

LORNE R. ZELYCK

John among the Other Gospels

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zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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John among the Other Gospels

The Reception of the Fourth Gospel
in the Extra-Canonical Gospels

Mohr Siebeck

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To the Dinklings

For the Bloodpact

*In loving memory of
Michael M. Zelyck
(1947–2012)*

Preface

This monograph is a slightly revised version of my doctoral thesis that was completed in August 2012 at the University of Cambridge. I would like to thank the Tyndale House Text and Canon Project, as well as the St. Edmund's College Commonwealth Scholarship, for their generous financial support. My parents, John and Linda Gemmill, Bill and Elvira Warner, Timothy and Gwenyth Hall, and Michael Zelyck graciously allowed me to beg, borrow, and steal money from them to complete this thesis. I am thankful for the personal, as well as financial, support that each of them has provided. My *Doktorvater*, Dr. Simon Gathercole, offered invaluable direction and insight into the extra-canonical gospels, and my host at the University of Regensburg, Prof. Tobias Nicklas, provided exceptional feedback on the role of the extra-canonical gospels in early Christianity. Prof. Jörg Frey and Dr. Peter Williams, the examiners of my thesis, also provided many helpful critiques and useful suggestions for its publication. My wife, Kristin, and daughters, Zoe and Selah, have given me joy and a welcome reprieve to the burden of completing this work. They have endured seven moves, over four years, to three countries, and I am exceedingly grateful for their constant love and support.

Ash Wednesday 2013

Lorne R. Zelyck

Table of Contents

Preface VII

Part I: Introduction

1. Identifying the Extra-Canonical Gospels 3

 1.1. *What is a Gospel?* 3

 1.2. *The Sub-Genres of the Extra-Canonical Gospels* 6

 1.2.1. Narrative Gospels 6

 1.2.2. Sayings Gospels 7

 1.2.3. Dialogue/Discourse Gospels 8

 1.2.4. Gospel Fragments 9

 1.2.5. Excursus: Doubtful Extra-Canonical Gospels 10

 1.3. *Theological Categories for the Extra-Canonical Gospels* 11

 1.4. *Conclusion* 12

2. Method for Identifying the Reception of the Fourth Gospel 13

 2.1. *Introduction* 13

 2.2. *Method* 14

 2.2.1. Maximalist Methodology: F.-M. Braun 15

 2.2.2. Minimalistic Methodology: M.R. Hillmer 15

 2.2.3. 'Realistic' Methodology: T. Nagel 17

 2.2.4. Method for the Reception of the Fourth Gospel in the Extra-Canonical Gospels 17

 2.3. *Conclusion* 20

Part II: Narrative Gospels

3. The <i>Egerton Gospel</i> (P.Eg. 2 = P.Lond.Christ. 1, + P.Köln. 255)	25
3.1. <i>Introduction</i>	25
3.2. <i>The Egerton Gospel and the Canonical Gospels</i>	26
3.3. <i>The Egerton Gospel and the Fourth Gospel</i>	28
3.3.1. Episode 1 – Confrontation with the Authorities (1v.1–20 + P.Köln. 255 1v.19–24)	29
3.3.1.1. Probable Influence of the Fourth Gospel	29
3.3.1.2. Analysis of Episode 1	33
3.3.2. Episode 2 – Attempt to Stone and Arrest Jesus (1r.1–10)	37
3.3.2.1. Plausible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	38
3.3.2.2. Analysis of Episode 2	40
3.3.3. Episode 3 – Healing of a Leper (1r.11–20 + P.Köln. 255 1r.19–24)	42
3.3.3.1. Possible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	42
3.3.4. Episode 5 – Question about Tribute-Money (2r.1–18)	43
3.3.4.1. Plausible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	43
3.3.5. Episode 6 – Another Attempt to Stone Jesus (3r.1–6)	44
3.3.5.1. Plausible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	44
3.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	45
4. The <i>Gospel of Peter</i> (P.Cair. 10759)	48
4.1. <i>Introduction</i>	48
4.2. <i>The Gospel of Peter and the Canonical Gospels</i>	50
4.3. <i>The Gospel of Peter and the Fourth Gospel</i>	53
4.3.1. Joseph’s Request and the Handing Over of the Lord (§§3–5) ..	53
4.3.2. Mocking the Son of God as a King (§§6–8)	54
4.3.3. Abusing the Son of God (§9)	59
4.3.3.1. Analysis of §§6–9	60
4.3.4. The Crucifixion of the Lord (§§10–14)	60
4.3.5. The Death of the Lord (§§15–19)	65

