

NEW TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

New Testament Apocrypha

More Noncanonical Scriptures

VOLUME ONE

Edited by

Tony Burke and Brent Landau

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Dedicated to

Montague Rhodes James and James Keith Elliott,
editors and translators of *The Apocryphal New Testament* (1924 and 1993)

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Foreword: The Endurance of the Christian Apocrypha

“Of making many books there is no end” in Ecclesiastes 12:12 may be a fair judgment about the seemingly interminable stream of writings concerned with the events and personages of the New Testament commonly gathered together under the umbrella title “The Christian Apocrypha.” The King James Version of the rest of that verse, “. . . and much study is a weariness of the flesh,” however, may be sensibly glossed over as an inappropriate sentiment to cite in this scholarly book.

Defining “New Testament Apocrypha”

The so-called apocryphal writings are an amorphous and flexible collection of writings that do not constitute an agreed or settled entity, nor are they a body of literature from a defined timeframe. There is no agreed set number of books as there is in the so-called Old Testament Apocrypha, usually printed separately in many Protestant Bibles. Such an enormous, yet unspecified, number of such texts is the reason why *more* Christian apocrypha need to be published.

The titles given to collections may vary. All the words in the title “The Apocryphal New Testament” are wrong, and “Early Noncanonical Christian Literature,” although preferred by many academics, is not precise or ideal. We study not only early texts, not all of them are Christian (one in the current collection here is Jewish in origin), and “noncanonical” in such a title is as anachronistic as “apocryphal” (in the literal sense). At least “New Testament Apocrypha” is a well-known, if less than perfect, title, which most readers and prospective readers recognize; they know the sorts of writings that may be found in a book with this name on its spine.

Early Christian Apocrypha Collections

Some apocryphal Christian texts have been known for centuries and are among the earliest books printed. The *Arabic Infancy Gospel* was first printed in 1697 and the *Protevangelium of James* in 1552. The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* were published in the eighteenth century. A Latin version of the *Acts of Timothy*, included here, was published in Leuven in 1485 and later revised by the Bollandists in 1643.

Printed collections containing, admittedly, only a limited number of apocryphal texts, as commonly designated, can be traced to the volumes edited by Fabricius (1719), Jones (1726–1727), Birch (1804), Thilo (1832), or Giles (1852). Modern translations of some of these texts into Western languages have been edited over the past century by Walker, Cowper, Vouaux, Amiot, de Santos Otero, and others. A strange but very popular collection containing not only conventional apocryphal texts but some of the Apostolic Fathers was edited by William Hone in 1820 and went through many editions; the editor is now rightly

criticized for peddling the false belief that the apocryphal writings were deliberately and wilfully excluded from the canon by its compilers.

Modern Christian Apocrypha Collections

Those of us who have had the privilege, and problem, of making a meaningful, representative, and manageable selection of the New Testament apocryphal texts have an *embarras de richesses* to work with. When I was asked in the late 1980s to revise M. R. James's classic collection *The Apocryphal New Testament*, first published in 1924, Oxford University Press gave me *carte blanche* over what to include. For the most part I obviously followed James's lead, but I added texts unknown in his day and expanded or changed others where newer or better manuscripts had been published. In the end there was no trouble filling a volume of roughly 700 pages with what I judged to be the most important and influential apocryphal texts, although not necessarily including only the oldest such writings. I made reference to the many subordinate and secondary apocryphal acts such as the *Acts of John in the city of Rome* or the *Acts of John* according to Prochorus. I also had knowledge of the many apocryphal apocalypses over and above those I included, which were the apocalypses of Paul, of Peter, and of Thomas.

I was all too aware that at the time the multi-volume editions by Mario Erbetta and by Luigi Moraldi included many more texts than I was willing or able to use. *The Investiture of Abbaton* found in English in the present book had previously appeared in Italian in Moraldi's and in Erbetta's collections. I knew that the various editions of the German collection of apocrypha begun by Edgar Hennecke and continued by Wilhelm Schneemelcher had also made a somewhat different selection. The first volume of the latest, seventh edition of Hennecke (-Schneemelcher), *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*—edited by Christoph Marksches and Jens Schröter and published in 2012—greatly expanded its predecessors' collection of texts relating to the gospels. The first volume alone totals 1468 pages, compared with the 442 pages of volume one of Hennecke-Schneemelcher. The editors of Hennecke-Schneemelcher decided that a new title was needed, and they came up with what they hoped would be the more accurate and inclusive *Antike christliche Apokryphen*. Its editors have restricted themselves to early texts, setting John of Damascus (d. 749 CE) as their *terminus*.

The latest French-language selection of apocryphal texts has also adopted a similar title, *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* (= EAC). These are published as two volumes in the prestige series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, an extensive multi-volume library of the classics of world literature. In them are several Christian apocrypha that have previously seldom seen the light of day, for instance the *Encomium on John the Baptist*, *On the Priesthood of Jesus*, the *Acts of Titus*, the *Epistle of Christ from Heaven* (although the latter is in de Santos Otero's and in Erbetta's collections of apocryphal books), and the *Dialogue of the Paralytic with Christ*, all of which are now to be found in English in our current book, *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures* (= MNTA). Several other collections in French are more popular in approach, some of them trying to satisfy a readership interested in the Cathars or other "fringe" movements—for example, Charles Mopsik, *Les Évangiles de l'ombre: apocryphes du Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Lieu commun, 1983) or France Quéré, *Évangiles apocryphes* (Paris: Seuil, 1983).

Some apocryphal texts that have been identified or catalogued have not yet been published. Others, again, have been discovered, recovered, or uncovered in the last few decades in libraries and monasteries or in archaeological excavations with the scholarly

world at large being exposed to them only in recent times. The *Gospel of Judas* in the Codex Tchacos was studied only this millennium; the complete *Gospel of Thomas* in Coptic with all 114 logia was found in only 1945; the *Gospel of Peter* came to light in the 1880s; previously unknown portions of the *Acts of Paul* became known to scholars in the twentieth century. It was in 1974 when François Bovon and Bernard Bouvier found Xenophontos 32, a hitherto unexamined but crucially important witness to the *Acts of Philip*. The *Discourse of the Savior* included in *MNTA* was found only in 1965.

When Is Enough Enough?

One may ask: With Erbetta, Moraldi, and now *HS*⁷ and *EAC*, do we not have enough apocrypha to satisfy scholarship? Why ask for more? Apart from a natural human curiosity to find, to assemble, and (*pace* Ecclesiastes 12:12b) to study as much as there is, the (re)quest for “more” (texts) is greeted now with a greater understanding than that exhibited by Mr. Bumble and Mr. Limbkins in Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* when Oliver begged for “more” (gruel).

Scholarly appetite for this literature has grown recently. Not only is there a learned journal, *Apocrypha*, dedicated to publishing essays on this discipline, but there is also an increased publication of critical editions, translations, and studies of this body of literature. One need look only at the growth of the compendious bibliographical listings of the annual *Bulletin de l’AELAC*, published since 1991 by the active research group, the Association pour l’étude de la littérature apocryphe chrétienne (= AELAC; the group is itself a significant symptom of the academic hunger for this work), to recognize that this is an area of great scholarly industry within theological studies. AELAC is a body of, mainly, European scholars that is encouragingly active, editing and translating as well as aiding research into the whole general area. Whereas previously such study was typically restricted to a few antiquarians, personified by the likes of M. R. James himself in the early twentieth century, nowadays we do not dub such research “recherché.” Predominantly, but certainly not exclusively, North American in membership, the Society of Biblical Literature hosts a number of significant seminars and study groups in the whole area of early Christian apocrypha, and its annual jamborees see a healthy number of younger scholars presenting their innovative work on these noncanonical texts. Some of these academics’ work bears fruit in the present book.

Much of this recent and increased interest is doubtless fueled by a healthy desire to understand the origins and growth of Christianity within the widest geographical and literary contexts. Whatever uniqueness the pious may claim for the 27 New Testament books, many apocryphal writings also acquired a literary and theological life of their own. Work on the apocrypha (to be pedantic, books that were “*apokryph geworden*”—i.e., books described later as apocryphal—to adopt a neat German description) shows that these later, oftentimes pioneering books, may indeed have a history ultimately influenced by the biblical canon (again, to speak more accurately, “writings that were to become canonical”) but that thereafter the apocryphal texts themselves went on to influence other writings, sometimes as pervasively as had the authorized Scriptures.

Unlike the British novelist Kingsley Amis who coined the tag “More means worse” (albeit originally relating to the increasing numbers of students in higher education), scholars of Christian apocrypha do not use the word “more” pejoratively. Far from it. An increased awareness of apocryphal literature in all its variety enhances our understanding of Christian history, theology, and culture. There is more still to be read. Taking Maurice

Geerdard's *Clavis Apocryphorum Novi Testamenti* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992) as a convenient register, we can look through its titles to see just how many have already been identified but have not yet been edited or published in a critical edition, let alone translated into a familiar Western language. The extensive Old and Middle Irish apocrypha are a case in point. There are several valued texts in these corpora, which only recently have been receiving the attention they deserve, in many cases thanks to Brepols's *Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum* (= CCSA), which to date has three volumes devoted to apocryphal literature in the language once called Erse. Coptic fragments of allegedly apocryphal material also, perhaps inevitably, keep emerging—not least in ongoing publication from the Oxyrhynchus hoard. Georgian and Armenian texts deserve more prominence, and it is rewarding to see one such apocryphon here in *MNTA*: the *Dialogue of the Paralytic with Christ*. Further newly edited Armenian texts are to be found in two other CCSA volumes. Those whose interests lie not only in apocryphal texts in general but in those from particular language areas are well catered for by newly edited texts: the *Acts of Cornelius the Centurion* here survives substantially in Ethiopic. The *Life of John the Baptist by Serapion* is an Arabic text; the *Revelation of the Magi* is in Syriac, as is the *History of Simon Cephas*, and as too is the version included here of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*.

More New Testament Apocrypha

This present collection, *MNTA*, is the first of a projected multi-volume series. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the editors, Tony Burke and Brent Landau. This first volume contains some thirty texts newly introduced and translated by a distinguished panel of contributors, all of whom have been active in their research on these texts. The whole scholarly enterprise has been scrupulously and carefully edited. *MNTA* shows splendid examples of how this increased number of publications can enhance our understanding. In some cases the texts here add to our repertoire of stories about New Testament worthies: Mary of Nazareth, Simon Cephas, a paralytic, Barnabas, the Good Thief, Judas, Mary Magdalene, Timothy, Cornelius, Titus, John the Baptist (about whom there are three examples here), and the Magi (the focus of two texts). As stated above, sometimes a study of the apocryphal texts is undertaken to examine the literature of a particular language group. At other times one may wish to undertake further study into a particular genre, for example apocalypses; one finds here apocalypses of John and of the Virgin Mary (now with her own tour of hell). This genre has been acquiring attention recently and further work needs to be done. The underrepresented genre of epistle writing is enhanced here by two texts written as letters. Again, more texts are required in this field of study.

At yet other times research may use reception history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) to plot how ideas, characters, storylines, or events were received by later generations of writers. Once again, this present collection helps shed new light on how key figures like Mary Magdalene or Peter were later understood. The texts here on the Magdalene and on Simon Cephas, for example, have many helpful allusions to and quotations from earlier sources such as the Pseudo-Clementine writings, the *Acts of Peter*, and, of course, the New Testament itself, which are themselves of interest. The *Hospitality of Dysmas* has fascinating textual and literary links to other Christian apocrypha, especially the *Acts of Pilate*.

The expanding, and occasional contracting of stories, such as we find in, say, the *Dysmas* apocryphon are characteristic of much apocryphal literature, partly because writers were not constrained; they felt freer to rewrite texts that were not treated as authorized Scripture. We may wish to plot theological or biographical details about stories of Mary's

early life from the *Protevangelium* through to the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* and on to the ninth-century *Nativity of Mary*, the last only recently studied in depth. Without that last writing, any investigation into the onward march of the traditions about Mary would be truncated. In those stories relating to Mary's early life there is a more realistic chance to plot the reception history and/or literary development of the stories from their origins onwards the more evidence we can draw upon. Each new text, like the *Hospitality of Dysmas*, provides us with further pieces of the jigsaw in this expanding picture.

Many a dissertation awaits the writing on the multifarious accounts of the Virgin Mary's dormition (or "transitus" or "falling asleep" or "obsequies" or "assumption") in the various ancient Christian languages and, although it seems well nigh impossible to consider there could ever be a synopsis of all the accounts or a Diatessaron-like retelling of them all in one narrative, nonetheless possible influences, recurrent concerns and teachings, may become apparent and will need careful unraveling as new texts emerge and familiar ones are reexamined.

To those whose interest may primarily be in ancient Christian art or medieval drama or poetry the study of written apocrypha may provide helpful parallels with, potential sources of, and developments from iconographic expressions. Many a fresco or stained glass may show an awareness of a story known to us in written form. The English medieval mystery plays often include tales drawn from the apocrypha, such as the so-called Harrowing of Hell, paralleling the *Descensus ad inferos*. *Saint John* by the eighteenth-century German poet Herder draws on the Story of the Partridge from *Acts of John* 56–57. Among earlier poets, Milton and Dante seem to have been influenced by apocryphal apocalypses. The Hymn of Jesus in *Acts of John* 94–95 inspired Gustav Holst's music performed at the English Three Choirs Festival in 1921. Even Hollywood failed to escape the biblical apocrypha, as evidenced by the blockbuster film *Quo Vadis? As more apocrypha are published we are likely to recognize further parallels with the creative or plastic arts, whichever way the direction of such influence be.*

Excuses for a publication like *MNTA* are unnecessary. The texts here and others awaiting future publication are apocrypha that need not and ought not remain apocryphal in the sense of "hidden away." The *richesses* within these writings, great literature though they seldom are, nevertheless need exposure.

