Apocryphal Gospel Titles in Coptic

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Abstract: During the 2nd–5th centuries, the usual format of the canonical gospel title is “The Gospel According to [person]”. While becoming well-established in this period, the title is reused and transformed when naming the apocryphal gospels. In order to study the meaning of the emerging canonical and apocryphal gospel titles, the claims of these titles will be analysed to determine who each title presents as the gospel’s source (often a divine figure) and who is implied to be that gospel’s author (often a human person). By revisiting well-known apocryphal gospels, and expanding on their number, new insights are achieved regarding the role of titles, authors, and apocryphal gospels. Results concern, for instance, the long recension of the Apocryphon of John, whose title comes to display a prominent gospel title; the Gospel of Judas, of which the author may be the infamous Judas himself; and the Gospel of Truth, which may not be an apocryphal gospel at all.

Keywords: apocrypha; gospel title; authorship; Nag Hammadi; Coptic literature; Late Antiquity

1. Introduction

Apocryphal gospels are defined as extra-canonical texts that, by entailing the title of “Gospel”, somehow relate to the four canonical gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In Coptic, the usual suspects of apocryphal gospels are the Gospel of Truth (Gos. Truth), the Gospel According to Thomas (Gos. Thom.), the Gospel According to Philip (Gos. Phil.), the Gospel of the Egyptians (Gos. Egyp.), the Gospel According to Mary (Gos. Mary), and the Gospel of Judas (Gos. Judas). Yet, when scanning the scene of Coptic literature for texts explicitly entitled “Gospel” until c. 500 CE, we are able to retrieve more examples, such as the Gospel ascribed to Mani (Gos. Mani) and the Gospel of the Lots of Mary (Gos. Lots Mary), which scholars do not usually consider to be apocryphal gospels. Nevertheless, they are included here as they both bear ἐγγαρέων titles, and as the present study focuses on the meaning of this specific title. Finally, and perhaps surprisingly in this context, we also include the long recension of the Apocryphon of John (Ap. John).

Earlier studies on canonical gospel titles are primarily related to the Greek and Coptic titles of the New Testament writings (e.g., Buzi 2004; Gathercole 2013; Allen 2022) as well as the semantics of the canonical gospel title in Greek (e.g., Larsen 2018), but hardly in relation to apocryphal gospels. The current contribution seeks to fulfil such a desideratum. While building on these earlier analyses of the canonical gospel title, the present study focuses, mainly, on the canonical and the apocryphal gospel titles in Coptic.

We are not going to focus much on the meaning of the texts, nor on the dating of their original compositions; instead, the focus will be on their titles as they are transmitted in the Coptic manuscripts. The aim is to reach a clearer picture of how each gospel presents its title (format and content) in connection with its source of authority and its means of textual production until the middle of the first millennium.

After having established the current method of analysis, the selected apocryphal gospels will be studied in two separate groups. The first includes texts where titles attest a clear dependency on the canonical gospel title (Ap. John, Gos. Thom., Gos. Phil., Gos. Mary, and Gos. Judas); the second group consists of texts of a less clear affiliation (Gos. Egyp. and Gos. Mani), sometimes attesting an occurrence of ἐγγαρέων so peculiar that we may question whether it is meant to be a gospel title at all (Gos. Lots Mary and Gos. Truth).
2. Methodology

We begin with the Greek manuscript tradition, on which the Coptic relies. Around the turn of the 3rd century and onwards, the Greek standard form of the canonical gospel title is either εὐαγγέλιον κατ’ ἀνθρώπων or the abbreviated κατ᾽ ἄνθρωπον. Both these forms are widely attested in our earliest Bible manuscripts: The first one in 46266.75 Π A C D W as inscription, subscription, and running header, whereas the abbreviated form occurs in Β D as subscription and running header (cf. Gathercole 2013, pp. 37–47). If we take the Gospel of John as example, both εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Ιωάννην and κατὰ Ιωάννην should be translated as “The Gospel According to John”; that is, not with “(Gospel)” in parentheses, in the case of the abbreviated form, since both forms are authentic gospel titles, expressing the same meaning for contemporary readers. This will be an important point when we reach the analysis of the title of Ap. John.

In the 1st century, the canonical gospels are anonymous and only as of the later second half of the 2nd century do they begin to receive what becomes the standard title εὐαγγέλιον κατ᾽ ἄνθρωπον (cf. Reed 2002, pp. 16–21). As far as we know, Irenaeus of Lyon is the first to refer to gospels like that (c. 180 CE). In contemporary Greek literature, title nomenclature in relation to κατὰ does not designate an author in the modern sense of the term, but the editor/corrector of a living textual tradition (cf. Larsen 2018, pp. 78–79). In the prologue of what later becomes the Gospel of Luke, for instance, an editor and corrector of earlier biographical tradition about Jesus is obviously at work (Luke 1:1–4), but compared with the text’s redaction of its Vorlage (i.e., probably an early version of the Gospel of Mark), the same editor/corrector seems to be a creative author too. Thus, when Christians begin to use titles with κατὰ, they do not separate editor/corrector from author as is the case in the Classical texts, but use κατ᾽ ἄνθρωπον while presenting the evangelist as both. Such a meaning of the gospel title in the canonicals also applies to the apocryphal gospels.

In order to analyse the gospel title we need to have a closer look at its exact meaning. For heuristic reasons, the title, again with John as example, is depicted in Table 1 as εὐαγγέλιον (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) κατ᾽ Ιωάννην, “The Gospel (of Jesus Christ) According to John”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>εὐαγγέλιον</th>
<th>Text (“The Gospel”)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ)</td>
<td>Source of Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κατὰ Ιωάννην</td>
<td>Author</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the canonical gospels, the Text as “Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον)” tends to represent a certain genre, namely Jesus’ βίος/ vita (or the like). This is hardly the case with the apocryphal gospels, where we find no ‘biography’ of Jesus, but rather a focus on his teaching. However, the extra-canonical gospels also tend to prefer the narrative genre, e.g., three revelation dialogues (Ap. John, Gos. Mary, and Gos. Judas), one sayings collection (Gos. Thom.), and two tractates (Gos. Phil. and Gos. Egypt.), where the last three texts attest narrative sections too. Some apocryphal gospels display very little narrative, taking on other genres, such as homily (Gos. Truth) and oracular discourse (Gos. Lots Mary). One text does not provide enough information to decide its genre (Gos. Mani).

Since the Text of the gospel was thought to be of divine origin, Christians believed it to be εὐαγγέλιον (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), “The Gospel (of Jesus Christ)”; thus, the genitivus auctorius denotes the gospel’s Source of Authority as Jesus, the spirit, or another supernatural entity. Early gospel titles do not spell this out, which is the reason why “Jesus Christ” heuristically is put in parenthesis, but we can assume that Christians of Late Antiquity understood it thus. The Revelation of John may provide a telling example. The text leaves
no doubt that John of Patmos wrote the text himself, but after an angel’s dictation. This aligns with the idea that John is the text’s Author, whereas its Source of Authority is the angel, operating by the agency of Jesus and God (Rev 1:1–2).

