosity of those who found the canonical biblical writing inadequate. The role of Pilate in particular obviously intrigued early Christians, and the Pilate cycle in general—not just the *Acts of Pilate* but also the associated literature—reflects the way in which the pious attempted to satisfy their curiosity' (1999: 165).

The *Letter of Lentulus*

A similar desire to provide information that the New Testament does not include is also reflected in the text known as the *Letter of Lentulus*, and named after another Roman official. It is sometimes preserved in the form of a letter, attributed to Lentulus, but sometimes (without reference to Lentulus) in the form of an extract from a text that it names as the *Annals of the Romans*. The latter is more likely the original version. This is a late text (probably composed around the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) that survives in Latin and Syriac versions. Introductions and translations are found in Moraldi (1971), Erbetta (1981), Elliott (1999), and Geoltrain and Kaestli (Backus 2005b). It is best known for its description of the physical appearance of Jesus. I quote here, in full, the English translation by Elliott (1999: 543):

> In these days there appeared, and there still is, a man of great power named Jesus Christ, who is called by the Gentiles the prophet of truth, whom his disciples call the Son of God, raising the dead and healing diseases—a man in stature middling tall, and comely, having a reverend countenance, which those who look upon may love and fear; having hair of the hue of an unripe hazel-nut and smooth almost down to his ears, but from the ears in curling locks somewhat darker and more shining, flowing over his shoulders; having a parting at the middle of the head according to the fashion of the Nazareans; a brow smooth and very calm, with a face without wrinkle or any blemish, which a moderate red colour makes beautiful; with the nose and mouth no fault at all can be found; having a full beard of the colour of his hair, not long, but a little forked at his chin; having an expression simple and mature, the eyes grey, flashing, and clear; in rebuke terrible, in admonition kind and lovable, cheerful yet keeping gravity; sometimes he has wept, but never laughed; in stature of body tall and straight, with hands and arms fair to look upon; in talk grave, reserved and modest, fairer than the children of men.

CONCLUSION

A number of points emerge from this survey of early Christian apocryphal letters. The first is the wide range of material that might be included within this category. Some texts make only formal use of epistolary features, as a means by which an author can present his material to a wide readership, whereas others may be characterized more straightforwardly as letters. Examples of the former include the three revelation dialogues considered above (the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, the *Apocryphon of James*, and the *Epistle of the Apostles*) and also *Pseudo-Titus*. Each of the three revelation dialogues conveys teaching that Jesus is said

to have given after his resurrection, but incorporates it within the framework of a letter so that it may be conveyed to a wider audience than those who are depicted as having been present to hear the risen Jesus' teaching for themselves. The claim that Jesus gave such teaching has parallels in canonical texts (cf. Matt. 28.18–20; John 20.19–21.25; Luke 24.13–49; Acts 1.3–8), but these apocryphal texts break new ground in recording what the risen Jesus said at some length, and conveying it indirectly through a letter attributed not to Jesus (cf. Rev. 2.1–3.22) but to one or more of those who received his teaching. The author of the *Letter of Pseudo-Titus* makes only cursory use of epistolary features, which may in fact be the work of a later editor, and it may be more naturally considered a homily than a letter.

Second, it seems worth making the point that few of these texts contain anything that might be labelled 'heretical' rather than 'orthodox' in terms of their theology. Two of the revelation dialogues might be considered 'gnostic', and the *Letter of Jesus on the Sabbath* is written to support a rigorous form of sabbatarianism that was at variance with the views of most (but by no means all) Christians at the time when it was likely written, but the majority of apocryphal letters express theological views that would either fit easily in the New Testament or are not at significant variance with it. This may be seen most clearly in the case of *3 Corinthians* and *Laodiceans*, each of which might easily have been included in the New Testament if they had been in circulation before other letters attributed to Paul were brought together in a closed collection. These texts are very similar to other letters written by Paul, both in content and form, and their portrayal of Paul is clearly indebted to canonical Pauline texts. Likewise, the *Letter of Peter to James* is very similar to canonical letters; it shows a concern to distinguish between trusted teachers of whom it approves and others whom it does not trust, and any anti-Pauline polemic that it may contain can be paralleled in canonical texts. It may perhaps represent a type of Jewish Christianity that came to be regarded as heretical by Gentile Christians, but this was hardly because of any new or radical teaching that it presents, but more likely because it retained features of Jewish observance that fell out of fashion as Christianity spread far beyond its original Jewish context, but may not be far from the theological perspective found in a canonical text such as James (or arguably even Matthew). Certainly there is very little evidence to suggest that apocryphal letters should be considered to contain much content that may be considered theologically distinct from what may be found elsewhere, either in canonical letters or in other early Christian writings.

Third, even those letters that seem most distinct from the letters found in the New Testament may be seen to reflect concerns that are shaped by continuing engagement with canonical texts. This can be seen in the case both of Jesus' letter to Abgar and his letter on Sabbath observance. In one sense, they are far removed from anything in the New Testament, since the canonical Jesus is not presented as the author of any written text, and even the story of his writing in the sand may not have originated as part of the Gospel according to John. Yet his letter to Abgar is entirely consistent with Christian claims that Jesus was well known as a healer, and fits neatly with his portrayal as a miracle worker. Similarly, his letter on Sabbath observance is consistent with his portrayal as a teacher who upheld the Mosaic Law, even if in the Synoptic tradition he appears less interested in rigorous Sabbath observance than he does in the letter. Conversely, whereas both these texts build on prominent characteristics of how Jesus is portrayed in the canonical Gospels, the letters attributed respectively to Pilate and to Lentulus manage to fill lacunae in the gospels, and shed light on details that were likely of interest to Christians who wanted to know more of matters that canonical texts did not explicitly address. Thus the letters attributed to Pilate

expand on earlier accounts of Jesus' trial and crucifixion, and the *Letter of Lentulus* describes at some length the physical appearance of Jesus.

Also of relevance here is the correspondence attributed to Paul and to Seneca. Paul's letters to Seneca differ from other works attributed to him in that they are addressed to someone who is not only not a follower of Jesus, but is an individual of high social standing who is known from sources outside early Christian texts, and also in that they do not address matters of theological concern. This sets these letters quite apart from other Pauline letters, but may be compared with Luke's presentation of Paul in the canonical Acts, and is hardly out of keeping with other letters attributed to Paul. They reflect a new historical context in which the New Testament and other Christian texts are being assessed on a literary basis, and they exemplify one way in which such a challenge might be addressed.

It follows therefore that historians can and should read the letters of Paul and Seneca, like all other apocryphal letters (and indeed all apocryphal texts), on their own terms, as evidence for how Christianity developed in different places at different times. They are discrete literary artefacts in their own right, and should be approached as discrete texts rather than only—or perhaps primarily—as examples of a predetermined category such as 'apocryphon' or 'apocryphal letter'. Certainly these texts may be read in that way too, and comparison with canonical letters and other texts is of interest, but they are shaped not only by engagement with the sort of ideas that New Testament texts contain and with the ways in which they express and convey those ideas, but also by the particular circumstances in which their authors lived and wrote. First and foremost they are early Christian writings, and labels such as 'apocryphal' or non-canonical' should not predetermine or limit the ways in which they may be read.

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CHAPTER 6

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NON-CANONICAL APOCALYPSES AND PROPHETIC WORKS

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RICHARD BAUCKHAM

'APOCALYPSE' (from Greek *apokalupsis*, 'revelation') is the term used to describe a type of ancient Jewish and Christian literature. In popular modern usage it has come to mean 'the end of the world', but in this essay it will be used exclusively for a genre of literature. A definition of this genre that would be widely accepted is: a work with a narrative framework in which otherwise inaccessible knowledge is revealed by an otherworldly agent of revelation (such as an angel or Jesus Christ or God) to a human recipient (cf. J. J. Collins 1979: 9). Most apocalypses are pseudonymous, ascribed to an authoritative biblical figure, in whose name the work is written. (A few, including the book of Revelation [or Apocalypse of John] in the New Testament, are ascribed to their real author, but they will not concern us here.) Many works of this type were called 'apocalypses' in the ancient period, but others did not have this word in their title, while the word was occasionally used for works that do not come within the definition I have just given. Since the content of apocalypses was often prophetic, it is not surprising that ancient authors sometimes used the term 'apocalypse' for works that would more accurately be called prophecies, though sometimes they did distinguish the two. In this essay I restrict the term 'apocalypse' to works that fit the definition I have given and I distinguish them from 'prophetic works'. These differ from apocalypses in that the prophet speaks either in his or her own person with prophetic authority or quotes prophetic utterances attributed directly to God, in the manner of the biblical prophets. Again we shall confine our discussion to pseudonymous examples, attributed to prophetic figures from the Bible or (in the case of the Sibyls) pagan antiquity. Of course, all genres have borderline cases and some writings have the characteristics of more than one genre. We should not be too rigid about genre definitions, but the distinction I have made between apocalypses and prophetic works is useful for our present purposes.

Apocalypses and prophetic works differ from other genres of Early Christian Apocrypha in that they constitute literary traditions already well established in Jewish usage before Christian authors adopted them. In the case of these genres there is direct continuity between the Jewish and Christian traditions. Not only the book of Daniel (the only apocalypse in the Hebrew Bible), but also non-canonical Jewish apocalypses were read and valued by early Christians, who sometimes produced redacted versions of them as well as writing similar works of their own, which often draw on material from the Jewish apocalypses. Surprisingly, the New Testament apocalypse, the Book of Revelation, exercised little influence on these Christian apocalypses. Jesus' revelatory discourse about the future (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21) was rather more influential, but most early

Christian apocalypses owed more to the Jewish tradition than they did to the New Testament.

In order to classify the Early Christian Apocrypha of these kinds, I shall distinguish three different types of apocalypse and two different types of prophecy. First, there are apocalypses that reveal the course of history and the eschatological future of history. They work with a predominantly temporal axis. Second, there are apocalypses that reveal the contents of the other world, the unseen world that can only be visited, in this life, by visionaries taken out of this world so that they can travel through the various heavens with their varied contents. This type of apocalypse works with a predominantly spatial axis. The contents may include meteorological and astronomical phenomena in the lower heavens, as well as, in the highest heaven, the throne of God and the angels who worship before it. The places of the dead, paradise and hell, are sometimes located in the heavens, sometimes elsewhere. So the interest of this kind of work can be quite varied. The fate of persons after death is often the most important or sole concern, but other heavenly mysteries feature too. Scholars of early Judaism and the New Testament tend to be most familiar with the first of these two types of apocalypses, but the second type is also very old and was popular among both Jews and Christians from the late Second Temple period onwards. The two types may overlap. For example, a tour of the other world may include some eschatological prophecy.

A third type of apocalypse I call 'Questions'. They take the form of questions posed by the biblical figure to whom the work is ascribed and the answers given by the heavenly revealer. The subject matter can range widely over the same kind of topics as the other two types of apocalypse address. This third type of apocalypse seems to be a purely Christian development, without Jewish precedent. The two types of prophetic work I shall distinguish are, first, those which adopt the style of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and, secondly, those that belong to the tradition of Sibylline prophetic oracles.

I shall discuss these five categories of literature in general and then give more detailed attention to a few major examples: the *Ascension of Isaiah*, and the apocalypses of *Peter, Paul*, and *Thomas*. In relation to the five categories of literature I shall refer to Jewish examples that were read and preserved by Christians. It is important to realize that most of these works eventually fell out of favour in Greek-speaking Christian traditions, and so have been preserved for us in translations into Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, Old Slavonic, and other languages, depending on the branch(es) of Christianity in which they survived. The Christian reception history of these Jewish works needs to be studied in connection with the similar literature written by Christians.

APOCALYPSES TYPE 1: REVELATIONS OF THE HISTORICAL-ESCHATOLOGICAL FUTURE

The Old Testament book of Daniel is the earliest example of this genre of Jewish literature, while the New Testament book of Revelation is also an apocalypse of this type. It includes the spatial axis of revelation in that the prophet John is taken up in vision to the divine throne room in heaven, but the purpose of his vision of the worship of God in heaven is to enable him to understand and to receive the revelation of the future, the coming of God's kingdom on earth, that the rest of his visions comprise. In this respect it resembles the nearly contemporary *Apocalypse of Abraham* (Charlesworth 1983: 689–95), preserved only in Old Slavonic but originally a Jewish work of *c*.100 CE (Harlow 2013). There too the seer ascends to the heavenly throne room, from which he looks down on the earth and sees in vision the whole course of human history, from Adam and Eve to the end of history.

The *Ladder of Jacob*, a work that similarly survives only in Old Slavonic (Charlesworth 1985: 401–11), is likewise a Jewish work of perhaps *c*.100 CE, to which Christian additions have been made in Slavonic. The *Apocalypse of Baruch* (*2 Baruch*) (Charlesworth 1983: 615–52), another Jewish work of the late first century CE, is now extant only in Syriac. These works may have had only limited circulation in Christian circles, but the *Apocalypse of Ezra* (*4 Ezra*) (Charlesworth 1983: 517–59; Stone 1990; and in editions of the English Apocrypha as 2 Esdras 3–14), from roughly the same date, was evidently valued widely by Christians and influenced the writing of Christian apocalypses, as we shall see. It is noteworthy that all these apocalypses were read and valued by Christians, even though they were written well after the beginning of the Christian movement. Presumably this late origin was not known by their Christian readers, who valued their prophecies of the Messiah among other aspects of their content. Also particularly popular among Christians were the various works ascribed to Enoch and included in the collection we know as *1 Enoch*, several parts of which are apocalypses of the historical-eschatological type.

The *Apocalypse of Peter*, one of the earliest of the Christian apocalypses, represents Jesus, after the resurrection, expanding on the eschatological discourse that he had given to his disciples before his death (Matt. 24). It will be discussed in more detail later. A lesser-known work in which the risen Christ similarly expands, at the request of the disciples, on his previous teaching, forms the first part of the Syriac *Testament of our Lord* (1.2–14: Cooper and Maclean 1902: 49–59), the rest of which is a manual of church order from the fifth century. The apocalypse is certainly older than the rest of the work, and is also known in a somewhat different form in an Ethiopic version (*The Testament of our Lord in Galilee*). Its narrative of the signs preceding the *parousia* draws on Matthew 24 and other parts of the New Testament, but also includes material, such as a physical description of Antichrist, that is paralleled elsewhere in Christian apocalypses and prophetic works. Its general theme of the increase of evils of all kinds as the end of history approaches, culminating in the reign of Antichrist, his deception of the world, and persecution of the elect, is common in Christian literature of this kind. This apocalypse may be quite early, but has so far been studied hardly at all (see A. Y. Collins 1979: 77–8).

The *Apocalypse of Thomas* is known in two recensions. The shorter and probably earlier recension, following a brief general description of the evils of the last days, focuses on the last eight days of this world's history, describing the signs in the heavens that will be seen on each of seven days and the deliverance of the elect on the eighth day. It will be discussed in more detail later. The longer recension places before the account of the eight last days a narrative review of the history leading up to the end. Following an account of apostasy in the church, the narrative takes the form of a succession of kings (Roman emperors), good and bad, with summaries of events in their reigns. Surprisingly this narrative ends before the appearance of Antichrist. It must have been an independent text before being joined to the account of the eight last days.

The model for apocalyptic narratives of this kind, recounting the reigns of a succession of kings leading up to the last events of history, was chapters 10–12 of the book of Daniel. In such narratives, many of the kings were already figures of the past when the text was written, though they belonged to the future from the point of view of the seer to whom the prophecy is fictionally attributed. Such texts can often be dated approximately by determining the point in the narrative where a transition is made from events in the real author's past, events we can identify historically, to the part of the narrative that was future from the real author's standpoint and does not correspond to history. Usually but not always, the real author places himself and his readers not too far from the eschatological climax of history. However, identifying the point of transition is not always straightforward,

both because the descriptions of rulers and events can be vague or cryptic, and because the texts were sometimes updated by interpolations in the course of transition (cf. DiTommaso 2005: 104–7). In the case of the longer recension of the *Apocalypse of Thomas*, however, the textual indications point to the middle of the fifth century.

The purpose of such reviews of history, presented as prophecy and as prelude to the still future events of the last days, was not merely to authenticate the work by means of prophecies that appeared to have been already fulfilled, but, more importantly, to convey a sense that history proceeds according to a predetermined divine plan. When evil seems out of control, in reality it is subject to the overriding purpose of God, and the final redemption of the faithful is assured, provided they remain faithful through the trials of the last days.

The longer recension of the *Apocalypse of Thomas* is probably the first Christian apocalypse of this type that we have, though one passage in the Christian Sibylline Oracles provides a short narrative of Roman emperors (*Sib. Or.* 8.50–72). But one of the apocryphal Daniel apocalypses, the *Seventh Vision of Daniel*, is an apocalypse of this type written not much later (*c*.484–91) (La Porta 2013: 414–15). Whereas the longer recension of the *Apocalypse of Thomas* comes from the west of the empire and was probably composed in Latin, the *Seventh Vision of Daniel* was written in the east in Greek, though now extant only in Armenian. It records a seventh vision additional to the six visions in the canonical book of Daniel. A significant feature is that it appears to predict a sequence of many generations subsequent to the real author's time and prior to the final events of world history. Eschatological imminence is not essential to this kind of apocalypse.

A large number of other apocryphal Daniel apocalypses were written, in the Christian east, from the fifth to at least the tenth century, and there are even Islamic examples, written in Arabic, and a Jewish example in Hebrew (DiTommaso 2005, chapter 3, describes twenty-four Daniel apocalypses; see also Henze 2001). Most have in common a narrative review of history as a series of rulers, together with a cluster of end-time motifs, such as the last Christian emperor, the figure of Antichrist, Gog and Magog, and the return of Enoch and Elijah. The profusion of such works should be related to the turbulent times in which they were written, including the Muslim conquest of much of the Byzantine Empire. A closely related work is the *Apocalypse of (Pseudo-)Methodius*, attributed to Bishop Methodius of Olympus (d. 311). Composed in Syriac, *c*.692, and well known in both Greek and Latin versions, it proved hugely influential, not only in the east but also, unlike the Daniel apocalypses, in the Latin west (Reinink 2005: chs 5–10; Himmelfarb 2010: 128–35; Garstad 2012).

The *Greek Tiburtine Sibyl*, which is known in a sixth-century version of a late fourth-century original (Alexander 1967; Buitenwerf 2013), is more like an apocalypse than the other Sibylline books in Greek (it is not one of the standard collection discussed later). Whereas they are prophetic oracles delivered by the Sibyl in hexameter verse, this work is a prose account of the Sibyl's interpretation of a vision or dream that a hundred judges in the city of Rome have had and ask her to interpret. The vision and the Sibyl's interpretation present a scheme of world history from creation to the end, comparable in some ways with the content of some of the Sibylline Oracles, but also resembling the Daniel apocalypses.

APOCALYPSES TYPE 2: REVELATIONS OF THE OTHER WORLD

The term 'other world' here refers to parts of the cosmos that are not normally accessible to living people but which it was thought could be visited in the kind of visions that are

described in these apocalypses. Early Jewish apocalypses of this type include visits to the places of the dead (either where they presently are or where they will be after the last judgement), but also display wide-ranging interests in other secrets of the cosmos, such as the courses of the heavenly bodies, the sources of meteorological phenomena, and the various angelic inhabitants of the heavens, as well as the divine throne and those who worship around it in the highest heaven. By contrast, most Christian apocalypses of this type—and certainly the most popular ones—focus exclusively on the fate of the dead (Bauckham 1998: 81–96). It was on this important subject that they were valued as adding to the relatively meagre information to be found in the New Testament. Christian thought, imagination, and art throughout the centuries (though especially in pre-modern periods) have been richly fed by this tradition of apocalyptic visions.

The oldest Jewish apocalypse in which a seer tours the 'other world' in visions is the Enochic *Book of Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 1–36) (third or early second century BCE). Around the beginning of the first century CE a major shift occurred in the kind of cosmology that informs such apocalypses. Apart from the divine throne in heaven, the sights seen by Enoch, including the places of the dead, were located at the furthest extremities of the earth, but later apocalypses envisage a series of seven heavens above the earth, each much greater in height than the one below, culminating in the throne of God in or above the seventh heaven. Thus in *2 Enoch* (Charlesworth 1983: 91–213), probably a Jewish work of around the first century CE, the kinds of sights that in the *Book of Watchers* Enoch had seen at the edges of the earth are relocated to the lower heavens.

The case of *3 Baruch* (Charlesworth 1983: 653–79) is particularly instructive for our purposes. In an originally Jewish work from *c*.100 CE, Baruch ascends through five of the seven heavens and sees such interesting sights as the source of the rivers, the paths of the sun and the moon through the heavens, the garden of Eden, heavenly birds that continuously praise God, and the way in which angels present the prayers of humans to God. He does not see the dead except in the special instance of those who built the tower of Babel (3.2–7; 4.3–8). But we have *3 Baruch* only in two Christian recensions, in Greek and Old Slavonic, and Christian additions to the text can be distinguished by the fact that each addition appears in only one of the two recensions. Both recensions contrive to introduce the souls of the dead into Baruch's vision but in different ways (Bauckham 2001: 183). For example, the Greek recension identifies the heavenly birds as the souls of the righteous engaged in singing praise to God (10.5), while the Slavonic recension adds to the end of the text visits by Baruch to the places where the righteous dead rejoice and the wicked dead are punished (16.4–8). These Christian adaptations of the Jewish work illustrate how Christian interest in this type of apocalypse was especially focused on the fate of the dead.

Another historical development of which we must take account is in views of the intermediate state, the condition of the dead between their death and their bodily resurrection at the end of history. In the older view, the dead are in Sheol or Hades, awaiting their resurrection and the last judgement, which will either consign them to hell or admit them to paradise. This does not necessarily mean that they are presently in a neutral condition: the wicked may be understood to be waiting in fear for their future punishment, the righteous in joyful anticipation of their coming reward (*4 Ezra* 7.75–101; *2 Enoch* 40.13J). This older view survives in only two Christian apocalypses, one of which is the *Apocalypse of the Virgin* that forms the final part of the Syriac *Transitus Mariae* (Bauckham 1998: 346–60) (this is one of four different apocalypses attributed to the Virgin Mary). When the Virgin sees hell, with the smoke and the stench of sulphur and the roar of the flames coming from it, she also sees the wicked viewing it from a distance, knowing that it is the punishment that awaits them at the day of judgement. When she sees paradise, she

sees the righteous similarly viewing it from afar, delighting in the prospect of their future rewards. It is interesting that this apocalypse while featuring the places of the dead also includes sights of some of the other mysteries to be seen in the various heavens, such as the storehouses of the weather and the angels engaged in ceaseless praise of God, as well as the heavenly Jerusalem in which God dwells. All these features suggest that, although the present form of the work probably dates from the fifth century, it draws on much older material. The other Christian apocalypse, in which the old view of the state of the dead survives, is a Byzantine apocalypse which Court calls the *Third Apocalypse of John* (Court 2000: 104–31), though, as in *4 Ezra* 7.75–101, there are no visions, just an account.

Most of the Christian apocalypses that deal with the fate of the dead have a different view of the intermediate state. In this conception the dead are already, prior to the last judgement, in either hell or paradise, suffering punishment in hell or enjoying the delights of paradise. This development probably first appeared in pre-Christian Jewish apocalypses, in particular in an *Apocalypse of Elijah*, of which only quotations have survived (Stone and Strugnell 1979: 5–85). It was a development within the Jewish tradition, but it may well have been influenced by Greco-Roman pagan accounts of descent to Hades, where the differing fates of the dead could be observed (Bauckham 1998: 19–32). Certainly, the Jewish and Christian apocalypses borrowed from such accounts some of the specific punishments that the damned in hell are depicted as suffering. What the new conception of the present conditions of the dead made possible, in Jewish and Christian apocalypses, were tours of the punishments, in which the seer is able to observe in each case what kind of sinner was suffering what kind of punishment. This particular subgenre of apocalyptic vision became very popular (Himmelfarb 1983; Bauckham 1998: 49–80), along with visits to the righteous in paradise that tended to be far less detailed than the accounts of hell. Clearly the paraenetic potential of a visionary account of hell was much enhanced when the seer could describe differentiated punishments actually being exacted. Adulterers, for example, could be warned of exactly what terrifying fate is awaiting them at death, and each major type of sinner similarly. Along with this development went the advent of apocalypses exclusively concerned with the fate of the dead.

The oldest of these that we know may be the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, which survives in Coptic in a rather fragmentary condition (Charlesworth 1983: 497–515). Scholars are divided as to whether it is of Jewish or Christian origin, though it was certainly in use among Egyptian Christians. In this work the prophet Zephaniah follows the path of the soul of a dead person through the other world. As in some of the Graeco-Roman descents to Hades (Bauckham 1998: 23–6), he apparently falls into a cataleptic trance, which enables his soul to take leave of his body and be conducted by an angel through the experiences of a soul after death, but then to return to his body and recount what he has seen. The angel protects Zephaniah from the angels of punishment who seize the souls of the wicked after death, and conducts him first to Hades, where his sins and righteous deeds are assessed and he is vindicated as righteous, and then to paradise, where he meets the patriarchs. From paradise he is able to look down into the abyss where the wicked are punished and see the various punishments endured by various categories of sinners. He also sees how the righteous in paradise, also looking down on the suffering of the wicked, pray for God's mercy for them. In this text it is not clear whether this intercession for the damned in hell has any effect. The same motif of prayer for mercy for the damned, either by the righteous in paradise or by the seer when he views the punishments, is found in many of the visits to hell in the Christian apocalypses. Sometimes it is merely rebuffed; sometimes it wins some kind of concession from God, such as the Sabbath or Sunday rest of the damned, a day's respite each week from the pains of hell. These apocalypses, along with a desire to see

justice done and a strategy of evoking repentance by those who might otherwise go to hell, also give voice to a compassionate impulse in the face of the terrifying pictures of hell that they paint (Bauckham 1998: 132–48).

The longest and most influential of the apocalypses that deal exclusively with the fate of the dead is the *Apocalypse of Paul*, written around the end of the fourth century (Piovanelli 1993, 2007), which will be discussed in detail. Its popularity, in a variety of later forms, for many centuries and in most of the diverse Christian traditions, was due to the fact that it gives so detailed a picture of the afterlife. It was a subject about which people naturally wanted to know and the *Apocalypse of Paul*, apparently on good authority, offered an unrivalled wealth of information. Surprisingly, the original Greek form of the work has not survived, doubtless because in Greek-speaking churches it was supplanted by the *Greek Apocalypse of the Virgin*, which fulfilled the same function. In the other churches of the east —Coptic, Syriac, Armenian—the *Apocalypse of Paul* was well known, in somewhat fluid textual forms, while in Ethiopia the *Ethiopic Apocalypse of the Virgin* is nothing but a version of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, with the protagonist changed (Bauckham 1998: 338–40). But it was in the Latin West that the *Apocalypse of Paul* had its greatest success, not only in a Latin version close to its putative Greek original, but also transmuted into a whole series of abbreviated and otherwise adapted later redactions in Latin, and translated into European vernaculars. Medieval Western conceptions of the fate of the dead, paradise, and hell, came more from the *Apocalypse of Paul* than from any other source. It exerted influence over a long series of medieval western visions of paradise and hell, which were ascribed not to biblical figures but to persons of the medieval period (e.g. the visions of Wetti, Tnugdale [Tundale], Adamnán, the Monk of Evesham, Thurkhill, and St Patrick's Purgatory) (for some of these, see Gardiner 1989). These medieval visions are, in effect, a new genre of revelations of the fate of the dead in the other world, gradually incorporating the developing notion of purgatory. Finally and climactically, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, indebted to the *Apocalypse of Paul*, is an astonishingly new and creative form of apocalypse of this type.

As already mentioned, the *Greek Apocalypse of the Virgin* (Bauckham 1998: 333–8), a work of uncertain date, supplanted the *Apocalypse of Paul* in Greek-speaking Christianity. It was inspired by the *Apocalypse of Paul*, but it focused exclusively on the punishments in hell. The same is true of Redaction IV of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, the most popular of the medieval Latin redactions. But the *Greek Apocalypse of the Virgin*, along with its lengthy account of the various punishments awaiting those guilty of the corresponding sins, also features the Virgin's compassion for the damned. Joined by Michael and various saints, she prays for mercy for them, and obtains a respite for them of fifty days each year. It may have been a belief that her intercession would be even more efficacious than Paul's that enabled her apocalypse to overtake his in popularity. A quite different *Apocalypse of the Virgin* (also distinct from the Syriac and Ethiopic apocalypses of the Virgin already mentioned) is found in that form of the extensive literature about the dormition of the Virgin that is known as the *Obsequies of the Virgin Mary* (Bauckham 1998: 340–6). There is a literary relationship between this apocalypse and the *Apocalypse of Paul*, but it is not clear which work is dependent on the other. It may well be that this *Apocalypse of the Virgin* was one of the sources of the *Apocalypse of Paul,* in which case it would date from the fourth century.

Another apocalypse of this type was ascribed to Ezra. It survives in two later forms: the *Greek Apocalypse of Ezra* (Charlesworth 1983: 561–79) and the *Latin Vision of Ezra* (Bauckham 2013). Although the original was written in Greek, it is the *Latin Vision* that preserves the content of the work more faithfully, whereas the *Greek Apocalypse* has drastically rearranged the material. In the *Latin Vision*, Ezra, described as a prophet, is conducted by angels on a tour of hell and paradise. His response to seeing each of the

different punishments to which the wicked are subjected is in most cases to pray to God to have mercy on them. The abode of the righteous is much more briefly described. Then, taken up to the seventh heaven, he pleads the cause of sinners, not only asking God to spare them the punishments of hell, but also arguing with God about whether the damnation of sinners accords with God's righteousness and mercy. This part of the work especially is inspired by *4 Ezra* (chs 5–8) and accounts for the choice of Ezra as the seer of this apocalypse. But whereas in *4 Ezra* Ezra's pleas for mercy for sinners and his debate with the angel about theodicy elicit no positive response from God, in the *Latin Vision of Ezra* Ezra eventually secures a considerable respite from punishment for the damned: thirty-six hours each week. God makes this concession when Ezra offers his own life in exchange for the wicked. At this point the model is not the Ezra of *4 Ezra* but Moses (Exod. 32.30–2).

If the Greek work underlying the *Latin Vision of Ezra* was Christian, it probably dates from the second half of the fourth century, but a good case can be made for regarding it as a non-Christian Jewish work written at any time from the second to the fourth century (Bauckham 2013: 505–10). It probably influenced the *Greek Apocalypse of the Virgin*, since only the Virgin Mary in that apocalypse prays for the damned as consistently and persistently as Ezra does in the *Latin Vision of Ezra*, and she is the only other apocalyptic seer who, like Ezra, offers to suffer instead of them. In its Latin version this apocalypse influenced some of the medieval visions, though it was not as influential as the *Apocalypse of Paul*.

The *Coptic Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul* (not to be confused with the Coptic version of the *Apocalypse of Paul* discussed already), one of the texts in the Nag Hammadi library (Hennecke-Schneemelcher 1992: 695–700), belongs to the tradition of revelations of the places of the dead, but the form has been adapted to express a specifically gnostic theology. Here Paul ascends in vision through the heavens, following the path of a soul after death as it is brought by angels up to the fourth heaven, where it is tried and condemned. In the seventh heaven, where the throne of God is usually located, Paul sees an old man on a throne. This is the Jewish god, the creator of the world, portrayed here as the gnostic figure of the demiurge. The demiurge is not able to prevent Paul ascending higher to 'the place from which I have come'. In the cosmology of the Jewish and Christian apocalypses, the seventh is the highest heaven, but here Paul has come from and returns to a higher heaven, transcendent over the realms of the inferior god of the Jews. In the eighth heaven he greets the twelve apostles, in the ninth heaven those who evidently rank above the twelve in spiritual nature, and finally, in the tenth heaven, 'I greeted my fellow-spirits'.

To the rule that Christian apocalypses of this type are overwhelmingly concerned with the fate of the dead, we should note one signal exception: the Coptic *Mysteries of John* (Court 2000: 132–63). This is a tour of the seven heavens in which, as in Jewish apocalypses such as *2 Enoch* and *3 Baruch*, all kinds of cosmological secrets are revealed, from meteorology to creation and the fall. Its sources and origins are obscure.

What is probably another work in a specifically Coptic tradition of apocalyptic writings is an *Enoch Apocryphon* that is preserved only in a very fragmentary state (Pearson 1972). What is revealed to Enoch in this case is the three 'invisible names' of the Trinity. Later the Sibyl, here described as Enoch's sister, communicates eschatological revelations to him, with a focus on the last judgement. This work has been dated to the fifth century.

APOCALYPSES TYPE 3: QUESTIONS

Most apocalypses include questions put by the seer and answers given by the heavenly agent of revelation. Often the questions are about the meaning of the visions the seer sees and form an integral part of the genre of revelatory vision already in the Old Testament (e.g. Zech. 1–7). This common feature of apocalypses was presumably the basis for the emergence of a subgenre in which all revelations of mysteries are given by the heavenly agent in response to questions posed by the seer. The most striking result of this development is a type of apocalypse in which the initiative in revelation lies entirely with the human seer, not with God. God does not choose to reveal what he knows people need to know; rather he (or Christ or an angel) satisfies human curiosity. The assumption seems to be that any question about divine or cosmic mysteries will be answered if it is put by a sufficiently favoured person. The subject matter of this type of apocalypse varies greatly, mostly overlapping the subject matter of the other two types.

The *Questions of Bartholomew* (Hennecke-Schneemelcher 1991: 539–53; Kaestli and Cherix 1993) is sometimes classified with apocryphal gospels, partly because of its content and partly because it has been supposed to have some connexion with a lost *Gospel of Bartholomew*, but generically it is an apocalypse of this type, dating perhaps from the late fourth or early fifth century (Kaestli and Cherix 1993: 94). Like *4 Ezra* and the gnostic books of revelation, but unlike most of the Christian apocalypses, the *Questions of Bartholomew* presents itself as an esoteric work, to be divulged only to those who are worthy. It looks like a compendium of revelations on subjects the author found had not been been adequately treated in existing apocalyptic literature or gospels. Bartholomew, represented as the apostle who has the courage to ask the risen Jesus about these subjects when the other apostles hesitate to do so, asks about such matters as Jesus' descent to Hades and which sins are the most grievous. He also asks the Virgin Mary about her experience of the conception of Jesus. But the largest part of the work is taken up by an appearance of Beliar or Satan, whom Bartholomew asks to see and who answers questions about himself and volunteers an account of his fall from heaven.

Also belonging to this type of apocalypse is a Greek apocryphal *Apocalypse of John*, now variously known as the *Second Apocalypse of John* (Court 2000: 23–65) or the *First Apocryphal Apocalypse of John* (Kaestli 2005), dating probably from the fifth or sixth century. This work is presented as a revelation of the contents of a book, sealed with seven seals, that is evidently a kind of supplement to the sealed scroll in the book of Revelation (Rev. 5.1–7). The contents of the scroll are divulged in the answers Christ gives to a long series of questions John puts to him about the events of the last days, the resurrection, and the last judgement. A prominent feature of the work is the abundance of scriptural quotations that are cited as referring to the eschatological information given in Christ's answers. Early apocalypses hardly ever quote scripture, but later apocalypses in both the Jewish and the Christian traditions frequently do, perhaps from a sense that, despite their bold claim to be direct revelation, their contents might not be taken seriously without scriptural backing. Presumably following the precedent of this earliest apocryphal *Apocalypse of John*, later Greek apocalypses attributed to John also take the form of questions and answers, though in the case of the work Court calls the *Third Apocalypse of John* it is John himself who answers the questions put to him by James the Lord's brother (Court 2000: 104–31). There is also an *Apocalypse of John* that consists of questions put by John and answers given him by Abraham (Kaestli 2005: 989). Finally, quite closely related to the *First Apocryphal Apocalypse of John*, there is a Bogomil and Cathar work, extant in Latin as the *Book of John* or *Interrogatio Iohannis* (i.e. Questions of John) (James 1924: 187–93).

The *Questions of Ezra* (Charlesworth 1983: 591–9; Stone 2006) is extant in Armenian and consists of a series of questions about the fate of the dead put by Ezra and answered by an angel. Like the *Latin Vision of Ezra*, the work is inspired by *4 Ezra* and reflects, though in greatly attenuated form, Ezra's debate with the angel in that work. Whether the Armenian is a translation of a Greek or Latin original is unknown, though the work's formal resemblance to other examples of the apocalyptic subgenre of Questions may point in that direction.

A NOTE ON POST-RESURRECTION REVELATION DISCOURSES/DIALOGUES

Some of the apocalypses we have discussed (the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Testament of Our Lord*, the *Questions of Bartholomew*) are revelations given by Jesus Christ to his disciples in the context of conversations with them after his resurrection. This was a natural choice of setting for writers who wished to supplement the teaching of Jesus in the gospels with further revelations made by him on eschatological or other topics. Another work that uses the same setting for this purpose is the *Epistle of the Apostles*, although it is usually associated with apocryphal gospels rather than apocalypses. We should bear in mind that distinctions between genres are not rigid. Other such revelations in a post-resurrection setting are found among the works conventionally known as 'gnostic'. The Nag Hammadi codices, in addition to the *Coptic Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul*, which we have discussed, contain two works entitled *Apocalypse of James* and one entitled *Apocalypse of Peter*. The two apocalypses attributed to James report secret revelations given by Jesus to his brother James in dialogues after the resurrection. They are indistinguishable in genre from the work, also among the Nag Hammadi texts, known as the *Apocryphon of James*, except that the latter concludes with a visionary ascent to the heavens. Other post-resurrection dialogues are the *Book of Thomas*, the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, the *Dialogue of the Saviour*, the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, and (in part) the *Gospel of Mary*. The gnostic *Apocalypse of Peter* has the same kind of setting, but unusually takes the form of Jesus' interpretation of three visions that Peter reports. All these works could be called apocalypses, though they are prominent among the works popularly known as 'the Gnostic Gospels'. Though gnostics did not invent the post-resurrection revelation dialogue, it was a form that various gnostic groups adopted as especially suitable for their purpose of claiming esoteric revelations that the exalted Christ made secretly to his disciples, different from the public teaching that he gave before his death.

PROPHETIC WORKS TYPE 1: BIBLICAL STYLE

The works I place in this category take the form of prophetic oracles spoken by a prophet, represented as the direct speech of God, and following Old Testament models of prophetic speech. Two of the texts from Qumran Cave 4 (the *Jeremiah Apocryphon* and *Pseudo-Ezekiel*) are Jewish examples of this kind of work attributed to a prophet from the Israelite past.

Two such early Christian works have survived by being attached to the Latin version of the Jewish apocalypse known as *4 Ezra*. These three texts combined achieved a quasi-canonical status in the medieval West and became part of the English Apocrypha under the name of 2 Esdras. The Christian work that constitutes chapters 1–2 of 2 Esdras is now

known as *5 Ezra*, while chapters 15–16 are known as *6 Ezra*. In *5 Ezra* the prophet 'Ezra the son of Chusi' denounces the people of Israel and predicts their supersession by a new people of God. *6 Ezra* prophesies judgement on specific nations as part of the approaching eschatological woes, while calling sinners to repentance and the elect to perseverance. As an attempt to write something close to the style of biblical prophecy, *6 Ezra* is more successful than any other such attempt known to me. Both works seem to date from the second or third centuries. *5 Ezra* influenced medieval Latin liturgies, and is the source of the still popular prayer for the dead, 'Let light perpetual shine upon them' (2.35). (On *5* and *6 Ezra*, see Bergren 1990, 1998, 2013a, 2013b.)

The *Coptic Apocalypse of Elijah* (Charlesworth 1983: 721–53; Frankfurter 1993) is neither an apocalypse (according to my definition), nor a pre-Christian Jewish work (as used to be argued). It begins with an introduction modelled on Ezekiel: 'The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, say to this people …"' (cf. Ezek. 33.1). After introductory oracles that include exhortations to fast, the main part of the work is a prophetic narrative predicting a succession of king's reigns and that of the Antichrist before the coming of Christ, very much in the manner of Christian apocalypses of the historical-eschatological type. Frankfurter's study discerns indebtedness to native Egyptian prophetic traditions as well as to the Jewish and Christian apocalypses, and contextualizes the work in Christian circles in third-century Egypt.

PROPHETIC WORKS TYPE 2: SIBYLLINE ORACLES

The Sibyls were legendary female prophets, well known in the Graeco-Roman world, to whom were ascribed books of oracles written in Greek hexameter verse. The most famous collection of Sibylline oracles was kept in the Temple of Jupiter in Rome. But already in the third century BCE, Jewish writers had adopted the traditional form and used it largely as a vehicle for reviews of world history, oracles of judgement against the nations, and prophecies of the eschatological events, while exhortations against idolatry and immoral practices accompanied the predictions, presumably for the benefit of non-Jewish readers who would suppose they derived from one of the prestigious Sibyls of antiquity. The content of these Jewish Sibyllines resembles that of those apocalypses that reveal the historical and eschatological future (type 2), but the literary genre and style are distinct.

Christian writers adopted the same practice. These Jewish and Christian books of Sibylline oracles in Greek have come down to us largely in two collections made by Christian editors, the first containing books 1–8, the second containing books numbered 9–14 (of which books 9 and 10 merely repeat material from the first collection). (For translations and introductions to all books except 9 and 10, see Charlesworth 1983: 318–472; for books 1–2, see Lightfoot 2007.) Books 3–5 and 11–14 are Jewish, with only minor Christian embellishments, whereas books 1–2, 6–8 are Christian, probably all written in the second and third centuries. It should be noted that borrowings from earlier Sibylline books are not uncommon in the later books, and so there may be some borrowing from no longer extant Jewish Sibylline oracles in the Christian books. But such borrowing is less than has been postulated by some scholars (especially those who have not noticed the extensive borrowing from the *Apocalypse of Peter* in book 2).

The most distinctive feature of these Christian Sibyllines, by comparison with the Jewish tradition that they in many respects continue, is their detailed summaries of the Gospel story of Jesus, couched in the form of prophecies by the Sibyl (1.324–82; 6.1–28 [the entirety of book 6]; 7.64–70; 8.251–336; cf. also 8.456–79). The authors evidently expected to find

among the Sibyl's prophecies what they found in the Old Testament prophets—predictions of the events of the first coming of Christ—and were able to write more explicit prophecies of this kind than the prophets of Israel provided.

The Sibyl to whom most of these books of oracles seem to be attributed was adopted into the biblical history by being identified as a daughter-in-law of Noah (3.827; 1.288) as well as being the Sibyl called the Erythrean by pagans (3.814). This gave her prophecies the prestige of great antiquity, while also making it plausible that she recognized the one true God and was truly inspired by him. The Sibylline oracles (of both Jewish and Christian origin) were highly esteemed by many Christian writers in the early centuries. They had apologetic value as a witness to Christian teaching from outside the Christian scriptures and from a source already known and highly regarded among pagans. In the Latin West, the work of Lactantius, who quoted Sibylline Oracles extensively in Latin translation, helped to boost their prestige, and the prophecies of the Tiburtine Sibyl were frequently revised in Latin versions throughout the medieval period (Holdenried 2006). A work called the *Prophetia Sibyllae Magae* seems to be an original composition in Latin from the early medieval period (Hennecke-Schneemelcher 1965: 741–5).

ASCENSION OF ISAIAH

The *Ascension of Isaiah* is the oldest Christian apocryphal work attributed to an Old Testament figure and it may be the oldest Christian apocryphal apocalypse (dated at the end of the first century by Bauckham 1998: 381–90; in the first half of the second century by most other scholars). For much of the twentieth century, study of it as an early Christian work was impeded by attempts to excavate pre-Christian Jewish sources within it (still reflected in Charlesworth 1985: 143–76; Hennecke-Schneemelcher 1992: 603–20), an attempt that has now been universally abandoned. Chapters 1–5 make use of a Jewish tradition about the martyrdom of Isaiah, but there is no reason to suppose that a non-Christian Jewish work has been incorporated in those chapters, still less to entitle it or them 'The Martyrdom of Isaiah' (a title that is nowhere found in antiquity). In ancient usage, the title *Ascension of Isaiah* always refers to all eleven chapters, although chapters 6–11 did circulate as a separate work known as the *Vision of Isaiah* in Latin and Old Slavonic versions. The *Ascension of Isaiah* certainly consists of two distinctive parts, but recent scholarship agrees that they are both of Christian origin and are at least closely connected. Enrico Norelli, who has contributed most to recent study of this work, argues that chapters 6–11 were written first and that another author then added chapters 1–5 to them (Norelli 1994, 1995). I have argued, on the contrary, that the two parts were designed as complementary parts of a single work, and compared them to the two parts of the book of Daniel (narratives in chapters 1–6, visions in chapters 7–12), which the author of the *Ascension of Isaiah* probably took as a generic model for his work (Bauckham 1998). The resemblance to Daniel and to other apocalypses that combine a substantial narrative section with visionary revelations (*Book of Watchers* [*1 Enoch* 1–36], *Apocalypse of Abraham*) also makes it clear that the *Ascension of Isaiah* really is an apocalypse, though it is an unusual one that cannot be assigned exclusively either to type 1 or to type 2 in the classification used in my discussion.

Chapters 1–5 tell the story of Isaiah's persecution and martyrdom at the hands of king Manasseh, but they also contain a report of a prophetic vision Isaiah had seen during the reign of Hezekiah (3:13–4:22). A longer and complementary account of the same vision is the main content of chapters 6–11, within a narrative framework set in the reign of

Hezekiah. The first account of the vision begins with the coming to earth of 'the Beloved' (a title for Christ distinctive of this work), summarizes the earthly history of Jesus, and goes on to describe the corruption of the church and other events of the last days up to the end. In the second account, Isaiah ascends through the heavens to the seventh heaven, from which perspective he is given a prophetic vision of the future descent of the Beloved through the heavens to earth, his earthly history and his re-ascent through the heavens to enthronement beside God in the seventh. While both accounts of the vision tell the story of Jesus, the first operates on a mainly temporal axis, the second on a mainly spatial (cosmological) axis.

I have argued (Bauckham 2015) that the principal purpose of the author was to create a cosmological reading of the Gospel story. For this purpose he has adopted a particular version of the seven heavens cosmology. In a sharply dualistic picture of the cosmos, the heavens (inhabited solely by angels occupied with the praise of God) are characterized by glory, which increases as one ascends upwards to the Great Glory (God) in the seventh. The realm below is in darkness, dominated by the powers of evil who inhabit the firmament. In order to bring the saints up to glory in the seventh heaven, the Beloved must descend to earth and, further, to Hades, all the while keeping his identity secret so that it may not be known to the evil powers. So in each heaven he adopts the form of the angels in that heaven, in decreasing degrees of glory, and then on earth he takes human form. Only after his resurrection does he resume his glorious form and ascend in this form back to the seventh heaven. To create this version of the Gospel story the author has developed hints in cosmological passages in the Pauline literature (Phil. 2.6–11; 1 Cor. 2.6–7; 2 Cor. 3.18; Eph. 1.20–1, 2.6, 6.12). The resulting vision of the hidden descent and glorious ascent of Christ was remarkably influential in the Christian literature of the second century (Bauckham 2015).

The attribution of this revelation of the cosmological dimension of the Gospel story to the prophet Isaiah was highly appropriate, for it was especially in the prophecies of Isaiah that early Christians found the events of the Gospel story foreshadowed in considerable detail. But according to the *Ascension of Isaiah*, these things were told 'in the book which I prophesied openly' only 'in parables' (4.20). In the later vision recounted in the *Ascension of Isaiah* they were much more clearly revealed.

APOCALYPSE OF PETER

Originally written in Greek, the *Apocalypse of Peter* is now known only in an Ethiopic translation, which reliably represents the content of the ancient apocalypse, though unfortunately, in the only two known manuscripts, the text is often corrupt in details. Of the original Greek, we have only two small fragments and a few quotations in patristic authors. These confirm the general reliability of the Ethiopic version, while also showing that the Greek text in a codex from Akhmim that is usually known as the *Apocalypse of Peter* (Kraus and Nicklas 2004: 101–20) is actually a considerably rewritten version of material from that apocalypse and may actually have formed part of a quite different work. (For translations of the Ethiopic version, see Buchholz 1988; Hennecke-Schneemelcher 1992: 620–38; Marrassini and Bauckham 1997; for the Greek fragments, with English translations, see Kraus and Nicklas 2004: 121–8; for the patristic quotations, see Kraus and Nicklas 2004: 89–99.)

The apocalypse takes the form of a revelation by Jesus Christ to his disciples after his resurrection. In fact, it represents itself as the last such revelation before the ascension of Jesus to heaven, which the disciples witness at the end of the work. At the beginning of the

work, Jesus and his disciples are seated on the Mount of Olives, and they ask him what will be the sign of his coming, as in Matt. 24.3. The first part of Jesus' response echoes other parts of Matthew 24. The purpose of the work is to supplement the eschatological revelations that Jesus makes in the Gospel of Matthew with a much fuller account, especially of the judgement and the respective destinies of the wicked and the elect. Jesus prophesies the coming of a false Messiah and the many martyrs who die at his hands, the resurrection of the dead, the cosmic conflagration, his own coming as judge, and the river of fire through which all must pass. There is an extensive description of the punishments in hell, each inflicted for a specific kind of sin. After this revelation of judgement, the scene changes: Jesus takes the disciples to 'the holy mountains', where they are granted a vision of the heavenly paradise that is the destiny of the elect after the judgement, and from which Jesus ascends to heaven.

Much of the material derives from Jewish apocalyptic tradition, although specific sources cannot now be identified. The account of the twenty-one punishments in hell is probably the earliest example of what Himmelfarb called 'tours of hell' (Himmelfarb 1983), with the exception of a fragment of the lost *Apocalypse of Elijah* (Stone and Strugnell 1979: 14–26). In most of these 'tours' the seer is actually taken to see the punishments that the wicked are already suffering, immediately after death, but the *Apocalypse of Peter* has adapted this subgenre in order to describe the future fate of the wicked after the last judgement. About half of the punishments are 'measure-for-measure' punishments, in which the punishment is designed to correspond to the sin (e.g. adulterers are hung up by their genitals, female infanticides are gnawed by animals produced from their milk), while some others are other-worldly versions of punishments practised in this world. There is considerable emphasis on the strictly retributive justice of the punishments, which the damned themselves acknowledge (Bauckham 1998: 205–32). But, in an interesting example of the motif of compassion for the damned that often appears in such apocalypses, the *Apocalypse of Peter* claims that, at the time of the judgement, the elect will be able to pray for any sinners they wish to save from hell and their prayers will be granted. The idea may derive from the tradition that Christian martyrs prayed for the forgiveness of their persecutors. This possibility of mercy for the damned, at the request of the saints at the time of the last judgement, occurs in a few other texts dependent on the *Apocalypse of Peter* (e.g. *Coptic Ap. El.* 5.27–9) (Bauckham 1998: 142–8), but was refuted by Augustine (*Civ. Dei* 21.18, 24) (Bauckham 1998: 149–59).

I have argued that the *Apocalypse of Peter* is a Palestinian Jewish–Christian writing from the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt (132–5 CE), partly on the basis of identifying the false Messiah of chapter 2 as Bar Kokhba, though there are a variety of other ways in which the apocalypse fits well into such a context (Bauckham 1998: 176–94; cf. also Buchholz 1988). In that case it is a rare instance of a surviving text from Palestinian Jewish–Christian circles in the period after the New Testament writings. Some other scholars, however, have challenged the identification of Bar Kokhba, without necessarily denying a Palestinian origin for the work (especially Tigchelaar 2003).

The *Apocalypse of Peter* was popular in the early centuries of the church (evidence in Jakab 2003), no doubt because its accounts of the judgement and especially of hell and paradise were so much fuller than anything to be found in other available Christian literature, but it seems later to have fallen out of favour, partly because the even more extensive visions of the other world to be found in the *Apocalypse of Paul* were preferred, and perhaps also because of its expectation of the salvation of some of the damned after the last judgement.

APOCALYPSE OF PAUL

In the absence of the Greek original, the long Latin version (translation: Hennecke-Schneemelcher 1992: 712–48) best represents the original apocalypse and will be discussed here. (For later versions and descendants of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, see under 'Apocalypses: Type 2'.) The work has a prologue that narrates the miraculous discovery of the apocalypse in the house in Tarsus in which Paul had lived. This discovery is said to have occurred in the year 388, during the reign of the emperor Theodosius I. It is plainly a literary device designed to account for the appearance of a writing by the apostle Paul that had not previously been known. Although it has been argued that the original form of the apocalypse was older than this prologue, it seems more probable that the prologue is original and that the work dates from the end of the fourth century (Piovanelli 1993, 2007). It seems to reflect a monastic setting of origin. It is indebted to the apocalypses of *Peter* and *Zephaniah*, perhaps to the *Latin Vision of Ezra*, and probably also to unidentifiable Jewish apocalyptic sources. It is something of a compendium of materials about the afterlife drawn from various sources, but it combines these materials in a fairly coherent vision of the fate of the dead.

It purports to report the vision to which Paul refers in 2 Cor. 12.1–5, which is quoted at the outset of the work. In accordance with that text, Paul ascends to the third heaven, where he sees what happens to souls when they depart from the body at death. He sees the souls of the wicked and the righteous taken into the custody of different categories of angels who take them before God for judgement and then to their places of punishment or reward. Again in accordance with 2 Cor. 12.1–5, Paul is taken to paradise, but is forbidden to disclose the other things revealed to him there. Only his meeting with Enoch and Elijah there is mentioned. It is evidently not the place of the righteous dead in general. Then he is taken down to the edge of the earth, where he sees 'the land of promise', the place in which the millennial kingdom of Christ and the saints will be located. The description of the place he next visits, the city of Christ, where the righteous dead live now, is reminiscent of both the New Jerusalem of Revelation and the garden of Eden. Specific categories of the dead have their own parts of the city.

Paul now travels to the place of the punishment of the wicked, also located at the edge of the earth. (This is a survival of the old cosmology found in the *Book of Watchers* [*1 Enoch* 1–36], where the places of the dead are to be seen around the edges of the earth, but the *Apocalypse of Paul* combines this old Jewish notion with the old Greek notion of a great river called Ocean that encircles the earth: Copeland 2007.) Like other seers, Paul observes a large variety of punishments, each related to a particular sort of sin. Unlike the *Apocalypse of Peter* (where sins related to a situation of persecution and martyrdom are prominent) and the *Latin Vision of Ezra* (which features sins related to the law of Moses), the *Apocalypse of Paul* gives prominence to ecclesiastical sins, i.e. committed in or after church worship or committed by ecclesiastics (bishops, priests, other clergy), revealing its post-Constantinian Christian context. Like other seers who visit hell, Paul is moved to join Michael and the wicked dead themselves in imploring God's mercy, with the result that God grants them relief from punishment for twenty-four hours each week.

A very significant feature of this apocalypse is that, not only is it exclusively concerned with the fate of the dead, but it is almost exclusively concerned with the state of the dead in the present, prior to the last judgement. The *parousia* is barely mentioned except in connexion with the millennial kingdom. We might think that Christians influenced by it

would have no interest in a future beyond their individual fates at death, but this was not the case, as we can tell from other influential apocalypses, such as the *Apocalypse of Thomas*.

APOCALYPSE OF THOMAS (SHORT RECENSION)

As already indicated above ('Apocalypses Type 1'), in its shorter recension, which is probably its original form, the *Apocalypse of Thomas* consists largely of an account of the last eight days of the history of this world. The speaker introduces himself as 'the Son of God', addressing Thomas and announcing that he will reveal 'the signs which shall come to pass at the end of the world'. The accounts of the signs of the seven days have a consistent literary shape: on each day there is first of all a loud noise (e.g. 'a great voice in heaven'), then a visible sign in the heavens, and finally the reaction of the earth's inhabitants (e.g. fear). The signs are not only portents that herald the end of the world; they mark the progressive disintegration of the cosmos, which is finally, on the eighth day, consumed by the eternal fire that surrounds paradise. In distinction from the expectation in some apocalyptic traditions that the end will see a renewal of the heavens and the earth, here there is no doubt that the world itself will be destroyed and the elect will be taken from it to live eternally in heaven with God and Christ and the angels. The seven days of the 'signs' presumably correspond to the seven days of creation in Genesis 1.1–2.4, though the correspondence is compromised by the fact that only on the eighth day, at the time of the *parousia*, is the cosmos finally destroyed. The creative voice of God at the beginning of each of the six days of creation in Genesis is, on these last days of de-creation, replaced by unidentified and incoherent cosmic voices; the appearance of the creatures on each day of creation is replaced by an instance of disintegration on each of the last days; the formulaic 'God saw that is was good' is replaced by the fearful and foreboding reactions of humans; and the concluding formula in Genesis, 'The evening and the morning were the *n*th day,' is replaced by the formula, 'These are the signs of the *n*th day.' The whole scheme may reflect *4 Ezra* 7.30–1, where the world reverts for a period of seven days to the primordial chaos before creation, from which the new, incorruptible world then arises. Implicitly, this new creation, together with the resurrection of the dead, occurs on the eighth day, as it does explicitly in *Barn*. 15.8 (Stone 1990: 217). The scheme in the *Apocalypse of Thomas* differs in filling the seven days with a sequence of signs and in envisaging, not a new creation, but the ascent of the elect, in their now risen and transformed bodies, to God's own dwelling in the highest heaven.

   The short recension of the *Apocalypse of Thomas* cannot be later than the middle of the fifth century, but could be considerably earlier. Since there is no trace of a Greek recension and it seems never to have been known outside the Latin West (where it was translated into Old Irish and Old English), it was likely composed in Latin, which probably gives it a *terminus post quem* in the late second century, when Christian literature in Latin first appeared. The concept of 'signs' of the end is found in the gospels (Luke 21.11, 25; cf. Matt. 24.3; Mark 13.4) and in Jewish apocalypses such as *4 Ezra* (5.1–12, 620–4). There are several medieval Jewish apocalypses devoted to describing the 'ten signs' that will precede the end (Reeves 2005: 106–32), but they are not assigned to single and successive days and they do not concern the destruction of the cosmos. Closer to the design of the *Apocalypse of Thomas* is a work known as the *Fifteen Signs before the Judgement*, which is extant in Latin, Hebrew (translated from Latin), and Armenian (Stone 1981). The fifteen signs take place on fifteen days and they do relate to cosmic destruction. The heaven and the earth are finally consumed with fire on the fourteenth day and the new heaven and the

new earth appear on the fifteenth. Heist (1952) argued for a medieval Irish origin for this text and identified the *Apocalypse of Thomas* as one of its sources, but detailed resemblances are few, and it is possible that the *Fifteen Signs* is a much older text. Its fifteen signs represent two weeks of cosmic disintegration, compared with the single week in the *Apocalypse of Thomas*, followed by a day of new creation, which is more like the implied eighth day in *4 Ezra* than the eighth day in the *Apocalypse of Thomas*. The latter is a fuller and more sophisticated development of the same basic concept.

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PART II

KEY ISSUES AND THEMES

CHAPTER 7

THE INFLUENCE OF JEWISH SCRIPTURES ON EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

TOBIAS NICKLAS

IT is quite difficult to give a more or less exhaustive overview of the influence of Jewish scriptures on Early Christian Apocrypha. There are at least two reasons why this is so. First, there is no fixed corpus of 'Christian Apocrypha'—even if we limit our study to (late) ancient writings it is not reasonable to cover all of the many different texts which could be counted among 'Christian Apocrypha'. This makes it necessary to draw a rough sketch and attempt to describe some major patterns which can be found in many different writings. Second, although intertextual relations between apocryphal writings and what we now call the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament abound, there was no fixed Jewish 'canon' (in the sense of a fixed list of writings)—neither in the form of a Tanak nor as 'the' Septuagint—in the period when many Early Christian Apocrypha emerged. If the following overview speaks about 'Old Testament', 'Septuagint', or 'Hebrew Bible' intertexts, this is—at least in a certain sense—an anachronism. A very good example mirroring the situation is Melito of Sardis' († *c*.180 CE) well-known letter to Onesimus, which is quoted by Eusebius in his *Church History* (*Hist. eccl.* 4.26.13–14). Obviously Onesimus had asked Melito several times to give him the correct number and sequence of 'Old Testament' books—here we find perhaps the oldest evidence for the use of this term. In his response to this—at least in our modern eyes—simple question Melito states that he had travelled to the Orient which gave him the chance to undertake detailed investigations of the problem, and finally gives a list of books which is very close to today's canon of the Hebrew Bible, but lacks the Book of Esther and deuterocanonical/apocryphal writings like Tobit or 1–2 Maccabees. Only one generation after Melito, Tertullian in his *On Female Fashion* (*De cultu feminarum* 1.3) discusses the idea of fallen angels, and uses the book of *1 Enoch*, although this text 'is not accepted by some' according to Tertullian. Other examples could be added. On the whole, this shows us that there has been at least an idea of a collection of authoritative Jewish scriptures which were taken over by most (or at least many) Christian groups. However, this also shows that the concrete extent and limits of this collection remained a matter of debate for a long time, and, perhaps even more, many Christians seemingly did not have a clear understanding of these limits. The fact, however, that even the earliest Jewish followers of Christ like Paul speak about 'scripture' or 'scriptures', the 'Law', 'Moses', and /or the 'prophets', shows that there must have been a widespread concept of Jewish 'scriptures'. Thus it makes sense to discuss relations between ancient Christian writings—here 'Christian Apocrypha'—and what can be called Jewish 'scripture' or 'scriptures'.

THE USE OF JEWISH SCRIPTURES IN CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA AS TESTIMONIES FOR THE JESUS STORY AND/OR CHRISTIAN BELIEF

In the struggle to show that their ideas of truth were not something completely 'new', but had very old roots, (many) 'Christian' groups not only used 'Old Testament' writings but also tried to show that only *their* readings of these texts were appropriate. At the same time, they had to demonstrate that 'Jews'—or better, Jewish non-believers in Jesus Christ—did not really understand them properly (for further reading, see Nicklas 2013a [lit.]). The struggle for an appropriate reading of Jewish scriptures is mirrored in many ancient Christian texts—perhaps the most prominent example being Justin Martyr's well-known *Dialogue with Trypho*. But even several narrative texts show that at least some ancient Christian groups tried to prove that only their—christological—reading of many parts of Jewish scriptures made sense. A very good example can be found in the New Testament Gospel of John where Jesus claims that Moses' writings in fact speak about him, Jesus (John 5.45–7). That, of course, means that his Jewish counterparts did not really believe in the scriptures, because otherwise they would have believed in Jesus. In the so-called 'Unknown Gospel' on Papyrus Egerton 2 (+ Papyrus Cologne 255) a similar dispute between Jesus and Jewish 'experts of the Law' can be found. This apocryphal text weaves together the abovementioned John 5.45 with other Johannine passages such as John 5.39 and 9.29 (for further reading, see Nicklas 2008 and 2009). The text states: '"Do not think that I have come to accuse you before my Father. There is already someone who accuses you: Moses, in whom you have hope." But when they said: "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but of you we do not know where you come from", Jesus responded to them and said: 'Now accusation will be made against your unbelief in relation to what he gave testimony of. For if you believed Moses, you would also have believed me. Because he has written about me to your forefathers …' (translation Nicklas 2009: 25). After these words the second- or third-century fragment breaks off. Scenes like this perhaps do not suggest that 'Christian' groups were claiming to use Jewish scriptures only for their own purposes from this point forward. Of course, this text presumes that Moses' writings, i.e. the Torah, are still authoritative scriptures for the Jews as well; however, it proposes a new reading —'Moses has written about *me*'—and claims that this is the only appropriate reading: everybody who does not know 'where Jesus comes from' cannot understand scripture correctly.

The fact that many Christian groups began to read more parts of the Jewish scriptures as speaking or prophesying about Jesus Christ can also be seen in many quotations and allusions that we find in early Christian literature. Perhaps most revealing is the fact that many early Christian stories about Jesus are interwoven with allusions to Jewish scriptures —a well-known example is the pattern of allusions to and quotations of Psalm 22 in the Markan and Matthean passion accounts (for further reading, see Nicklas 2013b). Patterns of narrative allusions to 'Old Testament' intertexts can also be found in many apocryphal gospels. At least in some cases they seem to witness the existence of early Christian collections of 'Testimonia'. An interesting example for the second-century development of motifs created from allusions to 'Old Testament' subtexts is the passion and resurrection account of the *Gospel of Peter*, probably dating to some time after the middle of the second century (see also Foster 2010: 169–72: 150–90 CE; and Nicklas 2013c). While the *Gospel of Peter* gives only one (quite vague) explicit quotation (Deut. 21.22–3 both in *Gos. Pet.* 5 and in *Gos. Pet.* 15), the text is full of allusions to 'Old Testament' intertexts. These, however,

are partly mediated via the (probably) older accounts which came to be part of the New Testament, as is the case with the very vague allusion to Ps. 21 LXX in Jesus' cry on the cross (*Gos. Pet.* 19; see Mark 15.34; Matt. 27.46): 'And the Lord cried out and said: "*My power, power, you have forsaken me*." And having said this he was taken up' (translation Kraus and Nicklas).

In other cases, however, the *Gospel of Peter* seems to be nearer to the Old Testament intertexts than its canonical parallels. This is especially the case in *Gos. Pet.* 9: 'And others stood there and spat into his face, and others slapped him on the cheeks, others pricked him with a reed, and some scourged him and said: "With this honour let us honour the Son of God"' (translation Kraus and Nicklas). Unlike any of the canonical accounts of Jesus' mocking, the *Gospel of Peter* offers exactly the three motifs of abusing Jesus, which can also be found in Isa. 50.6, a passage about the Suffering Servant. *Gos. Pet.* 16 moreover offers an interpretation of Ps. 68.22 LXX: contrary to the canonical Gospels, the *Gospel of Peter* does not only mention gall *and* vinegar, it seems to understand the drink offered to Jesus as poisonous—only one of several examples where the *Gospel of Peter* understands the Jewish scriptures as prophecies of the Jews' responsibility for Jesus' death.

But, of course, narrative interpretations of Jewish scriptures are not only limited to passion accounts: a lot of well-known motifs (with a high impact even for later times) are to be found in apocryphal infancy gospels. For example Matt. 2.1–12 only mentions (an unknown number of) magi coming from the East to Jerusalem to render homage to the newborn king of Israel; apocryphal traditions, however, speak about three holy kings. One of the earliest texts where we find this idea is the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*, a late antique apocryphal text (for a discussion of the exact date see Ri 2000; Leonhard 2001) narrating the history of the world from the creation to the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth: here the magi are called kings from Persia, Saba, and Seba. This is not done out of pure delight for new and (possibly) obscure details; it is rather an interpretation of Psalm 71.10 LXX which speaks about Israel's peaceful king who receives gifts from the kings of Tarshish, Saba, and Seba. For the *Cave of Treasures*, Jesus is this peaceful, Solomon-like king, and Matthew's magi are interpreted as these kings. Only one problem remains: because Tarshish is usually located on the Iberian Peninsula in the West and, according to Matt. 2, the magi are coming from the East, the text has to replace Tarshish by an eastern country well known for its magi —Persia.

Another very well-known example can be added: today a traditional crib without an ox and an ass seems unthinkable. None of the canonical accounts of nativity, however, mentions even one of these creatures. While our oldest witness for the motif of ox and ass in the stable goes back to Origen's *Homilies on Luke* 2.13–16, it became widespread via the (probably) seventh-century apocryphal *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*; see also the parallels in the Irish *Leabhar Breac*. In chapter 14 of the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* we read: 'And on the third day after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, Mary went out of the cave, and entering a stable, placed the child in the stall, and the ox and the ass, genuflecting, adored him.' The text goes on in a 'typical' Matthean manner—explaining the motif by two fulfilment quotations from the 'Old Testament': 'Then was fulfilled that which was said by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib' [Isa. 1.3]. The animals, therefore, having him in their midst, incessantly adored him. Then was fulfilled that which was said by Habakkuk the prophet, saying, 'Between two animals you are made manifest.' Joseph remained with Mary three days in the same place' (translation Elliott 2005: 88–9).

It becomes clear that even if apocryphal infancy stories contain many details and dates that we do not find in the texts which came to be part of the New Testament, some of them

at least were not developed simply out of sheer delight for telling crude and strange stories, but rather out of theological motives. In the cases already mentioned at least, the story of Jesus and his family was understood as fulfilment of Old Testament narratives which otherwise would have remained obscure.

Other 'Christian' texts are (more or less) entirely interwoven with allusions to 'Old Testament' and 'Early Jewish' intertexts or almost completely made up of motifs and images that we also find in the Jewish scriptures. The most well-known 'New Testament' example is surely the book of Revelation whose author could even be called a 'new Ezekiel' (see Hieke 2004); but there are also a few highly interesting apocryphal texts that work in comparable ways. Perhaps the best example of such a technique is *5 Ezra*, a Christian apocalyptic text probably dating from the turn of the second to the third century CE, which has been transmitted in some manuscripts of the Vulgate as chapters 1–2 of *4 Ezra*. While the text, comparable to the book of Revelation, does not contain any explicit quotations, it is full of allusions to very different 'Old Testament' parallels mainly from the prophetic literature. Interestingly, one of the most important intertexts is the *Book of Baruch*, today counted among the deuterocanonical or apocryphal writings of the Old Testament: *5 Ezra* 2.2–5 is, for example, a close parallel to *Baruch* 4.8–23 (see Bergren 1990: 257–8)—parallels are italicized:

> The mother who bore them [i.e. Israel] *says* to them: '*Go, children, because I am a widow and forsaken. I brought you up with gladness, I will send you away with mourning and sadness, because you sinned before the Lord God* and did iniquity in his presence. *But now*, what will I do for you? for *I am a widow and forsaken* by my children. *Go children, seek mercy from the Lord*, for *I am desolate*. (translation Bergren 1990: 403)

What does this mean for our overall question? *5 Ezra* can be understood as a (Jewish?)–Christian *relecture* ('re-reading') of motifs, images, and texts we also find in the Jewish scriptures; it wants to be a very ancient prophecy, but one dealing with 'actual' matters. *Baruch* is interesting because it describes Israel in a desperate situation; but while *Baruch* ends with the promise of future hope for Israel and (especially) Jerusalem, *5 Ezra* uses the material to write a prophecy of Israel's ultimate rejection and the election of a new people of God.

JEWISH AND/OR CHRISTIAN? THE PROBLEM OF CATEGORIES

As 'Christian' theologies—if they are not, for example, Marcionite—usually cannot be understood without their roots in 'Old Testament' ideas of God and his history with Israel and the world, many Christian apocryphal texts show theological ideas that are more or less deeply connected with ideas that find their roots in Jewish scripture. This is the case even where there is no explicit quotation from or allusion to these Jewish texts. The number of examples is surely countless: one could start with the idea of one God who created heaven and earth, the idea of his spirit, the coming of a messianic figure, a chosen people, a covenant, his coming kingdom, or one could discuss the relation of 'Christian' ethical ideas to what we find in the Torah, etc. One text which illustrates this point especially well is *Apocalypse of Peter* 4. Today, this passage of the originally Greek *Apocalypse of Peter* is only extant in an Ethiopic translation; the original text was composed during the first decades of the second century CE; the question whether its place of origin was Egypt (Alexandria?) or Palestine (during the Bar-Kokhba War) is still a matter of debate (see Norelli 1991; Bauckham 1998; Nicklas 2011). The text reads as follows:

1 And see now what will happen to them in the last days when the Day of God comes. 2 And on the day of judgment which is the punishment from God, from the east to the west [and] all the children of man will be gathered before my Father who lives forever 3 and he will command Gehenna that it opens its bars of adamant and give back all which is his in it. 4 And as for the beasts and the birds, [and] he will command (that) they bring back all the flesh which they have eaten since he wants that men appear. 5 For there is nothing which perishes for God and there is nothing which is impossible for him. All is as his. All (will be) on the day of punishment, on the judgment day for (it is) with the word of God. 6 And all will be in accordance with how he creates the world. [and] Everything in it he commanded (to be) and everything was. So likewise it will be in the last days. 7 For everything is possible for God and therefore thus it says in scripture: the son of man prophesied to each of the bones. 8 And you said to the bone: 'Bone (be) to bones in limbs, tendons and nerves, and flesh and skin and hair on it.' 9 And soul and spirit the great Uriel [and] will give at the command of God, for God has appointed him over his resurrection of the dead at the day of judgment. 10 And see (pl.) and understand (pl.) the seeds which were sown into the ground. Like a dry thing which is without soul it is sown into the ground and it lives and bears fruit 11 and the earth will give back in accordance with (its) pledge what has been entrusted to it: and this is what dies. The seed which has been sown into the ground and revives and is given life (is) man. 12 How much more (will he not revive) those who believe in him and his elect ones, for whose sake he made (the earth)? God will raise them up on the day of judgment. 13 And all (things or people?) the earth will give back on the day of judgment, for in it (i.e., the day) it (i.e., the earth) must be judged at the same time, and heaven with it. (translation: Buchholz 1988)

What is, perhaps, most striking is that this 'Christian' text offers us a scenario of the final judgement and resurrection of the dead in which Jesus of Nazareth does not play any role. He appears only in chapter 5—after many of the most important things have happened. What we have here is thus a scenario of the end of times which could be interpreted more or less as a Second Temple Jewish writing if we had only this fragment. Of course, we find almost every pattern of relationship to Jewish scriptures mentioned earlier (for more details see Nicklas 2013d): *Apocalypse of Peter* 4.8 even quotes an 'Old Testament' passage from Ezek. 37 and thereby shows that it understands this text, comparable to early Jewish witnesses like 4QPseudo-Ezek., as a prophecy of bodily resurrection. Moreover, the connection between creation and resurrection of the dead in *Apocalypse of Peter* 4.6 goes back to Isa. 43.18–19, Dan. 11.29 Theod., Lam. 5.21, or Ezek. 36.11, while motifs like the idea of a 'Day of God' (or 'Day of the Lord'; see Isa. 2.12, 13.6–9, 30.7; Zech. 13.1, 14.1–9; Mal. 3.2, 19–21, 23, etc.) or the idea that for God nothing is impossible (see for example Gen. 18.14; Job 42.2) clearly find their background in Jewish scriptures. And finally, even if 'the great Uriel' is no 'Old Testament figure', we know this archangel from early Jewish writings like *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, and some of the *Sibylline Oracles*. One could add many other examples, but it is already evident that *Apocalypse of Peter* 4 could be understood as a 'Jewish' fragment in a 'Christian' apocryphal text.

While this is, in the case of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, usually not seen as a major problem, in other texts the problems are more significant. The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, for example, have for a long time been understood as a Jewish Pseudepigraph, a part of Jewish intertestamental literature with a few later, Christian interpolations. This idea has changed dramatically with the work of Marinus De Jonge (see De Jonge 2003; now also Kurowski 2010): it is becoming clear that it is impossible to remove a few 'Christian' interpolations and reconstruct an original 'Jewish' source. Even if many passages of this text look like an early Jewish literary reworking and expanding of the Old Testament story of Jacob's Blessing (Gen. 49), it is not possible to reconstruct a Jewish 'Grundschrift'—and perhaps this 'Grundschrift' never even existed! In their final form at least the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* are a Christian writing. Shall we go so far as to call this text a 'Christian' apocryphal text? This question should at least be a matter for discussion—and the discussion should not be confined only to the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*; other writings usually counted among the 'Early Jewish Pseudepigrapha', for example the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, cause similar problems (for a broader discussion, see Davila 2005;

Kraft 2009). They contain so many motifs, images, and text passages which look as if they are 'Jewish', being connected to Jewish thinking or Jewish Scripture(s), and show so few clearly 'Christian' details that they have been considered to be 'Jewish' pseudepigrapha that were transmitted and interpolated in Christian contexts. It is, however, becoming clearer that reconstructions of their alleged Jewish 'Grundschrift' are not possible any more.

FAMOUS FIGURES FROM JEWISH SCRIPTURES

The texts already mentioned are also very good examples of another pattern of influence of Jewish scriptures on Christian apocryphal texts. Even in the first pages of the New Testament, starting with Jesus' genealogy (Matt. 1.1–17), many 'Old Testament' characters play decisive roles. While, however, no New Testament book purports to be written by an Old Testament figure, this is certainly the case with several apocryphal writings.

For a long time scholars were convinced it was possible to reconstruct a 'Jewish' source of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the so-called *Martyrdom of Isaiah* (which still can be found in many collections of so-called 'Jewish pseudepigrapha' or 'intertestamental' literature). Now the text is usually considered to be a 'Christian' apocalypse probably from the first decades of the second century CE. While it is still a matter of debate whether the *Ascension of Isaiah* can be read as a unified whole or has been put together from two different early 'Christian' texts by a second-century redactor, the idea of a pure Jewish source which could be reconstructed from the *Ascension of Isaiah* can be put aside (see, among others, the work of Pesce 1983 and Norelli 1995). This text is a clear case showing that the usual criteria for what makes a text 'Christian' (or 'Jewish') do not always work very well. It is also another good example of what we already recognized with *5 Ezra* (and can also be seen with *6 Ezra*): at least some early Christians produced prophetic and/or apocalyptic writings under the names of important figures of Israel's past in order to have 'ancient' texts available to deal with contemporary concerns and to prophesy the truth of their 'new' movement and its claims. If one tries to get an overview of the production of apocalyptic writings until the end of the Byzantine period, it becomes obvious that the need for this kind of texts to be produced continued for a long time: to give just one example, the list of Byzantine Greek apocryphal apocalypses attributed to Daniel is extremely impressive (see DiTommaso 2005): we know of a *Vision of Daniel on the Island of Cyprus*, a *Vision of Daniel on the Blond Race*, *Visions of Daniel and Other Holy Men*, an *Oracle of Daniel on Byzantium*, a *Proclamation of the Prophet Daniel*, a *Vision of Daniel on the Future of the Seven-Hilled City*, and many others.

The case of Daniel is not the only example of a re-use (if not 'recycling') of famous Old Testament figures. One character who plays a decisive role in quite different Christian apocryphal texts is King Solomon. Already in Jewish traditions, starting with the Old Testament book of Proverbs, a number of sapiential, but also poetic writings have been attributed to him. This development went on in Christian circles. One of the most mysterious early 'Christian' texts is the early second-century collection of the *Odes of Solomon*, originally consisting of forty-two poetic writings which are now mainly extant in a Syriac translation of the original Greek. It is, however, not entirely clear why these writings have been attributed to Solomon. Was this title given only by chance—perhaps because of the Odes' transmission together with the early Jewish *Psalms of Solomon*? This would surely be the easiest solution of the problem. There are, however, a few lines between the texts themselves and ancient Christian receptions of the Solomon figure which make it very probable that this has not been the case (for further reading, see Nicklas

). First, the *Odes* contain several motifs which are connected to the figure of Solomon. While 2 Chron. 22.9–10, for example, calls Solomon a 'man of calmness', the *Odes of Solomon* use the idea of 'calmness' as a key term for 'salvation'. This can be seen very well in Ode 26, a text which speaks about 'Odes of his calmness' (26.3), discusses the necessity to 'recognize and be calm', and finally addresses the singers' 'calmness' (26.12). Moreover, when the *Odes* again and again speak about 'peace' (e.g. 8.7, 9.6, 10.2, 11.3, 35.1, 36.8), this calls to mind the idea that Solomon was understood as a king of peace in important Old Testament traditions (see mainly Ps. 71 LXX). Finally, the *Odes* are spoken by the voice of one who is loved (3.2–7; 7.1; 8.22; 38.11)—a concept that can be connected to the idea that, according to Ps. 44 LXX and 2 Sam. 12.24–25, Solomon is the 'Beloved One'. But there are even more connections between the *Odes of Solomon* and early Christian receptions of the figure of Solomon: at least a certain group of ancient Christian authors establish a connection between Christ and Solomon. While an author like Hippolytus of Rome (170–235 CE) in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* reflects on the question that Solomon, even if he was the Son of David, was not the Christ, according to Justin Martyr (*Dial*. 61.3), the Divine *Logos* himself spoke through Solomon's proverbs. It is thus quite possible that the *Odes of Solomon* can be seen as another very early witness connecting the figures of Christ and Solomon: if this is the case, the text claims to be spoken by the very Solomon whose words are the words of Christ, the divine Logos. Reading, praying, (or singing?) these texts thus can mean joining into a mystical connection with Christ who, like Solomon, is peaceful, calm, and the beloved one.

While it is difficult to establish a firm connection between motifs connecting the Old Testament Solomon figure to the *Odes of Solomon*, King Solomon plays the leading part in the so-called *Testament of Solomon*, a Christian text which at its kernel probably goes back to the post-Constantinian fourth century CE (for more information on this text see). Solomon is portrayed here as the dominator of all demons and the greatest of all exorcists. This idea finds its roots in 1 Kings 5.9–13 and has been developed further in texts like Wisdom 7.17–21 and Josephus, *Ant*. 8.44–6. An important part of the storyline, however, has been developed as an interpretation of 1 Kings 6.7 where we read that during the building of the Solomonic Temple one could not hear a hammer, nor an axe, nor any other iron instrument. This strange statement led to the idea that Solomon built the Temple with the help of demons whom he forced to serve him. The *Testament of Solomon* thus can, at least in parts be read as an ancient Christian demonology put into the context of a story about the building of the First Temple which is based at least partly on a few short passages from Jewish scripture.

These are but a few examples of texts purporting to come from an Old Testament figure, re-telling stories around it or creating new stories along old lines. Interestingly, some important Old Testament characters seem not to play major roles along these lines: at least as far as I see, there are no Christian apocrypha around David or Aaron—although this is perhaps due to the fact that the Messiah himself is a Davidic figure, and that the Aaronitic priesthood did not play a role in Christian circles. The roles of other figures, however, even increased with the development of more and more apocryphal writings: while at least some apocryphal Ezra-writings have already been mentioned above, there is a circle of (Christian) literature on *Adam and Eve*, a Syriac *Life of Abel*, a ('Christian' or partly 'Christian'?) *History of Melchizedeck*, even a (fabulous) *History of the Rechabites*, also called the *Vision of Zosimos*, and much more besides.

NON-USE OF JEWISH SCRIPTURES/ANTI-USE

While the examples noted here can be seen as witnesses for 'Christianities' that are more or less deeply influenced by their Jewish roots (or, in some cases, perhaps still part of what one could call 'Judaism'), other Christian groups tried to cut off these roots, or at least drastically reinterpreted them. The most well-known example is surely Marcion, who accepted Jewish scriptures as inspired by a deity, but by the *wrong* God, who had nothing to do with Jesus' God, and who created a form of Christianity which tried to be as purified from any 'Old Testament' ideas as possible. Interestingly, the author of the *Letter to Diognetus*, a text usually counted among the Apostolic Fathers, took a similar line: while he admits that Jews worship only one God, the creator of the world who revealed himself via his Son, he totally discredits any kind of Jewish worship and way of life, and tries to define 'Christianity' in a way that does not show any connection to Judaism and its scriptures. I do not know of any Christian apocryphal texts that are clearly related to the thought-world of the *Letter to Diognetus*; however, ideas about cutting off 'Christianity' from Jewish roots (and the God of the Jews) can be found in many writings, usually called 'gnostic' (on the problems of using this term, see for example Williams 1996; King 2003).

In an important monograph, Gerard P. Luttikhuizen (2006) offers a series of highly interesting examples showing how some 'Sethian Gnostic' writings reinterpreted the biblical stories of Creation to make them fit with their own thought worlds. Perhaps the most well-known example is the *Apocryphon of John*, a text preserved in four manuscripts and also reflected in Irenaeus' *Adv. haer.* 1.29. According to Michael Waldstein, the second part of the text can be called a 'critical midrash on Gen 1–7' (Waldstein 2001: 96), interpreting Israel's God as the diabolic creator of the material world, called Jaldabaoth or Samael. This, of course, drastically changes the perspective of the storyline; the words 'not like Moses said/wrote' are almost becoming a kind of leitmotif for the text's retelling of the first seven chapters of Genesis (see mainly NHC II.1 13.20, 22.22, 23.2, 29.6, and parallels). With this background, it is also no surprise that positive Old Testament figures (e.g. Noah) can be reinterpreted in highly negative ways because of their connection to the demiurgical creator. Even if these patterns of interpretation seems extremely strange to us today, Gerard Luttikhuizen finds an interesting parallel to other, more 'mainstream' ancient Christian interpretations of Jewish scriptures. He writes: 'Just like other early Christians, *Apoc.John*'s mythopoets were convinced that the true significance of the Jewish Scriptures was disclosed when they were read in the light of the Christian revelation. However, the agreement is purely formal because early Christians had very divergent ideas about the actual content and meaning of the revelation brought by Christ. A basic element in the demiurgical gnostic, the Marcionite, and Ptolemy's Valentinian understanding of the Christian message was the conviction that Christ revealed another God than the Old Testament creator and ruler of the world' (Luttikhuizen 2006: 27).

CONCLUSION

As we can see, the spectrum of possible influences of Jewish scriptures on Early Christian Apocrypha shows extreme varieties, which can be seen on different levels. Besides texts—like many of apocryphal Acts of the Apostles—where we find only some casual references to what we now call 'Old Testament', there are writings which are—like *5 Ezra*—more or less composed from scriptural allusions. In some Early Christian Apocrypha this use of scriptural allusion is so prevalent that their 'Christian' character is not easily identifiable— and one could debate whether a text is in fact a 'Jewish' Pseudepigraphon with a few redactional 'Christian' additions or a 'real' Christian text. In some cases at least this also

has to do with genres of texts: while many apocryphal Acts are interested in addressing, educating, and entertaining a certain Christian elite, many early Christian apocalypses try to show that they are going back to very ancient times by using the names of great figures of the past.

The whole spectrum of possible connections between Christian apocryphal writings and 'the' Jewish scriptures is unmanageable if one focuses on the details. However, there is one thing that most of these texts have in common: they are conscious of the fact that they are part of something new which has to relate itself to its very ancient roots. These ancient roots, however, are now seen from a new perspective—the perspective of the Christ event which could be understood in very different ways, but became a centre of belief for the variety of groups which can be called 'ancient Christianity'.

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CHAPTER 8

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WHO READ EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA?

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L. W. HURTADO

THE question posed in the title of this essay is difficult to answer for several reasons. First, there is a diversity of texts usually grouped under the category 'Early Christian Apocrypha', including typically some texts often linked with dissident, 'heretical' groups and/or ideas, but also other texts that may have been intended to supplement or expand upon early 'orthodox' texts and ideas, and/or simply to promote a version of Christian edification and perhaps entertainment. (I place the words 'heretical' and 'orthodox' in scare quotes to signal that I use them simply to reflect how certain texts have been seen traditionally.) So an immediate answer to the question of who read 'Early Christian Apocrypha' is that the variety of texts under this heading likely signals a variety of readers; and this is confirmed by other evidence that we will note shortly. Given the diversity and number of texts that comprise 'Early Christian Apocrypha', however, within the limits of this discussion it is not realistic to attempt anything more than an illustrative treatment of the matter.

Another problem lies in the available evidence for a number of these apocryphal texts. For some of them (e.g. the gospels often linked specifically with Jewish Christianity), we have only what purport to be brief quotations given by some early Christian writers, mere snippets of what may have been texts of some considerable size. So inferring readers from contents (always difficult) is all the more difficult with regard to these texts. This has not stopped some scholars from speculating about the provenance of these writings, but in my view these speculations carry little probative force (e.g. Klijn 1992, but cf. Gregory 2008).

Moreover, some apocryphal texts survive only in translation, often from a considerably later time than the probable point of original composition, reflecting a transmission history that likely involved significant redactional changes, sometimes perhaps of incalculable dimensions. Even when texts survive in the likely original language, it is often clear that they underwent significant reshaping and adaptation in the course of being copied across the early centuries, as, e.g., we can see in comparing the extant portions of the earlier Greek text of the *Gospel of Thomas* with the later Coptic version (see Attridge 1989). One of the few commentators on the *Gospel of Thomas* who takes serious notice of differences between the extant Greek fragments and the Coptic text is Valantasis (1997, and cf. now Gathercole 2014: 14–34). Another example of a scholar who takes seriously the differences between different versions of the same text is Burke (2010), who discusses the complex recension history of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (not to be confused with the *Gospel of Thomas*!). On the one hand, the translation of these texts certainly reflects interest in them and usage of them by readers in various cultural settings. On the other hand, this usage by

different kinds of readers across time further complicates any answer to the question of who read the texts.

POSITING READERS FROM CONTENTS

One of the ways that scholars have gone about trying to posit the readers of early Christian texts (both canonical and extra-canonical) is by making inferences based on their contents. Indeed, this kind of 'mirror reading' has often generated proposals that this or that kind of reader or 'community' is reflected in, and lay behind, a given text. Granted, *to some extent* early Christian texts do likely reflect interests and situations of authors and intended readers. But defining with any precision the identity and nature of the intended readers on the basis of the contents of unprovenanced texts is more difficult than some may have realized, and involves making a few dubious assumptions. By contrast, in the case of some texts, such as the undisputed letters of Paul, we may well have explicit identification of the author and addressee(s), as well as reference to the situation (either the author's or the addressees') that occasioned the letter. But by 'unprovenanced' texts I mean texts that do not give such information, making it more often very difficult to judge these things.

One of the dubious assumptions sometimes made is that the characters, settings, and emphases in texts reflect the historical circumstances and characteristics of the intended readers sufficiently to permit us to determine these matters. But in fact literary texts may reflect imaginary settings, may project fictional, perhaps idealized people and circumstances, and may even portray circumstances that contrast with those of the author and intended readers, e.g. for the purpose of offering something exotic or interesting to readers. It is actually not clear that texts so readily and directly mirror their intended readers. Any claim that they do must be argued on a case-by-case basis, preferably supported with some other corroborating evidence.

A related dubious assumption is that texts such as the apocryphal writings were intended for some specific 'community' or particular circle of readers in the first place. Several decades ago, Frederik Wisse criticized the assumption that texts such as those often labelled 'gnostic' reflect specific circles or 'communities' whose beliefs and practices can be read off the texts in question. He judged it 'very questionable' to attribute the special features of a given text to 'a certain, otherwise unknown, branch of early Christianity' (Wisse 1986: 181). To cite Wisse further:

> the beliefs and practices advocated in these writings, insofar as they vary from those reflected in other Christian texts, cannot be attributed to a distinct community or sect. Rather, these writings were more likely idiosyncratic in terms of their environment. The 'teaching' they contain was not meant to replace other teaching but to supplement. They did not defend the beliefs of a community but rather tried to develop and explore Christian truth in different directions. (Wisse 1986: 188)

That is, the intended readers of these 'gnostic' texts may as likely have been assorted individuals of various types, interested (perhaps for various reasons) in what they may have regarded as the explorative or innovative approach to Christian faith taken in the texts. Moreover, despite assumptions to the contrary, there is no good reason for thinking that these texts functioned as 'scripture' for defined Christian groups such as 'Thomasine' Christians distinguishable from other Christian circles (so also Bird 2003; cf. Layton 1987; Kazen 2005, the latter making assertions but offering no basis for them).

An example of the dubious tendency to ascribe specific groups or types of readers to early Christian texts is the claim that some of the apocryphal acts were intended for women readers (e.g. Davies 1980: 95–6; Burrus 1987: 108). The basic reason for such proposals

seems to be that the texts in question feature prominent women characters. Here, again, we see the somewhat simplistic notion that texts rather directly mirror their intended readers. This particular view, however, that certain of the apocryphal acts were particularly directed to women readers, has been challenged recently by Kim Haines-Eitzen (2012: 53–64; see also Haines-Eitzen 2006). Focusing on the physical form of the early manuscripts containing these texts (a topic to which I return later in this discussion), she judges that 'there is nothing to suggest a gendered readership'. Instead, she concludes (62–3):

> If, indeed, the form of ancient books can tell us something about their readers—a subject we still have much to learn about—then these apocryphal acts were read not by the 'popular' masses or necessarily by 'women' but rather by those members of the upper echelons who likewise enjoyed poetry, history, and perhaps philosophy.

In sum, instead of assuming that any specific readership can be inferred directly from the contents of a given text, it is wiser to take account of other data as well. In what follows, I underscore this other evidence, some of which has perhaps not been considered adequately.

'EXTERNAL' REFERENCES TO USAGE

As a first step, I discuss 'external' evidence, by which I mean here explicit references in ancient Christian writings to the use of apocryphal texts. One of the most explicit of such references is the oft-cited passage where Eusebius describes how Serapion (bishop of Antioch, 199–211 CE) reacted to being informed that a *Gospel of Peter* was read by certain members of the church in Rhossus (Eusebius, *HE* 6.12.1–6), one of the communities within his episcopal authority. Initially assuming that the text was harmless (though he apparently doubted the attribution to Peter), Serapion did not object to Rhossus Christians continuing read it. Then, however, after being prompted to read the text himself carefully, he came to the view that, though for the most part it was 'in accordance with the true teaching of the Saviour', there were some things 'added' (προσδιεσταλμένα), which he apparently regarded as possibly tending in a heretical direction.

Although it cannot detain us here, an obvious question concerns the identity and contents of the text that Serapion considered. A majority of scholars have assumed that it is substantially the same as the partially preserved text included in the 'Akhmîm codex' (P. Cair. 10759, dated variously seventh to ninth century CE), which, accordingly, has acquired the title '*Gospel of Peter*' (e.g. Elliott 1993: 150–1). The partially preserved text in the Akhmîm codex bears no title, but is typically referred to as the *Gospel of Peter*, largely because of the statement in the final lines, 'But I, Simon Peter, and Andrew my brother, having taken up our nets went to the sea …' (*Gos. Pet.* 14.58). I translate the transcription of the text in Foster (2010: 205) who, in the most thorough examination of matters to date, urges that 'one should exercise caution before too quickly identifying the Akhmîm text with the *Gospel of Peter* that Serapion declared open to docetic interpretation' (Foster 2010: 90; see also Kraus and Nicklas 2007). But it is not crucial here whether the Akhmîm codex does or does not preserve substantially the text that Serapion wrote about; instead, we focus on what Eusebius relates about the use of the text that he refers to as the *Gospel of Peter*.

Clearly, this text was read by Christians in Rhossus, and likely in addition to, not instead of, other texts more familiar to us that came to form the emerging Christian canon. Eusebius says that Serapion wrote a refutation of the 'false statements' in the *Gospel of Peter*, because some in Rhossus 'on the ground of the said writing had turned aside into heterodox teachings' (*Hist. eccl.* 6.12.2). But it is by no means clear that these people comprised some separate circle or 'community' that identified itself with particular reference to this text.

Instead, it appears to have been simply one of the texts read among at least some Christians in Rhossus, with some of them apparently taking it as justifying some ideas that Serapion considered heterodox. However, it is interesting that, although Serapion became concerned about this, he also judged that 'for the most part' the text was acceptable. It is not clear from Eusebius' report whether, in addition to refuting the bits that he regarded as susceptible to heterodox interpretation, Serapion also actively sought to suppress this *Gospel of Peter*, or was content to correct what he regarded as inappropriate uses of the text.

If we return briefly to consider the Akhmîm text regarded by many as a later copy or version of *The Gospel of Peter*, it is noteworthy that the small, composite codex containing the text (along with portions of the *Apocalypse of Peter, 1 Enoch*, and the *Martyrdom of St. Julian*) was found in the grave of a man buried in a cemetery that seems to have been associated with a nearby monastery (Bouriant 1892). The most natural assumption is that the man was a member of the local Christian community, quite possibly a monk, and was given a Christian burial, this small codex buried with him, perhaps because it was some special possession of his. So, whether the text is or is not related to the *Gospel of Peter* that Serapion read and refuted, indications are that this apocryphal text (along with the other extra-canonical texts in this codex) was read (and perhaps treasured) by this Christian man, with no indication that he was particularly heterodox or that he was part of some discrete circle attached to the text.

There are also several references in ancient Christian writers to other gospels that they link specifically to Jewish Christians. (For detailed discussions of these citations, see Klijn 1992; on the gospels from which they may be taken, see Evans 2007 and Gregory 2008.) But there are problems that create major uncertainties about these texts (Evans 2007: 241). The most significant problem is that all we have are a handful of what these writers present as citations of these texts, and no copy of any of them survives. A second difficulty is that the references to and descriptions of these texts do not cohere very well. So, for example, it is not entirely clear whether we are dealing with two or three such gospels (Gregory 2008: 56–9). In scholarly discussion one finds references to a *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, a *Gospel of the Ebionites*, and a *Gospel of the Nazoraeans*, but only the first title appears in the ancient sources (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 2.45.5; Jerome, *Comm. Mich*. 7.7; *Comm. Isa*. 40.9), and the others are convenient titles attached by scholars to the putative excerpts of texts associated with Jewish–Christian circles in the ancient writers in question.

The earliest, Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer*. 1.26.2, 3.11.7), refers to Ebionites having their own gospel, which he took to be a version of the Gospel of Matthew. Later, Epiphanius (*Pan*. 30) also refers to Ebionites, whom he characterizes as having certain heretical beliefs, and he gives several citations of what he says was their own gospel. But scholars are not agreed that Epiphanius actually either knew any Ebionites for himself, or that he had direct knowledge of a complete text of the gospel that he attributes to them (Gregory 2008: 61–5).

Whatever we make of Epiphanius' statements, as Gregory noted, the apparent acquaintance with a *Gospel according to the Hebrews* shown by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Didymus 'suggests that it was both widely known and widely acceptable, at least among those for whom they wrote', and that it was likely 'a text with wide appeal in the period before the boundaries of the New Testament canon were formally closed' (Gregory 2008: 67). In short, although there were extra-canonical gospel texts that may well have emerged in Jewish–Christian circles and may have been intended initially for such readers, it appears that they then obtained a wider readership in the early Christian centuries. If these texts functioned as scripture for some, they were also read, and probably with some appreciation, among those who did not so include these texts among their scriptures.

