

New Testament Apocrypha
More Noncanonical Scriptures

VOLUME ONE

Edited by

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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.

Instead of "noncanonical," an even more popular descriptor for this literature is "apocryphal"—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 preface 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 New Testament 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 numerical 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 Marksches, has opted instead for the title *Antike christliche Apokryphen* (“ancient Christian apocrypha”).² Moreover, although it 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 of “Christian” for these writings, both because of the former’s established usage in early

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

2. For a history of the Hennecke-Schneemelcher-Marksches 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.

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 (*apokekrummenon*) 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 criticize those who would regard the *Shepherd of Hermas* as an authoritative book. The

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.

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

Although Schneemelcher exaggerates when he says that a “firmly closed collection . . .

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.

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

When discussing the formation of the NT canon in the context of the CA, five inter-

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*

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, or that of Alexandria. 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 are in dispute or 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 is 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 arise, Serapion does not perceive there to be objectionable characteristics in the text itself, but in the faith of those who are 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 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

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

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 to 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 C.E. 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 writings.¹⁹ Indeed, it has sometimes been suggested that the Nag Hammadi writings were

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.

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.

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 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*

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.

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 placement 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), 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 apoc-

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).

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

ryphal 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 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

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.

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 bookends 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 *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 Jacobus de Voragine's *The Golden Legend*.³² Each of these examples illustrate, once again, that Christians continued to value certain non-canonical 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.

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

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 E. A. Wallis 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.

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 Pseudo-Abdias, 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 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

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 passionesque 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 XVIe–XVIIe 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.

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 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

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).

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 catholique, 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 von 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 editit, 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, 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* (Ho-

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 of 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 1924,⁶⁰ 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 *Anti-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 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

rae 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 the Virgin*, and the *Martyrdom of Pilate*.

55. Oscar von Lemm, "Koptische apocryphe Apostelakten 1," *Bulletin de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences* 33 (1890): 509–81; "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); Eugène Revillout, *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).

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 for Sunday*, the *Apocalypse of the Virgin*, and others)⁶⁴ and the first volume of M. R. James’s *Anecdota Apocrypha* (with the *Acts 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 pioneering work is so esteemed among German scholars that the major revision currently in progress by Christoph Marksches and Jens

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 Adelbert 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.;

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 Pseudo-Abdias), 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 published in 1978

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. Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924; 2nd ed. 1953).

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, 1956, 1 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).

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 Pseudo-Abdias 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 but focused 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 *Esdras*).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 *Unknown Life of Christ* and the *Letter of Benan*, in their projects. Many of these texts are

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); James Carey, *Apocrypha Hiberniae. Part 2, vol. 1: In Tenga Bithnuua—The Ever-New Tongue* (CCSA 16; Turnhout: Brepols, 2009). Two volumes of apocalypses are currently in production.

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 2012—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 Press, 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 apokryph 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

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.

remaining texts in the volume have been available to scholars for a considerable amount of time.

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 of Mary* 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

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

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 since its *editio princeps* in 1865. Another curious entry in the volume is the Aramaic fragment of the *Toledot Yeshu*, a Jewish satire of Christian gospel literature. The *Toledot Yeshu* 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

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.

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 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 *Acts 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,

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.

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.

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 century. 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 *Acts 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 of 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 centuries, while a few are very late, written perhaps early in the second millennium C.E. 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 stemma would be a hopeless endeavor. The apocalyptic *Tiburtine 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 of 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
Life of Joseph of Arimathea
The Beheading of John the Baptist
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 Peter 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)

Introduction

The History of Philip in the City of Carthage
The Teaching of the Apostles
The Epistle of Pelagius
An Encomium on the Apostles
The Dialogue between Jesus and Andrew
The Catechesis of Ps.-Basil of Caesarea/Letter of Luke
2 Apocalypse of John
The Questions of James (3 Apocalypse John)
4 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 guide the way.

The Legend of Aphroditianus

A new translation and introduction

by Katharina Heyden

The *Legend of Aphroditianus* (*Leg. Aphr.*; CANT 55) is a supplement to the pericope of the adoration of the Magi in Matthew 2:1–12. It first explains how the Magi knew about the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem and then describes their journey and their encounter with Christ and Mary in more detail than the canonical account. In the Slavic cultures, especially in medieval Russia, *Leg. Aphr.* was a popular text that was read during the Christmas liturgy. In consequence, all modern Russian collections of Christian apocrypha contain *Leg. Aphr.*¹ In the West, however, the legend has remained almost completely unknown, for in Greek manuscripts it is rarely transmitted on its own,² but is usually embedded in larger literary works that were themselves long-neglected by scholars, even though they are preserved in many manuscripts. *Leg. Aphr.* is also known in scholarship as the “Narrative of Events Happening in Persia on the Birth of Christ,” falsely attributed to Julius Africanus.

Contents

In its first part (chaps. 1–6), *Leg. Aphr.* describes a miracle in the temple of Hera in Persia (1) at the time of Christ’s birth. In the presence of the Persian king and a priest, the statues of the temple dance and sing, announcing that Hera has been made pregnant by Zeus and will give birth to a child (2). Then a star appears above the statue of Hera. A voice proclaims the birth, and all the other statues fall down upon their faces (3). The wise men of Persia interpret the miracle as an announcement of the birth of the Messiah in Judah (4). In the evening, the god Dionysus appears to confirm this interpretation and to proclaim the end of the worship of the pagan gods (5). Then the king sends the Magi to Judea with gifts, the star pointing them along their way (6). The second part of *Leg. Aphr.* (chaps. 7–9) is a report of the Magi about their journey to Jerusalem and Bethlehem, including a discussion between the Magi and the Jewish leaders (7), and their meeting and encounter with Mary and the two-year-old Jesus (8). Of interest here are the precise description of Mary’s appearance (8:4) and the remark that the Magi brought back to Persia a likeness of the mother and child, which they placed in the temple where the star originally appeared. The report of the Magi concludes with the appearance of an angel who, warning the Magi of a plot against them, advises them to return home (9).

1. For an overview of these editions see Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditian*,” 32–39.

2. Bringel, “Une polémique religieuse,” 134–226, lists 15 Greek manuscripts that transmit *Leg. Aphr.* on its own; the other 43 present the legend as part of *De gestis in Perside*.

