

THE  
**FIFTH GOSPEL**

NEW EDITION

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THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS COMES OF AGE

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STEPHEN J. PATTERSON  
HANS-GEHARD BETHGE  
JAMES M. ROBINSON

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NEW EDITION



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*The Gospel of Thomas Comes of Age*

NEW EDITION

Stephen J. Patterson  
With an essay by James M. Robinson  
And a New revised translation from  
Hans-Gebhard Bethge, et al.



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# Introduction

Stephen J. Patterson

The Gospel of Thomas ranks among the most important manuscript discoveries in the last two hundred years. The debate it unleashed in the 1950s, when scholars first got a glimpse of the new gospel, continues unabated today. It has reshaped the discussion of Christian origins by introducing students of early Christianity to a new set of ideas and practices that, a generation ago, one could hardly imagine as deriving from the words of Jesus. And the words of Jesus themselves have fallen under renewed scrutiny in view of Thomas' new witness to the shape and scope of the Jesus tradition. Scholars now find themselves debating basic aspects of the mission and message of Jesus because of the way the Gospel of Thomas presents the sayings of Jesus. It consists entirely of sayings of Jesus arranged in a simple list. There are no miracles here, no stories of Jesus' birth, death, or resurrection from the dead. It presents itself as the secret teaching of the living Jesus. For some, the new gospel has become the holy grail of all we ever thought, or wanted to believe, about Jesus. For others it is nothing but a deviant cast-off from the more reliable main-stream of canonical voices enshrined in the New Testament itself. Controversy has courted it from the day it was discovered.

It was discovered in 1945 as part of a larger collection of ancient books known as the Nag Hammadi Library, so-named for



the modern-day city of Nag Hammadi, which lies close to the site of this remarkable discovery. An Egyptian peasant happened upon this collection of books while rummaging around in the talus at the base of the cliffs that line the Nile River in Upper Egypt. There they had lain, sealed in a large, rough clay jar, for more than fifteen centuries, until time and the shifting of rocks and sand had exposed them to view. Scholars would eventually learn that the jar contained thirteen papyrus books, or codices, dating to the fourth century, C.E. They are written in Coptic, a form of the ancient tongue of Pharonic Egypt in use when Christians first came to Egypt in the late first or early second century. These early Christians used the Greek alphabet (together with a few characters unique to Coptic) to create a written form of this language, into which Christian works composed in Greek could be translated for use among the local population. The Nag Hammadi texts all share this history: they are Coptic translations of Greek originals made by Christian scribes for use in Egypt.

Within the thirteen volumes of the Nag Hammadi Library were found almost fifty previously unknown or lost texts. Most of them are Christian tracts, though there are a number of Jewish texts, and at least one Greek philosophical text – a section of Plato's Republic. Thus, the Nag Hammadi Library ranks among the major manuscript discoveries of the twentieth century of relevance to biblical studies. But by far the most important of the Nag Hammadi texts is the second tractate in Codex II of the Library: the Gospel of Thomas. Its discovery was quite astonishing, for here was a gospel known to have existed in antiquity, but long lost in the deep mists of history, presumably never to be heard from again. And yet here it was. Before, its content could only be guessed at. Now scholars could see that it contains approximately one hundred and fourteen sayings of Jesus, usually presented in the form of a

brief *chreia* – that is, a short vignette in which Jesus speaks a word of wisdom. A good number (about half) of these sayings were already known, since they are found also in the canonical gospels, principally in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Of the remaining sayings, a few were known from an occasional reference or odd quote from Thomas found scattered in the literature of early Christianity. But the discovery of the Gospel of Thomas brought to light dozens of new sayings of Jesus – and with them the question: could any of these sayings also be authentic sayings of Jesus?

This was not the first time a manuscript discovery had brought to light new sayings of Jesus. Fifty years earlier, about 120 kilometers southwest of Cairo, two young British archaeologists made what should be considered one of the most remarkable finds in the history of archaeological discovery. B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt were in their twenties, and labouring through their first season at Oxyrhynchus, where a dry climate and some ancient trash heaps made it a promising place to look for ancient papyri. Indeed it was. A young Bernard Grenfell managed to capture a little of the excitement and romance of their expedition when he penned the following account for an 1897 issue of McClure's magazine:

On January 11th we sallied forth at sunrise with some seventy workmen and boys, and set them to dig trenches through a mound near a large space covered with piles of limestone chips, which probably denotes the site of an ancient temple, though its walls have been all but entirely dug out for the sake of the stone. The choice proved a very fortunate one, for papyrus scraps began to come to light in considerable quantities, varied by occasional complete or nearly complete private and official documents containing letters, contracts, accounts, and so on; and there were also a number of fragments written in uncials,

or rounded capital letters, the form of writing used in copying classical or theological manuscripts. Later in the week Mr. Hunt, in sorting through the papyri found on the second day, noticed on a crumpled uncial fragment written on both sides the Greek word KAFOS (“mote”), which at once suggested to him the verse in the Gospels concerning the mote and the beam. A further examination showed that the passage in the papyrus really was the conclusion of the verse, “Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye;” but the rest of the papyrus differed considerably from the Gospels, and was, in fact, a leaf of a book containing a collection of sayings of Christ, some of which, apparently, were new. More than that could not be determined until we came back to England.<sup>1</sup>

Later that year, back in Oxford, Grenfell and Hunt were able to examine the leaf more carefully. What they found, in addition to the familiar saying from the Sermon on the Mount, were what appeared to be a series of sayings of Jesus, some of them unknown until this chance discovery. They read: J(esu)s says: “If you do not fast to the world, you will not see the kingdom of God; if you do not observe the Sabbath as a sabbath, you will not see the f(athe)r.” And then further: J(esu)s says: “I stood in the midst of the world and appeared to them in the flesh. I found them all drunk. I found none of them thirsty. And my soul ached for the sons of men, because they are blind in their hearts and do not have sight...” In all, there turned out to be eight sayings of Jesus inscribed on the front and back of this papyrus scrap, originally a page from a papyrus book or codex. Six of them had not been read for fifteen centuries. This was Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1. When Grenfell and Hunt published a popular account of their find later that year it would sell more than

30,000 copies.<sup>2</sup> In subsequent seasons Grenfell and Hunt would discover other papyri containing previously unknown sayings of Jesus, including Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 654 and 655. Until the 1950s they were known simply as “the unknown sayings of Jesus.” But that all changed with the discovery of the Gospel of Thomas, for it turned out that Grenfell and Hunt’s unknown sayings were in fact bits and pieces of the Gospel of Thomas. Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1 contained parts of what we now know as Gospel of Thomas 26–33, 654 contained fragments of sayings 1–7, and 655 contained sayings 36–39.

The Oxyrhynchus papyri notwithstanding, the Coptic Gospel of Thomas from Nag Hammadi remains to this day our only complete version of this gospel. Thus, when one speaks of the Gospel of Thomas, it is usually to the Coptic version that one is referring. The first critical edition of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas appeared in 1959, just in time for the Christmas rush<sup>3</sup>, and promptly sold over 40,000 copies. This very popular version of Thomas became the scholarly standard for many years to come, even though it was produced before scholarship had advanced very far in understanding the textual problems in the manuscript and the many translational difficulties posed by the text. Since then, scholars have continued to study Thomas, and their advances have made it possible to produce new and improved texts and translations of this important document of early Christianity.

We are pleased to offer, within the present volume, a translation of Thomas that we believe represents the culmination of the best scholarship on Thomas, gathered over many years in the same centre of research that produced the initial edition of Thomas, Berlin. Out of that early flurry of activity there emerged a team of scholars with the disarming self-designation: The Berlin Working Group for Coptic Gnostic Writings. Originally founded by Hans-Martin

Schenke, it is led today by Schenke's former student, Hans-Gebhard Bethge. The Berlin Working Group continues to be one of the most important centres for the study of the Nag Hammadi texts. It is therefore not surprising that, as the fruit of more than a generation of concentrated work, they have produced a critical Coptic text of the Gospel of Thomas that is superior to any previously available. Furthermore, their translation into German and English provides the most reliable access to the sayings themselves. Their original Coptic text and translations are available in the newer editions of Kurt Aland's *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, published by the German Bible Society.<sup>4</sup>

In the 1990s we decided to make the work of the Berlin Working Group available to a wider audience in the first edition of this book. In that volume, published in 1998, we used the text and translation of the Gospel of Thomas that appeared in the 1996 edition of Aland's *Synopsis*. Since that time, the Working Group has continued to revise and refine its translation for various publications, including subsequent editions of the *Synopsis*, the standard German-language translation of the Nag Hammadi Library, the *Nag Hammadi Deutch*, and the latest edition of Hennecke and Schneemelcher's *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*. In addition, important studies have emerged, such as Uwe-Karsten Plisch's recent commentary, from which helpful insights into the text and translation might be gleaned.<sup>5</sup> All of these developments are reflected in the latest updated version of the Working Group's text and translation, printed in the most recent edition of the Aland *Synopsis*.

As in 1998, our intention in issuing this revised edition of *The Fifth Gospel* is to offer the scholar and layperson alike a tool for the study of the Gospel of Thomas that reflects the best work of the Berlin Working Group through the years. The text and translation

are taken from the *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (15th edition, 3rd corrected printing, 2001, revised 2009<sup>6</sup>), with a few noted improvements from the authors. As in the original edition, the following standard sigla will alert the reader to problems and editorial decisions reflected in the text:

( ) Parentheses surround words not in the Coptic text itself, but those which an English reader needs in order to catch the tone of the original.

< > Pointed brackets surround a word or words where the translation involves the correction of an error in the manuscript.

[ ] Square brackets indicate places where a hole in the manuscript had led to the loss of one or more letters. Often the team is able to supply the missing letters by conjecture; other times they must be left blank. In such cases a series of dots may indicate approximately how many characters are missing.

{ } Curly brackets indicate that the translators have omitted something that occurs in the original manuscript on the suspicion that it is in error.

In addition to the revised translation of Thomas, we have once again provided two essays for those who may be unfamiliar with this new gospel, or with the events that led to its discovery and publication. The first (by Patterson) is a revised version of the essay that first appeared in this volume in 1998, “Understanding the Gospel of Thomas Today.” It is intended to provide a general introduction to current scholarly thinking on the interpretation of this gospel. The second (by Robinson) is unchanged from the original

1998 edition. It tells the story of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library, recounts the subsequent work of bringing the new gospel to light, and assesses how the Nag Hammadi discovery has changed the landscape of New Testament scholarship. As before, it is hoped that these essays will initiate the general reader to the discussion of this new text, and indicate avenues for further investigation. For those who are interested in reading more about Thomas and the Nag Hammadi Library, we have also provided a brief annotated list entitled “Further Reading.”

# Revised English Translation<sup>1</sup>

## *Introduction*

### *Saying 1*

These are the hidden words that the living Jesus spoke. And Didymos Judas Thomas wrote them down.

And he said: “Whoever finds the meaning of these words will not taste death.”

### *Saying 2*

(1) Jesus says<sup>2</sup>: “The one who seeks should not cease seeking until he finds. (2) And when he finds, he will be dismayed. (3) And when he is dismayed, he will be astonished. (4) And he will be king over the All.”

### *Saying 3*

(1) Jesus says: “If those who lead you say to you: ‘Look, the kingdom is in the sky!’, then the birds of the sky will precede you.

(2) If they say to you: ‘It is in the sea’, then the fish will precede you.

(3) Rather, the kingdom is inside of you and outside of you.”

(4) “When you come to know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will realize that you are children of the living Father.

(5) But if you do not come to know yourselves, then you exist in poverty and you are poverty.”



*Saying 4*

- (1) Jesus says: “The person old in his days will not hesitate to ask a child seven days old about the place of life, and he will live.
- (2) For many who are first will be last.
- (3) And they will become a single one.”

*Saying 5*

- (1) Jesus says, “Come to know what is in front of you, and that which is hidden from you will become clear to you. (2) For there is nothing hidden that will not become manifest.”

*Saying 6*

- (1) His disciples questioned him, (and) they said to him, “Do you want us to fast? And in which way should we pray and give alms? And what diet should we observe?”<sup>3</sup>
- (2) Jesus says, “Do not lie. (3) And do not do what you hate.
- (4) For everything is disclosed in view of <the truth><sup>4</sup>.
- (5) For there is nothing hidden that will not become revealed.
- (6) And there is nothing covered that will remain undisclosed.”

*Saying 7*

- (1) Jesus says, “Blessed is the lion that a person will eat and the lion will become human. (2) And cursed is the person whom a lion will eat, and the lion will become human.”<sup>5</sup>

*Saying 8*

- (1) And he says, “The human being is like a sensible fisherman, who cast his net into the sea, (and) drew it up from the sea filled with little fish. (2) Among them, the sensible fisherman found a large fine fish. (3) He threw all the little fish back into the sea, (and) readily chose the large fish.

(4) Whoever has ears to hear should hear.”

*Saying 9*

(1) Jesus says: “Look, a sower went out. He filled his hands (with seeds), (and) he scattered (them). (2) Some fell on the path. The birds came and pecked them up. (3) Others fell on rock and did not take root in the soil, and they did not sprout up ears into the sky. (4) And others fell among the thorns, they choked the seeds, and the worm ate them. (5) And others fell on good soil, and it produced good fruit, yielding sixty per measure and one hundred and twenty per measure (of crop).”

*Saying 10*

Jesus says: “I have cast fire upon the world, and see, I am guarding it until it blazes<sup>6</sup>.”

*Saying 11*

(1) Jesus says: “This heaven will pass away and the (heaven) above it will pass away.  
(2) And the dead are not alive, and those who are alive will not die.  
(3) In the days when you consumed what was dead, you made it alive. When you are in the light, what will you do?  
(4) On the day you were one, you became two. But when you become two, what will you do?”

*Saying 12*

(1) The disciples said to Jesus: “We know that you will depart from us. Who (then) will rule<sup>7</sup> over us?”  
(2) Jesus said to them: “ (No matter) where you came from, you should go to James the Just for whose sake heaven and earth came into being.”

*Saying 13*

- (1) Jesus said to his disciples: “Compare me and tell me whom I am like.”
- (2) Simon Peter said to him: “You are like a just messenger<sup>8</sup>.”
- (3) Matthew said to him: “You are like an (especially) wise philosopher.”
- (4) Thomas said to him: “Teacher, my mouth <can>not bear at all to say whom you are like.”
- (5) Jesus said: “I am not your teacher. For you have drunk, (and) you have become frenzied from the bubbling spring that I have measured out.”
- (6) And he took him, withdrew, (and) he said three words to him.
- (7) But when Thomas came back to his companions, they asked him: “What did Jesus say to you?”
- (8) Thomas said to them: “If I tell you one of the words he said to me, you will pick up stones (and) throw them at me, and fire will come out of the stones (and) burn you up.”

*Saying 14*

- (1) Jesus said to them: “If you fast, you will bring forth sin for yourselves. (2) And if you pray, you will be condemned. (3) And if you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits.”<sup>9</sup>
- (4) “And if you go into any land and wander from place to place<sup>10</sup>, (and) if they accommodate you, (then) eat what they will set before you. Heal the sick among<sup>11</sup> them!
- (5) For what goes into your mouth will not make you unclean. Rather, what comes out of your mouth will make you unclean.”

*Saying 15*

Jesus says: “If you see someone who was not born of woman, fall on your face (and) worship him. That one is your Father.”

*Saying 16*

(1) Jesus says: “Perhaps people think that I have come to cast peace upon the earth. (2) But they do not know that I have come to cast dissension upon the earth: fire, sword, (and) war.

(3) For there will be five in one house: there will be three against two and two against three, the father against the son, and the son against the father.

(4) And they will stand as solitary ones.”

*Saying 17*

Jesus says: “I will give you what no eye has seen, and what no ear has heard, and what no hand has touched, and what has not occurred to the human mind.”<sup>12</sup>

*Saying 18*

(1) The disciples said to Jesus: “Tell us how our end will be.”

(2) Jesus said: “Have you already discovered the beginning that you are now asking about the end? For where the beginning is, there also will be the end.

(3) Blessed is he who will stand at the beginning. And he will know the end, and he will not taste death.”

*Saying 19*

(1) Jesus says: “Blessed is he who was before he came into being.

(2) If you become disciples of mine (and) listen to my words, these stones will serve you.

(3) For you have five trees in Paradise that do not sway in summer (nor) winter, and their leaves do not fall. (4) Whoever will come to know them will not taste death.”

*Saying 20*

(1) The disciples said to Jesus: “Tell us what<sup>13</sup> the kingdom of heaven is like!”

(2) He said to them: “It is like a mustard seed. (3) <It ><sup>14</sup> is the smallest of all seeds. (4) But when it falls on soil that is cultivated, it (the soil) produces a large branch (and) it (the branch) becomes a shelter for the birds of the sky.”

*Saying 21*

(1) Mary said to Jesus: “Whom are your disciples like?”

(2) He said: “They are like servants<sup>15</sup> who are entrusted with a field<sup>16</sup> that is not theirs. (3) When the owners of the field arrive, they will say: ‘Let us have our field.’ (4) (But) they are naked<sup>17</sup> in their presence in order to let them have have them (i.e., their clothes<sup>18</sup>) so that they give them their field.”

(5) “That is why I say: When the master of the house learns that the thief is about to come, he will be on guard before he comes (and) will not let him break into his house, his domain<sup>19</sup>, to carry away his possessions.

(6) (But) you, be on guard against the world! (7) Gird your loins with great strength, so that the robbers will not find a way to get to you.”

(8) “For the necessities for which you wait (with longing) will be found.<sup>20</sup>

(9) There ought to be a wise person among you! (10) When the fruit was ripe, he came quickly with his sickle in hand, (and) harvested it.

(11) Whoever has ears to hear should hear.”

*Saying 22*

(1) Jesus saw little (children) being nursed.<sup>21</sup>

(2) He said to his disciples: “These little ones being nursed<sup>22</sup> are like those who enter the kingdom.”

(3) They said to him: “Will we enter the kingdom as little ones?”

(4) Jesus said to them: “When you make the two into one and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside and the above like the below, – (5) that is, to make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will no longer be male and the female no longer female – (6) and when you make eyes instead of an eye and a hand instead of a hand and a foot instead of a foot, (and) an image instead of an image<sup>23</sup>, (7) then you will enter [the kingdom].”

#### *Saying 23*

(1) Jesus says: “I will choose you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand. (2) And they will stand as a single one.”

#### *Saying 24*

(1) His disciples said: “Show us the place where you are, because it is necessary for us to seek it.”

(2) He said to them: “Whoever has ears should hear!

(3) Light exists inside a person of light, and he<sup>24</sup> shines on the whole world. If he<sup>25</sup> does not shine, there is darkness.”

#### *Saying 25*

(1) Jesus says: “Love your brother like your life! (2) Protect him like the apple of your eye!”

#### *Saying 26*

(1) Jesus says: “You see the splinter that is in your brother’s eye, but you do not see the beam that is in your (own) eye. (2) When you remove the beam from your eye, then you will see clearly (enough) to remove the splinter from your brother’s eye.”

*Saying 27*

- (1) “If you do not abstain from the (entire) world<sup>26</sup>, you will not find the kingdom.  
(2) If you do not make the (entire) week into a Sabbath<sup>27</sup>, you will not see the Father.”

*Saying 28*

- (1) Jesus says: “I stood in the middle of the world, and in flesh I appeared to them. (2) I found all of them drunk. None of them did I find thirsty. (3) And my soul ached for the children of humanity, because they are blind in their heart, and they cannot see; for they came into the world empty, (and) they also seek to depart from the world empty. (4) But now they are drunk. (But) when they shake off their wine (frenzy), then they will change their mind.”

