

ALIN SUCIU

*The Berlin-Strasbourg
Apocryphon*

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament*

370

Mohr Siebeck

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Alin Suciu

The *Berlin-Strasbourg*
Apocryphon

A Coptic Apostolic Memoir

Mohr Siebeck

ALIN SUCIU, born 1978; holds a PhD degree in Religious Studies from Université Laval, Québec (2013); former research fellow at the Hiob Ludolf Centre for Ethiopian Studies, Hamburg (2013–2014); since 2015, senior researcher at the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

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List of Abbreviations

- BHG F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* 3 vols. (3rd edition; Subsidia Hagiographica, 8a; Brussels: Societ  des Bollandistes, 1957).
- BHO Paul Peeters, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 10; Brussels: Societ  des Bollandistes, 1910).
- CAVT Jean-Claude Haelewyck, *Clavis Apocryphorum Veteris Testamenti* (Corpus Christianorum; Turnhout: Brepols, 1998).
- CANT Maurice Geerard, *Clavis Apocryphorum Novi Testamenti* (Corpus Christianorum; Turnhout: Brepols, 1992).
- CMCL *Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari* (available online at <http://www.cmcl.it/>; retrieved October 12, 2016).
- CPG M. Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum: qua optimae quaeque scriptorum patrum graecorum recensiones a primaevae saeculis usque ad octavum commode recluduntur* 5 vols. (Corpus Christianorum; Turnhout: Brepols, 1974–1987); supplemented in M. Geerard – J. Noret, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum: Supplementum* (Corpus Christianorum; Turnhout: Brepols, 1998).
- CSCO Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.
- EMML Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library.
- PG J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca* (Paris).

For the reconstruction of the White Monastery codices I have adopted the sigla established by the CMCL project. According to this system, each reconstructed codex is designated by the abbreviation MONB (= “Monastero Bianco”), followed by two letters of the Latin alphabet (e. g. MONB.AA, MONB.AB, MONB.AC etc.). I have also referred to the identification numbers of the literary works preserved in Coptic according to CMCL’s “clavis optica” (= Clavis Patrum Copticorum).

Introduction

Although Coptic literature is in many regards similar to the religious literature transmitted into other languages of Eastern Christianity, there is something that singles it out as being in a class of its own. Thus, while Coptic manuscripts are of venerable age, most of them dating from the first Christian millennium, they are heavily damaged, so much so that they are often reduced to mere fragments. Consequently, the Coptologist has not only the painstaking task of solving a puzzle with many pieces missing, but also of identifying the literary works preserved by the debris of dismembered manuscripts. Not surprisingly, examples of misidentifications or misattributions of fragments are not few. Paul Devos, one of the most accomplished scholars of Coptic hagiography, once wrote about the challenges encountered by the Coptologists dealing with fragmentary manuscripts:

What allows someone to distinguish beforehand a hagiographic work from a piece related to preaching, a sermon from an epistle or, again, an apocryphal writing from a simple homily? What at first sight seemed to come from an apocryphal gospel, did it not prove to belong to a discourse? Conversely, what seemed to derive, because of the tenure and form, from a homiletic writing, did it not appear to belong to an apocryphal legend or to the biography of some monk? The list of misunderstandings will not close very soon.¹

The Coptic writing examined in this book has suffered a similar fate. The text is an apocryphal story of Jesus and the apostles, placed shortly before the Passion. At a certain point in the narrative occurs a long hymn sung by Christ to the cross on which he will shortly be crucified, while the apostles dance and answer “Amen.” The work is transmitted in the debris of two Sahidic manuscripts. The first is a fragmentary parchment manuscript held in the Papyrussammlung of the Egyptian Museum in Berlin (P. Berol. 22220), which was published for the first time in 1999 by Charles W. Hedrick and

¹ P. Devos, “Introduction,” in E. Lucchesi, *Répertoire des manuscrits coptes (sahidiques) publiés de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris* (Cahiers d’orientalisme, 1; Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1981) 10 (my translation).

