



CHAPTER

12 The Gospel of Thomas and the Synoptics

Melissa Harl Sellew

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190887452.013.27> Pages 223–C12P121

Published: 22 March 2023

Abstract

This article moves away from questions of dependence or autonomy to show that comparison of the texts' style and content is fruitful for understanding both Thomas and the Synoptic Gospels. When we read the Synoptics against Thomas, some of the central characteristics of Mark, Matthew, and Luke stand out in higher relief. Differences in theology, narrative structures, genre, and approaches to community formation combine to confirm that early gospel writers had a variety of choices about their modes of representation of the meaning(s) of Jesus. As part of its pattern of distance from Judaism, Thomas shows that it was possible to present Jesus as somehow removed from the thought world of Scripture, even as a source of revelatory or prophetic information.

Keywords: Gospel of Thomas, Synoptics, parables, gospel genre, Coptic

Subject: Christianity, Religious Studies, Philosophy of Religion, Religion

Series: Oxford Handbooks

A Different Sort of Gospel

SINCE the discovery and first publication of elements of the Gospel of Thomas, there has been a rich and vibrant discussion among scholars as to how it might relate to the Synoptic Gospels of the New Testament. The conversation began well over a century ago. English classicists digging in the trash heaps of Oxyrhynchus, a city of Greco-Roman Egypt (Parsons 2007), discovered three small fragments of Greek papyri with brief sayings ascribed to Jesus, which they termed *logia* (Grenfell and Hunt 1897). These statements showed an intriguing pattern of similarity and contrast with verses well known from the New Testament. A few examples will make the point.

The opening lines of the first fragment (labeled Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1 = P. Oxy. 1) contain the conclusion of a pithy moral exhortation well known from the programmatic speech Jesus makes in Matthew 5–7 and Luke 6: “and then you will see clearly to cast out the speck in your brother’s eye” (P. Oxy. 1.1–4, now known as Gos. Thom. 26b; Greek text in Attridge 1989, 96–128; Coptic in Layton 1989, 52–93). The wording of this partial sentence is precisely the same in Greek as in Matthew 7:5b (with a small variation in word order in Luke 6:42b). But when one reads the very next lines on the fragment, Jesus’s statements are unfamiliar from the canonical Gospels, though the vocabulary is found in and outside the Bible. Jesus says, “If you do not fast with regard to the world, you will surely not find the Kingdom of God; and if you do not keep the sabbath [as] the sabbath, you will not see the Father” (P. Oxy. 1.4–11 = Gos. Thom. 27). Jesus says, “I stood in the midst of the world, and was seen by them in the flesh, and found all of them drunk and no one thirsty among them, and my soul was pained for the children of humanity, because they are blind in their heart and [do not] see” (P. Oxy. 1.11–21 = Gos. Thom. 28). Soon, however, on the other side of the fragment, we find

the familiar aphorism “A prophet is not acceptable in his town” (P. Oxy. 1.30–35 = Gos. Thom. 31, see Mark 6:4a; Matt 13:57; Luke 4:24; John 4:44).

This unexpected appearance of a “lost gospel” aroused public excitement as well as scholarly scrutiny. Two more papyri fragments from separate manuscripts were soon published as well, but still without indication of their literary context. Half a century later a complete copy of this text was found elsewhere in Egypt, in 1945—not in Greek, but instead in Coptic translation, entitled the “Gospel of Thomas,” and inscribed in a late fourth-century manuscript buried across the Nile from the modern town of Nag Hammadi (Nag Hammadi Codex II; Layton 1989). When read in its full version, the newly discovered Gospel now appeared to resemble the Synoptic Gospels quite closely in some respects, in that more than half of Jesus’s statements in Thomas have counterparts there (Koester 1989, 46–48); yet the new Gospel differs dramatically from the New Testament writings in some significant ways, including its structure, view of the world, connections to Scripture, soteriology, and theology. How are we to explain this combination of close equivalence and considerable distance?

Scholars have struggled to answer the questions that consumed them at first with anything like consensus (recent treatments of the history of research in Patterson 2013, 93–118; Gathercole 2014, 91–184; Miroshnikov 2018, 25–37). In what ways does Thomas relate to the canonical Gospels? Does it represent an early and possibly autonomous witness to “authentic” Jesus traditions, or is it better understood as a late patchwork of secondary citations lifted from the (ultimately) canonical texts mixed with unbiblical notions? How do we best understand its unusual structure, consisting of a series of statements ascribed to Jesus (114 *logia* in the conventional numeration), with little or no apparent narrative design? What are its views of the person and role of Jesus, its anthropology and theory of salvation, or its connection with Judaism? What was its original language and place of composition?

Patterns of Familiarity and Independence

Debates over the relative antiquity of Thomas, or its secondary dependence on the Synoptic Gospels, have been intimately connected to contrasting views over the nature of Christian origins, including one’s preferred construal of the “historical Jesus” (Cameron 2004; Patterson 2013, 119–39; Gathercole 2014, 176–84). It is not difficult to sense that many who propose either a first-century or a later origin of Thomas, or at least for much of its content, have done so because this Gospel could then support their preferred views of the formative Jesus movement. Since Thomas lacks the apocalyptic imagery of the Synoptic Jesus, for example, this fact might be explained as attesting to its very early composition, before a putative redirecting by Paul of the Jesus traditions toward a more eschatological direction (Crossan 1985; Koester 1971). Thomas has been claimed by others to rely on early Jewish–Christian traditions (DeConick 1996; Lelyveld 1987; Quispel 1974/75) or to fit within Near Eastern wisdom traditions, based on its format and tone (Davies 1983; Patterson 1993; 2013, 141–74), in either case in contrast to the strains of proto-orthodox Christianity that show a more urgent eschatological outlook, such as is found in Paul, the Synoptic Gospels, or the Apocalypse of John.

From another point of view, scholars have argued that Thomas is a second-century and secondary text that derives its seemingly earlier content from the protocanonical Gospels, with sayings of Jesus that were extracted from them either directly, or possibly indirectly, or both, as for example via oral traditions (Gathercole 2012; Goodacre 2012; see Uro 1998a). These more “authentic” sayings were then combined with newly created material, apparently in service of some ultimately less orthodox portrayal of Jesus, whether that be termed Gnostic or mystical or Encratite. Scholars who pressed the “dependence” model usually found their interpretive context for Thomas not in first-century Palestinian Judaism, or Hellenistic Wisdom, or in comparisons with the Sayings Source Q, but rather mostly among so-called Gnostic writings bound and buried with the Coptic translation of Thomas in the late antique Nag Hammadi codices (Grant et al. 1960; Haenchen 1961; see Popkes 2007). Scholars taking this position argue that far from reflecting some preapocalyptic moment in the earliest Jesus tradition, the lack of apocalyptic symbolism results from Thomas’s deliberate rejection and excision of the sort of first-century Jewish and Christian eschatology seen in Paul or Mark.

