Over recent decades our acquaintance with apocryphal and gnostic literature has deepened considerably; this has allowed us to see some of the exegetical, liturgical and artistic sources of early Christianity in a new light. We are now better able to discern, in numerous elements of Christian tradition in both East and West, an indebtedness to texts of Jewish or Gnostic origin. Scholars have demonstrated how texts of Jewish derivation were elaborated by Christians, and how the literature of the Second Temple provided inspiration for Christian authors and artists of different national traditions, even when the ‘explicit meaning’ of such documents seemed to contradict the New Testament. A remarkable number of the documents that we now call ‘Apocryphal’ (originally meaning ‘hidden’ or ‘concealed’) continued to condition the mental world of late antique and early medieval Christendom.

Most of the texts that at a certain point in the past came to be considered ‘Apocryphal’ were transmitted not out of an institutional need, and with institutional support, but because they aroused spontaneous interest both in clergies and in lay people in various parts of Christendom. Their proliferation in numerous languages must be regarded, therefore, as a direct consequence of those metaphysical questions which had been sown by Christianisation, yet could not be answered exhaustively by the texts officially sanctioned by the Churches. Not verified by formal authorities, numerous apocryphal texts underwent important transformations, often to become a medium of literary elaboration and mythological creativity. The phenomenon of rewriting and of local adaptations of Biblical stories in text and in art indicates that copyists, authors and artists conceived of themselves living not in a post-Biblical era, but in direct continuity with the personages of the Bible.

Certain themes deriving from Second Temple Judaism, which are not present in the Canonical Scriptures, were inherited by both Christianity and the Jewish tradition of the Rabbinic period. Each tradition, however, developed these themes in its own way, so that the place occupied by them in Christianity is not symmetrical with their place in Judaism. Nevertheless, the investigation of these two religious worlds may be undertaken as a shared enterprise. One of the central themes that this conference will seek to explore is the origin of the human race as presented in exegetical, liturgical and artistic sources of the first millennium. Apocryphal sources narrate the story of the first human beings, telling also about the eschatological expectations which they would transmit to their posterity. Some sources speak of a secret knowledge passed on by Adam to his progeny. Transmission of divine revelation via Adam and other patriarchs would thus make real the covenant between creatures and the Creator, while ideas about the origins of humankind conditioned the understanding of time and chronology. This conception of the human past played a crucial role in the formation of historiographical representations. The Christianisation of time, as well as the understanding of time in the Rabbinic tradition (and, more widely, in the late antique and early medieval Jewish world, as well as in the Samaritan tradition), have seldom been addressed within the scholarly contexts of either early Christianity or Judaism.

Texts regarding primaeval human beings also trace a direct line between Adam and the Messiah; the advent of the Saviour is often accompanied by numerous references to the vicissitudes of the first human beings. Christ’s Nativity is depicted as the accomplishment of the promises received by Adam, Eve and other antediluvian patriarchs; the new-born child is visited by Eve who recognises in him her Saviour; the Magi coming from the east to Bethlehem are revealed as inheritors of a secret writing transmitted to them from the beginnings of the world, while the infant Jesus is presented as an actor from the days of Creation. The recognition of the Messiah by his contemporaries had to rely on ancient revelations and prophecies; that recognition is the precondition of the Messiah’s earthly ministry.

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Gefördert von der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft
Monday, 26 March

I. Introduction (chaired by Abraham Terian, St Nersess Seminary)
09.30–10.15 – Igor DORFMANN-LAZAREV, Frankfurt University
“The Historian’s Craft and Temporal Bridges in Apocalypse and in Early Christian Art”

II. Symbols and figures of Messianic expectation (chaired by Charles Lock, University of Copenhagen)
10.15–11.00 – Daniele TRIPALDI, University of Bologna
‘The creation and the first-created human beings’
11.00–11.30
11.30–12.15 – Abraham TERIAN, St Nersess Seminary, New York
‘Whether Lamb or Lion: Overlapping Symbols in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism’
12.15–13.00 – Albert BAUMGARTEN, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan
‘Rescuing John the Baptist’
13.00 – 14.00 – Lunch
14.30–15.15 – Cecilia PROVERBIO, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome
“The Iconography of Angels: the Roots and the Origins of a Model”

III. Pagan mysteries and the esoteric legacy of the Magi (chaired by Jost Gippert, Frankfurt University)
15.15–16.00 – Jan BREMMER, University of Groningen
‘Early Christianity and the Pagan Mysteries’
16.00–16.30 – Coffee pause
16.30–17.15 – Antonio PANANO, University of Bologna
‘The Esoteric Legacy of the Magi of Bethlehem’

IV. The Magi and the Nativity accounts (chaired by Abraham Terian, St Nersess Seminary)
17.15–18.00 – Felicity HARLEY, Yale University
‘Visual Apocalypse: the case of the Adoration of the Magi in early Christian art’
18.30 – – Dinner