Paul A. Mirecki.² The second manuscript, which consists of numerous small papyrus fragments, is preserved in the National and University Library in Strasbourg as Copte inv. no. 5–7. These papyrus fragments have been known for a long time under the generic title the “Strasbourg Coptic Gospel.”³ The manuscripts have been studied separately until Stephen Emmel identified them as two witnesses of the same work.⁴ Finally, another parchment manuscript, discovered in 1965 at Qasr el-Wizz, in Nubia, contains an abbreviated and redacted version of the Hymn of the Cross.⁵

As the Berlin and Strasbourg manuscripts are fragmentary, the title of the text has not survived. Furthermore, the recension of the hymn in the Qasr el-Wizz codex is untitled. The subtitles which appear in this manuscript – “the second hymn (ἕμνος) of the cross” and “the fourth dance (χορεία) of the cross,” the former being partly recoverable also in the Berlin parchment – refer only to the textual divisions of the hymn and cannot be extrapolated to the entire work. Because of the title conventionally assigned to P. Berol. 22220 in the *editio princeps*, the text is largely known today as the *Gospel of the Savior*.⁶ The title in question suggests – with little accompanying evidence – that the text is an apocryphal gospel possibly bypassed in the formation of the canon of the Christian scriptures. However, as this possi-

² C. W. Hedrick – P. A. Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior: A New Ancient Gospel* (California Classical Library; Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1999).

³ A. Jacoby, *Ein neues Evangelienfragment* (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trübner, 1900).

⁴ S. Emmel, “Unbekanntes Berliner Evangelium = The Strasbourg Coptic Gospel: Prolegomena to a New Edition of the Strasbourg Fragments,” in H.-G. Bethge et al. (eds.), *For the Children, Perfect Instruction. Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften’s Thirtieth Year* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, 54; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002) 353–374; Idem, “The ‘Gospel of the Savior’: A New Witness to the Strasbourg Coptic Gospel,” *Bulletin de l’AELAC* 12 (2002) 9–12.

⁵ *Editio princeps* in P. Hubai, *A Megváltó a keresztről. Kopt apokrifek Nubiából (A Kasr el-Wizz kódex)* (Cahiers patristiques. Textes coptes; Budapest: Szent István társulat, 2006). German translation of the Hungarian version in Idem, *Koptische Apokryphen aus Nubien. Der Kasr el-Wizz Kodex* (Texte und Untersuchungen, 163; Berlin – New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 2009).

⁶ On the arguments in favor of this title see Hedrick – Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior*, 17. Another early Christian writing, preserved in a single Greek fragment from Oxyrhynchus, has received the same title from its latest editor, albeit it does not have any literary connection with our text, see M. J. Kruger, *The Gospel of the Savior: An Analysis of P. Oxy. 840 and Its Place in the Gospel Traditions of Early Christianity* (Texts and Editions for New Testament Study, 1; Leiden – Boston, MA: E. J. Brill, 2005). This papyrus fragment (P. Oxy. 840) was edited for the first time by C. Wessely, *Les plus anciens monuments du christianisme écrits sur papyrus* vol. 2 (Patrologia Orientalis, 18/3; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1924) 488–490 [264]–[266].

bility is subject to serious caveats, the title *Gospel of the Savior* should be avoided altogether.

In German publications the text is usually called the “Unbekanntes Berliner Evangelium,” in reference to the location of the Berlin manuscript. However, this label too is problematic, as not only also implies that the text is a gospel, but, given that the Strasbourg fragments belong to the same work, it is now obsolete. Other tentative identifications of the Berlin parchment, like the *Gospel of Peter* (Hans-Martin Schenke),⁷ the *Gospel of Andrew* (Uwe-Karsten Plisch),⁸ and the *Gospel of the Twelve* (Stephen Emmel, Christoph Marksches),⁹ have not received widespread support from scholars.

The titles that have been ascribed to Strasbourg Copte 5–7 are equally problematic. Walter E. Crum called them the “Strassburg Gospel Fragments.”¹⁰ The title of the *editio princeps*, “A New Gospel Fragment,” is also based on the assumption that they belong to an apocryphal gospel.¹¹ Although various attributions have been proposed for the Strasbourg fragments – *Gospel of the Egyptians* (Adolf Jacoby),¹² *Gospel of the Ebionites* (Carl Schmidt and Theodor Zahn),¹³ and *Gospel of the Twelve* (Eugène Revillout)¹⁴ – none of them is supported by evidence.

A more satisfactory title is the one given by the *Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari* (= CMCL) project, directed by Tito Orlandi (Rome/Hamburg). In the CMCL database, our text is called *Apocryphon Berolinense/Apocryphon Argentoratense*. This title, coined after the location of the two manuscripts, has the advantage of integrating the text into the more capa-

⁷ H.-M. Schenke, “Das sogenannte ‘Unbekannte Berliner Evangelium’ (UBE),” *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 2 (1998) 199–213.

⁸ U.-K. Plisch, “Zu einigen Einleitungsfragen des Unbekannten Berliner Evangeliums (UBE),” *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 9 (2005) 64–84.

