The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew and the Nativity of Mary

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The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew and the Nativity of Mary

Brandon W. Hawk

THE GOSPEL OF PSEUDO-MATTHEW AND THE NATIVITY OF MARY

Early Christian Apocrypha 8

To those who have gone before:
Constantin von Tischendorf, Jan Gijsel, and Rita Beyers

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

THE *GOSPEL OF PSEUDO-MATTHEW* (*Ps.-Mt.*) is one of the most important witnesses in the Latin West to apocryphal stories about the lives of Mary, Joseph, Jesus, and Mary's parents, Anna and Joachim. Among apocryphal gospels in medieval Western Europe, this apocryphon was second in popularity only to the more widely attested *Gospel of Nicodemus*, revealing *Ps.-Mt.* to be a bestseller of mainstream Christianity in the Middle Ages. In many ways, the origins and transmission of the Latin *Ps.-Mt.* are tied up with its source, the Greek *Protevangelium of James* (*Prot. Jas.*), and the transmission of related apocrypha in medieval Western Europe. As an adaptive translation and expansion of *Prot. Jas.*, the Latin apocryphon is a keystone in the explosion of apocryphal literature in the Middle Ages, including competing translations of *Prot. Jas.* as well as rewritings, excerptions, expansions, and translations of *Ps.-Mt.* from the ninth century onward.

Despite its apocryphal status—and medieval writers did acknowledge it to be extrabiblical—*Ps.-Mt.* remained both popular and influential throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern period. Its popularity and influences may be traced in many pieces of Christian literature (in Latin and vernacular languages), visual arts, liturgy, and theological perspectives still revered by Roman Catholic theologians. *Ps.-Mt.* is also a significant work for considering the history of monasticism and the cult of the Virgin Mary. All of these developments provide evidence for the endurance of both *Prot. Jas.* and *Ps.-Mt.* as a major part of mainstream Christianity in Western Europe during the medieval period.

Summary

After some prefatory material (which varies in the manuscripts: see below), *Ps.-Mt.* begins by introducing Joachim and Anna, who live according to Israelite law but have no children after twenty years of marriage. When Joachim makes a pilgrimage to the temple to offer a sacrifice, a scribe rebukes him and rejects his offering because of his infertility. In shame, Joachim leaves but does not return home; instead, he assumes a self-exile in the mountains as a shepherd for five months. Meanwhile, Anna is left alone at home, ignorant of what has happened to Joachim and believing that he might be dead. In response to her lamentation, an angel visits her and promises that she will bear a child destined for greatness. Around the same time, this angel visits Joachim disguised as a boy and urges him to return home, telling him that Anna will have a daughter who will be blessed above all women. Joachim offers a sacrifice to the angel, who demurs, and at the angel's insistence instead makes his sacrifice to God. After Joachim's companions hear about the angel's visit and announcement, they insist that he return home, but Joachim still hesitates. Again, the angel visits him, this time in a dream, and tells him to return home. Finally, at the shepherds' continued urging, Joachim leaves the mountains to be reunited with Anna.

Nine months later, Mary is born and her parents raise her at home. At the age of three, Anna and Joachim take Mary to the temple and dedicate her to God, leaving her to live in a community of female virgins in an ascetic lifestyle. Mary is specifically singled out for her special status as the most holy of these virgins. The temple priests become anxious when she reaches fourteen years old, so they arrange to have her betrothed, through a ceremony in which they ask God to reveal the most suitable husband among the single men in Israel. Despite his hesitancy—because he is an older widower and has children from a previous marriage—Joseph is selected to be Mary's husband and she is betrothed to him. An angel visits Mary (as with Anna before, while her husband is away) and announces that she will give birth to a son through a miracle of God. When Joseph learns of this he considers quietly divorcing her, but an angel also appears to him (as with Joachim before) and reassures him that Mary is pure. Yet the rumor of Mary's pregnancy spreads, and the temple priests summon Mary and Joseph to appear before them and submit to a test of their purity. After undergoing this trial, they are exonerated of any sins.

Later, Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem for Caesar Augustus' census, but along the way Mary has a prophetic vision of two peoples and shortly afterward goes into labor. Joseph finds a cave for Mary, where she gives birth to Jesus. Joseph brings a midwife named Zahel to Mary, who inspects her postpartum and declares her to be still a virgin. Another midwife, Salome, hears of this, doubts that this could be true, and inspects Mary for herself; as a result, her hand withers, and an angel appears, instructing her to seek healing by touching the baby's swaddling cloths. A series of episodes follow, the point of each one to present the fulfillment of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. Joseph then takes Jesus to the temple for his circumcision and to offer a sacrifice.

Two years later, three magi visit Jerusalem in search of a new-born king. Fearing that the baby is the king heralded by earlier prophecy, Herod commands that all children in Israel age two and under shall be killed. Joseph is warned in a dream about Herod's command and he flees to Egypt with Mary and Jesus. A series of miracles occur along the way, including Jesus subduing a group of dragons, wild animals venerating Jesus along the road, a palm tree bending to allow Mary to eat its fruit, Jesus creating a shortcut to shorten a thirty-day journey to one day, and Jesus being venerated by the idols of pagan gods and the governor in an Egyptian temple. The gospel in its original form ends at this point.