4.3.6. The Removal from the Cross and Burial of the Lord (§§20–24)	66
4.3.7. The Securing of the Tomb (§§28–33)	67
4.3.8. The Report to Pilate (§§43–49)	68
4.3.9. The Women’s Visit to the Tomb (§§50–57)	68
4.3.10. A Fishing Excursion to the Sea (§§58–60)	69
4.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	70
5. Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840	72
5.1. <i>Introduction</i>	72
5.1.1. The Historical Veracity of Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840	72
5.1.2. The Nature of the Debate between Jesus and Levi	75
5.2. <i>Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840 and the Canonical Gospels</i>	75
5.3. <i>Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840 and the Fourth Gospel</i>	76
5.3.1. Possible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	76
5.3.2. Excursus: ‘Living Waters’ and Baptism	79
5.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	81

Part III: Sayings Gospels

6. The <i>Gospel of Thomas</i> (NHC II,2 + P.Oxy. 1, 654, 655)	85
6.1. <i>Introduction</i>	85
6.2. <i>The Gospel of Thomas and the Synoptic Gospels</i>	86
6.3. <i>The Gospel of Thomas and the Fourth Gospel</i>	87
6.3.1. Influenced by the Fourth Gospel	87
6.3.2. Independent of the Fourth Gospel	89
6.3.3. The Community-Conflict Thesis	90
6.3.3.1. Variant Interpretations of Common Traditions and Themes	90
6.3.3.2. The Negative Portrayal of Thomas in the Fourth Gospel	92
6.3.3.3. Analysis of the Community-Conflict Thesis	93

6.3.4. Parallels between the <i>Gospel of Thomas</i> and the Fourth Gospel	94
6.3.4.1. Plausible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	94
6.3.4.2. Possible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	99
6.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	102
7. <i>The Gospel of Philip</i> (NHC II,3)	104
7.1. <i>Introduction</i>	104
7.2. <i>The Gospel of Philip and the Fourth Gospel</i>	105
7.2.1. Probable Influence of the Fourth Gospel	106
7.2.1.1. Flesh and Blood (§23b)	106
7.2.1.2. Knowledge and Truth, Freedom and Enslavement (§§110a and 123d)	109
7.2.2. Plausible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	113
7.2.3. Possible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	118
7.3. <i>Conclusion</i>	120

Part IV: Dialogue/Discourse Gospels

8. <i>The Gospel of the Savior</i> (P.Berol. 22220 + Strasbourg Coptic Papyrus 5–7)	125
8.1. <i>Introduction</i>	125
8.2. <i>The Gospel of the Savior and the Canonical Gospels</i>	126
8.3. <i>The Gospel of the Savior and the Fourth Gospel</i>	126
8.3.1. Probable and Plausible Influence of the Fourth Gospel (vs.12–23)	127
8.3.2. Probable and Plausible Influence of the Fourth Gospel (vs.91–93; 69–70)	134
8.3.3. Possible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	141
8.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	142

9. <i>The Sophia of Jesus Christ</i> (NHC III,4; BG 8502,3; P.Oxy. 1081)	144
9.1. <i>Introduction</i>	144
9.2. <i>The Sophia of Jesus Christ and the Fourth Gospel</i>	146
9.2.1. Probable Influence of the Fourth Gospel	146
9.2.2. Plausible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	148
9.2.3. Possible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	150
9.3. <i>Conclusion</i>	153
10. <i>The Gospel of Mary</i> (BG 8502,1; P.Ryl. 493; P.Oxy. 3525)	155
10.1. <i>Introduction</i>	155
10.2. <i>The Gospel of Mary and the Canonical Gospels</i>	156
10.3. <i>The Gospel of Mary and the Fourth Gospel</i>	157
10.3.1. Plausible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	157
10.3.2. Possible Influence of the Fourth Gospel	162
10.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	166
11. <i>The Gospel of Judas</i> (Codex Tchacos, 3)	168
11.1. <i>Introduction</i>	168
11.2. <i>The Gospel of Judas and the Canonical Gospels</i>	169
11.3. <i>The Gospel of Judas and the Fourth Gospel</i>	170
11.3.1. Possible Influence of the Fourth Gospel (Thematic Parallels)	170
11.3.2. Possible Influence of the Fourth Gospel (Verbal Parallels)	173
11.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	174

