

I was looking through the blog archives today, and ran across this interesting one from four years ago. In addition to being rather informative about Gospels outside the New Testament, it shows how even in antiquity Christians had to figure out how to reconcile minor discrepancies among the canonical Gospels. Enjoy!

Yesterday in my graduate seminar we spent three hours analyzing the three so-called “Jewish-Christian Gospels.” These are very tricky texts to deal with. We don’t have any manuscripts of them – even small fragments. They come to us, instead, in the quotations of church fathers such as Origen, Didymus the Blind, Jerome, and Epiphanius. These (orthodox) church fathers sometimes quoted or referred to one or the other of the Gospels in order to relate what it said; and sometimes it was in order to attack what it said. There are all sorts of questions raised about these no-longer surviving Gospels in these quotations.

A good part of the problem is that some of these fathers – especially Jerome, on whom we depend for most of our information for two of the three Gospels – quite obviously confused things, or were confused themselves in what they had to say, since what they have to say about these Gospels doesn’t add up and in the end doesn’t make sense. On this every scholar who works on these things agrees.

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