⁹ S. Emmel, “Ein altes Evangelium der Apostel taucht in Fragmenten aus Ägypten und Nubien auf,” *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 9 (2005) 85–99, at 95; C. Marksches, “Was wissen wir über den Sitz im Leben der apokryphen Evangelien?,” in J. Frey – J. Schröter (eds.), *Jesus in apokryphen Evangelienüberlieferungen. Beiträge zu außerkanonischen Jesusüberlieferungen aus verschiedenen Sprach- und Kulturtraditionen* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 254; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 61–90, at 71, 82.

¹⁰ W. E. Crum, “Notes on the Strassburg Gospel Fragments,” *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 22 (1900) 72–76.

¹¹ Jacoby, *Evangelienfragment*.

¹² Jacoby, *Evangelienfragment*, 27–30.

¹³ C. Schmidt, review of Jacoby, *Evangelienfragment*, *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* 162 (1900) 481–506, at 500–503; T. Zahn, “Neue Funde aus der alten Kirche,” *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift* 11 (1901) 347–370, 431–450, at 366–368.

¹⁴ E. Revillout, *Les apocryphes coptes I: Les Évangiles des douze apôtres et de Saint Barthélemy* (Patrologia Orientalis, 2/2; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1904).

cious genre of apocryphal writings.¹⁵ Thus, unless the title of the writing is recovered one day, the most convenient name for the text is the *Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, abbreviated henceforth *BSApo*.

Although Hedrick and Mirecki's edition of P. Berol. 22220 has now been superseded, their evaluation of the text as a previously unknown ancient Christian gospel continues to dominate the perception of the *BSApo* in scholarship. For example, at the end of 2012 appeared *post-mortem* Hans-Martin Schenke's German translation of the Berlin manuscript in the first volume of the revised edition of Hennecke and Schneemelcher's ancient Christian apocrypha collection, which comprises gospels and related writings.¹⁶ Similarly, a new English translation of the Berlin and Strasbourg manuscripts has appeared in a popular collection of apocryphal gospels prepared by Bart Ehrman and Zlatko Pleše.¹⁷

The present book, which is an improved version of the dissertation which I defended in June 2013 at the Faculté de théologie et des sciences religieuses, Laval University, Québec, approaches the *BSApo* from the angle of Coptic literature. The book also includes a new edition and translation of the text. The evidence that the *BSApo* does not belong to the context of early Christian gospels, but to that of post-Chalcedonian Coptic literature, is set out in the four chapters of the introduction. The first chapter is dedicated to previous research on the *BSApo*. As this chapter will show, the announcement concerning the imminent publication of the Berlin manuscript by Hedrick and Mirecki was leaked into the media, which exploited the so-called *Gospel of the Savior* in a sensationalist fashion. As to the scholarly publications, most of them endorsed uncritically Hedrick and Mirecki's early dating of the text and its identification as an apocryphal gospel.

The next two chapters concern the manuscripts and the relationships between them. Thus, chapter 2 offers a detailed paleographical and codicological inspection of the manuscript evidence. This chapter includes descriptions of P. Berol. 22220, Strasbourg Copte 5–7, and of the Qasr el-Wizz codex, an overview of their publication history, and observations on

¹⁵ <http://cmcl.it/> (retrieved October 12, 2016). The text can be found in the CMCL's *Clavis Patrum Copticorum* (= *clavis coptica*) under the number 0870.

¹⁶ H.-M. Schenke, "Das Unbekannte Berliner Evangelium, auch 'Evangelium des Erlösers' genannt," in C. Marksches – J. Schröter (eds.), *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* vol. 1/2: *Evangelien und Verwandtes* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012) 1277–1289.

¹⁷ B. D. Ehrman – Z. Pleše, *The Other Gospels: Accounts of Jesus from Outside the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 217–225. This is an enriched edition of B. D. Ehrman – Z. Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), but without the original Greek, Latin, and Coptic texts.

their possible dating on the basis of paleographical comparisons with other Coptic manuscripts. Chapter 3 documents the parallels between the Berlin and Strasbourg witnesses of the text. Here, I also provide arguments that the Hymn of the Cross in the Qasr el-Wizz codex, much of which is recoverable in the Berlin and Strasbourg manuscripts, although sometimes in a different order, contains an abbreviated and redacted version of the Hymn of the Cross in the *BSApo*.

