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# The Battle to Authenticate “The Gospel of Thomas”

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## Abstract

*Many early Christian sects were aware of and accepted The Gospel of Thomas as authentic Christian scripture, despite its unorthodox, radical doctrine, igniting an ideological battle in and around the Thomasine communities of the ancient world. This ideological war is still raging and conflict renewed and amplified with the discoveries of the Greek and Coptic texts of The Gospel of Thomas in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Since its discovery, The Gospel of Thomas has presented scholars with ferocious debate, as serious probability exists that Thomas preserves an older tradition of the historical Jesus than that of the Synoptic Gospels. Though the fierce theological battle of religious scholars in the 1990s hardly sparked The Gospel of Thomas debate, their combined research has renewed questions of how to validate Thomas, and thus, Jesus scholarship over the last half century has been restrained in the use and acceptance of Thomas. Failure of modern scholars to develop a shared understanding of the proper role of The Gospel in reconstructing Christian origins underscores the importance of accurately dating documents from antiquity. Progress in Thomasine studies requires exploration of how texts and traditions were transmitted and appropriated in the ancient world. The greatest contribution of Thomas' discovery will be to deepen knowledge and understanding of early Christianity. The Gospel clearly bears witness to an independent branch within early Christianity and is a prime example of the diversity of the early Christian Church.*

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The Dead Sea Scrolls, the Lead Book of Codices, the Sea of Galilee (Jesus) Boat, the Pontius Pilate Inscription, the Shroud of Turin, the House of (Apostle) Peter, the Ossuary of Caiaphas and the Nag Hammadi texts . . . religious scholars may tend to differ slightly, but most would agree that these are among the most extraordinary archeological discoveries in the modern world. This essay will focus not only on one of the most astonishing of these finds, but also undoubtedly the most controversial – *The Gospel of Thomas*. That early Christians were aware of and accepted *Thomas* as authentic Christian scripture is unquestionable but *Thomas'* controversy, a battle begun nearly 1,800 years ago, lies in the radical doctrine and theology that developed in and around the Thomasine communities of the ancient world. This ideological war is still being waged and the conflict was renewed and amplified with the discoveries of the Greek and Coptic texts of *The Gospel of Thomas* in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

### History of the Discoveries of *The Gospel of Thomas*

While still nominally a part of the crumbling Ottoman Empire, Egypt came under British rule in the early 1880s, and this annexation spawned many British archeological expeditions into the ancient and sacred lands on the banks of the Nile. Considered of relatively minor importance was the area in and around the town of Oxyrhynchus in Upper Egypt. Oxyrhynchus was not considered a prominent site for excavation since a modern town had been erected upon the ruins of the ancient Egyptian city. In 1896 two junior British archeologists excavated the remains of an ancient garbage dump and amongst the rubbish made one of the most startling finds in modern history. Owing to the unique combination of climate and circumstance, Bernard Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt exhumed a large number of ancient Greek papyrus fragments, possibly dating back to the time of Christ, which would become known as the Oxyrhynchus Papyri.<sup>1</sup>

Grenfell and Hunt were only tacitly aware of the significance of their find. It was not until they published a small page (14.5 x 9.5cm) from the papyrus codex, written in Greek the following year that the religious and academic world began to realize what had been discovered. Seven of the translated sayings from this papyri fragment were previously unknown sayings attributed to Jesus. This papyri was published under the title of P.Oxy1 and was initially dated to around 200 CE.<sup>2</sup>

Over the next decade, between 1896 and 1906, Grenfell and Hunt would return to Oxyrhynchus annually. They returned each winter, when the Egyptian climate was conducive to their excavative work, and their efforts were rewarded in 1903 when they discovered two additional papyri believed to contain more original Jesus sayings. These papyri, which would become known as P.Oxy 654 and P.Oxy 655, each contained an additional six previously unknown sayings. After careful study, these three fragments were determined to belong to the original Greek compilation of *The Gospel of Thomas*. Though there was considerable excitement generated by these discoveries, it would not be until approximately 50 years later that scholars would fully realize the immense significance of these finds in the reconstruction of the historical Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

In the years following the landmark discoveries of 1897 and 1903, war and famine raged in and around Upper Egypt. It was not until 1945 that a peasant farmer, Muhammad 'Ali, and his brother, accidentally trenched into an early Christian tomb while digging for fertilizer at the base of a cliff, some six miles north of the modern town of Nag Hammadi. In the process of this dig, the farmers unearthed, among other relics, a six-foot jar. After breaking the jar open, they discovered twelve leather-bound codices and part of a thirteenth. These codices proved to contain 48 or 49 separate documents written in the ancient Egyptian Coptic language and together with the Greek fragments found at the turn-of-the-century, would constitute the collection of sayings known in antiquity as *The Gospel of Thomas*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hartin, Patrick J. "Two Sayings Gospels: The Gospel of Thomas and the Sayings of Gospel Q." *Bible Today* 47, no. (2009): 167-71. Accessed October 11, 2012. Academic Search Complete.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard, Andrew, Bernard P. Grenfell, and Arthur S. Hunt, trans. "The Gospel of Thomas Fragments from Oxyrhynchus." *The Gnostic Library*. Ed. Eveylyn White Hugh, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, and Harold W. Attridge. The Gnostic Society. Web. 15 Oct. 2012. <<http://www.gnosis.org>>.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce, F. F. "The Gospel of Thomas." *Faith and Thought* 92, no. 1 (1961): 3-23. Accessed October 11, 2012. <http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/>.

<sup>4</sup> Hartin, Patrick J. "Two Sayings Gospels: The Gospel of Thomas and the Sayings of Gospel Q." *Bible Today*

This discovery was made in the vicinity of the ancient town of Chenoboskion, on the east bank of the Nile. This area, some 30 miles north of Luxor, was the site of one of the earliest Christian monasteries founded by Pachomius in 320 CE. These codices and their separate documents would become known as the Nag Hammadi papyri, ostensibly as Nag Hammadi was the nearest modern town to the scene of the discovery site and was where the news of finds were first reported.<sup>5</sup>

This study will attempt to enhance the academic debates analyzing and synthesizing the probable origins, authorship and authenticity of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri and Nag Hammadi codices. Taking those elements a step further, this paper will offer explanation of the messages inherent in this controversial gospel and thoroughly identify, compare and contrast the disparity between *The Gospel of Thomas* and the Synoptic Gospels which evolved into orthodox Christian doctrine. Researching the contentious nature of *The Gospel of Thomas* involved an exhaustive literature review and comprehensive study of the multitude of contemporary writings which have emerged in the 65 years since the Nag Hammadi discoveries. Critical exploration of not only the translated texts themselves, but also the evolutionary building blocks laid by each successive generation of scholars, warrants this continued research as the historic implications of these manuscripts form the framework of spiritual beliefs for more than half of the population of the modern world.

### Literature Review

An infancy gospel under the name of *Thomas* had been known well before the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts. *The Gospel of Thomas* was familiar to writers in the early centuries of Christianity such as Origen, Jerome and Hippolytus and has been dated anywhere from 40 to 140 CE. Some of the Greek originals were known to have existed during the time of Irenaeus (c 180 CE), going back to the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. *The Gospel of Thomas* disappeared in the fourth century and reappeared in 1945, intact in its fourth century Coptic form. Though the Coptic version of *Thomas* represents a marginally different redaction than was found in the Greek Oxyrhynchus papyri, there is no doubt amongst scholars as to the identity of the two works and their relationship.<sup>6</sup>

More than 15 years of political and scholarly obstacles elapsed between the discovery of the codices in 1945 and their translation and publication in 1959. Gilles Quispel, one of the première Church historians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, played an instrumental role in the acquisition, identification, translation and editing of several of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts. In 1955 Quispel became the first scholar to photograph and decipher a large portion of Coptic Thomas text.<sup>7</sup>

Following his research and analysis, Quispel published *Some Remarks on the Gospel of Thomas*, in which he described the detection of the influence of Jewish-Christian gospel structure in certain Thomasine sayings. These sayings, commonly

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47,no.(2009): 167-71. Accessed October 11, 2012. Academic Search Complete.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce, F. F. "The Gospel of Thomas." *Faith and Thought* 92, no. 1 (1961): 3-23. Accessed October 11, 2012. <http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/>.

<sup>6</sup> Janssens, Yvonne. "Gospel of Thomas." In *Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia*, edited by Aziz Suryal Atiya, 1162-63. 2nd ed. Vol. 4 of *The Coptic Encyclopedia*. New York: Macmillian, 1991.

