

Chapter 1 : A Thorough Guide to the Non-Canonical Gospels - J. Warner Wallace, calendrierdelascience.com

Noncanonical writings are early Christian documents that are not found in the New calendrierdelascience.com list of writings in the New Testament are known as a canon, a term that comes from a word meaning "measuring stick" or "rod."

As a new investigator of the claims of the New Testament, I was immediately intrigued. I bought the book and began to research the historical texts it described. These texts were never part of the New Testament canon. They were written late in history and rejected by everyone who knew the truth about Jesus of Nazareth. This series of posts will help you understand why such untruths about Jesus were written in the first place, what the documents said about Jesus, and why they were rejected as frauds: Information About the General Reliability of the Non-Canonical Texts Before surveying each text, these articles examine why such texts would be written in the first place and whether or not these documents do anything to invalidate what we know about Jesus from the reliable New Testament manuscripts: Although these late legends contain many exaggerations and lies, they built their myths and fabrications on the foundation of a true account. As we sift through the legendary claims, we can expose the true foundations upon which they crafted their stories. Once exposed, these foundations can give us even greater confidence the original story of Jesus is early and accurate, even though these late legends are not to be trusted. Those who sought to change the story of Jesus in antiquity were driven by a desire to validate their theological presuppositions. We have little reason to accept late re-writes of the life and ministry of Jesus; these non-canonical fictions were rejected by the ancients who recognized their late arrival and understood the self-serving motivations of their proponents. There are dozens of ancient non-canonical legends related to Jesus. Given the nature of Jesus and his impact on our world, we should expect to find such a reaction to his life and ministry. In fact, the explosive body of ancient literature related to Jesus is a testimony to both His historicity and Divine nature. Only the Son of God could provoke such a response. The original manuscript of the Preaching of Peter is now lost to us. We do, however, have a few fragments and evidence from letters written by Clement of Alexandria AD and Origen AD that quote the Preaching of Peter in several places. In addition, Origen wrote early church leaders like Heracleon used the text alongside the canonical Gospels. The Secret Gospel of Mark is described in a letter attributed to Clement of Alexandria AD , although this alleged letter has been attacked as a forgery by many scholars. The letter is the only source referencing the gospel; there are no existing manuscripts of The Secret Gospel of Mark. Clement was allegedly writing to another Christian leader named Theodore, advising him about the existence of a more expansive version of the Gospel of Mark containing additional stories and sayings of Jesus. The Apocryphon of John is a Sethian Gnostic text Sethians were named for their reverent adoration of the Seth, the son of Adam and Eve, who they described as a divine incarnation and the ancestor of a superior race of humans. Like others Sethian texts, it was first discovered as part of the Nag Hammadi Library collection in Egypt in The copies date to the 4th century, but scholars place the writing of the text in the 2nd century. While the manuscript discovered at Nag Hammadi dates to the 3rd or 4th century, scholars believe that the original text was written in the middle of the 2nd century. This late non-canonical text was first discovered in as part of a large collection of papyri excavated near Nag Hammadi in Egypt. The original text was not called The Gospel of Philip; this title has been applied to the text in modern times because Philip is the only disciple of Jesus that is mentioned in the document. The Gospel of Mary was discovered in as part of a larger set of papyri. Later discoveries of additional papyri have helped to provide us with a reconstruction of the Gospel, but even with the additional manuscripts, many chapters are still missing. Scholars disagree about the identity of Mary within the text, but most believe that she was intended to represent Mary Magdalene. Scholars have dated the writing of the text to the mid or late 2nd century. The Gospel of Judas is a Gnostic text similar to other texts from the 2nd century and later. Like other Gnostic Gospels, it contains a conversation between Jesus and one of His disciples in this case Judas in which Jesus reveals secret, esoteric knowledge. Only one copy has ever been discovered and this copy is in very poor condition, missing large portions of text. The Traditions of Matthias is described by Clement of Alexandria in a letter Miscellanies written in AD and many

scholars suspect that it is the same text known as the Gospel of Matthias and mentioned by Origen, Eusebius, Ambrose, and Jerome. This text has been reconstructed from three Coptic fragments and additional pieces of papyri the Coptic language was spoken in Egypt until the 7th century. The dating for the book has been very difficult to establish. The British Museum possesses the best manuscript of The Book of the Resurrection of Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle, but this manuscript dates to the 12th century. There are fragments of the text that are much older, but scholars are undecided on the original date of authorship. Some place it as late as the 5th or 6th century given its similarities to other Coptic literature. It includes, as part of the text, a section entitled The Acts of Pilate and the two titles for the combined text are usually used interchangeably.