One way of finding the Author in an apocryphal gospel is by its depiction of scribal activity, if extant in the text. The Author is often engaged in textual production and recording, and may be detected by the vocabulary of γράφειν (Coptic, ⲡⲥⲁⲓ), which means, [1] “to write” as an Author composing a text (Gos. Egyp.), or [2] “to write down” as an Author recording a new text from a Source of Authority (Ap. John, Gos. Thom., and Gos. Mani). Γράφειν/ⲥⲁⲓ can also mean [3] “to copy”; in which case we are no longer dealing with an Author as such, but with a scribe who copies an exemplar (Gos. Egyp.). Another way of detecting an Author may be by the use of the κατ’ άνθρωπον (Coptic, κατὰ ἄνθρωπον) formula, where άνθρωπον/ἄνθρωπον refers to the name of one of Jesus’ disciples (Ap. John, Gos. Thom., Gos. Phil., and Gos. Mary).

Accordingly, each of the chosen apocryphal gospels will be studied with a focus on the information given in its Title and, to some extent, its running text (mainly prologue and epilogue). These data concern primarily each text’s implied Source of Authority (often Jesus, but not always) and Author (often a disciple, but not always).

Before commencing such a study we need to revisit the traditional gospel title in Coptic. From early on, also Coptic gospel versions attest the two Greek forms of the canonical title (as we saw above), here listed in Table 2.

### Table 2. Canonical Gospel Titles in Coptic until c. 500 CE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codex</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Subscription</th>
<th>Inscription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.Osl. 1661a</td>
<td>ⲡⲥⲁⲓ ⲡⲕⲧⲁ Ⲝⲩⲓⲣⲏⲥ</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Bodmer III</td>
<td>ⲡⲥⲁⲓ ⲡⲕⲧⲁ ⲑⲓⲓⲓⲣⲏⲥ</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codex Scheuyen</td>
<td>ⲡⲥⲁⲓ ⲡⲕⲧⲁ ⲓⲏⲓⲓⲣⲏⲥ</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codex Scheide</td>
<td>ⲡⲥⲁⲓ ⲡⲕⲧⲁ ⲓⲏⲓⲓⲣⲏⲥ (“In peace”)</td>
<td>Subscription with a wishing of peace</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Bodmer XIX</td>
<td>ⲡⲥⲁⲓ ⲡⲕⲧⲁ ⲓⲏⲓⲓⲣⲏⲥ</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Palau Rib. 181–183</td>
<td>ⲡⲥⲁⲓ ⲡⲕⲧⲁ ⲑⲓⲓⲣⲏⲥ</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna K 2591</td>
<td>ⲡⲥⲁⲓ ⲡⲕⲧⲁ ⲓⲏⲓⲓⲣⲏⲥ (“The end of the Gospel According to Matthew”)</td>
<td>Subscription as explicit</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Mich. 3992</td>
<td>ⲡⲥⲁⲓ ⲡⲕⲧⲁ ⲓⲏⲓⲓⲓⲣⲏⲥ (“Twenty-[?]”)</td>
<td>Running header or page number</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the twelve attestations, the usual form of the gospel title (ἐγγέγαγεν κατὰ ἰωάννης) is found nine times, though with some variation: “Gospel” occurs seven times with determination (πειραγέγαγεν) and once, perhaps twice, without (ἐγγέγαγεν); “According to” (κατὰ) occurs five times with the attributive (性价), twice with determination (性价), and once (perhaps twice) without. The abbreviated form of the gospel title (κατὰ ἰωάννης) only occurs once (κατὰ ἰωάννης), in Vienna K 2591, or twice if we follow the restoration of P.Mich.Inv. 3992, taking the running header as a gospel title (κατὰ ἰωάννης) and not as a page number (cf. Gathercole 2013, p. 61). The final gospel title is a quite rare species in Coptic, as it attests only the name of the evangelist, ἰωάννης, without the κατὰ. The Coptic κατὰ usually takes the name in the Greek nominative, whereas κατὰ takes accusative. Notice also that the construction πειραγέγαγεν ἰωάννης does not occur in Table 2, contrary to what we find in some apocryphal gospel titles (Gos. Egyp. and Gos. Judas).
3. Apocryphal Titles Close to Canonical Titles

The following five texts make use of the ⲡⲉⲩⲅⲕⲅⲅⲃⲉⲗⲓⲟⲛ (Ϧ)ⲕⲧⲁ ⲣⲱⲙⲉ in their title, with a few exceptions. Applying the method of focusing on each text’s Title, Source, and Author, we begin the analysis with Nag Hammadi Codex (NHC) II, which is especially rich in examples. Before analysing the codex’ two well-known gospels, we start out by taking a closer look at the first text, the long recension of Ap. John, which actually attests a canonical gospel title; thereafter, the second text of Codex II, Gos. Thom., and then the third, Gos. Phil. The choice of these three apocryphal gospels may be intended by the scribe who designed the text of NHC II. The fourth text in this section is Gos. Mary, which is a rarity among apocryphal gospels due to its female protagonist. The last apocryphal gospel here is Gos. Judas, which is included since it appears quite alike to Gos. Mary, even if its title does not attest the kata.

3.1. Long Recension of the Apocryphon of John (NHC II,1 1,1–32,9)

Ap. John can be characterised as a revelation dialogue that presents the Saviour and his disciple John in conversation with each other. The text exists in four Coptic versions, where two are traditionally referred to as the short recension and the other two as the long recension. For reasons of convenience scholars simply treat all four texts as witnesses to the same work, referred to as Ap. John (or the Secret Book of John), even though the short and long recensions differ significantly in contents and even have different titles. The short recension is entitled ⲡⲡⲟⲕⲣⲩⲫⲟⲛ ⲛ̄ïⲱϩⲁⲛⲛⲏⲥ (“The Apocryphon of John”; NHC III,1 40,10–11; PB 8502,2 77,6–7), whereas the long recension is entitled κⲧⲁ ïⲱϩⲁⲛⲛⲏⲛ ⲛ̄ⲁⲡⲟⲕⲣⲩⲫⲟⲛ (NHC II,1 32,8–10) and κⲧⲁ йⲤⲁⲛⲛ ⲡⲡⲟⲕⲣⲩⲫⲟⲛ (NHC IV,1 49,27–28). Notice that both titles present the name, not in the Greek nominative (κⲧⲁ йⲤⲁⲛⲛ) as is usually the case in Coptic, but in the Greek accusative (κⲧⲁ Ⲣⲧⲙⲁⲛ), which may indicate that this title already existed in the Greek text that the Coptic version was translated from. Such a suggestion is supported by the title in NHC IV, which even appears to attest a full Greek title, κατά йωάν(υ)ν ἀπόκρυφον.12

What is of special interest here, though, is the long recension’s use of κατά йωάν(υ)ν, which in fact corresponds to a gospel title, “The Gospel According to John”, as argued above.13 Based on this, we may interpret ἀπόκρυφον (ἀπόκρυφον) either adverbially (“secretly”) or adjectivally (“secret”). The adverb would call for a title like “The Gospel According to John, secretly”, whereas the adjective seemingly works better as describing the unstated “Gospel”, implied by the use of the κατά μᾶς formula: “The Secret Gospel According to John”, or, perhaps even catchier, the Secret Gospel of John.14

