

Thomas and the Gospels

Notes

Mark Goodacre 2012
And analysis over it



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getics.¹⁴ We should be wary of the notion, however, that a late or dependent *Thomas* always and inevitably proceeds from a conservative or apologetic scholarly stance. Assessing scholarly trends is rarely straightforward and it is frequently unhelpful. The easy categorizing of viewpoints into one camp or another can lead to summary dismissals and failure to study the evidence.

Scholars who propose a later date for *Thomas* are only Christian Apologists.

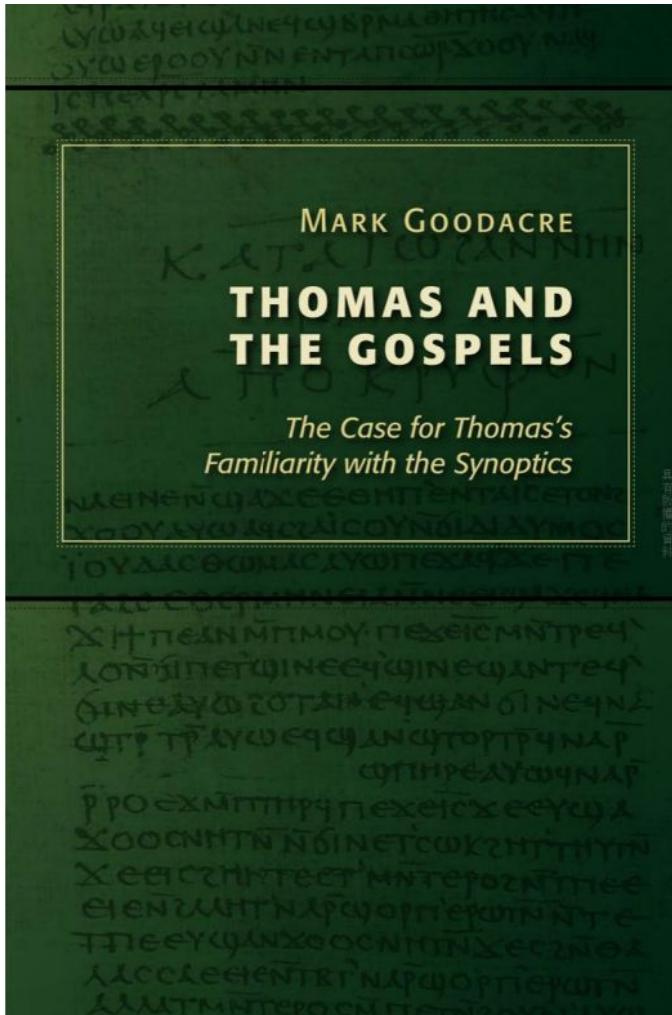
Dependence or Familiarity?

In the early days of *Thomas* scholarship, following the publication of the Coptic text in 1959,¹⁷ the majority view was that *Thomas* knew the Synoptic Gospels.¹⁸ These days, essays on the state of the question tend to represent the debate as a scholarly split, half on the side of *Thomas*'s independence, half on the side of its dependence on the Synoptics,¹⁹ though some claim that the scales are tipping in favor of Thomasine independence,²⁰ or that there is a kind of geographical split, with those in North America more inclined to see *Thomas* as independent, and those in Europe more inclined to

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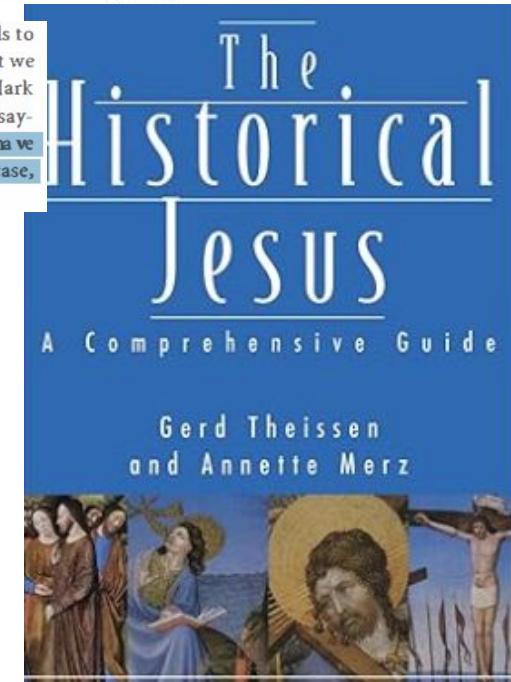
The Case for Thomas's Familiarity with the Synoptics