As another category of apocryphal gospel, let us now consider the so-called 'Infancy Gospels' (conveniently presented in both Greek and English, with a useful introduction, in Hock 1995). Once again, we have texts that seem to have enjoyed a wide readership and reception in Christian circles. In fact, the most influential of these, known variously as the *Protevangelium Jacobi*, the *Nativity of Mary*, and *The Infancy Gospel of James*, exercised 'an influence on the faith and piety of the church which rivals that of the canonical gospels' (Cartlidge and Elliott 2001: 21). The wide reception of this text is particularly evident in Christian art down the centuries after it was composed, with numerous examples of scenes and figures that are derived from it (see Cartlidge and Elliott 2001: 21–46). For example, depictions of Joachim and Anna (Mary's parents) and type scenes such as Mary's birth all reflect its influence long after the text itself was forgotten in Western Christianity (though it continued to be copied and read in Eastern Christianity). Moreover, if we note that the paintings in question were typically commissioned by ecclesiastical authorities, it becomes clear that this extra-canonical text exercised influence (and perhaps had a readership) in the hierarchy of Christianity, at least in Late Antiquity and the medieval period, and not only among the laity. However the text itself seems to have become virtually unknown in the Western churches at some point, until it was reintroduced in a Latin translation made by Guillaume Postel in 1552 from a Greek manuscript that is now lost. The earliest complete copy extant is P. Bodmer V (fourth century), a small codex whose provenance is probably Upper Egypt (van Haelst 1976: §599; on other early fragments, see van Haelst 1976: §600, §601).

Another leading example of this type of text is *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (known in earlier centuries as *Evangelium Thomae Israelitae* or *Evangelium Thomae*), which is less a connected narrative and more 'a collection of largely self-contained stories that are only loosely held together by a series of indications of Jesus' age' at various points in his childhood (Hock 1995: 85). Stephen Gero (1971: 56) referred to it as 'the fixation in writing of a cycle of oral tradition, of religious folklore'. The extant manuscripts exhibit considerable fluidity in the transmission of the text, with deletion and insertion of some stories, all the easier in such a loose collection of vignettes, at least some of which circulated on their own before being collected in *Infancy Thomas*. So, although some individual stories (especially the exchange between the child Jesus and a Jewish teacher about the meaning of the Greek letters *alpha* and *beta*, *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 6.13–23) are attested in some early writings (e.g. the *Epistula Apostolorum* 4, Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.20.1, each cited in Gero 1971: 63), it is not always easy to determine whether their authors actually knew and read something like the full text of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* or instead simply were acquainted with some of these particular vignettes.

But the multiple later copies of this infancy gospel, and its translation into a number of ancient languages, surely show that it came to be read in various Christian circles. Gero (1971: 48–56) discusses versions in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, and Old Church Slavonic. As he (Gero 1971: 75) notes, 'Apparently, both Greek and Slavonic versions of apocryphal gospels were quite generally used in Orthodox monasteries as devotional reading'. Moreover, to judge by the references to Jesus in the Qur'an as 'he who made clay birds fly' (*Surah* 3.49, 5.110; one of the famous stories in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* 2.1–7), it appears that the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (or at least some of its contents) may have been enjoyed (and influential) well beyond early Christian circles.

The several works in the category of 'apocryphal acts' likewise were widely read and influential for centuries. Of the five main works in this category (*Acts of John, Acts of Paul, Acts of Peter, Acts of Andrew, Acts of Thomas*), only the *Acts of Thomas* survives

completely, but the extant portions of the others, along with references to them in other Christian texts, clearly show a great interest in all these works. As a collection, all five works were known and widely read among Manichaeans in particular (Klauck 2008: 3–5). But also, despite critical comments about them by figures such as Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.3.2, 3.25.4), these works enjoyed varying levels of popularity and usage across wider circles of early Christianity as well. Indeed, in the case of a portion of the *Acts of Peter* that recounts his martyrdom, we have material taken into the liturgy of some ancient churches (Bauckham 1992; Klauck 2008: 100–5). Moreover, characters and scenes in this work (e.g. Peter's crucifixion upside down) and the other apocryphal acts were also popular subjects in Christian art (Cartlidge and Elliott 2001: 134–235). We have only to think of the enormous place of the figure of Thecla in Christian tradition and art (Cartlidge and Elliott 2001: 148–62), a figure who seems to have emerged influentially in the *Acts of Paul* (Dagron 1978). This account subsequently generated other texts about her (e.g. the *Life and Miracles of St. Thecla* dated to the fifth century).

To be sure, the *Acts of John* exhibits certain emphases (especially in §§87–105) that raised doubts about its orthodoxy (e.g. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.25.6), leading to condemnation of the text at the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 CE. Klauck (2008: 17–18) judged that in this material the text exhibited certain 'points of contact' with 'the Eastern version of Valentinianism', but pre-dating 'the elaboration of the great gnostic systems', and consequently he regards it as the earliest of the apocryphal acts (dating it *c*.150–60 CE). But it is likely that for at least some Christian readers more generally *Acts of John* and the other apocryphal acts were read variously as interesting, provocative, and edifying texts. I return to this point later in this discussion.

Some recent studies emphasize certain similarities between the apocryphal acts and Roman-era 'pagan' novels. Jan Bremmer (2001: 164) firmly contended, 'In fact, the intertextuality of the *AAA* [apocryphal acts of the apostles] with the novel cannot be doubted', underscoring similar motifs in both bodies of texts. Christine Thomas (2003: 87–105, citing 89) posited strong similarities to what she called 'historical novels' in particular, fictional accounts featuring characters regarded by writers and readers as real figures of history, and she proposed the Alexander Romance as providing 'the best generic parallel among the novelistic products of the Roman Empire'. She distinguished between ancient 'historical novels' and 'erotic novels' in that the former 'are all "referential" texts that narrate major historical events, however constitutive novelistic techniques of embellishment may also be for their genre', whereas the erotic novels 'all avoid this sort of referentiality, focusing on the private events of obscure characters' (Thomas 2003: 93). Moreover, she contended that the 'narrative fluidity' of these apocryphal texts, 'their existence in multiple translations, redactions, abridgments, and expansions', comprises evidence of the popularity of the material that they contain among various 'audiences' over time and place (Thomas 2003: 89).

I noted earlier that some scholars have taken the prominent place of Christian women in some of the apocryphal acts as indicating that these texts were intended for, and were particularly read by, Christian women. To cite another scholar who takes such a view, Bremmer firmly contended that women were both 'the actual readers' and the intended readers of these texts. He further proposed that the authors of the apocryphal acts had a 'missionary' intention, particularly aiming for the attention and conversion of upper-class women, a conclusion he judged 'inescapable' in light of the 'female focus' of these writings (Bremmer 2001: 166–7). But we have also already noted the critical assessment of this stance by Haines-Eitzen (2012). Moreover, in likening the apocryphal acts to the ancient historical novel, a type of writing that likely enjoyed a readership of males and females,

Thomas seems implicitly to come down closer to Haines-Eitzen than to Bremmer. To be sure, women may well have been among those who enjoyed the apocryphal acts (and other early Christian writings), but there does not seem to be a good a reason to make them the predominant readers. Instead, we should probably allow for a diversity of people for whom these texts were meaningful in various ways.

THE ARTEFACTS OF ANCIENT READING

I turn now to consider evidence that is often overlooked in studies of Early Christian Apocrypha and their likely readers: the extant physical artefacts of ancient readers, the remains of early manuscripts of these texts. It has not been adequately recognized that the physical features of ancient manuscripts can give us hints of the kinds of readers for whom they were copied and the settings in which they were read. (See further Roberts 1979; and the pioneering studies of Turner 1980, esp. 74–96; and Hurtado 2006, 2012.) Here also, because of the limitations of space, I shall confine the discussion to some examples.

Perhaps the best-known Christian apocryphal text today is the *Gospel of Thomas*, and so the portions of three manuscripts of this text that are dated palaeographically to the third century, which are the earliest copies extant, provide a good place to start, drawing here on material that I have presented more fully elsewhere (Hurtado 2008).

Although one must be cautious in doing so, it is interesting to consider whether the comparative number of extant copies of a given text may reflect its comparative popularity in the ancient setting. I have surveyed the comparative number of all the extant copies of texts of Christian provenance from before 300 CE, tentatively considering what we may infer (Hurtado 2006: 24–41). In the case of the *Gospel of Thomas*, the portions of three early manuscripts certainly indicate some ancient interest in this text. To be more specific, on the one hand, it is not among the most frequently attested (cf., e.g., the twelve copies of Matthew or sixteen copies of John). By my calculation, the remains of three copies of the *Gospel of Thomas* make the text tie for thirteenth place (with James, Ephesians, Leviticus, and *Acts of Paul*) in the number of extant copies among literary texts in Christian manuscripts of the second and third centuries CE. On the other hand, for many Christian texts, both canonical and extra-canonical, we have portions of only one or two copies from this early period.

But what more might these fragments of early copies tell us about who read the *Gospel of Thomas* and the circumstances in which it was read? Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1 is a portion of one leaf of a papyrus codex, the extant text roughly corresponding to sayings 26–30 (+77b) and 31–3 of the Coptic text from Nag Hammadi. The original page size of the codex (*c*. 27 × 10–13 cm) makes it analogous to some other Christian codices of the same period containing literary texts, both (what became) canonical and extra-canonical ones. The copyist-hand likewise fits within the spectrum of hands that we see in some other early Christian literary manuscripts, in this case a copyist aiming for clarity but of limited calligraphic abilities, as reflected in the inconsistency in letter sizes, the ligatures and an inability to produce truly 'bilinear' writing (i.e. a text written with letters of fairly even height, all positioned evenly within imaginary top and bottom lines, which is one of the key earmarks of a more skilled copyist). It is, however, perhaps more interesting that, in comparison with some other early Christian manuscripts of equivalent page size (particularly copies of texts known to have been treated as scripture in early Christian circles), the letters are somewhat smaller and the number of lines per page (*c*.37–8) somewhat larger, producing a more compressed format. A smaller number of lines per page

suggests a text intended for greater ease of reading, perhaps public reading, whereas a larger number of lines per page may suggest a copy intended for individual reading/study (Hurtado 2006: 171–7).

Moreover, the intriguing page-number (ια = 11) on the verso side of the leaf (apparently added by an early reader) suggests that some other text (which, unfortunately, we cannot identify) preceded the *Gospel of Thomas*, and so this codex combined two or more texts. The desire to combine multiple texts in one codex would also help explain the somewhat more compressed writing just mentioned. In sum, the physical features of P. Oxy. 1 (e.g. compressed writing, absence of punctuation, etc.) suggest that it more likely was copied (as some sort of compendium of certain texts?) for personal reading and study, rather than for public reading (e.g. in corporate worship).

In P. Oxy. 654 we have remnants of a re-used papyrus roll (sometimes called an 'opisthograph'), the extant portion of *Gospel of Thomas* copied on the outer side of a roll, the inner side (with horizontal fibres) containing the remains of a survey list. As for the copy of *Gospel of Thomas*, the complete inability at bilinear writing, the irregularities in letter size and formation, and other features of the copyist-hand (errors in spelling, a bizarre first line) suggest someone of very limited skill. There are horizontal lines extending from the left margin and into the text to signal the first line of a saying of Jesus, these apparently added by a reader rather than by the copyist. Here, too, the physical features of this manuscript suggest that it was prepared for private study. This was the typical purpose of re-used rolls which, as Houston (2009: 257) observed, are 'usually taken as a sign of an economy-minded collector'.

P. Oxy. 655 comprises fragments of a small papyrus roll, the small majuscule characters confidently and skilfully formed, forming neat, narrow columns of *c*.12–16 characters per line. The original height of the roll was about 16 cm (inclusive of top and bottom margins), yet with some 30 lines of text per column. This was clearly a manuscript toward the small/compact end of the spectrum of sizes of literary rolls (Johnson 2004: 141; Kraus 2010). As a modern comparison, volumes in the Loeb Classical Library series have pages of just over 16 cm height, and a maximum of *c*.32 lines of text per page. As the case with the Loeb volumes, P. Oxy. 655 was almost certainly intended (and used) for personal reading.

Another text that is witnessed in remnants of early manuscripts is the *Gospel of Mary* (Magdalene) (Tuckett 2007, 2008). Although its text is preserved most extensively in a fifth-century Coptic copy, it is the remains of two early Greek copies that will concern us here. The one, P. Oxy. 3525, is a scrap measuring 11.5 × 12 cm, the text written in a cursive hand on the 'recto' (the side of papyrus with horizontal fibres), the 'verso' side blank, which strongly suggests that it is a portion of a roll (Parsons 1983). There is an excellent photograph of this and the other fragments in Tuckett (2008, after 110). The cursive hand, the roll book-form, and the modest size of the roll, all make it rather certain that this is the remnant of someone's personal copy of the text.

The other Greek remnant of the *Gospel of Mary* is P. Ryl. 463, a papyrus fragment (8.9 × 9.9 cm) with writing on both sides and page numbering, which make it the remains of a leaf of a codex. In this copy, the writing is majuscule and a hand described by Roberts (1938: 20) as 'clear and upright [but] also ugly and ill-proportioned, and show[ing] considerable cursive influence'. Tuckett (2008: 84) noted the numerous mistakes made by the copyist, some of them corrected, and some of the mistakes producing Greek text that 'makes little sense' such that at these points it can only be understood on the basis of the later Coptic translation. Here, again, in view of these data, plus the small size of the codex (*c*. 11 × 16 cm), we likely have an informal copy intended for someone's personal reading of the text (Hurtado 2006: 155–65).

The general point I wish to make here is that, based on the nature of the remnants of the early manuscripts of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Mary*, in neither case do we have any reason to link these copies with distinctive circles of Christians. That is, it would be dubious to posit a circle of 'Thomas' Christians or 'Mary' Christians as connected with these manuscripts. Indeed, I suggest that this should be taken as illustrative more widely of how apocryphal gospels functioned. There were obviously Christians who wrote these and other gospel texts featuring figures such as Thomas and Mary, and there were obviously other Christians who enjoyed reading these texts, as reflected in the remnants of early copies of them, and the subsequent translations of these and other such texts (into Coptic and other languages). But the features of the extant artefacts of the early reading and readers suggest that these texts were (typically?) copied for, and read by, individuals, the texts likely circulated and copied among those Christians who expressed an interest in them. As to the social connections of these individuals, at the most, we should probably imagine loose networks of sorts, rather than defined circles or sects of Christians. This observation takes us into broader issues than can be handled adequately here, but my proposal of loose networks of somewhat like-minded individuals has some resonance with some recent explorations of the circumstances in which so-called 'gnostic' writings were copied, translated, and read (Williams 1996: 235–62; Emmel 2008).

I take it to be congruent with this view that the remnants of these texts were found in the same locations (e.g. in the same mounds in Oxyrhynchus) as the remnants of familiar Christian texts such as copies of writings of the OT and the emergent NT, and writings by Irenaeus, Melito, and others, all of which are typically taken as reflective of 'mainstream' Christianity of the time. This suggests that the 'apocryphal' texts were likely read by at least some in the same Christian circles in which these other texts also functioned.

Along similar lines, consider again Wisse's (1986) contention that the so-called 'gnostic' texts likely circulated primarily among individual Christians who were intrigued by the alternative ideas in them. Whether or not the *Gospel of Thomas* or the *Gospel of Mary*, for example, is taken as 'gnostic' by scholars today, the earliest extant artefacts of these texts in themselves give no basis for positing discrete circles of Christians devoted particularly to these texts and their distinctive teachings. Instead, as noted already, these early manuscripts appear to have been prepared for individual usage. Of course, discrete Christian circles of various sorts may well be posited on other grounds (e.g. the claims of writers such as Irenaeus or Eusebius). But my point here is that, whatever such circles there were, the sorts of texts that we have been considering also likely circulated and were read, perhaps mainly, by interested individuals who otherwise were members of 'mainstream' Christian churches of their time and place.

This also seems to me broadly in accord with Haines-Eitzen's view (2012: 53–64) cited earlier about the likely readers of the apocryphal acts, based on her analysis of the extant manuscripts of these texts from the first six centuries. As noted already, she was particularly concerned to test contentions by other scholars that these writings were read especially by women, concluding against this view (Haines-Eitzen 2012: 57 and 58–61 for comments on illustrative manuscripts). She also weighed the view that these writings had a 'popular' readership, i.e. people of relatively lower social levels, and found this, too, dubious. The thirteen manuscripts of apocryphal acts that she surveyed are all codices (as we would expect generally for Christian literary texts increasingly after the third century; Hurtado 2006: 53–61). Moreover, she judged that these codices show no particularly distinctive physical features in copyist hands or other matters in comparison with copies of other texts (including scriptural texts), making it 'highly problematic to continue to argue for the popular readership—or the popular/female readership—of the *Apocryphal Acts of the*

Apostles' (Haines-Eitzen 2012: 62). Instead, she proposed that the readers of these texts were simply individuals (more likely 'members of the upper echelons') who enjoyed the stories of the adventures (and martyrdoms) of heroic Christian figures (Haines-Eitzen 2012: 63).

For the purpose of this discussion, the main point is that the apocryphal acts, as also the case with the other Christian apocryphal literature, found readers who for various reasons were interested in the contents of these texts. In some cases, this or that apocryphal text might have been of special significance for a given circle of Christians. But, more generally it seems, as a diverse body of writings, Early Christian Apocrypha likely drew a diversity of readers, most of whom were simply interested individuals who found the texts variously intriguing, entertaining, inspiring, provocative, or edifying, and perhaps other readers who found them dubious or even objectionable. Who read Early Christian Apocrypha? The best general answer would seem to be a variety of people who took an interest in these diverse texts for a diversity of reasons.

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THE FORMATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON AND EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

JENS SCHRÖTER

INTRODUCTION

THE formation of the New Testament canon was a process that lasted, broadly speaking, from about the end of the first century until the middle of the fourth century. The process involved the circulation and use of numerous writings in Christian communities, the theological reflection of Christian theologians such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Eusebius, and the emergence of smaller collections preceding the formation of the canon: the four-gospel collection, the collection of Paul's letters, and the compilation of the Acts of the Apostles and the so-called 'catholic epistles'. At the end of the second century a consolidation of this process can be detected: Irenaeus argues that certain writings are constitutive for the church because they are in essential agreement with the apostolic creed (*Haer.* 1.10.1–2). In the so-called 'Canon Muratori' ('Muratorian Canon'), a catalogue probably compiled around 200 CE in Rome, a number of accepted writings are introduced and distinguished from those which are disputed or rejected. Origen lists the books of the Old Testament and mentions the authoritative Christian writings (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.3–12).

These authors knew, however, of many other writings which had been produced and used within Christian communities since the early second century but which did not eventually become part of the New Testament canon. These writings, as well as the comments of early Christian theologians, therefore provide evidence for a situation of diversity within early Christianity as the theological and social context from which the biblical canon and the Christian creeds emerged. Although the explicit distinction between 'canonical' and 'apocryphal' writings does not appear before the second half of the fourth century, it is the result of differences between various texts that originated roughly between the second half of the first century and the third century. (It first appears in the thirty-ninth festal letter of Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria from 367. Prior to this, the term 'apocryphal' (ἀπόκρυφος) was used as a designation for books with 'secret teachings': e.g. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.15.69, on the secret books of Zoroaster. Other early Christian writers equated 'apocryphal' with 'forged', e.g. Irenaeus, *Haer* 1.20.1: πλῆθος ἀποκρύφων καὶ νόθων γραφῶν ('a multitude of apocryphal/secret and spurious writings', referring to Valentinian texts); Tertullian, *Pud*. 10: apocrypha et falsa ('apocryphal/secret and false',

referring to the *Shepherd of Hermas*).) Christianity during this time developed as a movement of various groups and writings that interpreted the life and activity of Jesus and the apostles in various ways and formulated different, sometimes even opposing, views on the meaning of faith in the God of Israel and in Jesus Christ. It was this situation that drove early Christian theologians to distinguish between different writings according to their theological acceptability and their usage by different Christian groups. In some cases—for example, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the letter to the Hebrews, and the *Apocalypse of Peter*— there was no unanimous view about their suitability for Christian reading. The *Shepherd* was quoted without any reluctance by Clement (*Strom.* 1.1.1, quoting *Vis.* 5.5; *Strom.* 1.85.4, quoting *Mand.* 11.3; *Strom.* 2.43.5–44.3, quoting *Sim.* 11.16.5–7; *Strom.* 6.46.5, quoting *Sim.* 9.16.6, etc.) and Irenaeus (*Haer.* 4.20.2, quoting *Mand.* 1.1), but criticized by the author of the Muratorian Canon; the letter to the Hebrews was disputed in the Western part of the church because of its uncertain origin; the *Apocalypse of Peter* is mentioned, together with the *Apocalypse of John*, in the Muratorian Canon among the accepted writings. The formation of the New Testament canon was therefore not a straightforward process but rather the gradual emergence over a period of time of a corpus of accepted writings out of a much larger body of early Christian texts. The fairly fixed collection of accepted writings around the year 200 consisted mainly of the four Gospels, the Pauline letters, the Acts of the Apostles, and the letters of Peter and John. Conversely, there was widespread agreement among 'orthodox' or 'proto-orthodox' Christian theologians of that time about the rejection of the writings of the 'heretics', for example the Valentinians, the so-called 'Docetists', the 'Barbelo-Gnostics', or the 'Naaseenes'. In between there was a 'grey area' of writings of more ambiguous status. The classification of writings into different groups, occurring first in Origen's works, was an attempt to come to terms with this complex situation.

According to Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 6.25.3–12), Origen distinguished between non-controversial writings (ἀναντίρρητα), e.g. the four Gospels, and writings which were not generally regarded as authentic (οὐ πάντες φασὶν γνησίους εἶναι ταύτας), e.g. the second and third letters of John, and the letter to the Hebrews which is of unknown origin. In another passage, Eusebius himself introduces the categories of 'accepted' (ὁμολογούμενα), 'disputed' (ἀντιλεγόμενα), and 'forged' writings (νόθα) (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25.1–7; this classification also appears in the Stichometry of Nicephorus from the ninth century.) Within the first category he mentions the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the letters of Paul, the first letter of John, and the letter of Peter. The Revelation of John might also be associated with this group, although there were dissenting views about it. Among the disputed writings Eusebius mentions the letters of James and Jude, the second letter of Peter, and the second and third letters of John. To the last group belong the *Acts of Paul*, the *Shepherd*, the *Revelation of Peter*, the letter of Barnabas, the *Didache*, and again the Revelation of John which is rejected by some (though regarded as authentic by others). To this group some also add the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*. All these writings should be distinguished, however, from such writings which no church writer regarded as worthy to be mentioned. This group consists of writings that were put forward under the name of the apostles Peter, Thomas, or Matthias, or gospels under the names of others, or the Acts of Andrew, John, and other apostles.

In this passage Eusebius provides an instructive insight into the formation of the New Testament canon at the beginning of the fourth century. The collection of four Gospels and the letters of Paul are obviously undisputed writings of the church. The case is much more difficult with regard to other writings. Eusebius also knows of texts that were never regarded as part of the Christian tradition at all. It is also remarkable that there is not yet a

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clear-cut distinction between 'canonical' and 'apocryphal' writings as in the Easter letter by Bishop Athanasius some decades later (367 CE).

Among the disputed and rejected writings Eusebius mentions different types: gospels (εὐαγγέλια), letters (ἐπιστολαί), acts (πράξεις), and revelations (ἀποκαλύψεις), mostly under the name of an apostle. Clearly, many of these early Christian writings followed certain literary types: 'Jesus literature' ('gospels') comprised a wide spectrum in literary terms, including for example biographies, sayings collections, infancy narratives, revelatory dialogues, etc.; the stories about the apostles can roughly be classified as 'novelistic literature'; the letters include such different types as the *Epistle of Barnabas*, which is more of a theological treatise, the so-called *3 Corinthians*, belonging to the *Acts of Paul* (see below), and the fictional correspondence between Paul and Seneca from the second half of the fourth century composed as private letters. Another category consists of apocalyptic writings, taking up a Jewish genre and sometimes even expanding Jewish texts from a Christian perspective.

A characteristic of the apocryphal literature is thus that writings from the first century—Jesus accounts, narratives of journeys and deeds of the apostles, apostolic letters, apocalyptic treatises—were taken up and continued by early Christian authors from the second century onwards. These literary forms were expanded and embellished into a variety of descriptions of Jesus and his early followers. This development necessitated the distinction between writings that were acceptable for the emerging church and others that were not. In what follows this process will be outlined in more detail.

NON-CANONICAL GOSPELS

An important development leading to the formation of the New Testament canon concerns the distinction between the four Gospels that became universally recognized as authoritative texts and other gospels that circulated in Christian communities but did not gain canonical status. Around 180 CE Irenaeus refers to the 'Fourfold Gospel' (τετράμορφον εὐαγγέλιον) as the pillar of the church that corresponds to the four cardinal virtues and the four directions of the wind and therefore points towards the character of the church that is spread over the entire world (*Haer*. 3.11.8). Obviously, Irenaeus relies here on an older tradition about the four Gospels as a theological necessity for the church of God. Irenaeus's argument in this passage is first directed against those who use only one gospel (Marcion relying on Luke's Gospel, or those who use only the Gospel of John), and second against the Valentinians who boast of possessing more gospels and bring forward a writing entitled the 'Gospel of Truth' (*Haer*. 3.11.9).

In his homilies on Luke's Gospel, Origen interprets the remark in Luke 1.1 πολλοὶ ἐπηχε- ίρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν ('many have undertaken to compile a narrative') as a reference to the many gospels that exist besides the four Gospels of the church. Origen takes the term ἐπιχειρέω (probably against Luke's own intention) as a criticism of those who have compiled gospels without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As further clarification he mentions several gospels that 'heretics' have written in addition to the four Gospels of the church: the Gospel 'according to the Egyptians' (*secundum Aegyptios*), the Gospel 'according to the twelve apostles' (*iuxta duodecim apostolos*), another one written by Basilides, others named after Thomas (*secundum Thomam*) or Matthias (*iuxta Mathiam*), and some more. Obviously, Origen knew of the existence of several gospels that in his view do not belong to the 'inspired' writings of the church. At other places Origen can refer to a

Gospel according to the Hebrews (*Comm. Jo.* 2.12; cf. *Hom. Jer.* 15.4) and a *Gospel according to Peter* (*Comm. Matt.* 10.17). These gospels are just mentioned, but not rejected.

Clement of Alexandria refers to the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* and to the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* (*Strom.* 2.45.5, 3.92.2–93.1) and quotes sayings of Jesus from both of them. (For the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, see *Strom.* 3.45.3, 3.63.1, 3.64.1, 3.66.1–2, 3.92.2–93.1; *Exc. Theod.* 67.2; for the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, see *Strom.* 2.45.5, 5.96.3.) But he distinguishes these gospels from the four Gospels 'that are delivered to us' (*Strom.* 3.93.1: 'We do not have this in the four Gospels delivered to us, but in the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*').

Some decades earlier (around the middle of the second century), Justin Martyr in his dialogue with Trypho at several places refers to 'memoirs of the apostles' (ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων: *1 Apol.* 66.3, 67.3; *Dial.* 100.4, 101.3, 102.5, 103.6 and 8, 104.1, 105.1, 105.5–6, 106.1 and 3–4, 107.1) and adds at one place that these are called 'gospels' (ἃ καλεῖται εὐαγγέλια: *1 Apol.* 66.3). This is the first time that the term is used in the plural as a designation for narratives about Jesus. Justin thereby emphasizes that the gospels were written by the apostles and their followers (*Dial.* 103.8). He does not refer, however, to a 'Fourfold Gospel', nor does he mention any author of a gospel by name. Nevertheless, for him it seems to be important to underline that the memoirs of Jesus are trustworthy testimonies because they originate with the apostles as eyewitnesses and their immediate followers.

These statements show that from the second half of the second century, Christian theologians became aware of the existence of numerous gospels besides the four Gospels of the church. Apparently, they did not think that these gospels had the same status as the four Gospels, but they did not entirely reject all of these other gospels. Some of them were criticized as forgeries, brought forward under the name of an apostle or as writings that claim to contain the truth, while others are only mentioned as sources of information about Jesus and his teaching.

Some of these writings are referred to by the title 'Gospel according to …' (εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ …). This is the case in the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* and the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* as well as in the gospels according to Peter, Thomas and Mary. For the latter two this title is preserved in Coptic manuscripts: the colophons ⲡ[ⲉ]ⲩⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲓⲟⲛ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲙⲁⲣⲓ̈ⲁⲙⲙ and ⲡⲉⲩⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲓⲟⲛ ⲡⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲟⲑⲱⲙⲁⲥ are attested in Codex BG 8502 19.3–5 and in NHC II 51.27–8 respectively. The formulation 'according to …' (κατὰ …) is unusual as the title for a book in antiquity. The designation 'Gospel according to …' has therefore to be explained as expressing a distinction between different narratives about Jesus, bearing the title 'Gospel'. It became significant only when at least two gospels were known and used. The distinction was even more important when two or more gospels appeared in one and the same manuscript. An early example for this is the New Testament Papyrus 75. It is commonly dated between 175 and 225 CE and contains the Gospels of Luke and John. The title ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΛΟΥΚΑΝ appears as a colophon at the end of Luke, followed by a space and a new title ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ (the beginning of Luke's Gospel and the end of John's Gospel are not preserved). P[75] is therefore an early witness for the existence of two gospels in the same codex, distinguished by the title ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ + name of the (assumed) author. The earliest unambiguous evidence for a four-gospel codex is Papyrus 45 from around the middle of the third century. Whether other manuscripts earlier than P[75] and P[45] contained two or more gospels remains uncertain. T. C. Skeat has argued that P[4], with fragments of Luke's Gospel, and P[64] and P[67], with parts of Matthew, belonged to the same manuscript because they were written by the same scribe. This manuscript, according to Skeat, was a

codex containing the Gospels of Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark (cf. Skeat 2004). But the evidence is shaky (cf. the critical assessment by Head 2005). It can be inferred, however, that the designation 'Gospel according to …' originated in the second half of the second century. It was also used in P[66] (around 200 CE) which contains a fragment of the Gospel of John, and it was also known to Irenaeus who used it in his description of the four Gospels of the church (see *Haer*. 3.11.8: the Latin text uses 'secundum Lucam' etc., whereas the Greek fragment has εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ). The application of this title to non-canonical gospels is therefore most probably to be explained as an application of the designation of the earlier gospels and the common usage of at least two of them in Christian communities.

The production of non-canonical gospels apparently began in the second half of the second century. Some of them are preserved only fragmentarily on small pieces of papyrus or parchment, e.g. the fragments on Papyrus Egerton 2 or Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840. Although some aspects of the perspectives on Jesus developed in these texts can be identified (see e.g. Kraus, Kruger, and Nicklas 2009), it is not possible to determine their place within the formation of the New Testament canon in more detail. The so-called 'Jewish–Christian gospels' (the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, and the *Gospel of the Nazoreans*) as well as *Gospel according to the Egyptians* are only known by citations from Christian theologians who occasionally quote sayings or small episodes about Jesus from them. Also with regard to these writings it is only tentatively possible to determine their place within early Christian literature and their meaning for Christian communities. It can be assumed, however, that the fragments belonged to narrative gospels that were used by Jewish–Christian groups of the second and third century as rivals of the four Gospels.

Since the second half of the nineteenth century various manuscripts that were discovered in the Egyptian desert in rubbish heaps (mainly at Oxyrhynchus and Nag Hammadi) or in burial mounds have enriched our knowledge about non-canonical gospels considerably. While the titles, but not the content, of some of these writings were already known from things said by early Christian writers, others could be identified by these finds for the first time. In the following paragraph I consider some of these writings more closely.

A first example is the Akhmîm fragment (P. Cair. 10759), usually called the *Gospel of Peter* (*Gos. Pet.*). The text was discovered in 1886/7 in Akhmîm (Upper Egypt) as the first writing of a codex which also contains a Greek version of the *Apocalypse of Peter* and fragments of Greek *Enoch*. The Akhmîm fragment of the *Gospel of Peter* consists of a fragment of a passion narrative, beginning in the middle of a sentence about the Jews not washing their hands (probably in contrast to Pontius Pilate who may have been mentioned just before). There is no superscription or subscription preserved. The ascription to Peter as the (pseudonymous) author is instead inferred from the last sentence of the fragment which reads ἐγὼ δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος καὶ Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφός μου … (14,60. Cf. also 14,59: ἡμεῖς δὲ οἱ δώδεκα μαθηταὶ τοῦ κ(υρίο)υ; 7,26: ἐγὼ δὲ μετὰ τῶν ἑταίρων μου …; and 7,27: ἐπὶ δὲ τούτοις πᾶσιν ἐνηστεύομεν καὶ ἐκαθεζόμεθα πενθοῦντες…). The fragment could therefore belong to the *Gospel of Peter* mentioned by Origen (see above, this section), although this cannot be proved with certainty. On the basis of this identification another Greek fragment, P. Oxy. 2949, fr. 1, could be identified as belonging to the same writing, although its contents do not go beyond those of the Akhmîm fragment. (Other fragments that have occasionally been argued as relating to the *Gospel of Peter* are probably not part of this text.)

The scribe who copied the Akhmîm fragment obviously did not have a more extensive text in front of him. This can be inferred from the beginning and the end of the manuscript that are clearly marked by a cross at the beginning and three crosses at the end. At the same

time, however, the fragmentary status of the text is evident from the incomplete sentences at the beginning and the end. It cannot be determined whether the entire text also contained an account of Jesus' teaching and deeds and concluded with appearances of the risen Jesus. The depiction of Jesus' passion, crucifixion, and resurrection, however, has some peculiarities which clearly point to a later date of composition of the text in the fragment, e.g. the detailed description of Jesus' resurrection, the cross following Jesus out of the tomb, the designation 'Lord' (κύριος) for Jesus in narrative passages or the negative description of the Jews who are mainly responsible for Jesus' execution.

The *Gospel of Peter* is referred to in a striking passage in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. In book VI Eusebius lists several writings of Bishop Serapion of Antioch, among them one entitled 'On the so-called Gospel of Peter' (*Hist. eccl.* 6.12.1–6). In another passage (3.3.1–2) Eusebius mentions several writings ascribed to Peter: two letters, Acts, a gospel, a Revelation. The latter three, according to Eusebius, were never handed down among the general writings (ἐν καθολικοῖς) because their witnesses were never used by any of the church authors. In this writing, according to Eusebius, Serapion refutes its heretical teaching to which some members of the community of Rhossos had been attracted. Afterwards Eusebius quotes a passage in which Serapion clarifies his position regarding the *Gospel of Peter* in a letter to the community of Rhossos. He explains that initially he agreed that this gospel, shown to him at the occasion of his visit by some members of the community, might be read. Only after he recognized that they were inclined towards a heresy, he decided to visit the community again. Meanwhile he had the opportunity to read the *Gospel of Peter* that was used by the followers of the so-called 'docetists' (δοκηταί) who composed the writing. He then realized that most of it corresponded to the teaching of the Saviour and only partially differed from it.

Interestingly, Serapion originally accepted the use of the *Gospel of Peter* in the community of Rhossos. Although it was a matter of dispute, there was obviously no clear criterion for a separation of accepted and rejected writings. The reason for its subsequent rejection was not in the first place its content, which in Serapion's view was for the most part in agreement with the teaching of the Saviour. Rather, the problem was that it was used by a group of 'heretics' and caused separation within the community.

Of course we do not know about the relationship between the *Gospel of Peter* mentioned by Serapion (Eusebius) and the Akhmîm fragment. If the writing mentioned by Serapion (Eusebius) is at least in partial agreement with the Akhmîm fragment, one has nevertheless to take into account that the language and perhaps also the content might have been altered in the transmission process. This seems likely to have been the case because the text of the fragment displays characteristics of the Greek language that date from the end of the sixth / beginning of the seventh century, rather than to the second century (the date of the letter of Serapion) (Kraus 2007). Serapion's remarks can therefore be related to the Akhmîm fragment only with caution. This also implies that it would be problematic to look for traces of 'docetism' in the Akhmîm text on the basis of the remarks in Serapion's letter. (Also the character of the group called 'docetists' by Serapion and their teaching cannot be stated with certainty.)

From these observations it can be concluded that a *Gospel of Peter* was known in the second century and used at least in the community of Rhossos. For Serapion this usage was not objectionable as such, because, as he states after his reading of the *Gospel of Peter*, most of it does not contradict the teaching of the Saviour. Instead his letter shows that in the second century a bishop could regard it as generally possible that a Christian community might use a gospel that does not belong to the accepted four Gospels. But he regards it as a

problem that a certain group within the community uses this gospel to support a heresy and therefore announces another visit in the community to solve this problem.

Probably the most well known non-canonical gospel is the *Gospel of Thomas*. Origen and Eusebius refer to it in the passages quoted earlier; it is also mentioned by Hippolytus (*Ref*. 5.7.20). The Stichometry of Nicephorus mentions the *Gospel of Thomas* among the apocryphal writing of the New Testament. In all these references the *Gospel of Thomas* is regarded as a heretical writing, although it is not clear whether the authors did have access to it and knew its content. Only Hippolytus cites a saying from the *Gospel of Thomas* as part of the teaching of the Naaseenes. This quotation has loose connections to the Coptic manuscript (NHC II 32.14–19), and to the Greek fragment P. Oxy. 654.6–9. This might suggest a use of the *Gospel of Thomas* by 'heretical' groups as the background of its rejection by Christian theologians.

The main manuscript evidence comes from Nag Hammadi Codex II which contains a Coptic version of the *Gospel of Thomas* as the second writing, preceded by the *Apocryphon of John* and followed by the *Gospel of Philip*. On the basis of this manuscript, which dates from the first half of the fourth century, it was possible to identify smaller fragments from Oxyrhynchus as belonging to earlier Greek versions of the *Gospel of Thomas*. P. Oxy. 654, from the beginning of the third century, contains the incipit, mentioning 'the hidden sayings of the living Jesus' and the name of Thomas, as well as several sayings with analogies in the Coptic manuscript. P. Oxy. 1 and P. Oxy. 655, from the first half of the third century might also be regarded as Greek versions of the *Gospel of Thomas*, although in the latter case it is less certain. (P. Oxy. 655 contains a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples which in the Coptic manuscript is in the form of two separate sayings (36 and 37). Thus the literary character of the Greek manuscript—whether it was a sayings collection or a collection of dialogues or stories about Jesus—remains uncertain.) In any case, it seems probable that the *Gos. Thom.* originated in the second half of the second century as a collection of sayings, parables, and short dialogues of Jesus, introduced as 'hidden sayings of the living Jesus' written down by the apostle Thomas.

The *Gospel of Thomas* is a collection of traditions about Jesus, some of which may be considered early and others which appear to be later. Roughly half of the material has analogies in the Synoptic Gospels, some of them belonging to the oldest parts of the Jesus tradition. The *Gos. Thom.* invites its readers to reflect on individual sayings or short episodes about Jesus that are not brought into a direct relation with each other. Those who find the meaning of the sayings will be preserved from death. This concept has affinities with the interpretation of Christianity as 'knowledge' or 'true philosophy' in other writings of the second century, e.g. by Tatian and Clement of Alexandria. At the same time, there are no obvious traits of 'gnostic' thinking, nor is there a gnostic 'myth' discernible against which the traditions should be interpreted. There is, however, a critical attitude towards the history of Israel and Jewish traditions. They are either rejected entirely or gain a new meaning by their interpretation as renunciation of the world or radical asceticism.

A third example of an apocryphal gospel from the second century is the *Gospel of Judas*. The text is preserved in a Coptic translation as the third writing in the so-called 'Codex Tchacos'. It was discovered in the 1970s, and published in 2006 by the National Geographic Society. The existence of this gospel was already known from a passage of Irenaeus. In the first book of *Against Heresies* he mentions a heretical group that aligns itself positively with Cain, Esau, the Sodomites, and other biblical figures who are generally regarded negatively and/or condemned. This group also claims to confess that Judas recognized the truth and accomplished the 'mystery of the betrayal'. As proof they bring forward a 'fictional

account' which they call the *Gospel of Judas* (*Haer*. 1.31.1; a *Gospel of Judas* is also attested by Theodoret, *Haer*. 1.15, and Epiphanius, *Pan*. 38.1.5).

The *Gospel of Judas* contains a narrative about meetings of Jesus with his disciples before his passion. There are several dialogues about the true origin of Jesus and the 'strong and holy generation' to which the disciples themselves do not belong. Priests and sacrifices are rejected by Jesus as belonging to the god who is venerated by the disciples. Only Judas is distinguished from the other disciples in that he receives a special instruction by Jesus and a vision about the origin of the upper world. At the end of the text Jesus is arrested and Judas receives money from the high priests. The role of Judas in this gospel—whether he is regarded as a positive or negative figure—is disputed. In any case, Judas has a special role among Jesus' disciples who are depicted as worshipping a deity who is to be distinguished from the god of Jesus.

These three examples show that, in the process of the formation of the New Testament canon, apocryphal gospels can be regarded in different ways. The *Gospel of Peter*, together with other Petrine writings, was regarded by Eusebius as not belonging to the 'catholic' writings, i.e. to the commonly accepted writings of the mainstream church. The Serapion episode, however, shows that it was not so much the content of this gospel but rather its effect within the community that led to its rejection. The *Gospel of Thomas* was not discussed with regard to its content, but rejected by Hippolytus because of its use by a heretical group and mentioned by Origen among the gospels of the heretics. The *Gospel of Judas* was ascribed to a group that according to Irenaeus belonged to the gnostic movement that had already gone astray from the truth at the beginning of Christianity.

As with other apocryphal gospels, none of these texts ever appeared in a list of accepted or disputed writings. Rather, it seems that the four Gospels together were accepted at an early stage within the formation of the New Testament canon. The later gospels did not follow the narrative genre of these gospels; they were influenced by ideas that arose in second-century Christianity and were used by groups regarded as 'heretical' by 'mainstream' or 'orthodox' Christian theologians. As a result, the 'canonical' Jesus tradition was concentrated in the four Gospels. Nevertheless, from an early time other gospels contributed to the Jesus tradition with competing interpretations of his activity, passion, and crucifixion, but also with legendary accounts about his birth and childhood and his appearances after the resurrection.

A prominent example of an infancy gospel is the so-called *Protevangelium of James* that mainly narrates the birth of Mary, the mother of Jesus. This writing was very popular in early Christianity as is indicated by the more than 140 Greek manuscripts and translations into Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, and other languages. The *Protevangelium* originated in the second century and is probably mentioned by Origen in a remark on the 'Book of James' (*Comm. Matt*. 10.17). It was rejected in the early church because it supports the idea that the 'brothers' of Jesus mentioned in Mark 6.3 are sons of Joseph from an earlier marriage and not his cousins. Nevertheless, it was widely read and it had considerable influence on the development of Christian tradition about the birth of Jesus. In later times it was integrated into the Arabic infancy gospel and the so-called *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, an infancy gospel from the eighth or ninth century that incorporated several older infancy gospels and also other apocryphal traditions about Jesus' birth and childhood.

Examples of 'dialogue gospels', focusing on dialogues of Jesus with his (male and female) disciples are the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, the *Epistula Apostolorum*, and the *Gospel according to Mary*. They focus on the teaching of Jesus after his resurrection, presented as instruction that goes beyond that of the pre-Easter period. This provides, for example, specific knowledge about the upper world, the origin of the human race, and the way to

salvation. The concept of these writings is obviously to present the teaching of Jesus in philosophical and ethical terms that can only be perceived by those who possess special knowledge.

As these examples show, from an early stage the Jesus tradition was broader than that of the four Gospels. The apocryphal gospels fill in gaps left by the Gospels of the first century with legendary and sometimes competing traditions; they make the figure of Jesus and his teaching accessible also for groups at the edge of the emerging church; they point to a diversity of Christianity in the second and third century for which the formation of the New Testament canon should provide a framework.

NON-CANONICAL ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Another part of Early Christian Apocrypha consists of non-canonical acts of the apostles. They can be characterized as novelistic descriptions of the journeys and deeds of apostles mentioned in the New Testament. For the formation of the New Testament canon only the older acts are to be taken into account: the Acts of John, Peter, Paul, Andrew, and Thomas. The first three of these originated in the second half of the second century, the latter two in the first half of the third century. The later acts, e.g. the Acts of Philip, Mark, Timothy, or Bartholomew, are already on the way to hagiography and therefore not of direct interest for the topic here. Also the text from Nag Hammadi Codex VI.1, *The Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles*, originated at a later date (probably mid fourth century) and will be left aside here.

Although the title 'acts' (πράξεις, acta) could suggest closeness to the canonical Acts of the Apostles, there are considerable differences in genre and content. The title of the canonical Acts was probably added later and is only partially appropriate because the canonical Acts of the Apostles is in fact an account of the developments within Christianity of the first three decades with a clear focus on the figures of Peter and particularly Paul. The apocryphal acts, on the other hand, are descriptions of journeys and miraculous deeds of individual apostles in legendary form, sometimes with gnostic tendencies. With regard to genre, the apocryphal acts can therefore be regarded as novels, whereas the canonical Acts belongs to ancient historiography and can be characterized as a 'historical monograph'.

Apocryphal acts are mentioned occasionally in early Christian literature. Tertullian (*Bapt.* 17.5) reports the story of a presbyter from Asia who had compiled the *Acts of Paul*, but had confessed that he had done so out of love for Paul and had resigned from his ministry after he was found guilty of the forgery. The *Acts of Paul* are also referred to by Origen (*Princ.* 1.2.3; *Comm. Jo.* 20.12). Eusebius mentions the 'Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles' among the heretical writings (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25.6). In another passage Eusebius reports that the 'holy apostles and disciples of our Lord' were scattered about the whole earth and he lists the regions in which Thomas, Andrew, John, Peter, and Paul preached the gospel (*Hist. eccl.* 3.1.1–3). In the same context he mentions the deaths of John in Ephesus and of Peter and Paul in Rome. He is obviously referring here to the reports about these events in the acts of these apostles. Epiphanius reports that the acts of apostles were used in encratite circles (*Pan.* 47.1.5). Later they also appear in lists of biblical books: the catalogue in Codex Claromontanus mentions the *Acts of Paul*, and the Stichometry of Nicephorus lists the 'journeys' of Paul, Peter, John, and Thomas, together with other writings, among the apocryphal writings of the New Testament; in the ninth century Photius refers to the Acts of Peter, John, Andrew, Thomas, and Paul as one book, 'Journeys of the Apostles', allegedly written by Leucius Charinus. This name was already connected to the Acts of John in older

witnesses (it first appears in Epiphanius, *Pan*. 51.6.9), although even this authorship remains uncertain.

The oldest acts are probably the *Acts of John*. According to the list of Nicephorus about two thirds of the text is preserved. The passage in paragraphs 94–102, consisting of a dance hymn (perhaps an actually celebrated ritual) and a 'gnostic' description of Jesus' crucifixion, was probably an independent text, later incorporated into the *Acts of John* either by the author himself or at a later redactional stage. Its original place in the *Acts of John* is not entirely certain. Perhaps it was part of the description of John's activity in Ephesus during his first stay. (Its placement in the second stay in Ephesus follows the edition of Bonnet which perhaps has to be corrected.) For his presentation of Jesus, especially for the calling of the disciples, the beloved disciple, the account of the transfiguration, and the passion events, the author relies on the canonical Gospels. Perhaps he also knew the canonical Acts.

The original beginning of the *Acts of John* is lost. The first passage that is preserved describes the coming of the apostle John from Miletus to Ephesus, his activity in this city, a journey from Ephesus to surrounding cities in the province of Asia, the return to Ephesus, and his death in the city. John is characterized as a mighty apostle who introduces the Christian faith in the province of Asia, especially in Ephesus. He is able to destroy the temple of Artemis, to perform miracles, to heal and to resurrect people from death. Even animals like bugs obey him. The passage in paragraphs 87–105 can be characterized as John's 'preaching of the gospel'. Here Christ is described as appearing in various figures, e.g. as a little boy, as an old man and a young man, as a small human being, or as figure in bright light. The passion is described in a 'gnostic' manner as the opposition of a 'cross of light' and a 'cross of wood'. Christ is not hanging on the wooden cross; he has not suffered, but is above the cross of light, without shape, only as a voice.

A second example is provided by the *Acts of Peter*. Eusebius (*Hist. eccl*. 3.3.1–4) mentions it together with other writings ascribed to Peter (the first and second letter, the *Gospel*, the *Preaching*, and the *Apocalypse of Peter*). He states that only the first letter is commonly accepted, whereas the second one is not regarded as canonical (ἐνδιάθηκος), but as useful (χρήσιμος). The other writings, among them the *Acts of Peter*, however, were never counted among the 'catholic' writings.

The main manuscript for *Acts of Peter* is the *Actus Vercellenses* (*Act. Ver.*), a Latin translation of the Greek text of the *Acts of Peter*, beginning with the departure of Paul from Rome and ending with Peter's martyrdom. Three Greek fragments contain the martyrdom of Peter that was also handed down separately from the other parts. P. Oxy. 849, a fragmentary page of a parchment codex perhaps from the third century, contains a section of the resurrection of a dead boy by Peter in Rome, reported also in *Act. Ver.* 26.

The beginning of the *Acts of Peter* is perhaps fragmentarily preserved in the Berlin Gnostic Papyrus 8502, 128–32 and 135–41. (Cf. Schmidt 1903. Schmidt's hypothesis that the Coptic text is the translation of a Greek passage from the *Acts of Peter* was heavily criticized by A. L. Molinari. A relationship between the Coptic text and the Greek *Acts of Peter* seems, however, a plausible suggestion, although it is less clear how this relationship is to be seen precisely.) The text deals with Peter's healing activity in Jerusalem and a story concerning Peter's daughter. The beginning of the *Act. Ver.* is a report about Paul's departure from Rome to Spain, followed by the conflict between Simon and Peter in Rome. This confrontation is broadly presented and focused on the power to perform miracles. The description of Simon goes far beyond the remarks in the canonical Acts, but text shows no interest in presenting him as the initiator of gnostic heresies as is the case in Justin's and Irenaeus's portrayals. Instead, the *Acts of Peter* are focused on the presentation of Peter as

superior to Simon in his capacity to perform mighty deeds. The last part is devoted to Peter's martyrdom. This part of the *Acts of Peter* was also passed down independently as is attested by several Greek manuscripts and translations. After the famous 'Quo vadis' scene (as he wants to leave Rome, Peter meets the Lord) Peter returns to the city and is crucified head downwards. Just before his crucifixion he gives a speech about the meaning of the cross as the symbol for the participation in Christ's sufferings. Hanging on the cross he gives a second speech about the meaning of his crucifixion: his head downwards symbolizes the perverted nature of humankind from its very beginning.

The *Acts of Paul*, our third example, consists of different parts: the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, the description of Paul's activity in several cities in Asia Minor, including the so-called *3 Corinthians*, the journey to Rome, and the martyrdom of Paul in this city. These parts belonged together already at an early stage as can be inferred from a Coptic papyrus discovered in 1894 and published by Carl Schmidt in 1904. The *Acts of Paul* can therefore be regarded as a presentation of Paul's career from his conversion to his death that runs parallel to the canonical Acts. The beginning of the *Acts of Paul*, describing his conversion and his coming to Antioch, is only poorly preserved. The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* narrates the encounter of Paul and Thecla who, because of Paul's preaching, decides to stay as a virgin. In the following episodes Thecla becomes the main figure. She follows Paul as his disciple from Iconium to Antioch and Myra, she remains sexually abstinent, and suffers several times on account of her faith. Thecla is presented in this part of the *Acts of Paul* as the exemplary apostle and martyr. In the following paragraphs Paul's activity in several places (Myra, Sidon, Tyre, Ephesos, Philippi, Corinth) is narrated. From a prison in Philippi, he writes a letter to the community in Corinth refuting the heresies that were propagated there by Simon and Kleobius. The final section reports his journey to Italy, his encounter with the emperor Nero, and his beheading. Immediately after his death he appears again in front of Nero as he had predicted before. Interestingly, the tradition that Paul was released again and travelled to Spain, hinted at in *1 Clement* and explicitly mentioned in the Muratorian Canon, does not appear in the *Acts of Paul*. In sum, the *Acts of Paul* are focused on the description of Paul's activity mainly in those places which are also known from the canonical Acts and from Paul's letters. But the *Acts of Paul* also contain specific traditions, e.g. the stories about Thecla, Paul's activity in Sidon, Tyre, and Ephesus, and the description of his final days in Rome. The *Acts of Paul* can therefore be regarded as a presentation of Paul's career from the perspective of second-century Christianity. Distinctive tendencies are the presentation of Thecla as a role model for a life according to Paul's gospel, the emphasis on sexual abstinence, and the presentation of Paul as powerful in speeches and deeds. As with the *Acts of John*, the *Acts of Paul* also contain novelistic elements, e.g. the story about the baptized lion, alluded to also by Hippolytus of Rome, or the milk sputtering out of Paul's body after his beheading. The *Acts of Paul* can therefore be regarded as a description of Paul's career with legendary tendencies that takes up older traditions, among them also some from the canonical Acts.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the apocryphal acts take up traditions about the activity and the fate of the apostles and present them in the context of second- (and third-)century Christianity. They contain legendary, sometimes even fabulous, elements, e.g. speaking animals or miraculous deeds of the apostles. They are therefore to be classified as fictional literature, although not without their own theological perspectives. These include, for example, ascetic tendencies, the emphasis on the role of women in early Christianity, the presentation of the apostles as miracle workers, and the meaning of suffering. The only 'gnostic' passage appears in *Acts John* 97–102. The apocryphal acts

therefore use the figures of the apostles within the debates of second- and third-century Christianity about how to live in the light of Christian faith.

NON-CANONICAL APOCALYPSES

Within the New Testament only the Revelation of John belongs to the apocalyptic genre, whereas in other writings of the New Testament, e.g. in the Synoptic Gospels, 1 Corinthians 15, and 2 Thessalonians 2, only apocalyptic motifs occur. The apocryphal apocalypses are also closely related to Jewish apocalyptic traditions. Of special importance within early Christian literature are the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Apocalypse of Paul, 5* and *6 Ezra*, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, and several apocalypses from Nag Hammadi, e.g. the apocalypses of Paul, Peter, and Adam. The *Shepherd of Hermas*, although usually regarded as part of the collection of the so-called 'Apostolic Fathers', also belongs to the apocalypses of early Christianity.

Apocryphal apocalypses can appear in the form of Jewish writings expanded from a Christian perspective. This is the case in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, a complex writing which in its final form was probably composed in the late second century and is completely preserved only in an Ethiopic translation. It consists of an account of the martyrdom of the prophet Isaiah in chs 1–5 and his ascension into heaven in chs 6–11. The first half of the text is obviously a Jewish text, although some Christian additions can be recognized: in 3.13–4.18 a vision of Isaiah is reported in which he foretells the coming of a heavenly figure in human shape, his martyrdom, crucifixion, and resurrection as well as conflicts among his followers. This part is therefore an obvious Christian interpolation into a Jewish text. The second part is also written from a Christian perspective. It relates another vision of Isaiah: he ascends up to the seventh heaven and sees all the righteous ones since Adam, missing their thrones and crowns which they shall receive after the birth, activity, crucifixion, and ascension of Jesus which is revealed to Isaiah.

Another example of a close relationship between Christian and Jewish apocalypses is provided by *5* and *6 Ezra*. In the textual transmission both of these books are additions to *4 Ezra*, a Jewish apocalyptic writing from the late first century: *5 Ezra* serves as its introduction, i.e. the first two chapters, *6 Ezra* consists of the last two chapters, i.e. chs 15 and 16. In the so-called Sixto-Clementine, the edition of the Vulgate prepared by Pope Clement VIII and published in 1592, all three of these writings appear as '*4 Ezra*' as an appendix to the New Testament, preceded by *3 Ezra* and followed by *Psalm 151* and the *Letter to the Laodiceans*.

For chs 3–14, as well as for chs 1–2 (*5 Ezra*) and 15–16 (*6 Ezra*), only Latin manuscripts are preserved, dating from the ninth to the thirteenth century: eight manuscripts contain *4, 5,* and *6 Ezra*, another one consists only of *5 Ezra* 1:1–2:20. The earliest surviving manuscript is P. Oxy. 1010, a miniature leaf of a parchment codex from Oxyrhynchus from the fourth century with a Greek fragment of *6 Ezra* (15:57–9). Besides these manuscripts there are several quotations of *5* and *6 Ezra* in writings of Christian theologians from the fourth and fifth century.

The manuscript tradition is divided into a French and a Spanish recension. The differences between the two recensions indicate a textual history within the Latin transmission of *5 Ezra*. In *6 Ezra* the case is slightly different. Here the translations rely on a common Latin *Vorlage*, which is better preserved in the French recension.

The sequence of the Ezra writings in the manuscript transmission differs. The order *5 Ezra−4 Ezra−6 Ezra* is only preserved in manuscript A, originating from the ninth

century. In manuscript S *5 Ezra* is followed by *3 Ezra* 1:1–2:15, only then by *4 Ezra* (3–14) and *6 Ezra* (15–16). In the manuscripts of the Spanish recension *5 Ezra* is arranged as the last book, after *4 Ezra* and *6 Ezra*. Thus already the manuscript transmission shows that *5* and *6 Ezra* were originally composed as independent writings and only later integrated into a Jewish apocalypse under the authority of Ezra, serving as its introduction and conclusion. The original language of *5 Ezra* was either Greek or Latin; *6 Ezra* was almost certainly composed in Greek and translated into Latin only later. This can be inferred from P. Oxy. 1010 but also from several Latin phrases pointing to a Greek *Vorlage*.

With regard to the date of composition of *5 Ezra* it is probable that the author knew *4 Ezra*, the Gospel of Matthew, and also the Revelation of John. The quotation in the *Acta Silvestri* from the fifth century points to a period of textual transmission in which this addition became known as part of the Ezra literature. A date in the second or third century is therefore probable. It would be difficult, however, to determine the time of origin more precisely.

Concerning the date of *6 Ezra*, scholars have suggested that it originated in the second half of the third century. Even more specific was Alfred von Gutschmid who assumed that the events described in 15:28–33 refer to the conflicts between the kingdom of Palmyrene and its ruler Odaenathus and the Romans on the one hand and the Persians (Sasanians) and their king Shapur I between 262 and 267 CE on the other. It is disputed, however, whether the *nationes draconum Arabum* in 15:29 can be related to the kingdom of Palmyra and whether the events described in that passage should be interpreted as referring to concrete historical events at all. If the passage does not reflect such a precise historical background, *6 Ezra* could have been written any time in the second or third century.

The French recension of *5 Ezra* opens with a genealogy, tracing Ezra's origin back to Aaron from the tribe of Levi. The first part of the book (1:1–2:9) consists of harsh indictments of God against Israel. This part is structured by the repeated introduction *haec dicit Dominus omnipotens*, followed by rhetorical questions pointing to God's benefactions for his people and by the announcement of punishment. Ezra is instructed to charge God's people with their disobedience and ungratefulness for God's protection during the Exodus and in the desert. This leads to the proclamation that God will cast out his people and hand over their houses to a people coming from far away. They will not see with fleshly eyes, but believe with the spirit. The patriarchs and the prophets will be given to them as leaders. This part ends with a lamentation of the 'widow' Jerusalem, abandoned by her children.

The second part is introduced in correspondence to 1:4–5 with *haec dicit Dominus ad Ezram*. It contains announcements of salvation for the new people of God who will replace Israel. They will be given eternal dwellings, their dead will be raised and the prophets will be sent to them. This part also contains a catalogue of ethical instructions focusing on mercy with the disadvantaged. In 2:33 Ezra himself gives a summary, saying that Israel has rejected him and his instructions, and the new people are assured that they will gain God's salvation. Finally, Ezra reports a vision on Mount Zion: he saw a great crowd praising God and a young man in their midst crowning their heads with crowns. Eventually, an angel identifies the crowd as those who have taken off the mortal garment and donned the immortal, and the young man is identified as the Son of God.

5 Ezra is influenced by a number of Jewish and Christian biblical and non-biblical writings and traditions. Besides *4 Ezra* it shows traces of influence especially of *2 Baruch* as well as of Old and New Testament writings, such as Exodus, Psalm 77^{LXX} (78), the Revelation of John, and the tradition of the violent fate of the prophets of Israel. Its place within the history of early Christian literature can be described as taking up the history of

God's people outlined in Baruch and integrating it into a sketch of salvation history from a Christian perspective.

6 Ezra begins with a preface in which God instructs Ezra to speak the words of prophecy to his people and to cause them to be to be written down. This preliminary remark is then followed by an announcement of the destruction of the earth brought about by God. The reason for castigating mankind with these evils is that wickedness has overwhelmed the earth and especially that God's people have to suffer from all the other peoples on earth. Four parts of the inhabited world are mentioned in particular: Egypt, Asia, Babylonia, and Syria. In the second part, beginning in 16:36, God admonishes his people to be aware of the word of God and of the calamities which have been announced.

Both books can clearly be identified as Christian apocalypses. Their aim is to comfort God's people—that is, the Christian believers—and at the same time to criticize the people of Israel in a harsh manner. *5 Ezra* in particular can be regarded as part of early Christian *Adversus Iudaeos* literature. Its perspective is directed at the replacement of God's original people with a new one because of the disobedience of the first one. *6 Ezra*, however, is oriented towards a final judgement as it is known from several Jewish and Christian apocalypses. At the same time, this judgement will bring about salvation for the elect who do not commit sin and keep God's commandments.

With regard to their genre, *5* and *6 Ezra* do not fit straightforwardly into a definition of an 'apocalypse'. *5 Ezra* is presented as prophetic utterances revealed by God to Ezra. The final sentences, however, are formulated as a vision of the last events in history when a great crowd will gather at Mount Zion and the Son of God will be revealed to them. These verses can therefore be regarded as an apocalyptic vision. *6 Ezra*, in a similar way, is presented as prophetic speeches given by Ezra, describing the destruction of the earth and the salvation of the elect. The events leading to a complete destruction thereby resemble those in other apocalyptic writings in many ways.

The (Greek) *Apocalypse of Peter* (*Apoc. Pet.*) is referred to, as mentioned earlier, together with the Apocalypse of John, as an accepted writing of the early church in the Muratorian Canon. The Stichometry of Nicephorus mentions both apocalypses among the disputed writings. *Apoc. Pet.* also appears in the catalogue added to the Codex Claromontanus as the last writing, after the *Acts of Paul*. The two main versions of this writing are the Greek fragment in the Akhmîm Codex that also contains the *Gospel of Peter* (see the second section, 'Non-canonical Gospels') and the Ethiopic version that was discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century and contains a complete text of the Apocalypse. The content of the (Greek) *Apocalypse of Peter* is the disclosure of the events related to the Parousia of Christ and the end of the world. They are revealed to Peter by the Lord himself on the Mount of Olives. The righteous and the sinners will be separated and the sinners will be castigated with severe punishments that are described in detail. The chosen and the righteous ones are brought to Christ in white clothes. The final scene is a version of the transfiguration story in the synoptic gospels. It describes the encounter of Jesus and the disciples with Moses and Elijah, a voice from heaven declaring Jesus as the beloved son, followed by the ascension of Jesus into heaven.

The *Apocalypse of Paul* (also known as the 'Visio Pauli') originated in the third century, although only a small fragment from the original Greek text is preserved. Several translations into different languages (e.g. Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic) present different versions of the text which can hardly be traced back to one 'original' version. The apocalypse takes its point of departure from 2 Cor. 12.2–4 (as does the much shorter *Apocalypse of Paul* in NHC V.2) where Paul reports the ascension into the third heaven (or paradise). The apocalypse reports a revelation in which Paul is taken up to the throne of

God and sees the punishments of the sinners. Afterwards he comes to paradise and meets Mary, the mother of the Lord, the patriarchs, and finally Peter and the apostles on the Mount of Olives.

The apocryphal apocalypses take up several motifs from Jewish apocalyptic literature and transfer them to prominent figures around Jesus, especially to Peter and Paul. Another feature of this part of Christian apocryphal literature is that the writings can also appear in the form of expanded Jewish texts under the authority of Isaiah, Ezra, or other prophets. In some cases, e.g. with regard to the apocalyptic texts ascribed to Zephaniah, it is almost impossible to differentiate between Jewish and Christian traditions. Obviously, Jewish apocalyptic literature could become part of the Christian tradition with only slight, or even no, alterations. In other cases, visions about the end of the world and the final judgement that in Jewish texts are ascribed to prominent figures, e.g. Enoch, Abraham, Moses, or Daniel, could be transferred to Peter and Paul by using the same motifs. Although only the Revelation of John was accepted into the New Testament canon, apocalyptic writings became an important part of Christian literature.

CONCLUSION

Early Christian Apocrypha can be characterized as accounts about figures and events in early Christian history that expand and elaborate the traditions of the 'canonical' writings. The main characters of these accounts are Jesus and the apostles, but also other figures, e.g. the parents of Mary, the mother of Jesus, or Thecla. Some of these writings provide interpretations of Jesus' activity that consciously compete with those in the accepted gospels while others are just legendary embellishments of older traditions. The stories about the apostles can be regarded as narratives taking up material from older writings and elaborating it into stories that make these figures meaningful also for later contexts, beginning in the second century. The apocalypses take up the expectation of God's final judgement and the separation of righteous and sinners and present them in the Christian context of the expectation of the parousia of Jesus Christ.

The apocryphal texts posed the question of a corpus of authoritative writings for the church. This was not only necessitated by dissenting views about the meaning of Jesus or the scriptures of Israel but also by the wide range of literature about Jesus, the apostles, the origin of the world, the end of time, and the final judgement. The development of the biblical canon can therefore be regarded as a process within early Christianity in which those writings were regarded as constitutive that contain the authoritative traditions about the formative period of Christianity. The early Christian Apocrypha placed these writings in the wider context of diverging interpretations, legendary elaborations, and supplementing traditions. The Christian tradition was, therefore, never restricted to those writings that gained canonical status. Rather, the wide range of apocryphal literature contributed to the perception of the meaning of Jesus and the formative period of Christianity from the very beginning.

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CHAPTER 10

'USEFUL FOR THE SOUL'

Christian Apocrypha and Christian Spirituality

FRANÇOIS BOVON

INTRODUCTION

IN 1599 Elias Hutter presented a polyglot Bible in twelve languages that offered a fascinating solution to the perplexing problem of how to preserve an epistle that no one considered to be totally canonical, but that no one thought should be rejected as apocryphal. At p. 525 of the second volume of his Bible, Hutter reaches the end of the Epistle to the Colossians and leaves p. 526 blank, in order to begin the next letter on the right page. But— to our surprise—when he begins the next text we find that he abandons for a while the regular canon of the New Testament and what follows is not 1 Thessalonians, as we would expect, but the *Epistle to the Laodiceans*. Hutter knew that this letter was so beloved in the Middle Ages that it was copied in many manuscripts of the Vulgate. He therefore decided to publish it as well, and here it is side by side with the other Pauline epistles in twelve languages. But because he knew that this letter was not really canonical he did not dare to give those pages a number. Only after *Laodiceans*, when he takes up Thessalonians, does Hutter begin to number the pages again, and he starts with p. 527. Between pp. 526 and 527 we therefore read seven pages without numbers that contain the *Epistle to the Laodiceans*, a document that appears at the same time both 'canonical' and 'apocryphal'!

This example illustrates a thesis that I have begun to address elsewhere (Bovon 2004, 2012) and that I develop here more fully: contrary to a commonly held assumption, church leaders, major theologians, and ordinary Christians from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance acknowledged and distinguished not two groups of texts, but three—those that were canonical, those that were rejected (apocryphal), and those that were useful for private piety, edification of the community, and a historical understanding of Christian origins. Many texts that today are referred to as 'New Testament Apocrypha' or 'Christian Apocrypha' belong to this third category. Among them are several gospel harmonies that played an immense role in the life of the Christian churches, beginning with Justin's lost gospel harmony and Tatian's *Diatessaron* (dated to the end of the second century CE) and ending with the Old English Pepysian gospel harmony. Also in this category are *3 Corinthians* and *Laodiceans*, two epistles that are at the same time present and absent from the Armenian and Latin manuscripts of the Bible. Texts of other genres may also be identified as belonging to this category of books that were considered useful for the soul. A good example is a Greek version of the *Prayer and Apocalypse of Paul*, preserved in the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, which together with other versions of the

Apocalypse of Paul challenges the widespread opinion that the Byzantine church, following in the steps of earlier Alexandrian theologians, was reluctant to accept apocalyptic thinking and apocalyptic texts. Like the gospel harmonies and the non-canonical Pauline epistles, those revelations were not rejected. On the contrary, they were read and copied with enthusiasm. Of course they were not canonical—that is, they were not read in public worship—but neither were they rejected or considered to be apocryphal.

The descriptive adjective that was applied to these texts and that reappears across centuries of time, but has been largely ignored, is 'useful' or 'profitable'. This term was already present in Origen's writings in the third century CE, was used by Luther at the time of the Reformation, and reappears in a French dictionary of the eighteenth century. In Greek Orthodox piety these writings are called ψυχωφελῆ, that is, 'useful for the soul'. It is my contention that today there is still a place in Christian spirituality for this third category of texts.

For instance, according to the author of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* (dated early third century) this story was preserved and this text written in a particular form so that it might serve as a parallel to the canonical Gospels. Like the Gospels, the author considered the *Martyrdom* to be one of the instrumenta, the tools, facilitating the spread of evangelical truth (de Labriolle 1947: 1.156–9; on the text as a whole, see Salisbury 1997; Heffernan 2012). Two centuries later, Augustine developed a similar theory: the thaumaturgic virtue of Saint Stephen's relics on the sick in Hippo, Carthage, and Utica in the province of Africa must be consigned in written documents by the healed persons themselves. These witnesses, called *libelli*, served as proofs that God's salvific action and divine power were as powerful at that time as they were during the time of Jesus (Delahaye 1910; Bovon 2003: 283). Along with the martyrdoms, such miracle stories were not of course viewed as canonical—not in the sense that the gospels were—but neither were they rejected or considered apocryphal. Instead, they constituted the third category of texts that are discussed in this essay: they were profitable for the soul, useful for the individual, and beneficial to the community.

There was, I believe, a theological reason behind the practical decisions to save the texts of this third category and the age-old tradition to read them as a source of inspiration and devotion. For the first Christians, as well as for their successors, the structure of Christian faith might be pictured as an ellipse having Jesus Christ and the apostles as the two poles: these believers remembered not only the deeds and words of Jesus but also the activities of the apostles. They therefore welcomed stories related to the first Christians (Bovon 1993). If the foundation of Christian propaganda was the creed of Jesus' death and resurrection, stories about the apostles and the first missionaries were also part of building up the Christian faith. As early as the time of Paul, the apostle had already become a model to be imitated (1 Cor. 11.1; Betz 1967; Castelli 1991); and the first epistle of the Romans to the Corinthian community (so-called *1 Clement*), a very ancient document, proposed Peter and Paul as models of behaviour (*1 Clem.* 5–6).

My point is that non-canonical writings related to the apostles were not *ipso facto* rejected but initially formed the third category of texts under consideration here. Some of these were memories cherished by Christians who were considered to be heretical by the mainstream orthodox church; others expressed doctrinal positions, particularly in the speeches made by Christian protagonists—most often apostles—that either could not, or could no longer, be considered to be tolerable from an orthodox point of view. Accordingly, it was the clash between two contradictory needs—the respect for apostolic memories and the search for orthodox stability—that explains the paradoxical fate of many non-canonical acts of apostles.

Two of the oldest and most needed memories, the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Acts of John* (two apostolic figures neglected by the author of Acts), were among the most despised by orthodoxy. Their strange christology and the marginal position of their authors and first readers explain why both texts were held in contempt. In the *Acts of Andrew* the Father and the Son are merged into one God whose transcendence does not allow any place for incarnation. Jesus Christ, who is both Father and Son at the same time, remains in the divine realm, leaving the apostle Andrew to take over and fulfil the function of mediator and saviour (Prieur 1989: 1.293–307, 344–67; Bovon 1994). In the central section of the *Acts of John* (vv. 94–102 and 109), which is probably derived from an independent source, the text presents a christology that is clearly docetic. Jesus Christ is not really the incarnation of the Word of God but a divine figure who has the ability to modify his shape according to salvific or missionary needs (so-called polymorphy; see Junod and Kaestli 1983: 2.581–677; Junod 1982). Not surprisingly, these two books rapidly became suspect; they were not, however, simply rejected. The need for apostolic memories of John and Andrew remained too strong to allow simple rejection.

Several solutions offered themselves: expurgation, revision, reconstruction, and substitution of the contents of the stories. Gregory of Tours, a sixth-century bishop who was immune from any heresy, expurgated the *Acts of Andrew* and rewrote a Latin version in order to preserve the memory of the apostle's peregrinations and miracles. The only censorship Gregory exercised was over Andrew's speeches, which, he explains, were cut short because they were lengthy and tedious. In truth, it is more probable that Gregory considered them to be heretical or tendentious. In the East the *Acts of Andrew* endured another, more drastic solution: as soon as Patras, the location of the apostle's martyrdom, was appreciated as a holy place, local legends developed which were then gathered together and fashioned into a new story. This process was repeated at a later date, when Constantinople, the unhappy capital short of an apostolic see, transferred Andrew's relics from Patras to the second Rome. Nor was historical truthfulness the decisive question that argued either for or against the acceptance of non-canonical acts, for a preoccupation with reliability found in some authors today is an essentially modern phenomenon (e.g. Gasque 1975, Winter et al. 1993–6). Despite the fact that the chronology and geographical itinerary of the *Acts of Paul* are inconsistent with those in the canonical Acts of the Apostles, this book was read without hesitation and with interest by orthodox Christians for more than a century.

The Twelve were not the only ones who caught the attention of early Christian storytellers. The destinies of several women—Mary Magdalene, Salome, and the Virgin Mary—also entered into the focus of Christian memory. Stories written in the second century about Jesus' mother recounted her providential birth and miraculous childhood; these are contained in the so-called *Protevangelium of James* (de Strycker 1961). Then, in the fourth and fifth centuries other tales about Mary's old age and death appeared in the manifold recensions of the *Assumption of Mary* (Mimouni 1995; Shoemaker 2002). While the Virgin Mary's function was more narrative and economical, Mary Magdalene's responsibility was more doctrinal: was she not an important witness of Jesus' teaching and resurrection? In the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Pistis Sophia*, and the *Gospel of Mary*, Jesus' friend plays a major role, welcoming women and men, teaching, and carrying out her own ministry. It was often the case that an explicit or implicit rivalry developed between Mary Magdalene and Peter, between the first two witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. In one instance found in the *Acts of Philip* (probably fourth century) a woman named Mariamne—another name for Mary Magdalene—is not only a witness but also the hero of the narrative (Bovon 2002).

In addition to these women, Christians in Late Antiquity wished to hear about the destiny of the seventy, or seventy-two, disciples who were sent out by the Lord in Luke 10. Short notices preserving their names, origins, birthplaces, and final destinies were gathered together and have reached us in different forms, recensions, and languages (Schermann 1907; Dolbeau 1992). Paul's main collaborators and companions also excited Christian imagination: their ministries and martyrdoms were recorded, and thus we have the *Acts of Timothy* (Delahaye 1939), the *Acts of Titus* (Geerard 1992: §§ 285–6), and the *Martyrdom of Barnabas*. There was similar interest in the evangelists Luke (Lipsius 1883–90: 2.2, 354–71) and Mark (Bovon and Callahan 2005); as members of the group of the Twelve, Matthew and John had already been taken care of. Even Stephen, the only early Christian hero for whom the New Testament itself provides a martyrdom story, aroused curiosity in the minds of early Christians.

We reach the following conclusion: as long as a text did not harm or pose a threat to the developing creed and emerging church order, the reading of non-canonical stories related to the apostles was permitted, even welcomed. And as long as their readers did not promote heretical habits, such as excessive ascetical rules, or condemn the emerging catholic ethics and christology, these texts were viewed as useful alongside the Gospels, the Epistles, the book of Acts, some Catholic Epistles, and—as long as it was accepted—the book of Revelation.

THE CASE OF SAINT STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR

While many scholars have spent time and energy analysing the canonical book of Acts and its portrait of Stephen (Bovon 2003), few have written on the other texts in which Stephen also features. Indeed it is astonishing to realize how little intellectual curiosity has been stimulated by the following question: what do we know about Stephen from sources other than the canonical book of Acts?

The literature produced on Saint Stephen during the late antique period was extensive. These writings, although not canonical, should not be called apocryphal. As hagiographical narratives (Halkin 1957) and apocalyptic visions (Erbetta 1969: 397–408) they belong to the third category. The case of Stephen is exemplary of this third category in at least one important aspect: the multiplicity of texts, forms of the texts, recensions, and translations in existence. By way of contrast, a canonical text is characterized by its unicity. Even if there are always variant readings, the text of a canonical book—let us say, of a gospel—can still be considered stable. Sacralization implies and provokes a certain stability of the text. An apocryphal text, lying at the other end of the spectrum, is considered to be fallacious; it is expected to be rejected and has a tendency to disappear. The number of its copies often reaches the number zero. Some apocryphal texts, for example the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* (Puech and Blatz 1999), are known to us only through the appearance of their title on a list of apocryphal books.

In the case of Stephen, besides the Lukan narrative preserved in Acts 6–8, we can mention at least three different texts: (a) a martyrdom story, (b) a revelation concerning Stephen's relics, and (c) the story of the translation of Stephen's relics from Jerusalem to Constantinople (Bovon 2003: 294–301). This variety is only the beginning of what I call the text's 'multiplicity', which is attested by the many manuscripts and the absence of textual stability, made evident by the many dissensions among the codices. Only the characteristics of the 'profitable books' can explain the devotion shown for such stories.

In contrast to canonical and apocryphal texts, profitable documents are flexible, adaptable to the needs of the audience, the taste of the scribe, and the circumstances of the moment. Each copy becomes something of a performance, and it is difficult—even impossible—to prepare an edition of the same text using several manuscripts, because all of them diverge markedly from one another. In the case of Stephen, there are at least nine different recensions of the *Martyrdom*. There are also several different recensions of the *Revelatio* to the priest of Caphar Gamala, and the same can be said of the *Translatio* (Bovon 2003: 305). To this multiplicity of recensions one has to add the large number of translations. For the Greek *Revelatio* there are versions in Syriac, Latin, Armenian, Georgian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Slavonic, and Gaelic!

One example of a book about Stephen that is better characterized not as 'apocryphal' but as 'profitable for the soul' is the *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen* (Bovon and Bouvier 2004). This is a text that combines both canonical and non-canonical traditions. The first part of the document relates a story that is unknown in the canonical book of Acts; the second part consists of a long quotation—also not introduced as a quotation—of Acts 6.14–7.59a (Stephen's trial, defence, and condemnation); the third part forms a conclusion that is again made up of non-canonical material. In spite of being a mixture of canonical and non-canonical material, the narrative is logical and coherent as a whole. It should not be called apocryphal, for it was not rejected; nor can it be called biblical, for it was not considered holy scripture; it belongs to the tradition of the orthodox church. I must add that this martyrdom story exists in nine forms or recensions, all very similar and very different, which is again a characteristic of the third category, the useful books.

The first part of the *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen* explains the origin of a dispute that includes Stephen and the Hellenists, but spares the twelve apostles (see Acts 8.1). In this way, the story takes up a task that remains incomplete in the canonical book of Acts. It explains that the Hellenists, not the apostles, took the risk of participating in a dispute that arose among several Jewish groups. While christology remains strangely discreet in Stephen's long canonical speech in Acts 7 and in his trial, in the *Martyrdom* it forms the central core of the dispute between the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Hellenists. In the story, Stephen attempts to explain to both the Sadducees and the Pharisees the providential stages in Jesus' destiny while emphasizing the salvific effects of his ministry; the motif of tension between the two groups probably originates in another part of the canonical book of Acts (Paul's appearance before the Sanhedrin, Acts 23.6–10). In order to give this local debate a universal dimension the author constructs—perhaps following the Lukan list of nations in Acts 2.9–11—a gathering of wise men and great scholars who come from Egypt and Babylon and converge at Jerusalem (the text says 'from Thebaid and Alexandria, Mauritania, Jerusalem and Babylon', a list that deserves further investigation).

Just as there are three groups engaged in the dispute, so there are three opinions regarding Jesus' identity. According to one group, probably the Pharisees, Jesus must be a great prophet; according to another, probably the Sadducees, he was a seducer who led the people astray; according to still another group, probably the Hellenists, he was the Son of God. These diverging opinions provoke great turmoil. At this very moment, Stephen dares to speak. Our document—as all the others—respects a particular detail, which says that Stephen spoke 'from a high place'. Stephen's first speech, a non-canonical one, contains all the christological substance that is absent from the canonical speech found in Acts 7. Jesus, considered the hope of salvation for the world and the friend of the human race, came down from heaven because of the sins and ignorance of the world. Stephen also insists on the election of the Virgin Mary 'from before the creation of the world'. Using a typological argument between Eve and Mary, he deduces that the name 'Life', which was given to Eve,

is now valid also for Mary. Another kind of argument serves to transform the massacre of the innocents—Herod of course is responsible for this and behind him, the Devil—into a story of loving intercession: from now on, deceased small children will pray for the human race. In the final part of this speech Stephen urges his audience to believe in Christ, offering Christ's miracles as proof of his divine origin and authority.

After this totally non-canonical narrative, the reader is confronted with a long quotation from the book of Acts. It must be noted first that the author does not introduce the quotation; that is, he does not intend to distinguish, from a literary and theological point of view, between the non-canonical and the canonical parts of the document. Second, we must note that the portion of Acts that is quoted is taken from neither the ancient Egyptian text nor the Western text, but from the Byzantine. In Acts 7.17, for example, what is mentioned is an oath, not a confession; in Acts 7.30 an angel of the Lord, not just an angel, is introduced. Third, it must be noted that the author is forced to create a transition, which he does by freely reshaping Acts 6.8–13; then, from Acts 6.14 on, the quotation is literal and faithful. It must be noted, fourth, that there is a small but decisive change in the quotation: where Luke insists on Stephen's Jewish identity and has him refer to the patriarchs as 'our fathers', the author of the *Martyrdom* removes Stephen from his ancestors by using the homophony of ἡμῶν ('of us') and ὑμῶν ('of you'): under his pen the patriarchs become 'your fathers'. At this point, the divorce with Israel is pronounced.

After a new, indispensable transition, the author of the *Martyrdom*, wishing to continue the story beyond the canonical limits, proceeds with a totally non-canonical final section. Saul's participation in Stephen's death is increased. Gamaliel, opposing his former pupil, supports the Christians—as in Acts 5—and defends Stephen's honour. The first martyr himself utters a prophecy that Luke does not mention: he predicts to Saul that in the end he will die in a similar way. The text also adds some new elements to the evocation of the funeral: the quality of the coffin, the location of the grave, and the inscription *chiliel*, which in Syriac—like *stephanos* in Greek—means 'crown'. A last paragraph introduces Gamaliel's nephew, Nicodemos, who brings his nightly visits with Jesus (John 3) to fulfilment through baptism, which is celebrated by Peter and Paul. Such adherence to Christianity is not without danger: only Gamaliel's authority spares Nicodemos from capital punishment. While he avoids death, Nicodemos loses his belongings and is forced to accept brutal corporal pain. Fortunately, Gamaliel opens his home to him. But Nicodemos soon dies and is buried next to Saint Stephen.

It is clear from the three parts of this document that the first is totally original; the second is biblical; and the third part, which is also non-canonical, parallels narrative parts of the *Revelatio*; it is difficult to explain the kinship between the *Martyrdom* and the *Revelatio*. Concerning the third part, I would suggest that legends about Gamaliel's care for Stephen's remains and Nicodemos' destiny were circulating in Palestine during the third and the fourth centuries. Ephrem the Syrian bears witness to such traditions in his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles (Bovon 2003: 288–9). Some of the details concerning Stephen's coffin and the word *chiliel* that was inscribed on it were also included in these memories. Both the *Martyrdom* and the *Revelatio* adopted portions of these legends according to their literary, historical, and spiritual needs. Something similar can be said with regard to the first part of the *Martyrdom*. Just as the christological dispute received confirmation in more recent hagiographical texts and Stephen's location on a high place is universally attested, so this non-canonical 'preparation' to the canonical sequence most likely relies on an ancient tradition.

CONCLUSION

The flow of apostolic memories did not dry up with the evangelical kerygma and the christological creed. The growing church preserved a stock of useful data concerning its origin and early witnesses. What interested her most was the ministry and death of the first generation of apostles on one hand, and the brave and noble martyrdoms of so many heroes of the Christian faith on the other. I have shown this here by reference to a Greek tradition about Stephen, but the same twofold focus of interest in the apostles may be seen also in the Coptic Church, where two different collections of literature also survive: the journeyings of the apostles and their martyrdoms (Morard 1981).

Among the many documents that were written about the apostles and the first Christian witnesses, only the second part of the Lukan enterprise, namely the book of Acts, was canonized; this book also became part of the cycle of readings in the liturgy. The early catholica decided to have not only two readings of scripture in the dominical liturgy—one from the Old Testament, the other from the New—but three (one from the Old Testament and two from the New). The church refused to have only a reading from the gospels and added a reading from the epistles or the Acts. This second New Testament reading was called the 'Epistle' in the West and the 'Apostle' in the East (Bovon 1993). Thus in the whole church—Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic—Christian faith was not considered to be a circle with a christological centre, but an ellipse that had two poles: one christological and the other apostolic. Following tactful intuition, an appropriate time of year was chosen for reading the Acts of the Apostles: in Africa it was read after Easter; in Milan, after Pentecost (Bovon 1967: 30–2). Both solutions were theologically relevant, since the resurrection of Christ (the Easter solution) or the outpouring of the Spirit (the Pentecost solution) constitute the beginning of the church—such is the content of the book of Acts. The canonization of the book of Acts was of course a choice. Readers of the non-canonical acts who were considered suspect, like the Manicheans, inflicted great injury on these other documents. But in a spontaneous way the church in each country, in each language, did not confine herself to choosing the drastic solution: to accept Acts and reject the others. Instead, the patristic structure of three types of documents offered a much better solution. In addition to the canonical books, the church retained other respectable documents that concerned the apostles and first Christians. Such non-canonical but nevertheless profitable books were considered part of the Christian tradition. Some of the oldest acts of apostles were formally rejected, but their plots, the peregrinations of their heroes, and their martyrdoms were rescued. Revisions allowed them to become part of mainstream Christian tradition. Other Christian legends, such as those related to Stephen, Matthew, Mary Magdalene, Salome, Mark, Luke, Titus, and Timothy, were collected and appreciated for their 'usefulness'. Piety, edification, and ethics could only benefit from such examples.

As modern readers, we might immediately raise the question of historicity. My own experience with Greek monks helped me understand retrospectively that such a question was not a priority in Late Antiquity. Once, I inadvertently embarrassed the *higoumenos*, the abbot, of the Monastery of Limonos on the island of Lesbos when I asked when the saint of the day—St Paraskeve—had lived. He hesitated about Domitian for a moment, then said that it was under Diocletian; he was however much more certain about the virtue and merits of dear Paraskeve.

Modern readers might also wonder how much this mine of apostolic material contains by way of historical nuggets. Any attempt to respond to this question must take into account three considerations: (a) like the Jewish faith, Christian faith is attached to historical events and shaped by religious memory; (b) this memory is, however, a creative, inspired memory that is eager to shape coherent, convincing, and exemplary stories. If the first remark insists

on preservation, the second insists on the construction of Christian memories about its origins; (c) any new narrative that is partially constructed from memory but with the addition of much creativity, will not find final form unless it includes the influence of other, more ancient documents. There is always an element of imitation. The Jesus of the Gospel of Luke bears some traits of the prophet Elijah; the Stephen of the book of Acts dies uttering the same prayer for forgiveness as the Lukan Christ; Gamaliel's attitude in the legends related to St Stephen follows the shape of the Gamaliel found in Acts 5.

Modern Christians who might follow in the traditions of their ancient counterparts and continue to read these texts would do well not only to insist on Christianity as a historical religion but also to admire and recognize the spiritual value of Christian memory more than its historical accuracy. For we should not forget that between the categories of sacred and rejected texts there exists a wide space for other Christian documents, documents that are 'profitable for the soul', and we should be open to the possibilities that such texts might offer to us today.

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CHAPTER 11

CHRISTOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY IN APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS

PHEME PERKINS

EUSEBIUS' account of the *Gospel of Peter* has shaped modern scholarly treatments of non-canonical gospel traditions (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.12). Bishop Serapion initially accepted public use of this gospel at Rhossus until he was shown that it promoted a heretical christology taught by Docetists. Citing a pamphlet Serapion composed to refute its errors, Eusebius provides a glimpse of the problem that bedevils interpretation of apocryphal gospels generally, distinguishing free-form, oral retelling of popular stories about or sayings of Jesus from a theological agenda. The bishop employed a text-critical strategy that had been taught in rhetorical schools for centuries, alleging that an original has been corrupted by the introduction of spurious additions. Unfortunately, Eusebius did not include the passages which Serapion listed as not in accord with 'the authentic teaching of the Saviour'. Our only known section of the *Gospel of Peter* (P. Cair. 10759), from an anthology of selections buried in an eighth-century grave, begins with the trial of Jesus. Its dramatic 'eyewitness' rendering of the resurrection seems more a tribute to popular imagination than a piece promoting denial of Jesus' humanity.

The correlation between dissident teaching about the Saviour and the composition of alternative gospels was as much a standard rhetorical move in the arsenal of second- to fourth-century heresiologists as it is in twenty-first-century advertising for the *Gospel of Thomas* or *Gospel of Judas*. For example, Irenaeus charges that the Marcosians not only misrepresented received gospels, but also forged a number of apocryphal and spurious writings. In addition, he asserts that they supported their claim to possess a hidden wisdom taught by the Saviour by citing Matt. 11.25–7 (*Adv. Haer*. 1.20.1–3). Refutation of their views focuses on canonical texts concerning Jesus' baptism. Irenaeus correlates the heretical position that true Christian baptism involves the mystical ascent into heavenly regions with a deviant christology. According to Irenaeus, the Marcosians distinguish a baptism for forgiveness of sin instituted by the visible Jesus, from the redemption brought by 'that Christ who descended upon him' (*Adv. Haer.* 1.21.2). The baptism of Jesus also becomes a key focus of polemic against the Jewish Christian Ebionites in the fourth-century heresiologist, Epiphanius. He alleges that the sect promotes an angel christology that rejects both the divinity ('born from the Father') and the humanity of Jesus (*Pan*. 30.13.3–4, 30.14.3–5). This sect is not charged with forging false gospels, but misinterpreting and corrupting 'their gospel', a Hebrew version of Matthew. Epiphanius employs two stock rhetorical charges against their positions: (a) corrupting the text by excising Matthew's genealogies from the beginning of the gospel (*Pan*. 30.14.3); and (b) misreading passages by abandoning the proper sequence of words (30.22.4).

These examples highlight the difficulty of using non-canonical gospel materials as evidence for second- and third-century views of christology and soteriology. Much of our evidence comes from statements about, quotations extracted from, or papyrus fragments of works no longer extant. What survives often appears to be oral variation of, midrashic elaborations on, or harmonizing combination of narratives and sayings also found in the canonical gospels. The connections to christology and soteriology made by patristic interpreters often appear extraneous. Rather than perpetuate 'corruption of scripture and doctrine' approaches in either the ancient heresiological polemic or its modern anti-orthodox mode, scholars should ask what this material indicates about second- and third-century theological imagination.

WHAT MAKES A GOSPEL?

Scholars often attach titles with the word 'gospel' to newly discovered works or fragments thereof solely on grounds that some deeds, teaching, or Jesus and disciple interaction is mentioned. Standard collections of New Testament Apocrypha adopt the narrative sequence, infancy (and childhood), ministry, passion (and resurrection). Gospels described in patristic sources that are not extant, assorted sayings of Jesus, and the numerous fragments may be presented independently (so Elliott 1993) or included in the framework (so Ehrman and Pleše 2011). Assembling the surviving materials under these categories short-circuits obvious differences in genre and scope. The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, a modern title given to what may have been called 'The Childhood Deeds of Our Lord Jesus Christ', begins with Jesus at age five and concludes with a variant of Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2.41–52) at age twelve. The *Gospel of Thomas* has the formal title *Gospel according to Thomas* in the fourth-century Coptic codex, but the introductory line also preserved in earlier Greek fragments, 'these are the hidden sayings that the living Jesus spoke', better describes its genre. Epiphanius assumes that the selections he has from a Jewish–Christian gospel represent an altered or truncated version of a Hebrew 'Gospel of Matthew'.

Neither the 'childhood deeds' nor the 'hidden sayings' were intended to complement the received gospels in presenting a 'life and teaching' of Jesus. Eusebius' report concerning the *Gospel of Peter* suggests that it was such a 'life' even though the surviving extract is limited to the passion and resurrection. Some scholars have attempted to detect evidence for earlier parts of the *Gospel of Peter* in earlier fragments (P. Oxy. 4009; P. Vindob. G 2325) with little success (Lührmann 2004; cf. Foster 2006). Some papyri with gospel material are so small that they may have been amulets (P. Oxy. 840). Papyri classified as gospel fragments could also derive from homilies citing those passages (Hagen 2010).

The most plausible examples of narratives about Jesus intended to advance theological perspectives different from views based on a received canon derive from Gnostic groups. Revelation dialogues in which the risen Saviour imparts teaching to one or more disciples were contained in codices discovered in the twentieth century (Hartenstein 2000; Perkins 1980). The slight framing narratives employ details from the canonical gospels and Acts to support their authority, but these writings have no interest in expanding gospel-like narratives about Jesus. Most examples of this type have other genre terms such as 'apocryphon', 'apocalypse', 'wisdom', 'dialogue', or 'letter' in the codex titles. However, one example has the title *Gospel according to Mary* in the Coptic version. If 'gospel' is used in its Pauline sense akin to 'preaching about salvation in Jesus', then the title may derive from the final exhortation of Levi, 'let us do what he has commanded us—to preach the gospel' (*P. Ryl*. 463, 22.11–12), combined with the unusual genre element that Mary's

revelation of an earlier private teaching comprises the second half of the work after Jesus had left the scene. In that respect, the *Gospel according to Mary* departs from the usual revelation discourse as much as it does from other canonical and apocryphal gospels (Tuckett 2007).

Finally, the *Gospel of Judas*, published in 2006, presents another genre misfit. Its narrative chronology invokes the period of Jesus' instruction prior to the Last Supper. The discourse shifts between Jesus and the Twelve and Jesus with Judas alone. It incorporates a long cosmogonic section that echoes Sethian mythemes (*Gos. Jud.* 46.5–53.7). This work might be the *Gospel of Judas* to which Irenaeus refers (*Adv. Haer.* 1.31.1–2) that celebrates Judas as the only disciple with knowledge of the divine realms above the creator and, according to this group (Cainites), charged with completing 'the mystery of betrayal'. Pseudo-Tertullian explains that some Cainites honour Judas for betraying Christ lest the cosmic powers themselves prevent Christ's death for the salvation of humanity (*Adv. Omn. Haer.* ii, 6), a theological position possibly grounded in 1 Cor. 2.8. These patristic notices suggest that the *Gospel of Judas* is a supplement to or insert for the received narrative of Jesus' passion formulated to accommodate a revisionist soteriology. Its opening says of Jesus' ministry: 'When he appeared on earth, he performed signs and great wonders for the salvation of humankind. Some [walked] on the path of justice, but others stumbled in their mistakes, and so the twelve disciples were called' (*Gos. Jud.* 33.6–14; Meyer 2007). The expression 'he appeared' suggests that this work had no place for birth or childhood narratives. 'Appeared' could be attached to the narrative with the descent of a divine figure at the baptism, for example. The *Gospel of Judas* concludes with Judas being paid for directing authorities to the room in which Jesus is praying with the Twelve (*Gos. Jud.* 58.9–26).

Scholars use the expression 'rewritten scripture' for works like *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon* that engage in major reconfigurations of the base text (Zahn 2010). Similar patterns occur in the apocryphal gospels. Distinctions between genre types are often blurred; a text may hew closely to its scriptural archetype in one section while diverging radically in another; it can be difficult to determine whether one should speak of a literary genre or simply a method of interpreting scripture in some cases. This 'rewritten scripture' analogy should prevent students of early Christianity from adopting the rhetorical ploy of heresiologists that 'other gospels' are replacements for the canonical gospels. They may foster interpretations of Jesus and salvation not evident in the received traditions, but their very existence depends upon readers familiar with a gospel canon.

CHRISTOLOGICAL DOCETISM AS A DEFAULT POSITION

When Ernst Käsemann attributed a naive docetism to the Fourth Gospel, insisting that it depicted a Jesus who was more of a god come to earth than a human being, scholars protested that his proposal was inadequate to the symbolic complexities of Johannine narrative (Hurtado 2003). Yet Irenaeus had concluded that the evangelist had docetic christology in his sights. According to Irenaeus, John opposed the heretic Cerinthus, who taught that 'Jesus' was the human son of Joseph and the 'Christ' was a heavenly aeon who descended upon Jesus at his baptism and departed before the crucifixion (*Adv. Haer.* 1.26.1, 3.11.1). Jerome adds 'Ebion', hypothetical founder of a Jewish Christian sect, as another opponent (*In Matt.* Prologue). These examples, one from a proto-gnostic sect, the other from a Jewish Christian one, employ different approaches to formulating a christology that

draws a sharp distinction between what is necessary for salvation, a divine Saviour, and the human Jesus.

Such 'naive docetism' operates at the level of myth and folklore, that is, imagination rather than doctrine (Goldstein and Stroumsa 2007). In that setting deities appear to be ordinary human beings. Interaction with a god in that shape may bring unanticipated blessings or a devastating curse if one offends the deity. Acts 14.8–18 has the people of Lystra mistake Paul and Barnabas for gods in this fashion. The miracle-working child Jesus in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* both displays his divine powers and proves dangerous to those who cross him. But when he heals a young man who had split open his foot with an axe, the crowd responds appropriately, 'When the crowd saw what had happened it worshipped the child, saying, "The Spirit of God truly resides within this child."' (*Inf. Gos. Thom*. 10.2).

Such a naive 'god among us' christology differs from the 'two beings' form associated with Cerinthus and the Jewish Christian Ebionites. In that type of docetism, 'Jesus' is a completely ordinary human being, the son of Joseph (and Mary). Consequently, Epiphanius reports that the Ebionite gospel chopped off the genealogies and virgin birth stories (*Pan*. 30.14.3). At his baptism in the Jordan a heavenly entity descends into and subsequently speaks and acts through Jesus. Measured against the emerging Nicene orthodoxy, Epiphanius finds the Ebionite view wanting, 'They do not allege that he was born from God the Father, but that he was created as one of the archangels, yet he was made greater than they, since he rules over the angels and all things made by the almighty' (*Pan*. 30.14.4). However, the citation from their gospel which follows this statement has nothing to do with this summary.