Data on Source of Authority and Author of Ap. John can be retrieved from the version found in Nag Hammadi Codex II:

Subscription Title (32,8–10)
The Secret Gospel According to John (κατά йωάν(υ)ν ἀπόκρυφον).15

Prologue (1,1–4)
The teaching ( waive) [of the Saviour and] the [revelation] of the mysteries . . . those he taught (тєαβω-) to John, [his] disciple.16

Epilogue (31,32–33)
The Saviour gave him these (teachings) so that he could write them down (евα).17

“The teaching ( waive)”, in the prologue of the Ap. John, originates from Jesus (“[the Saviour]”) and is “taught (тєαβω-) to John”. In the epilogue, when “the Saviour gave him these (teachings) so that he could write them down (евα)”, the transmission of the teachings from Jesus to John is explicitly described as an act of scribal activity. Thus, following the present method, the content of the Title confirms Jesus as provider of the “teaching . . . [and] the [revelation] of the mysteries”, i.e., Jesus as Source of “The Secret Gospel”; while “[his] disciple” John is the Author, in line with our understanding of the phrase “According to John”.

[1]: Religions 2022, 13, 796
[2]: 3 of 18
[3]: 4 of 18
[4]: 5 of 18
[5]: 6 of 18
[6]: 7 of 18
[7]: 8 of 18
[8]: 9 of 18
[9]: 10 of 18
[10]: 11 of 18
[11]: 12 of 18
[12]: 13 of 18
[13]: 14 of 18
[14]: 15 of 18
[15]: 16 of 18
[16]: 17 of 18
3.2. The Gospel According to Thomas (NHC II,2 32,10–51,28)

An identical scheme can be detected in the second text of NHC II. Gos. Thom. is a sayings collection divided by modern scholars into 114 sections. Narrative threads, which include dialogue between Jesus and his disciples, also occur in several of these logia, such as 13, 22, 60, etc. The data we currently are interested in are found in the text’s title and prologue.

Subscription Title (51,27–28)
The Gospel According to Thomas (πειγαγελιον πικατα οῳμακ). 18

Prologue (32,10–12)
These are the secret words, which the living Jesus spoke, and Twin Judas Thomas wrote them down (ςαις) . . . 19

“The Gospel” of the title again corresponds to “the secret words” of the prologue, and since “the living Jesus spoke” these words, he fulfills the function of their Source of Authority. We are told that “Twin Judas Thomas wrote them down (ςαις)”, which means that Thomas is the text’s Author, in accordance with the phrasing of the title as πικατα οῳμακ (“According to Thomas”).

As is the case with Ap. John, also Gos. Thom. seems to be a perfect fit that confirms our method, pertaining to Title, Source, and Author, at least in the Coptic version. The case may be a bit different in the parallel of the Greek witness. 20

3.3. The Gospel According to Philip (NHC II,3 51,29–86,20)

This text does not present much coherent narrative, but is rather a polemical discourse that concerns inner-Christian debates. Its genre has been suggested to be a sayings collection or a florilegium of otherwise unconnected themes; however, the text is not as incoherent as early scholarship suggests, but presents its doctrinal themes in a coherent, if at first confusing, manner, probably in the genre of the tractate (cf. Lundhaug 2010, 156–162). The interpretation of the title of this third text of NHC II is more complicated than our previous examples. 21 Compared to Ap. John and Gos. Thom., Gos. Phil. as a whole is not dictated by Jesus, nor does it directly refer to a secretary disciple, except in its title.

Subscription Title (86,19–20)
The Gospel According to Philip (πειγαγελιον πικατα φαιηπιο). 22

In a first reading of the text, it appears as if the text is entitled after “Philip the apostle (φαιηπιο ταιοςος)”, who is briefly mentioned in the third person in the text (73,8), or perhaps after “Philip the evangelist (Φιλιππου τοι εναγελιστοι)”, who is mentioned in Acts 21:8, but otherwise unknown. 23 The Philip figure within the text quotes, in passing, a short non-canonical saying about Jesus (73,9–15), which seemingly is presented as his own quotation, but nothing else in Gos. Phil. portrays Philip as transmitter or author of Jesus’ teachings. Therefore, we are not able to confirm the Title’s use of πικατα φαιηπιο as an indication of Philip as Author from the contents of the text itself. He may in fact be intended as both Author and Source of Authority in the text, in the sense that he is meant to represent the apostle (or evangelist) Philip’s opinion about the inner-Christian conflicts as they are displayed in Gos. Phil. Such a scheme is identical with what we find in the New Testament letters, where an apostolic person (e.g., Paul, Jacob, Peter) gives advice to Christians in a specific context.

Still, the question remains, why is Gos. Phil. given a gospel title, and why with Philip as its author? 24 The answer may be found in the comparison with John 14:8–11, where Philip asks Jesus to show the disciples the Father. Jesus’ reply highlights the shared identity of the Father and the Son; thus implying that when the disciples see the Son they see the Father too. Hugo Lundhaug (2010, pp. 347–48) convincingly suggests that Gos. Phil., with its focus on deification, may be “an extended answer” to questions raised by the apostle.
Philip in John 14 on the nature of the Father and the Son, and the relationship between them. That may answer why Philip appears in the title.

As for the use of “Gospel” in the title, I believe that the Gospel of John, and especially its chapter 14, may shed further light on the case. In John 14:2–7, just before the Philip passage, Thomas asks Jesus how the disciples can know the way to heaven. This aligns with the text before Gos. Phil. in NHC II, namely Gos. Thom., where the core theme also concerns heaven and the kingdom, and the disciples’ access thereto.25 Furthermore, the first text of Codex II, Ap. John, also has a strong connection to the Gospel of John, both through its title, the Secret Gospel of John, and its contents, with clear Johannine themes build into its composition (cf. Falkenberg 2017, pp. 94–97).

Secrecy and hidden teachings are a thread that runs through all the three first texts of Codex II. They are, as we have seen, all entitled as gospels; the title of the first even mimicks the canonical Gospel of John. The following two gospels seem to shed light on the questions posed in John 14:2–11 by Thomas and Philip, in the same sequence and by the same disciples, as is the case with their apocryphal gospels in NHC II. The scribe, who selected the texts of Codex II, may thus have intended the first three to appear as gospels, even secret gospels, and not just any secret gospels, but secret gospels related to the Gospel of John. This may answer why Gos. Phil. receives the title ⲡⲉⲩⲅⲁⲗⲓⲟⲛ ⲡⲕⲧⲁ ⲫⲓⲗⲓⲡⲡⲟⲥ.26

3.4. The Gospel According to Mary (PB 8502,1 7,1–19,5; pp. 1–6, 11–14 Missing)

Even though this text lacks more than half of its pages, what is left of it still provides ample information about genre and content. Gos. Mary is a revelation dialogue, first between the Saviour and all of his disciples; then, after Christ leaves the scene, Mary takes over and presents the disciples with his teaching, which she has received from him by herself. The Mary figure is clearly Mary Magdalene (cf. Nagel 2014, pp. 5–6). The information needed, for our current proposes, is found in the title, corpus, and epilogue.