<sup>7</sup> Pakis, Valentine. "(Un) Desirable Origins: The Heliand and the Gospel of Thomas." *Exemplaria* 17, no. 2 (2005): 215-53. Accessed October 10, 2012. Literary Reference Center.

referred to as logia, were composed in Aramaic and independent of the canonical writings. Quispel identified these writings in four ways: i) through Aramaisms in the Coptic text; ii) through parallels from Jewish-Christian literature; iii) through the use of form-criticism; and iv) through parallels for Diatessaronic witnesses. Quispel found these traces to be of great importance because they reflected an early and independent account of the canonical narratives, and held the promise of “some consequences for our assessment of the value of our Gospels.”<sup>8</sup>

Helmut Koester, a prominent contemporary theologian, has more recently made a significant impact on views of *The Gospel of Thomas*. Koester contends that the similarities between the canonical Gospels and their sources have led to a very positive assessment of several non-canonical Gospels. Koester believes that some of these sayings “are perhaps at least as old and as valuable as the canonical Gospels as sources for the earliest development of Jesus traditions.”<sup>9</sup> In Koester’s work *Authentic Sayings* he makes one of the more startling assertions ever regarding *The Gospel of Thomas*, believing that *Thomas*, at times, reflects the most primitive stages of the Jesus tradition and concluding that “much of the material of *The Gospel of Thomas* . . . was probably written within ten to twenty years of Jesus’ death.”

### *Debating the Authenticity of “The Gospel of Thomas”*

Inherent inconsistencies and sporadic, garbled texts have plagued the *Gospels’* authentication since its discovery, creating numerous theories to address the problems of seemingly disorganized and often contradictory sayings. One of the most common theories proposes a redactor (editor) that utilized other Gospels as sources when composing his work. Some of the suggested sources include a Jewish-Christian Gospel, possibly the Gospel of the Nazarees; an encratic Gospel, possibly the Gospel of the Egyptians; and a Hermetic Gospel. Conceptually, the redactor, probably from Edessa, edited this material, adding his own occasional commentary into what is now the present collection. This theory contends that the redactor did not intend his gospel to be esoteric but an exoteric writing containing divine sayings whose interpretations could be grasped by the spiritual man.<sup>10</sup>

This theory, put forth by Quispel, alleges the “Judaic Christian sayings were written down in 50 CE in Jerusalem,” and the encratic source was combined by the Edessan, editor of the Gospel around 140 CE. While the Coptic version of *The Gospel of Thomas* dates to the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, scholars other than Quispel also estimate the original text may have been composed as early as the first century and probably in Syria. The combined scholarly research and analysis would contend that the early Christian movement eventuated in Syrian monasticism which succumbed to the Gnostic

<sup>8</sup> Quispel, Gilles. "Some Remarks on the Gospel of Thomas." *New Testament Studies* 5, 1958-59, 276-90.

<sup>9</sup> Thatcher, Tom. "Early Christianities and the Synoptic Eclipse: Problems in Situating the Gospel of Thomas." *Biblical Interpretation* 7, no. 3 (1999): 323-39. Accessed October 10, 2012. Academic Search Premier.

<sup>10</sup> DeConick, April D. "The Original Gospel of Thomas." *Vigiliae Christianae* 56, no. 2 (2002): 167-99. Accessed October 10, 2012. Literary Reference Center.

proclivities inherent in that genre. This would date the original composition of *Thomas* in the vicinity of 70-80 CE.<sup>11</sup>

In 1991 two landmark studies were conducted and published on the authorship and development of *The Gospel of Thomas* and the historical Jesus. Historian John Dominic Crossan strengthened Quispel's earlier theory of redaction and believes that much of the collection is "very, very early," having been pieced together in the 50s under the authority of James [the Just]. This first layer is distinguishable "in those units with independent attestation elsewhere."<sup>12</sup>

Crossan goes on to speculate that after James' death in 62 and the migration of the Thomasine Christians to Edessa, a second layer of material was added, "possibly as early as the 60s or 70s under the aegis of Thomas' authority" and adding that this secondary layer is made up of "that which is unique to this collection." Together, these dual points of primitiveness and multiple attestations have Crossan concluding that Thomasine sayings carry a "very high degree of authenticity."<sup>13</sup>

### *Theories of Multi-Layer Authorship*

The theory of multi-authorship finds additional support in explaining many of the inconsistencies and dichotomies that have plagued the manuscript since its discovery. The common practice of redaction and layering help to account for the plethora of interpretive glosses found tacked on to certain sayings, presumably evidence of a later redactors' authoritative interpretations of early works. Additionally, the apparent random structuring of sayings tied together by *catchwords* is a compositional framework common to the oracles of a prophet and academically referred to as a *rolling corpus*. *The Gospel of Thomas* fits the oracle paradigm as an aggregate corpus of Jesus sayings organized loosely by catchwords. By the mid-second century, the *Gospel* had nearly developed into the form we know it today. It was in this form that it was taken to Alexandria and became part of the early Christian teachings of the region at that time.<sup>14</sup>

Origen Adamantius was a scholar and theologian in Alexandria, famed in the late 1<sup>st</sup> – early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. His writings are included in the general collection of works known as the Early Church Writings. Origen's works are known to contain references to early Gospel traditions that were excluded from the canonical Gospels (those written by the Apostles Matthew, Mark, Luke and later, John). Some of these same sayings or parables have close parallels to Thomasine logia.<sup>15</sup>

Conversely, the research of John P. Meier, presents a diametrically opposed approach and judges the Thomasine collection to be reflective of second century Gnosticism. Meier contends, "it is only in light of this strange mixture of mysticism, asceticism, pantheism and polytheism that many of the sayings of the Living Jesus can be

<sup>11</sup> Perrin, Nicholas. "Recent Trends in Gospel of Thomas Research (1991-2006): Part I, The Historical Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels." *Currents in Biblical Research* 5, no. 2 (2007): 183-206. Accessed October 10, 2012. Academic Search Premier.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> DeConick, April D. "The Original Gospel of Thomas." *Vigiliae Christianae* 56, no. 2 (2002): 167-99. Accessed October 10, 2012. Literary Reference Center.

<sup>15</sup> Grosso, Matteo. "A New Link between Origen and the Gospel of Thomas: Commentary on Mathew 14,14." *Vigiliae Christianae* 65, no. 3 (2011): 249-56. Accessed October 10, 2012. Academic Search Premier.

understood.”<sup>16</sup> He further alleges that *The Gospel of Thomas* is wholly dependent upon the Synoptic Gospels (those of Matthew, Mark and Luke) and concludes that, “*The Gospel of Thomas* will not be used in our quest as an independent source for the historical Jesus.”

### Discussion

*The Gospel of Thomas*, as discovered in 1945, is a collection of 114 sayings or logia, ascribed to Jesus by Didymus Judas Thomas. According to the colophon on the outside of the leather-bound codices, enclosed was *The Gospel of Thomas*:<sup>17</sup>

*These are the secret words which Jesus the Living One spoke and Didymus Judas Thomas wrote down. And he said: “Whosoever finds the interpretation of these words shall never taste death.”*

*Jesus said: “Let not him who seeks desist until he finds. When he finds he will be troubled; when he is troubled he will marvel, and he will reign over the universe.”*

The sayings themselves are not what were secret, but their interpretation; and these were interpretations that paralleled the principles of the Gnostic school of theology. Basic Gnostic principles held that the central goal of life was to free the soul from its imprisonment in the physical body, enabling it (the soul) to return to the realm of the divine.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Gnostic Influences: Values of Illusion and Enlightenment*

It is this Gnostic influence, with its tendency towards the intellectual rather than the emotional that has found *The Gospel of Thomas* in perpetual conflict with traditional Christian scripture. *Thomas* belonged to an early Christianity that valued the sayings of Jesus, as the prologue on the outside of the codices explained, and whose sayings reflected a countercultural wisdom to that of the prevailing philosophies found in orthodox Christian society. This is also a primary reason that *The Gospel of Thomas* was touted as Gnostic, buried in the fourth century and Gnosticism condemned as heretical.<sup>19</sup>

In the initial flurry of scholarly literature that followed the 1959 publication and translation of the full Coptic text focused the opinion that the text was largely Gnostic. The Coptic text was felt to be a later redaction, which was gnosticized over the Greek fragments, and was not a direct translation. To that end, nearly all of the codices contained in the Nag Hammadi papyrus are Gnostic treatises and bare eloquent witness to the Gnostic influence present in early Egyptian Christianity.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Meier, John P. "Is Luke's Version of the Parable of the Rich Fool Reflected in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2012): 528-47. Accessed October 10, 2012. Academic Search Complete.