A different approach to describing the nature of the Saviour denies all ties to created beings, human or angelic. For example, in the *Gospel of Thomas* Thomas' insight into the true nature of Jesus distinguishes him from humans and angels: 'Jesus said to his disciples, "Make a comparison and tell me: who am I like?" Simon Peter said to him, "You are like a righteous angel." Matthew said to him, "You are like a wise philosopher." Thomas said to him, "Teacher, my mouth cannot let me say at all what you are like." Jesus said, "I am not your teacher, for you have drunk and become intoxicated from the bubbling spring that I myself have measured out."' (*Gos. Thom*. 13). Because Thomas acknowledges that Jesus is like God, ineffable, he possesses the living water (wisdom or the Spirit) that flows from Jesus (cp. John 3.5, 4.10, 7.38–9). This example illustrates two characteristics of the docetic options in apocryphal gospels generally: (a) detachment from Jewish messianic categories; and (b) emphasis on a divine Saviour who is decidedly not 'in every respect tested as we are, yet without sin' (Heb. 4.15).

PASSION NARRATIVES AND THE DIVINE SAVIOUR

Christologies that emphasize the divine being of the Saviour have no place for interpreting the death of Jesus as atonement for sin. Ignatius of Antioch charges 'some atheists' with saying that 'he suffered in appearance only' (*Trall*. 9–10; *Smyrn*. 2–3). He mocks their view by suggesting that without a bodily resurrection the most they can hope for is to become 'disembodied and demonic'. If the Saviour did not suffer and die for humanity on the cross, then the martyrdom of the apostles as well as his own would be a worthless gesture. This counter-argument sets the parameters for opposition to docetic interpretations of the passion in the second and third centuries. Salvation gained through comprehending the higher truth

contained in the Saviour's teaching as in *Gos. Thom.* has no place for bodily resurrection or martyrdom.

If the heavenly aeon which descended upon Jesus at his baptism departed prior to the crucifixion (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.26.1, on Cerinthus), the passion narrative needed no revision to accommodate a docetic position. Scholars acknowledge that without the Serapion story in Eusebius, the passion and resurrection account from *Gos. Peter* would not lead one to ask if that gospel promoted a docetic christology ([McCant 1984](#)). Marcion allegedly taught that Christ appeared on earth as a 'phantom', without bodily substance (Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.27.2; Tertullian *Adv. Marc.* 3.8.1–3, 4.8.3). Yet the only reported excision from Luke's passion narrative in Marcion's version is the promise 'today you will be with me in paradise' (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 42, 11.6). Tertullian observes that logically one would expect Marcion to omit Luke 24.38–9 with its affirmation of resurrected body. He suggests that Marcion has twisted the interpretation of the passage so that Christ claims to be a ghost (*Adv. Marc.* 4.43.6–8). In limiting his deletions, Marcion makes it appear that he has not mutilated Luke's Gospel, but only removed some textual accretions.

Contrary to Tertullian's polemical reading of Marcion's editing, one might consider it evidence for the importance of the passion narrative to early Christian gospels generally. Familiar elements from the canonical accounts are expanded and reshaped in revisions such as are found in the *Gospel of Peter*, but the basic structure remains. For example, the episode in Luke 23.39–43 appears in an abbreviated form. Instead of replying to the other criminal who mocked Jesus, the speaker addresses those dividing Jesus' garments, 'We have suffered like this for the evil things we did; but this one, the Saviour of the people—what wrong has he done you?' (*Gos. Pet.* 13). The enraged guards break Jesus' legs in order to increase the pain of death (contrary to John 19.32). However, Jesus is never reduced to agony. His final words, 'My power, my power, you have left me behind!' (Mark 15.34) meet with a divine response, 'he was taken up' (*Gos. Pet.* 19). The numinous power associated with his body causes an earthquake when the corpse is laid on the ground (*Gos. Pet.* 21). Where Luke had the crowd 'return home beating their breasts' (Luke 22.48), the *Gospel of Peter* has 'the Jews, the elders and the priests … beating their breasts, saying, "Woe to us because of our sins. The judgement and end of Jerusalem are near"' (*Gos. Pet.* 25).

By setting the stage for a dangerous public reversal of opinion, the *Gospel of Peter* provides the 'scribes, Pharisees, and elders' with the motive for establishing a high level of security over the tomb and preventing the disciples from staging a resurrection (Matt. 27.62–6). The centurion and soldiers posted as guards witness the angels descending into the tomb, and their emergence leading a Jesus whose head was above the sky followed by the cross. Like the centurion of Mark 15.39, they report to Pilate, 'He actually was the Son of God' (*Gos. Pet.* 45). Then the *Gospel of Peter* returns to the canonical stories of the women at the tomb, the disciples' return to Galilee, and breaks off with Peter heading out to fish (John 21.1–4).

The *Gospel of Peter* is not concerned to explain how the enormous figure, greater than his angelic escort, who emerges from the tomb, is related to the figure who died on the cross. It is sufficient to demonstrate that his enemies in fact knew the truth about Jesus as the Son of God. Pilate passes off the execution to Herod and 'the people'. They not only mock him as 'King of Israel' but as 'Son of God'. No 'Son of God' would permit himself to be dragged around and flogged (6–8). Jewish leaders also acknowledge that the 'end of Jerusalem' will be God's punishment for their sins.

Where the *Gospel of Peter* remains relatively close to storylines found in the canonical gospels, later Apocrypha associated with Pilate elaborate on Pilate's innocence and role as

witness, the responsibility of the Jews for Jesus' death, numerous miraculous signs of Jesus' divinity, as well as a detailed investigation of the resurrection by a Jewish court. Represented in over 500 medieval manuscripts in many languages, the materials contained in the 'Acts of Pilate' did as much to shape Christian imagining of Christ's trial, death, harrowing of hell, and resurrection, as the *Protoevangelium of James* did for the Virgin Mary. Eusebius points to an anti-Christian 'Acts of Pilate' circulating in the early fourth century (*Hist. Eccl.* 1.9.3–4, 9.5.1, 9.7.1). The opening trial accounts might have been composed in response to such polemic. Earlier Christian versions of the trial before Pilate appear to have circulated as early as the mid second century (Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 35.9; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 50.1; Tertullian, *Apol.* 21.24, as correspondence between Pilate and Tiberius). While the opening chapters take the form of reports concerning the proceedings before Pilate, the resurrection eyewitness guards report to the Jews who conduct the subsequent investigations. The medieval manuscripts prefer to title these works the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, who is the fictional author (in Hebrew) of an account employed by the alleged author of the work itself, a member of the procurator's body guard who converted to Christianity (*Gos. Nicod.* A prologue). A search of the public records enabled this fifth-century Christian to piece together a colourful picture of events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection.

Although presented as an expanded passion narrative comparable to the much less elaborate *Gospel of Peter*, the *Gospel of Nicodemus* incorporates references to episodes from the canonical narratives of Jesus' ministry into the trial testimony (*Gos. Nicod.* A 1.1). Despite being the son of Joseph the carpenter and Mary, Jesus 'calls himself a son of God and king'. His healing miracles violate the Sabbath and undermine ancestral law. His power over unclean spirits proves that Jesus is really a magician. Pilate rejects that conclusion, 'No one can cast out demons by an unclean spirit, but only by the god Asclepius', and is even willing to accord Jesus a royal status that his Jewish accusers reject (*Gos. Nicod.* A 1.2–4). The scenario of Jesus' entry confirms the presence of a powerful divine figure when the Roman standards insist upon bowing down in worship before him (*Gos. Nicod.* A 1.5–6).

For post-Constantinian Christians, this popular legend had a transparent message. Their legions no longer marched behind standards honouring pagan deities. They fought under the sign of the true God, which had brought Constantine victory (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 9.9.9). Eusebius describes the triumphant emperor setting up 'a trophy of the Saviour's passion' with a Latin inscription on the emperor's statue: 'By this saving sign … I saved your city … and set her free;… and restored them [the senate and Roman people] to their ancient renown and splendour.' Nothing could be clearer. The christology which sees the cross and resurrection as a divine Christ triumphant over demonic enemies enabled that same sign to inspire armies. As Peter Brown has pointed out, from the mid-fourth to the mid-fifth century this 'sign' would dominate the city of Rome, not only through the churches erected by Constantine as votive monuments to his victories but even more so by the titular churches erected by other wealthy aristocrats (Brown 2012: 241–54). 'It was through such churches that Christianity moved, in the course of the fourth and early fifth centuries, from a state of virtual invisibility around the year 350 to being a religion whose presence was felt throughout the city'(Brown 2012: 246). Theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries will engage in vigorous debate over how to square the suffering of God incarnate with divine impassibility, but the apocryphal gospels do not engage in theological fine-tuning at the narrative level.

CELEBRATING CHRIST IN TRIUMPH

Since the divinity of Jesus can be represented as victory over the suffering imposed by those hostile to God, some narrative shifts require that the enemy acknowledge defeat, as in the expansions connected with the Jewish authorities in the *Gospel of Peter*. While second-century docetic Christologies retain the paradox that Paul expressed in 1 Cor. 2.8—'... for if they [= the rulers of this age] had known (it), they would not have crucified the Lord of glory'—by distinguishing the inner reality of the Saviour from the body he employed, some later Apocrypha emend the canonical accounts to show that the rulers did know they were attacking 'the Lord of glory'. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* introduces testimony to counter the charges against Jesus from those whom he had healed as well as Nicodemus' argument that the Jewish leaders are repeating what their ancestors had done to Moses. They should accept Jesus' miracles as signs from God (*Gos. Nicod.* A 5–8). A Jewish priest, teacher, and Levite witness the risen Jesus instructing his disciples on a mountain in Galilee and his ascension into heaven. Their testimony provokes a heated debate and investigation by the Sanhedrin. Priests and Levites conclude that if remembrance of Jesus continues until the Jubilee, 'know that he will prevail forever and will raise a new people for himself' (*Gos. Nicod.* A 16.7). With a reminder that anyone who worships as God a creature or idol fashioned by human hands is cursed, the people depart singing a hymn to the Lord God as their Saviour (*Gos. Nicod.* A 16.7–8). For a fifth-century Christian audience, this celebration should be directed to Jesus even if the characters in the story do not recognize that fact: 'The Lord will be king over all the earth … the Lord will be one and his name will be one, the Lord our king…. Heal us by your power, O Lord, and we will be healed. Save us, O Lord and we will be saved.'

The narrative hardly reflects the turbulent christological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries. By referring to the commandment against worshipping any creature, the text could allude to the distinction 'begotten not made one in being with the Father'. Despite its clear insistence upon the divinity of Jesus, *Gos. Nicod.* has no problem with his death, which the author treats as the soul's departure from the body (*Gos. Nicod.* A 14.3). Christological disputes over the relationship of divine and human in the soul of the incarnate Son leave no traces in these narratives. However, the *Gospel of Nicodemus* does refute the allegation that appearances of the risen Jesus concerned a ghost. Jesus appears in angelic glory to rescue Joseph of Arimathea from the house in which the Jews had imprisoned him. Joseph treats the apparition as a 'phantom' by reciting the commandments that should have driven it off. Then Joseph tries addressing it as 'Elijah'. Only a visit to the empty tomb with the grave wrappings intact persuades Joseph that the figure is Jesus (*Gos. Nicod.* A 15.6).

A later reworking of *Gos. Nicod.* sometime in the sixth century develops the obscure statement in 1 Pet. 3.19 that Christ 'went and made proclamation to the spirits who were in prison' and extends the triumph to Hades itself (*Gos. Nicod.* 17–27). The Son of God assumed humanity in order to deceive Satan so that he could bring salvation to the dead. The harrowing of hell became an established feature in Christian imagination, as celebrated in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, for example: 'I [= Virgil] was new-entered on this state when I beheld a Great Lord enter here; the crown he wore, a sign of victory … before them, there were no human souls that had been saved' (*Inf.* 3.52–9, trans. A. Mandelbaum). In order to provide witnesses to the events in Hades, *Gos. Nicod.* B enlists the risen dead who appeared around Jerusalem in Matt. 27.52–3. Prior to Christ's descent, John the Baptist preaches to those in Hades. Still believing that Jesus is human, Satan approaches Hades with the request to keep Jesus there. However, acknowledging Jesus' superior powers especially in raising Lazarus, Hades rightly fears the approach of the King of glory, 'We have been defeated…. What sort of being are you who comes here without sin, … You were nailed to the cross and

placed in the grave, and now you have become free and destroyed all our power' (*Gos. Nicod*. 22.1). Satan is permanently bound in Hades. The triumphant Christ establishes all of the righteous from Adam on in the heavenly kingdom.

A PROGRAMME FOR THE SAINTS

The dramatic images of liberated people following the triumphant Christ to take up residence in a glorious, heavenly home convey the message that salvation is won through the cross without articulating a theological explanation of 'why' or 'how'. Early formulaic summaries in the New Testament associate the death of Christ with sacrifices for sin (Rom. 3.24–6; 1 Cor. 15.3; 2 Cor. 5.21; Heb. 1.2–3). Since the visual scenarios of execution and sacrifice do not overlap, this explanation does not shape narrative accounts of the passion. Arguments against docetic Christologies in the second and third century rely on the sacrificial transposition. Unless a living body dies on the cross, Christ has not died for our sins. But atonement is not the only model for soteriology.

For the cosmological myths formulated in Gnostic sects, Hades is this material universe created and ruled by an ignorant or malicious demiurge and subordinate angels. When he arrogantly boasted of being the only god, the true divine realm was revealed in the image of the spiritual Adam. The creator and associates set about trying to trap that light in a human creature of their own fashioning, with a psychic and material body governed by various demons and planetary angels. Details vary between schools and with each retelling. But salvation requires clandestine incursions into the material cosmos by Saviour figures from the divine world to awaken humanity to its true divine nature, to inspire contempt for the creator who is depicted as the god of Jews or ordinary Christians, and to provide the ritual, ascetic, and cognitive mechanisms for souls to return to their divine source. Christian adaptations of this mythic pattern not only promote a docetic reading of the crucifixion as the heresiologists recognized, they also make separation of the 'inner self' from both the material body and the psychic passions necessary for salvation.

Most of our evidence for interpretations of the passion and the body of the Saviour in Gnostic circles derives from writings which are not designated gospels. However, one section of *Gos. Mary* appears to incorporate the soul's instructions for ascending past the planetary powers and shedding the ignorance and passions as it does so (BG 15.1–17.1). Mary says she received this private teaching following a visionary experience of the Lord. Ability to stand without wavering in the presence of the divine was widely understood as evidence of spiritual enlightenment, so Jesus' beatitude (BG 10.14–16) indicates that Mary receives this teaching because she is one of the spiritual elite (Tuckett 2007: 169–85). Just as the newly liberated soul enters 'the rest of time' in silence, Mary falls silent—possibly an indication that her soul has been able to imitate the journey recounted in the text (Tuckett 2007: 185).

Six pages from the beginning of the codex are missing. *Gos. Mary* opens in the middle of a dialogue between the Saviour and disciples concerning the nature of the material world, sin, death, and the passions. The conversation ends abruptly. After commissioning the disciples to go and preach the gospel of the Kingdom, the Saviour departs (BG 8.12–9.5). Afraid lest the Gentiles treat them as they had the Saviour, the disciples break down weeping until Mary rallies the group (BG 9.5–24). Whether or not the missing pages said anything about the crucifixion, Jesus' disciples are afraid of being killed. Both their fear and the subsequent refusal to believe what the Saviour taught Mary (BG 17.10–18.5) show that the disciples have not reached the same level of spiritual maturity as Mary. *Gos. Thom*. 13

takes a more conventional position: Thomas will not divulge what Jesus said to him because it would provoke wrath in the less enlightened. By speaking rather than rejecting Peter's request, Mary does provoke hostility. Levi defends the Saviour's choice, scolds the others, and goes to preach as the Saviour commanded. The Greek only has Levi do so (*P. Ryl*. 463 22.15) while the Coptic has 'them' go out. In either case apostolic teaching is presumed to incorporate the special material found in the *Gospel of Mary*.

Its spiritual teaching incorporates an understanding of the material world, the body, the passions, their demonic or astrological equivalents intended to transform believers into 'the perfect human' (BG 9.20, 18.16) or 'the Son of Man within you' (BG 8.18–19). The weaknesses and fear of suffering which prevented the disciples from preaching the gospel as the Saviour commanded will be overcome. Whether visionary or mystical experiences of the risen Lord are part of the process by which the enlightened soul attains 'the rest' and silence is difficult to say, since 'I have seen the Lord' (BG 10.10–12) has adopted Mary Magdalene's words from John 20.18.

The Saviour's response to Peter's question concerning the 'sin of the world' (John 1.29?) initially denies that there is sin (BG 7.10–14), but goes on to develop an account of matter as the source of passion or disturbances in the body that are contrary to nature (BG 8.2–6). Though commentators have filled out these references with parallels in gnostic anthropologies (Tuckett 2007: 142–8), the text as it stands reflects a hybrid of Platonic and Stoic elements without any gnostic mythological notes. Presumably this teaching serves to confirm some form of ascetic discipline. Thus the fear of hostility comparable to that faced by the Saviour only shows the immaturity of Jesus' disciples. It does not provide evidence about christology in the *Gospel of Mary*. The Saviour's relationship to his body would render him impassible in any case, but in a docetic account of the crucifixion only the spiritually enlightened see that the man being crucified is not the Saviour (for example, *Second Logos of Great Seth*, NHC VII 55.9–56.20; *Apocalypse of Peter* NHC VII 82.3–9). In other words, the spiritual state of the interlocutor not only determines whether or not she can receive Jesus' hidden teaching, it also shapes her vision of the Saviour.

A POLYMORPHOUS VISION OF THE SAVIOUR

Socrates bans myths of shape-shifting deities from his imagined city as incompatible with the eternal, unchanging reality of the divine/Good (Plato, *Rep*.380a–382a). That metaphysical exclusion generally holds for the theological debates over the relationship of divinity and humanity in Christ. It is somewhat loosely held in the canonical gospels where walking on water (Mark 6.47–52 par.); transfiguration (Mark 9.2–8 par.) and resurrection appearances are in play (Luke 24.13–35; John 20.11–18 [hidden stranger]; Luke 24.36–51; John 20.19–29 [materializing in a locked room]). Divine beings cannot be constrained by the constraints of the material universe (Goldstein and Stroumsa 2007: 423–9). The miraculous birth of Jesus shrouded in light in the *Protevangelium of James* and the child Jesus not entirely beneficent with miraculous powers in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* are rather simple examples of spontaneous epiphanies of the divine. At the same time, the narrative archetype for such stories requires staging of conflict and rejection by enemies unable to perceive the hidden presence of a divine being. Similarly, the *Gospel of Peter* infers either from the canonical transfiguration stories or from association of the risen and exalted Jesus with angelic beings that witnesses to his emergence from the tomb must have seen a luminous figure stretching from earth into the heavens.

Any description of how the risen Jesus appeared to the disciples has been lost with the missing opening of the *Gospel of Mary*. The simple departure notice 'when he had said this, he went away' (BG 9.5) might indicate that there was no emphasis on the Saviour's appearance. It could have opened as the *Dialogue of the Saviour* does with the Saviour inviting his disciples to grasp the occasion to leave suffering behind and stand in the rest (NHC III 120.1–4), for example. By contrast, the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II 2.1–24) has the Saviour appear as a polymorphous luminous figure who self-identifies as the deity, father, mother, and son, the incorruptible and undefiled. At the conclusion he departs by disappearing. A similar description of the Saviour appearing to his disciples 'not in his previous form but in invisible spirit … like a great angel of light … Mortal flesh could not bear it, but only pure and perfect flesh' opens the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (NHC III 91.10–17). The departure formula 'these are the things the blessed Saviour said and he disappeared' (BG 126.17–127.1) is followed in both instances by the recipients' joyful departure to carry out the Saviour's commands. Therefore the disciples' fearful collapse in the *Gospel of Mary* plays out contrary to type. Mary's previous vision of the Saviour, the instruction she received, and her closeness to the Saviour, who 'made her worthy', 'knows her', 'loves her more than us' (BG 18.10–14) enables her to carry out the task which Luke 22.32 attached to Peter: 'when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers'. Some interpreters even see her stepping into the role of the revealer at this point (Pasquier 1983: 69). However, the text requires no more than that she function as the enlightened spiritual teacher whose vision of the real nature of the Saviour enables her to instruct immature followers.

Other Apocrypha incorporate dreams and visions into the passion narrative. Fragments from a fourth- or fifth-century Coptic manuscript in Strasbourg contain lines from a departure prayer comparable to John 17 along with Jesus' words to encourage his fearful disciples. Small fragments from another page allude to a visionary experience in which the disciples not only witness the Saviour's glory but even gaze (or journey?) up through the heavens to see the enthroned Lord, 'We beheld the glory of his Godhead and all the glory of his dominion. He clothed us with the power of our apostleship …' (Elliott 1993: 42). This vision of the divine throne room is the occasion for their investiture as apostles. How that episode which apparently concludes the apocryphal text is associated with the passion and resurrection stories is impossible to say. These fragments may be from a Coptic apocryphal gospel, the 'Unknown Berlin Gospel' or 'Gospel of the Saviour', first published in 1999. With echoes of Matthew and John, this work presents the Saviour's farewell discourses. As in John 14.31, the summons to depart is followed by further discourse. Their vision of the Saviour's entry through the heavens occurs on the Mount of Olives. Other elements from Rev. 4.4–10 describe the divine throne room. Apparently the Gethsemane prayer formula has been incorporated into a vision of Jesus praying before his Father there. When the Saviour informs his disciples of the impending resurrection, John asks that he not do so in his full glory: ' … change your glory into [some other] glory so that [we might be able to bear] it, lest we see [you and] despair from [fear]!' (*Gos. Sav.* 66–8; Emmel 2002: 57). Though the prayer before the Father in heaven affirms the Son's willingness 'to die with joy and pour out my blood for the human race' (*Gos. Sav.* 52; Emmel 2002: 56), the text is too fragmentary to determine how the divine figure relates to the body which dies.

The *Gospel of Judas* also exhibits features of this visionary pattern. Jesus has appeared to his disciples in multiple forms, often appearing in their midst unexpectedly (*Gos. Judas* 33). The gnostic features of *Gos. Judas* are more explicit than in the *Gospel of Mary*. From the beginning, Jesus chides the disciples for giving thanks over bread offered to the creator (*Gos. Judas* 34). Judas confesses that Jesus has come from the divine world, the Barbelo

aeon familiar from Sethian traditions (Turner 2008). But unlike Mary Magdalene in the *Gospel of Mary*, even though Judas is able to stand before Jesus, which the others cannot do, Judas cannot look Jesus in the face (*Gos. Judas* 35). Not only is Judas taken apart from the Twelve, his replacement in that number (*Gos. Judas* 36; Acts 1.15–26) enables Jesus to designate Judas 'the thirteenth'(*Gos. Judas* 44.21, 46.19–47.1), that is higher than the twelve astrological regions which dominate the material universe and the fate of all within it including the Twelve (*Gos. Judas* 42). Judas is destined to rule over the thirteenth aeon (*Gos. Judas* 55.10–11) despite the hostility he will experience from the Twelve. But scholars remain divided over whether Judas is included in the 'generation without a king' (*Gos. Judas* 53.24) or the generation to which the spiritual Jesus belongs but his disciples do not: 'Truly I say to you, no one born of this aeon will see that generation; and no angelic host of the stars will rule over that generation; and no human of mortal birth will be able to come along with it' (*Gos. Judas* 37.1). Neither patristic reports that make Judas the 'hero' nor the canonical 'betrayer' fit the picture of Judas in this text. At the present state of reconstruction of the text and research, the most cogent interpretations treat Judas as a mediating figure comparable to the psychics in Valentinian sources (Thomassen 2008; Painchaud 2008; Jenott 2011).

The rigid dualism separating what belongs to the eternal, divine world (Barbelo aeon) from the entire material cosmos is only overcome by Jesus, who is able to transit from one to the other even during his earthly activity. This transition pattern is marked by the fact that he appeared in the lower world—no conception or birth stories are required—and by the dramatic visionary episode in which Judas witnesses his ascent (*Gos. Judas* 57.15–23). Ambiguity in the referent of the 'he' led some interpreters to presume that Judas was the subject of the verb 'entered'. However, with Jesus as the grammatical referent (Meyer 2008; Jenott 2011) this passage is comparable to others in which disciples witness Jesus' ascent through the heavens. The missing lines at the top of page 58 may have dealt with what happened to Judas as a consequence of this vision. When the text resumes, Jesus and the Twelve are gathered in the 'guest room' (*Gos. Judas* 58.11; Mark 14.14; Luke 22.11). Judas, who is outside, hands Jesus over (*paradidonai*) to the authorities (*Gos. Judas* 58.9–26).

No dramatic betrayal scenario is involved. Judas appears to be accomplishing what Jesus had earlier prophesied was his destiny, 'You will exceed all of them [= the Twelve?]. For you will sacrifice the man who bears me' (*Gos. Judas* 56.17–21). Is Judas following a command of Jesus (cp. John 13.27b, after Satan has entered Judas)? Or is it a prophetic statement (cp. John 13.18, 21)? Again, the poor condition of the text has generated divergent interpretations. Two phrases are critical to our investigation of christology and soteriology: (a) 'sacrifice'; and (b) 'the man who bears me'. One might presume, as Epiphanius did, that Judas is praised for enabling the sacrificial death of Jesus. That view runs up against the extensive polemic against sacrifice, a ritual action demanded by the evil creator, earlier in the document (*Gos. Judas* 38.1–39.3; Kerchove 2008). Unlike the Jewish–Christian polemic against sacrifice because Jesus' death is a perfect sacrifice, *Gos. Judas* portrays Jesus' disciples engaged in that practice. Referring to the Ebionites, Epiphanius alleges that ' … in their gospel … I have come to destroy the sacrifices. And if you do not stop making sacrifices, God's wrath will afflict you' (*Pan.* 30.16.4–5). In the *Gospel of Judas* the vision of the horrors of sacrificial cult accepted even by the Twelve shifts from the outer reality of animals to the horrific slaughter of humans, women and infants. Rather than rest with the rhetorical use of a polymorphous vision to horrify the reader, a number of interpreters argue that this vision represents opposition to the developing cult of martyrdom in the second and third centuries (Jenott 2011).

Whether the *Gospel of Judas* has adapted an earlier Christian polemic against Jewish cult sacrifice to challenge sacrificial interpretations of Jesus' death and eucharist in the larger Christian community or has a special focus—martyrdom as imitation of that sacrifice—'sacrifice' does not have positive associations. Therefore the death of 'the man who bore me' has no role in salvation for those who belong to the other generation, a race superior to mortal humans (*Gos. Judas* 36.11–17). Although neither the Twelve nor (apparently) Judas can belong to that group, the audience is certainly intended to identify as members of that generation (Thomassen 2008: 162). Within this framework Judas' action is insignificant. His role belonged to the canonical gospel traditions that the author has reworked. Judas' vision of the luminous ascent into the heavens may have been associated with the departure of the spiritual Saviour from that psychic–material entity prior to the passion events. However, the state of the text makes it impossible to determine whether or how it conceived the relationship between the Saviour and his body.

CONCLUSIONS

Clearly the apocryphal gospels provide snapshots of early Christian imagination. To imagine Jesus as a divine being active among humans and allegedly put to death by those who fail to recognize him employs imaginative forms of 'appearance christology' or docetism with roots in mythic and religious traditions that antedate the doctrinal disputes of the second and third centuries. Therefore, the patristic correlation between heretical teaching and apocryphal gospels is an element of polemic, not historical information. Furthermore, the apocryphal gospels like other 'rewritten scripture' presume that the audience is familiar with traditions comparable to those in the emerging four-gospel canon. They have not been composed as replacements for the gospels to which they allude. Nor, because of their dependence upon earlier traditions, do these texts serve as repositories for early Jesus materials suppressed by the orthodox promoters of the canonical Gospels.

Early Christian polemics endowed the term 'docetic' or 'docetism' with negative overtones of 'denial of Jesus' and of the saving significance of his death. However, a more diverse set of options underlie the depictions of Christ and his passion than this usage suggests. The divinity of the Saviour figures more prominently in the second- and third-century Christian imagination than his (Jewish) humanity. The many forms of docetic explanations for appearances of the divine occur in these presentations without engaging in the speculations concerning the complex relationships between human and divine that lead to Nicea.

Many of the apocryphal gospels do not associate salvation with Christ's death on the cross as a sacrifice for sin. Instead Christ whose divine reality is displayed in resurrection and return to heavenly glory provides disciples a path to transformation. They too will strip off the material humanity dominated by passions and escape the demonic or planetary guardians seeking to retain souls. Not surprisingly, soteriology as disengagement from the world often requires ascetic praxis. Apocryphal gospels associated with Gnostic Christians locate secret teaching transmitted to individual disciples in a post-resurrection visionary experience or in the days before the passion. Narrative motifs from the canonical gospels provide the setting just as they do in other Apocrypha that fill in imaginative gaps in stories of Jesus' life such as the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* or the *Gospel of Peter*.

SUGGESTED READING

The collection of apocryphal gospels edited by Ehrman and Pleše (2011) provides the Greek, Latin, and Coptic texts and English translation on facing pages. Brief introductions and bibliography orient readers to the history of discovery and discussion of the texts. Foster (2004) enlists a number of scholars to provide longer introductions to the most important apocryphal gospels. Readers with some knowledge of Greek wishing to understand the problems in editing, translating, and interpreting fragmentary apocryphal gospels would be well served by working through Kraus, Kruger, and Nicklas (2009).

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CHRISTOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY IN APOCRYPHAL ACTS AND APOCALYPSES

PAUL FOSTER

INTRODUCTION

CLARIFYING the understanding of the person and nature of Christ was perhaps the central theological preoccupation of the early Christian religion between the second and fourth centuries. The centrality of this endeavour may be recognized especially in the first six of the seven ecumenical councils (Need 2008). The majority of texts discussed in this chapter were, however, written prior to the meeting of the first of those councils in Nicea in AD 325. Notwithstanding this, the writings commonly known as early Christian apocryphal acts and apocalypses reflect, albeit for the most part subconsciously and not as their central theological purpose, various presuppositions and outlooks concerning the identity of Christ and the salvation of people who come to faith in him. These texts also form part of the wider evidential base of Christian thought that fed into the major councils. As such, the perspectives they enshrine are of importance to perceive the more popularizing forces at work in communicating certain theological understandings within the early church.

Classical approaches to christology have tended to focus on the titles used to describe, depict, or address Christ (standard works that adopt this approach include Cullmann 1959; Hahn 1969). This has proven to be a rich method for elucidating the christological perspectives of a given text or author. In particular, when applied to discursive or propositional texts, such as the letters of Paul, this titular approach has provided helpful access to an author's core christological convictions. However, when applied to narrative texts, such as the Christian apocryphal acts and apocalypses, while the method of surveying titles remains useful, there is also much to be learnt about attitudes towards Christ through the actions and narratives depicted in such texts. In the discussion that follows, both the titles used and the actions narrated will be considered in determining the christological and soteriological ideas contained in the various texts that are surveyed.

THE APOCRYPHAL ACTS

Among the corpus of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles (AAA), scholars have identified five major writings as early examples of this genre. The dating of these texts is notoriously difficult, both in terms of their relative and absolute chronology. For convenience, the order in which the texts are treated in this section will follow one of the more widely accepted

proposals, although as all scholars acknowledge, the evidence is slight and the proposal is based largely on inferences from internal evidence. The suggested date order places the five texts in the period of the mid-second to mid-third centuries: *Acts of Andrew* AD 150, perhaps in Alexandria; *Acts of Peter* AD 180–90, perhaps in Rome; *Acts of Paul* AD 185–95, perhaps in Asia Minor; *Acts of John* AD 200–50, perhaps in Eastern Syria; and *Acts of Thomas* AD 200–50, perhaps in Eastern Syria (Bremmer 2001: 152–3). While this ordering is followed mainly for convenience, if it is correct it may allow one to trace certain christological and soteriological developments. However, it also needs to be remembered that the theologies expressed by the authors of the various AAA (and of the apocryphal apocalypses) do not necessarily follow linear patterns of development. Therefore, one cannot infer from a supposedly 'more primitive' christology that a given writing was composed at an earlier date than another text with a 'more developed' perspective. Rather the earlier writing may simply reflect a less sophisticated author. Moreover, if some of these texts are unrelated, then their christological and soteriological perspectives may have been shaped in a localized and relatively isolated setting. Other later AAA besides these five texts are also extant. The most extensive of these later surviving texts is the *Acts of Philip*, so this survey will also consider that text.

Acts of Andrew

As it can be best reconstructed the *Acts of Andrew* remains a fragmentary text, being a pastiche of various manuscripts, ordered where possible in accord with the sixth-century epitome of Gregory of Tours, *Liber de Miraculis Beati Andreae Apostoli* (Elliott 1993: 231–2).

In the opening sections, which relate the divine healing of Stratocles' slave through the words of Andrew followed by Stratocles' subsequent conversion, Christ is mentioned only once. That reference describes those in the process of coming to faith as 'being confirmed in Christ night and day' (*Acts Andr.* 10). If anything can be gleaned from this fleeting remark, it might be that the author holds to some type of idea of participation or christology of union. Typically the idea of being 'in Christ' takes on a spatial sense, whereby believers are seen as existing in a new realm. Here the locative sense seems to transcend mere metaphorical usage, since in Pauline theology believers have in actuality been united with Christ in his death and resurrection through the act of baptism. Although such ideas may find their origin in New Testament thought (cf. Rom. 6.3–8), these do not appear to be a major theological emphasis in the *Acts of Andrew*.

More prominent in the section describing Andrew's imprisonment is a conception of salvation that is understood as the bringing forth of the hidden inner soul (*Acts Andr.* 37[5]–38[6]). The one who undergoes this soteriological process of releasing the divine soul that is captive in the physical body is 'deemed worthy of the Lord's seal'. However a warning is issued: namely that apostasy can defile this seal that has been placed on the soul. The goal for the one receiving salvation by having the liberated soul divinely sealed is to return 'the deposit spotless to the one who entrusted it to us' (*Acts Andr.* 10–12). This section of the text may reveal something of its theological location. The concept of liberation of the soul has affinities with certain forms of Valentian thought, such as that represented in the *Gospel of Philip*. However, the *Acts of Andrew* is devoid of any cosmological reflection or discussion concerning the origin of evil (Prieur 1992: 246). For this reason it is more likely that these ideas reflect the widespread view in the Graeco-Roman world that saw death as the liberation of the soul from the body, rather than being drawn from a Valentinian context.

In the next section prayer is addressed to the 'Lord Jesus', who is invoked to provide protection from Maximilla's husband, Aegeates. Andrew prays, 'save us all by repelling that savage lion armed to attack us' (*Acts Andr.* 13). The prayer is answered in a unique manner, with Aegeates being afflicted with severe constipation, and hence being so engrossed in his exertions that the believers are able to escape without his notice. This is also achieved by Andrew laying his hand on each person, with the result that each appears to receive some cloak of invisibility. In this context, the prayer to be saved concerns immediate deliverance, rather than the liberation of the soul. Prayer language continues to pervade this section. Thus, for example, Andrew prays to the 'Lord Jesus Christ' on behalf of the now celibate Maximilla that she may be strengthened to withstand the sexual blandishments of her husband (*Acts Andr.* 16). Such prayer is typical of wider Christian usage. As part of her salvation that brought forth the pure soul free of its material body Maximilla is now 'repulsed by sexual intercourse … as a heinous and despicable act' (*Acts Andr.* 21). This may reflect an encratic mentality behind the theology operative in the *Acts of Andrew*. Yet, this is not necessarily to suggest some direct point of contact with *Encratism* (cf. Hippolytus, *Ref.* 8.13), but rather only to observe that similar forces may have shaped the outlook of the author of this text.

Again, when Iphidama manages to gain entrance miraculously to the imprisoned Andrew, on seeing her he cries out 'glory be to you Jesus Christ, ruler of true words and promises, who instills courage in my fellow servants. All who make use of you conquer their enemies, for you alone exist' (*Acts Andr.* 29). This doxological confession declares Jesus to be the only being with true existence, and that his communications to his followers are recognized for their veracity. Jesus is frequently addressed in prayer, which reveals that he is seen as a figure of devotion and one who is able to respond to the requests of the suppliants. Nevertheless there is little explicit attention given to christology generally.

One passage that does have some bearing on the christology of the author is *Acts Andr.* 47. While Andrew is still in prison Maximilla visits him. Here the text states that she was 'led by the Lord disguised as Andrew' (*Acts Andr.* 47). Although the text is unclear here—it appears that it is the Lord, not Maximilla, who is disguised as Andrew—nothing further is done with this transformation of appearance. It is, however, significant that here there is a description of the Lord's altered outward appearance. This is a feature that appears in other apocryphal acts, and is commonly described as polymorphic christology (Foster 2007: 66–99). On being led to the cross for his execution, Andrew makes a series of declarations that may have had christological resonances for readers of this text, yet none of them is explicitly exploited. On seeing the cross he makes the following speech:

> Greetings, O cross! Greetings indeed! I know well that, though you have been weary for a long time, planted and awaiting me, now at last you can rest. I have come to you, whom I have known. I recognize your mystery, why you were planted. So then, cross that is pure, radiant, full of life and light, receive me, I who have been weary for so long. (*Acts Andr.* 21)

This absence of explicit christological reflection continues even during the martyrdom of Andrew. As has been noted, rather than pointing to salvation in Christ, 'the apostle alone offers a soteriological bridge' (Bovon 2000: 91). Therefore, in the *Acts of Andrew* Christ is the object of devotion and prayers are addressed to him. Salvation is a topic of greater interest than that of christology. However, salvation is envisaged as the release of the soul from its current location within mortal bodies. Since this soteriological scheme lacks many of the elements of Valentinian or Sethian cosmologies, it is perhaps better to see such ideas as general reflections on wider Hellenistic understandings of the fate of the soul after death.

Acts of Paul

The *Acts of Paul* is another text that no longer survives in its entirety. According to the Stichometry of Nicephorus this work comprised 3600 lines. What survives is derived from various manuscripts, including an extensive approximately eighty-page Coptic text that has been reassembled from over two thousand fragments. It appears that about two thirds of the original work is extant (see Sellew 1992: 202–3). The sequencing of some of the surviving manuscript evidence is not unproblematic (Elliott 1993: 355). Overall the text promotes a simple ascetic Christianity, with a strong emphasis on sexual continence, and contains no obvious traces of 'gnostic' systems of thought.

Although Paul's travels, harmonized into one continuous journey, form the narrative framework of the story, the text also reveals aspects of its reflections on Christ and its views on salvation. While the *Acts of Paul* lacks the mythic conception of salvation as the release of the soul, as found in the *Acts of Andrew*, it does share a common doxological language. Prayer is unabashedly addressed directly to the Lord (*Acts Paul*, §9 Corinth). Yet alongside this God can also be addressed in prayer, but interestingly at times in a qualified form to 'God, … father of Christ' (*Acts Paul*, §9 Corinth). The text struggles to present any clear distinction between 'God' and 'Christ'. Thus on occasion it addresses Jesus as 'my God, Jesus Christ' (*Acts Paul*, §7 Ephesus), or 'my God, Son of the Most High' (*Acts Paul*, Thecla 29). Given the prominence of the form of address 'God Most High' (*theos hypsistos*) in the region of Asia Minor (Trebilco 1991: 127–44), this might support the scholarly view of an Ephesian origin for the text. Believers are 'sealed' in Christ, or in the Lord (*Acts Paul*, §7 Thecla 25; Martyrdom 7). As the response to Thecla's request makes clear ('Thecla, be patient, you shall receive the water'), this is a description of baptism in the name of Christ. In the latter part of the reconstructed text, *Third Corinthians* and the Martyrdom, the expanded form of address 'Lord Jesus Christ' is employed with greater frequency. Whether this says anything about multiple stages of composition is difficult to determine due to the composite text itself being a pastiche of fragmentary witnesses with differing histories of transmission.

One feature that is significant in the christological outlook of the text is its rebuttal of what can be labelled for convenience as docetic perspectives. During his period at Philippi, Paul receives news from Corinth that Simon and Cleobius have arrived causing distress by teaching that 'there is no resurrection of the body but only of the spirit … nor has Jesus Christ has been crucified but only in appearance, and he was not born of Mary nor of the seed of David' (*Acts Paul*, §8 Philippi). In the part of the text typically known as *Third Corinthians*, Paul writes a lengthy repudiation of such beliefs, and presents his own doctrinal affirmations. A pithier summary is placed on the lips of Paul during his journey from Corinth to Italy. Paul states that:

> Jesus Christ … gave himself for us … For in these last times God for our sakes has sent down a spirit of power into the flesh, that is, into Mary the Galilean according to the prophetic word, which was conceived and born by her as the fruit of her womb until she was delivered and gave birth to Jesus the Christ, our king, of Bethlehem in Judaea, brought up in Nazareth, who went to Jerusalem and taught all Judaea, 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand! Forsake the darkness, receive the light, you who live in the darkness of death! A light has arisen on you!' And he did great and wonderful works, choosing from the tribes twelve men whom he had with him in understanding and faith, as he raised the dead, healed diseases, cleansed lepers, healed the blind, made cripples whole, raised up paralytics, cleansed those possessed by demons. (*Acts Paul*, §10 From Corinth to Italy)

Earlier in the *Acts of Paul*, the 'spirit of Christ' is described as existing prior to the birth of Jesus. The author declares that Israel itself is saved through Christ since God 'took from the spirit of Christ and poured it out upon the prophets' (*Acts Paul, 3 Cor. 1*). The reference to

the 'spirit of power' that God sends into the flesh of Mary is the same pre-existing spirit of Christ that empowered the prophets. Therefore, taken together, these statements provide a strongly incarnational and historicized perspective. Thus, the text emphasizes the historical elements of Christ's earthly ministry. Moreover, Mary becomes a focal point, since the conception and birth of Jesus are essential to the affirmation of the humanity of Christ.

Concern about describing the mechanism of salvation is not particularly prominent. When the author makes a soteriological statement, for the most part it appears incidental to the major thrust of the narrative. During one of his speeches in Ephesus, Paul declares 'hope in Christ and he will give you forgiveness of sin and will bestow on you a crown of freedom, that you may no longer serve idols' (*Acts Paul*, §7 Ephesus). Thus in typical Pauline fashion (cf. 1 Thess. 1.9) part of the process of coming to faith in Christ entails rejection of false gods. Another vital aspect is forgiveness. The theme of salvation comes to the fore more explicitly in *Third Corinthians*. As part of the wider incarnational theology of the text, Paul is presented as making the following soteriological statements:

> Our Lord Jesus Christ was born of Mary of the seed of David … that he might come into this world and save all flesh by his own flesh and that he might raise us in the flesh from the dead as he has presented himself as our example.… [God] wished to save the house of Israel; therefore he took from the spirit of Christ and poured it out upon the prophets … For by his own body Jesus Christ saved all flesh, presenting in his own body a temple of righteousness through which we are saved. (*Acts Paul; 3 Cor. 1*)

Perhaps the most interesting element is the development of the idea that those who are the beneficiaries of salvation in the Hebrew Bible received that divine gift through the spirit of Christ being poured upon the prophets.

The *Acts of Paul* encapsulates a number of 'proto-orthodox' ideas in relation to christology, and where it touches upon the topic of soteriology its outlook is largely conventional, in that it sees Christ's death as being the means by 'which we are saved'. The text strongly affirms the incarnation and bodily resurrection of Jesus. It also declares that believers will be raised in the flesh. This position stands in tension with the soteriology of the *Acts of Andrew*, where salvation entails the release of the soul from the physical body. It would certainly transcend the bounds of the evidence to suggest that the *Acts of Paul* responded directly to the outlook of the *Acts of Andrew*. However, the *Acts of Paul* is obviously aware of similar theological viewpoints, and it even attributes a kind of anti-material christology and soteriology to the figures named as Simon and Cleobius. There is no doubt that the agenda contained in some of its sections is to quash such perspectives, and to offer a robust affirmation of the reality of the spirit of Christ becoming 'flesh' and salvation being achieved 'by his own body' wherein 'he saved all flesh'.

Acts of Peter

The *Acts of Peter* is an entertaining narrative, which while interested in suppressing certain forms of early Christian teaching that were not considered congenial, does not place detailed theological reflection at the centre of its storyline. Despite earlier scholarly statements that confidently declared the *Acts of Paul* to be dependent on the *Acts of Peter* and hence its earliest source of external attestation (Schmidt and Schubart 1936: 127–30), current opinion sees the relationship as more complex and hence as not resolved (Poupon 1988: 4363–83; Elliott 1993: 390; Rordorf 1998: 178–91). The relationship with the *Acts of John* is equally problematic (Elliott 1993: 390, although Lalleman has argued that that the final form of the *Acts of John* was known to the author of the *Acts of Peter*; Lalleman 1998: 161–77). However, here no direct literary relationship is assumed between any of these texts. Again, the extant portion of the text is lacunous, with perhaps only two thirds

surviving (based on the Stichometry of Nicephorus). The largest surviving fragment is found in the Latin Codex Vercellenis 158 (sixth to seventh century).

Theologically the *Acts of Peter* is eclectic, and no uniform christological perspective is discernible. However, it does employ examples of polymorphic appearances: a feature that frequently occurs in docetic texts. Yet, here the function is somewhat different, for such appearances reveal a Christ taking on forms that are beneficial for those in need (Cartlidge 1986: 53–66). The extended title 'Lord Jesus Christ' is a favourite throughout the narrative, although shorter forms also are used frequently. People are entreated to 'pray to' and 'believe in' the Lord Jesus Christ and to trust in 'the power' he supplies (*Acts of Peter* 17, 28). The 'Lord Jesus Christ' is declared to be 'faithful' and to be 'pure and undefiled from every impurity' (*Acts of Peter* 6, 28). Jesus' unique filial relationship to the Father is affirmed through the form of address 'Father of your holy Son Jesus Christ' (*Acts of Peter* 17; cf. 'holy Father of your Son Jesus Christ', 27). The distinction between God as Father and Jesus Christ as his son dissolves at other points in the text where Jesus is addressed directly as 'God': 'Jesus the living God will forgive'; 'most excellent and only holy one, for you appeared to us, O God Jesus Christ' (*Acts of Peter* 2. 5). Therefore, the christological of the *Acts of Peter* appears to reflect popular spontaneous piety in the form of outbursts of doxological confession, rather than being the product of mature theological reflection.

Despite using polymorphic appearances and language, the author affirms the reality of Christ's crucifixion. Thus the author appears to struggle to find a middle path between affirming the transcendence of Jesus as God and his immanence as human:

> For he is in the Father and the Father in him, in him is the fulness of majesty, who has shown us all his benefits. He ate and drank on our account though he was neither hungry nor thirsty; he suffered and bore reproaches for us, he died and rose for us. He also defended and strengthened me by his greatness when I sinned; he will also comfort you so that you may love him: this one who is great and small, beautiful and ugly, young and old, appearing in time and yet utterly invisible in eternity;… not subject to suffering, but having now made trial of suffering for our sake, never chastised, yet now chastised; who was before the world and is now perceived in time;… This Jesus you have, brethren, the door, the light, the way, the bread, the water, the life, the resurrection, the refreshment, the pearl, the treasure, the seed, the abundance (harvest), the mustard seed, the vine, the plough, the grace, the faith, the word: he is all things and there is none other greater than he. To him be praise in all eternity. Amen. (*Acts of Peter* 20)

This rich litany of christological affirmations leaves the reader in little doubt that from the author's perspective Jesus is an intended focus of devotion. However, the tension between acknowledging that Jesus partook of food and drink, while simultaneously declaring he was never hungry or thirsty, does betray some residual resistance to the idea of full humanity. It is probable that this should not be read as a denial of the incarnation, especially given the stress on the reality of Christ's suffering. Instead the statement that 'he was neither hungry nor thirsty' appears to stress the fact that Jesus was the pre-existent one who became human and yet remained divine. At this juncture the text struggles to find a suitable way to affirm humanity and divinity alongside each other. Although both aspects are present in these statements, this uneasy juxtaposition is not resolved.

Reports of conversion are prominent in the text, and without extended reflection such occurrences are viewed as soteriological moments. Thus Marcellus, whose faith is more fully confirmed on seeing Peter best Simon in a miracle confrontation then rebukes Simon for attempting 'to lead me away from Christ my Lord and Saviour' (*Acts of Peter* 14). During the martyrdom account, Peter addresses the cross not as an implement of execution, but as the 'unspeakable mercy, which is expressed in the name of the cross'. In the same speech, still ostensibly addressed to the cross although it seems to have wandered into a more general exhortation, Peter declares 'withdraw from actions which are seen outwardly and you shall perceive the facts about Christ and the whole mystery of salvation' (*Acts of*

Peter 37). Hence in line with some of the martyrological fervour within certain strands of the early church, the world-negating nature of salvation in Christ is affirmed. Outward appearance is not able to apprehend the salvation that is being won by the martyrs.

The *Acts of Peter* is a complex and in many ways theologically unsophisticated text. Yet as a reflection of popular piety, it depicts the doxological nature of christological affirmations and the growing veneration of the cult of the martyrs who are understood as having some fast-track access to salvation, as well as a heightened perception of the nature of the heavenly life of which they are about to be part. The famous *Quo Vadis* story, which is part of this text, presents the martyrs as being in closer communion with Christ, and hence through the mystical sharing in crucifixion, or other forms of execution, they become participants in the salvation of Christ.

Acts of John

The critical edition of *Acts of John* (Junod and Kaestli 1983, 2 vols) provides a composite text, reconstructed from fragments preserved in different manuscripts. Hence, this final form may bring together stories from different sources with differing theological perspectives. This is particularly relevant to a discussion concerning the text's christology, since a Valentinian influence appears to pervade the outlook of chapters 94–102 and 109, but is not present in other sections such as the immediately preceding chapters 87–93. The text is officially condemned in the proceedings of the Second Council of Nicea (AD 787).

The suitability of the term 'christology' to describe the perspectives on Christ contained in the *Acts of John* has been questioned (Junod and Kaestli 1976: 138). Instead it is suggested that it is more appropriate to speak of a holistic doctrine of God, since one cannot find a clear distinction in the text between Christ and God. On numerous occasions Jesus is addressed or identifies himself as God: 'Who am I? You shall know when I go away … I am your God' (*Acts of John* 96); 'glory be to you, my Jesus, the only God of truth' (*Acts of John* 43); 'our God Jesus Christ' (*Acts of John* 107); 'Christ Jesus, God, Lord, who with your gifts and your compassion protect those who hope in you' (*Acts of John* 108); 'God Jesus, Father of the supernatural, ruler of those in heaven' (*Acts of John* 112). Put simply, the one addressed as 'Jesus' or 'Christ', according to the highest perception offered in the *Acts of John*, is none other than the appearance of the deity proclaimed in the text. This may in part explain the multiple forms in which he is perceived in certain sections of the text. An eminent believer from Ephesus, Drusiana, confesses that 'the Lord appeared to me in the tomb in the form of John and of a youth' (*Acts of John* 87). The character of John validates this polymorphic appearance when he recalls that during his initial call with his brother James the two of them had seen the Lord in different forms. In another incident, during a period of feigned slumber, John recalls that 'I saw another like him whom I also heard saying to my Lord, "Jesus, those whom you have chosen still do not believe in you." And my Lord said to him, "You are right, for they are men"' (*Acts of John* 92). The identity of the second figure is not stated in this context. However, a clue may be given in later sections. During the crucifixion, John is confronted with three different forms of the one he recognizes as the Lord.

> He was hung upon the cross on Friday … And my Lord stood in the middle of the cave and lit it up, and said, "John, to the multitude down below in Jerusalem I am being crucified … but to you I am speaking … And having said this he showed me a cross of light set up, and around the cross a great multitude which had no one form; and in the cross was one form and one likeness. And the Lord himself I beheld above the cross, not having a shape, but only a voice, and one truly divine. (*Acts of John* 97–8)

This confusing scene appears to depict a physical form of Jesus being crucified, another form speaking with John in the cave, and a third manifestation without form hovering above the cross that is identified as divine.

This section of the text, which is likely influenced by similar Valentinian ideas, appears to posit a three-level christology. The cross is the location where humanity is discarded by the one John addresses as Lord, and that is identified as the third and lowest level of perception. The figure speaking with John immediately subsequent to the crucifixion now self-identifies as the Logos. This three-level schema is reiterated in a later passage:

> And thus I speak, discarding manhood. Therefore, in first place think of the Logos, then you shall perceive the Lord, and thirdly the man, and what he has suffered. (*Acts of John* 101)

While this christological outlook may not permeate the whole composite text, it was integrated into the text at some stage and may, at least in part, explain the rejection of its perspectives at later Councils.

Salvation in the text is a vague concept, but appears to be related to gaining an understanding of the non-material cosmological significance of the figure of Jesus. Therefore, what John describes as 'the whole spectacle of salvation' (*Acts of John* 77) is explicated in a christological panegyric addressed to the 'Lord Jesus Christ' who possesses 'great mercy and endless forbearance'. As the passage continues, without any change of referent the figure is addressed as 'Father, full of mercy and compassion' and then concludes 'holy Jesus, for you alone are God and none else; you against whose power all devices can do nothing now and in eternity' (*Acts of John* 77). Therefore salvation appears to be obtained by those who recognize that the Lord Jesus is himself the immaterial and transcendent holy God. Yet, alongside this in other portions of the text more traditional ethical imperatives are directed towards potential recipients of salvation. Thus John preaching to the Ephesians places the following stark choice before them: 'If you do not wish to die, let me convince you of your idolatry…. Be converted by my God, or I will die at the hands of your goddess. For I will pray in your presence to my God, and ask him to have mercy upon you' (*Acts of John* 40). So here the typical concern of turning from idolatry and receiving the true God is part of the soteriological landscape of this text. Later in the text the unique saving efficacy of the Lord is stated, when he is described as being 'alone a Saviour and righteous,… Christ Jesus, God, Lord, who with your gifts and your compassion protect those who hope in you' (*Acts of John* 108).

Consequently, in the *Acts of John* salvation primarily involves gaining a correct perception of transcendent realities. It is presented as an immediate reality for those who gain such understanding, and hence there appears to be no future or eschatological aspect to salvation in the *Acts of John*. Salvation is based upon the recognition that the one known as Jesus and Lord is the only God, and he is the one towards whom belief is directed. The soteriological event is directed towards individual converts, and results in that person no longer being subject to the constraints of the material realm (Junod and Kaestli 1976: 136–7).

Acts of Thomas

The *Acts of Thomas* is the only one of the five early apocryphal acts for which a complete text survives. It has been noted that describing the text as 'gnostic' is an 'obsolete oversimplification', since it lacks cosmological myths often found in texts belonging to that milieu. Instead, the text represents 'the mixture of theology, liturgy, and ascetical piety characteristic of Syrian christology of the 2d and 3d centuries' (Attridge 1992: 534). The

text does, however, contain various encratite perspectives that are central to the piety that it espouses. Foremost among these is its disavowal of sexual intercourse even within marriage. Marriage itself is not prohibited, but sexual relations are described as 'filthy intercourse' (*Acts of Thomas* 12, 88) or a 'deed of shame' (*Acts of Thomas* 14, 54, 55, 84). Alongside this, excess in food or drink is also a form of corruption (*Acts of Thomas* 20). In fact the material world and the body itself are seen as fundamentally susceptible to corruption (cf. Klijn 2003: 10). It is within this larger theological outlook that the christological and soteriological perspectives of the text are presented.

One of the more important aspects of the text is the presentation of Thomas as the twin brother of Jesus. This is most clearly communicated when a great serpent addresses Thomas, saying: 'for I know that you are the twin brother of Christ and always bring our race to naught' (*Acts of Thomas* 31). Such twinship does not equate with identity, but it does allow access and spiritual intimacy that permits a deeper understanding of the person and purposes of Christ (cf. the incident with the ass's colt, *Acts of Thomas* 31). From this position of intimacy, Thomas' preaching is central to the christological perspectives of the text. Christ is seen to have put on a human body. Therefore he is described as the 'polymorphous one, who is the only begotten and first born among many brethren'. In a hymn addressed to the father it is stated that 'you spread over us your mercy in him who came by your will and put on a body' (*Acts of Thomas* 48, 70). Nonetheless, the text maintains a high Eucharistic theology focused on the body and blood of Jesus: 'let your body be for us salvation, and your blood for the remission of sins' (*Acts of Thomas* 158).

There is no strong concern to distinguish clearly between Jesus and God, so that the two are virtually synonymous on occasions. The text describes Jesus unambiguously as being divine, without reflecting in detail upon his relationship to the father: 'Jesus, God of God and Saviour … Jesus Most High, voice arising from perfect compassion, Saviour of all, right hand of the light; God of God Most High and man …' (*Acts of Thomas* 48). Yet, even here there are slight qualifications in that this Jesus is the 'right hand of the light' and while being lauded as 'God of God Most High' is also declared to be 'man'. The emphasis on the divine aspect of Christ, and the viewpoint that his human body was a shell which he put on, suggests that the text aligns with various docetic ideas.

One of the frequent titles for Jesus is 'Saviour', and consequently the salvation he brings is a key aspect of the text. Thomas is the one by whom 'is he preached, the Saviour of the souls that come to him' (*Acts of Thomas* 42). In line with the wider theology of the text, it is the soul that needs to be freed and to be kept pure from bodily pollution (*Acts of Thomas* 30). However, it is the conversion of individuals that leads to salvation, and consequently 'entails a life of rigorous asceticism' (Attridge 1992: VI.533).

The *Acts of Thomas* contains a variety of christological and soteriological ideas that perhaps find their coherence in a commitment to a radical and demanding asceticism. Such an outlook promotes understanding Christ's divine nature as the spiritual aspect of his being, and the human side as being simply a cloak or shell that allows him to approach humans in their lower and benighted physical state. Moreover, the Eucharistic theology found in the text declares Jesus' body to be holy and the means of salvation (*Acts of Thomas* 158).

Acts of Philip

In 1974 François Bovon and Bertrand Bouvier rediscovered the longest surviving form of the *Acts of Philip* in the library of Xenophontos monastery on Mount Athos. The text of the *Acts* and the *Martyrdom of Philip* occupy folios 30r–109v of the 141 folios of the

fourteenth-century paper manuscript. The process of transmission is unknown, but presumably this form of the text has undergone mutation between its likely composition in the fourth century and the date of the Xenophontos 32 (A) manuscript in the fourteenth century. However, notwithstanding these likely changes, much in the narrative appears to reflect the theological outlook of the earlier period.

The diverse christological and soteriological statements of this extensive text can only be summarized. The fulsome title 'Lord Jesus Christ' is used repeatedly. Upon the appearance of a beautiful eagle, Philip ponders whether 'perhaps even now, Lord Jesus Christ, you are the one revealing yourself in this form' (*Acts of Philip* 3.6; cf. 15.7). This is a vehicle for a reflection on the mystery of the incarnation:

> And how did you endure being made humble, since you are the Lord? And how did you bear being called a servant? And how, since you are eternal, did you associate with birth? You were fixed on a cross in order that you might set us free from the nails, granting us unceasing, unshaded, ever-shining nightless light. (*Acts of Philip* 3.6)

Here there is no concern with addressing docetic issues; instead the incomprehensibility of divinity in humanity is simply affirmed. This may explain the confident manner in which the text describes Jesus as a deity. Addressing a widow, recently bereft of her only child, Philip declares 'I will raise your child by the power of my God Jesus Christ, who was crucified, buried, rose from the dead, and rules for ever—whoever believes in him receives life eternal' (*Acts of Philip* 1.2). Therefore, Jesus is unabashedly described as divine, his death and resurrection are affirmed, as is his gift of salvation—conceived as being eternal life—which he gives to believers. The text does promote sexual asceticism. On the raising of her son, the widow confesses that 'I believe in Jesus and in holy virginity' (*Acts of Philip* 1.3). Given the likely fourth-century date, and that virginity is promoted, it may be the case that the text is not necessarily the product of an encratic community, but reflects the growing commitment to celibacy in the early church (cf. Jerome, *Adversus Helvidium, c.* AD 383), as well as the radical asceticism that became prominent in some sectors of Christianity in the period.

The text does not attempt to distinguish between the person of the Father and that of Christ in any significant manner. Rather it repeatedly calls Jesus 'father', in one sense or another. Thus Philip declares to the widow 'you have as a father Jesus the crucified' (*Acts of Philip* 1.3). With more discrimination Jesus is addressed as 'O Lord Jesus, sweet voice of the Father' (*Acts of Philip* 4.2)—perhaps showing relationship to, rather than identity with the Father. However, elsewhere the text in a litany of titles describes Jesus as 'Lord Jesus Christ, Father of the ages, King of the light' (*Mart. Philip* 38). Hence there is no strict desire to maintain a separation between the titles typically applied to the different persons of the Trinity.

From the perspective of the text, salvation is found exclusively in Christ. During a commotion in the city of Nikatera, Philip comforts his terrified fellow-believers by reminding them that Christ is the one 'who saves us from every distress, and he will deliver us from every trial.… He also saves us from every trick and deception of the devil, whom the Lord Jesus will rebuke at the end' (*Acts of Philip* 5.4). So while the saving power of Christ may be experienced in the present life, its ultimate manifestation is eschatological being expressed in the final defeat of the devil. Salvation is presented in the text as an individual experience, and one for which recipients may need to prepare themselves, but not for a period of great duration. In the conversation that ensues after Ireos shelters Philip and his companions from the baying mob, Ireos declares 'I have prepared my soul for salvation.' Philip responds with qualified approval, 'The Lord will fulfil your longing. Only

do not hesitate with regard to preparation, on account of which you have come to us' (*Acts of Philip* 5.8).

The sheer length of the Xenophontos manuscript and its diverse statements concerning Christ and salvation means that one cannot offer a simple summary of its perspectives. Some developments in christological perspectives in comparison with some of the earlier five major apocryphal acts are readily seen: most notably the clearer affirmation of both the divinity and humanity of Christ that is represented as true but incomprehensible. Further, the text affirms that Christ is eternal, giving a more straightforward affirmation of a pre-existent figure taking human form. However, the text does not have a sensibility concerned with maintaining a clear differentiation when it comes to applying the title of 'father' only to the first person of the Trinity, and not to the second. The soteriological perspectives contained in the text find parallels in some of the earlier apocryphal acts. Salvation is in Christ alone, and believers are called to a radical asceticism. However, unlike the *Acts of John*, while salvation may be focused on the individual it is not about disconnecting the soul from the material body. Thus, if it is possible to draw a generalization, the *Acts of Philip* portrays an understanding in which salvation is not the escape of the soul from the material realm, but includes among other things the final defeat of evil and the end of its control over believers. In this sense salvation has an immediate impact on the life of believers in their present physical state.

THE APOCRYPHAL APOCALYPSES

The distinction between apocryphal acts and apocryphal apocalypses is not always particularly sharp. The apocryphal acts contain a number of apocalyptic or revelatory passages, where the information disclosed is mediated through a heavenly being, often the risen Jesus, and discloses a transcendent reality (Rowland 1982: 70–2). Similarly, a number of the so-called apocryphal apocalypses centre on a single apostolic figure, who becomes the focus of the revelatory actions in the text. Thus, while the latter category may place more emphasis on revelatory communications that pertain to the eschatological era, there are overlaps in generic features with apocryphal acts. The classification that is followed here is due in large part to convention, as well as being attuned to the ancient titles affixed to texts that are now grouped as apocalypses.

Here the texts that are considered are a representative sample, and include the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *First Apocalypse of James*, and the *Apocalypse of Thomas*. These texts are selected because of the diverse perspectives they reflect. A number of apocalypses occur in different recensions, but in length the Christian apocalypses associated with a figure from the early Jesus movement tend to be much shorter texts than the apocryphal acts.

Apocalypse of Peter

This text occurs in a number of different forms, and is a title applied to at least two different texts. Here the text being considering is that known in both a shorter Greek form (discovered at Akhmîm in 1886–7), as well as in a longer Ethiopic form. This text is distinct from the Nag Hammadi tractate of the same name (NHC VII.3). The relationship between the surviving Ethiopic and Greek forms of the text is complex and not yet fully resolved. The differences between the two forms reflect the fluidity in the process of textual transmission. However, both of the surviving forms are likely developments of a base text. The text is significant because it is viewed as the 'earliest extant Christian document that

describes Heaven and Hell' (Elliott 1993: 595). Moreover, while it is often linked with the Bar Kokhba revolt (see Bauckham 1985: 269–87, 1994: 7–111), that association is not certain.

The longer Ethiopic text employs various christological titles, while the shorter Greek fragment is consistent in using 'the Lord' as its means of designating Jesus. This use of the title 'the Lord' also aligns with the most frequent christological title in the *Gospel of Peter* fragment, which is preserved in the same codex. Both the *Apocalypse* and the *Gospel of Peter* fragments contained in the Akhmîm codex may be written in the same hand. Therefore, the consistency in the use of the title 'the Lord' may have been imposed by a later scribe or editor, rather than reflecting a more primitive textual form. However, on one occasion when the Greek text of the *Apocalypse of Peter* refers to the deity using *kyrios* language, it makes this clear by employing the formulation 'Lord God' (Greek *Apoc. Peter* 19). In the Ethiopic text Jesus is described or addressed using the following titles: 'Christ', 'Son of God', 'Lord', 'Saviour', 'God, Jesus Christ', 'my Lord and God Jesus', Lord Jesus Christ' (*Apoc. Peter* 1, 3, 16). The formula 'my Lord and God Jesus' may well reflect the phraseology of the fourth gospel when Thomas confesses Jesus to be 'my Lord and my God' (John 20.28). Therefore, in line with much other extant early Christian evidence, the *Apocalypse of Peter* affirms that Christ is a divine being. There are, however, no explicit affirmations or denials of Christ's humanity. What the text does do is situate the revelation of teaching concerning differentiated future fates within the setting of the earthly ministry of Jesus. The opening portion of the text has numerous verbal parallels to Jesus' eschatological discourse, most frequently to the Matthean form (cf. Matt. 24.3–44). Although this temporal horizon fades as the text progresses, the location of this revelation during the earthly life of Jesus may suggest that the humanity of Christ was not an issue for the christological perspective of the text.

However, the text rapidly moves beyond the subject matter contained in Matt. 24. Referring to Jesus as 'the Saviour' (*Apoc. Peter* 3), it launches into a lurid description of the punishments that await those who are to be consigned to hell at the final judgement. Here the theme of future salvation and damnation is the main concern of the text. On the day of the final judgement 'all the children of men' are gathered, hell gives up those it holds captive, animals have to return the human flesh which they have devoured, and Uriel revivifies all human life by giving back 'soul and spirit' (*Apoc. Peter* 4). The text devotes a disproportionate section to outlining the sufferings of the damned in comparison to describing the 'life that is above' that the righteous are to enter. However, the damned are able to see the heavenly life of the righteous, and consequently the text depicts the following appeal and its rejection:

> And all those in torment shall say with one voice, 'Have mercy upon us, for now we know the judgement of God, which he declared to us beforetime and we did not believe.' And the angel Tatirokos shall come and chastise them with even greater torment, and say to them, 'Now do you repent, when it is no longer the time for repentance, and nothing of life remains.' And they shall say, 'Righteous is the judgement of God, for we have heard and perceived that his judgement is good, for we are recompensed according to our deeds.' (*Apoc. Peter* 13)

Here one sees the classic idea of differentiated eternal fates for believers and unbelievers. This scheme finds antecedents in New Testament texts such as Revelation 20–2. However, in that example less is said about the negative future state than about the paradisical future for the faithful. The imagery may develop ideas already present in Jewish (*1 Enoch* 17–36) and classical texts (Homer, *Odyssey*, Book XI; Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book VI).

However, the text itself appears to wrestle with the notion of eternal damnation. Towards the conclusion of the Ethiopic version, Peter is overcome by the apparent eternal

punishment of sinners and appeals to Christ to have pity on them. Peter weeps for many hours on their account, and although 'exceedingly diffuse and vague,[the text] does seem to promise ultimate pardon for all' (James 1924: 520). Jesus answers Peter, 'my Father will give to them all the life, the glory and the kingdom … It is because of them that have believed in me that I am come. It is also because of them that have believed in me, that, at their word, I shall have pity on men.' In the end, the text may espouse a type of universalism. This is striking, especially given the intense punishments described. The text may, however, offer its own hermeneutic for understanding this tension. Jesus forbids Peter from speaking of the potential universal salvation: 'you must not tell what you hear to sinners, lest they transgress and sin even more'. Consequently it is possible to infer that the depictions of the torments in hell are primarily seen as motivational. Fear of eternal judgement is viewed as a very strong reason to join the company of the righteous in the present life.

First Apocalypse of James

Found amongst the Nag Hammadi corpus of writings (NHC V.3), the visionary text the *First Apocalypse of James* is concerned with the future sufferings soon to befall James, transmission in secret of the true teaching, the role of women disciples, and the rebuke of the Twelve (Schoedel and Parrott 1996: 260). The Lord provides James with a series of formulae that will enable him to progress past the hostile powers that will attempt to block his assent to 'the pre-existent one'. 'These formulae represent a dramatized version of texts that appear elsewhere in the context of rites for the dying in forms of Valentinian Gnosticism' (Schoedel and Parrott 1996: 260). The motif of the post-mortem journey of the soul and its confrontation of hostile powers is well known in the broader thought world of the time (see the Egyptian funerary text, the *Book of the Dead*, and from a similar setting as the Nag Hammadi texts, see the *Books of Jeu*).

The narrator refers to Jesus as 'the Lord', whereas in direct speech James addresses him as 'rabbi'. This may affirm the role of Jesus as a teacher of hidden mysteries, as well as attempting to communicate to readers the antiquity of the tradition, stemming from Jerusalem in the first decades of the movement. In this way the *First Apocalypse of James* appears to be advocating an alternative ancient strand of authoritative teaching that has an apostolic pedigree. In this text 'the Lord' declares himself to be unnameable, yet to be 'an image of Him-who-is', and his purpose is to bring forth that image to the ones who are the offspring of the highest ineffable one. Thus the Lord tells James that 'I shall reveal to you everything of the mystery' (NHC V.3, 25).

The text is more interested in the revelation of the mystery than in the identity of 'the Lord'. Its view of salvation is concerned with the cosmological assent through the seventy-two heavens that are under the authority of the twelve archons. James is not only forewarned about his coming martyrdom but also the perils he will face during his cosmic journey. When one of the powerful beings will confront James with a question concerning his origin, he is instructed to answer 'I am from the Pre-Existent Father, and a son in the Pre-Existent One' (NHC V.3, 33). The central concern of the text is that of soteriology, but as understood from a Valentinian perspective. Many of the characters associated with Valentinian cosmology appear in this revelation dialogue about James's future assent. Similarly there is an emphasis on the female. This occurs in two ways. First through prominence given to female disciples, with James commanded to 'encourage these four: Salome and Mariam and Martha and Arsinoe' (NHC V.3, 40). Also in line with Valentinian cosmology and the understanding of the reunification of the feminine soul with her

masculine heavenly counterpart, the text states that 'the perishable has gone up to the imperishable and the female element has attained to this male element' (NHC V.3, 41). Salvation is mystical, and entails the reunification of the soul and its return to the one who is the highest power. The text communicates its salvific teachings in a narrative form. Not only does this result in a greater dramatization of the soteriological teachings of the text, it also projects the antiquity of such teachings back to the origin of the Jesus movement.

Apocalypse of Thomas

The *Apocalypse* or *Revelation of Thomas* is known in two recensions. The longer recension betrays knowledge of events at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century with obvious allusions to imperial history. The text portrays its own contemporary horizon as the end of time:

> Suddenly there shall arise near the last time a king, a lover of the law, who shall not rule for long, he shall leave two sons. The first is named after the first letter, the second after the eighth. The first shall die before the second. Thereafter shall arise two princes … Again another king shall arise,… After a little space there shall arise a king out of the east, a lover of law,… and after that again a king shall arise in the south part of the world … (*Apocalypse of Thomas*, long recension)

The first figures mentioned are Theodosius I (347–95) and his two sons Arcadius who died in 408 and Honorius in 423. Thereafter, the text alludes to the divided empire, and the second emperor depicted as a lover of the law appears to be Theodosius II (401–50), whose name is attached to the eponymous legal code. The surviving portion of the longer form of the *Apocalypse of Thomas* has no explicit christological or soteriological interests. Rather, its concern is to interpret contemporary events as part of the eschatological culmination of history.

By contrast, the shorter form is likewise addressed to Thomas, but explicitly as a communication from Christ: 'Hear, O Thomas, for I am the Son of God the Father, and I am the father of all spirits.' (*Apocalypse of Thomas*, shorter recension). The more precise christological formulation that declares the speaker to the son of 'God the Father' reflects developments in Trinitarian theology that had evolved by the time of the composition of the text, usually taken to be late fourth or early fifth century (Thomason 1992: VI 534).

Next, after a brief description of the time of pestilence, the text narrates the time when there shall be 'for seven days great signs in heaven.' It is not until the sixth day that Christ surfaces in the account when he states 'then shall they behold me coming from above in the light of my Father.' Here the text expresses the belief that the resurrected Christ dwells in heaven with his Father until his *parousia*. At this point the spirits and souls of the departed return to repossess their bodies, 'then shall every spirit return to his own vessel, and the bodies of the saints who have fallen asleep shall arise'. After this, those revivified saints shall 'be changed into the image and likeness and the honour of the holy angels, and into the power and image of my holy Father'. This future that awaits the faithful departed entails the sending forth of the spirits awaiting in paradise, which appears to be an interim state prior to the final eschatological salvation. The resurrection of the dead, prior to the ingathering of living believers is probably due to an application of the Pauline declaration that 'the dead in Christ will rise first' (1 Thess. 4.16). It is not until the seventh day that 'my elect shall be sought out by the holy angels from the destruction of the world'. On the eighth day, after the final battle and destruction of the earth, there is heard 'a sweet and tender voice in heaven from the east' and at this point the angels 'deliver the elect who have believed in me'. Therefore, in the *Apocalypse of Thomas*, salvation is linked with eschatological victory. The faithful departed are brought forth from their interim state as

disembodied spirits in paradise, and the living 'elect' are saved from the apocalyptic destruction of the world through the intervention of the angels of God. The schema is a much-developed reflection and expansion on ideas embryonically latent in certain New Testament texts.

CONCLUSIONS

It is not possible to draw out unified conclusions concerning the topics of christology and soteriology as reflected in the various texts known as the apocryphal acts and apocalypses. The reason for this is because of the multiple and diverse perspectives they contain in relation to christology and soteriology. At times it appears that certain texts are used overtly to promote a particular theological outlook. However, at other times, the christology or salvific stance of the text is a secondary concern and may be reflected in an allusive manner. In the apocryphal acts and some of the apocalypses, the extended title 'Lord Jesus Christ' is prominent.

While terms such as 'gnostic', and to a lesser extent 'docetic', are contested (Williams 1996), texts such as the *Acts of John* and the *First Apocalypse of James* do present cosmologies that involve the assent of the soul and its release from the material world to the immaterial sphere above. As such, affinities with Valentinian soteriological beliefs are readily seen. Other texts among the apocryphal acts link the efficacy of salvation in the individual with the practice of radical asceticism, most typically demonstrated through the renunciation of sexual intercourse and through embracing celibacy. Such texts may thus reflect some association with encratic communities. However, given the widespread adherence to asceticism, especially in terms of celibacy in various sectors of the early church it does not follow that such tendencies necessarily reflect writings that were the products of encratic communities. Other texts, such as the *Acts of Paul*, appear to reflect a popular form of piety, and the purpose of these writings may be none other than encouraging ongoing devotion to Jesus through the telling of racy and inspiring stories about the adventures of the apostles.

The apocryphal acts and apocalypses are a varied and artificially assembled collection of texts. As such it is perhaps unsurprising that their christological and soteriological perspectives are similarly diverse. However, this is perhaps the important lesson to be drawn. Namely, such diversity illustrates why the quest for clarity concerning christology and soteriology became such an important and pressing concern. Moreover, this is precisely why the seven ecumenical councils were required to resolve these fundamental theological questions.

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THE *GOSPEL OF THOMAS* AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS

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THE *Gospel of Thomas* is a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus. Since its discovery and subsequent publication in the middle of the last century (Robinson 2011: 67–84), scholars have naturally been curious about whether and how this new gospel might reveal something new and interesting about Jesus. But in the fifty years since its introduction into the discussion, little consensus has been reached about whether to use *Thomas* and how, and whether and how it might make a difference. *Thomas* poses a number of significant technical challenges, including its survival in a relatively obscure ancient language in an odd dialect, insufficient understanding of its provenance and the circumstances of its creation, and only a sketchy sense of its theological orientation. In addition to this, one must deal with the ideological currents that seem constantly to swirl around *Thomas* because of its non-canonical status. In spite of the fact that scholars from across the ideological spectrum approach the text with the best intentions of letting the evidence carry the day, it remains true that religious conservatives tend to regard *Thomas* as late, derivative of the canonical Gospels, and 'gnostic' while secular scholars tend to see it as an early, independent source of considerable importance to the study of Christian origins and the historical figure of Jesus. So, in spite of scholars' best efforts to be fair and impartial, *Thomas* has become something of an ideological football in the contest to win from the past something historical about Jesus.

The question of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the historical Jesus is a difficult one with a complicated history. I will begin with an account of the discussion itself. Generally it has unfolded around two issues. The first is the question of how to regard the *Thomas*/Synoptic overlapping material. Is *Thomas* late, dependent, and irrelevant, or is it early, independent, and another source to place over against the Synoptic portrait of Jesus? The second is the matter of new sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Are any of these sayings worth considering as authentic sayings of Jesus?

THOMAS, THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS, AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS

When the *editio princeps* of the *Gospel of Thomas* was published in 1959, the question of the historical Jesus was front and centre in European Protestant theology. For more than a generation, Rudolf Bultmann's version of form criticism had cast doubt upon the historical reliability of the gospels. But in 1953 a number of Bultmann's former students took leave of

their former teacher to launch what has become known as the 'new quest' for the historical Jesus. These post-Bultmannians acknowledged the problems posed by form criticism, but asked whether certain criteria could be developed by which to identify authentic sayings of Jesus within the mass of later, interpretive material that comprises the canonical Gospel tradition. Outside of scholarship none of this was comforting to rank-and-file believers in post-war Europe. In 1952 a general synod of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany condemned Bultmann's views as dangerous. All through the 1960s the controversy over Bultmannian scepticism roiled in the German churches. In 1966 22,000 angry parishoners filled the Westfallenhalle in Dortmund to condemn Bultmann and his students in a modern-day heresy trial (Harenberg 1970: 1–24). This was the tumult into which the *Gospel of Thomas* made its dramatic entry in 1959.

In 1957 Gilles Quispel published an essay in *Vigiliae Christianae*, heralding the soon-to-be-published 'Gospel of Thomas' (Quispel 1957). When the text becomes available, he announced, we will see that here is a gospel that is a direct descendant of the oldest of the lost Aramaic Jewish gospel sources—the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. All of its Synoptic-like sayings, he argued, derive not from the Synoptic Gospels themselves, but from the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and its cousin, the *Gospel of the Ebionites*. As such, it is completely independent of the biblical gospels and instead goes back to the Aramaic-speaking companions of Jesus himself. What would this mean? At the end of his essay he writes:

> And when we keep in mind that a great number of these sayings are if not identical, very similar to the wording of our Synoptics, and yet come from a different and independent Aramaic tradition, we see clearly that the almost nihilistic skepticism of certain "Histories of the Synoptic Tradition" about the authenticity of the words attributed to Jesus in our scripture has not such solid foundation as it claims to have. In this sense the Gospel of Thomas confirms the trustworthiness of the Bible. (Quispel 1957: 16)

Quispel's reference to Bultmann's opus on form criticism, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, is more than obvious. When the *Gospel of Thomas* finally did officially appear two years later, the Bultmannians were waiting. In the 1961/2 issue of *Theologische Rundshau*, Ernst Haenchen easily dismantled Quispel's theory (Haenchen 1961–2). Of the 114 sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* only one, logion 2, has a legitimate parallel to any of the known sayings belonging to the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, and this saying has no equivalent in the Synoptic tradition. Quispel's theory turned out to be much too speculative. The new gospel, argued Haenchen, does not go back to a primitive Aramaic gospel. Instead, it derives from the Synoptic Gospels themselves, or more precisely, a collection of sayings that was itself composed of material drawn from the Synoptics (Haenchen 1961–2: 314). The new gospel would not undo the results of form criticism after all. Among the new questers for the historical Jesus, the *Gospel of Thomas* would not play a role. In 1964 Wolfgang Schrage published his comprehensive study of the *Thomas*/Synoptic parallels and concluded that the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* is a gnostic gospel dependent upon the Coptic versions of the New Testament (Schrage 1964). That would convince most German New Testament scholars for many years to come that *Thomas* is a relatively late gnostic gospel with little or no relevance to the study of the Synoptic tradition, Christian origins, or the historical Jesus.

But outside of the Bultmannian circle the matter was not yet closed. Few were willing to take up Quispel's speculative theory about a primitive Aramaic gospel tradition. But neither was everyone convinced that *Thomas* was simply derived from the Synoptic Gospels. In an essay published in 1960 the conservative Alsatian scholar, Oscar Cullmann, took a more open-ended approach (Cullmann 1960). He sorted the *Thomas* sayings into four groups: (1) sayings that are more or less word-for-word parallels with something in the Synoptic Gospels; (2) more variant forms of known Synoptic sayings; (3) sayings with parallels to non-canonical sources; and (4) previously unknown sayings. Sayings in the first group are

too close to their Synoptic parallels to be of help: they could be independent or dependent. Cullmann was more interested in the second group. Here he could find no tendency to follow one or another of the Synoptic texts, no evidence that *Thomas* had made use of one or more of the Synoptics. Neither did the variations one finds in the *Thomas* sayings add up to any particular theological tendency—gnostic or otherwise. They were simply the sort of variations one finds in material derived from free-flowing oral tradition (Cullmann 1960: 332–3). The third group was like this as well: he could see no evidence that *Thomas*' sayings had been taken from one or another of the known non-canonical gospels. Rather, they probably derived from oral traditions associated with Jesus that were shared with these non-canonical gospels (Cullmann 1960: 334). As for the fourth group, most of its sayings seemed to him to reflect a speculative gnostic framework. But not all of them did. A few, like sayings 97 and 98, were very Synoptic-like, in his view, and thus might well be indicative of an independent gospel tradition with roots in the same oral traditions that lay in part behind the Synoptic Gospels (Cullmann 1960: 334). Cullmann, however, did not see that any of this necessarily contradicted the basic tenets of the form-critical school. On the contrary, it was a good example of what form criticism had brought to the discussion:

> We must always be reminded of what form criticism has taught us, namely, that the existence of various versions of a saying is not to be explained exclusively on the basis of literary influence when such influence cannot be proven, especially when we see motives at work that are not theological, but which belong to the general rules of oral tradition, as is often the case with versions of sayings found in the Gospel of Thomas. (Cullmann 1960: 332)

In 1960 Hugh Montefiore, while still a New Testament scholar at Cambridge, published a more detailed form-critical study of the parables in the *Gospel of Thomas* with parallels in the Synoptics (Montefiore 1960–1). Montefiore took as his point of departure the work of the parables scholar Joachim Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*. When measured against Jeremias' various 'laws of transformation', do *Thomas*' parables show any greater or lesser degree of tradition-historical development than their Synoptic counterparts? Montefiore found that in some respects the *Thomas* parables showed a greater degree of development, especially with regard to embellishment and shift in audience (Montefiore 1960–1: 225–30). But in other respects the *Thomas* parables were much *less* developed. Missing, for example, are the allegorical features present in several synoptic parables and the generalizing conclusions one finds there (Montefiore 1960–1: 235–8, 247). In general he found that the *Thomas* parables show the same *kind* of development Jeremias had observed in the Synoptic tradition, but not the same *specific* developments to be found in their Synoptic parallels. The fact that the form-critical developments in *Thomas* and the Synoptics are alike *in kind*, but *specifically* different means that *Thomas*' sayings derive from the same kind of oral traditioning that produced the Synoptic tradition, but not the Synoptic tradition itself. Montefiore's conclusions were echoed by Claus-Hunno Hunzinger in an essay published also in 1960 (Hunzinger 1960b), and two years later, when Joachim Jeremias revised his famous study to include all of the *Thomas* parables (Jeremias 1962). His work on the new material confirmed precisely what Montefiore had found. As a result he was able to use the *Thomas* parables to refine his tradition-historical analysis of the parables of Jesus. This was the first attempt to integrate the *Gospel of Thomas* into a major work in the quest for the historical Jesus. Since Jeremias, most critical studies of Jesus' parables have taken the *Thomas* parables into account.

The concern of these scholars was neither to use *Thomas* to confirm the reliability of the gospels, nor to undermine any misplaced confidence in their historicity. It was, rather, to use *Thomas* as a second point of reference for working out the tradition history of particular sayings of Jesus. The goal was to come as close to the original gist of the saying as the

extant tradition—now including *Thomas*—would permit. This meant, however, that the Synoptic Gospels would no longer necessarily have the final word on what Jesus actually said and did.

The scholar most noted for carrying this programme forward is John Dominic Crossan. Beginning with his work on the parables in the 1970s (Crossan 1973) and continuing with a volume on the sayings of Jesus (Crossan 1983), Crossan undertook what amounted to an overhaul of Bultmann's form-critical work, now with the *Gospel of Thomas* in the mix. The culmination of this extended programme was Crossan's (1991) study of Jesus, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Crossan 1991). Among the many innovative things Crossan tried in this work was the thorough integration of *Thomas* into the materials judged to be authentic to Jesus. Critical to Crossan's method was the principle that sayings enjoying independent multiple attestation should be regarded more highly than sayings that are attested only once. For this reason, Crossan did not consider any of the new sayings from *Thomas*. But he did fully credit Thomas as an independent witness to the Jesus sayings tradition. As a result, *Thomas* came to figure in Crossan's work in two respects. *Thomas* supplied multiple independent attestation for dozens of Synoptic sayings, which then ended up serving as the focus of his work. Second, Crossan used *Thomas* together with the Synoptic tradition to reconstruct the tradition history of these sayings, many of which lend themselves to a multiplicity of meanings and uses. Without the witness of *Thomas*, scholars had often simply assumed that the Synoptic use of a saying or parable had more or less preserved the original gist of the saying. But in *Thomas* many of these sayings are put to use in much different ways. The 'thief in the night', for example, is not an image for the coming Son of Man (see Luke 12.39–40//Matt. 24.43), but for the world and its hostility to the Jesus movement (see *Thomas* 21.5–6). One result of Crossan's decision to include *Thomas*' sayings in this way was a re-gauging of the eschatological register of Jesus' preaching. For one of the striking differences between *Thomas* and the Synoptics is the relative lack of apocalypticism in *Thomas*. For example, *Thomas*' parables do not include the allegorical interpretations that often transform the Synoptic parables into apocalyptic commentary. According to Crossan, Jesus proffered what might be called a more 'sapiential' eschatology—a kingdom of God already potentially present in the followers of Jesus—a result not altogether different from what some New Quest proponents had proposed without considering *Thomas* as part of the tradition (see, e.g., Käsemann 1969: 40). This view rose to prominence also in the Jesus Seminar, of which Crossan served as co-chair with Robert Funk, supported in part by the author's own efforts to establish the autonomy of the *Thomas* tradition using form and redaction-critical methods (Patterson 1993). This led to a frequent criticism of the Jesus Seminar that it had overvalued the *Gospel of Thomas* and allowed it too much weight in determining the authentic voice of Jesus.

NEW SAYINGS OF JESUS IN THE *GOSPEL OF THOMAS*

Thomas raised another issue quite apart from the canonical Gospels and the question of their reliability. Only about half of *Thomas*' sayings have parallels in the Synoptic Gospels. What about the rest of its sayings? Could some of these sayings have come from Jesus? These were the sayings that fell into category 4 of Cullmann's inventory. In 1960 Johannes-Baptist Bauer offered the first assessment of *Thomas*' unique sayings as a supplement to W. C. van Unnik's popular book on Nag Hammadi, *Evangelien aus dem Nilsand* (Bauer 1960). Among them, Bauer found reason to think that several might be authentic sayings of Jesus:

Thomas 82 ('Whoever is near me is near the fire …'), *Thomas* 81 ('Let the one who has become rich rule …'), *Thomas* 58 ('Blessed is the one who has suffered and found life'), *Thomas* 51 ('When will the repose of the dead be …'), *Thomas* 52 ('Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel …'), and *Thomas* 102 ('a dog in the manger …'). Bauer's method relied primarily on the criterion of coherence. In each case he finds a certain resonance with something comparable in the canonical Gospels, the historicity of which he more or less assumes. Hunzinger also made a quick pass through these sayings in 1960 to establish in principle their value, giving full discussion only to two sayings in particular: the Parable of the Assassin (*Thomas* 97) and the Parable of the Large Fish (*Thomas* 8) (Hunzinger 1960a). His criterion, too, was basically coherence with the Synoptic Gospels. In the 1963 revision of his *Unbekannte Jesusworte* Jeremias also took up this question, expanding its scope only slightly. Like Hunzinger, he believed that the Large Fish could be authentic (Jeremias 1963: 84–6), as well as Bauer's 'Near the Fire' saying (*Thomas* 82) (Jeremias 1963: 64–71) and the brief version of the 'Lilies of the Field' speech in *Thomas* 36 (Jeremias 1963: 92–3). But sayings 77 ('Split the wood') and 42 ('Become passers-by') he thought were probably not authentic (Jeremias 1963: 100–10). The first and only attempt to go through all of *Thomas*' unique sayings and assess them for their authenticity was that of the Jesus Seminar, which considered them piecemeal from 1985–92 (Funk et al. 1993). But in spite of charges that the Seminar gave too much weight to *Thomas*, it actually failed to assign any of the sayings unique to *Thomas* unequivocally to its database. Two parables, sayings 97 (the Woman and the Jar) and 98 (the Assassin), were given a 'pink' designation (meaning the sayings *probably* come from Jesus) by the Seminar. A third saying, *Thomas* 42 ('Become passers-by') came close when the Seminar voted exactly 50 percent for authenticity and 50 percent against. But in the case of ties, the Seminar favoured the negative and the saying was given a 'gray' designation (meaning the saying *probably* does not come from Jesus). In short, very few of the sayings unique to *Thomas* have received serious consideration as actual sayings of Jesus. *Thomas*' new sayings, it is safe to say, have made no significant impact on the quest for the historical Jesus.

This survey has been necessarily brief and incomplete. We might add several more recent works that carry forward the work of integrating *Thomas* even more fully into the historical Jesus debate, including studies by Liebenberg (2001), Zöckler (1999), and Patterson (1998). On the other side there have been several significant contributions to the Jesus quest that have adamantly rejected *Thomas* as a source, including significant works by N. T. Wright (1996), Jens Schröter (1997), and John Meier (1991, 1994, 2001, and 2009). And of the dozens of works that have appeared from among the ranks of evangelical scholars in the last fifteen years, none has accepted *Thomas* as a legitimate source in the search for the historical Jesus. Looking back on fifty years of discussion, one may say, in fact, that the debate about the *Gospel of Thomas* has not really changed very much. Since 1957 this discussion has taken shape around two alternative positions: *Thomas* is late, derivative of the Synoptic Gospels, gnostic, and therefore not relevant to the historical Jesus question, or *Thomas* is early, independent of the Synoptic Gospels, not gnostic, and therefore very relevant to the historical Jesus question. Why, after more than fifty years, have scholars been unable to break the stalemate around these several issues? Is it simply a matter of competing ideologies lining up on either side of an issue with obvious consequences for contemporary theology? To deny that this is in part true would be naive. But this is not the whole truth. In fact, there is something about the Gospel of *Thomas* itself that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to reach a consensus on these key issues: its *form*.

THE PROBLEM OF *THOMAS*' GENRE

The *Gospel of Thomas* is a sayings collection. This has many implications for those who would make use of *Thomas* in historical Jesus research. There is, of course, the obvious fact that it therefore contains no narrative: no life of Jesus, no virgin birth, no miracles, no death, and no resurrection. But the implications of *Thomas*' genre for this research go much deeper than this. These deeper problems have to do with the fact that the sayings collection is in many respects a mere list (Crossan 1992; Patterson 2006: 672–81). The list is a very simple composition and by its very nature malleable. Unlike a narrative form, where additions and subtractions must be made with care and attention to their effect on the whole, with a list new sayings can be added and older sayings sloughed off with relative ease. That the *Gospel of Thomas* is the result of many such alterations over time can be seen, perhaps, in the variety of formulae employed in the introduction of its sayings. The large majority of sayings are introduced with the simple formula 'Jesus said' (*peje Iesous*). At some point an author must have employed this as a compositional technique to construct a collection of Jesus' sayings. But in addition to these sayings, there are several that have no introduction (e.g. *Thomas* 27, 43b, 69b, 93, 101, and 113); others are introduced by a simpler 'he said'; (*pejaf*) (e.g. *Thomas* 8, 20, 21, 24, 65, 72b, 79b, 91, 99, and 100)—and in one of these (*Thomas* 74) 'he' appears not to be Jesus. Still others are formulated as brief chriae, introduced by a question posed by 'the disciples' (*Thomas* 6, 12, 18, 20, 21, 24, 37, 43, 91, 99, and 113) or occasionally an anonymous interlocutor (*Thomas* 72, 79, 100, and 104). In sayings 51–3 we find a sequence of formally similar chriae, each beginning with a question posed by the disciples (*pejaf naf enhi nefmathetes* … / 'His disciples said to him …'), to which Jesus then responds (*pejaf nau* … / 'He said to them …'). All of this variety suggests very strongly that *Thomas*, like any anthology, is an aggregate list, and came over time to 'possess the qualities of a snowball' (Wilson 1960b: 231, 1960a: 9, 145). This conclusion, which has become one of the few points of consensus about the history and composition of the *Gospel of Thomas* (so, e.g., Haenchen 1961–2: 306–7; Puech 1963: 305; Schrage 1964: 10; Kelber 1992: 26; Neller 1989: 1–17; Patterson 1993: 115; DeConick 2005), implies that what may be said about the date, sources, or theology of one or several sayings cannot be inferred for the whole (Robinson 1986: 162–3). How, then, does one date the *Gospel of Thomas*, or determine its sources, or its theology? It should not be surprising to find that scholars remain divided on these critical issues for assessing *Thomas*' historical value.

DATING THE *GOSPEL OF THOMAS*

There is no reliable way to assign a date to the *Gospel of Thomas*, beyond the obvious *terminus ad quem* fixed by the date of the earliest of the extant manuscripts, P. Oxy. 1, roughly 200 CE (Grenfell and Hunt 1897: 6) and the *terminus a quo* of Jesus himself. Within that time frame, dates as early as the 50s CE (Davies 1983: 16–17) and as late as some time after Tatian's *Diatessaron* in the late second century (Perrin 2002) have been proposed. The problems are multiple. First, there are no clear hints within the gospel that would point to a more specific time frame. Stevan Davies thinks that *Thomas*' similarity to Q suggests an early date, as though the sayings-collection genre would have disappeared after the middle of the first century. And yet, we know that Luke was still using Q late in the first century, or even into the second. Jens Schröter and Hans-Gebhard Bethge have argued that the speculative Platonizing aspects of *Thomas* recommend a second-century date, when the *Thomas* tradition will have walked away from its Jewish roots (Schröter and Bethge 2001: 154–5). But the revival of Platonism began as early as the second century BCE and

was in full flourish in the first century CE, when Philo of Alexandria became one of its leading lights (Dillon 1996: 135–83). What is more, Middle Platonism was making inroads into nascent Christianity as early as the 50s CE, as the distinctly Philonic language of Paul's letter known as First Corinthians clearly shows (Horsley 1976). It may be that the speculative aspects of *Thomas* are part of its first-century Jewish roots. Those favouring a mid-second-century date often cite the work of Grenfell and Hunt on the Oxyrhynchus fragments, but their date of 140 CE was a *terminus ad quem*. Their educated guess was that the new gospel ought to be dated somewhat earlier, 'to the period when the Canonical Gospels had not yet reached their pre-eminent position' (Grenfell and Hunt 1897: 16). My own arguments for a late first-century date were also an educated guess (Patterson 1993: 113–18).

But when one takes into account the list-like quality of the document, the problem of assigning a date to *Thomas* becomes even more intractable. For, if there were some clear indication that a particular saying derives from a particular time frame—whether early or late—one could not assume that the entire collection is to be dated similarly. For example, Schenke proposes that saying 68.2 ('no place will be found wherever you have been persecuted') refers to the final destruction of Jerusalem after the Bar Kochba rebellion in 136 CE (Schenke 1994: 25). Let us suppose that this phrase, added to *Thomas*' version of the beatitude about persecution ('Blessed are you whenever you are hated (and) persecuted'), indeed refers to period of Bar Kochba. Would that mean that every saying in *Thomas* derives from this period, or just this added phrase? Similarly, if the Parable of the Vineyard Workers in saying 65 should appear to be formally prior to its Synoptic twin, Mark 12.1–12 (and parallels), would this necessarily mean that every saying with a Synoptic parallel is to be judged older or more primitive than its Synoptic counterpart? Certainly not. This situation has resulted in an endless series of proposals and counter-proposals with little hope that a consensus will be won.

The difficulty of the situation is illustrated by saying 33. 33.1 is the saying familiar from Luke 12.3 and Matt 10.27 (presumably, Q): 'That which you hear in your ear …, preach from your housetops.' 33.2–3 is the saying one finds in Luke 11.33 and Matt. 5.15 (also Q): 'For no one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel.' Now, the Coptic word *maaje* can mean both 'ear' and 'bushel', and it occurs in both 33.1 and 33.2. It would appear, in fact, that *maaje* is the catchword that connects these two sayings—a catchword that obviously works only at the level of the Coptic. In the complex history of this gospel, two sayings, both of very ancient patrimony, were apparently joined together in *Thomas* only very late, after the gospel had been translated into Coptic. The age of these sayings is therefore completely unrelated to their history within the *Thomas* collection itself.