On Writing Christian Apocrypha

It is often said that the Christian apocrypha began life with the filling-in of perceived gaps in the biblical narratives because human curiosity quite naturally wanted fuller accounts of what the founders of the faith had done and said. More complete biographies were demanded of all its heroes. Thus deeds and deaths, typically martyrdoms of the eponymous heroes, were written. Likewise, parallel tales about a church's or a region's founding fathers were concocted; later, hagiographies followed similar lines. As far as Jesus was concerned, tales about his mother's and Joseph's early life were invented; imaginative and sometimes bizarre childhood tales about Jesus were created that filled in some of his "missing" years; Jesus' three-day absence in the underworld between the crucifixion and resurrection also fueled imaginative deeds of derring-do. But not all the "silent" times in Jesus' career gave rise to imaginative retellings. For instance, very few apocrypha deal with gaps in the period of his earthly ministry, although a few agrapha and some of the logia in the *Gospel of Thomas* may best be planted in that time. By contrast, the creative writers of the apocrypha seemed strangely satisfied by the canonical Gospels' Easter stories, even though these

amount to very few events allegedly occurring during the forty days that Jesus remained on earth being gainfully occupied prior to his ascension. As far as I know, no further confessions beyond those in our canonical writings seem concerned about where Jesus went, who else observed or met him, or what other things he did in his newly acquired and transient resuscitated state, despite the tantalizing absence of a running commentary on such a unique stage in his career. However, it is still true to a great extent that expansions of the sparseness characteristic of many biblical sequences were sometimes the reasons behind later rewritings.

Jacob of Voragine's famous and popular *Golden Legend* is not an apocryphal writing as such—it is a collection of hagiographies—but many of his accounts of the lives of the saints, especially those of the disciples, the apostles, and Jesus' family, drew on stories found in Christian apocrypha. The inspiration of characters from the New Testament has also continued to fuel many a modern literary re-creation; Lazarus, the Prodigal Son, and Salome all readily come to mind, and the Christian apocrypha themselves have inspired modern stories about the descent of Jesus to the underworld, for instance. Rewritten biblical events and enhanced details about the *dramatis personae* of the New Testament are still being composed; some could perhaps be styled “modern apocrypha.” E. J. Goodspeed in 1931 collected together and discussed eight such compositions under the title *Strange New Gospels*. Further such compendia have been published of late.

On a proper literary level, many novels—some of which are surveyed by Susan Haskins (*Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor* [San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993]), Richard C. Trexler (*The Journey of the Magi: Meanings in History of a Christian Story* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997]), and Kim Paffenroth (*Judas, Images of the Lost Disciple* [Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001])—adapt stories from the New Testament, often to subvert them, although in some cases a new narrative is merely being grafted onto a biblical theme, type, or character. Anthony Swindell's *Reworking the Bible: The Literary Reception-History of Fourteen Biblical Stories* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010), appropriately published in the series *The Bible in the Modern World*, investigates many such compositions. These literary creations themselves should also not be confused with apocrypha proper.

One of the current book's co-editors, Tony Burke, published the results of a symposium held at York University in Canada in 2011 on the so-called *Secret Gospel of Mark* under the title *Ancient Gospel or Modern Forgery: The Secret Gospel of Mark in Debate* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2012). Many scholars now see this apocryphon as an elaborate and clever hoax perpetrated by Morton Smith; it is in no sense an ancient apocryphal text with anything to do with an alternative contemporary version of canonical Mark or with the historical Clement of Alexandria. Several scholars have been sidetracked by the modern forgery, but they may gain comfort that “Secret” Mark may still be called an apocryphon, albeit one composed in 1973 rather than one emerging from antiquity. In that sense the *Secret Gospel of Mark* should be treated like those writings in Goodspeed's book; all such modern forgeries are superfluous to the normal concerns of a serious academic study of Christian apocrypha.

Nevertheless, we are alert to the ongoing fascination that apocryphal stories hold for modern generations. We may even compare the insatiable lust for ancient stories about biblical and early Christian events and characters with comparable yarns inspired by twentieth-century Marian apparitions and their associated legends—the incredible examples at Fatima in Portugal readily coming to mind. We are obviously not considering such

modern confections in this book, but it is worth recalling that Christian apocryphal writings, the origins of many of which were in the earliest Christian centuries, still demand re-dressing in modern garb, just as they always have done throughout their colorful and variegated histories. An unquenchable human desire for ever more details about the past, more manifestations of allegedly divine occurrences and, indeed, more tangible supporting evidence of these phenomena could perhaps be explained by sociologists, especially sociologists of religion—and maybe particularly convincingly analyzed by psychologists—but, whatever the motives behind this relentless desire for *more* and our plotting the progression of such stories and events, we have in books like the present further exposés of previously submerged older written evidence from a gradually reducing iceberg.

Of Apocrypha There Is No End

The books in Geerard's *Clavis* belong to an ongoing stream of writings that for convenience's sake ends with the invention of printing. It is those that *MNTA* and biblical scholars concentrate on, i.e., Christian texts from the earliest centuries, through the "dark ages" and up to the Renaissance. The writing of books and articles about the seemingly endless ancient texts whose existence may hitherto have been merely noted fleetingly and tantalizingly in, say, Geerard's *Clavis* is itself also boundless. The growing number of these new publications means that, in the context of the Christian apocrypha, there is a fuller and increasingly comprehensive set of evidence on which scholars can establish a better, more rounded picture of Christian literature and history. Additional volumes of *MNTA* are promised by the present editors and we wish all power to their collective elbows as they prepare other significant but largely neglected texts to present not only to their academic peers but ultimately to a readership with a healthy appetite for such writings. The endurance of the traditions deriving from the earliest Christian apocrypha is impressive; the commendable endurance of modern scholars in editing and interpreting surviving texts facilitates a greater understanding of Christian history and theology.

J. K. ELLIOTT
The University of Leeds, U.K.
St. Thecla's Day, 2014

Preface

Collections of Christian apocrypha hold particular allure for those of us who work in the field. Our romance with this fascinating literature began by seeking out one of these indispensable tomes in search of insight about a particular text; one text led to another and before long we had fallen in love, seduced by their promise of revealing forbidden secrets. Certainly apocrypha collections are not the only resource for reading and researching these texts, but having them gathered together into one book lent them a magical quality—a canon of literature like the Bible, but not the Bible at all.

As we delved further into the literature it soon became clear that one collection alone is not enough. Because no anthology contains all the apocryphal texts known to us, and not every entry represents the best and most recent work. So, more collections are needed, in more languages, both ancient and modern. And before long our personal libraries contained a collection of collections, each one capturing the state of the art in its time and location.

As with other apocrypha collections, *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures* reflects the trends in scholarship current in its time and place. Its primary goal is to present to English readers a broad assortment of texts, much as Italian, French, and German anthologies have done before it. And its editors and most of its contributors reside in North America, and are thus influenced by approaches that are particular to American and Canadian scholarship. Multi-author apocrypha collections have appeared in English before but this is the first such initiative to come from North America. We hope that, like previous anthologies, it too will capture the hearts and minds of its readers.

Together the editors would like to thank all of our contributors for their work and for their patience in bringing this project to realization. We have learned much from reading their texts. In particular, we thank Alin Suciú, David Eastman, and Slavomír Čéplö for going above and beyond the call by reading over other contributions in the volume and offering their insights. It is an honor to have J. Keith Elliott contribute a foreword and we thank him for his willingness to be “supplemented.” Keith is one among many giants in our field who have inspired us in our work; we acknowledge particularly Walter Bauer†, François Bovon†, Bart Ehrman, Jean-Daniel Kaestli, Helmut Koester†, Christoph Marksches, Marvin Meyer†, James Robinson†, and Pierluigi Piovanelli.

This project would not have been possible without the inspiration and support of Jim Davila, co-editor of our sister publication *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*. A special thank you goes to the staff at Eerdmans including Allen Myers, Andrew Knapp, David Cottingham, Jim Chiampas, David Bratt, and Vicky Fanning. And we each thank our co-editor for putting up with us through the long process of seeing this book through to publication; any errors that remain are his fault. Now, on to volume two!

Individually, Tony acknowledges the personal and professional support of his teachers Harold Remus, Michel Desjardins, Robert Sinkewicz, Peter Richardson, and John Kloppenborg. And he has benefitted much from collaboration with members of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, the Canadian Society of Patristic Studies, the Society of Biblical Literature Christian Apocrypha Section, the North American Society for the Study of Christian Apocryphal Literature, and participants in the 2011–2015 York University Christian Apocrypha Symposium Series. Most importantly, Tony wishes to thank his wife Laura Cudworth for her unfaltering support and encouragement.

Brent is especially grateful to the late François Bovon, his *Doktorvater* and guide into all things apocryphal. He is also very grateful to the following teachers, colleagues, and friends: George W. E. Nickelsburg, Ralph Keen, Ellen Aitken†, Helmut Koester†, Karen King, Charles Kimball, Tom and Barbara Boyd, Geoff Smith, Steve Friesen, and L. Michael White. Financial support for the research necessary to complete this project was provided by Harvard Divinity School, the Religious Studies Program of the University of Oklahoma, the Department of Religious Studies of the University of Texas at Austin, and the Institution for the Study of Antiquity & Christian Origins at the University of Texas at Austin. He is most thankful to his wife, Elizabeth, and his two children, Zack and Charlie, for their love, patience, and generally for putting up with a daddy who was sometimes grumpy as this project neared completion.

Introduction

by Tony Burke and Brent Landau

In the pages that follow, the reader will learn about: a heavenly letter sent by Christ himself promising dire consequences for those who do not attend Sunday services; a luminous Jesus who appears to the Magi in the form of the Star of Bethlehem; a fearsome child Jesus who has no need of repentance, rehabilitation, or education; a Mary Magdalene who is not Jesus' love interest, but his great-aunt; the nightmarish flying severed head of John the Baptist; a Jesus who harasses incognito a paralyzed man in order to test the man's faith; one of the thieves who was crucified with Jesus meeting Jesus' family thirty years prior to his execution and showing them hospitality during their stay in Egypt; the angel Muriel and how he became Abbaton, the Angel of Death; two apocalypses that, in medieval times, were vastly more popular than the canonical Book of Revelation; and a trove of other largely forgotten tales that were written over one thousand years ago to preserve communal memories, to function as religious propaganda, to provide edification and entertainment for Christians, and yes, to serve as authoritative and inspired Scriptures.

When it comes to giving a name to the types of writings described above, specialists in this literature immediately are confronted with vexing terminological difficulties. What should we call such writings? The broadest, and perhaps fairest, approach would be to call them simply "early Christian writings." But such a neutral designation immediately demands further clarification. What *kind* of writings are these, what *genre*? Narratives, homilies, epistles, treatises? Is the *author* of each work an identifiable historical figure? Or is their authorship a pious (or possibly duplicitous) fiction, or completely anonymous and unknown? To which *generation* or *timeframe* do these writings belong—to the very beginnings of Christianity, the first few centuries, or much, much later?

So "early Christian writings" raises many more questions than it answers. May we instead define them, as has often been done, by what they are not? That is, as "writings not included in the New Testament"? Or similarly, "noncanonical writings"? No, because this presupposes that all of these writings existed at the time—if such a moment can even be ascertained—that the New Testament was being assembled as a set of authoritative writings. In fact, based upon the best current scholarly understandings of the canonization process, a great many writings in the present volume came into being long after a canonical New Testament had solidified (roughly in the fourth century). It also presumes, potentially erroneously, that those responsible for the creation of such writings uniformly desired them to be on par with the four canonical Gospels, the letters of the apostle Paul, and the like. Perhaps some authors sought such a status for their text, but it is just as likely that many of these writings were intended as supplements to the canonical New Testament (hereafter NT, for short).

Instead of "noncanonical," an even more popular descriptor for this literature is "apoc-

ryphal”—the precise valences of which we will say more about later. The term appears in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, the most venerable anthology of such writings in English. Published in 1924 by M. R. James and overhauled more than twenty years ago by J. K. Elliott,¹ who has generously written the foreword for this volume, *The Apocryphal New Testament* is one of the chief predecessors of the present work. Yet Elliott and even James himself were ambivalent about such a title, since it implies that these writings were considered for inclusion within the NT and rejected. Worse yet, it suggests that such texts constituted a sort of sinister anti–New Testament, a heretical mockery designed by enemies of Christianity. But no such conspiracy was indeed present in the production of nearly all the writings included here (save for the Jewish parody of the life of Jesus, the *Toledot Yeshu*). Not only was there no conspiracy, but there is also not a fixed number of writings that would constitute such an “apocryphal New Testament.” The existence of the present volume demonstrates that previous “apocryphal New Testaments” have not managed to exhaust the storehouse of this literature. Indeed, even if the two volumes in this series continue into three or even more, it would still be impossible to include everything produced by ancient, medieval, and modern Christians that should be regarded as apocryphal literature—a scenario anticipated by John 21:25 (“But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written”).

The term “New Testament apocrypha,” which has been adopted as the title of the present volume, at least has the advantage over “apocryphal New Testament” of less strongly implying a numerically fixed canon of writings. It also stands in continuity with the venerable Hennecke-Schneemelcher anthology, translated into English as *New Testament Apocrypha*—though the new incarnation of this anthology, spearheaded by Christoph Markschies, has opted instead for the title *Antike christliche Apokryphen* (“ancient Christian apocrypha”).² Moreover, although the title still compares this category of writings with the canonical NT, one benefit of this comparison is that it reveals that these writings are largely the same genres found in the NT: gospels, acts, epistles, and apocalypses. Yet it is dangerous to insist too strictly on a continuity of genre between the NT and these writings, since one encounters in the present collection an array of genres much broader than those found in the canon.

The designation for this literature most preferred among scholars at present is not, in fact, “New Testament apocrypha,” but “Christian apocrypha.”³ One reason for this current scholarly preference is that it is thought to be more free from an unfair and potentially anachronistic comparison to the NT writings, and it allows for broader chronological parameters and flexibility of genres. Yet even many of its proponents will admit that it is still inadequate, since it employs as part of its title a word that in common parlance is synonymous with “false” or “fictitious.” There are, however, some reasons to retain the term “apocrypha” in spite of its baggage, as we will soon see. But it is still preferable, at least as concerns the title of an anthology, to use the descriptor “New Testament” instead

1. Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924; 2nd ed. 1953); J. Keith Elliott, ed. and trans., *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993; updated paperback ed. 2005).

