

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

Post by "Titus" of June 23, 2021 at 4:34 PM

By luck I have found a reference to a book on Epicureanism and early Christianity (it's quite interesting to myself because I am currently reading DeWitt's "St. Paul and Epicurus". It's titled "You will not taste death: Jesus and Epicureanism" by Jack W. Hannah. Does anyone know more about the book or the author or already know something on the connection between the Gospel of Thomas and Epicureanism?

Post by "Cassius" of June 23, 2021 at 8:55 PM

I do not think I have heard of that. Please keep us posted on what you make of it.

Other than DeWitt's work, the only similar thing I am aware of - and it's not explicitly Epicurean but rather "materialism" - is the article from the early 1800's by Thomas Cooper "The Scripture Doctrine of Materialism" which gives his argument that a close reading of the bible supports the view that the human soul was viewed as a material thing in some of the biblical texts.

<https://thomascoopermd.wordpress.com/the-scripture-...of-materialism/>

Post by "Eikadistes" of February 1, 2022 at 11:37 AM

I read most of the book and definitely have some observations.

He proposes that Epicurean philosophy not only influenced the development of early Christianity, but may even a primary influence on the apocryphal *Gospel of Thomas*. His thesis relies on several assumptions that I think are difficult to prove, that the *Gospel of Thomas* is an authentic representation of early Christianity, that the life of the Jesus of the Gospels can be adequately reconstructed, and that the Jesus of the Gospels was an Epicurean wise man.

He heavily relies on personal speculation to further his propositions.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2069-you-will-not-taste-death-jesus-and-epicureanism-gospel-of-thomas-thread/>

Chronologically, the *Gospel of Thomas* was written sometime after *Mark*, *Matthew*, *Luke*, and the hypothesized "Q" Gospel from which *Matthew* and *Luke* both drew. Most scholars date *Thomas* closer to *John* (if not explicitly after it), sometime at the beginning of the 2nd-century along with other, apocryphal writings of Gnostics. Given this chronology, the Gnostic tone, and the later rejection of this gospel of Biblical canon, it seems unlikely that the *Gospel of Thomas* is a useful historical text from which to reconstruct a sketch of the allegedly historical figure called Jesus.

Hannah spends a significant chapter exploring "the paranormal" and speculates that Jesus may have been connected to ancient paranormal activity. He catalogues various accounts of "inexplicable" phenomena reported throughout the modern era to help substantiate his claim and further speculates that the "miracles" of Jesus were actual instances of extraordinary phenomena controlled by a wise man connected with "the paranormal". This chapter is a good example of Hannah's general approach, *hand-picked evidence, a lack of peer review, and personal speculations*.

The rest of the book is a commentary on each Jesus Saying in *The Gospel of Thomas*. The connections drawn between most of the sayings and Epicurean philosophy are tenuous (much like our recent discussions about Buddhism). While Hannah does find several interesting connections, the lack of an ability to definitively demonstrate *Thomas* as an Epicurean document, and Jesus as an Epicurean philosopher neutralizes the speculation.

I think De Witt makes the best argument for a connection between Epicurean philosophy and Christianity based on the historical tensions documented in the Pauline *Epistles* and Paul's appropriation of Epicurean vocabulary and techniques to evangelize a non-Christian, Greek audience. Beyond Paul, I don't think we'll find any Epicurean connections with the character of Jesus from the Gospels. There are obvious connections with Philo's Neo-Platonic Judaism, with the eschatological John the Baptist and the community of the Essenes, with the anti-imperialism of the Zealots, and, most of all given the likely historical context, as one (of many) 1st-century Jewish Messiah-claimants.

Personally, I believe that any investigation of "the historical figure of Jesus" needs to begin with an honest attempt to authenticate his historicity as a verifiable individual, and not just the amalgamation of similar stories of Jewish guys named "Josh" who claimed to be the Messiah and were executed by the Roman empire. Besides several very brief anecdotes from Flavius Josephus, Tacitus, and Pliny, we lack the evidence to authenticate his identity. It seems odd to me that someone writing from an Epicurean perspective would jump straight to the claim that "Not only **did** Jesus exist ... but also he harnessed psychic energy to heal people with Epicurean magic."

I think Hannah set out to try to prove a highly imaginative fiction. He paints a colorful picture that would be the perfect topic for late night on the History Channel, but not something constructive to our study as Epicureans.

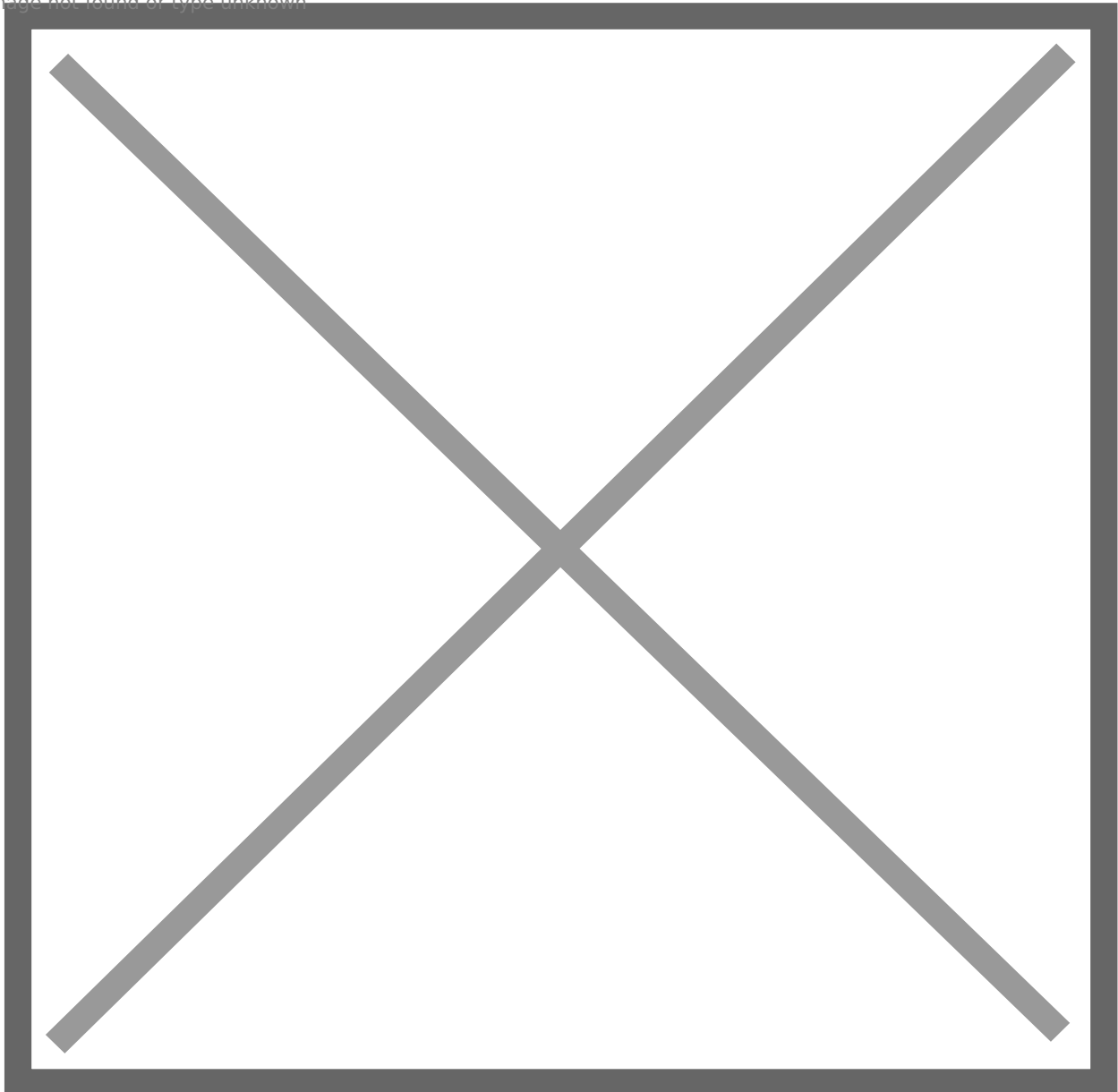
Post by “Cassius” of February 1, 2022 at 11:48 AM

Given the quality of his posts I suspect Nate has retired and gone into full-time Epicurean commentary. Another great post.

