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THE YOKE SAYING IN THE *GOSPEL OF THOMAS* 90*

BY

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The study of the *Yoke Saying* has been the subject of a large quantity of research over the past few decades.[1] This research, however, has dealt, for the most part, with Matthew's version of the *Yoke Saying* (11, 28-30) and its interpretation and redaction within Matthew's gospel.[2] The version of this logion in the *Gospel of Thomas* (logion 90) has received very little attention;[3] and when an analysis is made of logion 90, scholars largely have placed it within the framework of gnosticism and thereby have discarded it as a later and gnosticized version of the *Yoke Saying*.[4] Studies of the *Gospel of Thomas*, however, have shown that this gospel's "gnostic" character is highly questionable if not entirely misrepresentative of the text. Far from being gnostic, the *Gospel of Thomas* is encratite in character and, as G. Quispel has demonstrated, is based on at least three sources, none of which are gnostic; these sources include a Jewish Christian source, an Encratite source, and a Hermetic source.[5] In addition, the *Gospel of Thomas* often contains more primitive versions of sayings than those found in the canonical gospels.[6] Taking into consideration these conclusions, the object of this essay is to isolate the "aphoristic core"[7] of the *Yoke Saying* by making a detailed analysis and comparison of the two major independent witnesses to this logion: the *Gospel of Thomas* 90 and Matthew 11, 28-30.

For the sake of convenience, the following alphabetical and numerical labels for the stiches will be used when discussing this logion:

The Gospel of Thomas 90		Matthew 11, 28-30	
A	Come unto me	A	Come to me
B		B	all who labor and are heavy-laden
B1		B1	and I will give you rest.
C		C	Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me,

C1		C1	For I am gentle and lowly in heart,
		D1	and you will find rest for your souls,
D	for my yoke is easy and my lordship is mild,	D	for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
D1	and you will find rest for yourselves.		

Before beginning the analysis of the *Yoke Saying*, it is imperative that the genre of this logion be established. The *Yoke Saying* has long been recognized as belonging to the thought-world of Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Literature. Strauss was the first to suggest a relationship between Sirach 51 and Matthew 11, 25-30 as well as a no longer extant Wisdom writing as the source of Wisdom passages within the synoptic gospels.[8] Norden, in *Agnostos Theos*, furthered these ideas by outlining a tri-part schema upon which the texts of Sirach and Matthew were based: 1) a prayer of thanksgiving; 2) the transmission of wisdom (= gnosis); and 3) an appeal to the ignorant of heavy-hearted and -laden.[9] Bultmann, in his analysis of this saying, has also placed it within the Wisdom trajectory; he suggests that Matthew 11, 28-30 is a quotation from a Jewish Wisdom text which has been attributed to Jesus. Parallels to this Wisdom speech, according to Bultmann, can be found in Sirach 51, 23ff.; 24, 19ff.; Proverbs 1, 20ff.; and 8, 1ff.[10] Bousset has stated that Matthew 11, 28-30 "belongs to those passages in which words applied to Wisdom...have been transferred to Jesus."[11] Betz has concluded that in the Pre-Matthean tradition "Jesus has taken the place of the hypostasized Wisdom."[12] He goes on to say that the variants of this saying were originally independent Wisdom sayings which were gnosticized and then taken up into different versions in Matthew, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and *Pistis Sophia*.[13] Suggs in his study of Matthew, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew's Gospel*, has taken a further step in his analysis by proposing that not only does Matthew 11, 28-30 belong to "the familiar genre of Wisdom's invitation," but also in this logion he states that "Wisdom is identified with Christ."[14] He continues to define this statement by explaining that here "Jesus issues Wisdom's invitation. His ἐγώ and the ἐγώ of Sophia are one."[15] The conclusion is drawn from these exhaustive studies that indeed this logion participates within the tradition of Wisdom Literature and represents a saying in which Jesus is speaking the wise words of wisdom as Sophia herself.

Stiches A and B: Both *Yoke Saying* variants use the imperative verbal form: "Come (δεῦτε/*amēiten*)" to introduce the saying. Stiche B, the description of the adressee, is found in Matthew's version only: "all who labor (οἱ κοπιῶντες) and are heavy-laden (πεφορτισμένοι)." The question arises: Is Stiche B part of the primitive saying or has the primitive logion been expanded at some point in its transmission? In order to answer this question, the Jewish Wisdom Literature needs to be reviewed as well as any other witnesses or allusions to the *Yoke Saying* in Christian literature.