So just how critical is the question of *Thomas*' date? It perhaps stands to reason that an earlier date favours its general relevance to the historical Jesus question. However, a later date would not necessarily disqualify sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* from the discussion. Scholars regularly consider material from Matthew or Luke when discussing the historical Jesus, and rightly so. Every early Christian gospel is dependent in some measure on oral tradition, some of which extends back to Jesus in some form. Once gospels were written, beginning in the middle of the first century, oral tradition did not cease. If one did not suppose Luke could still mine the oral tradition for authentic Jesus traditions some sixty to eighty years after the fact, no one would consider the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, or the Rich Fool as candidates for authenticity—and yet, many scholars do. The situation with *Thomas* is really no different. A lack of consensus about its date is not as problematic as one might think.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE *GOSPEL OF THOMAS*

A similar situation obtains with the question of *Thomas*' theology. Since the very beginning of the discussion there have been scholars who have regarded *Thomas* as 'gnostic' (e.g. Grant and Freedman 1960, Gärtner 1961, Haenchen 1961, Kasser 1961, Vielhauer 1964, Leipoldt 1967, and Ménard 1975; recently also Popkes 2007). On the other side, many also have disputed this label (e.g. Quispel 1957, Higgins 1960, Grobel 1962, Frend 1967, and Davies 1983: 18–35; recently also Zöckler 1999: 101–35). Today the term 'gnostic' has fallen from favour as the catch-all term for anything in early Christianity of an esoteric, speculative, or otherwise obscure nature (Williams 1996; King 2003). Still, *Thomas*' many abstruse sayings call for some explanation. Apart from Gnosticism, the proposals for understanding *Thomas*' theology have been multiple. Quispel thought that *Thomas*' more opaque sayings were best explained by parallels to Hermetic texts (Quispel 1981). Stevan Davies rejected the gnostic label and argued that there is nothing in *Thomas* that cannot also be found in speculative Jewish Wisdom theology, as seen especially in Philo (Davies 1983). Others saw in *Thomas* a dedication to certain practices, such as asceticism (e.g. Cullmann 1960; Frend 1967; Richardson 1973; DeConick 1994) or mysticism (DeConick 1996). Recently I have attempted to gather up a number of these theological peculiarities under the category of Middle Platonism (Patterson 2008). After all, *Thomas* begins with the promise that enlightenment will come when you come to 'Know yourself' (*Thomas* 3.4). 'Know thyself'—the age-old Delphic maxim was the focus of Middle Platonism and the Platonic renaissance that came into full swing in the first two centuries CE. The preference for 'spirit' over 'body' (*Thomas* 29), the notion of the spirit as the divine 'image' dwelling within (*Thomas* 84), and the hoped-for return to the divine realm (*Thomas* 49–50) are among the many Middle-Platonic themes that come to expression in *Thomas*.

And yet, when one considers the fact that *Thomas* is a list and that any of these sayings might have been added to the collection at any time in what is very likely a complex history, it may well be that any or all of the proposals are true at least in part. There are many very simple sayings of Jesus in this collection. Consider: 'Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of heaven.' Here is a familiar beatitude that may derive ultimately from Jesus' own repertoire of wisdom sayings and aphorisms. It might have been part of a collection of Jesus' sayings very early, say even in Galilee itself, as its appearance in Q might suggest. As the collection grew in the hands of subsequent caretakers, each with their own way of seeing the Jesus tradition, it is easy to imagine how such a gospel could end up singing so many strains at once, and not always in harmony. For example, is the kingdom of which this gospel speaks a present reality 'spread out upon the earth' (saying 113), or is it in another place, a place from which the chosen ones have come, and to which they will one day return (saying 49)?

The theology of this gospel is a puzzle with many pieces and we are only just beginning to assemble them. But for the purposes of the historical Jesus quest, how important is it to solve this puzzle? Once upon a time labelling a text 'gnostic' signalled to everyone that it was heretical, deficient, mistaken, and therefore to be disregarded. Robert Grant's assessment in 1959 was perhaps typical:

> The conclusion we should draw is that many of the sources of the Gospel of Thomas have passed through Nassene hands and that, since this is the case, we cannot expect to find any authentic sayings of Jesus accurately reproduced in it. (Grant 1959: 179)

Even those who thought *Thomas* might contain something valuable could only speak of its 'rehabilitation' (Frend 1967). But today such assumptions find less purchase in critical

scholarship. *Thomas* has a theology. But this is true of all gospels, both canonical and non-canonical. To use any of this material in the quest involves allowing for the interpretive moves of the evangelists. If one can do this with Mark or Matthew, one can do it also with *Thomas*. The more we learn about *Thomas*' theology, the better we will become at doing this. But the fact that *Thomas* has a theology does not mean that it should be cast aside, even if that theology was at some point judged to be heresy.

SOURCES BEHIND THE *GOSPEL OF THOMAS*

There is little consensus today about the question of sources behind the *Gospel of Thomas*. Earlier theories about its author's use of lost gospels, such as the *Gospel of the Hebrews* or the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, have never attracted much of a following. Far more critical for the historical Jesus debate has been the question of whether *Thomas* is dependent on the Synoptic Gospels for that material which it shares with them, or a (more or less) independent rendering of that material. The implications of this question are critical. If *Thomas* is an independent witness to that common material, then not only will dozens of sayings enjoy independent multiple attestation, a key criterion for authenticity for many scholars, but these sayings will also have to be reassessed as to their tradition history. This is what Crossan has done, with results that are quite striking (see earlier discussion).

Unfortunately on this issue, too, the evidence has not led to a scholarly consensus. When the gospel first appeared in the 1950s, scholars began immediately to line up on either side of the issue. Methods varied. Grant reasoned it out this way: *Thomas* is clearly a Naasene gospel. The Naasenes made use of the canonical Gospels. Therefore, *Thomas*, too, has made use of the canonical Gospels, treating them more or less as the Naasenes did (Grant 1959). But not everyone was convinced of the Naasene origins of *Thomas* and the evidence for Naasene exegesis in *Thomas* was ambiguous. More promising was the approach taken by Harvey McArthur using redaction criticism (McArthur 1959/60). McArthur reasoned that if *Thomas* could be shown to reproduce material from Matthew or Luke commonly judged to be redaction, then one must conclude that the author of *Thomas* made use of those gospels. McArthur went on to identify four instances in the Coptic version of *Thomas* in which that is the case: (1) *Thomas* 65/66 (cf. Mark 12.1–12, pars.): both *Thomas* and Luke omit any reference to Isa. 5.2 in their introductions (cf. Mark 12.1; Luke 20.9); in both *Thomas* and Luke only the owner's son is killed (cf. Mark 12.3–8; Luke 20.10–15) and both Luke and *Thomas* quote only Ps. 118.22, omitting v. 23 (cf. Mark 12.10–11); (2) *Thomas* 14.5: both *Thomas* and Matt. specify 'mouth' (cf. Mark 7.15, 18; Matt. 15.11, 17–18); (3) *Thomas* 47.3 (cf. Mark 2.21–2, pars.): both Luke 5.39 and *Thomas* preserve the saying about drinking new wine after old; (4) *Thomas* 104 (cf. Mark 2.19–20, pars.): both *Thomas* and Luke 5.33 mention both fasting and prayer, while Mark mentions only fasting. In the event that one should think that this phenomenon occurred only at the level of the Coptic translation, he pointed out two more from the Greek Oxyrhynchus fragments of *Thomas*: (1) *Thomas* 31 (=P. Oxy. 1 [→].30–5; d. Mark 6.4, pars.): in both *Thomas* and Luke there is an adjacent saying about a physician (cf. Luke 14.23); (2) *Thomas* 5 (=P. Oxy. 654.27–31; cf. Mark 4.22, par. Luke 8.17; Luke 12.2//Matt. 10.26, Q): *Thomas*' Greek in P. Oxy. 654.30 is closer to Luke 8.17 than to either Mark 4.22 or Q. Together, these six instances proved, in his view, that *Thomas* was dependent upon the Synoptic Gospels.

But not everyone was convinced by this. In his Claremont dissertation, John Sieber used McArthur's method and discovered more or less the same thing (Sieber 1966). There are indeed a handful of places where *Thomas* reproduces the Synoptic redaction. But Sieber

was impressed not by the fact that there were such instances, but by how few there actually were. He concluded that 'there is very little redactional evidence, if any, for holding that our Synoptic Gospels were the sources of *Thomas*' Synoptic sayings' (Sieber 1966: 262). Subsequent studies by Christopher Tuckett (Tuckett 1988) and the present author (Patterson 1993) added to this number a handful of instances of possible influence, so that most scholars today will agree at least on the evidence to be interpreted: there are, more or less, sixteen instances where one might detect influence from the Synoptic texts in *Thomas*. Most of these are on the order of those detected by McArthur: a single word ('bush' not 'tree' in logion 20), or phrase ('not worthy of me' in logion 55), a grammatical construction *ho ou* in logion 5), or a common sequence (*Thomas* 65–6). For some scholars, that constitutes overwhelming evidence that the *Gospel of Thomas* is dependent on the Synoptic Gospels, is derivative, late, and therefore to be dismissed from further discussion. But there are, more or less, ninety-five *Thomas*/Synoptic parallels altogether. If *Thomas* were dependent on the Synoptic Gospels, why have the Synoptic versions left no trace more than 80 percent of the time? Thus, a significant number of scholars see the evidence pointing in the other direction, in favour of *Thomas*' independence. What, then, are we to make of those sixteen instances?

Ernst Haenchen saw the problem of this paucity of evidence and proposed that *Thomas*' author did not draw directly upon the Synoptic Gospels, but upon oral traditions that were themselves based on the Synoptics (Haenchen 1961/2). This theory has been revived more recently by Risto Uro (Uro 1993), among others (e.g. recently, Gathercole 2012), giving it the name 'secondary orality'. The concept is sound: once a gospel was written, oral performances of the materials in it did not suddenly cease. As people heard the gospels read, they would have repeated what they had heard and in this way incorporated these written forms into the oral tradition. This could account for occasional details turning up in *Thomas*. But could it also account for virtually all of *Thomas*' Synoptic material? Hardly. While the Synoptic Gospels might have influenced oral tradition, they were not the *source* of oral tradition. At first, at least, their contribution would have been as a drop in the proverbial bucket—one voice (or three) among hundreds in the cloud of oral repetition. Not until much later could one imagine a situation in which virtually all of oral tradition stood under the influence of the Synoptic Gospels themselves. Chances are, then, that while some Synoptic sayings might have found their way into *Thomas* by this route, most of them did not.

Another way to account for these instances takes consideration of the text-critical situation with *Thomas*. The puzzle we are trying to solve is not really how did these few (or several) instances of apparent Synoptic influence find their way into *Thomas*, but how did they find their way into a fourth-century manuscript of a Coptic translation of *Thomas*. Together with the few extant Greek fragments, this single manuscript is all we have. Given the fact that every ancient biblical manuscript has numerous errors, including, frequently, harmonization to other similar texts, it would be surprising if our manuscript of *Thomas* were to be free of such errors. Where we can compare the Coptic text with the scant Greek fragments that survived at Oxyrhynchus, we see many variations—but without other manuscripts to fill out our picture we cannot tell which reading is the more original, let alone what other variants might appear in the singly attested material. We know that there are errors; we just do not know where they are. Schrage's study, mentioned earlier, was actually quite revealing on this score. Part of Schrage's method was to note those places where *Thomas*' translator had chosen to render the Greek original with a Coptic word that was unusual or rare, but which also turned up in one or another Coptic rendering of the parallel Synoptic passage. These unusual translational choices, he argued, showed that

Thomas' Coptic translator had been influenced by the Coptic New Testament. Indeed, this would appear to be so. The two instances of Synoptic influence pointed out by McArthur and Tuckett in the Greek fragments indicate that influence did not occur exclusively at the level of the Coptic, but we know that some influence occurred then, and not at the level of composition.

So is there any room still for the idea that virtually all of *Thomas'* sayings come from the scribal activity of copying snippets of Synoptic texts into this gospel? One recent study still pursues this line of argument (Goodacre 2012). But most have abandoned this model. Even Gathercole, whose estimate of the evidence of influence is in my view excessive, still concludes that scribal copying is not indicated. This is also indicated by a fascinating recent study by Robert Derrenbacker concerning ancient scribal practice and the Synoptic problem (Derrenbacker 2005). Given the rhetorical (as opposed to scribal) milieu in which most of our texts were produced, together with the actual mechanics of writing in the ancient world, the idea that an author would have borrowed directly from another text—or three—all the while switching back and forth from one text to another, plucking fruit first from this tree, then from that, conflating or blending sources together in the manner that earlier scholars thought must have been the case with *Thomas*, is just not very realistic. When ancient authors do borrow from other texts, they tend to follow one source at a time, drawing from it *ad seriatum*, without rearranging or reordering the material as it comes from the source. Since this is obviously not the case with *Thomas*, we can probably now rule out direct copying from the Synoptic Gospels as the source for *Thomas'* Synoptic parallels.

What does this mean for scholars of the historical Jesus? Is *Thomas* an independent witness to the Jesus tradition or not? It is clearly not derivative of the Synoptic Gospels in the same way that Matthew and Luke derive from Mark and Q. On the other hand, it is also clear that our fourth-century Coptic manuscript of *Thomas* is not free of Synoptic influence, whether one speaks of relatively late scribal corruption at the level of the Coptic or secondary oral influence at the level of composition. The better part of wisdom, then, is to proceed with caution. Where evidence of Synoptic influence exists, one must account for it. When none exists, one should probably conclude that the *Thomas* version of a saying has another history, one that does not involve Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

CONCLUSION

Since its dramatic publication in 1959, the *Gospel of Thomas* has become for historical Jesus scholarship a kind of crucible. Here was a very different gospel, a sayings collection: how willing would scholars be to deal with this artifact on its own terms with methods and assumptions appropriate to it? Here was a gospel that was not in the Bible, and yet had many sayings with biblical parallels, and many others that were of like form and tenor: how willing would scholars be to admit evidence about Jesus that did not come with the *imprimatur* of biblical authority? Here was a gospel that presented the voice of Jesus in a different register—a less apocalyptic and more sapiential and philosophical Jesus: how willing would scholars be to revise history in light of new sources of information? And here was a gospel that reminded us that the past contained more than we now have, a gospel that refuses even now to yield to our most pressing questions: how willing would scholars be to admit that we often cannot know what we would like to know? *Thomas* can be as useful to historical Jesus scholarship as any other gospel. We cannot date it with any precision, but it is not so late as to render it useless. It has a theology, but then so does every gospel. *Thomas*, too, can be dealt with critically to discern beneath its final form the building blocks

of tradition it shares with other gospels. Like Matthew, Luke, and Mark, *Thomas* probably incorporates antecedent sources—even if we are less certain about what they were. There is no reason, then, to suppose that the methods of critical scholarship would be wasted on the *Gospel of Thomas* or that the historical circumstance of its non-canonical status should somehow disqualify it from the critical discussion of historical Jesus.

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OTHER APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS

SIMON GATHERCOLE

INTRODUCTION

THE question of whether apocryphal literature can contribute to our understanding of the historical Jesus has been much debated, with emotive language used on both sides. One scholar soon after the discovery of the Nag Hammadi literature commented that 'it would be sheer delusion to imagine that any substantial increase in our scanty knowledge of the Jesus of history will ever be gained from Thomas or from any of the new Gnostic documents' (Beare 1960: 112). On the other hand, Ron Cameron writes of a 'pernicious' tendency to subordinate apocryphal texts to the canonical Gospels (Cameron 1994: 519), and Hedrick of the 'tyranny of the Synoptic gospels' over their non-canonical counterparts in Jesus research (Hedrick 1988b).

It is perhaps tempting to imagine that the debate over the use of Christian Apocrypha for the study of Jesus divides along such lines, that is, between 'optimistic' radicals who value apocryphal literature highly and 'pessimistic' conservatives who devalue it. That is indeed how the debate does *sometimes* go. In fact, however, it is possible to identify at least five (sometimes overlapping) positions on the usefulness of the Christian Apocrypha for our understanding of Jesus.

(1) First, there is the position of *pessimistic scepticism*. One of those who have applied this most consistently is J. P. Meier, whose mammoth series on the historical Jesus, *A Marginal Jew*, has a treatment of sources in the first volume. In a passage suggestive of an exclusive marriage to the New Testament gospels, Meier writes: 'For better or for worse, in our quest for the historical Jesus, we are largely confined to the canonical Gospels; the genuine "corpus" is infuriating in its restrictions. For the historian it is a galling limitation. But to call upon the *Gospel of Peter* or the *Gospel of Thomas* to supplement our Four Gospels is to broaden out our pool of sources from the difficult to the incredible' (Meier 1991: 140–1).

(2) Secondly, in direct opposition, there is that of *optimistic revisionism*, in which the non-canonical gospels, especially the *Gospel of Thomas*, are introduced in order fundamentally to reshape the picture of Jesus. In contrast to, for example, an eschatological Jesus along canonical lines who proclaims the irruption of God's kingdom, Jesus is reconstructed instead as a sage of the 'peasant Jewish cynic' variety (Crossan 1993: 421), or as a 'teacher of common wisdom' (Taussig 1994). These two examples illustrate the approach of the controversial 'Jesus Seminar'.

(3) Thirdly, there is a middle position which might be called *complementarian*, according to which the non-canonical literature has the potential to supplement, or provide additional attestation of, the canonical presentations of Jesus. This view goes back as far as the church fathers, who often remarked (negatively) that the problem with the Apocrypha was not that they were completely false but that in them the truth was mixed with falsehood (e.g. Didymus, *Comm. in Eccles.* 8,3–7). It could be conceded that one might find *aurum in luto*, 'gold in the muck' (Jerome, *Ep. ad Laetam* 12). In modern

scholarship, Quispel and Jeremias have taken the position that the Christian Apocrypha are not a repository of material which might be used to undermine the canonical Gospels, but rather—in their scholarly context of Bultmannian scepticism—served as a kind of external corroboration of them. (Revisionists such as Crossan, however, have also used extra-canonical literature to multiply the attestation of a particular saying.) Hence Quispel's statement: 'the Gospel of Thomas confirms the trustworthiness of the Bible' (1957: 207). More recently still, Bauckham has argued in defence of the canonical portrait of Jesus, while also contending that extra-canonical literature can contribute to that portrait (Bauckham 1985, 2011).

(4) Fourthly, one might speak of a position of *relativism*. On this view, there is perhaps very little knowable about the historical Jesus at all, and the principal object of study is the various traditions and interpretations of Jesus. The canonical Gospels constitute some strands of this interpretive process, and the apocryphal gospels form others. Koester, for example, discusses the apocryphal gospels very extensively, but usually without any reference to the historical Jesus (e.g. Koester 1980). Franzmann gives voice to this approach in describing her study of Jesus in the Nag Hammadi codices as 'a valid investigation of the historical Jesus since the texts belong to one strand of the many interpretive traditions about him' (Franzmann 2004: 21; cf. 207).

(5) Finally, a view of a slightly different kind is adopted by Robinson. Despite his great enthusiasm for the Nag Hammadi literature, he considers understanding of it essential for the study of Jesus not because its contents supply new information about Jesus, but because in it we learn how traditions about Jesus developed (Robinson 1988: 45; similarly Bauckham 1985: 375). Armed, therefore, with fresh light on the processes of tradition history, we can go back to the Synoptic Gospels and understand better the process of transmission in the 'tunnel period' which culminated in the composition of those gospels. An illustration of this can be seen in the discussion of a parable embedded in the *Acts of Thomas* (see the section on specific apocryphal works below), in which Bauckham sees a process of 'deparabolisation': Bauckham identifies the same process at work in the pre-canonical tradition subsequently incorporated into Mark and Luke (1983: 131).

This chapter will explore the relevance for the study of the historical Jesus of the Christian Apocrypha in three stages.[1] First, we will examine the ways in which scholars generally assess the value of works as a whole, as well as their constituent parts for historical study (touching upon the 'criteria of authenticity'). Secondly, we will proceed through a number of apocryphal works (of various genres—the question of what constitutes a 'gospel' can be set aside here) which have been taken by scholars to shed light on Jesus. Thirdly, an analysis of the results will follow.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Assessment of the relevance of the Christian Apocrypha for the historical Jesus question can take a number of forms, which might roughly be divided into evaluations of the overall picture of a work (the macro-level), and evaluations of the historicity of individual components of a work (the micro-level).

In the first place, then, some identify the overall picture of an apocryphal gospel to assess whether it is plausible as a portrait of the historical Jesus. One test which can be applied relates to the local colour of the particular gospel. Does the gospel in question betray anachronisms or clear ignorance of the cultural context of Jesus? Thus, for example, there has been extensive debate over the plausibility of P. Oxy. 840's chief priest who belonged to the Pharisees, or of its assumption that sacred vessels were on open display.

Another test on the macro level is that of whether an apocryphal work's overall picture of *Jesus* is plausible. Crossan (1993: 421) talked of Jesus fitting well against a background of the 'hippy-like' Cynics, but one of the objections lodged against this and the related results of the Jesus seminar, for example, was whether such a Jesus would have elicited sufficient concern for the Romans to have crucified him. The fact of the crucifixion can thus function as an overarching criterion of assessment (see the application of this in e.g. Wright 1996: 115). Who, for example, would crucify the Jesus of the *Gospel of Philip*? Similarly, the

close association of John the Baptist and Jesus strongly suggests that the latter shared the eschatological outlook of the former, a point which Allison has stated to be a powerful argument against a non-eschatological Jesus (2011: 27), and Tuckett has applied this in a discussion of *Thomas* (Tuckett 1998: 32). The 'Jewishness' of Jesus, both in himself and in his comprehensibility to an audience of first-century Jews, can also function as a macro-criterion. Similarly, the need for a Jesus who can explain the existence of the early church is also a test which can be employed.

Also important at this stage is the question of a work's dependence upon or independence from the canonical Gospels. On the one hand, it is generally thought that the more a work displays extensive dependence upon the canonical Gospels, the less likely it is to have preserved additional dominical material independently. However, various scholars have argued for the independence of, for example, the *Dialogue of the Saviour* and other works to be discussed later.

On the micro-level, one might test particular sayings through the application of the traditional criteria of authenticity, such as the criteria of (a) multiple attestation, (b) coherence, (c) embarrassment, (d) Aramaism, (e) dissimilarity, etc. Thus, for example, J. Jeremias was one of the first to argue for the dominical origin of *Gos*. *Thom*. 82: 'He who is near me is near the fire; he who is far from me is far from the kingdom.' After all, the saying is theologically coherent with Synoptic material, its purpose (eschatological warning) fits the overall thrust of Jesus' teaching, and when retroverted into Aramaic, the result has alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm (Jeremias 1964: 71–2). Alternatively, one implication of an apocryphon's independence may lie in its ability to contribute to the multiple attestation of a saying: if, for example, the aphorisms 'sufficient for the day is the evil thereof', 'workers deserve their food', and 'disciples resemble their teachers' in the *Dialogue of the Saviour* (139.8–13) were independent, then their attestation would be multiplied; if dependent on the canonical Gospels, then the first and third would be only be singly attested, as would the second in that particular form (with 'food', rather than 'wages').

When one has different forms of the same material, the question arises as to which work has preserved the saying or discourse in the form closest to the original. Scholars who argue for the independence of a particular apocryphon from the canonical Gospels may go on to contend that that work preserves an earlier form of a particular narrative, as for example in Crossan's controversial argument that the *Gospel of Peter* preserves the most primitive form of the passion narrative. Others have argued vociferously that *Thomas* preserves some sayings more faithfully than have the Synoptics, and Koester asserts that the *Dialogue of the Saviour* has a more primitive version of the dialogue source freely expanded upon in John's gospel. The difficulty with such arguments lies in the subjectivity of assertions that, for example, brevity and simplicity equate to primitivity (see further Sanders 1969; Gathercole 2012a: 132–8).

We can proceed to examine in more detail some of the ways in which the criteria of authenticity and the form-critical 'laws' have been applied to particular works.

DISCUSSION OF SPECIFIC APOCRYPHAL WORKS

The order in which the material is treated here is not especially significant. We will begin with four works (§§1–4) which Hedrick singles out in his essay on the 'tyranny of the Synoptic Jesus' as deriving 'from early Christian oral tradition, i.e., from the same sources that the Synoptic Gospels themselves derived their material' (1988b: 5), and then proceed to

a block of Apocrypha (excluding *Thomas*, covered in §1) which are regarded by Jeremias and Hofius as containing authentic material (§§5–10). The majority of the remaining material covers individual sayings, although a segment also discusses works which may preserve memories of Jesus' family relations (§§12–15).

1. The *Gospel of Thomas*

The *Gospel of Thomas* is the subject of the previous chapter in this volume, and so will be treated only in very brief compass here. Opinion on *Thomas*' historical worth has been very much divided: for some, *Thomas* is 'our most significant witness to the early perversion of Christianity by those who wanted to create Jesus in their own image' (Grant and Freedman 1960: 20); for others 'the discovery of *Thomas* in its Coptic form revolutionized our approach to the historical Jesus question' (Sellew 1997: 332). In terms of its overall colouring, the objection has been lodged that 'the historical and geographical setting—Palestine under the Romans and the Herods around AD 30—has been almost entirely forgotten' (Bruce 1974: 155), indeed it is striking that the only place names mentioned are 'Israel' and 'Judaea'. Furthermore, the overall portrait of a Jesus who dismisses Old Testament prophecy as 'dead', and condemns circumcision (*Gos. Thom.* 52–3), and who speaks in quasi-Platonist terms of the Father's light image and eternal human images (*Gos. Thom.* 83–4) does seem historically very implausible. *Gos. Thom.* 52 also seems to confuse the number of biblical books with the number of prophetic authors. A good case can also be made for a significant level of influence upon *Thomas* from the canonical Gospels (Tuckett 1988; Gathercole 2012a; Goodacre 2012). Nevertheless, other scholars have insisted on the need to comb the individual logia on a case-by-case basis both for new sayings, and for more original versions of known sayings. Some have seen as authentic *Thomas*' parable of the Assassin, in which a man drives his sword into a wall as practice for killing someone, not only because of its content but also because it comes in a block of material containing known traditional material (*Gos. Thom.* 96–8). As far as more primitive forms in *Thomas* of known canonical sayings are concerned, many of the arguments for these run aground on their faulty assumptions about form-critical laws (as per the remarks about the criteria of brevity and simplicity above). To take one example, *Thomas*' parable of the Wicked Tenants (*Gos. Thom.* 65) is thought by some to be simpler and more elegant than its canonical parallels, and yet it is very likely to have been influenced by them (Gathercole 2012a). The most compelling evidence (in this parable and elsewhere) for seeing non-canonical material as influenced by NT gospels appears when elements of Matthew's or Luke's redaction of Mark are found.

2. The *Apocryphon of James*

The construction of *Apocr. Jac.* as a whole, with its atmosphere of secrecy and esoteric theology, has not been regarded by scholars as credible as an account of the historical Jesus. Cameron, however, has argued that it is based on sources containing early sayings traditions (Cameron 1984). Koester, similarly, sees it as attesting to a dialogue source which 'seems to be composed on the basis of the free tradition of sayings of Jesus. Its sayings are not drawn from several written sources … but represent an earlier stage of the development of the sayings tradition' (Koester 1990: 200).

This lays the groundwork for the possible identification of authentic material, and Cameron and Hedrick have proposed some instances of this, such as the parable of the Ear of Grain:

> For the Kingdom of Heaven is like an ear of grain which has sprouted in a field. And when it ripened, it scattered its fruit, and in turn filled the field with ears for another year. (*Apocr. Jac.* 12.22–7)

Cameron comments: 'the simile of the Ear of Grain is both formally and materially comparable with other agricultural similes and parables that derive from the earliest stages of the Jesus tradition … Since the simile of the Ear of Grain (12.22–7) displays no source-critical or redaction-critical dependence upon the NT or other early Christian literature, and betrays no influence of the language of the early church, it is to be judged as an independent, primary source of the sayings-of-Jesus tradition' (1984: 10, cf. 125–6). On the other hand, the simile appears in a paragraph with other material in traditional forms (woes, beatitudes, 'Truly I say …'), and which is a mix of traditional-sounding material ('Woe to those who have heard and not believed') as well as that which sounds more suspect ('Be like those who do not exist', 12.20–13.17) (cf. also Hedrick 1983: 9–13).

Hedrick adds further the saying: 'Do not cause the Kingdom of Heaven to become a desert within you/laid waste by you/abandoned by you' (13.17–19; the translation is difficult). It satisfies the criteria of dissimilarity and coherence according to Hedrick's interpretation, but its interpretation is uncertain (1983: 8–9).

Cameron suggested that the similitude of the Date-Palm in *James* 'could be very old' (1984: 30), but Hedrick perhaps goes further in arguing that it 'meets the test of the criteria of dissimilarity, coherence and linguistic/environmental tests and hence may have originated at an early stage of the Jesus tradition' (1983: 19).

Hedrick also argues that *Apocr. Jac.* 2.29–33 ('No one will ever enter into the Kingdom of Heaven if I bid him but because you yourselves are full') meets the same criteria (1983: 21); Cameron on the other hand sees it as an early Christian prophetic saying (1984: 69–70). The uncertain power of the criteria is evident here in the disagreement between two fairly like-minded scholars.

Further difficulties with seeing independent historical material in *Apocr. Jac.* lie in the clear evidence that it exhibits knowledge of written gospels (2.7–9), and the fact that in one place it gives a list of canonical parables (8.4–10). Koester concedes that the latter does show dependence upon canonical tradition, but asserts rather desperately that it is actually an interpolation (1990: 197). Furthermore Tuckett thinks dependence upon the Synoptic gospels is quite extensive (1986: 87–97; cf. Nicklas 2011: 2102–6).

3. *Dialogue of the Saviour*

A number of Koester's arguments about *Apocr. Jac.* are also applied to *Dial. Sav.* He takes the view that *Dial. Sav.* also has as a primary source an earlier dialogue gospel (probably a baptismal instruction) from the 'last decades of the 1st century CE' (1990: 187; cf. 173). Koester argues that *Dial. Sav.* preserves this source in a more primitive form than does the Gospel of John, which expands upon it (1990: 180). On the other hand, one might object that the similarities are quite general, and the form-critical criteria employed to argue in favour of primitivity are flawed. The independence of *Dial. Sav.* from the canonical Gospels is extremely unlikely in any case, given that it displays dependence upon them (Tuckett 1986: 128–35).

4. The Egerton Gospel (P. Egerton 2 and P. Cologne 255)

It is generally thought that this gospel,[2] despite the antiquity of the manuscript, 'contains no independent information relevant to the quest for the historical Jesus' (Labahn 2011: 1987). Since we have so little of the text, we are not really in a position to ascertain its overall picture of Jesus. As far as the details are concerned, Crossan considers that Egerton's

version of the 'render unto Caesar' pericope is earlier than its parallels, arguing (perhaps uncharacteristically) that the pericope becomes shorter and shorter over time (Crossan 1985: 86). The principal debate has concerned its dependence or otherwise upon the canonical Gospels. Koester argues strongly for independence (1980: 119–23, 1990: 205–16). A striking test-case is Egerton 1v 7–14 // John 5.39, 45, which Koester takes as evidence of John's dependence, with John having added in 5.40–4 (1980: 120–1). Perhaps most decisively, however, Zelyck has shown that similar omissions can be found in Irenaeus (*AH* 4.10.1), Origen (*Comm. Joh.* 6.109), and Cyprian (*Test.* 1.18) and so, far from being evidence of primitivity, the omission of the intervening verses is evidence of a 'traditional interpretation of the FG that considered John 5:40/41–4 superfluous for the argument that Moses foretold Jesus' coming' (Zelyck 2013). Thus the greater likelihood is of the Egerton Gospel's dependence upon the canonical Gospels than vice versa.

5. Gospel of the Hebrews

Jerome reports this gospel as containing a saying of Jesus, 'And never be joyful except when you look upon your brother in love' (*In Ephes*. 5.3). Since this saying 'corresponds exactly to the teaching given in the Gospels about the brotherly love towards their fellow-countryman that Jesus requires from his disciples', Jeremias considers it authentic (1964: 93; also Hofius 1991: 356). This is one of a number of cases adduced by Jeremias where there is no strong argument against authenticity, but where it is hard to know how convincing the application of the criteria is.

6. Gospel of the Nazaraeans

Jeremias also argues for the authenticity of two pieces of material conventionally assigned to *G. Naz.*. One is a version of the story of the rich young man, in which he scratches his head, and Jesus questions whether the man really has obeyed the commandments (Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 15.14); Jeremias concludes, on the basis of authentic Palestinian colour, and the fact that it is at points both longer and shorter than the Synoptics, that we have at least 'an independent version of the story' (1964: 47). The second (1964: 94–6) is the curious explanation attributed to Jesus for why one should forgive seventy times seven times: 'For even among the prophets, after they were anointed by the Holy Spirit, sinful talk was found' (Jerome, *Adv. Pelag*. 3.2).

7. P. Oxy. V 840

This text of an apocryphal gospel[3] has frequently attracted charges of historical implausibility, as was noted in the introduction above. Jeremias and Kruger have defended the historical details as credible (Jeremias 1964: 51–8; Kruger 2009: 145–56), while they ultimately differ in their assessment of the historicity of the episodes. In one episode, Jesus debates purity with the chief-priest, Jeremias arguing that 'this story represents a valuable tradition with sound local colour pointing to Jerusalem and closely akin in spirit to Mark 7.1ff.' (1964: 59; cf. Hofius 1991: 351). Again, Jeremias also defends as authentic the saying, 'Be on your guard lest you also suffer the same as they do' (1964: 104–5). Kruger has argued, however, that P. Oxy. V 840 presupposes all the canonical Gospels (2009: 156–60), which might call into question the fragment's preservation of very old, independent material.

8. P. Oxy. X 1224

Jeremias also argues in favour of the aphorism 'he who is far off today, will tomorrow be near you' as authentic: it is combined with two other synoptic sayings (Matt. 5.44; Luke 9.50); its antithetical parallelism lends support to it stemming from Jesus; and finally, the same is true of its subject matter (1964: 96; Hofius 1991: 356–7).

9. Apocryphal *Acts of Peter*

In one scene here, the Roman senator Marcellus asks Peter to pray for him, asserting that they are both weak: the former reminds Peter of Jesus' saying about the disciples, 'They that are with me have not understood me' (*Ac. Pet.* 10). Since the saying really has no gnostic component as some alleged, and resembles the 'misunderstanding' sayings in the canonical Gospels, Jeremias is sympathetic to the saying's authenticity (1964: 90–2).

10. *Pistis Sophia*

This gnostic dialogue contains a great deal of material which cannot possibly go back to Jesus, but *PS* is included here because it contains perhaps the most widely cited agraphon in all early Christian literature: 'Be approved money-changers' (*PS* 134). It is cited in Origen, the Pseudo-Clementines, Socrates' *Ecclesiastical History*, Jerome, and in many other places; in all, Resch cites about seventy instances of it (Resch 1906: 112–28; cf. Stroker 1989: 125–8). Jeremias considers it to have a good claim to authenticity, speculating that it may have originally been a warning of Jesus to be sober in one's response to false prophecy (1964: 100–4).

11. The *Acts of Thomas*

Bauckham has made a strong case for an embedded parable surviving in *Ac. Thom.* 146: 'Your vine I have planted in the earth; may it send forth shoots to the deep; may its tendrils go up to heaven; may its fruits appear in the earth, and may those who are worthy of you, whom you have acquired, take pleasure in them' (Bauckham 1987). This could be a recasting, or 'deparabolising', of an original parable structured as, 'A man planted a vine … It sent down roots to the deep, tendrils up to heaven …', etc., the distinctive feature of the parable being the downward, upward and outward growth of the cosmic tree. It finds parallels in the *Odes of Solomon*, the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, and perhaps also the *Gospel of Thomas* and the NT (not only in the Synoptics, but also in John and Paul). It therefore, argues Bauckham, is of great antiquity, and 'has a good claim to be an authentic parable of Jesus, both on the grounds of its similarity to the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Seed Growing by Itself, and on the grounds of its early attestation in 1 Corinthians and the Fourth Gospel' (Bauckham 1987: 97, referring in the last cases to 1 Cor. 3.6–9 and John 15.1–11).

On the other hand, one can query the various parallels. Franzmann, for example, notes that some of the similarities are of a very general kind (especially when one compares the Syriac texts of *Odes* and *Ac. Thom.*), and one difficulty with Bauckham's argument lies in the fact that in *Odes of Solomon*, it is the growth of the *root* which is described, not of the plant (Franzmann 1989). As for the parable's early attestation, Paul has only the quotidian agricultural activities of planting, watering, and growth, and John everyday viticultural elements; these parallels do not have the key features of downward, upward, and outward growth.

12. The *Gospel of Peter*

Some radical claims have also been made on behalf of *Gos*. *Pet*. Mirecki, for example, deems it to have been in circulation in the middle of the first century (1992: 5.278). Crossan has argued that from it can be reconstructed the 'Cross Gospel', which also influenced Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Crossan 1988). Despite this literary conclusion, however, Crossan does not think that we can deduce from *Gos*. *Pet*. the realities of the passion narrative, the details of which were not even known by the first disciples (1988: 405–6). In general, scholars are highly sceptical of the historical worth of *Gos*. *Pet*. Labahn remarks, for example, that 'the value of the Gospel of Peter for the quest of the historical Jesus is at best marginal' (2011: 1990; cf. Foster 2010). Nicklas (2011: 2085–8) offers one general problem and three more specific reasons for questioning the use of *Gos*. *Pet*. in reconstructions of Jesus. Overall, there is the problem of the textual witness of the Akhmîm codex, copied 'at some point between the late 6th century and the beginning of the 9th century' (Foster 2010: 3). Thereafter, (1) there are the historical implausibilities of Herod pronouncing sentence upon Jesus and presiding over his crucifixion; (2) there is a peculiar christology, including the outlandish resurrection accounts; (3) the only saying, 'My power, o power, why have you abandoned me', is almost certainly a variant on the canonical parallels.

One argument of a quite different kind relates to the claim made by Origen (*Comm*. *Matt*. 10.17) stating that *Gos*. *Pet*. witnesses to the so-called 'Epiphanian' view of Jesus' brothers and sisters being the children of Joseph by a previous marriage. Other evidence for this appears in the infancy gospels.

13.–14. The *Infancy Gospel (of Thomas)* (Paidika) and the *Protevangelium of James*

The infancy gospels are full of legendary material. It is possible, however, that, together with Origen's testimony to *G*. *Pet*., they preserve a historical reminiscence of the parentage of Jesus' siblings (Bauckham 1994: 695–6).

15. The Gospel of Jesus' Wife

Most controversial of all on this topic of Jesus' family relations is a fragment released in 2012. This manuscript contains a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples about Mary Magdalene, in which at one point Jesus says, 'My wife …' (the line breaks off here). This led to a barrage of media speculation about whether, therefore, Jesus might really have been married. Karen King, who was entrusted with publication of the fragment insisted, however, that it was not evidence for Jesus having been married (King 2014). Even leaving aside the interpretation of this statement, the most significant challenge to its usefulness for the reconstruction of Jesus' historical family relations is the doubt that has been expressed by scholars over whether it is really an authentic ancient document. The ink and ductus (style of writing), the compositional method, the grammar, and the discrepancy between the writing on the recto and verso, have all led scholars to wonder whether it is a modern forgery (Askeland 2014; Watson 2015).

16. The *Gospel of Judas*

With its account of the gnostic cosmogony occupying centre stage, the *Gospel of Judas* is very unlikely to be a reliable overall picture of the historical Jesus. The historical setting is very vague ('Judaea' is the only place name). Its christology of a Jesus who is not really human, and references to the 'Aeon of Barbelo', 'Autogenes', and other such figures, immediately arouse suspicion, and no scholar has advocated a broadly historical authenticity to *Judas*, although Bart Ehrman quite misleadingly claims, 'It will open up new

vistas for understanding Jesus and the religious movement he founded' (2006: 80). New vistas for understanding the history of the latter, perhaps, but not Jesus himself. On the other hand, as far as individual details are concerned, Evans (2006) considers the possibility that the *Gospel of Judas* may preserve a memory of a private exchange between Jesus and Judas. Van Oort has claimed that three sayings in the *Gospel of Judas* go back to Jesus (van Oort 2006: 49–52; cf. Roukema 2010: 9–10): '[But?] they have shamefully planted fruitless trees in my name' (39.15–17); 'A baker cannot feed all creation which is under [heaven]' (41.25–42.1), and 'It is impossible to plant on a rock and then reap (its?) fruit' (43.26–44.2). Others have argued, however, that the *Gospel of Judas* is more fundamentally dependent on the canonical Gospels for its traditional-sounding material (Gathercole 2007, 2012b; Roukema 2010: 12–16).

17. Secret Gospel of Mark

Morton Smith both discovered the manuscript of the *Secret Gospel of Mark*, and championed its usefulness for our understanding of the historical Jesus. His popular book on the subject announced that after his unveiling of the secret gospel, 'I gradually discovered its significance for the history of the life of Jesus, the course of early Christianity, and the interpretation of the New Testament' (Smith 1974: ix). His scholarly edition dates the gospel to 'well before 125', and considers it historically 'of the highest value' (Smith 1973: 90, 266). The content of Jesus' secret teaching was the relationship of the Messiah to the Kingdom of God which was accompanied by a secret baptism, such that the mystery of the Kingdom of God is 'a baptism with Jesus' spirit, effecting entrance of the Kingdom' (1973: 202, 265). This is the implication of Jesus' spending six days with the rich man, after which the man comes to him in the night/evening clothed only in a (baptismal) linen cloth and receives the mystery of the kingdom (2r, 6–10). Elsewhere, Smith argues that *Secret Mark* corroborates the reports of other gospels that Jesus associated especially with the rich and performed miracles for them (1977: 133–4). Other scholars who have endorsed the importance of *Secret Mark* include Crossan, who argues that it was the earliest form of Mark's Gospel (1985: 110), and Brown, who makes some tentative remarks about the use of *Secret Mark* for our understanding of Jesus (2005: 236–7).

The principal objections made to the use in Jesus research of *Secret Mark* relate not to its contents but to its authenticity as an ancient document. A number of scholars have argued that the real author of *Secret Mark* was in fact Morton Smith: questions have been raised about the handwriting (Carlson 2005), anachronisms such as the influence of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (Jeffery 2007), and other factors such as suspicious similarities with a 1940 novel, *The Mystery of Mar Saba* (Watson 2010). Although photographs of *Secret Mark* survive, the original manuscript does not: ink analysis would probably have been able to pronounce whether the copy was made in the eighteenth or twentieth century. At the very least, a number of scholars now operate on the assumption that the questions surrounding the authenticity of *Secret Mark* are sufficiently serious to mean that the text is not usable in historical research.

18. The *Gospel of Mary*

To my knowledge no other scholars have followed the suggestion of de Boer (2007) that the *Gospel of Mary* was probably written by a disciple of Mary Magdalene (with the possible implication that it might thereby contain historical material).

19. The *Gospel of the Saviour*/'Unknown Berlin Gospel' + ? 'Strasbourg Coptic Gospel'

Hedrick and Mirecki consider this gospel to have been written at a time in the second century when it might have access both to written gospels and to independent oral tradition (Hedrick and Mirecki 1999: 23). The difficulty, however, with taking this gospel as providing independent, authentic material is twofold. In the first place, the dependence upon written NT works is quite extensive: Emmel documents the influence of Matthew, John, and Revelation (Emmel 2002). Secondly, a growing number of scholars see the *Gospel of the Saviour* not as a product of the second century but as stemming from the Coptic church at a much later date (e.g. Hagen 2010).

FACTORS IN APPLYING THE CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA TO THE STUDY OF JESUS

Some of the most important factors in the study of the Christian Apocrypha can be treated in the following logical order: (1) the survival of authentic source material, (2) the circumstances in which the early Christian Apocrypha purporting to incorporate that source material are composed, (3) the condition in which these Apocrypha have come down to us today, and finally (4) the effectiveness of scholarly tools at identifying authentic material.

The Survival of Authentic Source Material

The first precondition for the identification of additional source material from the Christian Apocrypha is that oral and/or written sources from apostolic times survived up to the time of the composition of these Apocrypha. The opinion of Hofius that the canonical Gospels included just about everything that was remembered about Jesus in the second half of the second century (1991: 357, following Jeremias) appears to go against both Luke 1.1 and John 21.25, and is not widely followed. Most scholars assume that the written gospels did not replace oral tradition at a stroke, and that oral tradition must have persisted at least until some point in the second century, even 'well into the second century' (Bauckham 1985: 372). Hedrick, as we saw earlier, saw *Thomas*, the *Apocryphon of James*, the *Dialogue of the Saviour*, and the Egerton Gospel, as deriving independently from the same pool of oral tradition used by the Synoptic Gospels (1988b: 5). There is some degree of speculation involved, however, as to how long such oral tradition survived.

In addition to the existence of surviving oral tradition, one must also—as per Luke 1.1— reckon with the continuing existence of non-canonical written sources. As Bauckham puts it, 'there is no reason to suppose that they all disappeared as soon as the canonical Gospels were written. They very probably remained available to some second-century writers who quote Gospel traditions, and they could have been among the sources of those "apocryphal" Gospels which continued to be written throughout the second century' (Bauckham 1985: 371).

The Compositional Circumstances of Early Christian Apocrypha

A second important factor is that we must reckon with the question of the circumstances in which Early Christian Apocrypha purporting to incorporate that source material are

composed. It is a problem, however, that we know so little about the provenances and dates of most of these Christian Apocrypha.

A late date is not a decisive factor against historical value (Bauckham 1985: 370), but on the other hand it is no advantage either. There is clearly a difference between a historical time-frame of within a generation or two of Jesus' ministry, during which eyewitnesses were living and active, and—by contrast—a time 100 years or more after Jesus' ministry, by which time all eyewitnesses were dead. It is in this latter period that most Christian Apocrypha began to emerge.

What also reduces confidence is evidence—as discussed above—of clear unfamiliarity with first-century Palestine. One case already noted is still *sub judice*, that of P. Oxy. V 840. A clear howler appears in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, however, where Jesus is born 'in our region of Bethlehem, in the village of Nazareth' (*IGT* 1.1). The Nag Hammadi *Gospel of Thomas* also appears to betray ignorance of the realia of first-century Palestine in its references to 'Mary' *tout simple* (*Gos. Thom.* 21, 114), not sensing any need—as do the canonical Gospels and the *Gospel of Philip*—to specify which Mary. It also seems to confuse the enumeration of twenty-four biblical books (as in e.g. *4 Ezra* 14.44–7) with the number of prophetic authors (*Gos. Thom.* 52). Also disquieting is the *vagueness* about geography. The only places referred to by the *Gospel of Philip* are 'the world', 'Jerusalem', and the Jordan; *Judas* and *Thomas* refer merely to 'the world' and 'Judaea' ('Israel' is also perhaps a place in *Gos. Thom.* 52, though it may be the people).

Two implications follow from this. In the first place we do not have any clear positive evidence that these works were produced in environments where the surviving oral or written sources mentioned above existed. In the second place, despite the literary setting of some in the ministry of Jesus, the 'local colour' of many Christian Apocrypha is very far removed from the original environment of Jesus and the disciples.

The Condition in which Early Christian Apocrypha Have Survived

The state in which the relevant Apocrypha have come down to us today is also a matter likely to encourage caution in our confidence about identifying authentic material in them. At least four factors come in here.

First, is the language in which the work survives the original language? In some cases, we have substantial chunks in the original, in the infancy gospels, the *Acts*, and to some degree the *Gospel of Peter*. The major repository of agrapha is of course *Thomas*, of which only a small proportion (*c.*15 percent) survives in Greek. Of the *Apocryphon of James* and other cases, such as *Judas* and *Philip*, there is none at all in the original.

Secondly, how has the transmission of the work fared in the scribal copying process? This is a factor both at the level of the work in its original language, as well as in the 'secondary' transmission of the work in its translated form(s). For some Christian Apocrypha, we only have a single manuscript (*Judas, Philip*), and so it is impossible to measure the accuracy of the transmission. For others, such as *Mary, Thomas*, and *Peter*, there are earlier fragments with which to compare the fuller, later texts; what one finds is a mixture of close agreement and divergence. This was raised above with respect to the *Gospel of Peter*, whose primary witness, the Akhmîm codex, dates from the sixth to seventh century (Nicklas 2011: 2084–5).

Thirdly, has the work survived in full, or is it fragmentary? A number of the works surveyed above survive only in fragments. Where the text survives, there may of course be historically useful material. What the fragmentary survival of the work means, however, is that (a) we are unable to get an overall picture of the gospel at the 'macro-level', and (b) we are therefore unable to identify with clarity any particular tendencies in a work which may affect the wording of a purportedly historical saying or event.

Fourthly (and relatedly), if the work survives in (esp. patristic) quotations, how accurate are those quotations? Again we have the problem of the overall sense of, say, the *Gospel of the Hebrews* being lost to us. But we have the further difficulty of not knowing if a saying of Jesus has been preserved in adapted form by the author citing it. If it has been adapted, is it possible to recover anything like the original version? We have seen one instance of confidence about this in Bauckham's reconstruction of the parable of the Vine, but even here there are difficulties.

In summary, it is a sobering fact that of the Christian Apocrypha surveyed in this chapter, the only works to have survived in their entirety in their original languages are the *Protevangelium of James, Infancy Thomas* (both Greek), and the *Acts of Thomas* (Syriac or Greek). Thereafter, the best that we have is complete or near-complete translations, as with the gospels of *Thomas* and *Judas*. In many more cases we are dealing with fragments, or lacunose translations.

The Problem of our Scholarly Criteria

A further difficulty lies not only with the material itself but in our scholarly tools, and in our ability to identify authentic dominical words and deeds. We have seen in Cameron's use of the *Apocryphon of James* the employment of (a) the criterion of coherence both with respect to the form and content of the parable of Ear of Grain; Jeremias applies the same criterion to the saying about rejoicing over one's brother in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. This is of course a perfectly reasonable criterion, except that it is vulnerable to the criticism that it was natural in the early church to imitate as well as to innovate. A different kind of limitation lies in the fact that by its very nature this criterion will simply reinforce an existing picture of Jesus (Tuckett 1998: 31). Hedrick's confidence in the sayings about the kingdom was bolstered by their meeting (b) the criterion of dissimilarity, which is valid as far as it goes, but also presumes a greater knowledge of the early church than we really have (Hooker 1971: 482). The criterion (c) of embarrassment might have some value, but it might be applied equally to a rather improbable theme like Jesus' marriage as to his ignorance of the date of the parousia in Mark 13.32. Other difficulties attend such criteria as (d) multiple attestation; (e) environment; (f) characteristic forms (antithetical parallelism, etc.), and (g) Aramaic features; Bauckham's (h) criterion of 'early attestation' is an ad hoc one, and none the worse for that, but in the particular case of the parable of the Vine, the criterion is not really met. Overall, the 'crisis of criteriology' which afflicts the study of the canonical Gospels is just as great in the study of the Apocrypha (Allison 2011).

CONCLUSION

We have seen in this survey of the various Apocrypha that some scholars have displayed a good deal of confidence in what these works can tell us about the historical Jesus, or at least the earliest strata of the sayings traditions. The difficulties with identifying the

compositional circumstances of these works, the problem of the often fragmentary and translated forms in which they have come down to us, and the problems with our own scholarly criteria, however, are significant. If we are to escape from the shackles of thoroughgoing scepticism we will probably need both to refine our own scholarly methods and to await more discoveries from the sands of the Nile.

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[1] The 'Christian Apocrypha' in the title here is the corpus dealt with in this volume as a whole. It is a commonplace now also to ask what is meant by 'the historical Jesus', and what is meant by that here is the first-century person as far as he can be known and reconstructed by historical methods.

[2] The title 'Unknown Gospel' should be avoided, given the potential confusion with the *Gospel of the Saviour*, sometimes referred to as the 'Unbekanntes Berliner Evangelium' or 'Unknown Berlin Gospel'.

[3] The title 'Gospel of the Saviour' should be avoided, in view of the fact that this title is more widely used for the 'Unknown Berlin Gospel'.

CHAPTER 15

CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA AND THE DEVELOPING ROLE OF MARY

J. K. ELLIOTT

IN the New Testament the stories about Jesus' birth occur in the opening two chapters of the Gospel according to Luke and the Gospel according to Matthew. Both evangelists seem to have composed these chapters independently of the other. The two accounts differ considerably. Matthew's includes the Magi and the massacre of the innocents; Luke's relates the story of Jesus' birth in parallel to the story of the birth of John the Baptist, and includes an account of the visit of Mary to her kinswoman, Elizabeth. Luke tells of the census, and among his *dramatis personae* are the shepherds, as well as Simeon and Anna the prophetess. Luke's narrative ends with the visit of Jesus to the Temple at the age of twelve. His account contains several hymns which may have existed independently prior to the writing of this gospel.

But whatever the sources used by these two evangelists, both of them obviously felt the need to preface their accounts of Jesus' ministry with some details about his coming into the world. This was a need that continued; many later Christian writings elaborate the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth. The non-canonical writings, usually classified as Christian Apocrypha, display great literary and theological imagination in their expansions of the Christmas story. In these later narratives more is written about Mary and her parents in an attempt to explain the unique status of the mother of Jesus.

Anyone attempting to tell Mary's life story based only on the New Testament comes across many tantalizing gaps. Biographical queries arise: Where was she born? Who were her parents? How was she reared? What about her death? Other questions are theological: Why was this woman chosen to be the mother of Jesus? What was special and unique about her? What example can she set? It was in order to answer questions such as these that, from the second century onwards, Christian imagination and piety produced many (apocryphal) tales about Mary. In Bruce Metzger's words 'When people are curious, they usually take steps to satisfy their curiosity, so we should not be surprised that members of the early Church drew up accounts of what they supposed must have taken place' (Metzger 1987: 166–7). Some of these accounts survived, despite official disapprobation; such works appear separated from books styled 'canonical' in listings such as the Gelasian Decree of the fourth to fifth centuries, the List of the Sixty Books of the seventh century, or the Stichometry of Nicephorus, which originated in the fourth century.

The additions found in the apocryphal gospels are not only literary or due to creative storytelling; many reflect a developing theological interest, for example, in Mary's virginity. And, of course, it was these stories that not only reproduced folk traditions about Mary and developing Mariology but in themselves also fuelled such teachings.

Although theological and apologetic tendencies have shaped some of the material in the apocryphal infancy gospels, it is the narrative and biographical interest that predominates. The dominant theological concerns of the canonical birth stories (such as the fulfilment of prophecy, the Bethlehem versus Nazareth problem, the relationship with the Baptist) are less significant in the apocryphal tradition. These later texts were the popular literature of the pious for many centuries, and their influence in shaping belief, as well as their exposure of the beliefs that shaped their contents, are significant and important for all whose interests lie in the history of Christianity and Christian doctrine.

These developments, investigated in this chapter, focus on three significant texts, which from a wide time-span show how the traditions about Mary were popular, living, and changing. They are the *Protevangelium of James* (*PJ*), the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (*Ps.-Mt.*), and the *Gospel of the Birth of Mary* (sometimes known as the *de Nativitate Mariae*, and so referred to below as *DNM*). Although many centuries separate the final forms of these texts, each draws on its predecessors' work. They demonstrate how early apocryphal traditions, arising from a nascent New Testament canon, were used in Late Antiquity, then taken up and re-used thereafter. Changes and new, often differing, nuances may be detected and traced. Ultimately the links between these three 'gospels' and their later influencing of hagiographical writings on Mary may be plotted.

THE *PROTEVANGELIUM OF JAMES*

The book is usually referred to as the *Protevangelium*, because it tells of events prior to Jesus' birth and concerns Mary's parents, Anna and Joachim, her birth, and her upbringing. *PJ* is one of the most important and influential of the apocryphal gospels. It represents the earliest written elaboration of the canonical infancy narratives that has survived: what has sometimes been described as a midrashic exegesis of Matthew's and Luke's birth narratives finds permanent expression in this document. The influence of *PJ* was immense, and it may be said with some confidence that the developed doctrines of Mariology can be traced to this book.

The purported author (according to its final paragraph) is James of Jerusalem, pseudonymous authorship being an ongoing tradition within Christian writing. As such, he may be James the stepbrother of Jesus by Joseph's first marriage, but the Gelasian Decree identifies him with James the Less of Mark 15.40. In fact the author is unknown. He is not likely to have been a Jew: there is in *PJ* a great ignorance not only of Palestinian geography but also of Jewish customs (e.g. Joachim is forbidden to offer his gifts because of his childlessness, an otherwise unknown prohibition; Mary is reared as a ward of the Temple, also an unknown practice; in *PJ* 21.1 Joseph plans to go 'from Bethlehem to Judea'!).

Its stories reflect a developing tradition that was ultimately expressed in Christian teaching about the perpetual virginity of Mary; it gave support and impetus to feasts such as the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the Presentation in the Temple.

Together with the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas, PJ* influenced other and later birth and childhood gospels such as *Ps.-Mt.* and the Arabic, Armenian, and Latin infancy traditions.

It seems to have been a popular book; over one hundred extant Greek manuscripts, some of them dating from the third century, contain all or part of *PJ*. Over the centuries translations were made into Syriac, Ethiopic, Georgian, Sahidic, Arabic, Old Church Slavonic, Armenian, and Latin. In some cases (e.g. Ethiopic) the translation is very free, many liberties having been taken with the text. Others such as the Syriac are very literal. The rarity of surviving early Latin translations may be explained on two grounds. First, *PJ*

was prohibited in the West because of its teaching about Joseph's first marriage. Second, the development of Latin infancy gospels such as *Ps.-Mt.* and *DNM* (both of which were commended by introductory letters attributed to Jerome, who had denounced *PJ*), as well as the story of Joseph the Carpenter, all of which were based on *PJ*, obviated the need for its survival in Latin, as these other writings served to satisfy the same needs. In the Eastern church *PJ* continued to enjoy great popularity.

Most scholars now date *PJ*, or at least the bulk of the first draft of *PJ*, to the second half of the second century. Attempts to prove that links between Justin (died 165) and *PJ* (e.g. *Apology* I.33 and *PJ* 11.3 link Luke 1.35 and Matt. 1.21; cf. also *Dialogue with Trypho* 100.5 and *PJ* 12.2; *Apology* 1.33, 36 and *PJ* 11.2) are due to Justin's familiarity with *PJ* have not generally been accepted, There is, however, no doubt that a *terminus ad quem* may be found in the patristic testimony of Origen (died 254) and Clement of Alexandria (died 215). The oldest explicit reference to the existence of *PJ* is in Origen, *on Matt.* 10.17 and he is aware of the teaching about Joseph's first marriage (*on Matt.* 9.2, 17.1 and of the birth in a cave (*c. Cels.* 1.51). Clement's testimony is to be found in *Strom.* 7.16.93. One early manuscript which contains this text, Bodmer Papyrus V, has been dated to the fourth century and already shows secondary developments.

The *Ascension of Isaiah* 11, written early in the second century, has a similar account of the birth to that found in *PJ*, but dependence of one on the other is difficult to prove. Ignatius, *ad Eph.* 19, implies virginity *in partu,* and the *Odes of Solomon* 19 also shows knowledge of this. All that this needs suggest is a common provenance, possible Syrian.

One motive for its having been written seems to have been the defence of aspects of Christianity ridiculed by the second-century philosopher, Celsus *c.*170. To combat charges of Christianity's humble origins, *PJ* is at pains to demonstrate that Jesus' parents were not poor: Joseph is a building contractor; Mary spins, but not for payment. Another motive may be to defend Jesus' conception against charges of sexual irregularity: the pregnant Mary's virginity is vindicated before Joseph and later before the priests. Similarly, the Davidic descent of Mary is stressed (10.3), a significant detail once Joseph is described as only the putative father of Jesus. Jesus' siblings, known from the canonical Gospels, are now explained as Joseph's children from an earlier marriage. (Later, Jerome, objecting to such an apologia, preferred to say the siblings were in fact cousins. Jerome's explanations met with papal approval and were responsible for the decline in the use of *PJ* in the West. See, e.g., Jerome, *Adv. Helv.* 13–14.) A strong dogmatic motive lies behind the writing, too. The author wishes to stress that not only is Jesus' conception virginal but that even his birth preserved Mary's virginity. Virginity *in partu* is combined with a belief in Mary's perpetual virginity. The biographical interest in *PJ* centres on Mary, her miraculous birth (not her immaculate conception), her youth, and her marriage. Also of relevance for encouraging the enhancement of Mary is that she is seen in *PJ* as an instrument of divine salvation in her own right.

The main inspiration and sources behind *PJ* have been the birth stories in Matthew and Luke and the Old Testament. Like Luke 1–2 the language of *PJ* is heavily influenced by the LXX. The name of Mary's mother, Anna, may have come from Luke's birth story, but the figures of Hannah, Samuel's mother, Susanna in the additions to Daniel, and Manoah's wife in Judges 13 may also have been models for Anna. The name Joachim may have been suggested by Susanna's husband in the additions to Daniel, but Manoah and Elkanah in 1 Samuel could have also been models. 1 Samuel in particular seems to have served the author of *PJ* as a source. The popularity of the LXX version of 1 Samuel and of the story of Susanna in the second century AD seems evident.

THE *GOSPEL OF PSEUDO-MATTHEW*

A later apocryphon, the *Gospel of Ps.-Mt.*, popularized legends about Mary's early life in Latin-speaking Christendom in the Middle Ages. The motive for the compiling of this gospel seems to have been to further the veneration of Mary, not least by the inclusion of stories about the Holy Family's sojourn in Egypt. Much medieval art is indecipherable without reference to books such as *Ps.-Mt.*

Ps.-Mt. 1–17 is based on *PJ*, and 26–34, 37–9, and 41 on the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. As far as detailed differences between *Ps.-Mt.* and *PJ* are concerned, one may note the following: Anna's father, Achar, is mentioned only in *Ps.-Mt.*; in *Ps.-Mt.* Abiathar is High Priest when Mary is espoused to Joseph, in *PJ* it is Zacharias; *Ps.-Mt.* embellishes *PJ* by including the circumcision and purification. *Ps.-Mt.* does not include the catalepsy of nature (*PJ* 18), or John the Baptist, or Zacharias, absences which are possibly relevant in discussing the original form of *PJ*. Among the new details to be found in *Ps.-Mt.* is the information that Joseph not only had children from his earlier marriage, but also had grandchildren older than Mary (*Ps.-Mt.* 8). *Ps.-Mt.* 14 alone has an ox and an ass present at the birth of Jesus in fulfilment of Isaiah 1.3.

By way of introducing the book under good auspices, the compiler has provided it with credentials in the form of pretended letters: (a) from two bishops, Cromatius and Heliodorus, to Jerome; (b) from Jerome to Cromatius and Heliodorus. In some manuscripts these letters are to be found prefacing *DNM*, but references in them to the infancy of Christ make it more likely that they belong to *Ps.-Mt.*, seeing that *DNM* stops short at Jesus' nativity. In so far as it was due to Jerome's disapproval of the teaching of Joseph's first marriage that *PJ* stood condemned in the West, it is somewhat ironic that *Ps.-Mt.*, which also preserves this teaching, was published with prefaces associated with Jerome's name. Their presence in some manuscripts of *DNM* may be significant for the reason that at least in that gospel the offending teaching about Joseph's first marriage is not mentioned. It was the reference to Matthew in letter (a) that encouraged Tischendorf to name this apocryphal work *Pseudo-Matthew*, following the title in one of his manuscripts (although it is to be noted that at least two other manuscripts have the name of James in the title).

Links between *DNM* and *Ps.-Mt.* are strong. In both, Mary at three years of age mounts the fifteen steps of the Temple (*Ps.-Mt.* 4, *DNM* 6). But there are occasional differences. For instance, in *DNM* 8 Mary returns to her parents' home in Galilee after her espousal, whereas in *Ps.-Mt.* (and *PJ*) the parents are not mentioned again after they leave Mary in the care of the Temple. The work seems to have been compiled in Latin, possibly in the sixth century, although the oldest manuscript extant is of the ninth century.

THE *GOSPEL OF THE BIRTH OF MARY* (*DE NATIVITATE MARIAE*)

The text known as *De Nativitate Mariae* (sometimes, less accurately, called the *Gospel of the Birth of Mary*) was also popular in the West. This book, which probably arose in the ninth century, contains in chapters 1–8 a free adaptation of *Ps.-Mt.*; chapters 9–10 follow the canonical Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The motive for its composition was to enhance devotion to Mary while avoiding some apocryphal accretions found in the earlier texts that were doubtless deemed inappropriate or offensive.

DNM is less well known than either *PJ* or *Ps.-Mt.* and justifies a longer introduction here. It is a tale of two women, one, Anna, formerly sterile, the other, Mary, her virgin daughter, who conceives Jesus. The apocryphon concentrates on Mary's ancestry, birth, upbringing, betrothal to Joseph, and her pregnancy. It ends abruptly with Jesus' birth. As such, it may be seen as an encomium to Mary or the extolling of her virtues, and not merely a filling-in of gaps in her biography known from the New Testament canon, which is what we are often told was a motivation behind the composition of many later 'apocryphal' books. As a composition, it is dated from before 1000 AD and with a precise *terminus post quem* of 868–9 by Rita Beyers in her now definitive study of the text of *DNM* (Beyers 1997a).

DNM is not always included in compendia of non-canonical Christian texts, which usually concentrate on the earliest apocryphal writings. Although it appears in the editions by Fabricius, Jones, Thilo, Tischendorf, de Santos Otero, and Amann, it is barely mentioned by James and is not included in the new, seventh edition of Hennecke. Only now, thanks to Beyers' work in *CCSA*, can it be confidently studied; it is given due prominence in the collection of Bovon and Geoltrain (see Beyers 1997b).

Apart from its late date, another reason for its eclipse in modern scholarship and anthologies is that it seems merely to reproduce material known more familiarly in *Ps.-Mt.* (itself twice as long as *DNM*) and behind that in *PJ*. All these texts tell of Mary's parents, Anna and Joachim, especially Anna's sterility despite twenty years of marriage, the divine intervention making Anna pregnant with Mary, and Mary's infancy and childhood, leading up to her own pregnancy. But it would be unfortunate if the distinctive features of *DNM* were overlooked. At the very least, where it has parallels with these earlier texts, *DNM* seems to tell its tale in a smooth, almost elegant, manner, expunging much of the blatantly superstitious features of the early Apocrypha. For example, it is unlike *Ps.-Mt.* which is prone to repetitions: e.g. at *Ps.-Mt.* 1.1 where reference to Joachim's largesse is repeated; 3.1–4 (two appearances of an angel to Joachim); 2.3 and 3.5 (an angel appears twice to Anna); there are two angelic visits to Mary (9.1 and 9.2).

DNM may mark a watershed between the texts commonly labelled Apocrypha and the hagiographical writings that were to follow. One major hagiographical work is Jacob de Voragine's *The Golden Legend* of the thirteenth century. In that collection, chapter 131 on the birth of Mary repeats much in *DNM*; it then served to popularize the contents of *DNM* in the medieval West. And that makes another good reason for studying *DNM* in these days when 'reception history' is a prominent area for investigation and for tracing the influence and adoption of its teachings beyond its own day.

The author of *DNM* has deliberately avoided the more picaresque elements (i.e. the more characteristically *apocryphal*) in his retelling of the story about Anna and Joachim and of Mary's upbringing. *DNM* is more restrained. Thus, by the date of this book many details seen in *PJ* and *Ps.-Mt.* have been toned down; it is now more moderate, and the main message is to exalt Mary's purity and position.

COMPARING THE TEXTS

Among questions that arise is the extent to which we are justified in comparing this ninth- to eleventh-century *DNM* with parallels in the sixth-century *Ps.-Mt.* and the second-century *PJ*. Was there indeed direct literary interaction, or may we be justified in looking only at the traditions emerging from a remembered (and ongoing) oral tradition? What assessment may we make of each apocryphon as a piece of religious literature? Do they succeed in their apparent aims? How does one analyse the writings as examples of a particular genre?

Such analyses depend on our being able to rely on the text in a critical edition. As far as *DNM* is concerned, we now have access to a large number of extant manuscripts; this rose from twenty-seven in 1934 to sixty-three in 1968; Beyers (1997a: 16) reports that B. Lambert added thirty-six more between 1972 and 1974; in 1997 Beyers herself was able to include even more manuscripts and she has a near exhaustive list (Beyers 1997a: 137–261). Manuscripts that include *DNM* among their contents happen not to contain other New Testament apocryphal writings although other writings are included: lectionaries, lives of saints, sermons, homilies, or liturgical texts, as well as occasional Marian treatises, such as the Miracles of the Virgin.

Like many another similar apocryphon, *DNM* is a relentless and obsessive piece of propaganda for a typically monastic way of life in which perpetual virginity, celibacy, and abstention from sexual union are prominent, and in which these 'virtues' are deemed superior to institutional marriage and normal procreation. *DNM* was used in the reformed Dominicans' lectionary in the thirteenth century. The fifteen Gradual Psalms referred to in the context of Mary's ascent to the Temple were prominent in many monastic communities' devotions. Deviation from this monastic standard is branded as sin—'sin' thus bearing one definition only. *DNM* 9.10 even describes Jesus' uniqueness as Son of God because he was conceived 'without sinning'! We may compare this to Joachim who sees in the priest's frontlet in *PJ* 5.1 that Anna conceived without sexual intercourse having been committed and thus he has 'not sinned'—meaning that Joachim and Anna did not fall to the 'sin' of concupiscence. (Cf. pp. 274, 285 for textual variants in the text about Anna's conceiving.) The biblical teachings to be 'fruitful and multiply' are gratuitously and hypocritically swept away, as too is any acceptance of conventional conjugal rights or even a normal marital state.

The teachings in *DNM* both reflected and fuelled teachings about virginity, especially in the medieval West. The message here, aimed at the piously credulous, may reflect a particular interpretation of verses in 1 Cor. 7 (not that that chapter is cited in *DNM* although it is to be found in *Ps.-Mt.* 7.1 where 1 Cor. 7.32–40 may be behind the reference 'God is first of all worshipped in chastity'). Note also that Abel and Elijah cited in this context (*Ps.-Mt.* 7) as celibate virginal precedents are (strangely) absent from *DNM*. The canonical writings do not describe Mary as a perpetual virgin. They declare only that a virgin (or better, following the Hebrew [not LXX] of Isa. 7.14, a 'young woman') will bear a divinely given child. Matt. 1.25 implies the resumption of normal marital relations between Mary and Joseph, albeit only after Jesus' birth (if that be a correct interpretation of ἕως, 'until'). At any rate, in Matthew and Luke, Mary is merely the recipient of a miracle facilitated by the Holy Spirit, said to have 'come upon' her and by the 'power of the Most High' having overshadowed her (Luke 1.35), euphemistic language which is difficult to interpret, except to say that we must understand that Mary's pregnancy was allegedly caused by supernatural action. Her virginity is not *perpetual*, and Jesus' siblings, naturally and unselfconsciously referred to elsewhere in the New Testament Gospels, seem to be Mary's later offspring. In the New Testament she is not the 'Blessed Virgin' of later piety.

In *DNM* Mary is mainly a passive instrument or vehicle of others' wills, being vowed to the Lord by her parents, and, according to *PJ*, protected by them in her bedroom, before being placed under the wardship of the Temple's priests and, later, handed over into Joseph's guardianship. Stages in her life seem to be ordained and facilitated by divine power. Throughout the Marian literature she is regularly called just 'the virgin', never 'daughter', 'wife', or 'mother' (except at *PJ* 21.11, i.e. only in the disputed extended text which is not found in the fourth-century Bodmer papyrus of this apocryphon). In *DNM* she is commonly 'the Virgin of the Lord'. Her only function is to be a pious religious whose

one positive action is to proclaim in *DNM* 7 that she has vowed not to enter into any union with a man.

DNM extols Mary as virgin par excellence from the start of the work. In *Ps.-Mt.* we wait until ch. 8 for the first mention of Mary's virginity. The Carolingians who seem to have been behind much in *DNM* proclaimed her as the model to follow for their ideal of womanhood. She is portrayed as a headstrong girl determined to fulfil her vow, albeit one allegedly divinely orchestrated, in pursuit of a virginal life. The example found in these Marian Apocrypha later was called upon by the gullibly religious to provide a quasi-biblical precedent for their own monasticism. *DNM* is consistently and relentlessly used to fuel monastic practices as well as itself reflecting that lifestyle. *DNM* encourages an extreme asceticism and religiosity and that is its *raison d'être*.

The blandness of Mary's characterization is typical of many apocryphal and biblical writings. Normally she is a mere cipher, a two-dimensional person. Other *dramatis personae* are also cardboard figures, manipulated by the author to represent certain ideals. In addition, the stock human figures in the Apocrypha are remarkably susceptible to the influence of 'angelic beings', otherworldly heralds bringing divine announcements. They appear in much Christian literature; in *DNM* angelic apparitions are seen by Joachim in ch. 3, by Anna in ch. 4, by Mary in ch. 9, and by Joseph in ch. 10. The hallucinations themselves may be compared to Shakespeare's ghosts, supernatural spirits who interpret the present and foretell future events rather as classical soothsayers do. No wonder then that these supernatural phenomena help brand such literature as 'apocryphal' in its commonly understood definitions: 'magical', 'spurious', or 'fictitious'.

The author of *DNM* has added a prefatory letter allegedly from Jerome to Cromatius and Heliodorus—a spurious writing found in other, earlier, Apocrypha in a fuller form. The résumé is in most manuscripts of *DNM*. Yet another letter preceding that to Cromatius and Heliodorus is included here; this is also by Pseudo-Jerome. In it he suggests that there may be doubts about the historicity of some of the contents to follow. Pseudo-Jerome's preface thus claims a freedom of interpretation. Although the actual composer of that later letter is not revealed, it was possibly the author of *DNM* himself who wrote it; this was done in order to extricate himself from having been the one responsible for the writing of such incredible, superstitious material.

If direct copying has played any part whatsoever in the writing or assembling of *DNM*, then it may be useful to see where this apocryphon has added, omitted, or changed the text of its presumed predecessors, *PJ* and *Ps.-Mt.* in particular. In undertaking such an enterprise, it must be readily recognized that the comparing of these three apocrypha is complicated, not least by the fact that the writings are separated by many centuries, unlike our comparing the canonical Gospels, all of which were composed within one generation. Also, while all four canonical Gospels were written in Greek, *Ps.-Mt.* and *DNM* were composed in Latin and *PJ* in Greek. One ought also to take into account other infancy gospels such as the Armenian, Irish, and Arabic traditions, even though in those cases direct linguistic comparisons cannot be convincingly pointed to. Nonetheless, the contents of the storylines can obviously be checked and compared across the parallels. Major expansions or exclusions in the narrative are readily logged and even some minutiae identified.

As a consequence, it remains to be seen the extent to which later texts 'improve' on the writing techniques of an earlier source or the extent to which later writings avoid perceived faults or errors of judgement found in the earlier writings. Often a later writing may bowdlerize the earlier accounts to eliminate scandalous or unorthodox ideas. Is the purifying of texts relevant in our reassessing *DNM*, remembering that Gregory of Tours rewrote the *Acts of Andrew*, among other things, to avoid 'all that breeds weariness' and

'excessive verbosity'? (Cf. also Pseudo-Prochorus' rewriting of the *Acts of John*; Voicu 2011: 416.) One immediate observation is that by stopping his text at 10.3 with the birth of Jesus, *DNM* has no magi or shepherds, and no tales of Jesus as an infant during the flight to and time in Egypt nor as a child after the Holy Family's return home.

THE ROLE OF MARY

The role of Mary in the birth narratives may now be examined under the following seven subheadings:

1. Background Details

DNM begins with the titles of Mary, and reference to her perpetual virginity. This sets the tone for *DNM* and makes it differ from its predecessors. The idea of perpetual virginity could have been a well-established doctrine by the time of its composition. If so, that may explain the absence from *DNM* later of the stories concerning the examination of Mary by the midwives *post partem* or the water of testing found in the earlier accounts which establish her ongoing virginal state.

DNM relates that Joachim and Anna support pilgrims. Their largesse shows them to be good citizens in accordance with the Merovingian principles which seem to lie behind much of the teaching here. See also *Ps.-Mt.* 3.4 where the word *misericordia* refers to their charitable giving, acts compatible with and encouraged by religious communities.

Mary's birthplace is said in *DNM* to be Nazareth, Joachim's home town. Anna's mother is from Bethlehem. Possibly there was a need to identify both characters with places that became important for Christianity. Anna's father (Achar) is referred to in *Ps.-Mt.*, not *DNM*, the deletion of a detail apparently deemed unnecessarily distracting. Both parents are Davidic. (*PJ* mentions this only in ch. 10 in the context of Mary's making the veil for the Temple.) Mary is described as of royal lineage in *DNM* 1.1.

The vague festival that takes Anna and Joachim to Jerusalem becomes more precise as the Feast of Dedication in *DNM*. In the 'J' compilation (which is another apocryphon, the *Liber de infantia salvatoris*, known from Arundel manuscript 404) this event occurs, improbably, at 'Easter'!; the Hereford manuscript of the same or similar apocryphon to that in Arundel 404 has the feast as the Purification of the Temple, a detail followed in *DNM*. This is surely significant, as it is intended to indicate a pure moment for Mary's parents to visit. In *PJ* the occasion is, bizarrely, 'the grand day of the Lord'; in *Ps.-Mt.* it is a *jour de fête*.

The scribe R(e)uben who appears in the story represents the children of Israel in *PJ*. This is not so in *Ps.-Mt.* The adversary is called Issachar in *DNM* 2.2. In *DNM* the High Priest is anonymous at this point. There are often text-critical variations over the name of this participant. Abiathar is named in *Ps.-Mt.* 7.1, 8.8; but at 8.1 as only a variant to Issachar. R(e)uben appears in *Ps.-Mt.* 2.1. In *PJ* we have Zacharias as High Priest at 8.3. Reuben is named at *PJ* 1.1.

The story in *DNM* indicates that scripture curses a childless couple; they must produce a *male* child to avoid incurring divine wrath, but, strangely, nothing is subsequently made of this in the story to follow, when a female is born, albeit one who plays a decisive part in the divine plan. The 'scripture' referred to here is from the Old Testament and it is significant that even in a late apocryphon this word is still being used as a reference to the *Jewish* scriptures. (*DNM* 9 ends with a reference to the *Gospel* (singular) but without its being called 'scripture', and *DNM* 10 refers to the 'evangelists' but without their writings being

named.) This may imply that the sources behind *DNM* at this point are very early. And what 'scripture' is really meant? 1 Sam. 1.6 is one passage that readily comes to mind, but only because in the context Hannah there and her near namesake Anna here are sterile; however, 1 Sam. 1.6 hardly looks like a divine *curse* on the childless. In 1 Sam. 1 any 'cursing' is by Elkanah's fecund other wife, Peninnah, who torments and humiliates Hannah for her barrenness. Rather, the reference may be to Exod. 23.26: 'No woman … shall be barren in your land'. (One wonders how actively such teaching would have been encouraged amongst the religious.) Anna's long-standing barrenness is blamed on God's having 'closed her womb', although, as it transpires, not irretrievably.

The rebuke in the Temple results in Joachim's absenting himself from society. (Often, but not invariably, in iconography, both Joachim and Anna are shown being cast out.)

There is not so lengthy a lament by Anna in *Ps.-Mt.* as there is in *PJ*, possibly because Anna is less important in *Ps.-Mt.*, the emphasis being more on Joachim. It could be that the lament is not there at all in *DNM* because of its later concentration on Mary. In *Ps.-Mt.* Anna's first lament precedes the message from the angel; there is also another lament following the angelic message. In *PJ* both laments precede the vision of the angel.

2. Prophecy about the Coming of Mary, Anna's Daughter

A declaration concerning Mary's future is found in *Ps.-Mt.*'s protracted tale of the angel's prophecy to Joachim about his wife's conception and the birth and life of her offspring.

The accounts differ concerning the duration of Joachim's absence tending the flocks. *DNM* gives no time limit or geographical information. What *DNM* does is to speak of Joachim's being a man with his own shepherds and the owner of the sheep, thereby enhancing his social status. However, a textual variant omitting *suis* implies that Joachim retreated to be among shepherds who were keeping watch over their own flocks. In *PJ* the duration of his absence is a ubiquitous forty-day period; in *Ps.-Mt.* Joachim is away five months in the mountains before Anna becomes anxious about her husband's prolonged absence, possibly because the author pictures a herdsman's protracted periods away from home tending flocks in distant pastures. (In *PJ* Joachim retreats to a nearby desert and Anna becomes anxious immediately.) Anna's role is downplayed in *DNM* and that may be why this work ignores or deletes this detail.

In *DNM* the angel appears to Joachim first and later to Anna, as in *Ps.-Mt.*; this order reverses that in *PJ* which has two sightings of angels by Anna, in the second of which the author reports an appearance to Joachim which, presumably, must have occurred between the two visitations to Anna.

The account in *DNM* is verbose and concentrates on the role of the angel of the Lord. There is no immediate reaction to the angelic announcement in *DNM* (or *PJ*), unlike *Ps.-Mt.* The use of the euphemism 'closing the womb' in *DNM* 3 recalls the reproach of Anna's servant in *Ps.-Mt.* 2. The whole episode in *DNM* has echoes from the promises to Zechariah regarding John the Baptist in Luke 1.13–15. We may see other links to the New Testament's birth narratives at *DNM* 4.3 concerning another Anna in the Temple in Luke 2.37, and at *DNM* 5.2 which is close to the Magnificat in Luke 1.52. Mary's career pursues a divine plan even before her birth. In *Ps.-Mt.* the parents are not told what to call their child. In *DNM* the naming is part of the divine plan, just as, later, Mary will likewise be told that her child is to be given a preordained name.

In *Ps.-Mt.* 3 the angel tells Joachim that it is his seed that impregnates Anna whereas in *PJ* 4.4 and 9 there are textual variants which imply that the pregnancy has already started without Joachim's involvement. There are thus dissimilarities with the story of Hannah whose conception results unambiguously from intercourse with her husband. Examples of

barren women divinely helped are listed in *DNM*. This detail was popular in Carolingian hagiographies. In the list of barren women given by the angel *DNM* includes Sarah, Rachel and the mothers of Samson and of Samuel; Rebecca is absent from the list. *Ps.-Mt.* names no names. *PJ* 2.9 refers only to Sarah.

In the angelic message to Anna in *DNM* the proclamation that Mary will be 'blessed among all women' anticipates the Annunciation and is an improvement upon the ambiguous phrase in *Ps.-Mt.* 3.2. At *Ps.-Mt.* 3:2 Mary may herself be called the Temple of God. The texts here vary between manuscripts supporting *in templo* and those that read *templum*. Gijsel (1997: 306 note 3) allows either reading as the 'original'.

That may imply a direct copying or merely that by the time *DNM* was composed the phrase it uses had become the norm, thanks to the familiarity of *gratia plena* from Luke 1.28.

The place where Anna is to meet Joachim in *PJ* is not at their home but an unspecified gate in Jerusalem. That gate becomes, significantly, the Golden Gate in *Ps.-Mt.* (despite its apparent inappropriateness as a venue for arriving with a flock of sheep) as it is in *DNM* where the name 'golden' is gratuitously explained. Such a banal and obvious definition belongs with other displays of pedantic and usually redundant erudition elsewhere in this apocryphon.

This reunion of Anna and Joachim at the Golden Gate became a popular subject in iconography (Cartlidge and Elliott 2001).

3. Mary as a Child

Only in *PJ* and the Irish *Liber Flavus* 22–25 do we read of Mary at six months with their emphasis on the sanctity of her bedchamber. One wonders why that detail was ignored by *Ps.-Mt.* and *DNM*. Then we read of Mary at the age of one year found once more only in *PJ* and the *Liber Flavus*; again we may ask why it is absent in *Ps.-Mt.* and *DNM*.

At Mary's first birthday we have Anna's song in *PJ* 6 (cf. Anna's prayer at the Temple in *Ps.-Mt.* 5). Neither is in the shortened story in *DNM*. The words of Anna seem to have been better placed in *PJ*, i.e. on Mary's first birthday rather than when Mary enters the Temple. (There are links to 1 Sam. 2 including 2.21 and to Luke 1.17 found in *Ps.-Mt.* 5.1; again, surprisingly, these elements are absent from *DNM*.)

4. Mary in the Temple

Mary's ascent of the fifteen steps to reach the Temple during the Presentation (a 'swift ascent' according to *Ps.-Mt.*) recalls the fifteen Gradual Psalms and this is spelled out in *DNM* in its typically pedantic way. *DNM* does not repeat the charming detail of Mary's dancing on the step found in *PJ*. Mary, even though she is only three years old, walks up the steps to the Temple in *DNM*, a precocious spiritual activity spoken of as miraculous, 'a great act'; this episode could indicate the beginnings of a hagiographical approach to her story. By contrast to the regular shortening of the whole story in *DNM*, there is here a rare expansion of the account of the Presentation with her parents' being distracted from holding on to Mary while clothing themselves; that is unique. (The changing of clothing was never a requirement of those visiting the Temple.) The parents then leave Mary inside the Temple.

The altar of burnt offerings to which Mary repairs in *DNM* is said to have been outside the Temple—for once possibly revealing our author's unexpected knowledge that only priests went to the Holy of Holies within the Temple. According to Beyers (1997a *ad. loc.*), the altar of burnt offerings was found only in the first Temple; it was outside the Temple proper and there were no steps to it. But if our author knew anything about the history of the Temple he must have thought he was referring to a site where this altar had once stood.

However, there were not fifteen steps up to this altar. Generally, we do not expect accurate knowledge of the Temple or first-century Judaism from these apocryphal books.

The presence of children in the Temple in the tale (and also of 'older women', according to *Ps.-Mt.* 6) was not normal, although Elkanah's son, Samuel, was in the 'service of the Lord' being looked after by Eli the Priest, according to 1 Sam. 2.11. Sometimes children were in monasteries in the Middle Ages (Vuong 2011). That practice would have been known to the Merovingians and Carolingians. And for the writers of these Apocrypha the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was doubtless thought of as a monastery. According to *Ps.-Mt.*, Mary's perpetual adoration as part of her daily routine refers to a devotion introduced by the Merovingians. (It is, however, not in *DNM*.)

Ps.-Mt., in an interesting and well-written section, clearly depicts the Temple as a monastery and devotes much space to describing Mary's daily timetable. There is nothing comparable in *DNM*. This leads to our questioning if its author would have actually had a copy of *Ps.-Mt.* to hand or would even have known of this apocryphon. Yet another detail in *Ps.-Mt.* not known to *DNM* is that Mary is a healer (as regularly in the *Arabic Infancy Gospel*); this is found at the end of *Ps.-Mt.* 6 where, as in many of Jesus' healing miracles, the cure is effected by touch. (Cf. Mary as intercessor, another function applied to her by later Christian practice, found in *Ps.-Mt.* 8.5 when her fellow virgins ask her to pray for them.) In *PJ* 8.1 Mary is 'fed like a dove'. This is not included in *Ps.-Mt.* although Mary is fed by an angel (*Ps.-Mt.* 6.2). Mary is not fed by angels in *DNM*, although in 7.2 she is 'attended by angels'. By being accepted into the Temple, the Virgin reverses the rejection of her father's offering by the priests; the priesthood is now on the right path. Once Joachim's offering is accepted the history of salvation is on course.

Mary's presence in the Temple came to be seen as a problem due to the defiling of a sanctuary by a menstruating woman; this happened when she reached twelve years according to *PJ* and *Ps.-Mt.* but fourteen in *DNM*. All the other virgins who had been accompanying Mary in the Temple go to families at this time to await normal marriage—but that is not permitted to Mary, she uniquely is virginal. (Some virgins, presumably younger, are still available to chaperone Mary when she returns to the parental home after her nuptials (*DNM* 8).)

Ps.-Mt. 8 states that by so being and by so doing Mary has started a 'new order of living', as if perpetual virginity was invented for her or by her. In *Ps.-Mt.* 7 the High Priest intends to have Mary as a wife for his son but that detail is dropped from *DNM*.

In *DNM* 7.5 it is also reported that Mary must remain a virgin because her parents had committed her to the 'service of the Lord' (a state only achieved through virginity, it seems) and because her own vow was widely known and, as such, could not be set aside. Again, *DNM* points to biblical precedent for this state of affairs by citing Ps. 76.11. The use of scriptural citations in *DNM* betrays a more faithful acceptance of the biblical narrative than is the case in many an earlier apocryphal writing.

5. Mary's Betrothal

The decision about who can serve as a guardian to Mary is to be resolved in *Ps.-Mt.* by lottery and the lot falls on the tribe of Judah. *PJ* sets the scene around Jerusalem with heralds sent out into Judea to gather those with the right franchise. The event takes place in *DNM* before an altar, possibly the altar of ch. 6 outside the Temple. In *Ps.-Mt.* the event happens *inside* the Temple. In *DNM* the eligible constituency is 'all the notable citizens' of Jerusalem. The replacing of the lottery with a consultation in *DNM* makes the choice of guardian more magical, but less democratic. *DNM*, like *PJ*, has Zacharias enter the Holy of Holies for a consultation with God. But, whereas in *Ps.-Mt.* the High Priest delivers his

address to the 'sons of Israel' and the auditors are 'the entire synagogue', *PJ* has only the 'council of the priests'; likewise, *DNM* restricts the announcement of the result of Zacharias' consultation to 'the council of elders'. In *PJ* it is widowers who bring rods; in *Ps.-Mt.* and *DNM* all those eligible for marriage are included—widowers and bachelors.

In *Ps.-Mt.* all the rods, including Joseph's, are left overnight in the Holy of Holies before the decisive appearance of a dove on one of them. Inexplicably, the High Priest fails to bring Joseph's little rod outside with all the others the following morning. There is no 'sign' on any of the rods exposed to the crowds. Zacharias then re-enters the Holy of Holies in full regalia; the reply to his prayer by an angelic messenger is given: the High Priest is to fetch the overlooked rod, because the owner of this truncated staff is to be the one to receive Mary, whereupon the identity of its successful owner is revealed—it is, of course, Joseph.

The episode in *DNM* tells that it is Joseph alone among the eligible men from the house of David who refuses to submit his rod to the priest. When this oversight is detected, a second consultation with God by the High Priest is deemed necessary to make sure that every single eligible candidate has duly handed in his rod. The High Priest is told that only the man who failed to surrender his rod originally is to be Mary's guardian. Once again, we ask if this was because the author knew the story well from earlier oral traditions or whether he had written texts before him. Either way he clearly retold the tale in his own terms.

PJ and *Ps.-Mt.* refer to the dove of baptism in the description of the successful rod, belonging to Joseph. *DNM* with its additional detail of the flowering rod refers specifically to Isaiah (11.1) and also seems to know Num. 17.5 (once again showing his erudite knowledge of the scriptures, i.e. the Old Testament), so both elements, the dove and the flowering, are here.

The winner is to be Mary's guardian and ostensibly her presumed husband. Marriage to Joseph, despite his reluctance to permit such a liaison, is the only possible option. According to the High Priest in *Ps.-Mt.* 8.4, 'To no other can she be joined in matrimony'.

Engagement was a judicial state. In *DNM* 10.4 we read of events happening 'four months since the engagement'; and Mary and Joseph in this context are described as behaving like 'engaged' couples (cf. Luke 1.27, 2.5 where Mary is described as being 'betrothed'). To preserve the fiction, Joseph is described as very aged with sons in *PJ*; in *Ps.-Mt.* he is obliged to take Mary as his ward only until one of his sons could marry her. Joseph's children and his grown-up grandchildren are mentioned in *Ps.-Mt.*, as well as in the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* (where Mary adopts James the Less!); in *DNM* he is a widower with grown-up children.

In the way the story develops it hardly matters if Mary was formally engaged and then married to Joseph or not, because the union was said never to have been consummated in order to preserve her vow. (Jerome denied that theirs was a true marriage; Augustine and Ambrose allowed it to have been a marriage but it was one that was not consummated.) According to *Ps.-Mt.*, following the nuptials the couple do not live together; Mary and Joseph do go to Joseph's house but he *immediately* goes off to his building works in Capernaum. In *DNM* Joseph remains in Bethlehem (!) after the nuptials to prepare his household for what is needed for a (later) marriage. Mary retreats to her parental home with seven unnamed religious to resume the existence previously enjoyed within the Temple. Anna and Joachim do not appear again in *DNM*; they made their last appearance when Mary entered the Temple. This contrasts with *Ps.-Mt.*, where in *Ps.-Mt.* 12 the parents reappear in the story of the water of revelation. Although there are no virgins named in *PJ*, in *Ps.-Mt.* there are five named virgins, each supplied with a different type of wool to work with. (Mary's wool is different from theirs.) We may compare the detail here with Exod. 26.31ff.

DNM omits reference to Mary's work on the making of a woollen veil for the Temple. It also omits the use of the unique title 'Queen of Virgins' found in *Ps.-Mt.* 8.5, possibly because it was first given, rather bizarrely, as a rebuke by her fellow virgins *in fatigationis sermone* or *in fatigionem sermonis*. The title was obviously ideal although its origin in the context when it was first used looks inappropriate. Later, of course, the title 'Queen of Heaven' was regularly applied to her.

6. Annunciation and Pregnancy

Ps.-Mt. 9 contains two annunciations, one at a fountain, the other while Mary is working at home on her purple linen, the second occurring three days after the first.

PJ remains close to Luke and has only one annunciation—at a fountain. It is that which we also have in *DNM* 9.1. The greeting is fuller in *Ps.-Mt.* than Luke 1.28 and is particularly full in *DNM* which clearly sees the words as especially significant—even more so than in other Apocrypha. The indoor annunciation eventually became less popular, thanks to the influence of Gen. 24.15–20; Exod. 2.16–22, and even John 4 (Cartlidge 2002: 28–39, 60).

Mary is described by *Ps.-Mt.* and *PJ* as 'frightened'—not by the apparition but by the message she has heard and is about to hear concerning her conception which implies her *disbelieving* a voice from heaven. This detail, not surprisingly, is absent from *DNM*.

In *Ps.-Mt.* 10 Joseph is absent for nine months to prove he could not have been the father of Jesus. At *Ps.-Mt.* 12.1 he is then surprised by Mary's pregnancy. This is not in *DNM*. He is away for six months in *PJ* and only for three to four months in *DNM*. Fanciful, superstitious, and exaggerated are legitimate judgements on this body of apocryphal gospels but gnostic they are not. As far as the birth of Jesus is concerned, the emphasis is clearly on the reality of the incarnation. What needs to be emphasized here is that throughout the traditions Mary is visibly pregnant. Elizabeth, Joseph, and the priests all observe her swollen womb. The duration of any absence is inconsequential just as long as Joseph is absent immediately before the 'wedding' night and can later return in order to observe Mary's pregnant state.

The reaction of Joseph to her pregnancy is much longer in *Ps.-Mt.* and *PJ* than in *DNM*, which follows Matthew more closely. Hence it is not surprising that ostensibly docetic or magical elements in *PJ*, such as the catalepsy of nature or the emanating of a child from bright light, were dropped. Joseph is downgraded in *DNM*'s narrative.

In *PJ* Joseph is the first to submit to the priest's water test to verify Joseph's and Mary's explanation that the pregnancy was not the result of a violation of their respective vows. Here it seems that details in Num. 5.11–31 have been adapted, yet misunderstood. Once more, we note that the writers of these Apocrypha were not very familiar with Jewish practices. This episode is not in *Ps.-Mt.* or *DNM*. If this strange water test had been known to the authors of the other Apocrypha it must obviously have been too bizarre even for their levels of gullibility.

7. Jesus' Birth

In *PJ* the census is for Bethlehemites, which underlines the Davidic descent of Mary and Joseph; in *Ps.-Mt.*, as in Luke, it is for the whole world. *DNM* has no mention of the census, merely that as Joseph came from Bethlehem he took his fiancée there with the intention to make her fully and finally his wife. This clearly shows, at least at this point in his narrative, that he understands that earlier they had merely been betrothed. We then soon reach the end of the yarn in *DNM* with a summarizing statement that explains (in its author's ubiquitously pedantic manner) that Jesus' name means that he is a saviour. Jesus' prodigious ability

immediately after his birth to stand upright (in *Ps.-Mt.*) is absent from *DNM*, but other incredible stories survive, the main superstition about the virgin birth and Mary's ongoing virginal condition obviously dominating that apocryphon.

However apparently docetic some descriptions of the actual birth of Jesus seem to be, such as when Arundel 404 and *Protevangelium* 19.16 speak of the light in the cave withdrawing until the baby 'appears', these may be no more than a dramatization of teachings that the Light of the World had become incarnate—the Word has indeed become flesh. When we read of the bloodlessness at the parturition in *Ps.-Mt.* and the painlessness of the childbirth in the *Leabhar Breac* these are balanced by the main message which is that Mary's pregnancy was real. The reality of the birth is also evident in Mary's lactating. Her breasts are 'gushing' according to the *Leabhar Breac*, and she suckles Jesus both in the *Arabic Infancy Gospel* 3 and even in Arundel 404 (which is often pointed to as having encouraged a docetic understanding of the birth). Other Apocrypha describe the parturition and lactation for the same motive, namely, emphasizing a natural birth.

Unlike the canonical accounts, *DNM* and *Ps.-Mt.* do not include a visitation to Elizabeth with its allied blessings and greetings, although this is found in *PJ* and the *Liber Flavus*. Many other later apocryphal and canonical traditions are avoided in *DNM*.

CONCLUSION

The significance of these three major Apocrypha needs to be re-emphasized in order to show their influence and the influences on them.