*Saying 29*

- (1) Jesus says: “If the flesh came into being because of the spirit, it is a wonder.  
(2) But if the spirit (came into being) because of the body, it is a wonder of wonders.”  
(3) Yet I marvel at how this great wealth has taken up residence in this poverty.

*Saying 30*

- (1) Jesus says: “Where there are three gods, they are gods.<sup>28</sup>  
(2) Where there are two or one, I am with him.”

*Saying 31*

- (1) Jesus says: “No prophet is accepted in his (own) village. (2) A physician does not heal those who know him.”

*Saying 32*

Jesus says: “A city built upon a high mountain (and) fortified can neither fall nor can it be hidden.”

*Saying 33*

(1) Jesus says: “What you will hear in your ear {with the other ear}<sup>29</sup> proclaim from your rooftops.

(2) For no one lights a lamp (and) puts it under a bushel, nor does he put it in a hidden place. (3) Rather, he puts it on a lamp stand, so that everyone who comes in and goes out will see its light.”

*Saying 34*

Jesus says: “If a blind (person) leads a blind (person), both will fall into a pit.”

*Saying 35*

(1) Jesus says: “It is not possible for someone to enter the house of a strong one ([and] which [do not] care nor) take it by force unless he binds his hands. (2) Then he will loot his house.”

*Saying 36*

Jesus says: “Do not worry from morning to evening and from evening to morning about what you will wear.”<sup>30</sup>

*Saying 37*

(1) His disciples said: “When will you appear to us, and when will we see you?”

(2) Jesus said: “When you undress (yourselves) without being ashamed<sup>31</sup> and take your clothes (and) put them under your feet like little children, (and) trample on them, (3) then [you] will see the son of the Living One, and you will not be afraid.”



*Saying 38*

- (1) Jesus says: “Many times you have desired to hear these very words that I am speaking to you, and you have no one else from whom to hear them.
- (2) There will be days when you will seek me, (and) you will not find me.”<sup>32</sup>

*Saying 39*

- (1) Jesus says: “The Pharisees and the scribes have received the keys of knowledge (but) they have hidden them<sup>33</sup>. (2) Neither have they entered, nor did they let enter those who wished to (enter).
- (3) You, however, be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves!”

*Saying 40*

- (1) Jesus says: “A grapevine was planted outside (the vineyard) of the Father. (2) And since it is not supported, it will be pulled up by its root (and) will perish.”

*Saying 41*

- (1) Jesus says: “Whoever has (something) in his hand, (more) will be given to him.
- (2) And whoever has nothing, even the little he has will be taken from him.”

*Saying 42*

Jesus says: “Become passers-by.”

*Saying 43*

- (1) His disciples said to him: “Who are you to say this to us?”
- (2) “Do you not realize from what I say to you who I am?”

(3) But you have become like the Jews: They love the tree, (but) they hate its fruit. Or they love the fruit, (but) they hate the tree.”

*Saying 44*

(1) Jesus says: “Whoever blasphemes against the Father, it will be forgiven him. (2) And whoever blasphemes against the Son, it will be forgiven him. (3) But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, neither on earth nor in heaven.”

*Saying 45*

(1) Jesus says: “Grapes are not harvested from thorns, nor are figs picked from thistles, for they do not produce fruit.

(2) A good person brings forth good from his treasure. (3) A bad person brings forth evil from the bad<sup>34</sup> treasure that is in his heart, and (in fact) he speaks evil. (4) For out of the abundance of the heart he brings forth evil.”

*Saying 46*

(1) Jesus says: “From Adam to John the Baptist, among those born of women there is no one who surpasses John the Baptist so that his (i.e. John’s) eyes need not be downcast<sup>35</sup>.”

(2) “But I have (also) said: ‘Whoever among you becomes little will know the kingdom and will surpass John.’”

*Saying 47*

(1) Jesus says: “It is impossible for a person to mount two horses and to stretch two bows.

(2) And it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters, or else he will honor the one and insult the other.”

(3) “No person drinks old wine and immediately desires to drink new wine.

(4) And new wine is not put into old wineskins, so that they do not burst; nor is old wine put into (a) new wineskin, so that it does not spoil it.

(5) An old patch is not sewn onto a new garment, because a tear will result.”

#### *Saying 48*

Jesus says: “If two make peace with one another in one and the same house, (and then) they will say to the mountain: ‘Move away’, and it will move away.”

#### *Saying 49*

(1) Jesus says: “Blessed are the solitary ones,<sup>36</sup> the elect. For you will find the kingdom. (2) For you come from it (and) will return to it.”

#### *Saying 50*

(1) Jesus says: “If they say to you: ‘Where are you from?’, (then) say to them: ‘We have come from the light, the place where the light has come into being by itself, has established [itself] and has appeared in their (pl.) image.’

(2) If they say to you: ‘Is it you?’<sup>37</sup>, (then) say: ‘We are his children, and we are the elect of the living Father.’

(3) If they ask you: ‘What is the sign of your Father among you?’, (then) say to them: ‘It is movement and repose.’”

#### *Saying 51*

(1) His disciples said to him: “When will the <resurrection><sup>38</sup> of the dead take place, and when will the new world come?”

(2) He said to them: “That (resurrection) which you are awaiting has (already) come, but you do not recognize it.”

*Saying 52*

(1) His disciples said to him: “Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and all (of them) have spoken through you<sup>39</sup>.”

(2) He said to them: “You have pushed away the Living One from you, and you have begun<sup>40</sup> to speak of the dead.”

*Saying 53*

(1) His disciples said to him: “Is circumcision beneficial, or not?”

(2) He said to them: “If it were beneficial, their Father would beget them circumcised from their mother. (3) But the true circumcision in the spirit has prevailed over everything<sup>41</sup>.”

*Saying 54*

Jesus says: “Blessed are the poor. For the kingdom of heaven belongs to you.”

*Saying 55*

(1) Jesus says: “Whoever does not hate his Father and his mother cannot become a disciple of mine.

(2) And whoever does not hate his brothers and his sisters (and) will not take up his cross as I do, will not be worthy of me.”

*Saying 56*

(1) Jesus says: “Whoever has come to know the world has found a corpse. (2) And whoever has found (this) corpse, of him the world is not worthy.”

*Saying 57*

(1) Jesus says: “The kingdom of the Father is like a man who had (good) seed. (2) His enemy came by night. He sowed weeds among the good seed. (3) The man did not allow (the slaves) to pull out

the weeds. He said to them: ‘Lest you go to pull out the weeds (and then) pull out the wheat along with it.’”<sup>42</sup>

(4) For on the day of the harvest the weeds will be apparent<sup>43</sup> and will be pulled out (and) burned.”

### *Saying 58*

Jesus says: “Blessed is the man who has struggled<sup>44</sup>. He has found life.”<sup>45</sup>

### *Saying 59*

Jesus says: “Watch out for the Living One while you are alive, so that you will not die and (then) seek to see him. And you will not be able to see (him).”<sup>46</sup>

### *Saying 60*

(1) <He saw> a Samaritan who was trying to take (away) a lamb<sup>47</sup> while he was on his way to Judea.

(2) He said to his disciples: “That (man) is pursuing the lamb<sup>48</sup>.”

(3) They said to him: “So that he may kill it (and) eat it.”

(4) He said to them: “As long as it is alive he will not eat it, but (only) when he has killed it (and) it has become a corpse.”

(5) They said: “He cannot do it in any other way.”

(6) He said to them: “You, too, look for your resting place so that you may not become a corpse (and) get eaten.”

### *Saying 61*

(1) Jesus said: “Two will rest on a lounge. One will die, the other will live.”

(2) Salome said: “ (So) who are you, man? You have gotten a place on my lounge as a <stranger><sup>49</sup> and you have eaten at my table.”

(3) Jesus said to her: “I am the one who comes from the One who

is (always) at one with himself. I was given some of that which is my Father's."

(4) "I am your disciple!"

(5) Therefore I say: "If someone is <at one with himself><sup>50</sup>, he will become full of light. But if someone is not at one with himself, he will become full of darkness."

### *Saying 62*

(1) Jesus says: "I tell my secrets to those who [are worthy] of [my] secrets."

(2) "Whatever your right hand will do, your left hand should not know what it is doing."

### *Saying 63*

(1) Jesus says: "There was a rich man who had many possessions.

(2) He said: 'I will use my possessions so that I might sow, reap, plant, (and) fill my storehouses with fruit so that I will not lack anything.' (3) This was what he was thinking in his heart. And in that night he died.

(4) Whoever has ears should hear."

### *Saying 64*

(1) Jesus says: "A man had guests. And when he had prepared the dinner, he sent his slave so that he might invite the guests. (2) He came to the first (man and) said to him: 'My master invites you.'

(3) He said: 'I have money due from some merchants. They are coming to me this evening. I will go (and) give instructions to them. Excuse me from the dinner.' (4) He came to another (and) said to him: 'My master has invited you.' (5) He said to him: 'I have bought a house, and I have been called (away) for a day. I will not have time.' (6) He went to another (and) said to him: 'My master

invites you.’ (7) He said to him: ‘My friend is getting married, and I am the one who is going to prepare the meal. I will not be able to come. Excuse me from the dinner.’ (8) He came to another (and) said to him: ‘My master invites you.’ (9) He said to him: ‘I have bought a village. Since I am going to collect the rent, I will not be able to come. Excuse me.’ (10) The servant went away. He said to his master: ‘Those whom you invited to dinner have asked to be excused.’ (11) The master said to his servant: ‘Go out to the streets. Bring (back) whomever you find, so that they might have dinner.’ (12) Dealers and merchants [will] not enter the places of my Father.”

### *Saying 65*

(1) He said: “A [usurer]<sup>51</sup> owned a vineyard. He gave it to some farmers so that they would work it (and) he would receive its fruit from them. (2) He sent his slave<sup>52</sup> so that the farmers would give him the fruit of the vineyard. (3) They seized his slave, beat him, (and) almost killed him. The slave went (back and) told his master. (4) His master said: ‘Perhaps <they> did not recognize <him><sup>53</sup>.’ (5) He sent another slave, (and) the farmers beat that other one as well. (6) Then the master sent his son (and) said: ‘Perhaps they will show respect for my son.’ (7) (But) those farmers, since they knew that he was<sup>54</sup> the heir of the vineyard, seized him (and) killed him. (8) Whoever has ears should hear.”

### *Saying 66*

Jesus says: “Show me the stone that the builders have rejected. It is the cornerstone.”

### *Saying 67*

Jesus says: “Whoever knows all, if he is lacking one thing, he has (already) been lacking everything<sup>55</sup>.”

*Saying 68*

- (1) Jesus says: “Blessed are you when(ever) they hate you (and) persecute you.  
(2) But they (themselves) will find no place at the site where they have persecuted you.”

*Saying 69*

- (1) Jesus says: “Blessed are those who have been persecuted in their heart.<sup>56</sup> They are the ones who have truly come to know the Father.”  
(2) “Blessed are those who suffer from hunger so that the belly of the one who wishes (it) will be satisfied.”

*Saying 70*

- (1) Jesus says: “If you bring forth that (which is) within you, (then) that which you have will save you. (2) If you do not have that within you, (then) that which you do not have within you [will] kill you.”

*Saying 71*

Jesus says: “I will [destroy this] house and no one will be able to rebuild it [except me].”<sup>57</sup>

*Saying 72*

- (1) A [man said] to him: “Tell my brothers that they have to divide my Father’s possessions with me.”  
(2) He said to him: “Man, who made me a divider?”  
(3) He turned to his disciples (and) said to them: “I am not a divider, am I?”

*Saying 73*

Jesus says: “The harvest is plentiful but there are few laborers. But beg the Lord that he may send laborers for the harvest.”



*Saying 74*

He said: “Lord, there are many around the well, but nothing<sup>58</sup> is in the <well><sup>59</sup>.”

*Saying 75*

Jesus says: “Many are standing in front of the door, but it is the solitary ones who will enter the wedding hall.”<sup>60</sup>

*Saying 76*

(1) Jesus says: “The kingdom of the Father is like a merchant who had goods and found a pearl. (2) That merchant is prudent. He sold the goods (and) bought the pearl alone for himself.

(3) You too seek the treasure that does not perish, that stays where no moth comes near to eat (it), and (where) no worm destroys (it).”

*Saying 77*

(1) Jesus says: “I am the light that is above all. I am the All. The All came forth out of me. And to me the All has come.”

(2) “Split a piece of wood (and) I am there.

(3) Lift the stone, and you will find me there.”

*Saying 78*

(1) Jesus says: “Why did you go out to the countryside? To see a reed shaken by the wind, (2) and to see a man dressed in soft clothing [like your] kings and your persons<sup>61</sup> of rank? (3) They are the ones dressed in soft clothing and they will not be able to recognize the truth.”

*Saying 79*

(1) A woman in the crowd said to him: “Hail to the womb that carried you and to the breasts that nursed you.”

(2) He said to [her]: “Hail to those who have heard the word of the Father (and) have truly kept it.

(3) For there will be days when you will say: ‘Hail to the womb that has not conceived and to the breasts that have not given milk.’”

*Saying 80*

(1) Jesus says: “Whoever has come to know the world has found the (dead) body. (2) But whoever has found the (dead) body, of him the world is not worthy<sup>62</sup>.”

*Saying 81*

(1) Jesus says: “Whoever has become rich shall be king.

(2) And whoever has power shall renounce<sup>63</sup> (it).”

*Saying 82*

(1) Jesus says: “Whoever is near me is near the fire.

(2) And whoever is far from me is far from the kingdom.”

*Saying 83*

(1) Jesus says: “The images are visible to a person, but the light within them is hidden in the image.

(2) {}<sup>64</sup> The light of the Father will reveal itself, but his image is hidden by his light.”

*Saying 84*

(1) Jesus says: “When you see your likenesses you are full of joy. (2) But when you will see your likenesses that came into existence before you – they can neither die nor become manifest – how much will you bear?”

*Saying 85*

(1) Jesus says: “Adam came from a great power and great wealth.

But he did not become worthy of you. (2) For if he had been worthy, (then) [he would] not [have tasted] death.”

*Saying 86*

(1) Jesus says: “[Foxes have] their holes and the birds have their nest. (2) But the son of man has no place to lay his head down (and) to rest.”

*Saying 87*

(1) Jesus said: “Wretched is the body that depends on a body. (2) And wretched is the soul that depends on these two.”

*Saying 88*

(1) Jesus says: “The messengers<sup>65</sup> and the prophets will come to you, and they will give you what belongs to you. (2) And you, in turn, give to them what is in your hands (and) you say to yourselves: ‘When will they come (and) take what belongs to them?’”

*Saying 89*

(1) Jesus says: “Why do you wash the outside of the cup? (2) Do you not understand that the one who created the inside is also the one who created the outside?”

*Saying 90*

(1) Jesus says: “Come to me, for my yoke is gentle<sup>66</sup> and my lordship is mild. (2) And you will find rest for yourselves.”

*Saying 91*

(1) They said to him: “Tell us who you are so that we may believe in you.”

(2) He said to them: “You examine the face of the sky and the earth;

but the one who is before you, you have not recognized, and you do not know how to assess this opportunity<sup>67</sup>.”

*Saying 92*

- (1) Jesus says: “Seek and you will find.
- (2) But the things you asked me about in past times, and what I did not tell you then, now I am willing to tell you, but you do not seek them.”<sup>68</sup>

*Saying 93*

- (1) “Do not give what is holy to the dogs, lest they throw it upon the dunghill.
- (2) Do not throw pearls to swine, lest they turn <them><sup>69</sup> into [mud]<sup>70</sup>.”

*Saying 94*

- (1) Jesus [says]: “The one who seeks will find.
- (2) [The one who knocks], to him it will be opened.”

*Saying 95*

- (1) [Jesus says:] “If you have money, do not lend (it) out at interest.
- (2) Rather give [it] to the one from whom you will not get it (back)<sup>71</sup>.”

*Saying 96*

- (1) Jesus [says]: “The kingdom of the Father is like [a] woman.
- (2) She took a little bit of yeast. [She] hid it in dough (and) made it into huge loaves of bread.
- (3) Whoever has ears should hear.”

*Saying 97*

- (1) Jesus says: “The kingdom of the [Father] is like a woman who is carrying a [jar] filled with flour. (2) While she was walking on

[a] long way the handle of the jar broke (and) the flour leaked out behind her [onto] the street. (3) (But) she did not know (it); she had not noticed any trouble<sup>72</sup>. (4) When she had reached her house, she put the jar down on the floor (and) found it empty.”

*Saying 98*

(1) Jesus says: “The kingdom of the Father is like a man who wanted to kill a powerful<sup>73</sup> one. (2) He drew the sword in his house (and) stabbed it into the wall to test whether his hand would be strong (enough). (3) Then he killed the powerful one.”

*Saying 99*

(1) The disciples said to him: “Your brothers and your mother are standing outside.”  
 (2) He said to them: “Those here, who do the will of my Father they are my brothers and my mother. (3) They are the ones who will enter the kingdom of my Father.”

*Saying 100*

(1) They showed Jesus a gold coin and said to him: “Caesar’s people demand taxes from us.”  
 (2) He said to them: “Give Caesar (the things) that are Caesar’s. (3) Give God (the things) that are God’s. (4) And what is mine give me.”

*Saying 101*

(1) “Whoever does not hate his [father] and his mother as I do, will not be able to be a [disciple] of mine. (2) And whoever does [not] love his [father and] his mother as I do, will not be able to be a [disciple] to me.  
 (3) For my mother [...] <sup>74</sup>, but my true [mother] gave me life.”

*Saying 102*

Jesus says: “Woe to them, the Pharisees, for they are like a dog sleeping<sup>75</sup> in a cattle trough, for it neither eats nor [lets] the cattle eat.”

*Saying 103*

Jesus says: “Blessed is the person who knows at which point (of the house)<sup>76</sup> the robbers are going to enter, so that [he] may arise to gather together his [domain] and gird his loin before they enter.”

*Saying 104*

(1) They said to [Jesus]: “Come, let us pray and fast today!”

(2) Jesus said: “What sin is it that I have committed, or wherein have I been overcome? (3) But when the bridegroom comes out of the wedding chamber, then one shall fast and pray.”

*Saying 105*

Jesus says: “Whoever will come to know the father and the mother, he will be called son of a whore.”<sup>77</sup>

*Saying 106*

(1) Jesus says: “When you make the two into one, you will become sons of man<sup>78</sup>.”

(2) And when you say: ‘Mountain, move away’, it will move away.”

*Saying 107*

(1) Jesus says: “The kingdom is like a shepherd who had a hundred sheep.

(2) One of them went astray, the largest. He left the ninety-nine, (and) he sought the one until he found it.

(3) After he had toiled, he said to the sheep: ‘I love you more than the ninety-nine.’”

*Saying 108*

(1) Jesus says: “Whoever will drink from my mouth will become like me. (2) I myself will become he (3) and what is hidden will be revealed to him.”

*Saying 109*

(1) Jesus says: “The kingdom is like a man who has a hidden treasure in his field, [of which] he knows nothing. (2) And [when] he died, he left it to his [son]. The son did not know (about it either). He took over that field (and) sold [it]. (3) And the one who had bought it came, and while he was ploughing [he found] the treasure. He began to lend money at interest to whom he wished.”