Manuscripts and Editions

Leg. Aphr. has a complex and fascinating history of transmission. The oldest written version is found in an anonymous Greek work entitled *De gestis in Perside (Pers.)*, a fifth- or sixth-century fictional religious dispute between pagans, Christians, Jews, and a Persian magus at the court of the Sasanian Empire,³ in which *Leg. Aphr.* plays an important part. In *Pers.*, Aphroditianus is a pagan philosopher appointed by the king of Persia as an independent arbitrator in the dispute, but Aphroditianus turns out to be a defender of the Christian position, quoting *Leg. Aphr.* as the main argument in favor of the Christian truth.

Traces of *Leg. Aphr.* can be found in later literature, though these hint too of an earlier origin for the text. In the eighth century, John Damascene included the legend in a *Homily on the Incarnation of Christ (Homilia in nativitatem Domini)*,⁴ presenting it to the audience as a pagan oracle explaining why the Magi knew about the birth of Christ. Inserting biblical texts, omitting certain passages, and altering some formulations, John modified the text of *Leg. Aphr.* to harmonize the legend with the Gospels. Two illustrated Byzantine manuscripts of this homily from the second half of the eleventh century (Jerusalem, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Taphou 14 and Mount Athos, Esphigmenou 14) contain splendid miniatures accompanying the homily, bearing witness to the popularity of *Leg. Aphr.* at the time of the Macedonian dynasty of the Byzantine Empire (867–1056).⁵

The Slavonic versions of *Leg. Aphr.* are excerpts of the legend from *Pers.* translated from Greek. The first of these translations (Slav I) was made, probably in Bulgaria, in the tenth century.⁶ Through the southern Slavs, *Leg. Aphr.* was transmitted to Russia during the twelfth century, where it became very popular and was revised several times.⁷ In the

3. On *Pers.* see Bratke, *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch*, 46–271; Bringel, “Une polémique religieuse,” 13–133; Déroche, “La polémique anti-judaïque”; Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditian*,” 116–70; Külzer, *Disputationes*, 112–27.

4. Bonifatius Kotter, ed., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* (5 vols.; PTS 7, 12, 17, 22, 29; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969–1988), 5:324–47. Even though the homily is preserved in 58 manuscripts, it was neglected by scholars because its authenticity was denied for a long time (see Kotter, *Schriften des Johannes*, 307–10). A historical and theological analysis of the homily is given by Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditian*,” 94–115.

5. The miniatures of Esphigmenou 14 are published in Stylianos M. Pelekanidis et al., *The Treasures of Mount Athos. Illuminated Manuscripts*, vol. 2: *The Monasteries of Iveron, St. Pantaleimon, Esphigmenou, and Chilandari* (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1975), 223–52, tabl. 344–407; the 17 miniatures from *Leg. Aphr.* are reproduced in Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditian*,” 333–41, tabl. 14–30; the nine folios with miniatures on *Leg. Aphr.* from Taphou 14 were first completely published by Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditian*,” 344–52, tabl. 38–48. For iconographical and historical analyses see Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditian*,” 67–93.

6. The most ancient Old Bulgarian manuscript of *Leg. Aphr.* dates from the thirteenth century, but it is likely that the first translation was made already during the reign of King Simeon the Great (893–927), who ordered many translations of Greek Christian works.

7. Of the 92 Slavonic manuscripts of *Leg. Aphr.* 78 come from Russia, most of them part of liturgical collections. An examination of *Leg. Aphr.* and its various redactions in medieval Russia is given in Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditian*,” 20–56. In the sixteenth century, the Greek monk Maksim Grek published a polemical essay in Russian entitled “Speech of the monk Maksim Grek from the Holy Mountain on accusation and conviction of the lying writing of the erroneous Persian Aphroditianus” (see Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditian*,” 20–25). Maxim formulated three conditions to accept ancient Christian works within the Orthodox Church: first, that the author is well known and highly esteemed by the ancient authorities; second, that it corresponds with apostolic doctrines and traditions; and third, that it does not contain self-contradictions. In his polemics, Maxim tries to show that *Leg. Aphr.* does not meet these criteria. Unintentionally, with this polemic Maksim Grek bears witness to the popularity of *Leg. Aphr.* at his time.

sixteenth century, Aphroditianus was regarded as one among other pagan figures—such as the Sibyl, Hermes, Homer, and Plato—who are said to have announced the coming of Christ; this association is reflected in Aphroditianus's representation on the bronze portals of Kremlin cathedrals.⁸ The second Slavonic translation (Slav II) was made in the fourteenth century, probably by Serbian monks of Mount Athos, but based on a different Greek text.⁹ This version was translated later into Romanian.¹⁰ It differs from Slav I in some respects, two details being especially remarkable. First, the names of the Magi are given—Elimelech, Elisur, and Eliav—together with etymological explanations (see the note to *Leg. Aphr.* 6). Second, in the title of this version the legend is attributed to “the presbyter Philippus who was syncellus of the great John Chrysostom.” This attribution deserves attention because it provides clues as to how *Leg. Aphr.* came to be incorporated into *Pers.*

The title of Slav II corresponds to an addendum to *Pers.* that clarifies the identity of the historian Philippus whose *History*, according to the initial sentences of *Pers.*, caused the dispute between pagans and Christians in the Sasanian kingdom. The note reads:

This Philippus was a presbyter and syncellus of John, the archbishop of Constantinople. He wrote the whole [history] organizing it in periods in such an admirable way that no other of the historiographers can compare with him. The same presbyter narrated that from the day on which the star appeared in the temple, every year on the same day until the ascension of the Lord, all statues were uttering their own characteristic voices so that the whole city remained there to watch the great miracles and the annual appearance of the star.¹¹

This note identifies the Philippus of *Pers.* with Philip of Side, a Christian historian who, in the fifth century, compiled a monumental *Historia Christianae* in Constantinople, of which only a few fragments have survived.¹² Moreover, mentioning the report of the annual repetition of the miracle in the temple of Hera, the addendum shows that *Leg. Aphr.* was a part of Philip's *Hist. Christ.*, possibly of a book entitled “Hellenic Oracles.”¹³ But was Philip the author of the legend? This seems improbable for two reasons. First, his *Hist. Christ.* is a monumental work composed of many sources.¹⁴ Second, *Leg. Aphr.* contains

8. Aphroditianus stands beside Homer on the north-portal of the Blagoveschenskij Sobor and on the south-portal of the Usbenskij Sobor, in both cases accompanied by the inscription, “For God was born from the immaculate virgin Mary, in him is the origin of faith.” Of course, Aphroditianus differs from these other pagan figures in that he did not live prior to Jesus. For pictures of the portals see Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditian*,” 304–7, tabl. 1–4.