<sup>17</sup> Bruce, F. F. "The Gospel of Thomas." *Faith and Thought* 92, no. 1 (1961): 3-23. Accessed October 11, 2012. <http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Arnold, Kenneth. "The Circle of the Way: Reading the Gospel of Thomas as a ChristZen Text." *Cross Currents* 51, no. 4 (2002): 459-69. Accessed October 10, 2012. Academic Search Premier.

<sup>20</sup> Perrin, Nicholas. "Recent Trends in Gospel of Thomas Research (1991-2006): Part I, The Historical Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels." *Currents in Biblical Research* 5, no. 2 (2007): 183-206. Accessed October 10, 2012. Academic Search Premier.

*The Gospel of Thomas* is peppered with examples of a Living Jesus who speaks of the Gnostic values of illusion and enlightenment rather than sin and repentance. According to contemporary Gnostic scholar Elaine Pagels, “instead of coming to save mankind from sin, the Thomasine Jesus has come as a guide who opens access to spiritual understanding, and when the disciple attains enlightenment, Jesus no longer serves as his spiritual master: the two have become equal, even identical.”<sup>21</sup> Pagels illustrates her interpretation of this with logia 35 and 55:

*Jesus said: “I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become drunk from the bubbling stream which I have measured out . . . he who will drink from my mouth will become as I am: I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him.”*

There is evidence in logion 49 that Jesus’ instructions were meant to free the believers’ soul from the body and that upon entering Heaven the soul would obtain a heavenly image.<sup>22</sup>

*Jesus said: “Blessed are those who are alone and chosen, for you will find the kingdom. For you have come from it, and you will return there again.”*

*The Gospel of Thomas* held a countercultural view of the “world” as a hostile place, one to be avoided at all costs. This radical view of the “world” is evident in logion 28.<sup>23</sup>

*Jesus said: “I took my stand in the midst of the world and in flesh I appeared to them. I found them all drunk, and I did not find any of them thirsty.”*

In *The Gospel of Thomas*, the kingdom of God is a present reality. There is no future apocalyptic vision of the implosion of God’s kingdom. According to logion 3, as the kingdom of God lies within, one is able to understand one’s true identity as “children of the Living Father.”<sup>24</sup>

These and other such interpretations have made *The Gospel of Thomas* a transmission outside of traditional Christian scripture. It is this message of knowledge as the path to salvation, central to the Thomasine scripture, that clouds *Thomas’* place as one of the most important early Christian texts outside of the canonical Gospels.

### *Unification of Opposites as a Symbol of Salvation*

The Nag Hammadi texts serve to remind religious scholars of the extent in which the Gnostic principles viewed the unification of opposites as a prime symbol of salvation. Those this symbolism flourished in the second and third centuries, its origins were much earlier and as Paul dictates in his Letter to the Galatians regarding the ritual of baptism,

<sup>21</sup> Arnold, Kenneth. "The Circle of the Way: Reading the Gospel of Thomas as a ChristZen Text." *Cross Currants* 51, no. 4 (2002): 459-69. Accessed October 10, 2012. Academic Search Premier.

<sup>22</sup> Hartin, Patrick J. "Two Sayings Gospels: The Gospel of Thomas and the Sayings of Gospel Q." *Bible Today* 47, no. 3 (2009): 167-71. Accessed October 11, 2012. Academic Search Complete.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Hartin, Patrick J. "Two Sayings Gospels: The Gospel of Thomas and the Sayings of Gospel Q." *Bible Today* 47, no. 3 (2009): 167-71. Accessed October 11, 2012. Academic Search Complete.



“there is no Jew nor Greek, there is no slave nor free, there is no male and female” (Galatians 3:28). This unification of opposites is a well-known belief in ancient philosophy and the mythical pattern of androgyny, developed significantly in the hands of the Gnostics, who were bewitched by the character of the primal man. The Gnostic teachings focused primarily the concept of a subjective transformation of consciousness, which in turn, resulted in a radical isolation of the individual.<sup>25</sup>

The task of “make the two one,” especially “the male and the female,” is a prominent theme in *The Gospel of Thomas* as seen in logia 22:

*Jesus said to them: “When you make the two one, when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female on and one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female; and when you fashion eyes in the place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness; then you will enter the kingdom.”*

The emphasis of self-knowledge as a means of salvation suggest the term “male” and “female” are used metaphorically in some *The Gospel of Thomas* sayings to represent aspects of the individual personality. If this interpretation is accurate, the “making the two one” is a Gnostic parallel to a more philosophical use of the same metaphor to depict the progress of the wise man through the practice of virtue and the contemplation of philosophy to a heightened state of self-consciousness.<sup>26</sup> If cultic acts play any part in this sequence, this is not attributed to *Thomas* however, baptism is presumably presupposed by only as an initiation or the beginning of the transformation by gnosis.

In Gnostic teachings, the union of male and female represents not a heightened or spiritualized libido but a neutralization of sexuality and a renunciation of all ties which join the “unified” individual with society. If in baptism, the Christian has put on the image of the Creator, in whom “there is no male and no female,” then for him the old world has passed away and a new world has come.<sup>27</sup>

### *Parallels With or Dependency Upon the Synoptic Gospels*

Amid endless debates over *The Gospel of Thomas*’ relationship to the Synoptic Gospels, recent scholarly attention has focused on the notably Lucan tone of a majority of the Thomasine logia. In a subsequent analytical study by Meier, he highlights Charles L. Quarles’ 2007 research on the Lucan influence in both the Q Beatitude on the Poor (Matthew 5:3; Luke 6:20; GOT 54) and the Marcan parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1-11; Matthew 21:33-43; Luke 20:9-18; GOT 65-66).<sup>28</sup>

Meier furthers his assertions by citing Simon J. Gathercole’s work, *Luke in the Gospel of Thomas*, which appeared in 2011. Meier contends that Gathercole’s body of work enlarged the argument to include Lucan influence in Thomasine logia 5, 31, 65-66, 33, 99, 104, 100, 26, 47, 72 & 76. Meier notes that some test cases are more convincing

<sup>25</sup> Meeks, Wayne A. "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Early Christianity." *History of Religions* 13, no. 3 (1974): 165-208.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Meier, John P. "Is Luke's Version of the Parable of the Rich Fool Reflected in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2012): 528-47. Accessed October 10, 2012. Academic Search Complete.

than others but concedes that Gathercole's analysis does support the theory that *Thomas* does show an almost indirect influence from Luke's Gospel. This influence is then attributed to either Gospel harmony or secondary oracles.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, none of this reflection resolves the larger question of whether all or most of *The Gospel of Thomas* sayings that have parallels in the Synoptics are actually dependent on the Synoptic Gospels.

An accepted view amongst religious scholars is that Luke's Gospel was the last of the Synoptics to be written; many placing its composition in the range of 80-100 CE, while others dating it to the early second century. If the influence of Luke can be detected in Thomasine logia 72 & 63 it can be then argued that *The Gospel of Thomas* represents an early tradition independent of the Synoptics and possibly more historically reliable than the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>30</sup>

### *The Theoretical Gospel of Q*

And then there is Q? Where does this hypothetical canonical work fit into the conversation? Closer examination of the Synoptic Gospels reveals both tremendous similarities and vast differences. Academically accounting for this phenomenon has been termed the "Synoptic Problem." Many New Testament scholars believe that underlying the canonical Gospels of Matthew and Luke was a common source. This source, a hypothetical collection consisting solely of Jesus sayings, has become known as *The Gospel of Q*.<sup>31</sup>

Since the 8<sup>th</sup> century, religious scholars have proposed theories that center around the literary relationships of the Synoptic Gospels. At the center of the relationships is Mark's Gospel that Matthew and Luke used as the basis for their works. However, Mark's priority does not answer all of the questions since a significant amount of content (some 240 verses) present in Matthew and Luke are absent from Mark. Though a number of theories have been suggested, the most enduring and seemingly most plausible is that Matthew and Luke are independent of each other and used another source known to each of them.<sup>32</sup>

Analysis of the 240 verses revealed what Jesus scholars hypothesize as *The Gospel of Q*. The German scholar Johannes Weiss is credited with referring to the source behind Matthew and Luke as the Redenquelle, which he abbreviated with the symbol Q. Subsequently Q has become the accepted way in which scholars refer to these 240 verses.<sup>33</sup>

The extent that Q can be reconstructed from the non-Markan material common to Matthew and Luke forms the largest portion of Q. In order to quantify the known extent of Q it is necessary to draw on Matthew and Luke's treatment of Mark as an anthology. In Matthew, nearly 90% of the Markan material is preserved (600+ verses from Mark's

<sup>29</sup> Meier, John P. "Is Luke's Version of the Parable of the Rich Fool Reflected in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2012): 528-47. Accessed October 10, 2012. Academic Search Complete.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Hartin, Patrick J. "Two Sayings Gospels: The Gospel of Thomas and the Sayings of Gospel Q." *Bible Today* 47, no. 3 (2009): 167-71. Accessed October 11, 2012. Academic Search Complete.