Chapter 4, the core of the book, inserts the *BSApo* into the post-Chalcedonian Egyptian setting. This chapter tries to penetrate the cloak of complexity which covers the Coptic apostolic memoirs, a group of apocryphal texts to which the *BSApo* also belongs.¹⁸ The writings included in this literary genre consist of narratives and revelation dialogues between Jesus and his disciples on various topics related to Coptic religious festivals. An original feature of these texts is that the apostles write down the dialogue in the first person plural in a book which they deposit in a library in Jerusalem. Sometimes, the texts mention that the alleged apostolic writing was discovered by one of the fathers of the Coptic church, who transcribed and included it in a sermon delivered for a specific religious festival. The memoirs of the apostles treat different topics – usually of hagiographic nature – from the enthronement of angelic beings (such as the archangels Michael and Gabriel, the Four Bodiless Creatures, and Abbaton, the Angel of Death), to accounts of New Testament figures like Jesus’ parents, Mary Magdalene, Gamaliel, and Pilate (who is regarded as a saint in Coptic sources). The birth, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ are also among the favorite topics of the memoirs. It becomes apparent that, by attributing these texts to the apostles and, at the same time, to the church fathers, their authors tried to confer on them double authority, both apostolic and patristic. While many of the apostolic memoirs have survived in Coptic, some of them are no longer extant in this language. Thus, some apostolic books are preserved only in Arabic and Ethiopic (Ḡə‘əz), but they are arguably based on lost, or not yet identified, Coptic originals.

As the *BSApo* has clear literary connections to the corpus of apostolic memoirs, in the same chapter I will make an inventory of these pseudepigraphic writings and briefly review them and the manuscripts in which they are preserved. The Coptic apostolic books can be broadly divided into two categories: memoirs included in a patristic homily and memoirs without a homiletic framework.

¹⁸ The label “memoirs of the apostles” was applied to these texts by P. Piovanelli, “Thursday Night Fever: Dancing and Singing with Jesus in the *Gospel of the Savior* and the Dance of the Savior around the Cross,” *Early Christianity* 3 (2012) 229–248, at 238.

1) 18 apostolic memoirs embedded in a pseudo-patristic sermon:

Ps.-Cyril of Jerusalem, *On the Life and the Passion of Christ* (CPG 3604; clavis coptica 0113), Ps.-Cyril of Jerusalem, *On Mary Magdalene* (CANT 73; clavis coptica 0118), Ps.-Cyril of Jerusalem, *On the Life of the Virgin* (clavis coptica 0005), Ps.-Cyril of Jerusalem, *On the Dormition of the Virgin* (no clavis number), Ps.-Bachios of Maiuma, *On the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace* (clavis coptica 0068), Ps.-Cyriacus of Behnesa, *On the Flight of the Holy Family to Egypt* (no clavis number), Ps.-Cyriacus of Behnesa, *On the Dormition of the Virgin* (CANT 147, 153), Ps.-Cyriacus of Behnesa, *Lament of Mary* (CANT 74), Ps.-Cyriacus of Behnesa, *Martyrdom of Pilate* (CANT 75), Ps.-Archelaos of Neapolis, *On the Archangel Gabriel* (clavis coptica 0045), Ps.-Basil of Caesarea, *On the Building of the Church of the Virgin* (CPG 2970; clavis coptica 0073), Ps.-John Chrysostom, *On the Four Bodiless Creatures* (CPG 5150.11; clavis coptica 0177), Ps.-John Chrysostom, *On the Archangel Michael* (no clavis number), Ps.-John Chrysostom, *On John the Baptist* (CPG 5150.3; CANT 184; clavis coptica 0170), Ps.-John Chrysostom, *Revelation on the Mount of Olives, 40 Days after the Resurrection* (no clavis number), Ps.-Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Dormition of the Virgin* (no clavis number), Ps.-Timothy Aelurus, *On the Archangel Michael* (CPG 2529; clavis coptica 0404), Ps.-Timothy Aelurus, *On Abbaton* (CPG 2530; clavis coptica 0405), Ps.-Theodosius of Alexandria, *On the Dormition of the Virgin* (CPG 7153; clavis coptica 0385);

2) nine apostolic memoirs without a homiletic framework:

History of Joseph the Carpenter (BHO 532–533; CANT 60; clavis coptica 0037), *Enthronement of Michael* (clavis coptica 0488), *Enthronement of Gabriel* (clavis coptica 0378), *Mysteries of John* (clavis coptica 0041), *Book of Bartholomew* (CANT 80; clavis coptica 0027), *Discourse of the Savior* (the Stauros-text) (no clavis number), Ps.-Evodius, *On the Dormition of the Virgin* (CANT 133; clavis coptica 0151), Ps.-Evodius, *On the Passion 1* (clavis coptica 0149), Ps.-Evodius, *On the Passion 2* (CANT 81; clavis coptica 0150);

Additionally, at least three texts seemingly belong to the genre of apostolic memoirs, but as they have survived fragmentarily, we cannot decide whether they belonged to the first or to the second category: a Miaphysite Christological extract, a Sahidic fragment discovered at a monastery from Bala'izah in Upper Egypt, and the *BSApo*. The parallels between these three texts, especially the *BSApo*, and the other apostolic memoirs will be documented in Chapter 4.