Subscription Title (19,3–5)
The Gospel According to Mary (ⲡⲉⲩⲅⲁⲗⲓⲟⲛ ⲙⲁⲣⲓϩⲁⲙⲡⲧⲁ).28

Corpus (10,1–6)
Peter said to Mary, “... Tell us the words of the Saviour that you remember, those known to you, not to us; nor have we heard them”.29

Epilogue (17,7–9)
When Mary had said these (words), she was silent, since the Saviour spoke with her until this point.30

“The Gospel” of the title seemingly corresponds to “the words of the Saviour that you remember, those known to you, not to us” in the corpus, i.e., the words that “the Saviour spoke with her until this point” in the epilogue’s narrative. Yet, the text does not refer directly to any scribal activity in relation to the Mary figure. Still, since the primary teaching of Christ is aimed at her, we may interpret her transmission of Christ’s private instruction as the chief teaching of the text. This teaching is seemingly the same as “The Gospel”, and probably the very reason why she is highlighted in the Title as the textual transmitter, that is, “According to Mary”. So, on the one hand, the text clearly presents the Saviour as its Source; on the other hand, even if Mary is not said to write down anything, she is presented as the key dialogue partner of Christ and as the transmitter of teachings not revealed by him to his other disciples. Thus, the Author of the text’s teaching, in accordance with our interpretation of the phrase “According to Mary”, is Mary Magdalene.

3.5. The Gospel of Judas (CT,3 33,1–58,28)31

This gospel text is in a number of ways similar to Gos. Mary; both share the genre of the revelation dialogue, where Christ is in conversation with the group of disciples, but mainly with Mary and Judas. So far, the main research question relating to Gos. Judas has been whether Judas represents the text’s protagonist or antagonist. I tend to interpret him
as a bit of both (cf. Petersen 2012, pp. 288–90). Yet, *Gos. Judas* differs from *Gos. Mary* in its title, which here is presented together with the incipit.

**Subscription Title (58,27–28)**

The Gospel of Judas (*πυγαμελοιοι ιουδαλαοι*). 32

**Incipit (33,1–3)**

The secret discourse of the judgment that Jesus spoke with Judas [the] Iscariot. 33

“The Gospel” of the Title corresponds to “The secret discourse of the judgment that Jesus spoke” in the incipit, thus confirming Jesus as the **source of authority** in *Gos. Judas*. Most scholars hold the text to be the same as “The Gospel of Judas” (*Iudae Euangelium/ευχ γγελιον τοι τωδα*), mentioned by Irenaeus (*Adv. haer. I.31.1*) and Epiphanius (*Panarion 38.1.5*). 34 The Latin and Greek titles correspond to the Coptic title (*πυγαμελοιοι ιουδαλαοι*), since none of them attest the use of “According to” (*secundum, κατα, or κατα*). So, due to the lack of *κατα* in the title we cannot readily establish Judas as the text’s **author**, and, as is the case in *Gos. Mary*, the main dialogue partner of Jesus in *Gos. Judas* is not presented as putting anything into writing.

I think it all comes down to our interpretation of the text’s Judas figure. If he is, on the one hand, mainly considered as the antagonist in *Gos. Judas*, the genitive of the title should be taken in the adnominal sense: “The Gospel about Judas” (cf. Nagel 2008, pp. 101–2, n. 12), thus leaving the text without any **author**. If he is, on the other hand, the protagonist, then the genitive of the title should be taken as **genitivus auctoris**: “The Gospel of Judas”; then, he would, in fact, emerge as the text’s **author**. 35

4. **Other Apocryphal Gospel Titles**

Of the last four apocryphal texts with gospel titles, three display the title constructed as *πυγαμελοιοι οι* (“The Gospel of/for [a group, a thing, or a topic]”), where the *οι* signals the genitive (*Gos. Lots Mary* and *Gos. Truth*) or perhaps the dative (*Gos. Egyp*); in one case, the *οι* does not occur together with the gospel title in a similar manner (*Gos. Mani*). When we analyse the Title through the lenses of **source of authority** and **author**, the majority of these texts come out quite differently in comparison with the ones discussed in the preceding section, where Jesus represents each text’s **source** and a disciple its **author** (except for *Gos. Phil.*, where Philip seems to be both). The first and second texts, *Gos. Egyp* and *Gos. Mani*, both introduce another **source** than the Christ figure. The last two, *Gos. Lot Mary* and *Gos. Truth*, are traditionally entitled by their incipits, and may not be classified as apocryphal gospels at all.

4.1. **The Gospel of the Egyptians (NHC III,2 40,12–69,20)**

In Nag Hammadi Codex III and IV, we find the tractate often called *Gos. Egyp.*, but also entitled the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*, after God’s name in the text. It concerns the structure of the heavenly world and its inhabitants, involving, inter alia, ritualistic discourse (hymns/prayers). The Codex III version includes a colophon, which the other version, in Codex IV, does not (due to missing pages). In the Codex III version we find five (!) titles. Of relevance here is the incipit, epilogue, and colophon.

**Title in Incipit (40,12–13)**

(1) The book (χαριμε) of the [holy . . . ] of the great invisible [spirit] . . . 36

**Titles in Colophon (69,6–8, 14–17)**

(2) The Gospel of the Egyptians (*πυγαμελοιοι φιλτικαι*), (3) the divinely written (*ικαλα ιφιοτε) Holy Book (αιθος) that is secret . . . Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Saviour, ΙΧΘΥΣ, (4) the divinely written (οεγιακος) Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit. Amen. 37

**Subscription Title (69,18–20)**

Epilogue (68,1–19)

This is the book that the great Seth wrote ( Cald ). . . The great Seth wrote this book . . . through the gift ( ὁ = δόμαδος) of the undetectable, unknown, fatherly intention.39

In the text’s outer frame we find its primary title in the incipit (first title) and subscription (fifth title), “The Holy Book ( χαρισμή/κτισμός) of the Great Invisible Spirit”, which is identical with the colophon’s last title (fourth in our counting). Of special interest is the beginning of the colophon, where the second and third titles occur as “The Gospel of the Egyptians, the divinely written Holy Book that is secret”. The third title appears here in abbreviated form, “Holy Book”. The gospel title, “The Gospel of the Egyptians (πνευματερόν ἀπελικτικός)”, is only one title out of the five in the text, but may still be important, since it takes as its apposition “the divinely written Holy Book”. That “Gospel” here is identified with a “Book” should come as no surprise, since the Gospel of John also presents itself as a “book ( βιβλίον = χαρισμένο)” (20:30; 21:25).