The question of the dependence or autonomy of Thomas with regard to the Synoptic tradition is difficult to solve using the methods of classical source criticism (Gathercole 2012, 1–16). There is no clearly visible connection of content and sequence between Thomas and the New Testament Gospels that is at all

comparable to the relationships of the three Synoptic Gospels with each other, however those are explained, or even to their somewhat less obvious connection with the Gospel of John. In addition to the close verbal connections and sequencing of events seen in many parallel passages and individual verses among the Synoptics, all four canonical Gospels adopt a semibiographical narrative format. Their stories feature the same general plotline and many specific themes, running from Jesus's encounter with the prophet John the Baptist, calling of twelve disciples, engagement in public teaching and works of wonder, adversarial encounters with Jewish opponents, and eventual arrest, trial, crucifixion, burial, and reported resurrection. None of these key elements of the canonical story of Jesus is developed in Thomas, apart from bare snippets (e.g., a reference to John the Baptist as a marker of the age in Gos. Thom. 4.6). Despite similarities in the wording of individual sayings, there are only a relatively few, and comparatively minor, cases of agreement in their sequence in Thomas as compared with the Synoptics.

p. 226 Thus, a reader of Thomas who did not know the New Testament texts would have little ability to reconstruct or perhaps even imagine the story of Jesus presented there. Consideration of early gospels beyond the Synoptic three helps make this point. Readers who knew only John's Gospel or the Gospel of Peter (Crossan 1985; Hill 2004; Koester 1980; Sellew 1992b; Wiles 1961) would nonetheless find the same narrative thrust presented in the Synoptic texts, though of course presented with a different tone and theological emphasis, and somewhat variant content. The surviving portion of the Gospel of Peter, for all its distinct character, is visibly telling more or less the same story of Jesus's passion and resurrection as do the New Testament four.

The Jesus of Thomas, in great contrast, though he speaks proverbs, macarisms, and parables alike to those of his Synoptic counterpart, nonetheless performs no deeds of power, encounters no opposition from either Jewish or Roman leaders, makes no threats or warnings of imminent divine judgment or eschatological crisis. Only by foreknowledge of the New Testament Gospels (or for argument's sake, the Gospel of Peter) would a reader of Thomas realize that Jesus was to meet a gruesome death at the hands of the Romans, framed as a divinely required sacrifice to redeem the world of sin, and yet was somehow able to transcend death through resurrection. In other words, the "Jesus Christ crucified, and him alone" preached by Paul (1 Cor 2:2) is not the subject of the Gospel of Thomas.

Arguments about Thomas's relative autonomy from, familiarity with, or dependence on other gospels thus necessarily adopt a more granular compositional approach (Gathercole 2012; Goodacre 2012; Kloppenborg 2006; Patterson 1993). It is noteworthy, for example, that parables spoken by Jesus in Thomas are presented without the interpretive introductions or summary moralizing found in the Synoptics, beginning with Jesus's decoding of the *Fate of the Seeds* in Mark 4:14–20 and parallels (contrast Gos. Thom. 9). This absence of explanations by Jesus or the author can be construed as evidence that the parables were taken up by Thomas without knowledge of those Synoptic interpretive interventions (Jeremias 1972; Scott 1989); just as well, however, one could imagine Thomas or its traditions omitting any such explanations known to them in service of the text's opening challenge: to avoid "tasting death" by finding the meaning of Jesus's mysterious words for oneself (Gos. Thom. 1). Some illustrative cases are treated in more detail in the section "[Parables](#)" here.

A more productive path through this perennial controversy is emerging from several quarters, an approach that avoids limiting our thinking to the methods of classical source criticism and canonical criticism. Instead of framing the issue starkly as reliance of a later writing on one or more authoritative predecessors, one can instead apply the lens of intertextuality, along with other possible models of familiarity with shared traditions. Such an approach sets aside any privileging of works found within the biblical canon on seemingly unexamined assumptions that they have a priori claims to antiquity or "authenticity" compared with other early texts, including Q or Thomas. Stating that Thomas is somehow less relevant to one's construal of Jesus or of Christian origins because it relies on other gospels for some of its content, or because it may be from the second century, appears to be rather an odd perspective, given what we know about the connections among the New Testament Gospels themselves. Few disregard the Gospel of Luke simply because it openly reveals its knowledge of (and implies its partial dependence on) earlier writings (Luke 1:1–4) or because it (along with its companion text, Acts) may well also be an early second-century composition (Matthews 2017, 103–4; Reasoner 2017, 174–75; Reid and Matthews, 2021).

p. 227 Perhaps one could look to discussions of the Gospel of John's relation to the Synoptic tradition as something of a model for how we might imagine Thomas's connections with Luke, among other possibilities. Over the decades, scholarly views on John's relationship with the Synoptics have swung back and forth (Smith 2001).

A theory of Johannine independence dominated scholarship through most of the twentieth century, based largely on the canons of form criticism; this allowed (or required) that some prominent aspects of Mark, Matthew, and Luke that are shared by John, such as a cycle of miracle stories or the Passion Narrative, “must” have had pre-Markan origins, potentially in a putative oral tradition. But the hypothesis of John’s independent access to such material via oral traditions has come to seem less and less likely in recent work, as scholars have adopted a more expansive approach to questions of sources and influence (MacKay 2004; Viviano 2004). When one drops the presumption that John wrote without knowledge of other gospels, in some sense at least, the simpler and more elegant explanation for John’s incorporation of the Synoptic plotline and major characters is some sort of intertextual connection. At places it seems as though John has read or heard another gospel; mostly, it is a matter of shared themes and topics that could have been drawn one way or another from shared traditions. So too with Thomas.

The Genre of Thomas

One fundamental difference with the Synoptics is Thomas’s adoption of a wisdom-book style of presentation, along with a radical disinterest in employing the biographical mode that was apparently pioneered by Mark. Thomas consists of a brief opening remark from its author (incipit + Gos. Thom. 1), followed by a series of statements ascribed to Jesus, punctuated here and there by questions or observations by others. These statements employ a range of formats, including conventional proverbs, ethical demands, beatitudes, parables, and puzzling allusions and metaphors. In strong contrast to the New Testament Gospels, in Thomas virtually all the statements of Jesus lack placement in a chronological or travel narrative. The occasional introductory notes to a statement in Thomas, reflecting the style of apophthegmatic *chreiai* or pronouncement stories, such as at Gos. Thom. 22 (“Jesus saw infants being suckled”) or Gos. Thom. 60 (“[He saw] a Samaritan carrying a lamb on the way to Judea”) offer only a scattered and unhelpful set of data from which one might imagine an “original setting” for any particular pronouncement, even less usefully than do such comments in the New Testament Gospels.

Thomas’s format as a wisdom-book or sayings gospel can be helpfully compared and contrasted with the Sayings Source Q in several ways. An early point stressed by supporters of the two-source solution to the Synoptic Problem was that the discovery of Thomas challenged the assertion by Q skeptics that a “gospel” must have certain narrative and Christological features; Thomas has even less of a visible narrative structure than does the Q material, though its manuscript calls it a gospel, and it is labeled as ἄ such even by its ancient critics (Sellew 1992a; see testimonia in Gathercole 2014, 34–61). The similarities extend to some aspects of their theologies as well: neither has a Passion Narrative, indeed neither displays any interest in the Pauline/Markan emphasis on the redemptive power of Jesus’s suffering and death. On the other hand there are stark differences between Thomas and Q that make any claims of close correspondence between the two seem strained. A fundamental contrast is that the Q material sets Jesus firmly and decisively into the context of Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic teaching, and includes frequent and significant appeals to the Jewish Scriptures to explain Jesus’s person and role, while Thomas eschews any direct appeal to biblical traditions and seems rather removed from any actual connection with contemporary practice of Judaism (e.g., Gos. Thom. 52–53).