2. For a history of the Hennecke-Schneemelcher-Markschies anthology tradition see “Collecting Christian Apocrypha” below.

3. The program unit within the Society of Biblical Literature devoted to the study of this literature is called “Christian Apocrypha,” a designator that has been in place for more than fifteen years.

of “Christian” for these writings, both because of the former’s established usage in early collections and because it is still very unclear how much of an improvement the latter is, given its retention of the highly problematic word “apocrypha.”

Terminology

Two interrelated terms and concepts must be addressed in order to properly contextualize the writings contained in this anthology. The first of these is “apocrypha,” and the second is “canon.”⁴ We will take them in order.

Apocrypha

The term “apocrypha” has become the standard way of referring to early Christian texts that were not included in the NT of the Christian Bible. But what is the origin of this term? The Greek adjective *apokryphos* means, first and foremost, “secret” or “hidden.” This can have a positive sense, such as an authoritative teaching that has been restricted for sophisticates, or a revelation that was lost but has now been found. At least two CA texts do intend this meaning in their titles: the *Apocryphon of James* and the *Apocryphon of John*, both found among the texts of the Nag Hammadi library (though the *Apocryphon of John* is also extant in the Berlin Gnostic Codex).⁵ Furthermore, although not extant in the original Greek, the prologue of the *Gospel of Thomas* likely used the term *apokryphoi* to describe the “secret sayings” of Jesus.⁶

But these uses of *apokryphos* are not confined to texts outside of the canon, since the adjective and its cognate verb are used seven times in NT writings, all with positive connotations.⁷ Consider, for example, the use of *apokryphos* and *apokryptō* in Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, regarded by a significant majority of scholars as pseudepigraphic. In Col 1:26, Paul refers to the “word of God” (*ton logon tou theou*) as “the mystery hidden (*apokekrymmenon*) from the ages and the generations.” The theme of secret teachings or hidden wisdom is continued in Col 2:3, where Christ is said to be the one “in whom are hidden (*apokryphoi*) all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Given the valorization of esoteric understandings of Christ in this discussion, it should not be surprising that there were Christian groups in the second century that positively described their communities’ sacred texts as *apokrypha*.

Despite the positive associations for this term among some Christian groups, over time *apokryphos* took on a more negative connotation. The second-century heresiologist Irenaeus of Lyons mocks the sect of the Marcosians for using a number of “apocryphal and spurious writings” (*apokryphōn kai nothōn graphōn*), among them a story about the child Jesus learning the alphabet found also in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (*Haer.* 1.20.1). Similarly, Tertullian uses the Latin terms *apocrypha* and *falsa* interchangeably in *Pud.* 10.12 to

4. For both of these terms, the “General Introduction” by Wilhelm Schneemelcher (in Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha* [trans. from the corrected 6th ed. of *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* by Robert McLachlan Wilson; 2 vols.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1991–1992]), 1:9–75) remains helpful.

5. See the introductions to and translations of these texts in Marvin Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2007), 19–30 and 103–32.

6. See the reconstruction by Harold W. Attridge, “The Gospel According to Thomas. Appendix: The Greek Fragments,” in *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7* (ed. Bentley Layton; 2 vols.; NHS 20; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 1:95–128 at 113.

7. Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17; 10:21; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 3:9; Col 1:26; 2:3.

criticize those who would regard the *Shepherd of Hermas* as an authoritative book. The fact that Tertullian refers to *Hermas*, usually numbered among the “Apostolic Fathers,”⁸ as an apocryphal book is noteworthy and indicates that the precise contours of the category of what came to be called apocrypha were rather uncertain in antiquity, as they are today. But it was the fourth-century champion of orthodoxy, Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, who was responsible for drawing the line between apocryphal and canonical writings most sharply. In his 39th Festal Letter for the year 367, Athanasius not only advances for the first recorded time the same 27-book NT canon used by most Christian communities today, but he also characterizes the “apocrypha” as writings that are entirely the recent product of heretics wishing to ascribe some ancient origin to their ideas.⁹ It is apparently due to the efforts of such polemicists that when the term “apocryphal” first appears in English literature in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it has the clear meaning, “[o]f doubtful authenticity; spurious, fictitious, false; fabulous, mythical.”¹⁰

Despite this modern connotation of “apocryphal,” most specialists intend the term “Christian apocrypha” as a neutral designation for a particular body of ancient Christian texts. In his popular introduction to this literature, Tony Burke describes the category as follows:

The term ‘Christian Apocrypha’ designates non-biblical Christian literature that features tales of Jesus, his family and his immediate followers. They are similar in content and genre to texts included in the New Testament; the essential difference is that they were not selected for inclusion in the Bible, either because those who decided on the Bible’s contents did not approve of them, or because they were composed after the time of this selection process.¹¹

Notice, however, that Burke does not specify chronological parameters for this literature. The question of a timeframe for the CA has been controversial among specialists, and by using the title “New Testament Apocrypha” for the present collection of writings, the co-editors have taken a definite position on this issue. Wilhelm Schneemelcher had proposed restricting the category of the CA to writings produced in the first three centuries of Christianity; writings produced thereafter about NT figures are better understood as hagiography (that is, accounts of the life and miracles of saints or other ecclesiastical figures). Schneemelcher argues that this is not an arbitrary cut-off; rather, “As is clear from our survey of the history of the canon, it makes a considerable difference whether a work of this kind originated before or after the middle of the 4th century.”¹² This is because, he contends, that “[w]hether the canon included twenty-two or twenty-six or twenty-seven books, all that is important here is the fact that a firmly closed collection of recognised texts, invested with the highest authority, now existed everywhere.”¹³

8. For the most recent discussion of the origins of this term, see David Lincicum, “The Paratextual Invention of the Term ‘Apostolic Fathers,’” *JTS* 66 (2015): 139–48.

9. See the translation of the relevant section of his letter in Schneemelcher, “General Introduction,” 49–50.

10. “apocryphal, adj. and n.,” *OED Online*, released March 2015, <http://www.oed.com/>.

11. Tony Burke, *Secret Scriptures Revealed: A New Introduction to the Christian Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans; London: SPCK, 2013), 6.

12. Schneemelcher, “General Introduction,” 54.

13. Schneemelcher, “General Introduction,” 57.

Although Schneemelcher exaggerates when he says that a “firmly closed collection . . . existed everywhere,” he is certainly correct to notice that it is in the fourth century that there arises a more widespread concept of a fixed number of texts constituting the NT. Nevertheless, the co-editors side with Éric Junod in this debate,¹⁴ preferring to leave the chronological parameters for the production of the CA completely open, given that CA are still being produced today. Many of the writings in the present volume were indeed produced after the fourth century, which would theoretically disqualify them as CA by Schneemelcher’s standards. Yet it is not necessarily the case that, on the whole, CA define themselves in relationship to a fixed canon. A few seem to perceive themselves as replacing canonical writings, others as complementing them. Many others, however, do not articulate any sort of relationship with the canon, positively or negatively. Although we cannot, at present, dispense with describing the CA with some degree of juxtaposition to the writings of the NT, it does not seem obvious to us that the fourth-century development of a fixed canon had the sort of clear and definitive effect on the production of CA that Schneemelcher supposes it did.

Canon

Although the use of the term “canon” to describe a fixed group of Christian writings only occurs for the first time in the fourth century, a move toward privileging certain works above others certainly arose prior to this time. It will be helpful, however, to describe briefly the etymology of the term “canon” and how it came to mean what it did,¹⁵ before addressing the more complicated issue of the relationship between the formation of the NT canon and the CA.

The Greek word *kanōn* is apparently a loanword from the Hebrew *qāneh*, meaning “reed.” Although it originally meant a kind of measuring stick, over time it took on the meaning of a fixed standard. For example, 4 Macc 7:21 speaks of living one’s life by the rule (*kanona*) of philosophy, and Epictetus (*Diatr.* II.11.24) claims that philosophy is simply the investigating and establishing of standards (*kanones*). Most of the uses of the term in early Christian literature are in keeping with this idea of a normative rule. This is not, of course, necessarily the same as having a firmly fixed group of writings, but one can certainly see how the idea of the former might have contributed to a desire for the latter. However, an additional usage of *kanōn* that may have been relevant is the notion of a list, chart, or table. This is what Eusebius uses to describe his set of tables for the Synoptic Gospels, and it was used also to describe astrological or chronological data in a non-Christian context. Presumably, we should not think of either the “rule” or the “list” meaning of *kanōn* as being exclusively determinative for its eventual use in Christian discourse about the shape of the biblical canon. At any rate, it was not until the fourth-century Council of Laodicea and its directives about “noncanonical books” (*akanonista biblia*) not being permitted to be read in church that we find this terminology deployed to denote the idea of books being inside or outside of the Bible.¹⁶

14. See his “Apocryphes du NT ou Apocryphes chrétiens anciens,” *ETR* 58 (1983): 408–21. For an overview of the subsequent debate over redefining the category see Péter Tóth, “Way Out of the Tunnel? Three Hundred Years of Research on the Apocrypha: A Preliminary Approach,” in *Retelling the Bible: Literary, Historical and Social Contexts* (ed. Lucie Dolezalová and Tamás Visi; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 45–84 at 74–80.

15. This brief overview follows Schneemelcher, “General Introduction,” 10–13.

16. Cited in Schneemelcher, “General Introduction,” 10. Text in Erwin Preuschen, *Analecta: Kürzere*

When discussing the formation of the NT canon in the context of the CA, five inter-related observations are key. First, our knowledge of the process by which the form of the NT became fixed has significant gaps, and in many cases we can only make an educated guess about why a given CA text was not included in the NT canon. Second, however, only a few CA texts should be regarded as being of comparable age as the most prominent of the writings found in the NT—that is, the letters of Paul and the four canonical Gospels (plus Acts)—so it is unwise to posit an overarching conspiracy that unfairly removed the CA from inclusion in the NT. Third, there is regional and temporal variation in what constituted canonical writings: the situation in Rome in the fourth century was not the same as that of Syria in the third, or that of Alexandria in the fifth, etc. Fourth, many ancient Christian discussions of the canon do not simply say which texts are in and which are out, but instead operate with a third category, in which appear texts whose canonicity is in dispute or that are suitable for private but not public reading. Fifth, although the influence of the canonical writings on the formation of Christian beliefs and practices is no doubt enormous, the persistent roles that CA text played in this development as well must not be overlooked.

First of all, there is much we simply do not know about how the NT canon came together. We cannot provide here a thorough presentation of the chief textual witnesses for the canonization process; let it suffice to say that there are a number of sources (for example, the Muratorian Canon or the *Decretum Gelasianum*) that provide a snapshot of what a given group of Christians in a certain place at a certain time thought should be inside and outside of the canon. However, even these fragments rarely give us any information about *why* a writing was accepted or rejected. For the apocryphal gospels that have been the subject of the most scholarly attention, such as the *Gospel of Thomas* or the *Gospel of Peter*, we have nothing like a series of deliberations about whether a writing should be included or not. In the case of the *Gospel of Peter*, we do have a very interesting piece of correspondence (preserved by Eusebius in *Hist. eccl.* 6.12) from around the year 200 between Serapion, the bishop of Antioch, and a church at Rhossus that was experiencing divisions over the status of this text. But this data point is highly puzzling in a number of respects: Serapion says that he has never read the *Gospel of Peter*, nevertheless, he is comfortable with the community reading it; when problems arose, Serapion did not perceive there to be objectionable characteristics in the text itself, but in the faith of those who were reading it; and Serapion's concluding verdict seems to be that the *Gospel of Peter* was unproblematic with the exception of a few passages that he points out, perhaps thereby allowing the community to continue to read it. In the case of the *Gospel of Thomas*, its rejection was due in part probably to its use by groups that were scorned by proto-orthodox branches of the church. But the Gospels of John and Luke were both favorites of "heretics," and yet this did not ultimately lead to their rejection. Why the *Gospel of Thomas* suffered this fate, we simply do not know.

Second, even if we cannot be certain why a writing like the *Gospel of Thomas* was rejected, it would be highly inaccurate to say that the canonization process was on the whole a bald power-play by the proto-orthodox church to include and exclude texts based on the church's positions on Christology, doctrine, community organization, and so forth. When we look carefully at the writings that appear to have been the most authoritative and the

Texte zur Geschichte der alten Kirche und des Kanons (2 vols.; 2nd ed.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1909–1910), 2:70.

least disputed in canon lists, we find the letters of the apostle Paul and, quite often, the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In other words, we find most of the very earliest Christian compositions. No Christian writings earlier than Paul's letters have survived or are even known to have existed. Similarly, with the exception of the Q document used by Matthew and Luke, there is remarkably little evidence of any other gospels as ancient as those that would be included in the NT canon. The *Gospel of Thomas* may well be very old; it is possible that the lost gospel preserved in Papyrus Egerton 2 is early as well, though its fragmentary nature precludes definitive statements. The *Gospel of Peter* and several of the Jewish Christian Gospels (though not the *Gospel of the Hebrews*) are best understood as harmonizations of the early second century, even if they do, on occasion, preserve very archaic traditions not found in the canonical writings. In the case of the infancy gospels, the earliest of which probably came into being prior to 150, virtually all of their materials are best understood as creative expansions upon the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke—instances like the *Protevangelium of James's* possibly independent tradition of a cave as the birthplace of Jesus are exceptions that prove the rule. Thus, the impression created by popular treatments of early Christianity, like Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*, that the gospels and other core writings of the NT were chosen over a multitude of equally early CA simply does not comport with what we know about the earliest of the Christian writings.