In the epilogue, the divine Seth, son of Adam (Gen 5:3–8), is twice said to be the one who “wrote this book”; thus, taking on the role of the text’s Author. This also explains why the “Holy Book” in the colophon is “divinely written ( χρησιμοτερών)”, namely by a god called “the great Seth” in the epilogue. That the acronym ΙΧΘΥΣ (“Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Saviour”) is mentioned in close connection to Seth’s authorship in the colophon (“the divinely written Holy Book”), can be explained by the fact that Seth earlier in the text is said to have clothed himself in Jesus (64,1–3), thus establishing their shared identity, even while Seth is the text’s key protagonist.40

We also read in the epilogue that Seth’s Holy Book came to be “through the gift of the undetectable, unknown, fatherly intention”, which by usual apophatic discourse refers to God’s plan. So, Seth’s work happens “through the gift ( ὁ = δόμαδος)” of God’s “intention”, where the highest god then comes to represent the text’s Source of Authority. This conclusion is confirmed by the Title, “The Holy Book of ( ἅ-) the Egyptians”, where the ᾧ- is the genitivus auctoris, representing the Source of the text’s teachings.

However, such a use of the genitive hardly applies to the Title, “The Gospel of ( ἅ-) the Egyptians”, since native people of Egypt is not mentioned in the text, apart from this title.41 An explanation of the current use of “Egyptians” has formerly been that the text aims at presenting the biblical Seth figure as superseding the Egyptian god Seth (cf. Böhlig et al. 1975, pp. 22–23). However, this may not be the better explanation. We notice instead that the manuscript in which the text is attested was found in Egypt, for sure, and it may therefore be the work of an Egyptian aimed at other Egyptians. Accordingly, we could interpret the ᾧ- of the Title in the dative case, indicating “The Gospel for the Egyptians”, thus referring to the text’s implied, and even actual, readers.

Such an Egyptian person was seemingly at work in the colophon, where the scribe presents himself as “the one who copied (καθαρισμόν) it, Eugnostos the loving one in spirit, in flesh my name is Gongessos” (69,9–12). It seems clear that the use of καθαρισμόν here cannot designate authorship, since that has already been explicitly ascribed to Seth, but rather designates the scribe who copied the text of Gos. Egyp. into Nag Hammadi Codex III from another Coptic exemplar.42

4.2. Mani’s Gospel from Manichaean Canon Lists

Mani (216–c. 276 CE) was from Mesopotamia and established a new religion, which was based on Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Christianity, and which flourished for more than a millennium from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Manichaeism may have entered Egypt already in Mani’s lifetime, and had its heyday in the Mediterranean region in the 4th–5th centuries. The religion’s founder composed a number of writings, only left to posterity in fragments, among them a text on the Manichaean deities, mythology, and secret teachings, namely Gos. Manti.44 The text does not exist in Coptic, but its title is attested in the Manichaean canon lists, preserved in the writings of his followers.
First Canon List (Manichaean Homilies 25.1–5)
(1) [The] Gospel ([πειρατείον] and (2) the Treasury of Life, (3) the Tractate and (4) the Book of Secrets, (5) the Book [of] the Giants and (6) the Epistles, (7) the Psalms and Prayers of my Lord.\(^{45}\)

Second Canon List (Kephalaia 355.5–11)
These great writings (τριάντα) that I wrote down (καὶ ὑμεῖς) to you are gifts ([τὰ ἱμαὶ τὰ χάρις) gracefully given (χάρις) from the light fathers: (1) The Great Living Gospel (ἡμᾶς . . . πειρατείον εἰς) is the gift (ἀληθές) of the Messenger; (2) the Treasury of Life is the gift of the Pillar of Glory (etc.).\(^{46}\)

The Title of Gos. Mani is always mentioned as the first in the Coptic canon lists, here in the first list as “[The] Gospel ([πειρατείον]”, and in the second list as “The Great Living Gospel (ἡμᾶς . . . πειρατείον εἰς)”. The first canon list simply presents the seven classical writings of Mani, whereas the second provides us with the information we currently need on Author and Source of Authority. Mani is the one who “wrote down” his “great writings” to his disciples, which makes him Author of these texts. Before moving on to the source, we briefly return to Gos. Egyp., where the Author, Seth, wrote his Holy Book “through the gift (τὸ δόμα/δοσις)” of God’s “intention” (NHC III,2 68,17–19), making God the Source of that text. A similar scheme is at work in the second canon list, when we are told that Mani’s writings also are “gifts ([τὰ ἱμαὶ τὰ χάρις) . . . from the light fathers”, namely the prime gods of the Manichaean system. Concerning Gos. Mani, it is specifically said that his “Gospel is the gift (ἀληθές) of the Messenger”, who is one of these light fathers; thus, the Source of Authority in Gos. Mani is here the deity called the Messenger.\(^{47}\)

4.3. The Gospel of the Lots of Mary (HUAM 1984.669 1,1–75,7)\(^{48}\)
This text is probably the newest of our texts under study. It exists in the format of a handy miniature codex, which may have been produced in the 5th or even 6th century (Luijendijk 2014, pp. 44–46). The text belongs to the genre of oracular literature, and was probably not intended for proficient Christian readers, but instead for lay Christians. They could ask for advice from the book holder, who then would pick random pages with one of the 37 extant oracles and present it to the person asking. Here, the incipit provides the data we need.

Incipit (1,1–2,1)
The gospel of the lots of Mary (πειρατείον ὑπὲρκλήφας ὑμῶν), the Lord Jesus Christ’s mother, whom Gabriel the archangel brought the gospel (πηθνοῦγε = εὐαγγέλιον).\(^{49}\)

The incipit begins and ends with “the gospel (πειρατείον/πηθνοῦγε)”, which “Gabriel the archangel brought” to “Mary, the Lord Jesus Christ’s mother”. According to our definition of Source of Authority, Gabriel is, as the bringer of the gospel message, the best candidate. The text does not display any explicit Author.

All information of the incipit points to Luke 1:26–38, which is a dialogue where (a) Gabriel (b) brings revelation of the future (c) to Mary. The scene parallels the practical circumstances of Gos. Lots Mary, as also (a) the book holder (b) gives oracles of the future (c) to a person seeking advice. This is exactly what the system of drawing lots or oracles is all about.

In this context, πειρατείον and πηθνοῦγε are not referring to “the gospel” as Text, but instead to “the good news” of a given oracle’s lucky outcome. Even if the text refers to a well-known passage of a canonical gospel, Gos. Lots Mary seems to use πειρατείον/πηθνοῦγε quite differently: It is about selling the book holder’s divination services, namely “The good news of the lots of Mary (πειρατείον ὑπὲρκλήφας ὑμῶν) . . . Jesus Christ . . . Gabriel”, where three strong divine beings help the hopeful broker authorising his or her oracle message. So, even if the incipit begins with πειρατείον, I am not sure we automatically should take it as designating the gospel genre. “The Lots (ὑπὲρκλήφας) of Mary” is the
better choice, if the quality of a Title still is to be determined by its ability to characterise the text properly. I therefore think that Gos. Lots Mary should not be included in our stock of apocryphal gospels, since it fits better together with other oracular literature. The reason why the word πειράγτων was used in the incipit may be the marketing value of its association by allusion to the canonical gospels.30

4.4. The Gospel of Truth (NHC I,3 16,31–43,24)

This commonly used title of the text is derived entirely from its incipit. The text belongs to the genre of the homily and concerns divine revelation, the book and name of God, and readers’ ability to escape deficient and worldly nature in order to obtain heavenly perfection. The text lacks a proper title, so the information we need for our current purposes may be found in the text’s incipit and corpus.