9. The Greek pattern of this version is preserved in Mount Athos, Vatopedi, gr. 10 (14th cent.), which contains the entire text of *Pers.*

10. For a German translation of the Romanian version, which survives in a single manuscript of the seventeenth century, see Gaster, “Die rumänische Version.”

11. The Greek text can be found in Bratke, *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch*, 45; and Bringel, “Une polémique religieuse,” 488–90. The English translation is my own.

12. A descriptive catalogue of the fragments is given in Heyden, “Christliche Geschichte.”

13. This title is mentioned in *Pers.* 5.5 (Bratke), where Aphroditianus asks a slave to read out a passage of Philip's *Hist. Christ.* entitled “Hellenic Oracles.” According to Socrates Scholasticus (*Hist. eccl.* 7.27.4), *Hist. Christ.* was divided into 36 books that were thematically arranged.

14. This is evident from the polemics of Socrates (*Hist. eccl.* 7.27) and Photius (*Bib.*, cod. 35).

some elements that point to a place of origin other than Constantinople and to a time earlier than the fifth century.¹⁵

In 1804, the German scholar Johann Freiherr von Aretin published for the first time a Greek text of *Leg. Aphr.* using two manuscripts from Munich (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Monac. gr. 61 and 199); the text was accompanied by a translation into Latin.¹⁶ Athanasius Vassiliev published the entire text of *Pers.* in 1893 from two manuscripts: Moscow, State Historical Museum, Synod. gr. 252 (11th cent.) and Vatican, biblioteca apostolica, Palat. 364 (14th/15th cent.).¹⁷ This manuscript base was expanded dramatically by Eduard Bratke in 1899,¹⁸ and Pauline Bringel in her unpublished thesis from 2007.¹⁹ Bratke compared 29 manuscripts of *Pers.* and chose Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 1084 (11th cent.) as the base text for his edition. Bratke mentioned also an Armenian version of the text, but this has not yet been published.²⁰ Bringel included 14 more manuscripts and divided the evidence into two redactions: a short one that is preserved in Vatican, Biblioteca apostolica, Palatina gr. 4 (10th/11th cent.) and a long one found in all other manuscripts, of which Bringel favored Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, gr. 467 (11th cent.) as the best witness. In 2009, Katharina Heyden published a monograph on the transmission of *Leg. Aphr.* in the East and the West, discussing the literary, theological, and historical aspects for every stage of the text's transmission as well as the origin of the legend.²¹ In this study, *Leg. Aphr.* was presented as an independent apocryphal writing for the first time to readers in the Western world.

Date and Provenance

The miracle in the temple of Hera that is narrated in the first part of *Leg. Aphr.* (chaps. 1–6) has its parallels in the cult of the Syrian goddess Atargatis in Hierapolis, as described by the Roman author Lucian of Samosata in his satirical work *De Dea Syria* in the second century.²² According to Lucian, the goddess was called “Syrian Hera,” and her statue

15. See the discussion of all pre-Constantinian elements in *Leg. Aphr.* in Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditianus*,” 226–94.

16. Aretin, *Beyträge*, 49–69, published again in PG 10:97–108. The manuscripts of Munich attribute the legend to an “Africanus.” Therefore, the legend was considered to be a work of the second-century Christian historian Julius Africanus. This attribution was accepted by the editors of the *Patrologia Graeca* as well as by those of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (ANF 6:127–30), even though Aretin himself in his introduction doubted it. Most likely, the attribution to Julius Africanus is based on a misunderstanding of the Greek abbreviation *Aphr* that actually does not refer to “Africanus” but to “Aphroditianus.” Bringel, however, does not totally abandon the attribution to Julius Africanus (cf. Bringel, “Une polémique religieuse,” 13–14). But, there is information in *Aphr.* that clearly contradicts a note in the *Chronography* of Julius Africanus. According to *Leg. Aphr.* 8:4, Christ was nearly two years old when the Magi came to Bethlehem, whereas Julius Africanus notes that the child was only seven days old. Cf. Julius Africanus, *Chron.*, fragment T 91 in the edition of Martin Wallraff, *Iulius Africanus: Chronographiae. The Extant Fragments* (trans. William Adler; GCS NF 15; Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2007), 274–75.

17. Vassiliev, *Anecdota graeco-byzantina*, 73–125, with manuscript details pp. xxvii–xxxii.

18. Bratke, *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch*.

19. Bringel, “Une polémique religieuse,” 44–61. Bringel presented a detailed introduction to *Pers.*, a new critical edition, and a translation into French.

20. Bratke, *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch*, 128.

21. Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditianus*.”

22. Edition and commentary in Jane L. Lightfoot, ed., *Lucian, On the Syrian Goddess* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 247–86. Other sources for the cult of Hierapolis are Plutarch, *Crassus*; Macrobius, *Saturnalia*; Athenaeus Grammaticus, *Deipnosophistae*; Aratus Latinus, *Phaenomena*, as well as iconographic and archaeological evidence.

combined characteristics of other goddesses, such as Athena, Aphrodite, Selene, Rhea, Artemis, and Nemesis. Her statue was adorned with the belt and the crown of the goddess Urania. By night, a precious stone above the statue of the goddess lit up the temple. In addition to the goddess in the cella, the temple also featured a statue of Zeus-Helios and another mysterious statue identified by many people as Dionysus, who was regarded as the founder of the temple. The temple was sumptuously adorned with gold and silver, and the statues would move and give oracles of their own accord. Near the temple, there was a pool of spring water with fish that were regarded as holy to the goddess. Iconographical evidence shows that Atargatis, the Syrian goddess par excellence, was adored as “Source” and “Virgin.” All these elements suggest that the origin of *Leg. Aphr.* can be located in the environment of the cult in Hierapolis—i.e., in western Syria. The Christian author of *Leg. Aphr.* presumably intended to offer his audience an *interpretatio christiana* of this popular pagan cult.²³