Over time, the narrative of *Ps.-Mt.* did not remain static. In fact, it is apparent from the manuscript evidence that the text of this apocryphon was dynamic throughout the medieval period—probably due, in large part, to its popularity. The core remained the same, but later compilers and scribes continued to expand the contents with more material about Jesus' childhood. Such expansions are most evident in additions made in the twelfth century, as well as later episodes further appended by the end of the thirteenth century. These will be discussed in the section about Later Transmission and Additions, and are included in this translation to demonstrate the evolution of the textual tradition throughout the Middle Ages.

Transmission and Survival

Transmission of *Ps.-Mt.* was widespread and long-lasting. The manuscript evidence ranges from the turn of the ninth century to the sixteenth century, with origins or provenances as far-flung as modern-day France,

Spain, Ireland, Britain, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovenia. In his 1997 critical edition for the Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum, Jan Gijsel identifies 190 manuscript witnesses, and in a follow-up article he identifies another seven.[1] These manuscripts are divided into four major family recensions: A, P, Q, and R. Within the four major textual families, further distinctions may be made, and some of the manuscripts contain hybrid versions. Gijsel also discusses forty witnesses that are either too fragmentary or have too much of a hybrid form to be conclusively classified. For the most part, the A-text takes precedence in this introduction and the following translation, although it is also useful to consider the P-text in establishing the early form of the apocryphon, and the Q and R texts reveal important aspects of its later transmission.

The A-text represents a version of *Ps.-Mt.* closest to the original, though revised around the year 800 with some slight grammatical changes. The earliest manuscript of the A family was created just a few decades later: London, British Library, Add. 11880, copied around 820 in Regensburg, Germany. Other early manuscripts of the A family include:

> Budapest, Széchényi Bibliothek National, Clmae 316 (9th cent., Salzburg)

> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 5327 (10th cent., Saint-Amand-les-Eaux)

> Rheims, Bibliothèque municipale 1395 (ca. 850, Rheims)

> Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 550 (10th cent., Northern France)

> Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 289 (10th cent., Salzburg)

The P-text also developed around 800, from the same antecedent version that lies behind the A-text. The earliest manuscripts of the P family include:

> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouv. acq. lat. 1605 (9th cent., Orleans)

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1. See manuscript descriptions in Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae*, 108–217, and full "Listes des manuscrits *Pseudo-Matthieu*" in various groupings at 483–515; see also Gijsel, "Nouveaux témoins."

Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 430 (ca. 840, South-Western Germany)

Of the manuscripts that Gijsel found impossible to classify by family, or for which only tentative classification is possible, particularly noteworthy is Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Fragmentum 94 (Aug. 248), copied around 850 in Reichenau, Austria. Because this manuscript is fragmentary (containing only part of chap. 8) and due to its variant text form, its precise relationship to the A and P recensions is indeterminate, but it remains one of the earliest witnesses to *Ps.-Mt.*

Although the A and P text types share a common ancestor, P exhibits features of more profound revision with both grammatical and substantive changes. Such differences have even led commentators to deride the author of the original text and uphold P as an improved revision. Recently, for example, Ehrman and Pleše followed the general assessment of scholars (including Gijsel) in claiming that the author "was not a particularly gifted writer, hence the rough and occasionally slovenly character of the older A recension, in contrast to the more refined P."[2] Yet Rita Beyers has refuted these criticisms through a comparative examination of the lexicographical styles of both A and P, especially calling attention to several uncommon words or rare uses in A that signal some amount of sophistication.[3] Indeed, as she says elsewhere about the apocryphon, "le *Pseudo-Matthieu* possède une unite de structure et une richesse de sentiments" ("*Pseudo-Matthew* has a unity of structure and a richness of sentiment") to be appreciated.[4]

Around the middle of the twelfth century, the Q-text emerged. The earliest surviving witnesses are Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 648 (12th cent., Rheims) and Cambridge, Corpus Chisti College 288 (12th/13th cent., Cambridge). This family of witnesses derives from P, although some of the manuscripts also demonstrate affinities with A in certain details. The Q-text also incorporates some innovative revisions, especially with major additions to the main narrative: at the beginning, a text now known as the *Trinubium Annae* and, at the end (as chaps. 26–42), a Latin version of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (*Inf. Gos. Thom.*) commonly referred to as the *pars altera*, or "other part" of the text. While

2. See Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae*, 88–89; and Ehrman and Pleše, *Apocryphal Gospels*, 75.

3. Beyers, "Transmission of Marian Apocrypha," 130–33.

4. Beyers, *Libri de nativitate Mariae*, 20.

this *pars altera* is now recognized as an addition to *Ps.-Mt.*, earlier editors and scholars believed it to be part of the original compilation, though from a separate source.[5]

Only some decades later, around the turn of the thirteenth century, the R-text was created, derived directly from Q. The earliest surviving witnesses are Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Theol. lat. qu. 369 (13th cent., Northern France) and Paris, Bibliothèque natio-nale de France, lat. 5560 (13th/14th cent.). The R-text represents a further process of revision and, as Gijsel observes, "témoigne d'un effort constant de réécriture, qui ne porte pas seulement sur le style" ("witnesses to a constant effort to rewrite, which is not solely about the style").[6] The com-poser of R also worked with a variety of other sources to create a newly compiled narrative;[7] these sources include the *Nativity of Mary* (*Nat. Mary*), which had been written by about the year 1000 as an independent adaptation of *Ps.-Mt.* Finally, some manuscripts of this new revision end with an epilogue in the form of a prayer to Mary:

> intercedente sanctissima matre tua ad resurrectionis gloriam peruenire mereamur, ut te laeti facie ad faciem uideamus domi-num nostrum Iesum Christum cum patre et spiritu sancto qui regnas deus per infinita saecula. Amen.