*Saying 110*

Jesus says: “Whoever has found the world (and) has become wealthy<sup>79</sup> should renounce<sup>80</sup> the world.”

*Saying 111*

(1) Jesus says: “The heavens will roll up before you, and the earth. (2) And whoever is living from the Living One will not see death.” (3) Does not<sup>81</sup> Jesus say: “Whoever has found himself, of him the world is not worthy?”

*Saying 112*

(1) Jesus says: “Woe to the flesh that depends on the soul. (2) Woe to the soul that depends on the flesh.”

*Saying 113*

(1) His disciples said to him: “The kingdom – on what day will it come?” (2) “It will not come by watching (and waiting for) it. (3) They will

not say: 'Look, here!' or 'Look, there!' (4) Rather the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it."

*Saying 114*

(1) Simon Peter said to them: "Let Mary go away from us, for women are not worthy of life."

(2) Jesus said: "Look, I will draw her in so as to make her male, so that she too may become a living male<sup>82</sup> spirit, being similar to you."

(3) (But I say to you)<sup>83</sup>: "Every woman if she makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."

*Subscription*

The Gospel according to Thomas



# Understanding the Gospel of Thomas Today

Stephen J. Patterson

## *The Discovery of a New Gospel*

Discoveries in the world of Biblical Studies are always exciting. The books of the Bible are ancient texts, shrouded in the mysteries of the remote past, a time and place about which we know precious little. We long for more information, any tidbit of evidence that might open up one more shadowy corner of the ancient world to our eager eyes. New discoveries excite us because they hold out the promise and possibility for disclosure, although rarely do the greatly heralded discoveries of the past live up to our inflated expectations of them. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is an exceptional case, as are a handful of less well-known discoveries, such as the Chester Beatty and the Bodmer papyri.

The discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library in December 1945 falls into this rare category of astounding finds. The hero of the story, narrated by James M. Robinson in the final chapter of this volume, was an Egyptian peasant by the name of Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Samman, who happened upon this remarkable cache of texts sealed in an ancient clay jar, buried for safe keeping at the base of the cliffs that run along the Nile in upper Egypt, near the present-day town of Nag Hammadi.<sup>1</sup> In the years since Muḥammad ʿAlī's chance find in the dry sands of Egypt, it has become clear that this

is one discovery that has lived up to its promise. Among the many reasons that allow one to make this claim, none is more significant than the second tractate in codex two of the Nag Hammadi Library, the text known today as the Gospel of Thomas.

The Gospel of Thomas was not always known by this name. Half a century before the famous discovery at Nag Hammadi, two British explorers, B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, had actually found fragments of this lost gospel among the ancient papyrus rubbish heaps of Oxyrhynchus, some 200 kilometers downstream from Nag Hammadi. But these fragments held only a few sayings of the Gospel of Thomas, and no title nor any indication of where the sayings might have come from. Grenfell and Hunt called them simply “Sayings of Our Lord,” “New Sayings of Jesus,” and a “Fragment of a Lost Gospel.”<sup>2</sup> With the discovery of the new text from Nag Hammadi, it soon became clear that what Grenfell and Hunt had discovered were actually fragments of the lost Gospel of Thomas.<sup>3</sup>

The Gospel of Thomas turned out not to be like the better-known gospels from the New Testament. Perhaps the most striking difference is the fact that in this gospel there is no narrative to speak of. It tells no story of Jesus’ life. Rather, it is simply a collection of Jesus’ sayings, each introduced by the simple formula “Jesus says.”<sup>4</sup>

The one complete copy of the Gospel of Thomas we possess from Nag Hammadi has 114 such sayings. This copy, however, may not be identical to the original Gospel of Thomas. For one thing, it is a translation into Coptic of a more original, Greek version of this text, of which Grenfell and Hunt’s Oxyrhynchus fragments are a reminder. Coptic is a written form of late Egyptian used by the Christians who brought Christianity to Egypt in the second century. It uses the Greek alphabet (together with a few unique characters to represent the Egyptian sounds not found in Greek) to give

expression to the native Egyptian language commonly spoken, but rarely written during this period. Thus, our sole surviving complete copy of Thomas is actually a missionary's translation. The Greek fragments of Thomas discovered by Grenfell and Hunt are linguistically closer to the original. But the texts they represent were not identical to the Coptic version from Nag Hammadi. For example, one Greek fragment, POxy 1, lists Saying 30 and part of Saying 77 from the Coptic version in consecutive order. Another fragment, POxy 655, offers a version of Saying 36 that is much longer than the same saying in the Coptic text.

One of the reasons for such differences may be the fact that the Gospel of Thomas is a sayings collection. As a simple collection, unlike the more complicated narrative texts of the Bible, Thomas would have been much more malleable and susceptible to change over the course of its transmission, as new sayings were added or sloughed away, expanded, contracted, or shifted around as usefulness dictated. There may have been many versions of the Gospel of Thomas at one time or another. The three Oxyrhynchus fragments of Thomas actually come from three different copies of the text, made at different times. The earliest of these (POxy 1) was created early in the third century.<sup>5</sup> The Coptic version of Thomas from Nag Hammadi was created sometime in the fourth century, but may itself be an adaptation of an earlier Coptic text that was written in a different dialect of the Coptic language.<sup>6</sup> Thus we know that Thomas enjoyed a long history of popularity in upper Egypt. Over the course of this history, and in the years it circulated prior to its arrival in Egypt, the Gospel of Thomas was probably altered many times.

The Gospel of Thomas, as a sayings collection, was not unique in the ancient world. In fact, such collections were rather common. The students of well-known philosophers, such as Epicurus or

Epictetus, often collected the sayings of their teachers into *gnomologia*, or collected words of insight, which they might then use as they evangelized the public in the market places and streets of the ancient city. This practice extended across cultures in antiquity. Jews, Egyptians, Persians, and other peoples of the Mediterranean basin also gathered the proverbial wisdom of their sages into collections of *logoi sophon*, or sayings of the wise.<sup>7</sup> In the Jewish tradition one finds such collections embedded, for example, in the book of Proverbs, or in the inter-testamental books, the Wisdom of Solomon, or the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach. The gathering of Jesus' sayings into such a collection was therefore not a neutral activity. It placed him among the great sages of Israel's history. He was, as the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon might have said, one of those holy souls found in each generation, into whom the goddess Wisdom sends her spirit to make them friends of God and prophets (Wis Sol 7:27).

### *Who Wrote the Gospel of Thomas?*

The opening lines of the Gospel of Thomas read as follows:

These are the hidden words which the living Jesus spoke. And  
Didymos Judas Thomas wrote them down.

*(Thom. Prologue)*

The collection of these sayings is ascribed to a certain Didymos Judas Thomas, or in the Greek original (see POxy 654) simply "Judas, who is also called Thomas." This is a curious name. Only one part of it is a *bona fide* given name: Judas. Didymos and Thomas are simply the Greek and Semitic words for "twin," respectively. Originally the writer was identified as Judas Thomas (that is,

Judas the Twin); later someone added the Greek word for twin for audiences unfamiliar with the Semitic word *thoma*. In any event, our purported scribe is Judas the Twin. Who was he?

The name Judas Thomas belongs to a well-known apostolic figure from eastern Syria, where he appears in a number of works, including the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, the *Doctrines of Addai*, and Ephraem's *Sermons on Faith*. He also appears in the legendary accounts of how the gospel was brought to Edessa narrated by Eusebius: it was Judas Thomas who sent the apostle Thaddaeus to Edessa to fulfill a promise Jesus had made to King Abgar to send a disciple who could heal him.<sup>8</sup> In another version of this story, it is Judas Thomas himself who is sent to Edessa. By this same account his body was entombed in a shrine in Edessa, where pilgrims could come to venerate him.<sup>9</sup> In the *Acts of Thomas* he is the apostle sent to evangelize the east, and travels to India. After his martyrdom there, legend has it that his bones were transported back to "the west," presumably Edessa.<sup>10</sup> Thus it was that the Christians of eastern Syria came to regard Judas Thomas as the founding apostle of the church there.

With a name like Judas, one can imagine that those who revered him would want to distinguish him from the other, infamous apostle with whom he shares this name. So, in the list of apostles found in chapter 1 of the *Acts of Thomas* he appears as "Judas of James," meaning probably Judas the *brother* of James. He also carries this designation in Luke's apostolic lists (Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13), and in John he is called simply "Judas, not Iscariot" (14:22), to make clear the distinction. He is also probably the apostle to whom the Epistle of Jude (*Ioudas*) is attributed.

But he also shares the second half of his name, Thomas, with another famous disciple, "*doubting* Thomas" (from John 20), and this has also caused some confusion over the years. In the Syrian

Christian tradition, the apostle Judas Thomas was not the same person as the doubting Thomas encountered in John 20. This can be seen in Syriac versions of John, where “Judas, not Iscariot” is called Judas Thomas and not associated with the apostle Thomas in chapter 20. This is also clear from the *Acts of Thomas*, where the apostle Thomas also appears in the same list of disciples that concludes with the name *Judas* of James. As the story begins, it is this *Judas* who is the protagonist and main character of the story, not *Thomas*.<sup>11</sup> In fact, this work should rightly be called the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, just as our gospel should rightly be called the *Gospel of Judas Thomas*. Over time, the Christian tradition seems to have shied away from apostles named Judas – even as modern interpreters refer to the Epistle of *Jude*, not Judas – and so he became simply “Thomas.” This is perhaps why the later colophon title affixed to the end of our gospel reads simply “Gospel According to Thomas,” rather than *Judas Thomas*.

But just who was this Judas Thomas, or Judas the Twin? In chapter 13 of the *Acts of Thomas* Jesus appears in the guise of Judas Thomas but explains: “I am not Judas who is also called Thomas, but his brother.” Thus, in this early Syrian tradition, Judas Thomas appears to have been a brother of Jesus. This, of course, calls to mind the curious fact that in Mark 6:3 we find named among the brothers of Jesus a certain “Judas.” Could it be that the Gospel of Thomas intends to claim as its author Judas, the brother of Jesus?<sup>12</sup> Perhaps so. In Saying 12 of the gospel, the authority of another brother of Jesus is invoked, namely, “James the Just”:

The disciples said to Jesus, “We know that you will depart from us. Who is to become preeminent among us?” Jesus said to them, “Wherever you have come from, you are to go to James the Just, the one for whom heaven and earth came into being.”

We do not know how or why these two brothers of Jesus came to be associated with this gospel. But it seems clear enough that the claims to authority being made here go beyond mere apostolic authority, and include family ties as well. Nonetheless, these claims must be assessed critically. Was this text *really* written by Judas Thomas, the brother of Jesus? Probably not. In all likelihood, Jesus' brothers, all from the same peasant family of hand-workers in Nazareth, would not have been literate. Moreover, it is unlikely that the Gospel of Thomas, a simple list of sayings, was composed at a single stroke, but compiled over time, with materials added or deleted as time and circumstance dictated. Over the years it may have had many curators, including the fourth century Egyptian monks to whom we owe the sole surviving complete exemplar of the gospel in Coptic. It therefore seems best not to attach too much historical significance to the text's own authorial claims and to assume that the authorship asserted in the opening line is pseudonymous.

### *Where Was the Gospel of Thomas Written?*

As we have seen, the name Judas Thomas, or Didymos Judas Thomas, is to be found primarily in early Christian texts associated with eastern Syria. In early Christianity it may be observed that often the name of a particularly prominent leader will come to have significance within a distinct geographic region. Peter, for example, was associated with Rome, John with Asia Minor, James with Jerusalem, and so forth. Whether such associations are grounded in an historical memory of the evangelization of that area, or are purely legendary, is difficult to say. Judas Thomas was apparently the patron apostle for eastern Syria, particularly the area around the ancient city of Edessa, modern Urfa, in far eastern Turkey. As

such, it seems reasonable to assume that the Gospel of Thomas came originally from eastern Syria.<sup>13</sup>

Yet all of the Syrian sources in which we find evidence for the Judas Thomas tradition post-date the Gospel of Thomas by at least a century, and more. This raises the question of whether the Gospel of Thomas was simply heir to the Syrian Judas Thomas tradition, or in fact pre-dates it. Could the Gospel of Thomas have even played a role in bringing this tradition to Syria in the first place? After all, as a collection of *Jesus'* sayings, much of the material in the Gospel of Thomas would have come originally from out of the early Jesus movement in Palestine. Furthermore, Thomas 12 grants considerable authority to "James the Just," that is, James the brother of Jesus, who is thought to have been a leader in the early church in Jerusalem (see Gal 1:19). And in Eusebius' version of the Abgar legend, Judas Thomas himself is an authority figure, not in Edessa, but in the Jewish homeland, from where he sends out emissaries, like Thaddeus.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it may be that the Gospel of Thomas was originally assembled not in Syria, but further west, in Christian circles active in and around Jerusalem. Later it may have been transported to the east, where it became the basis for the subsequent flowering of the Judas Thomas tradition in Syria.

### *When Was the Gospel of Thomas Written?*

Thomas is difficult to date with any precision. The problem lies with the nature of the text itself: it is a sayings collection. As I have already indicated, this means that as a document Thomas would have been much more malleable than the better-known canonical gospels. It is this malleability that poses the greatest difficulty in reaching any consensus about when this text might have been written. The problem is quite simple: a collection of sayings cannot



be dated in the same way as a novel or treatise, where the creation of the whole composition in all its constituent parts might be located within a relatively limited time frame. In a sayings collection such as Thomas, the sayings themselves might well stem from quite disparate time periods; some originating with Jesus himself, others having been coined a century or more later. Therefore, one should probably not try to date Thomas in the same way that one might date a text like the Gospel of Mark. Rather, one should ask about the history of the Gospel of Thomas: When did it begin? How did it continue? Did it ever end?

When did it begin? There are several indications that some version of the Gospel of Thomas may have existed relatively early, before the end of the first century. The sayings collection as a literary form belongs to the earliest period of Christian literary activity, as evidenced by the so-called Synoptic Sayings Source, or Q, a collection of sayings and parables used by Matthew and Luke in the composition of their respective gospels. Another, shorter example of this literary form may be the collection of parables found in Mark 4. The fate of these two examples of the genre is instructive: neither survived as an independent document; rather, both were absorbed into the narrative genres favoured by Christians in the latter part of the first century. In the second century a new form of gospel emerged, in which a risen Jesus imparts esoteric knowledge to elect apostles who then are to disseminate it to other *electi*. The older sayings forms were taken up and developed in this genre as well. In any event, for reasons that will perhaps never be entirely clear, the simple sayings collection as a gospel form seems to have passed out of fashion after the first century.

An original date before the end of the first century is also suggested by the way various authority figures appear in Thomas.<sup>15</sup> In *Thom.* 12 James is appealed to as an authority. In *Thom.* 13

another authority is lifted up: (Judas) Thomas. Other apostles do not fare so well, however. In *Thom.* 13, Thomas is exalted, but Peter and Matthew must play the fool, unable to understand the real significance and identity of Jesus. This suggests a time in early Christianity when local communities still appealed to the authority of particular well-known leaders from the past to guarantee the reliability of their claims, even while rejecting the rival claims of others and their apostolic heroes. The rather pointed criticism of Matthew and Peter in *Thom.* 13 suggests that perhaps the author of this saying has the Gospel of Matthew in view, and the particular form of Christianity associated with it. This sort of rivalry seems more at home in the first century than later. As apostolic history gradually faded into the distant past, such apostolic-inspired rivalries seem to have quieted – or shifted to other flash-points – as the apostles themselves became revered figures of that remote time of sacred origins. Perhaps Luke made the first step in this direction. In Acts, written around the turn of the first century or perhaps slightly later,<sup>16</sup> the twelve have become heroes of the early church, only a little less in stature than Jesus himself. And old rivalries, even as fierce as that which existed between Peter and Paul, are smoothed out. In Acts, Paul accepts the Jerusalem church's position on circumcision (Acts 16:3), and Peter accepts the Pauline position on eating with Gentiles (Acts 10). The Gospel of Thomas, with its raw display of apostolic rivalries, probably originated before this period of accommodation.

Finally, there is the way in which Jesus himself is treated in this collection. Throughout the collection, one is hard pressed to find an instance in which Jesus is referred to as using any of the Christological titles that became ever more prominent as the early followership of Jesus grew into a full fledged religious movement.<sup>17</sup> He is not the “Son of Man,”<sup>18</sup> or the “Son of God,” the “Messiah”

or “Christ,” or even the “Lord.”<sup>19</sup> He is just Jesus. Of course, the content of many of Thomas’ sayings imply a view of Jesus that was more exalted than this lack of Christological titles would suggest. Nonetheless, their absence is indicative of a generally early, rather than late, time frame.

All of this suggests that some form of the Gospel of Thomas already existed before the end of the first century. This does not mean, however, that everything we now see in this gospel derives from this early period. There is evidence that over time this gospel did indeed grow and change, as newer sayings were added or older sayings were changed. A good example of a newer saying in Thomas is *Thom. 7*, a mysterious logion that reads as follows:

(1) Jesus says: “Blessed is the lion, that a person will eat and the lion will become human. (2) And anathema is the person whom a lion will eat and the lion will become human.”

This odd image fits into the religious environment one finds among the ascetic monks of upper Egypt in the second century and later, where the lion had come to symbolize the human passions those ascetics fought to resist. It was probably added to the collection some time after it had come to Egypt and been adopted by Christian ascetics living there.<sup>20</sup>

Other sayings in Thomas show how traditions that may have themselves been very old, were nonetheless changed over the course of their transmission under the influence of other texts and traditions, such as the canonical gospels. A good instance of this is to be found in *Thom. 65–66*. *Thom. 65* is a version of the Parable of the Tenants found also in Mark 12:1–12, and its parallels in Matthew and Luke. The Thomas version is distinctive in that here the parable is a true parable; it has not been secondarily allegorized, as is the

case with the Markan version. In this sense, it derives ultimately from a stage in the Jesus tradition that predates the Gospel of Mark. However, even though *Thom.* 65 has none of the allegorical features of Mark's more developed version, it is followed in the collection curiously by *Thom.* 66, a citation of Ps 118:22. This is the psalm that Mark just happens also to append to his version of the parable (Mark 12:10b-11) to complete his allegorical reading of it. For Mark, Jesus is the rejected stone of the psalm. Since Thomas has no apparent interest in reading the parable allegorically, there is no real reason for the psalm to appear together with the parable in Thomas. Indeed, in Thomas they are presented as separate sayings, each introduced by "Jesus says," so that one is not explicitly directed to read them together. Still, the location of the psalm directly after the parable in Thomas seems to be too much of a coincidence not to suppose that one of the synoptic versions of this parable has exercised an influence on the formation of the Thomas text.<sup>21</sup>

So not everything in the Gospel of Thomas comes from the first century. And not everything in Thomas that does come from this early period remained unchanged and free from the influence of other texts and traditions. As generations of scribes tinkered and tweaked this tradition, influence from any number of directions would have exercised an effect on the text of Thomas. It is unlikely that we will be able to sort out all the intertextual possibilities with certainty. Thus, we must be content for now with a more general picture. The genesis of the Gospel of Thomas probably lies in the last decades of the first century, when sayings collections were still current, apostolic pedigrees were still disputed, and Jesus was still sometimes just "Jesus." But this collection grew and changed. Scribes were probably still adding and altering things when the Coptic version we now possess was copied in the fourth century by a monk in upper Egypt. The interpreter of Thomas

must always hold open the possibility of various time frames for individual logia.<sup>22</sup>

### *Thomas and Early Christian Social Radicalism*

Early Christianity was a diverse phenomenon. From its very inception, the followership of Jesus comprised disparate groups that came in various ways to understand Jesus as significant for their lives, and for many, determinative for their understanding of who God is. Based on what we read in the Gospel of Thomas, what can be said about the sort of Christianity (if one may rightly call such early followers of Jesus “Christians” at all) that is reflected here?

