New Testament Apocrypha More Noncanonical Scriptures

VOLUME THREE

Edited by

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Dedicated to current students (and future scholars) of Christian apocrypha

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Preface

The second volume of MNTA was published in the summer of 2020. This third volume was submitted to the publisher a year later. The reason for this speed is that volume 2 had grown so large that five entries had to be removed; I was determined to do right by my contributors and get their work out as quickly as possible. I am thankful for their patience. And I am grateful to the other contributors for completing their work while also dealing with the personal and professional challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic also affected efforts to promote and celebrate volume 2. A review panel scheduled for the meeting of the Canadian Society for Patristic Studies had to be delayed until 2022 (and in anticipation of that meeting I would like to thank Mona Tokarek LaFosse for planning the session and to Ronald Charles and Sean Hannan for participating). A planned session for the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature was transformed into a special issue of Ancient Jew Review (April 2021) featuring articles by four of the contributors to volume 2 (Brandon Hawk, Jonathan Holste, Christine Luckritz Marquis, and J. Edward Walters) and one from volume 3 (Julia Snyder). My thanks to Janet Spittler and Lily Vuong for planning the issue and to Erin Galgay Walsh for working with me to edit the pieces for publication. MNTA 2 also received attention from several podcasts: Benito Cereno and Chris Sims at the podcast Apocrypals devoted three episodes to discussing texts in the volume, Shirley Paulson interviewed me for the Early Christian Writings podcast, and James McGrath interviewed me for his Religion Prof podcast. Finally, Rick Brannan tweeted mini-summaries of each text (as he did for MNTA 1). I am grateful to everyone who engaged with the book, especially in a time when we all have far more pressing concerns.

The original list of texts to be included in the new volume changed a little since its announcement in volume 2. As frequently happens with multiauthor works, some promised contributions do not get completed and others must be found to fill their places. My thanks go to Carson Bay and Rick Brannan for joining the project late in its development and working quickly to meet our deadline.

As with the other *MNTA* volumes, several of the contributors worked behind the scenes to assist each other, and the editor, in a variety of ways. I want to acknowledge their contributions and express my gratitude. Jacob Lollar assisted Carson Bay on the *Passion of Peter and Paul* and Rick Brannan (along with Janet Spittler) on the *Memorial of John*; Ivan Miroshnikov assisted Janet Spittler on the Coptic tradition of the *Acts of John by Prochorus*; James Walters consulted Jacob Lollar on the manuscript tradition of the *History of Paul*, and Jacob took a close look at one of the difficult-to-read manuscripts of the *Decapitation of John the Forerunner* for me while he was in Paris;

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Nathan Hardy made some helpful changes to Tobias Nicklas's translation of the *Martyrdom of Mark*; Slavomír Čéplö checked information on Church Slavic traditions for several of the entries, and Janet Spittler read over my introduction and offered suggestions for improvement. As a team, we are grateful also to a number of non-contributors who shared their expertise: Stephen C. Carlson, David Eastman, Philip Michael Forness, Justin Howell, Jean-Daniel Kaestli, and Andrew Langford.

To all the contributors, thank you so much for being a part of this project and for your patience with the near-endless requests for changes and clarifications. On a recent podcast Janet Spittler was asked what advice she would give students of early Christianity; she answered "make good friends." What she meant was that these texts come in such a variety of languages that their study requires the collaboration of colleagues with different skills. But I think too that it is important to work with people who are gracious and supportive. Over the course of producing the three *MNTA* volumes, I have indeed made good friends.

A special thank-you goes to Ryan Davis and the staff at Eerdmans, including Andrew Knapp, Jenny Hoffman, and their colleagues.

And finally, no MNTA volume would be complete without a thank-you to my wife, Laura Cudworth, for her continual support.

by Tony Burke

When work began on the More New Testament Apocrypha project (*MNTA*), there were no plans for a third volume. Our sister project, More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (*MOTP*), was contracted for two volumes and revealed the texts planned for volume 2 (still unpublished at this date) in a list appended to the end of the introduction to volume 1. Our publisher expected the same for *MNTA*, but there are so many *more* apocryphal Christian texts to study that two volumes became three. And there are still even more texts that await publication.

