



PROJECT MUSE®

---

The Gospel of Matthew's Dependence on the Didache (review)

James A. Kelhoffer

Journal of Early Christian Studies, Volume 13, Number 3, Fall 2005, pp. 388-391  
(Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/earl.2005.0041>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/186939>

and (8) a tendency towards dualism in concepts of the divine, spirit and matter, and human beings. The remainder of chapter 1 posits the problem of whether Gnosis is to be understood as a movement within or outside Christianity.

Chapter 2 provides a substantial survey of the sources of Gnosis. The author organizes them into (1) ancient critics who pass on original texts; (2) heresiologists who simply report; (3) original Gnostic, Coptic texts; and (4) non-Gnostic texts. Markschiefs argues that the final form of the Nag Hammadi texts “certainly do not come from the period before the end of the second century” (58).

The third chapter treats the question of early forms of Gnosis in antiquity. It is better, Markschiefs thinks, to speak of Jewish roots to Gnosis than of Jewish Gnosis and to see John’s Gospel, Ephesians, and Colossians as part of the pre-history of the movement. Neither does he find the beginning of Gnosis with Simon the magician. Instead, influenced by Basilides, he believes Gnosis arose “in the metropolitan centres of education in antiquity as an attempt by semi-educated people to explain their Christianity at the level of the time” (83). To accomplish this aim, elements of Jewish-Hellenistic philosophy were popularized.

This central thesis appears repeatedly in Markschiefs’s fourth chapter as he discusses the great Gnostic schools. Of great import is his opinion regarding Valentianism. In this school, for example, the multiple Aeons are not multiple gods but several, partial aspects of the one God, the apparent fragmentation only occurring as a device within mythological narrative. (Another example of early Christian mythological narrative can be seen among the Barbelo-Gnostics as they contemplate the unity of Father, Son, and Spirit.) Such narratives, by adding heavenly prehistories and sequels to biblical themes, placed features of Jewish-Christian theology within the world of popular Platonic opinions and made Christianity more competitive.

The final three chapters develop Manichaeism as the culmination of Gnosis, the conclusion of a movement which began in urban centers fed by charismatic, intellectual teachers as an attempt to explain Christianity to the intellectuals but which eventually moved to the rural areas and constituted itself into a religion separate from Christianity.

Markschiefs has provided a convenient and coherent, although not uncontested version, of the history and content of Gnosis. It is a wonderful introduction into the complex and creative world of second-century theological development.

*D. Jeffrey Bingham, Dallas Theological Seminary*

Alan J. P. Garrow

*The Gospel of Matthew’s Dependence on the Didache*

*Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series 254*

New York: T & T Clark, 2004

Pp. xxxiii + 272. \$120.

Alan Garrow’s latest book is a revision of his 2000 Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, supervised initially by Christopher Rowland and at its conclusion by Christopher Tuckett. Part 1 of the volume under review concerns the composi-

tional history of the *Didache* (9–156), and Part 2 examines points of contact between the *Didache* and Matthew (157–243). The second part, from which the book derives its name, builds upon the first part's conclusions. Providing bookends to these sections are a Greek-English parallel text of the *Didache* with possible Matthean parallels underlined (xi–xxxiii), introductory and concluding chapters (1–8, 244–52), a bibliography (253–60), and indices of ancient references and modern authors (260–72). Additionally, Garrow's Web site includes links to the book's first and last chapters, the *Didache* in Greek and English, and information about the author: <http://www.didache-garrow.info>.