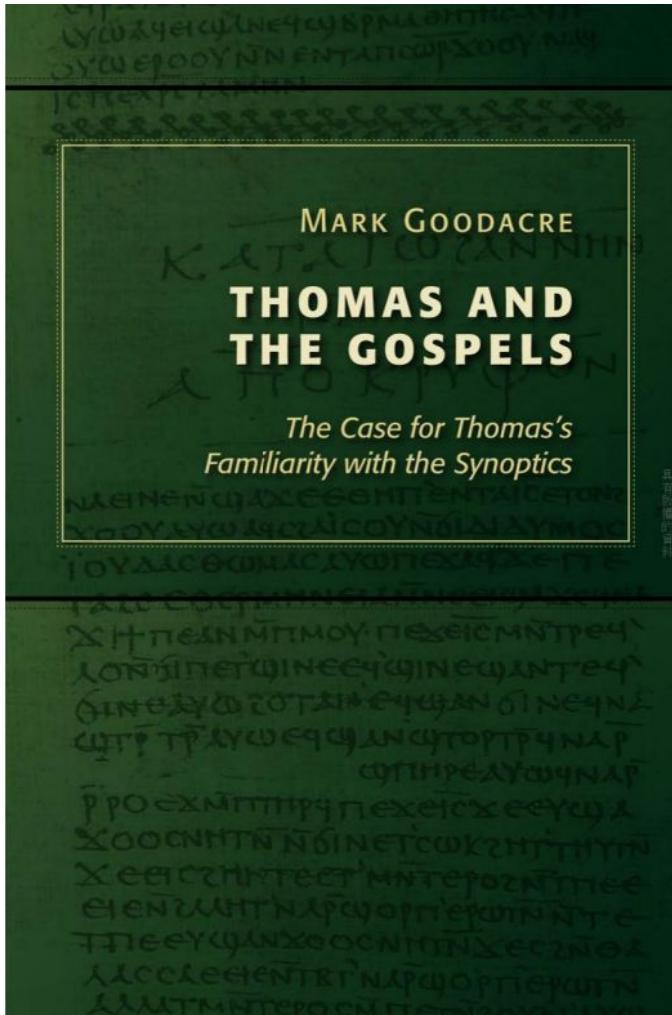


Similarly, Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, in their popular textbook on the historical Jesus, state the case for independence with no consideration of the alternative. They offer three primary reasons for seeing *Thomas* as independent of the Synoptics under the headings of genre, order, and tradition history.³⁰ On genre, they write: "As a collection of sayings, the Gospel of Thomas embodies one of the earliest genres of framework in which the Jesus tradition was handed down."³¹ On order, they say: "The order of the

of first-century sayings gospels like *Thomas*, but there are not.³⁶ Appeals to ‘the collection of logia behind Mark 4’³⁷ simply beg the question. What we have are first-century narrative gospels in which sayings clusters like Mark 4 are embedded. We do not have extant examples of the kind of gospel sayings collections that the genre argument requires. Of course they may have existed, but arguments like this, based only on what may have been the case, are inevitably weaker than arguments that draw on extant materials.

Criticizes Q for lack of manuscript evidence but doesn't deny its historical plausibility





Matt. 7:5	Luke 6:42	P.Oxy. 1.1-4 (Πιοτρ. 26)
<p>ὑποκριτά, ἔκβαλε πρώτον ἐκ τοῦ ὄφθαλμοῦ σοῦ τὴν δοκόν <u>καὶ τότε διαβλέψεις</u> <u>ἔκβαλεν τὸ κάρφος</u> <u>ἐκ τοῦ ὄφθαλμοῦ τοῦ</u> <u>ἀδελφοῦ σου</u></p> <p>Hypocrites! First cast out the beam from your own eye, <u>and then you will</u> <u>see clearly to cast out</u> <u>the speck from your</u> <u>brother's eye.</u></p>	<p>ὑποκριτά, ἔκβαλε πρώτον τὴν δοκόν ἐκ τοῦ ὄφθαλμοῦ σοῦ</p> <p><u>καὶ τότε διαβλέψεις</u> <u>τὸ κάρφος τὸ</u> <u>ἐν τῷ ὄφθαλμῳ τοῦ</u> <u>ἀδελφοῦ σου ἐκβαλεῖν</u></p> <p>Hypocrites! First cast out the beam from your own eye, <u>and then you will</u> <u>see clearly to cast out</u> <u>the speck that is in your</u> <u>brother's eye.</u></p>	<p><u>καὶ τότε διαβλέψεις</u> <u>ἔκβαλεν τὸ κάρφος τὸ</u> <u>ἐν τῷ ὄφθαλμῷ τοῦ</u> <u>ἀδελφοῦ σου</u></p> <p><u>and then you will</u> <u>see clearly to cast out</u> <u>the speck that is in your</u> <u>brother's eye.</u></p>

