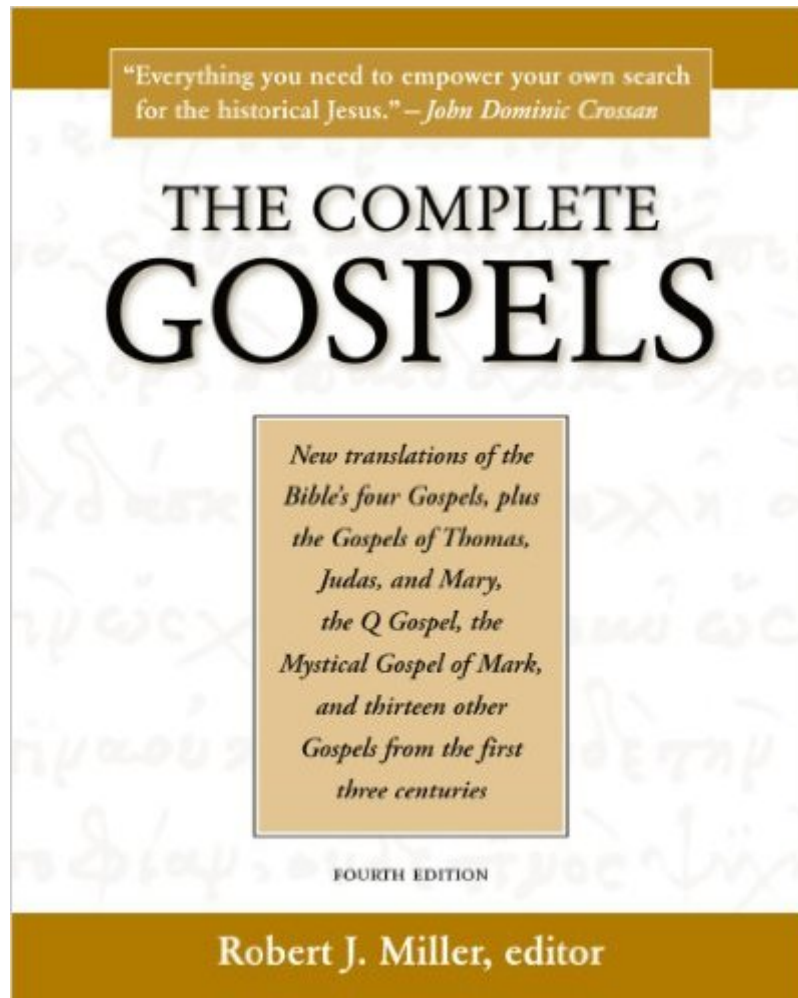


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The Complete Gospels, 4th Edition



Synopsis

The Complete Gospels is the first publication ever to collect the canonical gospels and their extracanonical counterpoints under one cover. The selected extracanonical gospels date from the first and second centuries, are independent of the canonical gospels, and significantly contribute to our understanding of the developments in the Jesus tradition leading up to and surrounding the New Testament gospels. Two additional texts, the Gospel of Judas and the Gospel of the Savior, and a new text of Q are found in this fourth edition. Each gospel begins with an introduction that sets the text in its ancient and historical contexts and discusses the overall structure and central themes. Cross references point out the numerous parallel passages, intratextual indicators, and thematic parallels so the reader can see how the individual passages of a gospel fit into the rich tapestry of Jewish and early Christian texts. Notes explain important translation issues, supply necessary background information, offer guidance to difficult passages, and honestly indicate problems in the text or in our understanding of them. This volume is the premier publication of the Scholars Version translation of the gospels a fresh translation from the original languages into living American English that is entirely free of ecclesiastical control. The Scholars Version intentionally drops the pretense that academics have all the answers. It strives to avoid both talking down, and over the heads of readers. The goal is to make these fascinating texts intelligible and inviting to all who want to study them.

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Customer Reviews

The Complete Gospels is a collection of the four gospels of the New Testament and other (what I would call) protognostic texts, perhaps including books with which we're so unfamiliar with their origin, composition, date etc. that we are unsure how to categorize. The editors of this work, the Jesus Seminar, would not quite define this work in those terms. In their own words they agree this book is "the first publication to include both the canonical gospels and their principal extracanonical counterparts under one cover" (3). While I think this rather begs the question, I will mention this briefly later in my critique. The works themselves met three requirements. First, the books chosen were to have dates from the first and second centuries (however, we don't know the dates of any of the writings. While estimation for some is better than others, some are almost pure guesswork and rely on certain presuppositions about what is considered a 'Jesus tradition' cf. the dating of the Gospel of Thomas). Second, the editors wanted the selected works to be "more or less independent" of the canonical gospels and also to contain much material not gotten from them. Third, works were selected which "significantly" contributes to the understanding of precanonical Jesus traditions before and after the canonical gospels. Also included are works for which we have no empirical evidence for, including the Signs Gospel and Q. These writings also stem from Jesus Seminar presuppositions - being that rather extensive written material would have had to exist to form the canonical gospels. Of course this leads to the question of the dating of the gospels themselves and we also find that naturalistic presuppositions lie behind the dating of a gospel.

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