Regarding the third point, about the diversity of canons by place and time in ancient Christianity, there is an incorrect impression in nonspecialist circles that there was a single definitive moment, generally identified as the Council of Nicea in 325, when the church as a whole “decided” what would be in its Bible. But some variety in church canons persisted beyond the fourth century. This variety is illustrated particularly well by the Syriac-speaking branch of the ancient Christian church. Well into the fifth century, the standard format in which the Gospels appeared in Syriac was the *Diatessaron*, a gospel harmony that blended the four canonical Gospels with additional extracanonical traditions. Moreover, the pseudepigraphic Pauline epistle embedded within the *Acts of Paul*, commonly known as 3 *Corinthians*, was regarded as authoritative by patristic writers like Ephrem and Aphrahat. Finally, Revelation was, as in other Eastern Christian communities, not accepted in the Syriac church until much later than in the West.¹⁷ All of these features of the canon in Syriac Christianity are found *after* Athanasius's famous festal letter of 367 CE. Clearly, the letter did not lead automatically to the adoption of a standard twenty-seven-book New Testament throughout the ancient Christian church. Even in the West, the Muratorian Canon, which is perhaps a fourth-century Roman product,¹⁸ demonstrates that apart from the four Gospels and the Pauline corpus, the periphery of the Western canon was somewhat fuzzy—texts that would later become securely canonical or apocryphal mingled at the edges. Also, it is important to recognize that Athanasius is not simply passing on a previous tradition, but is instead actively striving to impose his vision of a sharp binary between canonical and apocryphal upon an Egyptian Christianity that in many places still regarded Athanasius's category of the “apocryphal” to contain many valuable

17. For an overview, see Sebastian Brock, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2006).

18. On recent reevaluations of the origins of the Muratorian Fragment see Geoffrey Mark Hahneman, “The Muratorian Fragment and the Origins of the New Testament Canon,” in *The Canon Debate* (ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 405–15.

writings.¹⁹ Indeed, it has sometimes been suggested that the Nag Hammadi writings were placed in jars and buried, perhaps by a community of monks, in order to protect them from Athanasius's push for a definitive canon.²⁰ This effort, however, was not entirely successful, as Christian communities for centuries thereafter continued to advance different canon lists. The Armenian Church, for example, included *3 Corinthians* and the *Rest of John* (a portion of the Greek *Acts of John*) in their biblical manuscripts, and the thirty-five-book Ethiopic canon still in use today includes the *Book of the Rolls*, the *Didascalia*, and several church orders. Consider also the modifications to the canon advocated by Martin Luther, who acquiesced to tradition by including the Epistle of James in his translation of the Bible, but nevertheless refused to grant it page numbers in the first edition.²¹

A fourth point of importance concerning the canon in antiquity is that Athanasius is somewhat unusual in his attempt to create a binary division between those texts that are clearly in and those that are out. In many of our ancient sources for the history of the canon, we frequently see a tripartite division consisting of texts that are "accepted" (*homologoumena*), texts that are "false," "forged," or "spurious" (*notha* or *pseudē*), and a third category of texts that are "disputed" (*antilegomena* or *amphiballomena*, meaning that some communities approve of their use and some do not). These disputed texts are sometimes said to be allowable for private but not public reading, or are "useful for the soul" (*psychophelē*), or some other description that does not permit an easy classification as canonical or apocryphal.²² In this third category appear writings that would later be regarded as canonical, as apocryphal, or as something else entirely. Depending on which canon list is consulted, considered disputed are the Epistle of James, Jude, 2 Peter, Revelation, *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Acts of Paul*, and the *Apocalypse of Peter*, as well as the *Wisdom of Solomon*, categorized today among the apocrypha of the Old Testament. Thus, while Athanasius may have attempted to draw the line between canonical and apocryphal quite sharply, and much of later Christian tradition followed his lead, the situation was far more fluid than this for many early Christians. In fact, even Athanasius himself concedes that the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Didache* can be read privately by newcomers to the faith, undermining his sharp distinction between canonical and apocryphal.

Fifth and finally, in part because of this continuum between universal acceptance and almost complete rejection of writings, it is important to recognize that the designation of a given text in antiquity as apocryphal did not immediately relegate it to the dustbin of history. In numerous instances, an apocryphal writing has had a far greater impact on the development of Christian tradition—narratives, doctrines, art, music, and so forth—than many writings contained in the Bible. To provide one such example of an extremely impressive reception history, consider the second-century infancy gospel known as the *Protevangelium of James*, which tells of Mary's life from her childhood up through the birth of Jesus. In contrast to apocryphal texts that are extant in a single fragmentary manuscript, the *Protevangelium of James* is preserved in over 150 Greek manuscripts, to say nothing

19. On this, see most recently David Brakke, "A New Fragment of Athanasius's Thirty-Ninth *Festal Letter*: Heresy, Apocrypha, and the Canon," *HTR* 103 (2010): 47–66.

20. This theory is recounted, and challenged, in Nicola Denzey Lewis and Justine Ariel Blount, "Rethinking the Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *JBL* 133, no. 2 (2014): 399–419.

21. See Albert Maichle, *Der Kanon der biblischen Bücher und das Konzil von Trient* (Freiburg: Herder, 1929), 6–7.

22. See François Bovon, "Beyond the Canonical and the Apocryphal Books, the Presence of a Third Category: The Books Useful for the Soul," *HTR* 105 (2012): 125–37.

of its attestation in other ancient languages. Such a remarkably rich manuscript record greatly undermines any suggestion that Christians did not pay attention to this text because it was not in the biblical canon. The contributions of the *Protevangelium of James* to the development of Mariology are very well known, as this text provides the names of Mary's parents, the idea of Joseph as an older widower, and an early articulation of the concept of Mary's perpetual virginity. But the influence of another, often-overlooked element may indeed be even more impressive: the *Protevangelium of James* is the first text to depict Mary as traveling to Bethlehem riding on a donkey, with Joseph walking alongside of it. The early history of this element's reception has not yet been entirely clarified, but it has become an absolutely unquestioned part of the visual representation of the Christmas story. A Christmas card, storybook, children's pageant, motion picture, or any other medium containing a depiction of the Holy Family's journey to Bethlehem would appear quite strange without the presence of the *Protevangelium of James's* donkey.

Collecting Christian Apocrypha

The writing of noncanonical Christian texts began, as with canonical Christian texts, in the first century, though at the time no distinction was made between the two categories of literature. The separation originated late in the second century when Christians established their own collections of Scripture distinct from Jewish Scripture. Marcion, often credited with creating the first Christian-only Scripture collection, is said to have considered only the Gospel of Luke and ten of the letters of Paul (all edited to cohere with Marcion's theology)²³ to be authoritative, though there is evidence that his later followers also valued Matthew and two additional (perhaps falsely attributed) letters of Paul: one to the Laodiceans and one to the Alexandrians. To Marcionite Christians, all other texts would have been considered "apocryphal." Writers in the proto-orthodox tradition favored a more expansive collection, with four gospels, fourteen letters of Paul, and Acts. Opinion differed over other texts, with some championing letters by other apostles (1 and 2 Peter, 1–3 John, James, and Jude), apocalypses (Revelation and the *Apocalypse of Peter*), and other texts (the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Acts of Paul*, 1 and 2 *Clement*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*) in a variety of combinations. Some of these combinations are particularly puzzling. Does the presence of 1 and 2 Peter and Jude along with the *Protevangelium of James*, 3 *Corinthians*, and a portion of the *Odes of Solomon* in Papyrus Bodmer V indicate an elevation of these apocryphal texts to canonical status or a devaluation of the epistles? Are the placements of *Hermas* and the *Epistle of Barnabas* at the end of Codex Sinaiticus and 1–2 *Clement* and the *Psalms of Solomon* at the end of Codex Alexandrinus indicative that they were valued on par with the rest of these collections or are they meant to be understood as appendices?

Several additional early texts achieved a similar esteem, despite ecclesiastical efforts to discourage their circulation. For example, the *Protevangelium of James* and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, both in circulation by the latter half of the second century, were widely copied and translated into numerous languages. So valued were these texts that many later writers expanded them with the addition of other texts or traditions (as with the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, the *Arabic Infancy Gospel*, and the Syriac Life of Mary collections),

23. Note, however, that the conventional wisdom that Marcion "mutilated" Luke's Gospel recently has been subject to increasing scrutiny. See Jason BeDuhn, *The First New Testament: Marcion's Scriptural Canon* (Salem, Ore.: Polebridge, 2013) and Dieter Roth, *The Text of Marcion's Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

or reused them in homilies,²⁴ or drew upon them as authoritative resources to craft new texts, such as the *Life of John the Baptist* attributed to Serapion. Similarly, the earliest apocryphal acts circulated widely, though for the most part in condensed forms, shorn of the apostles' teachings and much of the activities that precede their martyrdoms; and, like the second-century infancy gospels, the apocryphal acts were used in the creation of other accounts of the apostles, such as the Syriac *History of Simon Cephas*, which combines portions of the *Acts of Peter*, the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognition*, and the *Preaching of Simon Cephas in the City of Rome*. Perhaps all of these esteemed early texts could be considered part of another middle category between canonical and noncanonical—something akin to hagiography—or perhaps they demonstrate that the boundary between scripture and apocrypha was more porous than the creators of the various canon lists suggest.

Formal declarations of the shape of the canon seem to have done little to stop the creation of new apocrypha. Coptic Christians in post-Chalcedonian Egypt created a genre of literature known today as “pseudo-apostolic memoirs.”²⁵ These feature tales of various early Christian figures in texts that, the authors claim, were hidden away in a house or library in Jerusalem until they were rediscovered by illustrious fourth-century homilists—though these attributions too are fictions. The *Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, the *Investiture of Abbaton*, and the encomia on John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene are all examples of this literature. Alin Suciú believes they were written to create a distinct identity for Coptic Christianity; indeed, many of them institute festivals for particular saints or angels and promise rewards for their proper worship. Similar motives lie behind a number of late-antique Greek and Latin apocrypha, such as the *Acts of Cornelius* and the *Acts of Barnabas*, composed, at least in part, to provide warrant for the acceptance of saints' relics in local churches. Other late-antique texts, such as the *Apocalypse of the Virgin* or the *Epistle of Christ from Heaven*, were written to regulate behavior, and whenever tragedy affected the church, new apocalypses, like the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, appeared to address the anxiety of the times. Despite church officials' calls to avoid, even destroy, apocryphal texts, sometimes churches created their own apocrypha when it served their interests. It is unlikely that any of the writers of these texts expected their work to be added to their church's canon, though such a development would not be impossible; changes to the canon were made over the centuries, including the late addition of Revelation to the Greek canon and the occasional inclusion of the *Epistle to the Laodiceans* in Vulgate manuscripts,²⁶ and many of these apocryphal texts did enjoy a popularity that, at times, surpassed that of canonical works.

The value placed on apocryphal texts is evident also in efforts made to compile the

24. See the homilies on the Passion attributed to Eusebius of Alexandria surveyed in John A. McCulloch, *The Harrowing of Hell: A Comparative Study of an Early Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1930), 174–91; and the use of an early translation of *Prot. Jas.* in Latin homilies discussed in Jean-Daniel Kaestli, “Le Protévangile de Jacques latin dans l'homélie: Inquirendum est pour la fête de la Nativité de Marie,” *Apocrypha* 11 (2001): 99–153.

25. The texts that conform to this genre are described by Alin Suciú in “Apocryphon Berolinense/Argentoratense (Previously Known as the Gospel of the Savior). Reedition of P. Berol. 22220, Strasbourg Copte 5–7 and Qasr el-Wizz Codex ff. 12v–17r with Introduction and Commentary” (PhD diss., Université Laval, 2013), esp. 75–91. See also the introduction to Suciú's entry on *B-S Ap.* in this volume.

26. The manuscript sources (more than 100 in all) are provided in Samuel Berger, *Histoire de la Vulgate pendant les premiers siècles du Moyen-Age* (Nancy, 1893) and summarized in Irena D. Backus, “Renaissance Attitudes towards New Testament Apocrypha. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and His Epigones,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998): 1169–97 at 1172–73.

material; such compendia circulated long before the era of printed apocrypha collections. For example, the Nag Hammadi codices and other books of “gnostic” texts—the Coptic Bruce, Askew, Berlin, and Tchachos codices—testify to collectors’ interests in assembling noncanonical texts, as does Codex Panopolitanus from Akhmim (collecting portions of the *Gospel of Peter*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, 1 *Enoch*, and some Psalms), and numerous miscellanies created in monastic contexts that contain various combinations of apocryphal and hagiographical texts. Efforts were made also to collect texts with generic, not just thematic, affinities. The five great apocryphal acts were circulated as a group by Manicheans as early as the fifth century, and Latin apocryphal acts of the entire college of apostles (save for Judas) were combined around the sixth century to form the ten-volume collection *Virtutes apostolorum* attributed to Abdias of Babylon, said to be one of the seventy-two disciples mentioned in Luke 10:1.²⁷ Christians in Egypt could read a similar collection of texts—which includes not only apocryphal acts but also the *Letter of Pseudo-Dionysius on the Deaths of Peter and Paul*—in Arabic and Ethiopic.²⁸ Gospels also were brought together in collections. Latin infancy gospels, such as the various iterations of the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, are found alongside the *Gospel of Nicodemus* in many manuscripts, thus forming an apocryphal Life of Jesus.²⁹ Similarly, Syriac Life of Mary collections use the *Protevangelium of James* and the *Dormition of Mary* as book-ends to additional apocryphal traditions, including the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and the *Vision of Theophilus*.³⁰ Sometimes canonical and noncanonical stories were combined into sprawling gospels, such as the Arabic *Apocryphal Gospel of John* and its Ethiopic translation, the *Miracles of Jesus*, the latter of which was employed in Ethiopic liturgy.³¹ Apocryphal traditions were assembled also to provide material for liturgical readings of the saints in *menologia* and *synaxaria* and for popular lives of saints collections such as Jacob of Voragine’s *The Golden Legend*.³² Each of these examples illustrate, once again, that Christians continued to value certain noncanonical texts and traditions long after their church leaders declared them “apocryphal.” Indeed, some of these combinations of texts may have been regarded as supplementary volumes to be read and appreciated alongside the canonical writings.