For readers new to the series, it is worthwhile to repeat its mandate. Both MOTP and MNTA publish English translations of apocryphal texts that have not appeared in previous English compendia or, in some cases, in any scholarly works, ever. Other texts are included that were previously published only once, over a century ago, but new manuscript discoveries have radically changed reconstructions of the texts and offer new insights into how they have been transmitted over time and space. And some additional texts appear either because their original publication is so obscure—buried in a little-known collection or a narrowly circulated journal—that republication in the series brings them back to scholars' attention, or because they are discussed regularly in cognate disciplines, such as medieval studies or patristics, but not within the context of Christian apocrypha. Earlier English compendia, such as J. K. Elliott's The Apocryphal New Testament and the English translation of Wilhelm Schneemelcher's New Testament Apocrypha, focus on a certain temporal period-the first three or four centuries, thereby defining apocrypha as texts that could have been included in the New Testament-or contain material that expands our understanding of the development of New Testament texts. But those who study Christian apocrypha today decry the idea that apocryphal texts are only useful for the study of the New Testament; instead they declare that apocrypha are worthy of study in and of themselves. The MNTA and MOTP series, therefore, expand the temporal limit past the fourth century. MOTP closes its canon at the advent of Islam, but MNTA has pushed beyond that limit with texts appearing, at least in their earliest known form, in the late medieval period (eleventh, twelfth centuries). Certainly the scope could be expanded even further to include texts created in the fourteenth century (such as the Gospel of Barnabas), or the nineteenth (the Life of St. Issa), or even the twenty-first (the Gospel of Jesus' Wife). But perhaps those texts are best left for another project in another time.

The introduction to *MNTA* 2 includes a list of texts to be included in the current volume. While most of those texts do appear here, five do not: the *Book of the Rooster*, the *Discovery of John the Baptist's Head*, the *Dream of Nero*, *On the Star* by Pseudo-Eusebius of Caesarea, and the *Vision of Theophilus*. As often happens with

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multiauthor projects, some contributors are simply unable to complete their work owing to shifts in professional or personal commitments. For many of us, such commitments were complicated by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic that began late in 2019. Fortunately for MNTA, other contributors came forward to fill the spaces left behind, and the volume has not suffered with the texts' absence. Of the twenty-nine texts included here, fifteen have not appeared previously in English, six of these not in any modern language at all, and five are based on the contributors' own (as yet unpublished) critical editions. This last category includes the Martyrdom of Zechariah, one of several interrelated Byzantine texts documenting the lives of John the Baptist and his parents. A description of the Church Slavic form of the text appeared in scholarship in 1904, but the Greek text, found in only two manuscripts, is still unpublished; an English translation based on these manuscripts, the first in any language, is presented here. Also included in the volume is the related text the Decapitation of John the Forerunner, previously published from one Greek manuscript and in three Church Slavic forms, and here making its English debut in advance of a critical edition based on nine manuscripts. Rounding out the Baptist texts is the brief Birth of John, included as an appendix to the Decapitation of John; an Arabic version was translated into French, but this is the first English translation of the Greek text, which is known from one unpublished manuscript. These join the Life and Martyrdom of John the Baptist, which appeared in MNTA 1, alongside the Life of John the Baptist attributed to Serapion, available today in Arabic but likely composed in Coptic. Two more texts translated from the contributors' own editions are the Revelation about the Lord's Prayer and the Dialogue of Mary and Christ on the Departure of the Soul. Both are examples of Byzantine erōtapokriseis (question-and-answer texts), a genre examined in MNTA 2 through a range of Johannine apocalyptica. As with the Johannine texts, these new examples of erōtapokriseis demonstrate how musings on such topics as the afterlife and the meaning of the Lord's Prayer have become "apocryphized" in order to attract a wider audience to the works. Who better to explain the Lord's Prayer than the Lord himself?