12. <i>The Dialogue of the Savior</i> (NHC III,5)	175
12.1. <i>Introduction</i>	175
12.2. <i>The Dialogue of the Savior and the Canonical Gospels</i>	176
12.3. <i>The Dialogue of the Savior and the Fourth Gospel</i>	176
12.3.1. <i>Possible Influence of the Fourth Gospel</i>	176
12.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	182
13. <i>The Book of Thomas the Contender</i> (NHC II,7)	184
13.1. <i>Introduction</i>	184
13.2. <i>The Book of Thomas the Contender and the Canonical Gospels</i>	185
13.3. <i>The Book of Thomas the Contender and the Fourth Gospel</i>	186
13.3.1. <i>Possible Influence of the Fourth Gospel</i>	186
13.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	189

Part V: Conclusion

14. <i>Summary and Conclusions</i>	193
14.1. <i>Were the Extra-Canonical Gospels Influenced by the Fourth Gospel?</i>	193
14.1.1. <i>Ranking the Influence of the Fourth Gospel on the Extra-Canonical Gospels</i>	193
14.1.1.1. <i>Probable Influence of the Fourth Gospel</i>	193
14.1.1.2. <i>Plausible Influence of the Fourth Gospel</i>	194
14.1.1.3. <i>Possible Influence of the Fourth Gospel</i>	194
14.1.2. <i>Comparing the Influence of the Fourth Gospel on the Extra-Canonical Gospels by Sub-Genre, Theology, and Date of Composition</i>	195

<i>14.2. How did the Extra-Canonical Gospels Use and Interpret the Fourth Gospel?</i>	196
14.2.1. Quotation and Exegesis	197
14.2.2. Lengthy Parallels	197
14.2.3. Shorter Parallels	198
14.2.4. Traditional Interpretations	199
<i>14.3. The Reception of the Fourth Gospel</i>	202
Chart 1: Identifying the Extra-Canonical Gospels	205
Chart 2: Parallels between the Extra-Canonical Gospels and Fourth Gospel	206
Chart 3: Concentration of Parallels: The Frequency of Parallels Relative to the Length of Text	211
Chart 4: Number of Verses from the Fourth Gospel Paralleled in the Extra-Canonical Gospels	212
Bibliography	213
Index of Ancient Sources	237
Index of Authors	257
Index of Subjects	259

Part I: Introduction

Chapter 1

Identifying the Extra-Canonical Gospels

The canonical gospels are the four gospels that were listed in an authoritative collection by bishops, synods, and Church councils of the fourth century CE. While the extra-canonical gospels are the ‘other’ gospels, there is little scholarly consensus regarding the enumeration and identification of the works that should be included in this corpus.¹ In order to identify the extra-canonical gospels, a fundamental question must first be answered: What is a gospel?

1.1. What is a Gospel?

The definition of a gospel is intrinsically connected to the literary genre of the canonical gospels, but identifying the genre of the canonical gospels is itself problematic: there is no exact, parallel genre in antiquity; the ‘gospel’ title first attributed to these works was likely a description of their kerygma, rather than an identification of their literary genre; the canonical gospels vary in content and structure (e.g. Mark→FG) and they appear to incorporate multiple sources with parallel forms in other literary genres (e.g. an ‘apocalypse’ (Mark 13)). Since it is difficult to identify exemplary features of the gospel genre based on the canonical gospels, many recent attempts to define this genre and demarcate its corpus have been either too restrictive or too inclusive.

¹ Significant collections of extra-canonical gospels from the past quarter-century do not include and exclude the same works. See R. Cameron, ed., *The Other Gospels* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1982); H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels* (London: SCM, 1990); J.K. Elliott, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: University Press, 1993); U.-K. Plisch, *Verborgene Worte Jesus – verworfene Evangelien* (Berlin: Evangelische Haupt-Bibelgesellschaft und von Cansteinsche Bibelanstalt, 2000); H.-J. Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 2003); W. Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003); C.M. Tuckett, “Forty Other Gospels,” in M. Bockmuehl – D.A. Hagner, eds. *The Written Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), 238–253; A.E. Bernhard, *Other Early Christian Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 2006); P. Foster, ed., *The Non-Canonical Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 2008); C. Marksches – J. Schröter, hrsg., *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

R. Burrige has argued that the gospel genre is most similar to ancient *bioi*, where the primary subject is one person, who is also the grammatical subject of a high proportion of verbs.² This is an adequate description of the canonical gospels where the primary subject is Jesus, but it does not account for fragmentary works of the second and third centuries CE that possess narrative material about Jesus' life and teaching, but bear little resemblance to ancient *bioi*. A more inclusive definition of the gospel genre is needed to incorporate these other works.

