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## Book Reviews

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## Book Reviews

### **Abstract**

Book reviews from various authors.

### **Keywords**

Providence, Molinism, Gospel of Thomas, Synoptic Problem

### **Cover Page Footnote**

Various Authors

*Four Views on Divine Providence*. Edited By Stanley N. Gundry and Dennis W. Jowers. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, 264 pp., \$19.99.

Questions concerning how God providentially orders the course of history can be some of the most controversial and dense, yet comforting and spiritually intimate inquires one could make. In this Counterpoints series, *Four Views on Divine Providence*, four scholars present their case for a coherent and biblical depiction of God's providential care and self-glorification. The formats of these discussions are conducive for honest and open dialogue unimpeded by arguments guised as strawmen. There is a spectrum of thought being represented. On one end, Paul Kjoss Helseth presents the view that God causes all things, Ron Highfield with the concept of divine control by liberation, William Lane Craig's Molinist understanding that God directs all things, and ending at the opposite end of the spectrum with Gregory A. Boyd's open theism, God's self-limitation of control.

Paul Helseth commences the four-way dialogue with the model of divine omnicausality. Helseth's research is quite impressive for such a short essay and should be commended for being detailed and well-versed. The omnicausal model of divine providence suggests that God accomplishes all his good purposes not just by preserving and passively observing what he has created but also by simultaneously working concurrently with created things to cause them to act as they do in his all-determining will (30-31). There are several problems in claiming that God causes everything, some of which will be reserved for later criticism throughout this review (i.e. responsibility and the role of evil, which Craig and Boyd offer excellent counter-arguments), but the most fundamental problem is how Helseth views the ontic status of reality.

Helseth introduces a radical doctrine of *creatio continuans* (32-37). Though it is true that all reality, which is ontologically external from God, is not self-existent, it does not follow that its contingency requires *continual creation* as a form of preserving its existence. As Craig argues, God may sustain the existence of all contingent reality and entities by weak actualization not only strong actualization. Human choices may serve as secondary orders of causation that do not require God's direct willing of those contingent state of affairs; rather, it is sufficient that God may permit such actualizations without directly causing them himself. The strong actualization of all states of affairs has deleterious implications for how responsibility, evil, and even the holiness of God are viewed. Thus, the ontic status of the actual world must not be dependent on God to produce all the effects that are manifested as long as there is a second order of causation, namely, free agents as argued by Craig and Boyd.

William Lane Craig presents his Molinist case for providence by means of divine direction. He begins with a historical background and development of middle knowledge, which is the crux of Molinism. In this interlude the Molinist semantics are defined with illustrative examples to aid in understanding them. The stage is set with a well-versed introduction to middle knowledge, which follows three primary arguments for the Molinist case: biblical, theological, and philosophical arguments. The curtains are drawn and Craig's performance begins.

Middle knowledge is the second logical moment of God's knowledge. The first logical moment is God's natural knowledge. Within the first moment lie all necessary truths (triangles have three sides,  $2 + 3 = 5$ , etc.). Essentially, it is by God's natural knowledge that he knows the range of all possible worlds. The third moment is God's free knowledge. This moment is God's knowledge of the actual world. What *has* happened in the past, what *is* happening, and what *will* happen in the future. Appropriately, middle knowledge rests between the first and the last moments. The second moment contains God's knowledge of all contingently true conditional propositions in the subjunctive mood (i.e. If Jones were placed in circumstance S God knows Jones would do X). It would have been beneficial for Craig to spend less time on the historical development of Molinism and more time presenting a more robust concept of middle knowledge and its associated semantics. Though he does emphasize the semantic distinctions throughout his presentation, many of the criticisms against Craig originate from their lack of a fundamental comprehension of middle knowledge.

Helseth responds to Craig on two primary grounds: expelling evidence and argument for libertarian freedom and dismissing divine middle knowledge with the latter being an implication of the former. Helseth's first criticism is against Craig's presupposition of libertarian freedom, which he brings to the text during his exegesis. I maintain that Helseth may have a case to be made for why an exegetical rendition of Scripture should direct one to rejecting human libertarian freedom but he makes no such argument for why the experience of freedom should be considered illusory or why the appearance of it in Scripture is a ruse (arguments initially made by Craig). A concession is made that although no Reformed thinker embraces the idea that humans are automatons though there is a sense of responsibility (107). However, this denial is left unjustified with no further argument for why responsibility remains with the human agent.