The author notes correctly that scholars are quite divided on whether Matthew and the *Didache* are independent writings or the *Didache* is dependent on Matthew (2–7; cf. recent arguments for the former position: W. L. Petersen, "The Genesis of the Gospels," in *New Testament Textual Criticism and Exegesis* [ed. A. Denaux, Leuven: Peeters, 2002], 33–65; here, 51–53; A. Milavec, "Synoptic Tradition in the *Didache* Revisited," *J ECS* 11 [2003]: 443–80). Garrow interacts at length with both conclusions and ultimately dismisses both of them. He advances instead a *tertium quid*, "that the author of Matthew's Gospel depended directly upon a version of the *Didache* essentially similar to that rediscovered by Bryennios in 1873 except for the absence of *Did.* 8.2b; 11.3b; 15.3–4 and 16.7" (2–3). The potential implications of this thesis are obviously far reaching. Scholars would indeed like to know more about the sources utilized by the Synoptic evangelists. Such a breakthrough is precisely what Garrow claims to offer concerning one pre-Matthean source, namely the *Didache*.

Garrow's thesis stems from two separate observations, both of which, he claims, are widely supported by past scholarship. The first maintains that the *Didache* is the product of at least two different authors/editors. The second seeks to demonstrate that the *Didache* and Matthew's gospel share substantial, widely dispersed, and largely unique parallel material. Garrow infers from these two observations that the numerous parallels are most readily explained by Matthew's use of the *Didache* since it would be most unusual for the latter's various authors and editor(s) to have used Matthew in the same ways. Either or both of the first two observations can be appreciated without giving credence to Garrow's third point. This review can summarize and evaluate only the main findings of these very complex arguments.

Part 1 offers "a full analysis of the compositional history of the *Didache*" (153). Among the author's more noteworthy conclusions in these lucidly argued chapters are "that *Did.* 1–5 contains work derived from nine points of origin" (92). Garrow also maintains that *Did.* 1.3–5a and 1.5b–6 stem from different stages of composition/editing (77; he argues the same for *Did.* 3.1–6 and 3.7 [84–85] and for 9.1–5 and 10.1–7 [13–28]). Concerning the *Didache* as a whole, Garrow concludes that its composition took place in five different stages beginning with a "base layer," which comprised *Did.* 1.1–5a; 2.1–5.2a; 6.1–7.1a; 7.1c; 7.1e; 7.4a; 9.1–5a; 11.3a; 11.4–6; 16.1–6; 16.8–9 (149). To this document were added directives on the ministry of prophets (Stage II: *Did.* 10.1–7; 11.7–9; 11.12; 12.1–5) and, subsequently, teachings about finances and self-definition

(Stage III: *Did.* 1.5b–6; 5.2b; 7.1b; 7.1d; 7.2–3; 7.4b; 8.1–2a; 8.2c–3; 11.1–2; 11.9–10; 13.1–15.2). Even later came citations of “the gospel” of Matthew (Stage IV: *Did.* 8.2b; 11.3b; 15.3–4) and an insertion at *Did.* 16.7 (Stage V). For Garrow, since the *Didache*’s references to “the gospel” (*Did.* 8.2b; 11.3b; 15.3–4) are later redactional expansions (the author’s Stage IV), they are irrelevant to the question whether the *Didache* was originally dependent on Matthew during Stages I, II or III (129–41).

I learned much from Part 1, especially from the discussions of *Didache* 9–10 and 16. If nothing else, Garrow’s reconstruction of the *Didache*’s five compositional stages demonstrates that certain complementary themes pervade the *Didache*’s different parts. Yet, on the whole a recurring problem of equivocation amidst the results of source, form, and redaction criticism exists. Observations concerning the *Didache*’s various micro-genres do not necessarily reveal how many different sources there were from which its author(s) drew or at how many different points in time these sources were incorporated into the *Didache*. Likewise, the author’s claim about finding numerous literary seams throughout the *Didache* does not require the inference that *more than one author or editor* was responsible for them. Although a number of fine scholars would affirm this point, scholarship has not reached a consensus; thus, an argument is needed here. Nonetheless, Garrow’s detailed and careful work in Part 1 merits attention from specialists.