Thomas’s manner of presentation lends itself well to the inquiring minds of readers who seek inspiration of a more probing sort in Jesus’s words and may have less need (for whatever reason) for narration of events in his life. Thomas has been well compared to gnomological texts, which could suggest its use in a school setting (Arnal 2021; Kloppenborg 1987, 289–306; 2014, 228–31). In terms of its reception, as distinct from its original composition, whose circumstances remain opaque, a text like Thomas would have had much appeal to solitary ascetics who sought to make progress on a spiritual path of self-scrutiny and improvement (Sellew 2018). In this sense, in terms of its usage, the Gospel of Thomas could be characterized as a spiritual guide (Sellew 1997a; see Valantasis 1997) that activates a “hermeneutical soteriology” (Sellew 1997b).

The frequent use of paradox and of contrasting symbols and images, leading at times to outright contradiction, a feature found throughout Thomas, coupled with the lack of interpretive narrative context or framings, forces its readership to think for themselves. Many of the instances of this paradoxical tone are familiar from the Synoptics, such as Gos. Thom. 4b: “Many who are first will become last” (see Mark 10:31 // Matt 19:30; 20:16 // Luke 13:30); Gos. Thom. 5b: “There is nothing hidden that will not be made manifest”

(Mark 4:22 // Matt 10:26 // Luke 8:17; 12:2); Gos. Thom. 20: “The smallest of all seeds ... produces a great plant” (Mark 4:32 // Matt 13:32 // Luke 13:19); or such beatitudes as Gos. Thom. 54: “Blessed are the poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven” (Luke 6:20 // Matt 5:3), or Gos. Thom. 68a: “Blessed are you when you are hated and persecuted” (Luke 6:22 // Matt 5:11). But Thomas takes this tendency of spinning out oppositions further, as in the conclusion to Gos. Thom. 3: “The Kingdom is inside of you *and it is outside of you*” (see Luke 17:20–21), or Gos. Thom. 18: “Have you discovered *the beginning* that you look for the end?” Contrasting pairs of darkness and light, body and soul, flesh and spirit, above and below are woven throughout the text (esp. Gos. Thom. 22) as it calls its readers to look away from their material existence to find their authentic spiritual character.

p. 229 “Whoever finds the meaning of these words will not taste death. Let the person who is seeking keep on seeking until they find” (Gos. Thom. 1–2a). The process of searching for meaning leads to difficulty, wonder, and ultimately to self-mastery and rest (Gos. Thom. 3). The text’s lack of concern for presenting Jesus’s sayings in even the modified sort of biographical story seen in the New Testament Gospels could be explained ↵ in various ways. Perhaps, as some argue, Thomas stems from a Syrian context, where the suffering messiah and eschatological message of Paul (and Jesus?) carried little currency (e.g. Patterson 2013, 9–32; but see Given 2017), or from a more exegetically engaged Alexandrian environment (Brown 2019). Or, more plausibly, Thomas shares with John’s Gospel an interest in a more transcendent theology and soteriology, unconnected to physical location, and influenced in part by popularized Platonism (Asgeirsson 2006; Miroshnikov 2018; Patterson 2013, 32–91; Sellev 2020); Thomas achieves this move more thoroughly than does John by abrogating the Markan plotline entirely.

The Character of Jesus: Speaker of Divine Mysteries

At a very basic level, one could say that both Thomas and the New Testament Gospels feature Jesus as their protagonist. As such, his personality shares some features across all five texts: he can speak with misdirection and opacity; he can show impatience with his listeners’ difficulty in understanding his comments, instructions, or symbolic speech. But the differences in characterizing their main figure far outweigh these basic similarities. Jesus’s role in Thomas is fundamentally as a speaker of mysterious sentences (Gos. Thom. incipit; 38; 62), whose authority arises from his status as the “Living One” (Gos. Thom. incipit; 52; 59) who is the “son of the Living One” (Gos. Thom. 37) and “exists from the Undivided” (Gos. Thom. 61). There are indications, such as Gos. Thom. 28 (“I took my place in the midst of the world, and I appeared to them in flesh”), of Jesus having come from a nonmaterial plane. The place that Jesus has arrived from is not Galilee or Nazareth, nor is his destination Jerusalem, but his home is where the divine Light exists. Gos. Thom. 77a: “Jesus said, ‘It is I who am the light which is above them all; it is I who am the all.’” This portrait offers interesting analogies with John’s view of Jesus as God’s enfleshed Word and Light that shone in the darkness (John 1:1–18), having arrived from and soon returning to the divine realm; similarly, in Thomas, Jesus “is seen both as a preexistent and as a divine human being” (Marjanen 2006, 212).

Thomas has no interest in showing Jesus moving about in the world in ordinary ways (walking or boating from place to place, as so often in the Synoptics) or in display of unusual powers of sudden appearance and disappearance, as seen in both biblical and noncanonical postresurrection scenes (Matthew 28; Luke 24; John 20 and 21; Gospel of Judas). The contrast with the New Testament Gospels is quite strong in this regard. Jesus performs no healings, whether miraculous or not, and, like John, no exorcisms. The grave attention paid to Satan and the demonic in the Synoptics (and later monastic texts) is conspicuously absent from Thomas.

p. 230 The Jesus of Thomas has occasional things to say about ritual behaviors, but seemingly only in response to questions from the disciples, and not clearly with any intention to establish community rules (but see Moreland 2006). Indeed, in stark contrast to the ↵ Synoptics, this Jesus seems mostly uninterested in pious practices like prayer, fasting, almsgiving, or dietary rules (Gos. Thom. 14; 89), including even circumcision (Gos. Thom 53), apart from warnings that these can encourage the sin of hypocrisy (Gos. Thom. 6; 104; Marjanen 1998b; Sellev 1994). Lively conversation and debate with other forms of Jewish life and practice are staged throughout the canonical Gospels and Paul, but in Thomas disagreements over pious practice lack a sense of tension or immediacy, suggesting little connection to a putative community struggling with

A fundamental contrast with the Synoptics is Thomas's lack of messianic titles or expectations for Jesus's return. The term *Christ* as either a name or a title with the meaning "messiah" never appears (an interesting absence shared with the Q material), nor does Thomas place Jesus in the context of a specifically Israelite prophetic tradition; indeed the "prophets" of the Jewish Scriptures are dismissed as "dead" (Gos. Thom. 52). The Jesus of Thomas is less a character in his own story than a spiritual guide tied to no specific historical, biographical, or geographical locale; he speaks directly to his audience in the form of challenges and riddles that can be pondered in many situations. The confusion and incomprehension of his "student" audience in the text stands in for the reader or audience even more clearly than does the cadre of disciples and other followers in the canonical Gospels.

