

Overview of the Use of Apocryphal Sources by Epiphanius of Constantia, Cyprus, in his Work *Panarion*

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Apocryphal Writings

From its first steps, the Church had begun to face various problems, such as the persecution by the Jews in Palestine¹ and elsewhere², as well as the hostile climate of the Roman Empire, which at times were leading into persecutions. Apart from that, however, the Church had to face the challenge to its teaching, even from the period when the apostles were continuing their preaching³.

The preaching of the Gospel, with its message that Jesus Christ's voluntary Passion and Resurrection is bringing with it the redemption of the human race, was difficult to be accepted: The Hebrews, after centuries of slavery, were expecting a Hebrew leader as their redeemer; the Greeks were trying to solve the problem of redemption by either participating in mysteries or with the theories of the various philosophical schools. Also, as early as the Hellenistic period, the mixture and adoption (syncretism)

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1. Acts δ' 1-3; ε' 17-18; ζ' 54-η' 3; ιβ' 1-5; κα' 30-31; Epiph. *Πανάριον* (Κατὰ Ἑβριωνάϊων 30, 40, 1): K. Holl (ed.), *Panarion, Haer. 1-33*, vol. I, [GCS 25], J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, Leipzig 1915, pp. 338, 14-19.

2. Acts ιγ' 50; ιδ' 19.

3. «Ὡ Τιμόθεε, τὴν παρακαταθήκην φύλαξον, ἐκτρεπόμενος τὰς βεβήλους κενοφωνίας καὶ ἀντιθέσεις τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως, ἧν τινες ἐπαγγελλόμενοι περὶ τὴν πίστιν ἠστόχησαν»: 1 Tim. στ' 20-21. See also, 1 Tim. δ' 1-3; Kol. β' 2; Tit. γ' 9-11.

by a part of the population of religious and philosophical beliefs coming from different cultures (Greek, Jewish, Egyptian, Babylonian-Persian, Indian) had given rise to the movement of Gnosticism⁴, a movement that tried to provide an answer to all of humanity's timeless problems: Where we come from, where we are going, what redemption is and how it can be achieved. The various Gnostic groups believed that they possessed revelation (secret knowledge), necessary for the salvation of their followers⁵.

The challenge of the Church's teachings was done by some of its members or others who acted alongside it; this, in its turn, gave rise to multifarious heresies. The different groups of heretics were also using various writings to spreading their doctrine, which were circulated only within their groups and were called apocryphal, because, as they said, they share their knowledge only with their followers.

In the ecclesiastical literature, the writings which have been presented as works of Old or New Testament figures, such as the apostles, with names as gospels, acts, letters, revelations, etc., but without having actually being written from these figures, are nowadays characterized as apocryphal. The authors of the apocrypha were Judeo-Christians, heretical editors and commentators of Jewish apocrypha, Gnosticizing Christians, Gnostics, imaginative or naïve men, etc.⁶; but not genuine Christians, who claimed to possess or know apocryphal books or traditions, i.e., discourses, teachings, information about the life, actions, miracles, and revelations of both Old and New Testament persons, including Jesus Christ⁷.

The authors of the apocrypha either remain faithful to the Church Tradition or try to supplement the latter, trying to substitute the canonical books, or create something completely new, without presupposing

4. Cf. H. Jonas, "Delimitation of the Gnostic phenomenon – typological and historical", in: U. Bianchi (ed.), *The Origins of Gnosticism / Le origini dello Gnosticismo*, Colloquium of Messina, 13-18 April 1966. Texts and Discussions, [Studies in the History of Religions, 12], E. J. Brill, Leiden 1967, pp. 90-108; U. Bianchi, «Le problème des origines du Gnosticisme», in: U. Bianchi (ed.), *The Origins of Gnosticism...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-27.

5. St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α', Εισαγωγή: Β' και Γ' αιώνας*, Athens ²1982, p. 200.

6. St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α', op.cit.*

7. St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α', op.cit.*, pp. 200-201.

elements of the New Testament tradition. The last group are the well-known Gnostics, whose writings are often only conventionally described as apocryphal, because all they retain from the New Testament are their inscriptions (Gospel, Epistle, etc.) and, often, their attribution to apostles⁸.