Information About the Lesser Known Non-Canonical Texts Many of the non-canonical, fictional accounts of Jesus were used by lesser-known, smaller heretical groups: Nothing of this Gospel survives today. What little we do know about Basilides and his followers comes first from the letters of Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Hegemonius all of whom described Basilides as a heretic. He taught among the Persians and wrote many commentaries on the orthodox Gospels assembled as a volume known as Exegetica. The text is lost to us, but the Early Church Fathers and apologists such as Tertullian criticized The Gospel of Marcion extensively in their own writings; we can now reconstruct much of The Gospel of Marcion from the critical writings of the Church Fathers. It is typically dated in the mid-2nd century. What we do know about the text is what is mentioned by Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus and Epiphanius of Salamis. From what little we have, it is impossible to know if the text was a narrative about Jesus or simply a collection of sayings. Its title comes from the final line of the text and it is unknown if there was a First Treatise, as none has ever been discovered. It is yet another example of Sethian Gnosticism; a text used by a group who originally worshipped the biblical Seth as a messianic figure and later treated Jesus as a re-incarnation of Seth. The text is written as though Jesus Himself is the author. Based on the Gnostic contents of the text and its position among other documents, scholars place the writing of the book in the 2nd century as yet another Gnostic Sethian document. This text is written as a message from Jesus on the Mount of Olives in which he talks about the life of His stepfather, Joseph. This Gnostic text was discovered by two American scholars in a Berlin museum. It is only a fragment, and scholars date the fragment to somewhere between the 4th and 7th century, although the date of writing has been attributed to the 2nd century. This Infancy Gospel like other apocryphal Infancy Gospels was likely written to satisfy the curiosity of those who wanted more detail related to the childhood of Jesus. It appears to be a compilation written originally in Syriac and then later translated into Arabic, and it clearly draws from and amplifies information from prior Infancy Gospels. The document borrows heavily from The Infancy Gospel of James for material related to the Virgin Mary, from The Infancy Gospel of Thomas for material related to the childhood of Jesus, and then provides additional information from an unknown source related to the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt. Scholars have dated it to the 2nd century and have connected it with an early Gnostic teacher named Valentinus who lived from AD. The Dialogue of the Saviour was discovered, along with other Gnostic texts, in the Nag Hammadi collection in Egypt in The original text was greatly damaged, but it appears to be a dialogue between Jesus and some of His followers, or book of sayings bearing some similarity to The Gospel of Thomas. The text seems disjointed at points, and jumps from topic to topic without continuity. For this reason, scholars have surmised that the text may have been assembled from a number of separate documents. Scholars date the text to the mid to late 2nd century. This important Gnostic work has been known to scholars for over two hundred years. It was originally purchased by a private citizen from a bookseller in London and then purchased by the British Museum in It is an expansive document of Upper Egyptian origin that appears to be a collection at least two scribes seem to be involved of Gnostic Coptic manuscripts. The Pistis Sophia includes passages in which a transfigured Jesus is described teaching His followers about the mysteries of Heaven and various spiritual matters. These ancient non-canonical texts are late, heretical documents. Follow the links and investigate each document. When they are examined under the criteria we use to determine eyewitness reliability, they fail the test. The four canonical Gospels Mark, Matthew, Luke and John are still the earliest reliable record of Jesus, written within the lifetimes of the eyewitnesses who knew Jesus personally. Comment or Subscribe to J.

Chapter 2 : What are the apocryphal gospels?

A Thorough Guide to the Non-Canonical Gospels jwallace January 17, *Non-Canonical Texts, Writings 7, Views* Many years ago, when I first became interested in Christianity, I encountered a book at a local bookstore entitled, *The Lost Books of the Bible*.