It is also imprecise to correlate the gospel genre with a gospel kerygma (Mark 1:1). If the kerygma is restricted to a proclamation of the saving works of Jesus' death and resurrection,³ then this would be far too narrow of a definition for a gospel and, according to A. Gregory – C.M. Tuckett, it may even exclude “one or two of the canonical ones!”⁴ J. Schröter has accurately noted that all genres of canonical and extra-canonical Christian literature attempt to promote some type of a soteriological message about Jesus. The gospel kerygma is the soteriological message of a work; it does not help us identify its genre.⁵

H. Koester has suggested that the gospel genre is a compilation of multiple genres from divergent sources (birth legends, parable collections, miracle stories, sayings sources, passion sources, etc.), and that “all those writings which are constituted by the transmission, use, and interpretation of material and traditions from and about Jesus of Nazareth” should be considered gospels.⁶ This definition is far too inclusive and does not discriminate between a gospel (Mark), letter (*Ep. Pet. Phil.*), acts (*Acts John*), or apocalypse (Rev), which all contain traditions about Jesus.

In the introduction to the Oxford Early Christian Gospel Texts series, Gregory – Tuckett state their criteria for a work to be included in the series:

As an overarching criterion, we have tended to accept the distinction that many might instinctively make, separating ‘gospels’ from other early Christian works (e.g. letters of apostles, or accounts of the history of the early church) on the basis that ‘gospels’ make at least some claim to give direct reports of the life and/or teaching of Jesus, but taking ‘life and teaching’ broadly enough to include accounts purporting to give teaching given by Jesus after his resurrection. Further, we have mostly accepted the claims—either of

² R.A. Burrige, *What Are the Gospels?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 110.

³ See N.T. Wright, *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 2006), 29.

⁴ A. Gregory – C.M. Tuckett, “Series Preface,” in C.M. Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary* (Oxford: University Press, 2007), vi.

⁵ J. Schröter, „Die apokryphen Evangelien und die Entstehung des neutestamentlichen Kanons,“ in J. Frey – J. Schröter, eds., *Jesus in apokryphen Evangelienüberlieferungen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 40–45. However, Schröter is overly skeptical of any definition of the gospel genre.

⁶ Koester, *Ancient*, 46.

manuscripts themselves (e.g. in colophons) or of ancient authors talking about such texts—to identify some works as ‘gospels.’⁷

The overarching criterion is commendable in that it is simple, inclusive of canonical and extra-canonical works, and focused on the claims of the text itself. However, it is not entirely clear how this criterion can identify the genre of a work. A gospel, letter, acts, and apocalypse can all claim to give direct reports of the life and/or teachings of Jesus, and the distinction between these genres does not appear to be instinctive to multiple scholars.⁸

It is insufficient to define the gospel genre simply by its content (kerygma; sources and traditions about Jesus; claims to give direct reports about Jesus), since this content is not unique to the gospel genre. Many would agree that one of the most distinctive features of the gospel genre is its authorial perspective—the canonical gospels are primarily written from the third-person perspective, while letters and apocalypses are primarily written from the first-person perspective.⁹ Therefore, a more precise definition of a gospel is: a work that claims to give direct reports of the life and/or teachings of Jesus, and is primarily written from the third-person

⁷ Gregory – Tuckett, “Series Preface,” vi–vii. Marksches provides similar criteria for the works included in *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*: „Es gibt zwar keine eigenständige und einheitliche Gattung ‚apokryph gewordene Evangelien‘. Aber die unter diesem Titel hier in verschiedenen Abschnitten zusammengestellten Texte gehören nicht nur dadurch zusammen, daß sie Person und Werk Jesu Christi zum Inhalt haben, sondern sie sind auch dadurch charakterisiert, daß sie in unterschiedlicher Weise von der Gattung ‚Evangelium‘ bestimmt oder beeinflußt sind“ (C. Marksches, „Außerkanonische Evangelien“ in Marksches – Schröter, *Apokryphen*, 351). This definition is similar to Gregory – Tuckett’s in that it focuses on material about Jesus and attempts to describe the extra-canonical gospel genre in light of the canonical gospel genre, but it does not adequately distinguish gospel-content from the gospel genre.

⁸ For example Marksches – Schröter include *1 Apoc. Jas.*, *2 Apoc. Jas.*, and *Ep. Pet. Phil.* as gospels (*Apokryphen II*, 1152, 1181, 1195). Tuckett does not include these works, but considers the *Ap. Jas.*, *Dial. Sav.*, *Thom. Cont.*, and *Gos. Mary* to be gospels (“Forty,” 247), while F.T. Fallon considers all seven works to be ‘Gnostic Apocalypses’ (“The Gnostic Apocalypses” in J.J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 123–158).