<sup>32</sup> Wolter, Michael. "Reconstructing Q?" *The Expository Times* 115, no. 4 (2004): 115-19.

<sup>33</sup> Hartin, Patrick J. "Two Sayings Gospels: The Gospel of Thomas and the Sayings of Gospel Q." *Bible Today* 47, no. 3 (2009): 167-71. Accessed October 11, 2012. Academic Search Complete.

original 661); and Luke reproduces 350 verses from Mark. The combined total is nearly 53% of Mark's overall content. The assumption that between 80-90% of Q is preserved in the double tradition is proven fact.<sup>34</sup>

James Robinson was the first researcher to examine *The Gospel of Thomas* alongside Q as a trajectory of sayings within the Jewish-Christian community. In this evaluation, Robinson conducted the first serious attempt to locate Thomasine sayings within the broader scope of early Christian writings. Robinson saw *Thomas* as marking a transition along the trajectory of early Christian texts and alleging similarities with Q. This concept reinvigorated the investigation into the hypothesis of Q and has Robinson concluding that *The Gospel of Thomas* has status as historical text with the potential to reach back to Jesus himself.<sup>35</sup>

*The Gospel of Thomas* offers the first presentation of sayings as literary genre. As *Thomas* was found in its Coptic form, it is not the hypothetical source Q, but was likely derived from such a collection.<sup>36</sup> Over 50% of the sayings in the core Thomasine gospel parallel Q, yet not even one saying with a Q parallel can be found in the later layers of *Thomas*. This suggests that the sayings in the core *The Gospel of Thomas* are some of the oldest witnesses to Jesus traditions. Though the language, sequence and use of parallel sayings in Q and *Thomas* identify clear historical consistencies, the course that each Gospel took implies that neither was dependent upon the other. While apocalyptic expectations were intensified in Q they were de-intensified by the addition of later layers of *Thomas*.<sup>37</sup>

John Kloppenborg analyzed the entire text of Q and discovered different layers within it. The earliest layer he identified with the wisdom sayings, however a secondary layer was then added which included the apocalyptic Son of Man sayings and future-directed eschatological logia.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

Reconstruction of *The Gospel of Thomas* suggests an origin within a very old collection of Jesus sayings that likely emerged from the Jerusalem Church. This gospel was then carried to Syria, perhaps as the result of missionary activity by the Jerusalem Church. That *Thomas* was originally apocalyptic in its orientation is demonstrated by the anticipation of imminent judgment of god and the end of the world. This can be seen in numerous eschatological sayings that warn of the impending destruction and the need to prepare for the battle.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Wolter, Michael. "Reconstructing Q?" *The Expository Times* 115, no. 4 (2004): 115-19.

<sup>35</sup> Perrin, Nicholas. "Recent Trends in Gospel of Thomas Research (1991-2006): Part I, The Historical Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels." *Currents in Biblical Research* 5, no. 2 (2007): 183-206. Accessed October 10, 2012. Academic Search Premier.

<sup>36</sup> Janssens, Yvonne. "Gospel of Thomas." In *Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia*, edited by Aziz Suryal Atiya, 1162-63. 2nd ed. Vol. 4 of *The Coptic Encyclopedia*. New York: Macmillan, 1991.

<sup>37</sup> DeConick, April D. "The Original Gospel of Thomas." *Vigiliae Christianae* 56, no. 2 (2002): 167-99. Accessed October 10, 2012. Literary Reference Center.

<sup>38</sup> Kloppenborg, John S. *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. Print.

<sup>39</sup> DeConick, April D. "The Original Gospel of Thomas." *Vigiliae Christianae* 56, no. 2 (2002): 167-99. Accessed October 10, 2012. Literary Reference Center.

It would appear that the original community of *Thomas* believed themselves to be living in a very late stage of history, characterized by chaos and the reversal of normalcy. The reconstruction of this original community as thoroughly apocalyptic is the opposite of accepted scholarly interpretation of the Thomasine gospel and a community, which was non-apocalyptic. In this reconstruction it becomes evident that the later layers of *The Gospel of Thomas* introduce non-apocalyptic or de-apocalyptic interpretations to answer the needs and theology of previously strong eschatological hopes.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, the Thomasine Jesus is transformed and no longer an apocalyptic prophet, foretelling of cataclysmic implosion of God's rules at the end of time. *The Gospel of Thomas'* future dimension gives assurance to those who accept God's kingdom through Jesus' teachings will not taste death. As it became evident that the Judgment and Eschaton were delayed, Thomasine text reflects the theological repositioning of the community as they began to refocus.<sup>41</sup>

The Gospel's lack of concern for the imagery of the resurrection, so central to the framework of early as well as modern Christian theology, indicates that "reference to Jesus' resurrection was not a common persuasion" in early Christianities, but only "one among many ways in which early Jesus movements and Christian groups imagined their beginnings."<sup>42</sup>

Historian Gregory Riley theorizes that, "early Christian missionaries proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus throughout the Roman world not only as the founding event of their own faith but also as the central event in human history." Ironically, this stance by Riley was taken in a call to the scholastic community to "take *Thomas* seriously," but has placed Riley in the common position of asserting that *Thomas* is "just another early witness to Christianity which did not accept physical resurrection."<sup>43</sup>

To this point, Timothy Luke Johnson would conclude nearly fifty years *after* the discovery of the Nag Hammadi text:

*Some sort of powerful, transformative experience is required to generate the sort of movement earliest Christianity was, and to necessitate the sort of literature the New Testament is . . . [to argue] that the resurrection experience was found only among some early Christians but not all – [this view] suffers from a lack of positive evidence. Certainly the canonical New Testament writings as we now have them all assume the resurrection . . . [moreover,] the Gnostic writings from Nag Hammadi that are demonstrably Christian [The Gospel of Thomas] seem to have an understanding of the resurrection of Jesus that is distinctive, viewing it as a quality of his existence rather than a post-mortem event, but they still assume the resurrection is a central symbol that requires negotiation. The effort to reduce the resurrection experience to just another historical event runs the risk of failing to account for the rise of the historical movement. The denial of the*

<sup>40</sup> DeConick, April D. "The Original Gospel of Thomas." *Vigiliae Christianae* 56, no. 2 (2002): 167-99. Accessed October 10, 2012. Literary Reference Center.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Kloppenborg, John S. *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. Print.

<sup>43</sup> Cameron, Ron. "Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of the Gospel of Thomas and Christian Origins." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 11, no. 3 (1999): 236-57. Accessed October 10, 2012. Academic Search Premier.

*resurrection experience poses an even greater problem of origination: if some such experience was not at the root of the movement, what accounted for its unlikely birth, amazing growth and peculiarly tension-filled literature?*<sup>44</sup>

Since its discovery, *The Gospel of Thomas* has presented scholars with ferocious debate as the serious probability exists that *Thomas* preserves an older tradition of the historical Jesus and potentially, “brings us closer to Jesus’ original words.”<sup>45</sup>

Though the theological battle of the early ‘90s between Crossan and Meier did not spark *The Gospel of Thomas* debate, their combined research has renewed questions on whether or not to use *Thomas* and thus, Jesus scholarship over the last 20 years has been restrained in its use of *The Gospel*.<sup>46</sup> The failure of recent scholars to develop a shared understanding of the proper role of *The Gospel of Thomas* in reconstructing Christian origins only underscores the importance of the question of accurately dating documents from antiquity.

Progress in Thomasine studies will require further exploration into how texts and traditions were transmitted and appropriated in the ancient world. The greatest contribution of the Nag Hammadi discovery may be to deepen our knowledge and understanding of early Christianity. The community of *Thomas* was very different from other centers of early Christianity, particularly those associated with the canonical Apostles. *The Gospel of Thomas* clearly bears witness to an independent branch within early Christianity and is a prime example of the diversity of the early Christian Church.

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<sup>44</sup> Johnson, Timothy Luke. *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.