First, in the Jewish Wisdom Literature, Sophia or Sophia's representative, addresses the hearer/reader by using an imperative verbal form connected to a description of the addressee. Examples of this are found in Proverbs: "Hear (ἄκουε), my son (υἱέ), your father's instruction" (1, 8; 4, 10); "Do (ποίει) this, my son (υἱέ)" (6, 3); "My son (υἱέ), be attentive (πρόσεχε), to my words/wisdom" (4, 20; 5, 1); "And now, my son (υἱέ), listen (ἄκουε) to me" (5, 7; 7, 24); "My son (υἱέ), keep (φύλασσε)..." (6, 20; 7, 1); and finally, "My son (υἱέ), listen (ἄκουε) to me" (8, 32).[16] Sirach provides additional examples: "Come (πρόσελθε) to her like one who is plowing (ὁ ἀροτριῶν) and one who is sowing (ὁ σπείρων)" (6, 19); "Come (προσέλθετε) to me, you who desire (οἱ ἐπιθυμοῦντες) me" (24, 19); and finally, "Draw near (ἐγγίσατε) to me, you who are untaught (ἀπαίδευτοι)" (51, 23). Based on this evidence, the conclusion is drawn that Wisdom sayings were often introduced by an imperative followed by a description of the addressee. Thus, it is likely that the primitive *Yoke Saying* included both Stiche A and B.

Second, witnesses and allusions to the *Yoke Saying* in Christian literature also suggest that this logion included a form of address in which those who were laboring or burdened were mentioned as well as an imperative call. Stiche B, for instance, as well as Stiche A, is included in the *Pistis Sophia* variant of the *Yoke Saying* (95) although these stiches have been transposed.[17] Thus: "Everyone who is weary (*etharoots̄*) and heavy-laden (*ethose ha teuetpō*), come (*amēieten*) to me." Another independent variant of this logion[18] found in the *Dialogue of the Savior* (141, 3-6) also argues for the inclusion in the primitive core of the *Yoke Saying* of an address to people who were burdened. The formation of the dialogue from the primitive logion, however, has obscured the actual saying and thus has resulted in the loss of an exact parallel of Stiche B; but there is a clear allusion to Stiche B in the Lord's response to Matthew's question regarding rest:

" '<You will [rest]> when you lay down thy burdens.' " The inference here is that the addressee(s) were burdened. The *Yoke Saying* which the author of the Dialogue Source used in developing his questions and answers clearly contained Stiche B.

The evidence from the Jewish Wisdom Literature is overwhelmingly supported by this logion's variants within the Christian literature. Therefore, the conclusion is substantiated that both Stiche A and B were part of the primitive *Yoke Saying*.

Stiche B1: Stiche B1, "and I will give you rest," is found in the Matthew variant but not in the Thomas version. But again, from the available internal and external evidence, the conclusion is drawn that Stiche B1 is also part of the aphoristic core of this logion.

First, a review of the internal evidence lends support to the inclusion of Stiche B1 in the core aphorism. As shall be argued later in this essay,[19] Stiche B1 retains the Semitic parallelism of the saying as well as being a necessary structural part of the "form" which Sophia uses when calling or inviting people to herself. In addition, this essay will demonstrate that the concept of "rest" is viewed by the Hellenistic Jewish texts as the final consequence of Sophia's call[20] and thus is not out of place in this Wisdom saying.

As with Stiche B, the external witnesses and allusions to Stiche B1 in Christian literature also argue for its inclusion. Following the address, "Everyone who is weary and heavy-laden, come to me," *Pistis Sophia* has: "and I will give you rest (tati^emton)." This is an undeniable witness to Stiche B1. In addition, Stiche B1 was, in all probability, the reference which the author of the Dialogue Source used when constructing the question that Matthew posed to Jesus in the *Dialogue of the Savior* 141, 3: " 'Why do we not put ourselves to rest at once?' "

From this evidence, it is concluded that Stiche B1 also belongs to the primitive core of the *Yoke Saying* and represents the promise of Sophia—the gift which she offers to those people who come to her call.

Stiche C and C1: These stiches are not witnessed to in the *Gospel of Thomas* or in any other independent variant such as *Pistis Sophia* or the *Dialogue of the Savior*, but rather are found only in Matthew's gospel. They, unlike Stiche B and B1, break the Semitic parallelism, run counter to Wisdom theology, and are to be attributed to Matthew's redaction. Matthew inserted these verses in order to forward his own theological

vision of Jesus and, very likely, used Old Testament proof texts as his
models for the actual formation of these stiches.