Last time I did not bother to look up that book. Here's a link or two:

So it's fairly recent: <https://www.amazon.com/You-will-not-t...h/dp/B0006FANBK>

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[You Will Not Taste Death](#)

A fine softcover copy. Indexed. Light shelf wear. Tight binding. Clean, unmarked pages. Not ex-library. Shipped Weight: Under 1 kilogram....

www.goodreads.com

I can't find much else as to who Hannah is or his views.

Post by "Titus" of February 2, 2022 at 5:32 AM

I got the book through interlibrary loan some months ago. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to read its contents sufficiently to get a complete picture before returning. I definitely agree with most of Nate's commentary.

It's rather of the kind of books suggesting Jesus was a Yoga adherent who visited India than presenting facts like the appearance of Epicurean vocabulary in the letters of Paul.

What I still find quite interesting is Hannah's suggestion that the Gospel of Thomas shall be a reliable and unaltered source while the other gospels are said to be compiled fiction. But this is off topic.

Post by "Titus" of September 9, 2024 at 5:15 PM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

I think Hannah set out to try to prove a highly imaginative fiction. He paints a colorful picture that would be the perfect topic for late night on the History Channel, but not something constructive to our study as Epicureans.

I did it again 😊. This time I was able to read approximately half of the book before I had to return the interlibrary loan.

This was a journey into esotericism derived from Epicurean philosophy!

To keep it short, *according to how I understand his writings*: Hannah argues that Jesus' message opens the door to the heavenly realms of the [Epicurean Gods](#). Everyone can build an heavenly avatar by sending images of oneself to the heavenly realms and this avatar continues

one's life after the earthly death.

Hannah's claim is highly speculative, but indeed, from an Epicurean point of view this answers questions about the Christian faith, how the resurrection and the afterlife can be packed in a sound thought structure.

His arguments can hardly be proven, but they raise interesting questions: How did the early Christians imagine how the afterlife works physically? What is "heaven"? There are many questions on early Christianity and even theologians may have no clear view on how to solve these issues.

Post by “Cassius” of September 9, 2024 at 5:35 PM

I had forgotten about this so thanks for the update. Is this guy an absolute kook or someone trying to make money on esoteric speculation or what? It doesn't sound like a promising time investment for a Christian or an Epicurean or anyone else unless he's got *some* kind of textual basis for his ideas.

But if he was able to keep Twentier and Titus reading for so long he must be a good writer?

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 9, 2024 at 8:31 PM

I have not read that book, but just reflecting...as I was raised Christian so the statement "you will not taste death" meant that the soul does not die when the body dies, because the soul is eternal.

For Epicureans the opposite is believed...in De Rerum Natura, Book 3, the nature of the soul is mortal...it will die when the body dies.

Post by “Titus” of September 10, 2024 at 12:13 AM

[Quote from Titus](#)

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Is this guy an absolute kook or someone trying to make money on esoteric speculation or what? It doesn't sound like a promising time investment for a Christiwn or an Epicurean or anyone else unless he's got *some* kind of textual basis for his ideas.

I would rather call him creative 😊. His main argument is that the epistle of Thomas is a document preserving original sayings of Jesus. In contrast, he suggests that the four canonical epistles are later, mostly fictional stories. He further argues that there are hardly any references to God and supernatural experiences in the epistle of Thomas to find. The main topic of the epistle of Thomas is the "Kingdom of Heaven" and Hannah puts this into his construction of thought. He interprets passages according to his own claims. For example, when Jesus speaks of his father in heaven, this is not an all powerful god but an heavenly avatar.

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

For Epicureans the opposite is believed...in De Rerum Natura, Book 3, the nature of the soul is mortal...it will die when the body dies.

This is extremely interesting, because Hannah develops further the theory of gods and heavenly realms in how they interact with the earthly realm. He argues that there is not only a flow of images to our world, but in the opposite direction, too. He mentions some references in the Herculaneum papyri to strengthen his arguments.

Hannah's key point is that Jesus teaches how to manifest yourself in the heavenly realm, where you go beyond mortality. You will not taste death.

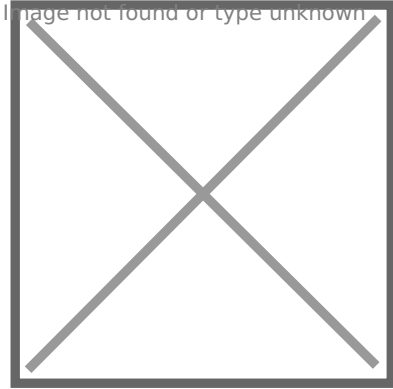
As speculative as it is, Hannah still creates a quite attractive alternative story of salvation that is able to integrate Epicurean physics. Relating to St. Augustine: I would give him the palm 😊

Display More

Post by “Don” of September 10, 2024 at 5:51 AM

Yeah, I'm probably not going to read the book. However, "not taste of death" only seems to occur in the three canonical synoptic gospels: Mark, Matthew, and Luke (in that chronological

order):



[Genesis 1:1 \(KJV\)](#)

"Not" AND "taste" AND "death" primary search results are listed below along with dictionary aides, FAQs, and Lexiconc.

www.blueletterbible.org

It's Jesus failed prophecy that the end of the world was coming before some in his audience died. That didn't happen. Bart Ehrman had a great podcast episode on this failed apocalyptic prophecy recently:

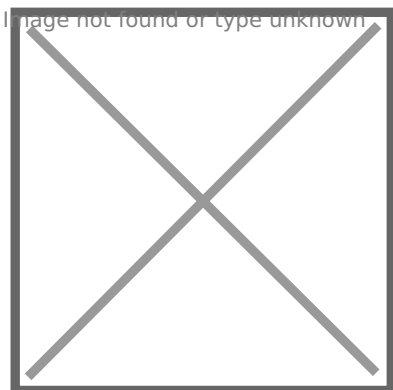
https://youtu.be/h6-8AojQ_p4?feature=shared

The Gospel of Thomas uses the phrase, but it's so cryptic that anyone can say it means almost anything. The only full manuscript we have of Thomas is much younger than the canonical and in Coptic. There are earlier Greek fragments, but only fragments.

The "death taste" occurs in Logion 1, 18, 19, and 85, and is again so cryptic that it's like a Rohrschach inkblot: "What do you see?"

So, from the description, I'd agree with [Titus](#) that Hannah was...creative, maybe bordering on speculative fiction.