> Through your intercession, most holy Mother, may we deserve to attain the glory of resurrection, so that face to face with you we might joyfully see our Lord Jesus Christ with the Father and the Holy Spirit, who reigns as God forever into infinity. Amen.[8]

This intercessory doxology highlights the associations that had grown up between *Ps.-Mt.* and the cult of Mary from the tenth century onward.

Two other apocryphal texts may be brought to bear upon the his-tory of the transmission of *Ps.-Mt.*: the so-called "J Compilation" and the *Liber de nativitate Salvatoris* ("Book of the Nativity of the Savior"). The J Compilation contains several sources pieced together into a single narra-tive: a Latin version of *Prot. Jas.*, *Ps.-Mt.*, a lost infancy gospel given the

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5. For more details on these additions, see the section on "Later Transmission and Additions" below.

6. Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae*, 96.

7. For more details on these additions, see the section on "Later Transmission and Additions" below.

8. Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae*, 97.

name the *Liber de nativitate Salvatoris*,[9] and the Latin version of *Inf. Gos. Thom.* (the *pars altera*), though the latter was likely added later in the compilation's transmission. In total, seven manuscripts of this compilation have been identified, grouped into two types known as the Arundel and Hereford forms (based on the first identified manuscripts). The later Hereford version also incorporates, as in the Q-text, portions of *Nat. Mary*, and a Pseudo-Augustinian homily on the Annunciation (*Serm.* 195). Gijsel notes and describes these witnesses in his edition of *Ps.-Mt.* (nine manuscripts to which he assigns the designation J) but does not use them for his collation.[10] Jean-Daniel Kaestli and Martin McNamara edited both forms in a parallel edition in 2001.[11] The most significant manuscript of J is Montpellier, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de médicine 55, copied around the year 800 at Metz or in a scriptorium with similar writing style (possibly Worms). It contains only part of the J Compilation (perhaps an early form of its development), made up of an interweaving of a Latin translation of *Prot. Jas.* 1:1—7:3 and *Ps.-Mt.* 1–4. The text (though not the manuscript as a whole) also has certain features that might point to Irish or Hiberno-Latin associations, although Kaestli and McNamara provided no solid conclusions. This manuscript represents the earliest identified witness to the text of *Ps.-Mt.* in any of its extant forms.[12]

The contents of the *Liber de nativitate Salvatoris* have been reconstructed based on later texts that seem to share this source, including the J Compilation, the Irish *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum*, and an Irish "gospel history" found in the *Leabhar Breac* and other manuscripts.[13] The contents that Kaestli and McNamara have reconstructed based on these later texts include: Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem; the birth of Jesus

9. M. R. James first titled this text the "New Source" in his 1927 edition of the J Compilation in *Latin Infancy Gospels*; it has since been named the "Source" or "Special Source" (as in Kaestli and McNamara, "Latin Infancy Gospels"); Kaestli proposed the title *Liber de nativitate Salvatoris* in "Mapping an Unexplored Second Century Apocryphal Gospel."

10. Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae*, 108–217 and 483–515.

11. Kaestli and McNamara, "Latin Infancy Gospels."

12. Kaestli and McNamara, "Latin Infancy Gospels," 650–54. Montpellier 55 is also significant because it includes a Latin translation of *Prot. Jas.* 8–25 with interpolations from the canonical Gospels; this Latin version of *Prot. Jas.* and the J Compilation do not belong together, as they are in different sections of the manuscript and thus present witnesses to two different Latin versions of *Prot. Jas.*

13. See Kaestli and McNamara, "Latin Infancy Gospels."

and testimony of the midwife about Mary's perpetual virginity; as well as the visit of the shepherds, the visit of the magi, and their encounter with Herod.[14] Kaestli and McNamara also concede the possibility (without further evidence one way or the other) that the original text of the *Liber de nativitate Salvatoris* may have also included the flight into Egypt and Jesus' childhood miracles along the way, since these are attested in the *Leabhar Breac*.[15] Kaestli claims that this *Liber de nativitate Salvatoris* should be identified with a work called the *Liber de natiuitate Saluatoris et de Maria uel obstetrice* ("Book on the Nativity of the Savior and on Mary and the Midwife") in a list of apocrypha in the *Pseudo-Gelasian Decree* (6th cent.).[16] Evidence suggests that this apocryphon was composed before 800, since it was incorporated into the J Compilation that was in circulation by this date. Kaestli further argues that the episode of the midwife in the *Liber de nativitate Salvatoris* is independent of and potentially even older than the corresponding episode in *Prot. Jas.*[17] If his suggestions are correct, the *Liber de nativitate Salvatoris* was likely composed in the second century.

A brief history of editions and printings of *Ps.-Mt.* made prior to Gijsel's critical edition is useful for demonstrating some of the issues surrounding the different text types and what they reveal about the transmission of the apocryphon.[18] The earliest printing occurred in Rome only a few decades after Johannes Gutenberg set up his printing press. In 1468 (in fact, the year Gutenberg died), Giovanni Andrea Bussi included fragments of the gospel among the *editio princeps* of Jerome's *Epistulae* (*Letters*) printed by Conrad Sweynheym and Arnold Pannartz.[19] In England, around 1477, William Caxton printed a version of *Ps.-Mt.* focused on the life of Jesus and omitting the parts before the Nativity.[20] Titled *Infantia salvatoris*, this version includes chaps. 13–24, the *pars altera*, and a handful of other added episodes, presumably from a late medieval manuscript

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14. Kaestli and McNamara, "Latin Infancy Gospels," esp. 64–102.

