Class 10
OTHER GOSPELS

Outline

- Apocrypha & Canon
  - "Apocrypha": definition, examples
  - The definition of the canon

- Gnostic Gospels and Gnosticism
  - The great discoveries: Oxyrhynchus and Nag Hammadi
  - Gospel of Thomas
  - Gnostic Thought: Origins, Comparison to Orthodox Christianity
  - Gospels of Judas, Mary (Magdalen)

- Other Apocryphal Gospels

APOCRYPHA & CANON
Apocryphal Texts
Some Definitions

Apocrypha: literally "hidden" in Greek, it refers to books judged at some point in time to be on the fringes of the canon.

Septuagint: The Greek translation of the Hebrew/Aramaic scriptures (200 BCE), it includes 7+ books that became apocryphal for Jews and later for Protestants, who followed the Jewish canon; these books are part of Catholic Bibles.

Apocryphal Texts
Some Examples

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<th>Canonical NT</th>
<th>Examples of Apocryphal Works</th>
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The Definition of the Canon

- **Definition**: A Greek word for a tool of measurement; in scripture studies a list or catalogue of books that "measure up" to the standards of the church as authoritative texts.
- **Time-Frame**: A 4-gospel limit in some communities by 180 CE; earliest canon that matches our NT's is in 367 CE (Athanasius' Easter Letter).
- **Criteria**: apostolic, or traceable to one of the apostles;
in traditional use, or in use from an early period in many churches;
catholic, or universal in appeal;
orthodox, or in conformity with emerging mainstream teaching.
GNOSTIC GOSPELS & Gnosticism

The Great Discoveries

Oxyrhynchus
2895–2930
35,000 fragments, mostly Greek, some of them Christian.

Nag Hammadi
1945
13 books with 52 separate “tractates” — 4th century copies of earlier gnostic works.

Gospel of Thomas

Manuscript Evidence

This gospel survives in 4 witnesses

- 3 Greek fragments from separate mss found at Oxyrhynchus (100–200 CE)

- A Coptic translation found complete in Codex II from the Nag Hammadi corpus (< XIII 4, 400 CE)
Gospel of Thomas

- **Date**: Mid-100s CE, Syria, though some sayings may go back to the 1st century
- **Genre**: Sayings gospel, like Q; almost no narrative material
- **Gospel comparison**: Some sayings are very similar to Q, but there are also unusual sayings
- **Content**: Jesus reveals the secret of the disciples’ origin; the world and human body are viewed negatively; the kingdom is the divine self of the disciple

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**Gospel of Thomas**

Logion 56

Jesus said, whoever has come to know the world has discovered a carcass, and whoever has discovered a carcass, of that person the world is not worthy.

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**Gospel of Thomas**

Logion 114

Simon Peter said to them, “Make Mary leave us, for females don’t deserve life.”

Jesus said, “Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the domain of heaven.”
A Problem that Gnosticism Addresses
How do you account for the presence of evil in the world?

Three basic answers:

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<th>Animosity between the gods at creation and ongoing (Mesopotamian mythology)</th>
<th>Two Gods: one good, one evil (Zoroastrian dualism)</th>
<th>One Supreme God with a lesser “demiurge” who creates this world (Platonic system)</th>
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Basic Platonic Idea | Gnostic Adaptation | Orthodox Adaptation |

Supreme God | For gnostics, creation occurs without the permission of the Supreme God (demiurge = OT God). So God does a workaround, implanting humans with a spirit / soul / spark of gnosia (knowledge of their true nature). Salvation = return to true root; return of spark to light. | For orthodox Christians, the “demiurge” is Christ. While “lesser” than the Father, he is of the same nature, so evil does not derive from him. Nor is the world God creates evil. “Sin” is alienation from our true root, and the Savior guides us to our true root (self) / the kingdom. |

Demiurge: a lesser god who creates this world | this world is but a shadow of what is in the mind of the supreme God | |

Gospel of Judas
Manuscript Evidence

The gospel was denounced by Irenaeus of Lyons in 180 CE, and by later heresiologists.

But we had no actual manuscript of it... until a 3rd-4th century ms came to light in 1983 in Geneva. It was published in 2006 as part of a National Geographic special.