Parables

Jesus speaks more than a dozen parables in Thomas, eleven of which are closely paralleled in the Synoptics, along with three that are not: the *Children in the Field* (Gos. Thom. 21); the *Woman with a Jar of Meal*; and the *Assassin* (Gos. Thom. 97–98; Cameron 1986; Crossan 1973; Dodd 1961; Jeremias 1972; Scott 1989). The text does not say why he adopts this discursive mode, though it fits both with his persona of a speaker of mysteries and the rich use of metaphor and simile throughout the text. Mark's Gospel, of course, explains Jesus's parabolic speech with its theory of the messianic secret: Jesus deploys symbolic stories as a tool to separate out faithful from more wobbly believers: "With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples" (Mark 4:33–34; Sellew 1990).

Matthew and Luke, in their own ways, represent the parables as tools of a master teacher. As was suggested earlier, all three Synoptics reinforce this approach by having either Jesus or the narrator, or both, offer interpretations of the parables to other characters within the narrative, or else directly to their readers and listeners through the introductory or summarizing attachment of moral or ethical meaning. In Luke, for example, one sees such framing comments surrounding the *Good Samaritan*, 10:29, 36–37; the *Rich Fool*, 12:13–15, 21; the *Banquet*, 14:15, 24; the *Lost and Found* sheep and coin, 15:1–2, 7, 10; the *Shrewd Manager*, 16:8b–13; and the *Unjust Judge*, 18:1, 6–8; as well as the deployment of interior monologue (Dinkler 2015; Sellew 1992b). The readers of Thomas are given no such interpretive guidance but instead are challenged to unlock the significance of these symbolic vignettes for themselves, as seen in the repeated call for the audience to play close attention at the close of parables: "The one with ears to hear had better listen!" (Gos. Thom. 8; 21; 63; 65; 96; see 24). Closer examination of a few examples will illustrate Thomas's tendency toward sparseness of narration and explanation.

First, a story of *A Catch of Fish*, known from two early sources, Gos. Thom. 8 and Matthew 13:47–50. These are clearly performance variations of the same basic story of an experienced fisherman's discernment in separating out the better from the inferior fish, an ordinary task of the trade. Both Gospels show that Jesus intends to have his listeners draw a lesson, but that lesson diverges dramatically. In Thomas, a wise individual will know how to discard the unimportant and less useful aspects of life, symbolized as "small," in favor of concentration on one "large" and desirable prize (similarly in the parable of the *Lost Sheep*, Gos. Thom. 107). Rather than spelling out the lesson, Thomas has Jesus add its favorite tagline about having ears to hear, to draw attention to the necessity of scrutiny and thought. In Matthew on the other hand the two types of fish are characterized in moral terms, as either "good" or else "bad" and "evil." Some are chosen and others are discarded, leading to one of Matthew's signature applications of Jesus's words: they are to be heard as warnings or threats of fiery divine punishment of wicked people. Thomas seemingly speaks of a timeless occurrence, where for Matthew the story is a vehicle for pressing its vision of apocalyptic, eschatological, and violent judgment.

Another parable known only from Matthew and Thomas is the *Weeds among the Wheat* (Gos. Thom. 57 and Matt 13:24–30). Thomas includes a less elaborate telling of the tale, or perhaps an abbreviated version. Matthew has Jesus offer his disciples an explanation a bit later "in the house" (Matt 13:36–43), where he decodes the details of the parable as pointing to "the end of the age" (13:40–43). Thomas of course lacks this interpretive material; but in other ways its rendering of the parable reads to some as truncated. There is seemingly no preparation in Gos. Thom. 57 for the farmer's address to an unnamed audience, which

Goodacre sees as fitting a pattern of abbreviated parables in Thomas (with omitted details) that he interprets as revealing familiarity with Matthew's or Luke's longer versions, as well as revealing a narrative deficiency that exposes the author as a lesser literary talent (Goodacre 2012, 73–80).

A third such example is the *Rich Fool*, found only in Gos. Thom. 63 and Luke 12:15–21. Luke's telling is more detailed and is introduced and concluded with moralizing commentary. Here Goodacre makes a stronger case for Thomas presenting an abbreviated version of the story that shows familiarity with its parallel in Luke, as opposed to the notion that it offers a more archaic, simpler telling that Luke has elaborated. In this case, the brevity of the narration in Thomas creates no inconcinnity, at least to my ear, though Goodacre numbers this parable among those that he argues have “a missing middle” of the story (2012, 109–12).

p. 232 What may be more telling is Thomas's mention of the foolish person's inner thoughts, though they are not directly quoted. This feature, even if quite attenuated, nonetheless appears to be inspired by Luke's signature device of using interior monologue to lay bare the intentions and private thoughts of characters in parables—particularly those of rather dubious moral standing, such as the *Prodigal Son*, the *Shrewd Manager*, the *Unjust Judge*, or this parable's self-satisfied and clueless landowner (Goodacre 2012, 89–90, drawing on Sellev 1992b; but see the critique in Kloppenborg 2014, 216). As Dinkler puts it, “The narrative rhetoric suggests that he has read his situation too myopically; the interior monologue demonstrates his foolish thinking” (2015, 386). Interesting from a more directly theological perspective is the absence of God as an active character in Gos. Thom. 63, or indeed in any part of this Gospel. The foolish landowner's death has come unexpectedly to him in both versions, revealing his misplaced confidence about his fate; Luke takes the opportunity to provide an ethical lesson, about how followers of Jesus must order their priorities: “So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God” (Luke 12: 21). Throughout their Gospels, Thomas and Luke share a strong critique of misbegotten or misdirected wealth and a consistent concern for the poor, so their inclusion of this parable fits the tendencies of both.

A fourth and final comparison of parables presented in Thomas and in the Synoptics is the *Tenants of the Vineyard*. Here the differences, some obvious and others subtle, reveal much about Thomas's perspective. In all three Synoptic versions, Jesus is speaking in a fraught environment of challenge and dangerous opposition in the Jerusalem temple precinct, as seen immediately beforehand in Mark 11:27–33, where the “chief priests, the scribes, and the elders” question his authority. We have just been told that these leaders “kept looking for a way to kill him, for they were afraid of him” (Mark 11:18 // Luke 19:47). After Jesus speaks the parable, appending an interpretive citation of Scripture (Psalm 118 [117 LXX]; Mark 12:10–11), the narrator tells us: “When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd” (Mark 12:12). In Thomas we get no hint of such a frightening confrontation, in accordance with its lack of interest in Jesus's violent death.