15. Kaestli and McNamara, "Latin Infancy Gospels," 67.

16. Kaestli, "Mapping an Unexplored Second Century Apocryphal Gospel."

17. Kaestli, "Recherches nouvelles" and "Mapping an Unexplored Second Century Apocryphal Gospel."

18. See Gijsel, *De nativitate Mariae*, 37–48.

19. Jerome, *Epistolae et Tractatus*.

20. Caxton, *Infantia salvatoris*.

exemplar. Unfortunately, Caxton's book has remained largely overlooked in studies of *Ps.-Mt.*'s reception.[21]

A full printing of *Ps.-Mt.* in its now-familiar form did not appear until more than 350 years after the publication of Caxton's text. In 1832, Johann Karl Thilo printed the *editio princeps* in his Christian apocrypha collection titled *Codex apocryphus Novi Testamenti*.[22] Here Thilo printed *Ps.-Mt.* following *Prot. Jas.* and *Nat. Mary* (because he thought this was older than *Ps.-Mt.* and not based on it), thus solidifying an identified relationship between the three texts. Thilo's text relies on two manuscripts of the P recension: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 5559 A (14th cent.) and lat. 1652 (15th cent.). In 1852, J. A. Giles reprinted Thilo's text in his collection of *The Uncanonical Gospels and Other Writings*.[23]

Before Gijsel's critical edition, the most important edition was that of Constantin von Tischendorf, included in his *Evangelia Apocrypha* (1853).[24] To the manuscripts used by Thilo, Tischendorf added two others: Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. 4578 (14th cent.) of the Q recension, and Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Gaddi 208 (14th cent.) of the R recension. Because these two provided witnesses to different text types, they significantly contributed to knowledge about the textual tradition of *Ps.-Mt.* In another major development for modern study, Tischendorf's edition included, for the first time, the *pars altera*. While he acknowledged that this section diverges from the rest of the text, and derives from a separate source (*Inf. Gos. Thom.*), he did not come to the more recent conclusion that these episodes were a later addition to the original narrative of *Ps.-Mt.* After the first edition of Tischendorf's collection, in 1869 Oscar Schade edited the A-text as found in Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. theol. phil. 8° 57 (12th cent., Zwiefalten Abbey), although he also consulted Paris 5559.[25] Schade's edition proved influential to German scholarship, and Tischendorf used the Stuttgart manuscript for his second edition of *Evangelia apocrypha* (1876). Tischendorf's edition remained a significant contribution to scholarship, and indeed the sole authoritative text, until it was

21. See Dzon, *Quest for the Christ Child*, with summary at 253–55; and translation in *Middle English Poems*.

22. Thilo, *Codex apocryphus Novi Testamenti*, 337–400.

23. Giles, *Uncanonical Gospels*, 1:66–89.

24. Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, 52–112.

25. Schade, *Liber de infantia Mariae et Christi*. On Schade's reliance on Paris 5559, see Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 83 n. 5.

superceded by Gijsel's full critical edition. *Evangelia Apocrypha* remains the only edition to include the full *pars altera*; a new critical edition of this material would be a benefit to the study of this text.

Title

Although the "Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew" is the common title assigned to this apocryphon, it comes from modern convention rather than medieval tradition. Indeed, medieval scribes had altogether different ideas about the title. The oldest manuscript witnesses fall into two types: either they lack a title completely or they offer a title showing interest in the birth of Mary. For example, there is no title at all in early witnesses to A—such as Budapest, Clmae 316 and Vienna, ÖNB 550—nor in the oldest manuscript of Q: Vatican, Reg. Lat. 648. On the other hand, the oldest witnesses that do have titles use variations on the name *Natiuitas sanctae Mariae* ("Nativity of Saint Mary"), some adding *uirginis* ("virgin," like Rheims 1395 and Paris, nouv. acq. lat. 1605) and others adding *incipit* or *historia* ("beginning" or "history"). Over time, scribes expanded the title beyond a focus on Mary, often adding a phrase like *atque infantiam Iesu Christi* ("and the infancy of Jesus Christ") or *atque infantia nostri Saluatoris* ("and the infancy of our Savior"). By the later Middle Ages, the expanded text with the *pars altera* was often known as the *(Liber de) Infantia salvatoris* ("Book of the Infancy of the Savior"), as in Caxton's version.[26] As Gijsel demonstrates, the evolution of titles is especially linked with the history of the text: the titles generally reflect the concerns of the revisions found in each family. Thus, the expansion of the title to include more information about Jesus appears alongside the addition of the *pars altera* relating more of Jesus' childhood miracles in Q and R, shifting the focus of both text and title to include as much about the Christ child as about the Virgin Mary.

Formal elements also influenced the title and its evolution. A set of spurious correspondence purportedly between bishops Chromatius (died ca. 406/407) and Heliodorus (ca. 330–ca. 390) and Jerome (ca. 347–420), appended to manuscripts of the A-text as a preface, provide further evidence. The first letter attributed to the bishops mentions the text as "ortus Mariae et natiuitas atque infantia" ("the birth of Mary and

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26. Caxton, *Infantia salvtoris*; see Dzon, "Cecily Neville and the Apocryphal *Infantia salvatoris*"; *Quest for the Christ Child*, *passim*; and *Middle English Poems*.