27. For recent work on the collection see the essays collected in Els Rose, ed., *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles in Latin Christianity: Proceedings of the First International Summer School on Christian Apocryphal Literature (ISCAL), Strasbourg, 24–27 June 2012* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

28. The Arabic and Ethiopic witnesses are numerous (over fifty in total). The most recent edition of the Ethiopic collection is that of Ernest A. W. Budge, *The Contendings of the Apostles* (2 vols.; London: Henry Frowde, 1899–1901; repr. Amsterdam: APA Philo, 1976); for the Arabic see Agnes Smith Lewis, *Acta Mythologica Apostolorum* and *The Mythological Acts of the Apostles* (*Horae Semiticae* 3–4; London: Clay, 1904). French translations of select chapters (on Matthew, Bartholomew, Luke, and James the Less) can be found in *EAC* 2:867–978.

29. Zbigniew Izydorczyk’s *Manuscripts of the Evangelium Nicodemi: A Census* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993) lists seventy-one manuscripts containing *Gos. Nic.* with an account of Jesus’ childhood (whether *Ps.-Mt.*, the Latin version of *Inf. Gos. Thom.*, or an unidentified text).

30. Some of these Life of Mary collections are found in Syriac manuscripts as early as the fifth century. For a comprehensive overview of the available evidence see Tony Burke, “The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* from an Unpublished Syriac Manuscript. Introduction, Text, Translation, and Notes,” *Hugoye* 16, no. 2 (2013): 225–99, at 232–37; and the entry on *Inf. Gos. Thom.* in this volume.

31. On the liturgical use of the text see Witold Witakowski, “The Miracles of Jesus: An Ethiopian Apocryphal Gospel,” *Apocrypha* 6 (1995): 279–98 at 280–81.

32. For a detailed discussion of the use of apocryphal texts and traditions in the *Golden Legend* see Rémi Gounelle, “Sens et usage d’*apocryphus* dans la Légende dorée,” *Apocrypha* 5 (1994): 189–210.

As the age of manuscript production merged into the era of printing, apocryphal texts began to be published in *incunabula*—early printed books that bear some of the characteristics of handwritten manuscripts. Some of the more popular texts—such as the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, and the *Life of Judas*—appear in *incunabula* of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, demonstrating the continued attraction these texts held for Christian laity and, at the same time, providing scholars today with print copies of otherwise-lost manuscripts.³³ One of the first “rediscovered” apocryphal texts from the East, the *Protevangelium of James*, was first published as an *incunabula* in 1552.³⁴ The edition, published by Theodore Bibliander, features a translation of the text into Latin made by Guillaume Postel along with the Gospel of Mark and other materials. The goal of the publisher was to demonstrate that the text was the lost introduction to Mark; such arguments for the historical value of newly found apocrypha often attended their publication, as did contrary arguments that maintained the superiority of the canonical texts over the noncanonical. Other apocryphal texts soon appeared, though published somewhat sporadically, utilizing whatever manuscripts each editor happened to have at hand.³⁵ The most significant of these are the *incunabula* of the *Virtutes apostolorum*, the first published in 1531 by Friedrich Nausea,³⁶ and the small collection included in the second and third editions of Michael Neander’s Latin translation of Martin Luther’s *Shorter Catechism*. By its third edition in 1567, Neander’s collection had grown to encompass the *Protevangelium of James* (this time in Greek), the Abgar Correspondence, several Letters of Pilate, and a series of Sybilline books.³⁷ Not long after, the Bollandists in Belgium began to systematically collect lives of saints and apply to them the scholarly techniques that were being applied to classical works.³⁸ The first volume of their *Acta Sanctorum*, featuring saints commemorated in January, appeared in 1643. The initial twelve volumes include a number of medieval lives of early Christian

33. As yet no systematic study has been made of CA in early printed books, though there has been some discussion of *incunabula* of the three texts listed here. In addition, Backus (“Renaissance Attitudes,” 1181–82) mentions a 1514 edition of *Ep. Lao.* and *Ep. Paul Sen.* printed along with Paul’s canonical epistles.

34. Guillaume Postel, *Protevangelion, de seu de natalibus Iesu Christi et ipsius matris Virginis Mariae sermo historicus divi Iacobi Minoris. Evangelica historia quam scripsit B. Marcus. Vita Marie evangelistae collecta per Theodorum Bibliandrum* (Basel: Ioannis Oporini, 1552).

35. The early history of scholarship on the CA is a growing area of interest in the field. See particularly Justin Champion, “Apocrypha, Canon and Criticism from Samuel Fisher to John Toland, 1650–1718,” in *Judaean-Christian Intellectual Culture in the Seventeenth Century: A Celebration of the Library of Narcissus Marsh (1638–1713)* (ed. Allison P. Coudert et al.; Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999), 91–117; and works by Irena D. Backus, including the monograph *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of Reformation (1378–1615)* (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 94; Leiden: Brill, 2003); also helpful is Tóth, “Way Out of the Tunnel?”

36. Friedrich Nausea, *Anonymi Philalethi Eusebiani in vitas, miracula passionisque Apostolorum Rhapsodiae* (Cologne: Peter Quentel, 1531).

37. Michael Neander, *Catechesis Martini Lutheri parva, Graecolatina, postremum recognita* (3rd ed.; Basel: Ioannis Oporini, 1567). For detailed discussion of Neander’s editions see Irena D. Backus, “Les apocryphes néo-testamentaires et la pédagogie luthérienne des XVI^e-XVII^e siècles: les recueils de Michael Neander (1564, 1567) et Nicolas Glaser (1614),” in *Apocryphité. Histoire d’un concept transversal aux religions du livre. En hommage à Pierre Geoltrain* (ed. Simon Claude Mimouni; Bibliothèque de l’École des Hautes Études. Sciences religieuses 113; Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 263–76; eadem, “Early Christianity in Michael Neander’s Greek-Latin Edition of Luther’s *Catechism*,” in *History of Scholarship. A Selection of Papers from the Seminar on the History of Scholarship Held Annually at the Warburg Institute* (ed. Christopher Ligota and Jean-Louis Quantin; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 197–230.

38. For a brief history of the Bollandists see David Knowles, *Great Historical Enterprises. Problems in Monastic History* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1963), 1–32.

figures, including the *Acts of Barnabas* and the *Acts of Timothy*. And to our benefit, the Bollandists continue to revise and supplement the collection.

The same urge to compile and examine nonbiblical Christian texts gave birth to the first substantial scholarly CA collection: *Codex apocryphus Novi Testamenti* by the celebrated bibliographer Johann Albert Fabricius, published in three volumes between 1703 and 1719.³⁹ Fabricius's collection was valuable, and remains so, because it compiles much of what had appeared before his day, including the manuscripts published in *incunabula*, along with a comprehensive range of ancient testimonies, and liturgies under the names of apostles, all accompanied by extensive commentary. The material is arranged intentionally as a mirror of the New Testament canon: separated into gospels, acts, letters, and apocalypses. This strategy was often imitated in subsequent collections, thus forming, in a sense, a canon of New Testament apocrypha.⁴⁰ Like other scholars of his day, Fabricius was far from dispassionate about the subject of his collection; indeed, his dislike for the CA, and the Catholic traditions reflected in them, is captured in the subtitle to his volumes, translated as "[texts] collected, castigated, and illustrated with testimonials, censures and critical notices."

Fabricius's collection quickly became established as the standard resource for the CA and remained so for over a century. All of the first modern-language compilations are translations of the texts collected by Fabricius, including the English translations presented in Jeremiah Jones's *A New and Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament* (1726),⁴¹ the French collection by Voltaire and Simon Bigex published in 1769,⁴² and the 1832 German volume prepared by J. G. Bartholmä.⁴³ Additional texts and manuscripts of texts became known, but aside from a supplement by Andreas Birch in 1804,⁴⁴ no effort was made to supplant Fabricius until 1832, with the first (and only) volume of Johann Karl Thilo's *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*.⁴⁵ Thilo's plans for subsequent volumes is not known, but the first, focusing on apocryphal gospels, trimmed down the material from Fabricius by focusing on the texts Thilo believed to be most important; he also endeavored to carefully compare and adjudicate between readings from newly

39. Johann A. Fabricius, *Codex apocryphus Novi Testamenti: Collectus, Castigatus, Testimoniisque, Censuris & Animadversionibus illustratus* (3 vols.; rev. ed.; Hamburg: Schiller & Kisner, 1719). The first volume appeared in 1703 and the second followed in 1719, along with a revision of the first and a third volume containing corrections and supplements.

40. Fabricius's other well-known collection, *Codex pseudepigraphus Veteris Testamenti, collectus castigatus testimoniisque, censuris et animadversionibus illustratus* (Hamburg & Leipzig: Sumptu Christiani Liebezeit, 1713) is credited with doing much the same for Old Testament pseudepigrapha. For an evaluation of the author's impact on the field see Annette Yoshiko Reed, "The Modern Invention of 'Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,'" *JTS* 60, no. 2 (2009): 403–36. The separation of apocryphal texts between Old Testament pseudepigrapha and New Testament apocrypha began with Fabricius's volumes, though some Christian-authored pseudepigrapha occasionally appear in CA volumes.

41. Jeremiah Jones, *A New and Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament* (2 vols.; Printed for J. Clark and R. Hett at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry near Cheapside, 1726); a third volume was added in 1727. Jones's translations were later used in the often-reprinted volume by William Hone: *The Apocryphal New Testament* (London: Printed for William Hone, 1820).

42. Voltaire and Simon Bigex, *Collection d'anciens Évangiles, ou monuments du premier siècle du christianisme, extraits de Fabricius, Grabius et autres savants* (Amsterdam: M. M. Rey, 1769).

43. Johann Georg Bartholmä, *Die Apogryphen (sic) des neuen Testamentes* (Dinkelsbühl: Walther, 1832).

44. Andreas Birch, *Auctarium Codicis apocryphi Novi Testamenti Fabriciani* (Copenhagen: Arntzen et Hartier, 1804).

45. Johann Karl Thilo, *Codex apocryphus Novi Testamenti* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1832).

published sources rather than simply reprint earlier editions based on single manuscripts. Thilo's gospels became the basis for a new string of vernacular collections: in English by John Allen Giles,⁴⁶ in French by Jacques-Paul Migne and Pierre Gustave Brunet,⁴⁷ and in German by Richard Clemens and Karl Friedrich Borberg.⁴⁸

Thilo's introduction of philological principles to the study of the Christian apocrypha was continued and refined by Constantin Tischendorf, well known as a hunter of biblical manuscripts, in particular the Codex Sinaiticus, which he acquired from St. Catherine's monastery in the Sinai. Tischendorf also found manuscripts of apocryphal texts in his travels and several of these were used in his three volumes of texts, one each on gospels (*Evangelia Apocrypha*), acts (*Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*), and apocalypses (*Apocalypses Apocryphae*).⁴⁹ Tischendorf's collection of apocryphal gospels replaced Thilo as the standard resource for scholars seeking to work with CA in their original languages. Even today, some of Tischendorf's texts have yet to be supplanted by new editions.

But anyone in Tischendorf's day seeking CA in ancient languages other than Greek and Latin had to look elsewhere. Texts extant in oriental languages—such as Syriac, Arabic, and Coptic—became available to scholars as early as the seventeenth century with Henry Sike's edition of the *Arabic Infancy Gospel*,⁵⁰ but the publication of oriental manuscripts accelerated in the nineteenth century, first with Paul de Lagarde's 1861 edition of an early Syriac manuscript of the *Pseudo-Clementines*. Soon after, three collections of Syriac texts appeared, all based primarily on manuscripts from the British Library: William Cureton's *Ancient Syriac Documents Relative to the Earliest Establishment of Christianity in Edessa*, published posthumously in 1864; and William Wright's two publications: *Contributions to the Apocryphal Literature of the New Testament* in 1865, focusing on gospels, and his two-volume *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* in 1871.⁵¹ Additional texts appeared in Paul Bedjan's seven volumes of Syriac martyrologies, including the *History of Simon Cephas, the Chief of the Apostles*, published between 1890 and 1897;⁵² and the so-called sisters of Sinai, Agnes Smith and Margaret Gibson, published their acquisitions and discoveries in several volumes of Syriac and Arabic texts between 1902 and 1904.⁵³ A few decades later,

46. John Allen Giles, *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti: The Uncanonical Gospels and other Writings referring to the first ages of Christianity in the original languages: collected together from the editions of Fabricius, Thilo and others* (2 vols.; London: D. Nutt, 1852).

47. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Dictionnaire des Apocryphes ou, Collection de tous les livres apocryphes relatifs à l'Ancien et au Nouveau Testament* (2 vols.; Paris: Ateliers catholiques, 1856–1858); Pierre Gustave Brunet, *Les Évangiles apocryphes. Traduits et annotés d'après l'édition de J. C. Thilo* (Paris: A. L. Herold, 1848).

48. Richard Clemens, *Die geheimgehaltenen oder sogenannten Apokryphen Evangelien* (Stuttgart: J. Scheible, 1850); Karl Friedrich Borberg, *Bibliothek der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen, gesammelt, übersetzt, und erläutert* (Stuttgart: Literatur-Comptoir, 1841).

49. Constantin Tischendorf, ed., *Evangelia Apocrypha* (Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1853; 2nd ed. 1876); idem, *Acta apostolorum apocrypha* (Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1851); idem, *Apocalypses apocryphae* (Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1866).

50. Henry Sike, *Evangelium Infantiae; vel, Liber Apocryphus de Infantia Salvatoris; ex manuscripto editid, ac Latina versione et notis illustravit Henricus Sike* (Trajecti ad Rhenum: Halman, 1697).

51. William Wright, ed., *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: Edited from Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum and Other Libraries* (2 vols.; London: Williams & Norgate, 1871); idem, *Contributions to the Apocryphal Literature of the New Testament* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1865); William Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents Relative to the Earliest Establishment of Christianity in Edessa and the Neighbouring Countries* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1864).