Scholars have noted, in past research, that Stiche C and/or C1 break
the internal parallelism of the saying.[21] These stiches actually represent
a "second invitation and a second promise"[22] which disrupt the flow of
the saying. Present in Matthew's rendition are two "because" clauses
which, in the first place, are unparalleled and, in the second place, pro-
vide two explications for a single idea. As the saying stands in Matthew,
the "parallelism" can be diagramed as follows:

Come to me

all who are *laboring* and *heavy-laden*
and I will give you *rest.*

Take my *yoke* upon you,
and learn from me, *that* ($\"{o}\tau\iota$) I am gentle and lowly in heart,

and you will find *rest* for your souls,
for ($\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$) my *yoke* is *easy*, and my burden is *light.*

Note how the parallelism is less obscured when Stiche C and C1 are
removed from the diagram:

Come to me

all who are *laboring* and *heavy-laden*
and I will give you *rest.*

and you will find *rest* for your souls,
for ($\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$) my yoke is *easy*, and my burden is *light.*

Second, Stiche C1, the result clause of Stiche C, opposes the Wisdom
theology of this saying.[23] Sophia, in the Jewish Wisdom literature, when
"inviting" people to herself, does so with pride and often in the brazen
manner of a prostitute (cf. Sirach 24). In Proverbs 1, 20-21, Wisdom
"cries aloud in the streets, in the markets she raises her voice; on the
top of the walls she cries out." In addition, Proverbs 8, 3-4 states that
"beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals,
she cries aloud: 'To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the sons of
men.' " Inherently, Sophia invites her people to herself with much
pride, loudly, and often in the guise of a harlot. This is in sharp contrast
to Stiche C1, which presents Wisdom/Jesus as gentle ($\pi\rho\alpha\ddot{\upsilon}\varsigma$, and lowly
in heart ($\tau\alpha\pi\epsilon\iota\nu\grave{o}\varsigma$ $\tau\tilde{\eta}$ $\kappa\alpha\rho\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$). In fact, Stiche C and C1 explain that learn-
ing about Wisdom/Jesus is to take on the "yoke" and understand that

Wisdom/Jesus is gently and lowly in heart. This type of theology is clearly Matthean, not Sophianological.

Scholarship has noted that Stiches C and C1 show evidence of Matthean theology, apology, and redaction.[24] First, these stiches emphasize Jesus as "teaching"[25] that he is "gentle and lowly in heart;" this constitutes, according to Betz, taking on the yoke of Jesus and becoming his disciple.[26] This description of Jesus as gentle (πραΰς) is not found elsewhere in the entire corpus of the New Testament except in Matthew's own gospel.[27] In one of Matthew's beatitudes (5, 5), gentle (πραεῖς) is used to describe those people who shall "inherit the earth." More importantly, however, in Matthew 21, 5, Matthew blends and modifies proof texts from the Prophets (Isaiah 62, 11 and Zechariah 9, 9) in order to describe Jesus and his entry into Jerusalem as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. In so doing, Jesus is understood centrally by Matthew as a "king" coming to Jerusalem "humble (πραΰς)" and mounted on an ass.[28] Thus the picture of Jesus as gentle (πραΰς) and lowly in heart found in Stiche C1 accords well with Matthew's own picture of Jesus and represents a Matthean addition to his source.

In fact, these stiches can further be identified as interjections due to Matthew's concern for fulfillment of Scripture. Sirach 51, 26, "Put your neck under the yoke (ζυγόν), and let your souls receive instruction (ἐπιδεξάσθω παιδείαν)," can be identified as Matthew's thematic source for Stiche C, "Take my yoke (ζυγόν) upon you, and learn from me," in which Matthew identifies Jesus as the one who fulfills Sophia's promises in Sirach. Additionally, Stiche C1 echoes the description of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 42, 2-4 and chapter 53.[29] The emphasis of this logion in Matthew centers around learning that Jesus is gentle and lowly in heart, or the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies.

To conclude, because Stiche C and C1 are absent from all variants other than Matthew's, and because they break the Semitic parallelism of the logion, and because they can be clearly identified as Matthean theology and the result of his characteristic concern that Jesus and his words are the fulfillment of Scripture, Stiches C and C1 are proven to be absent from the primitive *Yoke Saying*.