Those who used this gospel must have embraced an attitude about conventional life and the world around them that can only be described as ‘socially radical’. The Thomas Christians were not alone among the followers of Jesus in coming to this understanding of the significance of Jesus’ life and teaching. In fact, in recent years the study of the synoptic gospels and their antecedent traditions has shown that, among the earliest followers of Jesus, it was quite common to find this sort of social radicalism. Gerd Theissen initiated the study of this aspect of the early Jesus movement and coined a term to describe it: “Wanderradikalismus,” or “wandering radicalism.”<sup>23</sup> According to Theissen, the early Jesus movement included many who embraced an itinerant lifestyle in imitation of the itinerant life of Jesus himself. This is the origin and context within which such familiar sayings as this would have been remembered:

[Foxes have] their holes and birds have their nest. (2) But the son of man has no place to lay his head down (and) to rest.

(*Thom.* 86; cf. Matt 8:20//Luke 9:58 [Q])

These early itinerants would have left behind conventional family life, of which they had become critical:

(1) Jesus says: “Whoever does not hate his father and his mother cannot become a disciple of mine.

(2) And whoever does not hate his brothers and his sisters (and) will not take up his cross as I do, will not be worthy of me.”

(*Thom.* 55; cf. Matt 10:37–38//Luke 14:26–27 [Q])

They would also have become critical of common piety, distinctions of clean and unclean, and purity as a means of validating human worth and belonging: “There is nothing outside a person which by going in can defile....” (Mark 7:15; Matt 5:11; *Thom.* 14:5). They embraced those who had fallen out of the mainstream of society into the realm of human expendability:

Jesus says: “Blessed are the poor. For the kingdom of heaven belongs to you.”

(*Thom.* 54; cf. Matt 5:3//Luke 6:20b [Q])

Blessed are you who hunger, for you will be fed.

(Matt 5:6//Luke 6:21a [Q]; cf. *Thom.* 69:2)

Blessed are you who are hated and persecuted...

(Matt 5:10–11//Luke 6:22 [Q]; cf. *Thom.* 68)

They characterized wealth as useless:

(1) [Jesus says:] “If you have money, do not lend (it) out at interest.

(2) Rather give [it] to the one from whom you will not get it (back).”

(*Thom.* 95:1–2; cf. Matt 5:42//Luke 6:30, 34–35 [Q])

In the Jesus tradition this unconventional and critical view of the world comes to expression especially in the parables of Jesus – those brief narratives set in the common life of the Galilean peasant, in which the unusual strains of Jesus’ new kingdom of God are played out. A rich man invests all he has in storing up resources for the future, and then suddenly he dies (*Thom.* 63; cf. Luke 6:12–20); another aspires to host a great feast for his friends, but they all stand him up, so he decides to befriend the common crowd and open his table to anyone (*Thom.* 64; cf. Luke 14:16–23; Matt 22:2–13); another owns a vineyard, but loses everything – his property, his honour, and his son – when the tenants rebel and take over (*Thom.* 65; cf. Mark 12:1–11, pars.). Thomas embraces these parables of social comment and critique with minimal elaboration. Other parables in Thomas celebrate unconventional choices: the fisher, who sacrifices all the fish in his net to possess one exceptionally large and beautiful fish (*Thom.* 8; cf. Matt 13:47–8); a merchant who sells all to buy a single pearl for himself (*Thom.* 76; cf. Matt 13:45–46); a sower who sows willy-nilly and still manages to raise a crop (*Thom.* 9; cf. Mark 4:3–8). Still others liken the kingdom to a weed – the mustard (*Thom.* 20; cf. Mark 13:31–2, pars.) – or to the proverbially unclean leaven (*Thom.* 96; cf. Luke 13:20–1; Matt 13:33). The parable, as a wisdom form, seems to have been particularly well-suited to the kind of unconventional view of the world that was cultivated among those who prized the Gospel of Thomas. In the parables they could hear their own values and view of the world come to expression.

### *The Theology of the Gospel of Thomas*

Those who used this gospel did not simply rely on the original words of Jesus to fund an unusual way of life. They, no less than anyone else who created and used gospels in nascent Christianity, were interpreters of

Jesus, not just recipients of his teaching. Their interpretive fingerprints may be seen throughout this collection of Jesus' sayings. Even the form of this gospel – the sayings collection – says much about the direction their interpretive efforts took. As we have already noted above, the fact that Thomas is a sayings collection places it within a well-used genre of ancient literature – *logoi sophon*, or “sayings of the wise,” as James M. Robinson has called it. The Thomas Christians believed in the power of words, and in the wisdom of words to guide their lives. Much of what they valued could be captured in simple every-day proverbs that embodied the most common of insights. For example:

Jesus says: “If a blind (person) leads a blind (person), both will fall into a pit.”

(*Thom. 34*)

Or:

Jesus says, “No prophet is accepted in his own village. A physician does not heal those who know him.”

(*Thom. 31*)

Or:

It is impossible for a person to mount two horses and to stretch two bows. And it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters. Else he will honour the one and insult the other.

(*Thom. 47:1–2*)

However, the important questions of life are sometimes not so simply answered. What if, for example, one's experience of the world is not conventional? What if one feels alienated or out of



place in the world? This was true of many followers of Jesus, who on the one hand had come to embrace his socially radical critique of common life, and on the other had seen how the world had treated him. The apostle Paul offers a good example of someone who felt this way. The wisdom teaching he was developing within the Jesus movement was far from conventional. He writes:

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have killed the lord of glory.

(1 Cor 2:6–8)

The Gospel of Thomas shares this negative attitude toward the world. In fact, the very next words from Paul's pen in the passage just cited are a saying that is also found also in the Gospel of Thomas, but presented in Thomas as a saying of Jesus:

But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him," God has revealed to us through the spirit.

(1 Cor 2:9)

Compare:

Jesus said, "I will give you what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, what no hand has touched, and what has not arisen in the human heart."

(*Thom.* 17)

What Thomas and Paul share is the conviction that the world is not as it seems. To know it – to really know it as it is – one must attend not simply to conventional proverbial wisdom, but to the true wisdom that is *revealed* from God. In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus is the bearer of such revelation. Of the world, he says:

“Whoever has come to know the world has found a corpse. And whoever has found (this) corpse, of him the world is not worthy.”

*(Thom. 56)*

Or:

(1) “If you do not abstain from the world, you will not find the kingdom.

*(Thom. 27:1)*

The Gospel of Thomas does not hold the world in high esteem. It is a dead place, a mere corpse, unworthy of the followers of Jesus who have the misfortune to dwell in it. How does one come to understand the world in such terms? Paul came to such an understanding through his experience of the world as a place hostile to the utopian vision he had gained from Christianity – a vision he expected to come to fruition very soon, when Jesus would return to earth as the Son of Man to initiate the final apocalyptic drama. Paul gave expression to his frustration with the world by embracing an apocalyptic world view.

Thomas Christians did not think this way. Instead, they embraced a world view that is more akin to what one finds in the Gospel of John. John’s view of the world was also hostile. “If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you,” says Jesus to his disciples in John’s “Farewell Discourse” (John 15:18). And so Jesus departs from the world to go to another place, where his followers, too, will someday go:

In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so I would have told you. I go now to prepare a place for you. And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

(John 14:2–3)

This is very much like the view we find in Thomas. In Thomas, too, Jesus appears as one who has come to redeem his followers and lead them to another world. Just as John's Jesus comes into a world that "received him not" (John 1:11), so also in the Gospel of Thomas Jesus expresses his disappointment with what he finds in the world:

(1) Jesus says: "I stood in the middle of the world, and in flesh I appeared to them. (2) I found all of them drunk. None of them did I find thirsty. (3) And my soul ached for the children of humanity, because they are blind in their heart, and they cannot see; for they came into the world empty, (and) they also seek to depart from the world empty. (4) But now they are drunk. (But) when they shake off their wine, then they will change their mind."

(*Thom.* 28)

Like John's Jesus, Jesus in Thomas is here for just a brief time. He sojourns in the world, shares his words of divine wisdom, but ultimately must return to the heavenly abode from whence he came. In John 7:33–34 Jesus says:

I will be with you a little longer, and then I will go to the one who sent me; you will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you will not be able to come.

Compare this to Jesus' words in *Thom.* 38:

(1) Jesus says: “Many times you have desired to hear these words, these that I am speaking to you, and you have no one else from whom to hear them. (2) There will be days when you will seek me, (and) you will not find me.”

Finally, as with Jesus in John, in Thomas Jesus promises that someday his followers will return to their place of origin. They will not stay in this world, but shall someday return to God:

(1) Jesus says: “Blessed are the solitary ones, the elect. For you will find the kingdom. (2) For you come from it (and) will return to it.”

*(Thom. 49)*

In John this will happen as an answer to Jesus’ prayer on behalf of the disciples (John 17). Not so in Thomas. In Thomas, the followers of Jesus must know who they really are, and how to identify themselves to the powers of the universe, if they wish to return to the heavenly realm from whence they have come. Just so, the next saying reads like a brief catechism for passing this test :

(1) Jesus says: “If they say to you: ‘Where do you come from?’, (then) say to them: ‘We have come from the light, the place where the light has come into being by itself, has established [itself] and has appeared in their image.’ (2) If they say to you: ‘Is it you?’, (then) say: ‘We are his children, and we are the elect of the living Father.’ (3) If they ask you: ‘What is the sign of your Father among you?’, (then) say to them: ‘It is movement and repose.’”

*(Thom. 50)*

In these ideas, that Jesus is the redeemer come from God sent into a hostile world to lead the elect out the world and home to the

heavenly world from whence they have come, some have found the ingredients of Gnosticism, an ancient religious movement that found expression in many different religions of the ancient orient. Indeed, the influence of so-called Gnosticism on Thomas, John, and even Paul, has long been a topic of debate among New Testament scholars. But in recent years a critical shift has occurred in that discussion. It seems the term ‘Gnostic’ is not so well-defined a category as its frequent invocation would suggest. It has become a catch-all term applied to anything of an esoteric or speculative nature.<sup>24</sup> If it is to be retained at all, some have suggested that it be used only to describe those theological systems in which the world is understood to be a great cosmic mistake, perpetrated by an evil demiurge, a rebellious creator god, who seeks to keep its unenlightened inhabitants imprisoned in their own sleepy ignorance. But it is precisely this “cosmic devolution” that does not appear in the Gospel of Thomas (or John or Paul). How, then, shall we describe the theology of the Gospel of Thomas more precisely and accurately?

Scholars have over the years fished around for other ways to describe Thomas. Some have called it “Hermetic,” and compared it to ancient Hermetic texts like *Poimandres*. Others have placed it within the family of Jewish mystical writings. Still others have compared its ideas to the great Jewish theologian, Philo of Alexandria, who interpreted the Torah in terms of Hellenistic philosophy. Gnosticism, Hermeticism, mysticism, Philo–Thomas has certain affinities with all of these contemporaneous religious voices. Why? It is because all of them were making use of a religious and philosophical view of the world that was widely in vogue during the period of Christian origins: Platonism.

After an extended period of skepticism in the ancient philosophical world, the later Hellenistic period saw a resurgence of

interest in questions about the nature of the world, the cosmos, and the nature of human being. It was a time of change. People had begun to question whether they really knew the world, and whether they really understood themselves. To gain answers to these questions, many turned once more to the ancient sage, Socrates, and to his interpreter, Plato. These Middle Platonists – so-called to distinguish them from earlier *Platonists* and later *Neo-Platonists* – began to explore the more speculative passages in the *Republic*, *Alcibiades*, *The Sophist*, and especially the *Timaeus*, the most sweeping of Plato's attempts to describe the world and human being within it. They began to take to heart Plato's description of the way things are. It was Plato who gave these seekers the notion that the human being consists of a mortal part and an immortal part, and that the latter comes from God and returns to God when mortal life is ended. It was Plato who provided them with the cosmos in which they lived: an earthly world below, inferior, imperfect, a mere shadow of the real, and the heavenly sphere above, the place of light and life, the real world to which the immortal soul returns when the body dies. Eventually Platonic notions would come to dominate Christian theology, through the great Alexandrian theologians, Clement and Origen, and later, Augustine, who read them avidly. But now we are seeing that Plato's influence was felt earlier as well. The Thomas gospel is one of these earlier attempts to read the Jesus tradition through the lens of Platonism – or rather, *Middle Platonism*.<sup>25</sup>

This gospel's Platonic inclinations can be seen at the very beginning of the gospel, where the origins of this tradition in Jewish Wisdom theology can be seen to blend quite naturally with a concept that lies near the centre of Middle Platonic thinking. Thomas 3 begins like this:

- (1) Jesus says: “If those who lead you say to you: ‘Look, the kingdom is in the sky!’, then the birds of the sky will precede you.
- (2) If they say to you: ‘It is in the sea’, then the fish will precede you.
- (3) Rather, the kingdom is inside of you and outside of you.”

Here Thomas mimics an old Jewish wisdom motif: the search for Wisdom in all the wrong places. In Deuteronomy 30:11–14, for example, the word of God is said not to be in the heavens, and not beyond the sea, but “very near to you... in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.”<sup>26</sup> In Thomas the saying continues in a similar vein, but now making use of the familiar Platonic concept of self-knowledge:

- (4) “When you come to know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will realize that you are children of the living Father.
- (5) But if you do not come to know yourselves, then you exist in poverty and you are poverty.”

“Know thyself” – the ancient Delphic maxim. In the late Hellenistic period, this saying had come to hold a very specific meaning among Platonists: Know yourself, your true self, that you are of God.<sup>27</sup> Cicero, who was touched by Middle Platonic thought, expresses it nicely:

For he who knows himself will realize, in the first place, that he has a divine element within him, and will think of his own inner nature as a kind of consecrated image of God; and so he will always act and think in a way worthy of so great a gift of the gods, and, when he has examined and thoroughly tested himself, he will understand how nobly equipped by Nature he entered life,

and what manifold means he possesses for the attainment and acquisition of wisdom.<sup>28</sup>

The key to the well-lead life, according to the Middle Platonists, was proper self-knowledge, the content of which was the divine origins and nature of the true self. In Thomas 3 this concept is expressed using a term drawn from Jewish and early Christian tradition: to discover the true self is to discover that you are “children of the living Father.”<sup>29</sup>

In the above passage Cicero makes use of notion that is also central to the Platonic version of reality: the element of the divine contained in the human being is simply a tiny version of the great divine that rules the universe. Here Cicero expresses the thought when he calls this divine element the “image of God.” This, of course, was a concept well-known to Jews like Philo of Alexandria, interested in reading the Jewish tradition through Platonic lenses. When Philo read in Genesis 1:26–27 that God created the human in “the image and likeness of God,” he assumed that it naturally refers to that part of the person that is immortal and God-like. Like God, he says, it is “an idea, or a genus, or a seal, perceptible only to the mind, incorporeal, neither male nor female, imperishable by nature.”<sup>30</sup> Philo’s language here is thoroughly Platonic. The “image of God” is the divine element thought to be embedded in the mortal human being according to the Platonic anthropology. When, then, is the mortal part created? According to Philo, Genesis speaks of this only later, in Genesis 2, in what modern scholarship recognizes as a second, distinct creation account, in which the human one is created from the dust of the earth. But Philo did not see it this way. He saw the two accounts as two episodes of a single story. In the first episode, the immortal part – what Plato usually calls *nous*, or “mind” – is created “in the image of God.” In the second, God creates the mortal body in which this



immortal image of God will dwell. This part, he says, is “perceptible to the external senses, partaking of qualities, consisting of body and soul, man or woman, by nature mortal.”<sup>31</sup> In this way the whole Platonic anthropology is read into the Genesis creation account. The immortal, divine element, what Plato calls the “mind” (*nous*), is the part created in the image of God in Gen 1:26–27; the mortal parts, body (*soma*) and “soul” (*psyche*), are created later, in Gen 2:7.

Something like this Platonized Jewish anthropology is reflected in Thomas 84, which speaks of rediscovering one’s divine image that “came into being before you:”

Jesus says: “When you see your likenesses you are full of joy. But when you will see your images that came into existence before you – they can neither die nor become manifest – how much will you bear?”

The saying speaks first of “your likenesses,” what you see in a mirror, or a puddle, staring back at you. But delightful as this experience may be, the thing staring back at you is not the true self. What you see is merely the mortal body – what is referred to in Genesis 2:7. “But when you see your images,” the true self created in the image of God, “that came into existence before you,” – what is referred to *earlier* in Genesis 1:26–27 – that is the true self. When you come face to face with this true self, “how much will you bear?”

In Jewish exegesis of Genesis it was common to conclude that when Adam sinned, he forfeited the divine image, and the immortality that went with it. Thus Thomas 85 continues in this vein:

Jesus says: “Adam came from a great power and great wealth. But he did not become worthy of you. For if he had been worthy, (then) [he would] not [have tasted] death.”

Thomas 84 speaks of rediscovering the divine image that was lost in the garden when Adam sinned. Saying 85 intimates that the one who recovers that divine image undoes what Adam did, and so surpasses him.

These ideas are not unique to Thomas. Paul, too, saw in Christ a way to undo the effects of the first Adam. For him, Christ is the second Adam, who restores in people the heavenly image, and with it the immortality that was lost when the first Adam sinned.<sup>32</sup> For Paul, this is accomplished by the power of the risen Christ at the resurrection of the dead. Among the Thomas Christians recapturing the divine image was probably associated with certain ascetical practices. This is idea behind the mysterious logion 22 in the Gospel of Thomas. Notice how it speaks of replacing the mortal body – body part by body part – until at last the mortal body is replaced by the divine image:

Jesus saw little (children) being nursed. He said to his disciples: “These little ones being nursed are like those who enter the kingdom.”

They said to him: “Will we enter the kingdom as little ones?”

Jesus said to them: “When you make the two into one and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside and the above like the below, – that is, to make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will no longer be male and the female no longer female – and when you make eyes instead of an eye and a hand instead of a hand and a foot instead of a foot, and an image instead of an image, then you will enter [the kingdom].”

*(Thom. 22:4–7)*

Here again one sees the peculiar language of Genesis read through a Platonic lens. Recall that in Genesis 1:26–27 the human being

is created both “male and female.” Hellenistic Jewish exegetes saw in this language the idea (probably originally Platonic) that the primordial human being was originally androgynous – that is, both male and female – and they speculated that there would come a time when human beings would once again return to this original state of androgynous perfection.<sup>33</sup> Here and elsewhere in the Gospel of Thomas we encounter the idea of the “single one.”<sup>34</sup> In Thomas 22 the term is explained: it refers to someone who has recovered the original, immortal, image of God that was “both male and female.” How was it to be recovered? The language of bodily regeneration that is employed in this mysterious saying probably derives from the ancient world of asceticism. Early Christian ascetics engaged in their severe practices as a way of re-creating themselves anew – thus, “eyes instead of an eye, and hand instead of a hand, a foot instead of a foot.” And so the process goes, bodily part by bodily part, until the whole self is remade in the image of God.<sup>35</sup>

Of course, Genesis was not really a speculative philosophical text. Without a lot of help, its anthropology is very straightforward. But the Middle Platonists had Plato, from whom they would develop more elaborate ideas about, among other things, the human being. One of these developments was the idea that a human being consists not of two parts (say, body and soul), but of three. Plutarch states the concept clearly:

Most people rightly hold a person to be composite but wrongly hold them to be composed of only two parts. The reason is that they suppose mind to be somehow part of soul, thus erring no less than those who suppose soul to be part of body, for in the same degree as soul is superior to body so is mind better and more divine than soul (*Mor* 943A).