The work is part of Codex Trachos, which preserves 3 other works (First Apocalypse of James, Letter to Peter to Philp, and a fragment of the Book of Allogenes unlike the NH tractate of the same name). It most likely was discovered in Egypt.
Gospel of Judas

Date: 130–170 CE

Genre: Revelatory dialogue / secret instruction

Gospel comparison: Revelation before arrest through betrayal

Content: Judas alone recognizes that Jesus is the son of the Supreme God (not the demiurge); Jesus in turn reveals to him the divine and its emanations into this world; Judas frees Jesus from “the man who bears [him]”

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Gospel of Judas

34.12–35.6

[The disciples] said, “Master, you ... are the son of our god.”

Jesus said to them, “How is it that you know me? I tell you the truth, no generation will know me among the people who are with you.” When his disciples heard this, they began getting angry and hostile and blaspheming against him in their minds.

Jesus recognized that they did not [understand, and he said] to them, “Why has your concern produced this hostility? Your god who is within you and [his powers] have become angry within your souls. [Let] any of you who is a [strong enough] person bring forward the perfect human being and stand before my face.”

They all said, “We are strong.”

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Gospel of Judas

35.6–21

But none of their spirits dared to stand before [him], except Judas Iscariot. He was able to stand before him, yet he could not look him in the eye, but he turned his face away.

Judas [said] to him, “I know who you are and from what place you have come. You have come from the immortal realm of Barbelo, and I am not worthy to pronounce the name of the one who has sent you.”

Supreme God

Demiurge

a lesser god

who creates this world

Humans have the divine in them. Those who know it worship Barbelo; those who don’t worship the demiurge
Gospel of Judas
39.18–40.26

[The other disciples have a vision of the Jerusalem temple, which Jesus interprets as an allegory of the orthodox church]

“You are the ones presenting the offerings at the altar you have seen. That is the god you serve...And the cattle brought in are the offerings you have seen—they are the multitude you lead astray before that altar. [The ruler of this world] will stand and use my name in this manner, and generations of pious people will cling to him. After him...another [man will] come from the child-killers, and another from those who have sex with men, and those who abstain, and the rest of those who are impure and lawless and prone to error, as well as those who say, ‘We are like angels’; they are the stars that bring everything to its end...On the last day they will be put to shame.”

Gospel of Judas
56.18–57.23

[Jesus’ final revelation to Judas before Judas turns him in]

“...You will exceed all of [the disciples]. For you will sacrifice the man who bears me. Already your horn has been lifted up, and your anger has flared up, and your star has burned brightly, and your heart has [grown strong].

“Look, you have been informed of everything. Lift up your eyes and behold the cloud and the light that is within it and the stars that are circling it. And the star that leads the way is your star.”

Judas lifted up his eyes and beheld the cloud of light, and he entered it.

Gospel of Mary
Manuscript Evidence

This gospel survives in 3 witnesses, none of them found at Nag Hammadi (but all of them from Egypt)

♦ Papyrus No. 45 in the John Rylands collection at the University of Manchester (from Oxyrhynchus; Greek, early 200s CE)

♦ POxy 3525 (Greek, 200s CE)

♦ A Coptic translation at the beginning of the Berlin Papyrus 8502 (a.k.a. the Akhmim Codex, 400s CE)
**Gospel of Mary**

- **Date**: 100s CE, Egypt (or Syria?)
- **Genre**: Revelatory dialogue / secret instruction
- **Gospel comparison**: Entirely set after the resurrection; Q & A and commissioning of disciples; but content of conversation is gnostic
- **Content**: Post-resurrection dialogues with disciples about the destiny of matter and the nature of sin (which the Savior says "does not exist"); Mary then shares the special revelation

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**Gospel of Mary**

7.1-9

*The disciples ask* "Will matter then be utterly [destroyed] or not?"

The Savior replied, "Every nature, every modeled form, every creature exists in and with each other. They will dissolve again into their own proper root. For the nature of matter is dissolved into what belongs to its nature. Whoever has ears to hear should hear."

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**Gospel of Mary**

7.10-20

Then Peter said to him, "You have been explaining every topic to us; tell us one other thing. What is the sin of the world?"

The Savior replied, "There is no such thing as sin; rather, you yourselves are what produces sin when you act in accordance with the nature of adultery, which is called 'sin.' For this reason, the Good came among you, pursuing the good that belongs to every nature. It will set it within its root."
Andrew responded, addressing the brothers and sisters, “Say what you will about the things she has said, but I do not believe that the Savior said these things, for indeed these teachings are strange ideas.”