Evaluation[edit] Among historians of early Christianity the books are considered invaluable, especially those that almost made it into the final canon, such as Shepherd of Hermas. Bart Ehrman , for example, said: The victors in the struggles to establish Christian Orthodoxy not only won their theological battles, they also rewrote the history of the conflict; later readers then naturally assumed that the victorious views had been embraced by the vast majority of Christians from the very beginning The practice of Christian forgery has a long and distinguished history Considering the generally accepted dates of authorship for all of the canonical New Testament works ca. This was possibly due to fears of the influence of Montanism which used the book extensively to support their theology. See Revelation of John for more details. Athanasius wrote his Easter letter in CE which defined a canon of 27 books, identical to the current canon, but also listed two works that were "not in the canon but to be read: One aim with establishing the canon was to capture only those works which were held to have been written by the Apostles, or their close associates, and as the Muratorian fragment canon ca. But Hermas wrote The Shepherd very recently, in our times, in the city of Rome, while bishop Pius, his brother, was occupying the chair of the church of the city of Rome. And therefore it ought indeed to be read; but it cannot be read publicly to the people in church either among the Prophets, whose number is complete, or among the Apostles, for it is after their time. James, Montague Rhodes []. The Apocryphal New Testament 2nd ed. Vangeli apocrifi in Italian. Aurelio de Santos Otero, ed. Biblioteca de Autores Christianos. Sakartvelos SSR mecnierbata akademiis gamomcemloba. Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento in Italian. Translated by Moraldi, Luigi 2nd ed. The Nag Hammadi Library in English. Gli Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento in Italian. Translated by Erbetta, Mario. Aurelio de Santos Otero " Selected Texts in Translation. Burke, Tony; Landau, Brent, eds.

Chapter 3 : Do Religious Scholars Take the Gospel of Judas Seriously? : AskHistorians

Non-canonical gospels In addition to the four canonical gospels there have been many other gospels that were not accepted into the canon. These works appear to be later compositions than the canonical gospels, and as such were only ever accepted by small portions of the early Christian community.

Unless otherwise noted, all writings on this website are my own, copyright by Ben Johnson. Worse, not all are forthcoming about their ecclesiastical status. Aside from the obvious -- glaring flaws in their faith, order, or morals -- here are a few signs that an "Orthodox" church may be falsely so-called: It traces its lines of apostolic succession. Those currently in communion with an Orthodox bishop do not wrangle over "endless genealogies. It recounts its usually fractious jurisdictional history. Independent churches often justify their existence by claiming they broke ranks from an "ecumenist" jurisdiction or several in succession, or that they were "granted autonomy" at some vague date. Its name juggles the words "Orthodox" and "Catholic" with exotic modifiers. It proclaims it is "canonical. It defines canonicity as "following the canons. Do they eat in restaurants with Jews? Allow their parishoners to marry actresses? Administer Holy Communion with a spoon? The discipline of the Church is administered by bishops -- proper bishops who are part of the Church. Certainly wishing to follow the norms of Orthodoxy is praiseworthy, but it does not make one a member church of the Orthodox communion. It says Orthodoxy means only "fidelity to the Orthodox faith. Unlike Protestantism, Orthodoxy is not an ecclesiastically invisible communion of right-thinkers without any outer stricture. Becoming part of the Church means sharing Her faith, communion, and hierarchy. Many Lutheran, Anglican, and "Uniate" priests genuinely believe to "the Orthodox faith" and God bless them for it! It considers any discussion of canonicity an "attack. It accuses its critics of having a "papal" view of the Church. One often hears the strawman argument: However, the Church has the right to draw its own boundaries. To be part of the Orthodox Church, one must not only hold the faith but be in communion with one of the autocephalous or autonomous Orthodox Churches in the world. It need not be Constantinople, nor even a patriarchate. It responds with false historical analogies. Maximus the Confessor had to flee Eastern bishops to the Pope of Rome. It claims all canonical status is based on "political considerations. The EOC had to knock quite a bit It claims it is "pursuing relations with Orthodoxy. At least such an admission would acknowledge the jurisdiction is outside the Church. If a catechuman wants to be Orthodox, he should simply join the Orthodox Church. It boasts of "frequent concelebrations" with real Orthodox. Unlike whether a given jurisdiction is in communion with any other, this claim is not readily verifiable. This is particularly true when the Orthodox "concelebrant" is unnamed or deceased. But of itself, this proves nothing; Copts innocently concelebrated with the Gnostic Orthodox, who were still blasphemers. The vagante definition of "concelebration" also seems to differ from the norm; merely being present in the church sometimes qualifies. It claims it is "in communion with" legitimate jurisdictions. If asked, some vagantes will say they are "in communion with the patriarchates" or "have never broken communion" with a given Church. By this, they mean their priests will commune Orthodox, but the inverse is not true. This is a form of deception. It declares any discussion of canonicity "distracts from the task of proclaiming the Gospel. Any individual may "proclaim the Gospel," but only the Church can genuinely care for the newborn Christian soul -- washing it in baptism, sealing it in the Holy Spirit, nourishing it with the Body and Blood of Christ. If this "Orthodox" organization truly cared for its souls, it would refer them to the Holy Orthodox Church and follow them into Her loving embrace. These are just a few tips. Or better yet, stick with the legitimate Orthodox jurisdictions in the first place. To make the matter easy for those investigating the WR, officially, there are only two jurisdictions in the world with a Western Rite: Save yourself confusion and potential heartache; join one of these. To those outside the Church: God has planted this desire in you so you will follow it all the way to full communion with His Bride, the Holy Orthodox Church. We in the Western Rite do not wish to battle you; we wish to worship with all men and women of goodwill. Help us secure the position of the Western Rite within the unquestionable boundaries of our Holy Mother, the Church. There is much work to do, and we can use the assistance. More important to us, we long for the fellowship of devout souls. Above all, we pray you will find