Several texts from the projected list of contents appear here under different titles, demonstrating how quickly developments occur in the field. The original list includes only one text by the name of Revelation of Matthew about the End Times, prepared for MNTA by Stephen Pelle on the basis of earlier work appearing in the journal Apocrypha. But a second apocalypse attributed to Matthew came to the attention of Charles D. Wright, and he partnered with Pelle on its first translation into any modern language (which is based on their own forthcoming edition); the inclusion of both texts in the volume necessitated distinguishing them with the numbers "First" and "Second." And there were other changes made to titles: the Acts of Mark became the more standard Martyrdom of Mark (despite the fact that the text contains more than a martyrdom), the Travels of Peter and Christ in Rome became the Acts of Christ and Peter in Rome (since the protagonists do little traveling in the text), and the Interrogatio Iohannis, which has been published under several names, went from the Book of John to the more appropriate Questions of John. It is difficult to change titles once texts become established, even when the titles previously assigned by scholars no longer fit their contents. The classic example of this problem is the Infancy Gospel of Thomas. Though it has become clear that the text was not originally attributed to Thomas, the title continues to assert a pull on scholarship with attempts to connect the text to

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Thomas traditions, but abandoning the title at this late date causes more problems than it solves. Multiple works by the same or similar titles are also problematic. No-table in this case is the *Passion of Peter and Paul*, an excerpt from *On the Destruction of Jerusalem* (also known as Pseudo-Hegesippus) translated into English here for the first time. It is easily confused with several other texts documenting the deaths of the two apostles, including the *Passion of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul* attributed to Marcellus. While it is certainly a benefit to have more texts available to readers, the multiplicity of the variant forms complicates their study.

Also firmly established in the field are the divisions of the texts in the volume, reflecting the traditional genres of the New Testament writings: gospels, acts, epistles, and apocalypses. Recent discussions of genres in apocrypha have highlighted their fluidity. While the current volume continues to follow the divisions of its predecessors, many of the texts included here defy easy categorization. The Epistles of Longinus, Augustus, Ursinius, and Patrophilus, for example, are a group of "testimonia" texts demonstrating knowledge of Jesus and his early followers by so-called pagan historians and philosophers. Only two of the testimonia are actually epistles, and though it seems they once had independent origins, it would be cumbersome to disperse them throughout the volume. Since they deal with events in the life of Jesus, the testimonia could be placed among the gospel texts, but it seemed best to follow the lead of the title that has been assigned to them in previous scholarship and include them under "Epistles." A similar challenge presented itself in volume 2 with the Epistle of Pelagia, which was placed among epistles even though its content is more appropriate for acts. Another text that combines genres is the Acts of Christ and Peter in Rome, presented here in its first English translation, from Greek and Church Slavic. The text resembles apocryphal acts in that it presents tales of Peter after the ascension of Jesus, but it also has connections with infancy gospels in its portrayal of Christ, who is here disguised as a child, performing miracles in stories with parallels to the Infancy Gospel of Thomas. The decision to place "Christ" in the title is intended as an indication that the text is a departure from other apocryphal acts where Jesus chiefly appears in the commission scenes and then departs, leaving the apostle to wander the world alone save for the occasional descent from the heavens to perform a miracle. Lastly, the Gospel of the Twelve Apostles, making its first appearance in an English apocrypha compendium, begins with an account of the nativity, ministry, and resurrection of Jesus harmonized from the New Testament Gospels. The apocryphal content comes later. After a commissioning narrative, three visions (apocalypses) are revealed to John, James, and Peter. The unwieldy title originally assigned to the text—the Gospel of the Twelve and Apocalypses of Each of Them-highlights its composite nature, but the choice was made to shorten the title and assign it to the corresponding category.

Several other texts in the volume are difficult to assign to any of the usual categories. The *Dream of the Rood* is a poem about Jesus's passion but features few apocryphal traditions; still, it has interesting thematic connections with the *Legend* of the Holy Rood Tree featured in MNTA 2, as well as several "talking cross" texts, including the Gospel of Peter and the Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon. Similarly, the Story of the Image of Edessa incorporates the apocryphal Abgar Correspondence but for the most part focuses on the transmission of the relic in subsequent centuries. No doubt the text is useful for the study of the correspondence, but it does strain the limits of the definition of apocrypha. Then there is the Story of John Meeting