The five chapters comprising Part 2 correspond mostly to the five stages posited for the *Didache*’s compositional history in Part 1. A point well taken is Garrow’s recognition that the *Didache*’s compositional history is relevant to the discussion of its relationship to Matthew’s gospel. I had hoped that Part 2 would be up to the challenge of responding to Helmut Koester, Kurt Niederwimmer, and other reputable scholars, whose arguments for the independence of Matthew and the *Didache* I have never found compelling. One thing Garrow’s analysis lacks is a discussion of method or criteria for ascertaining literary dependence between two early Christian writings. One need not agree with Koester to appreciate his clear statement of the criteria he employs. For example, see Koester, “Written Gospels or Oral Tradition?” *JBL* 113 (1994): 293–97. (This publication and a number of Koester’s more recent ones on the issue are not listed in Garrow’s bibliography.)

Instead, Garrow all too often assumes the arguments of other scholars—including those of his eventual *Doktorvater*, Christopher Tuckett, and even Édouard Massaux—in favor of the *Didache*’s dependence on Matthew and, *mutatis mutandis*, seeks to turn them in the opposite direction. Such arguments from linguistic characteristics are far from conclusive and are mustered, for example, by neo-Griesbachians to dismiss Markan priority and demonstrate that the NT gospel of Mark is a conflation of Matthew and Luke. As a test to Garrow’s thesis, one could ask whether Matthew borrows from the *Didache* in ways analogous to this evangelist’s use of Mark (or Q). Garrow does not do this.

Since previous scholarship had considered only two possibilities for explaining the *Didache*’s similarities to Matthew (i.e., independence and the Didachist’s use of Matthew), Garrow’s *tertium quid* was certainly worth a try. I wish I could

affirm that the author advances the discussion of Matthew's sources or *Litteraturgeschichte*. What we are left with, however, is a hodgepodge of verbal similarities (Part 2) coupled together with an inconclusive reconstruction of the *Didache's* compositional history (Part 1). One can only look forward to further analysis of these and other "gospel" materials in early Christianity.

*James A. Kelhoffer, Saint Louis University*

Risto Uro

*Thomas: Seeking the Historical*

*Context of the Gospel of Thomas*

London and New York: T & T Clark, 2003

Pp. xi + 186. \$89.95.

Researchers on Thomas are likely familiar with the work of Professor Uro of the University of Helsinki, including his Q dissertation (*Sheep among the Wolves*, Helsinki, 1987) and *Thomas at the Crossroads* (London, 1998). Uro is a regular presence within the SBL Thomas Traditions Group, a careful thinker who contributes to the general discipline of Thomas studies.

The present volume is designed to provide theological, sociological, and historical background to the *Gospel of Thomas* rather than a commentary on the text. Uro approaches the work within the literary context of the *Book of Thomas the Contender* and the *Acts of Thomas*, offering wide documentation and excellent notes. He is in close touch with varied scholarly perspectives as he combs the arguments of diverse scholars. The text is well written and reveals a singular voice. Admittedly, that voice sometimes produces a confusing idea (e.g., "Drijvers' evidence does not, however, show that Tatian has influenced the *Gospel of Thomas* and not vice versa" [ 27 n. 99]), but examples are rare.

Uro correctly argues that the subject of the coherency of *Thomas* is a Holy Grail that drives much research in the area. As he remarks, we "do not know why the author or authors organized the material as it now stands. We have not achieved consensus about the sources used in the composition. We know precious little about the purpose of the composition" (3). Thus, he seeks no hermeneutical key to interpretation but a setting within Christian literature.

The volume combines individual essays that revolve around the Thomasine situation. Chapter 1 (The Secret of Judas Thomas) discusses the relation among Thomasine writings as evaluated by various competing scholars. Uro traces the origins of the name "Thomas" against its Syrian background, using ideas by John Turner, Paul-Hubert Poirier, Hans-Martin Schenke, Bentley Layton, Greg Riley, and others. Ultimately he rejects any view that claims a unity within Thomasine literature via literary traits or as the work of a single school or community.

In Chapter 2 (Gnosticism without Demiurge?) Uro counters the efforts of Layton and Michael Williams to categorize the literature around a central cosmological myth, seeking instead to "delineate *Thomas's* distinctive characteristics and make the comparison with other related texts clearer" (33). He