At least one text in the list above requires further explanation. In the sermon of Ps.-Bachios of Maiuma about the Three Children, the author

claims that he received from the Babylonian Christians an old book in which Jechonias relates, as an eyewitness, the lives of Ananias, Azarias and Misael.¹⁹ Jechonias is the Israelite king who reigned for only three months, before Nebuchadnezzar deported him to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:9), just like Daniel and his three companions. Said to be one of Christ's ancestors in the Davidic line (Matthew 1:11), he may have sparked the imagination of the Egyptian Christians because of the confusion with Joachaz-Jechonias, who died in Egypt according to 2 Kingdoms 23:34. Thus, although this homily is not an apostolic memoir *per se*, Ps.-Bachios uses a similar literary strategy to legitimize the text. Moreover, Bachios is invoked in Ps.-Cyril of Jerusalem's homily *On the Life and the Passion of Christ* as the one who deciphers an apostolic memoir written by the apostle Peter. This further supports the inclusion of the text attributed to him in the same category.

Although some of apostolic memoirs are framed by a pseudo-patristic sermon whereas others are not, it can vigorously be affirmed that they all belong to the same cycle as their numerous literary parallels suggest. For example, the synopsis below shows some structural parallels between three memoirs embedded in a sermon and three without homiletic framework.

I. Introduction.

Ps.-Chrysostom, *On the Four Bodiless Creatures*:

"It happened one day when we, the apostles, were gathered on the Mount of Olives that, behold, the Savior came mounted on the cherubs."²⁰

Ps.-Timothy Aelurus, *On Abbaton*:

"It happened that as our Savior, the entire root of Goodness, was finishing everything, that the day of his ascension has been completed for him to go up to his Father, he raised his hand over each one of his holy apostles."²¹

Ps.-Archelaos of Neapolis, *On Gabriel*:

"It happened while the holy apostles were sitting on the Mount of Olives, our God Christ appeared to them and taught them great hidden mysteries."²²

¹⁹ U. Zanetti, "Le roman de Bakhéos sur les trois jeunes saints de Babylone. Fragments coptes sahidiques," in B. Janssens et al. (eds.), *Philomathestatos: Studies in Greek and Byzantine Texts Presented to Jacques Noret for his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 137; Louvain: Peeters, 2004) 713–747, at 718.

²⁰ Translation from L. Depuydt (ed.), *Homiletica from the Pierpont Morgan Library* 2 vols. (CSCO, 524–525. *Scriptores coptici*, 43–44; Louvain: Peeters, 1991) 2: 32.

²¹ Translation from I. Saweros – A. Suciú, "The Investiture of Abbaton, the Angel of Death. A New Translation and Introduction," in T. Burke – B. Landau (eds.), *New Testament Apocrypha. More Noncanonical Scriptures* vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016) 536.

²² My translation of the Bohairic text in H. de Vis, *Homélies coptes de la Vaticane* vol. 2 (Coptica, 5; Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Roghandel-Nordisk Forlag, 1929) 249–250.

Enthronement of Michael:

“It happened when the good Savior came on the Mount of Olives, he with his disciples and holy apostles sat there for many days, teaching them about the creation of heaven and earth and the creation of the eons of light.”²³

Enthronement of Gabriel:

“It happened when the apostles gathered with our Savior, the king of life and peace, in order to ask from him about the assurance of everything, about the limit of the eons of light.”²⁴

Discourse of the Savior (the Stauros-text):

“My beloved, it happened one day, while our Savior was sitting on the Mount of Olives, four days before he was taken up to heavens, while his apostles gathered with him. He told them the incomprehensible mysteries.”²⁵

II. An apostle (Peter or Thomas) questions Christ concerning the specific topic of the memoir.

Ps.-Chrysostom, *On the Four Bodiless Creatures:*

Thomas, “My Lord, my God, and my Savior, why did you reveal to us all the mysteries, those of heaven and those of the earth, and did not hide anything from us? Why then, O our Lord, have you not revealed to us the mystery of these four creatures? ... We want you to reveal their names to us and on what day you established them so that we might preach them in the entire world.”²⁶

Ps.-Timothy Aelurus, *On Abbaton:*

Peter, “My Lord and my God, behold, you have informed us about everything that we asked from you and you have not hidden anything from us. Now then, my Lord and my God, behold, you are sending us to the whole world to proclaim your holy resurrection to all nations ... Now then, my Lord, we would like you to inform us about the day when you established Abbaton, the Angel of Death.”²⁷