The argument for a Syrian origin is plausible also with regard to the second part of *Leg. Aphr.* (chaps. 7–9). The notice that the Magi at their return placed a portrait of Mary and the child in the royal temple recalls the Legend of Abgar, according to which Hannan, the courier of King Abgar, made a likeness of Jesus that was placed in the royal palace of Edessa (*Doctr. Addai* 6). Pauline Bringel supposes, that, in composing *Leg. Aphr.*, a west Syrian author intended to compete with the Christians of Edessa, claiming the existence of an older image of Christ.²⁴ Provided that these parallels are accurate, *Leg. Aphr.* was probably composed in the third century, because the cult of Hierapolis prospered in the first three centuries of C.E., and the Legend of Abgar also originated at this time—Eusebius of Caesarea (*Hist. eccl.* 1.13) refers to the legend, without mentioning, however, the portrait of Christ.²⁵ In addition, the eucharistic use of the Christian symbol of the fish in combination with the mention of a “source” (see, e.g., *Leg. Aphr.* 2:2 where Hera is named Pege, meaning “source” or “spring”) appears also in the epitaph inscriptions of Abercius and Pectorius that date from the early third century.²⁶ The original language of *Leg. Aphr.* was certainly Greek.

Literary and Theological Importance

Leg. Aphr. combines the characteristics of two literary forms that were very popular in the pre-Constantinian era. In its first part, the text presents “hellenic oracles” in favor of Christianity similar to those attributed by Christians to the Sibyllines, Hermes Trismegistos, Zoroaster, Hystaspes, and other pagan authorities from the East. In comparison with other early Christian collections of oracles, however, the special feature of *Leg. Aphr.* is its literary form, for here the hellenic oracles are presented within a narrative frame.

The second part of *Leg. Aphr.* can be compared to other apocryphal retellings of the

23. See Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditian*,” 261–70. The location in Syria, however, seems to contradict the first paragraph of *Leg. Aphr.* (1:1), where the temple is localized in the capital of Persia. Perhaps the author already knew a tradition according to which the Magi came from Persia, or perhaps the first sentences of *Leg. Aphr.* were missing in the original legend and were added only by Philip of Side or by the unknown author of *Pers.*

24. Bringel, “Une polémique religieuse,” 54–55.

25. Bratke (*Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch*, 151–57) places *Leg. Aphr.* within the context of the mariological controversy of the fifth century. In my view, however, this is not conclusive because the characteristic term of this time, *theotokos*, does not appear in the text.

26. Text and brief commentary on the inscriptions in Margherita Guarducci, *Epigrafia greca* (4 vols.; Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1967–1978), 4:380–81 (Abercius) and 4:487–88 (Pectorius).

infancy of Christ, such as the second-century *Protevangelium of James* or the *Liber de Nativitate Salvatoris* (also known as the *J Composition*). But while *Prot. Jas.* was designed to defend the virginity of Mary before a Jewish or Jewish-Christian audience, *Leg. Aphr.* was addressed to pagans and Gentile Christians, drawing on the pagan myth of the holy wedding of male and female gods and combining it with the Magi pericope of Matt 2:1–12.

The manifold transmission of *Leg. Aphr.* testifies to the popularity of such a positive use of pagan elements in support of Christianity in various times and contexts. Unfortunately, this openness toward pagans comes alongside polemics against the Jews (see the encounter between the Magi and the Jewish leaders in *Leg. Aphr.* 7).

It is impossible to assign *Leg. Aphr.* clearly to a specific theological school. Composed in an epoch that was rightly called the “laboratory of Christian theology,”²⁷ the legend combines elements of various theological doctrines. Thus, the rejection of the idea that Pege-Mary was made pregnant by an earthly carpenter (2:3) seems to be a reaction to Jewish-Christian groups that denied the divinity of Jesus and the virginity of Mary and emphasized that the carpenter Joseph was the father of Mary’s child.²⁸ The phrase “bride of the triple-named single divinity” (3.1) recalls the doctrine of the Sabellians, who used the term *triōnumos* to express the hypostatical unity of the divine persons.²⁹ On the other hand, the humanity of Christ is emphasized in the interpretation of the miracle by Persian interpreters of prodigies who proclaim “the son of the Omnipotent, carried in bodily form in the bodily arms of a woman” (4:2) and in the report of the Magi who mention that Jesus looked like his mother and that he “smiled and leaped” (8:4). In addition, *Leg. Aphr.* 7 contains soteriological statements that are known from Jewish-Christian writings, especially from the eighth book of the *Sibylline Oracles* (see *Leg. Aphr.* 5 and *Sib. Or.* 8:265–70).

Altogether, the main intention of *Leg. Aphr.* seems to be the defense of the divinity of Christ against Jewish Christians on the one side, and of the humanity of Christ against monarchianistic tendencies on the other. These tendencies, which work to emphasize the unity of divinity and humanity in Christ, is expressed in *Leg. Aphr.* 4:2, in the interpretation of the miracle given by the wise men of Persia: “a divine and royal root has risen, bearing the stamp of a heavenly and earthly king.” From the perspective of the history of religions, the mixture of pagan and Christian elements in favor of a popular mariology and Christology is striking, since it shows that the differentiation between pagans and Christians was actually not as clear as many Christian apologists tried to suggest. The positive representation of the Persian interpreters of prodigies and of the Magi who, according to *Leg. Aphr.*, recognize the meaning of the miracle immediately and of their own accord, points to a certain affinity of *Leg. Aphr.* and *Rev. Magi*.³⁰

Translation

The accompanying translation of *Leg. Aphr.* is based on the critical editions of *Pers.* established by E. Bratke in 1899 and P. Bringel in 2007.³¹ The relevant differences between Bratke and Bringel and my own text-critical decisions are documented in the notes. Fur-

27. Christoph Marksches, “Alte Kirche,” *RGG3* (1998): 1:344–60 at 353.

28. Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.27; Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 16.12.

29. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Eun.* 3.8.23; Eusebius, *Eccl. theol.* 3.6; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 3.7.15.

