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# **Christian Apocryphal Texts for the New Millennium Achievements, Prospects, and Challenges**

**International Workshop on Christian Apocryphal Literature**

**University of Ottawa, Faculty of Arts**

**Department of Classics and Religious Studies**

**Day 0: Friday, September 29, 2006**

6:00-7:00 PM: Welcome cocktail: Department of Classics and Religious Studies, Arts Building, first floor

7:30-9:30: Dinner: Jazzy Restaurant, Jock Turcot University Centre, first floor

**Day 1: Saturday, September 30, 2006****Arts Building, room 509, fifth floor**

9:00-9:30 AM: Opening

9:30-10:00: Lorenzo DiTommaso (Concordia University), "Jewish Pseudepigrapha and Christian Apocrypha: Definitions, Boundaries, and Points of Contact"

10:00-10:30: Timothy Beech (St. Paul University), "Unraveling the Complexity of the Oracula Sibyllina: The Value of a Socio-Rhetorical Approach in the Study of the Sibylline Oracles"

10:30-11:00: Coffee break

11:00-11:30: Michael Kaler (McMaster University), "Gnostic Irony and the Adaptation of the Apocalyptic Genre"

11:30-12:00: Robert R. Phenix, Jr. (Saint Louis University), "The Problem of the Source of Balai's Sermons on Joseph and the Nachleben of Pseudepigraphical Joseph Material"

12:00-12:30: James R. Davila (University of St. Andrews), "More Christian Apocryphal Texts"

12:30-2:00: Lunch

2:00-2:30 PM: Louis Painchaud (Université Laval), "À propos de la redécouverte de l'Évangile de Judas"

2:30-3:00: F. Stanley Jones (California State University), "The Genesis of the Pseudo-Clementine Novel"

3:00-3:30: Annette Y. Reed (McMaster University), "New Light on 'Jewish-Christian' Apocrypha and the History of Jewish/Christian Relations"

3:30-4:00: Dominique Côté (University of Ottawa), "Orphic Theogony and the Context of the Clementines"

- 4:00-4:30 Coffee break
- 4:30-5:00: Nicole Kelley (Florida State University), “Pseudo-Clementine Polemics against Sacrifice: A Window onto Religious Life in the Fourth Century?”
- 5:00-5:30: Timothy Pettipiece (University of Ottawa), “Manichaean ‘Apocrypha’? From Mani to Manichaeism”
- 5:30-6:00: Theodore De Bruyn (University of Ottawa), “The Power of Apocryphal Narratives in Late Antiquity: The Testimony of Amulets”
- 7:30-9:30: Dinner: Merlot Restaurant, Ottawa Marriott, 100 Kent Street

**Day 2: Sunday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006**

**Arts Building, room 509, fifth floor**

- 9:00-9:30 AM: Tony Chartrand-Burke (University of York), “Researching the New Testament Apocrypha in the Twenty-First Century”
- 9:30-10:00: Peter W. Dunn (Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui), “The Acts of Paul as an Experimental Control for the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles”
- 10:00-10:30: François Bovon (Harvard University), “The Revelation of Stephen or the Invention of Stephen’s Relics (Sinaiticus graecus 493)”
- 10:30-11:00: Coffee break
- 11:00-11:30: Dennis R. MacDonald (Claremont Graduate University), “The Gospel of Nicodemus (or, the Acta Pilati) as a Christian Iliad and Odyssey”

- 11:30-12:00: Cornelia Horn (Saint Louis University), “From Model Virgin to Maternal Intercessor: Mary, Children, and Family Problems in Late Antique Infancy Gospel Traditions”
- 12:00-12:30: Stephen J. Shoemaker (University of Oregon), “Mary in Early Christian Apocrypha: Virgin Territory”
- 12:30-2:00: Lunch
- 2:00-2:30 PM: Craig A. Evans (Acadia Divinity College), “The Apocryphal Jesus: Assessing the Possibilities and Problems”
- 2:30-3:00: Ian Henderson (McGill University), “The Usefulness of Christian Apocryphal Texts in the Research on the Historical Jesus”
- 3:00-3:30: Adriana Bara (Université de Montréal), “The Convergence between Canonical Gospels, Apocryphal Writings and Liturgical Texts in Nativity and Resurrection Icons in Eastern Churches”
- 3:30-4:00: Coffee break
- 4:00-4:30 Paul-Hubert Poirier (Université Laval), “La Prôtennoia trimorphe (NH XIII,1), le Livre des secrets de Jean et le Prologue johannique”
- 4:30-5:00: Pierluigi Piovanelli (University of Ottawa), “Using Labels and Categories in a Responsible Way: The Making and Evolution of Early Christian Apocryphal Texts with the Gospel of Mary as a Test Case”
- 5:00-5:30: Final Discussion and Conclusion
- 7:30-9:30: Dinner: Saigon Restaurant, 85 Clarence Street (ByWard Market)