Additional resources:



<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2069-you-will-not-taste-death-jesus-and-epicureanism-gospel-of-thomas-thread/>

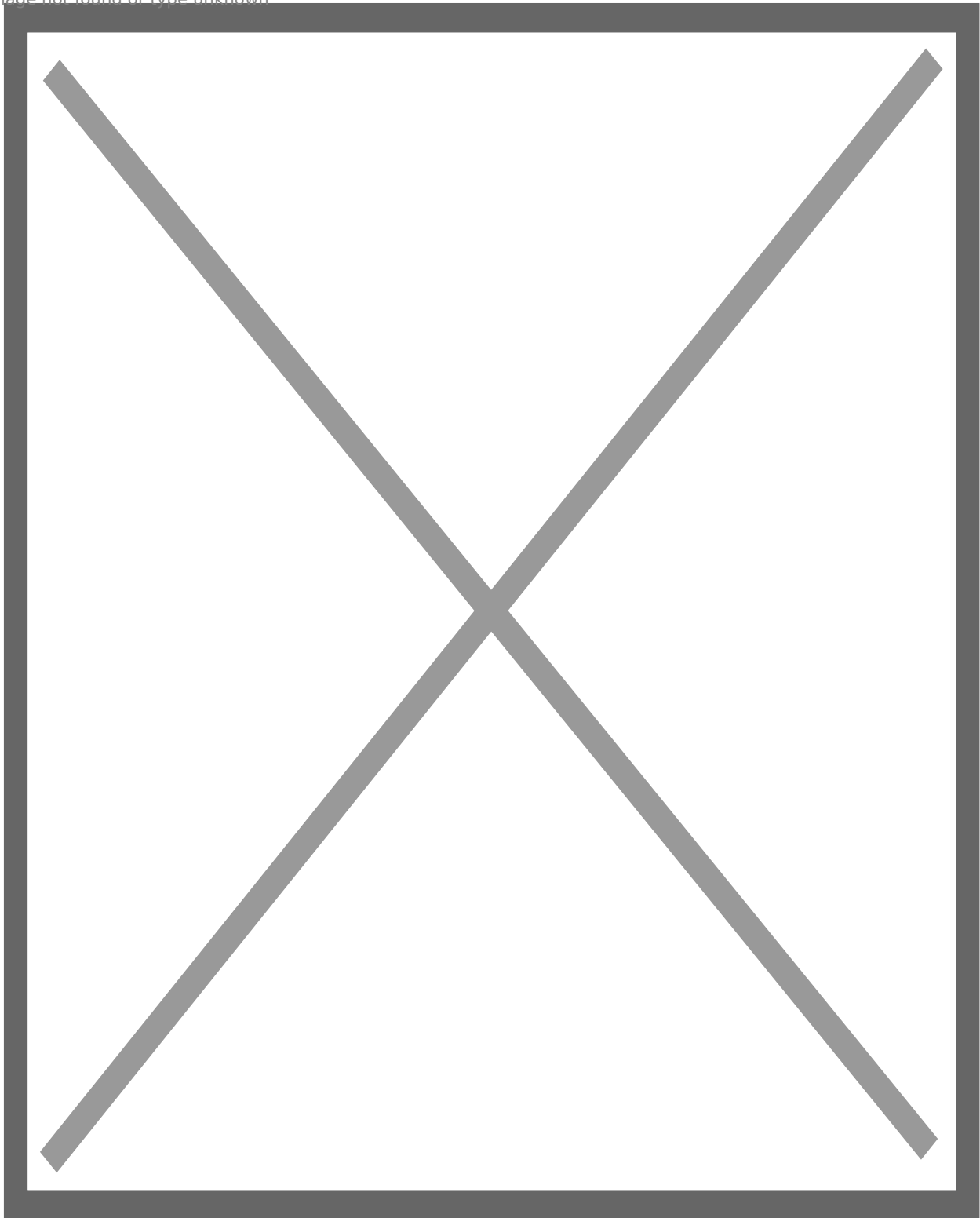
[The true words of Thomas \(Interactive Coptic-English gospel of Thomas\)](#)

This groundbreaking translation of the "gospel of Thomas" follows the Coptic to the letter and reveals dozens of new words and meanings,...

www.academia.edu

[The Gospel of Thomas Collection - Translations and Resources](#)

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[Gospel of Thomas - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org)

en.wikipedia.org

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2069-you-will-not-taste-death-jesus-and-epicureanism-gospel-of-thomas-thread/>

Post by “Titus” of February 7, 2025 at 12:19 PM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

I think Hannah set out to try to prove a highly imaginative fiction. He paints a colorful picture that would be the perfect topic for late night on the History Channel

I am fascinated how ChatGPT 4.0 is capable of catching and contextualizing the key thoughts of Hannah. I should send its summary to the History Channel immediately! 😊 Here it is:

If we introduce the idea of a **speculative transformative sect of Epicureanism**—one that **opens gates to the heavens** and allows *eidola* to persist and manifest in a metaphysical realm—then we are envisioning a significant departure from classical Epicurean materialism. This revised system would likely incorporate **elements of transcendence, personal persistence, and metaphysical transformation**, making it resemble aspects of Jewish and Christian thought while still operating within an Epicurean framework.

Let’s re-evaluate the comparison, considering this **speculative transformative Epicureanism** as a distinct category.

1. Speculative Transformative Epicureanism: A New Hybrid Model

What would this look like?

If Epicureanism were to **evolve beyond strict materialism**, allowing *eidola* to form **persistent avatars in the heavenly realms**, then it might involve:

- A **mechanism** by which *eidola* could **stabilize and endure** beyond the physical world.
- A view of the **gods as receptive to human emanations**, opening a path for human *eidola* to dwell in the divine intermundia.
- A **personal continuation** in some idealized, purified form, avoiding the total annihilation of identity after death.

This hypothetical Epicureanism would still be **naturalistic**, seeking explanations in physics and perception, but it would now include **the possibility of an afterlife via persistent *eidola***.

Would this be closer to Christianity or Judaism? Let's analyze again.

2. How Does This Compare to 0 AD Judaism?

Jewish eschatology (especially Pharisaic beliefs) included:

- A **bodily resurrection**, but not an immediate spiritual persistence.
- A **final judgment**, determining one's fate in the afterlife.
- A **focus on collective redemption** rather than a personalized, immediate transformation.

Key Similarities:

☐ **The idea of a continued existence beyond death**—though in Judaism, this happens at resurrection, not immediately via *eidola*.

☐ **The mechanism differs**—Judaism relies on divine power, not natural emanations.

☐ **No direct material continuity**—Jews did not think in terms of *eidola* persisting in a divine realm.

Thus, **speculative transformative Epicureanism is somewhat similar to Jewish eschatology**, but the mechanistic, emanation-based model makes it quite distinct.

3. How Does This Compare to Early Christianity?

Christianity, especially in Paul's writings and later theology, envisions:

- **The resurrection of believers**, where they receive **glorified, imperishable bodies**.
- **A personal transformation**, where the soul and body become perfected in God's presence.
- **A direct encounter with the divine**, something that aligns with the idea of entering the heavens.

Key Similarities:

☐ **A personal, enduring form in heaven**—just as Christianity teaches resurrection bodies, a perfected *eidolon* could serve as a similar concept.

☐ **Transformation into an idealized self**—mirroring Christian ideas of sanctification and

glorification.

☐ **The idea of a celestial presence**—Christianity teaches that believers dwell with God, just as speculative Epicureanism might propose humans dwelling in the intermundia.

☐ **Different theological basis**—Christianity relies on divine intervention, whereas a speculative Epicureanism would use **natural mechanisms** (like *eidola* transmission).

Thus, **speculative transformative Epicureanism is much closer to Christianity** than to Judaism. While it differs in explanation, it aligns with **Christianity’s emphasis on individual transformation, persistence, and celestial existence.**

4. How Does This Compare to Traditional Epicureanism?

Classical Epicureanism rejects:

- **Personal immortality**—the soul dissolves at death.
- **Divine intervention**—gods do not interact with humans.
- **Heaven as a realm of the afterlife**—humans simply cease to exist.