A. PJ

i. Virginity

As soon as Anna conceives, her child is destined to be the mother of the Son of the Most High. The pregnancy is divinely ordained. The repeated angelic proclamations to Joachim and to Anna also make that clear. Mary's own destiny is spelled out: she is to be reared in the Temple and later, without the stain of sexual contact, shall, as a virgin, bear a son. *PJ* 9.7 uses the title 'Virgin of the Lord' for the first time, and that is how she is constantly referred to thereafter in this literature.

ii. Immaculate Conception

Another aspect of Mary's birth gave rise to the doctrine known as the Immaculate Conception. This may be seen most vividly in *PJ*. The angel tells Anna she *will* conceive but at 4.4 when an angel speaks to the long-absent Joachim he tells him that his wife *is* already pregnant, implying a miraculous conception. At 4.9 too the perfect tense (indicating a present reality) is found, although some manuscripts, conscious of the difficulty, both here and at 4.4 have substituted a future tense. Defenders of the future tense, improbably, read Joachim's 'resting' at home after his return as a euphemism that is intended to say that that is when the conception occurred. However, the perfect tense is probably to be preferred in both verses and may be used to support the teaching that Anna's conception of Mary was indeed without *macula*. That Anna conceived without sexual intercourse is implied when Joachim sees in the priest's frontlet that he has not sinned (*PJ* 5.1).

iii. Marian Festivals

Stories about Mary influenced the church's liturgy, just as they themselves had been influenced by early Christian practices. After the Councils of Ephesus in 431 and of Chalcedon in 451 when Mary's status as *theotokos* was proclaimed, the Eastern churches began to celebrate Marian festivals. However, according to Harald Buchinger of Regensburg in private communication, there was a Marian feast of the *Theotokos* in Jerusalem on August 15th, witnessed to by the Armenian lectionary, the lost Greek model for which stems from 417–39. The feast of her birth, based on *PJ*, seems to have originated in Constantinople in the sixth century; the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, perhaps in the century following; the Conception of Anna from the ninth, as well as the Feast of Anna and Joachim a century later. The West imported some of these from the East, thanks in part to Augustine's influence. Those include the Purification and Assumption as well as the Annunciation and Nativity. As far as the Presentation is concerned, this became a popular subject for iconic representations. The four Marian Feasts (Nativity, Annunciation, Purification, and Assumption) were adopted by the Roman church at the end of the seventh century under Sergius, according to the testimony of the *Liber Pontificalis*.

iv. Other Writings

Ps.-Mt. and *DNM* are obvious successors to *PJ*, clearly influenced by its stories. Other texts influenced by *PJ* include the *Arabic Infancy Gospel* and the *Armenian Infancy Gospel*, both from the East, and the fifteenth-century Irish *Leabhar Breac* from the West, as well as the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and the *History of Joseph the Carpenter*.

B. Ps.-Mt.

Among the distinctive influences arising from *Ps.-Mt.* we concentrate on one major theme, monasticism, while noting from A iii, above, that certain Marian festivals arose later than *Ps.-Mt.*, and so it may have contributed to the origin of some observances.

i. Monasticism

The promotion of or reflection on monasticism is noteworthy. At the time Anna conceives Mary, she and Joachim vow that, if they are granted to become parents, their offspring would be dedicated, like a religious, to the service of the Lord. The monastic origin of some of the Mary materials may be seen in *Ps.-Mt.* Even at the beginning of the narrative (*Ps.-Mt.* 1) Joachim is introduced as a pious man whose almsgiving is exemplary: he even supports pilgrims as did many a monastic house. Later, Mary, too, practises almsgiving.

Mary's monastic upbringing begins even prior to her third birthday when she is presented in the Temple where she is to remain until she is twelve. From her earliest days while she was still in her parental home she is nurtured constantly in the '*sanctuary* of her bedroom', as her feet must not be contaminated through contact with the earth. *PJ* had already stressed the undefiled nature of that domestic setting where Mary is attended by 'the pure daughters of the Hebrews'. In the Temple, later, Mary is attended by fellow virgins and she undertakes monastic rituals. Only *Ps.-Mt.* 6–7 gives the daily routine of the virgin during her nine years cloistered in the Temple. One can see here the influence of the Benedictine Rule. Day and night her life is characterized by righteousness and prayer: 'From the morning to the third hour she remained in prayer; from the third to the ninth she was occupied with her weaving; and from the ninth she again applied herself to prayer. She did not retire from praying until there appeared to her an angel of the Lord, from whose hand she used to receive food'. *Ps.-Mt.* 6.1 refers to perpetual adoration (*laus perennis*) by Mary. Her communicating with angels occurs here, as it does in other Marian gospels, e.g. *DNM* mentions Mary's regular

divine visions in the Temple. Throughout her life she had been at home in the company of fellow virgins, including her later time as a ward of the Temple; when Mary leaves the Temple to be the ward of Joseph, other virgins (religious) accompany her. Her life is therefore described as having been regulated in a monastic community until she sets off for Bethlehem to give birth to Jesus.

C. DNM

i. The Golden Legend

As far as the influence of the *DNM* itself is concerned, the greatest is clearly on Jacob of Voragine's *Golden Legend*. The appearance of a chapter on Mary's birth there, dependent as it is on *DNM*, shows the ongoing significance of this apocryphon. Although late in terms of normal New Testament Apocrypha and therefore excluded from many modern florilegia of such literature, *DNM* is nonetheless important to study—if for no other reason than it became the basis for chapter 131 in the *Golden Legend*, even though some details and minutiae were changed: in ch. 1 Issachar is no longer named in the *Golden Legend*; in *DNM* 3 Sarah is barren until aged 90, in the *Golden Legend* she is 80; from *DNM* 4 there is merely a summary of the angelic message to Anna; *DNM* 7 is abbreviated in the *Golden Legend*; from *DNM* 8 there is now no reference to Joseph's grown-up children. Among the *addenda* in the *Golden Legend* are the many tales relating the miracles of Mary.

ii. The Carolingians

The Carolingians' interest in the patristic exegesis of earlier centuries is said to have rekindled knowledge of scripture. We have already noted Mary's ascent of the fifteen steps to the altar of burnt offerings in the Temple which is said to parallel the fifteen Gradual Psalms (Pss. 120–34); the many allusions to the Old Testament including the Old Testament Apocrypha are all too evident in the references supplied in the first apparatus to the French and Latin sides of Beyers' edition of the *DNM* (1997a: 276–331), e.g. at *DNM* 2.2 (1 Reg.; Pss.), 3.11 (Isa.; Jer.), 4.1–2 (Tob.); these are seen as due to Carolingian exegesis. The naming of Mary at 3.8 and the divine promise that she will be 'made eminent by name and work' is compatible with such teaching.

This chapter has concentrated on the stories leading up to Jesus' birth. Later, Mary plays a major part during the Holy Family's flight and sojourn in Egypt. In the Arabic tradition she resumes her activity as a miracle-worker. Other infancy stories concern Jesus as a child in which Jesus' mother plays a minor role as wife and mother. It is only at the end of her life when the Apocrypha resume their interest in the biography of Mary and they do so, again, from a theological perspective, namely to describe the nature of her death or dormition. The rich array of narratives about her assumption contains many differing accounts of her end-time. Those writings merit a separate study; suffice it to say now that these expose yet another aspect to developing Marian traditions.

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CHAPTER 16

THE APOCRYPHAL MARY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN ART

ROBIN M. JENSEN

INTRODUCTION

SOME of the earliest surviving visual representations of stories from the apocryphal documents can be seen in Rome's oldest and largest Marian church, the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (St Mary Major). Founded during the reign of Pope Celestine I (422–32) and completed by his successor Sixtus III (432–40), the basilica's construction began shortly after the Council of Ephesus (431), which (among other things) declared Mary to be the Mother of God (*Theotokos*). As one of the major papal establishments, it was a monumental witness to the Marian cult in the West, particularly in Rome.

Sixtus' dedication, preserved only in a medieval transcription, seemingly alludes to the church's primary image of the Virgin, surrounded by martyrs. In this inscription, Sixtus records his understanding of the Virgin's role in salvation and, in particular, his assertion of Mary's physical virginity, not only before conception but also in the delivery itself (*in partu*).

VIRGO MARIA TIBI XYSTVS NOVA TECTA DICAVI
    DIGNA SALVTIFERO MVNERA VENTRE TVO
TV GENITRIX IGNARA VIRI TE DENIQUE FAETA
    VISCERIBVS SALVIS EDITA NOSTRA SALVS
ECCE TVI TESTES VTERI SIBI PRAEMIA PORTANT
    SVB PEDIBVSQVE IACET PASSIO CVIQVE SVA
FERRVM FLAMMA FERAE FLVVIVS SAEVVMQVE VENENVM
    TOT TAMEN HAS MORTES VNA CORONA MANET (Diehl, *ILCV* I.976)

Virgin Mary, to you Sixtus dedicates a new dwelling;
    a worthy offering to your salvation-bearing womb.
You, a mother, having born a child, yet having known no man,
    our salvation came forth from your intact womb.
Behold, the witnesses of your womb win crowns for themselves
    and each one's passion lies beneath his feet:
sword, fire, wild beast, river, and bitter poison.
    So many kinds of death, yet one crown endures. (Trans., author)

Although Mary's virginity *in partu* was not defined in the canons of the Council of Ephesus, it was asserted by Augustine of Hippo, who had been a correspondent of Sixtus' (cf. *Ep*.

194). In a sermon for Christmas Day, probably delivered around 411, Augustine speaks of Mary's virginity in conception, in delivery, and in perpetuity (*Serm*. 186.1). Prior to this, another western bishop, Zeno of Verona (300–71) also had preached on Mary's threefold virginity (*Tract*. 2.8.2, 1.5.3) and, within a decade or so of the church's construction, Sixtus' successor, Leo I (pope from 440–61), had incorporated it into both preaching and theological argument (*Ep*. *Flavian* or *Tome; Serm*. 23.1). Thus, a tradition that may have had its origins in the apocryphal nativity story of the midwife's test (*Prot*. *Jas*. 20) became an important aspect of the Virgin's depiction in the very first major basilica dedicated to her, more than 250 years before the dogma was promulgated at an official ecclesial synod, the so-called Quinisext Council (692), *Can*. 79.

Sta. Maria Maggiore's original image of the Ever-Virgin was lost at the end of the thirteenth century, when massive renovations to the church demolished the apse and changed much of basilica's appearance (Spain 1983). Based on the surviving traces as well as later (thirteenth-century) monumental apse mosaic, which depicts the Coronation of the Virgin, scholars have concluded that the original apse depicted the enthroned Virgin holding the Christ Child (Henkels 1971; Cormack 2000; Brenk 2010). However, other than another long-destroyed apse from the Basilica Suricorum at Sta. Maria in Capua Vetere (also dated to the 430s), extant examples of this motif cannot be dated before the early sixth century (e.g. the Virgin and Child with saints from the Catacomb of Commodilla, 528–30). Thus, Sta. Maria Maggiore's Virgin and Child may have been one of the earliest—if not the first—of these types. In nearly all her later representations, the Virgin wears what would become her most traditional garb: a fairly simple dark blue *stola* and veil (often embellished with gold details), a white coif, and red slippers, which suggests that she wore a similar costume here.

By contrast to the apse mosaic, both the basilica's fifth-century triumphal arch mosaics and forty-three nave panels have survived and, except for some later restorations, are largely intact. While many of the Old Testament scenes in the nave mosaics are the first of their kind, their identification has been more or less uncontroversial (Karpp 1966; Brenk 1975; Saxer 2001). The subjects of the arch's compositional scheme, however, have puzzled historians and led to a number of conflicting interpretations (Figure 16.1). Most agree that the arch panels, arranged in four ascending horizontal zones, show scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary and Christ, and the majority of scholars perceive the influence of apocryphal writings, in particular the *Protevangelium of James* and the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, on their composition. The presumed influence of these non-canonical documents on the arch mosaics makes them the earliest known monumental display of apocryphal Marian narratives.
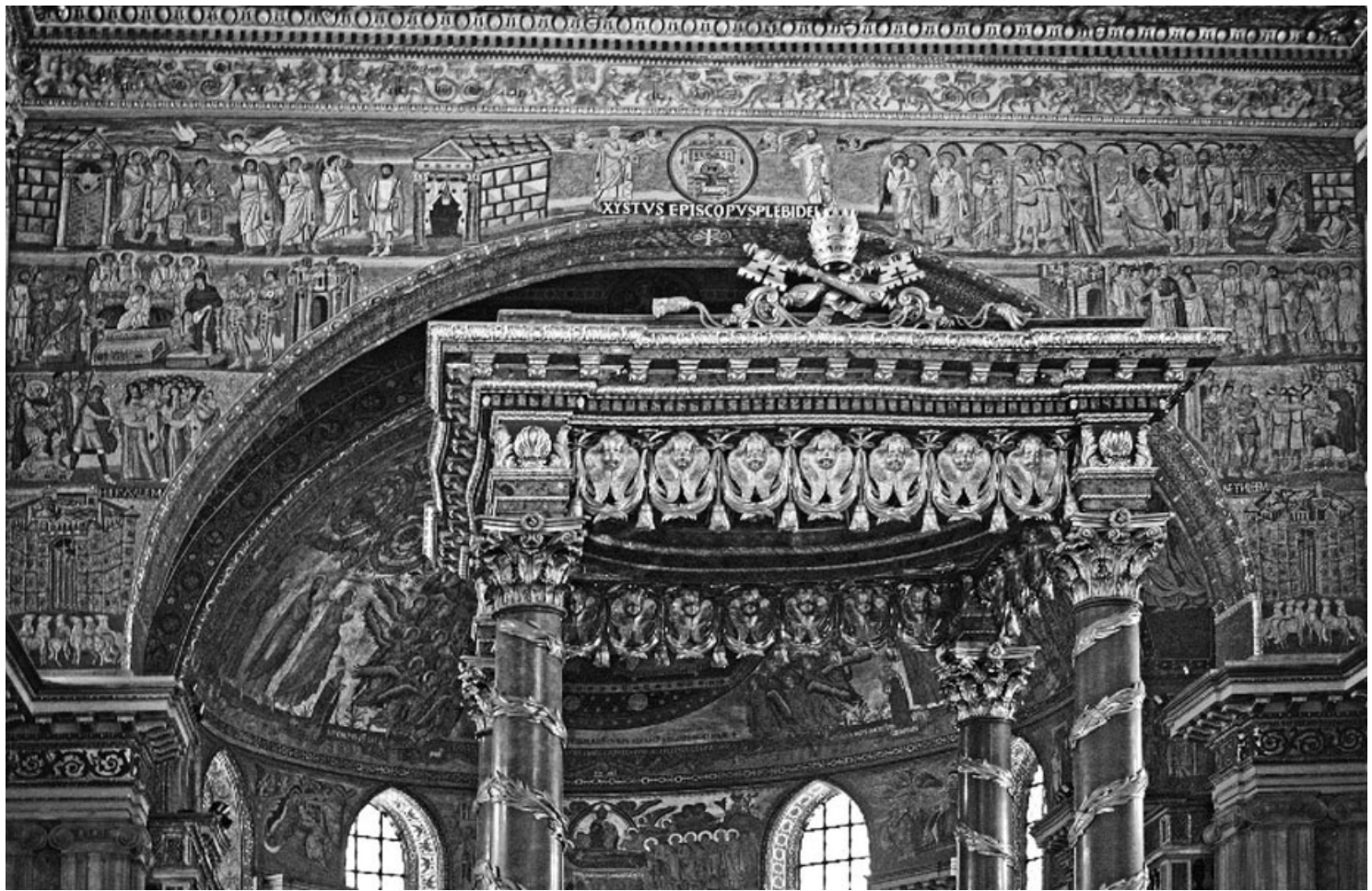
FIGURE 16.1 Mosaic arch, Sta. Maria Maggiore, Rome (*c*.435). Photo: Author

BACKGROUND

Despite her role in earlier theological constructions, which defined Mary as the New Eve (the obedient one who overcame the disobedience of the first woman and was thus credited for her role in salvation), or her early recognition as a model for Christian ascetics, the Virgin Mary was not a popular subject for early Christian art. Most of her appearances in third- or fourth-century catacomb paintings and sarcophagus reliefs show her in profile, seated and holding the Christ Child in a depiction of the adoration of the magi. Sometimes these compositions include a scene of the ox and ass at the manger. Apart from these and some unique—and possibly misidentified—paintings from the Catacomb of Priscilla, most of the well-known Marian themes in visual art (e.g. the Annunciation, Madonna and Child) are virtually absent before the fifth century and remain rare until the sixth and later. (There are two paintings in the Catacomb of Priscilla that commonly are identified as the Madonna and Child and the Annunciation (Parlby 2008), but they are at least unique and—especially in the case of the latter—may simply be paintings of a mother and a child or a seated woman with an unidentified man.)

This limited scope of Marian motifs may seem surprising considering her importance in the gospels and the fact that apocryphal traditions about her had been circulating since at least the second century (cf. Origen, *Comm*. *Matt*. 9.2, 17.1). With some possible exceptions, including a late fourth-century sarcophagus from Le Puy that some scholars believe to show the betrothal of Mary and Joseph (*Prot*. *Jas*. 9; Cartlidge and Elliott 2001: 36) but could be a more ordinary marriage scene, the lid of Syracuse's Adelphia sarcophagus that arguably depicts an unprecedented version of the annunciation to Mary at the spring (*Prot*. *Jas*. 11; Cartlidge and Elliott 2001: 78), and the suggestion that Mary—and not the Samaritan woman —is shown at the well in the mid-third-century Dura Europos baptistery (Peppard 2012: 554–

6), little undisputed evidence of apocryphal influence can be found in artworks dated prior to the early fifth century. Only the depiction of the ox and ass at the stable (*Ps.-Mt.* 14—cf. Figure 16.2) clearly demonstrate that some non-canonical traditions had found their way into early Christian iconography.

FIGURE 16.2 Detail of sarcophagus, nativity with ox and ass, last quarter, fourth century. From Saint-Béat, now in the Musée departmental Arles antique. Photo: Author (used with permission)

Thus, while the Virgin Mary played a central and complex role in early Christian writings, it was not until she took centre stage in the fifth-century doctrinal debates that she emerged as a primary subject for visual art. Out of these debates, her human and fleshly body was affirmed as necessarily pure, since it conceived and gave birth to the Incarnate Son. At a popular level, the outcome was an almost sudden flowering of Marian devotion, which found an outlet in visual art. Along with the iconic portraits of her that appeared in wall paintings or monumental mosaics (Cormack 2000), this art also depicted the non-canonical stories about her conception and youth, her marriage to Joseph, and the annunciation and birth of Jesus. Although the triumphal arch mosaics of Sta. Maria Maggiore are the most prominent examples, surviving representations of these apocryphal stories are more frequently found on small ivory carvings dating to the next two centuries (Cutler 2000).

Most of these ivories show the Virgin Mary spinning at the Annunciation, a motif that continues to appear in Christian art until the Middle Ages and appears in a range of materials, including early Coptic textiles (Rutschowscaya 2000). Some variations arise, however, and several other apocryphal episodes appear as well. The fifth-century Milan Gospel covers,

now in the Tresor del Duomo di Milano, show the annunciation at the spring and the trial of bitter water (*Prot. Jas.* 11, 16).

The sixth-century cathedra of Ravenna's Bishop Maximian has a series of panels depicting the Virgin's story: one shows her spinning at the annunciation (*Prot. Jas.* 10), a second with Joseph at the trial of the bitter water, a third as pregnant and riding to Bethlehem on a donkey (*Prot. Jas.* 17) underneath an image of Joseph's dream (Matt. 1.20). A fourth panel depicts Mary reclining after Christ's birth and includes the ox and ass, as well as the midwife, seeking healing for her injured hand (*Prot. Jas.* 19–20; *Ps.-Mt.* 13–14; Figure 16.3). A single sixth-century ivory plaque, possibly originating in Syria and now in the Louvre Museum, also shows her spinning at the annunciation and with Joseph at the trial of the bitter water, but here perhaps astride a donkey in a scene of the flight into Egypt (Figure 16.4).

The story of Mary's own miraculous conception (which appears to be present in some versions of the *Prot. Jas.* 4.4, or at least may be inferred from it, depending which textual witnesses are followed) seems to have emerged in visual art in the sixth century and appears initially in small ivory reliefs as well. For example, one panel of the St-Lupicin diptych, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, apparently shows Anna's maid (holding a headband) mocking the future mother of the Virgin (*Prot. Jas.* 2–3). Directly above this small panel is an Annunciation (with Virgin spinning); on the other side of a central portrait of the Virgin and Child is the trial of the bitter water. Another ivory diptych, now in the Hermitage museum, has two scenes that scholars variously explained as showing the annunciation to Mary and the visit of Mary and Elizabeth, or as depicting the annunciation of Mary's birth to Anna (the birds in the tree alluding to her lament) and Anna's mockery (*Prot. Jas.* 2–4; cf. Cartlidge and Elliott 2001: 38–9).

FIGURE 16.3 Nativity of Jesus, ivory plaque from the Cathedra of Maximian, *c*.550, Ravenna (Museo Archiepiscopal). Photo: Holly Hayes, EdStock Photos

FIGURE 16.4 Sixth-century ivory plaque, probably from Syria, now in the Louvre Museum, Paris. Photo: Author (used with permission)

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF STA. MARIA MAGGIORE'S TRIUMPHAL ARCH

Although most scholars agree that the mosaics of Sta. Maria Maggiore's triumphal arch display previously unknown scenes from apocryphal traditions regarding Mary's life, they are far from in agreement about the identities of their precise subjects or the source narratives

from which the scenes were chosen. The most controversial of the images are within the upper two registers; the images toward the bottom present little or no problems of analysis.

If one views the arch's four zones from left to right and descending from top to bottom, the programme begins with a scene that most commentators identify as a double annunciation—to the Virgin on the left and to Joseph on the right (e.g. Brenk 1975: 11–12; Saxer 2001: 49–54). Two buildings frame the scene, one on the left and one on the right. Both of these rectangular edifices are constructed of masonry blocks and have simple pitched roofs, pediments, clearstory windows, and columned entrances. The door to the building to the left has an elaborate golden gate in front of a curtain, while the right-hand building's entrance is only partially covered by a curtain and features a central hanging lamp.

Several figures fill the space between these buildings. A seated woman robed in a gold dalmatic and *trabea* draws the viewer's attention. She is bedecked with a pearl-encrusted diadem, collar (or necklace), and a gem-studded girdle (Figure 16.5). She holds a skein of red yarn, drawn from a basket of wool at her feet. Two angels, wearing white tunics and *pallia* stand slightly behind her. On her right are three more angels, the one nearest to her makes a gesture indicating that he is addressing her. Above, hovering among some colourful clouds, are a descending dove and a horizontal, flying angel. This crowd of angels might be divided into two groups of three (the two on the left being joined by the one flying overhead).

On the other side of the central angel trio is a short, darkly bearded man who wears a short, belted tunic and white boots with red straps. A yellow-orange mantle covers his left shoulder and falls to his knees and he holds a staff in his left hand. The angel nearest him turns toward the man and makes a similar gesture of speech; the man appears to be pointing to himself in response.

FIGURE 16.5 Triumphal arch mosaic, Sta. Maria Maggiore, Rome (*c*.435), upper left. Photo: Author

At the apex of the apse is a medallion surrounding a gem-studded diadem and cross sitting on a jewelled throne (*hetomasia*), a symbol of divine presence and the sovereignty of Christ. This is the oldest known instance of this widely depicted motif: the throne of preparation. To the throne's right and left stand Peter and Paul, behind them are the four beasts of Revelation. Underneath, the Pope's dedicatory inscription reads: *XYSTUS EPISCOPUS PLEBI DEI* ('Bishop Sixtus to the People of God').

The upper-right panel displays a four-part composition. The first three scenes take place in front of an arched arcade, the fourth in front of another rectangular structure. The woman in gold reappears here. On the left two angels turn and gaze at her as she presents a baby to a

small group to her right. A red cross surmounts the baby's halo, indicating that he is the Christ Child (Figure 16.6).

Three figures comprise the group in the centre (man, angel, woman). Their positions and posture parallel a typical Roman marriage depiction (*dextrarum iuntio*). A heavily bearded, grey-haired man, wearing a short tunic, yellow-orange mantle, and red and white boots extends his right hand to a woman who wears greenish-gold *stola* and *palla* drawn over her head as a veil. She points at the man with her right index finger. Behind them, another angel makes a gesture of blessing (acting as officiant?). Although its composition suggests that this might show the betrothal of Mary and Joseph (*Prot. Jas.* 9; cf. Brenk 1975: 19–24), or the betrothal of Christ or Joseph with the Church (Schubert 1995), many historians have identified it as the Presentation in the Temple with Simeon and Anna (Luke 2.36; cf. Oakeshott 1967: 76; Kitzinger 1980: 72; Warland 2003: 128–9).

The third scene in the composition depicts a group of bearded men, preceded by one who bows toward the central trio, covering his hands with his *pallium*. Behind him are eleven others (the back three merely shadowed heads). Those in front wear short white tunics and white and red boots; two also have dark blue mantles closed with large jewelled brooches. Their number suggests that they represent either the twelve apostles or twelve tribes of Israel.

FIGURE 16.6 Triumphal arch mosaic, Sta. Maria Maggiore, Rome (*c*.435), upper right. Photo: Wikimedia commons: RomaSantaMariaMaggioreArcoTrionfaleDxRegistro1MetàSx.jpg

On the far right another angel addresses a sleeping male who has his head propped in his left hand. He wears the now-familiar white tunic and a yellow-orange mantle. Scholarly consensus here sees the angel appearing to Joseph in a dream and warning him to flee with his family to Egypt. The building behind them looks much like the two to the left, although this one has doubled columns, decorative heads (or masks) along the cornice, and in the pediment an image of an enthroned deity holding an orb and a staff. The deity may be Roma, which would conflate the Jerusalem Temple with Rome's own Temple of Venus and Roma (Warland 2003: 130–1, following Grabar 1936: 216–17 and Kitzinger 1980: 72). Two pairs of birds (pigeons and doves) perch on the steps of this temple-like structure, possibly a reference to Mary and Joseph's offering at the time of the Presentation (Luke 2.24, and cf. *Ps.-Mt.* 15, which mentions two pairs of birds, both turtledoves and pigeons).

The scene on the left side of the arch in the next lower zone depicts the adoration of the magi (Figure 16.7). The Christ Child sits on a broad, jewelled, and high-backed throne. His gold nimbus includes a small gold cross. Four angels stand behind the throne, a bright star dividing them into two groups of two. To the left of the child's throne are three figures: the same bearded man in a short tunic, yellow-orange mantle, and red and white boots; one of the magi pointing to the star, and the woman in gold, seated as before upon a small dais. The woman's right hand touches her throat and she casts her eyes toward the child. To the throne's right a different woman sits on a similarly raised throne. She wears a dark blue *stola* over a golden tunic and red slippers. She puts her right hand to her chin in an expression that implies either thoughtfulness or wonder. Her right hand holds a partially unrolled scroll (or, possibly, a white cloth or *mappa*). To her right are the other two magi, exotically dressed and holding their gifts. A walled city rises on the left to complete the scene.

FIGURE 16.7 Triumphal arch mosaic, Sta. Maria Maggiore, Rome (*c*.435), centre left. Photo: Author

Across the arch is a depiction of two groups of people encountering one another. Some of the figures to the right are familiar (angels, Christ Child, the man with the yellow-orange mantle, and the woman in gold). The group on the left is more puzzling. They emerge from a different walled city and are led by two striking figures, one dressed in a gold tunic, covered by a blue cape. He has a jewelled brooch at his shoulder and wears a diadem. To his right is a bearded and bare-chested figure—a type usually associated with philosophers in classical art. Almost all the characters in this panel extend their right hands as if indicating a wary greeting. Scholars have identified this scene as the Holy Family entering Egypt and being greeted by the governor of Sotinen, Aphrodisius (cf. *Ps.-Mt.* 24; cf. Oakeshott 1976: 74–6; Saxer 2001: 49; Brandenburg 2004: 188; Kessler 2007: 123; Brenk 2010: 73). If this is correct, it is the earliest known representation of this very rare non-canonical scene in Christian art.

The subjects of the two scenes in the next lower zone are more certain. To the left of the arch Herod presides over the massacre of the innocents; on the right Herod instructs the magi to report back to him after they have seen the child. The fact that these two images seem out of order suggests that the composition probably was not designed to be read as a sequential narrative from right to left. One detail in the massacre scene could be important to an analysis of the influence of the Apocrypha on the iconography: the woman on the right turns away and appears to be escaping with her child. She may represent Elizabeth disappearing with John the Baptist (*Prot. Jas.* 22). Below these images are two cityscapes, their labels clearly marking them as representations of Jerusalem (left) and Bethlehem (right). Six sheep appear

before their gates, possibly a reference to the church of the Gentiles (Bethlehem) and the church of the Jews (Jerusalem).

INTERPRETATION

Most of the scholarly debate about the iconography has revolved around whether the woman in gold should be identified as Mary or as some other character. Scholars often simply describe her as an early Maria Regina, largely because her garments appear to be similar to those worn by women from the imperial family (e.g. Brenk 1975: 12–13; Kessler 2007: 123; Cormack 2000: 93). This identification has led several scholars to emphasize the Roman and imperial or even political associations of the mosaic over against the theological or ecclesial messages that others might see in it. For example, Rainer Warland boldly asserts that the iconography of the adoration scene, with its enthroned Christ, comes not from an ecclesial context but from an imperial one and thus 'their interpretation can only succeed along imperial connotations' (Warland 2003: 136–7). Warland, following Johannes Kollwitz, cites some of the sermons of Sixtus' successor, Leo I (440–61), to support his argument for an imperial programme in the arch (cf. Kollwitz 1960). Joanne Deane Sieger similarly explains Mary's imperial garb by noting that some of Leo's Christmas sermons, which may have been preached at the Basilica itself, emphasized Mary's royal descent through King David (Sieger 1987). To be sure, the Bible proclaims that Mary was from the House of David (Luke 1.27) and Jesus' being from the 'root of Jesse' was part of his messianic identity. Although Pope Leo's Christmas sermons may have been influenced by the iconography in the basilica, in those that have survived, Leo actually refers only once to Mary as 'Virgo Regia' (*Serm.* 21.1).

The woman in gold undoubtedly bears some similarity to the regal-looking Virgin Mary depicted in the remains of a sixth- or seventh-century palimpsest fresco found in Rome's church of Sta. Maria Antiqua (Figure 16.8), a ninth-century painting of the Virgin and Child from the lower church of San Clemente, or the Madonna della Clemenza from Sta. Maria Trastevere, which is dated roughly anywhere from the sixth to the ninth century. Both of these works show the Virgin enthroned and arrayed in a (dark blue) jewel-encrusted robe and crown. Yet, these later images of a queenly Mary are still quite different from golden-robed woman on the triumphal arch who looks more like Pharaoh's daughter in one of the nave mosaics. Her diadem and garments also resemble those of the processing women saints from Ravenna's Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo (*c*.550—see Figure 16.9) or that of St Agnes from Rome's Basilica of Sant'Agnese (*c*.625; cf. Rubery 2008). Despite their pearl collars, jewelled belts, gold *trabeae*, and diadems, these figures never were viewed as imperial figures, even though their garments—at least according to this common analysis of Sta. Maria Maggiore's woman in gold—might indicate that they should also be so recognized. Moreover, since most depictions of Mary as an enthroned and crowned 'Queen of Heaven' are much later in date, it may be that representing Mary as a queen actually alludes to her apocryphal title, *Regina Virginum*—albeit assigned in mockery by her jealous sister-virgins in the Temple (cf. *Ps.-Mt.* 8).

Identifying the woman in gold as the Virgin leads to the related problem of the identity of the other women in the mosaic: the woman in the marriage (or presentation) scene and the second woman (in blue) in the adoration panel. As already noted, commentators have variously perceived the woman in the marriage/presentation scene as the Virgin (at her betrothal), as the Church, or as the Prophetess Anna at the Jesus' presentation in the Temple (Luke 2.36). If, in the adoration panel, the woman in gold is Mary, she cannot also be the woman (in blue) sitting to the right of the enthroned Christ Child. One scholar has asserted

this latter woman to be the personification of the Church of the Jews (Weis 1960), while others have identified her as the figure of Divine Wisdom (Cecchelli 1956: 214) or the Roman Sibyl (Thérel 1962: 153–71; Karpp 1966; Warland 2003: 134). This second woman might also be Anna (Mary's mother), Mary's cousin Elizabeth, or even the personification of the Church (Ecclesia), looking fondly at her spouse (Christ). One main difficulty with any of these alternatives is that this woman's garb makes her look more like all later depictions of the Virgin Mary, even including her red slippers, ironically a symbol of imperium, that are given to this woman and not to the woman in gold. If the white object she holds is a *mappa*— a symbol of political authority and commonly depicted in consular diptychs—it would add an additional regal attribute to her image.

FIGURE 16.8 Ninth-century fresco of the Virgin and Child, from Sta. Maria Antiqua, Rome. Photo: Author

Suzanne Spain proposed an alternative identification for the woman in gold. Basing her argument partly on the woman's costume, which she saw as lacking the basic elements of imperial regalia—crown, *pendilia*, and red shoes—Spain claimed that she was meant to be Sarah, Abraham's wife and Isaac's mother, rather than an imperialized Mary (Spain 1979). Consequently, instead of an annunciation to Mary, Spain interpreted the upper-left panel as showing the three angelic visitors announcing the birth of Isaac (Gen. 18). This reading

makes sense of all the angels appearing in this iconography; the three in the centre particularly representing the visitors at Mamre. Spain thus saw Sarah as Mary's antetype, her promised, miraculous only child, Isaac, as prefiguring Jesus, and Abraham, thereby, as Joseph's antetype.

FIGURE 16.9 Women martyrs, nave mosaic, Sant'Apollinare Nouvo, Ravenna (*c*.550). Photo: Author

By this logic, Sarah is the woman in gold in the next scene: the one who presents the child. Spain sees the next image as showing the betrothal of Joseph and Mary. By presenting a vision of their promised child, Jesus' great-great-great grandmother reveals their destiny to Joseph and Mary. Abraham is the man on the right who bows down before them. Hence, Spain sees both Mary and Sarah in the adoration scene along with Abraham (standing behind Sarah—the woman in gold). Spain never explains why, in the annunciation scene, Sarah should be holding the red threads that Mary was given to weave for the Temple's veil in the apocryphal tradition (cf. *Prot. Jas.* 10).

Spain actually introduces her theory with an analysis of the so-called Aphrodisius scene. At the outset, she asserts that the Aprocrypha are 'implausible sources for the themes of the arch' (Spain 1979: 519). Therefore she argues that that enigmatic panel depicts Sarah and her divine descendent as they meet his ancestor, King David and his prophet, Isaiah. In this respect, the image also represents the coming of Christ to the Nations and thus connects with the adoration of the magi image above. This concludes Spain's theory, that the mosaic programme was based on the theme of promise and fulfilment, and a kind of merging of Old Testament types with their New Testament antetypes.

More problems with Spain's theory revolve around the identity of the male figures. Spain sees most of the dark-bearded men as Abraham, and the grey-bearded man in the marriage/presentation scene as Joseph. She acknowledges that she also views the grey-haired man who bows to the betrothed couple (Mary and Joseph) as Abraham. To explain this discrepancy, she notes, as others have, the fact that some of the mosaics were changed during centuries of restoration, and then asserts that the only original head actually belongs to that bowing Abraham figure (Spain 1979: 536–7). Other scholars have challenged Spain's reconstruction, however, seeing the only significant restoration as the face of the sleeping man on the far right of the upper zone (cf. Nordhagen 1983). One crucial detail that Spain seems to have overlooked is that the dark-bearded male holds a staff in most of his appearances. The staff, possibly a reference to Joseph's miraculous and signifying staff (cf. *Prot. Jas.* 9) does not show up in the one place a viewer would most expect it: the betrothal scene.

Most scholars have rejected Spain's analysis, choosing rather simply to identify all the women in the iconography as Mary and avoiding the problem of the duplication of the figures in the adoration scene. A more recent hypothesis offered by Eileen Rubery proposes that, in a composite sense, both the woman in blue and the woman in gold represent Mary; the one in gold refers to the Christ Child's divine nature and the other in blue to his human nature (Rubery 2008: 164).

The complicated composition may never be explained satisfactorily. Perhaps the original apse iconography would have made it all clear. Nevertheless, Spain's statement, 'that the apocrypha are implausible sources for the themes of the arch' is worth revisiting in this context. Most of the other explanations assume the influence of the Apocrypha on the iconography but avoid engaging some of the problems that Spain sees with doing so. She bases her objection to citing the Apocrypha as source texts on three grounds: first that the composition of the so-called 'Aphrodisius' panel bears little resemblance to *Pseudo-Matthew*'s account of the Holy Family's arrival in Egypt. For example, 'The ground is not littered with idols, nor does Mary hold the Christ Child in her arms' (Spain 1979: 521). Nor, she adds, is Aphrodisius' imperial costume appropriate for a mere governor. She also argues that the eight or nine men standing behind him hardly constitute the army mentioned in the text.

Yet, at the same time, the upper-left scene bears very little similarity to the Genesis narrative of Abraham and his three visitors that Spain perceived as its source. While certain details allude to it (e.g. the three central angels), other details conflict (e.g. Sarah was in the family tent, not on a throne and spinning red thread). Thus, no existing canonical or apocryphal document is a clear or exact match for the iconography.

Second, Spain sweepingly claims that the influence of the apocryphal gospels on early Christian art was limited in general but especially for a monumental arch in a major basilica. She claims this is the case because, 'the presence of apocryphal elements in an Infancy cycle in a church sponsored by the Papacy is inconceivable, given the caution with which the popes treated the canonical corpus of biblical writings' (Spain 1979: 521). Yet, she never offers any support for such a claim and appears to apply this perceived papal repudiation only to the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, since there could be no other way to account for the golden-robed woman's spinning other than an apocryphal source (e.g. *Prot. Jas.* 10). She gives no reason for the Bishop of Rome to tolerate one apocryphal tradition over another. Furthermore, a good part of her own argument relies on the identification of the next scene as the marriage of Mary and Joseph, which was certainly based on a non-canonical document (e.g. *Prot. Jas.* 9).

Third, Spain offers what she deems her most serious objection: that the availability of *Pseudo-Matthew* in the fifth century was highly unlikely (Spain 1979: 521). As at the very

earliest a sixth-century compilation, she insists that it could not have been a source for fifth-century iconography. While this argument seems to have some logic, it is a simple fact that some details from that apocryphal gospel are well established in fourth-century Christian art (e.g. the ox and the ass at the manger).

CONCLUSION

While the controversial compositional scheme of the arch mosaics of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore may never be fully resolved, a final question is whether they should be understood as primarily integrated with dogmatic developments or reflect more on the spread of popular traditions and the dissemination of non-canonical legends. Although most commentators have aligned the basilica's iconography with the Council of Ephesus' declaration of Mary's status as Mother of God, the original depiction of her in that particular role—presumably in the apse mosaic—no longer exists. A general assumption that the apse showed the enthroned Virgin and Child, facing forward and surrounded by angels or saints, makes sense, particularly considering subsequent iconography of the kind. It might even have been the prototype for that later iconic imagery. If Sixtus' dedicatory inscription was addressed to that image, it may have included some allusion to Mary's status as Virgin both after conception and after giving birth, a dogma that was not officially defined at the Council, although it was asserted by western theologians at the time (e.g. Augustine of Hippo and Leo I).

Yet, what we see on the arch is narrative, not dogmatic, iconography. Whatever it depicts, it appears to display the Virgin's role in the economy of salvation through a cycle of stories rather than in a single, monumental portrait. Arguably, it began by showing her as the one chosen to weave the purple and scarlet threads of the Temple veil—possibly a symbol of the divine child who would bear her own human flesh and blood. While she is at this task, angels visit her, one of them bearing the news that she will conceive the Son of the Most High. The Holy Spirit comes down upon her and she gives birth to the child whom she sets upon a broad throne. She presents him in the Temple, where she was earlier betrothed to Joseph and he is, in turn, warned in a dream to take his family and flee. She is not a figure of adoration in these images; rather she is the featured player in a drama that has a rather large cast. This cast includes Joseph, the magi, the wicked King Herod, and (maybe) even a delegation of Egyptians.

In other words, while the declarations of the Council of Ephesus regarding the Virgin Mary may have prompted the building of the basilica, they did not guide the iconography of its triumphal arch. Here the scenes were drawn from well-known canonical and non-canonical texts, possibly many of them long since lost. The document we know as the *Protevangelium of James* seems to have been among them, and there is every reason to assume that an early version of the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* was as well. Their incorporation shows that narrative no less than doctrinal debate both shaped and reinforced the faith and piety of early Christians.

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CHAPTER 17

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THE ROLE OF THE APOSTLES

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RICHARD I. PERVO

INTRODUCTION

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EUSEBIUS opens the third book of his *Ecclesiastical History* with a description of the world mission of 'the holy Apostles and disciples of our Saviour' who had been disbursed throughout the inhabited lands:

> Thomas, as tradition relates, obtained by lot Parthia, Andrew Scythia, John Asia (and he stayed there and died in Ephesus), but Peter seems to have preached to the Jews of the Dispersion in Pontus and Galatia and Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Asia, and at the end he came to Rome and was crucified head downwards, for so he had demanded to suffer. What need be said of Paul, who fulfilled the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyria and afterward was martyred in Rome under Nero? This is stated exactly (*kata lexin*) by Origen in the third volume of his commentary on Genesis. (3.1, Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Loeb edn, 1.191)

The presumed citation from Origen (on which see Harnack 1918: 14–16; Junod 1981) mentions five apostles rather than twelve, the very five associated, since antiquity, with 'major' apocryphal acts. One theme underlying this account is the 'apostolic lottery' (on which see Kaestli 1981), according to which each of the twelve receives by lot as a missionary territory a portion of the twelve sections into which the inhabited world is divided. The idea of a universal mission is grounded in Matt. 28.19 and Acts 1.8 (cf. Justin, *1 Apol*. 39.3), but is not described in Acts, where Peter is the only apostle whose missionary activity receives attention. The motif of a lottery is likewise probably inspired by Acts (1.23–6), but not utilized for missionary allotments there. Not only the lottery but also the realm of each apostle is legendary. (For the association of Andrew with Scythia see MacDonald 1994: 292; for Thomas in Parthia see *Acts Phil*. 8.1.) The NT could be held as the source of the idea that John died in Ephesus, by attributing Revelation to that apostle, and the death of Paul in Rome is a reasonable inference from 2 Timothy, but for the details one must consult the apocryphal acts, where one learns that John died a natural death in Ephesus (*Acts John* 115), that Paul was martyred under Nero (*Acts John* 14), and that Peter was crucified upside down (*Acts Pet*. 37). The notices about Peter and Paul integrate these stories with references to specific scriptures (1 Pet. 1.1; Rom. 15.19, respectively).

APOSTLES

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The essence of the apostolic office as reflected in most of the Christian Apocrypha is mission. The NT already presents conflicting views of the apostolic office. Linkage with the

twelve disciples of Jesus, evident in the lists (e.g. Mark 3.13–19//Matt. 10.1–4//Luke 6.12–16; Acts 1.13; *Acts Thom.* 1; *Ep. Apos.* 2) emphasizes the historical and juridical (Luke 22.28–30 [Q]), but the understanding of apostles as missionaries authorized by a Christophany (1 Cor. 15.3–8), which may be characterized as charismatic legitimation, may well be earlier. Luke, as is well known, integrates the two (Acts 1.21–2). From the institutional and juridical understanding of the term derives 'apostolic' in the doctrinal sense, the faith of the apostles that provides the basis for orthodoxy and is grounded in apostolic succession. The apocrypha often maintain the charismatic, missionary understanding of 'apostle' in its purest form, but not exclusively so. Peter and Paul, for example, are the recipients of revelations in the various apocalypses attributed to them because of their authority. Tradition had long established the virtue of giving venerable status to great worthies, such as Enoch. The various acts focus upon the missionary role.

With a few exceptions, notably the *Epistle of the Apostles*, the Apocrypha display no interest in the Apostolic College as a repository of authority and orthodoxy. The apostles are not rivals so much as independent agents. Rivalry appears in so far as their names may be associated with particular theological traditions, as in works linked to John, to James, and to Thomas. The classic rivalry between Peter and Paul was rapidly papered over. In the later edition of the *Acts of Peter* that survives, known from the manuscript as the *Actus Vercellenses*, Peter goes to Rome to replace Paul. In due course they will become joint martyrs and supersede Romulus and Remus as patrons of Rome.

Canonical Acts establishes the narrative pattern for the apocryphal acts, but the impulse comes from the canonical Gospels (Bovon 1988). In a Christophany the risen Lord delivers an oracle (Acts 1.8). Oracles and epiphanies are normal features of cult-foundation stories (on which see Pervo 2009: 389–90). With this are often associated, logically, typical features of a prophetic call. The call of Paul in Acts 9 shows an interesting variation on the form, as both the objection of unsuitability and the oracle are stated by and to another character (Ananias). The *Acts of Thomas* 1 reports the division of the world by lots:

> By lot India fell to Judas Thomas, also called Didymus. And he did not wish to go, saying that he was not able to travel on account of the weakness of his body. He said, 'How can I, being a Hebrew, go among the Indians to proclaim the Truth? … The Saviour appeared to him during the night and said to him, "Fear not, Thomas, go away to India and preach the word there, for my grace is with you.' (Trans. Elliott 1993: 447–8)

Thomas continues to resist, as the author builds a formal motif into a plot device with theological significance. Chapter 113 of the *Acts of John* suggests that John (possibly with his brother James) experienced a Christophany on the Lake of Galilee and was persuaded to embrace celibacy. These examples indicate both the standard features of apostolic commissions and the creative freedom with which the authors developed those typical elements. The apostolic office includes pastoral tasks, which were promptly associated with the office's institutional component. John 21, an appendix that, like Mark 16.9–20, lies in the foothills of the Apocrypha, offers both. Verses 1–14 present a post-resurrection missionary commission, while vv. 15–17 focus upon Peter's pastoral office. The *Actus Vercellenses* (mentioned earlier) concentrates upon his pastoral work in Rome: reconstituting a fractured community. Much of the *Acts of Paul* also attends to pastoral work in established communities. In Ephesus (*Acts Paul* 9), for example, statements about numerical growth are limited to summaries, whereas qualitative growth receives detailed attention. In general, the Christian Apocrypha do not segregate evangelism from pastoral care. The latter is part of the church's mission.

As duly commissioned agents, apostolic missionaries represent the prophetic tradition exemplified by, e.g., Jonah. Without usurping Christ's place at the right hand of power,

apostles tend to become saviour figures. (This is to be distinguished from the identification with Christ achieved by martyrs.) Apostles also recruit pupils (disciples) rather than enrol fellow followers of Jesus. Once again, this tradition presented the author of the *Acts of Thomas* with a glittering opportunity, as he is the twin brother of Jesus (Jude the twin, Jude the brother of Jesus). Like other twins these two occasionally enjoy exchanging places. Cf. *Acts Thom.* 11. Twinning is congenial to the theology of the *Acts of Thomas*, since the 'soul' is the heavenly twin of the earthly body.

That the *Acts of Thomas* may be viewed as a development of earlier concepts is quite apparent from the Pauline tradition, in which notions of Paul as a salvation-conveying figure (e.g. Acts 27.1–28.15) whose suffering is redemptive (cf. Col. 1.24–6) can be traced through the wide-ranging Deuteropauline trajectories. (On this development see Pervo 2010. For detailed parallels between the *Acts of Paul* and the canonical Gospels see Pervo 2012.) A few examples from the story of Thecla in the less theologically sophisticated *Acts of Paul* should provide sufficient illustration. Shortly after arriving in Iconium the apostle preaches a sermon. Although little of the preceding part of the text survives, it is not unlikely that this was the inaugural sermon in the original, for authors preferred to establish the character of the hero before offering a detailed report of his message, as in Luke 4.16–30; Matt. 5–7; Acts 13.15–43). Paul's inaugural message at Iconium opens with a series of beatitudes (*Acts Paul* 3.5–6). The author did not hit upon that beginning by mere coincidence.

When Thecla, converted by Paul's message, finds herself condemned to public immolation,

> … [A]s a lamb in the wilderness looks around for the shepherd, so Thecla kept searching for Paul. And having looked into the crowd she saw the Lord sitting in the likeness of Paul and said, 'As if I were unable to endure, Paul has come to look after me.' And she gazed upon him with great earnestness, but he went up to heaven. (*Acts Paul* 3.21, trans. Elliott 1993: 368)

Paul is the great shepherd of the sheep for this vulnerable lamb. For Paul to take the form of Christ would be remarkable. When the Lord adopts the appearance of the apostle, the structure of salvation seems inverted. Paul, physically absent, like Christ, is present for his disciple. After Thecla has been extricated from this unpleasantness and has located Paul, she exclaims, 'I will cut my hair off and I shall follow you wherever you go' (3.25, trans. Elliott 1993: 369). This is a component of the type of apophthegm classified as a 'vocation story'. Its prototype is the Q material in Luke 9.57–62. Thecla's proposal to cut her hair is, *inter alia*, a renunciation of her sexuality, a synecdoche for total renunciation. The second part of her saying is an unbounded commitment to be Paul's disciple.

Soteriology

This propensity to blend the role of the one sent with the sender opens many Apocrypha to theological criticism. (See also below, under 'Speeches and Rhetoric'.) An exception of sorts emerges when the content of revelation is more central than the deeds of the revealer. This is most apparent in systems designated as 'gnostic', where discovery of one's true nature is essential. In those contexts apostles largely serve as acknowledged Christian authority figures, the recipients of full revelation. Among the major Apocrypha, revelation is particularly central to the *Acts of Thomas*, which resembles gnostic works in that way.

In the case of the *Acts of Paul* the objection remains. Those responsible for producing Christian Apocrypha were not attempting to turn the godhead into a pantheon. Granting that

the finer points of soteriology—in truth some points ever so blunt—had not yet been proposed, tested, and resolved, the purpose of this effective identification is to make Christ and his benefits fully available to believers. The apostles do not merely talk about a future deliverance guaranteed by the atonement; they make salvation present. This is implicit. The authors probably did not reflect upon some possible ramifications of their narrative. More recent critics have frequently assumed a vicarious atonement as the normative christology and have held that apostles should stick to this talking point. That criticism is not valid.

Salvation History

A more immediate source of this approach was Luke and Acts, in which the continuity of salvation history is shown by presenting the apostles as performing deeds done by Jesus, who, in turn, did what Moses and the prophets, especially Elijah and Elisha, had wrought. Luke also wished to portray the presence of Christ; most of his apocryphal successors displayed no more than a limited interest in salvation history. A further question is whether this chain terminates with the apostles, i.e., whether they kickstarted a mission that could thereafter continue to run on normal power. The most radical response is manifest in the *Acts of John*. Chapters 22–4 narrate that John raises Cleopatra, who subsequently restores to life her husband Lycomedes, who had perished from grief. The power of the gospel (i.e. resurrection power) is transmitted to all, without regard to rules of office and succession. Even those who do not cavil at the identification of pupil with master, apostle with Christ, may object that the tendency to express this relationship through miracles, some of which are quite unedifying, is too limited in scope. Those who can tolerate the wonders may find the more or less omnipresent celebration of extreme asceticism unbearable. Talking dogs and balking wives have helped consign many Apocrypha to the fringes of the scholarly horizon. Both miracles and asceticism require discussion.

CELIBACY AND ASCETIC DIET

With regard to asceticism two questions arise: its origin(s) and its character. Is asceticism prescriptive or exemplary? The two are related. In dualistic contexts, where matter is the problem and the body the highest expression of that problem, asceticism rests upon strong ideological bases. Suppression of the body is a means for liberation of the spirit. Christian followers of Mani could read the apocryphal acts as reinforcement of their views, as could various gnostic groups, for example. Not all of the Apocrypha are dualistic, however. The *Acts of Paul* and the *Acts of Peter* are, in general, monistic, even if without thorough and consistent reflection. In the *Acts of Paul* asceticism seems to be both the means for attaining salvation and the expression of its achievement. Utopian ideas never lay at a great distance. By rejecting sexuality believers could return to the original human state, envisioned as either androgynous or as immaterial and, in any case, lacking reproduction through sexual intercourse or the attendant sexual desire.

Dietary asceticism looked back to the primeval state in so far as it was vegetarian, but its evident purpose was mastery of the body through the quest to consume no more than was necessary to maintain one's existence. Fasting was a corporate as well as an individual practice in early Christianity (Matt. 6.16; Acts 13.2, 14.23; *Did*. 8, for example). Christian Apocrypha include, in addition to heroic fasting by apostles, regular references to individual, familial, and community fasting (e.g. *Acts Paul* 1, 2, 3.23, 6.5, 9.22, 11.1, 12.2,

13.1). Temporary fasts from sexual activity were general components of purity practices and religious devotion (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.5). Many Apocrypha represent strains of Christianity which viewed the demand for celibacy as universal. Luke is the first known representative of the Pauline tradition to reject sex entirely (e.g. Luke 20.34–6). Another strand, represented by 1 Timothy, viewed marriage as normative (and frowned upon dietary asceticism: 1 Tim. 4.3, 5.23). Eventually dominant orthodox Christianity retreated from descriptions of apostles as disrupters of lawful marriages. Although one can read of such deeds in modern editions and translations, the manuscript evidence for them is very tenuous.

In general, demands for celibacy and examples of ascetic rigour are somewhat more often exemplary than normative. Extraordinary examples will inspire the less motivated to middling achievements. Both sexual and dietary restraint provide believers at every level with motives and measures for and of self-control. These disciplines, excessive and sometimes abhorrent to modern westerners, represented early Christian efforts to teach even the most humble people the allegedly elite virtues of self-restraint and control. See *2 Clement* and *Hermas*, representatives of the 'Apostolic Fathers' rather than the Apocrypha, for evidence of these ideals. Celibacy and dietary rigour were not alien intruders into the Graeco-Roman religious world; such phenomena were, pardon the oxymoron, culturally acceptable forms of countercultural behaviour. Most early Christians would view such antitheses to the error and vanity of 'the world' as examples of the miracle of new life.

MIRACLES AND ANIMAL STORIES

All of the wonders depicted in the more flamboyant Christian Apocrypha respond to the question: how does one depict a miracle, specifically the miracle of new life? (Cf. R. Bultmann's tenet that the essence of the miraculous is the forgiveness of sins.) Just as Jesus' healings and exorcisms were signs of inbreaking of God's rule, all wonders were symbols and synecdoches of grace. As such they were both harder and easier to grasp than parables. While the latter could be reduced to sanitized allegories of salvation history, miracles thrived in the climes of Madison Avenue, as it were. They served as excellent advertisements, having many features of modern commercials: the capacity to attack dreadful impediments to a full life freely and rapidly by producing instantaneous, thorough, and enduring results. The analogy serves to highlight several features important for understanding apostolic miracle stories. One is competition: other soaps, fragrances, and cigarettes exist. One must strive to achieve the strongest appeal, by one means or any. Another is that miracles are tropes. Commercials prefer synecdoche and metonymy. The latter involves substitution of effect for cause or vice versa. Marlboro cigarettes, after mediocre results from marketing aimed at women, introduced the 'Marlboro man', a rugged, handsome, outdoorsy type. The message was simply not that males should imitate these vigorous models but that manliness was the *result* of smoking the brand. Miracles advertised health and empowerment as the result of conversion to Christianity. Similarly, healings were synecdoches, parts standing for the whole of divine rule.

Models could be important. Decades ago athletes endorsed one brand of cigarette or another, implying that the choice contributed to their success. Testimonials had their value. At one time a brand of cigarette would present an apparent physician who stated that he recommended this brand (to his patients who smoked). Statistics count: at least one brand featured alleged survey data about the happier throats and lungs of their patrons. Those under seventy may doubt that such advertisements ever saw the light of day. They are also

not unlikely to doubt some reports about apostolic miracles—the precise reason for selecting old cigarette ads. They level the playing field. An apparently logical but not particularly fruitful question to ask of either or both stories and commercials is whether people were expected to believe 'this stuff'. The answer is that the creators wanted people to 'buy' the product. Good works have priority over faith.

As narrative miniatures miracle stories may include various literary devices and techniques, including suspense, humour, mystery, irony, and sensation. They may be sentimental, sensitive, sadistic, or violent, possibly all in the same narrative. The dynamic of competition sparked all of the above. Without competition advertisements are unnecessary.

From the perspective of the history of religion 'new' gods stand in particular need of miracles. Three qualifications beg for attention:

1. In Graeco-Roman antiquity priority resided not in the atypical or aberrant ('violation of natural law'), but in the experience of epiphany. A glass of wine was an epiphany of Dionysios, a flash of lightning a manifestation of Zeus.
2. 'New' may mean 'new on the scene', with the connotation of mission, a willingness to seek new adherents and/or gain public acceptance.
3. In cultures and societies various gods had established functions, some of which we might call 'miracles'. Eileithyia was a goddess of childbirth, Asclepius a healing deity. The work of each could be regarded as miraculous or otherwise, but it belonged to a defined sphere. When a goddess like Isis began to acquire attributes of Demeter, Asclepius, and others, the effects of competition began to emerge. Gods pursuing universal status might become proponents of 'one-stop shopping', offering wonders and epiphanies of every type for devotees. Many would have read John in this light: in chapter 2 Jesus works a Dionysiac wonder; chapter 5 sees him succeed at a healing pool; in John 6 he rivals Moses as a provider of wondrous food.

Still, the exuberantly competitive quality of apostolic miracles amounts, as noted, to dozens of different signs that all point to the same reference: God's gracious rule. Moreover, the most important function of miracle stories is symbolism. This manifests itself in two tendencies. Resurrections tend to predominate, for they clearly exemplify the gift of new life. The *Acts of John* clearly but not exclusively manifests this tendency. *Acts John* 47 reports the resuscitation of the relative of a priest of the Ephesian Artemis, who is told: 'You have been raised and are indeed not really living, and are not partaker and heir of the true life' (trans. Elliott 1993: 324). He is exhorted to embrace the faith, does so, and follows John. *Acts John* 52 tells of a father murdered by his son, who, when raised, finds it regrettable, until convinced by John to rise to a better life. When Fortunatus has been raised, he wishes he had remained dead, a wish quickly granted (*Acts John* 83–6).

Corresponding to this narrowing of the symbolic range was a tendency to let symbolism run wild, as it were. That exuberance landed many Apocrypha in very hot water. Blame for this rests upon interpreters of the modern period, who both neglected the use of animal stories in antiquity, especially in the second and third centuries CE, and, more importantly, were guilty of a propensity toward unduly concrete interpretation. Talking animals imply that one is in the realm of myth, fairy tale, or fable. Children learn very early that, when animals speak, the outcome will be instructive. Children would have limited difficulty grasping the purpose of animal stories in the apocryphal acts; those requiring remedial instruction are likely to be highly educated adults. (On animals in the apocryphal acts, see Matthews 1999, Klauck 2008: 95–138, and Spittler 2008.)

Readers who encounter Gen. 3.1 ('Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?"') rarely react by exclaiming: 'Wait a minute! Snakes don't *talk*.' In stories snakes can talk. The example is apposite for several reasons. This took

place in Paradise, before the Fall. When holy persons can consult with animals, they display, as in their lifestyle, paradise restored, the situation evoked in Isa. 11.6–8. With the return of the primeval state will come cessation of the conflicts among species, including human wars and violence, the hunting and destruction of other species by people, and assaults of animals upon other living creatures, including humans. The resultant 'peaceable kingdom' will recreate the original world order, marked by harmony and cooperation rather than by enmity and conflict. As agents of grace, apostles can repair the breaches caused by sin. Mastery over the animal kingdom is also a standard attribute of the charismatically endowed leader, exhibiting both his wisdom and his power. (See Bieler 1967: 1.103–10.)

Balaam's talking donkey (Num. 22.28–30) is a lesson about obstinacy. Acts 4 and 8 of the *Acts of Thomas* include longer (and more perceptive) speeches by wild and domesticated representatives of this species (e.g. *Acts Thom*. 74, 78–9). Is this a difference of kind or degree? The latter. Where difference in kind comes into play is that for the *Acts of Thomas* the donkey is a symbol of the fleshly body (a theme also arguably developed in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*).

The animal incident with the most venerable pedigree of opprobrium is Paul's baptism of a lion, roundly denounced by Jerome (*Vir. Ill*. 7): 'We therefore classify the *Journeys of Paul and Thecla* and the entire fable of a baptized lion with the apocryphal writings.' Fable it is; shortly after his conversion, the apostle, travelling with two women, is accosted by a lion. Rather than lacerate them, the beast demands and receives baptism, whereupon he embraces celibacy. On the moral, fictitious level, this creature, famed for sexual potency and prowess, shames human males. Symbolically, the creature represents the Christian victory over feral lust. Paul's wisdom is confirmed later (*Acts Paul* 9), when he is condemned to the beasts at Ephesus and finds the fierce lion selected to shred him to be none other than his protégé. The lion is also an apt literary fit, providing a nice parallel with Thecla, who is befriended by a lioness designated to devour her (*Acts Paul* 4).

Peter's contest with Simon (*Acts Pet*. 9–32) deals with a serious matter: an exploitative imposter who deceives and seduces many of the faithful. The story is also a lot of fun, for the wicked magician is constantly foiled in his crude efforts. The action begins at chapter 9, when Peter engages Simon's doorkeeper (continuing a theme launched in Luke 22.56–7 and continued in Acts 12.12–15). Since the porter has been instructed to report that Simon is not in, Peter deputizes the dog to deliver his message. This is a guard dog, a frightening brute, kept chained and doubtless menacing. Peter's fearless handling of this creature, not to mention his ability to endow it with intelligent speech used both to shame and refute Simon (*Acts Pet*.12), demonstrates the ease with which he can wallop the wicked magician.

Acts Pet. 13 reports a deed that has sent waves of revulsion rippling through readers both naive and erudite. The apostle, beseeched for an additional sign—Simon had worked a basketful of awesome wonders—takes his cue from a smoked fish, which he tosses into a conveniently adjacent pond and summons, in the name of Jesus Christ, to revive and swim. It does so, and eats bits of bread tossed by the awestruck crowd. It is over the top and amusing. Might some detect symbolism in a fish (Mark 1.16–20, etc.) once dead but now brought to life by immersion in water? This is a vulgar but utterly memorable parable of baptismal regeneration. (When the resuscitated eat they prove they are not zombies. Cf. Mark 5.43; Luke 24.41–3.)

The inclination to view miracles as symbols was a response to important stimuli, such as the recognition that all those healed by Jesus—or Peter—had long since died and that for each person healed myriads remained in misery. The process began before the gospels were issued (e.g. Luke 5.1–11//John 21.1–14: mission; Acts 9, John 9: physical and spiritual blindness; John 11: resurrection). All the miracles represented charismatic legitimation.

'Rule Miracles', in which, for example, a healing on Sabbath justifies revision of Torah, as in Mark 3.1–6, are rarer. Predominant overt functions are propaganda/advertisement, as when a miracle attracts a crowd which then hears a sermon, and frank response to the demand for miracle as proof of the validity of the message. The revived fish in *Acts Pet*. 13 meets a demand for greater wonders to generate belief. Other than the *Acts of John*, to a degree, the Christian Apocrypha display little of the ambivalence toward wonders that characterize some major NT writers (e.g. Mark, John, and Paul).

In sum: miracles in the apocryphal acts are synecdoches for the miracle of the Christian mission. Although some are of similar types to those found in the canonical narratives, tendencies toward greater extravagant wonders appear. This extravagance is due in part to the symbolic presentation which dominates the narrative and in part to competition, some of which involved competing with texts about other apostles. Wondrous interaction between humans and animals functions at different levels in the Apocrypha, from fable and fairy tale to sophisticated theological reflection. Interpreters will do well to seek first a symbolic interpretation of animal stories before appealing to zoological reason.

VISIONS AND CHRISTOPHANIES

This category embraces several forms and genres. Apocalypses are visionary literature that came to focus upon presumably edifying tours of heaven and hell. The Latin tradition served the far from unworthy purpose of providing inspiration and source material for Dante. Prominent among those was the Latin *Apocalypse of Paul* (*Visio Pauli*). A Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul* is rather different and related to Paul's commission. (2 Cor. 12.2–5 made Paul a natural subject for vision reports. His reservations about reporting what he saw in Heaven could later be discarded.) On these texts see Klauck 2008: 139–98. Most apocalypses were not, in fact, associated with apostles. See, for example, the surveys in Schneemelcher 1992: 542–752, and Elliott 1993: 591–687.

Revelation 'gospels' in which the saviour appears to the Twelve or a group thereof on the Mount of Olives with epiphanic signs and demonstrations of polymorphy are characteristic of texts called gnostic. The *Epistle of the Apostles* is a more 'orthodox' rejoinder to this type, without reliance upon the full epiphanic apparatus.

In general, the Apocrypha do not utilize dreams as a medium of revelation. Visions are explicitly 'real'. Christophanies predominate. See, e.g., *Acts Pet*. 5 and 16. The most famous of these is the 'Quo Vadis' episode (*Acts Pet*. 35). Dreams are, however, suitable for ordinary folk (e.g. *Acts Pet*. 5). Revelations are granted rather freely: to Thecla (*Acts Paul* 3.21) and to two members of the community at Corinth (1 Cor. 12.3–4). Revelations have varied and familiar functions: to give specific instructions and to rouse suspense with vague premonitions, to encourage, and admonish. They operate like coaches, who direct and motivate athletic teams.

The role of the Spirit is rather limited and non-specific in most of the Christian Apocrypha. 'Being filled with the [Holy] Spirit' is as likely to refer to ecstatic phenomena as to inspiration. Apostles tend to relate to the heavenly Christ rather than through the Spirit. This is due in part to the lack of Trinitarian reflection and development. (In the *Acts of Thomas* heavenly Wisdom is an important source and medium of divine power.)

SPEECHES AND RHETORIC

Apostolic speeches are generally like those in the canonical Acts. Symboleutic rhetoric predominates. Even defence speeches, several of which can be found in the *Acts of Paul* (e.g. chs 3, 9, and 14), tend to become sermons. See Pervo (1997). Like the speeches in Acts, they are brief. Lengthier examples can be found in the farewell speeches (a well-developed ancient genre, on which, see Pervo 2009: 515–29). *Acts Paul* 12 follows the model of Acts: the farewell address is given to an assembly of believers prior to Paul's voyage to Rome. *Acts Paul* 14 contains a post-resurrection speech to Nero, a fine treat for those who regret the obscure location and humble witnesses of the resurrection in the canonical tradition.

Acts Pet. 37–9 is a substantial farewell, beginning from Peter's arrival at the place of crucifixion, which takes place, per his demand, upside down. The speech presents a mystical, paradoxical, esoteric theology quite unlike the generally simple doctrines proposed in earlier chapters. One clear and another possible allusion to the *Gospel of Thomas* (or similar traditions) indicate the divergence. Critics are left wondering if this is an aberration from the normal character of the *Acts of Peter* or a survival of a vigorously 'heterodox' work purged in the course of its transmission. The problem is not ameliorated by the location of this speech in the final chapter, a generally well-attested, widely used, and thus eminently correctable section of the book. It probably survived because construed as a mystical meditation on the meaning of the cross.

Andrew also delivers a speech from the cross, not just seven last words, but a sermon that lasts into the fourth day and comes within a millimeter of provoking a riot that would have delivered the apostle from death (*Acts Andr*. 51–63). His message is congruent with the dualistic tenor of the work, which participates in the philosophical tradition labelled Middle Platonism. The manner of Andrew's death, and that of the other apostles, demonstrates, in accordance with the philosophical tradition, the validity of their message. Long speeches while undergoing crucifixion could not have been easy; these addresses manifest considerable fortitude and powers of concentration. The major Christian Apocrypha note suffering, but do not develop its potential for grand guignol, an opportunity already grasped by 2 Macc. 6–7, for example. Hagiography would provide ample portions of sadomasochistic narrative, as would later Apocrypha, such as the Ethiopic texts rendered by Budge (1935).

Not to be outdone, Thomas offers two pages of prayer before execution by spearmen (*Acts Thom*. 167, 144–8, 168), followed by a post-mortem appearance (169). John, who dies a natural death, enjoys a peaceful and edifying farewell with followers (*Acts John* 106–15). John was privileged to be the sole hearer of the words of Christ, who appeared to him in a cave on the Mount of Olives to interpret what was happening at Golgotha to the earthly Jesus (chs 97–102 of the current text).

In the last example, John serves as a transmitter of revelation. A basic shift is apparent when apostles become revealers proper. The distinction seems clear, but it is not. When John and Andrew (in their respective acts) are the visible revealers of an invisible saviour, either side could be argued with essentially equal weight. As a general rule, the more esoteric the theology (e.g. in the *Acts of Andrew*, the *Acts of John*, and the *Acts of Thomas*), the greater the propensity for the apostle to become a primary revealer. This is due in large part because the emphasis is less upon who is proclaimed than what is proclaimed.

MISSIONARY TECHNIQUES

Apocrypha do not draw a strong line between mission as enlarging membership and mission as pastoral care. The basic means of communication are preaching, miracle-working, and witness through self-denial and endurance under persecution. Itinerancy is the means for spreading the word; persecution is a frequent propellant. Apostles take advantage of whatever opportunity lies to hand: a wedding, a demoniac, a beggar, a polytheist celebration, an idol, a trial, and so forth. They also build social networks of supportive households, advance agents, messengers, and other helpful persons. The conversion of wealthy people brings both advantages and dangers, the former through support in high places and financial resources, the latter because of the threat to the established order. Converting the wife of a governor was asking for trouble. Such trouble apostles sought, and it paid dividends, for persecution led to growth. From the perspective of sources and the sociology of ancient missions, the techniques described tended to blend the itinerant style (Mark 6.7b–13; Luke 10.1–12) with the community-building model apparent in the NT letters. Canonical Acts also reflects this mixture.

SUMMARY

Apostles in the Christian Apocrypha are first and foremost missionaries devoted to the worldwide enterprise of conversion and appropriation. Although works featuring apostles represent theological perspectives, 'orthodoxy' and polemic are rarely in the forefront. The apocryphal acts, in particular, continue the genres and impulses of the canonical Gospels and Acts, with developing literary capabilities, more diverse theological experiment, and tendencies toward the more sensational. Apostles tend to become saviour figures and teachers who recruit disciples rather than recruiters of disciples for Jesus.

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JUDAISM AND ANTI-JUDAISM IN EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

PETRI LUOMANEN

INTRODUCTION

The Texts

This article discusses anti-Judaism in Early Christian Apocrypha by focusing on three types of gospel traditions that tell more or different stories about Jesus than are known from the canonical Gospels.

Infancy gospels satisfied the curiosity of early Christians about Jesus' parents and his childhood. Naturally, the stories of these gospels are placed in Jewish settings. As such, they reveal something of the way Judaism was pictured in these gospels that, although not canonical, were popular and also quite influential among Christians from the second century onwards. In this essay, I discuss two of them: the *Protevangelium of James* and the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*. The latter is relatively late (from the beginning of the seventh century) but I have included it because it shows how the reception of Judaism and anti-Judaism developed in Christian Apocrypha.

The so-called Jewish–Christian gospels provide several examples of the positive reception of Judaism in Christian Apocrypha. However, some of the fragments attributed to these gospels also seem to be highly critical of rabbinical traditions of their time, so that a question arises if they should in fact be called anti-Jewish. Unfortunately, none of these gospels has survived. We only know them through fragmentary citations by the church fathers on the basis of which scholars have tried to reconstruct the number and character of these gospels. The shortcomings of the traditional theory of three separate Jewish–Christian gospels—the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, the *Gospel of the Nazarenes*, and the *Gospel of the Hebrews*—have been recently acknowledged and it is giving way to other reconstructions (see 'Number and Character of Early Jewish–Christian Gospels' below).

The *Gospel of Peter* and the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (the *Acts of Pilate*), for their part, provide examples of the ways in which Jesus' passion and the roles of various Jewish groups and actors in the events connected to Jesus' death were treated in apocryphal gospel traditions.

The Concepts

How should we define 'Judaism', 'anti-Judaism', and 'Christian' in the context of early Christian Apocrypha? Judaism and Christianity are modern categories that can be very deceptive if applied to ancient sources without any critical reflection. Several terminological distinctions have been proposed in order to highlight the ways in which present forms of Judaism and Christianity differ from their ancient predecessors. Terms like early Christ-believers, Christ-followers, Israelite/non-Israelite Christ-followers (Esler 2003: 13, 275), and Apostolic Judaism (Runesson 2008: 72–4) have been generated in order to avoid the anachronistic use of the words Christian and Christianity. Likewise, the word Judeans is adopted as a translation of the Greek *ioudaioi* in order to avoid the anachronistic use of the word Jews. It is argued, for instance, that Judaism as a religion was not separable from the Judean identity at least until the second revolt in 132–5 CE (Esler 2003: 62–74) or the third century (Mason 2007). Before that, we should not speak about Jews but Judaeans. All these distinctions have their valid historical points but they are not without their own problems either. Because the texts discussed in this article are relatively late, from the mid second century onwards, my use of the words 'Christians/Christianity' and 'Jews/Judaism'—qualifying them with additional attributes when necessary—might also be acceptable to those who prefer the translation Judeans for *ioudaioi* in the New Testament.

However, when the topic is anti-Judaism in Christian apocryphal gospels, the issue of terminology is a bit more complicated from an ethical point of view and therefore deserves some attention. The translation 'Judeans' for *ioudaioi* is defended, in addition to reasons of historical accuracy, on the basis that it liberates the Jews of modern times from anti-Judaism fostered by New Testament texts (Danker 2000). The intention is good, but the flipside of the coin is that such a distinction may look like an attempt to hide the actual effective history of the texts where Jews were vilified. The result, a '*Judenrein*' New Testament may turn out to be the opposite of what was hoped for (Levine 2006: 159–66). Christian Apocrypha often make use of concepts and story worlds of New Testament writings—elaborating them in the interests of emerging Christian myth-making and identity discourse. In so doing, they also carry on some of the more or less explicit anti-Jewish biases of the New Testament to new generations in the form of outright anti-Judaism. From the perspective of this 'formative anti-Judaism', it would be hypocritical to try to make a distinction between the Judeans in the story worlds of the New Testament and the Jews of the later Apocrypha, when the texts use the same Greek word (or its Latin equivalent). Thus, no clear-cut terminological distinction is attempted in this essay, even if it sometimes deals with New Testament texts as points of comparison and the ethnic character of the term *ioudaioi* is kept in mind.

In his discussion of Jews and anti-Judaism in the New Testament, Terence L. Donaldson takes into account three possible critical attitudes towards Judaism (Donaldson 2010: 17–20; following Hare 1979): (1) Prophetic critique takes place within the traditional confines of Judaism and is therefore not to be labelled as actual anti-Judaism. (2) Sectarian critique from a Jewish–Christian point of view, i.e. critique 'anti other forms of Judaism', is also still within Judaism and may hope for the conversion of other Jews. However, it contains a seed of actual anti-Judaism if the separation from the parent body increases. (3) Only the third category ('gentilizing anti-Judaism') is totally anti-Jewish. In this category, even those born Jews are expected to convert to Christianity. These three types are best understood not as fixed categories but as points on a continuum from a 'mild', prophetic critique to total rejection.

A useful concept for the present discussion is also supersessionism, which helps to clarify the overall salvation-historical stance of the texts towards the role of Israel. Supersessionism may not always show explicit vilification of Judaism but it is important to

take into account in the discussion of anti-Judaism because it provides an ideological background and a seedbed for more explicit forms of anti-Judaism. Donaldson makes a distinction between two types of supersessionism: economic and punitive (Donaldson 2010: 20–5, drawing on Soulen 1996: 29–33). In economic supersessionism, the religion of Israel has a preparatory role in relation to emerging Christianity. Israel is not punished but it becomes obsolete after the emergence of Christianity. In punitive supersessionism, Israel is rejected because it rejects Christ. Although the distinction between economic and punitive supersessionism is reasonable, it may not always be useful because salvation-historical schemes may often be more implicit than explicit in the Apocrypha. Therefore, in addition to Donaldson's two types of supersessionism it is important to keep an eye on a more general form of supersessionism, a kind of 'colonial supersessionism', that exploits Jewish scriptures and some general (or superficial) knowledge of Jewish beliefs and practice in a way that has no connection to historical Judaism, either in the historical context that is presupposed in the narrative of an apocryphal text or in the historical context of its author. These three types of supersessionism are to be taken as ideal types that are not necessarily met in pure forms in the texts analysed; they are used as heuristic devices.

Despite the general tendency towards anti-Judaism in Christian apocryphal gospels, there are also examples of positive receptions of Jewish scripture, beliefs, and practice. Thus, Judaism and anti-Judaism in Christian apocryphal gospels had various nuances.

In my earlier analysis of Jewish Christianity and Jewish–Christian gospel traditions (Luomanen 2012: 8–14), I have applied an approach that focuses on *indicators of Jewish–Christian profiles*. The idea of this approach is to focus on features that—from a present perspective—appear as clearly Jewish (Torah observance, circumcision, Yahweh monotheism, Temple as God's abode, etc.) or clearly Christian (Christian baptism, Jesus worship, etc.). A mixture of these indicators creates a Jewish–Christian profile that can be either more 'Jewish' or more 'Christian'. An important part of the indicators approach is to pay attention to the social consequences of the indicators by asking to what extent they function as boundary markers in relation to other Jewish or Christian groups. This article applies the same approach but focuses more on tracing indicators of Judaism and discussing their significance; indicators of Christianity are relatively clear in the following Apocrypha.

INFANCY GOSPELS

Themes and Contents of the *Protevangelium of James* and the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*

The *Protevangelium of James* (*Prot. Jas.*) was originally written in Greek, most likely in the second half of the second century in Syria or Egypt (Pellegrini 2012: 907–9). The present title of *Prot. Jas.* is based on the concluding note of the 'author' who obviously identifies himself as James the brother of Jesus (*Prot. Jas.* 25.1). Despite its present title—which the text received in the mid sixteenth century when it was reintroduced in the West by Guillaume Postel—the main character in the text is Mary.

The narrative is usually divided into three main parts: Chapters 1–7 tell the story of Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, who are depicted as very wealthy and devout Israelites with one major problem: they are childless and therefore despised among their fellow Israelites. Chapters 8–20 focus on the story of Mary and Joseph from the time Mary has to leave the Temple at the age of twelve until the birth of Jesus. In chapters 17–22, the narrative gives its own version of Augustus' census, the trip of Joseph and Mary towards

Bethlehem, Jesus' birth and incidents following it (for *Prot. Jas.*, see also the essays by Frey and by Touati and Clivaz in this volume).

The *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (*Ps.-Mt.*) was not composed until the beginning of the seventh century (Gijsel 1997: 67; Klauck 2003: 78). Tischendorf's edition of *Ps.-Mt.* included the story that is paralleled in *Prot. Jas.* (chs 1–16), a legendary, elaborated account of the Holy Family's trip to Egypt (chs 18–24), and miraculous stories from Jesus' childhood paralleled in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (chs 25–42). The latest critical edition by Gijsel includes only the first two sections that can be found in the oldest manuscripts. In this article, the focus is on the first section (chs 1–16) and its relation to *Prot. Jas.* (for an introduction to *Ps.-Mt.*, see also Touati and Clivaz, Frey, and Elliott in this volume).

Even a cursory look at the narrative of *Ps.-Mt.* reveals that the focus has shifted more to Mary, her exemplary virtues and perpetual virginity. John the Baptist and his parents, who have a prominent role in the narrative of *Prot. Jas.*, have disappeared and the sections added to the narrative exemplify a much more developed Mariology. Both *Prot. Jas.* and *Ps.-Mt.* propagate Mary's virginity but *Ps.-Mt.* goes beyond that, also implying Mary's assumption and her status as the queen of virgins and martyrs (*Ps.-Mt.* 7, 8.5). Mary's life in the Temple is described at length and it clearly serves to prefigure monastic life as it was known to the Latin translator and editor (Gijsel 1997: 66; Ehlen 2012: 985).

Characterization in the *Protevangelium of James*

Jewish culture and people are clearly presented in a positive light in *Prot. Jas.* This can be seen both in the way in which the main characters are depicted as well as in the attributions that describe the Jewish secondary characters and Jewish groups in the narrative. The genre of *Prot. Jas.* is best described as an encomiastic history (Hock 1995: 15–20) and it is clear from where the standards for encomium are derived. When the narrative praises Mary's background, upbringing, and personal virtues, the argument carries conviction only if the readers also realize and recognize the intertextual connections of the story about Joachim and Anna with stories about Abraham and Sarah as well as Hannah and Elkannah.

The reader is also assumed to value the fact that Anna turns Mary's bedroom into a sanctuary where 'undefiled daughters of the Hebrews' amuse her and where 'nothing profane or unclean' passes her lips (translations in this section follow Hock 1995, but not its numbering of sections). The excellence of Joachim and Anna in guarding Mary's sanctity and purity reaches its peak when Mary is, at the age of three, handed to the priests in the Temple. The daughters of the Hebrews lead Mary to the Temple with their lamps so that her heart does not become captivated by things outside the Temple.

The picture of priests and 'people of Israel' is also positive throughout the entire narrative. For instance, Joachim invites 'high priests, priests, scribes and the elders and the whole people of Israel' to Mary's first birthday. The priests and chief priests bless Mary and the people confirm this with their 'so be it' and 'Amen' (*Prot. Jas.* 6.2). The solidarity of the people also becomes clear in the concluding sections of the narrative when Zacharias—the father of John the Baptist whom *Prot. Jas.* seemingly identifies as a high priest—is murdered by Herod's men. All the tribes of the people mourn for three days and nights and even the ceiling of the Temple wails. The narrator emphatically notes that 'the children of Israel did not know' about the murder. All the hostility and hatred is laid on the shoulders of Herod and his murderous officers (*Prot. Jas.* 22, 23).

There is a critical edge in the characterization of two Israelites: Annas, the scribe who learns about Mary's pregnancy and reports the transgression to the high priest, and Salome, the midwife, who does not want to believe in the miraculous birth unless she gets an opportunity to examine Mary herself. However, the actions of both these characters ultimately serve the purpose of highlighting the reliability of the miraculous birth: Annas' report leads to the test that proves the innocence of both Mary and Joseph, and the graphic description of Salome's attempt to examine Mary makes clear the burning divine spirit that protects Mary's perpetual virginity. After his report, Annas disappears from the scene. The narrator does not disclose his response to the test results but the people marvel. Salome is convinced and she becomes a worshipper of 'the great king that has been born to Israel' (20.3–4).

There is one point in the narrative that clearly refers to the twofold reception of the child to whom Mary is about to give birth. When Joseph, his sons, and Mary, who is riding on Joseph's donkey, are approaching Bethlehem (*Prot*. *Jas*. 17.2), Joseph wonders why he sees Mary at one time laughing and at another time sad. The reason for Mary's emotional rollercoaster ride is that she sees with her eyes two peoples, 'one weeping and lamenting and one rejoicing and exulting'. It has been suggested that this could refer to the positive response among Christians and negative among Jews—like the same scene does explicitly in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (13.1)—but this kind of distinction does not cohere with the overall positive characterization of the 'people of Israel' in the narrative of *Prot*. *Jas*. The dividing line is not drawn between 'Christians' and the 'people of Israel' (as they are depicted in *Prot*. *Jas*.) but between believers and non-believers (Dehandschutter 1989: 346).

Indicators of Judaism in the *Protevangelium of James*

Jewish law, scriptures, and practice are depicted in a positive light in *Prot*. *Jas* and there also seems to be some knowledge of Jewish festivals and religion in general.

The description of Joachim's sacrifice as 'without spot or blemish' draws on regulations for correct sacrifices (Exod. 29.38; Lev. 21.1). The author makes use of the knowledge of some details of priests' vestments: the golden headband (*Prot*. *Jas*. 5.1; cf. Exod. 28.36–8) and bells around the hem of the priest's robe (*Prot*. *Jas*. 8.3; cf. Exod. 28.33–5). The narrative also includes clear references and allusions to stories and characters in the Old Testament. In the beginning of the narrative (*Prot*. *Jas*. 1–4), it is clear that the situation of Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, is prefigured in the stories of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 17–18, 21–2), and even more clearly in the story of Hannah and Elkannah (1 Sam. 1–2). Similarly, Joseph sees the story of Adam repeated, in his case, when he comes from his prayers and finds Mary deceived and corrupted (*Prot*. *Jas*. 13.2). The way in which Joseph is chosen among the widowers of Israel to take care of Mary—a dove comes out of Joseph's staff—echoes the call of Aaron in Num. 17.16–23. When Joseph objects, he is reminded of the destiny of 'Dathan, Abiron and Kore' that is in the previous chapter of Numbers (Num. 16). In the end, the killing of the Christian martyr Zacharias recalls the killing of Zacharias son of Jehoiada (2 Chron. 24.20–2; Allen 1991: 511–12).

In the beginning of the narrative there is a reference to the approaching 'great day of the Lord' when the people of Israel were offering their gifts (1.2). However, it is not clear which day in the Jewish festal calendar is meant. The phrase 'great day of the Lord' is not a standard name of any of the Jewish festivals. It appears in Acts 2.20 (referring to Joel 2.11) but there it means the day of the last judgement (Hock 1995: 33), not a festival day.

Nevertheless, the phrase may still have a link to a Jewish festival, and even to a festival where the idea of judgement is present. Philo calls Yom Kippur 'the greatest of feasts'(*Spec*. 2.193–4). Joachim's sin-offering, mourning, and fasting (*Prot*. *Jas*. 1) would also link up with Yom Kippur (Vuong 2013: 75–6). Another possible candidate as to the feast that the author may have had in mind is the Feast of Tabernacles, because in John 7.37 the last day of the feast is called 'great day of the feast'. The idea of a great day approaching and the Israelites offering their gifts would suit the Feast of Tabernacles also because offerings were required on the seven days preceding the final 'great day' (cf. Lowe 1981: 65 n.36). Because the Feast of Tabernacles was a joyous festival (Lev. 23.40), the comment of Juthine, Anna's slave, would also make perfect sense: 'The great day of the Lord has arrived and you are not supposed to mourn'. Thus, both Yom Kippur and the Feast of Tabernacles would be suitable points of reference for the term 'great day of the Lord'. Perhaps we do not need to choose between these two since the author may very well have had in mind both these festivals that were close chronologically. In particular, for outside observers, the two festivals seem to have appeared as one long celebration (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003: 68–9, 250, 254; see, for instance, Plutarch, *Quaest*. *Conv*. 4.6.2). Thus, the author obviously had some knowledge of Jewish festivals but the viewpoint seems to be that of an outsider.

Several scholars have argued that the author of *Prot*. *Jas*. did not have any knowledge of Jewish religion or local Palestinian geography: Joseph goes from Bethlehem to Judea (although Bethlehem is in Judea); Mary lives in the Temple, in the very holy of holies; the water test does not follow biblical regulations, because it is also applied to Joseph in *Prot*. *Jas*. (Cullmann 1987: 337; Elliott 1993; Hock 1995: 10). On the other hand, it has been argued that the way the author uses the term Israel as the self-designation of Jews—while outsiders use the term Jews/Judeans—betrays a Palestinian geographical point of view (Lowe 1981: 59–62). Furthermore, the story indicates the author's knowledge of Jewish customs and ideas, although not necessary biblical. For instance, the story of Mary's upbringing and betrothal has three time periods: from birth to the age of three, from three to twelve, and after twelve years of age. This probably reflects the Jewish idea that the virginity of a girl under the age of three is practically invulnerable: if violated, her hymen will regenerate itself spontaneously (*m*. *Nid*. 5.4; *m*. *Ketub*. 1.2–3). Thus, Mary is transferred to the Temple at the age when her virginity is becoming more vulnerable (Horner 2004: 321–4). The second turning point is at the age of twelve when the possibility of her menstruation endangers the purity of the Temple (see Vuong 2013: 120–36).

Mary's living in the Temple is not quite as unrealistic as it may first appear. There is a tradition about temple virgins who were responsible for weaving the temple curtains (Nutzman 2013: 563–70) and some Mishnaic traditions imply that in a case of suspected adultery, the effect of the bitter water test will also be felt by the suspected man, not only by the woman (Horner 2004: 329; Nutzman 2013: 559–63). There are enough points of contact in these parallels to show that the author of *Prot*. *Jas*. did not simply take his inspiration for the story from the Septuagint. He also seems to have some knowledge of contemporary Jewish practice and thought. However, the story and ideology of *Prot*. *Jas*. goes its own way, making both the Old Testament stories and some allusions to contemporary Jewish ideas serve its own purpose, that of creating a Christian encomium of Mary's perpetual virginity. In that kind of framework the term Israel is not an indicator of the Jewish background of the author (in contrast to Lowe 1981: 61–2) but a term that serves the needs of Christian supersessionism by showing how the 'true' Israelites treat the Mother of the Saviour.

Characterization in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (chs 1–16)

The stance of *Ps.-Mt.* towards Judaism is most clearly expressed in the explanation that it attaches to Mary's vision of two peoples, one weeping and one rejoicing (cf. *Prot. Jas.* 17.2). A beautiful boy appears to Joseph and explains the vision:

> For she saw the people of the Jews weeping because they have departed from their God; and the people of the Gentiles rejoicing, because they have now approached and are near to the Lord, in accordance with what he promised to our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for the time is at hand when in the seed of Abraham a blessing should be bestowed on all nations. (Trans. Elliott 1993: 93)

Obviously some sort of supersessionism is at work here. Whether it is economic, punitive, or something else is not easy to say because otherwise the story is relatively silent about the status of the Jews. The Latin translator and editor is not much concerned about the story's main characters' relation to their Jewish contemporaries. Most of the parts where *Prot. Jas.* explicitly describes the reactions of Jews or relates the incidents to Jewish scriptures have been dropped or significantly abbreviated: there is no study of 'books of twelve tribes of Israel'. Explicit references to the stories of Abraham and Sarah as well as to Adam and Eve have been dropped (cf. *Prot. Jas.* 1). 'Undefiled daughters of the Hebrews' who helped Anna to take care of Mary and who escorted her to the Temple have disappeared from the story (cf. *Prot. Jas.* 6–7). There is no birthday banquet for the 'high priests, priests, scholars, council of elders, and all the people of Israel' (cf. *Prot. Jas.* 6.2, 7.2) when Mary turns one. Instead, virgins living in the Temple get a more prominent role, and the superior example that Mary provides them by her own conduct (*Ps.-Mt.* 8).

For the author of *Prot. Jas.*, it was important to make sure that the midwife whom Joseph found was a 'Hebrew' and that she testifies about the 'salvation that has come to Israel' (*Prot. Jas.* 19.1–2). In *Prot. Jas.* the first midwife believes without any examination but the second midwife, Salome, who hears about the miracle and comes to examine Mary, is punished because she dares to touch her. Salome also regrets referring to her status as a descendant of Abraham and that she had been healing people in the name of her ancestral God (*Prot. Jas.* 20.1–2). For the translator/editor of *Ps.-Mt.* the main reason for Joseph bringing the midwives—he brings both of them at the same time—seems to have been to certify the virginal birth. The first midwife, Zelome, examines Mary without any problems and confesses her virginity: 'A virgin has conceived, a virgin has brought forth, and a virgin she remains' (*Ps.-Mt.* 13.3–4). There is nothing about bringing salvation to Israel. Only perpetual virginity matters. The second midwife, Salome, is punished because she makes an unnecessary second examination. When she regrets, she refers to her fear of God and the charity that she has showed to widows, orphans, and other needy persons. There are not any references to Israelite ancestry.

To be sure, salvation-historical reflection is not totally missing in *Ps.-Mt.* because the translator/editor has taken from Luke the story about Jesus' circumcision, the purification of Mary in Jerusalem, and the adoration of Jesus by Simeon and Anna (*Ps.-Mt.* 15; Luke 2.21–38). Nevertheless, even in this case the connections to Jewish prehistory are toned down since Lukan references to the waiting of Simeon and Anna for the consolation of Israel and redemption in Jerusalem are missing (cf. Luke 2.25, 38).

Indicators of Judaism in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (chs 1–16)

Because the number of clearly Jewish characters in the story has decreased, it is no wonder that it is also difficult to find any clear indicators of Judaism. The Temple plays a central role but the practices have now lost practically all contacts to historical Judaism. If it is possible to see some allusions to Mishnaic Judaism at some points of the story of *Prot. Jas.*, these are totally missing in *Ps.-Mt.*: Mary is taken to the Temple when she turns three but she stays there without any problems until she is fourteen. Even then the problem is not the danger of pollution because of her menstruation but that the time would be ripe to find a husband for her. According to *Ps.-Mt.*, this had been a custom with all the virgins of the prophets and priests who had been raised in the Temple. The weaving of the veil of the Temple is mentioned only in passing, just to give some kind of setting for the other virgins to hail Mary as the 'queen of virgins' (*Ps.-Mt.* 8.5).

Judaism and Anti-Judaism in the *Protevangelium of James* and in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (chs 1–16)

Comparison with *Ps.-Mt.* reveals some clear apologetic features in the narrative of *Prot. Jas.*, giving further support for the theory that *Prot. Jas.* was written not only in order to praise Mary but also in order to answer Jewish accusations concerning Mary's background and character (cf. Van Stempvoort 1964: 413–15; Hock 1995: 11–12, 15–20). The story shows how the Jews not only witnessed but were also involved in keeping Mary pure. Characterization in *Prot. Ja*s. also aims at giving a role model to persuade Jews to convert. The Jews are given a chance to convert, in the spirit of sectarianism. In this regard, *Prot. Jas.* has features that resemble Jewish–Christian anti-Judaism ('anti other forms of Judaism') but it is clear that *Prot. Jas.* is no longer Jewish. *Ps.-Mt.* is not worried about Jews at all. It focuses on enhancing the adoration of Mary and the legitimation of monastic life.

Both *Prot. Jas.* and *Ps.-Mt.* are free from outright anti-Judaism but their attitude to Judaism can be described in terms of supersessionism. In *Prot. Jas.*, Jews and Judaism are described in a positive light—but only in order to show the supremacy of the point of view of *Prot. Jas.* The author seems to be occupied with the relation to Judaism although his knowledge of Jewish practice is weak. In the case of *Ps.-Mt.*, the knowledge of Jewish religion is practically non-existent. There are no traces of punitive supersessionism in *Prot. Jas.* or in *Ps.-Mt.* (chs 1–16). The supersessionism in *Prot. Jas.* comes close to the economic type while the supersessionism in *Ps.-Mt.* can be better characterized as colonial supersessionism because Jewish religion is exploited only in order to enhance Christian theology and myth-making, without any historical knowledge or interest.

JEWISH–CHRISTIAN GOSPELS

The Number and Character of Early Jewish–Christian Gospels

By definition, it is to be expected that in Jewish–Christian gospels, Judaism appears in a positive light. Unfortunately, none of these gospels has survived in its entirety. We only know fragments of them through the church fathers and it is not absolutely clear from which gospels the fragments are derived. The *Gospel of the Ebionites* (*Gos. Eb.*), which Epiphanius quotes in his *Panarion*, is the clearest case. Scholars generally agree that the

fragments quoted by Epiphanius come from one and the same post-canonical gospel that was used by the Ebionites, at least by Epiphanius' time. In addition to this, several scholars have also assumed the existence of two other Jewish–Christian gospels: the *Gospel of the Nazarenes* (*Gos. Naz.*) and the *Gospel of the Hebrews* (*Gos. Heb.*). The distinction between these gospels was made in the second and third edition of Hennecke's influential collection of Christian Apocrypha (for the details of history, see Luomanen 2012: 84). Especially in the French-speaking scholarly world, the distinction has never gained wide acceptance although it has been popular elsewhere. There are several problems with the criteria that were originally used to support the distinction, and scholars have become more hesitant to come to definite conclusions about the number of early Jewish–Christian gospels (see Klauck 2003: 37; Evans 2007: 245–7; Gregory 2008: 59). In his recent study, Jörg Frey argues for the traditional theory of three Jewish–Christian gospels (Frey 2012b; see also Frey's essay in this volume), albeit in modified form, since he dropped from the 'Gospel of the Nazarenes' Jewish-Christian textual variants that were added to margins of some manuscripts (the so-called Ioudaikon readings). My alternative theory (see Luomanen 2012) presumes only two actual Jewish–Christian gospels: the *Gospel of the Ebionites* and the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. The new Two-Gospel Hypothesis also includes a hypothesis that Jerome received a collection of anti-Rabbinic gospel passages from Nazarene Christians. However, these fragments did not come from a distinct 'Gospel of the Nazarenes' but from a Syriac translation of the Gospel of Matthew, the wordings of which had been adjusted to support the Nazarenes' ongoing polemics against the rabbis. Thus, the new Two-Gospel Hypothesis differs both from the Three-Gospel Hypothesis—by providing more neutral criteria for the classification of the fragments—and from the old Two-Gospel Hypothesis (cf. Mimouni 2012: 175–91)—by offering a better explanation for the information Jerome received from the Nazarenes. In the following, the fragments are analysed in the context of the new Two-Gospel Hypothesis but I also indicate to which gospel the fragment has been attributed in the latest form of the Three-Gospel Hypothesis (Frey's reconstruction).

Because of the fragmentary character of the information, it is not possible in this section to carry out the same kind of analysis of story worlds that was conducted above. Only some longer quotations allow observations about characterization. The discussion proceeds fragment by fragment, focusing on the cases that are relevant to the present discussion and keeping in mind the analytical perspectives introduced in the Introduction.

Judaism and Anti-Judaism in the *Gospel of the Ebionites*

All fragments of *Gos. Eb.* come from Epiphanius' *Panarion* and because he refers to only seven passages, there is not much information. To some extent, it is possible to compare the passages with other information about the Ebionites in order to get more information about the Ebionites' beliefs and practices. However, this has to be done carefully because by the time Epiphanius discussed the Ebionite movement (*c.*378 CE), it had already changed from what it was when Ireaneus first discussed it in his heresiology (*c.*180 CE).

The Jewish character of *Gos. Eb.* becomes clear in the section where Epiphanius quotes the story about Jesus' baptism. According to Epiphanius, the description is in accord with the Ebionites' christology which makes a distinction between the man Jesus and the Christ that descends into Jesus in the form of a dove:

> And when he ascended from the water the heavens opened and he saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending and coming to him. And a voice from heaven said: Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I

am well pleased, and next: This day I have generated thee. (*Pan*. 30.13.7; trans. Klijn 1992: 70)

As the above translation shows, the gospel did not explicitly speak about Christ descending but the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, Epiphanius' interpretation is probably correct since the idea about the eternal Christ appears in Pseudo-Clementine literature (cf. *Rec*. 1.27–71) that was also used, in some form, by the Ebionites that Epiphanius knew. The idea about the man Jesus into whom the divine Christ enters at his baptism by John, was already implied in Irenaeus' heresiology. Irenaeus explicitly connects this idea to Cerinthus but later on characterizes the Ebionites' beliefs about Christ as similar to those of Cerinthus (Irenaeus, *Haer*. 1.26.2).