## Abstracts

**Adriana Bara**

Université de Montréal

*The Convergence between Canonical Gospels, Apocryphal  
Writings and Liturgical Texts in Nativity and  
Resurrection Icons in Eastern Churches*

The reception of the text of the Christian texts can be explored from different perspectives. One of the ways that the reception of the texts is actualized in the life of the community is in the liturgy, the forms of worship celebrated by the community. Another way of the reception of the Christian texts is through the icons of the Great feasts. These icons are not only pieces of art, but also exegetical representation of the Gospels and the apocryphal writings. These texts have inspired many iconographers over the centuries. Through two millennia, the Gospels and the apocryphal writings have been translated into icons. I would like to emphasize the role of the icons of the Nativity, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as meeting places between canonical Gospels, liturgical texts and apocryphal writings, and between art and theology.

**Timothy Beech**

Saint Paul University

*Unraveling the Complexity of the Oracula Sibyllina:  
The Value of a Socio-Rhetorical Approach in the Study of  
the Sibylline Oracles*

As we find it in its present form, the body of ancient literature known as the *Sibylline Oracles* is an intricate blending of Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman material that stands as a compelling monument to the complexity of the religious landscape during the period of Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity. To date, the majority of study that has been carried out on this complex body of literature has been undertaken through the lens of various historical-critical methodologies, and these have certainly yielded important conclusions about the development of the *Sibylline Oracles* and their places within their contemporary religious environments. However, in order to build on the results of previous historical-critical study, it will be suggested that a socio-rhetorical approach is able to offer fresh perspective that will advance the scholarly discussion and understanding of *Sibylline Oracles* forward on at least four fronts: 1) the cultural and ideological significance of the redactional layers within *Sibylline Oracles*; 2) the relationship of the Jewish and Christian *Sibylline Oracles* to their Greco-Roman counterparts; 3) the relationship of *Sibylline Oracles* to the apocalyptic literature with which it was contemporary; and 4) the value of the individual *Sibylline Oracles* as legitimate rhetorical productions.

**Tony Chartrand-Burke**

York University

*Researching the New Testament Apocrypha in the Twenty-First Century*

In a 1988 article on “Research on the New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha” (*ANRW* 2.25.2, pp. 3919-3968) James H. Charlesworth divided research on the NTAP into four phases. The last of these phases began in 1965 and is marked by a tendency to evaluate the texts critically as evidence (alongside the canonical gospels) for early forms of Christianity. It seems appropriate at this time, in celebration of Volume 2 of *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, to look back at the past 18 years and evaluate the current state of scholarship on the NTAP. The proposed paper is part of a planned study on the Transmission of the New Testament Apocrypha. It will survey the most recent scholarship on the NTAP and identify its accomplishments, reception, and tendencies. Included in the survey will be overviews of recent NTAP collections (e.g., the two volumes from Pléiade, Hans-Josef Klauck’s *Apocryphal Gospels: An Introduction*, Fred Lapham’s *An Introduction to the New Testament Apocrypha*, and various publications by Bart Ehrman), major studies of individual texts (in particular, the *Pseudo-Clementines*, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, and recent work on the Irish apocrypha and the Apocryphal Acts), new discoveries (the *Gospel of the Savior*, and the *Gospel of Judas*), and a discussion of current tendencies in scholarship, including the continued integration of key gospel texts for the study of the Historical Jesus, the surge of scholarly interest in the Apocryphal Acts and public interest in the *Gospel of Mary*, and the attention now being paid to apocryphal texts from Late Antiquity.

