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Thomas and the Gospels: The Case for Thomas's Familiarity with the Synoptics. By Mark Goodacre. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012, x + 226 pp., \$39.00 paper.

Mark Goodacre has done it again. In much of his previous work Goodacre has taken on that juggernaut of Gospels scholarship, the pervasive theory of a single, written Q source behind the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. His book, *The Case Against Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), presents a clear and compelling refutation of the Q hypothesis by meticulously building the case for the alternative Farrer hypothesis: affirming Matthew and Luke's use of Mark, but arguing that the shared material of Matthew and Luke over against Mark is best explained by Luke's use of Matthew.

In *Thomas and the Gospels* Goodacre has taken on another emerging juggernaut of Gospels scholarship, the view that the *Gospel of Thomas* is an independent and early witness to the Jesus tradition. Goodacre's refutation of this hypothesis is just as meticulous, clear, and compelling as is his case against Q.

Goodacre begins with some "First Impressions." In this opening chapter he describes why the theory of Thomasine independence has gained such a following among scholars and summarizes many of the key arguments for the independence and antiquity of the *Gospel of Thomas*. Along the way he offers an alternative perspective on this evidence, showing that the arguments for Thomasine independence are weaker than they are normally made out to be.

Goodacre then builds his case for the familiarity of *Thomas* with the Synoptics by working through standard methods of source criticism. This means, first, exploring the “Verbatim Agreement between *Thomas* and the Synoptics” (chap. 2). Working primarily with the Greek Oxyrhynchus fragments and secondarily with accepted Greek retroversions of the Coptic Nag Hammadi text (Greeven and Bethge), Goodacre demonstrates that “there are frequent and extended verbatim parallels between *Thomas* and the Synoptic Gospels” (p. 44). Furthermore, Goodacre argues, these verbatim parallels are such that some kind of literary connection between *Thomas* and the Synoptics is the best explanation.

Yet establishing the likelihood of a literary link is only the first step; it does not on its own establish the direction of this link. Thus, in the next four chapters Goodacre works to demonstrate that these verbatim parallels are best explained by the familiarity of *Thomas* with the Synoptics.

Chapter 3 (“Diagnostic Shards”) introduces the method: searching for distinctive, redactional features of one text appearing in another. Goodacre patiently lays out how this method works and what we can legitimately expect from it, and he anticipates some counter-arguments for this evidence in *Thomas*. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on distinctive Matthean and Lukan redactional features respectively that are discernible in *Thomas*, and chapter 6 looks at a special case, *Gos. Thom.* 79 and Luke’s Gospel. While some of these examples are compelling on their own, such as Goodacre’s treatment of the “wheat and tares” parable (Matt 13:24–30; *Gos. Thom.* 57) and his special focus on the “womb and breasts” sayings (Luke 11:27–28; 23:27–31; *Gos. Thom.* 79), the cumulative case made from all of Goodacre’s examples seems unassailable: *Thomas* is indeed familiar with both Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels.

However, Goodacre is not finished. In the seventh chapter he focuses on the phenomenon of “The Missing Middle in *Thomas*,” reflecting one of Goodacre’s most distinctive contributions to Gospels source criticism. The idea is this: when one author takes over a story or saying from another, occasionally they leave out a middle segment, whether unintentionally in working with the prior material from memory, or intentionally as a way of abbreviating the prior material. An inadvertent side effect sometimes results, when the removal of this middle segment—the “missing middle”—produces a “continuity error” or other “inconcinnity,” an incongruous or even unintelligible feature in the story or saying. Goodacre gives several examples of this “missing middle” in *Thomas*. One such example is in *Gos. Thom. 57*, where the man in the “wheat and tares” parable speaks to an inexplicable “them”: no possible plural audience has been introduced in the story. A solution arises in comparison with Matthew’s version of the parable: the middle of the story from Matthew 13 is missing, in which “servants” are mentioned as the antecedent of “them.” *Thomas* has taken over the parable from Matthew (see above) and abbreviated it by removing the middle of the story, but the author has failed to change the pronoun “them” to make his version of the story work smoothly.

One of the most common arguments for the primitivity of *Thomas* and thus independence is the supposed “oral character” of the *Gospel of Thomas*. Goodacre addresses this issue in his next chapter (“Orality, Literacy, and *Thomas*”). He begins by providing a lengthy and helpfully nuanced discussion of orality and literacy as it relates to Christian origins and NT studies more broadly. Goodacre then assesses the “oral character” of *Thomas* in light of this discussion, concluding that the oft-discerned orality of *Thomas* is overblown (e.g. simplicity is not a sign of primitivity), and that many of these features are explainable by recognizing the genre of *Thomas*,

acknowledging the *Gospel of Thomas* for what it claims to be: a *written sayings* collection (*Gos. Thom.* 1).

In the ninth chapter Goodacre turns his attention to the date of the *Gospel of Thomas*. The latest possible date is relatively simple to establish: it can be no later than its earliest textual witness, c. AD 200 (P.Oxy. 1). Determining the earliest possible date for *Thomas* is more complex as it involves judgments regarding literary relationships, relative dates for source works, and significant historical events reflected in the text. Having demonstrated the familiarity of *Thomas* with the Synoptics, Goodacre discusses the dates for Mark, Matthew, and Luke, determining a post-AD 70 date for all three in subsequent order. The predictions of temple destruction are the key evidence here, and two sayings in *Thomas* provide additional elements not found in the Synoptic temple predictions: “I will destroy this house [the temple], *and no one will be able to build it*” (*Gos. Thom.* 71); and “But they [your persecutors] *will find no place at the place where they have persecuted you*” (*Gos. Thom.* 68). In these additional elements (italics mine), Goodacre sees evidence of a post-AD 135 period, after the failed Bar Kochba rebellion when it was apparent the temple would indeed remain desolate.

In a final chapter (“Secrecy, Authority, and Legitimation”) Goodacre explores how and why *Thomas* used the Synoptic Gospels. He argues that “*Thomas’s* use of the Synoptics is an authenticating device, a means by which the author can charge his newer, stranger material with an authenticity it derives by association with older, more familiar material” (p. 172). Goodacre makes a solid case here, drawing especially on the authorial self-representation in *Thomas’s* incipit and the particular way *Thomas* weaves together well-established Synoptic sayings with his own material. Thus “*Thomas* reinvents Jesus as the mysterious, enigmatic Living One who

sometimes sounds suspiciously like the Synoptic Jesus but who, in the end, is not the same man” (p. 191). Goodacre concludes with a short summary of the book, followed by a bibliography and indexes of authors, subjects, and ancient texts.

Thomas and the Gospels is a must-read for all Gospels scholars and graduate students of the Gospels, but evangelical Gospels scholars will be particularly interested in Goodacre’s case for use of the Synoptics in *Thomas*. As Goodacre notes in the opening chapter, “Several scholars who identify themselves as evangelicals are among those who argue for a later, dependent *Thomas*,” primarily for apologetic reasons (pp. 3–4). After all, an early and independent *Thomas* would be a witness to an early Christianity not grounded primarily in Jesus’ death and resurrection, the heart of early apostolic and historically evangelical theology (cf. 1 Cor 15:1–11). These evangelical scholars have an ally in Goodacre, made all the stronger because he does not share these evangelical, apologetic concerns but is instead motivated by the historical questions.

In summary, *Thomas and the Gospels* is meticulous in its argumentation and clear in its presentation. The result is a compelling case for the knowledge and use of the Synoptic Gospels in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Those who hope to make the case for the independence of the *Gospel of Thomas* from the Synoptics will now have a very hard row to hoe indeed.

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