

In my last reposted-post I mentioned that some years after the Apostolic Fathers (after, apparently, I had forgotten all the pain involved), I took on another (very large) translation project, of wider interest to the world at large — the ancient Gospels that did not make it into the New Testament. Here is how I have described that one, just to finish out the thought.

After having done the Apostolic Fathers in two volumes for the Loeb, I had decided never to do another translation project again. Too hard! But then, forgetting my decision, I thought it would be useful to have a Greek/Latin - English version of the early Christian non-canonical Gospels. And at the urging of the editor at Harvard, submitted a proposal also for the Loeb Classical Library. But the editorial board decided that they did not want to start publishing new editions of Christian texts in the series, since that would detract from its typical focus on Greek and Roman classics. And so I was now interested in a project without an publisher.

I should say - this may not be widely known - that most of the time a scholar writes a book, s/he does not know who will be publishing it, or even if **anyone** will be. This can be a source of real anxiety, especially for younger scholars who desperately need to get a book published in order to get a good teaching job or, if they have a job, in order to get tenure. But for a big project like this, I was not about to put in all the work - I knew it would be an enormous amount of work - without being assured of a publisher. So before beginning the project, I decided to secure a contract on the book.

Years, ago, Oxford University Press had told me that they would be willing to publish all my work. They wanted to be my sole publisher - for scholarly monographs, textbooks, anthologies, and trade books. (I eventually started publishing my trade books with another press — Harper; and now Simon & Schuster; but this was before all of that.) And so I approached Oxford with the idea of a bi-lingual edition (well, tri-lingual) edition of the “Apocryphal Gospels” and they were eager to do it. So I was set to go.

But then a thought occurred.

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