**Dominique Côté**

Université d’Ottawa

*Orphic Theogony and the Context of the Clementines*

Neoplatonists, from Porphyry to Damascius, integrated within their construction of Hellenism legendary figures like Homer, Pythagoras and Orpheus. Both Porphyry and Iamblichus wrote about Pythagoras and his way of life, presenting the philosopher as a divine man and a paradigm of wisdom as well. Damascius, last head of the Neoplatonic Academy at Athens, included in his treatise *On Principles* a vast survey of mythical cosmogonies including Orphic texts. It is worth noting that we find in the *Clementines*, a corpus dating from the fourth century, a cosmogony and a theogony, attributed to the grammarian Apion, which agree in many ways with some Orphic theogonies. The problem raised by this Orphic theogony in the *Clementines* has been studied in 1981 and more recently in 2004 by Jan van Amersfoort. The Dutch scholar reached the conclusion that this type of Orphic theogony was of Alexandrian origin and had been gathered by the author of a Jewish Apology written in Alexandria against Apion, the source of *Homilies* VI 3, 4-10 and *Recognitions* X. 17-20; 30, according to Werner Heintze. I do not share Amersfoort’s view concerning the origin of the Orphic theogony in the *Clementines*. I would rather support the view held by Georg Strecker that the dialogue with Apion has been invented by the Homilist. Therefore the Orphic theogony in the *Clementines* should be read in the context of a conflict between Neoplatonism and Christianity in the fourth century.

**James R. Davila**

University of St. Andrews

*More Christian Apocrypha*

The *More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* project at the University of St. Andrews (<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/academic/divinity/MOTP/index-motp.html>) has assembled an international team of scholars to translate a new collection of Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. The corpus of texts, which generally can be dated to c. 600 C.E. or earlier, includes about sixty complete or nearly complete works and numerous fragments. These documents are not covered in the Charlesworth volumes, apart from a few for which we have important new manuscript evidence. The corpus includes pagan works, Jewish pseudepigrapha transmitted by Jews, Jewish pseudepigrapha transmitted by Christians, and pseudepigrapha composed by Christians. The latter two categories are, of course, of great interest to specialists in Christian apocrypha. Specialists will be aware of some of these texts, but few will know all of them. By collecting introductions and translations of these documents, we aim to raise their profile among both scholars and nonspecialists.

**Theodore De Bruyn**

University of Ottawa

*The Power of Apocryphal Narratives in Late Antiquity:  
The Testimony of Amulets*

In the Graeco-Roman world amulets were a means to appeal to the divine for healing from sickness, protection against harm, and success in life. As Christian institutions and rituals became more

pervasive, amulets gradually incorporated Christian figures, narratives, acclamations, and signs. Scholars have noted the presence of apocryphal figures and narratives in several amulets, but to date there has been no comprehensive review of apocryphal elements in Christian amulets in late antiquity. This paper will examine the evidence of apocryphal influences in all extant Greek amulets containing Christian motifs and preserved on papyri or parchment. The investigation is part of a larger study, currently funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, of the incorporation of Christian motifs in Greek amulets in late antiquity.

**Lorenzo DiTommaso**

Concordia University

*Jewish Pseudepigrapha and Christian Apocrypha:  
Definitions, Boundaries, and Points of Contact*

Only in the past few decades has the study of biblical apocrypha begun to transcend the balkanisation imposed on it for a variety of historical and theological reasons. Although certain distinctions among the categories remain important, it is now clear that they do not automatically warrant the rigid classification of the corpus of apocryphal literature on the basis of chronology, canon, or confession. This paper examines two of these historical categories, the Jewish Pseudepigrapha and the Christian Apocrypha, with the goal of identifying avenues and approaches by which current research on the first collection of texts might inform the study of the second. The paper focuses on the related issues of definitions, terminology, and boundaries,

and on the confirmed and potential points of contact between the two collections.

**Peter W. Dunn**

Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui

*The Acts of Paul as an Experimental Control for the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles*

There is a rift in New Testament scholarship between those who maintain an early date for the canonical Acts and those who maintain that it takes place at least one generation after the events that it describes. *The Acts of Paul* may serve as an experimental control for the claim that Acts was written in the post-apostolic period, because the former document should be dated in the first half of the second century. By comparing Acts with the *Acts of Paul* in the areas of titles of officials, geography, historical persons, historical events, and orthodoxy and heresy, we will see that the latter belongs squarely in the second century, and that the former is more native to the first century and an early date for its writing is very much more plausible.

**Craig A. Evans**

Acadia Divinity College

*The Apocryphal Jesus:  
Assessing the Possibilities and Problems*

The debate surrounding the usefulness of the extracanonical Gospels for historical Jesus research is a long one, which in one form or another can be traced back to the early church. One thinks especially of second, third, and fourth-century Fathers who appeal to various Gospels or Gospel recensions in commentaries, treatises, and

apologetic works, consciously supplementing, even modifying the tradition of the canonical Gospels. In some ways what these early Christian theologians and apologists were doing was not much different from the objectives and activities of the modern research. The present study undertakes a critical investigation of the status of the question today, advocating an openness to the possibility of early, reliable tradition in these texts, but at the same time urging greater caution in their use.