<sup>45</sup> Pakis, Valentine. "(Un) Desirable Origins: The Heliand and the Gospel of Thomas." *Exemplaria* 17, no. 2 (2005): 215-53. Accessed October 10, 2012. Literary Reference Center.

<sup>46</sup> Perrin, Nicholas. "Recent Trends in Gospel of Thomas Research (1991-2006): Part I, The Historical Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels." *Currents in Biblical Research* 5, no. 2 (2007): 183-206. Accessed October 10, 2012. Academic Search Premier.

## Appendix A: Glossary of Religious Terms

**accretion** - process of growth through layers; layering

**agnostic** - one who is not committed to believing in either the existence or non-existence of God

**agrapha** - unwritten things

**anachronistic** - state of disorder due to the absence of or non-recognition of authority

**androgyny** - having characteristics or nature of both male and female

**apocrypha** - early Christian writings not forming part of the accepted canon of scripture (New Testament)

**apothegm** - a short, pithy and instructive saying; a terse remark

**asceticism** - practicing a strict self-denial as a measure of personal or spiritual discipline

**beatitude** - any declaration made in the Sermon on the Mount beginning in the authorized version, "Blessed are. . ."

**canonical** - pertaining to the laws of the Christian Church

**chreia** - an elementary rhetorical exercise in which the speaker or writer comments on briefly on a famous saying or event

**codices** - a manuscript volume, held together by stitching, that replaced the scrolls and wax tablets of antiquity; usually of an ancient classic or the Scriptures

**cognitive dissonance** - psychological conflict resulting from incongruous beliefs and attitudes held simultaneously

**Coptic** – a stage of the Egyptian language, predominantly northern Afro-Asiatic, spoken in Egypt until the 17<sup>th</sup> Cen. Coptic flourished as a literary language from the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> Cen and its Bohairic dialect continues to be the liturgical language of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria

**colophon** - an inscription placed at the end of a book or manuscript; usually with facts relating to its production

**datum** - a basis for calculating or measuring usage

**Diatessaron** - the canonical gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John) combined into a single narrative

**Diotrephes** - a Christian in John's Gospel who was rebuked by John and then spoke maliciously of John and his followers

**encratic** - pertaining to self-denial and self-control, especially in the form of fasting, celibacy and abstinence from alcohol (wine)

**Encratite Acts** - works of the ascetic sect led by Tatian; these teachings rejected the Pauline Letters as well as the Acts of the Apostles

**engendered** - give cause or rise to

**eschatological** - a branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world and humankind

**Ethos** - the distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature or guiding beliefs of a person, group or institution

**Evangelists** - one who preaches the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John)  
exegetes - one who interprets or explains critical text

**Form Criticism** - method of identifying basic patterns in the history of a tradition; to determine the function of traditional material in the life of the people and communities of the time; inherently concerned with the history of early Christian theology

**glosses** -(Biblical glosses) an explanation of a purely verbal difficulty of the text to the exclusion of explanations required by doctrinal, ritual, historical or other obscurities

**gnosis** - Greek word meaning knowledge

**Gnostic** - pertaining to a secretive understanding of spiritual things

**Gnosticism** - a religion that differentiates the evil God of this world from a higher, more abstract God revealed by Jesus; a religion that regards this world as the creation of a series of evil archons/powers who want to keep the human soul trapped in the physical body; a religion that preaches a hidden wisdom or knowledge only to a select group as necessary for salvation

**hermeneutic** - pertaining to the interpretation of the Scriptures

**Johannine** - pertaining to the writings of John the Baptist

**juxtaposition** - fact that two things can be placed close together with contrasting effects

**kerygma** - preaching the Gospel of Christ in the manner of the early Church

**koan** - a paradox to be mediated upon that is used to train Zen Buddhist monks to abandon ultimate dependence on reason and force them to gain sudden intuitive enlightenment

**laudable** - worthy of praise

**liminal** - barely noticeable

**logia** – a supposed collection of the sayings of Christ held to have been drawn upon by the writers of the gospels

**logion** – one of a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus reputedly in circulation in the early Church, most of which are not recorded in the Gospels but which may have belonged to the source material from which the Gospels were compiled.

**Logos** - divine wisdom manifested in the creation, government and redemption of the world and often identified with the second person of the Trinity

**megalith** - large stone that forms a prehistoric monument

**monolithic** - constituting a massive, undifferentiated and often rigid whole

**Origen** - early scholar and theologian in Alexandria, Egypt (late 1st - early 2nd Cen). His writings are included in the general collection of early Christian writings

**orthodox** - observant, conservative, religious

**pantheistic** - doctrine that equates God with the forces and laws of the Universe

**parable** - simple story or moral lesson taught by Jesus

**paradigm** - exceedingly clear example of a pattern

**paronomasia** - a play on words; pun

**pedagogical** - relating to or befitting a teacher or educator

**pernicious** - highly injurious or destructive

**polemics** - an aggressive attack on or refutation of the opinions or principles of another

**procrustean** - marked by an arbitrary, often ruthless disregard of individual differences or special circumstances

**prodigious** - extraordinary in quantity or degree



**redaction** - a form of editing in which multiple source texts are combined and subjected to minor alteration to make them into a single work

**redactor** - one who edits texts

**sage** - wise through reflection or experience

**sapient** - having wisdom

**soteriology** - doctrine of the salvation of Christ

**stoicism** - indifference to passion or pain

**Synoptic** - pertaining to the first three Gospels of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark & Luke)

**Synoptic Eclipse** - broad set of presuppositions about the place of Synoptic Gospels in reconstructions of the evolution of the Jesus Tradition

**taxonomy** – classification

**treasties** - a systematic exposition or argument in writing including a methodical discussion of the facts

**Appendix B: *The Gospel of Thomas* Fragments from Oxyrhynchus**  
**Translated By Andrew Bernard, Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt**

**Prologue and Saying 1** (pOxy 654.1-5)

These are the [hidden] sayings [that] the living Jesus [sp]oke a[nd Judas who] is also Thomas [recorded.] And he said, "[Whoever finds the interpretat]ion of the[se] sayings will not taste [death]."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:* These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down. And he said, "Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death."

**Saying 2** (pOxy. 654.5-9)

[Jesus said,] "Let the one seek[ing] not stop [seeking until] he finds. And when he find[s] he will marvel, and mar]veling he will reign, an[d reigning] he will [rest.]"

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:* Jesus said, "Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All."

**Saying 3** (pOxy. 654.9-21)

J[esus] said, "[If] those pulling you [say to you, 'Look,] the kingdom is in the sk[y,] the birds of the sk[y will go before you. Or if they say t]hat it [is] beneath the ground, the fish of the se[a will go in, preced]ing you. And the king[dom of God] [i]s within you [and outside you. Whoever] knows [himself will] find this [and when you] know yourselves [you will know that] you are [children] of the l[iving] father. [But if] you will [not] know yourselves, [you are] in [poverty] and you are the pov[erty].]"

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:* Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty."

**Saying 4** (pOxy. 654.21-27)

[Jesus said,] "A per[son old in day]s will not hesitate to ask a ch[ild seven day]s old about his place in [life and] he will [live.] For many of the f[irst] will be [last and] many of the last will be first and they [will become one]."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:* Jesus said, "The man old in days will not hesitate to ask a small child seven days old about the place of life, and he will live. For many who are first will become last, and they will become one and the same."

**Saying 5** (pOxy. 654.27-31)

Jesus said, "K[now what is in fr]ont of your face and [what has been hidden] from you [will be] revealed [to you. For there] is [nothing] hidden that [will] not [be made] cl[ear] and n[othing] buried that [will] n[ot be raised]."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:*  
Jesus said, "Recognize what is in your sight, and that which is hidden from you will become plain to you . For there is nothing hidden which will not become manifest."

**Saying 6** (pOxy. 654.32-40)

[His disciples qu]estioned him [and s]aid, "How [should we] fast [and how] should we [pray,] and how [should we do charitable deeds a]nd what [food law should we] observe?"

Jesus said, "[Do not lie and that which] you [hate], do not do [because everything is evident before t]he tru[t]h. [For there is nothing hi]dd[en that will not be made clear.]"

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:*  
His disciples questioned him and said to him, "Do you want us to fast? How shall we pray? Shall we give alms? What diet shall we observe?"  
Jesus said, "Do not tell lies, and do not do what you hate, for all things are plain in the sight of heaven. For nothing hidden will not become manifest, and nothing covered will remain without being uncovered."