Cerinthus. Like the Story of John and the Robber (from MNTA 2) and the Death of Judas (MNTA 1), this is an apocryphal tale of an apostle transmitted by an orthodox writer—in this case Irenaeus, but his account is copied by several later writers. Does its use by Irenaeus make the story historical rather than apocryphal? Irenaeus certainly thinks so. Consider too the Memorial of John, which is an introduction to the Gospel of John found attached to the text in numerous manuscripts. The Memorial is of interest to scholars of Christian apocrypha because it features traditions deriving from the Acts of John by Prochorus. Finally, it may seem strange to see epistles of Ignatius in an apocrypha collection, but the four short pieces of this correspondence included here are written to the apostle John and the Virgin Mary, who likely were long dead by Ignatius's time. The epistles are found in the so-called Long Recension of the Ignatian corpus, and though they were considered genuine for centuries, they were declared "spurious" in the Renaissance and have been neglected in scholarship ever since. So that makes them twice apocryphal: letters falsely attributed to Ignatius and, in the case of Mary's reply to Ignatius, a letter presented as a composition by a first-century Christian figure.

The remaining texts of the "Gospels" section of the volume hearken back to selections in previous volumes. The Hospitality and Perfume of the Bandit is yet another free-floating story of the good bandit crucified beside Jesus. This version is found in certain manuscripts of the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, a text that began as a Latin translation of the Protevangelium of James but has been expanded in multiple ways over the centuries. The variants are so many that they do not always get noted by editors and translators. One of the goals of MNTA is to bring attention to these stories that may not be original to the text but deserve mention. The Dialogue of Jesus and the Devil has appeared previously in English but only in a translation from the Church Slavic text; here both the Greek and the Church Slavic versions are given attention. The dialogue genre has appeared previously in MNTA with the Dialogue of the Paralytic with Christ in volume 1 and, to some extent, with the Johannine apocalyptica from volume 2 in which John poses questions to Jesus or Abraham, or John responds to questions by James. Designating a dialogue as a gospel or apocalypse depends solely on whether its exchange takes place before or after Jesus's resurrection; in this text, the dialogue is set uniquely amidst the temptation scene from early in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Finally, the Eremitic Life of Mary Magdalene, translated here for the first time in any modern language, presents the Magdalene not as a penitent prostitute but as a cave-dwelling hermit; readers of MNTA 2 will remember that Jacob of Voragine's account of Mary in the Golden Legend combines this vita eremetica tradition with the vita apostolica tradition exemplified in the Life of Mary Magdalene published in the earlier volume.

Much of *MNTA* 3 is devoted to apocryphal acts, a rich corpus of texts often passed over by readers and many scholars more interested in studying Jesus traditions found in apocryphal gospels. Even within the acts category, scholars' attention has been fixed primarily on the five "great" apocryphal acts (Andrew, Peter, Paul, John, and Thomas), leaving later developments relatively unexplored, particularly the collection of Egyptian acts initially assembled in Coptic but available more plentifully in Arabic and Ethiopic translations. More Coptic witnesses have become available in recent decades, prompting scholars to examine this tradition anew, leading in some cases to opening up questions about the possibility of Coptic origins of the texts that have Greek counterparts, such

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as the Martyrdom of Mark. Ivan Miroshnikov is at the forefront of this work and here has contributed translations of the full range of available Coptic witnesses to the Acts of Andrew and Philemon and the Preaching of Philip. Another Coptic Andrew text included in the volume is the Acts of Andrew and Paul. This text, extant in a single manuscript and no other ancient language, has previously appeared only in summary or as excerpts. Acts in Syriac, like the Coptic, have also suffered from neglect. A number of Syriac accounts of Peter appeared in MNTA 2 in translations by J. Edward Walters, who returns here with two more: the Preaching of Simon Cephas in the City of Rome, which was published and translated more than a century ago but is represented here with notes on additional manuscripts, and the Disputation of Peter and Nero, which until now was available in English only in a recent master's thesis from Italy. The MNTA series' first contribution to the body of Syriac Petrine acts is the History of Simon Cephas, the Chief of the Apostles, which was included in volume 1. Readers may recall that the text appears in manuscripts together with the History of Paul as the first of a two-part story. With the publication of the History of Paul in MNTA 3, the entire story is now available to English readers for the first time. Another text found in Syriac (as well as Armenian) is the Epistle of James to Quadratus, which has not appeared previously in English. The Epistle does not belong to the genre of apocryphal acts, but like the acts, it reveals something about the exploits of an early Christian leader-in this case James, the brother of Jesus-after the ascension.