One indication of the Jewishness of *Gos. Eb*. can also be seen in the way that it characterizes John's performance of the baptism: it is simply a 'baptism of repentance' (*Pan*. 30.13.6). In this regard, *Gos. Eb*. follows the Gospel of Matthew that also eliminates references to forgiveness in the description of John's baptism (Matt. 3.1–6 parr.). In the case of Matthew, this is probably also due to the Jewish pattern of salvation that is presumed in the gospel: conversion means repentance and return to the covenant (Luomanen 1998: 204–9).

Something of the salvation-historical orientation of the Ebionites is revealed in the passage that describes the calling of the disciples.

> [The Gospel which is called with them according to Matthew which is not complete but falsified and distorted, they call it the Hebrew Gospel and in it can be found:]

> There was a man called Jesus, about thirty years old, who chose us. And he came to Caphernaum, he entered the house of Simon, also called Peter, and opened his mouth and said: When I went by the sea of Tiberias I chose John and James, the sons of Zebedee, and Simon and Andrew and Thaddaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the Iskariot and you Matthew, who was sitting at the custom-house; I called and you followed me. I wish you to be twelve apostles for the testimony to Israel. (*Pan*. 30.13.2–3; trans. Klijn 1992: 65)

The passage is usually attributed to *Gos. Eb*. but it could as well be from the beginning of the Ebionites' Acts of the Apostles. Be that as it may, at least this passage restricts the apostles' mission to Israel. Whether or not their gospel also included some indication of a mission to the Gentiles is, of course, impossible to say for sure but there is no indication of such an operation in the surviving passages. Epiphanius also reports that the Ebionites known to him were strict about purity rules and were careful about touching Gentiles (*Pan*. 30.2.3). If this is correct, then their gospel may very well have restricted the mission to Israel.

Epiphanius also discusses the Ebionites' diet. They do not eat meat and have therefore changed two passages in their gospel: in *Gos. Eb*., John the Baptist does not eat locusts but honey cakes (*Pan*. 30.13.4–5) and when the disciples ask Jesus where to prepare a Passover meal to him, he replies 'I do not earnestly desire to eat meat with you this Passover' (*Pan*. 30.22.4).

Vegetarianism cannot be regarded as anti-Jewish because the practice was well attested among the Jews. Nevertheless, if the Ebionies were strict with their vegetarianism they surely were regarded as special kinds of Jews, even more so because of their attitude towards the Temple. According to Epiphanius, *Gos. Eb*. included the following saying of Jesus: 'I have come to abolish the sacrifices and if you do not stop sacrificing, the wrath will not cease from you' (*Pan*. 30.16.5; trans. Klijn 1992, modified). This critique also links *Gos. Eb*. to the oldest layers of the Pseudo-Clementine literature, *Rec*. 1.27–71, where a lengthy historical discourse ties Israel's salvation with its stance towards sacrificing:

misfortune always follows when Israel starts sacrificing (for *Rec*. 1.27–71, see Jones 1995, 2005).

Even the critique of the sacrificial cult does not make the Ebionites anti-Jewish because the Temple cult was also disputed by other Jewish groups, most notably by the Qumran movement. Criticism of the Temple was also often linked with the Hellenists of the early Jerusalem Christian community. As a matter of fact, it is possible that Epiphanius' Ebionites belonged to a branch that was rooted in the missionary activity of the Hellenists (Luomanen 2012: 45–9). In any case, the Ebionites' stance on the sacrificial cult, their christological views, their strict observance of Jewish law and purity rules mark them as a sectarian movement in relation to Judaism. In Donaldson's terms, the anti-Judaism of the Ebionites is of the Jewish–Christian type ('anti other forms of Judaism').

Judaism and Anti-Judaism in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*

In the Hennecke-Schneemelcher edition of the New Testament Apocrypha, Vielhauer and Strecker characterized the *Gospel of the Hebrews* as a gnostic gospel (Vielhauer and Strecker 1991[2] [1963[1]]: 113). This characterization was based on an erroneous assumption about two different types of gospels: the Synoptic type and the gnostic type. In more recent characterizations, the same features that were earlier labelled as gnostic are more appropriately placed in the category of Jewish wisdom tradition. Thus, the Jewish orientation of *Gos*. *Heb*. is acknowledged even in the latest form of the Three-Gospel Hypothesis (thus correctly Frey 2012a: 601). In this regard, it agrees with the reconstruction of *Gos*. *Heb*. in the new Two-Gospel Hypothesis. The following two passages exemplify the close relation of *Gos*. *Heb*. to Judaism and Jewish–Christian traditions in general.

Gos. *Heb*. includes a description of Jesus' appearance to James:

> But the Lord, after he had given a linen cloth to the servant of the priest, went to James and appeared to him. For James had sworn that he would not eat bread from the hour in which he drank the cup of the Lord until he had seen him rising again from those who sleep, and again, a little later, it says: Bring the table and bread, said the Lord. And immediately it is added: He brought bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to James the Just and said to him: My brother, eat thy bread for the Son of Man is risen from those who sleep. (Jerome, *Vir. ill*. 2, trans. Klijn 1992: 80, modified)

The passage is attributed to *Gos*. *Heb*. both by the Three-Gospel Hypothesis and the new Two-Gospel Hypothesis. It shows a concern to provide concrete evidence of the resurrection to Jews, because Jesus hands the linen to a servant of the priest, probably the high priest (Waitz 1924: 49; Klauck 2003: 42–3). The passage also seems to emphasize the position of James, who was known as the head of the Jerusalem church after Jesus' crucifixion. The canonical Gospels do not mention Jesus' appearance to James. Instead, James appears in a critical light since he is listed together with Jesus' relatives (Mark 6.3) who go after Jesus because they think he is out of his mind (Mark 3.20–1, 31). Clearly, one of the central concerns of this fragment is to write James into the gospel narrative, placing him among the first witnesses of the resurrection.

But why do that with a narrative where Jesus commands James to stop fasting? An apologetic concern has been suggested as the possible reason: if James, a just man, deviates from his vow of not eating bread, the resurrection 'has indeed taken place and the risen Lord has encouraged his brother to resume eating' (Klauck 2003: 43; Frey 2012a: 599). Another, more probable, reason for the passage is that it defends the non-Quartodeciman Easter/Passover fast that is determined to end on the day of the resurrection, not on the

fourteenth of Nisan, like the 'Jewish' Quartodeciman practice. Support for this interpretation comes, first of all, from the Eucharistic overtones of the passages. Furthermore, Narcissus, the bishop of Jerusalem, belonged to the Palestinian-Alexandrian faction in this debate and it would have been natural for this group to depict James the Just, the first bishop of Jerusalem, as the model for this practice. Finally, we can note that Jerome, who presented this passage in his *Illustrious Men*, most likely got this passage, in Greek, from Origen who also sided with the non-Quartodeciman practice (for details, see Luomanen 2012: 168–73). If this interpretation is correct, then the practice that this fragment defends is actually non-Jewish. Possibly the passage was added to *Gos. Heb.* later on. Another option is that we are dealing with a free-floating tradition that is attributed to *Gos. Heb.* because of its semi-canonical status (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.25). As such, it was a suitable context for a tradition dealing with the highly esteemed James the Just.

According to the new Two-Gospel Hypothesis, *Gos. Heb.* also included a version of the story where a rich man comes to Jesus and asks what he must do in order to live (Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 15.14; parr. Mark 10.17–22; Matt. 19.16–22, Luke 18.18–23; the Three-Gospel Hypothesis attributes this passage to *Gos. Naz.*). The passage clearly implies a more Jewish audience than its Synoptic counterparts. This becomes clear at the end of the fragment where Jesus reprimands the rich man, saying:

> How can you say: I have done the law and the prophets? For it is written in the law: love your neighbour as yourself. See, many of your brothers, sons of Abraham, are covered with dung, dying from hunger and your house is full of many good things, and nothing at all comes out of it for them. (trans. PL)

The Synoptic Gospels do not have any counterpart for this final admonition that seems to presume a clearly Jewish setting for the gospel. This concluding exhortation gives the passage a character that is different from its canonical counterparts. The final lesson in the canonical stories is that although it is a good thing to obey the commandments, what one really should do is sell everything and follow Jesus. In *Gos. Heb.* the admonition to sell and follow is retained but the story continues and turns attention to inner-Jewish ethical teaching. In the last analysis, the rich man is not reprimanded for not selling his property but for not using his means to alleviate the poverty of his ailing brothers, 'sons of Abraham' (Luomanen 2012: 195–9).

Overall it is hard to find any obvious critical stance against Judaism in the fragments that are attributed to *Gos. Heb.* Only the passage about James the Just may propagate a non-Jewish timing for the Easter/Passover fast, but even in this case, the criticism is more implicit than explicit and if the passage was composed in the heat of the Quartodeciman dispute then the passage was probably added to *Gos. Heb.* later on. Thus, the 'anti-Judaism' in *Gos. Heb.*—if there is something of it to be found in *Gos. Heb.*—is best characterized as prophetic anti-Judaism. Consequently, the 'Hebrews of the *Gospel of the Hebrews*' may very well have continued living among Jewish communities (Luomanen 2012: 233–43).

Judaism and Anti-Judaism in the Nazarenes' Anti-Rabbinic Collection

Anti-Judaism is clear in a piece of information that Jerome offers in his *Commentary on Matthew*, as an explanation of Matt. 27.16 which introduces Barabbas: 'The name of the man is interpreted in the Gospel which is written according to the Hebrews as son of their master.' Although Jerome attributes the information to the *Gospel of the Hebrews* it is

generally agreed that he got the information from the Nazarenes. Jerome thus claims that the name Barabbas which actually means 'son of the/his father' in Hebrew, was followed by an interpretation that the name means 'son of their master'. However, in this context, the 'interpretation' does not refer to a translation but to spelling/reading the name in a twisted way, so that it comes to mean the 'son of our rabbi' instead of the 'son of (our) father' (Lagrange 1922: 329). While Matthew said that the 'people as a whole' (Matt. 27: 25) were ready to take Jesus' blood on them and their children, the Nazarenes also claimed that this was because the people wanted to have 'the son of their rabbi' released.

This passage alone is enough to show how the Nazarenes with whom Jerome was in contact must have been involved in a fierce anti-rabbinic polemics. The polemics are also clear in the quotations from the Nazarenes' exposition of Isaiah. There we can find similar play with Hebrew words as in the case of Barabbas/Son of our Rabbi. In the exposition of Isaiah, the Nazarenes reinterpreted the names of two well-known Rabbis: Hillel is made 'unholy' by reading the first Hebrew letter ח as ה , and Shammai becomes 'scatterer' if the name is thought to come from a slightly different root (שמם instead of שמאי ; cf. Jerome, *Comm. Isa.* 8.11–15). Jerome also transmits other information from the Nazarenes' commentary that helps to form a picture of their relation to Judaism. It becomes apparent that the Nazarenes fully accepted Paul's mission to the Gentiles (*Comm. Isa.* 9.1). As a matter of fact, the Nazarenes seem to have fully adopted the Christian point of view:

> O sons of Israel who deny the Son of God with the most vicious opinion, turn to him and his apostles. For if you will do this, you will reject all idols which to you were a cause of sin in the past and the devil will fall before you, not because of your powers, but because of the compassion of God. (*Comm. Isa.* 31.6–9; trans. Klijn and Reinink 1973: 223, 225)

As was shown above, this anti-rabbinic attitude is highlighted by at least one fragment derived from the gospel that was used by the Nazarenes. However, it is possible that much of the information that Jerome received about the contents of the Nazarenes' gospel actually came from an anti-Rabbinic collection of sayings. This becomes evident if Jerome's short references—which at first glance may appear like simple textual variants—are placed in their Matthean contexts.

When the variant readings from Jerome's *Commentary on Matthew* are replaced in their original Matthean contexts, it appears that fragments in *Comm. Matt.* 2.5, 23.35, 27.16, and 27.11 form a unified collection consisting of (1) the initial rejection of the newborn 'king of the Jews' by Herod and 'all Jerusalem', (2) the words of judgement upon the nation because of its treatment of the prophets, (3) the nation's avowed responsibility for the death of Jesus (who died instead of a 'son of their rabbi'), and (4) the signs following Jesus' death that prove him to have been 'the son of God'. Even (5) the Matthean version of the Lord's Prayer (*Comm. Matt.* 6.11) accords very well with this collection because the Lord's Prayer in Matthew is presented as an alternative to Jewish prayer practices and similar criticisms of Jewish prayers and praying habits also characterize the Nazarenes' relation to the rabbis.

If this reconstruction of the Nazarenes' collection is on the right track, the Nazarenes' anti-rabbinic critique would have characterized their way of reading of the Gospel of Matthew in general, not just the passage about releasing 'the son of our Rabbi'.

Although the Nazarenes still seem to have hoped for the conversion of the 'sons of Israel' (see the passage above) and at least some of them must have been of Jewish origin— because they were familiar with rabbinic traditions and were able to play with Hebrew words—they seem to have adopted a Christian identity to the extent that it is hard to characterize their critique any longer as intra-Jewish. In my view, it rather deserves the label anti-Judaism.

JUDAISM AND ANTI-JUDAISM IN APOCRYPHAL ACCOUNTS OF JESUS' PASSION

The *Gospel of Peter* and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*

The so-called Akhmîm codex (P. Cair. 10759) contains the only text that can be relatively securely attributed to the *Gospel of Peter*. The text opens and ends abruptly but the decorations in the end of the manuscript show that the scribe had copied all the text that was available to him (Klauck 2003: 83). Scholars generally identify the text of the Akhmîm codex with a gospel that is mentioned in Eusebius' *Church History* (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.12.1–6). Eusebius reports on the dealings of the bishop of Antioch, Serapion, with the community of Rhossus, which used a gospel attributed to Peter. Serapion ends up prohibiting the use of this gospel because of its suspicious christology. There has been much discussion whether two papyrus fragments from Oxyrhynchus, P. Oxy. 2949 and P. Oxy. 4009, should also be counted as parts of *Gos. Pet.* The case of P. Oxy. 4009 is disputable (see Lührmann 1993, 2006; Myllykoski 2009a, 2009b; Foster 2010: 69–79) but P. Oxy. 2949 appears to be either a parallel to the tradition used in the Akhmîm codex or an earlier version of *Gos. Pet.* (Kraus and Nicklas 2004: 58; Foster 2010: 56–68). The text of the Akhmîm codex has obviously undergone several re-editions in the course of its transmission, which complicates the dating of the writing. The following discussion is based on the largely accepted dating to the second half of the second century (Foster 2010: 169–72) for the first edition of *Gos. Pet.* However, as we will see, the characterization of Jews in the Akhmîm codex has affinities with the anti-Jewish stance of the Nazarenes. This suggests a later date, perhaps even late third or early fourth century, for the version preserved in the Akhmîm codex (for *Gos. Pet.* and *Acts Pil.*, see also Frey's essay in this volume).

The *Gospel of Nicodemus* consists of two parts, the *Acts of Pilate* (chs 1–16) and *Christ's Descent into Hell* (chs 17–27). The *Descent* is a later addition, composed in the fifth or sixth century (Schärtl 2012: 235–6) and therefore it is not discussed in this essay that focuses on the *Acts of Pilate*. *Acts Pil.* is securely attested at the end of the fourth century (*c.*375 CE) when Epiphanius refers to it in *Pan.* 50.1.5 and 50.1.8. The earliest possible reference is in Justin the Martyr's *First Apology* which refers to an appearance of witnesses of Jesus' miracles at his trial—a feature not found in the canonical Gospels (*1. Apol.* 48.3; a reference also in 35.9). It is apparent that the *Acts Pil.* also has a longer editorial history behind it. Chapters 12–16 include a detailed account of what happened to Joseph of Arimathea after the crucifixion and how he and three men from Galilee, a teacher, a priest, and a Levite, provided testimony to Jesus' resurrection and ascension. From chapter 12 onwards, the story also starts to include features that differ thematically and stylistically from the previous chapters. Therefore, this part is likely to contain tradition that was attached later to the story about Jesus' trial, death, and resurrection. For the present topic, the literary seam in chapters 12–13 is noteworthy, because before that, the main opponents are identified collectively, and almost exclusively, as 'the Jews'. In chapter 12, 'the rulers of the synagogue/elders, the priests, and the Levites' receive a more prominent role on the side of 'the Jews' as the representatives of the Jewish opposition, and from chapter 14 onwards the term 'Jews' practically disappears from the story. According to Schärtl (2010: 167–75, 2012: 325), the original *Acts of Pilate* is to be found in chapters 1–11 and 13.1–2 (excluding ch. 5 and 4.2), and the original *Gospel of Nicodemus* in 12–16 (without 13.1–2). A more detailed discussion of the editorial history is not possible here but the hypothesis that

probably contain tradition from a less anti-Jewish source may explain some of the discrepancies in the story's depiction of Jews and Judaism.

Judaism and Anti-Judaism in the *Gospel of Peter*

The *Gospel of Peter* has an obvious bias to move all the guilt for Jesus' death from the shoulders of Pilate to Herod and the Jews in general. The text starts by noting that 'none of the Jews washed their hands, neither Herod nor any of his judges' (translations of *Gos*. *Pet*. in this section, from Kraus and Nicklas 2004). It is impossible to say exactly what there was in the story before this, perhaps a description of Pilate washing his hands as in the Gospel of Matthew (27.24; Foster 2010: 215–16). In any case, the short note shows that some Jews, Herod (cf. Luke 23.6–12) and his judges, were in the company of Pilate when 'the Lord'—the narrator uses this title of Jesus throughout the story—was convicted. In this way, the narrator seemingly contrasts their actions with Pilate's washing of his hands.

In any case, the story in *Gos*. *Pet*. continues in a manner that leaves no doubts about the active participation of the Jews: Herod takes command and orders Jesus to be taken away. He also says to those who will take Jesus: 'What I commanded you to do to him, do.' This gives the impression that the following mistreatment, mocking, and crucifixion of Jesus is ordered by Herod. Moreover, the task is not carried out by Herod's soldiers as one would expect. Instead Herod delivers Jesus 'to the people'. The people are not explicitly called Jews at this point of the story but their Jewishness becomes evident (Nicklas 2001: 215–16) when the narrator refers to 'the first day of the unleavened bread, their feast'. Later on he also explains that 'it is written for them that the sun should not set on one that has been put to death', in order to explain why 'they' become worried when Jesus is not dying fast enough. The agency of Jews becomes explicit after the death of Jesus: 'The Jews rejoiced and gave his body to Joseph that he might bury him…'. Thus, in *Gos*. *Pet*. the Jews are not just made to take responsibility for the conviction of Jesus by choosing Barabbas; they have also become the actual executioners of 'the Lord'.

After the execution, other Jewish agents also appear on the scene and some remorse is expressed: 'As the Jews and the elders and the priests perceived what evil they had done to themselves, they began to lament: "Woe on our sins, judgement has come close and the end of Jerusalem."' Moreover, the close pact between the people/Jews and the leading groups of elders, priests, and Pharisees splits when the story moves on to describe the scheme of how to make sure that Jesus remains in the sepulchre. When 'scribes, Pharisees, and elders' learn about the reaction of the 'whole people', the elders go to Pilate and ask him to provide soldiers to guard the tomb (*Gos*. *Pet*. VIII/28–30).

When it emerges that the plan failed—two men had come from heaven and escorted Jesus out of the tomb, followed by a cross (*Gos*. *Pet*. IX–X/34–42)—'they all' come to Pilate, afraid of being stoned by 'people of the Jews', and convince him that it is better to order the soldiers to keep quiet about the incidents by the tomb. Although this seems to imply a positive description by the narrator of at least some of the Jewish people, it is clear that the contrast between the people and their leaders is there more because of the narrative line, probably also because the leaders were active agents in the tradition about guards on the tomb. In the closing scenes of the Akhmîm codex the Jews appear again as one coalition: because of 'the fear of the Jews' Mary and her friends did not dare to anoint Jesus before his burial. Therefore, they are heading to the tomb 'at the dawn of the Lord's day', still in fear of the Jews. Nevertheless, the fact that at least some of the Jews express remorse

may indicate that the author leaves open the possibility of repentance of Jews in the future (thus Nicklas 2001: 220–1).

The version of *Gos. Pet.* in the Akhmîm codex is clearly written from a Christian point of view. Jesus is addressed as the Lord throughout the narrative and the women are heading to the tomb on the 'Day of the Lord', not on the 'first day of the week' as in the canonical Gospels (Mark 16.2; Matt. 28.1; Luke 24.1; John 20.1). The term *ioudaioi* appears as a collective term that is applied to Jews as outsiders. The anti-Jewish character of *Gos. Pet.* is plain.

Certainly, at first sight some parts of the narrative could be taken to support a geographical interpretation: Peter, a Galilean himself and appearing as the first-person narrator in *Gos. Pet.* VII/26–7, could be seen to put the blame on the 'the Judeans'. The title that they put on the cross—'The King of Israel' (*Gos. Pet.* IV/11)—could also be in line with this interpretation: Jesus was not just 'The King of Judeans'. However, a closer look at the story reveals that the persons who mistreat Jesus and execute him cannot be just Judeans: the first day of the unleavened bread is described as 'their feast' and the law about burying before sunset is 'written for them'. These features of the text indicate that for the final narrator, the term *ioudaioi* was not a geographical term that referred to people living in Judea, in contrast to other Jews in the narrative. The author's aversion towards Judaism in general is the reason why he avoids the title 'The King of the Jews'. For the author 'the Lord' was the 'King of Israel', because the church was the new Israel (see Foster 2010: 295–8). This does not exclude the possibility that an earlier version of the story may have been 'anti-Judean'.

Judaism and Anti-Judaism in the *Acts of Pilate*

The anti-Jewish stance of the *Acts of Pilate* is very plain in the first eleven chapters where 'the Jews' is used as a collective term designating the group that is pressing Pilate to kill Jesus. The whitewashing of Pilate in *Acts Pil.* is comparable to what is observable in the *Gospel of Peter*. It becomes clear that Pilate is unwilling to kill Jesus but is compelled to do so when the Jews argue that releasing Jesus would in practice mean acknowledging his kingship over Caesar. Later on, Pilate even earns a characterization which makes him look like a Christian: when Joseph of Arimathea argues with the Jews, he refers to Pilate as 'he who is uncircumcised in the flesh, but circumcised in heart' (cf. Rom. 2.28–9).

However, the Jewish coalition is not unanimous. First of all, Nicodemus, a 'Jew', defends Jesus throughout the entire narrative. Furthermore, when Jesus is accused of being born of fornication, twelve devout 'Jews', all names listed, appear to testify that they had been present at Joseph's and Mary's betrothal (2.3–6). Therefore, there was nothing suspicious in Jesus' birth; he was born after a legitimate engagement. Moreover, the persons who testify how Jesus cured them are explicitly characterized as Jews (chs 6–8). Nevertheless, the Jewishness of these characters in the story underlines the obstinacy of the Jewish collective because 'the Jews' should have no reason to doubt the testimony of their fellow Jews. This is very obvious in the case of the twelve men testifying to the betrothal. The story makes a point of showing that the witnesses were not proselytes or Jesus' followers.

The role of the representatives of the Jews in the latter part (from ch. 12 onwards) of *Acts Pil.*, namely 'the rulers of the synagogue/elders, the priests and the Levites', is more difficult to interpret. When the three witnesses of Jesus' ascension come to Jerusalem for the first time, the elders, the priests, and the Levites act as expected: they label the men's

testimonies as 'idle talk', give them some money, and make sure that they depart to Galilee (ch. 14). However, after an unsuccessful search for Jesus in the hills of Galilee—styled after the search for Elijah in 2 Kings 2—they seemingly regret the way they have treated Joseph of Arimathea and send seven of his friends after him, equipped with a flattering letter. Moreover, after hearing Joseph's account about his miraculous escape from the room where they had locked him, they 'became as dead men and fell to the ground and fasted until the ninth hour' (16.1). There follows an additional, more detailed hearing of the three witnesses (16.5–6). Because the story of *Acts Pil*. ends with a hymn of praise where 'all the people' praise God for having given 'rest to the people of Israel according to his promises' (16.8), one could almost interpret the storyline to the effect that in the latter half of the story, the leaders and the people repented and acknowledged Jesus' kingship. However, a more critical tone in 16.7 makes this interpretation problematic. For instance, in this section, the teachers remind the people that 'cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' (Deut. 21.23).

There are at least two possible interpretations for this discrepancy. As Roy R. Jeal argues in his 'rhetorographic' analysis of *Acts Pil*., the storyline can be taken to highlight the obstinacy and hypocrisy of the Jews. They keep on seeking crooked ways of refuting the witnesses but are knocked back (Jeal 2010: 164–7). Another, more probable option is that the latter half (chs. 12–16) of the story was originally derived from a Jewish–Christian source (the *Gospel of Nicodemus*?) which gave a paradigmatic picture of the repentance of the Israelites (as sketched above). When this was attached to the clearly anti-Jewish *Acts of Pilate*, the result is that the narrative as a whole gives a picture of a mixed reception of Jesus by Jews. Notably, the story of Simeon from Luke 2.28–35 has a central role in the concluding chapters. Simeon's concluding words are repeated three times: 'Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that will be spoken against' (16.2, 6, 7).

The editorial history of the text is notoriously difficult to reconstruct. It is clear that the text as we have it now also takes a critical stance on Jews, especially Jewish leaders, in its latter part, although the overall tone is more positive than in the clearly anti-Jewish first part (chs 1–11). It is also possible that an earlier version of the latter part may have been more positive towards Jews and Judaism than the final version.

In any case, it is should be noted that—in contrast to the *Protevangelium of James* and the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*—the witnesses of Joseph and Mary's engagement do not try to argue for virginal conception. Instead, the logic is that Jesus was born naturally to Joseph and Mary, after a legitimate betrothal. This 'Ebionite' christology would, in fact, be in accord with the views that the Jews present at the conclusion of the story:

> Cursed is the man who shall worship the work of man's hand, and cursed is the man who shall worship created things alongside the creator. And the people answered: 'Amen, amen'. (*Acts Pil*. 16.7; trans. Wilson in Schneemelcher 1991)

From the viewpoint of later 'mainstream' christological doctrine, these words on the lips of the Jewish people probably looked like the Arian heresy. However, in the context of the possible earlier Jewish–Christian version, the view may have been perfectly acceptable. In any case, there is no doubt about the Jewish character of the christology implied by the witnesses of the betrothal. Notably, the low christology of *Acts Pil*. also seems to resemble the christology implied by *Gos. Pet*. where Jesus' final words on the cross 'My power, power, you have forsaken me' (*Gos. Pet*. 5) are often taken as the proof that *Gos. Pet*. presumes the natural birth of the man Jesus—into whom the power/Christ had descended in the baptism by John. On the cross, the power left Jesus.

The text also exemplifies positive reception of Jewish scripture when it uses Old Testament stories and characters from the Old Testament in order to show how these prefigure Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

As the above discussion shows, the first part of *Acts Pil*. (chs 1–11) has clear signs of Gentile anti-Judaism. In the latter part (chs 12–18) the possibility of repentance of Jews gets more attention. Thus, the stance in the latter part is more close to Jewish–Christian anti-Judaism.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study of a selection of Christian Apocrypha provides a large variety of examples of relation to Judaism. In terms of categories developed in the introduction of the article, the relations to Judaism can be summarized as follows.

The *Protevangelium of James* and the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* are free from outright anti-Judaism. Their attitude to Judaism can be described in terms of supersessionism: the supersessionism in *Prot. Jas*. comes close to the economic type while the supersessionism in *Ps.-Mt*. can be better characterized as colonial supersessionism.

The Ebionites' stance on the sacrificial cult, their christological views, their strict observance of Jewish law and purity rules indicate their sectarian attitude in relation to other forms of Judaism. Thus, the anti-Judaism of the *Gospel of the Ebionites* is of the Jewish–Christian type ('anti other forms of Judaism'). The anti-Judaism in the *Gospel of the Hebrews* is best characterized as prophetic anti-Judaism. The 'Hebrews' of the *Gos. Heb*. may very well have continued living among Jewish communities. Although the Nazarenes still seem to have hoped for the conversion of the 'sons of Israel' and some of them must have been of Jewish origin, they seem to have adopted a clear Christian identity. Therefore, it is hard to characterize the critique in their *anti-Rabbinic collections* as intra-Jewish. Rather, it deserves the label anti-Judaism.

The *Gospel of Peter* is also clearly anti-Jewish and so are also the first eleven chapters of the *Acts of Pilate*. The final chapters of *Acts Pil*. (chapters 12–16) are more mixed in their attitude toward Judaism and therefore exemplify Jewish–Christian anti-Judaism.

There are hardly any traces of anti-Judaism in the infancy gospels studied in this article. This is probably due to the fact that already the canonical infancy stories try to show that Jesus' birth fulfilled the promises and expectations expressed in Israel's sacred scripture. The history of Mary and Joseph before Jesus' birth is developed in the same mode. However, in the course of time, the stories become more and more detached from any connection to historical Judaism. While *Prot. Jas*. may still also have an apologetic goal and has some knowledge of Jewish practice and belief, in *Gos. Ps-Mt*. Judaism functions as a fictive setting for a narrative that serves the needs of intra-Christian propagation of Mariology and monastic practices.

In contrast to the infancy gospels, the gospels which focus on Jesus' passion and resurrection, are clearly anti-Jewish. Again, the inspiration comes from the canonical Gospels where the 'Judeans' and especially their leaders are depicted as the masterminds of Jesus' passion and execution. In *Acts Pil*. (chs 1–11) and in the *Nazarene's anti-Rabbinic collection* the Jews are loaded with more guilt and in *Gos. Pet*. they have the role of actual executioners.

Interestingly, the obvious anti-Judaism of *Gos. Pet*. and *Acts Pil*. seems to be combined with a low christology which does not presume virginal conception. A more detailed discussion of the possible reasons for this seemingly strange combination of Jewish–

Christian christology and anti-Judaism is not possible in this context. However, the combination would be understandable if the traditions behind *Gos. Pet.* and *Acts Pil.* were originally composed by a faction of Ebionites who were 'anti-Judean'—in the geographical sense of the word. Epiphanius' description of the Ebionites suggests that the movement may partly have been influenced by Samaritan critique of the 'Judeans' (see Luomanen 2012: 47–8, 161–5). Thus, the Christian anti-Judaism as we now have it in *Gos. Pet.* and *Acts Pil.* could have developed from an earlier Ebionite anti-Judeanism.

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ESCHATOLOGY AND THE FATE OF THE DEAD IN EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS ESCHATOLOGY? WHAT IS EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA?

ESCHATOLOGY, teaching about 'last things' (τὰ ἔσχατα), is a word that, according to one dictionary entry, refers to 'Jewish, Christian, and Muslim beliefs about the end of history, the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgement, the Messianic era, and the problem of theodicy (the vindication of God's justice)' (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The word was coined in the nineteenth century for the purposes of Christian theology (Petersen 1992: 576; Aune 1992: 594). If the term is taken to imply a systematic teaching about the topic, there is no such thing as 'eschatology' in Early Christian Apocrypha, or any other ancient texts. On the other hand, the word *eschatos*, 'last' or 'final', occurs frequently in these texts, and different kinds of visions of the coming of the Messianic age, a new heaven and a new earth, and descriptions of the afterlife, the bliss of the saved and the punishment of the condemned, abound.

When the word *eschatos* is used in a temporal sense, it often refers to 'the last day' and implies a time when a profound, cosmic change will take place, the present order will end, and an entirely new one will begin. In early Christian parlance, the *eschaton* is indicated by evil signs and evil people (2 Tim. 3.1; Jas. 5.3; 2 Pet. 3.3). Nevertheless, it is something to be welcomed, for it means the coming of Christ and the salvation of his own people (1 Pet. 1.5, 7). Several New Testament texts indicate that the 'last days' are already present (Acts 2.17; 1 John 2.18).

Even though the scope of most eschatological texts is cosmic and communal, in some texts the focus is on the question of what happens to individuals after their death. In such individual eschatological scenarios the end is not the end of the present world associated with a particular point in history but the individual's end at the moment of that person's physical death. In Early Christian Apocrypha, the fate of individuals after death dominates. There is less emphasis on the end of this world and events leading to it, while the focus is usually on the ultimate fate of righteous and wicked people, usually revealed in apocalyptic visions. The recipient of revelatory teaching in these texts is typically a visionary figure, such as one or several of the apostles and the vision is mediated by Christ or an interpreting angel (*angelus interpres*).

Alongside with cosmic and individual strands of eschatology, it is customary to speak about 'present' or 'realized' eschatology. This expression is strictly speaking a contradiction

in terms since its emphasis is on the present life and not on the anticipation of the end. The basis for this view is the conviction that what seems to be the *eschaton* (physical death or the end of the world) has no added significance; the saved already enjoy the bliss of the divine life and the condemned are already spiritually dead. Even though the present circumstances might seem to contain only perils and scorn for the righteous while the godless seem to prosper, this is an illusion, for salvation and resurrection are present realities. All these different forms of eschatological teaching occur in the texts that were to be included in the New Testament canon, often side by side within one text (Lehtipuu 2007). In this respect, it is little wonder to find a similar variety within Christian apocryphal texts.

If 'eschatology' is difficult to define unequivocally, the term 'Early Christian Apocrypha' is no less complex (see the Introduction to this volume). In a broad sense, the name refers to non-canonical early Christian writings that form a vast and amorphous body of texts. This kind of definition, however, is too inclusive, but at the same time too exclusive. It is too inclusive because early Christian writings also contain texts that are conventionally not counted among 'apocryphal' texts, such as the so-called apostolic fathers and all of the patristic texts; and it is too exclusive because a few texts normally considered apocryphal belong to the NT canon for some Christians, such as Paul's third letter to the Corinthians which appears in the Armenian Bible. Canonicity is also a problematic criterion since the formation of the New Testament canon does not offer any temporal limit for the production of the so-called Apocrypha: some of them were created before any concept of canon had emerged, others centuries later, in medieval times. The Nag Hammadi text corpus is not always treated along with other Early Christian Apocrypha. The same holds true with the numerous early Christian martyrologies. This is mainly due to the established scholarly tradition that has kept them apart even though there are no real reasons for this.

Yet another difficulty with determining what texts belong to Early Christian Apocrypha is that, especially as far as apocalypses go, there are no clear borderlines between early Christian and early Jewish texts (Bauckham 1998: 82, 171). Many of the so-called Old Testament pseudepigrapha may have originated in Jewish circles but they have been transmitted and preserved by Christians. Sometimes they may have been reworked by Christians and the possibility that they actually are penned by Christians cannot always be excluded (Davila 2005). In this article, I only treat texts that are named after or linked to a New Testament figure such as an apostle or a group of apostles. Such linking implies that there is an explicit relation between the apocryphal writing and a New Testament text or tradition. Even with this criterion, there are borderline cases. For example, the *Epistle of Pseudo-Titus* includes a portion of an older (either Jewish or Christian) apocalypse that is ascribed to 'the prophet Elias' (but not known from a Coptic text that bears the name of the *Apocalypse of Elijah*). Using the definition proposed above, this article includes the *Epistle* but excludes the *Apocalypse* and the vision of hell that seems originally to have been included in the latter is treated as part of the former.

Another methodological point to be noted is the fact that most of the so-called Apocrypha are only attested in relatively late medieval manuscripts and in languages other than their original language. Very little is known about their textual history. They represent what scholars call 'living texts' (Hilhorst 2007: 6); in other words, these texts were not only copied but often 'improved'. Thus it is often impossible to know how faithfully a version that we have preserves ancient readings, and creating theories about how these texts evolved can be precarious. Moreover, some texts appear in several versions, often in several languages, that may differ considerably from one another.

The aim of this chapter is to give examples of central themes that are characteristic of different eschatological teachings found in early Christian apocryphal texts. These include descriptions of the events preceding the end, tours in heaven or hell that reveal the punishments of the sinners and the bliss of the righteous, and different understandings of resurrection and salvation. It is not possible to treat the important questions of the provenance and textual history of the texts referred to here. An interested reader may consult other articles of this volume. (On apocalypses, see especially Chapter 6 by Richard Bauckham.)

JUDGEMENT AND THE EVENTS OF THE END OF THE WORLD

In many New Testament texts, eschatological expectations focus on the second coming of Christ and the final judgement. All three Synoptic Gospels report Jesus' apocalyptic discourse revealing events that precede the end (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 17, 21). Some apocryphal texts elaborate these discourses. As examples of texts that anticipate a general judgement in the future and describe its circumstances, I discuss the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Epistula Apostolorum*, and the *Apocalypse of Thomas*. My fourth example is the *Apocalypse of Paul* which briefly mentions the coming 'great day of judgement' without elaborating the idea further. Instead, this text invests in the description of the Messianic reign of a thousand years in the book of Revelation (Rev. 20.4–6) and depicts what happens to the dead immediately after death.

The *Apocalypse of Peter* is known in two somewhat different versions, one in Greek (the so-called Akhmîm version) and one in Ge'ez (Ethiopic). The text reports a dialogue between the risen Lord and his disciples on the Mount of Olives. According to the beginning of the text (preserved only in Ge'ez), the book is about 'the second coming of Christ and resurrection of the dead which Christ revealed through Peter'. The bulk of the text, however, consists of a vision of the punishments of sinners after the judgement (on these, see further the section Fate of the Sinners: Punishments in Hell). On the request of his disciples to 'declare the signs of your coming and of the end of the world', Jesus warns about false Christs and then describes his coming: 'As the lightning that shines from the east and the west, so will I come upon the clouds of heaven with a great host in my majesty. With my cross going before my face will I come in my majesty. Shining seven times brighter than the sun will I come in my majesty with all my saints, my angels' (*Apocalypse of Peter* 1.6–8; cf. 6.1–2). The description combines and expands the gospels' imagery of the Son of Man's coming as the flash of a lightning (Matt. 24.27; cf. Luke 17.24), on the clouds of heaven with power and glory (Matt. 24.30; Luke 21.27), surrounded by angels (Matt. 16.27; Luke 9.26). The idea of the cross preceding the Lord resembles the resurrection narrative in the *Gospel of Peter* where the cross follows the resurrected Jesus and gives a testimony (*Gos. Pet.* 10.39–42). Another sign that the end is near is given by a fig tree, an image that also combines different gospel traditions (*Ap. Pet.* 2; cf. Mark 11.12–14; Matt. 21.18–22; Luke 13.6–9). According to the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the fig tree is a symbol of the house of Israel. Even though it seems to sprout and flourish, this is the work of a deceiver whose actions will only cause martyrdom. It has been suggested that this description reveals the historical context of the text. The reasoning goes that the passage was written in polemic against the millenarian expectations raised by Bar Kochba in 132 CE (Buchholz 1988: 408–12; Bauckham 1998: 176–94), but this remains speculative.

Judgement follows immediately. There is no place for an earthly golden age of Christ's thousand-year reign. Judgement also requires the resurrection of the dead. All living people are gathered before God, and the land of the dead will give up all that it holds. The wild beasts and the fowls will restore all the flesh they have devoured (*Ap. Pet.* 4; similar ideas occur in the Jewish apocalypses *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*). On the last day darkness and obscurity veil the whole creation and cataracts of fire fall down and burn everything in a cosmic conflagration. Waters turn into fire, stars and the firmaments of heaven melt, and the whole creation dissolves (*Ap. Pet.* 5). Evil-doers try to find an escape but are not able to as the fire overtakes them and they will experience great affliction which causes them to gnash their teeth.

Fire is a deeply traditional Jewish image of God's anger and divine judgement (e.g. Ps. 18.8–9, 97.3; Mal. 3.19) and it also became the major element of Gehenna (Mark 9.43–7; Matt. 5.22, 29; James 3.6). In the *Apocalypse of Peter*, fire does not only function as an instrument of punishment but all people must enter into the river of fire while their works will be shown to them. The righteous ones will pass the fire unharmed but 'the unrighteous, the sinners, and the hypocrites' will have to stay in the darkness and in the fire and will be eternally punished, 'every one according to his transgression' (*Ap. Pet.* 6).

The *Epistula Apostolorum* ('The Letter of the Apostles') which is preserved in a Coptic and a Ge'ez version (together with some Latin fragments) shares several common features with the description in the *Apocalypse of Peter*. Notwithstanding its name, the text is not a letter but an apocalypse comprised of revelations of the risen Lord in the form of a dialogue with his disciples. When the disciples ask 'in what kind of power and form are you about to come?', the Lord answers, 'Truly I say to you, I will come as the sun which bursts forth; thus will I, shining seven times brighter than it in glory while I am carried on the wings of the clouds in splendour with my cross going on before me, come to the earth to judge the living and the dead' (*Ep. Apost.* 16). The second coming will take place 'when the hundred and fiftieth year is completed, between Pentecost and Passover' (*Ep. Apost.* 17). Similar to the *Apocalypse of Peter*, Christ's return is directly linked with the resurrection of the dead and the judgement, with no intermediate Messianic age. The resurrection pertains to the flesh that will be judged together with the soul and spirit (*Ep. Apost.* 26). The last days will be filled with disasters and agony: there will be constant thunder and lightning, fiery hail, earthquakes, drought, plague, wars, and persecution causing 'extensive and quick death' (*Ep. Apost.* 34). Everything is pure hatred and jealousy but even worse things await those who have not listened to God's commandments. Their end will be destruction and punishment. The righteous whom they have reviled, tormented, and persecuted will be blessed in heaven (*Ep. Apost.* 37–8).

An even more elaborate description of the End appears in the Latin *Apocalypse of Thomas*. The longer version of the text starts with a listing of the signs that predict the End. These include famine, wars and earthquakes, snow, ice and droughts, blasphemy, iniquity, envy, villainy, indolence, pride, and intemperance. 'The house of the Lord' and its altars shall be desolate 'so that spiders weave their webs therein'. The priesthood will be corrupted and wicked kings will arise. (Similar indicators of the End are mentioned in the *Gospel of Judas* 38–40.) The signs of the End turn into cosmic catastrophes: waters turn into blood, 'the heavens shall be moved, the stars shall fall upon the earth, the sun shall be cut in half like the moon, and the moon shall not give her light'. Then Antichrist will appear. A new list of seven signs is given that correspond to seven days of judgement, presumably meant as a reversal of the seven days of creation, even though this is not mentioned explicitly. A seven-day period that turns the creation back into a primordial chaos also occurs in the description of the end of the world in *4 Ezra* (7.30–1). The text of

the longer version ends abruptly in the middle of the sixth day but the shorter version continues by narrating how a perpetual fire will consume the whole earth and all its elements on the sixth day and how resurrection will take place. On the seventh day, angels descend and seek the elect ones and save them from the destruction of the world. These are presumably those who are still alive when the judgement takes place. After the seven days have passed, on the eighth day, there will be rejoicing in heaven for 'the destruction of this world has come'. There is no explicit mention of the fate of the wicked. Perhaps the supposition is that they perish together with the world.

The *Apocalypse of Paul* also refers to the great day of judgement that will take place in the future (*Ap. Paul* 16) but the ultimate judgement is overshadowed by the preliminary division of the souls immediately after death and the rewards and punishments in the intermediate period. After death, angels carry the soul in front of a heavenly court where God acts as the judge (Bernstein 1993: 293–5). In the case of a righteous person, the soul is handed to the angel Michael who leads it to the Paradise of Joy. The soul will dwell there until it will be reunited with the body at the resurrection when it will 'receive the things promised to all the just' (*Ap. Paul* 14). In like manner, when a wicked person dies, evil angels meet the soul and escort it to hear God's verdict. It will be handed to the angel Tartaruchos and cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (*Ap. Paul* 15–16). In a case where the outcome is not obvious, the soul is taken to see the places of punishment for seven days after which it has the chance to confess its sins. In the reported case, however, the soul claims it has not committed any sins. When the angel brings forth a list of the soul's sins, and the souls of its victims appear as witnesses, the soul is handed to Tartarus and led down to hell into the lower prison where it will experience torments (*Ap. Paul* 17–18). This, however, is not the final state for the wicked souls will also be reunited with their bodies at the resurrection to 'receive what is the due for the sins and impieties' (*Ap. Paul* 15). There is no indication that the punishments experienced in Tartarus would have a curative function and that the resurrection and the final judgement would change the preliminary verdict.

Another difference between the *Apocalypse of Paul* and the other texts discussed in this section is the reference to the thousand-year reign of Christ in the former. In his otherworldly tour, Paul sees the 'land of promise'. This is not situated in the heavens but on earth; it is the earth which the meek will inherit (cf. Matt. 5.5). For the time being, it is hidden but 'when Christ, whom you preach, shall come to reign, then, by the sentence of God, the first earth will be dissolved and this land of promise will then be revealed' (*Ap. Paul* 21). The idea of a thousand-year Messianic age was popular among several early Christian teachers, such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, but appears less often in the apocryphal texts (see, however, the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* 26).

The *Apocalypse of Paul* is clearly inspired by 2 Cor. 12.2–4 where the apostle Paul tells of his mystical experience of visiting paradise and the third heaven. His report of having heard things 'which no mortal is permitted to repeat' sparked the imagination of several Christian writers. Another text known by the same name is found in the Nag Hammadi Library (NHC V, 2). It narrates how souls are judged and punished as they ascend through heavens. Whether this is a description of the soul's ascent after death or of its spiritual development remains unclear (Pesthy 2007: 206–7), and these two alternatives are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The Nag Hammadi apocalypse describes Paul's ascent through the heavens, starting from the third heaven. In the fourth heaven he sees a scene of judgement which has affinities with the vision of judgement in the Greek *Apocalypse of Paul*, referred to above. Angels that resemble gods bring souls out of the 'land of the dead' (which probably refers to the world,

not to Hades), whipping them. They place the souls at the gate of the heaven where a toll-collector refuses to let sinners in. When the sinner protests, his sins are brought in as witnesses. Three witnesses arrive and when the soul cannot defend itself, it is cast down and forced into a body prepared for it (20.5–21.22). This apparently means reincarnation and a new cycle of life on earth. The description has close parallels with the Jewish *Testament of Abraham*, particularly with the Coptic version of the short recension of the text (MacRae and Murdock 1990: 256–7). A similar scene with angels herding souls to be judged appears at the gate of the fifth heaven but no details are revealed as Paul and the Holy Spirit who is guiding him are allowed to move forward. Toll-collectors or other powers examining incoming souls also appear in other early Christian texts, such as the first *Apocalypse of James* (NHC V, 3), the *Gospel of Mary* (BG 8502,1), and the *Vision of Isaiah*.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE HEREAFTER

A prominent feature in many apocryphal apocalypses is an otherworldly tour where a seer, often accompanied by an angel or other intermediary figure, visits heaven and hell. This is a widespread and ancient topos known in several cultural traditions, including the Mesopotamian, Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds (Bauckham 1998: 9–48). Sometimes, the torment or rest of the dead is revealed in a vision describing the future after the judgement but more commonly the punishments and rewards are envisioned as taking place simultaneously while life continues on earth. As we saw in the case of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, the idea that the dead experience their otherworldly fate directly after death does not have to exclude the belief that something will still take place in the future. In such a case, however, the final judgement will not change anything: the immediate punishments or rewards anticipate the ultimate fate. Even though this makes the judgement somewhat superfluous, such scenarios belong to several Jewish and Christian texts (most prominently in *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*).

Where is the abode of the dead situated? The location and the geographical information vary from text to text and must often be inferred from occasional comments. Typically, the souls ascend to heaven where the righteous souls are allowed to enter but the unrighteous are cast down to an underworld pit. Even though paradise and hell seem logically to be far away from each other, in several texts the condemned and the blessed are within sight of each other—in the same manner as they are in the Gospel story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16.19–31). For example, victims of murder or aborted children can see, or even participate in, the punishing of their killers (*Ap. Peter* 7–8; *Ap. Paul* 40). In some depictions, salvation and damnation are linked to specific directions: east is the way to salvation (*Book of Thomas the Contender* 143.2–8), the west is where the entrance of hell is situated (the Greek *Apocalypse of the Virgin* 3; the Ethiopic *Liber Requiei* 90). In some texts, most notably in the *Apocalypse of Paul*, both the places of punishment and the places for the blessed are neither within the heavens nor under the earth but at the ultimate limits of the world, outside both space and time. Both domains lie beyond the river Ocean that serves as a boundary between paradise and hell, the world of the living and the world of the dead as well as the earth and the heaven (Copeland 2007: 78).

The idea that the world of the dead lies in the furthest extremities of the earth by the river Ocean is as old as the Homeric epics (cf. *Odyssey* 11). Greek influence on early Christian descriptions of the places of the dead can also be detected in the borrowing of Greek mythological names. The abode of the dead is frequently called Hades which sometimes corresponds to the place where all the souls of the dead go but more frequently to the place

of punishment. The names abyss (ἄβυσσος) and Tartarus (Τάρταρος) also abound (see, e.g., *Ap. Paul* 11; *Acts of Philip* 2.23; *Book of Thomas the Contender* 141.33; 144.34–7). Sometimes Hades is personified, together with Death or with Satan (*Gospel of Nicodemus; Questions of Bartholomew*), and Tartarus has lent its name to the punishing angel Tartarouchus (*Ap. Peter* 13; *Ap. Paul* 16; *Book of Thomas the Contender* 142.41; cf. Rosenstiehl 1986). Similarly the Acherusian Lake and Elysium belong to some descriptions of the place of the blessed. For example, in the *Apocalypse of Paul* the Acherusian Lake is the place where those who have repented their sins are baptized by the archangel Michael (*Ap. Paul* 22).

One subcategory in the early Christian apocryphal discussions of the hereafter is the portrayal of Christ harrowing hell. Accounts of Christ's visit to the world of the dead serve two purposes (Bernstein 1993: 272–82). First, they satisfy the curiosity concerning what happened to Christ between his burial and his resurrection. If he died in the same manner as all human beings, he must have gone to Hades where all people go. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, they solve a theological dilemma concerning the salvation of people who lived and died before Jesus (Ehrman and Pleše 2011: 465–6). If no one (apart from the exceptional cases of Enoch and Elijah: see just below) was able to enter paradise before the death of Jesus—as is made explicit, for example, in the *Questions of Bartholomew*—where were all the Old Testament saints and other righteous people of the past? How could they receive salvation?

The widespread harrowing of hell tradition tells how Christ descends to Hades, picks up the righteous dead, and leads them to paradise with him. According to an apocryphal report ascribed to Thaddeus and preserved by Eusebius, Christ 'descended alone but ascended with a great multitude to his Father' (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.13.20; cf. *Acts of Thomas* 10). The best-known and most influential version is that in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (also known as the *Acts of Pilate*), a composite text preserved in several variations both in Greek and Latin. Christ's actions in Hades are reported by Karinus and Leucius, the sons of old Simeon (cf. Luke 2.25–35) who were deceased but resurrected at the death of Jesus (cf. Matt. 27.52–3) to give their testimony. After this they were brought to paradise. According to their report, Christ appeared as a bright light in the midst of the obscure darkness of Hades. He conquers death by defeating Satan and by casting him down to the everlasting fire of Tartarus. Then he takes the Old Testament saints and all those who believe in him with him. Figures such as Adam, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist are mentioned by name. They ascend together with Christ to paradise where Enoch and Elijah and the repentant criminal (cf. Luke 23.39–43) wait for them. Enoch and Elijah were considered special cases that did not face death but were directly translated to heaven (cf. Gen. 5.24; 2 Kgs 2.1–18). They appear frequently in apocryphal eschatological descriptions, especially in the portrayals of paradise (*Apocalypse of Peter* 2; *Apocalypse of Paul* 20–1; *History of Joseph the Carpenter* 30; Syriac *Transitus Mariae* 5). In the Latin version B of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the repentant criminal comes to Hades as Christ's herald and ascends together with him to be 'today with me in paradise'.

The account of Christ's descent tells primarily of exceptional individuals and their salvation, not about the fate of the ordinary dead. Most versions leave open what will happen to all those who have died or will die after Jesus' resurrection. Will they first descend to Hades to wait for the future judgement or will they immediately experience punishments or bliss? The Latin B text has an answer: after having smitten Hades, Christ makes a division among the inhabitants of Hades and 'immediately threw some down into Tartarus and led others with him to the world above' (*Gospel of Nicodemus* 25.2). This

implies that after Christ's victory over death, Hades ceases to exist (cf. Rev. 20.14) and the dead meet their fate immediately at death.

FATE OF THE SINNERS: PUNISHMENTS IN HELL

Hell is characterized by fire and darkness, sometimes also by filth and stench or smoke and sulphur. These are based on biblical imagery. Sheol, the traditional world of the dead, is a gloomy dark place (Job 10.21–2), and sulphur and fire are the means by which God destroys his enemies (Gen. 19.24). Similarly in the New Testament writings, sinners will be cast out into the outer darkness (Matt. 8.12, 22.13, 25.30) and their destination is an eternal fire (Matt. 13.42, 25.41) or a fiery lake that burns with sulphur (Rev. 19.20, 20.10, 21.8). Other New Testament images also abound: the punished sinners weep and gnash their teeth (Matt. 8.12, 24.51) and are chastised by a worm that never rests (Mark 9.44–8; cf. Isa. 66.24). According to the *Apocalypse of Paul*, one part of the place of punishments has 'nothing else but cold and snow' (*Ap. Paul* 42)—a characteristic that inspired later imagination (cf. Dante, *Inferno* 34).

One of the earliest, detailed accounts of hell, called simply the 'place of punishment' (τόπος κολ[ά]σεως) can be found in the *Apocalypse of Peter* (7–12 in the Ge'ez version, 21–34 in the Akhmîm text). It describes the place as very rough (αὐχμηρότατον) and both the punished people and their punishing angels as having 'dark raiment in accordance with the air of the place'. Peter sees different groups of sinners who suffer from different punishments, some of which directly correspond to their sins (measure-for-measure punishments). Many of these are so-called hanging punishments; people are hung by the body part that has caused them to sin: the blasphemers by the tongue, seducers of men by the neck and the plaited hair, men who slept with these women by the loins (thus the Ge'ez) or feet (thus the Greek), a euphemism for genitals. All these sinners are placed over an unquenchable fire. Other groups of sinners mentioned in the text include deniers of righteousness, murderers and their associates, women who have procured abortion, committers of infanticide, persecutors and betrayers of the righteous, slanderers and false witnesses, rich who have neglected widows and orphans, usurers, idol worshippers (described as men laying with men and women laying with women), makers of idols, and those who have forsaken the way of God. The Ge'ez version adds to the list those who have not honoured and obeyed their parents, girls who have not kept their virginity, disobedient servants, hypocrites, and sorcerers. Each group has a particular punishment assigned for it comprising of eternally flaming fire, flesh-devouring worms and beasts, chastising angels, etc. (Buchholz 1988: 206–338; Bauckham 1998: 205–21; Bremmer 2010: 309–18).

An even longer and more elaborate description of the fate of the dead appears in the *Apocalypse of Paul* which proved to be immensely popular, inspiring several later such descriptions. The *Apocalypse of Paul* is often assumed to have been influenced by the *Apocalypse of Peter* (Bernstein 1993: 293) but the closer relationship of the texts is not easy to infer, not least due to the fact that the bulk of the texts are preserved in different languages—the *Apocalypse of Peter* in Ge'ez and Greek, the *Apocalypse of Paul* in Latin, Syriac, and Coptic. Moreover, similar traditions of otherworldly punishments also appear in other texts. Perhaps the oldest occurrence of the so-called hanging punishments is in the *Apocryphon of Elijah,* presumably a Jewish work but preserved in an early Christian apocryphon, the *Epistle of Titus* (Bauckham 1998: 89). The author of this text quotes the 'prophet Elias' who in a vision saw a deep valley burning with sulphur and describes the different punishments of the souls of sinners he saw there.

The place of punishment in the *Apocalypse of Paul* is a place where 'there was no light, but darkness and sorrow and sadness' (*Ap*. *Paul* 31). There is a river of boiling fire and men and women immersed in it, some up to their knees, some up to their navels, some up to their lips, some up to their hair. Deep pits are filled with the souls of those 'who did not hope in the Lord', one on top of the other. Paul wonders whether the pits are deep enough to hold all the souls of the next thirty to forty generations but the angel assures him: 'The Abyss has no measure' (*Ap*. *Paul* 32). Unlike the *Apocalypse of Peter*, however, where the categories of sinners are distinguished mainly on moral grounds, the sins punished in the *Apocalypse of Paul* are first and foremost ecclesiastical and doctrinal (Czachesz 2007: 130–4). The emphasis is on distinguishing between true and false Christians and punishments—some again measure for measure and depicted as hanging punishments—are distributed, e.g., to those who have occupied themselves in idle disputes after church, committed sins after having taken part in the Eucharist, slandered each other at church gatherings, or planned evil against their neighbours. Church officers who have acted improperly or failed to act according to strict moral standards, such as presbyters, bishops, deacons, and readers, are listed separately, as well as usurers, magicians, adulterers (explicitly both men and women), and those who have harmed orphans, widows, and the poor, etc. (*Ap*. *Paul* 32–40).

The worst punishments, however, are reserved for those who err on doctrinal grounds. Those who 'do not confess that Christ has come in the flesh and that the Virgin Mary brought him forth, and those who say that the bread and cup of the Eucharist of blessing are not the body and blood of Christ' are placed in a well in the north that is sealed with seven seals. When Paul opens the cover, an evil stench comes out and he sees 'fiery masses glowing on all sides' (*Ap*. *Paul* 41). Those 'who say that Christ did not rise from the dead and that this flesh will not rise again' are in a cold and snow, gnashing their teeth while a worm that never rests devours them (*Ap*. *Paul* 42).

Similar lists of otherworldly torments also occur in some apocryphal acts of apostles. In the *Acts of Thomas*, the apostle restores the life of a young woman who was murdered by her former lover (*Acts of Thomas* 51–61). She recounts in detail what horrible punishments she saw while dead. An ugly-looking man in filthy clothing comes to receive her soul and takes her to a 'fearful and grievous place' with many chasms and a heavy stench. She sees souls hung upon fiery wheels, crying and lamenting, and others wallowing in mud full of worms, gnashing their teeth, yet others hung by the tongue, by the hair, by the hands or by the feet head-downward—each according to the sin committed. Some of the souls are fully consumed by these punishments, the rest are imprisoned in a dark cavern. Thomas confirms her testimony: 'There are not only these punishments but also others worse than these.'

A similar episode is told in the opening scene of the *Acts of Philip* (1.5–13). The apostle meets a widow who is burying her only son. Philip raises the son up and he reports what he has seen in hell. In one of the two extant versions (manuscript V), the son only says: 'I saw there tortures and punishments that the human tongue cannot tell.' The other version (manuscript A) gives a detailed description of the scenes. For example, a man who in his life tyrannized others and slandered bishops and presbyters is thrown into an infernal pit (λάκκος ταρταροῦχος), where he gnashes his teeth and an angel with a fiery sword tortures him. A young man who did not respect his parents or a presbyter and who insulted a virgin by calling her a prostitute lies on a bed of ember with his ribs jutting out. The flames turn into fiery snakes that spring up and devour him. A man and a woman are tied to the gate of Hades with chains of fire and a three-headed dog Cerberus devours them, holding their livers in its paws. The archangel Michael, who is guiding the dead man, explains that they will be tortured by the beast until the great day of judgement because they have slandered and spoken against the just, that is, against virgins and eunuchs who live in

purity and against different church office holders (bishops and both male and female presbyters and deacons are mentioned).

The son and his mother, who are explicitly described as worshippers of pagan gods, repent and become Christians and many others convert with them (*Acts of Philip* 1.18). A similar outcome is reported in the *Acts of Thomas* (58–9). The vivid accounts of the afterlife guide the audience—first and foremost the audience of the acts—to repent by giving them a warning as to what will happen if they fail to do so (Copeland 2007: 85).

Repentance is not possible after death. In several scenes of punishments the sinners lament and cry for mercy, but at the same time they acknowledge that they are rightfully punished (*Ap*. *Peter* 13; *Acts of Philip* 1.6). Often the seer is moved to compassion, protests that it would have been better for the sinners not to have been born, and pleads for mercy for the damned, invoking God's goodwill towards his creation (*Ap*. *Peter* 3; *Ap*. *Paul* 42–4). Sometimes angels, such as the archangel Michael (*Ap*. *Paul* 43–4), virgins and eunuchs (*Acts of Philip* 1.7–8), or other saints are mentioned as praying for the sinners. The living can also pray for the dead, like the apostles (*Ep*. *Apost*. 40) and Thecla (*Acts of Paul and Thecla* 28–9) do. Sometimes God hears the prayers of the righteous and grants a temporary rest from the torments—be that for the whole of the Lord's day (*Ap*. *Paul* 44) or three days starting on Sunday (Ethiopic *Liber Requiei* 100; or nine hours on Sundays according to some manuscripts), or a week (the Ethiopic *Apocalypse of the Virgin*) or fifty days (the Greek *Apocalypse of the Virgin* 29; some manuscripts define this as the period between Easter and Pentecost). These, however, are mere concessions; they do not change the fate of the damned.

PARADISE AND ETERNAL LIFE

The most common characteristics of the abode of the blessed include light, glory, beauty, and brightness, often depicted as surpassing the brightness of the sun. The fate of the righteous dead is frequently described as rest. Death is not death but eternal life: 'perpetual rest that will endure for ever' (*History of Joseph the Carpenter* 24). However, compared to the vivid and detailed descriptions of the punishments of sinners in hell, most texts have much less to say about the fate of the blessed. Portrayals of hell excited the early Christian imagination more than those of paradise, judging from the fact that the most detailed account of the fate of the blessed in the *Apocalypse of Paul*—where originally a description of hell was sandwiched between two accounts of paradise—was excluded from several later copies that only included the description of the punishments (Elliott 1993: 616).

In the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the description of paradise is closely connected to the transfiguration scene (cf. Matt. 17.1–8 and parallels). When Jesus takes his disciples to a mountain to pray with him they see two men with a shining glorious appearance whiter than snow and redder than rose. The Ge'ez text identifies them as Moses and Elijah, while the Greek version speaks only of 'your righteous brothers'. The vision motivates Peter to ask where all the righteous are. Jesus shows him a region outside of this world. It is a garden with wonderful trees of blessed fruit and pleasant fragrance. According to the Greek text, it is 'exceedingly bright with light and the air of that place is illuminated with the rays of the sun … And the inhabitants in that place were clad with the raiment of shining angels, and their raiment was like their land. And angels ran round about them there. And the glory of those who dwelt there was equal, and with one voice they praised the Lord God, rejoicing in that place' (*Ap*. *Peter* 15–20).

The Ge'ez version of the *Apocalypse of Peter* situates this paradise in heaven and treats it as the final destination of the righteous. In the *Apocalypse of Thomas*, on the other hand, paradise is where the righteous spirits and souls dwell between death and the day of judgement. At judgement they will come out of paradise and be reunited with the body. The righteous will then be overshadowed by a cloud which will change their bodies 'into the image and likeness and the honour of the holy angels and into the power of the image of my holy Father' and be lifted up to heaven where they will 'remain in the light and honour of my Father'. The *Apocalypse of Paul* links paradise closely with the expectation of the Messianic age. Paradise is the 'land of promise' where Christ will dwell with his saints and reign over them for a thousand years (*Ap. Paul* 22–3). This earthly paradise is the primordial paradise from which humankind has been excluded ever since the fall and which is reserved for the righteous dead. Four rivers flow there, a river of milk, of honey, of wine, and of oil. These rivers are identified with those in paradise (Pison, Euphrates, Gion, and Tigris; cf. Gen. 2.10–14).

The land of promise is full of trees and vines that yield an abundant harvest. Such imagery was widely disseminated in early Jewish and Christian traditions and is also attested by an independent, apocryphal saying of Jesus, preserved by Irenaeus who says he is quoting from a writing of Papias. According to this so-called *agraphon*, 'the Lord used to teach in regard to these times and say: The days will come, in which vines shall grow, each having ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each true twig ten thousand shoots, and in each one of the shoots ten thousand clusters, and on every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give five and twenty metretes of wine' (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.33.3–4; cf. *2 Bar.* 29).

According to the description of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, this abundant paradise is reserved for the end of time. The souls of the righteous already see paradise but will be able to enjoy it when the thousand-year reign begins. The way to paradise goes through a golden door, above which there are two columns of gold full of golden letters. These are the names of the just; only 'those who have goodness and purity of body' may enter through the door. These are those who have been chaste in their marriage ('who kept the chastity of their nuptials'), while virgins and 'those who hunger and thirst after righteousness' (cf. Matt. 5.6) will receive rewards seven times greater. This is the 'City of Christ', which can be reached by taking a golden ship on the Acherusian Lake. The City is all gold, with twelve walls and the four rivers of paradise encircling it (cf. Rev. 21.11–21). Old Testament prophets as well as the victims of Herod's infanticide and 'they who devoted themselves to God with their whole heart and had no pride in themselves' dwell along these rivers ready to receive the blessed (*Ap. Paul* 23–8). In the heart of the city, inside the twelve walls that have twelve gates with twelve thrones, there is a great altar by which David sings psalms. This is the heavenly Jerusalem and David sings psalms whenever the oblation of the body and blood of Christ takes place: 'as it is performed in heaven, so also on earth' (*Ap. Paul* 29).

The influence of the *Apocalypse of Paul* can be detected in the several apocalypses associated with the Virgin Mary (Bauckham 1998: 332–62). The Syriac *Transitus Mariae*, an apocryphal text depicting the death of the Virgin, includes a description of the paradise of Eden where Mary is brought after her death. This is the place reserved for the righteous but evidently the more ordinary dead may only enter after 'the day of resurrection'. It includes several departments, called 'the mansions of the just', 'the tents of the sons of light', and 'the couches of the martyrs'. Mary is taken on a tour through three heavens up to the heaven of heavens to the heavenly Jerusalem which has twelve walls with twelve gates, each bearing the name of an apostle. At each gate stands an apostle accompanied by angels. Unlike the *Apocalypse of Paul*, however, where the City of Christ is situated at the edge of

the world and not in heaven ready to receive righteous dead, this heavenly city is the dwelling place of God and the Virgin only sees the 'tabernacles of the just', as well as Gehenna, from there.

Another apocryphal text that includes the idea of multiple heavens is the Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul* from the Nag Hammadi Library (NHC V, 2). It describes Paul's ascent from the third heaven up to the tenth heaven. After passing the places of judgement in the fifth and sixth heaven, Paul arrives at the seventh heaven where an old man sits on a throne that is seven times brighter than the sky. This is the creator God who lords over principalities and authorities and his dwelling place is not where Paul is headed to. Following the instruction of the Holy Spirit who is with him, Paul gives the old man the sign that he has, the man opens for Paul, and he ascends higher. In the Ogdoad, the eighth heaven, he meets the twelve apostles. Together they go up to the ninth heaven where Paul greets those who are there (whose identity is not revealed) and goes up to the tenth heaven where he greets his 'fellow spirits' who are there.

The future blessedness of the righteous is also emphasized in several apocryphal acts. One of the characteristics of the *Acts of Thomas* is to contrast the transient physical life and the everlasting spiritual life. The life to come is characterized by joy, rest, liberty, and immortality (*Acts of Thomas* 142). Two episodes give a glimpse of this other world. In the first one, Thomas and a merchant Abban promise a king to build him a palace. The king sends them huge riches for the project but they distribute the funds to the poor. When the king finds out about this and demands to see the palace, the apostle answers: 'Now you cannot see it, but you shall see it when you depart this life.' The king becomes angry, throws Thomas and Abban into prison and plans to have them killed. In the meantime, the brother of the king dies and angels take his soul to heaven and show him heavenly mansions and palaces, among them the one Thomas has built for the king. The brother is allowed to depart back to life. When he tells about what he has seen, both the king and his brother convert (*Acts of Thomas* 21–5).

The other episode is about a young man whom a huge serpent, the Devil himself, has killed out of jealousy because the man had sex with a beautiful woman. Thomas restores the man to life and the man converts because he had seen the beauty and radiance of the life to come (*Acts of Thomas* 30–8). Interestingly, in both episodes people who are not Christians but sinners are taken to see the future bliss, not the torments of hell.

RESURRECTION AND SALVATION

In the eschatological scenarios in texts such as the *Apocalypse of Peter*, resurrection is needed for judgement: at the end of the world, the soul will be reunited with the raised body and judged together with it (*Ap. Peter* 4; cf. *Ep. Apost.* 21). Resurrection, however, is only the first step to eternal salvation. The ultimate goal of the righteous after the judgement will be a transformation: they will be clothed with 'the raiment of the life that is above' (*Ap. Peter* 13). Their bodies will correspond to the incorruptible heavenly life 'where there is no eating and drinking and no mourning and singing and neither earthly garment nor perishing' (*Ep. Apost.* 19). This, however, is not the only way of envisioning salvation in early Christian apocryphal texts. Several other texts discuss salvation using terms other than resurrection. Yet further texts speak about resurrection but understand it in a sense other than bodily resurrection following the tradition in the Gospel of John according to which Jesus promises that anyone who believes in him 'has eternal life, and does not come under judgement but has passed from death to life' (John 5.24).

The *Gospel of Thomas* (NHC II, 2) is an example of a text that does not anticipate any cosmic turn of history (Gathercole 2011). When the disciples ask Jesus when 'the rest of the dead' will take place and the new world will come, Jesus answers: 'What you are looking forward to has come, but you do not know it' (*Gos. Thom.* 51). The Kingdom of God is a present reality; the *eschaton* is not something that will happen in the future and the kingdom is not a place that is located somewhere and that might be entered (*Gos. Thom.* 3, 18, 113). The Kingdom is spread everywhere, 'within you and outside you' (*Gos. Thom.* 3). The goal for the followers of Jesus is to come to know themselves and to understand that they are children of the living Father. Those who understand it and who discover the true meaning of Jesus' words, will never die (*Gos. Thom.* 1, 18, 19, 111).

Salvation as something to obtain while still in the body appears in several other texts as well. In the *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I, 2), the risen Jesus speaks about the kingdom of heaven where he is going and from where he has come and advises his disciples to come with him. When the disciples consent, Jesus replies: 'Verily I say unto you, no one will ever enter the kingdom of heaven at my bidding, but (only) because you yourselves are full. Leave James and Peter to me, that I may fill them' (1.19–35). The text does not clarify what this filling might mean but it is clearly something that can be achieved during one's lifetime. In a similar vein, the *Apocryphon of John* talks about 'perfection' which can be achieved by the aid of the Spirit of life that reveals knowledge of one's true spiritual self. The perfect ones will not be distracted by passions such as anger, envy, jealousy, desire, or greed. Their only restraint is the flesh but when they will be freed from it (at death?) they will inherit eternal, imperishable life (*Apocr. John* [NHC II, 1] 25.23–26.6). The ultimate goal is to achieve final rest by defeating the worldly powers and the passions they occasion (King 2006: 141–2).

Salvation as obtainable in this life is also described in the *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II, 3). In a polemical fashion against those who imagine that the resurrection takes place only after death, the author declares: 'Those who say they will die first and then rise are in error. If they do not first receive the resurrection while they live, when they die they will receive nothing.' (*Gos. Phil.* 73.1–8). Even though the emphasis is on this life, something will also happen after death: 'While we are in this world it is fitting for us to acquire the resurrection, so that when we strip off the flesh we may be found in rest and not walk in the middle' (*Gos. Phil.* 66.16–20). The 'middle' represents death, the most evil place (*Gos. Phil.* 66.13–15). Resurrection seems to be linked with awakening from ignorance, for 'ignorance is the mother of all evil. Ignorance will result in death, because those who come from ignorance neither were nor are nor shall be' (*Gos. Phil.* 83.30–5).

Strikingly, the *Gospel of Philip* not only uses resurrection language in connection with salvation, it explicitly speaks of the resurrection of the flesh (σάρξ), even though at the same time it rejects the belief of the resurrection of the earthly body (*Gos. Phil.* 56.26–32, 57.9–19). It seems that the writer of the *Gospel of Philip* denounces those who think that the earthly flesh will rise but he does not reject the resurrection of all flesh. The spirit cannot rise alone, without a body, otherwise it would be naked; but the true clothing for it is the flesh and blood of Jesus. Resurrection is closely linked to the Eucharist (Schmid 2007: 171–8).

Similar views are expounded in yet another Nag Hammadi text, the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I, 4). As the name of the writing indicates, resurrection is its central theme and the author advises the recipients of the text never to doubt the reality of resurrection. The author is clearly elaborating Paul's view on resurrection and the text is full of allusions to the letters of the apostle. Resurrection is called 'a spiritual resurrection' and described as an ascent of the soul to heaven at death, 'not being restrained by anything'

(*Treat. Res*. 45.35–40). At death, the earthly body is left behind but this is only 'the visible members which are dead'. The 'living members which exist within them' will arise. (*Treat. Res*. 47.31–48.3). In an obscure passage, the author also speaks of receiving flesh at ascension (*Treat. Res*. 47.1–16) which, however, cannot be the earthly flesh but seems to refer to the invisible, spiritual members that will rise ([Lundhaug 2009](#)).

Resurrection is understood as something achievable in this life also in the apocryphal acts of apostles. Several of them speak both about physical resurrection and spiritual resurrection. The former, however, does not bring about immortality; raising someone from the dead means bringing him or her back to (earthly) life (*Acts of John* 19–25, 30–6, 38–47, 48–54, 63–86; *Acts of Thomas* 30–3, 54, 75–81; *Acts of Philip* 1.4, 2.23–4, 6.19; *Acts of Peter* 26–8). Spiritual resurrection, on the other hand, is a metaphor for conversion. The dead are those who are spiritually dead and in need of repentance. The new life is manifest in a new, often ascetically inclined lifestyle. There is little speculation on life after physical death. In the *Acts of John*, the devout Drusiana begs God to 'remove me to you at once' (*Acts of John* 64) which sounds like an immediate ascent to heaven after death. Similarly, wicked people who are revived to get another chance tell about immediate torments in hell (*Acts of Thomas* 55–8; *Acts of Philip* 1.1–18).

Resurrection and an ascetic lifestyle are especially closely linked in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, which forms one part in the composite *Acts of Paul*. Paul's preaching is summarized as 'the word of God about abstinence and the resurrection' (*Acts of Paul and Thecla* 5), and Paul's adversaries claim that he teaches that 'otherwise there is no resurrection for you, except you remain chaste and do not defile the flesh, but keep it pure' (*Acts of Paul and Thecla* 12). However, converting to an ascetic life is not the resurrection, as in other apocryphal acts. Resurrection is something that will take place in the future (*Acts of Paul and Thecla* 14) and that event is linked to the day of judgement (*Acts of Paul and Thecla* 38). The *Acts of Paul* also includes an apocryphal letter of the apostle to Corinthians, the so-called *3 Corinthians*. This letter advocates a literal resurrection of the flesh; in some manuscripts, it even bears the title 'Concerning the Flesh'. The letter is not explicit about when the resurrection will take place but since it also anticipates the second coming of Christ, the resurrection is likely to happen together with Christ's return. As to the fate of the unbelievers, the letter intriguingly states: 'And those who say that there is no resurrection of the flesh shall have no resurrection, for they do not believe him who had thus risen' (*3 Cor*. 3.24–5). These emphases remind, once more, that the apocryphal acts—and all early Christian apocryphal texts—must be treated individually, respecting their own literary genre and theological profile ([Lehtipuu 2015](#): 173–85).

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LITURGY AND EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

HARALD BUCHINGER

'APOCRYPHAL' TESTIMONIES AND THE EARLY HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN LITURGY

The Reassessment of Early Christian Apocrypha as Liturgical Sources

IN liturgical scholarship the historical assessment of Early Christian Apocrypha has undergone a veritable shift of paradigm (Bradshaw 2002; Meßner 2003): whereas only one generation ago they used to be considered as testimonies of deviant, if not heretic minority traditions by many authors, nowadays most liturgical historians take them impartially along with other sources as evidence for a multifaceted picture of early liturgy, in some cases even as key witnesses to major lines of liturgical developments. They become all the more precious as no other direct liturgical sources in the strict sense of the word—that is, books or at least texts which were written for actual liturgical use—have survived from the first three centuries apart from a few pseudo-apostolic church orders (which themselves are of dubious historical value), and some rare quotations and random hints in patristic literature. Furthermore, models of continuous liturgical development have become suspect: the classical shape of liturgy as it emerges in later fourth-century sources—mainly mystagogies and homilies which for the first time disclose developed series of both, sacramental liturgies and celebrations in the rhythm of time—seems at least as much an innovation as it may have grown organically out of earlier forms and conventions (which, of course, is true for some traditions of baptismal and eucharistic celebrations which were to become dominant in wide parts of the Mediterranean basin and beyond). The cult of the imperial church is the result of profound changes; the ritual response to the challenges of the Constantinian turn substantially transformed the shape, function, and meaning of Christian liturgy which was to become the public cult of a Christianized state and the worship of baptized masses (see the chapters by Kinzig, Wallraff, and Bradshaw in Kinzig, Volp, and Schmidt 2011: 3–98). It is evident that this shifting framework changes the perception of testimonies which formerly were often considered as marginal or defective.

Initiation: Apocryphal Acts in their Greater Syrian Context

Though as early as 1970 Georg Kretschmar had done justice to the apocryphal acts of the apostles as representative witnesses to ante-Nicene baptism in the Syriac and Greek East, it is not until quite recently that a 'Syrian tradition' has been distinguished as tantamount to an alternative to the mainstream celebrations in Mediterranean cities, as witnessed from the early third century on by Tertullian and others (though generally, as Paul Bradshaw 2002: 144 has put it, the investigation of early Christian initiation is 'a study in diversity'). Meanwhile it has become textbook knowledge that especially the *Acts of Thomas* witness to a liturgical shape and theological understanding which differs significantly from what can be gained not only from Western sources but also from later Eastern patristic testimonies (Meßner 2009: 86–92, with excellent bibliography, to which now Myers 2010 has to be added; further sources in Whitaker 2003).

Two baptismal episodes are depicted in some detail in the *Acts of Thomas*: the baptism of king Gundafor and his brother in chs 26–7, and of Vazan and his family in chs 157–8; several shorter references confirm and complete this evidence. The general outline of the rite can be summarized as shown in Table 20.1.

After an anointing of the head by the apostle, in most instances there follows a water-bath 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. It should be noticed, however, that in at least two texts of the Greek version, chapters 27 and 49, this water-rite is missing—whereas in turn the Syriac version of ch. 49 consistently replaces the 'sealing' of a possessed woman with baptism in the waters of a stream; this has been interpreted as evidence for initiation by oil alone and in any case demonstrates the paramount importance of the anointing which is well documented in Syrian baptismal theology.

Only in some cases does the anointing of the head lead into an unction of the whole body, showing however that concern for decency—especially with regard to women—that generally characterizes early Syrian Christianity. The fact that in the first line the head is anointed points to the Old Testament background of royal and priestly unction, though this reference is not expressly stated (which, however, is the case in the Syriac *Didascalia* 16 hailing from roughly the same period and region). The accompanying prayers oscillate in their direction between Christ and the Spirit. They reveal a highly differentiated pneumatology, making the communication of the Holy Spirit a central—though by no means exclusive—element of baptism (which, of course, is complemented by the eucharistic celebration with its by definition christological focus); in line with Syriac grammar and theology, the Spirit is addressed with female metaphors and attributes. Illumination (which is also set in scene in chs 26–7 by narrative means; cf. quite similarly the *Acts of Paul* as on Papyrus Hamburg, pp. 3–4 / Bodmer XLI, pp. 13–14, and the Latin *Acts of Peter* 5), forgiveness of sins and rebirth of the new man are further theologoumena (chs 131–2), as are the defence of the enemy (an apotropaic, if not implicitly exorcistic notion in chs 49 and 157) and the salvation of souls and bodies (ch. 157); and last but not least one should not forget that the passion of Christ and his cross are likewise not missing from one of the epicleseis over the oil (chs 121 and 157).

Table 20.1 Initiation in the *Acts of Thomas* in their Syrian context

Acts of Thomas		Syriac *Didascalia*, c.9; 16	
c.26–27 (♂)	c.157 (♂ + ♀)		
generally: seal		generally: gift of the Spirit, sealing, rebirth, liberation from sins	
illumination			
entrance into the bath (Syriac version only)	stripping (♀ by a woman) und girdling		
voice: 'Peace be with you' (liturgical quotation?)			
unction with oil	**unction with oil**	**unction with oil**	
at the edge of a cistern (Syriac version only)		men:	women:
unction of the head by the apostle (= bishop?) + epiclesis ('Come'; directed to the Spirit)	epiclesis ('Come'; to Christ; Spirit in 3rd person) unction of the head by the apostle (= bishop?) + interpretative word 'in your name, Christ …'	imposition of hands and unction of the head	imposition of hands and unction of the head by the bishop
		proclamation as child of God (using Ps. 2:7): liturgical quotation?	
	unction of the whole body	unction of the body	unction of the body if possible by a female deacon
	men	women	
	by the apostle	by a woman	
interpretation: seal	'forgiveness of sins, protection from the enemy, salvation of the soul (Syriac: and body)	interpretation: OT unction of priests and kings	
water–bath (Syriac version only)	**water–bath**	**water–bath**	
'in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit'	in/unto the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit	with 'invocation of the divine names'	
by the apostle (= bishop?)	by the apostle (= bishop?)	in any case by a male (bishop, presbyter, or deacon)	
apparition of light			
baptismal Eucharist (breaking of bread [only?])	**baptismal Eucharist** (bread and cup)	**baptismal Eucharist**	

c.49f. (♀): 'seal': only imposition of hands and 'sealing' (Syriac version instead: 'baptism' in a river) 'unto the name of the Father …'—baptismal Eucharist
c.121 (♀): unction of the head by the apostle—stripping + girdling—(Syriac version: unction of the whole body by a woman)—water-bath 'in the name of the Father …'—baptismal Eucharist
c.131f. (♀): catechesis—unction of the head + prayer (praise of the Spirit)—water-bath unto the name of the Father …—baptismal Eucharist

	Syriac version	Greek version
ch. 26	And they … begged of him that they might receive the sign …	And they begged of him that they also might henceforth receive the seal of the word ('orthodox' variant: of the bath) …
	And the king commanded that the bath should be closed for seven days and that no one should bathe in it. And when the seven days were done, on the eighth day they three entered into the bath by night that Judas might baptize them.	
		And he (i.e. the apostle) commanded them to bring oil, that they might receive the seal by oil. They brought the oil therefore,
	And many lamps were lighted in the bath.	and lighted many lamps, for it was night.
	And when they had entered into the bath-house, Judas went in before them.	And the apostle arose and sealed them.
27	And our Lord appeared to them, and said to them: 'Peace with you, my brothers!' And they heard the voice only, but the form they did not see whose it was, for till now they had not been baptized.	And the Lord was revealed to them by a voice saying: 'Peace to you, brothers!' And they heard his voice only, but his form they did not see, for they had not yet received the added sealing of the seal.
	And Judas went up and stood upon the edge of the cistern, and poured oil upon their heads, and said:	And the apostle took the oil and poured it upon their heads and anointed and chrismed them, and began to say:
	'Come, holy name of the Messiah. Come, power of grace, which is from on high. Come, perfect compassion. Come, exalted gift. Come, sharer of the blessing. Come, revealer of hidden mysteries. Come, mother of the seven houses, whose rest was in the eighth house. Come, messenger of reconciliation; and communicate with the mind of these youths. Come, Spirit of holiness, and purify their reins and hearts'.	'Come, holy name of the Christ that is above every name. Come, power of the Most High, and the compassion that is perfect. Come, most high gift. Come, compassionate mother. Come, communion of the male. Come, revealer of the hidden mysteries. Come, mother of the seven houses, that your rest may be in the eighth house. Come, elder of the five members, mind, thought, reflection, consideration, reason; communicate with these youths. Come, holy Spirit, and purify their reins and their hearts,
	And he baptized them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit of Holiness.	and give them the added seal, in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'
	And when they had come up out of the water,	And when they were sealed,
	a youth appeared to them, and he was holding a lighted taper; and the light of the lamps became pale through its light. And when they (Greek: he) had gone forth, he became invisible to them. And the apostle said (Greek: to the Lord): '(Greek: O Lord, your light is not to be contained by us.) We were not even able to bear your light, because it is too great for our vision'. And when it dawned and was morning, he broke the Eucharist (Greek: the bread) and made them partake in the table of the Messiah (Greek: in the Eucharist of the Christ). And they were glad and rejoicing. (Translation adapted from Klijn 2003)	

Comparing this earliest Syrian evidence with baptism of the 'Mediterranean' type (the basic features of which are already attested by Tertullian at the beginning of the third century), one notices: firstly, the absence of any ritual element after the water-bath (except, of course, for the Eucharist); secondly, the dominance of the pre-baptismal anointing, which in some contexts even appears as the only rite of initiation; and thirdly, the absence of any catechumenal rite. Fourthly, it has to be stressed that there is no explicit confession of faith connected to the core rite of baptism; of its negative counterpart, the baptismal renunciation, there is no trace whatsoever. Separation from Satan and from the World does not appear as a concern of the earliest Syrian baptismal tradition. On the theological level, one observes the dominance of a highly developed pneumatology, leaving relatively little space for the understanding of baptism as participation in the death and resurrection of Christ (which indeed is only alluded to once, and only in an indirect way, in ch. 121, but broadly expanded in the baptismal Eucharist of ch. 158).

It can only very briefly be mentioned here that, firstly, the picture emerging from the *Acts of Thomas* is totally consistent with the contemporary evidence of the Syriac *Didascalia* and the later testimony of Ephraem, whose baptismal theology likewise concentrates on the unction, and that, secondly, essential traits of the basic shape of the Syrian tradition of initiation do prevail well into post-Constantinian times: in later fourth-century Syria, the transition from 'Syrian' initiation without post-baptismal anointing to the 'Mediterranean' type of initiation with pre-baptismal unction, water-bath, and post-baptismal chrismation of the head can be observed from John Chrysostom, who testifies to 'sealing', i.e., a consignation with chrism, before the immersion, yet already testifies to its apotropaic interpretation, via Theodore of Mopsuestia, who knows a post-baptismal signation of the front, accompanied by a Trinitarian formula, as 'sealing', to the Apostolic Constitutions, which complement a pre-baptismal unction (which, however, is still interpreted pneumatologically) with a post-baptismal 'sealing' with myron. It is not unlikely that primitive Constantinopolitan practice as witnessed by Gregory Nazianzen and Proclus also followed the 'Syrian' pattern.

Composed most likely at the turn of the fourth to the fifth century, the Syriac *History of John, the Son of Zebedee* (the Syriac *Acts of John*, not to be confounded with the earlier Greek text of that name), contains several baptismal scenes. Their basic shape follows the traditional Syrian structure of consignation with oil followed by the immersion (and the Eucharist), but the whole ritual appears somewhat developed. Firstly, both the 'consecration of the oil' and also the benediction of the water are followed by the apparition of two angels crying the Trishagion; furthermore, a proper epicletic prayer over both elements is quoted in one case. Secondly, a double profession of faith in the Trinity immediately precedes the core rite of consignation of the forehead and anointing of the body, and also the immersion, which itself is accompanied by a Trinitarian invocation (a key document for the development of the baptismal formula as such); the account of the conversion of the priests of Artemis even contains a renunciation, though not immediately connected to their baptism. Thirdly, there follows a clothing in white garments and a kiss of peace with a respective greeting. Though the latter post-baptismal elements may show the influence of the 'Mediterranean' mainstream, the fundamental pattern of early Syrian baptism is still clearly recognized.

Eucharist: Diverse Patterns of Celebration, Praying, and Theology

More or less developed accounts of Eucharist, ritual meals or breaking of bread are included in quite a few apocryphal texts (Bradshaw 2004; Meßner 2005, both with bibliography; additionally, see Meßner 2000; Prieur 2004; Merz 2008); the richest evidence again comes from the *Acts of Thomas*, followed by the Greek *Acts of John* and complemented by occasional references in the *Acts of Paul, Acts of Peter, Acts of Philip*, and some others besides. By far the most frequent occasions for such celebrations are reports of conversions, where the initiation culminates in the Eucharist (in the *Acts of Thomas*, this is in fact true for all five instances; furthermore, see the *Acts of Paul* on Papyrus Hamburg, pp. 3–4, which additionally takes place in the vigil from Saturday to Lord's Day, and Latin *Acts of Peter* 5; all the more striking is the absence of the Eucharist from the *Acts of Andrew* 10, whereas the summary given by Gregory of Tours (ch. 5) relates a breaking of bread before (!) a conversion which, however, does not explicitly mention baptism). Where the breaking of bread is connected with the commemoration of the deceased (*Acts of John* 72) or with resurrection stories (*Acts of John* 46, 72, 85), this is a narrative version of the widespread understanding of the Eucharist as a sacrament of immortality or imperishability (which is stressed in the prayer of *Acts of John* 109). In comparison to these occasional motives, celebrations of the Eucharist on Sunday appear only rarely and never just in the setting of a regular assembly (*Acts of John* 106: immediately before the passing of the apostle; *Acts of Peter* on Coptic Papyrus Berlin 8502, pp. 128–41: connected with healings; *Acts of Paul* as mentioned above: as initiatory Eucharist without further congregation).

It is not easy to fit the basic shape of these eucharistic accounts into the larger picture of early liturgical development. In recent scholarship it is no longer assumed that the 'mass type' of a bipartite service in which the Eucharist is no more a real meal and is preceded by a Liturgy of the Word was dominant at an early stage, because Justin's famous testimony stands quite alone for a long time. Conversely, there are serious indications that celebrations of a 'sympotic type' prevailed in Tertullian's North Africa and perhaps in Clement's Alexandria well into the third century; in eastern Syria, the transition to the 'mass type' might have taken place only in the fifth century around the synod of Seleukia-Ktesiphon of 410 (Meßner 2006, esp. 70–2, 85–6), whereas in the community behind *Didascalia* 12–13 it might have taken place considerably earlier. In this situation it is particularly noteworthy that virtually none of the apocryphal acts appears to hint at a sympotic context of the Eucharist—with one remarkable exception: the (albeit lacunuous) description of sumptuous feasting (*euōcheîsthai*) along with inspired talk and the singing of Davidic psalms and hymns during the whole-night vigil in the *Acts of Paul* on Papyrus Hamburg 6–7; there is no reason to infer a ritual or theological distinction between the eucharistic offering (*prosphorá*) and the feasting terminating the fasting in this text, which can instead by counted as one of the most explicitly eucharistic meal scenes of its time (the Coptic Papyrus Bodmer XLI, pp. 2, 19; 3, 20; 4, 1 in turn, repeatedly contains the term *agápē*). That the apocryphal acts of apostles do not contain testimonies for a developed liturgy of the Word either, may be due to the special context of the many initiatory celebrations of the Eucharist and the other rather exceptional occasions. Significant, however, might be the sequence in the *Acts of John* 46, where the Eucharist is preceded by a homily and prayer, which might point to a rudimentary 'mass-type' celebration, and the sequence of lengthy discourses (and healings) before the presumable Eucharist ('praising the name of the Lord Christ, he gave them all bread') on the Lord's Day in the *Acts of Peter* according to the Coptic Papyrus Berlin 8502, pp. 128–41; other summary references like the one of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 5 to the 'word about abstinence and resurrection' after mentioning the bowing of knee and breaking of bread are not very likely to reflect a ritual sequence. It may by the way

be mentioned, however, that the Latin *Acts of Peter* 20–1 relate a (non-eucharistic!) scene in a dining room with a reading from the gospel followed by a discourse of the apostle and common prayer which possibly allows a glimpse of a peculiar moment in the history of the celebration of the Word.

That no chalice is mentioned at all in any of the eucharistic scenes of the *Acts of John* and most of those of the *Acts of Thomas* (where a chalice is explicitly mentioned only twice: one in ch. 121, filled with water, and the other unspecified, but interpreted as the blood of Christ in ch. 158; in addition, the prayer of ch. 49 speaks of the eucharistic communion in 'body and blood' of Jesus, though only bread is mentioned in the ritual framework—the *argumentum e silentio* about the cup should therefore not be overstressed) point to the ascetic background of aquarian Eucharists which seem to have been quite common in different Late Antique contexts (for a cup with water, see also *Acts of Paul* on Papyrus Hamburg 4.4, and Latin *Acts of Peter* 2). Bread only is referred to in other scenes in the *Acts of Peter* (as on Coptic Papyrus Berlin 8502, p. 141, and in the Latin *Acts of Peter* 5— forming a different historical layer than ch. 2?), in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 5 (with explicit encratite scope), in the sympotic Eucharist of *Acts of Paul* on Papyrus Hamburg, pp. 6–7, and in the summary of *Acts of Andrew* given by Gregory of Tours, chs 5 and 20.

Almost every account follows the 'four-action-shape' of taking the elements, praying over them, breaking bread and giving it; the use of an interpretative verbal element and the affirmation with 'Amen' at the distribution might hint at liturgical customs, as does the incision of a cross between prayer and communion according to the *Acts of Thomas*, which also testifies to a developing preparation of the table (chs 49–50).

The prayers narrated to be used at these celebrations have attracted much attention in liturgical scholarship of the last generation. While those of the *Acts of John* are purely doxological and eucharistic, but do not contain any petition, those of the *Acts of Thomas* in turn consist basically of a highly developed epiclesis, built by an anaphor of imperatives, with 'come' directed to Christ and/or the Spirit (or, as in ch. 133, a petition that the 'power of the benediction' may come. The prayer over the bread in ch. 50 resembles the epiclesis over the oil of ch. 27 as quoted above in the tabulated extract very closely); table fellowship with Christ as guest or host of the meal (and not primarily the consumption of him as an object, though the species are explicitly identified with his body and blood) thus appears as a dominant concept of the Eucharist. It is to be noted that the *Gospel of Judas* likewise identifies the invocation of the name of Christ as the characteristic element of the Eucharist (cf. 'The Struggle about the (Re)interpretation of Christian Liturgy' below). It is interesting, though, that these epicleseis are nevertheless understood as praise or benediction (*eulogeîn*) in the context (*Acts of Thomas* 133, 158).

Significantly, none of these prayers is addressed to God the Father, as later mainstream and modern research held to be the norm (older scholarship took that as a 'sign of the heterodox character of the sources' (Jungmann in Hänggi and Pahl 1968: 74) or at least spoke of 'non-traditional forms' (Vogel 1980)), but rather to Christ (*Acts of John passim; Acts of Thomas* 49, 158; cf. also *Acts of Peter* on Coptic Papyrus Berlin 8502, 141; Latin *Acts of Peter* 5), to the bread identified with him (*Acts of Thomas* 133), or to the Spirit (*Acts of Thomas*, rest of instances); they thus complement the existing majority church documents of endeavours to establish and enforce the 'convention' to direct the *prosphorá* (a term used also in *Acts of John* 108 along with *eucharistía*; cf. also *Acts of Paul* on Papyrus Hamburg, pp. 4, 4; 6, 36; *Acts of Philip* 11, 9 etc.) to the Father—a directive formulated, for example, in the inestimable minutes of Origen's intervention at a bishops' meeting in mid-third-century Arabia documented in his *Dialogue with Herakleides and his fellow bishops* (4, 27–5, 7).

Though most prayers developed at length betray a highly developed christology, they rarely mention his passion (and resurrection, which in *Acts of John* 109 is not addressed as historically accomplished, but as 'shown forth' by Christ, whereas the motif is more present in the *Acts of Thomas*, where one prayer in ch. 158 gives a detailed account of elements of the passion), though forgiveness of sins recurs repeatedly in the *Acts of Thomas*; none of the texts refers to the canonical institution narrative (which possibly found its way into traditional eucharistic prayers only after the Constantinian turn, as if to remind the superficially converted masses of the biblical rationale of the Eucharist).

Further Elements of Early Christian Worship

Valuable attestations of other liturgical customs, too, come from apocryphal writings. The first substantial outline of a paschal vigil is given by the *Epistula Apostolorum* 15–17 (26–8); this is all the more significant since this text is the first and for a long time only description of a Christian celebration of Easter going into some detail beyond the mere breaking of the fast (the next being the Syriac *Didascalia* 21 of the third/fourth centuries; cf. Auf der Maur 2003). The *Acts of Paul* (Papyrus Hamburg, pp. 1, 31–2) corroborate relatively widespread other evidence for the character of Pentecost as a period characterized by the suppression of genuflection and fasting (Rouwhorst 2001).

The Syriac version of the *Acts of Thomas* 10 contains the by far earliest example of a nuptial blessing *in thalamo*, which shows a bipartite structure which would fit much more neatly in modern clichés of sacramental prayers than the epiclesis of Baptism and Eucharist in the same source; it is noteworthy that while the prayer is missing in the Greek version, a Latin adaptation of this document, the *Passion of the Holy Apostle Thomas* from sixth-century Gaul (ch. 10) substitutes the situational text of the narrative with a blessing which later is popular in liturgical books of Gaul, Spain, England, and Northern Europe. It has been argued that the liturgical custom as such of accompanying the introduction of the couple into the bridal chamber might have been inspired by the apocryphal account (Ritzer 1981, esp. 54–7; 207–9).

The quotation of the Lord's prayer in the *Acts of Thomas* 144, however (which, in fact, is the only full rendering of the text in ante-Nicene times beyond *Didache* 8 and the three great tracts and homilies of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen *On Prayer*), is not likely to betray a background in regular worship, though a certain literary connection to the baptismal instruction has been observed (Buchinger 2010). Noteworthy, however, are the many prayers in diverse situations (Houghton 2004).

LITERARY ACCOUNT AND LITURGICAL PRACTICE

It is evident that narrative depictions of liturgical acts cannot be totally absurd for the intended audience or readership; however, not every literary account must necessarily testify to an underlying ritual tradition. Not always is the liturgical practice of a certain community to be sought behind apocryphal stories. There are several methodological means to discern putative liturgical traditions from mere narrative fiction.

Independent Contemporary Evidence

The easiest case is when corroboration comes from independent historical witnesses, at best stemming from a close date and place. This is true for certain ritual aspects of Initiation and Eucharist and for the references to the celebration of Passover and Pentecost (as mentioned already) or to liturgical psalmody (cf. 'Aetiologies of Liturgical Practice?' below).