30. On early Christian traditions on the Magi see Heyden, “*Erzählung des Aphroditian*,” 287–93; and Thomas Holtmann, *Die Magier vom Osten und der Stern: Mt 2,1–12 im Kontext frühchristlicher Traditionen* (Marburger Theologische Studien 87; Marburg: Elwert, 2005).

31. *Leg. Aphr.* previously appeared in English translation in *ANF* 6:128–30 as a work of Julius Africanus.

thermore, the notes document the productive reception of *Leg. Aphr.* in the *Homily* of John Damascene and in the Slavonic tradition. The *Homily* of John Damascene is translated from the critical edition by Kotter; Slav I. from the text established by Veder,³² and Slav II from the edition by Bobrov.³³ The chapter numbering is newly established. It enables one to reference *Leg. Aphr.* without recourse to the writings in which the legend was embedded during its long history of transmission.

Sigla

A	<i>Pers.</i> from Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 1084
C	<i>Pers.</i> from Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, gr. 467
J	<i>Pers.</i> from Vatican, Biblioteca apostolica, Palat. gr. 4
JD	John Damascene, <i>Homilia in nativitatem Domini</i>
Slav I	First Slavonic translation
Slav II	Second Slavonic translation

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32. Veder, “Slavonic Tale.”

33. Bobrov, *Apocryphal Legend* (Russian), 127–32.

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The Legend of Aphroditianus^a

Part one: The miracle in the Temple of Hera

Introduction: The temple of Hera

1 ¹To Persia, Christ was known from the beginning, for nothing escapes the learned lawyers of that country, who investigate all things with eagerness. Therefore, I will announce what is inscribed upon the golden tablets and laid up in the royal temples: that the name of Christ has first been heard of in the temples there and by the priests connected with them.^b

2 There is a Temple of Hera, which surpasses the royal palace and in which King Cyrus, the expert of all piety, built and erected golden and silver statues and he adorned it^c with precious stones—not to digress into describing the ornamentation.

The miracle of the dancing statues

2 ¹In those days—as the inscribed tablets teach—when the king came to get a dream-interpretation in the temple, the priest Proupippus^d said to him, “I rejoice with you, master, for Hera has conceived.” The king, smiling, said to him,

a. The original title of the legend is unknown. The Greek manuscripts witness various ascriptions either to Aphroditianus—e.g., “From the Legend of Aphroditianus the philosopher on the Magi and the star” (Berlin, Königliche Bibliothek, gr. 77); “The Legend of Aphroditianus the philosopher on the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 897)—or to an “Africanus” (as to that attribution see the introduction, p. \$\$\$) as in, e.g., Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Theol. gr. 48: “The Legend of Africanus on the things that happened in Persia during the incarnation of the Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Slav I has: “The Legend of Aphroditianus on the miracle that happened in the land of Persia,” and Slav II: “The Legend of Aphroditianus the Persian, written down by the presbyter Philip, who was syncellus of the great John Chrysostom, on the birth of Christ and on the star and on the adoration of the Magi from Persia.”

b. C (and Bringel) omits the phrase “and the priests connected with them.” In Slav I the first sentences differ slightly: “To Persia, Christ was known from the beginning, for nothing escapes the learned men of that country, who diligently investigate all things that are inscribed upon golden tablets and laid up in the royal temples. Here I announce something that was heard by the priests there: There is a Temple of Hera etc.” JD begins the narration with “Cyrus, the king of the Persians, built a temple and erected golden and silver statues in it and adorned it with precious stones.”

c. C (and Bringel) has “adorned them (i.e., the statues).”

d. The manuscripts give several different variants of the priest’s name: e.g., Proupipos, Proupiptos, Proupippios (see Bringel, “Une polémique religieuse,” 332)

“The dead one has conceived?” And he said, “She who was dead has come to life again and gives birth to life.” The king said, “What is this? Explain it to me!”

²He said, “Indeed, master, you have come here at the right time.^a For over the whole night the images were dancing, both the males and the females, saying to each other, ‘Come, let us rejoice with Hera.’ And they said to me, ‘Prophet, come and rejoice with Hera, for she has been loved.’ And I said, ‘Who was able to be loved, she who does not exist?’^b They said, ‘She has come to life again and is no longer called Hera, but Urania (i.e., “queen of heaven”). For the mighty Helios (i.e., “great sun”) has loved her. And the females said to the males, obviously to disparage the matter, ‘Pege (i.e., “source” or “spring”) is she who was loved, for Hera did not marry a carpenter!’^c

³“And the males said, ‘That she was rightly called Hera, we admit. But her name is Myria (i.e., “the thousandfold”),^d for she bears in her womb, as in the sea, a vessel burdened with a myriad. If she is also called Pege, let it be understood thus: a spring of water continuously sends forth a spring of spirit^e containing a single fish, which is taken with the hook of divinity and which sustains with its own flesh the whole world, dwelling there as though in the sea.^f You have well said: “she has a carpenter,”^g but the carpenter whom she bears does not come from a marriage-bed. For this carpenter who is born, the child of the chief carpenter, has built the triple-constructed celestial roof^h with most-wise skill, establishing this triple-habitated dwelling by the Logos.ⁱ

⁴“Thus, the statues continued to dispute with each other concerning Hera and Pege and unanimously they said, ‘When the day is brought to completion, we all, male and female, shall come to know the matter clearly. Therefore now master, remain for the rest of the day, for the matter will certainly receive full clarity. For what has emerged is no accident.’^j

⁵When the king remained there and was watching the statues, the harpers began to strike their harps of their own accord, and the Muses began to sing.^k And all four-legged animals and birds of silver and gold within (the temple) were

a. Slav I: “Indeed, master, the time has come.”

b. JD: “By whom could she be loved—for she is mine?”; Slav I: “Who can love her, who does not exist?”

c. J lacks “for Hera did not marry a carpenter.”

d. J and Slav I: “Maria.” Slav II: “Karia.”

e. Slav II: “A spring of water fluently flows.”

f. From the Greek text, it is not clear whether the phrase “dwelling there as though in the sea” refers to “a single fish” or to the “whole world.”

g. Some manuscripts add the phrase: “She married a carpenter—for she has a carpenter, but etc.”

h. C (and Bringel) has: “framed the triple-constructed sky as a roof.” JD has: “has built the triple hypostatic roof of the heavens.”

i. Slav II: “You have well said that Hera is engaged to a carpenter, but the carpenter is not descended from a male sperm, but the one to whom she gives birth is the everlasting Word and the son of the everlasting creator, who created the triple roof out of nothing with the utmost wisdom and who established this triple heaven with a word.”

j. C (and Bringel) lacks this phrase.

k. Slav I: “The king remained there and saw the statues predicting the future and playing harps, and the singers sang.” Slav II: “The king remained, and every statue moved of its own accord, the females played harps and the singer began to sing.”

uttering their own characteristic voices. And as the king shuddered and was filled with great fear so that he was about to withdraw, for he could not endure the spontaneous tumult, the priest said to him, “Remain,^a o king, for the full revelation is at hand, which the God of the gods had decided to make plain to us.”

