

carpets and textiles that they echo, and possibly inspire in turn, tell us about the less overtly theological aspects of what Talgam prefers to call 'faiths' rather than religions, religious traditions, beliefs or practices? Talgam's rich collection of mosaics could now serve for a second complementary study that would investigate not why aniconism, but why geometry. Such a question would also distract us from the current erroneous association of Islamic culture with iconoclasm, and offer those interested in pursuing questions of commonality a truly shared visual world, and one that would go from strength to strength over time in all the traditions that she explores – namely, that of geometric design.

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The Gospel of Thomas. Introduction and commentary. By Simon Gathercole. (Texts and Editions for New Testament Study, 11.) Pp. xii + 723. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2014. €193. 978 90 04 19041 2; 1574 7085

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With competence on the *Gospel of Thomas* already established through previous publications (for example *The composition of the Gospel of Thomas: original language and influences*, 2012), Gathercole has herewith produced what is now the most important English-language commentary on this much-discussed text. It is a major work, both in size and contents, and will now be a key resource in all future scholarly analysis of *Thomas*. His aim, expressed in his preface, is simply 'to understand the meaning of the sayings of *Thomas* in its second-century historical context' (p. ix), giving thereby advance indication of when he situates the composition of the text.

The 183-page introduction (organised in twelve chapters) addresses all the questions about the origins and nature of the text: manuscripts (both Greek and Coptic), named references to a *Gospel of Thomas*, early references to the contents of *Gospel of Thomas* the original language (Gathercole opting for Greek *contra* proposals for a Semitic original), the provenance (after weighing various proposals, he sagely judges that 'we do not really know'), the date of composition (various evidence supports a date before 200 CE and after 135 CE, which he notes rules out both an apostolic and a Manichaean authorship of this pseudonymous text), the structure (granting that the *Gospel of Thomas* is 'not a particularly carefully ordered collection or list' of material, nevertheless, he notes that there is an introductory prologue, and numerous word or subject links between pairs or small clusters of sayings, and he finds 'a much greater proportion of links than one would conventionally find in a piece of literature'). As to the *genre* of *Thomas*, Gathercole concludes that it is a mixture of 'Gospel' and sentence/chreia collection, finding Kelber's view of the text as a 'sayings Gospel' appropriate. Gathercole rejects various proposals that the *Gospel of Thomas* was formed in some sort of rolling recensional process, and judges that it was composed pretty much as we have it in the Coptic translation at some point in the second century CE.

The longest chapter of the introduction is rightly given to 'the religious outlook' of the text (pp. 144–75). Gathercole finds the fundamental emphasis of *Thomas* to be 'soteriology', declared explicitly from the opening words about finding life through interpreting aright the sayings that follow. Gathercole lays out the main

themes of the text: 'the Father' (mentioned twenty-one times but 'hardly a *character* at all'), 'the Kingdom' ('a pre-existent, paradisaical realm of light'), 'Creation and the Fall' (a tragic disruption of 'a primordial unity'), 'the World' (*Thomas* exhibiting a certain ambiguity in the theme), 'the Body' (a somewhat similar ambiguity, but on the whole 'a more negative perspective'), 'the History of Israel' (only 'brief allusions' and all negative), 'Jesus and Revelation' (Jesus/Christology prominent, his role as revealer 'central'), 'Self-knowledge' ('a central theme', 'an extraordinary density of "knowing" vocabulary' for such a short work), and 'Salvation' (self-knowledge the 'necessary condition for salvation', with 'a strong emphasis on text and textual interpretation as precondition for salvation').

In the ensuing section of the chapter, Gathercole discusses 'the practice of discipleship' in *Thomas*, the aim of which is 'self-union' in which the 'new, or true, person within' supersedes 'the external physical person'. Associated with this motif is the theme of 'gender union', the transcending of male/female, categories treated in *Thomas* as part of the human plight. The soteriology of *Thomas* also involves 'christological union', the incorporation of the elect persons 'into Jesus himself', although he finds the 'precise nature of this union' elusive. It is clear that *Thomas* requires 'radical self-denial', but Gathercole judges that celibacy is not required, though it is 'the (strongly) *commended* life'.