Text-immanent Cues

More sophisticated arguments draw on text-immanent cues pointing to a not merely literary character of certain passages. Literary critical indications in prayers may show that these texts are not only situational fiction; the double employment of almost identical epicletic pieces at Initiation and Eucharist in the *Acts of Thomas* 27 and 50 can be taken as an expression of liturgical convention, as may the oscillating direction of these and other prayers. Especially the rupture between the Spirit epiclesis in ch. 50 and the framing address of Christ to 'come and communicate' with the faithful may indicate the seam between pre-existing liturgical pieces.

Textual history likewise sheds light on the putative liturgical background of ritual scenes. If variants are particularly frequent in allegedly liturgical material, or if versions of liturgical episodes differ significantly and consistently (as is the case with baptismal accounts without the use of water in the Syriac *Acts of Thomas*), this is most likely caused by differences in the underlying ritual practice. Occasionally, textual criticism may reveal cases of 'orthodox corruption' of certain passages (e.g. as above in the Greek version of *Acts of Thomas* 26).

Aetiologies of Liturgical Practice?

Some apocryphal texts may not only reflect liturgical customs, but even be interpreted as aetiologies of contemporary practice. Without doubt this is true of the description of the psalmody in the heavenly Jerusalem of the *Apocalypse of Paul* 29–30, where the eschatological praise is performed in a way which clearly is motivated to provide a model for the liturgy of the church: in the—supposedly primitive—longer versions of this widely attested source, the aetiological aim 'as it is done in the heavens, so likewise is it below' is repeatedly stated and frames an unequivocal directive: 'for without David it is not lawful to offer a sacrifice unto God: but it is necessary that David sing praises at the hour of the offering of the body and blood of Christ: as it is performed in heaven, so also is it upon earth.' In fact, a number of early Christian texts testify to efforts to restrict the song repertoire of Christian assemblies to pious texts, if not to the biblical Psalms of David; the preference for 'Halleluja'-psalms with the community joining the psalmody with that response belongs to the best-documented features of early Christian liturgy at all (Quasten 1930; McKinnon 1987, with an excellent index referencing the sources. Hippolytus, Homily on Psalms 4, also gives a Davidic aetiology for the Halleluja-response). Furthermore, the connection between the reference to the Eucharist as sacrifice and the vision of David standing at the celestial altar may adumbrate a cultic understanding of Christian liturgy which in other Apocrypha gave rise to harsh polemics (see 'The Struggle about the (Re)interpretation of Christian Liturgy' below).

More obscure is the interpretation of the so-called 'dance-hymn' of the gospel passage concluding the *Acts of John*. The case has been made that the scene bears the traits of an

Institution narrative at the place of the Last Supper not only for its narrative setting in the congregation on the eve of the crucifixion but also for its responsorial character, the instruction to participate in song and dance as means of understanding, the potentially sacramental interpretation as 'mystery', and the explicit reciprocal correlation with the Passion. A background of this text in actual liturgy is widely assumed, but remains difficult to prove, even though altered versions of the scene recur in several later Coptic Apocrypha (Piovanelli 2012, with rich bibliography, to which Auf der Maur 1988 has to be added).

Liturgical Reception of Concrete Texts and Traditions

Cases in which the use of apocryphal material in liturgical texts and rites is likely to point to a historical background of narrative texts in actual liturgy could be called an a priori liturgical dimension of apocryphal accounts. A categorically different phenomenon is the liturgical use of apocryphal writings or traditions a posteriori—that is, the building of liturgical texts or rites on the basis of apocryphal material.

Reception History as an Indication of Supposable a priori Liturgical Character?

It may seem particularly appropriate to reason about real liturgies underlying the literary exposition when apocryphal material comes up in manifest liturgical sources; however, it is quite possible that some later liturgists secondarily turned narrative into ritual, and each of the known instances remains problematic for its own characteristic reasons, especially when alleged quotations or allusions have travelled over long distances and are integrated into new ritual contexts and greater literary units.

Most amazing is the reception of the eucharistic prayer from the *Acts of Thomas* in a basically Gallican-type palimpsest sacramentary manuscript which, having originally been copied in seventh-century Ireland and superscribed probably in the ninth century in the Benedictine abbey of Reichenau, later came to the Regensburg abbey of St Emmeram. Virtually the whole prayer of ch. 50 is integrated verbatim in the *Collectio* (*post sanctus*) of the proper eucharistic prayer for the Feast of the Circumcision, where it constitutes a remarkable example of an epicletic element in a Western anaphora. The literary dependence on the Late Antique Acts is close enough to situate the quotation in the known versions, and the editors explained it as evincing 'the same love of patristic texts the effect of which we can observe elsewhere in our book … and often in the Spanish and Gallican sacramentaries' (Dold and Eizenhöfer 1964: 108*; text: ibid. p. 44 § 38). Therefore it cannot be taken as evidence for an a priori liturgical character of the text, but rather belongs to their liturgical reception a posteriori.

Less literal echoes of the eucharistic prayer in the Greek *Acts of John* 109 have been identified in the Ethiopic *Anaphora of John the Evangelist*: to be precise, in the praise of Christ at the end of the *oratio christologica post sanctus*, and, more specifically, in a precommunion prayer connected with the fraction of which also the original text makes mention (Euringer 1934: 30–1 § 46; 54–7 §§ 108, 111); but given the late manuscript attestation, the composite character and the dark history of Ethiopic anaphoras, not too much can be inferred from this observation.

Closest in terms of historical vicinity, but loosest in terms of literary interdependence is Papyrus 1 from Kellis near the Dakhla oasis in the western desert of Egypt, originally part

of a Manichean library of the first half of the fourth century. The fragment clearly reflects material used in the eucharistic prayers of the *Acts of John* 85, 106, and 109, although 'the differences are too great and too complex' to suggest an excerpt from the latter (in spite of the striking consequence in the sequence of the common material). 'This might lead to the view that both the Manichaeans of Kellis and the compiler of the *AJ* made use of a collection of eucharistic prayers, and that the common tradition shared between them reflects their common but independent use of this source' (Jenkins 1995: 215)—a rare, but probably significant proof of the actual liturgical character of prayer texts in apocryphal acts. It is particularly astonishing that the papyrus prayer includes pieces from the more situational speech of the apostle in ch. 84 before the formal Eucharist; possible liturgical dimensions of these occasionally quite long passages preceding depictions of actual celebrations remain to be investigated.

Reception History as an a posteriori Phenomenon

Apocryphal traditions can be widely observed in the development of the liturgical year. The immense influence of the *Descensus* narrative of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* on the medieval exposition and celebration of Easter, including liturgical drama, has long been studied and is well known (though the circle between early patristic Easter theology, the development of the liturgical celebration, and the apocryphal narrative exposition in Late Antiquity is a source of ongoing speculation in view, for example, of the employment of Ps. 23[24].7–10 or the motif of light), as is the importance of apocryphal motifs for the devotion to certain aspects of the passion and nativity of Christ. More recently, Els Rose has demonstrated the great extent to which the liturgical celebration even of those apostles who are not the heroes of major Acts (Bartholomew, Philip and James, Matthew, Simon, and Jude) in the medieval West was influenced by apocryphal traditions (Rose 2009).

Motifs from apocryphal traditions can be identified even at the very roots of the liturgical year, as codified in the sources of fourth- to fifth-century Jerusalem. Not only does the admittedly secondary veneration of the ring of Solomon along with the relic of the cross on Good Friday at the times of Egeria (*Itinerarium* 37.3; AD 381–3) presuppose traditions codified in the *Testament of Solomon* (Busch 2006: 27–8), but the location of the first—and ecumenically highly influential—Marian feast, celebrated on 15 August in the recently unearthed church 'at the third milestone' halfway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem obviously refers to the *Protevangelium of James* 17 (which even led to speculation about an old 'Jewish–Christian' celebration of the nativity at that place and date lying behind the nativity-centred texts of this Marian feast, as first witnessed by the Armenian Lectionary of the early fifth century; Verhelst 2001). Only centuries later did the date of this originally rather undetermined memorial 'of the Theotokos' (Armenian Lectionary § 64) attract the content of the *Dormition of Mary*, itself an apocryphal tradition, while its celebration was shifted to the 'building of emperor Maurice († 602) at Gethsemani' (which, however, had predecessors at least from the fifth century on; Mimouni 1995; liturgical testimony: Georgian Lectionary §§ 1148–54). Later feasts of the birth and presentation of Mary equally draw on the *Protevangelium of James* and are connected with churches of Byzantine Jerusalem, namely St Ann and the 'New Theotokos' church built under Justinian (Auf der Maur 1994: 126–7). More incidentally, vague references are being made in the Hagiapolite lectionary, e.g. to the *Ascension of Isaiah* on his feast on 6 July (Armenian Lectionary § 62, reading Eph. 4.7–16). Although these layers certainly do not form the core of the liturgy, pilgrims' spirituality and the development of the liturgical year 'according to time and

place' (Egeria) did not limit itself to events, places, and motifs from the canonical Bible from which, of course, they drew their prime inspiration.

LITURGICAL PRACTICE AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Narrative Texts as Documents of Popular Understandings and Expectations

While the rituals narrated by apocryphal acts meanwhile have been exploited by liturgical historians, their narrative context still awaits exhaustive research: not only are the prayers and speeches around the liturgical episodes full of hints concerning the understanding of the sacramental action, but also the situational circumstances—e.g. of wondrous healings and resurrections (*Acts of John* 72 and 85–6; *Acts of Peter* on Coptic Papyrus Berlin 8502; summary of *Acts of Andrew* by Gregory of Tours 5) and also of divine punishments (*Acts of Thomas*, chs 51–61; *Acts of John* 84–6; *Acts of Peter* 2) related to stories about baptism and the Eucharist—illustrate popular conceptions and expectations, as well as fears and prerequisites (such as encratism) connected with the eschatological seal and the sacrament of life and imperishability.

It may be noted in passing that the famous episode of the baptized lion in the *Acts of Paul* (Papyrus Bodmer XLI, pp. 4–5) is complemented by the conversion and communion of a leopard and a kid in the *Acts of Philip* 8.16–21 and 12 (perhaps along with a baptismal scene in the lost Act 10); furthermore, the exorcism narrated in *Acts of Philip* 9 uses elements otherwise attested in initiation and eucharistic rites (epiclesis 'come', though—according to the development of liturgical prayer come about by that time—integrated in a bipartite structure, which is similarly applied in the prayer of *Acts of Philip* 12.7; appearance of light; chalice …).

Highly Differentiated Sacramental Theologies in the Library of Nag Hammadi

While some Apocrypha do not grant liturgy a crucial role, others develop complex systems of meaningful ritual, though the demarcation of some Nag Hammadi texts towards 'gnostic' literature and religious systems is in certain cases quite intricate. Among these, the highly differentiated but with regard to its concrete liturgical background equally disputed sacramental theology of the *Gospel of Philip* has to be mentioned (Schmid 2007), as has the wealth of baptismal material in sources of Sethian Gnosticism (Sevrin 1986; Pearson 2011), which in some sense can also be labelled 'apocryphal' but cannot be treated here in detail.

The Struggle over the (Re)interpretation of Christian Liturgy

Some Apocrypha indirectly or directly shed light on fundamental questions about the meaning and value of liturgical rites. The anonymous gospel of P. Oxy. 840 might echo polemics about the effect of ritual ablutions, but this remains implicit under the surface of

the historicizing narrative (Bovon 2000; Buchinger and Hernitscheck 2014). More explicit is the dialogue about the necessity of the liturgical celebration of the Pascha in the *Epistula Apostolorum*, which may reflect a respective contestation in the environment of the author and thus challenge the assumption of a wide and primitive institution of the Christian feast. Three levels can be distinguished in this complex text. On the narrative level, the episode of Acts 12 is retold in the form of a prediction; on the liturgical level, the night of prayer at the time of Passover narrated by the biblical text seems to be filled with information about the contemporary Christian celebration of Easter; on the theological meta-level, a fundamental liturgical reflection is made about not only the meaning of the Christian Pascha, but also the sheer requirement of its liturgical celebration: "'O Lord, did you not accomplish the drinking of the Pascha? Are we obliged to do it again?'—'Yes, until I come …'" (15 Ethiop.). The text clearly mirrors a sensitivity for the christological use of the Pascha as theological interpretation of the historical passion as witnessed by New Testament traditions (1 Cor. 5.7; John 19) in significant alteration of Luke 22.15; while the author has the church's celebration vindicated by the risen Christ himself, it is at the same time put under the eschatological reservation.

When the *Gospel of Judas* was published, a consensus soon emerged that several episodes polemically deal with contemporary liturgy and its interpretation (Rouwhorst 2011; Schmid 2012; Schwarz 2012; Nicklas 2013): Christ's laughing at the disciples' offering a prayer of thanksgiving over the bread (pp. 34–5), the persiflage of a sacrifice of the twelve men called 'priests' standing before the altar 'invoking your name' and offering to the wrong god (pp. 38–41; cf. also p. 56: Saklas), and moreover the critique of the baptism 'in the name of' Jesus fragmentarily preserved towards the end of the text (pp. 55–6). Especially the anti-sacrificial polemic perhaps gives a valuable insight in the struggle about the understanding of the Eucharist in a context where not only the offering, but also the office of the ministers who would have begun to understand themselves in the succession of the apostles and the furnishing of the church building were increasingly interpreted in cultic terms.

Given the entirely un-cultic character of Christian worship according to the New Testament, the cultic reinterpretation of Christian liturgy in the course of the second and third centuries surely was the most significant development in early liturgical theology. While professional theologians such as Origen clearly were aware of the hermeneutical efforts they were making in what Basil Studer classically baptized 'the double exegesis', namely of Bible and liturgy (Studer 1993, 1995), less erudite ecclesiastics of that time surely would have applied cultic language and categories to Christian liturgy in a less reflective way (Latin *Acts of Peter* 2—however that text might be dated—uses the language of *sacrificium* and *altarium* for the Eucharist and its table without any qualification). Texts like the *Gospel of Judas* and in its own way also the *Epistula Apostolorum* contain evidence that at least some authors of the second century were aware that the great hermeneutical shift of liturgical theology commencing in their period was neither self-evident nor in line with the canonical writings of the New Testament, and reacted to it either with legitimizing support or polemical critique. Apocryphal testimonies thus do not only disclose the development of early Christian liturgy, but also the dispute about its theological interpretation.

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ROMAN IMPERIALISM

The Political Context of Early Christian Apocrypha

CANDIDA R. MOSS

APPROACHES

THE subject of the political context of Early Christian Apocrypha, and the representation of persecution and martyrdom in particular, is a curious topic. On the one hand, the corpus of materials commonly known as the Early Christian Apocrypha is assumed by the majority of scholars to have been composed during a period in which Christians were a misunderstood and widely disliked minority in the Roman Empire. That these texts often describe the actions of Roman officials, police, and soldiers, as well as the sentencing and execution of the Apostles, means that the relationship of Christians to Roman structures of power is an unavoidable theme in this body of literature. More general references to persecution can be found in the apocalypses and apocryphal gospels (e.g. *Gospel of Thomas* 68–9; *Apocalypse of Peter* 9.2–4). At the same time, however, the depiction of Roman government, scenes of martyrdom, and individual officials are understood by many to reflect not the reality of early Christian experiences, but the literary taste and acumen of the authors of these accounts. The experience of persecution alluded to in the Apocrypha is sometimes assumed to be a generic feature adopted from other genres of literature such as the Greek romance novels or biographies like the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (Aune 1988: 53). Alternatively, in the more apocalyptically styled tours of heaven and hell, persecution is seen as a generic feature tied to a real or perceived experience, but so thoroughly refracted through the lens of symbolic interpretation that it ceases to provide historically useful data. In other words, while scholars see Early Christian Apocrypha as the product of a hostile political situation and as broadly reflective of that experience, they do not think that there is much historical data about 'real persecution' to be gleaned from these texts.

Traditional scholarship on the historical and political realities of persecution and martyrdom during the first three centuries of the Common Era has tended to overlook apocryphal literature (Ste. Croix 1963, 1964). The novelistic style of these writings, together with the understanding that most of these stories are fraudulently pseudepigraphical, led to the conclusion that there was little that Apocrypha had to say on the matter. Thus, while the writings of apologists like Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, and Musonius Rufus and the historically reliable courtroom-style martyrdom accounts were treated as unproblematic evidence for persecution, the martyrdom stories preserved as part of the *apocryphal acts of the apostles* were deemed romantic fictions. This impression was only reinforced by strict definitions of Apocrypha, such as that of Hennecke and

Schneemelcher in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, which distinguished Apocrypha from hagiography. The generic distinction between martyrdom account and apocryphal text has meant that even thematic studies of elements of martyrdom have overlooked the ways in which these texts intersect with one another.

More recent scholarship on martyrdom has drawn hagiographical material and apocryphal material closer together. The work of Junod (1992: 35–9), in particular, has undercut the binary between the two and demonstrated that both corpora of material share generic features and often originated from and were used in similar social contexts. Simultaneously, the work of Lieu (1996, 2002) and Castelli (2004) demonstrated that there are no unproblematic sources for the study of early Christian views of martyrdom. All early Christian texts from this period that engage the subject of persecution are concerned with the interpretation of the phenomenon and the use of the experience—real or perceived—for the construction of early Christian identity. As the terms of the scholarly discussion have shifted from an interest in persecution and historical events to a focus on ideology and representation, apocryphal Christian literature has become a valuable resource for those interested in Christian responses to their political context (Rhee 2005). A number of scholars have begun to reconsider the apocryphal acts, especially, as martyrdom literature (Hilhorst 1995; Perkins 1995; Bolyki 1996).

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

The political situation of early Christians in the Roman Empire has, since the time of Gibbon, been fiercely contested by scholars. The extent to which Christians lived contented, unaffected lives or experienced social marginalization, discrimination, or outright persecution is the focal point of this discussion. It is a question that is fraught with ideological tensions. Gibbon's stern rebuttal of the caricature of Roman governors as bloodthirsty persecutors, attempting to hound the Christians into non-existence, was at least in part an attempt to vindicate the Roman administration. In its place Gibbon set up a new caricature of the Romans as tolerant and accepting of all religions, a kind of utopian vision of Roman politics that itself did injustice to the evidence and, as Clifford Ando has shown, to an ancient worldview that did not idealize religious toleration as a mark of civilized society (Ando 2000). Modern scholarly assessments of the precariousness of the political situation for Christians and the scale of the 'persecution' of Christians are very much related to their own scholarly and ideological investments (Bremmer 2010; Moss 2012).

Traditional assessments of the legal situation of Christians in the Roman Empire have sought to describe the Christian experience within one of two contexts: (1) the legal procedures and stipulations that affected Christians, and (2) perceptions of Christians that fostered anti-Christian bias among both Roman officials and the people more generally. In the case of the former, the legal basis for the treatment of Christians, the sole piece of extant Roman evidence for the second century is the correspondence between the emperor Trajan and Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithnyia and Pontus. Pliny notes that the primary cause for concern regarding the Christian 'superstition' is the socio-economic impact that it is having on temples and on the purchase of sacrificial offerings. He notes that Christianity had won admirers from all quarters, including members from every class and rank, both genders, and both rural and urban contexts. While he alludes to accusations of impropriety, he finds them innocent of any real crime; he finds their 'inflexible obstinacy' (Pliny, *Letters* 10.96) frustrating. Pliny proposes a system in which the accused person is asked three times

whether or not he is a Christian, with a warning about the consequences of his answers. If the accused admits that he or she is a Christian then he or she is executed or dispatched to Rome for trial; if he protests that he is not Christian then Pliny has him venerate an image of the emperor and curse Christ. Both Pliny and Trajan agree that anonymous accusations of people as Christians should go unheeded and that Christians should not be sought out.

The Pliny–Trajan correspondence has been interpreted in various ways by classicists and ancient legal experts. In the first place, most agree that the prosecution of Christians proceeded on an ad hoc basis (Ste. Croix 1963: 106–7; Sherwin-White 1964: 23–27; Barnes 1968: 32–50). While Ste. Croix maintains—with support from the writings of Justin Martyr and Tertullian—that Christians were accused and executed 'for the name' Christian (i.e. merely for being Christians), Sherwin-White has argued that it was for their contempt, their *contumacia*, that Christians were executed. Vestiges of this idea can be seen in the Apocrypha as well: the apostles or their converts are often rude and insubordinate. The revivified Patroclus, imperial cupbearer in the *Acts of Paul*, tells Nero that he now fights for the 'eternal King' who will destroy 'all kingdoms' (*Ac. Paul* 2). While the statement makes for good Christian theology, if it has any bearing on historical events it certainly fits with the overarching impression that Christians were stubborn and insubordinate in the courtroom (Rordorf 1982). The explicitly supercessionist claims of Christians to follow an eternal king who would vanquish all the kingdoms of the earth would, to Roman ears, have sounded like sedition.

Many apocryphal accounts, however, are narratively set in the middle of the first century during the reign of Nero. According to Tacitus, Nero had blamed the Christians for the Great Fire of Rome, *c*.64 CE, thereby inaugurating the first wave of 'persecution' of Christians at the hands of the Romans (*Annals* 15.44). There are reasons to be sceptical of the veracity of this account. Tacitus' use of the term 'Christian', appropriate in his early second-century context, seems prochronistic in the mid-60s. Jesus followers do not appear to have begun to call themselves Christians until the late first century. It seems likely that Tacitus' discussion of this subject reflects his own situation in approximately 115 CE and the growing animosity towards Christians in the Empire at that time. What Tacitus would be evidence for, therefore, is the general ancient Roman opinion that Christians were generally unlikeable. Nero features prominently in the apocryphal acts, and his reputation for cruelty and for burning Christians alive is occasionally on display (*Acts of Paul* 5). In the apocryphal acts, Nero is irritated that the prefect Agrippa merely had Peter crucified rather than forcing him to suffer more greatly. Certainly the authors of the apocryphal acts share the more widely held conviction that Nero was given to excessive cruelty.

The second perspective, that Christians were vulnerable to prosecution on account of the rumours that circulated about them, again takes its rise from the writings of the apologists. From the writings of Justin Martyr onwards, Christian writers refer to elaborate and fanciful accusations of cannibalism and incest (Tertullian, *To the Nations* 1; Athenagoras, *Embassy for Christians* 3; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9.5). Such accusations were not out of keeping with ancient slander in general, but they do not appear in the apocryphal acts. If Christians were suspected of being cannibals and indulging in incest by the Romans, the apocryphal acts depict them being killed by cannibals (*Acts of Matthew*) and betrayed by incestuous women (*Acts of Andrew*).

While certain elements of the traditional scholarly narrative about the treatment of Christians in the Roman Empire can be detected in the Apocrypha, they are largely absent. This is unsurprising given that that the scholarly narrative was, as already noted, shaped independently from the Apocrypha. The effect, however, is that the presentation of persecution evident from the Apocrypha is obscured. Even if we accept the traditional view

that the presentation of events in the Apocrypha is stylized and fictional and that the truth is to be found in Pliny and Justin Martyr, there still remains the issue of how this truth is shaped and interpreted by the writers of the Early Christian Apocrypha.

THE DEPICTION OF PERSECUTION IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

When it comes to establishing the historical legal basis for the deaths of Christians in the Apocrypha, the accounts themselves are of little assistance. What we find instead is a superabundance of theological interpretation that refers to persecution only in the abstract. While there are occasional references to specific laws (e.g. *Martyrdom of Habib the Deacon* refers to persecution by Diocletian and Licinius), the source of the 'persecution' is often attributed to demons (*Martyrdom of Paul*), to the devil (*Narrative of Zosimus* 20), or to a general tendency on the part of the Romans (*Correspondence of Paul and Seneca* 11). Persecution itself is, in early Christian apocalypses, only opaquely referred to in an eschatological and cosmic setting. The *Apocalypse of Peter*, for instance, describes the post-mortem fate of those who persecute and betray the 'righteous ones', but this fate is set alongside the fate of those who slander, who bear false witness against the martyrs, and who place their trust in riches (*Apoc. Pet.* 9). No small amount of scholarly energy has been extended in trying to place the apocalyptic material into an immediate historical context of persecution. Richard Bauckham has argued that the Bar Kochba revolt forms the *Sitz im Leben* for the *Apocalypse of Peter* (Bauckham 1994: 184–5), yet there are some methodological problems with assuming that every detail of a highly symbolic description of hell refers to actual events and experiences. The descriptions of persecution are often too vague to permit a particular dating (Tigchelaar 2003: 70–1). It may well be that the crime of persecuting the righteous is stylized and refers not to specific events but rather to a general sense on the part of the authors that they are maligned and mistreated. What these portraits of hell offer, however, is a glimpse into the future envisioned in the theology of martyrdom (Czachesz 2007). The choice of a few hours of suffering instead of an eternity in hell is an easy one for many of the martyrs, and the rationale for that exchange is depicted in excruciating detail. Just as the persecutors burned the Christians, God will burn them in an unquenchable fire.

The exception to the studied vagueness of the causes and reasons for persecution are the martyrdom accounts contained in the *apocryphal acts*. In these narratives the immediate cause of the protagonist's arrest and trial is often the effect of their message on members of the governor's or Roman emperor's own household. The success of the apostle's message is precisely what gets him into trouble, either by placing him in an adversarial role to other religious competitors like Simon Magus, or by attracting converts from wealthy households. In both the *Acts of Peter* and the *Acts of Paul* the conversion of members of Caesar's household sets in motion the events that lead to the death of the apostle. Nero's anger in the *Acts of Peter* is prompted by the conversion of some of his servants. Also in both accounts, the motivation for the condemnation of the apostles is the content of their message (Bremmer 1998; Czachesz 1998). It is their preaching of sexual continence that renders them unpopular with the authorities (especially Agrippa and Albinus, whose concubines and wife, respectively, deny themselves to their partners). The condemnation of the apostles for their preaching of celibacy is a theme throughout both accounts and forms the centrepieces of the message of these texts (Bremmer 1998: 179). If in their own writings Roman governors like Pliny were unconcerned with the content of the Christian message,

the Roman officials of the apocryphal acts are intimately affected by the teachings of the apostles.

A second trope in these accounts is the martyr's arrest and condemnation on account of jealousy or envy. It is Peter's fraught contest with the magician Simon Magus in the *Acts of Peter* that ultimately leads to his demise. External references to the deaths of Peter and Paul in the letter known as *First Clement* share the perspective that interpersonal conflicts and envy led to the demise of the apostles. In the *Acts of Andrew* Andrew is brought to trial first by a woman who entertained incestuous longings for her son and subsequently by one who opposed Andrew.

The final accusation levied against the apostles in the Apocrypha is the accusation that they are magicians or sorcerers. Andrew is accused of sorcery and Peter engages in a contest with Simon Magus. The issue is much less the content of their practices than the rhetorical impact of the label 'sorcerer'. The negative associations of sorcery with malicious intentions, demonic manipulation, and foreign religious influence rendered the accusation potent and disturbing. During the fourth century, the emperor Diocletian banned Manicheism on the basis that it was a foreign religion native to his enemies. Similar concerns abounded with respects to the practice of sorcery. Not only did the accusation bear the sense of ill-will, it also implied something foreign and contagious. There may be some resonance here with Pliny's concern that Christianity was a contagious superstition; at the same time the accusation provides justification for the ability of charismatic Christian preachers to win over otherwise obedient Roman wives.

ROMAN OFFICIALS IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

Even if the conduct of Roman officials in Early Christian Apocrypha is consonant neither with the writings of Christian apologists nor with extant Roman sources, their presentation communicates a great deal about how early Christians viewed Roman authorities. It is perhaps worth noting, at the outset, that the Roman emperors and governors themselves are occasionally unspecified. The *Acts of Andrew*, for instance, refers only to the emperor and to the city of the emperor, never specifying precisely which individual was in power (*Ac. Andrew* 1, 59. See also *Anaphora Pilati* A; *Correspondence of Paul and Seneca* 3, 7–8; *Paradosis Pilati* 1–8; *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 27, 30–2, 34–8; *Acts of Andrew and Paul*). It is certainly possible that the author himself was unaware of the name of the specific governor or ruler. The effect of these anonymous judges, however, is to render individual representatives of the Empire into a monolithic whole. They become ciphers for the structures of power that they represent. In the majority of cases, however, the emperor is named and characterized as fickle, fearful, and passionate. The idealized self-controlled ruler as celebrated by Greek and Roman literature is nowhere to be found.

In a number of cases, as noted above, the cause of an apostle's martyrdom is his conversion of a member of the emperor's or Roman official's household to Christianity. The connection of prosecution to the conversion of Roman women or slaves is not a de-politicization of the treatment of Christians. The depiction of high-status Roman males as unable to organize and control their own households portrays those officials as inept and inadequate rulers and administrators. A man who could not even order his own household and control his own wives and slaves was hardly a suitable candidate for public office, much less for emperor. By depicting the cause of martyrdom as the infiltration of Christianity into even the household of the emperor, the authors of the apocryphal acts

emphasize both the potency of the representatives of Christ and, by implication, the impotency of the Roman emperor and by extension the Empire as a whole.

The idea that the Roman governor or emperor is unfit to rule is further accentuated by the portrayal of the emperor as lacking in self-control, enraged, or animalistic. Nero's cruelty in the *Acts of Peter* or the proconsul Virinus' anger towards Andrew in Gregory of Tours' epitome of the *Acts of Andrew* have the effect of portraying the Roman officials as passionate, headstrong, and womanly. They are easily swayed and given to wild emotions. Neither attribute was considered the mark of a true man in antiquity. The passion of the judges is offset by the calmness of the martyr's response. As stubborn as they were, the apostles remain composed. They never match the prosecutor's tone, only his rhetoric.

For every angry and demonically inspired Roman official, there stands, in contrast, the penitent convert. One anonymous proconsul in the *Acts of Andrew* transitions from enraged tyrant to penitential convert (4). The moment of realization that precedes baptism and acceptance into the Christian community is often brought about by means of a miraculous event. In the case of the *Acts of Andrew* Andrew's prayers engender an earthquake that throws the proconsul off his seat. Displaced from the position of power and thrown at the feet of Andrew, the proconsul begs Andrew for mercy and is baptized. The note that he and his whole household were baptized sets up an implicit contrast with narratives in which the pagan official's household is in disarray. Whereas Agrippa cannot keep his own concubines in check, the Christian proconsul can easily persuade his whole household to be baptized.

The pre-eminent example of the penitent Roman official is the figure of Pilate in the *Acts of Pilate*. The entire tradition revolves around the idea that the Roman official who condemned Jesus to die later repented and converted to Christianity. The story itself was an expansion of earlier stories of Christian sympathizers among the Roman military (Cornelius in Acts 10, the centurion at the cross in Mark 15) and of the more sympathetic and troubled Pilate of the Gospel of Matthew. Further expansions of Pilate's conversion after his role in the crucifixion can be found in the *Letter of Pilate to Claudius* and the *Letter of Pilate to Tiberius*. These texts certainly serve an apologetic function in exonerating Pilate of any crime, but they also form part of a broader theme of the sympathetic Roman official who only reluctantly sentences Christians to die and converts after witnessing a miracle.

ANTI-IMPERIAL CHARGES AND CHALLENGES

At the same time, the conversion of Roman women and the fracturing of the Roman marriage bed and *domus* was a powerful symbol of the countercultural impulses in Christianity. The household was the building block of Roman society and marriage provided the social adhesive that connected the various tissues of the Empire. It was not only the case, as Castelli observes, that marriage was 'the standard method of sealing pacts between families and assuring that a legitimate heir existed for the passing on of property' (Castelli 2008: 89–90), but also that the married couple and their household was a symbol of the Empire itself, only in microcosm. The rupturing of the marital union held greater significance as an emblem of the manner in which Christianity deconstructed the existing legal and social ties that bound society. Roman imperial ideology—an ideology that prized female virtues and the properly behaved Roman matrona—was undercut and subverted by tales of wandering preachers luring women into unnatural and unsociable lives of chastity (Perkins 1995; Cooper 1996). The effect of such tales was to challenge and undermine not just social conventions, but also the political structures that they encapsulated.

More explicit challenges to Roman authority are found elsewhere. In Patroclus' and Paul's dialogue with Nero both of the Christian heroes describe themselves as soldiers fighting for an eternal king. The language of military battle and conquest invokes the spectre both of rebellion and of potential for assassination. We should not forget that Patroclus is Nero's cupbearer and, in the world of the text, Nero has good reason to be concerned about a treacherous double agent in his own dining room, with access to his food supply. Similarly, the threat to imperial authority and claims to power implicit in the regal language used to describe Jesus by his followers is made explicit in the accusations brought against Andrew. Andrew is accused of preaching that the temples should be destroyed, the law abolished, and a single deity worshipped. The accusation works on multiple levels: on the one hand it explains the anxiety of the Romans who learn of a successful and potentially rebellious preacher. On the other, the presumably Christian audience understands that Andrew may not have had politically subversive intentions. Instead, Andrew may describe the abrogation of the law in a Pauline sense, the destruction of the temples metaphorically, and the monarchy of God in celestial and cosmic terms. Yet within the world of the text the grounds for persecution are clear; the apostle has been betrayed for reasons of personal envy and is now condemned because he is—mistakenly or not—understood as politically subversive and potentially dangerous. To an extent, the claim of the anonymous accuser stands: while the overarching message of the text may be that Andrew is falsely accused and deliberately misquoted, the application of imperial language to Christ coupled with the invocation of military terminology mirrors and attempts to usurp the Roman political system.

More subtle variations on this theme can be found elsewhere. In addition to the undermining of the traditional Roman household and the threats to the military stature and authority of Roman rulers, the presentation of Christ as imperial patron again trumps the position of the imperial authorities (Stoops 1986, 1991). The construction of a world in which Christ performs the duties of the Roman husband, patron, and emperor, and in which Christians serve him as soldiers in a battle between good and evil, served both to absorb, adapt, and overcome the social and political structures within which Christians lived.

CONCLUSION

Early Christian Apocrypha, like other categories and groups of early Christian literature composed during the second and third centuries, was composed in a political context that was broadly, although not strategically or consistently, antagonistic towards Christians. As both the Pliny–Trajan correspondence and the apocryphal acts of the apostles demonstrate, Christians do not appear to have been regarded as members of a real religion by the Romans. They were treated as sorcerers and magicians and Christianity itself was deemed a *superstitio*. In addition to the common interpretation of persecution as demonically cultivated, the Apocrypha often focus on the personal interactions and petty jealousies that led to the arrests of Christians. There are rarely references to legislation or to the legal grounds upon which the apostles were tried. In this way the representations of persecution and martyrdom in these accounts expand upon biblical views of the causes of persecution and emerging traditions about the fate of the apostles. Within the accounts themselves, Roman officials are portrayed either as misguided administrators awaiting an act of God or as angry and irrational tyrants unfit to rule the Empire. While Early Christian Apocrypha does not provide us with much information about the political or legal situation that faced Christians, it provides valuable clues about the ways in which Christians interpreted their

own circumstances and the personal interactions that seem likely to have played a role in the arrests of Christian leaders.

SUGGESTED READING

For the ways in which Early Christian Apocrypha provides evidence for and responds to experiences of real persecution, the work of Richard Bauckham is to be especially recommended. For the ways in which Early Christian Apocrypha undermines Roman political and social structures through recasting martyrdom as the goal of the Christian life, see the works of Judith Perkins and Kate Cooper. Individual studies of persecution and martyrdom can be found in the 'Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha' series. The work of János Boyki is especially helpful for understanding the *Acts of Andrew* and Hillhorst's study of the *Acts of Andrew* as martyrdom literature offers an excellent beginning for the reconsideration of Apocrypha as persecution literature.

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ENCRATISM, ASCETICISM, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITY IN APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS

JUDITH HARTENSTEIN

ONLY in a very few apocryphal gospels is sexual abstinence expressly a topic which is discussed; asceticism in terms of food etc. plays an even smaller role. It is, however, still widely agreed in scholarly circles that many of these writings call for abstinence from sexual relations or at least have an ascetic background. This is thought to be the case especially in relation to the 'gnostic' gospels from the Nag Hammadi library or related codices, because small clues and their theology as a whole—in particular, a negative view of the world—suggest ascetic tendencies. A special, but not undisputed, role is played by the *Gospel of Thomas*. Given the debate over the term 'gnostic' and the growing awareness of the differences between the writings referred to as 'gnostic', it is at least worth taking a closer look at the individual texts. But it is also generally difficult to connect conclusions drawn from the gospels, with their often abstract and theological content, with the experiences and lives of their readers. In my opinion, some of the statements can be understood in different ways depending on the context, and also depending on the gender of the reader. It is noticeable that in many gospels which are regarded as ascetic, women disciples of Jesus play a strong role.

In Late Antiquity, temperance, independence from external influences, and mastery of one's inner passions were viewed by different philosophical schools as virtues; the critical values were spiritual. Asceticism as an exercise in the mastery of physical and emotional desires therefore belongs to the philosophical life, but does not necessarily mean complete sexual abstinence. Sexuality in marriage for (male) philosophers can be an act of will with the purpose of procreation and the fulfilment of social obligations, and is explicitly not determined by passion (Francis 1995: 14–19; Clement *Strom*. 3.58). Asceticism in a radical form, however, has a sociocritical potential, because it gives the ascetic personal authority (Francis 1995: 182–3).

Asceticism presupposes a hierarchy between spiritual and material aspects of life. The assessment of materiality, the body and the world, may however be different: based on Plato, both a fundamental rejection of the body or of the connection of the soul with it, as well as a more positive view in which the body is made worthy of the soul by training, are represented (Dillon 1995: 80). Both can look very similar when implemented in practice. The relationship between philosophical theory and ascetic practice is therefore complex, and the background for particular practices may be different in each case. Conversely, a

particular view of the world does not necessarily have the same consequences—or at least different levels of abstinence are possible.

The hierarchy of spiritual and material corresponds to the relationship male–female; the whole sphere of the material, of sexuality and desires, can be described in metaphorical language as 'feminine' (Wisse 1988: 300). Turning to the spiritual can be described in figurative language as a turning away from the feminine. For men, this means controlling their own 'feminine' impulses along with contact with real women. Women are closer to the material as a gender, keeping away from the female-material realm is thus more difficult for them, but is also possible. However, the social implications are more serious because women are more strongly defined by their role in the family (Wire 1988: 309). The position of women is explicitly reflected in several apocryphal gospels, which suggests that women were significantly involved here.

For this essay, the task is to examine the individual explicit and implicit statements that indicate ascetic intentions and/or ascetic practice by the readers. I will also analyse the role of women—female disciples—in each text and then search for the theological background for both. This, in my opinion, shows that in some writings, certain theological ideas correlate with a strong participation of women and a certain kind of statement that is susceptible to an ascetic interpretation. Theology is the focus; ascetic practice and an equal role for women seem to be derived from it. Calls for asceticism are not a separate issue in these writings, because they are not the way to a specific goal, but rather the consequence of particular ideas.

Many apocryphal gospels contain nothing about asceticism. This is especially the case for many writings that have survived only in fragments, such as the *Gospel of Peter* or the Jewish–Christian gospels, but it is possible that relevant points have simply not been preserved. Gospels from Nag Hammadi and its environment are more productive; here an ascetic background is often assumed—for example in *Gos. Thom., Gos. Phil., Gos. Mary, Ap. John., Dial. Sav.*—though sometimes due to minimal references. But some writings in this context show no indication of asceticism at all, such as *Gos. Judas* or *Ap. Jas.*; in *1 Apoc. Jas.*, the transmission of the revelation is even explicitly ensured with the help of a Levi and his biological sons (NHC V 37,7–14).

The only writing in the field of apocryphal gospels in which sexual asceticism is expressly the central theme is *Thom. Cont.* The *Gos. Eg.* (in Clement) deals more with reproduction than with asceticism in the strict sense, but Clement's presentation gives an encratite interpretation. I will therefore start with these writings, although they are clearly younger than, e.g., the *Gos. Thom.*

THE *BOOK OF THOMAS* (*THOM. CONT.* NHC II,7)

The *Thom. Cont.* clearly advocates (sexual) asceticism. The main theme of the parenetic dialogue between Jesus and Thomas is the call to control one's own desire and inner fire so as to find salvation. 'Fire' is a central concept of the writing, specifically in the double meaning as an inner burning (desire) and as hellfire that threatens those who do not keep their desires in check (Schenke 2001: 284). The tension between the different options that are placed before Thomas and the reader is also described as an alternative between an animal-material and a spiritual-heavenly side: the individual person can decide whether he/she wants to sink to the level of the animals, with which he/she shares the physicality, or ascend toward heaven.

A broad consensus sees this writing as a call to complete sexual abstinence (Layton and Turner 1989: 176–7; Schenke 2001: 284). However, the writing primarily deals with the control of desire. Moreover, only in a very few places is sexuality really expressly mentioned; perhaps both the reference to desire and the image of fire have a much broader scope than sexuality alone. The general topic is the pursuit of invisible, eternal things and a turning away from what is visible. Physicality is a central example; the body is not only the product of sexuality such as with animals, but is also subject to change and transience (138,39–139,12). The reader should turn away from this animal nature and turn to the light; in my opinion, this is the basic challenge of the writing (139,25–31). This is explained in more detail immediately afterwards:

> O unsearchable love of the light! O bitterness of the fire that blazes in the bodies of men and in their marrow, kindling in them night and day, and burning the limbs of men and [making] their minds become drunk and their souls become deranged […] them within males and females … […] night and moving them, […] … secretly and visibly. For the males [move … upon the females] and the females upon [the males. Therefore it is] (p.140) said, 'Everyone who seeks the truth from true wisdom will make himself wings so as to fly, fleeing the lust that scorches the spirits of men.' And he will make himself wings to flee every visible spirit. (139,32–140,5; Layton and Turner 1989: 185–7)

This is the most comprehensive place that clearly speaks of sexual desire. The 'fire' which draws men and women to each other and confuses mind (ϩΗⲧ) and soul is considered here as dangerous; at the end, lust is mentioned (ⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ 140,3). The concluding statement widens the perspective and seems to involve the abandonment of all that is visible. Also, in the following, there is a warning against turning to the visible, which is transient and thus contrary to the real truth. This can be understood as physical attractiveness in the sexual sense, but in my opinion is more comprehensive; it has to do with the alternative between true heavenly values and the entanglement in earthly-material things. Perhaps sexuality is simply the most significant example of the wrong orientation. The physical is clearly devalued, but motifs such as keeping the body pure or forgoing children, which exclude sexuality and often appear in the apocryphal acts of the apostles (cf. Tissot, in this volume), are missing. I believe that the challenges of the text can be read as not implying complete abstinence when marital sexuality is not determined by desire.

It is striking that women and men are addressed as sexually active; both can be attracted to the other gender. From the genre of the text as a wisdom teaching and from the situation of Jesus teaching Thomas as depicted in this writing, however, it seems that it is men who are primarily in focus and being addressed. This becomes clear in another reference, the second one which is explicitly sexual in nature:

> Woe to you (pl.), who love intimacy with womankind and polluted intercourse with them! (144,8–10; Layton and Turner 1989: 201)

In a series of woes, there are warnings against those who put their hopes on the ephemeral flesh, who are controlled by the internal fire, who dwell in darkness and error—again, most woes are certainly to be understood more comprehensively than just in relation to sexual matters. Intimacy with womankind here expresses one of the dangerous entanglements, and this togetherness is regarded as basically dirty. However, the reader is not warned not to have this contact, but rather not to love it, although that is perhaps quibbling. To me, the question seems to be whether the woe really only refers to specific sexual acts. Similar to the 'sin of fornication' in *Gos. Mary*, intimacy with womankind in *Thom Cont.* could also mean a general connection to the material world for which sexuality is just an image. The concern of the text remains, in any case, orientation towards the heavenly immortal realm.

Overall, we can say that *Thom. Cont.* warns of sexual desire as extremely harmful to human salvation. But in my opinion it is not such a clear plea for total abstinence as is usually assumed. It is quite possible that it advocates control of desire more than a complete abandonment of sexuality. Above all, however, the sexual language—which is explicit only in a few places—can well be understood in a figurative sense. The alternative posed by the text is certainly not sex or no sex, but sinking down and involvement in the earthly-material world or ascent to the heavenly light. Sexuality is contrasted with spiritual values; control of this area is therefore a necessary step for spiritual existence.

THE *GOSPEL OF THE EGYPTIANS*

The *Gos. Eg.* is preserved by Clement of Alexandria who quotes some passages, including a dialogue between Jesus and Salome about an end to the 'works of the female', namely birth and death. Although these passages do not contain explicit calls for asceticism, the gospel was already read in such a manner in the second century CE. Clement cites not only the sayings, but also deals with a specific interpretation by an encratite group; it is often not clear what comes from the *Gos. Eg.*, what comes from this interpretation, and what is from Clement himself (Markschies 2012: 667–8). Clement does not share the ascetic interpretation, but offers his own view of the sayings:

> Those who are opposed to God's creation, disparaging it under the fair name of continence, also quote the words to Salome which we mentioned earlier. They are found, I believe, in the Gospel according to the Egyptians. They say that the Saviour himself said 'I came to destroy the works of the female', meaning by 'female' desire, and by 'works' birth and corruption. What then would they say? Has this destruction in fact been accomplished? They could not say so, for the world continues exactly as before. Yet the Lord did not lie. For in truth he did destroy the works of desire, love of money, contentiousness, vanity, mad lust for women, paederasty, gluttony, licentiousness, and similar vices. Their birth is the soul's corruption, since then we are 'dead in sins'. And this is the incontinence referred to as 'female'. (Clement *Strom.* 3.63.1–3; Oulton and Chadwick 1954: 69)

The *Gos. Eg.* seems, like *Thom. Cont.*, to seek an exit from the sequence of coming into being (birth) and decay (death), but sees this as a work of Jesus, not initially as a call to the individual. The encratite interpretation, which Clement deals with, possibly considers this state as having already been reached. This is what Clement questions. An ascetic way of life is then the consequence of the destruction of the works of the female already carried out. But Clement does not only deny that such a change has already occurred, he also offers a broader interpretation of the 'works of the female': not only sexuality and birth are meant, but all kinds of material desires and sins that kill the soul. Clement shows that it is indeed possible (as was already the case in antiquity) to understand references to the feminine, not only in the narrow sexual sense, but also in a comprehensively figurative way. As a consequence, the one interpretation leads to radical abstinence, the other just rejects excesses without excluding a normal married life. Elsewhere in Clement (*Exc. Theod.* 67.2–4), a further non-ascetic interpretation of the saying about the works of the female is offered: for the Valentinians, this is a reference to the heavenly Sophia, while on earth births are necessary to enable the salvation of believers.

Overall, I think it is likely that the *Gos. Eg.* primarily relates to sexuality and birth; at least this seems to be the basic interpretation from which Clement and the Valentinians distance themselves. But the language is not clear enough that all readers must come to this conclusion.

In a further passage, the new status is described in more detail:

On this account he [Cassianus] says: 'When Salome asked when she would know the answer to her questions, the Lord said, When you trample on the robe of shame, and when the two shall be one, and the male with the female, and there is neither male nor female.' (*Strom*. 3.92.2; Oulton and Chadwick 1954: 83)

Presumably, this section also belongs to the conversation about the works of the female (Markschies 2012: 673). It is used by Cassianus to support an attitude of abstinence. The alternative to becoming and passing away is a comprehensive unity in which the difference between feminine and masculine is dissolved. In such a context, sexuality is simply not necessary or even impossible. The point is not, as in *Thom*. *Cont*., a control of desires (Clement's alternative interpretation of this passage points in this direction), but a fundamentally altered state of human beings. In *Gos*. *Eg*., this is an announcement for the future, but it is quite conceivable that the Encratites considered this prophecy as having been fulfilled, and therefore led an abstinent life.

In the fragments of the *Gos*. *Eg*., Salome is the conversation partner of Jesus; she seems to be a disciple. This is no coincidence, but related to the content of the conversation, as parallel statements in *Dial*. *Sav*. show, which are also associated with a female disciple. The prospect of overcoming the 'works of the female' and the dissolution of gender difference bring about the presence of women (Petersen 1999: 307–8), while controlling one's own desires seems to be a more masculine question.

Thom. *Cont*. and *Gos*. *Eg*. can both lead to ascetic practice among readers. The argumentation, however, is very different: while human beings according to *Thom*. *Cont*. need to decide between their spiritual and material aspects and thereby control sexual desire, *Gos*. *Eg*. seems to assume a fundamentally altered state of the human, which includes a dissolution of gender difference. Asceticism is thus on the one hand the way to a goal, and on the other hand the consequence of theological ideas. In both texts, however, the sexual language can be interpreted metaphorically, so that it does not necessarily lead to radical asceticism. The roles of women are different. These points have to be kept in mind when it comes to texts in which asceticism is only a very marginal subject.

THE *GOSPEL OF THOMAS* (NHC II,2)

The *Gos*. *Thom*., presumably the oldest of the writings dealt with here (dating from perhaps around 100 CE), is often considered an ascetic gospel, one that promotes complete sexual abstinence. This view, however, has also been questioned (Uro 1998). Read against the background of *Thom*. *Cont*., it is the case that sexuality / desire / inner fire are not explicitly dealt with in the *Gos*. *Thom*. At the same time, the *Gos*. *Thom*. exercised influence in circles for which sexual asceticism was of great interest (this also includes the *Acts of Thomas*). The modelling of *Thom*. *Cont*. on the form of *Gos*. *Thom*. speaks for a high regard of the text. The *Gos*. *Thom*. is similar to the *Gos*. *Eg*. in form (sayings and short dialogues), and in terms of content there are parallels as well: the unity and dissolution of gender differences occur in *Gos*. *Thom*. 22 (and for trampling on the garment of shame, see 37). Destroying the works of the female is not in mind, but rather that Mary is called to become male (114).

Although sexuality in itself is not an issue in *Gos*. *Thom*., there are some thematic complexes that belong in this area. Thus, *Gos*. *Thom*. is clearly hostile to families and thereby somewhat harsher than the Synoptic parallels (55, 99, 101). Jesus' own family and the disciples' parents and siblings are mentioned, but spouses (as in Luke 14.26) and children (Luke 14.26 par. Matt. 10.37; also Mark 10.29 par.) are not. The statements seem to imply a break with social norms, rather than to lay down a specific, unmarried life—or

they already presuppose a life without marriage and children. Presumably the use of *monachos* should be considered in this context (16, 49, 75): From the fourth century on, the term refers to a clearly defined ascetic way of life, but this use cannot be assumed for the significantly earlier *Gos. Thom.* (Uro 1998: 156–9). The term is in *Gos. Thom.* 16, the most extensive context, in connection with the splitting of families, and it probably reflects the awareness of election and the minority position of the *Gos. Thom.* A certain—though not absolute—negative attitude to reproduction becomes clear in the beatitude of the women who do not give birth (79).

The issue of fasting is specifically treated in *Gos. Thom.* The term appears in the literal sense, as (religiously motivated) abstention from food, but this is rejected (6 and 14, more cautiously 104). But to 'fast as regards the world' (27) is required, which probably means a renunciation of involvement in earthly matters in favour of a heavenly orientation. Here, as in several other places, a devaluation of the material world (56, 80) and also the body (29, 87, 112) is clear. Risto Uro has shown, however, that world and body in *Gos. Thom.* are not only seen as negative, even if spiritual values are clearly more important. Rather, the position of the *Gos. Thom.* is quite comparable with pagan philosophy; it does not necessarily have to result in abstinence (Uro 2003: 54–79).

In some places in *Gos. Thom.*, children are presented to the disciples as an ideal (4, 21, 22, 37). The most detailed reference is in *Gos. Thom.* 22, where Jesus gives an assurance that 'infants being suckled' will enter into the kingdom. In the following explanation, he calls for a comprehensive combination of opposites:

> When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female; and you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness; then you will enter [the kingdom]. (22; Layton and Lambdin 1989: 63)

The exact interpretation is disputed. Often the main point is understood to be the dissolution of any difference between the genders, which means a return to an original state of creation, and is illustrated by the still undifferentiated small children (Patterson 2008: 195; Heininger 2010b: 389). The image of breastfeeding, however, may express attachment and closeness to God in which the gender issue is only one aspect (Standhartinger 2007: 886). In any case, the goal of unity and closeness to God is somehow linked to creation (Pagels 1999: 481), and certainly leaves no room for gender differences. Presumably readers of *Gos. Thom.* have already seen themselves at least partially in this state. When this unity is regained, then sexual attraction is automatically eliminated without it having to be specifically addressed (Zimmermann 2001: 569).

Such a view has consequences for women in a special way, and this is explicitly addressed in *Gos. Thom.* 114:

> Simon Peter said to them, 'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.' Jesus said, 'I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.' (114; Layton and Lambdin 1989: 93)

Although the language is more androcentric than in 22, I believe the same goal of asexual spiritual existence is described, which can be called male in the ancient hierarchy of female and male (Petersen 1999: 315; against Heininger 2010b: 361). Mary (Magdalene's) affiliation to the group and thus the strong, equal role of women in *Gos. Thom.* (of five named disciples, three are men and two are women), is confirmed by Jesus here in a prominent position at the end of the text, with an extension to all women who make

themselves male. Although no conclusions can be drawn about a specific life practice, I think it is very unlikely that women could invoke such a status and at the same time lead a normal married life. The male-spiritual existence probably completely offsets the female-material components. This also matches the beatitude in 79.

In my opinion, the findings show that the spiritual world of *Gos. Thom.* has no room for sexuality; it simply does not deal with it. Questions of asceticism are certainly not a concern of *Gos. Thom.* Asceticism is not a demand which serves a specific theological purpose, nor is it required to attain a spiritual orientation. Rather, it is the other way around: from the theology that is represented, a certain behaviour may follow or at least suggests itself. The basic concept is very similar to *Gos. Eg.*; it is about a change in human beings which is determined by unity, dissolution of gender difference, and closeness to God (maybe a return to the original creation). This idea has, then, potential ascetic consequences (which can be seen in the reception history of *Gos. Thom.*) and is associated with a strong female role.

THE *SOPHIA OF JESUS CHRIST* (NHC III,4; BG 3)

In *Soph. Jes. Chr.*, Jesus teaches his disciples in particular about heavenly circumstances; their concrete earthly life is thus hardly in mind, even if some prompts in this regard are included. Eating and drinking is not an issue, but sexuality is mentioned twice in a rather deprecating way as a means of reproduction. The first time is at the very beginning of the text after the appearance, when Jesus explains the purpose of his coming teachings:

> But to you it is given to know; and whoever is worthy of knowledge will receive (it), whoever has not been begotten by the sowing of unclean rubbing (ⲧⲉⲧⲡⲓⲃⲏⲉⲧ︦ⲭⲁ� ⲏⲙ̄) but by First Who Was Sent, for he is an immortal in the midst of mortal men. (NHC III 93,16–24; Parrott 1991: 49)

The text distinguishes between people who originated in the normal biological way and those who have their origin in God—similar to John 1.12–13, where an earthly conception and birth is set in antithesis to procreation by God. But *Soph. Jes. Chr.* speaks in a significantly more derogatory manner about the procreation process; sexual activity is clearly seen as negative. But it is also obvious that the formulation cannot be taken literally, because the persons being addressed originated themselves by sexual means. Here, a true existence originating from God is contrasted with normal earthly existence without explaining the practical consequences of this contrast.

Later on, Jesus responds to his role and its effect in a longer text insertion as compared with *Eugnostos*:

> And you were sent by the Son, who was sent that you might receive Light and remove yourselves from the forgetfulness of the authorities and that it might not again come to appearance because of you, namely, the unclean rubbing (ⲧⲉⲧⲡⲓⲃⲏⲉⲧ︦ⲭⲁ ⲏⲙ̄) that is from the fearful fire that came from their fleshly part. Tread upon their malicious intent (ⲡⲣⲟⲛⲟⲓⲁ). (NHC III 108,4–16; Parrott 1991: 135–7)

Again, we find the same derogatory formulations regarding sexuality, this time including a kind of guide to action: Jesus' task is, on the one hand, to enlighten his listeners, thereby setting aside the oblivion that the archons placed on the people at the time of creation, so that they no longer remember their heavenly origin. On the other hand, he wants them to abstain from sexual reproduction, which is characteristic of the creation of the archons and keeps it going. This brief mention can be understood as an invitation to the ascetic life. However, it is also possible to interpret this passage, like the first one, in a more figurative sense. If so, it deals with living according to their origin in God, whatever that looks like. But if this specifically means the renunciation of sexuality, and I think this is more likely,

the ascetic lifestyle seems to be so self-evident that a detailed explanation is not necessary. In any case, there is no other call for asceticism, not even in the last part of the teachings of Jesus, which summarize the effect of the teaching and contain challenges and a kind of mission.

However, in the context of these final challenges, one encounters a reference to an original state of creation which is to be reached. As in *Gos. Thom.* and other writings, in *Soph. Jes. Chr.* it is connected to overcoming duality:

> Because of this, then, I came here, that they might be joined with that Spirit and Breath, and might from two become a single one, just as from the first, that you might yield much fruit and go up to Him Who Is from the Beginning, with ineffable joy and glory and honor and grace of the Father of the Universe. (BG 122,5–123,1; Parrott 1991: 173–4)

Similar to *Gos. Thom.* and *Gos. Eg.*, *Soph. Jes. Chr.* depicts a theology in which salvation is thought of as a return to an original spiritual state of creation that might include the dissolution of gender difference. And in this text as well, the equal participation of women is noticeable. The revelations of Jesus are addressed to twelve male and seven female disciples (of these, four men and one woman involved in the conversation are specifically named); this double group seems more institutionalized than coincidental and is not problematized—there are hardly any other early Christian writings in which nearly equal participation of women and men seems so normal. This text also points to a rejection of sexuality, even if it is unclear as to how concretely and literally it is to be understood.

The text, however, does not focus at all on practical behaviour, and only sparsely on anthropology; it focuses primarily on the heavenly conditions before the fall. In other words, it is a description of the supreme God and his emanations. The fall of Sophia, which leads to the creation of human beings and our material world, is mentioned briefly only at the end. *Soph. Jes. Chr.* presupposes this gnostic myth, but does not elaborate it in detail. In these heavenly worlds, the supreme God is beyond any gender polarity (but of course described in male terminology); only the emanations are androgynous, each with a male and a female side that corresponds with each other. In my opinion, it reflects a view that gender differentiation is a secondary development, which is lacking in the highest deity.

THE *APOCRYPHON OF JOHN* (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1; BG 2)

The *Ap. John* provides a clearer view of sexuality. In the context of the detailed gnostic creation myth, sexual desire is an attempt by Yaldabaoth to bind the people to the material world. Desire is part of the physical creation, through which the archons want to separate Adam from his heavenly origin (BG 55), because he had shown himself superior to them through the spirit breathed into him. Yaldabaoth is also seen as the ruler of (or in) sexual desire (BG 51); his rape of Eve is the origin of conjugal sexuality (BG 62–3). Sexuality in these passages belongs, therefore, to the material world and leads to entanglement in it; it contrasts the reflection of one's own heavenly origin and the return to it.

On the other hand, the creation of woman and the differentiation of the sexes is positive (Williams 1996: 156). Adam's ability to recognize his own nature in Eve is attributed to the interaction of the heavenly Epinoia:

> Then the Reflection of the light hid herself in him (Adam). And in his desire, he (the Chief Ruler) wanted to bring her out of the rib. But she, the Reflection of the light, since she is something that cannot be grasped, although the darkness pursed her, it was not able to catch her. He wanted to bring the power out of him in order to make a form once again, in the shape of a woman. And he raised <her> up before him, not as Moses said, 'He took a rib and created the woman beside him.' Immediately (Adam)

became sober from the drunkenness of darkness. The Reflection of the light lifted the veil which lay over his mind. Immediately, when he recognized his essence, he said, 'This is indeed bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.' Therefore the man will leave his father and his mother und he will cleave to his wife and they will both become one flesh. For the Mother's consort will be sent forth and she will be rectified. Therefore Adam gave her the name 'the Mother of all the living'. (BG 59,6–60,16; Waldstein and Wisse 1995: 130–4)

Here, the connection between the two, including sexuality (cf. Gen. 2.23–4), appears to be more of a step to salvation. This is explicitly visible in the begetting of Seth, who has heavenly qualities, even though sexual desire is implanted in Adam by the archon (BG 63). So possibly only desire is negative, not necessarily each type of sexuality, and procreation might have positive effects.

A possible reference to the concrete effects on the lives of readers is then provided by a description of the saved souls who have no desire, but avail themselves of the flesh:

> Those on whom the Spirit of life is about to come, after they have joined with the power they will be saved, they will be perfect and they will be worthy to enter these great lights. For they will be worthy to be purified there from all wickedness and the attractions of evil since they do not devote themselves to anything except this incorruptible assembly and will surely direct their attention to it without anger, or envy, or fear, or desire, or gratification. By all of these they are not affected, nor by any one among them, except only (by) the flesh, while they use it, looking expectantly for when they will be brought forth and received by the receivers into the dignity of eternal imperishable life and the calling, enduring everything and bearing everything, that they may finish the contest and inherit eternal life. (BG 65,3–66,13; Waldstein and Wisse 1995: 146–8)

The text of BG (shorter version) speaks about using(ⲭⲣⲁⲥⲟⲁⲓ) the flesh. This can at least be interpreted as a facilitation of normal family life. The flesh, even though the goal is to leave it behind, can be used. However, the longer version speaks about bearing the flesh (ⲫⲟⲣⲉⲓ , *Ap. John* NHC II, 25,35) thereby describing only the state of physical existence in and of itself, without indicating what to do with it.

Women do not have a special role in *Ap. John*; there is no indication of equal participation, but also none against it. Even though I perhaps put too much weight on the differences, it seems to me that *Ap. John* represents—in spite of the gnostic myth which is to some extent the same—a different concept of asceticism, of gender roles, and of the presence of the new life than *Soph. Jes. Chr.*

THE *GOSPEL OF MARY* (BG 1)

The *Gos. Mary* is even harder to interpret than other writings, because it is only partially preserved, and also because it takes up traditions from many different areas without elaborating on them. The *Gos. Mary* also offers a derogatory remark which has to do with the topic of sexuality, namely as an answer to the question of the sin of the world:

> … What is the sin of the world?' The Saviour said: 'There is no sin, but it is you who perform sin when you do what is like the nature of adultery (ⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲛⲟⲉⲓⲕ) which is called sin. Because of this, the Good came among you to the (things?) of every nature, in order to restore it to its root.' Then he continued and said; 'That is why you are si[c]k and die, for … (p. 8) of the one who [… he who under]stands, let him understand. Matter [gave birth to] a passion (ⲡⲁⲑⲟⲥ) which has no image, which proceeded from (something) contrary to nature. Then there arises a disturbance in the whole body. That is why I said to you, be obedient and if you are not obedient still be obedient in the presence of the different forms of nature. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.' (7,12–8,11; Tuckett 2007: 87–9)

Adultery is seen here as identical with sin and serves as an illustration for the basic error of human existence. The reference to sexuality is explicitly used as an image. With 'sin', the blending of the spiritual/heavenly with material things is probably meant (King 2003:

50; Tuckett 2007: 142–3). Illegitimate sexuality thus seems to stand for an unauthorized connection, or maybe more directly the primacy of physical desires over other values. Physical disturbance caused by passion is seen negatively in any case in the following lines. But since adultery in the biblical context is also a common metaphor for idolatry/the turning to other gods, it might include the aspect of turning away from the true God, and that means from one's own origin. The figurative language does not contain an indication of the way of life of those addressed; moreover, the reference to adultery leaves open the possibility of legitimate sexuality. It is just clear that passion—and the following physical disturbance—is rejected.

In *Gos. Mary*, the aim is to return to an original state; the dissolution of all things to their origin seems to be a positive promise. Later in the document, this objective is related to individuals; it is about their search for the Son of Man inside themselves (8,18–21), the putting on and bringing forth the perfect human being (18,15–18) or the retrospective view that they were made into human beings by Jesus (9,18–20). In this sentence, the wording of the Greek and the Coptic versions of *Gos. Mary* differs:

> BG 9,19–20: *for he has prepared us and made us into human beings*. (Tuckett 2007: 91)

> P. Oxy. 3525 12: *for he has united us and [made us into] human beings*. (Tuckett 2007: 109)

It is clear that this state of true humanity is already set, despite the calls for realization. However, it is not described in detail. The Greek version probably uses the word 'united' (the word is difficult to read: see Tuckett 2007: 166–7) which might be interpreted as a male–female connection, and thus as a dissolution of gender difference. But this is not even certain for the Greek text, the Coptic text gives no indication of such an interpretation.

In the report on the ascent of the soul in the second half of the *Gos. Mary*, desire (ⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ) belongs to the forces that must be overcome (15,1, the second power; 16,6–7, part of the fourth power) and is thereby connected with darkness, ignorance, flesh, and wrath. A specific sexual interpretation with austere practice is not evident.

As to whether the *Gos. Mary* belongs in an ascetic context, the writing simply offers no evidence (Wire 1988: 321). There are no direct or indirect incitements to ascetic life. Conversely, there is also nothing that would contradict such a lifestyle. Small clues fit perfectly with a theology shown in more detail in *Gos. Thom.* and *Gos. Eg.* Visible in this text is the current presence of the true human being in the disciples and a practical dissolution of gender difference. Mary is explicitly allowed to teach; her womanhood is not an obstacle for this. But this is justified (unlike *Gos. Thom.* 114) only by the choice of Jesus, not in a fundamentally anthropological way, and also not explicitly extended to all women. I would suspect that the female readers of *Gos. Mary* could cite the example of Mary and fill in the blanks of the *Gos. Mary* so that true humanity also includes a dissolution of gender difference—and then probably for them an ascetic lifestyle as well (Wire 1988: 322). But it is (probably easier for men) also conceivable to combine *Gos. Mary* with its ascent to the heavenly origin with a normal married life.

THE *GOSPEL OF PHILIP* (NHC II,3)

The *Gos. Phil.* differs from the previously examined gospels. Its use of sexual language appears broad and positive, but it refers above all to heavenly, not earthly circumstances. In particular, the bridal chamber is often mentioned, where woman and man unite and thereby overcome their original separation (70,9–22). Presumably this is regarded as a union with a

heavenly syzygy. However, the varying language also refers to earthly marriage and generally to sexuality which is compared to the heavenly bridal chamber (81,34–82,10; 65,12–26). The earthly relations are reflections of a heavenly reality and help to understand it.

In scholarly discussions, it is debated whether the bridal chamber in the group behind *Gos. Phil.* is celebrated as a sacrament (and if so, what it might have looked like) or whether it is an interpretation of the generally accepted sacraments (baptism, Eucharist). The latter is more likely in my opinion (Heininger 2010a: 300), as it agrees with the overall assessment that *Gos. Phil.* is aimed at a group within a 'normal' community, not at a separate and independent form of church (Heimola 2011: 168–9).

The idea of the bridal chamber in *Gos. Phil.* is related to a theology of creation which is similar to *Gos. Thom.* or *Gos. Eg.*; *Gos. Thom.* 22 is probably used and interpreted in *Gos. Phil.* (67,30–5). An original separation of Eve from Adam leads to death and is dissolved by the unification made possible by Christ (68,22–6; 70,9–34). The re-establishment of an originally existing (but then lost) state of creation thus seems possible here. The *Gos. Phil.* shares with *Gos. Thom.* and other texts the fundamental idea that the true decisive life is heavenly-spiritual, not earthly.

But it is interesting that the return to the original state is not seen as a dissolution of gender difference, through which an asexual, spiritual and (in the gender terminology of antiquity) male humanity is accomplished, but via a union with a heavenly power of the opposite sex (65,1–12). The effect here, too, is the dissolution of sexual attractiveness (65,12–26); nevertheless, more gender polarity remains. This is also reflected in the fact that women do not appear as female disciples in *Gos. Phil.* as they do in *Gos. Thom.* Mary Magdalene has a prominent role, but she has it as a companion of Jesus; in other words, specifically as a woman. The differences and the attraction between man and woman are not fundamentally devalued. It is not only a characteristic of the material world, but also of the heavenly reality. The important thing is to connect with the right partner who protects against all other temptations.

But what can be inferred from *Gos. Phil.* about the concrete life of the readers? Are they called to an ascetic lifestyle—in other words, to give up normal marriage in favour of the heavenly bridal chamber? In research, this is often assumed (cf. Williams 1996: 148–9), but the opposite position can also be maintained (DeConick 2003: 335).

> No [one can] know when [the husband] and the wife have intercourse with one another except the two of them. Indeed marriage in the world (ΠΓΑΜΟС ΜΠΚΟСΜΟС) is a mystery for those who have taken a wife. If there is a hidden quality to the marriage of defilement (ΠΓΑΜΟС ΜΠΧωϨΜ), how much more is the undefiled marriage (ΠΓΑΜΟС ΝΑΤΧωϨΜ) a true mystery! It is not fleshly but pure. It belongs not to desire but to the will. It belongs not to the darkness or the night but to the day and the light. (81,34–82,10; Layton and Isenberg 1989: 205–7)

The distinction between different types of marriage is clear: the marriage of defilement corresponds to the marriage of the world and is set apart from undefiled marriage. This is probably a distinction between the earthly and the heavenly level; the latter marriage is celebrated in the true bridal chamber, while the former is not only inferior, but is also linguistically devalued (defilement). Despite this clear hierarchy, it seems to me that secular marriage nevertheless has a certain value as an earthly image of heavenly circumstances (64,30–65,1). Moreover, the argument assumes a familiarity with the conditions of earthly marriage.

On the other hand, there are passages in *Gos. Phil.* which seem to prohibit sexuality, at least for women: a bridal chamber is not for the animals, nor is it for the slaves, nor for defiled women (ΝСϨΙΜΕ ΕϤΧΟϨΜ); but it is for free men and virgins (ϨΝΠΑΡΘΕΝΟС)

(69,1–4; Layton and Isenberg 1989: 179). But it is not clear how literally this statement is to be understood. Groups of people are differentiated here, but animals are certainly meant figuratively—and probably slaves as well—so why not the virgins? (Cf. Lundhaug 2010: 302.)

In my opinion, it is unlikely that *Gos. Phil.* completely rejects earthly marriage. As an image of the heavenly bridal chamber, earthly marriage has a certain value and might be an option for the reader (Buckley 1986: 121; Zimmermann 2001: 586; Lundhaug 2010: 277–8; Heimola 2011: 283–4), at least for men. This view also conforms to the non-ascetic interpretation of *Gos. Eg.* by the Valentinians. A rejection of procreation is also not found. At the same time, there is no such clear involvement of women as in *Gos. Thom.* and other writings. Is concentrating on the spiritual life and marriage at the same time easier among men?

CONCLUSION

The results of this analysis of the apocryphal gospels are rather mixed. Asceticism as a direct call to abstinence is not to be found, except in *Thom. Cont.* But there is evidence for an early ascetic interpretation of *Gos. Eg.*, and in *Gos. Thom.* an 'ascetic reception history' can be seen. Moreover, many statements fit well in an ascetic context and might be read as supporting such a lifestyle. There are derogatory names for sexual activities (unclean rubbing, polluted intercourse, marriage of defilement); a basic connection of birth from a woman with death and the rejection of procreation and family relationships can be found as well, but also spiritual variants of sexual life (bridal chamber, companions). To complicate matters, sexual language is often used in a figurative sense. The desire and the inner fire of *Thom. Cont.*, the works of the female of *Gos. Eg.*, or terms such as adultery or unclean rubbing from *Gos. Mary* and *Soph. Jes. Chr.* are meant or can be interpreted in a much more general way than appears at first sight; and as a consequence, the ascetic effect diminishes. In any case, sexuality is contrasted with striving for spiritual values; it means entering a material world with desires and physicality—therefore, such an entering can also be described with sexual imagery.

All the writings examined—in conformity with the general opinion of the time in which they were written—show a clear hierarchy between spiritual values that constitute true humanity, and the physical and material side, to which sexuality and desires belong. In addition, sexuality, birth, and mortality are connected, and sexuality is seen as the origin of death which therefore can not be overcome by procreation (Brown 1988: 86). In this context, sexuality is not a positive value, but also not important. It fits the basic orientation toward the spiritual and heavenly things that sexuality is largely not an issue. However, this orientation does not necessarily have to result in abstinence; a married life (including sexuality without desire) is quite conceivable. Such a view is, in my opinion, most clearly available in *Gos. Phil.*, where the idea of the heavenly bridal chamber arguably requires— with all its subordination—a nevertheless positive view of earthly family life. Presumably an openness to procreation, perhaps even an intention of propagation of the chosen, is in the background. Having children, however, is viewed negatively in other writings, which points to an ascetic practice, as fertility is often used as a justification for marriage, even if desires are rejected (Brown 1988: 133; Francis 1995: 14).

The rejection of reproduction is often associated with ideas of the dissolution of gender differentiation, the return to an original unity, the dissolution of femininity—and a strong role for female disciples. This applies to *Gos. Thom., Gos. Eg., Dial. Sav., Soph. Jes. Chr.,*

possibly also for *Gos. Mary*—but not for *Gos. Phil., Thom. Cont.*, and *Ap. John*. Obviously both aspects are related: the dissolution of gender difference allows the participation of women. Precisely for women, a life without sexuality is, however, in my opinion an inevitable consequence, even if the express request for it is missing.

So there is, in some texts, a theology with potentially ascetic consequences that has a specific profile, despite some variations between the writings. Salvation is regarded as a return to an original state of creation, before sexual differentiation and without birth and death. This condition can actually be achieved—particularly in *Gos. Thom*. Asceticism is a logical consequence of this old/new angelic state; whether it was absolutely required cannot be seen from the texts. Anyway, asceticism is not a prerequisite; in other words, not the path towards this state.

The idea of creation in stages (in which a spiritual and sexually undifferentiated human being is created first, followed by the physical existence which includes sexuality and mortality) is well documented, especially in Philo. Additionally there is the idea of an angelic existence after the resurrection. Already in the first century, the community at Corinth might have used this concept and combined it with the idea of a resurrection which has already taken place (Heininger 2010b: 389–90). In 1 Corinthians, the consequences are also visible, specifically in relation to the role of women and of asceticism. Although the reconstruction of Corinthian positions is loaded with great uncertainty, I note a connection here, because the practical implications of these theological ideas can be better seen than in the non-canonical gospels. Moreover, this shows that the theological concept is relatively old.

In Corinth there was clearly a significant portion of the community who wanted to live ascetically, without sexuality, but also others who did not want to or could not do so (1 Cor. 7). There is some evidence that women especially lived abstinently, and thus difficulties originated within families (Wire 1988: 313–14). Presumably these are the same women who are prophesying in 1 Cor. 11. Whatever the exact problem is there, at least in the context of worship some women avoided a gender-typical hairstyle or head covering. Perhaps they justified their behaviour by means of creation theology. Very likely the Pauline formula of the dissolution of the differences in Christ (Gal. 3.28) lies in the background, which women have taken seriously in practice and which then had asceticism as a consequence (Merklein 1997: 235, 243–4). In Corinth, therefore, one already finds the combination of creation theology, realized eschatology, dissolution of gender difference, ascetic tendencies, and active women. The connection of theology, asceticism, and female participation is confirmed, but that does not imply that the various groups and writings are directly related; the combination may have objective reasons and therefore developed independently. These ideas do not require a gnostic mythology, although they can be combined with it (*Soph. Jes. Chr.*). A socially critical, radical attitude seems to be important, which is clearly present in *Gos. Thom.*, and also in Corinth. On the other hand, in *Ap. John* and *Gos. Phil.*, both of which are clearly gnostic, all elements are much less visible. In the Pauline communities as well as in gnostic contexts, a tendency to mitigate in favour of social integration can be observed with respect to both asceticism and the activities of women (Francis 1995: 167–77; Williams 1996: 107–15; Merklein 1997: 257–8).

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CHAPTER 23

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ENCRATISM AND THE APOCRYPHAL ACTS

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YVES TISSOT

THERE is much talk of 'moderate Encratism' or of 'Encratite tendencies' in regard to the sexual ethics of second-century Christians, who extolled virginity and conjugal fidelity and who condemned second marriage by widows, allowing only one marriage. This may be seen in a range of texts, including Justin, *1 Apol*. 15; Athenagoras, *Leg*. 33; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 2.137.1 and 3.4.3, 74.2; Tertullian, *Apol*. 9.19; *Cast*. 1.3–4. In my opinion, henogamy had its origin in baptismal syntaxis. Hippolytus specifies that the celibate be taught 'not to commit fornication, but to conform faithfully to the law or remain as he is' (*Trad*. *apost*. 15). Tertullian says much the same of children: 'Postpone their baptism until they are either married or strong enough to practise chastity' (*De bapt*. 18.6). In principle, therefore, once baptized, one did not marry again. I believe this rule dates back to the origins of Christianity. In 1 Cor. 7, where Paul answers questions that the Corinthians have asked him about married people and virgins, we find a brief passage, often considered an excursus, where the circumcised and uncircumcised, slaves and free persons are all invited to remain as they are (1 Cor. 7.17–24). In fact, as he states at v. 17b, Paul refers here to a tradition of encouraging married persons and as well as virgins to remain as they were when called (hence the rejection of digamy); in Christ they have received everything—why then would they seek to change their status in life? But to refer to these views as examples of 'moderate Encratism' or as 'Encratite tendencies' is unfortunate, for it leads us to believe that these Christians, without going so far as to reject marriage, shared the pessimistic views of sexuality for which they blamed the Encratites. Indeed, according to Irenaeus, the Encratites were inspired especially by Marcion in their preaching of abstinence from marriage (*Adv*. *haer*. 1. 28. 1 = Eusebius, *Hist*. *eccl*. 4. 28.1).

The name of 'Encratites' that was applied to them has long kept its heresiological meaning. But in the eighteenth century the term 'Encratism' arose to describe any ascetic tendency like theirs. Thus Beausobre comments on 1 Cor. 7.1b: 'We see here the birth of Encratism … In fact, I believe that in these first verses St. Paul speaks of married persons, and says it would be advantageous for a married man to abstain from his wife … This makes it apparent that there were already people who wished to introduce Encratism into the Christian churches' (Beausobre 1742: 326). In the course of time the term was expanded and thus weakened: 'Encratism' is sometimes applied to anything that seems to denote a certain depreciation of sexuality.

Nonetheless, it is worth recalling that despite Irenaeus' insinuations, Hippolytus recognizes that the Encratites 'confessed the same doctrine as the Church about God and Christ' (*Philos*. 8.20.1); the only thing for which he blames them is their pride in their way of life. Therefore it seems to me imprudent to suppose from the outset that Encratism implies a depreciation of sexuality. Suffice it to say that we are dealing with Encratism

when sexual continence is not proposed 'in order to be closer to God' (Athenagoras, *Leg*. 33), but imposed on every baptized person as a requirement of the faith.

VEHEMENTLY ENCRATITE ACTS?

The apocryphal acts are often presented as works steeped in Encratism, and by speaking of Encratism in an inadequately critical way, one ends by seeing it everywhere. So it is that Onuki, in discussing ascesis in the apocryphal acts, considers a series of scabrous tales (Onuki 2004: 292–305): the attack on Thecla in the public street by Alexander at Antioch (*Acts of Paul and Thecla* 26); the attempt at necrophilia by Callimachus in the tomb of Drusiana (*Acts of John* 70); and three murders: one of a peasant killed by his son, whom he wished to prevent from committing adultery (*Acts of John* 49); one of a young man killed by a serpent enraged because the man slept with the woman of whom the serpent himself was enamoured (*Acts of Thomas* 31); and one of a serving maid killed by a young man in love with her, with whom she was in love but whom she refused to follow in his resolution to lead a pure life (*Acts of Thomas* 52). Though these are stories of sexual excess, they clearly have no significant Encratite content.

In studying the apocryphal acts, we must be aware that in them chastity 'is given value in the stories, and not in the teachings that the authors of the Acts put in the mouths of the apostles. To appreciate the Encratism of these stories correctly, we must therefore allow for their romantic exaggeration' (Kaestli 1981: 59). In their teachings, the apostles usually contented themselves with denouncing adultery, fornication, pederasty, etc. Therefore one must not see Encratism when Paul exhorts the faithful to 'live chastely (ζῆν ἐγκρατῶς)' (*Acts Paul* 9); the term 'Encratism' (ἐγκράτεια) signifies not only sexual continence, but also a certain reserve in conjugal relations. Thus, for Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 3.46.4 and 52.1, one can be married and procreate 'in an encratite way' (ἐγκρατῶς). Moreover, we must keep in mind that in a story concerned with chastity, the authors naturally favour situations of crisis. In narrative terms, conjugal chastity is not an enticing subject: happy couples have no story (see section below on the *Acts of John*). But it will clearly be quite different if a couple breaks up because one of the married pair wishes to live chastely, *especially if the choice is that of the wife*, considered to be 'subject to her husband'.

We note nonetheless that a story of this sort is not necessarily Encratite, as is shown by the case reported by Justin in his *Second Apology*. Tired of living with a depraved husband who refuses to live chastely or temperately (σωφρονεῖν), a woman at length repudiates him, considering it impious to live with a debauchee. In vengeance, the husband then denounces her as a Christian and has the man who converted her condemned (*2 Apol*. 2.2). This story has often been compared to our acts, in which abandoned husbands hold the apostles responsible for their marital troubles. But on closer inspection the case reported by Justin is different, for the wife would doubtless have resumed a normal married life if her husband had renounced his debauchery.

THE *ACTS OF THOMAS*

The *Acts of Thomas* are the only apocryphal acts known to us in their entirety. Therefore they can show us the place held by Encratism in this type of romance. Two stories immediately stand out. The first (*Acts Thom*. 4–16) is contained in the initial story of

Thomas's voyage to India. In the course of a stop in Andrapolis, Thomas is invited to the wedding of the king's daughter. When night falls, the Lord appears to the married couple in order to invite them not to unite sexually (12). At this, the couple 'separate themselves from debauchery' (13.1). The second serves as a prologue to the apostle's martyrdom (*Acts Thom*. 82–169). Thomas converts Mygdonia, who thenceforth refuses herself to Charis, her husband. Charis complains to King Misdaeus, who confronts Thomas with the following dilemma: either he reconciles Mygdonia with her husband or he dies (127). Accompanied by Charis, Thomas goes to find Mygdonia and asks her to yield to her husband's demand, but Mygdonia will have none of it. Misdaeus then suggests that his wife, Tertia, go and reason with her, but the queen is also won over to chastity. Enraged by this turn of events, Misdaeus imprisons Thomas and has him put to death.

These two stories are clearly Encratite, describing marriage as 'impure union' (12.1, 88.2), 'debauchery' (13.1), 'corruption' (14.1, 15.1, 103), and 'work of shame' (14.1, 117.2). Its pleasures are 'impure and sullied' (117.2). Although chastity is recommended for quite prosaic reasons in the Andrapolis episode—it allows one to live without care, affliction, or sorrow (13.3), free of the troubles of marriage (14.2) and of the many worries caused by children (13.2)—it is above all required as a necessity of the faith. This is how Charis presents the preaching of Thomas to Misdaeus: 'He says: "You cannot become children for the eternal life that I teach unless you separate yourselves, the man from his wife and the woman from her husband"' (101.2; cf. 98.1). This is why Mygdonia begs the Lord to give her the strength to resist her husband's advances: 'Allow me to keep the sanctity in which I have pleased you and by which I will find eternal life' (97). God can be approached only 'by purity, sanctity and love' (104.4). Furthermore, chastity is required by the fact that Christ reveals himself as 'the true spouse', 'the incorruptible spouse' (14.1, 124.4). Therefore there can be no other, as the fiancée at Andrapolis explains to her parents, who are surprised not to find her troubled on the morning after her wedding night: 'I despised this husband and this wedding that passed before my eyes, because I had been joined in another marriage … united with a true spouse' (14.2 Gr.). In the same spirit, in order to disappoint the hopes of Charis forever, Mygdonia admits to him that she loves another: 'He whom I love is better than you and all your possessions … You are a spouse who passes and dies, but Jesus is the true spouse who remains forever immortal' (117.1).

Is this to say that the *Acts* are a 'vehemently Encratite' work, as G. Blond states, and that 'they miss no opportunity to call the work of the flesh dirty, to declare that sanctity consists above all in chastity and to present the latter as an indispensable condition of salvation for all Christians' (Blond 1946: 6–7)? The arguments advanced by Blond in this regard are astonishingly weak. He points out that in Act II, Thomas is presented as an ascetic who preaches 'a new doctrine of chastity and virginity' (Blond 1946: 9), without specifying that he is dealing with a variant attested by a single manuscript of Bonnet's Γ recension; furthermore, Blond misinterprets the expression ἐργασία τῆς γαστρός , which designates not 'work of the flesh' but gluttony, as the appended citation of Luke 12.24 shows. He acknowledges later that Act III 'has nothing specifically Encratite', but he still thinks that, in order to have killed a young man taken with a girl, the dragon must have been moved by 'the wish to punish every fault of the flesh' (Blond 1946: 10)—as if this dragon, himself in love with the girl, had not acted purely out of jealousy.

In reality, apart from the wedding story and the martyrdom, there is no trace of Encratism except at the beginning of Act VI, which concerns a young man who admits to killing a serving maid because she refused to be his companion in purity and he could not bear to see her go with other men (51.3). This is undoubtedly a case of retouching by the author, who made use of an aretalogical collection in Acts II–VIII. This collection was devoid of any

Encratite preoccupation, as is shown by the rest of the story, in which the resuscitated girl tells of what she saw in hell: the torments of those who pervert the conjugal union ('established by God', as even the Syriac says), the clients of prostitutes, and corrupted virgins 'who covered their parents in shame' (55.2–56.2). Besides, the fact that the young man explains his act by reminding Thomas that he had heard him condemn whoever indulged in an impure union, 'especially in adultery', seems to indicate that the murderer was originally married and that he had killed his wife on surprising her with another man. This better explains the cries of Thomas, which have no meaning for a crime of Encratite motives: 'O senseless union …, O irrepressible desire …, O work of the serpent …!' (52.1 Gr.).

However this may be, the *Acts of Thomas*, considered particularly Encratite, warn us to exercise a certain caution in examining the acts that follow, which have come down to us in a fragmentary state. The presence of one or two Encratite stories does not mean that they are fundamentally Encratite.

THE *ACTS OF ANDREW*

The *Acts of Andrew* presents great narrative similarities with the *Acts of Thomas* (Prieur 1989: 389ff.). Thus, for example, according to a later text, the *Epistle of Titus*, it contained a story of a thwarted wedding, as also does the *Acts of Thomas*, as I have already noted: 'And when Andrew too came to the wedding … he divided the intended couple, separated the other men from the other women and taught them to remain pure by leading a celibate life' (*Acts. Andr.* 14.1). A second similarity may be seen in the long Encratite prologue that prefaces its account of the apostle's martyrdom. Once converted, Maximilla refuses herself to her husband, the proconsul Aegeatus, who has Andrew thrown in prison and offers his wife the following dilemma: he will release the apostle if she comes back to him; otherwise, he tells her, 'I shall do no evil to you, for I cannot, but I will torment you even more though him whom you prefer to me' (36.4). Maximilla is obstinate in her refusal, and Aegeatus has Andrew crucified.

Here, as in the *Acts of Thomas*, marriage is described as a 'repugnant union' (14.4), 'an abominable and impure life' (37.2), and 'abjection' (46.2). Chastity is also required by the emergence of a spiritual reality to which one must be joined in order to be saved. But the understanding of this union is quite different from that of the *Acts of Thomas*, as the confession of Maximilla shows: 'I love, Aegeates, I love, and what I love (ὃ φιλῶ) does not belong to this world … Night and day he embraces me and I burn with love for this (πρὸς αὐτό) … Therefore let me be united to him, and let me remain with him alone' (23.4–5). About what is she speaking in this way? A prayer addressed by Andrew to Christ on her behalf gives us a clue: 'Keep her … and betroth her to the interior husband (τῷ ἔσω ἀνδρί) whom you know better than anyone else, because of whom all the mystery of your dispensation is brought to pass, so that, having strengthened her faith in you, she may keep herself united to her own kindred …' (16.1–3). Having become aware, by the grace of Christ, of the divine origin of her soul, Maximilla, who was hitherto distracted by worldly activities, will henceforth devote herself to recovering her true nature.

According to Gregory of Tours, chastity was also a theme of a story that began with a scabrous episode: after their encounter with Andrew, Trophima, an ex-concubine of the proconsul Lesbios, sent away the man with whom she was living, and Lesbios himself abandoned his wife. Believing that her husband had resumed his former affair, the wife had

Trophima confined in a house of prostitution (Gregory of Tours, *De miraculis* 23; a similar story is found in Xenophon, *An Ephesian Tale* 5).

THE *ACTS OF JOHN*

Since John did not die a martyr, the story of his metastasis cannot have an Encratite prologue. But chastity is still a theme of the three stories of the *Acts of John*, which unfortunately are known to us only indirectly. This may be seen at a number of points. First, chapters 63, 82, and 87 allude to a story in which Drusiana, converted by John, separates from her husband, the strategos Andronicus; in revenge, Andronicus lets her languish in a tomb for fourteen days (87 and the Manichean Psalter, Allberry 143.11–12), but Drusiana finally convinces him to share her convictions. This story has an Encratite form, for ch. 63 tells us not only that she acted 'from piety', but above all that she would have preferred to die 'rather than to do this abominable thing'. Second, among the women who accompanied John in his wanderings, there was Aristoboula, whose husband, Tertullus, had died in the Way (59). The Manichean Psalms tell us that she had suffered 'a great torment' in fighting 'for purity' (Allberry 143.13–14). This is an allusion to an expanded story that must have been analogous to Drusiana's (Junod and Kaestli 1983: 95). Third, the *Epistle of Pseudo-Titus* tells us a story in which John, invited to a wedding, exhorts the couple to keep themselves pure, revealing to them 'the mystery of nuptial union: it is a temptation of the serpent, ignorance of doctrine, harm caused by our begetting, a gift of death …, an obstacle that separates us from the Lord, the beginning of disobedience, the end of life, and death. Since you have heard this, my little children, join yourselves in an indissoluble, true and holy marriage, in expectation of the only spouse, incomparable and true, who comes from the sky, Christ, the eternal spouse' (13.21–9). The violence of this passage has astonished some; because of its eschatological conclusion, it has even been asked if it could have come from the *Acts of John* (Junod and Kaestli 1983: 145).

Junod and Kaestli believe that the loss of these three stories is due to doctrinal censorship: they were too marked by the Encratite ideal (Junod and Kaestli 1983: 104–5). Perhaps; but their loss, like that of many other stories, could also be wholly accidental. Who knows if readers of the past were truly shocked by the criticisms of marriage that led Drusiana and Aristoboula to renounce their husbands, since Andronicus and doubtless Tertullus finally agreed to live with them in conjugal chastity?

Chastity is also an implicit theme in the stories of John's first sojourn in Ephesus. On arriving in the city, John finds Cleopatra dying; seeing himself already deprived of his wife, the strategos Lycomedes dies of despair. Then John revives Cleopatra, and at his instigation she in turn resuscitates her husband (19–25). Next we find the couple, along with John, caring for the widows of Ephesus (30). It is not specified that they live in continence, but we can assume it from the intervening episode of the portrait (26–9), in which John teaches Lycomedes to paint himself: '… wash your face, train your look, purify your inwards, purge your stomach, cut off your sexual organs' (29). These last words, which clearly must not be understood literally (cf. chapters 53–4, where John blames the parricide for castrating himself: 'It is not the organs that do harm to man, but the invisible sources of the act that put into motion and bring to light every shameful impulse', 54), are a metaphor for chastity. Barely suggested, it is not given a motive.

The apocryphal acts examined to this point thus all contain a story of a thwarted wedding. They all also tell of marital conflicts caused by the conversion of wives to chastity against their husbands' will, conflicts resolved by the martyrdom of the apostle (*Acts of*

Thomas and *Acts of Andrew*) or by a reconciliation, the couple agreeing to live in wedded chastity (*Acts of John*). Therefore it is not surprising that these acts are precisely the ones read by the Encratites, according to Epiphanius (*Pan*. 47.1). But what about the *Acts of Peter* and the *Acts of Paul*?

THE *ACTS OF PETER*

Of the first part of the *Acts of Peter*, which takes place at Jerusalem, only fragments have come down to us. Two of them, the episodes of the daughter of Peter (Poupon 1997: 1048–52 and Aug., *C*. *Adim*. 17.5 for the lacuna in the Coptic text) and of the gardener's daughter (*Ps.-Titus* 4.1–5), are sometimes considered Encratite, but wrongly, in my view. In the first, a sudden paralysis saves the virginity of Peter's daughter when she is on the point of being raped; the Lord thus 'preserved his servant from defilement, impurity and ruin'. In the second, a gardener asks Peter to pray for his only daughter, who immediately falls dead; dismayed, the father begs Peter to resuscitate her … a great error, for a few days later she is destined to disappear, seduced by a hypocrite posing as a believer. Although both stories concern virgins, their lesson is that of providential misfortune: 'God takes care of his own, and he provides what is good for each, while we think that God has forgotten us' (Poupon 1997: 1052). There is nothing particularly Encratite in this.

Nor is there in the Roman episodes of the *Acts of Peter*. In his invectives against Satan in chapter 8, Peter says: 'You caught the first man in the net of concupiscence and you enchained him with your original sin and with the bond of the body.' But never in his speeches does he attack marriage. In chapter 30, indeed, the faithful think so highly of it that they blame him for having accepted ten thousand pieces of gold from Chryse, a woman decried throughout Rome 'because she did not attach herself to a single man'!

We find no Encratism except in the prologue of the martyrdom story. In Rome, Peter preaches chastity with such success that the four concubines of the prefect Agrippa 'agree among themselves to remain pure' (33), and Xanthippe 'departs' from her husband Albinus, a friend of Caesar's. And that is not all: 'There were many more women who, exalted by his preaching on chastity, separated from their husbands; men too withdrew from the beds of their wives, because they wished to worship God in a chaste and pure fashion' (34). Enraged, Albinus demands that the prefect proceed against Peter to end this epidemic: 'Well then, what are you waiting for, Agrippa? Let us find him and put him to death as a sorcerer, in order to win back our wives, and also to avenge those others whose wives he has taken from them but who lack the power to kill him' (34). We observe, however, that the author does not dwell on this prologue: a few lines are enough for him to describe the reactions of the 'troubled and sorrowed' Agrippa (33) and of Albinus, 'maddened like a wild beast' (34). As for the resistance of the women, it is contained in a single sentence about the concubines, who 'were willing to endure any evils from Agrippa' (33), and nothing is said about Xanthippe. Unlike Andrew and Thomas, Peter gives no motive for his call to chastity, and does not even say that marriage is an abomination. The sudden evocation in chapters 33–4 of a resoundingly successful sermon on chastity is therefore no more than a 'simple literary convention to set in motion the story of the apostle's martyrdom' (Kaestli 1990: 284). Thus the *Acts of Peter* are in no way a work of Encratite propaganda.

THE *ACTS OF PAUL*

In the *Acts of Paul*, if we agree with Kasser, the apostle 'goes from city to city, repeating without much variation a sermon whose essential element is the praise of Encratism, and hence of chastity. The results of the Encratite "gospel" are soon evident, especially among women: wives renounce their husbands, fiancées break with their fiancés; this social upheaval excites an uprising among the people, who demand that the proconsul put the apostle to death …' (Kasser 1960: 48). The last sentence of this summary, every bit as exaggerated as the remarks of Blond on the 'violently Encratite' character of the *Acts of Thomas*, refers erroneously to the episode at Ephesus (Act IX). If the people of that city, beginning with the goldsmiths (cf. Acts 19.24), demand the death of Paul, it is not because he criticized marriage, but because he took issue with the pagan cults: 'Your gods are nothing but empty idols!' (13). It is true that a trace of Encratism has been detected in the rest of the story, since on the day that Paul is to be thrown to the beasts, Artemylla, wife of the proconsul Jerome, falls ill from sorrow, and Jerome himself is afflicted 'not only on account of his wife, but also because the rumour that she was at odds with him had already spread through the city' (22). But this supposition is in error, for the episode of Artemylla's baptism on the previous day ended in a hardly Encratite fashion: '… then he sent her back to her husband Jerome' (21)!

In fact, the Encratism that Paul, according to Kasser, preached from city to city appears only in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. As soon as he arrives at Iconium, Paul announces 'the word of God on chastity and the resurrection' (5). But is this evidence of Encratism? The rest of the story leaves room for doubt: captivated by his preaching, Thecla loses interest in her fiancé, Thamyris; wishing to know the identity of this man 'who deceives the souls of young men and maidens into not marrying but remaining as they are' (11), Thamyris interrogates Demas and Hermogenes, who answer that they know nothing about him, but confirm that Paul does 'separate young men from women and maidens from men, saying 'There will be no resurrection for you unless you remain pure and do not defile the flesh, but keep it pure' (12). As Rordorf observes, this Encratite assertion comes from Paul's enemies and exaggerates his attitude: the apostle of the *Acts of Paul* did not forbid marriage (Rordorf 1997: 1132). Thamyris too will denounce to the proconsul Cestillius this intruder 'who keeps maidens from marrying' (16). In other words, in conformity with 1 Cor. 7, Paul does not seek to separate married couples, but only dissuades maidens from marrying, without ever denigrating marriage as such.

Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, however, considers the *Acts of Paul decisively* Encratite, believing that the phrase 'concerning chastity and resurrection' (περὶ ἐγκρατείας καὶ ἀναστάσεως) makes chastity a necessary condition of resurrection (Sfameni Gasparro 1983: 291). But is this so obvious? If resurrection is mentioned here, it is first of all because this phrase occurs in a series of thirteen beatitudes that culminate in an eschatological promise, but above all because Paul is accompanied at Ephesus by Demas and Hermogenes, two hypocrites who will soon express strange sentiments to Thamyris: 'We will teach you that this resurrection, which this man says is to come, has already arrived in the children that we have' (14). Therefore Paul speaks both of chastity *and* of resurrection, because these men's likening of resurrection to procreation amounts to a discrediting of chastity; but it is to unmarried people that he presents the chastity as a pledge of resurrection.