⁹ The exceptions would be the first-person perspective in Luke 1:3 and John 21:24, and the third-person perspective in Rev 1:1–3. These exceptions indicate that the criterion of authorial perspective is somewhat imprecise; even Luke and the FG do not provide ‘pure’ examples of the gospel genre. It is necessary to emphasize that this criterion must be applied to an entire work, in order to determine if it was *primarily* written from the third-person perspective. The value of this criterion is admittedly diminished when applied to fragmentary works, since it is possible that these fragments belonged to a larger works that were mostly written from the first-person perspective. Despite these shortcomings, this criterion is useful for evaluating and demarcating the genres of extant fragments.

perspective. By emphasizing the claim to give direct reports of the life and/or teachings of Jesus, gospels are distinguished from acts, and by emphasizing the third-person authorial perspective, gospels are distinguished from letters and apocalypses.

This definition of a gospel is the primary criterion that will be used to identify the extra-canonical gospels that will be examined in this study. Colophon titles and the claims of ancient authors that identify particular works as gospels are secondary criteria that will also be employed. For pragmatic reasons, this study will be limited to the Greek and Coptic extra-canonical gospels that give direct reports about the adult Jesus, are extant as distinct works in ancient manuscripts, and can be reasonably dated to the second or third century CE.¹⁰

1.2. The Sub-Genres of the Extra-Canonical Gospels

The extra-canonical gospels can be categorized into the following sub-genres: narrative gospels; sayings gospels; dialogue/discourse gospels; and other gospel fragments. Each gospel will be evaluated in more detail in their respective chapter, although the features that demarcate these works as gospels will be briefly listed below (see Chart 1).

1.2.1. Narrative Gospels

A narrative gospel is a work that claims “to give an account of the incidents in Jesus’ life in the form of a narrative.”¹¹ There is a widespread scholarly consensus that the *Egerton Gospel* (P.Eg. 2 = P.Lond.Christ. 1, + P.Köln. 255), *Gospel of Peter* (P.Cair. 10759), and the work preserved on P.Oxy. 840 are gospels. These gospels claim to give direct reports of Jesus’ life and/or teachings written from the third-person perspective in the form of a narrative. They do not contain a gospel colophon, and the only work known to ancient authors is a gospel attributed to Peter (Serapion in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.12.5–6; Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 10.17).

¹⁰ Infancy gospels, extra-canonical gospels imbedded in the writings of the church fathers, and works that can be reasonably dated to the fourth century CE or later will be excluded.

¹¹ Tuckett, “Forty,” 244.

1.2.2. Sayings Gospels

A sayings gospel is a work that consists “primarily of sayings of Jesus collected together with little or no narrative context.”¹² The *Gospel of Thomas* (NHC II,2 + P.Oxy. 1, 654, 655) is the prime example of this gospel sub-genre. It claims to give direct reports of 114 sayings spoken by Jesus to his disciples, is written from the third-person perspective, contains a gospel colophon in the Coptic manuscript, and ancient authors knew of a gospel attributed to Thomas (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.7.20; Origen, *Hom. Luc.* 1:1; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* 4.36).

The *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II,3) is more difficult to categorize. C.M. Tuckett does not consider it a gospel since “the text is mostly taken up with teaching from the author him/herself *about* God, Jesus, and human beings.”¹³ However, there are a number of features that indicate this work may be a gospel. Firstly, it does claim to give direct reports of the life and/or teachings of Jesus. There is narrative material about Jesus’ life that does not include the author’s theological reflection—“The Lord went into the dye works of Levi. He took seventy-two different colors and threw them into the vat. He took them all out white. And he said, “Even so the Son of Man has come as a dyer”” (63.25–30). There are nine sayings of Jesus that have parallels with the canonical gospels,¹⁴ eight sayings without canonical parallels,¹⁵ and at least three dialogues between Jesus and the disciples.¹⁶ It is also questionable how much material is the result of the author’s own theological reflection, and how much should be attributed to Jesus. For example, two sayings of Jesus that have parallels with the canonical gospels are not introduced with any formulae (77.15–18; 85.29–31), which makes it difficult to determine whether the entire pericope should be attributed to Jesus, the author, or a combination of the two. Secondly, the majority of this work is written from the third-person perspective, although significant portions of the work that include the author’s personal reflection are written from the first-person perspective.¹⁷ Thirdly, the Coptic manuscript contains a gospel colophon (86.18–19).¹⁸

¹² *Ibid.*, 245.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 242. See also Koester, *Ancient*, 47.