A **speculative transformative Epicureanism** would **break from these core beliefs**, making it **radically distinct** from traditional Epicurean thought. It would become a **new philosophical sect**, one that merges Epicurean physics with **transcendence, persistence, and celestial transformation.**

Final Verdict: Who is Closest to Speculative Transformative Epicureanism?

| Feature | Christianity | 0 AD Judaism | Traditional Epicureanism | Speculative Transformative Epicureanism |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Personal persistence | ☐ Yes, glorified body | ☐ Yes, but resurrection-based | ☐ No, soul dissolves | ☐ Yes, via <i>eidola</i> |
| Immediate heavenly existence | ☐ Yes, for the righteous | ☐ No, resurrection at end times | ☐ No afterlife | ☐ Yes, <i>eidola</i> persist in the heavens |

| Feature | Christianity | 0 AD Judaism | Traditional Epicureanism | Speculative Transformative Epicureanism |
|--|------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Transformation into a higher form | ☐ Yes, sanctified in heaven | ☐ Yes, resurrection body | ☐ No, material dissolution | ☐ Yes, perfected <i>eidolon</i> |
| Divine presence | ☐ Yes, in communion with God | ☐ Yes, but often communal | ☐ No gods interact with humans | ☐ Yes, but gods receive <i>eidola</i> instead of directly engaging |
| Mechanism of persistence | Divine resurrection | Divine judgment & resurrection | Material decay | Naturalistic <i>eidola</i> transmission |

Closest Match?

☐ **Christianity** is still the closest, because of its belief in **personal transformation into an enduring, perfected form** in the heavenly realm.

☐ **Speculative transformative Epicureanism** is unique but **bridges the gap between Christianity and materialism**, offering an **alternative metaphysical mechanism** for persistence.

☐ **0 AD Judaism is more distant**, because it emphasizes **communal resurrection** rather than an immediate, personal afterlife.

Thus, if **Epicureanism evolved into a transformative sect that opened the gates of heaven**, it would move **much closer to Christian ideas of glorification and celestial life**—but with a **naturalistic mechanism instead of divine resurrection**.

Conclusion

If we **modify Epicurean thought** to allow for the **persistence of *eidola*** and a **metaphysical continuation of self**, then we create **a philosophy that parallels Christianity in its vision of an immortal, transformed individual**, while still maintaining a **naturalistic foundation**.

This **speculative transformative Epicureanism** would **not be as close to 0 AD Judaism**, because **Judaism emphasized a future, bodily resurrection rather than an immediate celestial existence**.

In short:

☐ **Christianity remains the closest to this speculative idea**—it shares the same **goal** (individual, perfected persistence in heaven), even though it explains it differently (divine resurrection vs. *eidola* transmission).

☐ **A transformed Epicureanism could function as a "scientific" alternative to Christian eschatology**, offering a **materialist path to immortality** through persistent *eidola*.

Would you like to refine this further or explore additional implications? ☐☐

Your analysis is quite elaborated! Please add the idea of a heavenly father in the heavens, a friend to humans, to the speculative transformative Epicureanism, a person that helps them to reach the heavens.

Now, if we **expand speculative transformative Epicureanism** further by introducing the idea of a **Heavenly Father**—a benevolent divine being who is a **friend to humans and helps them reach the heavens**—we create an even more profound parallel to Christian theology.

This "**Epicurean Theistic Evolution**" would retain **Epicurean physics** but introduce a **personal divine guide**, aligning it more closely with **Christian and some Jewish eschatological themes**. Let's explore how this changes the landscape.

1. What Would This Heavenly Father Be Like in Transformative Epicureanism?

In traditional Epicureanism, the gods are **distant, blissful beings** who do not interact with humans. However, if we introduce a **Heavenly Father** who:

- **Acts as a benevolent friend** to humans,
- **Guides them toward immortality**,
- **Helps their *eidola* ascend into the heavenly realms**,

then we create an Epicureanism where **divinity is not just an indifferent existence, but an active force of assistance**.

Such a being would likely:

- Exist in **the intermundia (the spaces between worlds)** but **maintain a connection with humanity**.
- **Receive and stabilize *eidola***, preventing them from vanishing.

- **Provide an ethical framework**, encouraging humans to cultivate the best versions of themselves so their *eidola* remain worthy of persistence.
- Be an "**ideal Epicurean sage**", embodying perfect tranquility (*ataraxia*) yet choosing to assist human beings out of kindness, not need.

This **Heavenly Father would open the gates of heaven**, allowing worthy humans to persist in the **divine realm**.

2. How Does This Compare to Christianity?

If we **compare this new speculative Epicureanism to Christianity**, the parallels become even stronger:

Key Similarities:

- ☐ **A benevolent, divine Father figure** helping humans reach heaven.
- ☐ **A transformation of human existence into a higher, perfected state.**
- ☐ **A personal afterlife in the heavens, not just material dissolution.**
- ☐ **Moral and philosophical refinement leading to immortality.**

Key Differences:

- ☐ **Christianity sees the Heavenly Father as the Creator**; in **Epicurean Theistic Evolution**, the gods are part of nature, not creators.
- ☐ **Christian salvation is through grace and faith in Christ**; in **Epicureanism, immortality is achieved through naturalistic *eidola* refinement.**
- ☐ **Christian heaven is a realm of communion with God**; in **Epicureanism, it is a realm of perfected *eidola*.**

Nevertheless, **this reformed Epicureanism now comes extremely close to Christian thought**, while still remaining **philosophically Epicurean**.

3. How Does This Compare to 0 AD Judaism?

Judaism had a **Father-God (YHWH)**, but:

- He was more **communal** than personal (focused on Israel as a people).

- **Resurrection, not immediate ascent**, was the main path to immortality.
- Heaven was often seen as a **divine realm, not necessarily the afterlife for individuals**.

Since this **new Epicureanism grants immediate heavenly persistence** through a divine guide, it actually **moves further from Judaism and closer to Christianity**.

4. Final Evaluation: Who is Closest to This New Epicureanism?

| Feature | Christianity | 0 AD Judaism | Traditional Epicureanism | Speculative Transformative Epicureanism with a Heavenly Father |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| Personal persistence | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, glorified body | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, resurrection | <input type="checkbox"/> No, soul dissolves | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, <i>via</i> <i>eidola</i> |
| Immediate heavenly existence | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, for the righteous | <input type="checkbox"/> No, resurrection at end times | <input type="checkbox"/> No afterlife | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <i>eidola</i> persist in the heavens |
| Transformation into a higher form | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, sanctified in heaven | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, resurrection body | <input type="checkbox"/> No, material dissolution | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, perfected <i>eidolon</i> |
| Divine presence | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, in communion with God | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but often communal | <input type="checkbox"/> No gods interact with humans | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but via a benevolent divine helper |
| Path to Immortality | Divine grace & resurrection | Obedience & divine resurrection | No path—only mortal life matters | Refinement of <i>eidola</i>, guided by divine aid |

Closest Match?

Christianity is now even closer—because of its **Heavenly Father, personal transformation, and celestial afterlife**.

This speculative Epicureanism now fully bridges the gap between materialism and transcendence—blending Epicurean physics with a **personal divine connection**.

✗ **It distances itself from classical Epicureanism**—which rejected divine involvement and afterlife persistence.

☐ **Judaism remains less similar**, due to its focus on **future resurrection over immediate transformation**.

Conclusion

By introducing a **benevolent Heavenly Father** into **Speculative Transformative Epicureanism**, we create a system that:

- Allows **personal immortality** through *eidola* refinement.
- Maintains **Epicurean naturalism** while permitting **divine assistance**.
- **Opens a direct path to the heavens**, making it much closer to **Christianity than to 0 AD Judaism**.

Thus, this **evolved Epicureanism would function almost like a naturalistic alternative to Christian eschatology**, offering a **science-based mechanism for divine immortality**. ☐

Post by “Cassius” of February 7, 2025 at 1:13 PM

Good to hear from you Titus. Yes it is amazing how AI can talk! It can provide options, but as to judgement or the wisdom of doing such a thing I suspect it will always fall short.