that for which you truly long: And to my fellow Orthodox tempted toward complacency, remember: Although offhand I cannot name any legitimate Orthodox jurisdiction that is not in communion with at least one patriarchate.

Some scholars regard the Gospel of Thomas as part of the tradition from which the canonical gospels eventually emerged; however, the Gospel of Thomas is heavily gnostic and likely not written by orthodox Christians.

In the canonical gospels[edit] Main article: Women at the crucifixion In Mark In non-canonical works[edit] See also: One of them was Mary Magdalene; and Mary the mother of James the little and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee, and Salome, and many others which came up with Him unto Jerusalem. Clement quotes the passage in his letter: And the sister of the young man whom Jesus loved was there with his mother and Salome, but Jesus would not receive them. In the early but non-canonical Greek Gospel of the Egyptians early 2nd century , Salome appears again as a disciple of Jesus. She asks him how long death would hold sway, and he says to her, "So long as women bring forth, for I come to end the works of the female. In the Gospel of Thomas there is a reference to Jesus reclining on a couch and eating at a table that belonged to Salome and being asked by her: He described the variety of Christian sects at the time he was writing, c. AD , as extremely broad. His treatise is lost, but quotes survive in the attack written somewhat later by Origen , Contra Celsum "Against Celsus": And some Christians teach that the Son came from this higher god. Still others admit of a third god - those, that is to say, who call themselves gnostics - and still others, though calling themselves Christians, want to live according to the laws of the Jews. I could also mention those who call themselves Simonians after Simon, and those naming themselves Helenians after Helen, his consort. There are Christian sects named after Marcellina, Harpocratian Christians who trace themselves to Salome, and some who follow Mariamne and others who follow Martha, and still others who call themselves Marcionites after their leader, Marcion. In the early Christian texts, there are several other references to "Salome". A Salome appears in the infancy gospel attached to the name of James the Just, the Protevangelion of James , ch. For I have tempted the living God, and my hand is ready to drop off. By the High Middle Ages this Salome was often but not always identified with Mary Salome in the West, and therefore regarded as the believing midwife. Mary Magdalene; Mary the mother of James , whom Jesus delivered out of the hand of Satan; Mary who ministered to him; Martha her sister; Joanna perhaps also Susanna who renounced the marriage bed; and "Salome who tempted him". In art, she is often portrayed with the Holy Family in paintings of the Holy Kinship. She is also portrayed holding a thurible as a symbol of her sacrifice and faith in Jesus Christ. Mary, the mother of Jesus Mary of Clopas Salome, in this tradition called Mary Salome as in the tradition of the three Marys at the tomb Mary Magdalene is not part of this group. This account was included in the Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine , written in about The poem is preserved in a midth-century manuscript on vellum containing pages written in columns. The titles are in red and illuminated in gold. It is decorated with seven miniatures in monochrome gray. At the Reformation the idea of the three husbands was rejected by Protestants, and by the Council of Trent by Catholic theologians also, but Salome continued to be regarded as probably the sister of the Virgin Mary, and the wife of Zebedee, and mother of the two apostles.

Chapter 5 : 10 Books Not Included in the New Testament - Listverse

As with other non-canonical documents we've examined, there's an emerging pattern related to dating and accuracy (this set of ancient documents attributed to Peter is an excellent example). Earlier documents tend to be more orthodox in their presentation of Jesus than later texts.