¹⁴ *Gos. Phil.* 55.34–36; 57.4–5; 68.8–12, 26–27; 72.33–73.1; 77.15–18; 83.11–13; 84.7–9; 85.29–31.

¹⁵ *Gos. Phil.* 55.37–56.3; 58.10–14; 59.25–27; 63.28–30; 64.2–12; 67.30–35; 74.25–27.

¹⁶ *Gos. Phil.* 55.37–56.3; 59.23–27; 63.37–64.9.

¹⁷ *Gos. Phil.* 52.21–24; 57.9; 59.4–5; 62.2–4; 66.9; 67.6; 69.4–8; 73.33; 74.1, 14, 18; 75.20, 22; 76.31–32; 77.9–11; 79.25–30; 80.5; 83.18–29; 84.11–15; 85.11–12, 14, 18.

¹⁸ The colophon title in this manuscript is unique. There are no decorative marks to complete the final line of text (as in the *Gos. Thom.*), but *πεγαγγελιον* continues on 86.18 with *κατα φιλιππος* centered below on 86.19. Both *πεγαγγελιον* and *κατα φιλιππος*

Fourthly, a gospel attributed to Philip was known to Epiphanius (*Pan.* 26.13.2–3), and the *Gos. Thom.* and *Gos. Phil.* are coupled by other authors in antiquity, as they are in NHC II.¹⁹ Also, in *PS* 71.18–23, Jesus tells Philip, ‘you and Thomas and Matthias are the ones to whom it was given, through the First Mystery, to write all the words that I say to you, and the things that I will do, and everything that you will see,’ which may correspond to the three gospels in NHC II—*Gos. Thom.* (II,2), *Gos. Phil.* (II,3), and *Thom. Cont.* (II,7). This does not provide definitive evidence for the genre of the *Gos. Phil.*, although it should probably be classified as a sayings gospel.²⁰

1.2.3. Dialogue/Discourse Gospels

A dialogue/discourse gospel is a work that is focused on the life and/or teachings of Jesus (frequently the post-resurrection-Jesus) revealed in dialogue with his disciples.

The *Gospel of Mary* (BG 8502,1; P.Ryl. 493; P.Oxy. 3525) and *Gospel of Judas* (Codex Tchacos, 3) claim to give direct reports of Jesus’ dialogues with the disciples, are written from the third-person perspective, and contain a gospel colophon. Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.31.1–2 = Theodoret, *Haer.* 1.15) and Epiphanius (*Pan.* 38.1.5) also knew of a gospel attributed to Judas.

The *Dialogue of the Savior* (NHC III,5) claims to give direct reports of the Savior’s dialogues with his disciples, is written from the third-person perspective, but does not contain a gospel colophon, and does not appear to be known by ancient authors.²¹

are surrounded with a rudimentary border (see J.M. Robinson, ed., *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices, Codex II* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 98). P. Nagel has suggested that a copy of the work used by the scribe only contained *κατα φιλιππος*—the scribe could have chosen *αποκρυφον*, *διαλογος*, or *λογος*, but neither of these align with the content of the *Gos. Phil.*, so the decision had to be made between *εγαγγελιον* and *χωμνε*, and the scribe or a later redactor inserted *πεγαγγελιον* to align it with the preceding *Gos. Thom.* (P. Nagel, „Das (Buch) nach Philippus,“ *ZNW* 99 (2008): 104–111). However, even if a previous copy of this work contained the title *πωμνε κατα φιλιππος*, this would not exclude it from the gospel genre (cf. ‘The Book (*πωμνε*) of Thomas the Contender’ discussed below).

¹⁹ Pseudo-Leontius of Byzantium, *De sectis* 3.2; Timothy of Constantinople, *De receptione haereticorum* (Migne, *PG*, 86.21C). See S.J. Gathercole, *The Composition of the Gospel of Thomas* (Cambridge: University Press, 2012), 121.

²⁰ The following collections of extra-canonical gospels include the *Gos. Phil.*: Plisch, *Verborgene*; Klauck, *Apocryphal*; Schneemelcher, *Apocrypha*; Foster, *Non-Canonical*; Marksches – Schröter, *Apokryphen*.

²¹ The following collections of extra-canonical gospels include the *Dial. Sav.*: Cameron, *Other*; Koester, *Ancient*; Plisch, *Verborgene*; Klauck, *Apocryphal*; Schneemelcher, *Apocrypha*; Tuckett, “Forty,” Marksches – Schröter, *Apokryphen*.