By implication of Helseth's rejection of libertarian freedom so goes the subjunctive contingencies of such creatures. This should be expected, it is simply what follows from denying such an understanding of human agency. With this, Helseth capitalizes on two more arguments. The first argument attacks the coherency of middle knowledge on grounds that it requires a necessity of contingency. There is not much to be criticized for making such a point since the counterfactuals of libertarian agents are necessarily prior to the actual world (if it is the case that humans have libertarian freedom). However, Helseth strengthens this with his second point, that is, it seems to impinge on the doctrine of divine perfection by making God dependent (112). Boyd constructs a similar argument from the grounding objection claiming that contingent truths are not self-explanatory but must simply exist, from all eternity, as an ungrounded, metaphysical surd (131). This objection is merely the result of misunderstanding the means by which God knows what he does. God's knowledge is wholly intuitive and relies on no existent entity and is completely compatible with divine aseity.

According to Luis de Molina,

God does not get his knowledge from things, but knows all things in himself and *from* himself; therefore, the existence of things, whether in time or eternity, contributes nothing to God's knowing with certainty what is going to be or not to be... For prior to any existence on the part of the objects, God has within himself the means whereby he knows all things fully and perfectly; and this is why the existence of created things contributes no perfection to the cognition he has of them and does not cause any change in that cognition... [And] God does not need the existence of those things in his eternity in order to know them with certainty.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, I extend the same criticism of Helseth and Boyd to Highfield when he constructs a misguided argument against the “conceptualist” scheme of Molinism. The problem with his argument is that he presents Molinism more in sync with Platonic thought rather than conceptualist thought suggesting that God requires an eternally existing world of ideas that exist independently of him in order for God to know them (117).

Both Helseth and Highfield close their criticisms of Craig with an appeal to sovereignty. Helseth accuses Craig of being too philosophical and not sticking to a correct theological method while one finds Highfield making similar claims that Craig's theory is “elegantly flawed” and the philosophical criticisms should be left to the “God of the philosophers” (106, 114). Highfield continues by suggesting that limiting the scope of sovereignty to what is feasible does not do justice to divine sovereignty. This is to illicitly convert the modal notion of omnipotence with the categorical notion of omniscience (117-121). The reader is then proposed to face the so-called Molinist dilemma of choosing the highest praise for God by saying, “God is sovereign over all things, *except* the laws of thought and counterfactual truths,” or “God is sovereign over all things, no exceptions (121).” To make the claim that Molinism is too philosophical and does little justice to the sovereignty of God is doubly guilty of categorically hijacking the discussion. Helseth would have done well to focus more on the metaphysics of human agency to support his determinism than to deny it without offering a reciprocal argument. Though Highfield offers the strongest arguments against middle knowledge on the grounds of impeding upon divine aseity, his arguments may similarly be used against his own position in claiming that an external reality is required for God to know such states of affairs with certainty. Middle knowledge is possessed and known by God logically prior to creation just as he knows his natural knowledge. If an external reality is required for middle knowledge to be substantiated it is difficult to justify why the range of all possible worlds must not require such a reality since both are categorically prior to any actual state of affairs.

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<sup>1</sup> Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 4.49.12, 11.

I applaud Boyd's response to Craig because he takes Craig's arguments to task and appears to be more familiar with middle knowledge than Helseth and Highfield. Craig and Boyd both affirm libertarian freedom, which leads the discourse of criticism to the attempted dismantling of middle knowledge. Boyd's critique of Craig is perhaps the densest section of the book but it is also the most challenging section written against Craig's position. Boyd clarifies an initial misconception offered by Craig, which was to purport William Hasker's definition of omniscience, a definition Boyd and many other open theists deny.<sup>2</sup> Boyd maintains that propositions about future contingents do have truth-value but only in the form of might counterfactuals.

Boyd's charge is that there is a difference between might counterfactuals and would counterfactuals. Craig's argument is that might counterfactuals logically entail would counterfactuals; however, as Boyd notes, contrasting might counterfactual conjuncts are coherent whereas contrasting would counterfactuals are not. Consider their example of "Commander Karl *might* and *might not* publicly praise Churchill if given the chance" and "Commander Karl *would* and *would not* publicly praise Churchill if given the chance." Boyd *would* be correct in demonstrating the inconsistencies if he had made the distinction in a sequential logical flow between might and would counterfactuals instead of keeping them in the same logical moment while maintaining their conjuncts. This is not a problem for a Molinist conception of middle knowledge if the might counterfactual distinction is kept within Craig's original sequence, that is, antecedently, the true might counterfactual implies the true would counterfactual consequent.