What are the apocryphal gospels? Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are known as the canonical gospels because they were recognized by early church as being accurate, authoritative, and inspired accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus. However, in addition to these four works, there were a great number of other works that purported to record other words and deeds of Jesus. These works are not authoritative or inspired and sometimes not even accurate records of the life and teachings of Jesus. Many of the apocryphal gospels were considered by the early church to be useful but not inspired. In the years since, more works such as the Gnostic gospels have come to light, which the early church would have considered heretical. Currently, the term apocryphal gospel applies to any non-canonical early work that purports to record the life and teaching of Jesus. Neither Roman Catholics nor Eastern Orthodox nor Protestants accept any of the apocryphal gospels as authoritative or inspired. Some of the apocryphal gospels are lost to us but are mentioned in other early Christian writings and would have been considered helpful though not inspired. Some of the apocryphal gospels are the work of heretical groups that attempted to co-opt the teachings of Jesus for their own purposes. The Secret Gospel of Thomas. Some of the apocryphal gospels, like the Gospel of Peter, are just bizarre. In this work, we encounter an actual talking cross. The Secret Gospel of Mark has only recently come to light and suggests that Jesus may have had a homosexual relationship with Mark. Further investigation suggests that this find was a hoax perpetrated by Morton Smith, the man who claimed to have discovered it. However, modern critical scholarship uncritically accepted it as genuine for a time. The group that we now call orthodox was the group that eventually gained prominence; thus, the gospels that they preferred the canonical gospels were accepted as authoritative while the others were suppressed. On further investigation, we find that the apocryphal gospels that present some of the most divergent views on who Jesus was and what He taught were written much later than the canonical gospels. There is no evidence for the views they present in other writings of the early church. Scholars who put all the gospels on equal footing tend to be hypercritical of the canonical gospels and overly accommodating to the apocryphal gospels. The extant apocryphal gospels are all readily available online for whoever wants to read them. For a scholarly evangelical analysis of the apocryphal gospels, we recommend *Fabricating Jesus*:

Chapter 6 : Gospels - OrthodoxWiki

Currently, the term apocryphal gospel applies to any non-canonical early work that purports to record the life and teaching of Jesus. Neither Roman Catholics nor Eastern Orthodox nor Protestants accept any of the apocryphal gospels as authoritative or inspired.

May 06, Brian Collins rated it it was amazing This review has been hidden because it contains spoilers. To view it, click here. The fictional claims of Dan Brown, the sensationalized claims of Bart Ehrman, and the more scholarly arguments of Lee Martin McDonald, Ehrman, and others have promoted the idea of an early Christian movement notable for theological diversity. According to this storyline, the imposition of orthodoxy and a church-dictated canon of Scriptures stifled the creative diversity of the early church. Hill challenges this view by demonstrating that it is based on faulty methodology, overstatements, and slo The fictional claims of Dan Brown, the sensationalized claims of Bart Ehrman, and the more scholarly arguments of Lee Martin McDonald, Ehrman, and others have promoted the idea of an early Christian movement notable for theological diversity. Hill challenges this view by demonstrating that it is based on faulty methodology, overstatements, and sloppy handling of the evidence. For instance, one scholar claims that "gospels were breeding like rabbits" 2. Yet that scholar finally lists only nine non-canonical gospels that have been discovered. This scholar calls his listing "partial. But if they once existed, they have left no record, even in later lists of books to be avoided" 8. Since Irenaeus provides an early testimony to the four-gospel canon, scholars promoting a late canon must marginalize him as an aberration and not very nice, to boot. Having established that Irenaeus and the church of his era did have a four-gospel canon, Hill then works his way back by looking the citations of the four gospels and non-canonical works in the church fathers, gospel harmonies, and even the writings of the non-orthodox to demonstrate that evidence for the four gospel canon extends back to the early second century. Hill is fair in his interpretations of the evidence, noting when some of it is not as clear or a certain as other evidence. So, to restate the title question, Who chose the Gospels? All these had inherited the same four Gospels from previous generations. But how much earlier? While the date prior to are not quite so clear, the four Gospels are known as authoritative sources in the Epistle of the Apostles and the Apocryphon of James in the s. There was certainly no great council of Christian churches before which laid down the law on which Gospels to use. No single bishop, not even the bishop of Rome, should he ever have made such a proclamation and there is no reason to think he did , had the clout to make it stick. Such a story is a long, long way from historical verification, though that fact in itself does not make it impossible. We cannot find who chose the Gospels. It looks like nobody did. The idea of self-authenticating Scriptures may not sit well with some, but Hill notes that this best with the way the early Christians spoke about the gospels: This is not the way they thought. As an added benefit, I think it makes a marvelous case study in presuppositional apologetics that makes good use of evidences though I must admit that I do not know how Hill would self-identify in terms of apologetic method. The book is short and engaging, yet makes very compelling arguments backed up with solid research. The fundamental premise is that the final selection of the Gospels was not necessarily the result of power politics pushing our more common writings representing alternative views - but was rather a more inevitable selection of dominant teachings. The author builds the case steadily and offers a good counter-balance to more popular or conspiratorial v An excellent scholarly approach to the Gospels. The author builds the case steadily and offers a good counter-balance to more popular or conspiratorial views regarding the ultimate canon of the Gospels. He saves the answer for the end - but it is interesting that it may have in fact been the author of the Gospel of John that brought the 4 main Gospels together for the ages. Very interesting read for those seeking the historical view of Christianity.