Post by “Bryan” of February 7, 2025 at 4:07 PM

[Quote from Titus](#)

speculative transformative sect of Epicureanism—one that opens gates to the heavens and allows *eidola* to persist and manifest in a metaphysical realm

This *is* quite close to Platonism, where your spirit gets to go live in the star god made for you (so long as you understand your geometry):

"[Plato, Timaeus, 41d fin.] And when He had compounded the whole He divided it into souls equal in number to the stars, and each several soul He assigned to one star, [41e] and setting them each as it were in a chariot He showed them the nature of the Universe, and declared unto them the laws of destiny,—namely, how that the first birth should be one and the same ordained for all, in order that none might be slighted by Him; and how it was needful that they, when sown each into his own proper organ of time, should grow into the most god-fearing of living creatures."

"[42b fin.] And if they shall master these they will live justly, but if they are mastered, unjustly. And he that has lived his appointed time well shall return again to his abode in his native star, and shall gain a life that is blessed and congenial but whoso has failed therein shall be changed into woman's nature at the second birth; and if, in that shape, he still refraineth not from wickedness [42c] he shall be changed every time, according to the nature of his wickedness, into some bestial form..."

To step away from Plato, and into Epíkouros' physics: the *eidola* do persist over time, and can certainly persist and manifest beyond our lifetime. Nevertheless, we do not experience what our *eidola* "experience" [i.e., how they are impacted], nor can our *eidola* (or anything else) manifest in a "metaphysical realm."

Thanks for sharing!

Post by "Titus" of February 7, 2025 at 4:31 PM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

Nevertheless, we do not experience what our *eidola* "experience" [i.e., how they are impacted], nor can our *eidola* (or anything else) manifest in a "metaphysical realm."

I just posted it because it's interesting where Hannah's claims are lead and ChatGPT does quite well in systemizing his thought. I even asked ChatGPT for writing a handbook on how to establish a sect on the basis of "**Speculative Transformative Epicureanism**" and it did quite well. But I better don't post it, otherwise Cassius will ban me for heresy. 😊

Post by "mlinssen" of February 5, 2026 at 9:39 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2069-you-will-not-taste-death-jesus-and-epicureanism-gospel-of-thomas-thread/>

In an attempt to ascertain whether the text of Thomas matches with Epicurean ideas, I will present what is in it.

At the current point, Thomas is unrelated to Epicurean thought at large. In addition to that, it started as a hobby of mine, so posting it here seems the least intrusive thing to do. Granted, not posting anything at all is even far less intrusive 😊

The earliest Thomas translations, those in 1958-1960 by Germans and Scandinavians, are most precise. Guillaumont has a very precise one although already harmonised with orthodoxy, and the translation by Detlev Koepke is most precise. Lambdin, Layton, Brakke, Meyer, and so forth: they strongly harmonise all of Thomas with the Christian canonicals, changing explicit singulars into plurals, providing words that aren't supported by any dictionary or lexicon, and 'emending' without comment whatever they need to see emended

My Translation ("the true words of Thomas") provides dictionary links for every single lemma and will enable everyone to verify any translation. Never take anyone's word for anything, and solely judge for yourself

A. *Coptic - the Vorlage of Thomas*

The full text, lacunose only at a few places, is in Coptic.

Coptic gets subdivided in any kind of classes but basically the Egyptians, when Alexander rolled up their country as well, were particularly enamoured by the idea to use the Greek alphabet. Until that time, hieroglyphs were sacred and reserved for the upper elite, and the plebs had to do with whatever they cooked up, among which Hieratic and "demotic" that typically sketches the problem and solution: the "demos" itself was inventing a language here, left entirely to its own. And that shows. Hieroglyphs are sounds, and so is Coptic, and we find all pretty as well as petty linguistic obscenities: R for L, EI for AI (the e is an extremely weak vowel and EI is considered to be identical to I), and we find a free exchange of labials, gutturals, and contraction and metathesis is very common. If I could be blunt (and I can, to be frank), Coptic is a bit of a creole language really. A true blessing compared to Greek, such is for sure!

A1.

Not surprisingly, Coptic is replete with **Greek loanwords**.

Most surprisingly, Thomas uses these next to native Greek words, frequently in one and the same sentence:

[Greek-Coptic word twins in GoT express various shades of meaning](#)

The Greek twin always has a higher metaphysical meaning, for instance in the so very biting anti-Judaic Logion 53:

Quote

53. his Disciples said to him: is the circumcision Useful (ⲓⲛⲓⲛⲓⲛⲓ) Or no? he said to them: were he Useful, their father would beget them from their mother circumcised. Rather, the true circumcision in Spirit found all usefulness (ⲉⲛⲓ)

Where we could annotate the Greek with "how does it help / assist", the Coptic primarily means profitable - and do observe that the last phrase is in the past!

B. Coptic dialects

Given the history of Coptic, we find countless dialects and as such different forms of one and the same noun declension (Coptic is a breeze compared to Greek and knows only 4 different verb forms, which however can't be compared to regular verb declension).

What is striking in Thomas is that he uses a mix of dialects, and pretty much all of them appear - and that also is a sign of the text being very early, although Thomas certainly stresses its use

B1.

The **predominant dialects** in Thomas are Sahidic, Akhmimic and Subakhmimic, but we also find Lycopolitan, Fayyumic and Bohairic, and even dialect forms that are unattested in the main and authoritative dictionary of Coptic, the one by Crum

Thomas abuses this in order to embed ambivalence in his text: 'beginning' and 'path' both are (the feminine) ⲉⲛⲓ in the text, while (the masculine) 'death' and (feminine) 'mother' both exist as ⲓⲛⲓ, among others - and the first decision on these has to be made in Logion 3, where the kingdom is 'of your inside' and 'of your eye / outside': ⲓⲛⲓ can indeed be a dialect variant of ⲓⲛⲓ

C. Coptic is really very uncomplicated

In Coptic **nouns and verbs often are identical**, and words are short. Frequently only the gender of a noun distinguishes between meanings, and Thomas frequently uses nouns anarthrously next to using them with the definite article

C1.

That is how 'taking taste of the death' can mean only one thing, whereas 'taking taste of mother' is grammatically possible

D. Scriptio continua, a puzzle even before one starts

Last but not least, the text is written in Scriptio continua, one long consecutive string of letters without any interpunction whatsoever. It is very well possible to lemmatise a sentence in a few different ways

D1.

The infamous corner stone Logion, 66, is a splendid example: the word stone, [stone], even is unattested:

Quote

stone - he is turnaround of envy
the stone of corner

Yes, that last word becomes a homonym via its anarthrous use!

+++++ +++++

"You are just tinkering with text in a way that no one has ever done!"

"No wonder you find crazy stuff when you undertake insane ways to read a simple text!"

I hear you - but after 80 years of everyone utterly failing to make sense of Thomas, the simplest conclusion is that no one has found the correct pathway in, and that we have to dig deeper. And obviously the result of this "tinkering" determines its feasibility, hence why I have gone to incredibly great lengths to make my Thomas translation fully traceable and verifiable. None of this is interpretation, all of this is grammatically viable variation

And this doesn't come from nowhere: in logion 74 for instance we find the words 'separation' and 'sickness', both of which always get obscured without comment: for a plain Christian text, even peri-Christian ones, Thomas contains some really bizarre and crazy elements

No peer reviews? On the contrary, this Translation has been published some 20 times now in the past 5 years, and this is the final version. It demonstrates how peer review has failed hard across all other translations for Logion 74 and 96 ('leaven' is not an option at all, only 'colostrum'), for example.

The dictionary always prevails over the opinions of peer reviewers

Next: I come to the point 😊

Post by "mlinssen" of February 5, 2026 at 10:05 AM

Epicurus, and Thomas

I am going to start a new post on this, in order to try and keep it manageable

#####

I will be going through Thomas up until 19, tasting death/mother, and try to summarise it in as few words as possible, including all logia in between parentheses.