Plutarch thought that a correct reading of Plato would yield not a bi-partite anthropology consisting of body and soul, but a tri-partite anthropology consisting of body, soul, *and mind*. Among the Middle Platonists it was this third element, the *mind*, which is the immortal part of the human being, the part that is like unto God, bearing the image of God. Philo of Alexandria thought this way as well. The whole person, he believed, consisted of body and soul, but the soul, he says, consists of both a rational and an irrational part.<sup>36</sup> The rational part he calls *mind*, like Plutarch, to distinguish it from the lesser, irrational soul, or *psyche*.<sup>37</sup> He also uses various synonyms for *mind*. The most common of them is *pneuma*, or “spirit.” His point of reference is again Genesis 2:7, where he notes that God breathes into the human one the divine spirit (*pneuma theion*), thus enlivening the human made of dust with the divine breath.<sup>38</sup> Philo thought that Genesis was here describing the process by which the divine image of God, the spirit, was breathed into the mortal human body, thus completing the creation of the human one as both mortal and immortal.

In Thomas one sees this tripartite anthropology as well. In a series of sayings Thomas speaks on the one hand of body and *soul*, and on the other of body and *spirit*. The difference is important and revealing. Thomas 112 reads as follows:

Jesus says: “Woe to the flesh that depends on the soul. Woe to the soul that depends on the flesh.”

Notice how flesh<sup>39</sup> and soul are juxtaposed here, but not placed in a hierarchy of value. In the first clause, it is the flesh that suffers because of the soul; in the second, it is the soul that suffers because of the flesh. The detriment of the body to the soul is easily grasped, but the Platonists also thought about the detriments of the soul to

the body: the soul occupied with unhealthy passions – lust, greed, jealousy – can lead to problems with the body.<sup>40</sup> Flesh and soul are here understood as different parts of the mortal human being struggling one against the other to the detriment of both. But the relationship of body and *spirit* is different. Notice the difference in the wording of this second saying:

Jesus says: “If the flesh came into being because of the spirit, it is a wonder. But if the spirit (came into being) because of the body, it is a wonder of wonders.” Yet I marvel at how this great wealth has taken up residence in this poverty.

Here body and *spirit* are not equal: the spirit is wealth; the body is poverty. Why, it asks, would God wish the spirit to take up residence in the body? In reflecting on Genesis 2:7, Philo pondered this question as well. His answer was two-fold: first, God likes to give gifts, and second, such a gift makes the human being more aware of virtue, and thus closer to God.<sup>41</sup> In Thomas the question remains paradox, “a wonder of wonders.”

What about God in the Gospel of Thomas? The gospel says much about the world, and much about the human being. But its statements about God are relatively few. This relative paucity lies in keeping with the Jewish wisdom tradition on the one hand, and Middle Platonism on the other – the two traditions from which the Thomas theology generally takes its bearings. In both of these theological traditions, God is seldom described, and anthropomorphic references to God are avoided as primitive and unsophisticated. God, for the most part, remains in the background. God does not speak, but communicates through sages and emissaries. When God is mentioned in the Gospel of Thomas, it is in terms we can readily recognize as Jewish. Thus, like many pious Jews of this period, those who created the

Thomas gospel generally avoided the actual word “God” as a pagan impiety – in the Coptic version it occurs just once (in Saying 100), and once more in the Greek fragments (Saying 30). When referring to the kingdom of God, for example, Thomas prefers the simple “kingdom” (thus, “the kingdom is like...”<sup>42</sup>), or occasionally the “kingdom of Heaven,”<sup>43</sup> or more commonly the “kingdom of the Father.”<sup>44</sup> God is the “Living Father” in Thomas, and those who follow God are “children of the living Father.”<sup>45</sup> The Father’s word (Thomas 79) and will (Thomas 99) can be known and obeyed. The Father offers solace to the persecuted and oppressed (Thomas 69). All of these views are firmly rooted in Jewish tradition.

The closest Thomas comes to a statement about God’s appearance and character is in Saying 83, which, after the work of the Berlin Working Group, reads as follows:

- (1) Jesus says: “The images are visible to a person, but the light within them is hidden in the image.
- (2) The light of the Father will reveal itself, but his image is hidden by his light.”

This saying is a study in the way Platonism and Jewish tradition could come together quite naturally. Light in Platonism is a fundamental feature of the divine realm. It represents the real, as opposed to the illusory. One need only remember the iconic Allegory of the Cave in Plato’s *Republic*: when the captive is freed from his chains to look about, he soon discovers that the shadows that were his only reality are in fact poor images of the illuminated world of light shining out beyond the cave’s entrance. Jewish readers of Plato found a nice concurrence between Plato’s notion of light as the reality standing behind all that is real, and the Genesis account of creation, where, before all else, God calls forth light (Gen 1:3).

This first light Philo calls “the invisible light perceptible only to the mind,” the “image of the divine Word.”<sup>46</sup> It is a projection of God’s very self. Elsewhere he declares that “God is light,” for as scripture says, “the Lord is my illumination and my saviour” (Ps 27:1 [26:1 LXX]).<sup>47</sup> In Jewish mysticism the vision of light that typically lies at the pinnacle of the beatific vision was understood to be the aura of light that surrounds God, God’s “glory” (*kavod* or *doxa*).

In saying 83 these concepts are in play. The first verse uses “images” in the conventional Platonic way, to refer to the material world in which mere copies, or *images* of the real world exist. These images obscure the divine light that dwells within each person: all you see is the external appearance. The divine light dwelling within remains hidden. But with God it is different: God’s light conceals God’s image. Now “image” is used with a different frame of reference: the *image of God*. To understand this half of the saying one must recall the stories of Moses’ encounter with God on Sinai. There we learn that because no one may look upon the face of God and live (Ex 33:20), Moses must be shielded from seeing God’s face. He is exposed, however, to God’s “glory,” the light that surrounds God. As a result his face is said to shine, then and whenever thereafter he would communicate with God (Ex 34:29–35). From this there developed the well-known tradition in Jewish mysticism that the beatific vision could not involve an actual face-to-face encounter with God. Rather, the light one encounters in the intense mystical experience is in fact the glory of God – God’s *kavod*, or *doxa* – that serves to conceal from view God’s actual image. This is the experience to which Thomas 83 refers: the image of God is concealed by his light.<sup>48</sup> One cannot actually see the image of God: the light emanating from God protects one from this.

This, of course, may imply that the experience of God in Thomas Christianity would have been conveyed at least in part

by mystical experience. Indeed, there are sayings in the Gospel of Thomas that may best be explained as commentary on mystical encounters with God. One is Saying 27:

- (1) “If you do not abstain from the (entire) world, you will not find the kingdom.
- (2) If you do not make the (entire) week into a Sabbath, you will not see the Father.”

In this saying, preparation for the central mystical experience of “seeing the Father” involves both asceticism and the strict observance of the Sabbath – both very common in the tradition of Jewish mysticism contemporaneous with the emergence of Christianity.<sup>49</sup> Another is the very difficult Saying 82:

- (1) Jesus says: “Whoever is near me is near the fire.
- (2) And whoever is far from me is far from the kingdom.”

Here, perhaps, is reflected the idea from Jewish mysticism that God’s glory may take on the appearance of fire, and that the one who gazes upon God’s glory will be consumed by fire.<sup>50</sup> These and other sayings in the Gospel of Thomas are enough to indicate that even though this gospel has little to say about God, the experience of God enjoyed by those who made use of it was rich indeed, and rooted in something like traditional Jewish mysticism.

### *Thomas and Early Christianity*

Where does Thomas fit into the overall landscape of early Christianity? As we have seen, the Gospel of Thomas represents a unique form of early Christian faith, but one that is not



completely isolated from other versions of Christianity current in the first century. In this way, Thomas contributes generally to our understanding of Christian origins as a diverse phenomenon, encompassing many different strands of religious thought current in the ancient world.

This view, however, has not gone undisputed in the history of Thomas scholarship. In the early years of the discussion, many took the position that the Gospel of Thomas belonged not to the first century, but to second century Christianity, and represented a late, corrupted form of Christian faith whose more original form was to be seen in the canonical gospels.<sup>51</sup> This view of Thomas was under girded by three interlocking assumptions, none of which seems warranted today. The first was that Thomas should be dated in the second century. The second was that Thomas was dependent on the synoptic gospels, and so should be seen as a late, secondarily derived form of Christian reflection. The third was that the Gnostic ideas in Thomas belong in the second century, where Gnosticism first emerged as an early Christian heresy.

We have already seen that Thomas should not necessarily be dated in the second century. Advocates for a second century date have sometimes appealed to Grenfell and Hunt, who speculated that if POxy 654, the earliest of the Greek fragments of Thomas, was created just after 200 C.E., the original of this text could have been composed no later than 140 C.E. This *terminus ad quem* has often been cited as their date for Thomas. But note that this was their estimate of the *latest* possible date, not the *earliest*. With the whole Gospel of Thomas now in front of us we are in a position to revise this view, as I have attempted to do above (see pp. 33–38), suggesting a series of reasons for positing an original composition in the last decades of the first century, but allowing for much growth and change over the long course of its history.

The second assumption, that Thomas was dependent on the synoptic gospels, received an enormous amount of attention in the early years of the Thomas debate – and still does today.<sup>52</sup> It is obviously a basic issue in locating Thomas within early Christianity. Proponents of the view that Thomas was dependent on the synoptic gospels have based their position on the several occasions where the Thomas version of a saying seems to reflect the editorial work of one or another of the synoptic evangelists. This could only mean that the author of Thomas had copied such sayings from the synoptic text itself.<sup>53</sup> There are indeed several places where this appears to be true.<sup>54</sup> But taken together, these instances do not suggest any consistent pattern of borrowing. And they are far outnumbered by the many sayings that show no knowledge at all of their synoptic counterparts, and in many cases appear to come from a stage in the tradition that is more primitive. In one instance (POxy 655, saying 36) Thomas seems to have preserved a sayings cluster in a form that is older than the form found in Q, and even lacks a scribal error that was present already in Q.<sup>55</sup> This, together with the fact that roughly half of Thomas's sayings have no parallels with the synoptic tradition at all, indicates that Thomas represents a stream of tradition that is basically autonomous and distinct from the synoptic tradition. As years passed, intertextual back and forth between the Thomas and synoptic traditions no doubt occurred, leaving its mark probably on both traditions. However, this is different from supposing that Thomas was generated out of the synoptic texts through wholesale borrowing of material. In my opinion, the evidence just does not support this view.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, there was the assumption that the Gnostic ideas we find in Thomas belong to the second century, where, it was believed, Gnosticism originated as a Christian heresy. This view is also outmoded today on several different levels. Few today would regard

Gnosticism as a specifically Christian heresy. This is due in large measure to the discovery at Nag Hammadi itself. Among the Nag Hammadi texts are several examples of non-Christian Gnosticism, especially of the Sethian school of thought, an early form of *Jewish* Gnosticism. One such text, Eugnostos the Blessed, has been dated by its introducer in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* to the first century B.C.E.<sup>57</sup> Whether this early dating for Eugnostos will ultimately prevail in the discussion (it is currently unchallenged) remains to be seen. However, it is clear that one cannot assume today, as many did a generation ago, that Gnostic ideas belong exclusively in the heretical Christian sects of the second century and later. But more than this, the very notion of Gnosticism as a distinct and well-defined religion is today coming into question.<sup>58</sup> Among Jews and Christians of the first and second centuries there arose a variety of interpretive strategies that employed the philosophical thinking of the day. Sorting through these various theological contributions with greater precision is one of the great tasks that lies before us in the study of Christian origins. The older view that saw everything in the canon of New Testament scripture as part of an early unified vision of nascent Christian orthodoxy, and everything outside as heretical and late will no longer do.

It now seems most likely that with the Gospel of Thomas we do indeed have a new text, whose traditions are for the most part not derivative of other, better-known gospels, and which was originally written at a time more or less contemporaneous with the canonical gospel texts. What will the new information gleaned from this text tell us about early Christianity? What more can be said about Thomas Christianity itself? And how will the Gospel of Thomas help us to understand better the texts and communities of early Christianity about which we already know much, but would like to know more? This work is only just now beginning,

but it is already challenging some old canons in New Testament scholarship.

For example, it was once thought that Pauline Christianity formed a clean break with groups influenced more by the words and deeds of Jesus. Thomas muddies the waters of this once clear situation. We have already seen how Thomas and Paul might agree in cultivating a kind of counter-cultural wisdom as a way of creating critical distance from a world that did not embrace Jesus and his followers. And when we encounter in Paul the idea that Christ is a second Adam able to restore the image of God that was lost when Adam fell into sin (1 Cor 15:42–49), we can now see this notion firmly rooted in a branch of the Jesus tradition associated with his sayings. Paul's embrace of the notion that in Christ there is no male and female (Gal 3:28) is also echoed Thomas. In Thomas, in fact, we can better see the Wisdom theological context in which that Pauline creedal formulation makes sense.<sup>59</sup> Even Paul's position on the non-circumcision of Gentile proselytes is shared by the Gospel of Thomas:

- (1) His disciples said to him: "Is circumcision beneficial, or not?"
- (2) He said to them: "If it were beneficial, their father would beget them circumcised from their mother. (3) But the true circumcision in the spirit has prevailed over everything."

*(Thom. 53)*

It is clear now that there are ideas running through both Thomas and Paul's letters that call for explanation and clarification, which will ultimately change the way we understand Paul's relationship to the rest of the Jesus movement.

The Gospel of Thomas may have a similar effect on Johannine studies. Scholars have generally taken the very

different content and theology of the Gospel of John as indicative of its relative autonomy with respect to the synoptic Jesus tradition. The synoptic gospels stand in one thought world, a world grounded in the words and deeds of Jesus, while John stands in another, more speculative thought world related to Gnosticism and Hellenistic Judaism. For this reason, John has generally been considered rather exotic and more distant from Jesus and Christian origins than the synoptic tradition. But Thomas disturbs this tranquil scene as well. Here is a gospel whose theology is quite similar to that which we find in John, and yet it presents this theology while making copious use of the sayings of Jesus, many of which are paralleled in the synoptic gospels. Thus, Thomas demonstrates the potential for the tradition of Jesus' sayings to develop in ways that were once quite unexpected. But once we have seen this potential in the Thomas tradition, it becomes easier to see signs of it in John, signs that might have been overlooked before. We have already seen, for example, echoes of Thomas in John 8:51: "Truly I say to you, whoever keeps my word will never taste death," or John 6:68, where Peter proclaims, "You [Jesus] have the words of eternal life." Such sayings seem out of place in John, for here Jesus very seldom utters a saying one might "keep." Rather, John's Jesus seems always to be talking about himself, not offering insight about life or how it ought to be lived. Such sayings must have originated in a literary and theological milieu much more akin to what we find in Thomas (see the Prologue and Saying 1). Was there perhaps an early, as yet undetected stage in the Johannine tradition when more focus was placed on sayings of Jesus? Might John have even known the Thomas tradition?<sup>60</sup> These are questions that we are only just now in a position to begin posing anew.

*The Gospel of Thomas and the Historical Jesus*

One of the reasons the Gospel of Thomas was such an exciting find was the fact that its sayings are attributed to *Jesus*. The first question on everyone's mind when the new gospel appeared was whether, and to what extent, it might give us new information about Jesus of Nazareth. Before this question could be answered responsibly, however, it was necessary first to understand the new gospel on its own terms. Like the other gospels, Thomas is not first and foremost a source for information about Jesus. It is an interpretation of Jesus. Once that interpretive voice is understood, it might then be possible to hear in it the remains of that earlier voice it aims to interpret. Now after fifty years, the state of Thomas research is such that this gospel can now be integrated into the discussion of the historical Jesus.

There are three ways in which Thomas has begun to make an impact on the quest for the historical Jesus: by providing new sayings to be considered as sayings of Jesus; by offering independent versions of sayings already known from the tradition, so that their history and development can now be better understood; and by adding another perspective from which to view the overall development of the Jesus tradition, and so better to understand its origins.

The first area is perhaps the least significant. From the several attempts to find new sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas the results have been meagre. Joachim Jeremias thought that *Thom.* 82 and 98 might be authentic sayings of Jesus.<sup>61</sup> Johannes Bauer added *Thom.* 81, 58, 51, and 52 to this list.<sup>62</sup> R. McL. Wilson considered *Thom.* 39, 102, and 47 as possible candidates.<sup>63</sup> The Jesus Seminar voted no new sayings in Thomas into the "Red" category (=authentic), but did consider *Thom.* 97, the Parable of

the Broken Jar, “Pink” (=probably authentic).<sup>64</sup> If one had thought that Thomas would add many new sayings to the corpus of things Jesus said, these results are disappointing. But that does not mean that the Gospel of Thomas has not played an important role in the latest phase of the Jesus debate.

Much more important has been the way in which the Gospel of Thomas has contributed to a better understanding of the tradition history of those sayings for which there are versions in both Thomas and the synoptic gospels. Where Thomas is truly an independent source for these sayings, it can give us critical leverage for seeing how they developed in the course of their transmission in various settings of the early church. By comparing two independent versions of a single saying, one can easily identify those shared aspects as belonging to an early, common version of it – perhaps even the original – while those elements that are unique to one version or the other should more likely be seen as later and not original. Sometimes this procedure has produced some rather striking results. For example, many years ago the parables scholar C. H. Dodd proposed an early version of Mark’s Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1–11) that lacked the allegorical features that link the parable so well to Mark’s story of Jesus. But without an independent version of the parable against which to compare it, Dodd’s reconstruction remained pure speculation. With the discovery of Thomas, however, Dodd’s skills as a form critic were confirmed: here was a version of the parable (*Thom.* 65) in exactly the form Dodd said it should be.<sup>65</sup>

It is not always the case that Thomas offers a more original version of a saying or parable. The Thomas tradition also comes with its interpretive tendencies against which the synoptic version must serve as a control. The point is that, with the Gospel of Thomas, we now have a second source to be used together with the

synoptic tradition to arrive at a more original version of the sayings they hold in common.<sup>66</sup> This means, however, that for the first time a non-canonical source has been brought in to address a question that should have profound implications for Christian theology: what did Jesus actually say? Not everyone is comfortable with allowing a text considered by many to be heretical into that exclusive club. But historical honesty and integrity of method has made it difficult to keep the Gospel of Thomas out of the discussion, and unmasked some lingering prejudice in an area of research that strives for objectivity.