Ps.-Archelaos of Neapolis, *On Gabriel:*

Peter, “My good Savior, you made us hear hidden words filled with life by informing us about all those things that will happen. Therefore, I want, O my Lord, that you inform me and my fellow-apostles who are these two youth with a very beautiful face that follow your Lordship?”²⁸

Enthronement of Michael:

Peter, “O my Lord, there is a little word on my heart that I want to ask.”²⁹

²³ My translation of the Sahidic text in C.D.G. Müller, *Die Bücher der Einsetzung der Erzengel Michael und Gabriel* 2 vols. (CSCO, 225–226. *Scriptores coptici*, 31–32; Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1962) 1: 2.

²⁴ My translation of the Sahidic text in Müller, *Bücher der Einsetzung* 1, 61.

²⁵ Translation, with modifications, from P.C. Dilley, “The Discourse of the Savior and the Dance of the Savior,” in Burke – Landau (eds.), *New Testament Apocrypha* 1, 193.

²⁶ Depuydt, *Homiletica* 2, 32–33.

²⁷ Saweros – Suci, “The Investiture of Abbaton,” 536.

²⁸ My translation of the Bohairic text in de Vis, *Homélies coptes* 2, 250.

²⁹ My translation of the Sahidic text in Müller, *Bücher der Einsetzung* 1, 4.

Enthronement of Gabriel:

Thomas, “O my Lord, there is a little word on my heart that I want to ask from you. . . . My Lord and my God, we want you to inform us how many angels lead the day and how many the night, and you inform us about the condition of each of them, so that we might preach their honor in the whole world, just as you revealed to us the day and the enthronement of the archangel Gabriel.”³⁰

Discourse of the Savior (the Stauros-text):

Peter, “Our Lord and our God, and the Savior of the souls . . . You have revealed to us all the mysteries, and also now, may you reveal to us the mystery which we will ask you . . . Our Lord, and our God, and our Savior, we want you to tell us the mystery of the cross . . . so that we will hear from you concerning it, and preach it in the whole world.”³¹

III. Christ commissions the apostles to proclaim in the whole world what he just revealed to them.

Ps.-Chrysostom, On the Four Bodiless Creatures:

“Now then (τενονυ σε), O my brethren, my beloved ones, preach to the entire world and let them make offerings and do charity in their names.”³²

Ps.-Timothy Aelurus, On Abbaton:

“Now then (τενονυ σε), O my holy apostles, behold, I informed you how my Father made Abbaton frightful and disturbing . . . Proclaim him to all humanity.”³³

Ps.-Archelaos of Neapolis, On Gabriel:

Missing

Enthronement of Michael:

“Now then (τενονυ σε), O my disciples, arise and go out to the world and proclaim the four gospels and their sweet teachings, the ones that I told you.”³⁴

Enthronement of Gabriel:

“Now then (τενονυ σε), O my blessed disciples, go out in the whole world and gather my scattered sheep, take them and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”³⁵

Discourse of the Savior (the Stauros-text):

“Now then (τενονυ σε), O my holy members, go and proclaim to the whole world, so that they will follow the cross, so that they will possess this great glory on the day which is under that fear.”³⁶

The parallels supplied above show that these six apostolic memoirs were seemingly written following a certain pattern, albeit they otherwise differ in detail.

³⁰ My translation of the Sahidic text in Müller, *Bücher der Einsetzung* 1, 62.

³¹ Dilley, “Discourse of the Savior,” 193.

³² Depuydt, *Homiletica* 2, 35.

³³ Saweros – Suci, “The Investiture of Abbaton,” 542.

³⁴ My translation of the Sahidic text in Müller, *Bücher der Einsetzung* 1, 59.

³⁵ My translation of the Sahidic text in Müller, *Bücher der Einsetzung* 1, 81.

³⁶ Translation, with modifications, from Dilley, “Discourse of the Savior,” 194.

Delimitating such a large corpus of writings necessitates some further clarifications. What exactly allows the historian of Coptic literature to include a certain text among the apostolic memoirs? As the label itself implies, the writing must claim to be an apostolic book written by the apostles and, most often than not, embedded in a sermon pronounced by a church father. Consequently, not every Coptic writing that includes apocryphal stories about Christ and the apostles falls into this category. For example, texts like Ps.-Severian of Gabala's encomium on the twelve apostles (CPG 4281; *clavis coptica* 0331),³⁷ Ps.-Chrysostom's homily on the Resurrection and the apostles (CPG 5150.11; *clavis coptica* 0167),³⁸ or the four homilies on the Passion (CPG 3598–3601; *clavis coptica* 0114–117) and the homily on the cross (CPG 3602; *clavis coptica* 0120),³⁹ all attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, cannot be counted as apostolic memoirs. Although these texts are also Coptic apocrypha of the New Testament, and some of them even have literary connections with the memoirs, they do not claim to be authentic books penned by the apostles. Therefore, I would define the Coptic apostolic memoirs as writings probably composed directly in Coptic which use the first person plural narrative in order to convince the reader that they are authentic records of the apostles, and focus on specific issues connected to the Egyptian liturgical calendar. Their unity as a genre is ascertained by a whole string of literary commonalities, which include both thematic features and textual parallels.