**Saying 7?** (pOxy. 654.40-42)

[b]esse[d] is [ . . . ]

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:*  
Jesus said, "Blessed is the lion which becomes man when consumed by man; and cursed is the man whom the lion consumes, and the lion becomes man."

**Saying 24?** (pOxy. 655d.1-5)

[it] is [ . . . ]light [ . . . w]orld [ . . . i]t is [ . . . ]

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:*  
His disciples said to him, "Show us the place where you are, since it is necessary for us to seek it."

He said to them, "Whoever has ears, let him hear. There is light within a man of light, and he lights up the whole world. If he does not shine, he is darkness."

**Saying 26** (pOxy. 1.1-4)

". . . and then you will see clearly to cast out the speck that is in your brother's eye."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:*  
Jesus said, "You see the mote in your brother's eye, but you do not see the beam in your own eye. When you cast the beam out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to cast the mote from your brother's eye."

**Saying 27** (pOxy. 1.4-11)

Jesus said, "If you do not fast from the world, you will not find the kingdom of God. And if you do not keep the sabbath a sabbath, you will not see the father."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:*  
<Jesus said,> "If you do not fast as regards the world, you will not find the kingdom. If you do not observe the Sabbath as a Sabbath, you will not see the father."

**Saying 28** (pOxy. 1.11-21)

Jesus said, "I s[t]ood in the midst of the world and in the flesh I appeared to them. I found everyone drunk and none thirsty among them. My soul worries about the children of humanity because they are blind in thei[r] hearts and [they] do [not] see."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:*  
Jesus said, "I took my place in the midst of the world, and I appeared to them in flesh. I

found all of them intoxicated; I found none of them thirsty. And my soul became afflicted for the sons of men, because they are blind in their hearts and do not have sight; for empty they came into the world, and empty too they seek to leave the world. But for the moment they are intoxicated. When they shake off their wine, then they will repent."

**Saying 29** (pOxy. 1.22)

"[. . .]he dwells in th[i]s poverty."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:*  
Jesus said, "If the flesh came into being because of spirit, it is a wonder. But if spirit came into being because of the body, it is a wonder of wonders. Indeed, I am amazed at how this great wealth has made its home in this poverty."

**Saying 30 + 77b** (pOxy. 1.23-30)

[Jesus sa]id, ["Wh]ere there are [th]r[ee] t[hey ar]e [without] God. And [w]here there is only o[ne], I say, I am with hi[m]. Li[f]t the stone and there you will find me. Split the wood and I am there."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:*  
(30) Jesus said, "Where there are three gods, they are gods. Where there are two or one, I am  
am with him"  
(77b) ...Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."

**Saying 31** (pOxy. 1.30-35)

Jesus said, "A prophet is not acceptable in h[i]s homeland. Nor does a physican perform healings for those who know him."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:*  
Jesus said, "No prophet is accepted in his own village; no physician heals those who know him."

**Saying 32** (pOxy. 1.36-41)

Jesus said, "A city that has been built and established on the summit of a high [m]ountain can neither fa[l]l nor be hi[d]den."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:*

Jesus said, "A city being built on a high mountain and fortified cannot fall, nor can it be hidden."

**Saying 33** (pOxy. 1.41-42)

Jesus said, "What you hear [i]n your one ear . . ."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:*  
Jesus said, "Preach from your housetops that which you will hear in your ear. For no one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, nor does he put it in a hidden place, but rather he sets it on a lampstand so that everyone who enters and leaves will see its light."

**Saying 36** (pOxy. 655i.1-17)

[Jesus said, "Do not worry f]rom early u[n]til late no[r] from ev[ening until m]orning. Worry neither [for y]our [food,] what [you] will eat, [nor] for [your] c[lothes,] what you will wear. [You are] [mu]ch gr[ea]ter than the [li]lies wh[ic]h n[ei]ther ca[r]d nor s[pi]n. When you have n[o c]lo[thing], what do [you wear]? Who can add to your time of life? H[e it is who w]ill give you your clothing."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:* Jesus said, "Do not be concerned from morning until evening and from evening until morning about what you will wear."

**Saying 37** (pOxy. 655i.17-23)

His disciples said to him, "When will you be visible to us? And when will we see you?"

He said, "When you undress and are not ashamed."

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:* His disciples said, "When will you become revealed to us and when shall we see you?"

Jesus said, "When you disrobe without being ashamed and take up your garments and place them under your feet like little children and tread on them, then will you see the son of the living one, and you will not be afraid"

**Saying 39** (pOxy. 655ii.11-23)

[Jesus said, "The Pharisees and the scribes] to[ok the keys] of [knowledge. They] hi[d them. They did not] go in, [nor did] they [allow those] trying to go [in to do so. You,] however, b[e wi]se a[s snakes and i]nnocen[t as do]v[es.]"

*Coptic version of same saying as found in the Nag Hammadi manuscript:* Jesus said, "The pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge (gnosis) and hidden them. They themselves have not entered, nor have they allowed to enter those who wish to. You, however, be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves."

### **Appendix C: *The Gospel of Thomas* Translated from the Coptic text by Thomas O. Lambdin**

These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down.

- (1) And he said, "Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death."
- (2) Jesus said, "Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All."
- (3) Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty."
- (4) Jesus said, "The man old in days will not hesitate to ask a small child seven days old about the place of life, and he will live. For many who are first will become last, and they will become one and the same."
- (5) Jesus said, "Recognize what is in your sight, and that which is hidden from you will become plain to you. For there is nothing hidden which will not become manifest."
- (6) His disciples questioned him and said to him, "Do you want us to fast? How shall we pray? Shall we give alms? What diet shall we observe?"  
Jesus said, "Do not tell lies, and do not do what you hate, for all things are plain in the sight of heaven. For nothing hidden will not become manifest, and nothing covered will remain without being uncovered."
- (7) Jesus said, "Blessed is the lion which becomes man when consumed by man; and cursed is the man whom the lion consumes, and the lion becomes man."
- (8) And he said, "The man is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of small fish. Among them the wise fisherman found a fine large fish. He threw all the small fish back into the sea and chose the large fish without difficulty. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear."
- (9) Jesus said, "Now the sower went out, took a handful (of seeds), and scattered them. Some fell on the road; the birds came and gathered them up. Others fell on the rock, did not take root in the soil, and did not produce ears. And others fell on thorns; they choked the seed(s) and worms ate them. And others fell on the good soil and it produced good fruit: it bore sixty per measure and a hundred and twenty per measure."
- (10) Jesus said, "I have cast fire upon the world, and see, I am guarding it until it blazes."
- (11) Jesus said, "This heaven will pass away, and the one above it will pass away. The dead are not alive, and the living will not die. In the days when you consumed what is dead, you made it what is alive. When you come to dwell in the light, what will you do? On the day when you were one you became two. But when you become two, what will you do?"
- (12) The disciples said to Jesus, "We know that you will depart from us. Who is to be our leader?"

Jesus said to them, "Wherever you are, you are to go to James the righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being."

(13) Jesus said to his disciples, "Compare me to someone and tell me whom I am like."

Simon Peter said to him, "You are like a righteous angel."

Matthew said to him, "You are like a wise philosopher."

Thomas said to him, "Master, my mouth is wholly incapable of saying whom you are like."

Jesus said, "I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring which I have measured out."

And he took him and withdrew and told him three things. When Thomas returned to his companions, they asked him, "What did Jesus say to you?"

Thomas said to them, "If I tell you one of the things which he told me, you will pick up stones and throw them at me; a fire will come out of the stones and burn you up."

(14) Jesus said to them, "If you fast, you will give rise to sin for yourselves; and if you pray, you will be condemned; and if you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits. When you go into any land and walk about in the districts, if they receive you, eat what they will set before you, and heal the sick among them. For what goes into your mouth will not defile you, but that which issues from your mouth - it is that which will defile you."

(15) Jesus said, "When you see one who was not born of woman, prostrate yourselves on your faces and worship him. That one is your father."

(16) Jesus said, "Men think, perhaps, that it is peace which I have come to cast upon the world. They do not know that it is dissension which I have come to cast upon the earth: fire, sword, and war. For there will be five in a house: three will be against two, and two against three, the father against the son, and the son against the father. And they will stand solitary."

(17) Jesus said, "I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind."

(18) The disciples said to Jesus, "Tell us how our end will be."

Jesus said, "Have you discovered, then, the beginning, that you look for the end? For where the beginning is, there will the end be. Blessed is he who will take his place in the beginning; he will know the end and will not experience death."