Even more interesting is what the sequence of parable and biblical citation shows about Thomas's attitude to Scripture in contrast to that of the Synoptics. Mark 12:1 and Matthew 21:23 make specific allusions to the symbolic vineyard planted by the Lord in Isaiah 5, with their reference to the surrounding fence, the wine press, and the watchtower (Isa 5:2 LXX); Luke 20:9 and Thomas 65 do not include these details. In Isaiah, God decides to destroy the vineyard after it fails to produce the proper grapes, that is, in place of the expected justice and righteousness God saw bloodshed and lamentation (Isa 5:7). In the four witnesses known today to Jesus's version of the story, it is the workers in the vineyard who are to blame for the owner not receiving his due, and who are destroyed. Still, there is an interesting intertext in Gos. Thom. 40: “A grapevine has been planted outside of the Father, but being unsound, it will be pulled up by its roots and destroyed,” but without any direct mention of the biblical metaphor.

p. 233 In the Synoptics it is clear to the reader, and even to the characters in the story, that Jesus “told this parable against” the leaders of Jerusalem. This makes his remark “Have you not read this Scripture, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?’” (Ps 118:22–23) that much more piquant. Thomas also has Jesus refer to the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone in a separate statement placed immediately after the parable of the *Tenants* (Gos. Thom. 66), a juxtaposition whose similarity is too prominent to likely be explained by coincidence. Some proponents of Thomas's autonomy from the Synoptics ascribe the placement of the cornerstone remark here to a secondary stage in the Gospel's transmission history, perhaps on the occasion of its translation from Greek into Coptic (e.g., Patterson 1993, 51). But a different approach may be more satisfying. The lack of allusion to Isaiah 5 in Thomas's telling of the parable, combined with no indication in Gos. Thom. 66 that Jesus is quoting from the Psalms, suggest a deliberate distancing of the Gospel from reliance on the Bible as a support or source of information about

Jesus and the meaning of his words and deeds. This disconnect between Scripture and Jesus is one of the greatest contrasts between Thomas and virtually the entire New Testament collection (Baarda 2003; Goodacre 2012, 187–91).

When Luke presents the parable, he adds a telling and rather shocking adverb to the owner's speech when he sends out his "beloved son" after his previous messengers to the wicked tenants have been met with violence. The owner says: "*Perhaps* they will respect him" (Luke 20:13). This statement strikes one as chilling for a loving parent to make in these dangerous circumstances: does the owner care more about his profits than his cherished son's life? (Sellew 1992b, 248; see also Dinkler, 392). But the remark's retrospective symbolism is clear. Luke means that the priests and elders of Jerusalem should have respected Jesus and given him his due as God's son, and Luke's readers know that they did not. The owner in Mark and Matthew does not express this attitude of apparent uncertainty or unconcern; he simply asserts "they will respect my son" (Mark 12:6 // Matt 21:37). The addition of the single word in Luke makes a powerful impression. Quite interestingly, Thomas 65 has the owner show this same attitude twice: "*Perhaps* he did not know them" (said of the first messenger who was nearly killed). And then: "*Perhaps* they will show respect to my son." This agreement with Luke in expressing this rather surprising landowner's perspective is best explained by supposing a literary connection. Since Luke has presumably modified the story from Mark, the stunning addition of the word "perhaps" is Luke's contribution, and thus its double appearance in Gos. Thom. 65 indicates familiarity with the Lukan version (Gathercole 2012, 188–94).

Disciples in Thomas

Occasionally Thomas has Jesus speak with interlocutors, mostly said to be "his disciples." Often it is they who open a brief exchange with a question or challenging remark, starting with Gos. Thom. 6; frequently their comments and Jesus's dismissals or ripostes reveal their lack of understanding (e.g., Gos. Thom. 12, on leadership; Gos. Thom. 18 and 51, on eschatology; Gos. Thom. 52, on the pertinence of Jewish Scripture). All the individuals explicitly named in Thomas, including James (Gos. Thom. 12), Judas Thomas (Gos. Thom. incipit; 13), Simon Peter (13; 114), Matthew (13), Mary (21; 114), and Salome (61), appear in one or more of the Synoptics. Precisely why these individuals are interacting with Jesus as their teacher, however, is never explained. For all one can tell, until the disciples' first, unprepared appearance in Gos. Thom. 6, Jesus is speaking into the void, or, more likely, directing his words mostly to an implied audience outside the text.

In Gos. Thom. 19, Jesus clarifies that "listening to his words" is necessary to become his disciple and to avoid death. Yet there are no scenes of initial encounters or "calls" of people like Peter, James, or Levi to follow him as one sees them in the Synoptics (Mark 1:16–20 // Matt 4:18–22, cf. Luke 5:1–11 and John 1:35–51; 21:1–11; Mark 2:14 // Luke 5: 27–28, cf. Matt 9:9; Mark 3:13–19 // Luke 6:12–16, cf. Matt 10:1–4). Jesus explicitly refuses the role of his followers' teacher or master within a scene of apostolic competition in Gos. Thom. 13, where Thomas succeeds by silence over Matthew's and Peter's attempts to characterize Jesus properly. "Leaders" who claim to explain the Kingdom had already been dismissed as misguided as early as Gos. Thom. 3. These and similar factors contribute to a strong sense of "masterless discipleship" in Thomas (Marjanen 1998a; 2006; Uro 2003, 80–105; Zöckler 1999, 245–47). The disciples' interest in seeking an apostolic authority (Gos. Thom. 12), renewed even in the face of Jesus's refusal of the title of teacher and praise of Thomas's silence in Gos. Thom. 13, is striking (Sellew 2017). In combination with the naming of Judas Didymus Thomas as scribe in the incipit, this scene may suggest a literary development from (earlier) anonymous gospels to those depending on "eyewitness" authority, moving in the direction of "authorial fiction" such as one sees in Luke 1:1–4; John 21:24–25, and here in Thomas (Dunderberg 1998a, 80–88; 2006). It may be that the implied rejection of Matthew's and Peter's construals of Jesus and his role in Gos. Thom. 13 reflects knowledge of other gospels' claims to authority (Goodacre 2012, 174–79).

Two women appear on the margins of those called disciples, and their names are also familiar from the canon: a person named Mary, who asks Jesus to characterize his disciples (Gos. Thom. 21), suggesting that she is not among them, and Salome. Both women's status appears contingent, despite Salome's self-assertion "I am your disciple" (Gos. Thom. 61; Marjanen 1998c). An unnamed woman shouts out a blessing on the womb and breasts of the unnamed mother of Jesus, a blessing that he immediately rejects, adding a denigration of reproduction and child rearing (Gos. Thom. 79; see other rejections of parents and family in Gos. Thom. 99; 101; 105). The demand by Simon Peter at the conclusion of the Gospel (Gos. Thom. 114) that Mary be excluded from the group on the grounds of her female gender seems mostly to reflect concerns over

preconditions of salvation (see section “*Salvation in Thomas*” here) rather than controversies over reproduction or women’s place as leaders in a particular community (Cwikla 2019; Sellew 2020), though such disputes are of course well attested from the letters of Paul and his followers, as well as texts like the second-century *Acts of Paul and Thekla* and the Gospel of Mary (King 2003; Tuckett 2017).

p. 235 Though some of the specifics differ, Thomas shares the theme of incomprehension on the part of the disciples as to Jesus’s intentions and teaching with Mark and, notably, with John. The bewilderment and repeated misunderstandings of the male disciples of course make up a major theme of the Synoptics, tied closely to Mark’s theme of the hidden destiny of Jesus as messiah and son of God. Thomas’s deployment of this feature more closely resembles that of John’s Gospel, where irony and misdirection serve to fuel the literary effects of Jesus as a “man of mystery” and the incarnate Son of God (Dunderberg 1998b; 2006). In Thomas, the function of the theme of incomprehension serves to underline one of the Gospel’s central topics and purposes: to encourage the reader or listener to scrutinize the meaning of Jesus’s words as a means of enlightenment, self-discovery, and salvation from our world of death.