Chapter 7 : The Non-Canonical Gospels - The Byzantine Forum

A Thorough Guide to the Non-Canonical Gospels J. Warner Wallace Author, Cold-Case Christianity Many years ago, when I first became interested in Christianity, I encountered a book at a local bookstore entitled, The Lost Books of the Bible.

What Are Noncanonical Writings? First of all, the canon of the New Testament formed only very late around the fourth century C. Even then, it differed slightly from our New Testament canon today. It is therefore not accurate to call key texts like the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John canonical when referring to the second century. This is because the category itself is quite old, and it derives from a particular bias in biblical scholarship of the nineteenth century, where only Christian documents that made it into the New Testament were considered valuable, and others were considered spurious, or worse, blasphemous and foolish! Scholars nowadays, by contrast, recognize that even Christian documents that are not part of the New Testament have a great deal to tell us about early Christianity, particularly in terms of how people understood Jesus and what it meant to be Christian. Noncanonical writings fall into different kinds, or genres. We have letters that early Christians exchanged, for example. We have apocalypses, gospels, and sermons. We have many Acts of the Apostles. We have prayers, poetry, and revelatory texts in which Jesus discloses special knowledge to his disciples. All of these writings are considered noncanonical in the way we use the term today. Some of the more famous noncanonical writings include texts like the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, the Gospel of Judas, the Protevangelium of James, the letters of Ignatius and Clement, and the apocryphal acts of the apostles. There are hundreds more, many of which were hugely popular in Christian antiquity and considered important sacred texts. We know this because some exist in multiple translations, or in multiple ancient copies. Some of them, like the letters of Ignatius and Clement, were even considered canonical texts in certain Christian denominations. Some people use the words interchangeably. Nevertheless, both types of writings—noncanonical and apocryphal—share one thing: Another problem, however, is that even modern Christianity does not adhere to a single canon. If you look carefully, you might notice that a Catholic Bible is slightly different from a Protestant Bible. In fact, Catholic Bibles often say on the front that they contain the Apocrypha. They refer to texts that early Christian theologians considered useful in a church context, but that were not considered divinely inspired. Modern Christianity is diverse; so many denominations have ancient origins and their own distinctive canons. The equally ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Church has a broad canon—in the sense that as many as 70 different writings are considered authoritative. Even in the ancient world, texts could move between canonical and noncanonical status. The book of Revelation provides a counterexample: There are many published collections of noncanonical Christian writings out there, and most are also freely available on the Internet. If you read a noncanonical text, you might be surprised to find the origin of a common belief in Christianity that has no basis in canonical writings. This attests to the popularity of noncanonical texts and the degree to which they shaped Christian understandings of the world, perhaps even as much as the writings of the New Testament. An award-winning teacher and researcher, she is a frequent contributor to Bible Odyssey. Faith, Fact, and Forgery.

Chapter 8 : Who Chose the Gospels?: Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy by C.E. Hill

Canonical and Non-canonical Gospels Through the work of Elaine Pagels, who is a professor of religion at Princeton University, our understanding of early Christianity has been deepened. She has written a number of best-selling books that explore the complex nature of early "Christianities."

