



Doubting Thomas

Glenn W. Most

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About the disciple known as Doubting Thomas, everyone knows at least this much: he stuck his finger into the risen Jesus' wounds. Or did he? A fresh look at the Gospel of John reveals how little we may really understand about this most perplexing of biblical figures, and how much we might learn from the strange twists and turns Thomas's story has taken over time.

From the New Testament, Glenn W. Most traces Thomas's permutations through the centuries: as Gnostic saint, missionary to India, paragon of Christian orthodoxy, hero of skepticism, and negative example of doubt, blasphemy, stupidity, and violence. Rife with paradoxes and tensions, these creative transformations at the hands of storytellers, theologians, and artists tell us a great deal about the complex relations between texts and their interpretations?and about faith, love, personal identity, the body, and twins, among other matters.

Doubting Thomas begins with a close reading of chapter 20 of the Gospel of John, set against the conclusions of the other Gospels, and ends with a detailed analysis of the painting of this subject by Caravaggio, setting it within the pictorial traditions of late antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. Along the way, Most considers narrative reactions to John's account by storytellers of various religious persuasions, and Christian theologians' interpretations of John 20 from the second century ad until the Counter-Reformation. His work shows how Thomas's story, in its many guises, touches upon central questions of religion, philosophy, hermeneutics, and, not least, life.

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