<center>*1*</center>

Prefatory Letters

(From manuscripts of the A-text)

1 ¹*To the most beloved brother Jerome the Priest, Bishops Chromatius and Heliodorus*ᴬ *greet you in the Lord.*

²In apocryphal books we have found the birth of Mary, Queen of Virgins, together with the birth and childhood of our Lord Jesus Christ. ³Considering that many things in them are contrary to our faith, we believed that the writings should be completely rejected, lest, with Christ as pretext, we give joy to Antichrist. ⁴Then, while we were considering this, the men of God Armeniusᴮ and Virinusᶜ came, who were saying that your holiness found a volume in Hebrew written by the hand of the most

A. *Bishops Chromatius and Heliodorus:* Chromatius (died ca. 406/407), likely born in Aquileia, was bishop of this city from 387/388 until his death. Heliodorus (ca. 330–ca. 390), born in Dalmatia, was the first bishop of Altinum (date uncertain). The two bishops are appropriate choices for this pseudepigraphic correspondence: Jerome (ca. 347–420) addressed his *Epist.* 7 and the preface to his translation of Chronicles to Chromatius, *Epist.* 14 and 60 to Heliodorus, and the prefaces to his translations of Tobit and the Books of Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs) to the two bishops together. Both men were later canonized as saints.

B. *Armenius:* a number of manuscripts in the Q family give this name as *Parmenius.* A priest named Armenius contemporary with Jerome, Chromatius, and Heliodorus was executed with Priscillian (the famous bishop of Avila) and others condemned for heresy at a trial at Trier in 385.

C. *Virinus:* manuscript witnesses present a discrepancy concerning this name: in A, *Virinus* and *Verinus*; and in Q, *Ierinus*, *Vrinus*, and *Vltimus.* The identity of this figure is unknown.

blessed Matthew the Evangelist, in which was written about the Virgin Mother and the childhood of our Savior.[A] [5]For that reason, seeking your charity through our Lord Jesus Christ himself, we request that you translate it out of Hebrew for Latin ears, not so much for perceiving which things are signs of Christ, as for rejecting the craft of heretics, who, in order to teach evil doctrine, have mingled their lies with the good birth of Christ, so that they might hide the bitterness of death through the sweetness of life. [6]Therefore, it will be the purest charity should you obey us, asking as your brothers, or if you prefer, you could pay us as bishops demanding a debt of charity that you believe is fit for us to receive. [7]Be strong in the Lord and pray for us.

[A]. *in Hebrew . . . Savior:* the Latin phrasing used here to indicate the apocryphon's contents is parallel to titles of the apocryphon found in manuscripts (see the introduction). However, in this instance, the grammar does not seem to fit the context, since *uirginis matris* ("the Virgin Mother") is in the genitive case. It is possible (and would explain the problematic Latin) that the author of this spurious letter relied on a titular ascription for this phrasing but did not alter the grammar to fit the sentence.

2 [1]*To the holy and most blessed lords Bishops Chromatius and He-
liodorus, Jerome, a humble servant of Christ, greets you in the Lord.*

[2]Whoever digs in ground known for gold[A] does not immediately
seize whatever the torn trench might pour out, but first holds
the sifting shovel, lifting up the shining stone from the bottom,[B]
pausing to turn and overturn the dirt, and maintains hope for
profits not yet increased. [3]Arduous work is put upon me, since
this was commanded me by your blessedness—something not
even Saint Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist wanted to be pub-
lished openly. [4]For, indeed, if this were not more secret, certainly
he would have added it to the Gospel that he did publish. [5]But
he made this little book in Hebrew letters as a sealed document,
which he never published, so that today the book—written in He-
brew letters by his own hand—is possessed by the most religious
men, who have received it from their predecessors over successive
ages. [6]They never handed over this book to anyone to translate,
but they have told its story one way and another. [7]Thus it came
to pass that this book was published by a disciple of Manichaeus
named Leucius[C] (who also wrote the false acts of the apostles),

A. *Whoever digs in ground known for gold:* the image of digging in the
mud for gold in relation to apocrypha is found in Jerome's *Epist.* 107, written
to a noblewoman named Laeta about the education of her daughter, Paula.
There, Jerome writes, "Let her take care with all apocrypha and, if ever she
wishes to read them, not for the truth of their doctrines but for respect for
miracles, let her know that they are not by those to whom they are ascribed,
that many faults are interspersed in them, and that it demands great discre-
tion to seek out gold in the mud." Jerome makes a similar statement in his
Epist. 54, to a widow named Furia about the best way to preserve her chastity
in widowhood. The author of this letter seems to take Jerome's imagery as in-
spiration for the extended, more digressive, and more complicated metaphor
that follows.

B. *shining stone from the bottom*: this phrase (*fulgidos fundos pondus*) is
problematic. Although Gijsel notes that the sense seems clear, the question-
able reading in the manuscripts (which likely represents textual corruption)
presents an uncertain philological crux. Unfortunately, the Latin in this pas-
sage is also more generally problematic, as the vocabulary, grammar, and
syntax reflect post-classical constructions—including convoluted phrasing
and ambiguity that is difficult to translate.