The appearance of the star above the statue of Pege

3 ¹When these things had been said, the roof was opened, and a bright star descended and stood above the statue of Pege, and a voice was heard as follows: “Mistress Pege, the Mighty Helios has sent me to announce to you and at the same time to serve you in your giving birth, for he produces a blameless childbirth for you, who is becoming mother of the first of all ranks, bride of the triple-named single divinity.^b And the unbegotten new-born is called Beginning and End—the beginning of salvation, the end of destruction.”

²When this voice had been given, all the statues fell down upon their faces.^c Pege alone remained standing, upon whom a royal diadem was found fastened, having on its upper side a star made of precious stones—carbuncle and emerald. And above her the star rested.

The interpretation of the miracle by wise men of Persia

4 ¹Immediately the king gave an order^d to bring together all wise interpreters of prodigies who are under his dominion. When the heralds urged them on with their trumpets, they all came into the temple.

²When they saw the star above Pege, and the diadem with the starry stone, and the statues lying on the floor, they said, “O king, a divine and royal root has risen, bearing the stamp of a heavenly and earthly king.^e For Pege is the daughter of Karia^f the Bethlehemite, and the diadem is a royal sign, and the star is a heavenly announcement of marvels on earth. Out of Judah a kingdom has arisen which will abolish all the memorials of the Jews.^g The prostration of the gods upon the floor prefigured the end of their honor. For he who comes is of more ancient dignity and will shake those who are new in it. Therefore, o king, send to Jerusalem! For you will find the son of the Omnipotent, carried in bodily form in the bodily arms of a woman.”

³The star remained above Pege, who has been called Urania, until the Magi went forth, and then it went with them.^h

a. Slav I: “Rise!”

b. JD: “bride of the autocrat with three names”; Slav I: “As an uncorrupted message I serve you, mother of the oldest of all ranks, you appear as the bride of the triple-named and single divinity.”

c. JD adds: “and shattered”

d. C (and Bringel) has: “Having watched these things, the king gave order etc.”

e. Slav II adds: “Therefore, we request your authority to hear this.”

f. The name Karia remains obscure; some manuscripts have *Kuria* (“Mistress”), others *Maria* (“Mary”).

g. J replaces “of the Jews” with “of the kings,” thus omitting the anti-Jewish tendency.

h. Slav II: “The star remained above the statue that has been called the Heavenly One, until the Magi were sent forth from Cyrus, the Persian king, and it went with them.”

The apparition of Dionysus^a

5 ¹Then in the late evening, Dionysus appeared in the same temple, without the Satyrs,^b and said to the statues, “Pege is no longer one of us, but she stands far above us, since far above us she gives birth to a human being, the fetus of the divine Tyche (i.e., Fortune). O priest Proupippus, what are you doing sitting here? An action, indicated in writing, has proceeded against us, and we are going to be exposed as false by an acting person. That which we imagined, we have imagined. That which we commanded, we have commanded.^c No longer do we give oracular responses. Removed from us is the honor. Inglorious and unrecompensed we have become, because one, and one only, has received his proper honor.

²“Say (to the king): ‘Do not be disturbed!’^d No longer do the Persians demand tributes of earth and air. For he who established these things is present, and he brings tribute of actions to he who sent him. He recreates the ancient image, and puts together image with image, and the unlike he brings to likeness.^e (Gen 1:26–27)

³“Heaven rejoices with earth, and the earth boasts the heaven’s boast that it received. That which has not happened above, has happened below. He whom the order of the blessed has not seen, at him looks (the order of) the miserable.

a. Chap. 5 is missing in JD.

b. Slav I: “with a flag”; Slav II: “with the Satyrs.”

c. Slav II: “That which we dreamed, we misleadingly dreamed; that which we hoped, we illusively hoped.”

d. The Greek text seems corrupt here. I follow the edition of Bringel: “*eipon: mē throbadei*, “according to the majority of the Greek manuscripts. The Greek verb *eipon* can be understood either as a third-person aorist “they said,” referring to the statues, or as a first-person aorist (“I said”), or as an imperative singular (“Say!”). The verb *throbadei*, however, is not attested elsewhere. Slav I has the equivalent of the Greek *mē thorybei*. I assume that this translation represents the meaning of the original Greek verb. However, Bringel supposes *eipon* to be a third-person plural, interpreting the following sentences as the answer of the statues to Dionysus (cf. in §§§), and translates as “They said: ‘Do not grumble!’” But this does not fit with the phrase below: “rightly do the females dance and say,” for in the speech of the statues this statement should be given in the first-person plural. Therefore, the *eipon* is to be understood as an imperative “say!” and is addressed to the priest Proupippus who—instead of “sitting here”—shall deliver the following message to the king. The call “Do not be disturbed” is the reaction to the statement on the king’s emotional condition in *Leg. Aphr.* 2:5 (“And as the king shuddered and was filled with great fear so that he was about to withdraw, for he could not endure the spontaneous tumult etc.”). Bratke follows a small group of Greek manuscripts, including A, that read: “*eipon Mithrobadei*” (“say to Mithrobades”). Mithrobades appears twice in *Pers.* (37.26 and 44.12 Bratke) as the son or a high official of the king Arrinatios who presided over the dispute. This fact may explain why some writers replaced the corrupted text inserting this name. Even if Bratke’s reconstruction of the text were right, the mention of Mithrobades could not help to date the Legend, because we do not know any historical person of this name.

e. Slav I: “They said: Do not grumble! No longer will the Persians demand tributes of earth and air. For he who established these things has come and he brings tribute to he who sent him. He rebuilds the first image and renews the new one, he came at the right time with his spirit.” Slav II: “I say to you, Proprie, do not be wrong! No longer will the Persians demand tributes of earth and air, for the word of God, that brings all from nothing to being, comes and brings effective tributes to the Father who has sent it, and it re-creates the ancient image and impresses the image and brings the unlike back to the likeness.”