(19) Jesus said, "Blessed is he who came into being before he came into being. If you become my disciples and listen to my words, these stones will minister to you. For there are five trees for you in Paradise which remain undisturbed summer and winter and whose leaves do not fall. Whoever becomes acquainted with them will not experience death."

(20) The disciples said to Jesus, "Tell us what the kingdom of heaven is like."

He said to them, "It is like a mustard seed. It is the smallest of all seeds. But when it falls on tilled soil, it produces a great plant and becomes a shelter for birds of the sky."

(21) Mary said to Jesus, "Whom are your disciples like?"

He said, "They are like children who have settled in a field which is not theirs. When the owners of the field come, they will say, 'Let us have back our field.' They (will) undress in their presence in order to let them have back their field and to give it back to them.

Therefore I say, if the owner of a house knows that the thief is coming, he will begin his vigil before he comes and will not let him dig through into his house of his domain to

carry away his goods. You, then, be on your guard against the world. Arm yourselves with great strength lest the robbers find a way to come to you, for the difficulty which you expect will (surely) materialize. Let there be among you a man of understanding. When the grain ripened, he came quickly with his sickle in his hand and reaped it. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear."

(22) Jesus saw infants being suckled. He said to his disciples, "These infants being suckled are like those who enter the kingdom."

They said to him, "Shall we then, as children, enter the kingdom?"

Jesus said to them, "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female; and when you fashion eyes in the place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness; then will you enter the kingdom."

(23) Jesus said, "I shall choose you, one out of a thousand, and two out of ten thousand, and they shall stand as a single one."

(24) His disciples said to him, "Show us the place where you are, since it is necessary for us to seek it."

He said to them, "Whoever has ears, let him hear. There is light within a man of light, and he lights up the whole world. If he does not shine, he is darkness."

(25) Jesus said, "Love your brother like your soul, guard him like the pupil of your eye."

(26) Jesus said, "You see the mote in your brother's eye, but you do not see the beam in your own eye. When you cast the beam out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to cast the mote from your brother's eye."

(27) <Jesus said,> "If you do not fast as regards the world, you will not find the kingdom. If you do not observe the Sabbath as a Sabbath, you will not see the father."

(28) Jesus said, "I took my place in the midst of the world, and I appeared to them in flesh. I found all of them intoxicated; I found none of them thirsty. And my soul became afflicted for the sons of men, because they are blind in their hearts and do not have sight; for empty they came into the world, and empty too they seek to leave the world. But for the moment they are intoxicated. When they shake off their wine, then they will repent."

(29) Jesus said, "If the flesh came into being because of spirit, it is a wonder. But if spirit came into being because of the body, it is a wonder of wonders. Indeed, I am amazed at how this great wealth has made its home in this poverty."

(30) Jesus said, "Where there are three gods, they are gods. Where there are two or one, I am with him."

(31) Jesus said, "No prophet is accepted in his own village; no physician heals those who know him."

(32) Jesus said, "A city being built on a high mountain and fortified cannot fall, nor can it be hidden."

(33) Jesus said, "Preach from your housetops that which you will hear in your ear. For no one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, nor does he put it in a hidden place, but rather he sets it on a lampstand so that everyone who enters and leaves will see its light."

(34) Jesus said, "If a blind man leads a blind man, they will both fall into a pit."

(35) Jesus said, "It is not possible for anyone to enter the house of a strong man and take it by force unless he binds his hands; then he will (be able to) ransack his house."



(36) Jesus said, "Do not be concerned from morning until evening and from evening until morning about what you will wear."

(37) His disciples said, "When will you become revealed to us and when shall we see you?"

Jesus said, "When you disrobe without being ashamed and take up your garments and place them under your feet like little children and tread on them, then will you see the son of the living one, and you will not be afraid"

(38) Jesus said, "Many times have you desired to hear these words which I am saying to you, and you have no one else to hear them from. There will be days when you will look for me and will not find me."

(39) Jesus said, "The pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge (gnosis) and hidden them. They themselves have not entered, nor have they allowed to enter those who wish to. You, however, be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves."

(40) Jesus said, "A grapevine has been planted outside of the father, but being unsound, it will be pulled up by its roots and destroyed."

(41) Jesus said, "Whoever has something in his hand will receive more, and whoever has nothing will be deprived of even the little he has."

(42) Jesus said, "Become passers-by."

(43) His disciples said to him, "Who are you, that you should say these things to us?"

<Jesus said to them,> "You do not realize who I am from what I say to you, but you have become like the Jews, for they (either) love the tree and hate its fruit (or) love the fruit and hate the tree."

(44) Jesus said, "Whoever blasphemes against the father will be forgiven, and whoever blasphemes against the son will be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes against the holy spirit will not be forgiven either on earth or in heaven."

(45) Jesus said, "Grapes are not harvested from thorns, nor are figs gathered from thistles, for they do not produce fruit. A good man brings forth good from his storehouse; an evil man brings forth evil things from his evil storehouse, which is in his heart, and says evil things. For out of the abundance of the heart he brings forth evil things."

(46) Jesus said, "Among those born of women, from Adam until John the Baptist, there is no one so superior to John the Baptist that his eyes should not be lowered (before him). Yet I have said, whichever one of you comes to be a child will be acquainted with the kingdom and will become superior to John."

(47) Jesus said, "It is impossible for a man to mount two horses or to stretch two bows. And it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters; otherwise, he will honor the one and treat the other contemptuously. No man drinks old wine and immediately desires to drink new wine. And new wine is not put into old wineskins, lest they burst; nor is old wine put into a new wineskin, lest it spoil it. An old patch is not sewn onto a new garment, because a tear would result."

(48) Jesus said, "If two make peace with each other in this one house, they will say to the mountain, 'Move Away,' and it will move away."

(49) Jesus said, "Blessed are the solitary and elect, for you will find the kingdom. For you are from it, and to it you will return."

(50) Jesus said, "If they say to you, 'Where did you come from?', say to them, 'We came from the light, the place where the light came into being on its own accord and established itself and became manifest through their image.' If they say to you, 'Is it

you?', say, 'We are its children, we are the elect of the living father.' If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your father in you?', say to them, 'It is movement and repose.'"

(51) His disciples said to him, "When will the repose of the dead come about, and when will the new world come?"

He said to them, "What you look forward to has already come, but you do not recognize it."

(52) His disciples said to him, "Twenty-four prophets spoke in Israel, and all of them spoke in you."

He said to them, "You have omitted the one living in your presence and have spoken (only) of the dead."

(53) His disciples said to him, "Is circumcision beneficial or not?"

He said to them, "If it were beneficial, their father would beget them already circumcised from their mother. Rather, the true circumcision in spirit has become completely profitable."

(54) Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven."

(55) Jesus said, "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother cannot become a disciple to me. And whoever does not hate his brothers and sisters and take up his cross in my way will not be worthy of me."

(56) Jesus said, "Whoever has come to understand the world has found (only) a corpse, and whoever has found a corpse is superior to the world."

(57) Jesus said, "The kingdom of the father is like a man who had good seed. His enemy came by night and sowed weeds among the good seed. The man did not allow them to pull up the weeds; he said to them, 'I am afraid that you will go intending to pull up the weeds and pull up the wheat along with them.' For on the day of the harvest the weeds will be plainly visible, and they will be pulled up and burned."

(58) Jesus said, "Blessed is the man who has suffered and found life."

(59) Jesus said, "Take heed of the living one while you are alive, lest you die and seek to see him and be unable to do so."

(60) <They saw> a Samaritan carrying a lamb on his way to Judea. He said to his disciples, "That man is round about the lamb."

They said to him, "So that he may kill it and eat it."

He said to them, "While it is alive, he will not eat it, but only when he has killed it and it has become a corpse."

They said to him, "He cannot do so otherwise."

He said to them, "You too, look for a place for yourself within repose, lest you become a corpse and be eaten."

(61) Jesus said, "Two will rest on a bed: the one will die, and the other will live."

Salome said, "Who are you, man, that you ... have come up on my couch and eaten from my table?"

Jesus said to her, "I am he who exists from the undivided. I was given some of the things of my father."

<...> "I am your disciple."

<...> "Therefore I say, if he is destroyed, he will be filled with light, but if he is divided, he will be filled with darkness."

(62) Jesus said, "It is to those who are worthy of my mysteries that I tell my mysteries. Do not let your left (hand) know what your right (hand) is doing."

(63) Jesus said, "There was a rich man who had much money. He said, 'I shall put my money to use so that I may sow, reap, plant, and fill my storehouse with produce, with the result that I shall lack nothing.' Such were his intentions, but that same night he died. Let him who has ears hear."