Stiche D: This stiche is not only attested to in the *Gospel of Thomas* and Matthew, but it is found in *Pistis Sophia* as well. Additionally, the use of a "yoke" terminology is common to the Jewish Wisdom literature. To put on Sophia's yoke (ζυγός) or collar (χλοιός) is a common metaphor

which expresses the acceptance of Sophia as guide and teacher (Sirach 6, 24-25; 6, 29-31; 51, 26; cf. Sirach 28, 19-20 in opposition to Sophia). On the basis of these observations, Stiche D unquestionably represents part of the primitive core of this saying. The question which must be addressed in regard to Stiche D, however, is the differing versions of this Stiche. The *Gospel of Thomas* preserves Stiche D in the following form: "for my yoke is easy and my lordship is mild." Matthew, on the other hand, preserves Stiche D as: "for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."[30] By examining the usage of the term "yoke" in Jewish literature, the most probable primitive version of this variant can be determined.

In the Jewish literature, the usage of "yoke" suggests, according to Büchler's extensive studies, a connection between the concept of kingship and the "yoke."[31] In his review of this literature, Büchler has determined that the term "yoke" was understood in first century rabbinic traditions to be bound up with the idea of God's kingship.[32] When the Israelites accepted the "yoke of Heaven/yoke of the kingship of God" (*ʿwl šmym/ʿwl mlkwth šmym*),[33] they simply were accepting, according to the rabbis, the kingship or lordship of God. When they accepted the "yoke of a human being" (*ʿwl bsr*),[34] they were accepting the kingship of a man. This human kingship was viewed as interfering with God's lordship of Israel and was in direct opposition to taking on the "yoke of Heaven."

Additionally, Büchler states that this understanding of "yoke" is rooted in the biblical texts themselves. He cites, for instance, the texts which deal with Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of many nations (Jeremiah 27,8; 28,2, 4, 10-14) as being characteristic of this application. Jeremiah 28,14 reads: "For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve him."[35] Intertestamental literature also uses the terminology of taking on a "yoke" to refer to taking on the rule of a king. For example, 1 Maccabees 8,18 reads that Judas Maccabee sent messengers to Rome to "free themselves from the yoke; for they saw that the kingdom of the Greeks was completely enslaving Israel." Other "yoke" texts such as 1 Maccabees 8,31, 13,41, and Sirach 28,19-20 apply the term "yoke" in this way.[36] Büchler concludes that "the imposition of the yoke implies subjection to the rule of the conqueror, obedience and service."[37] Büchler goes as far as to suggest that texts such as Jeremiah 28,10-14, Leviticus 26,13, Isaiah 9,3, 10,24, 47,6, and 58,6 may refer to

the fact that ancient conquerors actually "placed a yoke on the conquered as the symbol of their subjection."[38]

Yet, upon saying this, it must be noted that the concept of "burden" on three occasions in the biblical literature (Isaiah 9,3; 14,25; 10,27) is also intertwined with the terminology of kingship and yoke where the lordship of a ruler is sometimes refered to as "the yoke of his burden." This is seen, for instance, in Isaiah 9,3: "For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as in the day of Midyan." Isaiah 14,25 states as well: "and his yoke shall depart from them, and his burden from their shoulder." The Targum, however, records the Aramaic version of this passage to have interpreted "his burden (swblw)" to have been "lease/rope (nyryh)," and "his yoke ('wlw)" to have been "his lordship (mrwthyh)." Thus, in the Aramaic traditions, "yoke" and "lordship" were seen to be synonymous ideas. This is supported by the Targumic version of Isaiah 47,6 which replaces the Hebrew "your yoke ('wlk)" with the Aramaic "lordship (mrwthyk)." In addition to these texts, Isaiah 10,27 reads: "And in that day his burden will depart from your shoulder, and his yoke will be destroyed from your neck." The Targum of this passage translates "his burden (swblw)" as the Aramaic "lordship (mrwthyh)," and "his yoke ('wlw) as the Aramaic "lease/rope (nyryh)." This passage demonstrates that, in the Aramaic traditions, "lordship" and "burden" were also considered to be interchangeable terms and represented the condition of being "yoked." The conclusions are drawn from this evidence that first the terminology of "yoke" centrally revolved around the concept of "lordship" where the "lordship" was frequently described as a "yoke" and less often as a "burden." Second, in the Aramaic traditions, "yoke" and "burden" were terms which were interchangeable with the term "lordship."[39]