The purpose of some apocryphal writings was the edification of the believers, while others were aiming at filling the many gaps in the narratives regarding the Lord (childhood), His relatives and the apostles, while the purpose of some others was to spread and enforce cacodoxies or showcase revelations⁹.

Epiphanius of Constantia's *Panarion*

The Church was constantly waging a struggle against heresies by using a wealth of different means: teaching, preaching, sermons, anti-heretical writings against one or more heresies, convocation of Ecumenical and local councils, etc. The most important anti-heretical writer of the 4th century AD is St. Epiphanius¹⁰, Bishop of Constantia Cyprus (367-403 AD). His best-known work is *Panarion*; it was written ca. 374-377 AD. Epiphanius, born in the Gaza region of Palestine, collected and recorded in the *Panarion* information on 80 heresies and schisms from his many meetings, even with heretics, and their texts. He also obtained information from the writings of various Church Fathers and Teachers and other Church writers, in which there is information about heresies and their texts (secondary sources). Thus, Epiphanius has preserved small and large excerpts from various writings, as well as from the writings of heretics and other writers.

He also records in the *Panarion* information about beliefs that prevailed in his own time and earlier ones, as well as the Church's struggle and agony for the preservation and prevalence of its teachings.

8. St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α', op.cit.*, p. 201.

9. St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α', op.cit.*, pp. 201-202.

10. St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Β', Ὁ τέταρτος αἰώνας (Ἀνατολή και Δύση)*, Grigoris Publications, Athens ²1999, pp. 720-731; K. V. Skouteris, *Ἱστορία Δογμάτων*, vol. Β', Athens 2004, pp. 563-571.

A simple three-fold classification of the apocryphal texts, related or unrelated to the *Panarion*, is the following: Old Testament apocrypha, New Testament apocrypha, and Gnostic apocrypha. Of the dozens of apocryphal texts associated with the *Panarion*, we will limit ourselves here to the study of the New Testament gospels, which are divided into Judeo-Christian (i.e., gospels written by Jewish Christians) and Christian, some of which exhibit Gnostic influences.

Judeo-Christian Apocryphal Gospels

1. *Gospel of the Nazarenes*

The *Gospel of the Nazarenes*¹¹, i.e. the Jewish Christians, who also observed the provisions of the Mosaic law –that is why Epiphanius considers them heretics–, is related to the *Gospel of Matthew*, written between 70-150 AD in the Aramaic language.

According to Epiphanius’s testimony, the Nazarenes were preserving the *Gospel of Matthew*, which was written, according to his expression, «πληρέστατον Ἑβραϊστί» and «Ἑβραϊκοῖς γράμμασιν»¹². He nevertheless admits that he does not know whether the text contained the genealogy from Abraham to Christ, possibly because he did not have access to its contents¹³.

The reference to the “Hebrew language” should not necessarily be interpreted as meaning the OT Hebrew; it is probably an Aramaic dialect written in the Hebrew alphabet, as it is implied in Jerome’s testimonies.

11. Epiph. *Πανάριον* (Κατὰ Ναζωραίων 29, 9, 4): K. Holl I, 332, 8-11. Cf. J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament, A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1993, pp. 4-8 and 10-14; D. A. Bertrand, «Évangile des Nazaréens», in: F. Bovon & P. Geoltran (eds.), *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, I, [Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 442], Gallimard, Paris 1997, pp. 433-445; A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, [Vigiliae Christianae Supplements, 17], E. J. Brill, Leiden & New York 1992, pp. 14-16; P. Vielhauer & G. Strecker, “Jewish-Christian Gospels”, in: W. Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1: Gospels and Related Writings, James Clarke & Co – Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville-London 2003, pp. 154-159; St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α΄*, *op.cit.*, p. 211.

12. Epiph. *Πανάριον* (Κατὰ Ναζωραίων 29, 9, 4): K. Holl I, 332, 8-11.

13. A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

The testimony of Epiphanius must be treated with caution; it is not based on direct knowledge of the text. According to modern research, the canonical *Gospel of Matthew* was originally written in Greek, while the so-called Hebrew version may refer to earlier, lost forms of the Gospel text.