Salvation in Thomas: The World, the Body, and Authentic Human Existence

Thomas’s approach to the means and meaning of salvation differs markedly from that of the Synoptics and entails understanding of authentic human existence. For Thomas, faith or belief in Jesus is not a precondition or a means to salvation, as it is for the New Testament Gospels and for Paul. When asked to provide information so that people “may believe in you,” Jesus says, “you have not recognized the one who is before you, and you do not know how to read this moment” (Gos. Thom. 91). Instead of Mark’s sharp focus on the salvific suffering of Jesus and his death on the cross, followed by his resurrection, Thomas (and Q) make only a single oblique reference to (hypothetical) crucifixion: followers or disciples are told to “pick up their cross”—not as a means of salvation but as a metaphor for radical commitment (Gos. Thom. 55b; see Mark 8:34 and Q = Luke 14:27 // Matt 10:38). Though Thomas was likely aware of the manner of Jesus’s death, salvation for this gospel does not require the self-sacrificial martyrdom of Jesus, or its ritual reenactment; instead, each individual must achieve return to the divine realm through self-knowledge, so as to overcome their material existence in favor of a unified essence called variously being a “solitary,” a “Living Spirit,” and a “person of Light” (Gos. Thom 24; 49; 114; Marjanen 2006; Sellew 1997b; 2020; Valantasis 1997; cf. Litwa 2015). This path is what Thomas would understand “following Jesus” could mean.

p. 236 The Gospel of Thomas has a view of human origins and destiny that is shared by at least some of its contemporaries, with several of its statements finding particular resonance with the Prologue to John, as well as with Platonizing biblical exegesis of the Genesis creation myths as known from Philo of Alexandria (Brown 2019; Davies 1992; Miroshnikov 2018; Pagels 1999; Patterson 2013, 33–92). For Thomas, authentic human being descends from a place of eternal divine Light; Jesus calls on his audience to live as persons of the Light, as does he, and reveals that their destiny is to return to the place of Light where he and they first originated as Living Spirits. “When you have found the beginning, then you will know the end” (Gos. Thom. 18; 24; 49–50). The soul or the spirit is the locus of one’s divine identity, whereas the physical body, as part of the material world, shares in its corruption, division, and mortal condition. So in Gos. Thom. 29: “If the flesh came into being because of spirit, it is a wonder. But if spirit came into being because of the body, it is a wonder of wonders. Indeed, I am amazed at how this great wealth has made its home in this poverty.” Thomas never expresses the biblical view of a good, divinely created order brought into being by a benevolent deity; instead, the world is a dead thing, a corpse (Gos. Thom. 56, 80; Miroshnikov 2018; Sellew 1997a; 2006) that those who follow the example of Jesus should prepare to escape (Gos. Thom. 49–50).

Quite interesting in Thomas is its view of authentic human existence as somehow transcending the limitations of embodiment, including especially the divisions marked by sex or gender (Sellew 2020). Salvation entails transformation that parallels the “rebirth” of John 3. So Gos. Thom. 22b: “When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female be female; and you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness, then you will enter [the Kingdom].” When the human soul returns to the place of its origin, the divine realm of Light, it will not be conveyed in a material form exhibiting sexual difference but instead be transformed (back) into the incorporeal, undivided, nonsexual,

spiritual character that represents divine humanity. Thomas here shares in broader interpretive traditions of the biblical creation narratives that are still visible in Philo, and others: original and authentic human existence, after the image and likeness of God, had no gender, until the first human, Adam, was divided into male and female, a fatal event (Miroshnikov 2018; Sellew 2020; Valantasis 1997). And so Gos. Thom. 85: “Adam came into being from a great power and a great wealth, but he did not become worthy of you. For had he been worthy, [he would] not [have tasted] death.”

The contrast with the Synoptic view of human existence and its destiny is quite strong: Mark, Matthew, and Luke portray people riven by conflict between the divine and the demonic, and a Jesus who fights to expel evil forces from within humans and grants power to others to do likewise. This struggle rises above the mundane to involve cosmic combat between Satan, God’s opponent, and Jesus, as God’s representative, champion, and son. Much of this picture emerges more or less directly from Jewish apocalyptic prophecy. For Thomas, which depends only indirectly if at all on the Hebrew Scriptures, the struggle is individual and internal: the need to scrutinize the self, to come to recognize one’s identity as a person of Light, just like Jesus, undivided by gender, and ultimately to find oneself as part of God—this is what salvation involves.

Thomas and Eschatology

Developed apocalyptic imagery is lacking in this Gospel, though there are a few remarks that evoke or echo apocalyptic eschatological discourse, such as in Gos. Thom. 11: “this world will pass away.” The similar statement in Gos. Thom. 111 (“the heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence”) is immediately qualified by the remark that ↵ “the one who lives from the Living One will not taste death” (see Gathercole 2011). The reference to the “son of human being” in Gos. Thom. 86 signifies, as its Synoptic parallels suggest (Luke 9:58 // Matt 8:20), the dilemma of people caught between heaven and earth, rather than invoking the angelic heavenly being of Mark 13 and other apocalyptic texts. In determining the interpretive context of these phrases, Patterson points usefully to the polyvalent character of prophetic pronouncements, whether those be of a “wisdom” or an “eschatological” type (Patterson 2013, 211–36). Reference to the rolling up of the heavens or passing away of the earth, then, can function in an apocalyptic drama but can also at times function as hyperbolic metaphorical gestures toward an indefinite future, as it appears in Matthew 5:18—not one iota of the Law of Moses will fall off the page before heaven and earth disappear.

Most likely this muted use of apocalyptic vocabulary or themes represents a disavowal and partial redirection of the usage seen in the Synoptics. Here the Gospels of John and Thomas seemingly agree in moving away from a historical or social-group approach to eschatology in the direction of a more individualized path to salvation: “belief in Jesus” and “birth from above” for John, return to divine “unity” or “singleness” in Thomas.

