

On Tuesday the 21st, September 2010, BBC FOUR aired “The Lost Gospels.” I was one of the talking heads. The presenter was an interesting fellow, an Anglican priest Pete Owen Jones. The show included several on-location discourses. They flew me to Egypt for the taping. Some of it was done near the village of Nag Hammadi, at the spot where the so-called “Nag Hammadi Library” was discovered in 1945. The fourteen books found in a jar in this wilderness area contain 52 tractates, the famous “Gnostic Gospels.” The most famous of these was and is the Gospel of Thomas. The clip here includes a shot in a busy market in Cairo, where we are sipping coffee and thinking deep thoughts together.

In the clip I talk about the Gospel of Thomas, and I would like to make one point before you watch it. For over a decade now a lot of scholars of Gnosticism have argued that this Gospel is not actually a Gnostic Gospel. None of the complicated Gnostic mythology that describes the divine realm or the coming into existence of this material realm can be found in Thomas, and so, in this judgment, if anyone reads the Gospel as a Gnostic text, they are reading Gnosticism *into* the Gospel instead of out of it.

I resisted this view for a long time. But the more I’ve studied the matter, read the texts, and worked on the Gospel of Thomas — especially over the past two years — the more it has started to make sense to me. Today I would not say what I emphatically state in this clip, that Thomas is (definitely) a Gnostic Gospel. Instead, now I would say that Thomas certainly can be *read* in a Gnostic way (presupposing all that Gnostic mythology), and that it certainly *was* read in this way in antiquity (it is found in a codex with other texts that clearly are Gnostic, which makes me think that the compiler of the codex read it in a Gnostic way). But whether its author himself was Gnostic or meant the text to be read Gnostically is something that I don’t think we can say.

The BCC would not allow the following video documentary to be posted publically on Bart’s YouTube Channel, where it can only be viewed for limited and segmented educational purposes.

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