Thus, as the evidence demonstrates, throughout Jewish literature, the terminology of "yoke" is dependent upon the concept of "kingship" or "lordship." On two of these occasions, "yoke" and "burden" are linked together; but the Targum versions demonstrate that in the Aramaic traditions at least, these terms were interchangeable with the Aramaic term "lordship." On another occasion, "yoke of my burden" is an expression used to refer to the lordship of a ruler. Thus, even when the terms "yoke" and "burden" are used together, the concept of "lordship" is still central to the text. On this basis, the *Gospel of Thomas*, most likely, witnesses to a more primitive variant of Stiche D

than Matthew by coupling "yoke" with "lordship." This is especially true, if, as the majority of scholars agree, Jesus spoke Aramaic. This may also suggest that Matthew, either created or relied upon a Hebrew translation of this logion of Jesus in which the Aramaic "lordship (*mrwthyh*)" had been translated as the Hebrew "burden (*swblw*)" and finally took the form of the Greek "burden (φορτίον)." In Matthew's creation of his *Yoke Saying* variant, he himself may have opted for "burden" instead of "lordship" for polemic reasons. Matthew saw the scribes as having loaded heavy burdens on the Jews (23,4) and he believed that the righteousness of the scribes was not sufficient in order for them to be able to enter the kingdom of heaven (5,20). Jesus, however, according to Matthew, had not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it (5,17). Jesus was giving a new Law, a new yoke; he was lifting the burden that the scribes had insisted on placing upon the people (11,29).[40] In any case, the accumulated evidence supports the conclusion that the *Gospel of Thomas* has preserved the more primitive core of Stiche D.

Stiche D1: First, upon examining the *Gospel of Thomas* and Matthew, the *Gospel of Thomas* states "you will find rest for yourselves," whereas Matthew states "you will find rest for your souls."[41] Also, Stiche D1 occurs as the final stiche in the *Gospel of Thomas* but follows Stiche C1 in Matthew. In both of these cases, the more primitive form must be determined by using comparative and structural analysis.

Examination of the first and less complex issue suggests that "your souls" is simply an expression for "yourselves" and is dependent upon the Semitic concept of "life," "person," or "self" (*nphš*). Thus Matthew's version is reflecting the Semitic concept of "*nphš*" or "self" which has been transposed into the Greek language and rendered as "ψυχή" or "soul." The meaning of this stiche, however, is essentially the same in both Matthew and Thomas: "You will find rest for yourselves."[42] The Christian variant of this logion in the *Dialogue of the Savior* 141,3-6 supports this conclusion: "You will put *yourselves* to rest."[43]

The *Gospel of Thomas*, however, takes priority in the second issue: Stiche D1 is structurally sound as it stands in the *Gospel of Thomas* version—as the final clause of the logion. To begin, thematically, "rest" is known to be the final consequence of Sophia's call. For instance, Sirach 6,28 states: "at last you will find the rest she gives." Or

Sirach 51,27 reads that after coming to Sophia's call, "[I] found for myself much rest." Second, in order to retain the Semitic parallelism in the logion as it has been reconstructed thus far, it is necessary for Stiche D1 to be the final stiche in the logion. Thus the reconstructed parallelism is *those laboring and heavy-laden/give rest/yoke easy and lordship mild/find rest* rather than as Matthew has presented it: *those laboring and heavy-laden/give rest/find rest/yoke easy and burden light.*

It can be further substantiated that in Matthew's redaction of this logion which included the additions discussed above, Matthew noticed that he had broken the primitive Semitic parallelism and so attempted to create a chiasma by transposing Stiche D1 so that it occured before Stiche D. Thus Matthew has redacted the logion as follows:

1. Come to me, those who are laboring and heavy-laden,
2. and I will give you rest.

3. Take my yoke and learn from me, that I am meek and lowly in heart.

2. And you will find rest for yourselves;
1. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

In conclusion, Matthew has created a literary pericope in which his own interpretation of the logion occurs as the central climatic core of the logion—the chiasmatic center. Therefore, the *Gospel of Thomas* again perserves Stiche D1 in its more primitive setting—as the final clause of the aphoristic core.

Reconstructed Aphoristic Core: Finally, the reconstructed aphoristic core has been determined, in this essay, to take the following form:

Stiche A   Come to me
Stiche B   All who are laboring and are heavy-laden
Stiche B1   And I will give you rest.
Stiche D   For my yoke is easy and my lordship is mild
Stiche D1   And you will find rest for yourselves.