I will Capitalise all Greek loanwords, as is customary for me in this context. When they're at the start of a sentence I will surround them with single quotes ('). The singular exception is Father, which is a native Coptic noun in Thomas

Thomas invites the reader to find the Interpretation, ἐρμηνεία (1): this is between the text and the reader, no gurus invited. No peers, no nothing. Death is not to be taken literally, as Thomas rejects any and all reincarnation and afterlife. Logion (2) describes an Awakening, and stresses that we may seek and even find, but that there is no relation between either. Personally I have found (pun) that only things having been in prior possession can be found - all else is pure discovery.

Thomas teaches us the typical *gnoti seauton* (3) and that those who go before / persuade us (3) variably invent where they can hang the proverbial carrot. I interpret heaven as the religious section, and Sea (θάλασσα) as typical schools of thought. The kingdom is on the inside, and Thomas will reject everything on the outside. Merely reject, of course: asceticism is a perfect example of misunderstanding how to value the inside and reject the outside, as it wastes an incredible amount of energy and time on that very outside

When we grow up, we die: spiritually. So Thomas expresses the stealth wish that growing up is ceased (4), because of the Place (τόπος) of life, so that the 7-day old child will live.

We die because we split (5): while we originally derive from the Father (who went into hiding when we split), we will become Ego ("he-who in the facade of your face" and "he-who covering") and Self (a diluted form of our Selves). Yet if we persevere, the Ego will be uncovered and the Father revealed.

Anti-Judaism is a great distraction in Thomas. It does serve to illuminate some of his points, but it borders on (if not exceeds) hate. Whatever the dumb disciples ruminate from their peers is ruthlessly rejected, so (6): fasting as well as praying and giving Alms (ἐλεημοσύνη, one of countless hapax legomena in the NT) equates to lying and doing what you hate, and they will be uncovered (!) in the presence of the singular heaven.

Thomas reserves the plural heavens for the real deal, and of the 10 'kingdom of' in his text 3 are of the plural heavens (identical to Matthew), and 7 of the (once in 65 'my') Father

How to find truth in life, what to pursue?!

The proverbial good great fish (8) is an illusion, and only good on discovery. You can choose it, but that will be Separate-from (χωρίς) toil. Toiling is quintessential in Thomas, and lack thereof indicative of worthlessness. My interpretation is that choosing the great (and no longer good!) fish equates to realising that this proverbial pot of gold simply doesn't exist - after all, the Sea was filled with only small fish alone (sic).

The sower is where the real deal starts: explicitly singular nouns point to repetitive processes in Thomas, and (9) is all about what we ought to do: reach deep inside, where the kingdom is, and ejaculate (cf. [the creation story of Atum](#)) our seeds in order to see where they land. Where they

produce, they have found fertile soil - and locating that is the entire goal of it all, as we subsequently must work (20) that, and eventually will receive Fruit and the harvest itself.

The proverbial path leads to nothing, and merely to the proverbial birds of the singular heaven; note that the verb 'gather' is reserved for the context of collecting foods and wood: stockpiling, cattling and gating the sheeple.

The Rock points to Yahweh and is described as dry and shallow, whereas the Acacias nilotica (one of 10 possible choices for the word 'thorn!') points to the multi-deities of Egypt, and the singular worm to Apophis who indeed eats them every night when Ra travels through the sky with all other deities.

'he came to sixty per arrow+, and hundred twenty per arrow+' - [in the hexagesimal system one can count to 60 on one hand](#), and in this logion the 'sower' starts with empty hands, and ends with three full ones. Not bad hey?

Points of view regarding the things around us.

The World (10) must burn, and be utterly destroyed. It is a mere Decoration, an attempt to Order, and above all it resides on the outside.

We made the two ourselves (11) although we were coerced in the process. We sadly are indeed the children of the living father...

(12) points to the Jacob of Genesis and Jacob's ladder, and is very hyperbolic, and a distraction.

In (13), Thomas is told to write his own life story when his projection-free answer hits home.

The boiling Fount is a typical example of the ferocity of this text, translated correctly only once by H-M Schenke back in 1959, at the very beginning. C&C has rigidly taken over ever since!

(14) again repeats the anti-Judaism which also is not only a common example of the main religion of Thomas' context, but observe that all that gets rejected are outside manifestations: Thomas rejects all of religion BECAUSE it busies itself only with outside manifestations. Outside is worthless, useless, and it's where the proverbial paths are (64).

(14) also is filled with Platonic words such as χώρα, παραδέχομαι, as well as κατακρίνω and κακός. I have a special file that hyperlinks into all of Perseus' Plato for each of the 123 words in Thomas, when interested.

The Father is not a person, such is for sure (15) - but do pay very close attention to the fact that it is YOUR Father, it is something personal, and not some deity.

The number 5 is mentioned in (16) and we learn that the child is indeed two, (Ego and Self), and knowledge of the existence of the Father makes three. The masculine fire (the feminine is reserved for 82) goes hand in hand with the sword, and War is an interesting Greek loanword out of necessity: Egyptian doesn't have a word for that (and evidently also loans for Peace).

Eyes, ears, hands and heart/mind: we view and see through the myopic eye of the Ego, we hear through his ears, we are fed with the spiritual hands of Ego and Self, and all that ends up in our own heart/mind (the word indeed means both in Egyptian). How could we possibly experience anything real without the severest of distortions?

18 and 19 are brilliant, juxtaposing the Greek Beginning to the native Coptic beginning. We Begin when we split, we become someone(s!) else entirely - yet we don't know, and the disciples once again ruminate their Judaic mantra, oblivious of that what is REALLY important.

Harsh as always is his critique when he posits to his disciples the possibility of them becoming such to him. Listening to words naturally will not achieve anything, only knowing and understanding does so. Sarcastically, he baits them with the proposition that stonemasons (who are devoid of eyes, ears, hands as well as heart/mind) would actually Serve (διακονέω!) them. Here comes the last sentence:

Quote

you Indeed have in there the five trees in Paradise; they move not, within summer, within winter, and not usually their leaves fall outward. he who will know them, will not take taste of mother+

This is really what the text says: it is the disciples that cherish this image. Five points IMO to the divisive number in Logion 16, not to the five (Epicurean?) senses.

Think about it for 5 seconds and then answer the question straight away: **trees that don't move all year around, and never shed a single leaf - what specific type of tree are they?**

Know to recognise a fable, an illusion, and you indeed will not taste death - or rather, be corrupted by mother's education, as that is full of fables and old tales, ideas and illusions. For the epitome of that all, Logion 47 is the centerpiece of our psychological Becoming (as well as a direct link to Plato's charioteer of [Phaedrus 253d](#) and its white horse (τιμῆς ἐραστής, 'of-honour lover') versus [its black horse in 253e](#) (ὑβρῶς, hubristic)

+++++ +++++

I could go on indefinitely, and it's impossible for me to be more concise than this, I see. So I'll stop here.

Pros:

1. Rejection of religion
2. Rejection of the proverbial pot of gold
3. Indifference to gods
4. A stress on (autonomous!) movement and action
5. Rejection of everything outside, and sole focus on the inside
6. Rejection of reincarnation (e.g. 27, 89, 112)
7. Rejection of leaders, status

Cons:

- A. Not a single mention of pleasure, and only one mention of 'my soul gave **pain**' in (28)
- B. Thomas doesn't bother at all with any cosmogony of any kind, which fits with rejecting anything on the outside. I find the Epictetus idea of only caring for that which is in your control particularly strong in Thomas. Let's be honest, all ideas about any cosmogony are mere

opinions.

C. Desire is a twin pair: desire [] Noun masculine 99, Desire [] Verb 38, 47. I can't evaluate it in an Epicurean sense.

D. Nowt about friendship. Thomas' Quest is a lonely, utterly solitary one where it is even strongly recommended to avoid everyone (64, 65).