Especially illuminating about the *Gospel of the Nazarenes* is Epiphanius's friend, Hieronymus, who writes in 395-415/416, i.e. after *Panarion*'s compilation, that the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, which was used by the Nazarenes in his time, was known as the *Gospel of the Apostles*, a manuscript of which was in the library of Caesarea, that it was written in Aramaic with the Hebrew alphabet¹⁴, and that the Nazarenes of the region of Beroea (contemporary Aleppo) in Syria had allowed him to make a copy of their Gospel¹⁵ and, actually, that he had recently translated from Hebrew into Greek the *Gospel of the Nazarenes* and the *Ebionites*, which many considered to be the original *Gospel of Matthew*¹⁶.

2. *Gospel of Ebionites*¹⁷

Epiphanius mentions that the Ebionites were using the *Gospel of Matthew*, calling it, "Against the Jews"¹⁸, but they had distorted and

14. Hieron. *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos* (Διάλογος κατὰ Πελαγιανῶν), III, 2, 1-5: C. Moreschini (ed.), *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera* III, 2, *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos*, [Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina LXXX], Brepols, Turnhout 1990, p. 99, 14-18.

15. Hieron. *De viris illustribus* (Περὶ ἐπιφανῶν ἀνδρῶν), III (Mathaeus): K. Siamakis, *Περὶ ἐπιφανῶν ἀνδρῶν. Πηγές καὶ πρότυπα*, διδ. διατριβή, Ἀριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, Thessaloniki 1992, pp. 160, 4-10 and 161, 4-11 (Greek transl.).

16. Hieron. *Commentarium in Matheum* (Ἐπιτομή εἰς τὸ Κατὰ Ματθαίου), II, 12, 13, 366-371: D. Hurst & M. Adriaen (eds.), *S. Hieronymi presbyteri, Opera Pars I*, 7, *Commentarium in Matheum*, [Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina LXXVII], Brepols, Turnhout 1969, p. 90, 15-20.

17. D. A. Bertrand, «Évangile des Ébionites», in: F. Bovon & P. Geoltran (eds.), *Écrits apocryphes...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 447-453; D. A. Bertrand, «L'Évangile des Ébionites: une harmonie évangélique antérieure au Diatessaron», *New Testament Studies* 26, 4 (1980), pp. 548-563; J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 3, 6, 14-16; P. Vielhauer & G. Strecker, "Jewish-Christian Gospels", in: W. Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1: Gospels and Related Writings, James Clarke & Co – Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville-London 2003, pp. 166-169.

18. Epiph. *Πανάριον* (Κατὰ Ἐβιωναίων 30, 3, 7): K. Holl I 337, 9-338, 3. The Gospel used by the Hebrews and called "Against the Jews" is different from the "Against the Jews (or According to the Jews) Gospel", which was most likely written in the early 2nd century AD, probably in Egypt, and probably used by Greek-speaking Jews, does not conform to

truncated it¹⁹. The name “Gospel of the Hebrews” was given by later researchers. Epiphanius states that the *Gospel of Ebionites* was also used by the followers of the heresiarchs Cerinthus and Carpocrates²⁰.

The *Gospel of the Ebionites* begins with the baptism of Jesus Christ, because the Ebionites did not accept Jesus Christ as God; thus, they do not mention the pre-baptismal events:

«Ὁὐ φάσκουσι δὲ ἐκ Θεοῦ Πατρὸς αὐτὸν γεγενῆσθαι, ἀλλὰ κεκτίσθαι ὡς ἓνα τῶν ἀρχαγγέλων [καὶ ἔτι περισσοτέρως], αὐτὸν δὲ κυριεύειν καὶ ἀγγέλων καὶ πάντων <τῶν> ὑπὸ τοῦ παντοκράτορος πεπονημένων, καὶ ἐλθόντα καὶ ὑφηγησάμενον*, ὡς τὸ παρ’ αὐτοῖς εὐαγγέλιον καλούμενον περιέχει, ὅτι “ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὰς θυσίας, καὶ ἐὰν μὴ παύσησθε τοῦ θύειν, οὐ παύσεται ἀφ’ ὑμῶν ἡ ὀργή”...»²¹.