This primitive core is further substantiated by the Jewish Wisdom texts. In this material, a particular structural type of Wisdom saying is discovered, a structure which can be labeled: "Sophia's invitation." This structure parallels the reconstruction of the *Yoke Saying* im-

mediately above and can be generically outlined in the following manner:

Stiche A   Call of Sophia
Stiche B   Description of the people in need
Stiche B1   Sophia's gift presented
Stiche D   Description of the person's new duty to Sophia
Stiche D1   Sophia's gift reinstated

Thus, below are examples of Sophia's invitation as found in the Jewish Wisdom texts:

Sirach 6,19

Come to her
like one who plows and sows,
and wait for her good harvest.
For in her service you will toil a little while,
and soon you will eat of her produce.

Sirach 24,19-20

Come to me
you who desire me,
and eat your fill of my produce.
For the remembrance of me is sweeter than honey,
and my inheritance sweeter than the honeycomb.

Sirach 6,27-28

Search out and seek
⟨my son⟩
and she will become known to you.
And when you get hold of her, do not let her go.
For at last you will find the rest she gives and she will be
   changed into joy for you.

This form can easily be expanded by inserting other material (in italics in the following example) into the bare structure such as found in Sirach 51,26-27:

Draw near to me,
you who are untaught,
and lodge in my school.
Why do you say you are lacking in these things,
and why are your souls very thirsty?
I opened my mouth and said,
Get these things for yourselves without money.
Put your neck under the yoke,
and let your souls receive instruction.

On the basis of these parallels, it is suggested that a particular structure existed for a logion which was concerned with inviting people to come to Sophia, a structure which included at the minimum five stiches as diagramed above. The reconstructed aphoristic core of the *Yoke Saying* attests to this structure as well as similar Sophia invitations in the Jewish Wisdom literature.

General Conclusions: The *Gospel of Thomas* 90 has proven to have retained more primitive content and structure than that found in Matthew's version of this saying. The logion in the *Gospel of Thomas* has been contracted, however, as it was transmitted from person to person, and from generation to generation. Thus, the *Gospel of Thomas* does not attest to Stiche B or B1. Matthew, on the other hand, has preserved much of the primitive content, but has expanded the saying with interpretative glosses and has rearranged its structure for redactive purposes. Primitive Aramaic tendencies in this saying were discovered in Stiche D and were preserved by Thomas' emphasis on "lordship" rather than "burden." It must be noted that this does not mean that Thomas' emphasis retains the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus of Nazareth; but it certainly indicates a very early tradition from a Jewish-Christian community—a tradition pre-dating Matthew's polemic emphasis on "burden." Additionally, in reconstructing the *Yoke Saying's* aphoristic core, the structure of Wisdom logia which center around inviting people to Sophia was discovered. This structure has been generically labeled, "Sophia's Invitation", and is represented by a five-stiche structure: 1. a call of Sophia; 2. a description of the people in need; 3. Sophia's gift presented; 4. a description of the person's new duty to Sophia; and 5. Sophia's gift reinstated. The reconstructed aphoristic core of the *Yoke Saying* is characterized by this five-stiche structure and suggests that the most primitive understanding of this logion centered around Sophia and her call: Jesus, like Sophia, calls people who are laboring to himself, and promises them rest; for only when these people come under his yoke, his lordship—that is, when these people serve him—will they find the rest (for themselves).[44] This primitive understanding has been retained in Thomas' version of the *Yoke Saying*.

*   I wish to gratefully acknowledge the suggestions and criticisms offered to me by J. Fossum and G. Quispel during the composition of this essay.

[1]   For a detailed review of this past research, see Hans Dieter Betz, The Logion of the Easy Yoke and of Rest (Matt 11,28-30), *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (1967) 10-24, and Samuele Bacchiocchi, Matthew 11:28-30: Jesus' Rest and the Sabbath, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 22 (1984) 289-316.