What Thomas Tells Us about the Synoptic Gospels

Moving away from fraught questions of dependence or autonomy, we have seen that comparison of the texts' style and content is quite fruitful for understanding both Thomas and the Synoptics. When one reads the Synoptics against Thomas, some of the central characteristics of Mark, Matthew, and Luke stand out in higher relief. Differences in theology, narrative structures, genre, and approaches to community formation, among other features, combine to reveal that early gospel writers had a variety of choices about their modes of representation of the meaning(s) of Jesus. One sees that there was nothing inevitable about the narrative pattern originating in the Gospel of Mark and taken over by Matthew, Luke, and John in distinct ways. Mark's story of Jesus on the way to the cross in order to save the world from sin through his sacrificial death, punctuated by encounters with the diseased and demonic, was remarkably influential. But neither of the two rituals central to Pauline communities that are narrativized in the Synoptics, baptism and the Lord's Supper, features in Thomas, a lack that is seemingly paralleled by the Q material. As part of its pattern of distance from Judaism, Thomas shows that it was possible to present Jesus as somehow removed or distant from the thought world of Scripture, even as a source of revelatory or prophetic information. Nor is Jesus set into the context of Israelite or Judean history and strife, be that with internal or external opponents. Concern over the fall of Jerusalem and its temple, an event that looms large over the Synoptic story line, is remarkably absent. This is a stunning departure from the other portrayals we have. It is thanks to Thomas than one can see that the ↪ Synoptic presentation of Jesus and his meaning was not inevitable but was fundamentally a matter of choice and circumstance.

p. 238

Future Directions

Future work on Thomas can build on recent advances in reading its distinctive portrait of Jesus in conversation with its canonical and extracanonical partners with less concern for the "authenticity" or "dependence" or "autonomy" of its material. What are the social implications of a gospel that found early Christian readers drawn to its style of paradox and challenge? What does Thomas's disinterest in the martyrdom of Jesus (and his followers) suggest about the circumstances of this gospel's composition or reception? What does its rejection of the relevance of Jewish ritual, prophecy, and apocalyptic for understanding Jesus, or the means of salvation, tell us about the varieties of Christian communities, and their preoccupations? Furthermore, what aspects of the Synoptic style of portraying Jesus can emerge more distinctly, once we see more clearly that their presentations must also have been in deliberate service of specific goals, be those theological, ecclesiological, or ethical? What was gained by adopting a biographical format to explain Jesus and his importance? These and assuredly many other questions remain open to continued collective work on this fascinating and most enigmatic Gospel.

References

Arnal, William E. 2021. "Minding the Margins: 'Scholia' in the Text of the Gospel of Thomas." *J ECS* 29:1–30.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Asgeirsson, Jon Ma. 2006. "Conflicting Epic Worlds." In *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas*, edited by Jon Ma Asgeirsson, April D. DeConick, and Risto Uro, NHMS 59, 155–74. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Asgeirsson, Jon Ma, April D. DeConick, and Risto Uro, eds. 2006. *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas*. NHMS 59. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Attridge, Harold W. 1989. "The Greek Fragments [of the Gospel of Thomas]." In *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7*, vol. 1, edited by Bentley Layton, 96–128. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Baarda, Tjitze. 2003. "The Gospel of Thomas and the Old Testament." *PIBA* 26:46–65.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Brown, Ian Phillip. 2019. "Where Indeed Was the Gospel of Thomas Written? Thomas in Alexandria." *JBL* 138: 451–72.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Cameron, Ron. 1986. "Parable and Interpretation in the Gospel of Thomas." *Forum* 2.2: 3–39.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Cameron, Ron. 2004. "Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of the Gospel of Thomas and Christian Origins." In *Redescribing Christian Origins*, edited by Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, 89–108. Atlanta: SBL.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Crossan, John Dominic. 1973. *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus*. New York: Harper.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Crossan, John Dominic. 1985. *Four Other Gospels: Shadows on the Contours of Canon*. Minneapolis: Seabury.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

p. 239 Cwikla, Anna. 2019. "There's Nothing about Mary: The Insignificance of Mary in the Gospel of Thomas 114." *Journal of Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies* 1, no. 1: 95–112.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Davies, Stevan L. 1983. *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*. New York: Seabury.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Davies, Stevan L. 1992. "The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*." *JBL* 111: 663–82.

DeConick, April D. 1996. *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas*. VCSup 33. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Dinkler, Michal Beth. 2015. "'The Thoughts of Many Hearts Shall Be Revealed': Listening in on Lukan Interior Monologues." *JBL* 134:373–99.

[WorldCat](#)

Dodd, C. H. 1961. *Parables of the Kingdom*. Rev. ed. New York: Scribner.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Dunderberg, Ismo. 1998a. "Thomas and the Beloved Disciple." In *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas*, edited by Risto Uro, 65–88. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Dunderberg, Ismo. 1998b. "Thomas' I-Sayings and the Gospel of John." In *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas*, edited by Risto Uro, 33–64. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Dunderberg, Ismo. 2006. *The Beloved Disciple in Conflict? Revisiting the Gospels of John and Thomas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Gathercole, Simon. 2011. "The Heavens and the Earth Will Be Rolled Up": The Eschatology of the *Gospel of Thomas*." In *Eschatologie—Eschatology*, edited by H.-J. Eckstein, C. Landmesser, and H. Lichtenberger, WUNT 272, 280–302. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Gathercole, Simon. 2012. *The Composition of the Gospel of Thomas: Original Language and Influences*. SNTSMS 151. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Gathercole, Simon. 2014. *The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction and Commentary*. TENT 11. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Given, J. Gregory. 2017. "Finding the Gospel of Thomas in Edessa." *J ECS* 25: 501–25.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Goodacre, Mark. 2012. *Thomas and the Gospels: The Case for Thomas's Familiarity with the Synoptics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Grant, Robert M., David Noel Freedman, and William R. Schoedel. 1960. *The Secret Sayings of Jesus*. Garden City: Doubleday.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Grenfell, B. P., and A. S. Hunt. 1897. *ΛΟΓΙΑ ΙΗΣΟΥ: Sayings of Our Lord from an Early Greek Papyrus*. London: Egypt Exploration Fund.

Haenchen, Ernst. 1961. *Die Botschaft des Thomas-Evangeliums*. Berlin: Töpelmann.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Hill, Charles E. 2004. *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Jeremias, Joachim. 1972. *The Parables of Jesus*. 2nd edition. New York: Scribners.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

King, Karen L. 2003. *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*. Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Kloppenborg, John S. 1987. *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Kloppenborg, John S. 2006. *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine*. WUNT 295. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Kloppenborg, John S. 2014. "A New Synoptic Problem: Mark Goodacre and Simon Gathercole on Thomas." *JSNT* 36: 199–239.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Koester, Helmut. 1971. "One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels." In *Trajectories through Early Christianity*, by James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, 158–204. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Koester, Helmut. 1980. "Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels." *HTR* 73: 105–30.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

p. 240 Koester, Helmut. 1989. "Introduction [to the Gospel of Thomas]." In *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7*, vol. 1, edited by Bentley Layton, 38–51. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Koester, Helmut. 1990. *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development*. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Layton, Bentley. 1989. *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7: Together with XIII,2*, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655*. Vol. 1. NHS 20. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Lelyveld, Margaretha. 1987. *Les Logia de la vie dans l'Évangile selon Thomas: À la recherche d'une tradition et d'une rédaction*. NHS 34. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Litwa, M. David. 2015. "‘I Will Become Him’: Homology and Deification in the *Gospel of Thomas*." *JBL* 133:427–47.