The Gospel of Thomas has helped us to understand better the development of certain individual sayings, but what about the tradition as a whole? When one strings together all of these smaller findings, are there any patterns that emerge? This is the third way in which Thomas has come to affect the recent Jesus debate. When one compares the sayings of Jesus in Thomas with their synoptic counterparts, two things stand out as distinctive of the synoptic side of the tradition: 1) a concern with Jesus' suffering and death; and 2) the assumption of an apocalyptic world view. The second of these in particular has proven to be quite important in the most recent phase of research into the historical Jesus. For almost a century, most scholars have held the view that Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet, who believed that the world as he knew it was about to come to an end. This view, of course, comes from the synoptic gospels, in which Jesus appears as just such a figure. That he is not such an apocalyptic figure in the Gospel of John was chalked up to John's eccentricity and distance from the more original synoptic tradition. Then the Gospel of Thomas appeared, with its dozens of parallels to the synoptic gospels, but without their characteristic apocalyptic slant. In addition to showing the potential of the Jesus tradition to move in ways not previously anticipated, this absence



of apocalyptic slant in Thomas raised the question of whether Jesus himself may not have shared this apocalyptic view of the world after all. Perhaps it was just this shift away from apocalypticism that separated Jesus from John the Baptist. Could it be that Jesus was not an apocalyptic prophet as so many have imagined him since Albert Schweitzer presented him thus almost a century ago?<sup>67</sup> These new discussions take in more than just the Gospel of Thomas, but Thomas has played a significant role in calling into question the synoptic view of Jesus as necessarily historical, and opened up new possibilities for seeing him in different ways.

After 50 years the study of the Gospel of Thomas has made great strides,<sup>68</sup> but there is still much that we do not understand about Thomas and Thomas Christianity. And there is still much to be said about the full significance of Thomas for our understanding of Christian origins, and even Jesus himself. But as we publish this volume it seems that interest in this fascinating text continues to grow, especially among younger scholars. It is hoped that presenting the work of the Berlin Working Group for Coptic Gnostic Studies in this format will serve to encourage and advance this research, and thus contribute to the coming of age of this ancient gospel.

# The Story of the Nag Hammadi Library<sup>1</sup>

James M. Robinson

I propose to discuss here the significance of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices 50 years ago, in terms of what the Nag Hammadi Codices have meant for the discipline of New Testament scholarship. This significance is not limited to such specific issues as Gnosticism and the New Testament. My focus here is rather in terms of the sociology of knowledge: how has this important manuscript discovery, and the way it was handled over the past half-century, affected the shaping of Biblical Studies as a discipline?

## *The Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library*

The Nag Hammadi Codices were discovered toward the end of 1945, but how this date came to be established is something of a saga in its own right, and so can be narrated in some detail just to give a feel for the region, the participants, and how the discovery actually took place.

A young French graduate student and adventurer, Jean Doresse, originally the only source of information on the discovery, had dated it variously and without explanation to the beginning of 1946,<sup>2</sup> then 1946 generally,<sup>3</sup> then 1945,<sup>4</sup> then 1947<sup>5</sup>, or even 1948.<sup>6</sup> Hence I sought to find more precise information about the time, place, participants, and specifics of the discovery.

The most obvious place to begin had apparently never been consulted – the Acquisitions Registry of the Coptic Museum in Cairo. Here the name of the person who sold the first codex, Codex III, to the Coptic Museum on October 4, 1946 for E£ 250 is listed by name: Rāghib Andarāwus “al-Qiss” Abd al-Sayyid. I tracked him down in retirement in September 1975 in the town of Qinaā in Upper Egypt, and he gave me information making it possible to unravel the whole story, with the help of the discoverer himself, Muḥammad Ālī al-Sammān in the hamlet al-Qaṣr across the Nile from Nag Hammadi.

Muḥammad Ālīa rustic peasant, was not able to put a calendar date to the discovery so many years after the fact, but it was associated in his mind with two things much more important to him at the time: when the local sugarcane harvest was over and the land lay fallow during the brief winter, he regularly dug the soft earth at the foot of the cliff that served as fertilizer for the fields. He had been digging fertilizer, he recalled, just a few weeks before the Coptic Christmas, which is January 6, when he made the discovery. This suggests the discovery was in a December.

With regard to the year, he again could only speak of it in terms more important to him at the time: the murder of his father in a blood feud. Muḥammad Ālī’s memory of that tragedy was as follows: one night his father, a night watchman for valuable irrigation machinery that had been imported from Germany, had killed a marauder from the nearby village Ḥamra Dūm – a village that had an ongoing blood feud with Muḥammad Ālī’s own village al-Qaṣr. The next day that murder was avenged when Muḥammad Ālī’s father was himself found shot through the head, lying where only twenty-four hours earlier he had killed the man from Ḥamra Dūm. Muḥammad Ālī’s mother, beside herself, told her seven sons to keep their mattocks sharp so as to be ready when an occasion for revenge presented itself.

Muḥammad Ālī regretted that he had had to wait some half a year before the opportunity came to avenge his father's death, by murdering the man who did it. His memory of revenge was as follows: someone ran to his house to tell the family that the murderer, Aḥmad Īsmā' īl, was asleep in the heat of the day on a dirt road nearby, with a jug of sugarcane molasses, the local product, by his side. The sons grabbed their mattocks, fell on the hapless person before he could flee, hacked him up, cut open his heart and, dividing it among them, ate it raw – the ultimate act of blood vengeance.

However, this new victim was from Ḥamra Dūm, the opposing village in a long-standing blood feud with al-Qaṣr. Since Ḥamra Dūm lay at the foot of the cliff on whose talus the discovery had been made, it claimed ownership over that area. Hence, Muḥammad Ālī's act of vengeance meant that he no longer dared return to the area of the discovery, which had taken place a month before he avenged his father's death. Therefore, if the date of the father's death could be established, the date of the discovery itself, about half a year later, could be calculated.

The Nag Hammadi Real Estate Taxation Office maintains a Registry of Deaths. A Copt I knew worked there, and was able to locate the entry, giving the cause of death as “unknown” and the date as May 7 1945. If the vengeance was some half a year later, about a month after the discovery, the discovery itself had to have been in November or December 1945.

The story of the blood feud had come out during Muḥammad Ālī's explanation as to why he would not accompany me to the cliff to show me the site of the discovery. So I had to go to Hamra Dūm myself, find the son of Aḥmad Īsmā' īl, the man Muḥammad Ālī had butchered, and get his assurance that, since he had long since shot up a funeral *cortège* of Muḥammad Ālī's family, wounding Muḥammad Ālī and killing a number of his clan, he considered

the score settled. Hence, he would not feel honour-bound to attack Muḥammad Ālī if he returned to the foot of the cliff. I took this good news back to Muḥammad Ālī, who opened his shirt, showed me the scar on his chest, and bragged that he had been shot but not killed, yet emphasized that if he ever laid eyes on Aḥmad Īsmā' īl again, he would kill him on the spot. As a result of this display of a braggadocio's fearlessness, he was persuaded to go to the cliff, camouflaged in my clothes, in a government jeep, with me sitting on the "bullets" side facing the village and him on the safer cliff side, at dusk in Ramadan, when all Muslims are at home eating their fill after fasting throughout the daylight hours.

Of course, this was only the beginning of the story of the discovery. The codices now had to move from the foot of the cliff into the hands of the Egyptian authorities. But this was no simple matter. It happened as follows:<sup>7</sup> Muḥammad Ālī had at first feared to open the jar (sealed with a bowl attached with bitumin in the mouth of the jar), lest it contain a jinn. But then it occurred to him that it might contain gold. This gave him courage enough to break it with his mattock. Out flew, up into the air, what he thought might be an airy golden jinn, but I suspect was only papyrus fragments. He was very dissatisfied to find only worthless old books in the jar.

He tore some up to divide them among the other camel drivers who were present, which explains some of the damage and loss that does not fit the pattern of what one would expect from the gradual deterioration of the centuries. Since the other camel drivers, no doubt out of fear of Muḥammad Ālī, declined his insincere offer to share, he stacked it all back up together, unrolled the turban from around his head, put the codices in it, and slung it over his shoulder. He unhobbled his camel, drove back home, and dumped the junk in the enclosed courtyard of his house where the animals and their

fodder were kept. His mother confirmed to me that she had, in fact, burnt some along with straw as kindling in the outdoor clay oven.

The family first tried to sell the books for an Egyptian Pound or so, but no one offered to buy them. Some were bartered for cigarettes or oranges. A Copt told Muḥammad Ālī that they were books of the church, which probably meant only that the Copt recognized the Coptic alphabet enough to know they were not written in Arabic. Since the police were repeatedly searching Muḥammad Ālī's home for incriminating evidence of the blood-vengeance murder, he deposited one book – Codex III – with a Coptic priest, knowing that his house would not be searched as the British had made it clear to the Muslim police that they were not to give the Copts too hard a time, for fear of inciting incidents between Copts and Muslims.

The priest gave this codex to his brother-in-law, a circuit-riding teacher of History and English in the parochial Coptic schools (the only schools in the region prior to President Nasser), who stayed overnight at the priest's home once a week, on the day he taught at al-Qaṣr. This parochial school teacher was Rāghib Andarāwus "al-Qiss" Ābd al-Sayyid. You may recall that it was his name that I had originally found at the Coptic Museum in Cairo, listed there as the seller of Codex III! At the end of the summer of 1946, he had taken Codex III to Cairo to sell. But when he showed it to an educated Copt, Georgy "Bei" Sobhy, to learn its value, he was – much to his horror – turned in to the authorities. He felt lucky to be permitted to finally sell his book to the Coptic Museum (for E£ 300, from which a "gift" to the Museum of E£ 50 was deducted) and return home without being put in prison.

One of the leading Cairo antiquities dealers at the time, the Cypriote Phocion J. Tano(s), was alerted by peasants from al-Qaṣr working at Giza near Cairo that there had been a manuscript

discovery near their home town. He alerted a provincial dealer of Qīnā, with whom he had ongoing business dealings, Zakī Bastā, to investigate, who in turn alerted his agent in al-Qaṣr, Bahj̄j Ālī, who was notorious as a one-eyed outlaw there. Bahj̄j Ālī did in fact get two codices for a pittance and, accompanied by Zakī Bastā, took them to Cairo to sell.

Prof. Jacques Schwartz of the University of Strasbourg has narrated how he, as a graduate student at the Institut français d'archéologique orientale in Cairo, had received a phone call from the M.A. Mansour antique shop at Shepherds Hotel to come and see some manuscripts, whose description makes it possible to identify them as Codices II and VII. His report about his visit agrees with that of Zakī Bastā, who observed from the back of the shop the two "foreigners" (Schwartz, accompanied by Charles Kuentz, Director of the Institut), who came to look at the books but did not buy. Hence Zakī Bastā and Bahj̄j Ālī sold them to Tano.

On returning to al-Qaṣr. Bahj̄j Ālī promptly acquired all that was left in the possession of Muḥammad Ālī's family and sold them in Cairo to Tano. But this time he went alone, since, as he explained, he now knew the way – that is to say, he left out Zakī Bastā, who commented bitterly that Bahj̄j Ālī did not want divide the profit this time. Instead, Bahj̄j Ālī, with the undivided profits from the sale, was able to buy a farm, a flagrant show of wealth for which Muḥammad Ālī never forgave him.

Most of the codices were thus acquired ultimately by Tano, who was pressured into entrusting them for safe-keeping to the governmental Department of Antiquities. However, the shift from King Farouk to President Nasser meant that they were ultimately nationalized and deposited in the Coptic Museum. The protracted, but ultimately unsuccessful, legal proceedings that Tano undertook to

reclaim them made the bulk of the codices inaccessible throughout the first half of the 1950s.

### *The Monopolizing of the Nag Hammadi Codices*

The first plans to publish materials from the Nag Hammadi Codices were undertaken by French scholars. It so happened that the Director of the Coptic Museum, Togo Mina, had been a classmate of Jean and Marianne Doresse in Paris, and had in fact proposed (unsuccessfully) to Marianne before she married Jean. He welcomed them to the Coptic Museum on their first visit to Cairo in the fall of 1947, proudly showed them Codex III, and offered to co-publish it with Doresse (though Mina had also shown it on December 5, 1946 to François Daumas, and offered to co-publish it with him). Mina also took Doresse to an antique shop in Cairo owned by Albert Eid to see some 40 leaves of a similar codex – Codex I – which was later smuggled out of Egypt and taken as far as Ann Arbor, Michigan, in an effort to sell it. Finally, it was bought by the Jung Institute in Zürich for \$8,000 contributed by an American expatriate, George H. (Tony) Page, and hence is known as the Jung Codex.<sup>8</sup>

When the French-educated Director of the Coptic Museum, Togo Mina, died prematurely in 1949, he was succeeded as Director of the Coptic Museum by the German-educated Pahor Labib. Then the Egyptian revolution in 1952 led to the expulsion of the French Director of the *Services des Antiquités*, Abbé Etienne Drioton, under whom Mina had studied in Paris. Finally, the Suez Crisis of 1956 resulted in a complete break in diplomatic relations between France and Egypt. All the French had left to show for their efforts was an International Committee dominated by Doresse's professor Henri-Charles Puech (who had by now cut Doresse himself out of the Committee, no doubt as academically



unqualified and no longer needed). The Committee had been convened in Cairo just before the Suez crisis, but achieved no more than to award publication rights for *The Gospel of Thomas* to itself. Official minutes of that meeting were never made available to the Committee members, and hence no publication rights were ever actually documented. The Committee was never reconvened.

When Coptologists from former East Germany, not compromised in the Suez Crisis, began to visit Cairo in 1958, they were welcomed by the new Director of the Coptic Museum, Pahor Labib, who awarded them choice publication rights. They then defected to West Germany! Martin Krause and Pahor Labib published the three copies of the *Apocryphon of John* in 1963,<sup>9</sup> while Alexander Böhlig and Labib published *On the Origin of the World* in 1962<sup>10</sup> and the four *Apocalypses* of Codex V in 1963.<sup>11</sup> Their colleagues still in East Germany, Hans-Martin Schenke and Peter Nagel, and of course all other Coptologists from other countries, including the original French team, were cut out of the publication rights.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, the French counter-attacked: in 1961, they enlisted Paris-based UNESCO to internationalize the project. At the suggestion of its scholarly advisors, who were of course French, UNESCO officials proposed to photograph all the material, bring it to Paris (which, after all, was where UNESCO was located), and convene an International Committee in 1962 to publish it by the end of 1964. But it soon became clear that the Coptic Museum, with Krause's help, had already assigned the unpublished plumbs to Krause and Böhlig. A preliminary committee consisting of Pahor Labib, (President), Martin Krause, and Michel Malinine, met in Cairo and submitted on a report based on Krause's inventory on November 4, 1961, proposing that UNESCO be authorized to assign only twenty-three of the forty-eight tractates, on the grounds

that the others had already been assigned, were in the press, or had already appeared.

Those listed as already published were I,3<sup>13</sup> (published in 1956); II,1 III,1, IV,1 (actually published, by Krause and Labib, only in 1963); II,2 (published in 1959); II,5 (actually published by Böhlig and Labib, in 1962); and II, 6–7 (actually published by Krause and Labib, in 1972). Two unedited items were already in the public domain by way of a very modest volume of facsimiles published by Pahor Labib in 1956,<sup>14</sup> and they were listed as assigned to the scholarly world outside of West Germany: II,3 to J.Martin Plumley of England, and II,4 to the American Kendrick Grobel (who was apparently never informed of his assignment).

After consultation with Puech and Antoine Guillaumont, the relevant UNESCO official queried: “This seems to me very serious; if a large part of the treatises, and perhaps the richest, are already in the process of publication, is the creation of an International Committee of Publication really justified?” In response to UNESCO’s follow-up request for an informed assessment, Guillaumont wrote on December 4, 1961:

I admit that reading this report causes me some surprise and reveals to me a situation very different from what was presupposed in our previous correspondence relative to the Committee envisaged for the publication of the texts of Nag Hammadi...

I note, furthermore, that the treatises presented as already published or to be published by persons already designated are undoubtedly those that have the most interest and that give to the Nag Hammadi discovery its exceptional importance. Only those are left to be distributed by the Committee that offer the least interest and those whose publication, in view of their poor state or their fragmentary condition, will be especially thankless.

Upon the invitation addressed to me last July 4 by the Director General of UNESCO, I agreed quite gladly to become part of a Committee whose stated objective was the publication of the whole of the Nag Hammadi texts; it was, moreover, stated that this Committee would have for its task, at its first meeting, to work out the plan of the publication and to divide the work among the competent specialists. Now it seems to me evident that, in the conditions defined by the report, the Committee is from now on dispossessed of this essential antecedent task, for the major and most important part of the Nag Hammadi texts. If its role must be limited to covering with its authority a work organized without it and accomplished outside of its effective control, I for my part think that it no longer has any *raison d'être*.

UNESCO decided to limit itself to a facsimile edition, whose photography it was willing to fund. The French, now that the West Germans had the remaining plums, lost interest. After all, the French had gotten control of the initial plum they had detected while France still held the monopoly, the Gospel of Thomas (II,2), and also had control of the Jung Codex (Codex I) in Zürich. Thus, by the mid-1960s, the Nag Hammadi Codices had fallen into the hands of two scholarly cartels, one French and one West German, who monopolized all access to, and work on, the important new texts.

### *The Breaking of the Monopoly on the Nag Hammadi Codices*

During a sabbatical year as Annual Professor at the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem in 1965–66, I went to Cairo to find out the status of the Nag Hammadi Codices, first in March 1966, and again in April, on the way to the Congress on The

Origins of Gnosticism at Messina, Sicily. The meagre information I was able to obtain in Cairo made me an instant authority on such matters at the Congress! So I was appointed to a committee to compose a telegram to UNESCO, endorsed by the Congress, urging UNESCO to complete the photography, which by then was languishing. On passing through Paris shortly thereafter, I inquired if the telegram had been received and acted upon. I was told that the last 314 photographs had indeed arrived in Paris on June 6, 1966, and was assured that publication would be completed by the end of 1968. I was of course pleased with such good news, but in more cynical retrospect realize that the publication timetable was at best wishful thinking, if not just an effective way to get me out of the office.

The German Archaeological Institute in Cairo had on my April trip given me access to Nag Hammadi photographs on file there, and I had worked twenty-four hours a day for a couple of days copying them. Then in June, I passed through Münster, Germany, to give a guest lecture at the University. In the process, I was lent some transcriptions by Martin Krause, which I stayed up all night copying by hand the night before my German lecture. On my return home, I obtained a modest NEH grant for three years, 1967–70, that made it possible to organize a small team to translate these few unpublished tractates, to which I had by such unorthodox means obtained access. We stamped each with a note to the effect that they should not be published, since we had no publication rights to offer. But we did circulate them widely in mimeographed form.

During this three-year grant period, I wrote repeatedly to UNESCO, letters that all went unanswered. The official in charge of the Nag Hammadi matter, N. Bammate, was a member of a gourmet dining club in Paris, but otherwise was quite inactive.

When I complained to his superior, I was told that he did not answer letters, since he came from an oral culture (Afghanistan).

I returned to Paris in January, 1968, to ask Bammate personally where things stood; for example, whether the fragments had been identified and placed on the leaves before photography, a prerequisite to using the UNESCO photographs for a facsimile edition that would put the material into the public domain available to all. Rather than bother with shuffling through the photographs to seek to answer my question, he said I could study them myself and write a report to him as to the status of the fragments. He even let me use a UNESCO office empty over the weekend for this purpose. He laid out for me about half of the glossy prints, and the negatives of the other half – no doubt so I could not abscond with a complete file.

On Saturday morning, I found a photography shop in a Paris suburb willing to work straight through the weekend, and gave them some 600 negatives to make glossy-print enlargements in time for me to pick them and the negatives up by Sunday evening. Meanwhile, in the UNESCO office, I laid the glossy prints one by one on the floor under my tripod and clicked away with my simple tourist's camera. On Monday morning I returned to Bammate the negatives and prints that he had lent me.