The *Gospel of the Savior* (P.Berol. 22220 + Strasbourg Coptic Papyrus 5–7), *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (NHC III,4; BG 8502,3; P.Oxy. 1081), and *Book of Thomas the Contender* (NHC II,7) all claim to give direct reports of Jesus’ dialogues with his disciples, do not contain a gospel colophon, and do not appear to be known by ancient authors. These works are primarily written from the third-person perspective, although some portions are written from the first-person perspective. The *Gos. Sav.* narrates events in which all the disciples participate from the first-person plural perspective (vs.29, 30, 33, 36, 67). It may be possible to classify this work as a narrative gospel,²² but the disjunctive chronology and the divergent contexts are more similar to dialogue/discourse gospels. The *Soph. Jes. Chr.* transformed a letter, *Eugnostos the Blessed*, into a gospel by placing the direct speeches of *Eugnostos* (written from the first-person perspective) into the mouth of the Savior (narrated from the third-person perspective), although there is one narrative aside written from the first-person perspective (BG 79.1).²³ The *Thom. Cont.* introduces the amanuensis—Mathaias—from the first-person perspective (138.1–4), while the rest of the dialogue between the Savior and Judas Thomas is recorded from the third-person perspective.²⁴

1.2.4. Gospel Fragments

There are also multiple scraps of papyrus and parchment that claim to give direct reports of the life and/or teachings of the adult Jesus written from the third-person perspective. This includes P.Mert. 51, P.Oxy. 210, P.Oxy.

²² S. Emmel has championed the narrative gospel position because it “seems to presuppose the narrative framework of the canonical Gospel story” and the extant page numbers “suggest that the complete work was comparable in length to one of the longer canonical gospels, namely Luke or Matthew” (S. Emmel, “Preliminary Reedition and Translation of the *Gospel of the Savior*,” *Apocrypha* 14 (2003): 13). This position has been recently challenged by J.L. Hagen who suggests that the *Gos. Sav.* is episodic literature comparable to a homily or Acts of the Apostles (J.L. Hagen, „Ein anderer Kontext für die Berliner und Straßburger ‚Evangelienfragmente,‘“ in Frey – Schröter, *Jesus*, 339–371). The precise genre of this work is somewhat elusive due to the fragmentary nature of the manuscripts. For the sake of completeness, the *Gos. Sav.* will be included in this study, although future scholarship and the discovery of more fragments of this work may ratify Hagen’s conclusions. The following collections of extra-canonical gospels include the *Gos. Sav.*: Plisch, *Verborgene*; Klauck, *Apocryphal*; Marksches – Schröter, *Apokryphen*.

²³ The following collections of extra-canonical gospels include the *Soph. Jes. Chr.*: Schneemelcher, *Apocrypha*; Klauck, *Apocryphal*; Marksches – Schröter, *Apokryphen*.

²⁴ The following collections of extra-canonical gospels include the *Thom. Cont.*: Schneemelcher, *Apocrypha*; Plisch, *Verborgene*; Klauck, *Apocryphal*; Tuckett, “Forty;” Marksches – Schröter, *Apokryphen*.

1224, P.Oxy. 5072, and P.Vindob.G. 2325.²⁵ These fragments do not have any parallels with the FG, so it is unnecessary to analyze them further.

1.2.5. Excursus: Doubtful Extra-Canonical Gospels

There are a number of works that some scholars have classified as gospels, but they do not satisfy the criteria used in this study. Two works that bear the (modern) gospel title—the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,3) and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (NHC III,2, IV,2)—do not claim to give direct reports of the life and/or teachings of Jesus. Rather, they provide generalized summaries about Jesus' life: 'Jesus was patient in accepting sufferings' (*Gos. Truth* 20.11); 'Jesus the living one' is 'he whom the great Seth has put on' (*Gos. Eg.* III 64.1–3). Furthermore, the first line 'the gospel of truth' (*Gos. Truth* 16.31) and the first colophon 'the gospel of the Egyptians' (*Gos. Eg.* III 69.6–8) likely refer to the kerygma of these works, and do not demarcate their genre.²⁶

The *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1, III,1, IV,1; BG 8502,2) and *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I,2) give direct reports of the life and/or teachings of Jesus, but they are primarily written from the first-person

²⁵ It is doubtful that P.Berol. 11710 contains an extract from an extra-canonical gospel. Rather, it appears to be an amulet with a clumsy remembrance of John 1:29, 49 that was combined with other Christian traditions that emphasized Jesus' divine identity. John 1:29 is quoted in the magical papyri P.Berol. 6751, and the only apocryphal narrative that appears to be used as an amulet is the Abgar Legend (see T.J. Kraus, "Other Gospel Fragments," in T.J. Kraus – M.J. Kruger – T. Nicklas, *Gospel Fragments* (Oxford: University Press, 2009), 228–239; T. de Bruyn, "Apocryphal and Canonical Christian Narratives in Greek Papyrus Amulets in Late Antiquity," in P. Piovanelli, ed., *Christian Apocryphal Texts for the New Millennium* (Leiden: 2013), 8–11, forthcoming).