Boyd delves deep into the seldom-explicated layers of middle knowledge, that is, there are two "sub-logical layers" within middle knowledge. The first layer is divine *reaction*, God's progressive apprehension of the truth-value of all counterfactuals of creaturely freedom as they unfold in logical sequence coupled with his original reactions to these counterfactuals. The second layer is divine *action*, God's transformation of each practicable world into a feasible world by fine-tuning it according to his full knowledge of everything that could or would happen in the entire history of that world as a result of different divine response to creaturely choices.<sup>3</sup> Let the might counterfactuals reside in the first layer. God knows what every libertarian agent might or might not do but, in Boyd's model, the knowledge of what libertarian agents would do does not carry over to the second layer, only the action of what God would do given the might counterfactuals. This is quite ironic because God seems to have certain would counterfactual knowledge of his own actions given the knowledge of might counterfactuals of libertarian agents. Boyd's attempt to present his neo-Molinist position inevitably falls short in offering a robust concept of providence.

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<sup>2</sup> God is omniscient = God knows all propositions, which are such that God's knowing them is logically possible.

<sup>3</sup> Kirk R. MacGregor, *A Molinist-Anabaptist Systematic Theology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007), 94-99.

I appreciate Highfield's tone throughout his chapter on providence by offering sincere attempts to do justice to Scripture and to exalt God as sovereign over everything. However, the end of the chapter leaves Highfield in a quagmire of conflicting premises with an appeal to mystery. He begins with several pages discussing the question of "how" God accomplishes his works and that we should not be afraid of laying this question at the transcendent mystery of God.

There is a difference between a logical paradox and an epistemic paradox. In a logical paradox, somewhere along the line of reasoning two or more premises negate each other, which render a contradictory conclusion. An epistemic paradox has all true or consistent premises but the conclusion is either not what was initially expected or the premises have been exhausted and no more information may be available to fill epistemic gaps between the premises and the conclusion giving the *appearance* of a contradiction, though no contradiction actually obtains. The "how" questions like, "How did God create the world?" and "How did Jesus become incarnate" are epistemic paradoxes, no contradictions obtain in answering these questions. We are simply left with epistemic gaps at certain points. This is where mystery and transcendence belong. Highfield's model of control by liberation does not belong in the same camp as transcendent mystery; rather, it is logically inconsistent arriving not only at contradictions but also problematic internal discrepancies.

The term *control* is incredibly ambiguous and I am sure each contributor to the book would affirm the categorical notion that God *controls* everything, it is a question of what he can control (i.e. states of affairs, agents, etc.) and to what extent. When setting Highfield's notion of control into his context, problems arise from the very beginning. Highfield maintains that human freedom comes into being through a sovereign divine act and that they do not conflict since human freedom depends absolutely on divine power (148). However, for God *not* to be able to cause human freedom to accomplish his divine will freely seems to imply a risk of fallible persuasion, and since God's will is infallibly accomplished, he must be able to cause human freedom in such a way that they freely accomplish his appointed end (150).

Highfield's contradictions arise in how he attributes divine causation to human freedom. He does note that some believe *causing* a free agent to *freely* do something is a contradiction but he seems to deny such reasoning. It depends on how God causes the agent's freedom. If by cause he means that God caused the existence of human freedom in the form of a derived or given freedom then no contradiction obtains. However, Highfield's notion of divine causation of free agency is a logical contradiction and not an epistemic mystery of divine transcendence, as he would like to argue.<sup>4</sup> This type of divine causation on human agency makes freedom illusory or superfluous with respects to responsibility at best.

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<sup>4</sup> Highfield does not specify his precise position but it seems that he may embrace compatibilism, which of course runs into more voluntaristic problems and only pushes the issue of determinism back one step, an issue Craig discusses.

There are several unanswered questions that lie in the milieu of Highfield's arguments. The first is a question that Boyd raises, "What is it that humans are being liberated from (178)?" This universal divine determinism allows God to make the choices of all the initial conditions to all states of affairs. Why is it the case that there must be any liberation at all? Craig argues that according to this type of determinism, "God makes people sin and then punishes them for it, and the world becomes a farcical charade (171)." If Highfield wants to maintain that it is human sinfulness then what becomes of freedom and responsibility with all causation being attributed to God? Under Highfield's model, God's will is formulated in a disjunction. Either God wills oppression or God wills liberation. An understanding of divine will, which is much more coherent, and as Craig and Boyd might argue, should be in the form of an antecedent and a consequent. Antecedently, God wills beatitude, salvation, etc. but because of human freedom, some reject God and consequently God wills for them to receive their own damnation. There are no compromises to a modal understanding of divine omnipotence and this understanding places the "how" of God's sovereignty in his categorical omniscience. Highfield's understanding of God's sovereign control runs in sync with Ockhamism, which is to say that God can do anything arbitrarily had he chosen to do it (i.e. God could have chosen to make  $2 + 2 = 5$  instead of 4). The implications that carry from such an understanding of omnipotence has more deleterious implications on modality than what simply rests within Highfield's argument. In the end, and as Craig concurs, Highfield's attempt to use human freedom as a means of how God causally and providentially orders history is no different from Helseth's.<sup>5</sup>

