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## **Jesus Sayings and Gospel Literature**

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The information about the apostle Bartholomew in the Synoptic lists and about Nathanael of Cana in Jn 1:45–51, already in antiquity led to interest in the identity of these two figures. They were mutually identified as a single character on the basis of the presumed common link with Philip. Although ancient sources attest many other identifications for Nathanael, the one with Bartholomew has always been at the heart of the interest of modern critics, who closely analyzed its historical plausibility, even more than the reasons why, and ways in which, it might have been produced, and firmly established. After a broad presentation of the ancient testimonies, this paper focuses on the different positions of modern scholars, and finally brings some methodological conclusions: on the one side, sources external to the New Testament are indispensable for understanding the data transmitted within it. On the other side, the problem of the actual historical reliability of the information conveyed by the ancient authors and works must be clearly distinct from that of their “internal” literary understanding and their own interpretation of facts and events.

*Keywords:* Bartholomew, Nathanael, History of Exegesis, Jesus Disciples, Gospel Harmonies.

Andrea Annese, <i>Il Vangelo secondo Tommaso e il platonismo. Considerazioni in margine a un recente volume</i> .....	61
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This article aims to scrutinize the hypothesis, proposed by some researchers, of Platonic or Platonizing influences in the Gospel of Thomas. The observations developed here are primarily stimulated by Ivan Miroshnikov’s recent volume, *The Gospel of Thomas and Plato. A Study of the Impact of Platonism on the “Fifth Gospel”* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). After summarizing Miroshnikov’s theses, this article presents a series of observations in dialogue with them and other studies. The issue of the extent and character of possible Platonic influences on the Fifth Gospel will be examined, as well as the diffusion and reception of philosophical doctrines in a given cultural context (from the viewpoint of historical-religious trajectories), in particular in early Syriac Christian context.

*Keywords:* Gospel of Thomas, Platonism, Ivan Miroshnikov, Edessa, Syriac Christianity.

Milan Vukomanović, <i>The Provenance of the Gospel of Thomas: Assessing the Syrian Hypothesis</i> .....	79
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The question of the provenance of the *Gospel of Thomas* raises a rather disturbing ambiguity that may seriously challenge a long-held consensus regarding *Thomas*' Syrian origin. Both versions of the document (in Greek and Coptic) were found in Egypt, and there is no extant Syriac text or fragment that could conclusively confirm the Syrian phase of transmission of this "gospel." Nevertheless, the conviction of scholars as to the eastern Syrian birthplace of our document is still adamant. This view was rarely disputed during the 20th century, after having gained almost instant confirmation among the most renowned scholars in the field. In this paper, I dispute the most frequent arguments employed by advocates of the Syrian origin of *Thomas*: 1) the argument based upon the triple name of the apostle Thomas (i.e. Didymus Judas Thomas); 2) the argument based on parallels with Syrian Christian documents; 3) the linguistic argument.

*Keywords:* Gospel of Thomas, Eastern Syria, Gnosticism, Early Christianity, Thomas Didymus.

Federico Adinolfi, <i>Il Vangelo dei Segni e i suoi predecessori. La Sēmeia-Quelle come rilettura post-70 di Marco e di Q [Il parte]</i> .....	109
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In this final part of a two-part essay an attempt is made to identify the most plausible historical context and the socio-religious matrix in which the Johannine Signs Gospel took shape. The essay argues that the document is the product of a Jesuanic-Baptist group of southern origin, whose distinctive memory of Jesus as a baptizer and miracle-worker in Judaea was subsequently expanded, through contact with the Gospel of Mark and its Galilean tradition, into a full-blown missionary gospel with one single purpose: to demonstrate that Jesus is the awaited royal and prophetic Messiah who, as shown by his powerful signs, is able to rebuild the Temple and restore the nation after the catastrophe of 70 C.E.

*Keywords:* Signs Gospel, Baptist groups, Temple rebuilding, Gospel of John, Sayings Source Q.

## Early and Late Antique Christianity

Antonio Cacciari, <i>Variazioni sul tema del "sostituzionismo" in età protocristiana: lo Pseudo-Barnaba</i> .....	149
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Starting from a controversial passage in the Epistle of Barnabas (IV, 6), this paper seeks to demonstrate that: a) the reading offered by Codex Sinaiticus (8) is supported by morphology and syntax, as well as by the historical context of the Epistle of Barnabas; and b) the dispute about the "covenant" regards Judaism, rather than Judaizing Christians.

*Keywords:* Epistle of Barnabas, Judaism, Covenant, Supersessionism, Proselytism.

Gaetano Spampinato, <i>Profeti, martiri e "ipocriti". Funzioni e ruoli sociali nel montanismo delle origini</i> .....	161
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In this article I examine the roles and social functions of some figures of early Phrygian Montanism, analyzing the polemical sources that report them—in particular, those sources quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea in the *Ecclesiastical History* when dealing with the birth and spread of the "New prophecy." Although prophets play a central role in the movement, other figures (such as the martyrs-confessors Alexander and Themiso, the administrator Theodotus, etc.) seem to have a precise function too, in different forms. One, for example, consists of

offering their support to the prophets—also, but not exclusively, in a “physical” manner. This role appears in some descriptions of attempted refutations of Montanist prophets, where the anti-Montanists opponents are sent away by these figures.

*Keywords:* Montanism, Prophecy, Phrygia, Montanist martyrs, Prophetic interpretation.

## Modern Jewish Interpretation of Jesus

Miriam Benfatto, *Da “Yeshu” al Gesù ebreo. La rivalutazione ebraica di Gesù tra filosofia e ricerca storica* 185

This essay presents some representations of the figure of Jesus in Jewish philosophical and historical production of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and their connection with the modern Jewish attempt to negotiate a place in “western” society. This paper will present some particular Jewish portraits of Jesus from medieval religious and apologetic literature. It will then present an analysis of examples taken from philosophical and historical literature in which the image of Jesus acquires clearly positive and exemplary traits. A link is drawn between the re-evaluation and, in a sense, the re-appropriation of the figure of Jesus, and the creation of the modern and multiple Jewish “identities.”

*Keywords:* Reclaiming Jesus, Jewish Enlightenment, Jewish Jesus, Wissenschaft des Judentums, Jewish Historiography.

## On Jonathan Z. Smith

Marianna Ferrara, *Magical Persistence. Rethinking the Vedic Taxonomy of Wisdom with Jonathan Z. Smith’s Approach to Alterity and Canon* ..... 209

In the essay *In Comparison a Magic Dwells* (1979/1982), J.Z. Smith discusses the problems of comparison and analyzes the limits of standard models applied in the study of religions: how to compare, what one can compare, and, above all, which comparison is adequate for the history of religions? Starting from these methodological questions, this article will deal with magic as an abstract notion for the interpretation of textual canons in the religious traditions of ancient India, especially as concerns the alleged exclusion and late inclusion of the “fourth Veda” in the mainstream of tradition. This article will redescribe the construction of the Vedic canon, adopting Smith’s proposal to consider “magic” as “just one possibility in any given culture’s rich vocabulary of alterity” (*Trading Places*, 1992/1995, 221) and “canon” as “one form of a basic cultural process of limitation and of overcoming that limitation through ingenuity” (*Sacred persistence: Toward a redescription of canon*, 1977/1982, 52).

*Keywords:* J.Z. Smith, Comparison, Atharvaveda, Magic, Canon.

## Discussion of Books

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