Tuesday, 27 March

IV. The Magi and the Nativity accounts (continued) (chaired by Abraham Terian, St Nersess Seminary)
09.30–10.15 – Andrew LOUTH, Durham University
‘Esotericism and Mystery in the Protevangelium Jacobi’

V. Creation and the first-created human beings (chaired by Elisabeth Hollender, Frankfurt University)
10.15–11.00 – Daniele TRIPALDI, University of Bologna
‘Apostles, Long Dead “Heretics” and Monks: Non-Canonical Traditions on Angels and Protoplasts in Two Late Antique Coptic Apocalypses (7th–8th Century CE)’
11.00–11.30 – Coffee pause
11.30–12.15 – Abraham TAL, Tel Aviv University
‘ Bridging the Gaps in Samaritan Traditions’
12.15–13.00 – Yuri STOYANOV, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London University
‘The Medieval Dualist Nachleben of Early Jewish and Christian Esoteric Traditions: The Role of the Pseudepigrapha’
13.00 –14.00 – Lunch
14.30–15.15 – Zaruhi HAKOBIAN, Matenadaran, Yerevan
‘Eve in Armenian Apocalypheal and Patristic Exegetical Literature’
15.15–16.00 – Maria MAMYAN, National Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran), Yerevan
‘The Gardens of Eden: Compositional and Iconographic Similarities Between the Mosaics from the Armenian Chapel of St. Polyeuctos in Jerusalem and from the Synagogue of Nirim’
16.00–16.30 – Coffee pause

VI. From Adam to Noah and beyond (chaired by Antonio Panaino, University of Bologna)
16.30–17.15 – Sergey MINOV, Oxford University / Hebrew University
‘Translatio corporis Adaie: Development of an Apocryphal Tradition’
17.15–18.00 – Nazenie GARIKYN, National Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran)
‘On the Mountains of Ararat’: Noah’s Ark and the Sacred Topography of Armenia’
18.30 – – Dinner

Wednesday, 28 March

VII. Enoch (chaired by Joseph Verheyden, Catholic University of Leuven)
09.30–10.15 – David HAMDOVIC, University of Lausanne
‘I Enoch 17 in the Papyrus Geneva 187’
10.15–11.00 – Yakir PAY, Hebrew University, Jerusalem
‘Metatron is not Enoch: Re-evaluating the Evolution of an Archangel’
11.00–11.30 – Coffee pause
11.30–12.15 – Jacques VAN RUITEN, University of Groningen
‘The Sons of God (Gen 6) through the Lenses of I Enoch and Jubilees in the Formation of Christian and Jewish Tradition’
12.15–13.00 – Florentina BADALANOVA GELLER, Freie Universität Berlin
‘Enochic traditions of Slavica Orthodoxa’
13.00 –14.00 – Lunch

VIII. From Abraham to Moses (chaired by Caroline Macé, Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities)
14.30–15.15 – Basil LOUIRE, National Research University, Higher School of Economics, and Maria KOROOGODINA, Russian Academy of Sciences Library, Petersburg
15.15–16.00 – Sabine FAIT and Dieter FAIT, Greifswald University
‘Die Quellen der nichtbiblischen Mose-Überlieferungen in der von Luther übernommenen alttestamentlichen Methode’
16.00–16.30 – Coffee pause
16.30–17.15 – Jan DOCHHORN, Durham University
‘Lex cordialis – lex naturale? Rm 2: 12–16 and its Biblical and Parabiblical Background’
17.15–18.00 – James RUSSELL, Harvard University
‘Moseh Rabbenu, Pious Aeneas, and Problems of Tannaitic Time Travel and Theodicy’
18.30 – – Dinner

Thursday, 29 March

IX. Apocalypses and visions (chaired by Jan Bremmer, University of Groningen)
09.30–10.15 – Joseph VERHEYDEN, Catholic University of Leuven
‘All Mysteries Revealed? On the Interplay between Hiding and Revealing in the Ascension of Isaiah’
10.15–11.00 – Emmanuelou a GRYFFEBOU, Stockholm University
‘Afterlife Visions in Byzantine Hagiology in its Relation to Esoteric and Apocryphal Sources’
11.00–11.15 – Coffee pause
11.15–12.00 – Yishai KIEL, Hebrew University, Jerusalem
‘Gnostic and Mithraic Elements in the Book of Zerubbabel’
12.00–12.45 – Tobias NICKLAS, Regensburg University
‘The Guardians’ Vision in the Gospel of Peter’
13.00–14.00 – Charles LOCK, University of Copenhagen
‘The Crypt and the Archive: Reflections on the Hiddenness of Things’
15.00 – – Excursion to the Roman fort Saalburg (optional)