

"You will not taste death: Jesus and Epicureanism" (Gospel of Thomas Thread)

Post by "mlinssen" of February 6, 2026 at 10:34 AM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

This is an awesome contribution of material. thank you for sharing your work!

Thank you Eikadistes!

Language is a living creature, and translated texts fixated in time. They need to be renewed every now and then for sure. With regards to Thomas, what has been produced by biblical academic simply **is** wrong at points, unsupported by dictionary and lexicon

In this reply I will merely counter with the content of Thomas, free from anything else. From my own translation, but please don't hesitate to use the ones from:

https://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/nhl_thomas.htm

(Yes, it's an old site and they don't have HTTPS enabled, so you'll have to click through a bit. Par for the course alas)

With regards to translations, proof is in Logion 9:

"and some others fell upon the acacias nilotica; they choked the seed, and the worm ate them"

The seed and worm are singular, and hence the only thing eaten by that particular worm is, indeed, the "thorns" - hence my interpretation of the multi-deities of Egypt represented by the acacias nilotica, who the serpent Apophis attempts to devour when Ra embarks on his nightly voyage across the skies with his boat filled to the brim with them all.

Right, the various translations:

Lambdin Translation - Thomas Oden Lambdin was an American linguist and scholar of the Semitic and Egyptian languages. His translation is held in highest esteem, yet it is THE most inaccurate translation, translating the same Coptic word with different English ones, while using those same English ones for other Coptic words as well.

"And others fell on thorns; they choked the seed(s) and worms ate them" in Logion 9 tells us everything

Meyer Translation - an NT scholar like most, Meyer produced a needlessly and primarily colourful translation with 'Yeshua' all over it; this translation tries too hard to sound awfully Jewish. Shimon Kefa, Matai, Yohanan the baptizer: 'nuff said. To be frank, it's a good translation

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2069-you-will-not-taste-death-jesus-and-epicureanism-gospel-of-thomas-thread/?postID=38723#post38723>

overall although harmonised as usual to the canonicals.

"Others fell on thorns and they choked the seeds and worms devoured them."

Davies Translation - Stevan Davies, NT scholar, is the scholar most addicted to Thomas 😊 and surpasses even me in that regard, I think. Unfortunately, Davies takes just about everything in Thomas literally and ought to have been forbidden to produce a translation - it's simply hideous and adds adjectives and even whole phrases where ever felt needed. Honestly, there should be prison sentences to this.

"Some fell into patches of thorny weeds that kept it from growing and grubs ate it"

Patterson and Meyer Translation - Stephen J. Patterson is yet another non-linguist, and this is yet another inaccurate Thomas translation.

Others fell on thorns, and they choked the seeds and worms ate them

Patterson and Robinson Translation - James Robinson has produced massive volumes on everything Nag Hammadi, and apparently felt the need to put his name below a Thomas translation.

"(4) And others fell among the thorns, they choked the seeds, and worms ate them."

My English translation of least bad choice is Guillaumont, the 1959 edition:

"And others fell on the thorns; they choked the seed, and the worm ate them."

See? That's not hard to do now, or is it. On the downside, his is the very first English and gets abused by all others in order to sanctify emendations, whereas his are notoriously against any and all rules. Logion 74 as example:

10 [x] sic; l. [w]

11 [w] sic; l. [w]

And that's the full extent of the whole emendation - to which I wrote a 24-page paper in return

Quote

I think this is a fair summation, with perhaps one tweak on point (3)., which corresponds with an earlier observation on prayer: while the forms of the gods are indifferent to the human drama, we are encouraged to practice piety, and engage in prayer (so long as it isn't about wish fulfillment).

That certainly is an irreconcilable difference with Thomas then!

6. they questioned him, his Disciples, they said to him: does thou desire that we Fast, and what is the manner <we> will pray, give Alms and Observe what within food? IS said: do not say+ lies, and that which you hate do not do it: they <are> all uncovering within the presence of the heaven.

14. IS said to them: if you should Fast, you will beget to you a sin; and if you should pray, they will Condemn you; and if you should give Alms, you will make an Evil one of your Spirits.

104. they said [to IS]: come, and we pray today, and we Fast. IS said: what Indeed is the sin <that> I have made, Or in what have they become strong to me?