C. *Leucius:* the tradition about a certain man named Leucius associated
with the composition and dissemination of apocryphal acts of apostles devel-
oped during the patristic period. Augustine mentions him in this context in

presenting the material not for edification but for destruction; and so in a synod it was judged according to its merits that the ears of the church should not be open to it.

[8]Let the bites of those who bark cease, for we do not add this little book to the canonical Scriptures, but we translate the writings of an apostle and evangelist for exposing the falsehood of heresy; in this work, we obey the commands of pious bishops as much as we oppose impious heretics. [9]Therefore, it is the love of Christ that we satisfy, believing that those who gain knowledge about the holy childhood of our Savior through our obedience might assist us in their prayers.

Fel. 2.6, and another reference appears in the *Pseudo-Gelasian Decree* 5.4.4, but the fullest account of Leucius as author of apocryphal acts is found in Photius, *Bibliotheca* 141. See Junod and Kaestli, *L'histoire des actes apocryphes*, 137–43; and Schäferdiek, "Manichean Collection," 92–94.

Prologue

(From manuscripts of the P-text)

I, James,[A] son of Joseph the carpenter, having lived in the fear of God, wrote in full all that I saw with my own eyes that happened in the time of the Nativity of Saint Mary and the Savior, giving thanks to God, who gave me wisdom about the history of his advent, manifesting fulfillment through the twelve tribes of Israel.[B]   cf. *Prot. Jas.* 25:1

A. *James:* the pseudonym of James (as in *Prot. Jas.*) is in contrast to the prefatory letters, which claim that Matthew the Evangelist wrote it in Hebrew. While scholars have seen this prologue as taken from *Prot. Jas.* 25 (where it is an epilogue), the only verbal commonality between them is that both state "I, James . . . wrote." Otherwise, the details differ. Especially notable is the added detail that this James was "son of Joseph the carpenter," meant to clarify that he was both the brother of Jesus (as in Mark 6:3 and Gal 1:19) and one of Joseph's sons from a previous marriage (see *pars altera* 41 and 42). This detail runs counter to the medieval tradition of the *Trinubium Annae* often appended to *Ps.-Mt.* in later manuscripts, distinguishing James the Lesser as the son of Alphaeus and James the Greater as the son of Zebedee.

B. *fulfillment . . . Israel:* this concept is thematically developed throughout the text, especially in the following ways: 1) relationships between depictions of Anna and Joachim and Jewish law in the Hebrew Bible; 2) the depiction of Mary in relation to biblical women in the Hebrew Bible; and 3) narrative episodes about Jesus' birth and childhood miracles posed as fulfillments of Israelite prophecies in the Hebrew Bible. The latter are particularly pronounced in 14:1–4, 18:5–6, 19:6–9, 23:1–2, and 39:3–9 (in the *pars altera*). The Latin here is ambiguous about the nature of this fulfillment concerning the twelve tribes of Israel, though it does seem indebted to typological interpretation.

2

The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew

1 (1) ¹In those days there was a man in Israel named Joachim from the tribe of Judah, and he was the shepherd of his sheep, fearing the Lord in simplicity.ᴬ ²He had no care for anything but the flock, from the harvest of which he nourished all who fear God; in fear of God he offered double the gifts to those laboring in doctrine and offered simple gifts to those ministering to them. ³So he arranged into three parts all of his lambs, his kids, his wool, and all of his possessions. One part he gave to widows, orphans,

<div style="margin-left:auto"><small>cf. 1 Tim 5:17;
Tob 1:6</small></div>

A. This description of Joachim (1:1–3) is adapted from the brief passage in *Prot. Jas.* The author omits the reference in *Prot. Jas.* 1:1 to an ambiguous source about Joachim in the "Histories of the Twelve Tribes of Israel" (mentioned again in *Prot. Jas.* 1:3, also omitted in *Ps.-Mt.*), but otherwise the description of Joachim is amplified. In his exemplary status as a man of God, an outstanding member of Israel, and his blessings because of God's favor, Joachim is depicted in the same terms as the patriarchs of the Hebrew Bible. It is significant that he is from the tribe of Judah, as this aligns Joachim with the southern Kingdom of Judah that supported the Davidic line when the Israelite nation was split (ca. 930 BCE). By establishing these connections with the Hebrew Bible, the author centers the narrative on Jerusalem, the temple, and the biblical concept of the Kingdom of Judah as inheritors of special status. This is also one of the first indications that *Ps.-Mt.* establishes its narrative as a typological fulfillment of the Hebrew Bible (especially notable in its references to the Prophets). Gijsel notes that the portrayal of Joachim is similar to what was expected of a Merovingian nobleman, which he uses to date *Ps.-Mt.* to the early seventh century, within the reign of King Dagobert I (629–639); but he does not substantiate this claim with further evidence.

pilgrims, and the poor; another part to those who worship God; a third part to himself and everyone in his home.[A]

(2) [4]Now,[B] since he did these things, God multiplied the flock, so that there was no man like him among the people of Israel. He began, moreover, to do this at the age of fifteen years old. [5]When he was twenty years old he took as his wife Anna the daughter of Issachar, from the tribe and family of David,[C] with whom he lived[D] for twenty years but had no children.[E]

2 (1) [1]And it came to pass that at the time of the feast,[F] Joachim stood among those who offered incense to the Lord, preparing

A. Cf. RM 91.48–52 concerning "*Quomodo suscipi debeat filius nobilis in monasterio*" ("How the son of a noble is to be accepted into the monastery"), in which the tripartite division is generally parallel to that of Joachim's possessions. In *Prot. Jas.*, Joachim offers a "double portion of his gifts to the Lord," so that the extra may be distributed to the needy. In *Ps.-Mt.*, the description is further divided into three, as is prescribed for nobles who enter the monastery in the RM.