While they were written too late to be legitimate eyewitness accounts, they were built on the core truths of Gospels albeit altered and embellished by authors with specific motivations. There are good reasons to reject these texts, but there is much we can learn about Jesus as well. We do, however, have a few fragments and evidence from letters written by Clement of Alexandria AD and Origen AD that quote the Preaching of Peter in several places. In addition, Origen wrote early church leaders like Heracleon used the text alongside the canonical Gospels. The text does not appear in early lists of canonical documents and may not have been considered worthy of addition based on the fact it appeared in history well after the life of Peter too late in history to have been written by him, and did not add significant, new or even contradictory material to the eyewitness account of Jesus. The few quotations available to us corroborate several elements of the historical account of Jesus. The text also affirms that Jesus had many disciples, and from these disciples twelve were specifically chosen and commissioned to preach the Gospel. The text also affirms the Old Testament prophetic predictions related to Jesus and the Biblical notion that only those who hear and believe are saved. In the few passages that are available to us from the letter of Clement, nothing from the Preaching of Peter appears to contradict or distort the orthodox teaching related to Jesus. The text available to us is only a fragment and it represents a narrative description of the Passion of Jesus His crucifixion and resurrection. It is unknown if the original Gospel of Peter was a complete narrative about the life of Jesus or if the text was always limited to the Passion. The Gospel of Peter may have been very popular among early Christians and was certainly known to the early Church Fathers. Much later in history, Church leaders continued to condemn the work as heretical; both Jerome and Pope Gelasius I classified the text in this manner. The Gospel of Peter appears in history far too late to have been written by Peter. Interestingly, the Gospel of Peter confirms and acknowledges much of the Passion narrative without actually utilizing material from Luke or Matthew. The details of the Passion are then described in a manner similar to the canonical Gospels. Jesus is taunted and subjected to the crown of thorns and the purple robe. His garments were divided and the executioners gambled for them. They gave Jesus gall and vinegar to drink. At the death of Jesus, the veil of the Temple was torn in two, and the sky became dark. Three disciples of Jesus are mentioned specifically Peter, Andrew and Matthew. The text encourages an immaterial view of Jesus. The surviving Gospel fragment is missing its closing chapters, but it does not seem to contain any accounts of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel of Peter seems to describe Jesus as resurrecting and ascending on the very same day although it is unknown if the missing chapters would include the reappearance of Jesus among the disciples. A Docetic view of Jesus would naturally exclude such accounts of a resurrected Jesus with a material body. Some scholars have also observed what appears to be an anti-Jewish inclination within the Gospel of Peter. Like other Gnostic texts from this period the Gnostic Apocalypse of Peter is presented as a dialogue between Jesus and a key figure from Christian history, in this case, Peter. The Gnostic Apocalypse of Peter appears in history too late to actually have been penned by Peter or any other writer who could have had contact with Jesus. In addition to this, the Gnostic Apocalypse of Peter was discovered alongside other Gnostic texts that date to the middle or late 2nd century. These texts were immediately identified by the early Church Fathers as late, heretical Gnostic frauds. In spite of these heretical elements, the Gnostic Apocalypse of Peter does affirm many details related to Jesus. Jesus is described as a wise spiritual teacher with Divine knowledge. He makes several statements familiar to the canonical Gospels, including: The Gnostic Apocalypse of Peter contains a number of common Gnostic characteristics, including the value of hidden, esoteric knowledge in this case revealed exclusively to Peter, and the corrupt nature of the material body. His material body was only an illusion and He is in truth a purely spiritual being who only appeared to die on the cross. Earlier documents tend to be more orthodox in their presentation of Jesus than later texts.

Chapter 9 : Western Orthodoxy: Signs an "Orthodox" Church is Non-Canonical

Thomas differs from the other non-canonical Gospels also in that almost half of his sayings find at least a partial parallel somewhere in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