Modern research accepts that the Ebionites were not using the *Gospel of Matthew*, but some other text, which was written in the first half of the 2nd century AD in Greek, by the Ebionites who lived in the area beyond the Jordan River (eastern bank). However, the *Gospel of Ebionites* was composed on the basis of the three Synoptic Gospels of the New Testament (*Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*). Only eight short passages of this Gospel survive in the *Panarion*²².

the synoptic tradition of the Church and expresses syncretistic and Gnostic tendencies. Only fragments of it survive. [B. Altaner & A. Stuiber, *Patrologie, Leben, Schriften und Lehre der Kirchenväter*, Herder, Freiburg – Basel – Wien ²1980, p. 123; P. Vielhamer & G. Strecker, “Jewish-Christian Gospels”, in: W. Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, *op.cit.*, pp. 172-176; J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal..., op.cit.*, p. 4].

19. Epiph. *Πανάριον* (*Κατὰ Ἐβιωναίων* 30, 13, 2): K. Holl I 349, 1-3.

20. Epiph. *Πανάριον* (*Κατὰ Ἐβιωναίων* 30, 14, 2): K. Holl I 351, 9-12. In the extant Latin translation of St. Irenaeus Lyon’s work *Ἐλεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως* [*Adversus Haereses*] it is stated that the Gospel used by the Ebionites was the *Gospel of Matthew*, and that it was different from the one used by Cerinthus and Carpocrates. (Irenaeus of Lyon, *Ἐλεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως*, I, 26,2,18-20: Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies*, A. Rousseau & L. Doutreleau, Texte et traduction, Livre I., Tome II, [Sources Chrétiennes 264], Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1979, here I, p. 346, 9-11: “... non similiter ut Cerinthus et Carpocrates opinantur. Solo autem eo quod est secundum Matthaeum Evangelio utuntur...”. Did Epiphanius have a different source on this subject or –very likely– was there a copying mistake in the translation process of Irenaeus’s work?

21. Epiph. *Πανάριον* (*Κατὰ Ἐβιωναίων* 30, 16, 4-5): K. Holl I 354, 3-8.

22. St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α΄*, *op.cit.*, p. 211.

But what was the gospel that the Hebrews were using? T. Zahn²³ has thoroughly and convincingly argued that it is the *Gospel of the Twelve*, mentioned by Origen²⁴. If we accept the prevailing view that the original form of the *Gospel of Ebionites* was the *Gospel of the Twelve*, i.e., the twelve apostles, and that it was written in Greek, as it becomes evident from its fragments preserved in the *Panarion*, then this gospel, until the time of Epiphanius and Jerome the *Gospel of the Twelve*, had been translated into Aramaic or, more probably, replaced by the *Gospel of the Nazarenes*, written in Aramaic but with letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which is why both Epiphanius and his friend Jerome considered it to be the original text written by the Evangelist Matthew.

Christian Apocryphal Gospels

1. *Gospel of the Egyptians*²⁵

It is an apocryphal text dated in the middle of the 2nd century AD, which was written in Greek, probably in Egypt, where it was considered canonical. However, Origen did not consider it as a canonical work²⁶. Few passages of the treatise have survived, from which it seems that its writer supported Gnostic and temperance tendencies and was against marriage.

In order to combat the heresy of the Sabellians, Epiphanius uses, by preserving a small passage from it, the *Egyptian Gospel*, as he himself

23. T. Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons: Das Neue Testament von Origenes*, II, B, Erlangen & Leipzig 1892, pp. 724-725. In his study, T. Zahn thoroughly and convincingly analyses his view, using the passages preserved by Epiphanius, in which the apostles appear as the narrators.

24. Orig. Ὁμιλίαι εἰς τὸ κατὰ Λουκᾶν, 1, 1; M. Rauer, *Die Homilien zu Lukas in der Übersetzung des Hieronymus und die Griechischen Reste der Homilien und des Lukas-Kommentars, Origenes Werke*, 9, J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, Leipzig 1930 and in: BEΠ 15, 11, 15-24.

25. J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-19; D. A. Bertrand, «Évangile grec des Égyptiens», in: F. Bovon & P. Geoltran (eds.), *Écrits apocryphes...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 473-477; St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α'*, *op.cit.*, p. 212. One of the Coptic texts that have been found at Nag Hammadi is known as "The Gospel of the Egyptians", but it is an altogether different text.

26. For this text and other non-canonical writings, see Orig. Ὁμιλίαι εἰς τὸ κατὰ Λουκᾶν, 1, 1, *op.cit.*, and in: BEΠ 15, 11, 15-24.

calls it. In a passage, the Savior is shown declaring to his disciples that he is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit²⁷.