The jewel of the crown in volume 3 is the *Acts of John by Prochorus*, not just because it is such a lengthy text—occupying more than 60 pages—but more because an English translation of this text is long overdue. *Prochorus* is less well known to scholars than the early *Acts of John*, which today is available only in fragmentary form—and much of the material used to reconstruct the *Acts of John* comes from manuscripts of *Prochorus*. The impact of *Prochorus* is far more substantial than the earlier acts, with around 150 manuscripts available in Greek alone, as well as translations into Coptic, Arabic, Ethiopic, Armenian, and Old French. Stories from the text also appear in iconography, including a series of paintings still extant today in the Church of John on Patmos (where much of the action in the text takes place). Janet Spittler's translation for *MNTA* 3 is a significant contribution to the study of this text. It makes a fine companion to Spittler's new translation of the *Acts of John in Rome*, which also incorporates material from the early acts and sometimes appears in manuscripts alongside *Prochorus*.

The Acts of John by Prochorus exemplifies the goals of the MNTA series: to make available in translation texts typically overlooked in previous English-language compendia, in part because they were composed after the formation of the Roman Catholic canon. Prochorus is one of the most well-attested apocryphal texts, with a manuscript base rivaling the Protevangelium of James, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, and a handful of other texts. Yet it has received far less attention not only in the field of Christian apocrypha studies but also in such cognate disciplines as Eastern Orthodoxy and medieval hagiography. So-called later apocrypha had far greater impact on Christian piety than many of the texts composed in the early centuries, yet they are mostly unknown. For medieval and some modern Christians, discoveries of such texts as the Gospel of Thomas or the Coptic Apocalypse of Peter would be considered "more" Christian apocrypha—new texts to be added to a corpus of centuries-old and well-established lives of saints and liturgical readings. But scholarship works here in

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reverse, focusing on reconstructing and rediscovering what is old to the detriment of what became standard. Such an attraction to early texts is understandable. It presents us with windows into nascent Christianity when it was most diverse: a world of gnostics, archontics, Priscillianists, encratites, Ebionites, and Marcionites. But there is also plenty of diversity observable in later works, as Christians created new texts, or adapted old ones, to combat or support new heresies, to establish new festivals and holy sites, to encourage their fellow renunciants, and to bring comfort in times of anxiety by promising rewards to those who remain faithful. Earlier is not necessarily better. Each of the texts in these volumes offers readers more to discover, more to appreciate, and more to enjoy.

Future Volumes of More New Testament Apocrypha

When MNTA 2 was submitted to the press, there were no guarantees made that the series would continue. But that volume had grown too large, so several texts were removed with the promise that they could be included in this now-completed third volume. Because of the success of the series to date, discussions have begun about producing even more volumes. No decisions have been made over what texts to include, but a preliminary "wish list" would comprise those that were planned for previous volumes but did not materialize, such as the Book of the Rolls, the Infancy of the Savior (also known as the Arabic Infancy Gospel), the Book of the Rooster, the Dream of Nero, and the Vision of Theophilus. Scholars would benefit also from a comprehensive synopsis of the Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Arabic texts of the Pseudo-Clementine Romance. And there are still several pseudo-apostolic memoirs, Coptic versions of apocryphal acts, and portions of the Latin Apostolic Histories collection that remain untranslated and understudied. Likely MNTA 4 will be some time in coming; in the meantime, readers can look forward to the long-awaited second volume in Christoph Markschies and Jens Schröter's Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung series; Ivan Miroshnikov's Parabiblica Coptica, which includes several editions and studies of texts featured in MNTA; and Hugo Lundhaug's Storyworlds in Transition project, which plans to produce a volume of Coptic apocrypha in translation. Also worth watching is the Early Christian Apocrypha series published by the North American Society for the Study of Christian Apocryphal Literature (NASSCAL); upcoming volumes will feature the Preaching of Peter (Kergmata Petrou), the Doctrine of Addai, and the Life of Thecla. The society also administers the open-access electronic resource e-Clavis: Christian Apocrypha (accessible at NASSCAL.com), which features summaries, bibliographies, and other resources on the full range of apocryphal literature.