52. Paul Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* (7 vols.; Paris: Otto Harrassowitz, 1890–1897).

53. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *Apocrypha Sinaitica* (Studia Sinaitica 5; Cambridge: C. J. Clay & Sons,

Alphonse Mingana published a number of Arabic (Garšūnī) texts in the series *Woodbrooke Studies*.⁵⁴ As for Coptic, pages from manuscripts produced at the White Monastery were published at the turn of the century by Oscar von Lemm,⁵⁵ Pierre Lacau,⁵⁶ Eugène Revillout,⁵⁷ and Forbes Robinson.⁵⁸ At first some of these pages were believed to derive from apocryphal gospels, but recent efforts to reunite the pages has revealed that many of the texts are pseudo-apostolic memoirs, such as the *Encomium on John the Baptist*. Additional Coptic texts, including the *Investiture of Abbaton* and the *Mysteries of John*, appeared in three collections assembled by E. A. W. Budge between 1913 and 1915.⁵⁹

Translators of CA were slow to integrate the oriental texts and manuscripts into modern-language collections. Paul Peeters is a notable exception. He worked with Charles Michel on a two-volume CA collection in 1911 and 1914,⁶⁰ contributing translations of Coptic, Arabic, and Armenian texts, including the lengthy *Armenian Infancy Gospel* published by Esayi Tayets'i in 1898.⁶¹ Also noteworthy is the expansive assortment of translations combined as volume 8 of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, containing republished material from the Ante-Nicene Christian Library—Alexander Walker's 1873 volume of *Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, and Revelations*, the *Pseudo-Clementines*⁶²—along with some Jewish pseudepigrapha and Cureton's Syriac texts.⁶³ Most collections in translation, however, remained focused on Greek and Latin sources, except for those texts extant only in other

1896); eadem, *Apocrypha arabica* (Studia Sinaitica 8; Cambridge: C. J. Clay & Sons, 1901); Agnes Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae* (Studia Sinaitica 11; Cambridge: C. J. Clay & Sons, 1902); eadem, *Acta mythologica apostolorum/The Mythological Acts of the Apostles* (Hœrae Semiticae 3–4; Cambridge: C. J. Clay & Sons, 1904). For a popular account of these women's work, see Janet Soskice, *The Sisters of Sinai: How Two Lady Adventurers Discovered the Hidden Gospels* (New York: Vintage, 2009).

54. Alphonse Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies: Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic, and Garshuni* (7 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927–1934). The first three volumes of the series include the *Life of John the Baptist* by Serapion, the *Vision of Theophilus*, the *Book of the Rolls* (under the title "Apocalypse of Peter"), the *Lament of Mary*, and the *Martyrdom of Pilate*.

55. Oscar von Lemm, "Koptische apocryphe Apostelakten 1," *Bulletin de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences* 33 (1890): 509–81; idem, "Koptische apocryphe Apostelakten 2," *Bulletin de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences* 35 (1892): 233–326.

56. Pierre Lacau, *Fragments d'apocryphes coptes* (Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 9; Cairo: Imprimerie de l'IFAO, 1904).

57. Eugène Revillout, *Apocryphes coptes du Nouveau Testament* (Études Égyptologiques 7; Paris: F. Vieweg, 1876); idem, *Les apocryphes coptes. Première partie: Les Évangiles des douze apôtres et de Saint Barthélemy* (PO 2/2; Paris: Firmin Didot, 1904).

58. Forbes Robinson, *Coptic Apocryphal Gospels. Translations Together with the Texts of Some of Them* (TS 4.2; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896).

59. Ernest A. W. Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (Coptic Texts 3; London: Oxford University Press, 1913); idem, *Coptic Martyrdoms in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (2 vols.; Coptic Texts 4; London: Oxford University Press, 1914); and idem, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (Coptic Texts 5; London: Oxford University Press, 1915).

60. Charles Michel and Paul Peeters, eds., *Évangiles apocryphes* (Textes et documents pour l'étude historique du Christianisme 13 and 18; Paris: Librairie Alphonse Picard & Fils, 1911–1914).

61. Esayi Tayets'i, *Ankanon girik' Nor Ktkaranats'* (T'angaran haykakan hin ew nor dprtu'eants' 2; Venice: S. Ghazar, 1898).

62. Alexander Walker, *Apocryphal Gospels, Acts and Revelations* (The Ante-Nicene Christian Library 16; Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1873); Thomas Smith, Peter Peterson, and John Donaldson, *The Clementine Homilies* (The Ante-Nicene Christian Library 17; Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1870).

63. Arthur Cleveland Coxe, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 8 (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886).

languages (e.g., the *History of Joseph the Carpenter*, the *Epistula Apostolorum*, and the *Book of Bartholomew*) or for texts preserved better in oriental manuscripts (e.g., the Ethiopic version of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and portions of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* available at that time only in Syriac).

The same neglect affected a number of late-antique texts in Greek. As the CA collections narrowed their focus to texts of the first three centuries, it became difficult for newly published texts to find a place in the emerging apocryphal “canon.” The materials in Athanasius Vasiliev’s *Anecdota graeco-byzantina* (the *Decapitation of John the Forerunner*, a *Dialogue between Jesus and the Devil*, and manuscripts of the *Legend of Aphroditianus*, the *Epistle of Christ from Heaven*, the *Apocalypse of the Virgin*, and others)⁶⁴ and the first volume of M. R. James’s *Anecdota Apocrypha* (with the *Life and Conduct of Xanthippe and Polyxena*, the *Apocalypse of the Virgin*, a *Description of the Anti-Christ in Latin*, and others),⁶⁵ both published in 1893, rarely make an appearance in subsequent apocrypha collections. Also largely disregarded are the three volumes of Jacques-Paul Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca* that feature Simeon Metaphrastes’s lives of the saints (the *Acts of Cornelius* among them; see PG 114–16) and a smattering of texts included in the companion series *Patrologia Latina* (e.g., the *Discovery of John the Baptist’s Head* in PL 67). After the nineteenth century, wide-ranging collections of apocrypha in their original languages became exceedingly rare. Except for the update of Tischendorf’s volume of apocryphal acts by Richard Adelbert Lipsius and Maximilien Bonnet (*Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, published 1891–1903),⁶⁶ there have been few efforts to supplant and expand the great collections; instead scholars have slowly replaced these early authorities with new editions of individual texts.

Modern-language CA collections were plentiful in the twentieth century, with editions in Afrikaans, Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Norwegian, and Spanish.⁶⁷ Three of these became so influential that they established publishing legacies that continue to today. The first is Edgar Hennecke’s *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* and accompanying *Handbuch* in 1904.⁶⁸ The collection follows the earlier convention of including the Apostolic Fathers and some Christian-authored pseudepigrapha (5 and 6 *Ezra*), but innovates with the delegation of texts or subgenres of texts to individual scholars. The second edition in 1924⁶⁹ updates and combines the two 1904 volumes into one, while the third, in 1959/1964 (edited with Wilhelm Schneemelcher),⁷⁰ narrows its focus to just the CA, a template continued for the revised fifth edition of 1987/1989 (edited by Schneemelcher alone).⁷¹ Hennecke’s pio-

64. Athanasius Vasiliev, *Anecdota graeco-byzantina, pars prior* (Moscow: Imperial University, 1893).

65. Montague Rhodes James, *Apocrypha Anecdota: A Collection of Thirteen Apocryphal Books and Fragments Now First Edited from Manuscripts* (TS 2.3; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893). The texts in the second collection (*Apocrypha Anecdota. Second Series* [TS 5.1; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897]) have received more attention.

66. Richard A. Lipsius and Maximilien Bonnet, eds., *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* (3 vols. in 2; Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1891–1903).

67. For more information on the collections not discussed below see the bibliographical references in ANT, xx.

68. Edgar Hennecke, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* and *Handbuch zu Neutestamentlichen apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1904).

69. Edgar Hennecke, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1924).

70. Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* (3rd ed.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959–1964); English trans.: *New Testament Apocrypha* (trans. Robert McLachlan Wilson; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1963–1966).

71. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* (5th ed.; 2 vols.;

neering work is so esteemed among German scholars that the major revision currently in progress by Christoph Marksches and Jens Schröter is nicknamed the “new Hennecke.”⁷² In England M. R. James worked alone on his collection, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, published in 1924 and again in 1953 with a small update.⁷³ The volume features the texts that have become standard but notably also includes descriptions of several Coptic, Armenian, and Ethiopic texts, along with discussions of a number of later apocryphal acts (including the *Virtutes apostolorum*), and a handful of medieval and modern apocrypha. Much of this abbreviated material was omitted in the “new James” edited by J. K. Elliott in 1993,⁷⁴ but the descriptions of later apocryphal acts remained, and a few newly discovered texts from the Nag Hammadi library were added. By Elliott’s time, however, the English translations of Hennecke-Schneemelcher had become the standard resource even among English-language scholars. Spanish readers encountered the texts first in a three-volume collection of gospels by Edmundo González-Blanco in 1934⁷⁵ and, beginning in 1956, in successive editions of Aurelio de Santos Otero’s bilingual (Greek and Latin texts with Spanish translations) *Los Evangelios Apócrifos*, which has yet to be superseded.⁷⁶ Two other bilingual editions appeared in the first half of the century, one in French (by Michel and Peeters, mentioned above) and one in Italian (Giuseppe Bonaccorsi’s *Vangeli apocrifi* from 1948)⁷⁷ but neither of these attained the levels of success enjoyed by the German, English, and Spanish scholarly traditions.

By the 1960s the Hennecke-Schneemelcher selection of texts had become entrenched; unfortunately, as noted above, the progressive narrowing of the corpus brought with it a rather narrow definition of “Christian apocrypha.” In the introduction to the 1959 edition, Schneemelcher characterized the CA as texts that “lay claim to be in the same class with the writings of the canon, and which from the point of view of Form Criticism further develop and mould the kinds of style created and received in the NT, whilst foreign elements certainly intrude.”⁷⁸ But the number of texts that could be considered for inclusion kept increasing, resulting in a challenge to Schneemelcher’s definition. A number of Irish apocrypha began to see publication in the 1920s; much of it was collected and translated into English for Máire Herbert and Martin McNamara’s 1989 compilation of *Irish Biblical Apocrypha*,⁷⁹ which includes, among other works, excerpts from two miscellanies: the *Liber Flavus* and the *Leabhar Breac*. Georgian versions of the apocryphal acts were collected by Korneli Kekeliže in 1959.⁸⁰ And Aurelio de Santos Otero drew Western scholars’ attention to the large body of Slavonic apocrypha in a two-volume study pub-

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987–1989); English trans.: *New Testament Apocrypha* (trans. from the corrected 6th ed. by Robert McLachlan Wilson; 2 vols.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1991–1992).

72. Christoph Marksches and Jens Schröter, eds., *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

73. James, *Apocryphal New Testament*.

74. Elliott, ed. and trans., *Apocryphal New Testament*.

75. Edmundo González-Blanco, ed., *Los Evangelios Apócrifos* (3 vols.; Madrid: Bergua, 1934).

76. Aurelio de Santos Otero, ed., *Los Evangelios Apócrifos: Colección de textos griegos y latinos, versión crítica, estudios introductorios y comentarios* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Christianos, 1956¹, 2006¹³).

77. Giuseppe Bonaccorsi, ed., *Vangeli apocrifi* (Florence: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1948).

78. Schneemelcher, “General Introduction,” 59.

79. Máire Herbert and Martin McNamara, *Irish Biblical Apocrypha: Selected Texts in Translation* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1989).

80. Korneli Kekeliže, ed., *Kartuli versiebi apokripebisa mocikulta sesaxeb: IX–XI ss. xelnacerta mixedvit. Teksti gamosacemad moamzada, gamokvleva da leksikoni daurto* (“Georgian Versions of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles”; Tbilisi: Sakartvelos SSR mecnierbata akademiis gamomcemloba, 1959).

lished in 1978 and 1981.⁸¹ Unfortunately, de Santos Otero did not include texts and translations in his study and very few of these texts have since been published. The biggest change in the field came with the publication of the Coptic texts from Nag Hammadi, which began to appear in 1956, with a complete collection published by James Robinson in 1977.⁸² Within the thirteen codices can be found fourteen apocryphal Christian texts, including a complete copy of the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Philip*, and the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles*.

Two Italian scholars fully integrated these new developments into their expansive CA collections. Mario Erbetta's four volumes, published between 1966 and 1981,⁸³ incorporated the recently published texts from Nag Hammadi and other gnostic texts, such as the *Pistis Sophia*, along with a wide range of infancy gospels and Dormition traditions, and some rarely seen apocalypses (the *Investiture of Abbaton* and the apocryphal apocalypses of John) and epistles (the medieval letters of the Virgin Mary). Luigi Moraldi's 1971 collection is notable particularly for its broad assortment of apocryphal acts, including the entire *Virtutes apostolorum* corpus.⁸⁴ The broad scope of the Italian compendia gave rise to the debate by Junod, Picard, Rordorf, and others about redefining and relabeling the literature.⁸⁵ Out of this discussion came the creation of a scholarly organization, the Association pour l'étude de la littérature apocryphe chrétienne (AELAC), with a mandate to create a French collection of texts with a scope similar to those of their Italian colleagues. The group specifically sought to broaden the CA corpus to include texts composed after the fourth century and texts written by Christians that focus on Old Testament figures and events. The principle is reflected in the title of their two-volume collection *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* (published in 1997 and 2005) and in its contents, which feature the standard early texts along with later, rarely seen material (e.g., *On the Priesthood of Jesus*, the *Book of the Rooster*, and the *Martyrdom of Luke*), and Christian-authored Pseudepigrapha (e.g., *Lives of the Prophets*, 5 *Ezra*).⁸⁶ The AELAC is responsible also for a series of critical editions (Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum) focusing on individual texts (such as the *Acts of John* and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*) and also collections of texts in lesser-studied languages: to date the series has included compendia on texts in Armenian, in two volumes by Louis Leloir,⁸⁷ and Irish, in multiple volumes published in association with the Irish Biblical Association and edited, once again, by Martin McNamara.⁸⁸

Despite the AELAC's call for the examination of texts written after the fourth century, the group has stopped short of including modern apocrypha, such as Nicolas Notovitch's

81. Aurelio de Santos Otero, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung der altslavischen Apokryphen* (2 vols.; PTS 20 and 23; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978–1981).