For those whom a flame threatens, the dew has come.^a It is the fortune of Karia to give birth to Pege in Bethlehem. It is Pege's grace to become heaven-desired and to conceive grace of grace.

⁴"Judea has bloomed, but now it is withering.^b To Gentiles and foreigners salvation has come, to the miserable there is more than enough refreshment. Rightly do the females dance and say, Lady Pege, Spring-bearer, you who have become mother of the heavenly light-giver, you are the cloud that after the heat brings dew to the world; remember your servants, dear mistress."^c

Part two: The narration of the Magi

The king sends the Magi to Judea

6 Then the king, without delay, sent the Magi who were under his dominion^d with gifts, and the star showed them the way. And then they returned, and they narrated to their contemporaries those things that were written also on golden plates and that were to the following effect: ^e

Matt 2:1-2

The conversation between the Magi and the Jews

7 ¹When we came to Jerusalem, the sign,^f together with our arrival, disturbed everyone. "What is this?" they said. "Wise men of the Persians arrive, and along with them an appearance of a star?"

²The leaders of the Jews asked us what was going to happen and the reason for our coming. And we said, "He whom you call Messiah is born." They were confounded and dared not oppose us. But they said to us, "By the heavenly Justice, tell us what you know!"

Matt 2:3-4

³We said to them, "You labor under unbelief, and neither without an oath

a. Slav II: "For those there is flame and forgiveness, for these dew and happiness."

b. Bratke has: "Judea has bloomed, and immediately our affairs are withering." I follow the text of Bringel, who in accordance with the majority of the manuscripts omits the phrase "our affairs" (*ta ěmetera*) that is found only in A and—as a supralinear correction—in one other manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 1538).

c. Slav II adds "o unmarried mother, mistress!"

d. Bringel has "sent some Magi of those under his dominion." In content, this is more logical than the *lectio difficilior* of Bratke given above.

e. JD who lacks the entire speech of Dionysus, introduces the second part of *Leg Aphr.* as follows: "The king of the Persians then did not think and hesitate for long, but called all kings-Magi who were under his dominion and sent them with gifts to honor the newborn king, bringing him the primal offering of the Gentiles." After this introduction, JD inserts the text of Matt 2:2-7, the conversation of the Magi and Herod. JD then continues with, "And they said to him, 'We have observed the star for days—since we departed for our journey, until we were led by him over here.' For Herod wanted to learn the time of the birth of Christ—not to honor him, but because he wanted to kill him." The same text is given in a copy of *Pers.* in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, gr. 307 (13th cent.). Both put the entire narration of the Magi in the third-person plural. Mount Athos, Vatopedi, gr. 10 (14th cent.) and Slav II have another insertion: "When the king saw and heard these things, he did not tremble and sent Magi of his kingdom with gifts. They were called Elimelech, Elisur, and Eliav. Elimelech means in Assyrian divine mercy and divine kingdom; to him he gave gold; Elisur (means) divine salvation and joy, to him he gave incense; Eliav (means) my God is my father and protector, to him he gave myrrh. The star led them on the right way to Jerusalem. Then they returned, they narrated all that they had heard and seen, as it was written on golden tablets as follows."

f. C (and Bringel) adds "of the star."

nor with an oath do you believe, but you follow your own thoughtless goal.^a For the Christ, the son of the Most High is born, annulling your law and your synagogues. And for this reason, struck by a most excellent oracle,^b you do not hear with pleasure this name which has come upon you unexpectedly.”

⁴When they had taken counsel together, they implored us to accept their gifts and to conceal this^c from their country, lest a revolt rise against us.^d But we said, “Gifts we have brought in his honor, with the aim of proclaiming those great things that had happened in our country on the occasion of his birth. And you say we should take the gifts and conceal the things that have been manifested by a celestial divinity and neglect the orders of our own king? Or do you not know what an experience you had once with the Assyrians?”^e They became afraid and after beseeching us repeatedly, they gave the matter up.

2 Kgs 16; 17:3–6; 2 Chr
28:16–25

⁵But then the one who was ruling over Judea^f sent for us and spoke with us and asked us, and we said to him (things) at which he was thoroughly disturbed.^g And we departed from him without giving any greater heed to him than to any worthless person.

Matt 2:7–8

The Magi in Bethlehem

8 ¹We went to the place to which we had been sent, and we saw her, the one who had given birth, and the one who had been born, the star indicating to us the lordly infant^h

Matt 2:9–10

²We said to the mother, “What is your name, oh renowned mother?”

She said, “Mary, masters.”

“Where do you come from?”

“From this district,” she said, “of the Bethlehemites.”

“Do you not have a husband?”

She said, “I have only been engaged; the pre-nuptial arrangements have been concluded,ⁱ but my thought is divided, for I did not want to come to this affair at all. But while I was giving little concern to it, at the dawn of the Sabbath, at the rising of the sun, an angel came to me announcing suddenly to me a childbirth. I was disturbed and cried out, ‘By no means can this happen to me, Lord! I do

Matt 1:18; Luke 1:27

a. Slav II. has “your foolish reason.”

b. C (and Bringel) has “struck by madness”; J: “struck by rage”; Slav II has “struck by jealousy.”

c. C (and Bringel) adds “important matter.”

d. Slav I: “Then they had taken counsel together, and they implored us to accept their gifts and to conceal this matter. So they did with foreigners lest the shame would not take themselves.”

e. This is an allusion to the conflict between the Judean kings Ahaz and Hoshea and the Assyrians. JD lacks this sentence.

f. Slav II: “But then Herod, who ruled Judea.”

g. JD lacks this sentence.

h. JD: “And they saw the mother and the newborn. They opened their treasuries, bowed to the earth and gave him as gifts gold and incense and myrrh—gold [for him] as king, incense [for him] as god, myrrh [for him] as a mortal being. Thus was fulfilled what is said by the prophet (cf. Ps 72:10): ‘The kings of Arabia and Saba shall offer gifts. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents. And to him will be given the gold of Arabia.’”

i. JD concludes the verse here.

not have a husband? And he assured me that it was God's will that I would have the child."