A remark is in order concerning the literary genre of the apostolic memoirs. Calling these texts either homilies or apocrypha seems to be ambiguous as the category "apocrypha" is often too rigidly delimited in scholarship. The numerous manuscripts that preserve apostolic memoirs demonstrate that they were read during liturgy in the churches and monasteries of Egypt

³⁷ This text is preserved in two recensions. The first one is attested only in Sahidic, see Michael E. Foat's edition and translation in L. Depuydt (ed.), *Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan Library* 2 vols. (CSCO, 544–545. *Scriptores coptici*, 47–48; Louvain: Peeters, 1993) 1: 85–130 (Coptic text), 2: 65–101 (English translation). The second recension is attested in Sahidic, Bohairic, and Arabic. Only the Arabic version has been published until now, D. Righi, *Severiano di Gabala, In apostolos: Clavis Coptica 0331 (CPG 4281)* 2 vols. (Rome: C. I. M., 2004). On the differences between the two recensions and the apocryphal traditions they feature, see S. Voicu, "Pseudo Severiano di Gabala, *Encomium in XII Apostolos* (CPG 4281): Gli spunti apocrifi," *Apocrypha* 19 (2008) 217–266.

³⁸ Sahidic text edited and translated by Zlatko Pleše in Depuydt (ed.), *Homiletica*, 1: 56–76 (Sahidic text), 2: 57–80 (English translation).

³⁹ On these and other similar pseudepigraphic homilies attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem in Coptic, see R. van den Broek, *Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem, On the Life and the Passion of Christ. A Coptic Apocryphon* (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, 118; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2013) 71–111.

throughout the Middle Ages. What I find relevant here is that, although the memoirs often claim to contain hidden mysteries revealed by Christ, they do not profess the teachings of a marginal Christian group; rather, they are meant to bolster the orthodox doctrines of the Egyptian church. As I will argue, some Coptic sources show signs of a conflict inside the Coptic church concerning the use of the apostolic memoirs. Nevertheless, the Egyptian monks continued to copy these untold stories about Jesus and the apostles, first in Coptic and, when this language came out of use, in Arabic.

The endeavor to document the literary connections between the *BSApo* and the Coptic apostolic memoirs was made independently alongside my work by Joost Hagen. In 2010, while I was still working at my dissertation, Hagen published an important article, which is essential for anyone who wishes to comprehend this text.⁴⁰ However, the limits of an article obliged Hagen to provide only a partial picture of the literary setting to which the *BSApo* belongs. Therefore, I felt that there was a need to go farther and offer a detailed account of the relationships between the *BSApo* and the other apostolic memoirs. As this book will show, the parallels are so clear and numerous that they leave little room to doubt that this is the context in which the *BSApo* must be included. Special attention will be given to two basic characteristics of the memoirs, which appear also in the *BSApo*: the first person plural narrative voice and the vocative “O my holy members,” a peculiar expression used by Jesus in addressing the apostles, rarely attested outside this category of texts.

The literary analysis of the apostolic memoirs will reveal that they were composed in the cultural setting of post-Chalcedonian Egypt. As we will see, this provenance emerges plainly from their Christology, which bears the marks of the fifth century polemics concerning the person of Christ. In some memoirs, the Coptic Miaphysite position is clearly expressed, which indicates that they should be dated after the council of Chalcedon (451).

⁴⁰ J. L. Hagen, “Ein anderer Kontext für die Berliner und Straßburger ‘Evangelienfragmente.’ Das ‘Evangelium des Erlösers’ und andere ‘Apostelevangeliën’ in der koptischen Literatur,” in Frey – Schröter (eds.), *Jesus in apokryphen Evangelienüberlieferungen*, 339–371.

Chapter 1

History of Research on the *Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*

A New Ancient Gospel?