Anonymous or inappropriate comments will be deleted. Thursday, April 28, Canonical and Non-canonical Gospels Through the work of Elaine Pagels, who is a professor of religion at Princeton University, our understanding of early Christianity has been deepened. She has written a number of best-selling books that explore the complex nature of early "Christianities. Among her assertions is the claim that the attacks on Gnostic texts by orthodox theologians in the second and third centuries were the result of institutional and political factors in the early church and not primarily a matter of theological disagreement and conflict. She is particularly troubled that women, who were accepted as spiritual leaders in Gnostic Christian circles, were marginalized and subordinated within the emerging catholic orthodoxy of these early centuries. This marginalization, too, was the result of political factors and not the result of theological concerns. Even the Gospel of Thomas, which may, in very small part, be based upon early traditions about Jesus, strikes many as fundamentally at odds theologically with the teaching and narrative structure of the synoptic gospels. A careful theological comparison of the canonical texts and their stories with those that come from the later Gnostic and other apocryphal "hidden" texts must lead one to make a choice: And yet the view that the apocryphal texts are just as valid as the canonical texts in their portrayals of Jesus "many Christs" has its many supporters. For example, in the latest issue of Church History, the quarterly journal that is published by The American Society of Church History of which I am a member , includes a book review by Timothy Miller, who is a professor of religious studies at the University of Kansas. The book is *Alternative Christs*, ed. Cambridge University Press, Indeed, it could be argued that the fact that huge swaths of Christianity emphasize a rigid doctrinal and textual orthodoxy impoverishes us, giving us only one narrow slice of a great story" *ibid*. Not a single reason to believe that the canonical Jesus stories are any more historically reliable than the gospels of Thomas, Philip, Peter, Judas, or any of the other twenty-plus "apocryphal gospels? Or the Secret Gospel of Mark? Did the gospels that are contained in the New Testament come into the canon only because of "political" reasons? Or were there legitimate theological issues at stake that related to the nature of the good news itself as it had been delivered to the early church and maintained by the faithful see First Corinthians These biblical texts provide the earliest of Christian traditions. That there are at least two conflicting views about the status of the canonical and non-canonical gospels is also reflected in one of the latest sales catalogs from "The Great Courses. Ehrman takes an approach that complements that of Pagels. Both of them build on the work of the German scholar, Walter Bauer *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christianity* , who tried to demonstrate that some early forms of Christianity that were eventually deemed heretical at a later time had been in fact quite popular in their earliest stages. What would come to be called "orthodoxy" at a later time might have been a minority view in the early decades of Christianity and what was "heresy" in later decades might have been quite popular. *Christian Scriptures and the Battles over Authentication*. He begins with questions about "Jesus in the memory of the church," and how the earliest apostolic preaching about Jesus had a distinct and normative shape already in the earliest decades of the post-resurrection Christian community again, see First Corinthians After exploring the canonical gospels and the problems attendant to them, he moves to discuss how early Christians rejected some texts that claimed to be "Christian" but were not, marginalized some texts that were not necessarily "heretical" but were not "canonical," and accepted others that had been widely used and were viewed as having a continuity with that earliest apostolic proclamation. Robert Grant, who taught early Christian history at the University of Chicago, has demonstrated that there were at least five implicit criteria at play in earliest Christianity to help Christian communities identify that which was in continuity with authentic apostolic teaching and that which conflicted with this teaching: That is, a book had to have been written or dictated by an apostle, or at least have the authority of an apostle behind it, to be recognized as authoritative. The older the better. Since all of the apocryphal gospels, with the exception of the Gospel of Thomas and the Infancy Gospel of James, were

written after A. Some writings were accepted and used by nearly all who called themselves "Christian" in the first and early-second centuries the letters of Paul, the synoptic gospels, the Gospel of John, First John, First Peter, whereas other writings James, Hebrews, Revelation, Second Peter, Second John, Third John, Jude, and many others were not as widely used and had questions about their authorship, age, and orthodoxy. The apocryphal gospels also fell far short of being as widely used as Pagels seems to suggest. There were good reasons for why Gnostic texts did not win wide acceptance in early Christianity, for why the canonical texts are understood to be more historically authentic than later texts that claim to be apostolic and ancient, for why the canon looks the way it does. An Introduction Fortress, , Finally, if the apocryphal gospels are just as historically authentic or inauthentic as the canonical gospels, then why do nearly all scholars who investigate the problem of the historical Jesus limit themselves to the canonical texts, even in view of the notoriously difficult nature of the canonical gospels as primary historical sources for Jesus? To quote from one of our premier New Testament scholars, E. They are legendary and mythological. Of all the apocryphal material, only some of the sayings in the Gospel of Thomas are worth consideration. This does not mean that we can make a clean division: There are legendary traits in the four gospels in the New Testament, and there is also a certain amount of newly created material. Nevertheless, it is the four canonical gospels that we must search for traces of the historical Jesus" E. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 3 vols.