He next considers the critical attitude in *Thomas* toward 'rivals': Judaism and 'the wider Christian movement which does not follow *Thomas*'. He rejects proposals that the text emanates from a Jewish-Christian ethos, noting that in *Thomas* neither Jesus nor his disciples are presented as Jews. Over against the wider Christian movement of its time *Thomas* presents teachings 'as soteriological conditions', thereby excluding 'non-Thomasine Christians', and exhibiting 'an uncompromising stance towards its rivals'. In a final part of the chapter, Gathercole considers whether *Thomas* is a 'gnostic' text, concluding that it is 'difficult to pin down' and align with 'other known works and movements'.

One of the questions much discussed in previous scholarship on *Thomas* is its relationship to the New Testament Gospels and to the historical Jesus, and Gathercole here reiterates his argument (previously published) that the text shows 'extensive' influence from the Synoptic Gospels. He also notes the chronological and cultural distance from the Galilean Jesus. But he grants that in principle some of the distinctive sayings in the text might comprise 'authentic *agrapha*'. All through this extensive introduction, Gathercole displays an irenic attitude, and gives cogent reasons for his judgements. Moreover, at some points, as in his discussion of the individual *logia*, he is commendably candid in admitting that a confident judgement is not possible.

In his commentary on the *logia* he considers both the Greek (where extant) and the Coptic forms. He weighs scholarly proposals about meanings, and, where he can do so, strives for a judgement. There is no sense of pushing some agenda, however, or trying to coerce the text in any way. Instead, we have a rich, reasonable and impressively informed treatment of the 114 sayings of this fascinating text. I was surprised, however, that in his discussion of the notoriously esoteric Greek form of Logion 30, 'lift the stone and you will find me there, split the wood/tree and there I am', Gathercole does not note that in early Christian parlance τὸ ξύλον can often refer to Jesus' cross (likely influenced by an early

Christological appropriation of Deuteronomy xxi.23, as, for example, in Galatians iii.13; Acts v.30; x.39; xiii.29; 1 Peter ii.24 *et al.*). Given that the Greek form of the saying twice uses the definite article *the* stone and *the* tree/wood, I wonder if there is more to consider than the options he cites: 'pantheistic' or 'omnipresence' or 'perpetual presence of Jesus' (which may more readily be posited for the form and placement of this strange saying in the Coptic text at Logion 77).

I was also a bit surprised to find his frequent references to a 'Thomas movement'. To be sure, there were readers of the text (as reflected in the early Greek fragments of several copies of it). But did these readers comprise a 'movement', a term that I take as connoting some group identity? Or were they simply self-identifying elitist individuals, perhaps in touch with others of a similar mentality, but hardly forming any organised 'movement'?

These queries notwithstanding, Gathercole has produced a work that is exemplary in all that we ask for in a scholarly introduction and commentary on a text. A fifty-five-page bibliography, and indices of text citations and modern scholars complete this excellent (albeit prohibitively expensive) volume.

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Jews and Christians in the first and second centuries. How to write their history. Edited by Peter J. Tomson and Joshua Schwartz. (Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum, 13.) Pp. xii + 550 incl. 20 figs. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2014. €172. 978 90 04 27839 4; 1877 4970
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According to the editors, the fundamental premise behind this collection of essays, which consists of papers delivered at a conference in the Jewish Museum in Brussels in September 2011, is the view that Judaism and Christianity cannot be treated as two separate entities in the first two centuries CE. 'Thus the birth and unfolding of Christianity represents a major development within Second Temple Judaism ... Similarly, the emergence of rabbinic Judaism concerns a development of prime importance for the history of Christianity and should not be treated as an event on the margins or periphery of church history' (p. 4). Important as a unifying factor in this history is the Roman Empire, whose impact upon the lives of Jews and Christians, manifested in particular in the three Jewish revolts of the period running from 66 to 135 CE, has to be kneaded into any account of this complex history.

The volume divides itself into three parts. Part 1, 'Varieties of Judaism and Christianity in late Second Temple Judaism', consists of four essays. Paula Fredriksen discusses a number of what she takes to be ill-conceived assumptions which adversely affect our understanding of Paul's Jewish identity. Eyal Regev examines Judaism in the period preceding 70, highlighting its sectarian character and the controversies surrounding understandings of the temple. Baudouin Decharnaux shows how Philo's depiction of the Carabas affair in the late 30s, which sparks off a crisis in Jewish-Gentile relations in Alexandria, betrays an ideology in which a variety of senses of order, imperial, natural and cosmological, play a significant part. Huub van de Sandt explores approaches to purity in three New Testament writings (Jude, James and Hebrews). While all these writings use