82. James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977).

83. Mario Erbetta, ed. and trans., *Gli Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento* (3 vols. in 4; Turin: Marietti, 1966–1981).

84. Luigi Moraldi, ed. and trans., *Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento* (2 vols.; Classici delle Religioni 24.5; Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1971; 2nd ed. in 3 vols. 1994).

85. Summarized in Tóth, "Way Out of the Tunnel?" 74–80.

86. François Bovon, Pierre Geoltrain, and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, eds., *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* (2 vols.; Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 442 and 516; Paris: Gallimard, 1997–2005).

87. Louis Leloir, *Acta Apostolorum Armeniaca: Écrits apocryphes sur les apôtres: Traduction de l'édition arménienne de Venise* (2 vols.; CCSA 3–4; Turnhout: Brepols, 1986 and 1992).

88. Martin McNamara et al., eds., *Apocrypha Hiberniae. Part 1: Evangelia infantiae* (2 vols.; CCSA 13–14; Turnhout: Brepols, 2001); John Carey, *Apocrypha Hiberniae. Part 2, vol. 1: In Tenga Bithnua—The Ever-New Tongue* (CCSA 16; Turnhout: Brepols, 2009). Two volumes of apocalypses are currently in production.

Unknown Life of Christ and the *Letter of Benan*, in their projects. Many of these texts are surveyed in Edgar J. Goodspeed's *Strange New Gospels* published in 1931 and later expanded as *Modern Apocrypha and Famous "Biblical" Hoaxes* in 1956.⁸⁹ A larger group of texts was covered by Per Beskow in 1983 and recently revisited in a 2011 essay.⁹⁰ Neither Goodspeed nor Beskow had much sympathy for the material; Goodspeed, for example, said they were of "baseless character," were "dredged up from obscure depths mostly beyond the ken of educated people," and he only examined them to show that they were not "genuine documents of Christian antiquity." But in 2005 one prominent AELAC member, Pierluigi Piovaneli, called for expanding CA collections to include modern texts.⁹¹ So far the only person who has been willing to take up this challenge is Laurie Maffly-Kipp who published a collection of *American Scriptures* in 2010,⁹² which includes selections from the *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, the *Archko Volume*, the *Book of Mormon*, and others. Examined objectively, there really is little difference between the modern texts and those produced at other times in history. They all claim to be written either by an esteemed early Christian figure or their disciple, they all draw upon canonical Christian Scripture (variously reinterpreting and augmenting it), and they all seek to speak to contemporary situations in ways that canonical texts do not. All of these texts are worthy of study as reflections of the interests, beliefs, practices, and knowledge of their time—whether that time is ancient history, the recent past, or even today.

With the resurgence of interest in the CA occasioned by Dan Brown's bestselling novel *The Da Vinci Code* and the rediscovery of the *Gospel of Judas*, publishers rushed to satisfy the public's curiosity with new CA collections, though most of these take little account of current discussion of what constitutes "Christian apocrypha." The best of these is Bart Ehrman and Zlatko Pleše's *Apocryphal Gospels* from 2011—one of the few collections in ancient and modern languages to appear in a century, and the first ever in English.⁹³ It combines the standard infancy and ministry gospels with a number of "gnostic" texts (the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Gospel of Judas*), and a broad selection of texts from the Pilate Cycle. But even this edition focuses only on early texts, the ones most useful for understanding pre-Constantinian Christianity. The Italian and French collections, and now the "new Hennecke" by Marksches and Schröter, have left Schneemelcher's definition far behind, advocating for the examination of noncanonical texts for their own sake as valid and fascinating expressions of Christian belief and not merely as texts that aid in

89. Edgar J. Goodspeed, *Strange New Gospels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931); idem, *Modern Apocrypha and Famous "Biblical" Hoaxes* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1956).

90. Per Beskow, *Strange Tales about Jesus: A Survey of Unfamiliar Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); idem, "Modern Mystifications of Jesus," in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (ed. Delbert Burkett; London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 458–74.

91. Pierluigi Piovaneli, "What Is a Christian Apocryphal Text and How Does It Work? Some Observations on Apocryphal Hermeneutics," *Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift* 59 (2005): 31–40.

92. Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, *American Scriptures: An Anthology of Sacred Writings* (New York: Penguin, 2010).

93. Bart D. Ehrman and Zlatko Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Other bilingual editions have appeared but these are much less comprehensive, focusing only on infancy gospels (e.g., Gerhard Schneider, *Evangelia infantiae apocrypha—Apokryphe Kindheitsevangelien* [Fontes christiani 18; Freiburg: Herder, 1995]) and fragmentary texts (e.g., Dieter Lührmann and Egbert Schlarb, *Fragmente apokrypher gewordener Evangelien in griechischer und lateinischer Sprache* [Marburg: Elwert, 2000]; Andrew E. Bernhard, *Other Early Christian Gospels: A Critical Edition of the Surviving Greek Manuscripts* [London: T.&T. Clark, 2007]).

understanding the origins of the New Testament. The same spirit has guided the creation of *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*.⁹⁴

This Collection

The present collection is related to and was inspired by our sister project *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures (MOTP)* edited by Richard Bauckham, Jim Davila, and Alexander Panayotov. The first volume of *MOTP* was published in November 2013; a second is set to appear in the next few years. The *MOTP* volumes are intended to be a supplement to the highly regarded collection of pseudepigrapha assembled by James H. Charlesworth in the 1980s. Bauckham, Davila, and Panayotov saw a need to publish additional texts and manuscripts of texts not included in Charlesworth but, recognizing the enduring value of Charlesworth's volumes, the editors decided it was better to create a supplement to Charlesworth, rather than a replacement. They opted also not to include texts that are sufficiently and more appropriately covered in other English collections, such as the texts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Nag Hammadi library. *MNTA* plays a similar role for the CA, supplementing the most recent comprehensive collection of the texts in English: J. K. Elliott's *The Apocryphal New Testament*, published in 1993. The title, *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, was chosen to illustrate both its relationship to Elliott's collection (as well as a nod to the Hennecke-Schneemelcher tradition) and to *MOTP*. Some readers may think the title was chosen in ignorance or defiance of the current trend in the field that advocates studying apocryphal Christian texts for their own sake, not for what can be learned from them about the origins and development of canonical texts. Clearly this is not the case, as many of the texts included in this collection were composed long after those in the New Testament, and one of the reasons for the creation of the *MNTA* series was to bring attention to texts that have been neglected by scholars because they have little bearing on the study of early Christianity. The chosen title also is more recognizable to a wide readership, a benefit recognized by Elliott when considering candidates for his own collection. After noting such alternatives as "Early Non-Canonical Christian Writings" and "Christian Apocrypha," Elliott concluded, "most readers turning to a book with this title are usually aware of the sort of literature they expect to find within its covers. Having become a conventional title it is now difficult to substitute for it another that would be more accurate yet still be recognized for what it is."⁹⁵

The texts featured in this volume, and future volumes in the series, were chosen based on the following criteria.

First, *ANT* was conceived as an update to the 1924 compilation by James; thus Elliott added a few texts that had been published in the intervening decades, though he chose to include only two of the Christian texts from the Nag Hammadi library (the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Apocryphon of James*) since these texts were already widely available in other compilations. *MNTA* follows in the James-Elliott tradition by including texts not available to Elliott—specifically, the fragment P. Oxy. 5072 (published in 2011), the *Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon* (first published as the *Gospel of the Savior* in 1999), and the *Dance of the Savior* and *Discourse of the Savior* from Qasr el-Wizz (published in 2006). The remaining texts in the volume have been available to scholars for a considerable amount of time.

94. The creation and scope of the project are described in the preview article by Tony Burke, "More Christian Apocrypha," *BSR* 41, no. 3 (2012): 16–21.

95. *ANT*, xii.

Second, Elliott's collection, like many other CA compilations, focuses primarily on texts believed to have been composed in the first three centuries. Some later texts do appear in his volume—the *Letter of Lentulus*, the *Epistle to the Laodiceans*, several apocalypses, some *Dormition* texts (relegated to an appendix), and descriptions or excerpts of later apocryphal acts and texts from the Pilate Cycle—but, despite Elliott's assertion that his collection “does not limit itself exclusively to early writings,” on the whole, it does, but perhaps more for pragmatic concerns: to limit the collection to a single volume.⁹⁶ *MNTA* is less restricted. Currently, a second volume of *MNTA* is in development, and additional volumes are in consideration. The number of texts that could be included is staggering—Maurice Geerard's 1992 *Clavis (CANT)* alone lists 346 texts, and there are more besides, particularly if one includes modern apocrypha, such as the *Unknown Life of Christ* and the *Archko Volume*. It seemed prudent, therefore, to adopt a temporal limit for the series. The *MOTP* editors settled on a time of composition before the rise of Islam in the seventh century, though with a few exceptions. Roughly the same limit has been followed for the *MNTA* series; a few texts push that boundary—such as the (*Latin*) *Revelation of John about Antichrist* (composed, likely, no earlier than the tenth century)—but are included for their intrinsic value and in awareness of the difficulties of dating texts known for their tendency to be altered, sometimes considerably, in the course of their transmission.

Third, the *MNTA* series appears at a time in scholarship when CA collections in other modern languages are less bound by the generic categories of texts within the canon. The most recent Italian, French, and German compendia surveyed above feature a much broader variety of texts, including dialogues, martyrdoms, Christian-authored pseudepigrapha, and apocryphal traditions embedded in other literature, such as chronicles and homilies. Apocrypha extant in lesser-known languages, such as Armenian and Georgian, are also incorporated. *MNTA* similarly casts its net wide, incorporating selections from medieval apocalypses, tales of relic invention, free-floating stories, patristic references to apostles, recycled apocryphal acts, and the growing corpus of Coptic pseudo-apostolic memoirs. Though the *MNTA* volumes follow Elliott in arranging the texts into the broad categories of gospels, epistles, acts, and apocalypses, it is with the awareness that some texts ill-fit these categories and that the boundaries between the genres are somewhat porous—for example, the *Encomium on Mary Magdalene* is placed within gospel texts, since it narrates some events from the life of Jesus, but it also has affinities with apocryphal acts (since it focuses on the life and mission of a prominent early Christian figure), and with apocalypses, since it concludes with a revelation discourse from an angel. Similarly, the *Letter of Pseudo-Dionysius* is placed among the epistles but it reports events surrounding the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul, events typically related in apocryphal acts.

Fourth, a number of texts in this first volume have appeared previously in English translation but needed to be reexamined in light of new manuscript discoveries and new trends in scholarship. This is particularly the case with the *Life of John the Baptist* by Serapion, which was published almost a century ago on the basis of two manuscripts; the new translation draws upon a significantly broader manuscript base and the accompanying introduction is the first significant discussion of the text. Another text, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* appears in Elliott's volume, but not in its Syriac form; indeed the Syriac version of the text, believed to be very important for the establishment of the gospel's original form, has not been sufficiently utilized in any CA collection since its *editio princeps* in 1865. An-

96. Elliott discusses his motivations in organizing the volume in his introduction to *ANT*, ix-x.

other curious entry in the volume is the Aramaic fragment of the *Toledot Yesu*, a Jewish satire of Christian gospel literature. The *Toledot Yesu* rarely appears in CA collections but it certainly fits the definition (stories about Jesus and his contemporaries that are not officially part of the canon of the Western church) and, in some of its versions, incorporates traditions found in Christian-penned apocrypha, such as the story of Jesus animating the birds from the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and several other texts. The *MOTP* collection features several Christian-authored Jewish pseudepigrapha; it is fitting, therefore, for *MNTA* to include an apocryphon about Jesus composed and transmitted by Jews.

And finally, many CA texts are not included in the collection because they are readily available in recently published English translations. The Christian texts from Nag Hammadi, for example, can be read in the update of Robinson's Nag Hammadi library collection edited by Marvin Meyer.⁹⁷ The lengthy *Armenian Infancy Gospel*, published in a critical edition in 1898 and translated into French in 1914, finally appeared in English translation less than a decade ago;⁹⁸ and Ps.-Cyril of Jerusalem's *On the Life and the Passion of Christ*, another pseudo-apostolic memoir, debuted in a critical edition by Roelof van den Broek in 2014.⁹⁹ The only exception to this rule is the *Revelation of the Magi*, which was published in a popular market translation by Brent Landau in 2010;¹⁰⁰ however, the entry included in this volume features only a summary of the text, and the introduction includes additional details about the text more appropriate for a scholarly reader.

Importance of This Collection

Generally speaking, the CA are of value in several different respects. In the case of the earliest apocryphal gospels, they provide us with otherwise-unknown traditions about Jesus, as well as materials also found in the canonical Gospels, but perhaps preserved in a more archaic form in the CA. But the number of CA texts that can be reasonably dated as contemporaneous with the NT writings is extremely small; thus, if the CA are to be considered of interest, it must be primarily on the basis of other considerations. Indeed, there are numerous reasons for regarding the CA as valuable for specialists in the field of ancient Christianity and other academic areas, as well as for interested general readers. In what follows, we will refer both to well-known CA texts as well as to those texts from this volume that are much less familiar to most readers.

First and foremost, the CA provide insight into the diversity of ancient Christian beliefs about Jesus Christ, God, humanity, religious diversity, salvation, repentance, martyrdom, and a host of other theological considerations. If we, for the sake of space, restrict our examples to Christology,¹⁰¹ the *Gospel of Thomas* promotes the view that Jesus' significance is not primarily (if at all) in his death, but in his saving words, which the reader of the gospel must interpret. The *Acts of John*, the *Acts of Peter*, and the *Revelation of the Magi* all depict Jesus as being capable of altering his appearance at will, an ability that scholars

97. Meyer, ed., *Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.

98. Abraham Terian, *The Armenian Gospel of the Infancy with Three Early Versions of the Protevangelium of James* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

99. Roelof van den Broek, *Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem, On the Life and the Passion of Christ. A Coptic Apocryphon* (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 118; Leiden: Brill, 2013).

