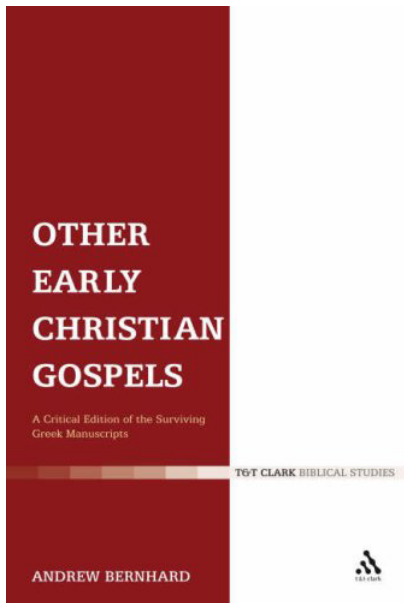


RBL 06/2009



Bernhard, Andrew

Other Early Christian Gospels: A Critical Edition of the Surviving Greek Manuscripts

Library of New Testament Studies 315

London: T&T Clark, 2007. Pp. xiv + 158. Paper. \$55.00.
ISBN 0567045684.

Stephen J. Patterson
Eden Theological Seminary
St. Louis, Missouri

In this volume Andrew Bernhard has assembled a useful collection of manuscripts of critical interest to New Testament scholarship today, along with fresh critical editions, translations, and, for many, photographic facsimiles. The scope of the volume is stated by the author: “The purpose of this book is to collect all the recently discovered Greek manuscripts containing parts of early Christian gospels (other than Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) into a single volume” (1–2). He goes on to explain, “the term ‘gospel’ is used for any written text that is primarily focused on recounting the teachings and/or activities of Jesus during his adult life” (2). Further, “‘early’ refers to the first hundred years of the Christian movement (ca. 30–130 C.E.)” (2). These attempts to avoid the inevitable arbitrariness of any selected collection of texts necessarily involves the author in a number of fussy discussions about dates, contents, and the like that, were they to be resolved, would detain him for several dozens of pages before coming to the task at hand. Those with a mind to seeing things through with consistency (the mark of a good papyrologist!) might be frustrated with these few opening pages, but most will appreciate the avoidance of pedantry in the interest of getting something useful into print. So, the selection is arbitrary but nonetheless useful. It includes the Greek fragments of the Gospel of Thomas, the several fragments of the Gospel of Peter, the Egerton Gospel (P. Egerton 2 and P. Köln 255), the so-called Faiyum Fragment, P. Merton 51, P. Oxy. 210, P. Oxy.

1224, P. Oxy. 840, and Berlin Papyrus 11710. There are plates for each of these except the Faiyum Fragment and P. Mert. 51. The first three chapters treat the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Peter, and the Egerton Gospel, respectively, and a fourth gathers the rest into an omnibus treatment. There is a select bibliography at the end of the volume and Greek indexes for each of the manuscripts, also gathered at the end.

Each chapter follows a formula. A brief introduction offers basic introductory information about each manuscript: what it is, when it was discovered, by whom, and any other interesting details worthy of the few pages set aside for *miscellanea*. This reviewer found interesting details in the footnotes, such as a reference to Bernard Grenfell's fascinating account of the discovery P. Oxy. 1, published in the October 1897 issue of *McClure's Magazine* (16 n. 2). The author has done some interesting digging in the literature. A half-dozen essential items of bibliography would enhance the usefulness of these little introductions.

The author then provides what he term "manuscript notes," that is, briefly the contents of the manuscript, its date, a physical description, current location and identification number, and the *editio princeps* and any subsequent critical editions of use to scholars. This is all concisely presented and quite useful.

The texts themselves are presented first in a critical edition, with apparatus (with a clear explanation for the novice unaccustomed to standard papyrological shorthand and *sigla*). Then, on the facing page, the author provides a cleaned-up version of the text, with lacunae filled, brackets removed, lines replaced with paragraphs, and so on to make it easier for the student to read the Greek text. Below the edited text is a translation. The translations are the author's own and will leave room to grumble on occasion. For example, he consistently translates λέγει Ἰησοῦς in P. Oxy. 1 and 654 as "Jesus said." This is a common rendering of the same, ambiguously phrased idiom in the Coptic version of Thomas (*peje Iesous* in Coptic can mean either "Jesus says" or "Jesus said"), but there is no reason to translate the Greek verb in the present. Another quibble stopped the reviewer on page 25, where the author renders οἱ ἔλκοντες ὑμῖν "those who lead you," again a common translation based on the Coptic. But the Greek is so odd (literally "those who *drag* you"), it is a shame to gloss over it without explanation or suggestions for emendation in the apparatus.

The bibliography at the end of the volume would be much more useful if it were sectioned into sublists for each manuscript and perhaps included in the introductory material for each manuscript. The Greek index is sectioned, which is useful, but an omnibus Greek index for the entire volume would also be of great use for the student of Greek and the lexicographer. The plates, gathered on unnumbered pages at the end of the

volume are a nice addition but probably of limited use in study. They are generally of poor quality (in the paperback edition, which I reviewed), and high-quality digital photographs for most of these are now available online or will soon be. Still, the photographs printed here are enough to give one an idea of what the original manuscript is like (especially since most are printed at actual size).

In summary, Bernard has produced a volume that most who do work in this subject area will want to own. For students of Greek, it might also make an interesting and inexpensive classroom tool for introducing students to the process of working from manuscript to transcription to edited text and translation. It is a successful effort and a welcome addition to the study of extracanonical literature.