Note on Cyrillic Transliteration by Slavomír Čéplö

In this volume, the following transliteration scheme for Cyrillic is employed:

Cyrillic uppercase	Cyrillic lowercase	TRANSLITERATION UPPERCASE	Transliteration lowercase	Notes
А	а	А	а	
Б	б	В	b	

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Cyrillic uppercase	Cyrillic lowercase	TRANSLITERATION UPPERCASE	TRANSLITERATION LOWERCASE	Notes
В	В	V	v	
Г	Г	G	g	Ukrainian: H h
Ґ	ľ	G	g	Only in Ukrainian
Д	д	D	d	
Е	e	Е	e	
Ë	ë	Ë	ë	
Ж	Ж	Ž	ž	
3	3	Z	Z	
И	И	Ι	i	
Й	Й	J	j	
Ι	i	Î	î	
Ï	ï	Ï	ï	
К	К	К	k	
Л	Л	L	1	
М	М	М	m	
Н	Н	Ν	n	
0	0	О	о	
П	П	Р	р	
Р	р	R	r	
С	С	S	S	
Т	Т	Т	t	
У	у	U	u	
Φ	ф	F	f	
Х	Х	Ch	ch	
Ц	Ц	С	С	
Ч	Ч	Č	č	
Ш	Ш	Š	š	
Щ	Щ	Šč	šč	Bulgarian: Št št
Ъ	Ъ	Ŭ	ŭ	Bulgarian: À ă
Ы	Ы	Y	У	
Ь	Ь	Ĭ	ĭ	
Э	Э	È	è	
Ю	ю	Ju	ju	
R	Я	Ja	ja	

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Cyrillic uppercase	Cyrillic lowercase	TRANSLITERATION UPPERCASE	TRANSLITERATION LOWERCASE	Notes	
Pre-1918 Russian reform letters					
θ	θ	Th	th		
Ъ	Ъ	Ě	ě		
V	v	Ü	ü		
Church Slavic usage					
E	e	Ê	ê		
Æ	Æ	Je	je		
S	S	Dz	dz		
¥	8	Ou	ou		
ω	W	Ô	ô		
Ü	Ŵ	Ôt	ôt		
Ж	Ж	Q	Q		
A	A	Ę	ę		
ЪЖ	囷	Jǫ	jǫ		
ĿΑ	IA	Ję	ję		
ž	ž	Ks	ks		
Ψ	ψ	Ps	ps		
Serbian usage					
Ђ	ħ	Ð	đ		
Љ	љ	Lj	lj		
њ	њ	Nj	nj		
Ћ	ħ	Ć	ć		
Ų	џ	Dž	dž		

This scheme is based on common standards (International Organization for Standardization, romanization of Russian [ISO/R] 9:1968, and the transliteration scheme used in Lunt's grammar of Old Church Slavonic¹) with some modifications. These modifications were chosen as a compromise between readability, existing practices, and the ultimate goal of providing a transliteration that would allow full conversion back to original Cyrillic in the context of the mixing of various orthographies (Church Slavic, pre-reform Russian, modern Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, etc.). The compromise is particularly evident in such choices as transcribing the *yers* as i and u where most standards prefer to use single and double quotes, respectively. Our solution is

Introduction

^{1.} Horace G. Lunt, Old Church Slavonic Grammar, 7th ed. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001).

preferable considering modern orthographic practices and the needs of editing/typesetting software.

Personal and place names are the one exception where this transliteration scheme is not applied. In such cases, if a standardized (in whatever way) form in Latin script exists, it is used throughout. One example is Aleksandr Pypin, whose last name is written in pre-reform Russian Orthography as Пыпинъ and should thus be translated as *Pypinŭ*. The *yer*-less form Pypin, established in English-language literature, will be used throughout. For place names, the standard English name is used—that is, Moscow instead of Moskva, Saint Petersburg instead of *Sankt Peterbürgŭ*.