

Essay on Non-Canonical Books:
The Gospel of Thomas

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Noncanonical writings are Christian documents that are not found in the New Testament. The word canon comes from the Hebrew word *qaneh*, which means reed or rod. Meaning to measure to something. When it came to scriptures, a book was canonical based on the adherence to well defined principles and complex rules. Some rules for canonization include, the document had to have been written before 400 B.C., it had to be from inspiration and the book had to be written by an apostle or prophet. Noncanonical writings included prayers, poetry and revelatory texts.

The gospel of Thomas is a noncanonical writing. This text was discovered in the Nag Hammadi library in 1945. It was published in English by 1977. This text dates back to 135 CE to 200 CE. Scholars are not certain when this book was written. The gospel of Thomas is comprised of 114 sayings of Jesus. This book has been called Gnostic based on secret or hidden knowledge that could lead someone to salvation and that Jesus behaves differently in this gospel than he does in the canonical gospels. In this book, Jesus gives strange advice and there is no evidence of his crucifixion and resurrection. Therefore, some scholars do not regard this book as useful. Another problem with this book is that no one knows the nature of its source and they are not sure which person named Thomas wrote this book. Some scholars believe this book dates back to the second century.

This book did not pair well with the four gospels. This is probably the main reason this book did not get canonized. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were well known at the time and there probably was not room for a fifth book named Thomas. Also, the book of Thomas was not similar to the other gospels and did not have apostolic authority.