During the 1995 American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting in Philadelphia, Charles W. Hedrick announced the discovery, in the papyrological collection of the Egyptian Museum in West Berlin, of a Coptic parchment manuscript (P. Berol. 22220) that presumably preserved an ancient Christian gospel.¹ He reiterated the announcement at the 6th International Congress of Coptic Studies, which took place in Münster, July 20–26, 1996.² At the Philadelphia meeting, Hedrick found out that another scholar, Paul A. Mirecki, was already working on the same manuscript. Thus, the *editio princeps* of P. Berol. 22220 was published conjointly by Hedrick and Mirecki a few years later.³ As the original title has not survived in the manuscript, but Christ is named “Savior” almost throughout the text, the editors called it conventionally the *Gospel of the Savior*.⁴

Already in the two preliminary reports, Hedrick underlined that the manuscript contains logia of Jesus, which do not follow literally those known from the New Testament. This feature may suggest, according to Hedrick, that P. Berol. 22220 does not draw on the canonical gospels but, rather, on the oral tradition of the sayings of Christ.⁵ Later, in the introduction to the *editio princeps*, Hedrick approximately dated the manuscript between the

¹ C. W. Hedrick, “A Newly Discovered Gospel (Berlin MSS P22220) and the Early Christian Tradition,” in *American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Abstracts* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998) 381–382.

² C. W. Hedrick, “A Preliminary Report on Coptic Codex P. Berol. Inv. 22220,” in S. Emmel et al. (eds.), *Ägypten und Nubien in spätantiker und christlicher Zeit. Akten des 6. Internationalen Koptologenkongresses, Münster, 20.–26. Juli 1996*, vol. 2: *Schrifttum, Sprache und Gedankenwelt* (Sprachen und Kulturen des Christlichen Orients, 6/2; Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1999) 127–130.

³ Hedrick – Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior*.

⁴ With three exceptions, when Christ is called “Lord” (ⲗⲟⲟⲥ), see P. Berol. 22220 97, col. A,32–col. B,1; 107, col. A,5, 12.

⁵ Hedrick, “Preliminary Report,” 130.

fourth and the seventh century, but, as for the writing itself, he postulated a lost Greek original, no later than the second half of the second century CE.⁶ This early dating would underline the importance of the text, which represents a product of proto-orthodox Christianity:

the Gospel of the Savior was composed at a time when Christian oral traditions were still influential as written gospel texts. Thus the latest date for the composition of the Gospel of the Savior that best fits these conditions is the later half of the second century before the canonical gospels had consolidated their influence over the church and at which time the oral tradition remained a viable competitor to the written texts.⁷

In another contribution published a few years later, Hedrick expressed again the same view, emphasizing that the logia of P. Berol. 22220 are as venerable as those in the synoptic gospels and the *Gospel of Thomas*.⁸ Apparently, Mirecki's first conclusion after he checked the manuscript in Berlin was that the writing "is comprised of gospel-like material that was originally embedded in another text of a different genre, such as a homily or a letter."⁹ However, the first editors of the Berlin manuscript have not explored further this possibility, but they rather favored the hypothesis that P. Berol. 22220 features a sayings gospel, perhaps punctuated by some narrative episodes.¹⁰

According to Hedrick, the original language of such a venerable document must necessarily be Greek. He tried to find arguments in this regard by underlining the "unusual use" of the verb $\omega\rho\eta\tau\epsilon$.¹¹ Thus, Hedrick stated that in P. Berol. 22220 110, col. B, 13–15 the Coptic verb $\omega\omega\rho\eta$, which normally means "to be early to/for," renders here the metaphorical sense of the Greek $\delta\rho\theta\acute{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$, "be eager" or "go eagerly." However, Peter Nagel documented that this sense of the word was well known in Coptic, albeit Crum's dictionary does not mention it.¹² He has pointed out that, in conjunction with the preposition ϵ - or $\epsilon\rho\omega$, $\omega\rho\eta\tau\epsilon$ sometimes translates the metaphorical meaning of $\delta\rho\theta\acute{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$ $\pi\rho\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ $\tau\iota\nu\alpha$ in the Sahidic version of the Bible. Consequently, its use

⁶ Hedrick – Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior*, 2, 15.

⁷ Hedrick – Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior*, 23.

⁸ C. W. Hedrick, "An Anecdotal Argument for the Independence of the *Gospel of Thomas* from the Synoptic Gospels," in Bethge et al. (eds.), *For the Children, Perfect Instruction*, 113–126, at 123.

⁹ Hedrick – Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior*, 19.

¹⁰ Hedrick – Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior*, 18–19.

¹¹ Hedrick – Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior*, 12–13.

¹² P. Nagel, "'Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern vor der Auferstehung' – zur Herkunft und Datierung des 'Unbekannten Berliner Evangeliums'," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 94 (2003) 215–257, at 227–229.