**Ian Henderson**

McGill University

*The Usefulness of Christian Apocryphal Texts in the Research on the Historical Jesus*

Increasing awareness (and textual availability) of non-canonical Gospels has had an ambiguous impact on Historical Jesus Research, an impact more hermeneutical than methodological or material. Most concretely a wider variety of texts labeled as “Gospel” raises questions of genre, influence and referentiality. Many scholars (and fiction writers) have publicly pointed to non-canonical Gospels as a warrant for re-imagining the “Historical Jesus.” Ironically, few non-fictional historical reconstructions actually rely on non-canonical Gospels for decisive evidence. Ultimately, increased access to non-canonical Gospels serves mainly to focalize the question of imagination, fiction and history in public as well as scholarly discourse about Jesus.

**Cornelia Horn**

Saint Louis University

*From Model Virgin to Maternal Intercessor:  
Mary, Children, and Family Problems in Late Antique  
Infancy Gospel Traditions*

Marian theology in early Christian and late antique settings has already received a considerable amount of scholarly attention in past decades. More recently, the study of private life in the ancient household as well as the more specific area of children's experience have entered the arena of scholarly discussions. This study offers a close-up examination of the intersection of both areas in late antique apocryphal acts and gospels, primarily those preserved in Syriac and Arabic. The development of women's religions and Marian piety in the Christian and early Islamic Near East may have played a role in the apparent shift from focusing on a blatant asceticism to a positive re-valuation of family life.

**F. Stanley Jones**

California State University

*The Genesis of the Pseudo-Clementine Novel*

This paper explores the relationship of the Pseudo-Clementine novel to the other novels of antiquity. Similar motifs are examined to determine which ancient novels the author of the *Periodoi Petrou* knew. Chronological conclusions are then drawn to aid in the dating of the ancient novels. The implications of the evidence for the working-method of the Pseudo-Clementine author are considered.

**Michael Kaler**

McMaster University

*Gnostic Irony and the Adaptation of the Apocalyptic Genre*

For gnostic authors as for other early Christians, Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writings were valued sources of information and inspiration. Apocalyptic works provided their readers with information about the true meaning of history, the nature of the cosmos, and humanity's origins and destiny. The influence of apocalyptic works, and of the apocalyptic genre, on gnostic writings of all sorts is clear. But one of the fundamental elements of apocalyptic writings was a glorification of the creator-God, a divinity whose status gnostic works radically downgraded. The tension caused by this basic difference in attitudes towards the creator-God and his creation led to the ironic reappropriation of the norms of the apocalyptic genre on the part of some authors. In this paper, I will examine such reappropriation as manifested in the gnostic *Apocalypse of Paul*, the *Apocalypse of Adam*, and *Allogenes*.

**Nicole Kelley**

Florida State University

*Pseudo-Clementine Polemics against Sacrifice:  
A Window onto Religious Life in the Fourth Century?*

Thanks in part to the heresiological testimony of church fathers such as Irenaeus and Epiphanius, opposition to animal sacrifice usually has been considered a hallmark of "Jewish-Christian" belief. The *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* and *Recognitions*, perhaps our most important late antique literary sources for "Jewish Christianity," contain polemics against sacrifice that are often interpreted in light of this religious heritage. My paper suggests that

we might fruitfully reconsider this prevailing interpretation of the *Pseudo-Clementines'* anti-sacrificial elements. I propose that the *Homilies* and *Recognitions'* polemic against sacrifice can be read not simply as a remnant of a sectarian past, but as a timely response to late antique religious developments that occurred during the reign of the emperor Julian.

**Dennis R. MacDonald**

Claremont Graduate University

*The Gospel of Nicodemus (or, the Acta Pilati) as a  
Christian Iliad and Odyssey*

In 1898 J. Rendel Harris suggested that the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (which he called the *Acts of Pilate*) was a two-volume work, the first half of which was a Christian Iliad and the second half, the so-called *Descensus Christi*, was an Odyssey. Unfortunately, Harris did not make a compelling case, in part because he wished to attribute at least some of the Homeric imitation to a second century lost poetic gospel. But the Homeric parallels are most extensive than Harris recognized. The implications of this observation are profound for understanding the relationship of the various recensions of this strange book to each other. It also shows that at least one early Christian was aware of parallels between the death and burial of Jesus and the death and burial of Hector and the strategic differences between Odysseus's visit to Hades and Jesus' emptying Hades of the righteous dead.