MacKay, Ian D. 2004. *John's Relationship with Mark: An Analysis of John 6 in the Light of Mark 6–8*. WUNT 2/182. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Marjanen, Antti. 1998a. "Is *Thomas* a Gnostic Gospel?" In *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas*, edited by Risto Uro, 107–39. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Marjanen, Antti. 1998b. "Thomas and Jewish Religious Practices." In *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas*, edited by Risto Uro, 163–82. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Marjanen, Antti. 1998c. "Women Disciples in the Gospel of Thomas." In *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas*, edited by Risto Uro, 89–106. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Marjanen, Antti. 2006. "The Portrait of Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas*." *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas*, edited by Jon Ma Asgeirsson, April D. DeConick, and Risto Uro, NHMS 59, 209–19. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Matthews, Shelly. 2017. "Fleshly Resurrection, Wifely Submission, and the Myth of the Primal Androgyne." In *Delightful Acts: New Essays on Canonical and Non-canonical Acts*, edited by Harold W. Attridge, Dennis R. MacDonald, and Claire K. Rothschild, 101–17. WUNT 391. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Miroshnikov, Ivan. 2018. *The Gospel of Thomas and Plato: A Study of the Impact of Platonism on the "Fifth Gospel"*. NHMS 93. Leiden: Brill.

Moreland, Milton. 2006. "The Twenty-Four Prophets of Israel Are Dead: *Gospel of Thomas* 52 as a Critique of Early Christian Hermeneutics." In *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas*, edited by Jon Ma Asgeirsson, April D. DeConick, and Risto Uro, NHMS 59, 75–91. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Pagels, Elaine H. 1999. "Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John." *JBL* 118: 477–96.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Parsons, Peter. 2007. *City of the Sharp-Nosed Fish: Greek Lives in Roman Egypt*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Patterson, Stephen J. 1993. *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*. Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Patterson, Stephen J. 2013. *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Origins: Essays on the Fifth Gospel*. NHMS 84. Leiden: Brill.

Popkes, Enno Edzard. 2007. *Das Menschenbild des Thomasevangelium*. WUNT 206. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Quispel, Gilles. 1974–75. *Gnostic Studies I–II*. Istanbul: Nederlands Instituut.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Reasoner, Mark. 2017. "The Open Stage of Luke and Acts." In *Delightful Acts: New Essays on Canonical and Non-canonical Acts*, edited by Harold W. Attridge, Dennis R. MacDonald, and Claire K. Rothschild, 159–76. WUNT 391. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Reid, Barbara E., O.P., and Shelly Matthews. 2021. *Luke 1–9*. Wisdom Commentary 34A. Collegeville: Liturgical Press.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Sellew, Melissa [née Philip] Harl. 1990. "Oral and Written Sources in Mark 4. 1–34." *NTS* 36: 234–67.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Sellew, Melissa Harl. 1992a. "Eusebius on the Gospels." In *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, edited by Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata, 110–38. Leiden: Brill

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Sellew, Melissa Harl. 1992b. "Interior Monologue as a Narrative Device in the Gospel of Luke." *JBL* 111: 239–53.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Sellew, Melissa Harl. 1994. "Pious Practice and Social Formation in the Gospel of Thomas." *Forum* 10: 47–56.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Sellew, Melissa Harl. 1997a. "Death, the Body, and the World in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas." *StPat* 33: 530–35.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Sellew, Melissa Harl. 1997b. "The *Gospel of Thomas*: Prospects for Future Research." In *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years*, edited by John D. Turner and Anne McGuire. NHMS 44. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Sellew, Melissa Harl. 2000. "Thomas Christianity: Scholars in Search of a Community." In *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, edited by Jan M. Bremmer, 11–35. Leuven: Peeters.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Sellew, Melissa Harl. 2006. "Jesus and the Voice from beyond the Grave: *Gospel of Thomas* 42 in the Context of Funerary Epigraphy." In *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas*, edited by Jon Ma Asgeirsson, April D. DeConick, and Risto Uro, NHMS 59, 39–73. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Sellew, Melissa Harl. 2017. "James and the Rejection of Apostolic Authority in the Gospel of Thomas." In *Delightful Acts: New Essays on Canonical and Non-canonical Acts*, edited by Harold W. Attridge, Dennis R. MacDonald, and Claire K. Rothschild, 193–207. WUNT 391. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Sellew, Melissa Harl. 2018. "Reading Jesus in the Desert: The *Gospel of Thomas* Meets the *Apophthegma Patrum*." In *The Nag Hammadi Codices in Late Antique Egypt*, edited by Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jannot. STAC 110. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Sellew, Melissa Harl. 2020. "Reading the Gospel of Thomas from Here: A Trans-centered Hermeneutic." *Journal of Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies* 1, no. 2: 61–96.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Smith, Dwight Moody. 2001. *John among the Gospels*. 2nd ed. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Tuckett, Christopher M. 2017. "Women in the *Gospels of Mark and Mary*." In *Connecting Gospels: Beyond the Canonical/Non-canonical Divide*, edited by Francis Watson and Sarah Parkhouse, 142–62. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Uro, Risto. 1998a. "Thomas and Oral Gospel Tradition." In *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas*, 8–32. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Uro, Risto. 1998b. *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas*, edited by Risto Uro. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Uro, Risto. 2003. *Thomas: Seeking the Historical Context of the Gospel of Thomas*. London: T&T Clark.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Valantasis, Richard. 1997. *The Gospel of Thomas*. London: Routledge.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Viviano, Benedict T. 2004. "John's Use of Matthew: Beyond Tweaking." *RB* 90: 209–37.
[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Wiles, Maurice F. 1961. *The Spiritual Gospel: The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Zöckler, Thomas. 1999. *Jesu Lehren im Thomasevangelium*. NHMS 47. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

p. 242

Further Reading

DeConick, April D. 2005. *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas: A History of the Gospel and Its Growth*. LNTS 286. London: T&T Clark.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

DeConick, April D. 2006. *The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation with a Commentary*. LNTS 287. London: T&T Clark.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Frey, Jörg, Enno Edzard Popkes, and Jens Schröter, eds. 2008. *Das Thomasevangelium: Entstehung—Rezeption—Theologie*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Pagels, Elaine. 2003. *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*. New York: Random House.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Plisch, Uwe-Karsten. 2008. *The Gospel of Thomas: Original Text with Commentary*. Translated by Gesine Robinson. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

Pokorny, Peter. 2009. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Thomas: From Interpretations to the Interpreted*. London: T&T Clark.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Schröter, Jens. 1997. *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte: Studien zur Rezeption der Logienüberlieferung in Markus, Q, and Thomas*. WMANT 76. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Snodgrass, Klyne. 1989–90. "The Gospel of Thomas: A Secondary Gospel." *Second Century* 7: 19–38.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Tuckett, Christopher M. 1988. "Thomas and the Synoptics." *NovT* 30: 132–57.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Turner, H. E. W., and Hugh Montefiore. 1962. *Thomas and the Evangelists*. London: SCM.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Uro, Risto. 2006. "The Social World of the Gospel of Thomas." In *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas*, edited by Jon Ma Asgeirsson, April D. DeConick, and Risto Uro, NHMS 59, 19–38. Leiden: Brill.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Valantasis, Richard. 1999. "Is the *Gospel of Thomas* Ascetical? Revisiting an Old Problem with a New Theory." *J ECS* 7: 55–81.