The *Gospel according to the Egyptians*, as Hippolytus mentions, was also used by the Naassenes (= Ophites), a group of Gnostics²⁸.

2. *Nativity of Mary*²⁹

Epiphanius is the only author who mentions the apocryphal *Nativity of Mary*, a Gnostic text from the mid-2nd century AD, which was used by a Gnostic sect. From this work, Epiphanius preserves a passage about the alleged murder, in the Jerusalem temple, of the priest Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, for supposedly revealing who the God the Hebrews worshipped was: a man with a head of a donkey. From then on, bells were added to the priest's uniform as he entered the temple to burn incense, so that the one whom the Hebrews worshipped could hear their sound and hide³⁰.

3. *Gospel of Thomas (or The Lord's Childhood)*³¹

This text can be dated in the middle of the 2nd century AD; it is written by a Gnostic Christian, who calls himself Thomas³². The work deals with the daily life and miracles performed by Jesus Christ between the ages of five and twelve. Thus, among other things, he took water from a brook after rain, which he put into small pits, where it became clean; he made birds of clay which came to life and flew away, and by

27. Epiph. *Πανάριον* (*Κατὰ Σαβελλιανῶν* 62, 2, 4-5): K. Holl (ed.), 2nd revised edition by J. Dummer, *Panarion, Haer.* 34-64, vol. II, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 1980.

28. Hippol. *Κατὰ πασῶν αἱρέσεων ἔλεγχος*, 5, 7, 8-9, 39-43: M. Marcovich (ed.), *Hippolytus, Refutatio omnium haeresium*, Berlin – New York 1968, p. 145, 4-7.

29. St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α΄, op.cit.*, p. 222; A. Berendts, *Studien über Zacharias-Apocryphen und Zacharias-Legenden*, Leipzig 1895, pp. 32-37; J. D. Dubois, «Hypothèse sur l'origine de l'apocryphe Genna Marias», *Augustinianum* 23, 1-2 (1983), pp. 263-270.

30. Epiph. *Πανάριον* (*Κατὰ Γνωστικῶν...* 26, 12,1-4): K. Holl I 290, 19-291, 13.

31. *Εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Θωμᾶ*: T. Burke (ed.), *De infantia Iesu euangelium Thomae graece*, [Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 17], Brepols, Turnhout 2010, pp. 302-539; St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α΄, op.cit.*, p. 213.

32. *Εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Θωμᾶ*, 1, 3: T. Burke (ed.), *De infantia Iesu euangelium Thomae graece, op.cit.*, p. 303, 3-5.

his word, in revenge, he caused the death of the young son of the high priest Anna, who destroyed pits with water he had purified³³.

Epiphanius mentions this work when dealing with the Irrationals, the heretics who did not accept the *Gospel of John* and the *Book of Revelation*. Epiphanius does not accept that the child Jesus performed miracles by playing; if he did that, John would have mentioned it in his Gospel. However, he adds that Jesus Christ must have performed miracles before His baptism – thus, some would not find excuses for creating heresies. Miracles before Baptism would confirm that He was God and not just a man; with His Baptism and the descent of the Holy Spirit into Him, He assumed some other mission³⁴. John the Evangelist states that the first miracle of Jesus Christ occurred after His baptism and the beginning of His public life³⁵.

Most likely, Epiphanius would simply have heard about the text, but did not have it at his disposal, in which case he would see it as a naive one³⁶.

Irenaeus of Lyon gives the information that the text *The Lord's Childhood*, as well as other apocryphal writings, were used by the followers of the heresiarch Mark; he also mentions an episode of the child Jesus with a teacher³⁷. Epiphanius cites the relevant passage by integrating it in a longer text that he had borrowed³⁸.

33. *Εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Θωμᾶ*, 2, 1, 1-3, 3, 8: T. Burke (ed.), *De infantia Iesu euangelium Thomae graece*, *op.cit.*, pp. 303, 7-307, 4.

34. Epiph. *Πανάριον* (Κατὰ τῆς αἰρέσεως τῆς μὴ δεχομένης τὸ κατὰ Ἰωάννην εὐαγγέλιον καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ Ἀποκάλυψιν 51, 20, 2-3): K. Holl II 277, 19-278, 5.