The only difference between *Thomas* and Luke 6:42 (NA^v) is the position of ἐκβαλεῖν ("to cast out"), at the end of the sentence in Luke 6:42, but after διαβλέψεις ("you will see") in P.Oxy. 1, apparently agreeing with Matt. 7:5. Of course, one has to be wary in comparing a manuscript fragment with a critical edition, and it is worth bearing in mind that when Grenfell and Hunt looked at P.Oxy. 1, they saw a text that "agrees exactly" with Luke.¹ of Coptic *Ithom.* 26, without noting how far the extant text agrees with Luke (and Matthew).²² April DeConick speaks of "the fact that the saying also reflects the characteristics of orally transmitted materials, common words and phrases with varying sequences and inflections," but this is weak.² The texts, in Greek, are practically identical. Verbatim agreement like this is actually characteristic of direct contact between texts and not of "orally transmitted materials." Indeed, it is diagnostic of that contact. And even if the Greek were to show variation in sequence and inflection, this would hardly point to oral contact since it is the very stuff of synoptic dependence where verbatim agreement is interspersed with minor editorial variations. The reason we know that there is a literary relationship among the Synoptic Gospels is exactly this kind of evidence, verbatim agreement between texts:

Argues since it verbatim copies Luke it must be dependent on Synoptics. But this is because Goodcare rejects Q. A complete minority position that dramatically affects his methodology. Q scholars argue Luke preserves Q better. This is no issue to Independent Thomas because it uses Q as its source.

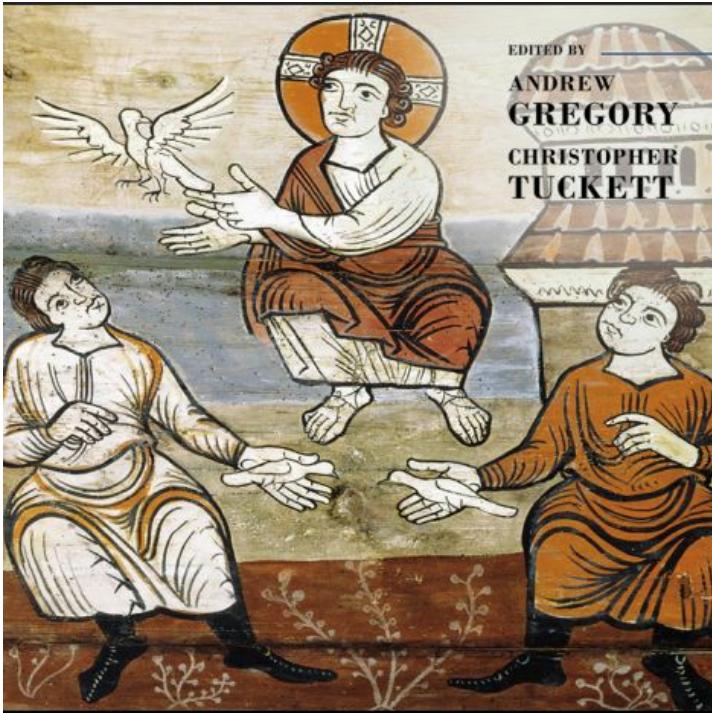
The Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30 // Thom. 57)

The parable of the Wheat and the Tares provides a particularly telling example of a Synoptic parable that is taken over secondarily in *Thomas*. Although the possibility of *Thomas*'s use of Matthew is sometimes discussed in the literature,³¹ one important element, the apparent parallel with Mark's Seed Growing Secretly, is rarely mentioned,³² so it is worth taking a moment to lay out the case. Matthew's parable appears to be his redactional expansion of Mark's parable of the Seed Growing Secretly (Mark 4:26-29).³³ Here are the three pericopae in parallel:

DeConick argues Thomas 57 we have access to has undergone expanded transmission with secondary expansion which refutes his position

strikingly different. On the one hand, *Thomas*' version appears to me to have been abridged during years of oral performance since the appearance of 'them' in L. 57.3 is unforeseen. Matthew's version, on the other hand, appears to me to have been expanded during its transmission so that it contains secondary elements as well, particularly the long dialogue