[2]   D. F. Strauss, Jesu Weheruf über Jerusalem und die σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ. Matth. 23,34-39, Luk. 11,49-51. 13,34f. Ein Beitrag zur johanneischen Frage, *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 6 (1863) 84ff.; E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos. Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* (Leipzig & Berlin 1913; with further printings) 277-308, 394 f.; T. Arvedson, *Das Mysterium Christi. Eine Studie zu Mt. 11,25-30*, Arbeiten und Mitteilungen aus dem neutestamentlichen Seminar zu Uppsala VII (Uppsala 1937); Bacchiocchi, *op. cit.*, 289-316; W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (translation by John E. Steely; Nashville 1970) 59ff.; R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (English translation by John Marsh of *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, first published in 1921, English translation from the third German edition of 1958; Oxford and New York 1963) 159f.; R. M. Grant and D. N. Freedman, *The Secret Sayings of Jesus* (Garden City, New York 1960) 184; H. Montefiore, A Comparison of the Parables of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the Synoptic Gospels, *New Testament Studies* 7 (1960/61) 220-48; A. M. Hunter, Crux Criticorum—Matt. XI. 25-30—A Re-Appraisal, *New Testament Studies* 8 (1962) 241-9; Betz, *op. cit.*, 10-24; M. J. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (Harvard 1970) 99-101; J. J. C. Cox, "Bearers of *Heavy* Burdens." A Significant Textual Variant, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 9/1 (1971) 1-15; M. Maher, 'Take my Yoke upon You' (Matt. XI. 29), *New Testament Studies* 22 (1975) 97-103; A. R. Motte, La Structure du Logion de Matthieu, 11,28-30, *Revue Biblique* 88 (1981) 226-233; G. Stanton, Salvation Proclaimed: X. Matthew 11:28-30: Comfortable Words?, *Expository Times* 94/1 (1982) 3-9; Bacchiocchi, *op. cit.*, 289-316.

[3]   Studies which seriously have included the *Gospel of Thomas* 90 are Betz, *op. cit.*, 19-21; D. Crossan, *In Fragments: The Aphorisms of Jesus* (San Francisco 1983) 257-260; and Montefiore, *op. cit.*, 244-245.

[4]   For instance, Betz, *op. cit.*, 20-22, concludes that the *Gospel of Thomas* 90 agrees with the gnostic interpretation of this logion in *Pistis Sophia* 95. Also Grant and Freedman, *op. cit.*, 184, write: "Thomas wants the invitation to be addressed to Gnostics, not to those burdened by the world (he twice omits 'burden'), and he wants the emphasis to be placed on the reward of rest, not on the yoke of Christ."

[5]   For Quispel's discussions on the sources behind the *Gospel of Thomas*, see his articles: The Gospel of Thomas and the New Testament, *Vigiliae Christianae* 11 (1957) 189-207; L'Évangile selon Thomas et les Clémentines, *Vigiliae Christianae* 12 (1958) 181-196; Some remarks on the Gospel of Thomas, *New Testament Studies* 5 (1958/59) 276-290; L'Évangile selon Thomas et le Diatessaron, *Vigiliae Christianae* 13 (1959) 87-117; The 'Gospel of Thomas' and the 'Gospel of the Hebrews,' *New Testament Studies* 12 (1966) 371-382; The *Gospel of Thomas* Revisited, in B. Barc (ed.), *Colloque international sur les Textes de Nag Hammadi* (Québec and Louvain 1981) 218-266. Most recently, M. Lelyveld has upheld the encratite character of the *Gospel of Thomas* in *Les Logia de la Vie dans L'Évangile selon Thomas*, Nag Hammadi Studies XXXIV (Leiden 1987). Discussions questioning the labeling of the *Gospel of Thomas* as a "gnostic" text include Quispel's

articles; K. Grobel, How Gnostic is the Gospel of Thomas?, *New Testament Studies* 8 (1962) 367-373; S. L. Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom* (New York 1983), especially 18-35; B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York 1987), especially xvi, 359-365; and M. Lelyveld.

[6] This author agrees with mainstream scholarship which concludes that the *Gospel of Thomas* represents an early and independent witness to the sayings tradition. For these discussions, refer to H.-Ch. Puech, 'Une collection des paroles de Jésus récemment retrouvée: L'Évangile selon Thomas' CRAI 1957, 146-166; Quispel's articles; Montefiore, *op. cit.*, 220-248; Betz, *op. cit.* 20; H. Koester and J. M. Robinson, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia 1971); and Crossan, *op. cit.*, 257-260.

[7] See Crossan's ground-breaking work, *op. cit.*, in which he discusses the "aphoristic core" as an "oral sensibility" that is concerned with the "structure" of a saying; in transmission, this core structure can be modified during "performance" and/or for "hermeneutic" purposes.

[8] See *op. cit.*, 84ff.; cf. Betz, *op. cit.*, 11.

[9] See *op. cit.*, 292f.; cf. Betz, *op. cit.*, 11.