Quote

Out of curiosity, have you found any relationship between the propositions in Thomas and the Apikorsim tradition in Judaism? I've loosely understood Thomas to be a mystical document that emerged from post-Second Temple Messianic Judaism, so in the regard of setting a contrast against other sects, I wonder if they were sympathetic to Apikorsim (less so ideologically, but perhaps more so in an "enemy of my enemy" kind of way).

I just Googled that, and understand Apikorsim to be a Jewish label to refer to Judaic / Samaritan "heathens". Never heard the phrase before!

I can't find any pro-religion in Thomas, at all. Certainly nothing Christian, but also nothing Judaic.

I ought to have been clear on this point: to me there are no Jews, as that label hopelessly conflates ethnic and religion people. I speak of Judeans and Samaritans, people who live in those regions regardless of their religion. I speak of Judaics and Samaritans when I refer to the religious people. I have been in the position for years now that Thomas, an Egyptian, likely came from a Samaritan background but at best turned Samaritan only.

As such, a fierce hate towards Judeans essentially is "nothing uncommon", when we consider that most countries have their own North & South.

This is not antisemitism, mind you. Very little is known about the true history between Samaritans and [Judeans Judaics], (modified 2026-02-07 12:01 Amsterdam time) but we do know they clashed and disagreed fiercely on a relatively minor set of religious issues

Quote

Tonally, I observe a contrast against Epicurean texts. Thomas relies heavily on (what I think Epikouros would agree to refer to as) "the mythic drama of tragic poets", in this case, the narratives provided from ancient Hebrew texts, like Genesis and Jacob. Epikouros suggests that only a wise person can interface with art and metaphor in a helpful manner, so using fables and metaphors as teaching tools for students is seen as obfuscating (compared with parresia, "frank speech").

Could you please elaborate? I think it is a very big step from seeing a word mentioned in a text to claiming heavy reliance - especially if those very words are ridiculed and rejected. The five trees of Thomas obviously are utterly dead trees (unless they're evergreens and stand in e.g. a cave where there never is any wind at all), and the disciples inquiring "who will be our Mummy when you've left?" unleashes a typical rejection from Thomas. Jacob, the Righteous (Psalms 99:4), is the father of Samaritans, David the father of Judeans. The place where Jacob had his dream, after which he still dared to bargain with God, is the very mount Gerizim where

Samaritans have their only altar, whereas Judaics are supposed to only have it in Jerusalem - the one main theological dispute between both. The disciples are presumed to be Judaic yet get referred to the father of all Samaritans: this little logion refers to a highly volatile topic!

The setting of Thomas is that of Judaic / Samaritan disciples verifying their teachings against someone they treat as authority. The presence of Tanakh elements can't be surprising in that context. What *is* surprising is the outright rejection, time and again, of each of these elements, by that alleged authority. And that is diametrically opposed to 'heavy reliance on', in my view.

But please, do elaborate: I have likely misread what you wrote

Quote

That doesn't necessarily mean that the content of those metaphors is anti-thetical. I think, maybe, speaking for myself, as an Epicurean, I want to skip metaphors and ask for a frank description, because I feel like I can never truly be sure what someone wielding metaphor really means. At the same time, it isn't pure grey—like you indicate, all translations benefit from review, and I am sure that there are more authentic, versus less authentic translations, each being the consequence of the educational resources available to the translator. Inter-disciplinary study is very helpful.

I fully agree on the metaphors, and here is an interpretation nonetheless: I am absolutely certain that Thomas did this on purpose (and will decline elaborating on motive for obvious reasons hahah) and that his text is a test from start to finish. It is something to be released out in the wild, and whoever passes the test automatically "finds the kingdom". It is deliberately obscure, and logion 20 exemplifies why so:

20. the Disciples said to IS: say it to us; the kingdom of the heavens is comparable to what? he said to them: she is comparable to a grain of mustard, being *few*, More than all the seeds. Whenever However she should fall upon the earth which they do work <on>, habitually he puts forth a great branch; and he comes to be Protection of birds of the heaven

The mustard grain is not smaller than all other seeds, it is FEWER (exact same word as in logion 75). No one in his sane mind would use a grain of mustard as a seed, and there are only a select few who will crack the Thomas puzzle.

Christianity is music for the masses and requires only blind belief, obedience, submission - but Thomas is meant for the very inquisitive and critical, and requires the very opposite of these traits.

This text is too damn elite for its own good, it's like a 5-dimensional Rubiks cube