E. Knowledge comes from empiricism by oneself about oneself inside oneself. It's the only knowledge of use, and when devoid of it you are doomed, and dead

Da bomb:

1. [Nothing Can Be Created From Nothing.](#)
2. The Universe Is Infinite In Size And Eternal In Time And Has No Gods Over It.
3. The Nature of Gods Contains Nothing That Is Inconsistent With Incorruption And Blessedness.
4. [Death Is Nothing To Us.](#)
5. [There Is No Necessity To Live Under The Control Of Necessity.](#)
6. He Who Says "Nothing Can Be Known" Knows Nothing.
7. All Sensations Are "True."
8. [Virtue Is Not Absolute Or An End In Itself - All Good And Evil Consists In Sensation.](#)
9. [Pleasure is The Guide of Life.](#)
10. By "Pleasure" We Mean All Experience That Is Not Painful
11. [Life Is Desirable, But Unlimited Time Contains No Greater Pleasure Than Limited Time.](#)

The above are all left unaddressed by Thomas. I get the impression (and cherish the stealth desire LOL) that most of these are reactions by Epicurus. If I'm correct that the Sea represents all schools of thought, Thomas simple wipes the entire table clean. He is a radical revolutionary interested in nothing but his own empiricism about himself - and as such hardly can be compared to full Epicureanism, I reckon.

Still: there are parallels, and Thomas most definitely is no signboard for anything in particular

A last one: Thomas shows us how to become Son of Man, Child of the Human (106) - it is the closest to the father that we will ever come. Free of our 'garments', free from the yoke of Ego and Self, free from that hobble that limited our movement (23). Free from shame and fear. Free from our slaveowner the Ego. No rules, no plans, no paths. No worries, no virtues, no higher goals

This is my first thread. Feel free to use the red pen and I will happily comply! I've gone by most of the introductory material in all kinds of aspects, but you never know...

This is it. I'll eagerly await any reactions. So far I haven't been able to link Thomas to anything in particular

Post by "Cassius" of February 5, 2026 at 11:34 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2069-you-will-not-taste-death-jesus-and-epicureanism-gospel-of-thomas-thread/>

(ADMIN NOTE) -- I moved two new posts over into this thread. For the time being let's keep the discussion of the Gospel of Thomas here in one place where people can best follow it. There is clearly some interest in this topic, but it's hard to assess the direction it will go, and we don't want a deep dive into this to disrupt the rest of the forum. This way, if some people want to simply "ignore" this thread, they can use the forum settings to do so.

Post by “Eikadistes” of February 5, 2026 at 11:54 AM

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

[Quote from mlinssen](#)

Never take anyone's word for anything, and solely judge for yourself

I've come to the same conclusion with regards to translations. I've found that many of our translation of classical texts come from stuffy British lords in the late 19th-century, whose contributions are excellent, reliable, and educational, yet still inject their own linguistic limitations.

... if I read ONE more translation with "in this wise", **BY ZEUS** ... 🤪

Not that they are *wrong*, just incomplete, or in need of an update for modern ears, or in need of a review by people (100+ years later) who benefit from a vast repository of educational resources.

In that regard, I really appreciate your angle. (Also, great style. You have a strong literary voice).

[Quote from mlinssen](#)

Pros:

1. Rejection of religion
2. Rejection of the proverbial pot of gold
3. Indifference to gods
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E. Knowledge comes from empiricism by oneself about oneself inside oneself. It's the only knowledge of use, and when devoid of it you are doomed, and dead

Display More

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).

I do see similarities, perhaps more so than with logocentric *John*, or the synoptic gospels.

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).

Tonally, I observe a contrast against Epicurean texts. *Thomas* relies heavily on (what I think Epíkouros 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*. Epíkouros 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").

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'm also curious on your thoughts on the influence the author of *Thomas* might have had against mystical currents that would later develop into christian "heretics" and Persian mystical sects that are sometimes loosely referred to as "Gnostic" (or, at that, if "Gnostic" is even a useful identifier).

Overall, great job. I'm going to continue reviewing because I am unfamiliar with much of this.

Post by "Cassius" of February 5, 2026 at 11:57 AM

[Quote from mlinssen](#)

Thomas rejects any and all reincarnation and afterlife.

Ok so that's a big one. So there is no eternal soul?

[Quote from mlinssen](#)

Anti-Judaism is a great distraction in Thomas.

Without being graphic, what's the general basis of this criticism. We know that Diogenes of Oinoanda is critical as well based on what appears to be general ethics, but what's the general basis of this criticism?

[Quote from mlinssen](#)

The Rock points to Yahweh and is described as dry and shallow, whereas the Acacias nilotica (one of 10 possible choices for the word 'thorn'!) points to the multi-deities of Egypt, and the singular worm to Apophis who indeed eats them every night when Ra travels through the sky with all other deities

So are the deities of Thomas the creators of the universe? Are they active in human affairs at all?

[Quote from mlinssen](#)

1. Rejection of religion
2. Rejection of the proverbial pot of gold
3. Indifference to gods
4. A stress on (autonomous!) movement and action
5. Rejection of everything outside, and sole focus on the inside
6. Rejection of reincarnation (e.g. 27, 89, 112)
7. Rejection of leaders, status

Display More

Most of that sounds parallel but the references to "outside" and "inside" seem a little unclear (?)

[Quote from mlinssen](#)

I find the Epictetus idea of only caring for that which is in your control particularly strong in Thomas. Let's be honest, all ideas about any cosmogony are mere opinions.

As for that last part I would say that Epicurus would strongly disagree, so this would be a major point of difference.

[Quote from mlinssen](#)

Now about friendship. Thomas' Quest is a lonely, utterly solitary one where it is even strongly recommended to avoid everyone (64, 65).

Yes that sounds highly incompatible, and indicates something much more "dark" than I would say Epicurus would approve of. But to understand that would require more definition of whatever positive side Thomas was promoting, and I am not clear on his positive teaching at this point.

[Quote from mlinssen](#)

A last one: Thomas shows us how to become Son of Man, Child of the Human (106) - it is the closest to the father that we will ever come. Free of our 'garments', free from the yoke of Ego and Self, free from that hobble that limited our movement (23). Free from shame and fear. Free from our slaveowner the Ego. No rules, no plans, no paths. No worries, no virtues, no higher goals

This sounds like it's going in an eastern "nihilist" / ascetic direction that I'd say Epicurus would strongly disapprove of, because Epicurus is clearly promoting something that he believes qualifies as "happiness." What did Thomas promote?

Post by “DaveT” of February 5, 2026 at 9:12 PM

My own research on the peer reviewed research on the mythology of a historical Jesus, in addition to the questions of the accuracy of translations, I'm not even clear whether Thomas existed as a historical person.

Indeed, the line of thought that the Jesus narrative of the early Christian narrative copies so many concepts of various regional religions, I would not be surprised that the early Greek and Roman Christians took Epicurus into account before they settled on an agreeable account narrative of Jesus up to and at the Council of Nicea and continuing for the millennia that followed.

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.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2069-you-will-not-taste-death-jesus-and-epicureanism-gospel-of-thomas-thread/>

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 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 ⲭⲓⲛⲓⲥ; l. ⲱⲛⲓ

11 ⲱⲛⲓⲥ; l. ⲱⲛⲓ

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 Epíkouros 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. Epíkouros 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

Post by “mlinssen” of February 6, 2026 at 11:15 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Ok so that's a big one. So there is no eternal soul?

29. IS said if indeed the Flesh has come to be because of Spirit, a wonder is <the flesh>; if indeed Spirit However because of the Body, a wonder [of wonder] is <the Body>. Rather, I myself wonder this one: Ho[w] did [this] great richness dwell in this poverty?

87. he said, viz. IS: a Miserable one [is] the Body which <is> hanging of a Body, and a M[i]serable is the Soul which <is> hanging of these ones both [to]gether

112. IS said: woe to the Flesh, this one who is hanging of the Soul! woe to the Soul, this one who is hanging of the Flesh!