Luke 1:26–38

³We said to her, "Mother of Mothers, all the gods of the Persians have called you blessed. Your glory is great. For you are better than all renowned women and you have become manifestly more queenly than all queens."^a

⁴The child, moreover, sat on the ground, being, as she said, nearly two years old and having in part the likeness of she who bore him. For she was small in stature even when she stood upright, and had a delicate body, wheat-colored; and she had her hair bound with a simple, very beautiful hairstyle.

⁵As we had along with us a servant quite skilled in painting,^b we brought back with us a likeness of them both to our country. And it was placed in the temple in which the oracle was given,^c with the inscription: "In the heaven-sent temple,^d the power of Persia dedicated this to Zeus Helios, the great God, King Jesus."

⁶Taking the child up and bearing him in our arms, each of us saluted and worshiped him and presented to him gold^e and said to him, "(We give) to you what is your own. We lavish you, oh heavenly power.^f In no other way the un-ordered things could be ordered than by your presence; in no other way things above could be compounded with things below than by your descent. For a service is not carried out to such a degree if someone sends a servant, as when he (i.e., the master) himself is present; nor when the king sends the satraps to war, as when he himself departs.^g It is quite fitting for your wise method to deal in this manner with rebels."^h

Matt 2:11

⁷The child smiled and leaptⁱ during our flattery and our words. When we had bidden the mother farewell, and when she had shown us honor, and we had glorified her properly, we went to the place in which we lodged.^j

a. Slav I lacks "and you have become manifestly more queenly than all queens."

b. Slav I lacks "and as we had along with us a servant quite skilled in painting."

c. JD replaces "in which the oracle was given" with "for it would be honored by all"

d. Slav II: "in the divine temple of Dionysus and Hera."

e. Slav I and Bringel: "gold and myrrh and incense." Slav II: "gifts—gold, incense and myrrh."

f. Slav I and Bringel: "We honor you in love, heavenly Jesus." Slav II: "We brought to you what is your own, heavenly Jesus."

g. JD and Slav I lack "neither . . . departures."

h. JD: "It was quite fitting for your wise method to face the rebels in such a body through your incarnation"; Slav II: "It was quite fitting your wise prudence to defeat and to overthrow your adversaries this way."

i. C (and Bringel) omits "smiled"

j. JD adds the interesting passage: "And they told each other about the child and how he appeared to them. The first of them said, 'I saw him as a child.' The second one said, 'I saw a thirty-year-old man.' And the third one, 'I saw him as a man who had grown old.' And they were surprised at the varying appearance of the child." With this passage, JD inserts the idea of the "polymorphy" of Christ into *Leg. Aphr.* The idea of the varying appearance of Christ has its origin in the pagan theologoumenon of the polymorphy of a divinity and can be already found in Christian gnostic texts of the second to fourth centuries. It is present even in (*Arm.*) *Gos. Inf.* 11 and in *Rev. Magi* 14:3–8; 28:1–3. The theological point of the polymorphy of Christ is that human beings are not in the condition to look at Christ in his divine form. Therefore, Christ appears to everyone in an appropriate form. The concept of the polymorphy of Christ was controversial, because orthodox theologians—such as the patriarch Photius in the ninth century—associated with it the risk of a docetic Christology. Therefore, it is surprising that HoJohn Damascene in his homily refers to this idea without any comment. A very interesting

The departure of the Magi

9 ¹In the evening, there came to us someone terrible and awesome^a saying to us, “Get away quickly, lest you fall prey to a plot.” And we said with fear,^b “Who is it who is plotting against such an embassy, o general of God?” And he (said), “Herod.^c But get up immediately and depart, so you will be preserved in peace!” We hurried and mounted our strong horses and departed from there in all earnestness; and we reported all that we had seen in Jerusalem.

Matt 2:12

²Behold then, such great things we have told you^d regarding Christ and we know that Christ has become our Savior.^e But you, by your ways, are opposed to him, all the time slandering his pain. For speaking unworthy things, and doing still more unworthy things, are a mark of hatred.^f

iconographical realization of the concept of Christ's trimorphy we find, however, in a miniature of Jerusalem, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Taphou 14 (fol. 106v; 11th cent.) that illustrates the meeting of the Magi and Mary in the homily of John Damascene. The child is depicted three times: the oldest, white-bearded Magi bends down to Christ as a child, which is depicted in the iconographical character of Emmanuel; the second, brown-bearded Magi bears an adult Christ-Pantocrator in his arms; and the youngest Magi holds an old man with a white beard and a blue himation. Obviously, Christ is depicted in these three characters as a representation of the whole history of salvation. For a convincing interpretation of this miniature, see Tamar Avner, “The Impact of Liturgy on Style and Content: The Triple-Christi Scene in Taphou 14.” *Jahrbuch für Österreichische Byzantinistik* 32, no. 5 (1982): 459–68. For the trimorphism of Christ see Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, “Die drei Weisen aus dem Morgenlande und die Anbetung der Zeit,” *Antaios* 7 (1965): 234–52.

a. C (and Bringel): “a certain terrible angel.”

b. C (and Bringel) omits “with fear.”

c. JD lacks the entire following passage and concludes the legend with the words: “When the Magi had heard this and received the order of the angel they mounted the strong horses and went back to their country on another way.”

d. These last sentences of the report given by the Magi address the people of Jerusalem.

e. For liturgical reasons, the end of the legend differs in the Slavonic tradition. Slav I has: “. . . that Christ has become our Savior and for all who believe in him. To him be honor and glory to the end of time. Amen.” Slav II: “He could not stand it any longer, that the unharmed image was trampled on with sinful feet. Thus, he who was in the form of God took upon him the form of a servant (cf. Phil 2:6–7) in order to redeem the slaves from sin and to save them from death. Through his death he leads back to the first heritage and creates sons of the heavenly Father, who form themselves according to his image. Therefore, the son of justice lighted up in the last times, in order to renew the entire human creature in the light of his grace. To him be honor to the end of time. Amen.”

f. C (and Bringel) adds: “And these are the frightening accounts of the inspired Magi.”