35. The miracle performed at the Cana wedding (*John* β', 1-11).

36. T. Burke, *De infantia Iesu euangelium Thomae graece*, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

37. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Ἐλεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως*, I, 20, 1, *Fragm. 10*, 802-813: A. Rousseau & L. Doutreleau, «Irénee de Lyon, Contre les hérésies», *Livre I*, *SCh* 264 (2006), p. 288, 33-289, 29 (note).

38. Epiph. *Πανάριον* (Κατὰ Μαρκωσίων 34, 18, 7-9): K. Holl II 33,11-19. Cf. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Ἐλεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως*, I, 13, 2, 12-21, 4, 86 (*Fragm. 10*, 1-941): Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies*, *op.cit.*, p. 191, 21-304, 34 (note).

4. *Protoevangelium of James*

The *Protoevangelium of James* is probably dated in the 2nd century AD; it is attributed to James the Adelphotheos [Just], and it is known by various other names³⁹. In it, with considerable naivety and reverence, an attempt is made for information to be recorded about the birth of the Virgin Mary, her life and the childhood of Jesus Christ⁴⁰.

From the *Protoevangelium of James*, Epiphanius borrows a lot of information, such as the way Joseph was chosen as the Virgin Mary's suitor, i.e. by lot: «... ὅτε ἡ παρθένος παρεδίδοτο τῷ Ἰωσήφ, κλήρων εἰς τοῦτο ἀναγκασάντων αὐτὴν ἦκειν...»⁴¹.

5. *Acta Pilati*⁴²

The *Acta Pilati* is a work known since the 2nd century AD; it is mentioned by Justin in his *First Apology*, addressed to the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161 AD) and is considered to have been written between 150 and 155 AD⁴³. The current text of the *Acta Pilati* was established in the first half of the 5th century AD through the combination of various texts. The Latin translation of the work is known as the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, which is mentioned by Ananias as the author of the work in Hebrew⁴⁴. Ananias presents himself as an officer

39. Other known titles: *Γέννησις Μαρίας τῆς Ἁγίας Θεοτόκου καὶ Ὑπερενδόξου Μητρὸς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (K. V. Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, Hildesheim – Zürich – New York 31987, p. 1), *Γένεσις Μαρίας – Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰακώβ* (the oldest known title: St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α΄*, *op.cit.*, p. 212) *et seq.*

40. St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α΄*, *op.cit.*, p. 212; A. Frey, «Protévangile de Jacques», in: F. Bovon & P. Geoltran, *Écrits apocryphes...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 73-104.

41. Epiph. *Πανάριον (Κατὰ Ἀντιδικομαριαμιτῶν* 78, 7, 2): K. Holl III 457,2-3. Cf. *Πρωτευαγγέλιον Ἰακώβου*, 9, 1: K. V. Tischendorf, *Evangelia...*, *op.cit.*, p. 18, 1-10.

42. St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Γ΄*, Grigoris Publications, Athens 2010, pp. 621-622.

43. Justin, *Ἀπολογία*, Α΄ 35, 9, 24-26; Justin, *Apologie pour les chrétiens*, C. Munier, Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes, [Sources Chrétiennes 507], Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris 2006, p. 222, 24-26: «Καὶ ταῦτα ὅτι γέγονε, δύνασθε μαθεῖν ἐκ τῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου γενομένων ἄκτων»; St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Α΄*, *op.cit.*, p. 239.

44. *Ἄκτα Πιλάτου (Ὑπομνήματα τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πραχθέντα ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου)*: K. V. Tischendorf, *Evangelia...*, *op.cit.*, p. 213, 3-5; F. C. Conybeare, “Acta Pilati”, in: E. L. Hicks *et al.* (eds.), *Studia biblica et ecclesiastica*, vol. 4, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1896, pp. 59-132; Th. Georgiadis (prologue, translation, notes), *Ἀπόκρυφα*

of the imperial guard, who in the 17th year of the reign of Emperor Theodosius II (408-450, i.e. in 425 AD) translated *Acta Pilati* from Hebrew into Greek⁴⁵.

The text recounts the events of the deliberations of the Jewish Council, the trial of Jesus Christ by Pontius Pilate, His crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and the events that followed it.

