

Christian Texts

New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha and Related Writings

These books were excluded from the New Testament canon. Some of these texts are also included in the Nag Hammadi or Gnostic collections. An excellent online resource for New Testament Apocryphal writing is *New Testament Apocrypha*. An overview of current views on this literature can be found in S. J. Shoemaker, *Apocryphal*. The most convenient published source for translations of these texts is the two-volume *New Testament Apocrypha (NTA)* edited by Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher. Originally published in German as *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* by Hennecke in 1904, a second edition was produced in 1924 and a third in 1959. The English edition of 1963-1965 contains English translations of the texts from the original, rather than from the German.⁵¹ Hennecke originally compiled this work to update M. R. James' *Apocryphal New Testament (ANT)*. Page numbers for both *NTA* and *ANT* are referenced in the table below.

Text Names	Date	Description and Comments	NTA	ANT
<i>Secret Gospel of Mark</i>	ca. 100	Of controversial provenance, this purported excerpt of a letter from Clement contains a brief account of the raising of Lazarus and of Jesus teaching the mysteries of the kingdom to a youth. Readily available in M. Smith, <i>Secret Gospel</i> . Subsequent research is documented in J. Dart, <i>Decoding</i> .		
<i>Protevangelium of James (Infancy Gospel of James)</i>	By the third century CE	This book contains a number of very early traditions about the life of Mary and the birth of Jesus. Parts were incorporated into the <i>Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew</i> (Pseudo-Matthew, <i>Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew</i>) and the <i>Gospel of the Birth of Mary</i> (A. Roberts, <i>et al.</i> , <i>Nativity of Mary</i>). A more recent English translation with commentary can be found in M. Barker, <i>Infancy Gospel of James</i> .	1:370-388	38-49
<i>Gospel of Nicodemus (Acts of Pilate and Christ's Descent into Hell)</i>	ca. 350	The so-called <i>Gospel of Nicodemus</i> is composed of two originally independent parts. The <i>Acts of Pilate</i> , which exists in Greek and Latin versions, was implausibly said to have been derived from official Roman records. The Latin appendix describing <i>Christ's Descent into Hell</i> , perhaps the most well-known account of the story of the "Harrowing of Hell," was popular among early Christians.	1:444-484	94-165
<i>The Acts of John</i>	ca. 150-200	About two thirds of this work, which was probably about the length of Matthew, has survived. John's visits to Ephesus and his death are recorded. A prayer circle at the Last Supper and other incidents surrounding the time of the Passion are also included. Some scholars date the work to the fourth century.	2:188-259	228-270
<i>Apocalypse of Peter</i>	ca. 100-150	"An early Christian document attributed to the apostle Peter, known only from quotes by early church fathers and a few fragments" (J. A. Tvedtnes, <i>Hidden Books</i> , p. 229).	2:663-683	505-524
<i>Apocalypse of Paul</i>	By the fourth century	"A document attributed to the apostle Paul, describing his vision of the heavens alluded to in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4. It was known to St. Augustine in the fourth century CE. It was widely distributed and is known from manuscripts written in Greek (the original), Syriac, Latin, Coptic, Armenian, and Old Church Slavonic" (J. A. Tvedtnes, <i>Hidden Books</i> , p. 229). An English translation of a Coptic fragment can be found in G. W. MacRae, <i>et al.</i> , <i>Paul</i> .	2:755-798	524-555
<i>Évangile des Douze Apôtres (Gospel of the Twelve Apostles)</i>	500-600	French translation in E. Revillout, <i>Évangile</i> . Nibley translates liberal portions into English in H. W. Nibley, <i>Christ</i> , pp. 416-428. <i>NTA</i> calls this a "collection of sixteen independent Coptic fragments... arbitrarily grouped under a fictitious title" (<i>NTA</i> , 1:271), but Nibley sees them as a connected forty-day manuscript (H. W. Nibley, <i>Christ</i> , p. 416). Not to be confused with the no-longer-extant <i>Gospel of the Twelve Apostles</i> referred to by the Church Fathers (<i>NTA</i> , 1:263-264) and possibly to be identified with the <i>Gospel of the Ebionites</i> (<i>ANT</i> , p. 10). Neither does it have anything to do with J. R. Harris, <i>Gospel</i> (an eighth-century Syriac manuscript—see <i>NTA</i> , 1:271), nor G. J. R. Ouseley, <i>Gospel</i> (purportedly from a manuscript hidden in Tibet that was "channeled" to the author).		

The Church Fathers

These texts represent the writings of early Christian leaders, following the apostolic period.⁵² They are usually divided into authors who wrote before the Council of Nicaea, held in 325 CE,

51 E. Hennecke, *et al.*, *NT Apocrypha*. Page numbers below are to the third edition. An English (1991/1993) fifth edition has now appeared. J. K. Elliott, *Apocryphal* has now superseded both *NTA* and *ANT*.

52 Kelly and Saint-Laurent have assembled a useful study of resources for the study of early Christianity, with a