



# The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say? The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus

By Robert W. Funk

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Did Jesus claim to be the Messiah?  
Did he promise to return and usher in a new age?  
How did Jesus envision the Kingdom of God?

*The Five Gospels* answers these questions in a bold, dynamic work that will startle traditional readers of the Bible and rekindle interest in it among secular skeptics. In 1985 the Jesus Seminar, comprising a distinguished group of biblical scholars, was founded by Robert W. Funk. They embarked on a new translation and assessment of the gospels, including the recently discovered Gospel of Thomas. In pursuit of the historical Jesus, they used their collective expertise to determine the authenticity of more than fifteen hundred sayings attributed to him. Their remarkable findings appear in this book.

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### Editorial Review

#### From Library Journal

The Jesus Seminar, a group of scholars who have attempted to locate the authentic words of Jesus, made headlines two years ago by reporting that, of the entire Lord's Prayer as found in Matthew, the only words that could conclusively be attributed to Jesus are "Our Father." In this book they have published their results. This new translation of the four gospels, augmented by the noncanonical Gospel of Thomas, presents Jesus' words printed in colored code: red for words Jesus almost certainly spoke, pink for his probable locutions, gray for the less than likely, and black for the implausible. The translation itself is far more colloquial than most. More germane, though, is that the four levels of authenticity were determined by the casting of ballots, which the editors admit is problematic and represents the fundamental weakness of the book. Whether Jesus actually spoke certain words matters little in the long view of Christianity, making this book a theological curiosity and religiously superfluous.

- W. Alan Foggatt, Bridgewater, Ct.

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#### From [Booklist](#)

Based on the work of the Jesus Seminar, which brought together a group of biblical scholars, this new translation of and commentary on the five Gospels offers an answer to the perennial question, What did Jesus really say? The group not only surveyed all the surviving ancient texts for words attributed to Jesus, but also examined the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas. Then, juxtaposing the Synoptic Gospels against John and Thomas, the seminar scholars began a long and arduous process to see if they could discover which sayings are close to what Jesus said, which might have originated with Jesus, those that are not his (though the ideas may be), and those that were created by his followers or borrowed from folklore. The story of how the scholars put together this translation is fascinating in its own right, but even more so is the color-coded New Testament itself, bolstered by enlightening commentary that explains why and how category decisions were made. A strong addition to religion collections. *Ilene Cooper*

#### Review

"This book is a probing, penetrating, and deeply spiritual journey into the heart of the gospels. It brings to the reading public many of the issues that are commonplace among Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish scholars, and might well become the means whereby the secularized post-Christian world discovers its own deepest roots."--The Rt. Rev. John Shelby Spong, Episcopal bishop of Newark, author of "Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism""At a time when the airwaves were full of televangelists touting the New Testament as God-inspired, inerrant...and supportive of right-wing views, here was a channel for another viewpoint..."The Five Gospels "said it loud and proud."--"Time""The Jesus Seminar is simply one of the most exhilarating developments in the recent history of scholarly books on the New Testament."--"Publishers Weekly"

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