Incipit (16,31–17,4)
The gospel of truth (πειράγτων ἡπιά) is a joy for those who received the gift (θαυμ), through the father of truth (πατὸς ἡ ἡπιά), to know him by the word’s power . . . 51

Corpus (18,11–15)
This, the gospel (πειράγτων) of him they search for, was revealed to the perfect ones through the mercies of the father.52

Gos. Truth has often been associated with a “Gospel of Truth”, mentioned by Irenaeus (Adv. haer. III.11.9).33 Yet, Peter Nagel (2014, pp. 29–32) is right to note that such an identification hardly can be the case. It may seem as if the incipit provides us with the text’s Title, “The gospel of truth”, and the Source of Authority, “the father of truth”. (Here, and in the rest of Gos. Truth we do not have any explicit data on the text’s Author.) Moreover, “the gospel” mentioned in the incipit and corpus does not refer to the canonical genre, but instead to “the gospel message”, as displayed in the Pauline letters in connection with truth, God, and word.34

Now, if the incipit does not present us with the text’s title, it does not help us identify its Source of Authority or Author. As for content, Gos. Truth is in one sense a sibling to Gos. Phil., since both texts centre on Christian teaching in a discourse almost without a coherent narrative (contrary to Ap. John, Gos. Thom., Gos. Mary, and Gos. Judas). In Gos. Phil., Source and Author merged in the figure of Philip because of its Title, but if Gos. Truth lacks both Title and Author, then the question of Source becomes irrelevant.

To be clear, I am hardly able to change the usual title of Gos. Truth, even if a title such as the Homily on the Father of Truth (or the like) would be a more saying alternative. What I am able to do, though, is to state the case that the text, as it is presented in the manuscript, is without title. To strengthen such an assumption we will first look at the extant titles in the facsimile edition of NHC I, where Gos. Truth is the third text.55 These results are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Titles in Nag Hammadi Codex I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codex</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Inscription</th>
<th>Incipit</th>
<th>Subscription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NHC I,1</td>
<td>“Prayer of Paul the Apostle”56</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHC I,2</td>
<td>Apocryphon of James</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHC I,3</td>
<td>Gospel of Truth</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHC I,4</td>
<td>“Tractate on the Resurrection”57</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHC I,5</td>
<td>Tripartite Tractate</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Only two titles are detected paratextually in NHC I: “Prayer of Paul the Apostle” and “Tractate on the Resurrection” (the latter text copied by a second hand). Therefore, scholars have entitled the other codex texts artificially, the Apocryphon of James and the Tripartite Tractate. Even if NHC I is damaged in relevant passages, it does not seem to attest any inscriptions, and the last two texts do not display titles in incipit. So, we have two subscription titles in Codex I, but conceivably three texts without titles, and two of the three do not seem to attest a title in incipit at all.

Yet, our observations regarding Gos. Truth in Table 3 are not conclusive. We simply need a broader basis of comparanda. The other Nag Hammadi codices provide such a basis, since they attest plenty of titles in incipit. Incipit and title of each of the seven relevant texts are, together with Gos. Truth, listed below in Table 4.

Table 4. Titles in Incipit from All Nag Hammadi Codices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incipit</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Title Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The gospel of truth is a joy for those who received the gift . . .”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“On the hypostasis of the authorities . . .”</td>
<td>“The Hypostasis of the Archons”.</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Eugnostos the blessed, to those who are his”</td>
<td>“Eugnostos the Blessed”</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The wisdom of Jesus Christ after he arose from the dead . . .”</td>
<td>“The Wisdom of Jesus”</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The apocalypse, which Adam taught his son, Seth . . .”</td>
<td>“The Apocalypse of Adam”</td>
<td>Inscription and subscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Dositheos’ revelation of the three steles of Seth . . .”</td>
<td>“The Three Steles of Seth”</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Peter, the apostle of Jesus Christ, to Philip”</td>
<td>“The Letter of Peter, which he sent to Philip”</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Admittedly, only two of the texts attest verbatim correlation with their title (“Eugnostos the Blessed” and “The Wisdom of Jesus”), but the other five quite closely confirm their title and are therefore included in the list. Not only did Gos. Truth stand out as the one text that may, or may not, have a title in incipit in Table 3, but compared to the rest of NHC in Table 4 we are now better off, when concluding on the title of the text. It surely seems as if titles in incipit were widely used throughout NHC, but always confirmed in an affiliated inscription, subscription, or colophon.

What makes the presumed title in the incipit of Gos. Truth stand out even more is the fact that the texts of Codex I are attesting paratextual titles, i.e., “Prayer of Paul the Apostle” and “Tractate on the Resurrection” (as is the case with the seven texts in Table 4), but without any titles in incipit; furthermore, Codex I includes texts without titles, namely the Apocryphon of James and the Tripartite Tractate. Hence, I suggest that Gos. Truth is to be included among the latter two as a text without a title. Then, it no longer stands out compared to its two titleless siblings in Codex I, but also compared to the rest of the NHC texts, where many other writings attest no title in the manuscript: On the Origin of the World (NHC II,5), Plato’s Republic (NHC VI,5), the Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth (NHC VI,6), Asclepius (NHC VI,8), the Thought of Norea (NHC IX,1), the Testimony of Truth (NHC IX,2), Valentinian Exposition (NHC XI,2), and the Sentences of Sextus (NHC XII,1).
5. Conclusions

The current results regarding the content of the apocryphal gospel title in accordance with the chosen methodology are listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Apocryphal Gospels, their Title, Source of Authority, and Author.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gospel Text</th>
<th>πευγατελόμον</th>
<th>κατα πανι</th>
<th>Title Location</th>
<th>Source of Authority</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ap. John</td>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gos. Thom.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gos. Phil.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
<td>Philip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gos. Mary</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gos. Judas</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gos. Egyp.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Incipit, colophon, and subscription</td>
<td>God</td>
<td>Seth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gos. Mani</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Canon lists</td>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Mani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gos. Lots Mary</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Incipit</td>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gos. Truth</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In our analysis of the canonical gospel title, we discovered that both εὐαγγέλιον κατ’ ἀνθρώπων and the abbreviated κατ’ ἀνθρώπων attest genuine gospel titles in the earliest New Testament manuscripts. Hence, the text known as the long recension of Ap. John was included in the study since its title use κατὰ ἰσωμην, i.e., “The Gospel According to John” (thus including “Gospel”, as it is an authentic gospel title). With its full title as κατὰ ἰσωμην ἰςωκρατον, we may now count this Secret Gospel of John among the apocryphal texts that bear gospel titles.