I also flew to Copenhagen and obtained from Søren Giversen microfilms he had earlier made in Cairo of Codices II, III and IX, but which he had not made available to others, on the grounds that Labib did not want the French to get them.

On returning to Claremont, I wrote the desired report and sent it to UNESCO. I now had photographs of all the Nag Hammadi Codices.

We enlarged our American Nag Hammadi Project membership, ultimately to include some 38 persons. We assigned all the Nag Hammadi tractates, and had produced draft transcriptions and

translations of everything by 1970. Then we distributed widely our transcriptions and translations to the Nag Hammadi scholars who had been left out in the cold. This is what in effect broke the monopoly.

At the meeting of the Society for New Testament Studies in 1969 in England, I co-chaired a Nag Hammadi Seminar with R. McLaughlin Wilson, to which I invited Henry Chadwick of Oxford, who had edited the Greek *Sentences of Sextus*, to discuss the Coptic translation in Codex XII that Frederik Wisse had just identified, and Böhlig of Tübingen to analyze the *Paraphrase of Shem* in Codex VII, both on the basis of the transcriptions and translations we had sent them.

We arranged a lecture tour for Böhlig in America, so that he could work with our translators when lecturing on their campuses, and in turn gain access to our material. Böhlig made it possible for Wisse to go to Tübingen and co-edit with him *The Gospel of the Egyptians*, for which Böhlig had held the official assignment since 1963. This gave us for the first time some limited publication rights. Such mutually supportive collaboration characterized our procedures from the beginning.

I sent our transcriptions and translations to Kurt Rudolph of Leipzig, East Germany. His report about their contents, which he somewhat naively published in 1969,<sup>15</sup> motivated the head of the French monopoly, Henri-Charles Puech of the Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes and the Collège de France, to make a formal protest to UNESCO for having given me access to its photographs. Fortunately UNESCO told him that it was their responsibility to disseminate the cultures of its member states, not to restrict access. So they did not restrict my activity.

During the school year 1970–71, I lived in Paris but commuted once a week to Strasbourg as a Fulbright Professor at the University of Strasbourg. Each week, I gave a Nag Hammadi colleague,

Jacques Ménard, our transcription and translation of a tractate, and the next week discussed it privately with him, while passing on to him another tractate for discussion the following week.

By such means we saw to it that all interested scholars got access to the material. But we still lacked publication rights.

### *The Publishing of All the Nag Hammadi Codices*

By 1970, only about a third of the discovery had been published. Only a fifth was available in English translation, no doubt because there had been no English monopoly. The history of a Nag Hammadi scholarship fully open to the whole academic community really began only in 1970.

During my sabbatical year 1970–71 in Paris, I worked in an office lent to me at UNESCO. At my urging, an “International Committee for the Nag Hammadi Codices” was not only nominated by UNESCO and appointed by the Arab Republic of Egypt, but actually convened in Cairo in December 1970.

Since I had long before arranged with Brill to publish the facsimile edition, Brill had made a plane reservation for their Dutch photographer to fly to Cairo and photograph the material as we restored it, if I could get the Committee to accept Brill (rather than some Egyptian firm) as publisher. Amid the pomp and ceremony of the opening day of the Cairo meeting I did arrange to get that much of the agenda acted on and a telegram off to Brill. This timing was crucial, for Brill’s plane reservation was for the next day and, due to the Christmas tourism, there were no plane seats left on later flights.

I proposed that a Technical Sub-Committee stay in Cairo after the formal meeting ended to reassemble the fragmentary leaves, so that a facsimile edition would be possible. I nominated for membership in the Technical Sub-Committee those who had long

since had access to the material, and hence had some experience in working at least with photographs: the German delegate Martin Krause, the Swiss delegate Rodolphe Kasser, the Danish delegate Søren Giversen and myself, the American delegate and Permanent Secretary of the UNESCO Committee.

We worked some ten days, and again a fortnight in January, using as our point of departure the mimeographed transcriptions and translations the American team had prepared. Not only each day's results of reassembled leaves, but in fact all the Nag Hammadi materials, were photographed by the Brill photographer, so that complete photographic files came to Leiden and Claremont in 1971. But the job of placing fragments and establishing the sequence of leaves in each codex was far from complete. We returned to Cairo once a year for a week or two as long as UNESCO would pay for the trips, but very many fragments still remained unplaced. I then took two of my students, Charles W. Hedrick and Stephen L. Emmel, for a semester to Cairo in 1974–75, and then left Emmel there for two more years to carry through the last fragment placements until the conservation project was really completed. The Institute for Antiquity and Christianity paid Emmel \$100 per month for living expenses in Cairo during that period.

*The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* began publication in the Spring of 1972 with the appearance of *Codex VI*, less than a year and a half after we first got access to the papyri themselves in Cairo. The publication of the last of the thirteen codices, in two volumes of the *Facsimile Edition* containing *Codex I* and *Codices IX and X*, took place in 1977, in time to be announced in December in a plenary address at the joint Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature (AAR/SBL) in San Francisco.



To meet that deadline, we had an all-too-tight schedule: the last fragment had been placed by Emmel in Cairo on September 2. This placement got the stamp of approval from our volume editor, Birger A. Pearson, for the critical edition of the relevant codex on September 30. Our placement was then phoned through to Frederik Wisse (whom we had, with Böhlig's help, stationed in Tübingen to work closely with the facsimile edition's printing firm in Stuttgart). He added a photo of the new fragment into the photograph of the correct leaf, which was then forwarded to Leiden in time to be bound and hand-carried to the AAR/SBL convention in December by the Director of Brill, W.C. Wieder, Jr. This meant that, eight years after getting access to the originals in Cairo, all thirteen codices had been put into the public domain. Hence we simultaneously published in December 1977 *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*,<sup>16</sup> our already-prepared English translation. Since then, it has appeared in three editions and sold over 100,000 copies.

Meanwhile our fourteen-volume critical edition, with introductions to each tractate, followed by transcripts, translations, notes and indices, had already begun to appear in 1975 with *The Gospel of the Egyptians* by Alexander Böhlig and Frederik Wisse.<sup>17</sup> The last two volumes, *The Apocryphon of John* by Frederik Wisse and Michael Waldstein,<sup>18</sup> and *Codex VII*, edited by Birger A. Pearson,<sup>19</sup> appeared 1995.

Our translation team consisted in many cases of the same Americans who went with me to Cairo year after year to place fragments for the facsimile edition and who at the same time were preparing our critical edition. They continue to be prominent in the Nag Hammadi Section of SBL created at about that time, and still continuing (now called Nag Hammadi and Gnosticism), currently chaired by John D. Turner. Two have become Project Directors at the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Birger

A. Pearson and Marvin W. Meyer, directing projects that grew out of our Nag Hammadi experience. Several are members of the recently reorganized Brill monograph series, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, whose original Editorial Board had only a small minority of Americans (Hans Jonas, George MacRae, Frederik Wisse, and myself), but whose reorganized board has now a majority (Harold W. Attridge, Ron Cameron, Stephen L. Emmel, Charles W. Hedrick, Howard M. Jackson, Douglas M. Parrott, Birger A. Pearson and myself). This team has thus matured to give American scholarship an international prominence in Coptology and Gnosticism it never had before.

The copies of our original draft transcriptions and translations given to Jacques Ménard in Strasbourg in 1970–71 became his motivation for organizing at the Université de Laval in Quebec, Canada, the French-Canadian critical edition with commentary, directed by Paul-Hubert Poirier, *La bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi*. It began publication in 1977, at Peeters in Leuven, and promises to complete its many-volumed edition before the end of the decade.

The *Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, led by Hans-Martin Schenke, had obtained on loan the transcriptions and translations I had given to Kurt Rudolph, photographed them, and used this as the source material for their own translation activity. For, as early as 1958, they had already begun publishing in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*<sup>20</sup> translations of the few tractates that were already available in the meagre volume of facsimiles Pahor Labib had published in Egypt in 1956. With all the material now in hand, their tempo escalated dramatically, and translations were followed by critical editions with commentaries, as dissertations were published. This Berlin group, though now somewhat scattered among the three centres, from Claremont to Quebec and Berlin, is

currently working on a complete and definitive German translation to appear in the series *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte*, as volumes 2 and 3 of the sub-series *Koptisch-agnostische Schriften*.

It is of some cultural-political significance, in terms of the sociology of knowledge, that a manuscript discovery originally monopolized by Western Europe, namely France and West Germany, with Denmark, The Netherlands and Switzerland playing supporting roles, is no longer dominated by Western Europe. Instead, the outsiders, rather than competing among themselves, have banded together to produce the comprehensive and definitive editions in English, not in England but in America, in French, not in France but in Canada, and in German, not in what was West Germany but in what was East Germany. What used to be considered in this area of research the outer fringes of the Western world have thus joined together to become a united cooperative undertaking. The three teams, representing the three scholarly language areas, have tended to merge into what has become the main strength of Nag Hammadi research in the world today.

### *The New Ethos for Handling Manuscript Discoveries*

The publication of the complete *Facsimile Edition*, just eight years after first getting access to the papyri themselves, has set an obvious standard for avoiding or overcoming monopolies in other manuscript discoveries. After all, we – though outsiders to the field – had shown that, where there is a will, there is a way. The impossibilities ticked off by the insiders usually turned out to be excuses to justify their own self-interest, excuses that could readily be overcome if one really wanted to.

For example, the last bit of the Nag Hammadi monopoly had been the Jung Codex, Codex I, since it was not in Cairo, where we had achieved open access, but in a bank vault in Zürich belonging to the heirs of Carl Gustaf Jung. The heirs were the owners, but had agreed to return the codex to Cairo when the team of editors no longer needed it for their transcription. The spokesman for the editors, Rodolphe Kasser, was on our Technical Sub-Committee, and would still have unlimited access to it in Cairo, had it been returned. But then so could the rest of us! So he maintained that the heirs were not willing to return it because they knew it was worth a lot of money. But then the spokesman for the heirs told me the Jung family was ready to return it whenever the editors said they no longer needed it in Zürich. He even agreed to write to the editors to inquire if he could return it. Thereupon he informed me that all who had responded (a postal strike had prevented the French from responding) had agreed to return it, except ... Rodolphe Kasser! Only when Kasser had sent the last volume of their edition to the publisher and thus insured that it would be the *editio princeps* did he agree to the return of the codex to Egypt.<sup>21</sup>

The most obvious comparison to the Nag Hammadi publication experience has been the abysmal publication record of the Dead Sea Scrolls, since both discoveries took place at about the same time, and hence have all along been compared in various regards.

At the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (that year in Kansas City, just a week after *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls* that I co-edited<sup>22</sup> had appeared), SBL President Helmut Koester convened a specially called meeting of the society at 9 PM on the last evening, Nov. 25. The Chair of the Research and Publications Committee read a resolution that had just been officially adopted by SBL:<sup>23</sup>

1. *Recommendation to those who own or control ancient written materials*: Those who own or control ancient written materials should allow all scholars to have access to them. If the condition of the written materials requires that access to them be restricted, arrangements should be made for a facsimile reproduction that will be accessible to all scholars. Although the owners or those in control may choose to authorize one scholar or preferably a team of scholars to prepare an official edition of any given ancient written materials, such authorization should neither preclude access to the written materials by other scholars nor hinder other scholars from publishing their own studies, translations, or editions of the written materials.

2. *Obligations entailed by specially authorized editions*: Scholars who are given special authorization to work on official editions of ancient written materials should cooperate with the owners or those in control of the written materials to ensure publication of the edition in an expeditious manner, and they should facilitate access to the written materials by all scholars. If the owners or those in control grant to specially authorized editors any privileges that are unavailable to other scholars, these privileges should by no means include exclusive access to the written materials or facsimile reproductions of them. Furthermore, the owners or those in control should set a reasonable deadline for completion of the envisioned edition (not more than five years after the special authorization is granted).

When the resolution had been read, Emanuel Tov, then head of the Dead Sea Scrolls project, himself arose and announced that all restrictions on free access to the Dead Sea Scrolls had been officially lifted.<sup>24</sup> You might as well unlock the barn, once the horse is stolen.

I hope and trust, and in fact am convinced, that we have all learned a lesson from this sad tale, for which we all bear some collective responsibility, and that in the case of future important manuscript discoveries a much more enlightened policy will be followed.<sup>25</sup> The Nag Hammadi experience deserves some credit for provided positive incentives to such a better future, in helping to change the ethos for handling important new manuscript discoveries.<sup>26</sup>

### *The Impact of the Nag Hammadi Discovery on the Shape of New Testament Scholarship*

Here it is not my purpose to itemize a series of specific details where the Nag Hammadi texts have influenced the understanding of New Testament texts.<sup>27</sup> Rather, my intent is to maintain the focus on the shape of the discipline of biblical scholarship itself as a result of the Nag Hammadi discovery.

The forty-eight Nag Hammadi tractates would have commended themselves to biblical scholarship much more readily if they had been discovered in Palestine or Syria, where many of them were composed, rather than in Upper Egypt, where none of them was composed, and if they had survived not only in late Fourth Century copies of Coptic translations, but also in the original Greek in which the authors wrote in the first three centuries of the Common Era. Hence they caught us academically unprepared. Coptic was at that time only one of the more esoteric dimensions of textual criticism, and had been safely ignored by the rest of us. It can no longer safely be ignored.

Furthermore, our traditional prejudices about Gnosticism had dampened the interest of many. But some of the Nag Hammadi tractates are not Gnostic at all! For example, *The*

*Teachings of Silvanus* (VII,4) is Jewish wisdom literature (somewhat Christianized), and indeed quotes the *Wisdom of Solomon* (7:25–26) as referring to Christ (112,37–113,7). Thus it involves a secondary Sophia Christology that expands considerably the faint traces in the New Testament itself.

The bulk of the tractates are of course Gnostic, and that has been a stumbling-block for many. After all, Gnosticism has commonly been held to be unintelligible, other-worldly, and rather irrelevant mythology, a corruption of earliest Christianity that abandoned the Old Testament and its God – our God – in a Marcion-like perversion. Hence, rather than, with an open mind, seizing upon this library, the first really authentic early Gnostic texts that can speak for themselves, many in our discipline have simply left them to one side. Therefore it is very important to communicate to a wider academic public the surprising results that the specialists have thus far reached, which should lead to a calming of such prejudices.

Rather than being a departure from the Old Testament as the basis of our religious tradition, Gnosticism found there, rather than in Homer, or Zoroaster<sup>28</sup>, or Gilgamesh, the inspiration for its mythology. The book of Genesis is the favourite authority of Gnosticism! For example, Gen 3 is retold detail after detail, even if with a typically Gnostic twist, in *The Testimony of Truth* (IX,3). To be sure, the Gnostics did interpret the Old Testament in a different way, as did, however, Philo, Josephus, the New Testament, Qumran, and Rabbinic Judaism. Hence Gnosticism stands in the biblical tradition as well.

In effect, the roots of Gnosticism, previously sought all over the ancient world, have become most visible in Judaism. Even the apocalyptic literature of Judaism itself has been enriched with one Jewish Gnostic apocalypse from Nag Hammadi, the

*Apocalypse of Adam* (V,5). George MacRae saw to its inclusion in the current edition of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*.<sup>29</sup> It narrates Adam's deathbed testament to his son Seth, a kind of Gnostic *Heilsgeschichte*, narrating the three descents of the Gnostic Redeemer, Seth, to rescue the elect Sethians from flood, fire, and the final cataclysm.

Birger A. Pearson has recently summarized the dependence of Nag Hammadi texts on Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature: *The Apocryphon of John* (II,1; III,1; IV,1; BG 8502,2) builds on *1 Enoch*; *The Apocalypse of Adam* (V,5) builds on *The Life of Adam and Eve*; *Zostrianos* (VIII,1) builds on *2 Enoch*.<sup>30</sup> Here one has before one's very eyes the source material of Gnosticism. All it took was the distinctive Gnostic twist, a powerful push from some kind of alienated Judaism, Samaritanism, or Proselytism, to engender the Gnostic movement and its distinctive literature.

A whole new Jewish sect, to add to the plethora already known to characterize Second Temple Judaism, has come into the clear light of day in the Nag Hammadi Codices. It is Hans-Martin Schenke who has brought into focus the Gnostic Sethians, who contributed the largest single cluster to the Nag Hammadi Library, eleven of the forty-eight different texts. At the International Conference on The Rediscovery of Gnosticism held at Yale in 1978, one major section of the program, and one whole volume of its proceedings, were devoted exclusively to Sethianism.<sup>31</sup>

The Nag Hammadi Sethian texts can be subdivided into three groups, making it possible to discern roughly the history of Sethianism.<sup>32</sup> Some are only Jewish, with no Christian aspects: *The Three Steles of Seth* (VII,5), *The Thought of Norea* (IX,2), *Marsanes* (X), and *Allogenes* (XI,3), or at most with scant secondarily Christianizing interpolations: *The Apocalypse of Adam* (V,5) and *Zostrianos* (VIII,1). Others have a thin Christian veneer:



*The Gospel of the Egyptians* (III,2; IV,2) and *The Trimorphic Protennoia* (XIII,1). Only a minority can be really called Christian Gnosticism: *The Apocryphon of John* (II,1; III,1; IV,1; BG 8502,2), *The Hypostasis of the Archons* (II,4), and *Melchizedek* (IX,1). But this Christian Sethianism is the only kind previously known, having been attested by the heresiologists.<sup>33</sup> The relative rarity of Christian Sethian texts in the Nag Hammadi library is all the more surprising, when one considers that it is after all a Christian library, which can of course account for the secondary Christianizing of several of the Jewish Sethian texts. Most of the non-Christian Jewish Sethian texts represent instead a Neo-Platonic Gnosticism, as especially John D. Turner has worked out: *The Three Steles of Seth* (VII,5), *Zostrianos* (VIII,1), *Marsanes* (X) and *Allogenes* (XI,3). Thus one can see Sethianism evolving out of Judaism into early Christian and Neo-Platonic cultural contexts, much as did main-line Christianity itself. Indeed these history-of-religions trajectories of Sethianism and Early Christianity are even more parallel in that both emerged from Jewish baptismal sects.<sup>34</sup>

Nag Hammadi tractates also fill gaps in early Christian trajectories themselves. Half of the Pauline corpus presents us with authentic letters of Paul, the oldest Christian texts to have survived. Then the last half of the Pauline corpus shows how Paul was variously interpreted after his death. The latest letters in the Pauline corpus, the Pastoral Epistles, display a mild, “safe” Paul that reassured the canonizers to include him after all, in spite of the (mis)use of him being made by Gnostics and Marcionites. Acts tends to confirm this domesticated Paul.

The earlier Deutero-Pauline Epistles, Colossians, and Ephesians, however, had pointed in a more speculative, cosmic direction. Paul himself had emphasized that the believer is united with Christ, in baptism indeed dying with Christ. But Paul reserved

one's resurrection with Christ for the eschatological future, what Ernst Käsemann drew to our attention as Paul's "eschatological reservation."<sup>35</sup> Yet already Col 2:12 presents the believer as both dying *and* rising with Christ. And Eph 2:6 affirms God has thereupon enthroned the believer "in heavenly places" with Christ. Is not the believer's resurrection then past already?

The canonical texts hesitate to actually put it that way. For a Pastoral Epistle condemns the "godless chatter" of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who "will lead people into more and more ungodliness, ... by holding that the resurrection is past already" (2 Tim 2:16–18). Here some kind of shadow-boxing is taking place, as the Pastorals allude to some otherwise unattested Christian leaders that had clearly gone too far. The only kind of resurrection for believers that this could be talking about is not physical, but purely spiritual. But if that spiritual resurrection has already taken place, an eschatologically future physical resurrection would have become quite superfluous. Hence the advocates of this "heresy" do not get an unbiased hearing in the New Testament.