Gregory A. Boyd's contribution to this book is worthy of notable exception for his elegant communication as well as his ability to present a compelling case for the openness view of providence. Boyd sets forth his hermeneutic by providing four criteria needed for a Christocentric understanding of providence: God wages spiritual warfare, God relies on power and wisdom, God relies on other-oriented love, and God wins by bringing good out of evil. Amenable to Craig's reflection on this hermeneutic, Boyd's four criteria are necessary but not sufficient for a robust model of providence. Craig includes two additional criteria, which are consistency with Scripture and consistency with perfect being theology (224).

Boyd is an ardent proponent of libertarian freedom and suggests that because God has bestowed humans with such freedom he limits his meticulous control—but at what cost? He does well to note the modal notion of omnipotence; with libertarian freedom God's power is limited to only those states of affairs which are now feasible. This is where Boyd sacrifices divine perfection when there is no reason to. As previously discussed with the multilayered notion of middle knowledge, Boyd presents his might counterfactuals. God only knows what *will* happen once character solidification has occurred, a point which seems entirely too

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<sup>5</sup> I did not offer much attention to Helseth's criticism of Highfield since Helseth agrees with almost everything Highfield states. Helseth's only objection is in Highfield's methodology and warns him that his attentiveness to primary and secondary causations may be too philosophical (166-169).



vague and even problematic for how it is that God knows such propositions but not others concerning the ontic status of reality.<sup>6</sup> I maintain that might counterfactuals do not give justice to the categorical notion of omniscience and this multilayered hermeneutic does well in response to Boyd's appeal to anthropomorphisms.<sup>7</sup>

Boyd also mounts a case against theological fatalism by arguing that God's knowledge (particularly his foreknowledge) does not dictate what happens (196-198). Consider the state of affairs  $S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow S_3 \rightarrow S_4$  in a temporal sequence with  $S_1$  being temporally prior to  $S_2$  and so forth. Boyd misplaces the logical priority of the events in relation to God's knowledge of the event. Given that the  $S_1$  through  $S_4$  states of events are *chronological* in relation to each other, if God knows  $S_4$  as being true at the time of  $S_1$  then God foreknows  $S_4$  at any temporally preceding moment ( $S_1$ ,  $S_2$ , or  $S_3$ ). God's foreknowledge does not have logical priority over any states of affairs; rather, these states of affairs have logical priority over God's foreknowledge. If God's apprehension of a state of affairs were logically prior to the state of affairs then God would not possess knowledge of such states of affairs. Not only does this damage God's ontology and knowledge, but, if taken seriously, makes any Scriptural passage regarding God's knowledge as superfluous.

Despite Boyd's short comings on the ontic status of reality and his inconsistencies with middle knowledge of creaturely freedom and divine action his arguments deserve more appreciation than what the contributors give him credit for. His case for an open view of providence does well for bolstering open theism to a more considerable and attractive view than it has been in recent decades. Boyd does seem to limit the ontological perfection traditionally equated with the Anselmian notion of God. His attempt to reconcile the compatibility of libertarian freedom and divine sovereignty is weakened by reducing the ontology of God with respects to his cognition—an unwarranted sacrifice in light of the coherence of the Molinist understanding of middle knowledge and the Scriptural witness of God's absolute directive control over every feasible state of affairs.

Both Helseth and Highfield offer very similar views, which offer little distinction to be made. The editors may have done well to select contributors with clearer contrasting positions. However, where the book lacks it compensates in its flow of literary elegance and formidable scholasticism offered by each contributor. I

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<sup>6</sup> I have previously discussed the ontic status of reality as it relates to divine omniscience when defending Craig's assertion that God's knowledge is not dependent on anything. Both Helseth and Highfield criticize Boyd on the point of solidified character arguing for determinism in a coercive fashion and unilateral causation as the best understanding (211, 233-235).