It emerges from this overview of the apocryphal acts that we must be careful not to consider them Encratite works as a whole. The stories of the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Acts of Andrew*, and the *Acts of John* show that their authors certainly had Encratite beliefs, but we cannot say the same of the *Acts of Peter*, whose Encratism is merely a literary technique in the prologue to the martyrdom. As for the *Acts of Paul*, they merely exalt virginal chastity.

A SOCIOLOGICAL AND FEMINIST APPROACH TO THE APOCRYPHAL ACTS

Male chastity held no interest for the authors of the apocryphal acts: in reading them, we learn incidentally that the murderer of a prostitute was motivated by her failure 'to follow him in purity and chastity' (*Acts Thom*. 52), that the Christianized Lesbios no longer slept with his wife (*Acts of Andrew*; cf. Gregory of Tours, *De miraculis b. Andreae* 23.3), and that Peter preached chastity with such success that 'men too left the beds of their wives' (*Acts Pet*. 34). As I have already remarked, this is explained by the fact that the case of a husband being chaste against his wife's will was uninteresting in a narrative sense: we cannot imagine Thecla rousing the city and dragging Thamyris before the proconsul for breach of contract!

Since the 1980s, however, a number of American scholars have been intrigued by the apocryphal acts' apparent interest in female chastity (e.g. Davies 1980: 57). From a sociological standpoint they have tried to define the milieu that produced the stories that discuss the subject. All of them come to the conclusion that the stories originate in communities of women who have chosen chastity as liberation from the constraints of marriage. Therefore, in telling of the quarrels between Mygdonia and Maximilla and their husbands, or those between Thecla and her fiancé, these women were speaking of themselves, of their aspirations to freedom, and of their difficulties in a patriarchal society. In short, this is the voice of women struggling for their emancipation (Burrus and Torjesen 1990: 372).

S. L. Davies, who initiated this trend (Davies 1980), judged that the apocryphal acts had been composed in communities of 'widows'. But his thesis conflicts with the fact that at least the *Acts of Paul*, according to Tertullian (*On Baptism*, 17.4), were composed by an elder of Asia. Furthermore, J.-D. Kaestli has shown that in the acts themselves, widows always appear as a group benefiting from the material assistance of the community (Kaestli 1990: 299) and certainly lacking in the affluence necessary for the writing of such works.

In his study of the *Acts of Paul*, D. R. MacDonald (MacDonald 1983) corrects Davies on an essential point. Following Schneemelcher (Schneemelcher 1964), he believes that in Acts III and IV the author has made use of legends about Thecla, legends elaborated and transmitted by 'widows'. To demonstrate the traditional character of these two Acts, MacDonald notes that Paul's role in the present story gives the impression that his character has been inserted fairly awkwardly into these legends during their inclusion in the *Acts of Paul*. At Iconium, he is only whipped and driven from the city, while Thecla is condemned to be burned at the stake (21); at Antioch, without any explanation, he disappears from the story, while Thecla is assaulted by Alexander. As for the female authorship of these legends, MacDonald emphasizes the particular role played by women in them: at Iconium, it is the women who run to hear Paul (7), while the men, disdainfully described as a 'crowd', attack him (15, 19, 20); at Antioch, it is again the women who protest against injustice when Thecla is condemned to the beasts for wishing to remain pure (27, 32); and on the day of the combat, when the 'crowd' grows impatient and demands that the offender be brought forward (30, 32), the women for their part are distressed (33), interfere with the games by throwing perfumes into the arena to drug the beasts (35), and finally praise God for having saved Thecla, to the point of shaking the city with their cries (38). Who but women could tell the story of a maiden in which the role of women is given such prominence?

MacDonald judges further that the Pastoral Epistles seek to counter the influence of these 'widows'. The epistles contain the same characters as their legends—Onesiphorus, Demas, Hermogenes—but a completely different teaching: here Paul forbids women from teaching and laying down the law to men (1 Tim. 2.12), maintains even that they will be saved by becoming mothers (1 Tim. 2.15), and requires young 'widows' to marry and to have children (1 Tim. 5.14). It is therefore possible that the warning of 1 Tim. 4.7 against the 'gossip of old women' is aimed at the story of Thecla told by these 'widows'. MacDonald's explanation of the relation between the *Acts of Paul* and the Pastoral Epistles is the weak point in his thesis. For example, the fact that the *Acts of Paul* put into the mouths of Demas and Hermogenes (14) a teaching similar to that of Paul in 1 Tim. 2.15 suggests rather that it is they who are criticizing the Pastorals. But it seems wiser to regard the Pastorals and the *Acts of Paul* as reflecting two divergent currents of the second-century Pauline tradition.

Virginia Burrus has proposed an extension of MacDonald's main thesis to cover the whole of the apocryphal acts, giving all their 'chastity stories' a traditional basis originating in communities of women (Burrus 1986: 102–3). The legends that form the basic structure of the actual stories tell how a woman, won over to chastity by an apostle, refused the advances of her husband; the couple's quarrel that follows is resolved by the defeat of the husband, who, tired of fighting, leaves his wife alone and perhaps even ends by sharing her chosen way of life. To dramatize these tales, the editors of the apocryphal acts sometimes added the episode of martyrdom: unable to achieve their ends, the husbands blame the apostle, who is depicted as a rival. Even so, the essential conflict, according to Burrus, remains the one that troubles the couple: 'Not only is the struggle between husband and apostle not always included, but even when it is emphasized, the apostle leaves the scene relatively early in the story, so that attention is shifted back to the woman and husband' (Burrus 1986: 105, cf. 107).

To support her thesis, Burrus denies that the 'chastity stories' have anything to do with the Hellenistic novels. She points out that the orientations of the two genres are opposed: 'Whereas the novel begins with mutual love and ends with marriage and reunion with family, the chastity story begins with the woman's attraction to the apostle and his message and ends with the woman's triumphant attainment of singleness' (Burrus 1986: 106). True; but this does not preclude that the 'chastity stories' have taken some of their motifs from the novels, nor does it prove that they make use of oral legends and not of ad hoc creations.

Burrus considers seven stories: the concubines of Agrippa and Xanthippe (*Acts of Peter*), Maximilla (*Acts of Andrew*), Drusiana (*Acts of John*), Thecla (*Acts of Paul and Thecla*), Artemylla and Euboula (*Acts of Paul*), the princess of Andrapolis, and Mygdonia and Tertia (*Acts of Thomas*). This is quite a heterogeneous collection, for two of these stories do not show the basic structure that she claims to find in them: far from quarrelling, the fiancés of Andrapolis gladly agree to remain virgins, and there is not even a question of chastity in regard to Artemylla. In four of the remaining stories, the offended husbands' anger is unleashed against the apostles responsible for their marital troubles: John is 'imprisoned for fourteen days so that he may die of hunger', while Thomas, Andrew, and Peter suffer martyrdom. This being so, it seems difficult to imagine oral legends in which the apostle's role, in preaching chastity, was only to create marital conflict. Furthermore, it is inaccurate to say that in the actual stories the apostle disappears soon enough to make way for the triumph of the woman in the conflict: after the deaths of Thomas and Andrew, we learn in three sentences that after vainly supplicating their wives, Misdaeus and Charis 'allowed them to behave according to the wish of their soul' (*Acts. Thom.* 169.2), and that Aegeates killed himself (*Acts. Andr.* 64.3). As for Maximilla and the concubines of Agrippa, they are not mentioned after the death of Peter. In the last analysis, the original structure of the

'chastity stories', as Burrus conceives it, is attested only in the case of Thecla—and in that story there is no sign that Thamyris recognizes his defeat.

Just like Davies and MacDonald, Burrus perceives female chastity as a protest against male domination and the established order: 'Chastity leads to autonomy, freedom from the oppressive authority of husband and political ruler' (Burrus 1986: 102). Now if certain social injustices are indeed denounced in the apocryphal acts, it is not from the perspective of a reform of institutions, but in regard to another reality. In these acts, the world appears as if surpassed by the revelation of an afterlife or of the nearness of its end. Therefore, why cling to it? 'May I leave this world and go to see him who is the beautiful one of whom I have heard, who is living and gives life to those who have believed in him, in that place where there is neither day nor night, neither light nor darkness, neither good nor evil, neither rich nor poor, neither male nor female, neither slaves nor free men, neither the proud nor those who are haughty at the expense of the humble!' sighs Mygdonia in the *Acts of Thomas* (129.2).

The apocryphal acts do not show us unhappy women before their conversion, waiting only for the opportunity to revolt against the established order. On the contrary, we see noblewomen who live in affluence with affectionate husbands, even if Aegeates does admit to certain escapades (*Acts Andr.* 23.3). Apart from Drusiana, these women will suffer no violence themselves to make them revise their decision. Even if their chastity provokes marital conflict, and outsiders see it as an assault on the established order, their motivation is purely spiritual: Mygdonia and Thecla burn with an exclusive love of Christ; having become aware of the divine part of her soul, which Christ revealed to her by 'the mystery of his dispensation', Maximilla does not wish to lose herself in the world again. Whether they practise chastity in eschatological expectation or as anagogical ascesis, it represents for them a requirement proceeding from their faith; they do not choose it *in order to* separate from their husbands, but *because* they have been converted to a new life. This is to say that the error shared by the three studies we have examined is that of 'having neglected what is at the centre of these "chastity stories" and informs their structure: the new convert's exclusive love of Christ and of the apostle who represents him visibly. Adherence to chastity and the conflict that results cannot be understood apart from this central theme' (Kaestli 1990: 289).

This neglect of Christ is found again in many studies treating the relationship, often described as erotic, between the women and the apostle who converted them. It is certainly possible to speak of erotic emotions when Thecla, visiting Paul in prison, 'kisses his chains' (*Acts Paul* 18), and her family finds her there 'a prisoner with him in love, so to speak' (*Acts Paul* 19). But can we, without exaggeration, maintain that in the apocryphal acts women find the strength to reject their husbands by attaching themselves to the apostle? Can we see Andrew as Aegeates' 'rival in love' (Cooper 1999, 47), or suggest that the *Acts of Thomas* depicts the relationship of Mygdonia with the apostle 'as a new "marriage" which replaces her old marriage to her husband' (Burrus 1986: 109)?

In short, my view is that sociological research on the apocryphal acts has gone astray by focusing on texts concerning women who are chaste against the wishes of their husbands or families, by taking these texts at face value as representations of reality, and by neglecting the religious motivation that they give for chastity, in order to see in the latter only a proto-feminist demand for autonomy.

THE INTRUSION OF THE 'GENDER' PROBLEM INTO THE STUDY OF THE APOCRYPHAL ACTS

The feminist approach to the apocryphal acts must necessarily direct attention to the question of 'gender', which surfaces in the study of Burrus when she notes that, in order to contest the social order, the women are not satisfied with rejecting their husbands, but emerge from their women's quarters to enter the outer world of men. Maximilla, after visiting Andrew in prison, goes to the court, 'not thoughtlessly, but with a considered purpose' (*Acts. Andr.* 43.1), to tell Aegeates once and for all that she will no longer sleep with him: 'She thus enters into the male world in order to defy her husband' (Burrus 1986: 53)! Unfortunately, as Kaestli has shown in his review, the court in question is not a public place, but the home of Aegeates (cf. *Acts. Andr.* 3.1, 20.2, 35.1), where Maximilla had her own apartments (Kaestli 1986: 131). Burrus's blunder is indicative of a pitfall that the study of gender in the acts has not always avoided: wishing at all costs to find in the texts what one is seeking.

In antiquity, the notion of 'male' connoted the ideas of strength, reason, and self-control, while that of 'female' suggested weakness, emotionality, and imperfection: *a physicis dicitur non aliud esse foeminam nisi masculum imperfectum* (Philo, *Questions on Exodus* 1.1.7). In order to assert herself, a woman therefore had to prove her virility, as Porphyry reminds Marcella: 'Do not think of yourself as a woman … Shun everything that is effeminate in your soul, as if you had taken on a man's body' (*Epistle to Marcella* 33). In the realm of religion, this virility will even be a condition of salvation: 'Every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven' (*Gospel of Thomas* 114). It goes without saying that these notions, common to the era, will be found in the apocryphal acts. Again we must understand that if the apocryphal acts make use of them, it is not to analyse the psychosocial dimension of sex, as the problematics of gender do, but to qualify states of life—two domains that overlap, but are not necessarily coterminous.

Two passages of the apocryphal acts have attracted particular attention. First of all, in *Acts Andr.* 38 and 41 Maximilla is addressed as a man (ἄνθρωπος and even ἀνήρ at 41.1). But it will be noticed that if Andrew addresses her in those terms, it is not because she has manfully rejected the advances of Aegeates, who desires her as a woman. Indeed, the 'man' in question is 'immaterial, holy, a light, a fellow of the unbegotten …' (38.3). Andrew speaks to Maximilla of her soul, which has awakened to its divine origin. Now this awakening is not specifically female; her brother-in-law Stratocles also experiences it, and is led by it to 'give birth to' the 'man' that is in him (ὁ ἐν σοὶ ἄνθρωπος, 7.1.6). In this regard, every human being is compared to a woman paradoxically called to become a man by giving birth to her true self. Moreover, the passages in question are metalepses (Spittler 2013): through Maximilla, the readers themselves are addressed. The first of these passages is found at the centre of a chiasmus (37.2–39.3): Andrew exhorts Maximilla not to yield to Aegeates' blackmail (37.2–4 and 39.2–3); he proceeds to explain the reason by means of a comparison with Adam and Eve (37.5–8 and 39.1), and it is then that he addresses himself to the 'man' (38.1–5), in a tirade directed no longer only at Maximilla, as the rest of the speech at 39.1 makes clear: 'I have said this *in regard to you*, Maximilla …'. As for the second passage, it is found in a fresh exhortation: 'It is to you that I address myself *again*, Maximilla …' (40.1). Andrew then begs her to do nothing to prevent his martyrdom, appealing to her 'rational man' (40.1), but concludes his exhortation with these words: 'I have said this for you and *for whoever is listening, if he wishes to hear*' (42.1).

Two passages of the *Acts of Paul* are often discussed in terms of the 'masculinization' of Thecla. In the first, Thecla tells Paul that she is going to cut her hair (25); in the second, she arranges her tunic as men do (40). These two passages are naturally brought together to make them say that Thecla renounces her status as a woman. In fact, the first is found at the end of Act III, where Thecla proposes to Paul that she accompany him to Antioch, and the

second toward the end of Act IV, where she decides to rejoin him at Myra. Thus both cases concern scenes of departure. Since the roads were not safe, Thecla is ready to sacrifice her hair in order not to attract male desire (cf. Jensen 1999: 113–14) but her proposal leaves Paul doubtful: 'The times are evil, and you are beautiful, and I fear lest another trial assail you, worst than the first, and lest you be unable to bear it, but yield to it' (25). And it is to facilitate her chosen course that she girds up her loins at Antioch and arranges her ankle-length woman's tunic (χιτών) to make of it a garment 'after the fashion of men'. Perhaps she again wished, by not ostensibly wearing women's clothing, to avoid attracting attention. However this may be, Thecla is neither asserting male behaviour nor expressing a feminist demand.

Umberto Eco speaks of 'cases where excessive interpretation results in a squandering of hermeneutical energy unsupported by the text'. This is observable in certain pages devoted by Helen Rhee to 'gender' in the apocryphal acts, where she takes up the observations of several other authors. She believes that Thecla adopts male behaviour when she blames Alexander, who assaulted her sexually, and when she confronts the beasts at Antioch (Rhee 2005: 140)—where in the text, in fact, her behaviour is strangely passive (in contrast, it may be noted, with the vision of Perpetua before her combat, in which she stripped of her clothes and 'became a man'; *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* 10.7). Rhee further suggests that Thecla, having become a man, acts independently of Paul in baptizing herself (34), and finally leaves alone 'to enlighten many people with the word of God' (43). In fact, her baptism raises many questions, for it is mentioned in what may well be an addendum (cf. Dunn 2006: 64–7). In any case, the very circumstances of this baptism invalidate the conclusion: 'she does not turn to Paul but to God and baptizes herself in the arena' (Rhee 2005: 140)—as if this were a form of feminist protest. As for the final scene, it will be noted that when Thecla tells Paul of her intention to return to Iconium, it is he who encourages her by saying: 'Go, and teach the word of God!' (41).

Rhee goes so far as to speak of an inversion of traditional genders in the apocryphal acts (2005: 137ff.), saying that their criticism of the patriarchal family made them depict men as weaklings. While the women are 'male', having overcome their natural weakness through chastity, the men are (in this view) systematically feminized, weak and pitiful. Thamyris and Charis weep over the loss of their consorts; Aegeates, 'in great distress', even loses his appetite over it (cf. *Acts Andr.* 23.1). But must we really interpret these scenes from the perspective of gender criticism? Are they not simply describing spontaneous reactions to a heavy blow? After all, the women too, judged to be so resolutely virile, sometimes fall prey to despair: after the imprisonment of Thomas, Charis finds Mygdonia distraught, 'her hair cut and her clothing torn' (*Acts Thom.* 114). Rhee sees here 'a measure that destroys any feminine and sexual attractiveness for the sake of her continence' (Rhee 2005: 141). But cut hair and torn garments are a sign of mourning (Job 1.20), of despair (*Acts Pet.* 17), or of contempt when inflicted on another (as, for example, in Xenophon, *Ephesiaca* V.5, when Rhena tears Anthia's clothes and cuts her hair when she takes her for a rival).

Rhee does not hesitate to say that even the apostles seem pale figures beside these women. At Iconium as at Antioch, 'Paul shows his "feminine" feature by his "cowardly" retreat and failure to defend Thecla, and he vanishes from the scene' (Rhee 2005: 140); and when Charis threatens him with death if he does not bring his wife back to him, Thomas hastens to find Mygdonia to tell her to obey her husband. One can only wonder how Paul, driven from Iconium, could have defended Thecla when she was condemned to be burned at the stake (*Acts Paul* 21); as for his lack of reaction when Thecla is attacked at Antioch, it is not attributable to cowardice, but to an oversight on the part of the author. Nor is it cowardice that makes Thomas tell Mygdonia to do as Charis tells her; certainly Mygdonia

believes that Thomas acts from fear (*Acts Thom*. 130.1), but is that really the case? The reaction of Thomas when Charis threatened him allows us to doubt it: 'Laughing, Judas went with him' (*Acts Thom*. 128.3). This laughter shows that he goes along with Charis only because he is sure that Charis will meet with a setback: Mygdonia will refuse.

P. Germond (1996) seems to me much more subtle when, instead of seeking an improbable inversion of genders in the *Acts of Thomas*, he finds a *redefinition* of genders. While Charis boasts of his bravery, Thomas proclaims a message of humility (*Acts Thom*. 86), and it is to this humility that he has converted Mygdonia (*Acts Thom*. 85): 'entry into the new world offered by Thomas does not redefine Mygdonia's female gender position in relation to the male gender position … Her gender is redefined in terms of the new codes she adopts—and this point must not be lost sight of, just as Thomas redefines the male gender; but the relative positions of power between male and female remain intact. In Thomas's new world, male authority retains its inviolate position' (Germond 1996: 366).

The sociological and feminist approaches to the apocryphal acts, like the gender analysis that is derived from them, often strike me as confirming a wise African proverb: 'The foreigner sees only what he knows'. Instead of seeking to understand the intentions and motivations of the authors, the studies devoted to them impose current preoccupations upon them, in order to make them say what the scholars wish them to say.

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EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA IN POPULAR CULTURE

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SURVEYING apocryphal Christian traditions in popular culture is not a straightforward task. The difficulty is due to the slippery nature of the term 'popular culture'. As John Storey states, 'popular culture is in effect an empty conceptual category, one that can be filled in a wide variety of often conflicting ways depending on the context of use' (1998: 1; for other entry points to the study of popular culture, see Strinati 1995, Mukerji and Schudson 1991, and Stout 2001). Storey surveys six current definitions, each with its own limitations: 'culture that is widely favoured or well liked by many people' (7), 'the culture that is left over after we have decided what is high culture' (7–8), 'mass culture' (10–11), 'the culture that originates from "the people"' (12), 'a site of struggle between the forces of "resistance" of subordinate groups in society, and the forces of "incorporation" of dominant groups in society' (13–14), and a postmodernist view that 'no longer recognizes the distinction between high and popular culture' (16).

For the purposes of this survey 'popular culture' is here defined as 'non-ecclesiastical'—including, therefore, apocryphal traditions in art, literature, music, and drama (theatre, film, and television) not created by, for, or under the authority of the church. This definition coheres, for the most part, with the view that popular culture is an expression of 'forces of resistance', for many of the artists use apocryphal traditions to indict ecclesiastical Christianity as an oppressive institution, either in its efforts to enforce conformity of belief or in its history of repression of women, while others simply enjoy the texts for their countercultural quality. Carried further, one might consider the Christian Apocrypha *as* popular culture, in the sense that it is a low form of literature produced by 'the people' in comparison to the higher literature of the canon and the great theologians of the church (see particularly in this regard Benko 1980). This is due to a characterization of the Christian Apocrypha as written, at least in part, to satisfy the needs of the pious for more complete biographies of Jesus and other New Testament figures, or written simply as entertainment—with appeal in this regard to the more bawdy elements of the apocryphal acts or the stories of the maleficent young Jesus in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*.

The argument for Christian Apocrypha as popular culture is harder to sustain for some of the more cerebral apocryphal texts, such as the *Apocryphon of John*, with its complex cosmogony, or the various dialogue texts (e.g. the *Dialogue of the Saviour*; the *Apocryphon of James*), with their discussions of redemptive anthropology. The argument also draws too thick a line between canonical and non-canonical texts, as if the elites confined their reading to only books of the canon and the average Christian delighted in secret, forbidden gospels, and assumes Christians in the second and third centuries (and even beyond) clearly

distinguished between canonical and non-canonical texts. As it happens, apocryphal and biblical traditions have always been weaved together—in homilies, hagiography, church decoration, and iconography. Rather than distinguish between lower and higher Christian literature, we are better served, then, to think of the texts as either official or unofficial. And both official and unofficial texts have been and continue to be used in expressions of popular, or non-ecclesiastical, culture.

Many of the examples in this survey cannot be considered 'popular' in the sense of widely known, but their value is not in their popularity. The examples demonstrate the enduring attraction of alternative portrayals of Jesus and the attendant dissatisfaction with canonical traditions; this same dynamic contributed to the creation of the Early Christian Apocrypha and accounts for the continued appeal of apocryphal texts throughout Christian history. The examples also have their pedagogical value, providing opportunities for instructors to illustrate concepts from the texts in interesting and entertaining ways.

Popular culture operates, to some extent, like oral culture. Except for those works that have made a large cultural impact, examples are passed along by word of mouth, from colleague to colleague. As a result, this survey is unavoidably incomplete, limited as it is to Western works in English. That said, this milieu is the chief producer of Christian popular culture and a major breeding ground for interest in the apocryphal Jesus.

CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA IN PRE-MODERN POPULAR CULTURE

Despite claims that popular culture originated as a result of the Industrial Revolution (see Storey 1998: 17), non-ecclesiastical uses of the Christian Apocrypha are observable throughout the Common Era in art, theatre, and literature. Cartlidge and Elliott (2001) have painstakingly catalogued images drawn from apocryphal texts and traditions that appear in late antique and medieval manuscripts, sarcophagi, paintings, and mosaics. While many of the materials that they cite were commissioned and utilized by the church, some, particularly certain examples of funerary art and manuscripts, were intended for private use. However, it is not always possible to determine their original context. Late medieval Books of Hours certainly were created for private devotional reading, and these sometimes contain images from the infancy gospels (for examples, see Smith 2003). Even manuscripts created for devotional use within monastic libraries can be said to stand outside of ecclesiastical authority. One particularly memorable manuscript contains both apocryphal tales and illustrations: Ambrosian Library *L58 sup*., a fourteenth/fifteenth-century manuscript in Latin, features a series of canonical and apocryphal stories about Jesus, each accompanied by a drawing of the scene (some images are reproduced in Cartlidge and Elliott 2001).

As for theatre, medieval European villagers were treated to cycles of 'mystery plays' performed in the streets by members of trade guilds. The plays enacted biblical episodes from creation to the last judgement, with the majority focused on the life of Jesus. The York Mystery Plays, performed from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries in the city of York, included the *Harrowing of Hell* from the Pilate Cycle of texts, and the N-Town Plays of the fifteenth century included stories from the Pilate Cycle and material from the *Nativity of Mary* and the *Assumption of Mary* (Elliott 2008: 8–9).

Characterizing the Christian Apocrypha *as* popular culture may be problematic, but there are medieval collections and adaptations of apocryphal texts that had wide appeal. Jacobus de Voragine's *The Golden Legend*, a compilation of lives of the saints composed around 1260, was extremely popular. Among the many sources Jacobus used for his biographies

are the *Nativity of Mary*, the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, traditions about the Magi, the *Life of Judas*, and various apocryphal acts. One thousand manuscripts of *The Golden Legend* survive today, and it was extensively printed, in its original Latin and in every Western European language. After the Bible, it was the most widely read book in the Middle Ages. Apocryphal traditions also circulated in devotional texts, such as Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditations on the Life of Christ* from around 1300. And with the advent of the printing press, apocryphal texts that once existed in handwritten manuscripts were made available to the public in pamphlets or *incunabula*—the term for early printed books that, in form and function, were still very much like hand-copied manuscripts). Copies of *incunabula* exist for the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, the *Life of Judas*, and others (see examples in Dzon 2009 and Izydorczyk 2010). Some texts from *incunabula* continue to be reprinted despite developments in the study of the texts; versions show up in such unlikely places as rural Manitoba, Canada (Izydorczyk and Fillmore-Handlon 2010). A similar phenomenon exists with the dissemination of old editions of Christian Apocrypha now in the public domain. *The Lost Books of the Bible*, frequently reprinted in inexpensive editions over the past century, combines William Wake's texts of the Apostolic Fathers (from 1737) with William Hone's texts of the Christian Apocrypha (from 1820 but copied from Jeremiah Jones's 1736 collection, which drew on *incunabula*). Not only does *The Lost Books of the Bible* operate outside of ecclesiastical authority, but it also functions outside of scholarship on the texts, which has developed considerably over the centuries (see the discussion in Goodspeed 1956: 106–14). Public domain translations continue to circulate as well on internet sites. Together these sites and *The Lost Books of the Bible* offer the non-scholarly public accessible entry points for learning about the Christian Apocrypha but they are lamentably poor representations of the present state of scholarship on the texts. Christian Apocrypha, therefore, can look very different in popular culture.

CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA IN MODERN POPULAR CULTURE

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the attention of the wider Christian public was drawn to a series of discoveries of lost apocryphal texts. Manuscripts of such early Christian Apocrypha as the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Gospel of Thomas* offered tantalizing new avenues of exploration for recovering the historical Jesus, and the voices of 'gnostic' Christians could now be heard in the *Pistis Sophia*, the *Apocryphon of John*, and more than fifty other texts, many of them unearthed from where they had been preserved in the sands and tombs of Egypt. The discoveries provided inspiration to musicians, writers, filmmakers, and other artists eager to reimagine Jesus and reconsider Christian origins. Every song, novel, movie, and television show adds to the public's awareness of the Christian Apocrypha; at the same time, however, many of these treatments misinform the public about the contents and significance of the texts.

Music

It should come as no surprise that musicians influenced by the Christian Apocrypha draw upon that material well-suited for musical adaptation—namely, hymns or poetry. The first to put such material to music was Gustav Holst, who, in 1917, composed the 'Hymn of Jesus', an adaptation of material from the *Acts of John* 94–5. Holst (1874–1934) was an English composer from Cheltenham best known for his orchestral suite 'The Planets', composed

between 1914 and 1916 (for an overview of Holst's career, see Short 1990; on the 'Hymn of Jesus', see Head 1999). In 1895 Holst became interested in Hindu philosophy and Sanskrit literature. This led to a friendship with the theosophist G. R. S. Mead, who published a translation of the recently discovered gnostic text *Pistis Sophia* in 1896. Mead's interest in Gnosticism was peaked further when M. R. James published a manuscript with several never-before-seen chapters from the *Acts of John* (James 1897: 2–25). These chapters include a dance and hymn incorporating gnostic terminology and featuring a series of paradoxes: 'I will be saved, and I will save … I will be loosed, and I will loose … I will be pierced, and I will pierce', etc. (*Acts of John* 95; trans. Elliott 1993). Some scholars, Mead included, believe the dance was an early Christian ritual incorporated into the *Acts of John* at a later date. Mead published on the hymn several times, most prominently in a 1907 translation and commentary (Mead 1907). He gave a copy of this to Holst and Holst set about producing his own translation of the text. Captivated by its paradoxes, Holst saw in the Hymn a perfect vehicle for articulating the impact of World War I (Head 1999: 7). In performance, it features two choirs, one representing the master (Jesus) and his disciples, and the other the initiate who is encircled by the first choir while they engage him or her in a question-and-answer dialogue (Short 1990: 151). Holst's 'Hymn of Jesus' was first performed in London in 1920 and was reportedly an 'outstanding success' (Head 1999: 7).

Christian Gnosticism also provides the source material for several more recent music projects. In 1999 Metaphor, an American progressive rock band heavily influenced by Genesis, released *Starfooted*, a rock opera based on Valentinian myth. Song titles on the album include 'The Illusion of Flesh', 'The Bridal Chamber', and the final song, 'Assumption'. The album begins with 'Ladder from the Sky', in which the character Sophia asks:

> What am I doing here? This place is nowhere. The chill of a lifeless eye, the hard of bone. I just wanted to look behind the curtain, didn't know I'd be thrown to the farthest shore. I've torn away every marker that matters. No trail I can follow to get back home. I've blown it big in the past, but God! What happened? I don't know what to do with a soul that's torn. And it's lonely outside of God's belly; the not knowing, the not knowing. I want to suck the universe into the inside to fill me up, to fill me up. Please don't take your fullness from me … I am the mother, and I am the daughter. I am the first, and I am the last. I am the barren, but I'll breed many nations. I am the revered, and yet I got no class. I am the whore, I am the holy. I am the only comfort in my travail. I am the law, and I am the lawless. It's been me all along, nipping at your tail. It is I who cry out, upon this hard earth cast out. I will not forget, I will not forget, I will not forget the tender taste of light …

'Ladder from the Sky' draws also on *Thunder: Perfect Mind*, a gnostic text not typically associated with Valentinian thought, but its poetic form and paradoxical imagery makes it apparently irresistible to songwriters. The speaker of the poem is a female figure who, like Jesus in the hymn from the *Acts of John*, delights in contradictory statements—'For I am the first and the last. I am the honoured and the scorned. I am the whore and the holy. I am the wife and the virgin' (13, 16–20; trans. Meyer et al. 2007). *Thund.* sits in Nag Hammadi Codex VI alongside the Christian *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* and several non-Christian texts, including an excerpt from Plato's *Republic* and the Hermetic *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*. Arguably, the text is not Christian—Jesus is not mentioned at all in *Thund.*; it has affinities instead with Jewish wisdom literature, Isis aretalogies, the Greek identity riddle, and Platonic thought. Nevertheless, it appears to have been valued by gnostic Christians and interpreted within their thoughtworld. One particular Christian gnostic group, the Borborites, mentioned by Epiphanius (*Panarion* 26), seem to have made use of *Thund.* It is said they valued a 'Gospel of Eve' in which Wisdom speaks in paradoxes and is described as 'a voice of thunder' (Layton 1987: 78). Though scholars do not include *Thund.* among the Early Christian Apocrypha, in popular culture it has become intertwined

with apocryphal texts and traditions, particularly those related to female figures, such as Sophia and, as we shall see, Mary Magdalene.

Three other musical acts have been drawn to the poetry of *Thund*. The first of these is Current 93, a British experimental music group whose sound fuses elements of folk and industrial. Their name derives from terminology used by Aleister Crowley; 93 is the numerical value of the Greek word Thelema, the name of Crowley's religious philosophy. The band named their 1992 album after *Thund*. and two songs bear the text's name: 'Thunder: Perfect Mind I', which features a recitation of lines from the text (13, 16–14, 32 with omissions) over wind instruments and voices, and the instrumental 'Thunder: Perfect Mind II'. In the same year, another British band, Nurse with Wound released their own *Thunder: Perfect Mind* album, named as a homage to their frequent collaborators Current 93. Also, the final track on the album is an extended version of Current 93's 'Thunder: Perfect Mind II' (for more on Current 93 and Nurse with Wound see Keenan 2003). Finally, excerpts from *Thund*. appear in the song 'I am' on the 2002 album *A Universe to Come* by Tulku, an American ambient/fusion band whose lyrics often draw upon Native American spirituality.

Another gnostic text, the *Apocryphon of John*, provided the inspiration to American pianist and singer-songwriter Tori Amos for her song 'Original Sinsuality' from the 2005 album *The Beekeeper*. The setting of the song is the Garden of Eden, though this version of the story is said to be 'before Genesis', suggesting it is the primeval event that led to the creation of the canonical tale. 'There was a tree there', Amos sings, 'A tree of knowledge/Sophia would insist/You must eat of this'. The chorus then subverts the traditional association of the fall of humanity with the introduction of sex: 'Original sin?/No, I don't think so/Original sinsuality'. The final verse invokes various names of the Demiurge used in *Ap. Jn.*—Yaldabaoth, Saklas, Samael (11, 15–18)—but Amos departs from the text by treating the figure sympathetically: 'You are not alone/In your darkness/You are not alone/Baby'.

Fiction

Much has been made in recent years of the impact on popular culture made by *The Da Vinci Code* and other novels that deal with Mary Magdalene and lost gospels. But long before Dan Brown and his ilk looked to the *Gospel of Mary* and the *Gospel of Thomas* for evidence of a wife for Jesus, other novelists drew upon apocryphal acts to create historical fiction set in the time of the apostles. The first of these is *Quo Vadis: A Narrative of the Time of Nero* released in 1896 by Polish writer Henryk Sinkiewicz. The title is Latin for 'Where are you going, Lord?' and is an allusion to an episode from the *Acts of Peter* 35. The novel takes place in the year 64 CE and tells the love story of a young Christian woman named Ligia and Marcus Vinicius, a Roman patrician. When the two are imprisoned, they meet Peter, who performs their marriage ceremony. Late in the story there is a series of chapters telling Peter's martyrdom. In chapter 70 Peter is urged to leave Rome for his own safety. But along the way he passes Jesus. Peter asks Jesus why he is going to Rome, and he says 'As you are deserting My people, I go to Rome to be crucified a second time' (531 trans. Curtin et al.). Peter is thus convinced that he must head back to the city and face martyrdom. *Quo Vadis* was such a success that it spawned numerous adaptations: in theatre (1900), as an opera (1909), an oratorio (1907), five films (three silent films in 1902, 1912, and 1924; the 1951 blockbuster directed by Mervyn LeRoy, nominated for eight academy

awards; and the 1981 Italian remake directed by Franco Rossi), and two television mini-series (in Italian in 1985 and in Polish in 2001).

The second work of historical fiction that draws upon apocryphal acts is Thomas B. Costain's 1952 novel *The Silver Chalice*. It tells the story of a Greek artisan named Basil who is commissioned by Joseph of Arimathea to fashion a silver holder for the cup Christ used in the last supper. Around the rim he must sculpt the faces of the disciples and Jesus himself. To complete the task, he travels to Jerusalem and to Rome to meet the men and those who knew them. Early in the novel (ch. 9) we are introduced to Simon Magus, known from the canonical Acts 8.4–25 as well as the apocryphal *Acts of Peter* and related texts. Simon is being used by the Sanhedrin to produce doubt about the miracles of Jesus—if Simon can duplicate the miracles through trickery, then Jesus cannot be the Messiah. Things go awry when Simon starts to believe he does have magic powers. Meanwhile, Basil falls in love with Simon's assistant Helena. The two are separated but reunite in Rome towards the end of the novel. Here Simon entertains Nero and requests an opportunity for a public miracle contest with Peter (ch. 27). In the Petrine Apocrypha, the two compete several times, both in Rome and Palestine, but in *The Silver Chalice*, Peter and Simon never meet because, Peter says, the Lord had not instructed him to do so (Costain 1952: 440). Peter believes Simon will defeat himself. And he does. Recalling *Acts of Peter* 32, Simon launches himself from a tower to demonstrate his ability to fly, but instead falls to his death (ch. 31). In *Acts Pet.*, however, Peter prays for Simon to fall and become crippled, and Simon later dies of his injuries. *The Silver Chalice* gained a wider audience when it was adapted into film by Victor Saville in 1954. The film featured Paul Newman as Basil and Jack Palance played Simon Magus.

Where Sinkiewicz and Costain drew upon age-old Christian traditions for their novels, other writers were inspired by the manuscript discoveries of the twentieth century. They contributed to what became a subgenre of thrillers based on the motif of revelations about Jesus recovered from lost gospels. Robert Price surveys more than forty of these novels in *Secret Scrolls* (2011). The plots follow a formula: a desperate band of churchmen endeavour to prevent, suppress, or destroy a newly discovered lost gospel in order to protect the status quo and the authority of the church. Most of the lost gospels are entirely invented by the novelists, but a few of the books draw upon Christian Apocrypha scholarship to construct their plots. In Irving Wallace's *The Word* (1972) the lost gospel Q is discovered, though here it is identified as the 'Gospel of James'. This gospel was written by Jesus' brother and it reports, among other things, that Jesus survived the cross, resumed his ministry, was crucified again in Rome, and then rose from the dead. Though this 'Gospel of James' is fictional, the excerpts from the gospel provided by Wallace derive from real apocryphal texts—two sayings are taken from *Gos. Thom.* (log. 48 and 22) and another from *Ap. Jas.* (7, 22–36). Q appears again in J. G. Sandom's *Gospel Truths* (1992), but this time it is associated with the *Book of Thomas the Contender*. In the story a fictive twelfth-century monk named Thierry of Chartres refers to a text from 100 CE entitled 'Thomas the Contender which Papias, bless him, copied from the sayings of Matthaios' (Sandom 1992: 101; combining the testimony of Papias [from Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16] on the gospels with the introduction to *Bk. Thom.*: 'The hidden sayings that the Saviour spoke to Judas Thomas, which I, Mathaias, in turn recorded', trans. in Meyer et al. 2007). Thierry also mentions an earlier form of *Gos. Thom.* buried within Chartres Cathedral. The novel's Monsignor Woyvetski says this gospel contains the 'oldest set of Logoi in existence … The very words Christ spoke!' and expresses concern about the impact of the text once it is found: 'think what would happen if those sayings happened to be Gnostic … if the ideas which Christ espoused were not at all the same as those the Church has come to stand for'

(Sandom 1992: 147–8). A third 'Secret Scrolls' thriller, *The Coptic Secret* (2009), by Gregg Loomis, begins with the kidnapping of a British philanthropist who was set to donate to the British Museum a hitherto lost gnostic text. The text is a second copy of the *Ap. Jas.*, but this one does not suffer from the damage of the one found at Nag Hammadi, which was intentionally censured because it establishes James as the head of the church, not Peter. This other version also contains an account of James's martyrdom (derived by Loomis perhaps from *2 Apoc. Jas.* 61,15–62,12) in which Peter, angry at his diminished status in the church, pushes James from the top of the Temple, accuses him of betraying Jesus, and urges a mob to stone him to death (Loomis 2009: 246–7).

By far, the most well-known 'Secret Scrolls' thriller is Dan Brown's 2003 novel *The Da Vinci Code* (adapted also as a blockbuster 2006 film directed by Ron Howard). The novel's chief protagonist is Robert Langdon, a Harvard 'symbologist' called in by the French police to help solve a murder. He is paired with cryptologist Sophie Neveu, who we later learn is the descendant of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. In one of the novel's key scenes (chs 55–8), Langdon takes Neveu to visit Leigh Teabing, a former British Royal Historian with an interest in the mythology of the Holy Grail. As Teabing acquaints Sophie with the secrets of the Grail legend, we learn that Jesus' life 'was recorded by thousands of followers across the land' and that 'more than *eighty* gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion' (Brown 2003: 231). Furthermore, the emperor Constantine is said to have been instrumental in forming the canon of the Bible. This Bible established the divinity of Jesus; before Constantine's day, Teabing reveals, 'Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet … a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless. A mortal' (Brown 2003: 233). Then comes the shocker: the Holy Grail is not a chalice at all but a woman, Mary Magdalene, the wife of Jesus and mother of his children. As proof, Teabing pulls out a massive volume of manuscript facsimiles called 'The Gnostic Gospels' (a nod to Elaine Pagels's book of the same name). He reads a passage from the *Gospel of Philip* (63, 33–64, 2) in which the author names Mary Magdalene the 'companion' of Jesus. The word companion, Teabing says, 'literally meant *spouse*' (Brown 2003: 246). He reads also a passage from the *Gospel of Mary* (the exchange between Mary and Peter in 17, 16–22 and 18, 6–15). Teabing places the passage in an unusual context: 'Jesus suspects that he will soon be captured and crucified. So He gives Mary Magdalene instructions on how to carry on His church after He is gone'. Mary, not Peter (Brown 2003: 247–8). Scholars who have commented on Brown's book have expressed their frustration at its numerous historical and interpretive errors—'companion' does not mean only 'spouse', Constantine did not create the Bible in his own time as a document establishing the divinity of Jesus, there are no gospels found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, etc. But *The Da Vinci Code* is really no different from the other 'Secret Scrolls' novels, which suffer from far more errors than Brown's novel. Only Brown, however, claims that the descriptions of all documents mentioned in the book are 'fact', a claim that has caused much confusion among its readers and, as a result, has led to a surge in popular interest in the Christian Apocrypha.

Another category of apocryphal texts, the infancy gospels, are used by Anne Rice to add detail to *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt* (2005), the first installment of her planned trilogy on the life of Jesus. After two near-death experiences in 1998 and 2004, Rice reconnected with her Catholic upbringing and turned from writing about vampires to chronicling the adventures of another undead character: Jesus. The first book tells the story of Jesus and his family's journey from Egypt to their home town of Nazareth. It opens with a seven-year-old Jesus in Alexandria, surrounded by his family, which includes Mary and her brother Cleopas, Joseph and his brothers Alphaeus and Simon, Jesus' aunts Salome, Esther, and

Mary, Jesus' cousins Little Joses, Judas, Little Symeon, and Salome, and big brother James, the child of Joseph from a previous marriage (recalling the explanation for the brothers of Jesus given in *Prot. Jas*. 9). Joseph and his brothers are employed in Egypt as carpenters. After Joseph completes a project for Philo, the famous Alexandrian teacher meets Jesus, whom he calls 'the most promising scholar he has ever seen' (Rice 2005: 14). But things go wrong for the family when Jesus curses a boy, Eleazer, in the marketplace. The miracle echoes *Inf. Gos. Thom*. 4, though in the gospel Jesus is five, not seven, and the story takes place in Nazareth, not Egypt. Departing from the gospel again, Jesus revives the boy and begins to question the origins of his powers. *Inf. Gos. Thom*. is employed also when James recalls seeing Jesus make birds from clay on the Sabbath (*Inf. Gos. Thom*. 2–3) and perhaps in the description of a teacher who instructs the boys in Greek (*Inf. Gos. Thom*. 6 and 14). On the journey to Nazareth, Jesus tries to uncover the mysteries of his birth and infancy. He also learns details about Mary's life, details derived, again, from *Prot. Jas*. Mary is said to have been born in Sepphoris to her parents Joachim (a scribe) and Anna (Rice 2005: 116). Mary's brother Cleopas describes her as, 'A virgin child, a child in the service of the Temple of Jerusalem, to weave the great veil, with the other chosen ones, and then home under our eyes' (Rice 2005: 46; cf. *Prot. Jas*. 10). As in *Prot. Jas*. Salome serves as midwife at Jesus' birth, though Rice's Salome is Mary's sister and there is no mention of a gynaecological examination that leaves Salome's hand withered (Rice 2005: 259; cf. *Prot. Jas*. 19–20). And this birth takes place in a cave (Rice 2005: 235; *Prot. Jas*.18). *Prot. Jas*. is used also for details about John the Baptist's life. Elizabeth tells the story of the death of Zechariah (*Prot. Jas*. 23–4), at which time she and John hid in the mountains (*Prot. Jas*. 22), though these mountains are said to be near the Essenes who helped the two fugitives by providing them with food (Rice 2005: 82–9).

In an appendix to the novel ('Author's Notes'), Rice discusses the use of apocryphal texts to construct her story. Rice says that she sought to write about the Jesus of the New Testament gospels but was fascinated also by the infancy gospels: 'Ultimately I chose to embrace this material, to enclose it within the canonical framework as best I could. I felt there was a deep truth in it, and I wanted to preserve that truth as it spoke to me. Of course that is an assumption. But I made it. And perhaps in assuming that Jesus did manifest supernatural powers at an early age I am somehow being true to the Council of Chalcedon, that Jesus was God and man at all times' (Rice 2005: 320). Given the author's reconnection with Catholicism, it is striking to see such liberal use of the Christian Apocrypha in Rice's novel. But her decision to do so is instructive, for it illustrates well some of the motives behind the creation of apocryphal texts. First, Rice felt the need to appeal to the infancy gospels in order to fill gaps left by the canonical texts, a need felt also by the infancy gospels' authors. Rice even invented some stories of her own. Second, Rice expanded the canonical Jesus story out of piety (a motive often ascribed also to the infancy gospel writers), not, as some opponents of the Christian Apocrypha might claim, to intentionally mislead believers or introduce heretical christology. The *Christ the Lord* trilogy continued in 2008 with *The Road to Cana*. Shortly after, Rice reportedly became disenchanted with the church and the planned third volume, *Christ the Lord: Kingdom of Heaven*, was shelved.

Television

The Christian Apocrypha have appeared on television via a number of documentaries created, in many cases, to capitalize on the interest in the texts created by *The Da Vinci Code*. The earliest of these is *Banned from the Bible* (2003 and 2007), a two-part documentary produced by the History Channel in the US. The documentary features discussions of several Old Testament Pseudepigrapha along with *Inf. Gos. Thom.*, *Prot. Jas.*, *Gos. Mary, Gos. Nic.*, and *Apoc. Pet.* (in part one), and *Acts Pet.*, *Acts Paul, Sec. Gos. Mk.*, and *Gos. Judas* (in part two). Commentary is provided by Marvin Meyer, John Dominic Crossan, Bart Ehrman, Kirsti Copeland, and others. In December 2006 the National Geographic Channel aired *The Secret Lives of Jesus* and BBC4 in the UK contributed *The Secret Family of Jesus* and *The Lost Gospels*. National Geographic also released their documentary on the discovery and reconstruction of *Gos. Judas* in Easter 2006 and in 2012 premiered *Secret Lives of the Apostles*, an examination of the apocryphal acts. Another programme that deserves mention is *Letters of Faith*, a short (35 minute) docu-drama about the Abgar Correspondence released on DVD in 2007 by the Newington-Cropsey Foundation. Eusebius (*Eccl. hist.* 1.13) and the *Doctrine of Addai* provide the source material for this re-enactment of the exchange of letters between Jesus and King Abgar of Edessa and the ensuing conversion of the city by the apostle Addai. Viewers may find the film's heavily embroidered re-enactment overwrought but *Letters of Faith* is a rare treat because the filmmakers seem to take for granted that the Abgar Correspondence is historical; thus they have created a devotional film about an apocryphal text. The other documentaries tend to sensationalize the contents of the texts but they are important to watch as they have contributed to, and to some extent shaped, popular knowledge of the Christian Apocrypha.

For more creative uses of Early Christian Apocrypha on television, look for episodes of Chris Carter's creations, *The X-Files* and *Millennium*. *The X-Files* ran for nine seasons from 1993 to 2002 and spawned two feature films in 1998 and 2008. The show follows the exploits of two FBI agents, Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, who investigate unsolved cases involving paranormal phenomena. Mulder is the hopeless optimist, open to any unconventional explanation, from UFO abduction to lake monsters, that would help solve the case; Scully, the scientist of the duo, is more sceptical, though the two agents reverse their roles when religion enters the picture. This is the case in a lighthearted episode from season seven entitled 'Hollywood A.D.' Mulder and Scully are called in to investigate the bombing of a crypt beneath a church administered by Cardinal O'Fallon. In the process of the investigation, they find a body which they believe to be that of Micah Hoffman, a 1960s counter-revolutionary. They visit Hoffman's home and Mulder finds what appear to be old religious papers. Scully manages to read the Greek text and tells her partner, 'It looks like some kind of lost gospel. A gospel of Mary Magdalene, and, uh, an account of Christ's life on Earth after the Resurrection … It's a heretical text, Mulder. Mythical, I should say, but long rumoured to be in existence'. Mulder shows the manuscript to O'Fallon, who reads from it, 'And then Jesus took his beloved Mary Magdalene in an embrace, an embrace not of God and woman but of man and woman. And Jesus said to Mary, "Love the body for it is not only with the soul that our senses can perceive."' The gospel is revealed to be a forgery but O'Fallon believed it was authentic and bought a copy from Hoffman to prevent others from feeling the despair and anger he felt as he read the text. 'The Christ I loved was not the Christ in these texts,' O'Fallon says. Despite Scully's impressive credentials as a scientist, she is unaware that a 'Gospel of Mary' has been available to scholars since its publication in 1960, but this text was not mentioned by any known ancient writer. The true *Gos. Mary* also does not contain anything like what O'Fallon reads in the modern forgery, though Peter

does say at one point that 'the Saviour loved [Mary] more than all other women' (10, 1–3; trans. in Meyer et al. 2007).

The relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus is the focus also of 'Anamnesis' from season two of *Millennium*. The show ran from 1996 to 1999, capitalizing on the anxiety many felt at the approach of the year 2000. Its main protagonist is Frank Black, a retired FBI criminal profiler struggling with the increased presence of evil in society as the millennium approaches. He is recruited by the Millennium Group, a mysterious organization of former law-enforcement personnel, to serve as a consultant on cases similar to those covered on *The X-Files*. In 'Anamnesis' Black's wife Catherine is paired with Lara Means, a forensic psychologist, to investigate five schoolgirls in Washington who claim to have seen a vision of the Virgin Mary. Catherine and Means observe the group during a prayer meeting. The meeting is interrupted when Alex Hanes, the son of the local reverend, clashes with one of the girls, Clare, over her recitation of a passage she claims is from the Bible. Means reveals that the reading is actually from *Thund.*, said to be one of the gnostic texts excluded from the Bible for promoting the idea that Mary Magdalene was the only apostle who truly understood Christ's teachings. Later it is determined that the girls were seeing Mary Magdalene not the Virgin Mary and we learn that Clare's DNA matches that of the Shroud of Turin, making her a descendant of Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

Finally, the video-sharing website YouTube is the venue for two short films based on apocryphal texts. The first once again draws on *Thund.* for 'Thunder: Perfect Mind', a six-minute short film made in 2005 by Jordan Scott (daughter of Ridley Scott) to promote the launch of Prada's first perfume. A shorter version of the film was used for television commercials. It depicts Canadian model Daria Werbowy moving through various scenes in Berlin, including a subway and a nightclub. Her character carries a copy of the poem and a female voice reads portions of the text (beginning and ending with the line, 'I am the first and the last', 16,1) over a jazz soundtrack. The second film is a brief, crudely animated clip based on the story of the Fall of Zeno from *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 9. Called 'Gospel of Thomas: The Adventures of Little Jesus' and credited to Martin McDonald, the clip is spoken in gibberish but subtitled in English (perhaps as a humorous nod to director Mel Gibson's use of Aramaic in his 2004 film *The Passion of the Christ*). The fallen child's name is Billy, not Zeno, and Jesus encourages the child to jump—he says that he will bless him and this will enable Billy to fly. As in *Inf. Gos. Thom.* Jesus is accused of killing the boy. Jesus brings him back to life in order to prove his innocence, yet the cartoon Jesus actually is responsible for his death.

There is one other depiction of the apocryphal Jesus available online, though it really cannot be considered 'television'; indeed, it defies categorization. Morphicmedia.tv has created a narration of *Gos. Thom.* (available at <http://www.gospelofthomas.tv/>) for its 'Morphic Player', an interface that allows the user to choose the actor narrating the text— either 'Western' or 'Semitic'. Several other adjustments are possible, such as toggling the emotion of the narration between Gentle, Mezzo, and Passionate. The ability to change the form of the speaker is particularly apropos, given that a number of apocryphal texts— including *Gos. Judas, Rev. Magi*, and *Acts John*—feature a polymorphic Jesus.

Film

Mention has been made above to several works of fiction (*Quo Vadis, The Silver Chalice*, and *The Da Vinci Code*) that were adapted into film. Another two films, both written for the

screen, draw heavily on Early Christian Apocrypha. The first is *Stigmata* (1999, dir. Rupert Wainwright and written by Tom Lazarus). It stars Patricia Arquette as a Pittsburgh hairdresser named Frankie Page who becomes afflicted with stigmata after acquiring a rosary. The rosary once belonged to an Italian priest, Paulo Alameida, who also was a stigmatic. When word spreads of Page's affliction, Cardinal Houseman of the Vatican calls on Andrew Kiernan (played by Gabriel Byrne) to investigate the case. Kiernan witnesses Page enter possession-like states in which she speaks in Italian and Aramaic. In one of these states she writes an Aramaic text on her apartment wall. Photographs of the wall are sent to Kiernan's colleague Brother Delmonico, who reveals that the text is from an apocryphal gospel assigned by the 'Gospels Commission' to Delmonico, Alameida, and a third man, Marion Petrocelli, to translate. The church became concerned about what was contained in the gospel, so they cancelled the translation project and excommunicated the three men. More is revealed about this text to Kiernan by Petrocelli late in the film. 'It's an Aramaic scroll from the first century discovered near the caves of the Dead Sea Scrolls outside Jerusalem,' Petrocelli reveals. 'Alameida and I concluded that it is a gospel of Jesus Christ in his own words—Aramaic … It was Jesus' words to his disciples on the night of his last supper, his instructions to them how to continue his church after his death.' These instructions, if revealed, will undermine the authority of the church. 'I love Jesus,' Petrocelli says, 'I don't need any institution between him and me. You see? Just God and men; no priests, no churches. The first words in Jesus' gospel are "The kingdom of God is inside you, and all around you, not in buildings of wood and stone, split a piece of wood and I am there. Lift a stone and you will find me."' The Aramaic gospel may be an unknown, lost text, but the saying given here by Petrocelli is a patchwork of two sayings from *Gos. Thom.* (3 and 77), which has been available to the public for over fifty years and appears to be no threat to the church. The film closes with Kiernan recovering the manuscript of the lost gospel from under the floorboards of Alameida's church in South America. Kiernan reads a second excerpt from the text in Alameida's notes: 'These are the living sayings that Jesus spoke. Whoever discovers the meaning of these sayings will not taste death' (cf. *Gos. Thom.* incipit and log.1). Before the credits role, a caption fills the screen further associating the lost gospel with the *Gospel of Thomas*, a gospel 'claimed by scholars around the world to be the closest record we have of the words of the historical Jesus'. The Catholic Church, the next caption states, 'refuses to recognize the document as a gospel and considers it heresy'.

The second original film, *Mary* (2005; written and directed by Abel Ferrara), incorporates a large portion of *Gos. Mary* in its portrayal of Mary Magdalene; this time, however, Mary is one of Jesus' most important disciples, not his wife. Similar in structure to Denys Arcand's *Jesus of Montreal* (1989), which features a group of actors staging a Passion play, *Mary* chronicles the consequences of the filming of a controversial Jesus biography called *This Is My Blood*. The director, Tony Childress (played by Matthew Modine), doubles as the film's Jesus; Marie Palese (played by Juliette Binoche) is Mary Magdalene. When filming wraps, Palese heads to Jerusalem in search of spiritual enlightenment, and Childress sets out to promote his movie. Childress comes off as an opportunist, revelling in the controversy stirred up by the film; yet, the majority of footage we see from *This Is My Blood* hardly warrants the demonstrations and the bomb scare that attend the film's premiere. Three scenes are based on *Gos. Mary* (incorporating roughly half of the text from 10,1–18,10), and others show Mary interacting with Jesus and the male disciples. *Mary*'s other main character is Theodore Younger (Forest Whitaker), the host of a television show called *Jesus: The Real Story* in which he interviews scholars and theologians. While researching Mary Magdalene for his upcoming interview with Childress, Younger watches

footage of Elaine Pagels discussing the rivalry between Peter and Mary, erroneous portrayals of Mary as prostitute and wife of Jesus, and the gnostic notion of salvation coming from within (*Gos. Thom.* log. 3). In another scene Younger views his own interview with Jean-Yves Leloup, author of *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* (2002), in which the theologian discusses the conflict between Peter and Mary in early Christian texts. *Mary* lacks the bombast of *Stigmata* but it is meticulously researched; indeed, it is perhaps the most accurate representation of an apocryphal text in popular culture. Surprisingly, however, no text is ever mentioned in the film. As a result, viewers may be left thinking the scenes of Mary Magdalene teaching the disciples derive not from early Christian Apocrypha but from the imagination of the filmmaker.

Given the prominence of *Gos. Mary* in *Mary* (and *This Is My Blood*), it may come as a surprise to discover that apocryphal texts are rarely used in films about Jesus. The one exception is the 1999 television mini-series *Jesus*, directed by Robert Young. In a flashback to Jesus' youth, the young miracleworker brings a dead bird back to life, thus recalling the story of Jesus animating twelve clay birds in *Inf. Gos. Thom.* Another scene features the adult Jesus grieving at the death of Joseph; the scene evokes, though perhaps unintentionally, the story of Jesus at his father's deathbed in *Hist. Jos. Carp.* The few other references to apocryphal traditions in Jesus films can just as easily derive from Catholic tradition. Franco Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* (1973), for example, names Mary's parents Joachim and Anna (from *Prot. Jas.* and related texts), as does the more recent *The Nativity Story* (2006, dir. Catherine Hardwicke). Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) includes a scene of Veronica wiping Jesus' face at the sixth station of the cross, a tradition which may have its roots in texts of the Pilate Cycle. And *Ben Hur* (1959; dir. William Wyler) has Balthasar, who is one of Matthew's Magi but is only given this name in apocryphal texts, appear in several significant scenes (not only the birth but also the Sermon on the Mount and the crucifixion). Though the Jesus-filmmakers shy away from apocryphal texts, they do not hesitate to create their own apocryphal episodes in Jesus' life, particularly to fill in details about Jesus' childhood and upbringing. The one Jesus film that does make effective use of Christian Apocrypha does not explicitly feature Jesus at all. In *The Matrix* (1999; written and directed by Larry and Andy Wachowski), Keanu Reeves plays a computer programmer named Thomas Anderson (a combination of Thomas as doubter and the promised redeemer as 'son of man') who also goes by the hacker name of Neo. Neo discovers that the world he lives in is an illusion. In reality, humans are enslaved by intelligent machines who have taken control of the earth's surface. Used as batteries to power the city of the machines, humans are kept docile by being plugged into a virtual reality world called the Matrix. The last remnants of free humanity live below the surface in Zion and slip into the Matrix in search of the 'One', a man prophesied to end the war between humanity and the machines. Neo dies in battle with Fight Agents, computer programmes that eliminate threats to the system, but after three minutes, he returns to life with enhanced abilities that enable him to defeat the Agents. The film ends with an overhead shot of a city. Neo's voice is heard making a phone call, presumably broadcasted to the machines in control of the Matrix. He promises to free humanity from the Matrix, to show everyone that 'anything is possible'. He hangs up and then 'ascends', flying up into the sky. Numerous other films work with gnostic imagery—from *Bladerunner* (1982) to *The Truman Show* (1998) to *Dark City* (1998)—but only *The Matrix* features a redeemer figure that can be likened to Jesus. No specific apocryphal text seems to have been used in the film's creation, but Christian motifs are apparent, including Neo's death and resurrection, and these are coupled with the gnostic Christian view of Jesus as the revealer of humanity's origins and path to salvation. Gnostic influence is apparent also in the second

film in the trilogy, *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003). Here Neo encounters a representation of the creator of the Matrix, the Architect, who represents the Demiurge in gnostic cosmogonies.

REFLECTIONS

The Early Christian Apocrypha are treated unevenly in popular culture. Sometimes the texts are considered historical records—whether for the lives of the apostles in historical fiction, for lost Christian rituals, for the early years of Jesus not mentioned in the canonical Gospels, for the true role of Mary Magdalene in the early church, or for controversial traditions about Jesus that the church has tried to suppress. Other times they are used simply because their contents are attractive and lend themselves well for creative adaptation, particularly in music. And then there are those who invoke the mystique inherent in the Christian Apocrypha as lost texts, whether real or imagined. Few have presented the texts accurately; even the documentaries can be accused of sensationalizing the texts' contents, emphasizing the possibility that they contain 'secrets' about Jesus and the early church censored in the process of canon formation. It can be argued, however, that fidelity to history is the responsibility of scholarship, not art.

That may be so, but the public often has difficulty making that distinction, particularly when fiction claims to contain fact (*The Da Vinci Code*) and documentary makers try to attract viewers with inflammatory statements (the National Geographic Society warned that *Gos. Judas* could lead to a 'crisis of faith'). Advantage is taken of the public's mistrust of institutions and willingness to accept a well-presented conspiracy theory. Truth be told, many texts of the Christian Apocrypha work the same way, offering special knowledge about Jesus and the nature of existence that runs contrary to what has become orthodox Christian teaching. But, except on rare occasions (such as Abel Ferrara's *Mary* and gnostic-influenced films like *The Matrix*), the true secrets of these texts are replaced in popular culture representations by more benign, though still tantalizing, claims that better address modern concerns. A married Jesus is more human, more relatable; an out-of-touch and corrupt church has no authority if it was usurped from its true heirs at the point of its origins. As frustrating as such depictions of the Christian Apocrypha can be for scholars, the real value of the various uses of Early Christian Apocrypha in popular culture is not in what such use says about ancient texts and traditions. Rather, as with any text that we study, their value lies in what they say about the interests and anxieties of their creators and audiences.

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EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

TONY BURKE

DISCOVERIES of Early Christian Apocrypha make for exciting news. What new light could they shed on the mysterious origins of Christianity? What provocative portrayals do they contain of Jesus, or other early Christian figures? These questions are made more urgent by the sometimes sensational claims of scholars who, perhaps, see much more significance in the contents of the texts than is warranted, and by theologians who worry that these sensational claims will have a detrimental effect on the faith of their fellow Christians. Such claims and attendant concerns are not new. Since the first publication of apocryphal texts during the Enlightenment, both the value and potential for injury of the Christian Apocrypha have been hotly debated. Arguably the debate reaches as far back as the second century when early church 'heresy hunters' like Irenaeus of Lyons warned their readers about certain texts that could lead the faithful astray.

Theological discussion of the Christian Apocrypha in the last few decades has focused on the impact of four texts. One is clearly ancient (the *Gospel of Judas*), two are modern (Dan Brown's 2003 novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, and the first publishing endeavour of the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels*), and one is widely considered a modern forgery of an ancient text (the *Secret Gospel of Mark*). There is also some debate as to whether a fifth text, usually referred to as the 'Gospel of Jesus' Wife', should be regarded as a newly discovered ancient text or as a modern forgery. All of these texts have received an enormous amount of attention in the media, bringing public awareness to a field that otherwise operates on the fringes of New Testament studies. The majority of contemporary scholars of the Christian Apocrypha work on texts that have little impact on discussions of the origins or interpretation of the New Testament. And most New Testament scholars take little notice of non-canonical texts, particularly if they consider the literature to postdate the canonical texts, more so if theological interests lead to dismissing the Christian Apocrypha as worthless, deceptive, ridiculous, or heretical. So, it is only when a publication elicits wide public interest that scholars and theologians outside the field take notice. And that is when the battles begin.

EARLIER CURRENTS IN THE RECEPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

Current theological discussion of early Christian Apocrypha needs to be considered in the context of the history of scholarship on apocryphal literature. Contemporary thinking develops out of earlier approaches; sometimes it merely repeats and recycles the mistakes of the past.

In 1988 James H. Charlesworth, well known as the editor of two volumes of Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, published an overview of 'Research on the New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha' (1988). The overview divides scholarship on the Christian Apocrypha into four phases. The first runs from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century. This was a time when texts found in monastic libraries of the East were brought to the West for investigation and publication. Protestant scholars saw great value in the texts, particularly for arguing the irrelevance of Catholic tradition. They demonstrated that certain dogma, such as the Harrowing of Hell and the Immaculate Conception of Mary, had their roots in apocryphal texts (specifically, the *Acts of Pilate* and the *Protevangelium of James*). Not only were these teachings, therefore, not biblical, but they derived ultimately from texts that appeared crude and outlandish in comparison to the more sober books of the Bible. Some scholars, a much smaller element, went so far as to claim that certain apocryphal texts pre-dated canonical texts. The *Protevangelium of James*, for example, was *given this name* by its first editor because he believed it was the source of Matthew's and Luke's infancy narratives (see the discussion in Elliott 1993: 48–9).

Charlesworth's second phase of scholarship takes place during the nineteenth century. This is when editing and publishing of the Christian Apocrypha became more scientific—with efforts to find better manuscripts and compare variant readings—but scholars still often disparaged the texts' contents. Nevertheless, the Christian Apocrypha were sometimes incorporated into studies reflecting the larger interests of New Testament scholarship of the time, including the work of the History of Religions School, which aimed to trace parallels in Christian literature to eastern religions (e.g. Kuhn 1896) and efforts to construct biographies of Jesus using historical-critical methodology (e.g. Pick 1887).

The third phase of scholarship on the Christian Apocrypha runs from the turn of the nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century. Numerous early Christian manuscripts were discovered preserved in the sands of Egypt. Between 1890 and 1930 both scholars and the wider public were introduced to the *Gospel of Peter*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Egerton Gospel*, the *Odes of Solomon*, the *Epistle of the Apostles*, the *Pistis Sophia*, and the as-yet-unidentified fragments from the *Gospel of Thomas*. So great was the interest in the mysteries contained in these remarkable, once-lost books that some enterprising writers decided to create new apocrypha—such as the *Archko Volume*, the *Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*, the *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ*, and others (see Goodspeed 1931; Beskow 1983; and collected in Maffly-Kipp 2010)—each containing messages from Jesus fitting for the time. To some, even the ancient Apocrypha contained teachings that were more attractive than those delivered by the Jesus of the Bible. Philip Jenkins documents well the excitement that attended the new discoveries and the claims made about them by feminists, esoteric believers, and aspiring reformers of Christianity (2001: 32–53). In many ways the reactions to the new texts in the nineteenth century are similar to the enthusiasm that has greeted more recent discoveries and discussions of non-canonical portrayals of Jesus. Like today, discussions of the time included arguments about the value of the texts, with two 'schools' arguing about their scope and significance. One of these schools minimized the number of gospels written in antiquity (there were four, and only four) and the other maximized them, stating that the selection of the four canonical gospels from the great pool of texts available is due simply to accidents of history (Harris 1899: 802–3; cited in Jenkins 2001: 35–6). Similarly, German scholarship characterized Catholicism as a pagan

perversion of authentic Christianity that won out, not because it was 'true', but because it was more powerful (Jenkins 2001: 40–1). Within this discussion can be situated Walter Bauer's *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (1934), which became popular in American scholarship after its translation into English in 1971 (as *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*). Bauer argued against the prevalent view of Christian history that Christianity began as uniformly orthodox and was infiltrated by heresies that deviated from what was genuine. He demonstrated instead that orthodoxy and heresy were relative terms, that in some locations of the ancient world, the earliest form of Christianity was a group later characterized as 'heretical' by the orthodox. In Bauer's view not only were heretical texts sometimes privileged over the orthodox, but heretical groups were orthodox, at least for a time. In the face of this argument, how can one form of Christianity be considered first or correct? And, by extension, which texts, if any, most accurately report Jesus' life and teachings?

Charlesworth's fourth and final phase of scholarship begins in 1965 with the publication of the texts from the Nag Hammadi library. This discovery was attended by a renewal of interest in the Christian Apocrypha but fewer commentators wished to demonstrate the texts' inferiority to the canon. Instead, apocryphal texts began to be appreciated for their own merits, for how they could inform discussions of Christianity in a variety of times and locations. This time of calm did not last. Before long, American scholarship on the Christian Apocrypha was gripped by the so-called 'Bauer thesis' and, once again, arguments were made for the early dating of non-canonical texts. Their views were met by a chorus of voices from evangelical Christianity, who would not permit these 'radical' views to pervert the faith of the growing number of Christians asking questions about lost gospels.

CONTEMPORARY DISCUSSION

The greatest battles in the last twenty years of theological discussion of the Christian Apocrypha have taken place largely, or at least most violently, in the US. There we find an alchemical mix of popular-market books by scholars who advocate the early dating of apocryphal texts and support the Bauer thesis, along with a media machine eager to give these authors a platform to promote their work, and apologetic reactions from evangelical writers out to defend the Bible by diminishing the importance of apocryphal texts. Looked at positively, this dynamic has brought a great deal of attention to the Early Christian Apocrypha, but it is also a distraction from more rigorous examination of the texts, not for what they may or may not say about the historical Jesus, but for what they say about Christianity in its myriad forms.

The *Secret Gospel of Mark*

The first of the four recent theological battles over apocryphal Christian texts is rooted in a discovery made over fifty years ago. In 1973, American scholar of religion Morton Smith published two books—one scholarly, one popular—documenting his 1958 discovery of a lost letter of Clement of Alexandria (*c*.150–215) in the monastery of Mar Saba located in the Judean desert (Smith 1973a, 1973b). The letter refers to a longer version of the Gospel of Mark, a 'Secret' or 'Mystic' Mark, circulating in Alexandria. Clement writes his letter to a certain Theodore who enquired about the contents of this text. Clement's response differentiates between the additions made to create *Sec. Gos. Mk.* and further additions

made by the followers of the heretic Carpocrates. In his discussion, Clement mentions two authentic sections of *Sec. Gos. Mk.*: a brief expansion of Mark 10.46 and a new story between Mark 10.34 and 10.35 very similar to the raising of Lazarus from the Gospel of John (11.1–44). In this new story, Jesus raises a rich young man to life. Later, the young man comes to Jesus, 'wearing a linen cloth over his naked body', and spends the night with Jesus, learning about 'the mystery of the kingdom of God' (translation from Smith 1973a: 446–7). Early responses to Smith's discovery were somewhat dismissive; *Sec. Gos. Mk.* simply resembled other second-century apocryphal texts, which expand upon and combine canonical material. But a decade later, some scholars were arguing that the *Sec. Gos. Mk.* passages were evidence of a longer version of Mark that pre-dated, not postdated, canonical Mark (Crossan 1985: 91–124; Koester 1990: 293–303; Schenke 1984). Others saw it as an early expansion of Mark made perhaps by the same author as canonical Mark (Brown 2005; and considered recently by Hedrick 2012: 59).

The majority of scholars, however, have been swayed by arguments that the *Letter to Theodore* is a forgery. The urge to declare it a forgery is due, at least in part, to a dislike of Smith's own peculiar interpretation of *Sec. Gos. Mk.* He considered Jesus' encounter with the rich young man evidence of secret, magical practices in the early Jesus movement, practices that involved mystical, and perhaps also physical, union with Jesus (1973a: 251). The first to openly challenge the authenticity of the letter was Quentin Quesnell (1975), who hinted that Smith himself created the text. After Smith's death in 1991, the accusations became more overt. Jacob Neusner called the *Letter to Theodore* 'the forgery of the century' and Smith 'a charlatan and a fraud' (1993; see the discussion in Brown 2005: 39–45). Furthermore, Neusner characterized the text's portrayal of Jesus as a 'homosexual magician' (1993: 28). Others joined the fray. Donald Akenson provided a motive for the text's creation: Smith had crafted 'a nice ironic gay joke' to fool his academic peers (1998: 597). And Philip Jenkins speculated that Smith's inspiration for the prank was James Hogg Hunter's novel, *The Mystery of Mar Saba* (1940), which also featured a manuscript hunter who found a lost text at the same library (2001: 102). The author who has made the greatest contribution to the forgery hypothesis is Stephen Carlson. In *The Gospel Hoax* (2005), Carlson identified evidence for forgery in photographs of the manuscript and listed apparent clues left by Smith to enable his colleagues to uncover his hoax. Carlson was followed by Peter Jeffery (2007), who drew attention to a number of twentieth-century homoerotic euphemisms in the text, and Francis Watson built on Carlson's arguments by pointing out additional clues to the hoax left by its author, Morton Smith (2010).

Scholars quickly applauded Carlson's work. Finally, it seemed, someone with the requisite skills had proven the *Letter to Theodore* a forgery. And the text it contained, the so-called 'gay gospel', could now be dispensed with as the creation of an eccentric, gay scholar with a chip on his shoulder against the academy. The uneasiness felt about *Sec. Gos. Mk.*'s perceived homoeroticism is evident in descriptions of the text by its critics (see further Brown 2005: 142). Craig Evans describes the longer passage from the text as, 'Jesus raises a dead man and then later, in the nude, instructs the young man in the mysteries of the kingdom of God' (2006: 95); but the text does not say either of the men were 'in the nude'. John Wenham's characterization is similar: 'Can we believe that Mark wrote the ill-fitting insertions attributed to him, which suggest that Jesus initiated nocturnal "mysteries" in the nude?' (1991: 144–45). Peter Jeffery calls the text, 'a cento of words and phrases from the canonical gospels and other ancient writings, carefully structured to create the impression that Jesus practiced homosexuality' (2007: 91; cf. 181). And Jeffery may be alluding to rumours of Smith's own homosexuality when he says, 'I pray for the late Morton Smith— may God rest his anguished soul' (2007: ix). Defenders of the text, however, fail to see any

homoeroticism in the text. Scott Brown, who calls *Sec. Gos. Mk.* 'a ten-ton magnet for the bizarre and controversial' (2005: 57), expresses the problem succinctly by saying that proponents of the forgery hypothesis have confused the text with Smith's interpretation of it (2005: 19, 68); as for euphemistic references to gay sex in the text, Charles Hedrick (2012: 33), for one, demonstrates that, if the statement that 'Jesus spent the night with the young man' means they had sex, then the same must be said of Jesus' post-resurrection encounter on the road to Emmaus with two men who ask him, in similar language, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over' (Luke 24.29). The efforts of Brown and others to address the arguments for forgery led *Biblical Archaeology Review* to commission two experts—one a Greek document examiner, the other a palaeographer—to examine the manuscript photographs (announced in Shanks 2009 and the results discussed in Shanks 2010). Though the experts' opinions on the text differ, both conclude that Smith did not have the capability to emulate eighteenth-century Greek handwriting in order to create the manuscript. Undaunted, forgery supporters have since declared that Smith must have worked with an accomplice.

What is disturbing about the case of *Sec. Gos. Mk.* is that some of the commentators have let their distaste for the contents of the text determine their conclusions. Faced with what appeared to them to be a theologically incorrect, maybe even blasphemous, portrayal of Jesus, they saw the best defence against the dissemination of the ideas in the text was to declare it a forgery and thus close discussion. Evidence may yet present itself indicating that *Sec. Gos. Mk.* is indeed a fake, but the rush to dismiss theologically difficult material is alarming, and an approach reminiscent of proto-orthodox heresy hunters who wished to do the same by declaring 'apocryphal' any texts they hoped to keep from the eyes of their communities.

The Jesus Seminar

Established by Robert Funk in 1985, the Jesus Seminar endeavoured to present to both scholars and an interested public the scholarly consensus on which early Christian gospel materials were useful for reconstructing the life and teachings of Jesus. The Seminar refused to restrict their investigation to only canonical materials; the agenda, Robert Miller recalls, 'was to evaluate the historicity of every utterance and every deed attributed to Jesus in Christian sources from the first three centuries' (Miller 1999: 15). As it happens, the only non-canonical material considered historically reliable by the Seminar was a handful of sayings from the *Gospel of Thomas*. Nevertheless, the value, however minor, attributed to *Gos. Thom.* is reflected provocatively in the title of the Seminar's first publication: *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (Funk with Hoover 1993). The Seminar's interest in non-canonical texts is reflected better in other titles published by the group. *Sayings Parallels: A Workbook for the Jesus Tradition* (Crossan 1986) features over 1500 sayings from canonical and non-canonical texts, and *The Complete Gospels* (Miller 1992) contains new translations of all known early Christian gospel texts, with the canonical Gospels appearing alongside the *Gos. Thom.*, *Sec. Gos. Mk.*, and others. The Seminar's publishing wing, Polebridge Press, has also published translations of individual non-canonical texts in their Early Christian Apocrypha series.

The Seminar has been attacked by critics for, among other things, their willingness to consider non-canonical texts as viable sources for the historical Jesus. Often, however, these attacks focus more on arguments made by the group's individual members than the

Seminar's collective work. John Dominic Crossan, one of the charter members of the Seminar, is well known for his position on the *Gos. Pet.* In *The Cross that Spoke* (1988), Crossan laid out his argument that *Gos. Pet.* is an independent witness, and a superior witness at that, to the early passion narrative incorporated into the canonical Gospels. Crossan's other works, including his landmark study of the historical Jesus published only a few years later (1991), also drew upon early Christian Apocrypha, particularly the *Gos. Thom.* and the *Egerton Gospel*. Another important contributor to the Seminar, Helmut Koester, integrated several apocryphal gospels into his broad overview of the history of early Christian literature (1990). Koester considered *Sec. Gos. Mk., Gos. Thom., Gos. Pet.*, the *Egerton Gospel*, and several dialogue gospels witnesses to early stages in the development of the canonical Gospels from their beginnings in oral traditions to completed written texts. Stephen Patterson, another member of the Seminar, published *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* for Polebridge Press in 1993. In it he advances the view prevalent in work by Seminar members and the group's collective work that the *Gos. Thom.* is independent of the canonical Gospels and contains early, perhaps historical, traditions about Jesus.

Criticism of *The Five Gospels* in particular again took issue with the Seminar's use of apocryphal texts, articulated as an unrealistically high valuation of non-canonical gospels for studying the historical Jesus and a correspondingly low valuation of the canonical Gospels. Two publications aimed specifically against the Seminar—M. Wilkins's and J. P. Moreland's essay collection *Jesus Under Fire* (1995) and Luke Timothy Johnson's *The Real Jesus* (1996; these and other critics of the Seminar are discussed further in Miller 1999)—characterize Seminar members as 'radical', 'fringe', and 'liberal' (Blomberg 1995: 20; Johnson 1996: 3). The early dating of texts like *Gos. Thom.* and *Gos. Pet.* is considered by Craig Blomberg an area 'in which few other reputable scholars (evangelical or otherwise) would follow the Seminar's leading' (1995: 20; similarly Johnson 1996: 22 and 47–8; Yamauchi 1995: 221; Bock 1995: 90). Philip Jenkins joins these critics in declaring that the Seminar's *The Complete Gospels* volume assigns 'improbably early' dates to non-canonical texts and objects to the group's 'literary dissection' of the canonical Gospels into various successive editions (2001: 94). Jenkins singles out Crossan's work on the *Gospel of Peter* for criticism, calling his theory 'the idiosyncratic work of one scholar, who has not been widely followed' (2001: 97) and disputes other early dates given to non-canonical texts in Crossan's 1991 biography of Jesus (2001: 97–103). The Seminar's practice of assigning early dates to apocryphal texts is considered by the group's critics as intentionally, if not primarily, an attack on the canonical Gospels. According to Johnson, the practice stems from 'a commitment to consider *any* source outside the canon as more reliable than a source inside the canon, and that something more than a desire for sober historical reconstruction is at work' (1996: 47–8).

To the Seminar's critics, the Seminar's views about Jesus and the Early Christian Apocrypha are dangerous for the non-scholarly public. The introduction to *Jesus Under Fire* describes the book's main purpose as 'to help the church and the people of the broader community understand the issues currently being disseminated in popular culture, and to be able to counteract these ideas and respond to them intelligently and responsibly' (Wilkins and Moreland 1995: 11). Addressing the Jesus Seminar in particular, the editors say, 'In our view, the claims of radical New Testament critics like the fellows of the Jesus Seminar are false and not reasonable to believe in light of the best evidence available. And in the pages to follow we are going to show you some of the reasons why we believe this way—hopefully, in a way accessible to the general reader' (Wilkins and Moreland 1995: 7). Johnson voices his concern for the Seminar's effect on the Christian faith when he writes,

'Much is at stake. If my analysis is correct, the state of biblical scholarship within the church is in critical condition' (1996: xii). In hindsight, the concerns of the Seminar's critics seem overblown. The limits of the canon remain inviolate, and there is little any scholar could say that would lead to its destruction or modification. And though they are correct that the early dating of such texts as the *Gos. Pet.* is a minority position, the scholars of the Seminar remind us that none of our available gospel literature, canonical and non-canonical, can be dated securely and that the categorization of a text as either canonical or non-canonical should have no bearing on determinations of its origins or historical value.

The Da Vinci Code

Dan Brown's 2003 novel *The Da Vinci Code* is not the first, nor the only, work of fiction that utilizes apocryphal texts to propel its plot. But it is the most successful. The book has sold over 60 million copies in forty-four languages and was adapted into film in 2006. The story involves the claim that Jesus married Mary Magdalene, they had children, and their lineage survives to today. As evidence, one of the book's principal characters cites the testimony of several non-canonical gospels, including *Gos. Mary* and *Gos. Phil.* The novel's impact on theology is due to a curious preface that states three things as 'fact', including 'All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate' (Brown 2003: 1). As a result, readers are left wondering about the validity of the texts mentioned in the book. Publishers responded to readers' interest by rushing out titles that capitalized on *The Da Vinci Code*'s success, either by expanding upon Brown's myths and misinformation or by refuting them. Churches also joined in, forming study groups for those interested in the claims made by Brown about early Christian history.

Among the books published refuting Brown's claims is Bart Ehrman's *Truth and Fiction in The Da Vinci Code* (2004). Ehrman's work on Early Christian Apocrypha, including his study *Lost Christianities* (2003a) and the companion collection of primary texts *Lost Scriptures* (2003b), made him well-suited to the task of answering the question 'How much truth is there in *The Da Vinci Code*?' (2004: xx). Ehrman speaks glowingly of the book as an engaging thriller, and praises it for bringing attention to early Christian history, but expresses concern about how it blurs fact and fiction for the reader. He sees his task, then, as to lay out various aspects of the study of early Christianity—including the various sources for Jesus (both canonical and non-canonical texts, so-called 'pagan' sources, but not the Dead Sea Scrolls), Gnosticism, canon selection, and the roles and views about women revealed in the texts—and to point out Brown's 'numerous mistakes, some of them howlers' (2004: xiii). Correct history is Ehrman's concern—'the problem is that [Brown] indicates that his accounting of early Christian documents is historically accurate, and readers who don't know the history of early Christianity will naturally take him at his word' (2004: 100)—though certainly some readers might not agree with Ehrman's reconstruction of that history.

Such readers would include the writers of several other *Da Vinci Code* refutations, which, in Ehrman's words, were 'written by religious persons who want to "set the record straight" in case some of their co-religionists (evangelical Christians, mainly?) might be misled by some statements made in the book' (2004: xv). Ben Witherington (2004), Darrell Bock (2004), and journalists Carl E. Olson and Sandra Miesel (2004) all contributed lengthy discussions for the evangelical book market, pointing out Brown's historical and theological fallacies. Unlike Ehrman, with his concern about correct history, these writers have a

transparently apologetic goal, which is not to defend the results of historical-critical scholarship, but, in Olson and Miesel's words, to 'defend and promote the truth' (Olson and Miesel 2004: 19). This 'truth', of course, is decidedly traditional or conservative—including, for example, an early date for canon formation, and a late date for the composition of *Gos*. *Thom*. And in the course of their rebuttals they specifically target scholars who challenge these views. Brown's novel, Bock says, 'elaborated on and embellished these more academic ideas' (2004: 156); so, this scholarship must be addressed and refuted alongside its 'popular expression', *The Da Vinci Code*. Bock's principle argument is that non-canonical texts cannot be read alongside the canonical: 'Either the Gnostic texts reflect what Jesus was and is, or the four Gospels are the best witnesses to the movement that Jesus generated. One cannot have it both ways' (2004: 123). Along the way he calls scholars who study the Christian Apocrypha 'Neo-Gnostics' (2004: 129) out to rewrite history by asserting that non-canonical texts better reflect 'truth' (135). Witherington does something similar, but spares little invective in speculating about Christian Apocrypha scholars' motives: 'Perhaps these scholars have been burned in one way or another by orthodox Christianity. Thus they are looking for an alternative path of quasi-Christian redemption that will justify their rejection of basic New Testament truths. It's almost as if they said to themselves, "If the first-century documents don't suit my belief system, I'll find some other early materials and rewrite the history of the first century." In other words it seems that these scholars are creating a new myth of Christian origins, one that better suits their own more human-centered approaches to religion' (2004: 94–5, cf. 172). 'These scholars', he continues, 'though bright and sincere, are not merely wrong; they are misled. They are oblivious to the fact that they are being led down this path by the powers of darkness' (2004: 174). To Witherington, *The Da Vinci Code* and the scholarship it reflects (albeit in a distorted mirror) is a battleground for the Christian faith. The novel represents the fulfilment of 2 Tim. 4.3 ('For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine …'). His own book, Witherington writes, 'is intended as a wake-up call to those who have not been noticing the signs of the times' (2004: 12).

All of these writers, Ehrman included, are concerned about the impact of *The Da Vinci Code* on its readers, whether because it distorts historical events and documents or because it perverts the 'truth' as defined by orthodox, evangelical Christianity. Surprisingly, much of the content of their refutations is similar, because Brown's account of Christian history is so full of erroneous readings of the texts and few reputable scholars argue that there is evidence of a marriage between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The writers agree also that the novel has brought much attention to the Early Christian Apocrypha, but disagree on whether that outcome is positive or negative. Even experts in the field have to concede that Brown has left them with much misinformation to correct.

The *Gospel of Judas*

When the *Gospel of Judas* was revealed to the public in 2006 it was touted as 'the most important archaeological discovery of the past sixty years' (Ehrman in Kasser et al. 2006: 79). Its portrayal of Judas, the editors of the text claimed, was not the devil-inspired betrayer of Jesus from the New Testament, but 'Jesus' closest intimate and friend, the one who understood Jesus better than anyone else' (Kasser et al. 2006: 80). The National Geographic Society, who were granted exclusive publishing rights to the text, teased in their advertising campaign that the contents of the document could be 'explosive' and could

create a 'crisis of faith' (discussed in Porter and Heath 2007: 2); the narrator of their documentary on the discovery asks: 'Will a dramatic discovery rewrite biblical history?' In their published work and interviews, the NGS's editorial team—which includes Marvin Meyer and Bart Ehrman, among others—were refreshingly cautious to state that the gospel had no bearing on the historical Judas, and that it should be interpreted as a gnostic text reflecting late second-century intra-Christian conflict. Nevertheless, their discussions of the gospel in the popular market translation of the text are peppered with hyperbole. Meyer claims the text presents Judas as 'a role model for all those who wish to be disciples of Jesus' (Kasser et al. 2006: 9). He expresses hope that the gospel will help to improve relations between Christians and Jews, because Judas, imagined in Christian tradition as the embodiment of Jewish betrayal of Jesus, is presented here as Jesus' 'beloved disciple and friend' who learns from his rabbi and master the mysteries of Jewish (albeit Jewish gnostic) lore (Kasser et al. 2006: 10). Whereas the canonical Gospels have generated almost two millennia of anti-Semitism, 'the Christian Gospel of Judas is at peace' with Judaism (Kasser et al. 2006: 10). Ehrman's discussion of the gospel in the same volume places it in the context of canon formation. The New Testament, Ehrman says, is the expression of one Christian group (the orthodox) who succeeded over all others and who celebrated their triumph by censuring other gospel literature. *Gos. Judas*, he says, highlights the fact that orthodoxy did not hold a monopoly on the claim to be the 'true' form of Christianity; 'here is a book,' Ehrman concludes, 'that turns the theology of traditional Christianity on its head and reverses everything we ever thought about the nature of true Christianity' (Kasser et al. 2006: 119). Before long, however, the editorial team's understanding of the text was challenged by other scholars, such as April DeConick (2007), who made a strong case for seeing this gospel's Judas as being just as demonic as he is in the New Testament.

The sensationalism of the find and its misrepresentation in the media made *Gos. Judas* seem to the public like yet another challenge to Christian tradition. It also presented another opportunity for apologetic writers to rail against the dangers of reading the Christian Apocrypha. The principal apologetic responses to the publication of *Gos. Judas* are the books by the British bishop N. T. Wright (2006) and Canadians Stanley Porter and Gordon Heath (2007). Wright's goal in his book is to calm the storm elicited by the text, both among the general public and by 'soulful American scholars declaring that the new find would, in a very real sense, compel us to boldly go into questions the church had tried to cover up' (2006: 10). Over the course of the book, Wright discusses the circumstances of the find, its connections with Christian Gnosticism (at one point, he belittles the cosmogony of *Gos. Judas* by likening it to letters he receives from mentally ill people; 2006: 59–60), and its differences from traditional portrayals of Judas. But the prime goal of Wright's book is to mount a defence against the perceived lure of modern Gnosticism. Meyer and Ehrman, Wright states, 'are trying earnestly to make [a case] against the odds at this point, that the 'Gospel of Judas' is just the sort of thing we need today to help us set traditional orthodoxy aside and embrace something more interesting' (2006: 60). He sees a connection between the 'New Myth of Christian Origins' (essentially the Bauer thesis) advanced by Ehrman and like-minded scholars and a 'larger Gnosticizing tendency within American Protestantism' (2006: 140). Together these forces 'propose the adopting of Gnosticism as the appropriate alternative to classic Christianity' (2006: 140). Ultimately, Wright hopes the ordinary reader will come to the realization that the excitement over *Gos. Judas* is 'obviously all a mistake, and maybe there is something in this classic Christianity after all' (2006: 137).

Porter and Heath's contribution to the discussion similarly was written 'to set the record straight' about the text in light of the 'hyperbolic language' used by the NGS and its editorial team (2007: vii). They see the audience of their book as 'those concerned for the

life of the church and Christians who have been attracted to this document' (2007: 115). But their attack is mounted principally against Ehrman's arguments about the gospel's place in early Christian literature and history. Porter and Heath characterize Ehrman's 'Lucky Winner thesis' (their term) as 'postmodern relativism' and object that he 'does not see one side as necessarily right (the orthodox) and others wrong (the heretics)' (2007: 8). And so, Porter and Heath diminish the value not only of the *Gos*. *Judas* but also other non-canonical texts in comparison to the canonical Gospels, which are the 'most genuine expression of the Christian faith' (2007: 105).

Shortly after the publication of *Gos*. *Judas*, additional books appeared integrating the gospel into attacks on the Early Christian Apocrypha and proponents of the 'Bauer thesis'. The authors, again, are largely American evangelicals and/or write for evangelical presses. Their books bear such provocative titles as *Fabricating Jesus* (Evans 2006), *Reinventing Jesus* (Komoszewski et al. 2006), *Dethroning Jesus* (Bock and Wallace 2007), and *The Heresy of Orthodoxy* (Köstenberger and Kruger 2010). Another, Darrell Bock's *The Missing Gospels* (2006), bears the subtitle 'Unearthing the Truth behind Alternative Christianities'. The testimonials that adorn their covers and flyleaves are written by a common stable of evangelical writers; some of them even endorse each other's books, underscoring the fact that these authors are working within a closed community—even their audiences are assumed to be committed Christians. Each writer is transparent about his apologetic goals. Evans writes to combat the 'sloppy scholarship and misguided theories that have been advanced in recent years' (2006: 14) and 'to defend the original witnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus' (2006: 17); Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace are out to counter scepticism engendered by 'the media's assault on the biblical Jesus, postmodernism's laissez-faire attitude toward truth, and America's collective ignorance of scripture' (2006: 16); Bock and Wallace juxtapose Christianity with Jesusanity, described on the book's dustjacket as 'an ideology advocated in universities and in the media which … denies any historical basis to the Jesus of faith and the creeds' (2007); and Köstenberger and Kruger rival Ben Witherington in ascribing public interest in 'alternative Christianities' to the forces of evil: 'This battle … is driven by forces that seek to discredit the biblical message about Jesus, the Lord and Messiah and Son of God, and the absolute truth claims of Christianity. The stakes in this battle are high indeed' (2010: 18). Alas, given the resounding silence about the modern apologists' positions in subsequent work by scholars of the Christian Apocrypha, no one outside evangelical circles appears to be listening. For all their bluster, then, the apologists are really just preaching to the converted.

Of this recent crop of apologetic books, the one that discusses the Christian Apocrypha in the most detail is Bock's *The Missing Gospels*. His approach and arguments are so typical of this group of authors that it is worthwhile to discuss his book in some detail. Bock's stated intent in writing is to investigate claims by Ehrman and other members of the 'new school' (i.e. proponents of the 'Bauer thesis'), claims which he characterizes as an attack on Christian orthodoxy. According to the 'new school' scholars, Bock says, 'the documents (i.e., the Christian Apocrypha) represent a historical exposé of our faith's origins and reveal the diversity of early Christian views. They open the possibility of new vistas and new ways of thinking about religion that breathe life into an old faith suffering a kind of religious arthritis. And the beauty of it all is that these new vistas are really the views of other ancients whose perspectives have been buried in sand for centuries' (2006: xx). Bock asserts instead that a certain amount of agreement was present early in the movement and this is expressed in the best source for early Christianity: the New Testament. Bock illustrates this argument by juxtaposing the portrayals of Jesus in canonical sources with those found in non-canonical texts. The intent is to show that, contrary to the 'new school's'

position that apocryphal texts present a Jesus that is more human (2006: xxii), the apocryphal texts portray him as more exalted, not less, and differ widely in their understandings of Jesus and salvation. The New Testament texts, however, have a clear, consistent theology that stretches back to the time of the apostles (2006: 203). Bock's selection of excerpts from apocryphal texts is expansive, though some of his choices for inclusion are made, it seems, to heighten the difference between 'traditional' and 'alternative' Christianities. The *Letter to Rheginos* and the *Valentinian Exposition*, for example, are evidence of gnostic views of Jesus, but they are treatises, not apocryphal gospels, and Jewish–Christian gospels, the only apocryphal texts that come close to presenting a human Jesus, are not even mentioned. Of course, Bock, like other apologists, is not an expert on the Christian Apocrypha, and his shortcomings are often apparent. He is also quick to dismiss the 'new school's' views on certain texts by emphasizing scholarship that is congenial to his position. *Gos. Thom.*, for example, is declared a late second-century composition based primarily on the work of Nicolas Perrin (2006: 6; cf. Perrin 2002), and Bock relies heavily on Hans-Josef Klauck's 2003 introduction to the Christian Apocrypha, which tends to assign late dates to many of the texts. Dates are important to Bock, as they help him to distance apocryphal texts from canonical texts. Thus he is quick to characterize a text as gnostic, since, according to his view of Christian history, Gnosticism is a late second-century phenomenon (2006: 22–31); any text, therefore, with apparently gnostic features must postdate the New Testament texts by a century or more. In the end, Bock does acknowledge that some 'new-school' scholars have made significant contributions to the study of early Christianity, but he is less irenic when he states that, 'As learned as many of these studies are when it comes to helping us with Gnostic sources (and they are excellent pieces of work at that level), they are even more seriously flawed when it comes to describing early Christianity' (Bock 2006: 212).

A recent study (Burke 2010) of *The Missing Gospels* and other reactions to the current popularity of the Christian Apocrypha draws attention to the tactics often employed by these writers—such as emphasizing the more bizarre features of the texts, categorizing all apocryphal texts as gnostic, declaring that non-canonical gospels are not truly gospels because they do not share the generic features of their canonical counterparts, drawing a distinction between canonical texts composed by Christians and non-canonical texts written by 'knock-off pseudo-Christian' groups (Komoszewksi et al. 2006: 158) and the like, and the demonization of scholars, such as those in the 'new-school', who approach the texts sympathetically. The study illustrates that the same tactics were used by the ancient heresy hunters in their efforts to dissuade Christians from reading texts that did not have wide acceptance in the early centuries, and from associating with groups they labelled 'heretics'. Like the heresy hunters, the modern apologists introduce readers to apocryphal texts and their champions in the course of their refutations; unfortunately, also like the ancient writers, the apologists often misrepresent both the texts and 'new-school' scholars in the process.

CONCLUSION

As stated at the outset, the majority of scholars who study the Christian Apocrypha resist claims about how the texts impact our knowledge of Jesus and other first-century Christian figures. Their aim in studying this literature is to understand what it says of Christianity in its many forms throughout the centuries of the texts' composition. Theology, in the sense of determining religious truth, rarely enters into their work except when identifying the

theology of the texts' authors and audiences. Only when scholars of Early Christianity appeal to the Christian Apocrypha, either to reconstruct the life and teachings of the historical Jesus or to demonstrate variety in the early church, are the texts brought into contemporary theological discussion. As already shown, such discussion is not only due to recent interest in the texts occasioned by the sensational finds and publications of the past few decades; the same debate ensued in the nineteenth century and can be traced as far back as the printing of the first apocryphal gospels centuries earlier. Today, however, it is more apparent that the combatants in these battles are living in very different methodological worlds. Köstenberger and Kruger, for example, complain strongly about the 'anti-supernatural bias in Bauer's historical method' (2010: 102) and state that 'The Bauer–Erhman thesis insufficiently recognizes that at the core, power was a function of divine truth, appropriately apprehended by selected human messengers, rather than truth being a function of human power … the Bauer–Ehrman thesis is wrong not just because these scholars' *interpretation of the data is wrong*, but because their interpretation proceeds *on the basis of a flawed interpretive paradigm*' (2010: 101). Bauer theorists would argue in their defence that the apologists operate under a supernatural bias and their arguments are based, not on rigorous text-critical and historical-critical labour, but on Christian tradition that affirms such principles as the apostolic authorship of the New Testament as well as orthodoxy's claim to being the one 'true' form of Christianity. The two groups of scholars cannot discuss the Christian Apocrypha fruitfully if they cannot agree on the framework of the debate. So, they continue to operate in their own worlds. The apologists warn their fellow Christians against the lure of new and challenging texts or ideas. And the Early Christianity scholars ignore the apologists and simply argue amongst themselves about the likelihood that the Christian Apocrypha contain first-century traditions. The two groups really only interact on bookstore shelves. There they fight for the attention of a public interested in sensational new discoveries, in a competition more concerned with sales than souls.

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