Of the first five gospel titles, four are built on the canonical format of πευγατελόμον (τ)κατα πανι, whereas Gos. Judas has πευγατελόμον Ποιγας, i.e., without κατα. Here, Judas can be labelled Author, if he is the text’s protagonist; if not, the title should be “The Gospel about Judas”. Of the first five texts, four have Jesus as Source of Authority, whereas Gos. Philip merges Source and Author into one in the Philip figure, because that text displays the disciple’s authority alike to canonical authorship as found in the New Testament letters. All five texts have disciples known from the canonical gospels as Authors, because they either perform scribal activity (Ap. John and Gos. Thom.) or are the key dialogue partners of Jesus (Gos. Mary and Gos. Judas).

All these parameters change in the last of our apocryphal gospels. As Source of Authority, Jesus is no longer explicitly part of the equation: Gos. Egyp. has God, i.e., “the Great Invisible Spirit”; Gos. Mani has one of the divine light fathers, the Messenger; and Gos. Lots Mary has the archangel Gabriel. In addition, the traditional disciple group vanishes here, when presenting the Author: Gos. Egyp. has the deity Seth writing the text; Gos. Mani has Mani himself writing the text down; and Gos. Lots Mary does not provide that information.

Gos. Egyp. attests the astonishing number of five titles: “The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit” (in incipit, colophon, and subscription); its abbreviation as “Holy Book” (in colophon); and finally as “The Gospel of (πευγατελόμον ἰςωκρατον) the Egyptians” (in colophon). Since the manuscript of the text was unearthed in Egypt, I assume that an Egyptian writer intended it for Egyptian readership, and therefore the title may be translated as “The Gospel for the Egyptians”.

Additionally, Gos. Lots Mary attests a title in incipit. However, it seems as if πευγατελόμον is added to the title in order to heighten the text’s market value and attain more customers for the divination business, which is offered by the text. In fact, the remaining part of the
title, “The Lots of Mary”, more clearly hits the target concerning the text’s content and genre. So, even if it entails “The gospel” in the incipit, Gos. Lots Mary hardly belongs in the apocryphal gospel repertoire, but instead among other oracular literature.

Traditionally Gos. Truth has been named from its incipit. However, when comparing the text with the other four writings of NHC I, its ascribed title stands out, since other titles in incipit are not found there. Lots of other titles in incipit are attested throughout the Nag Hammadi codices, but always confirmed in inscription, colophon, or subscription, which is not the case in Gos. Truth. So, instead of viewing the text as a stand-alone example of incipit entitling, I prefer to categorise it together with the many other writings without titles in the NHC. Since Gos. Truth does not seem to hold a gospel Title, we cannot apply the current method for a study of its Source and Author.

Furthermore, we notice that “the gospel” not only occurs in the apocryphal gospel titles, but also within the running text in other Coptic writings from relevant codices: When the disciples ‘preach the gospel’ in the Wisdom of Jesus Christ (NHC III,4 119,14–15) and Gos. Mary (PB 8502,1 8,21–22; 9,8–9; 18,18–19), and when readers ‘search the gospel’ in Gos. Truth (NHC I,3 17,1–4; 18,11–15 (quoted above)).

Interestingly, the Gospel of Mark are even alluded to in the Wisdom of Jesus Christ, “Bartholomeus then said to him, ‘How did they in the gospel (ἢ παντὸς Ιησοῦς) declare ‘Man’ and ‘Son of Man’ (cf. Mark 2:27–28), from which of them is this son?”’ (NHC III,4 103,22–104,4), and in the Tractate on the Resurrection, “For did you remember reading in the gospel (ἢ παντὸς Ιησοῦς), ‘Elijah appeared and Moses with him (cf. Mark 9:4)?’” (NHC I,4 48,6–10).66 This indicates that any use of παντὸς Ιησοῦς in Coptic apocryphal literature always refers back to the story of Jesus in the canonical gospels, or at least to “the good message” of the Jesus story, as it is interpreted in Paul or the rest of the New Testament. Thus, all texts scrutinised in this contribution are later apocryphal gospels, which reuse and transform that story from older gospels that later on became canonical.

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**Notes**


2 I am well aware that scholars tend to use κατ’ ἀνδρὰ (kat’ andra, “According to man”), and not κατ’ ἄνθρωπον (“According to human being/person”), in connection with the canonical gospels, traditionally associated with male evangelists. However, when studying apocryphal gospel traditions a more gender neutral approach is called for, since these gospel titles also include women: “The Gospel According to Mark” (Papyrus Berolinensis [PB] 8502,1 19,3–5; edition: Parkhouse 2019, p. 255); “The Gospel of the Lots of Mary” (HUAM 1984,669 1,1–4; edition: Luijendijk 2014, p. 98); and in the Greek tradition as “The Gospel of Eve” (Εὐαγγέλιον Εὕας; Panarion 26,2,6; edition: Holl 1915, pp. 277–78).

3 Irenaeus is also the first we know to formulate the idea of one gospel in four forms: “From this it is clear that the logos—everything’s designer, who sits upon the (four) cherubim, he who holds everything together (συνέχων), he who was revealed to humankind—gave us the four-folded gospel (τετράμορφον τῷ εὐαγγέλιον), held together (συνεχόμενον) by one spirit … The Gospel According to John (τὸ … κατὰ Ἰωάννην) … The Gospel According to Luke (τὸ … κατὰ Δούκαν) … The Gospel According to Matthew (τὸ … κατὰ Ματθαίου) … The Gospel According to Mark (τὸ … κατὰ Μᾶρκου)” (Adv. haer. III.11.8; edition: Brux 1995, pp. 110–12). Here, the logos is said to hold the universe together (συνεχων) in the same manner as the spirit has held the four gospels together (συνεχωμενον); thus, the spirit can be said to guarantee the divine source of the four gospels, thought to be authored by the evangelists.

4 That is, if we presuppose the Two-Source Hypothesis, where the earlier Gospel of Mark and the sayings source Q formed the basis of the later gospels of Matthew and Luke.
For the text that the versions written within originated from Jesus or another divine figure, cf., e.g., Didache 8,2; 2 Clement 8,5; Theophilus of Antioch, Ad Autolycum 12. The one Coptic example of an apocryphal gospel title, known to me, which applies authorship directly to Jesus is the Gospel of Jesus (ἰεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ), Son of God, Offspring from the Angels, mentioned only by title in Shenoute’s I Am Amazed; cf. n. 1 above.

According to the incipit, possibly the original title, it is hardly John’s revelation, but “The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ)”, first given by God to Christ, and then given by an angel to John, who finally sees and transmits its content (Rev 1:1–3). Afterwards, even if John himself is said to write letters (1:4ff.), he is consistently urged to write down what he sees and hears (1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). In the rest of the text, he sees and sees revelations and, the reader gets it at this point, even though John no longer is told explicitly to write down the visions, he now does this explicitly. All Greek text of the New Testament is translated from the 28th edition of Nestle-Aland.

The list is built on the study of Simon Gathercole (2013, pp. 58–62).

