



Association pour l'étude de la littérature apocryphe chrétienne

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LITURGY IN THE APOCRYPHA – THE APOCRYPHA IN THE LITURGY

International Conference AELAC, 24-25 February 2027; Université de Lausanne

Conference proposal and call for papers

Apocryphal literature and liturgical practice may seem at first glance to represent different or even opposite dynamics in the development of the Christian religion and its institutional organisation. Whereas liturgical practices include the ritual response to the articles of faith, formed and performed by lay and ordained members of the Church, apocryphal literature is famously considered a 'continent' on its own (Picard, *Le continent apocryphe*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), representing the variety of doctrinal, social and cultural currents in early Christianity and its many afterlives.

Over the last two decades, experts in both liturgical and apocryphal studies have offered correcting perspectives on liturgy and the apocrypha as interrelated fields. They uncovered many interferences of both fields and highlighted the dynamics of mutual influence of liturgical and apocryphal traditions. Harald Buchinger (*Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Apocrypha*, 2015) discusses early Christian apocryphal literature both as a *Fundgrube* of information on cultic practices and ritual conceptualisations as they developed in the first centuries CE, and as a vital source of inspiration for the development of cultic traditions and feasts. Apocryphal writings are in many cases the earliest evidence of liturgical practice, picturing the state of Christian rituals in a time that did not leave any documentation of liturgical cults as such. At the same time, the liturgical practice of the early and medieval church was to a considerable extent formed and fed by traditions and legends that we find transmitted in the large body of apocryphal literature. Liturgy is, thereby, a prime witness of how figures, convictions and legends shaped by the apocryphal writings in relation to the biblical heritage found a lively reception in the communal imagination and belief worlds of Christians. Some of the Church's main liturgical feasts concern traditions that we find in Christian apocryphal writings only, such as the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and the Martyrdom of most apostles. Mary's Assumption is a prime example of the principle *lex orandi lex credendi*, a case where the liturgical celebration, based on and nourished by apocryphal legends, leads the development of doctrine. The apocryphal legend of Mary's blessed demise, from which the liturgical celebration emanated, far preceded the doctrinal formulation proclaimed much later.

Liturgy and apocrypha have been each other's inspiration in many ways and in many different traditions and periods. The AELAC International Conference *Liturgy in the Apocrypha – the Apocrypha in the Liturgy* aims to bring together scholars on the crossroads of liturgy and apocrypha in all relevant areas and periods of Christianity, to encourage the discussion of case studies as a starting point for further methodological refinement and development. Next to invited keynote speakers, we welcome papers of 20 minutes on the topics outlined above. Sessions will schedule ample time for discussion. Your abstract of about 250 words and including at least five key words may be sent by **1 June 2026** to the organizing committee, by e-mail addressed to the AELAC Secretary, Sergey Kim sergey.kim@unil.ch. We plan to prepare the publication of the contributions. The conference languages include English, French, German and Italian.

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