

A couple of days ago we enjoyed a guest post on the blog by Mark Goodacre, Professor of New Testament at Duke University. In this post Mark provided five reasons for doubting if the story of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library - as that story has been recounted by scholars for many years - is in fact accurate. Mark's post was a summary of a longer, more detailed, and scholarly article that he has published on the subject.

I asked Mark's permission to respond to his five points, and he gladly agreed; I in turn have agreed to let him respond to my responses. Rather than asking you to reread his post, I have reproduced each of his five reasons here, and then dealt with them one at a time. Mark will later post a response to each of my responses.

Let me say that I really don't have a horse in this race, and my sense is that Mark doesn't either. We would both love to be able to keep telling the story, since it's such a great one. But there's no particular reason for wanting it to be true, other than the fact that it helps make our New Testament lectures a lot more interesting. But whether the story is true or not has no other major impact (or even minor) on our scholarship or lives. Still, it would be nice to know what really happened.

My responses are given in **boldface** after each of Mark's reasons, below.

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Here are five reasons to question the popular account:

- The Mystery of the Growing Jar: Like all good legends, the details get ever more impressive with repeated retellings. In the earliest versions of the story, the jar in which the manuscripts were found is just under two feet tall. In later versions, it grows to a remarkable six feet in size!

**My response: I completely agree that as people tell stories, they change the details, often making them more impressive. We have all experienced that ourselves, as we have heard different versions of a story over time. But....**

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