[Quote from Cassius](#)

[Quote from mlinssen](#)

Anti-Judaism is a great distraction in Thomas.

Without being graphic, what's the general basis of this criticism. We know that Diogenes of Oinoanda is critical as well based on what appears to be general ethics, but what's the general basis of this criticism?

I'm unsure whether you are referring to my claim that it is a distraction, or whether it concerns my label of anti-Judaism. Please see my previous comment to Eukadistes regarding the rejection of religious customs: if we presume that religion to be Judaism (which I think is certainly fair to do), then these are the basic anti-Judaisms in Thomas (Logia 6, 14, 104). To those, he adds:

27. in case you do not Fast to the World, you will not fall onto the kingdom; in case you do not make the Sabbath into Father's Day (sAB'BATH), you will not behold the father

43. they said to him, viz. his Disciples: who thou? thou say these ones to us. in these: I say them to you, and you do not understand who myself <is>. Rather, you yourselves came to be in the manner of the/those Judeans: they love the tree, they hate his Fruit; and they love the Fruit, they hate the tree

52. his Disciples said to him: twenty four Prophets spoke in Israel, and they all spoke in thee. he said to them: you dismissed him who is alive within your presence, and you spoke concerning them who are dead

53. his Disciples said to him: is the circumcision Useful Or no? he said to them: were he Useful, their father would beget them from their mother circumcised. Rather, the true circumcision in Spirit found all usefulness

85. IS said: Adam has come to be from a great Power, with a gre[at] richness, and he did not come to be [he is w]orthy of you. Had they been Worthy Indeed he [would have taken taste] not of the death

88. IS said: the Messengers <are> coming toward you with the Prophets, and they will give to you them who you have; and yourselves likewise you give them from your hand to them and you say it to you: what day, <on> which they are coming, and they take him who is theirs

(In Coptic there only are pointers to masculine or feminine nouns. The word 'it' doesn't exist, there is no neuter class. He-who can be taken to translate to that-which but wholly depends on interpretation when the referent itself is not present. I default to he-who)

102. IS said[: w]oe to them, the Pharisees! they rese[mble a] dog who sleeps upon the manger of [some] oxen: he Neither eats Nor [permits] the oxen to eat

(This is a perfect example of an anti-Judaism that *purely* is a distraction. What lesson possibly is to learn from this?!)

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So are the deities of Thomas the creators of the universe? Are they active in human affairs at all?

There are none at all. Here are the two logia that mention 'god':

30. IS said: the place <where> there are three gods, some gods are therein; the place <where> there are two Or one; I myself am existing with him

100. they showed IS a gold, and said to him: they who <are> counting to Caesar demand of us the taxes. he said to them: give those of Caesar to Caesar, give those of the god to the god, and he who mine is you give him to m

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Most of that sounds parallel but the references to "outside" and "inside" seem a little unclear (?)

The kingdom is of your inside, and of your eye - that last word is a homonym and could be interpreted to mean 'outside', but that doesn't square with the outright (hah!) rejection of outside:

40. IS said a vine of grape, they planted her **within the outside part of the father**, and she <is> not made strong - they will tear her out at her root and she is lost

64. ... the slaveowner# said to his slave: **go to the outside part, to the paths ...**

89. IS said: **because of what do you wash the outside part of the Cup**, do you not Perceive: he who has created the inside part, he <is> also he who has created the outside part

99. the Disciples said to him: **thy brothers with thy mother <are> standing to their feet on the outside part**. he said to them: they of these places who do the desire of my father; these ones are my brothers with my mother; themselves will go inward to the kingdom of my father

[Quote from Cassius](#)

[Quote from mlinssen](#)

I find the Epictetus idea of only caring for that which is in your control particularly strong in Thomas. Let's be honest, all ideas about any cosmogony are mere opinions.

As for that last part I would say that Epicurus would strongly disagree, so this would be a major point of difference.

That "all ideas about any cosmogony are mere opinions" was my personal note, please ignore - apologies

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Yes that sounds highly incompatible, and indicates something much more "dark" than I would say Epicurus would approve of. But to understand that would require more definition of whatever positive side Thomas was promoting, and I am not clear on his positive teaching at this point.

To be honest, Thomas is not teaching anything "positive". He is critical, fierce, sarcastic, biting, rejects pretty much everything there is to reject. Yeah, "love your brother" is one, but then who's that? Nope, Thomas most certainly is very dark, yes

[Quote from Cassius](#)

[Quote from mlinssen](#)

A last one: Thomas shows us how to become Son of Man, Child of the Human (106) - it is the closest to the father that we will ever come. Free of our 'garments', free from the yoke of Ego and Self, free from that hobble that limited our movement (23). Free from shame and fear. Free from our slaveowner the Ego. No rules, no plans, no paths. No worries, no virtues, no higher goals

This sounds like it's going in an eastern "nihilist" / ascetic direction that I'd say Epicurus would strongly disapprove of, because Epicurus is clearly promoting something that he believes qualifies as "happiness." What did Thomas promote?

Anti-everything, pretty much. It's funny but at this very point of writing this, this is slowly sinking in - and it's really not so very funny at all. I'll have to come back to this later on

Post by “mlinssen” of February 6, 2026 at 11:23 AM

[Quote from DaveT](#)

My own research on the peer reviewed research on the mythology of a historical Jesus, in addition to the questions of the accuracy of translations, I'm not even clear whether Thomas existed as a historical person.

When we simply go by the evidence, there are no signs of any Jesus nor Thomas at all whatsoever. Thomas could be excused of course, whereas Jesus - but let's not wander off 😊

If you're interested in some very interesting research, I recommend Markus Vinzent and David Trobisch, who follow the Patristic writings. If we take all the Christian dating at face value (since we don't have any evidence for the existence of these next two people either), all of the New Testament must have become written in between 155-165 CE, when Justin Martyr certainly attests to no Epistles at all, and no Gospels at all, and 175 CE, when Irenaeus' Adversus Haereses suddenly names almost all 27 books, even though he orders the Gospels by John, Luke, Matthew and Marc

Yet, again, I consider these wholly off-topic for this thread

Post by “mIinssen” of February 6, 2026 at 12:05 PM

One last for now, on the positive things in Thomas or his teachings.

This is my summary, in my words. Some exaggeration, a pinch of mean, as support for the notion that all this is a matter of life and death really, to Thomas

We are dualised divided beings, separated, sick - and we need to Heal, become one again. For that we need to know our Selves, and we also must accept that this is the only Quest worthwhile: we are dead, all of us. Nothing else matters than this

From chosen we must become they who have chosen themselves: choose that the proverbial good great fish is an illusion, that all stories are fables, mere opinions.

Work on your fertile soil, don't be distracted by the Ego, continue to sow your seeds. Keep acting, remain in movement, and pursue

Let me close with the story that Thomas paints when we ignore all his warnings:

97. IS said: the kingdom of the [father] is comparable to a woman, she bears under a ja[r] full of flour. she walks [on a] beginning+, distant. the ear of the ja[r] broke, the flour poured after [her on] the beginning+. was she not knowing? did she not understand to toil? after that she split+ inward to her house, she placed the jar downward: she fell onto him empty

Notice the ambivalence, and the homonyms: the usual word is path here, homonymous with beginning - and everything goes wrong in and on either.

The woman indeed bears under the jar instead of embracing it. The ear malfunctions, oh my, disaster will ensue! The flour pours out, on the path of course. Did she not understand how to toil? Nothing comes for free, and in order to save your skin you must toil, hard, consistently.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2069-you-will-not-taste-death-jesus-and-epicureanism-gospel-of-thomas-thread/>

She approaches her house (and house is our illusion of our self, our inside, just as the World is our illusion of our outside) and evidently she will split there, after all this mayhem.

And then, suddenly, only at the end, the dumb ignorant woman discovers that the jar is empty. Yup, that's what you get when you don't pay attention!

There 😏