<sup>7</sup> Consider one of Boyd's examples of God regretting that he had made Saul king (1 Sam. 15:11, 35). When the multilayered middle knowledge hermeneutic is applied the openness sacrifice of perfect would counterfactual knowledge becomes unnecessary. In the first layer, divine reaction, God's original reaction, only having apprehended the truth of the circumstances following Saul's actions logically leading up to this, was to literally regret his decision. Upon apprehending the logically successive knowledge that Saul's actions would produce states of affairs more desirable for God considering the second layer of divine action God chose to continue (in a logical, not temporal sequence) with following the original states of affairs. Thus, when one reads of anthropomorphisms that appeal to divine cognitive states they refer to the first layer of middle knowledge.

anticipate that this book will be received as a prominent work in upcoming theological and philosophical dialogues concerning divine providence, which may be appreciated by both laypeople and scholars.

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*Thomas and the Gospels: The Case for Thomas's Familiarity with the Synoptics* by Mark Goodacre. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012, 236 pp., \$39.00.

The Gospel of *Thomas* has garnered great interest in scholarship since the Coptic version was discovered at *Nag Hammadi* in 1945. Its sayings style format give it an “oral” flare that appears at first glance to preserve an ancient extra-canonical stream of Christian tradition. The sayings format fits well with the modern scholarly trend of viewing antiquity as a predominantly “oral” rather than a “literary” society. This has led some to herald *Thomas* as a “fifth” Gospel on a par with the canonical Gospels or even superior to the canonical writings.

Mark Goodacre is Professor in New Testament at the Department of Religion, Duke University in North Carolina. His research has focused on the Synoptic Gospels (where he has argued against the existence of Q), the historical Jesus, and the Gospel of *Thomas*. His recent book, *Thomas and the Gospels*, brings a fresh perspective to *Thomas* studies. Rather than picking over the sayings material for earlier strands of Christianity as is commonly done, Goodacre examines and evaluates *Thomas* on its own terms as a literary work.

Chapter one orients the reader to modern trends in *Thomas* studies and introduces the thesis of the book which argues that the author of *Thomas* was indeed familiar with the Synoptics (p. 7). The discussion centers on reasons scholars give for an early, independent *Thomas* (p. 8). The most “influential” being “tradition history,” which views *Thomas* as sourced in “a parallel and separate tradition” independent of the canonical Gospels (p.18). This is based on the view that if the author used the Synoptics as source material then *Thomas* “would have inherited all of the accumulated tradition-historical baggage owned by the Synoptic text, and then added to it his or her own redactional twist” (p. 18). And because the sayings do not reveal this level of “historical baggage” from the comparable Synoptic material, then *Thomas* must not have derived its sayings from any of the Gospels. Goodacre spends the rest of the work answering this argument and gathers an impressive level of evidence against this view.

The first pieces of testimony assembled by Goodacre are the verbatim agreements between the Thomasine sayings and their Synoptic counterparts. Working from the understanding that *Thomas* was originally authored in Greek, the three Oxyrhynchus fragments that preserve an early Greek form are used to compare the sayings with the Synoptic pericopes. Several places of verbatim agreement are discussed but the longest is at saying 26 which exhibits a remarkable thirteen word agreement with Mat 7:5 and Luke 6:42. It is common practice in Synoptic studies to use verbatim agreements between pericopes as criteria to recognize inter-Synoptic links (p. 32). In the same way, these verbatim agreements in *Thomas* reveal “a direct link between *Thomas* and the Synoptics” (p. 48). The direction of this link is discovered by searching “for distinctive, redactional features of one text appearing in another” (p. 49). Goodacre refers to these

“redactional features” as “diagnostic shards” (p. 49) There are several sayings in *Thomas* that do in fact exhibit both Matthean and Lukan special material.

Saying 57 contains many elements of Matthew’s “wheat and tares” parable (Mat 13:24-30) which is an expansion of Mark’s parable of the sower (p. 77-78). *Thomas* also uses characteristic Matthean imagery and phrases such as “kingdom of the heavens” (p. 81). There are even more examples of Lukan redaction in *Thomas* than there are for Matthew. Saying 5 and 31 are particularly striking as the Greek fragments reveal a verbatim agreement with Luke over their parallel in Mark (p. 82-84). And the parallels between Lukan special material and saying 79 are so remarkable that an entire chapter is given over to discussing them.