100. Brent C. Landau, *Revelation of the Magi: The Lost Tale of the Wise Men's Journey to Bethlehem* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2010).

101. For a helpful overview of this topic, see Einar Thomassen, "Jesus in the New Testament Apocrypha," in *Alternative Christs* (ed. Olav Hammer; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 33–50.

term “polymorphy.”¹⁰² The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* imagines a child Jesus who does not hesitate to maim or kill those who fail to show him proper reverence, going far beyond instances of Jesus’ anger in the canonical Gospels. The *Dialogue of the Paralytic with Christ* features a similarly cold-blooded Jesus who, in disguise, relentlessly mocks a paralyzed man for his misfortune before finally restoring him to health. All of these emphases found in the CA have some analogues with incidents reported in the canonical Gospels, but there they are somewhat muted. In the case of the many apocryphal gospels written after the canonical Gospels, it is possible to view such depictions of Jesus as instances where a later writer “walked through a door” that was “opened” by one of the earliest narratives about Jesus.

A second reason for the significance of this literature dovetails with this notion of the canonical Gospels as an “opened door.” The CA are extremely valuable witnesses to the practice of biblical interpretation by ancient Christians. No less than the commentaries on biblical books produced by patristic writers, the CA demonstrate a desire to know more about events that the NT writings mention only in passing. For example, in Romans 15 Paul expresses a desire to travel to Spain after he delivers his collection to Jerusalem; no NT source indicates whether Paul fulfilled this desire, but the ending of Acts would seem to imply that he did not. Yet the idea of Paul reaching the farthest western part of the inhabited world was too tempting a scenario for the author of the *Life and Conduct of Xanthippe and Polyxena* to pass up. As another instance of biblical interpretation, the infancy narrative of Luke’s Gospel implies that Jesus has Levitical ancestry through his mother Mary. *On the Priesthood of Jesus* takes this data and spins it into a fascinating story of Jesus’ election to the Jerusalem priesthood that the Jews conspired to hide. Also taking a page from Luke’s infancy narrative, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* builds upon the intriguing story of Jesus as a twelve-year-old prodigy in the temple to imagine what Jesus would have been like if he was truly a divine being throughout his entire childhood. Finally, infancy gospels like the *Legend of Aphroditianus* and the *Revelation of the Magi* demonstrate how intriguing Matthew’s brief and laconic story of the mysterious foreigners who visited the child Jesus was for Christian exegetes.

A third significance of the CA is that they are creative literary products in their own right. Despite the fact that an overwhelming percentage of CA texts are dependent upon NT writings, many of them are remarkably imaginative nonetheless. The *Dialogue of the Paralytic with Christ* and the *Revelation of the Magi* have been mentioned already, but these two narratives should be noted again here for their bold and surprising narrative innovations. The *Legend of the Thirty Silver Pieces* develops an elaborate backstory in which the money that Judas received for betraying Jesus passed through the hands of many other important biblical figures. The *Hospitality of Dysmas* explains how the “good thief” from Luke’s passion narrative came to the aid of Jesus’ family during their sojourn in Egypt long before the crucifixion. The *Investiture of Abbaton* describes how the angel Muriel was the sole angel who did not shrink at the name of God and played an essential role in the creation of humanity; as a result, God appointed him as the Angel of Death (Abbaton), who protects the dead from the clutches of the devil. Although not a Christian composition, the *Toledot Yeshu* creates an “anti-narrative” of Jesus’ life that draws on elements from the canonical Gospels and apocryphal traditions but repurposes them to present Jesus as a nefarious false prophet.

102. For the best discussion of this christological development, see Paul Foster, “Polymorphic Christology: Its Origins and Development in Early Christianity,” *JTS* 58 (2007): 66–99.

Fourth, the CA go beyond simply fashioning new narratives or new interpretations of details found in the NT. Instead, they both create and reflect new doctrines and ideas that develop in Christian thought. In terms of more familiar CA texts, the *Protevangelium of James* is a very noteworthy instance of such innovation, with its immense contributions to the early development of Mariology. Also, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which was considered an authoritative book by numerous early Christian communities, provides us with the first detailed “tour of hell,” in which sinners are subject to all manner of awful tortures. This notion of hell as a place of eternal torment is very difficult to find in canonical writings, but it evolves into the standard Christian teaching about hell, informing such later works as Dante’s *Inferno*. Regarding the texts found in the present collection, the *Epistle of Christ from Heaven* presents a communiqué from Christ himself enjoining Christians to attend church on Sundays. More study would be needed to see whether this inspires or attests to the notion of “holy days of obligation”—mandatory times, including every Sunday, when the faithful must be present; nevertheless, such an idea is not found in the earliest Christian writings, and its official articulation may be relatively late. Combining these elements, the *Apocalypse of the Virgin* envisions sinners burning in hell for sleeping in instead of attending Sunday services.

Fifth and finally, the CA do function as “history,” insofar as many of them give us valuable information about historical events. Whether the apocryphal gospels and the apocryphal acts tell us much of anything reliable about the historical Jesus or the first apostles is very unlikely, to be sure. Nevertheless, we are sometimes able to triangulate the CA with other historical data to determine to what events a given writing was responding. The *Life of John the Baptist* by Serapion and the *Life and Martyrdom of John the Baptist* both provide information about the circumstances under which the relics associated with John the Baptist came to light in mid-fifth-century Syria. The *Acts of Titus*, which describes the role played by Titus in the foundation of the Christian community on Crete, is itself a production of Cretan Christianity and reflects the ecclesiastical structure and historical circumstances of this community during the fifth to seventh centuries. But CA texts do not only reflect history; in some cases, they also help to create it. The *Revelation of the Magi* describes a community of Christians living at the furthest reaches of the inhabited earth, and this text was one of several that early explorers of the Americas drew on to make sense of the civilizations they discovered in the “new world.”

Thus far we have described the importance of the CA in general, both familiar and unfamiliar writings. But there are several ways in which this present anthology and the texts contained within it are noteworthy compared with previous CA collections. To start, this is the first major anthology of the CA that is based in North America. Until now, Elliott and the English translations of Hennecke-Schneemelcher have been the only major anthologies of the CA available in English. *MNTA* thus marks nothing less than a watershed moment in the study of the CA in North America, which has long lagged far behind the state of research in Europe. Coinciding with the publishing of *MNTA*, its co-editors have also begun a series of biennial symposia on the CA, the first three of these held at York University in Toronto, with plans to hold future symposia at other institutions in North America. These continuing symposia are one of the chief initiatives of a new scholarly organization devoted to the study of the CA: the North American Society for the Study of Christian Apocryphal Literature (NASSCAL).

A second important feature of *MNTA* is that the majority of the texts within its covers have never been translated into any modern scholarly language, let alone discussed

even in passing in the existing anthologies. For example, only six of the texts presented in *MNTA* are explicitly mentioned in Elliott's *ANT* (the Syriac *History of Simon Cephas*, the *Acts of Barnabas*, the *Acts of Titus*, the *Life and Conduct of Xanthippe and Polyxena*, the Strasbourg fragment of the *Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, and the Syriac version of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*), and most of these amount to only several sentences of summary. Even the comprehensive two-volume *EAC* collection, in which several of these texts also appear (*Dialogue of the Paralytic with Christ*, *On the Priesthood of Jesus*, *Acts of Timothy*, *Acts of Titus*, *Epistle of Christ from Heaven*, and *Encomium on John the Baptist*), lacks many of the texts found in *MNTA*. Although an anthology of the standard CA texts produced by a team in North America remains a desideratum, it is nevertheless more urgent to introduce new texts to the field, which is what *MNTA* has as its top priority.

Third, the texts assembled in *MNTA* are impressive in terms of their range of dates. Some texts included are quite early, dating from the second century, while a few are very late, written perhaps early in the second millennium CE. An average date for all of the texts would probably fall around the fifth century. Among the most ancient texts are the two fragments of apocryphal gospels, Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 210 and 5072. P. Oxy. 210 has been dated to the third century, while P. Oxy. 5072 may be from the late second century, which would make it the second earliest fragment of an apocryphal gospel, behind Papyrus Egerton 2. The Syriac version of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* is certainly much older than the "Greek A" recension usually found in anthologies, probably quite close to the original second-century form of the text. Two texts, one about the apostle John and a robber and the other about the death of Judas, are respectively found in the writings of Papias and Clement of Alexandria, both of whom lived during the second century. And the editors of the *Legend of Aphroditianus* and the *Revelation of the Magi* have each proposed third-century dates for these infancy gospels. So, it is simply not the case that so many of the texts featured in *MNTA* are of a very late date. Rather, there is certainly a continuum present from quite early to very late, with most of the texts falling somewhere between these two poles.

Fourth, although an average date around the fifth century places many of these texts outside of the chronological parameters adopted by Hennecke-Schneemelcher and Elliott, scholars of the CA have begun to move beyond a fixation on only the very earliest of the CA, rejecting the premise that an early text was inherently more valuable and interesting than a later one. Rather, an increasing number of scholars believe that all examples of CA are inherently worthy of study, and that a given text can be significant and challenging regardless of its date of origin; in this regard, CA scholars align themselves more with the basic principles of the humanities and less with the traditional theologically motivated study of the foundational Christian writings.

Finally, it is worth noting two particularly striking attributes found in a number of the *MNTA* texts. First, several of these texts have been extremely popular, even outstripping other CA or even canonical writings. The *Epistle of Christ from Heaven*, an ancient instance of a "chain letter," exists in such a multiplicity of versions and recensions that reconstructing a transmission stemma would be a hopeless endeavor. The apocalyptic *Tiburine Sibyl* has had a far greater influence on Western Christian eschatology than the canonical Book of Revelation, with more than 130 extant manuscripts of the Latin version alone. Another apocalyptic text, the *Apocalypse of the Virgin*, had a very similar level of popularity in the Greek East, with manuscripts of it being copied well into the nineteenth century. A second attribute is that a number of texts belong to a genre that has no precise

equivalent in the NT: the pseudo-apostolic memoir. In this volume, the *Encomium on Mary Magdalene*, the *Encomium on John the Baptist*, and the *Investiture of Abbaton* are all examples of this genre. Moreover, the *Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, which was introduced to the scholarly world as the *Gospel of the Savior* in 1999 and regarded by its editors as a new second-century apocryphal gospel, is yet another example of a pseudo-apostolic memoir, most likely composed no earlier than the fifth century. Thus, while we may have “lost” an extremely early apocryphal gospel, the *Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon* has helped to establish the existence of a distinctive and frequently employed genre used by Coptic Christians in late antiquity.

Future Volumes

The expansion of the definition of “Christian apocrypha” has broadened the scope of the field to such an extent that one volume alone cannot contain all the apocryphal texts that have been written. One additional volume of *New Testament Apocrypha* is planned, but if the initial two volumes are successful, then a third or possibly even a fourth volume may appear in the years ahead. Certainly there are still plenty of candidates for inclusion. The following is the current list of texts to be included in volume two.

On the Star, by Pseudo-Eusebius of Caesarea
The Infancy of the Savior (Arabic Infancy Gospel)
The Rebellion of Dimas
The Hospitality and Perfume of the Bandit
The Vision of Theophilus
A Homily on the Life of Jesus
The Book of the Rooster
The Life of Judas
The Life of Mary Magdalene
The Life of Joseph of Arimathea
The Decapitation of John the Forerunner
The Martyrdom of Zechariah
The Discovery of John the Baptist’s Head
The Rood-Tree Legend
The Dream of Nero
The Cure of Tiberias
The Pseudo-Clementines
The Preaching of Simon Cephas in the City of Rome
The Voyages of Peter
The Acts of John in the City of Rome
John and Cerinthus (Irenaeus, Haer. 3.3.4; Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 3.28)
The Epistle of James to Quadratus
The Martyrdom of James
The Martyrdom of Luke
The Acts of Nereus and Achilleus
The Acts of Peter (Rome, Angelicus graecus 108)
The History of Philip in the City of Carthage
The Teaching of the Apostles
The Epistle of Pelagius

Introduction

An Encomium on the Apostles

The Dialogue between Jesus and Andrew

The Catechesis of Ps.-Basil of Caesarea/Letter of Luke

1 Apocryphal Apocalypse of John

2 Apocryphal Apocalypse of John (Questions of James)

3 Apocryphal Apocalypse of John

The Mysteries of John (Coptic Apocalypse of John)

The Apocalypse of John Chrysostom

Conclusion

Apocrypha have been part of the Christian tradition almost from the time of Christ. Indeed, so ubiquitous is apocryphal literature that it should be more fully embraced, by historians and theologians, as a fundamental aspect of Christian thought and expression. These texts are not just the ramblings of heretics, often characterized as working to undermine and transform the gospel taught by Jesus and bequeathed to the church by his apostles. Indeed, the expansion of the CA corpus represented by the *MNTA* volumes demonstrates that CA come in many forms and play many roles: to fill in gaps in the gospel record, to counter or correct the views of other Christians, to establish festivals, to guarantee the authenticity of relics, to ensure compliance with rules of practice, to educate, frighten, and entertain. Despite calls to destroy early apocrypha, Christians, sometimes even so-called orthodox Christians, continued to compose new texts when the need arose. Some of these new creations achieved a high level of popularity, so much that they were valued alongside, perhaps even above, canonical texts. Some would have been lost to history were it not for scholars such as those who have contributed to this volume. Each of them has embraced the goal of bringing awareness to texts that often have been neglected by other scholars eager to use the CA simply for reconstructing the life and teachings of Jesus. But there is far more value to these texts and much to offer scholars and readers interested in any of the myriad aspects of Christian history. Expanding the CA corpus brings added complexity to the study of this literature, breaking the boundaries between what is canonical and noncanonical, between the concepts of orthodoxy and heresy, the temporal divisions of early and medieval Christianity, and such scholarly constructs as Coptic Studies, Gnostic Studies, and Patristic Studies. What once seemed a clearly marked path is now a labyrinth. Fortunately, the *MNTA* volumes are here to help guide the way.