**Timothy Pettipiece**

University of Ottawa

*Manichaean "Apocrypha"?*

*From Mani to Manichaeism*

In their efforts to construct a religion to replace all religions, Manichaeans were quite adept at interacting with and absorbing a wide variety of religious literature from both east and west, including, of course, what modern scholars classify as Judaeo-Christian "apocrypha." This paper will examine Manichaean attitudes towards and use of these "apocryphal" writings at a variety of stages in the history of this dynamic religious movement from Late Antiquity and address the validity of this literary category for the study of Manichaeism.

**Robert R. Phenix, Jr.**

Saint Louis University

*The Problem of the Source of Balai's Sermons on  
Joseph and the Nachleben of Pseudepigraphical Joseph  
Material*

The Syriac *Sermons on Joseph* of Balai (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> c.) is an example of a work that reflects the *Nachleben* of pseudepigraphical Joseph material as well as Jewish midrash and haggadah. Its peculiarities relative to other Syriac Joseph material pose the problem of the source of Balai's narrative framework. The basic outline of the *Sermons on Joseph* follows that of Genesis, with seamless incorporation of extra-biblical expansions. The overall shape of the *Sermons on Joseph* reflects a bi-partite structure: part one tells the story of Joseph through his reunion with his family and their establishment in Egypt and part two tells the story of the deaths of Jacob and Joseph, a division that is unique to the earliest Syriac Joseph material. A similar structure is found

in the pseudepigraphical *Ethiopic History of Joseph*. The death of Joseph and Jacob as a separate work is also reflected in the fragmentary remains of the *Prayer of Joseph* and its related works. The search for the characteristics of Balai's source involves the problem of the relationship between pseudepigraphical works and rabbinic biblical interpretation.

**Pierluigi Piovaneli**

University of Ottawa

*Using Labels and Categories in a Responsible Way: The Making and Evolution of Early Christian Apocryphal Texts with the Gospel of Mary as a Test Case*

In contemporary scholarship the issue of naming ancient religious texts and groups is hotly debated. Not only a good number of traditional identifications (as, e.g., the association of Qumran sectarians with the Essenes) but also of long-established categories (as Gnosticism and Jewish Christianity) have been called – in my opinion, rightly – into question. To acknowledge that some terms are still used in wrong and derogatory ways certainly contributes to put the history and theology of early Christianity into a different and more insightful perspective. However, to avoid problematic labels does not eliminate the trouble of describing the diversity existing between one Christian group and another or one corpus of texts and another. I am going to make this point explicit using the *Gospel of Mary* as a test case. How can we consider such an intriguing apocryphal text? Is it a “Gnostic,” an “Ascetic,” or simply a “Christian” text? We will see that one perspective does not necessarily exclude the other one and that, in the end, the editors of the *Pléiade* took the

right decision to include the *Gospel of Mary* in a new collection of Christian apocryphal text.

**Annette Yoshiko Reed**

McMaster University

*New Light on “Jewish-Christian” Apocrypha and the History of Jewish/Christian Relations*

The decades since World War II have seen a striking growth of scholarly interest in the history of interactions between Jews and Christians, marked by the development of new theories and perspectives on the relationship(s) between Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity. Although roughly concurrent with the flowering of new research on non-canonical Christian literature in the wake of the MS discoveries at Nag Hammadi, scholars are only recently beginning to bring NT apocrypha to bear on these broader issues. This paper will thus explore how NT apocrypha can shed new light on the history of Jewish/Christian relations in Late Antiquity. I will focus on texts (such as the *Pseudo-Clementines*) that can be deemed “Jewish-Christian” inasmuch as they assume or express an identity that cannot be adequately described as either “Jewish” or “Christian” in any mutually-exclusive sense of the terms. I hope to show how these texts grant us a much richer picture than can be drawn from the Church Fathers and classical Rabbinic literature alone – as well as offering intriguing hints of possible conduits for interchange between these two “orthodoxies.”

**Stephen J. Shoemaker**

University of Oregon

*Mary in Early Christian Apocrypha:*

*Virgin Territory*

The Marian apocrypha of the ancient church have received rather uneven treatment in various collections and studies of early Christian apocrypha. While the traditions of Mary's nativity as related by the *Protevangelium of James* are unfailingly represented, other important Marian apocrypha are mentioned only scarcely if at all. The Dormition narratives, for instance, are frequently overlooked, and the apocalypses and early Lives of the Virgin are even further marginalized. Moreover, Mary of Nazareth's connections with the Mary figure of certain Coptic apocrypha has long been obscured by the strict identification this literary character with Mary of Magdala. While the Pléiade volumes represent some notable advances in these areas in comparison with other collections, their recent publication invites some reflection on the current state of Marian apocrypha and the considerable tasks that lie ahead in their publication, translation, and interpretation.