Peter responded, bringing up similar concerns. He questioned them about the Savior, “Did he, then, speak with a woman in private without our knowing about it? Are we to turn around and listen to her? Did he choose her over us?”

Then Mary wept and said to Peter, “My brother Peter, what are you imagining? Do you think that I have thought up these things by myself in my heart or that I am telling lies about the Savior?”

Levi answered, speaking to Peter, “Peter, you have always been a wrathful person. Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries. For if the Savior made her worthy, who are you then for your part to reject her? Assuredly the Savior’s knowledge is completely reliable. That is why he loved her more than us.

“Rather, we should be ashamed. We should clothe ourselves with the perfect human, acquire it for ourselves as he commanded us, and announce the good news, not laying down any other rule or law that differs from what the Savior said.”

After [he said these] things, they started going out [to] teach and to preach.
**Gospel of Peter**

**Manuscript Evidence**

This gospel survives in 2 witnesses, both from Egypt

- A copy of the text found in the grave of a monk at Akhmim in Upper Egypt in winter 1886/1887 (Greek, 700s–800s CE)

- POxy 2949 (Greek, late 100s–early 200s CE)

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**Gospel of Peter**

- **Date**: Mid-100s CE, Syria?
  - Could parts of the passion narrative trace to the first century?
- **Genre**: Like the gospels but limited (?) to the passion and resurrection
- **Gospel comparison**: Incorporates quotes from the four NT gospels, but Peter character speaks in first person, and there's greater emphasis on the miraculous and thus on the resurrection
- **Content**: Pilate washes hands, Jews bear greater responsibility for Jesus' death; resurrection narrated (the cross emerges from the tomb and confirms that Jesus has preached to the dead)
Gospel of Peter
10.38-42

[When the soldiers at the tomb saw two men come down from heaven in “great brightness” and the tomb stone of itself start to roll away by itself], they awakened the centurion and the elders—for they also were there to assist at the watch. And whilst they were relating what they had seen, they saw again three men come out from the sepulcher; and two of them sustaining the other, and a cross following them, and the heads of the two reaching to heaven, but that of him who was led of them by the hand overpassing the heavens. And they heard a voice out of the heavens crying, “Hast thou preached to them that sleep?” and from the cross there was heard the answer, “Yea.”

Infancy Gospel of James
Manuscript Evidence

This gospel was very popular and was collated in several liturgical collections Because the text was not regarded as canonical, it was amended more often, so the versions are quite different from one another.

There are over 140 Greek mss (the oldest is Papyrus Bodmer 5 from the 300s), and multiple translations:

- 4 Syriac
- 2 Georgian
- 5 Armenian
- 1 Ethiopic paraphrase
- 1 Latin (+ extracts)
- 1 Arabic
- 169 Church Slavonic mss

Infancy Gospel of James

- Date 150–200 CE + later additions, place
- Genre A narrative like the NT gospels, but confined to stories of parents and Jesus’ birth
- Gospel comparison Presupposes and conflates the canonical infancy stories, adding legendary elements (1 Sam 1:1-2:11; 2 Chr 24:20-22)
- Content Mary’s conception, birth, upbringing, betrothal to older Joseph (with sons from a prior marriage), birth of Jesus, virginity in partu and post partum
**Infancy Gospel of Thomas**

**Manuscript Evidence**
- 8 Greek mss, the earliest of which dates to the 1300s
- 3 Syriac mss, the earliest of which dates to the 500s
- 2 Latin mss, the earliest of which dates to the 400s–500s
- 1 Georgian ms
- 15 Church Slavonic mss from the 1000s
- 1 Ethiopic ms
- Some of the details in this tradition reappear in the later Arabic infancy gospel and Armenian infancy document

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**Infancy Gospel of Thomas**

- **Date**: 100s CE, Syria?
- **Genre**: Collected traditions loosely strung together in a narrative form
- **Gospel comparison**: Vignettes of Jesus’ childhood unlike anything in the NT gospels, though some scenes are modeled on the adult Jesus’ miracles in canonical NT
- **Content**: Imagine an impulsive and willful child with divine powers