B. *now:* throughout *Ps.-Mt.*, the author follows the classical and biblical style of including conjunctions and particles to relate connections between ideas from one sentence (or sense unit) to the next, although in a much more exaggerative and repetitive style than usual. Despite the exaggeration and repetition, this practice seems to be indebted to the style of the New Testament, especially the Gospel of Matthew. This is particularly true of the many uses of *autem*. One might compare, for example, RB, in which the word seems to be one of Benedict's favorites (see de Vogüé and Neufville, *La Règle de Saint Benoît*, 1:245–314). The present translation seeks to render such instances in order to relay something of the style.

C. *David:* as in Matthew (1:1–17) and Luke (3:23–38), *Ps.-Mt.* is explicit about linking the genealogy of Anna—and therefore Mary and Jesus—with David, another effort by the author to establish typological associations between *Ps.-Mt.* and the Hebrew Bible. This association with the line of David is made all the more pronounced in *Nat. Mary*.

D. *lived*: the word *moratus* used here evokes a sense of waiting, delay, and expectation. This is emphasized by the following clause about their lack of children.

E. *no children:* the lives of Joachim and Anna are parallel to a number of biblical stories, such as those about Abraham and Sarah, the prophet Samuel, Susanna, Tobit and Anna, and Elizabeth and Zechariah; for further discussion, see the section of the introduction about the Bible as a source.

F. *feast:* the feast is not specified in the text (it is also ambiguous in *Prot. Jas.*), but it is likely a reference to either Passover or Shavuot, both Jewish pilgrimage festivals ordained in the Torah in which sacrifices were made: the Paschal Lamb for Passover and the First Fruits for Shavuot.

his gifts in the sight of the Lord. ²And, approaching him, a scribe of the temple of the Lord^A named Ruben said to him, "You are not permitted to stand among the sacrifices of God, because God did not bless you by giving you offspring in Israel." ³Thus, enduring shame in the sight of the people, Joachim departed from the temple of God lamenting and did not return to his home, but went to his flocks and led shepherds with him into the distant mountains, so that for five months his wife heard nothing from him.^B

(2) ⁴Meanwhile, Anna wept in her prayers and said, "Lord, since you have already given me no children, why have you taken my husband from me? For behold, five months have passed and I have not seen my husband, and I do not know where he might be dead, or where I might make his tomb."^c ⁵While she

<div style="margin-left:2em">

cf. Luke 1:9

cf. Isa 61:9; *Prot. Jas.* 1:4–5; 1 Sam 5–6

cf. *Prot. Jas.* 1:9

cf. *Prot. Jas.* 2:1

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A. *scribe of the temple of the Lord:* the terminology used for Israelite religious officials is complex and varied in *Ps.-Mt.* and in the additions (as in the *pars altera* and Paris 11867). For example, the term used here is *scriba templi domini* (*scriba* is also used in 16:3), but elsewhere the author uses *pontifex* ("high priest," in 3:12; 7:1, 3; 8:3, 5, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 26, 30, 32; 12:2, 6), *pontifices templi* ("high priests of the temple," in 4:5; 6:18), *summus pontifex* ("highest priest," 8:26), *sacerdos* ("priest," in 7:1; 8:5, 9, 17, 24; 12:2, 8, 11, 23), and *sacerdotes dei* ("priests of God," 10:9). It is especially odd that the author sometimes uses the plural form of *pontifex* when indicating multiple priests (*pontifices*), since the status of High Priest in post-Exilic Israel was reserved for only one man. Chap. 8 is particularly illustrative of the complexity of terminology, as it contains the most focus on the priests and the author juxtaposes the different types in appositive phrases like *sacerdotum et pontificum* (8:5) as well as additional details in phrases like *sacerdotibus super duodecim tribus* ("priests over the twelve tribes," in 8:9) and *summus pontifex* for the figure Abiathar (8:26). Aside from titles for Israelite religious officials, the term *pontifex* is used for the priests of the Egyptian temple in 24:2. In the *pars altera* and additions in Paris 11867, this array of titles is similarly diverse, with terms such as *sacerdos* (39:2) *sacerdos templi* (28:1), and *scriba* (54:1), as well as the added terms *princeps sacerdos* ("chief priest," in 27:9), the Greek loanword in the phrase *presbyteros totius ecclesiae Israel* ("priests of the entire church of Israel," in 30:4), *magistratus synagogue* ("magistrates of the synagogue," in 54:1), and the Greek loanword *archisynagogus* ("chief priest of the synagogue," in 54:7). To these titles we might also add several references to Pharisees (*Pharisaeus/Pharisaei*) in 8:1; 16:3; 27:9; 30:13, 15; and 54:1. The present translation seeks to capture this variance in the terminology.