[10] See *op. cit.*, 159ff.; cf. Betz, *op. cit.*, 17.

[11] See *op. cit.*, 62, n. 2; cf. Betz, *op. cit.*, 13.

[12] *Op. cit.*, 22.

[13] See *ibid.*, 20.

[14] *Op. cit.*, 99.

[15] *Ibid.*, 100; see also Felix Christ, *Jesus Sophia: Die Sophia-Christologie bei den Synoptikern* (Zürich 1970), which is a complete survey of all passages in which Jesus identifies himself with Wisdom.

[16] See Proverbs 8,4 as well.

[17] Betz, *op. cit.*, 20, and Crossan, *op. cit.*, 259, demonstrate that this *Pistis Sophia* variant is not dependent on Matthew or Thomas.

[18] Koester has argued that *Dialogue of the Savior* 141,3-6 is not dependent upon Matthew, in: Gnostic Writings as Witnesses for the Development of the Saying Tradition, in B. Layton (ed.), *Rediscovery of Gnosticism I: The School of Valentinus* (Leiden 1980) 246. Crossan has upheld this view, *op. cit.*, 260.

[19] See pp. 288 ff. below.

[20] See p. 288 below.

[21] Arvedson, *op. cit.*, 93; Motte, *op. cit.*, 226-7; Stanton, *op. cit.*, 5.

[22] Arvedson, *op. cit.*, 93.

[23] Noted by Stanton, *op. cit.*, 5.

[24] Betz, *op. cit.*, 23-24; Cox, *op. cit.*, 12-14; Crossan, *op. cit.*, 257; Koester, *op. cit.*, 245-6, and n. 20; Stanton, *op. cit.*, 5, 8.

[25] Undeniably a Matthean theme. For instance, see H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament: History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia 1983) 172-3.

[26] *Op. cit.*, 23.

[27] 1 Peter 3,4 uses the word πραΰς but not in describing Jesus. Thus: "but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle (πραέως) and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."

[28] The LXX version of Zechariah 9,9 uses πραΰς.

[29] Hunter, *op. cit.*, 248.

[30]   *Pistis Sophia* 95 has transposed the two parts of this Stiche: "For my burden is light and my yoke is easy."

[31]   J. B. Bauer, in Das milde Joch und die Ruhe, Matth. 11,28-30, *Theologische Zeitschrift* 17 (1961) 99-106, has examined other ancient Near Eastern texts and has concluded that in early Babylonian texts there was an expectation that a benign monarch or deity would grant rest. On the other hand, Bauer states, cruel kings gave a yoke but no rest. Thus, even in non-Jewish texts, the idea of kingship or lordship was bound up intrinsically with the theme of yoke and rest. Bauer, p. 106, found a parallel to Matthew in Epictetus IV,8,28 and thought that Matthew had adapted Hellenistic phraseology.

[32]   *Studies in Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the First Century* (New York 1967) 36-118.

[33]   Sotah 47b; Tos. 14.4; for additional references see Büchler, *op. cit.*, 36ff.; and see H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* I (Munich 1933) 608-610.

[34]   Sotah 47b; Tos. 14,4; for additional references see Büchler, 36ff.

[35]   See also Jeremiah 2,20.

[36]   Büchler, *op. cit.*, 71, states that in Sirach 28,19-20 "the evil tongue is a cruel tyrant like Nebuchadnezzar who imposed an iron yoke upon those whom he carried into captivity, and added brass chains to it; so heavy is the yoke of the evil tongue, which those who use it have to carry."

[37]   *Ibid.* 67.

[38]   *Ibid.* 68.

[39]   G. Messina, *Diatessaron Persiano*, Biblica et Orientalia 14 (Rome 1951) LXXII, has discovered the dialectics of "yoke" and "lordship" in the Persian Diatessaron. Messina pointed out that Targ. Isa. 14.25 and 47.6 used *ʿol* and *marutha*, and concluded that Tatian used an Aramaic Gospel.

[40]   Maher, *op. cit.*, 97-98.

[41]   *Pistis Sophia* does not attest to D1.

[42]   This may indicate that the author of the *Gospel of Thomas* was capable of translating the Aramaic tradition into idiomatic Greek.

[43]   See also Wisdom of Solomon 8,16a: "And I found for *myself* much rest."

[44]   This primitive version of a Wisdom saying supports the conclusion that some of the earliest sayings attributed to Jesus portray him as a "Wise man" or "Sage."

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