Panarion mentions *Acta Pilati* in conjunction with the heresy of the Tetradecimans, who did not celebrate the Easter together with the other Christians, but with the Jews, without however observing the Mosaic law:

«... Ἰουδαϊκοῖς ἔτι μύθοις προσανέχοντες. Καὶ οὐδὲ τὰ ἴσα αὐτοῖς δογματίζουσιν...»⁴⁶.

Ephraim explains where they base their view regarding the date of the celebration of Easter, referring to the date of the Passion, which was supposedly mentioned in the *Acta Pilati*:

«Ἐτεροι δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν τὴν αὐτὴν μίαν ἡμέραν ἄγοντες καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν μίαν ἡμέραν νηστεύοντες καὶ τὰ μυστήρια ἐπιτελοῦντες, ἀπὸ τῶν Ἰακτων δῆθεν Πιλάτου ἀρχοῦσι τὴν ἀκριβείαν εὐρηκέναι, ἐν οἷς ἐμφέρεται τῇ πρὸ ὀκτώ καλανδῶν Ἀπριλλίων τὸν Σωτῆρα πεπονηθέναι»⁴⁷.

In the text that follows, Ephraim gives his personal testimony about finding copies of *Acta Pilati*, with a different date for the day of the Passion, and that, after detailed research, he knows that the Passion of the Lord took place thirteen days before the calends of April:

«Ἐτι δὲ εὗραμεν ἀντίγραφα Ἰακτων Πιλάτου, ἐν οἷς σημαίνει πρὸ δεκαπέντε καλανδῶν Ἀπριλλίων τὸ πάθος γεγενῆσθαι· τὰληθῆ δέ, ὡς ἐκ πολλῆς ἀκριβείας ἔγνωμεν, ἐν τῇ πρὸ δεκατριῶν καλανδῶν Ἀπριλλίων τὸν Σωτῆρα πεπονηθέναι κατελήφαμεν· τινὲς δὲ τῇ πρὸ δέκα καλανδῶν Ἀπριλλίων λέγουσιν»⁴⁸.

Εὐαγγέλια, vol. Β', *Ἀπόκρυφα τοῦ πάθους* (Εὐαγγέλιον Νικοδήμου, Κύκλος Πιλάτου), Synchronoi Horizontes Publications, Athens 2003, pp. 18-19.

45. Ἰακτα Πιλάτου (Ἰπομνήματα τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πραχθέντα ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου): K. V. Tischendorf, *Evangelia...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 210, 4-211, 2.

46. Eph. *Πανάριον* (Κατὰ Τεσσαρεσκαίδεκατιτῶν 50, 1, 2): K. Holl II 244, 18-19.

47. *Op.cit.* (Κατὰ Τεσσαρεσκαίδεκατιτῶν 50, 1, 5): K. Holl II 245, 5-9.

48. *Op.cit.* (Κατὰ Τεσσαρεσκαίδεκατιτῶν 50, 1, 8): K. Holl II 246, 3-7.

In any case, in the surviving text of the *Acta Pilati*, which is later than the *Panarion* (first half of the 5th century AD), the date of the Passion that is given is the eighth day before the calends (first day) of April: «... τῇ πρὸ ὀκτῶ καλανδῶν Ἀπριλλίων, ἣτις ἐστὶν εἰκάς πέμπτη Μαρτίου...»⁴⁹.

Conclusion

The sources that Epiphanius had at his disposal for composing the *Panarion* include dozens of apocryphal writings; he refers the title and preserves excerpts from many of them. For some others, he draws information from the writings of earlier authors.

Some apocryphal texts have been extensively preserved, while others have not, and so it is often difficult to know their orientation, which heretical sects used them, and when they were written.

Most of the apocrypha, including those we've discussed in this article, date from the 2nd century AD.

The lack of easy communication and adequate control allowed for the recording of information about the apocrypha that does not correspond to reality.

The various apocryphal gospels were written in order to serve two purposes: either to meet the functional needs of the early Christians, or to fill the information gaps about the life of the Virgin Mary, the childhood of Jesus Christ, or His Passion.

49. Ἄκτα Πιλάτου (Υπομνήματα τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πραχθέντα ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου): K. V. Tischendorf, *Evangelia...*, *op.cit.*, p. 212, 2-3.