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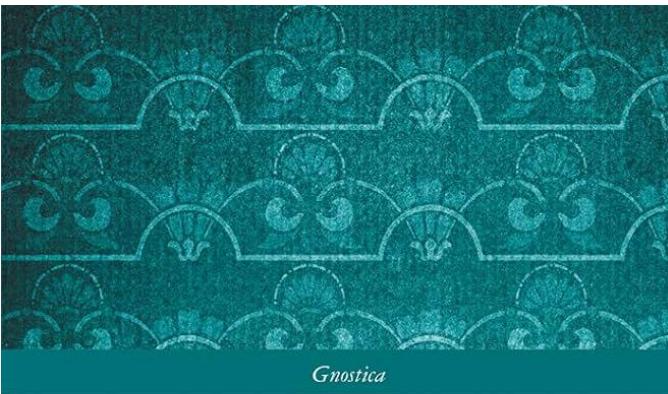
≡ The Oxford Handbook of EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

Thomas' Coptic translator had been influenced by the Coptic New Testament. Indeed, this would appear to be so. The two instances of Synoptic influence pointed out by McArthur and Tuckett in the Greek fragments indicate that influence did not occur exclusively at the level of the Coptic, but we know that some influence occurred then, and not at the level of composition.

So is there any room still for the idea that virtually all of *Thomas'* sayings come from the scribal activity of copying snippets of Synoptic texts into this gospel? One recent study still pursues this line of argument (Goodacre 2012). But most have abandoned this model. Even Gathercole, whose estimate of the evidence of influence is in my view excessive, still concludes that scribal copying is not indicated. This is also indicated by a fascinating recent study by Robert Derrenbacker concerning ancient scribal practice and the Synoptic problem (Derrenbacker 2005). Given the rhetorical (as opposed to scribal) milieu in which most of our texts were produced, together with the actual mechanics of writing in the ancient world, the idea that an author would have borrowed directly from another text—or three—all the while switching back and forth from one text to another, plucking fruit first from this tree, then from that, conflating or blending sources together in the manner that earlier scholars thought must have been the case with *Thomas*, is just not very realistic. When ancient authors do borrow from other texts, they tend to follow one source at a time, drawing from it *ad seriatum*, without rearranging or reordering the material as it comes from the source. Since this is obviously not the case with *Thomas*, we can probably now rule out direct copying from the Synoptic Gospels as the source for *Thomas'* Synoptic parallels.

What does this mean for scholars of the historical Jesus? Is *Thomas* an independent witness to the Jesus tradition or not? It is clearly not derivative of the Synoptic Gospels in the same way that Matthew and Luke derive from Mark and Q. On the other hand, it is also clear that our fourth-century Coptic manuscript of *Thomas* is not free of Synoptic influence, whether one speaks of relatively late scribal corruption at the level of the Coptic or secondary oral influence at the level of composition. The better part of wisdom, then, is to proceed with caution. Where evidence of Synoptic influence exists, one must account for it. When none exists, one should probably conclude that the *Thomas* version of a saying has another history, one that does not involve Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

Goodacres style is excessive because we know later copyists were under New Testament influence and have inserted wordings into it. Therefore its more probable to rule Synoptic Influence as later redactions, no original compositions (2023)



THE WORDS OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

THE GENESIS OF A WISDOM TRADITION

David W. Kim



Figure 0.2 Thomas studies by year, 1897–2006.²¹

then, as the literary independence of the Thomas texts from the canonical Gospels became the dominant view, and as readers adhering to this view adopted individual ideologies in their reading practices (1985–present).²⁵

This historical stream of Thomasine scholarship can be divided into four developmental periods: the age of uncertainty (1897–1944), the age of identification (1945–76), the age of popularization for modern readers (1977–93), and the age of ideological readings (1994–present).

2021 Consensus is Clearly favoring Thomasine Independence

Chapter 1 will investigate the involvement of *Gos. Thom.* in the transitional process of the oral *Logia* tradition on the theory that if it is independent of other literary gospels, the text should contain some traces of the oral tradition. The chapter will illustrate the evidence for this compositional independence, and draw the implications of that conclusion for the role of the text in the establishment and maintenance of a Thomasine community identity relatively early in the development of Christianity, prior to the time when the canonical Gospels emerged in the second half of the first century CE.

and Mary) demonstrating the equality of female discipleship with male disciples, I will confirm that the *Logia* tradition not only should be characterized as an “anti-canonical and feminine approach” but also intrinsically functions as an inter-bridge tradition between oral traditions and synoptic traditions. The hypothesis of the Thomasine *Logia*, in such a transformation of communication media, is grounded in the notion that there was a certain period in which the oral and written traditions of Jesus co-existed, before the canonical Gospels came to be written (70–100 CE).

2021 Scholars are still further refining and pushing for Thomasine Independence that predates the Synoptics