(64) Jesus said, "A man had received visitors. And when he had prepared the dinner, he sent his servant to invite the guests.

He went to the first one and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said, 'I have claims against some merchants. They are coming to me this evening. I must go and give them my orders. I ask to be excused from the dinner.'

He went to another and said to him, 'My master has invited you.' He said to him, 'I have just bought a house and am required for the day. I shall not have any spare time.'

He went to another and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said to him, 'My friend is going to get married, and I am to prepare the banquet. I shall not be able to come. I ask to be excused from the dinner.'

He went to another and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said to him, 'I have just bought a farm, and I am on my way to collect the rent. I shall not be able to come. I ask to be excused.'

The servant returned and said to his master, 'Those whom you invited to the dinner have asked to be excused.' The master said to his servant, 'Go outside to the streets and bring back those whom you happen to meet, so that they may dine.' Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my father."

(65) He said, "There was a good man who owned a vineyard. He leased it to tenant farmers so that they might work it and he might collect the produce from them. He sent his servant so that the tenants might give him the produce of the vineyard. They seized his servant and beat him, all but killing him. The servant went back and told his master. The master said, 'Perhaps he did not recognize them.' He sent another servant. The tenants beat this one as well. Then the owner sent his son and said, 'Perhaps they will show respect to my son.' Because the tenants knew that it was he who was the heir to the vineyard, they seized him and killed him. Let him who has ears hear."

(66) Jesus said, "Show me the stone which the builders have rejected. That one is the cornerstone."

(67) Jesus said, "If one who knows the all still feels a personal deficiency, he is completely deficient."

(68) Jesus said, "Blessed are you when you are hated and persecuted. Wherever you have been persecuted they will find no place."

(69) Jesus said, "Blessed are they who have been persecuted within themselves. It is they who have truly come to know the father. Blessed are the hungry, for the belly of him who desires will be filled."

(70) Jesus said, "That which you have will save you if you bring it forth from yourselves. That which you do not have within you will kill you if you do not have it within you."

(71) Jesus said, "I shall destroy this house, and no one will be able to build it [...]."

(72) A man said to him, "Tell my brothers to divide my father's possessions with me."

He said to him, "O man, who has made me a divider?"

He turned to his disciples and said to them, "I am not a divider, am I?"

(73) Jesus said, "The harvest is great but the laborers are few. Beseech the Lord, therefore, to send out laborers to the harvest."

(74) He said, "O Lord, there are many around the drinking trough, but there is nothing in the cistern."

(75) Jesus said, "Many are standing at the door, but it is the solitary who will enter the bridal chamber."

(76) Jesus said, "The kingdom of the father is like a merchant who had a consignment of merchandise and who discovered a pearl. That merchant was shrewd. He sold the merchandise and bought the pearl alone for himself. You too, seek his unfailling and enduring treasure where no moth comes near to devour and no worm destroys."

(77) Jesus said, "It is I who am the light which is above them all. It is I who am the all. From me did the all come forth, and unto me did the all extend. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."

(78) Jesus said, "Why have you come out into the desert? To see a reed shaken by the wind? And to see a man clothed in fine garments like your kings and your great men? Upon them are the fine garments, and they are unable to discern the truth."

(79) A woman from the crowd said to him, "Blessed are the womb which bore you and the breasts which nourished you."

He said to her, "Blessed are those who have heard the word of the father and have truly kept it. For there will be days when you will say, 'Blessed are the womb which has not conceived and the breasts which have not given milk.'"

(80) Jesus said, "He who has recognized the world has found the body, but he who has found the body is superior to the world."

(81) Jesus said, "Let him who has grown rich be king, and let him who possesses power renounce it."

(82) Jesus said, "He who is near me is near the fire, and he who is far from me is far from the kingdom."

(83) Jesus said, "The images are manifest to man, but the light in them remains concealed in the image of the light of the father. He will become manifest, but his image will remain concealed by his light."

(84) Jesus said, "When you see your likeness, you rejoice. But when you see your images which came into being before you, and which neither die nor become manifest, how much you will have to bear!"

(85) Jesus said, "Adam came into being from a great power and a great wealth, but he did not become worthy of you. For had he been worthy, he would not have experienced death."

(86) Jesus said, "The foxes have their holes and the birds have their nests, but the son of man has no place to lay his head and rest."

(87) Jesus said, "Wretched is the body that is dependant upon a body, and wretched is the soul that is dependent on these two."

(88) Jesus said, "The angels and the prophets will come to you and give to you those things you (already) have. And you too, give them those things which you have, and say to yourselves, 'When will they come and take what is theirs?'"

(89) Jesus said, "Why do you wash the outside of the cup? Do you not realize that he who made the inside is the same one who made the outside?"

(90) Jesus said, "Come unto me, for my yoke is easy and my lordship is mild, and you will find repose for yourselves."

- (91) They said to him, "Tell us who you are so that we may believe in you."  
He said to them, "You read the face of the sky and of the earth, but you have not recognized the one who is before you, and you do not know how to read this moment."
- (92) Jesus said, "Seek and you will find. Yet, what you asked me about in former times and which I did not tell you then, now I do desire to tell, but you do not inquire after it."
- (93) <Jesus said,> "Do not give what is holy to dogs, lest they throw them on the dung-heap. Do not throw the pearls to swine, lest they [...] it [...]."
- (94) Jesus said, "He who seeks will find, and he who knocks will be let in."
- (95) Jesus said, "If you have money, do not lend it at interest, but give it to one from whom you will not get it back."
- (96) Jesus said, "The kingdom of the father is like a certain woman. She took a little leaven, concealed it in some dough, and made it into large loaves. Let him who has ears hear."
- (97) Jesus said, "The kingdom of the father is like a certain woman who was carrying a jar full of meal. While she was walking on the road, still some distance from home, the handle of the jar broke and the meal emptied out behind her on the road. She did not realize it; she had noticed no accident. When she reached her house, she set the jar down and found it empty."
- (98) Jesus said, "The kingdom of the father is like a certain man who wanted to kill a powerful man. In his own house he drew his sword and stuck it into the wall in order to find out whether his hand could carry through. Then he slew the powerful man."
- (99) The disciples said to him, "Your brothers and your mother are standing outside."  
He said to them, "Those here who do the will of my father are my brothers and my mother. It is they who will enter the kingdom of my father."
- (100) They showed Jesus a gold coin and said to him, "Caesar's men demand taxes from us."  
He said to them, "Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, give God what belongs to God, and give me what is mine."
- (101) <Jesus said,> "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother as I do cannot become a disciple to me. And whoever does not love his father and his mother as I do cannot become a disciple to me. For my mother [...], but my true mother gave me life."
- (102) Jesus said, "Woe to the pharisees, for they are like a dog sleeping in the manger of oxen, for neither does he eat nor does he let the oxen eat."
- (103) Jesus said, "Fortunate is the man who knows where the brigands will enter, so that he may get up, muster his domain, and arm himself before they invade."
- (104) They said to Jesus, "Come, let us pray today and let us fast."  
Jesus said, "What is the sin that I have committed, or wherein have I been defeated? But when the bridegroom leaves the bridal chamber, then let them fast and pray."
- (105) Jesus said, "He who knows the father and the mother will be called the son of a harlot."
- (106) Jesus said, "When you make the two one, you will become the sons of man, and when you say, 'Mountain, move away,' it will move away."
- (107) Jesus said, "The kingdom is like a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. One of them, the largest, went astray. He left the ninety-nine sheep and looked for that one until he found it. When he had gone to such trouble, he said to the sheep, 'I care for you more than the ninety-nine.'"

(108) Jesus said, "He who will drink from my mouth will become like me. I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him."

(109) Jesus said, "The kingdom is like a man who had a hidden treasure in his field without knowing it. And after he died, he left it to his son. The son did not know (about the treasure). He inherited the field and sold it. And the one who bought it went plowing and found the treasure. He began to lend money at interest to whomever he wished."

(110) Jesus said, "Whoever finds the world and becomes rich, let him renounce the world."

(111) Jesus said, "The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence. And the one who lives from the living one will not see death." Does not Jesus say, "Whoever finds himself is superior to the world?"

(112) Jesus said, "Woe to the flesh that depends on the soul; woe to the soul that depends on the flesh."

(113) His disciples said to him, "When will the kingdom come?"

<Jesus said,> "It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying 'here it is' or 'there it is.' Rather, the kingdom of the father is spread out upon the earth, and men do not see it."

(114) Simon Peter said to him, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life." Jesus said, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."

The Gospel  
According to Thomas

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