B. *five months:* in *Prot. Jas.*, Joachim goes into the wilderness to fast and pray for 40 days and 40 nights, whereas here, he leaves his life behind to become a shepherd. While the text says that he was away for five months, there is a sense that he imposes his self-exile indefinitely.

c. Anna's prayer is amplified from the one in *Prot. Jas.*

wept exceedingly in the garden of her home, lifting her eyes in prayer to the Lord, she saw a nest of sparrows[a] in a laurel tree and sent her voice to the Lord with lamentation and said, [6]"Lord, God almighty, who has given children to all your creatures, beasts, and draught animals,[b] and reptiles, and fish, and birds—they all rejoice over children. Do you exclude me alone from the gift of your kindness? [7]You knew, Lord, from the beginning of my marriage I vowed that if you would give a son or daughter to me, I would bring it to your holy temple."[c]

cf. Gen 2:24–25

cf. 1 Sam 1:11; *Prot. Jas.* 3:1–8

(3) [8]While she said these things, an angel of the Lord appeared before her saying, "Do not be afraid, Anna, for your sprout is in God's design, and that which will have been born from you will be given admiration in all ages to the end." [9]When he said these things, he disappeared from her sight. [10]But she, trembling at having seen such power and having heard such words, entered her room and threw herself onto her bed and, as if dead, she remained in prayer all day and all night.[D]

cf. Prov 8:22; *Prot. Jas.* 4:1

(4) [11]After these things she called to her servant girl and said to her, "You see me as a widow in anguish, but you do not want to come to me?"

[12]Then, murmuring, she responded, "If God closed your womb and took your husband away from you, what might I do for you?" [13]Hearing these things, Anna began to weep greatly.[E]

cf. Gen 16:2, 20:18

cf. *Prot. Jas.* 2:2–7

A. *sparrows:* evoking Luke 12:7//Matt 10:31, which also discusses the significance of humans relative to sparrows.

B. *draught animals:* the terminology used for various pack animals and wild beasts is rather diverse in *Ps.-Mt.* and the *pars altera*. Here, in addition to *creatura* and *bestia*, the author uses *iumentum*, which is often used for an animal like a mule or ass, but can mean any type of draught animal or beast of burden. The same term is used in 13:4, 8; 18:1; 20:2, 11; *bestia* ("beast") is used here and in the *pars altera* at 35:11 and 12; *fera* ("wild animal") is used in 18:9 and 19:3; and *sagmarius* ("beast of burden") is used in 19:10.

C. Anna's vow to dedicate her child to God appears in *Prot. Jas.* after she has received news of her pregnancy (not before). The vow conforms with the command in Exod 22:29, further emphasizing how Joachim and Anna follow the Hebrew laws.

D. Anna's prayer after the angel's visit is new to *Ps.-Mt.* In *Prot. Jas.* she is visited immediately after by two angels, who tell her about Joachim's return home.

E. *Ps.-Mt.* reorders this passage, as it appears before the angel's visitation in *Prot. Jas.* In this change, the passage seems to imply there is still tension

3 (1) ¹Now, at that same moment, a certain youth appeared in the mountains where Joachim fed his flocks and said to him, "Why do you not return to your wife?"ᴬ

²And Joachim said, "I have had her for twenty years. But now, since God does not want to give me children from her, I left the temple of God with shame from reproach. ³So why should I return to her after I was cast out? For now, I will be here with my sheep, for as long as God wants me to live. ⁴But by the hands of my servants I will give the proper parts to the poor and widows and orphans and those who serve God."

(2) ⁵When he had said these things, the youth responded to him, saying, "I am an angel of God, who appeared to your wife today as she wept and prayed, as a comfort to her; you should know that she conceived a daughter from your seed.ᴮ ⁶This (daughter) will be the temple of Godᶜ and the Holy Spirit will rest in her,ᴰ and she will be a blessedness above all holy women, so that no one might say that there was ever such a one before her, but also that after her no other will be like her. ⁷Therefore, descend from

<div style="margin-left:2em; font-size:0.8em">cf. 1 Cor 6:19</div>
<div style="margin-left:2em; font-size:0.8em">cf. Luke 1:42</div>

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between the message given to Anna by the angel and the possibility of her pregnancy.

ᴀ. In *Prot. Jas.* Joachim's encounter with the angel is only a brief command for him to return home (as in *Ps.-Mt.* 3:7), after which he commands his companions to gather ten lambs for an offering and then heads out on his journey. *Ps.-Mt.* expands this episode to include further dialogue and a second visit after Joachim hesitates to return home. In this adaptation, Joachim makes his sacrifice even before he has decided to go back to Jerusalem, rather than at the temple after he has returned.

ᴮ. *daughter:* in *Prot. Jas.* the gender of the child is not revealed until after her birth (5:2). Here, the extended angelic prophecy to Joachim creates a closer parallel with those made to Zachariah in Luke 1:13–17 and to Mary in Luke 1:28–33. The angel's revelation also establishes more pronounced veneration of Mary and foreshadows her role later in the narrative.

ᴄ. *this (daughter) will be the temple of God:* the majority reading in witnesses of the A-text reads *Haec templum dei erit* (which this translation follows), but j reads *Haec in templo dei erit* ("She will be in the temple of God"), as do later recensions as in witnesses to the P, Q, and R texts.

ᴅ. *temple . . . rest in her:* in his *Epist.* 22.23 (to Eustochium), Jerome refers to holy virgins as "vessels of the temple" (*uasa templi*), and further remarks, "and no gold or silver vessel was ever so dear to God as is the temple of a virgin's body" (*neque enim aureum uas et argenteum tam carum deo fuit, quam templum corporis uirginali*s). Jerome's imagery is indebted to 1 Cor 6:19, and *Ps.-Mt.* uses similar language to describe Mary.