I here take caution when including the bilingual fragment (P.Osl.Inv. 1661a) in the counting since the two determinations are restored: [(ἡ)γεγραμμένος (ἡ)τινὶς ἱεροτελεῖον (ἡ)τινὶς] (cf. Gathercole 2013, pp. 39–40, 59; round parentheses mine). Comparing with the other titles in Table 2, the last restoration may in fact be [ἰεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ] or simply [ἰεροτελεῖον].

Nevertheless, the fact remains that his name presented as inscription still depicts him as the author of “The Gospel According to Mark”.

An additional apocryphal example is “The Gospel of Jesus (ἰεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ), Son of God, Offspring from the Angels” (Edition: Cf. n. 1 above), mentioned by Shenoute.

Coptic text of all versions taken from the study of Waldstein and Wisse (1995, pp. 176–77), except for their restoration of the title in Codex IV 49,27–28: κατὰ ἱεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ. Poirier (1997, p. 369) suggests, correctly I think, the alternative κατὰ ἱεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ, thus reading the last letter of line 27 as part of the name, contrary to Waldstein and Wisse’s reading that presupposes line 27 to consist of an abbreviated name (ἱεροτελεῖον) followed by the attributive (ἡ-ἡ). However, when scrutinizing the manuscript in the facsimile edition (cf. Kasser and Robinson 1975, p. 57), Waldstein and Wisse’s restoration of ἡ-ἡ can just as easily attest ἡ-ἡ, and the manuscript does not attest the superlinear stroke of their attributive (ἡ-ἡ). So, Poirier’s suggestion of ἱεροτελεῖον instead of ἱεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ is a splendid restoration, even if I would leave out the Coptic hori (ι)ω, suggesting instead the reading, κατὰ ἱεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ, since it is clear that the lacuna does not allow space for more than two letters (or three if including the unsecure reading of ἡ-ἡ).

Greek titles are common in the NHC, according to the counting of Riley (1990), Nagel (1996), Gathercole (1997), Poirier (1997), Bovon (1997a, p. 64; cf. also Bovon 1997b, p. 288; and Table 2). Comparing with the other titles in Table 2, the last restoration may in fact be [ἰεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ] or simply [ἰεροτελεῖον].

The only other example of an apocryphal gospel in Coptic of a similar abbreviated form of the title, know to me, is I Am Amazed (οἱ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἱεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ, ἤ οἱ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἱεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ) written in perfect knowledge”, (Edition: Simon Gathercole 2013, p. 92). However, since such a defective form of the name is not attested elsewhere, the reading that comes naturally would be ἱεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ (dative), but then we need a new restoration, which is skillfully provided by Peter Nagel (2010, p. 293),οἱ Ἰησοῦ ἱεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ, ὁ Θεός ὁ Θεός ἦσαν. These are the [secret] sayings [which] the living Jesus [spoke and which Judas, who is] also Thomas, [wrote down] … . The problem here is the name Θεός (manuscript: ΘΩΜΑ) in the nominative case, which the editor takes as a defective form of Θυμίαμα to make it fit the restoration of ”ἐγέρθης” (”wrote down”), thus being in line with the Coptic parallel’s Μέγας. However, since such a defective form of the name is not attested elsewhere, the reading that comes naturally would be Θωμᾶ (dative), but then we need a new restoration, which is skillfully provided by Peter Nagel (2010, p. 293),οἱ Ἰησοῦ ἱεροτελεῖον ἡ-ἡ, ὁ Θεός ὁ Θεός ἦσαν. These are the [secret] words [which] the living Jesus spoke [and gave Judas, who is] also Thomas … . While Nagel here solves an annoying textual problem, the scribal activity applied to Thomas in the Coptic text (’he wrote down’) is unfortunately lost in the Greek (’words Jesus gave Thomas’).
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24 In fact, πλοῦς/πλαύς κατὰ φασίς ("The Tractate/Book of Philip") is suggested as more appropriate titles by Nagel (2008, pp. 104–11).


26 Perhaps the title of Gos. Phil. was even added by the scribe of Codex II.

27 Despite the lengthily protestations of Stephen J. Shoemaker (2016).


29 grids petros miladom he ... ḫes man nibahhe ḫpeyr etsere irpey uneasye ni eests oonu nibooy nibani yo oylne nibikotheo'gy (Edition: Ibid., p. 250).


31 Codex Tchacos, where Gos. Judas occurred, was almost certainly exported from Egypt illegally. For discussion of the book’s problematic provenance history, (cf. Brox 2006).


33 Finally, in Greek witnesses, canonical gospel titles without κατὰ are a rarity, but examples from Ἡ ε ἕνα υπογέμνημα τίτλον (Böhlig et al. 1975, p. 52). However, the editors’ restoration of the first lacuna (πλοῦς/πλαύς κατὰ φασίς) seems a bit too speculative and is therefore not followed here. Compared with the other titles of the text, this title in the incipit is not a perfect match, since “the [holy] (Edition: Ibid., p. 136).

34 Latin and Greek text from editions of Brox (1993, p. 350) and Holl (1922, p. 63).

35 Additionally, in Greek witnesses, canonical gospel titles without κατὰ are a rarity, but examples from 6th–7th century; thus, a bit later than our timeframe) are highlighted by Garrick V. Allen (2022, pp. 158–60). Relevant for the current interpretation of Judas as the protagonist in Gos. Judas is Allen’s example of a possible inscription, where the evangelist’s name occurs in the genitive case: [εὐαγγέλῳ τοῦ ἄγνων Λούκα, “The Gospel of Saint Luke”.

36 πλοῦς/πλαύς κατὰ φασίς (Edition: Ibid., p. 166).

37 ταῖς τέσσαρες ἑτέρους ἱδρύσεως ἤπαν ἀπὸ ὑπογείων ... τάς τις ἱδρύσεως ἀπὸ ὑπογείων ἀπὸ ἀπὸ ὑπογείων εἰς ἐννέα ἱδρύσεως (Edition: Ibid., pp. 162, 164).


39 One other apocryphal gospel in Coptic attests a similar ethnic title, namely the Gospel According to the Hebrews. This text is also mentioned in nn. 1 and 13 above.

40 περήπτετος εὐρύγλωττος ἐν πεπλατο ἐν τῷ πάση χρόνῳ (Edition: Ibid., p. 166).

41 Usually we would expect to find the ‘real’ scribe of NHC III in this colophon, but even here, the scribe is quite probably a construction used for the purpose of the whole text design of Codex III; (cf. Falkenberg 2017, pp. 120–23).

42 Parts of the content of Gos. Mani are preserved in the Greek, Middle Persian, and Sogdian languages; (cf. Gardner and Lieu 2004, pp. 156–59). We have the incipit of Gos. Mani in the Greek: “I am Mani, apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God (ἦ ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ Θεός ... τῆς Θεοῦ ... ” (Cologne Mani Codex 66,4–6; edition: Koenen and Brox 1993, p. 48). This is almost a quotation of 2 Cor 1:1, thus attesting how strong a tie Mani himself has to the New Testament (Edition: Ibid., p. 146). On the complexity of Jesus’ names in relation to Seth in this tractate, (cf. Gathercole 2017, pp. 206–9).

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References