²⁶ Irenaeus knew of a Valentinian work entitled 'the Gospel of Truth' (*Haer.* 3.11.9), while multiple scholars have classified the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,3) as a "homily" or "meditation," rather than a gospel (Koester, *Ancient*, 47; Klauck, *Apocryphal*, 135; Tuckett, "Forty," 241–242). This suggests that ancient works that bore the title 'gospel' do not necessarily satisfy modern criteria used to identify the gospel genre, which is altogether unsurprising if ancient authors attributed this title to their works as a form of propaganda. Conversely, ancient works that do not contain the title 'gospel' may satisfy modern criteria used to identify this genre (e.g. *Dialogue of the Savior*; *Sophia of Jesus Christ*; *Book of Thomas the Contender*). Since the works in NHC I,3 and NHC III,2, IV,2 do not satisfy the primary criterion for classification as a gospel, they will be excluded from this study. For a discussion of the colophon title in NHC III,2—'The Holy Book of the Great, Invisible Spirit' (III 69.18–20), see A. Böhlig – F. Wisse, *Nag Hammadi Codices III,2 and IV,2* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 26.

perspective and should probably be considered apocalypses.²⁷ The *(First) Apocalypse of James* (NHC V,3) and *(Second) Apocalypse of James* (NHC V,4) have superscript titles that identify these works as apocalypses, although they are written from the first- and third-person perspective in order to record James' vision and recount his martyrdom.

The Letter of Peter to Philip (NHC VIII,2) is primarily written from the third-person perspective since the majority of this work records a dialogue between Jesus and the disciples, but it focuses on Peter and contains a superscript title and incipit that identifies it as a letter. The *Epistula Apostolorum* also contains a significant amount of dialogue between Jesus and the disciples, although it is primarily written from the first-person perspective. Both of these works open with an introductory address and close without final greetings (similar to James, 2 Peter, and Jude), and should be considered letters.²⁸

1.3. Theological Categories for the Extra-Canonical Gospels

It is difficult to place the extra-canonical gospels into theological categories since many of these works are fragmentary, and their depiction of Jesus and/or the universe do not have a precise correlation with known theological systems. Nevertheless, some of these gospels can be placed into broad categories.²⁹ The Gnostic gospels—those that present Jesus and/or the universe in a way similar to Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29–31, the *Ap.*

²⁷ *The Apocryphon of John* begins with a narrative description of the revelation written from the third-person perspective (II 1.1–17), similar to Rev 1:1–3. Likewise, *The Book of Allogenes* (Codex Tchacos, 4) begins by giving direct reports of the life and teachings of Allogenes written from the third-person perspective (59.1–62.9), but then it switches to the first-person perspective (62.9–66.24) to report the author's vision. Therefore, it may be categorized as an apocalypse.

²⁸ As noted above, it is problematic to clearly define a 'pure' literary genre, since one genre may be embedded within a larger genre. Therefore, the *Ep. Pet. Phil.* and *Ep. Apost.* may be examples of a gospel embedded within a letter, and *1 Apoc. Jas.* and *2 Apoc. Jas.* may be examples of a gospel embedded within an apocalypse. In order to avert this endless fragmentation of particular works (which would nullify the efficacy of any genre-classification assigned to them), this study has examined the works as a whole and sought to identify the overarching genre that best categorizes each particular work.

²⁹ This study follows M.J. Edwards, B. Layton, and D. Brakke in distinguishing Gnostic and Valentinian works, since Irenaeus indicates that Valentinus 'adapted the principles of the heresy called "Gnostic" to the peculiar character of his own school' (*Haer.* 1.11.1). See M.J. Edwards, "Gnostics and Valentinians in the Church Fathers," *JTS* 40 (1989): 26–47; "Neglected Texts in the Study of Gnosticism," *JTS* 41 (1990): 26–49; B. Layton, "Prolegomena to the Study of Ancient Gnosticism," in L.M. White – O.L. Yarbrough, eds., *The Social World of the First Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 334–350; D. Brakke, *The Gnostics* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010).