Some have argued that the similarities between *Thomas* and the Synoptics are the result of textual assimilation by scribes. Goodacre answers this claim by comparing the Coptic translation to the earlier Greek fragments. The results are that the Coptic translation actually reveals a tendency to move farther away from the text of the Synoptics. Indicating that the Matthean and Lukan redactional material most likely did not derive through textual assimilation by scribes (p. 61).

Another characteristic pointing to familiarity with the Synoptics are the many “missing middle” segments of the parables and narratives found in *Thomas* (p.109). The author of *Thomas* “redacts the material he takes over from the Synoptics” and then “fails to narrate the middle part of a given parable or saying” (p. 109). Several of the sayings that have already been discussed, containing verbatim agreement with the Synoptics and “diagnostic shards,” are shown to also lack these “missing middle” elements of the narrative. Saying 57, the “wheat and the tares,” lacks several key elements of the story in order to make adequate sense of the pericope. The “tribute to Caesar” narrative in saying 100 reveals that “the missing middle is a characteristic feature of *Thomas’s* apparent lack of storytelling ability and not an effect of *Thomas’s* closeness to raw, primitive oral traditions of Jesus’ parables” (p.112). Justin Martyr also exhibits this “missing middle” tendency when quoting from the Synoptics. Just as in *Thomas*, these missing narrative elements point to an author who is familiar with the Synoptic narratives.

Chapter eight does a great job of “unravelling” the complex modern perspectives on “orality” and literacy in early Christianity (p.128). It is important to understand these modern trends as much of the argument for an independent *Thomas* centers around scholarly perceptions of “orality” and literacy in antiquity. Several different issues are addressed, especially the impact of “form criticism” on *Thomas* studies (p.145). Form criticism considers “simpler forms of sayings and parables as more likely to be original” (p.146). This and other form critical rules and methodologies are examined in detail and Goodacre concludes that the approach “needs to be abandoned” (p. 150).

The discussion over the date of *Thomas* is more problematic and less straight forward than the rest of the work because the discussion is entangled in the debate over the date of the Synoptic Gospels. Goodacre notes that “the case for a post-70 dating for Mark is strong and gaining in momentum in recent scholarship” (p.161). For some scholars, the most convincing evidence for a post-70 date is found in Mark

13:14 where Jesus said to his disciples concerning the Temple that "[n]ot one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down" (p. 164). Goodacre appears convinced that Jesus' statements were written by Mark "in full knowledge of the disastrous events of 70" (p.164). If Mark is post 70, this would place *Thomas* at the end of the first century, and with the evidence given of a post-Bar Kochba date, pushes the composition even further into the middle of the second century.

The key to understanding the purpose and intent behind *Thomas* is by taking the opening statements in the incipit seriously. In doing this Goodacre concludes that the author of *Thomas* used the Synoptic Jesus as a means of authenticating new and strange sayings. By interweaving familiar Synoptic sayings with new sayings and parables, the author of *Thomas* authenticates the stranger material for the readers.

*Thomas* is often "boldly claimed" as a "fifth gospel" (p. 193). After all of the evidence gathered by Goodacre is assembled and weighed, he concludes that *Thomas* is not the "holy grail" for historical Jesus studies (p. 195). However, he does note that *Thomas* is "a fascinating artifact offering an early, enigmatic portrait of an esoteric Jesus" and "deserves the special place it has earned in the scholar's canon" (p.196).

*Thomas and the Gospels* is a well written work that balances thorough research with approachability. English translations of the Coptic and Greek are given along with the original languages. The various sayings are placed alongside of each other in helpful tables and columns, giving a visual aid to the various arguments and textual issues. Throughout the book, Goodacre does a fine job of engaging with a broad spectrum of scholarly opinions, methodologies, and presuppositions. This helps introduce the subject to laymen unfamiliar with *Thomas* scholarship and aids in framing the work as a whole.

Some evangelicals may take issue with Goodacre's post-70 dating of Mark and the other Synoptics. Even if one disagrees with a late dating for the Gospels, it does not detract from the argument for a later dating for *Thomas*. Others who do not hold to Markan priority may also find the discussion over "diagnostic shards" less convincing as they depend on Matthew and Luke redacting Mark. Nevertheless, the issue of Markan priority does not lessen the fact that words, phrases, and sayings unique to Matthew and Luke are found in *Thomas*.

Because many of the issues discussed in this book intersect with church history, the Synoptic problem, textual criticism, historical Jesus, and the New Testament canon, *Thomas and the Gospels* should be on the shelf of every biblical scholar, church laymen, and pastor, as well as anyone interested in early Christianity.

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