Now, *The Treatise on Resurrection* (I,4) presents in a very appealing way precisely this spiritual resurrection that has taken place already, and indeed by appeal to the authority of *the* Apostle *par excellence*, Paul! Should not any objective historian trying to trace the Pauline school include this non-canonical Epistle as part of the left wing of that school, alongside the Pastoral Epistles as documentation for the right wing? Or should we limit our knowledge of the left wing of the Pauline school to the smear by the right wing?<sup>36</sup>

*The Treatise on Resurrection* surely goes further than does Paul himself – indeed it would no doubt have been rejected by Paul, as is indicated by such texts as 1 Cor 4:8, where "already" is in effect branded as heretical, and Phil 3:11,20–21, where the believer's

resurrection is clearly still future. But neither are the Pastoral Epistles and Acts written as Paul himself would have written. The fact that we are *their* heirs, rather than heirs of the spiritualized Gnostic option, makes them instinctively more congenial to us. But as critical historians we must analyze all the evidence, if we want to assess the full history of the Pauline trajectory or trajectories.

Thus the Nag Hammadi Codices have forced us to direct our attention to New Testament “apocrypha” to an extent never before realized. The current edition of Wilhelm Schneemelcher’s standard *New Testament Apocrypha* contains eleven Nag Hammadi tractates,<sup>37</sup> and a more recent dictionary article on “New Testament Apocrypha” by Stephen J. Patterson lists thirty-two Nag Hammadi tractates.<sup>38</sup> Even more significant is Helmut Koester’s *Introduction to the New Testament*, which includes discussions of sixteen Nag Hammadi tractates!<sup>39</sup> The field of Early Christian Literature has grown immensely, and we must grow with it.

Perhaps the most lively debate going on in New Testament scholarship as a result of the Nag Hammadi discovery has to do with whether The Gospel of Thomas is largely dependent on the canonical Gospels, in which case one might relax and seek to ignore it as purely secondary, or whether it is an independent source of information about the historical Jesus, in which case one should tighten one’s belt, perhaps even learn Coptic, and bite the bullet.

Clearly The Gospel of Thomas does contain sayings that cannot be derived from the canonical Gospels, since they are not there to be found. Yet, among these sayings that are some that are clearly not Gnostic, but have the same claim to being old, even authentic, as does the older layer of sayings in the canonical Gospels and Q. This can be illustrated by some of the kingdom parables in The Gospel of Thomas.<sup>40</sup> For example, saying 97 reads:

The kingdom of the [Father] is like a woman who is carrying a [jar] filled with flour. While she was walking on the way, very distant from home, the handle of the jar broke and the flour leaked out on the path. But she did not know it; she had not noticed a problem. When she had reached her house, she put the jar down on the floor and found it empty.

Saying 98 reads:

The kingdom of the Father is like a person who wanted to kill a powerful person. He drew the sword in his house and stabbed it into the wall to test whether his hand would be strong enough. Then he killed the powerful one.

Such sayings are not Gnostic inventions, but simply part of the oral tradition of sayings ascribed to Jesus.

What is perhaps even more impressive is that The Gospel of Thomas contains some New Testament parables found in their pre-canonical form – that is to say, without Mark's secondary allegorical embellishments.<sup>41</sup> Saying 9, The Parable of the Sower, lacks the allegorical interpretation appended in Mark 4:13–20. Saying 65, The Parable of the Vineyard, lacks the allegory of history with which the parable in Mark 12:1–11 is so permeated that even a rather conventional exegete, Werner Georg Kümmel, despaired of being able to disengage a non-allegorical core that could go back to Jesus.<sup>42</sup> However, The Gospel of Thomas now presents us with just such a non-allegorical parable that may well go back to Jesus! Obviously The Gospel of Thomas was still in the flowing stream of oral tradition, and was not limited to canonical Gospels, themselves often secondary, and to Gnostic mythology as its sources.<sup>43</sup>

The completely untenable position into which one can in all innocence flounder by ignoring The Gospel of Thomas is illustrated by an anecdote from the 1984 meeting of the Society for New Testament Studies in Basel, Switzerland. There, Nikolaus Walter of the University of Jena presented a detailed analysis of all instances of Paul using sayings of Jesus, irrespective of whether one is to consider them authentic or not. Having been asked to be the respondent, I pointed out that all the sayings of Jesus that Walter listed were derived from the canonical Gospels, none of which had been written when Paul wrote. Obviously Paul was wholly dependent on oral tradition or non-canonical written sources. Hence sayings ascribed to Jesus outside the canon should be included.

Walter asked for an instance. What I came up with on the spur of the moment was 1 Cor 2:9: "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.'" The nearest one had come to identifying the source is Origen's allusion to an *Apocalypse of Elijah* (cited in the margin of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*).<sup>44</sup> But now it has cropped up as a saying of Jesus in The Gospel of Thomas, Saying 17: "I will give you what no eye has seen, and what no ear has heard, and what no hand has touched, and what has not occurred to the human mind." Should 1 Cor 2:9 not be included in a survey of Pauline verses parallel to sayings ascribed to Jesus?

Walter replied that Paul does not quote 1 Cor 2:9 as a saying of Jesus. I reminded him that a whole section of his paper had been devoted to Pauline parallels not ascribed by Paul to Jesus, such as 1 Cor 13:2, about faith that moves mountains, but that are ascribed to Jesus in the canonical Gospels, in this case Matt 17:20; 21:21 // Mark 11:23. Should he not also include non-canonical instances?

Walter finally conceded the point, but when he published his revised paper, it was in this regard unaltered.<sup>45</sup> What could he do? After all, I had handed him a can of worms! Was he, in revising his paper for publication, to go through the whole Gospel of Thomas, not to speak of other non-canonical sources, looking for sayings ascribed to Jesus with Pauline parallels? It would be a rather hopeless undertaking! This is just one illustration of the challenges the Nag Hammadi Codices pose to anyone who wishes to forge a more complete picture of the discipline.

A decade later, at the 1995 meeting of the Society for New Testament Studies in Prague, The Czech Republic, I convinced Barbara Aland, who was preparing a revised edition of Kurt Aland's *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, not just to include a very good Greek retroversion of parallel sayings from the Coptic Gospel of Thomas that the Berliner Arbeitskreis, now under the responsibility of Hans-Gebhard Bethge, was preparing for her, but also to include (instead of the Latin translation, and alongside new German and English translations) the Berliner Arbeitskreis' critical edition of the Coptic text of The Gospel of Thomas itself. I had cited to her as a North American instance John S. Kloppenborg's *Q Parallels*.<sup>46</sup> She subsequently wrote on a very positive note:<sup>47</sup>

The stimulating discussion with you has brought me now to think over basically once again the whole question of the revision of the *Synopse* and in this connection to study Kloppenborg. I am thoroughly impressed by the way he proceeds. To be sure, I would not like to offer a [Greek] translation for all parallel passages, but it is advisable no doubt in Coptic... The Aland *Synopsis* must be worked over in regard both to Nag Hammadi and to the Old Testament apocrypha.

As a result, the new edition of Aland's *Synopsis*<sup>48</sup> appeared early in 1997, containing as the first of the Appendices "Evangelium Thomae Copticum," presenting in a three-column format the Coptic original, alongside the German and English translations, and then, at the bottom of the page, the retroversion into Greek of sayings that have a parallel in the canonical Gospels. Hence not only North Americans have to stare the Coptic text of The Gospel of Thomas in the face when we use Kloppenborg's *Q Parallels*, but worldwide New Testament scholarship has also to face up to the Coptic text in using the standard tool for the scholarly study of the Gospels as a whole, the *Synopsis* of Aland.

North American New Testament scholarship has come a long, long way, when the German establishment turns to an American publication as a role model! This coming of age of American biblical scholarship over the last half-century<sup>49</sup> is to a considerable extent due to the Nag Hammadi Codices.<sup>50</sup>

## Further Reading

- Asgiersson, J. M., et al. (eds) (2006), *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of Thomas*. Nag Hammadi Studies 59. Leiden and Boston: Brill. Essays from the Thomas sessions of the Society of Biblical Literature by an international cadre of scholars.
- Davies, S. (2005), *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*. Oregon House, CA: Bardic Press. A revised edition of Davies' 1983 study of how Thomas makes use of ideas from Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom theology, such as one finds, for example, in the Alexandrian theologian, Philo. The revised edition has a new introduction, but is otherwise unchanged from the 1983 original (New York: Seabury).
- DeConick, A. (2006) *The Original Gospel of Thomas, with a Commentary and a New English Translation of the Complete Gospel*. Library of New Testament Studies 287. London: T & T Clark. A recent commentary on Thomas, featuring the author's theories about the origin of the Gospel of Thomas.
- Fallon, F. T., and Cameron, R. (1988), "The Gospel of Thomas: A Forschungsbericht and Analysis." in Haase, W., and Temporini, W., *ANRW II* 25.6. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, pp. 4213–4224. An excellent review of scholarship on the Gospel of Thomas in a number of different areas.
- Frey, J., et al. (eds.) (2008), *Das Thomasevangelium: Entstehung – Rezeption – Theologie*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 157. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter. Essays from an international gathering of Thomas scholars in German and English.
- Kloppenborg, J. S., Meyer, M. W., Patterson, S. J., and Steinhauser, M. G. (1990), *Q-Thomas Reader*. Sonoma: Polebridge, 1990. An introductory volume for those interested in learning more about Q and the Gospel of Thomas.
- Koester, H. (1990), *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development*. Philadelphia: Trinity/London: SCM. This volume represents the "state of the art" in gospel research, covering the widest range of gospel literature in early Christianity, including the Gospel of Thomas.
- Layton, B. (ed.) (1989), *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7 together with XII, 2 Brit. Lib. Or. 4926 (1), and P. Oxy 1, 654, 655*; Vol. 1: *Gospel According to*



- Thomas, Gospel According to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes.* Nag Hammadi Studies 20. Leiden: Brill. This volume contains the standard critical edition of the Coptic text of Thomas as well as the Greek fragments. It also contains excellent introductions to the Gospel of Thomas by Helmut Koester, and the Greek fragments of Thomas by Harry Attridge.
- Meyer, M. (1992), *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.** Meyer's text and translation of Thomas are highly regarded. Equally valuable in this edition are Meyer's critical notes, which explain many obscurities in the text.
- Meyer, M. (2007), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition.* San Francisco: HarperCollins.** This volume is now the standard translation of the Nag Hammadi Library into English. Included is a general introduction by Marvin Meyer and Elaine Pagels, as well as brief introductions to each tract, now revised and up-dated.
- Pagels, E. (2003), *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas.* New York: Random House.** A compelling account of how early Christianity developed in diverse ways, and the sort of Christianity represented by the Gospel of Thomas.
- Patterson, S. J. (1993), *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus.* Sonoma: Polebridge.** Patterson locates the Gospel of Thomas within the diverse developments of early Christianity, and traces the Thomas trajectory from the early social radicalism of the Jesus movement in Palestine to the emergence of ascetical Christianity in Syria.
- Plisch, U. K. (2008), *The Gospel of Thomas: Original text with Commentary.* Stuttgart: Deutche Biblegesellschaft.** The latest and best commentary on the Gospel of Thomas, from an outstanding younger scholar of Thomas and other Nag Hammadi texts.
- Robinson, J. M., and Koester, H. (1971), *Trajectories Through Early Christianity.* Philadelphia: Fortress.** Robinson and Koester's pioneering essays, redefining the shape and scope of the study of Christian origins. Many of these studies make creative use of the Gospel of Thomas in reshaping the discussion.
- Uro, R., et al. (1998), *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas.* Studies of the New Testament and Its World; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.** Collected essays on Thomas by Uro and a team of Finnish scholars whose work has moved the scholarly discussion significantly over the past 15 years.
- Uro, R. (2003), *Thomas: Seeking the Historical Context of the Gospel of Thomas.* London: T. & T. Clark.** A series of studies that represents some of the best recent scholarship on the Gospel of Thomas.

- Valantasis, R. (1997), *The Gospel of Thomas. New Testament Readings.* London and New York: Routledge.** An excellent commentary on the Gospel of Thomas. Valantasis takes an approach consistent the Routledge's series in which this volume appears, which focuses more on reading strategies and less on traditional exegesis.
- Wilson, R. McL. (1960), *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas.* London: A.R. Mowbray.** An early look at the Gospel of Thomas by one of the world's eminent scholars of Gnosticism and early Christianity.

# Notes

## Introduction

- 1 B. P. Grenfell, “The Oldest Record of Christ’s Life: The First Complete Account of the Recent Finding of the ‘Sayings of Our Lord.’” *McClure’s Magazine* (October, 1897) 1027.
- 2 Grenfell, B. P., and Hunt, A. S., *Logia Iesou: Sayings of Our Lord* (Egypt Exploration Fund; London: Henry Frowde, 1897).
- 3 A. Guillaumont, H.-Ch. Puech, G. Quispel, W.C. Till, *Abed al Masih, The Gospel According to Thomas: Coptic Text Established and Translated* (Leiden/London/New York: Brill/Collins/Harper, 1959).
- 4 K. Aland, *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum. Locis parallelis evangeliorum apocryphorum et patrum adhibitis*. 15th edition, 3rd corrected printing; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001, 517–46: Evangelium Thomae Copticum.
- 5 Uwe-Karsten Plisch, *The Gospel of Thomas: Original Text and Commentary*. (Gesine Schenke Robinson, trans.; Stuttgart: Deuteche Bibelgesellschaft 2008).
- 6 See note 4, above.

## Chapter 1: Revised English Translation

- 1 Translation by the Berliner Arbeitskreis für Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften (Hans-Gebhard Bethge, Christina-Maria Franke, Judith Hartenstein, Uwe-Karsten Plisch, Hans-Martin Schenke, Jens Schröter) as modified by Stephen J. Patterson and James M. Robinson. It is taken from *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, 15th edition, 3rd corrected printing, 2001, revised 2009.
- 2 The verb can also be expressed in its past tense. When sayings appear without a narrative framework, a translation in the present tense is preferable.
- 3 Cf. Saying. 14:1–3.
- 4 The Coptic text reads “before the face of heaven,” but this is probably a mistake. The emendation is proposed on the basis of Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 654.38.
- 5 The phrase “and the lion will become human” could be a copyist’s error,

which may have occurred already in the Greek text from which the Coptic translation was made. In this case it should be deleted. Others have emended the text to read “and the person will be the lion.” This produces a formal parallelism, but it is not unproblematic with regard to content.

- 6 Or: “I am protecting it (the world) until it blazes”.
- 7 Literally: “be great”.
- 8 Cf. Luke 7:24; 9:52. The text reads *angelos*, which may also be rendered “angel.”
- 9 Cf. Saying 6:1.
- 10 Literally: “in the countryside.”
- 11 Or: “there (in the countryside).”
- 12 Cf. 1 Cor. 2:9; *Dialogue of the Savior* (Nag Hammadi Codex III, 5) p. 140,2f.
- 13 Or: “whom.”
- 14 The conjugational element is missing in the Coptic text due to haplography.
- 15 Or: “Slaves”. – The usual (literal) translation of *šēre šēm* as “little children” makes little sense in this passage; the translation given here takes *šēre šēm* to be a rendering of *pais* (meaning *doulos*, cf. Matt. 14:2 and 2Kings 11:24 LXX) in the Coptic translator’s Greek copy.
- 16 “Who are entrusted with a field”: possible also, “who have taken over a field.”
- 17 A literal translation of the Coptic. It is possible, however, that a pronoun has been accidentally omitted from the text; in this case the text would read: “But they strip it (i.e. the field) bare,” meaning they harvest the crop from the field.
- 18 The translation assumes that the antecedent for this pronoun, *hbsw*, or “clothing,” has been inadvertently omitted from the text.
- 19 The Coptic genitive is to be understood as an explicative genitive.
- 20 Alternative translation (cf. Saying 21:6f.): “For the possessions you are guarding they will find.”
- 21 Or: “suckled.” Literally: “receiving milk.”
- 22 Or: “suckled”.
- 23 It is also possible for the Coptic text here to mean “face”; cf. *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* (Nag Hammadi Codex VI, 1) p. 2,24.
- 24 Or: “it.”
- 25 Or: “it.”
- 26 Literally: “If you do not fast against the world.”
- 27 This interpretation comes from Peter Nagel (HBO 32, 2001, 507–517).
- 28 The Coptic text is probably corrupt. On the basis of Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1, ln. 23, it should read: “Where there are three, they are godless.”
- 29 The text probably reflects a scribal error in which the phrase “in your

- ear” was inadvertently copied twice (dittography). Nevertheless, there are two possibilities for understanding the text as it stands: “what you will hear *in your ear*, proclaim from your rooftops *into someone else’s ear*,” or: “what you will hear *with your (one) ear (and) with (your) other ear* proclaim” (as an idiomatic expression meaning “with both ears”).
- 30 Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 655.1.1–17 has much longer text of Saying 36: “(1) [Jesus says, Do not be anxious] from morning [to late nor] from evening [to] morning, neither [about] your [food], what [you will] eat, [nor] about [your clothing], what you [will] wear. (2) [You are far] better than the [lilies] which [do not] card nor [spin]. (3) Not having any garment, what [will you put on], you too? (4) Who might add to your stature? He will give you your garment.”
- 31 Or: “When you take off your shame.”
- 32 Cf. Sayings 59; 92.
- 33 Or: “took away the keys of knowledge and have hidden them.”
- 34 Literally: “his bad.”
- 35 It is possible that the text is corrupt. A final, rather than consecutive understanding of *šina* is also possible. In this case, a literal translation would be: “so that his eyes do not get broken,” or “so that his eyes do not fail.”
- 36 The Coptic *auō* is to be understood as an equivalent to an epexegetical *kai* (“that is”) and not as a copula (“and”).
- 37 Possibly emend to: “< Who> are you?”
- 38 The Coptic reads “repose,” but this seems to be a misunderstanding caused by the end of Saying 50:3. Cf. 2 Tim. 2:18.
- 39 Possible alternative translations are: “in you,” or “of you,” or “about you.” It depends on which Greek preposition is expressed by the Coptic version.
- 40 Behind the Coptic expression there seems to be a Greek ingressive aorist. Literally: “you have spoken of the dead.”
- 41 Literally: “has found absolute profit (or use).”
- 42 The translation given here of the clause of apprehension beginning with *mēpōs* presupposes a conjecture: that *je enahōle* is to be seen as a corruption of an original *je etmahōle*. But it is also possible that there is an ellipsis in the Coptic text, such that the following should be understood: “Lest you go (saying): ‘We will pull up the darnel’, (and) (then) pull up the wheat along with them”. Possible also is that the Coptic text is to be explained by assuming that a whole line has been omitted through homoioteleuton, for instance: “Lest you go <and say: ‘We want to go> in order to pull up the darnel’...”
- 43 Or: “visible.”
- 44 Or: “suffered.”
- 45 Or: “...struggled (and) has found life.”
- 46 Cf. Saying 38.

- 47 The present tense is here to be understood as *praesens de conatu*.
- 48 Literally: “That (person) is around the lamb.” Presumably *mpkōte* corresponds to *einai peri ti* (“to be occupied with something”). The translation presupposes this understanding of the text.
- 49 The translation presumes an error in the Coptic translation. Originally the Greek text that lies behind our Coptic might have had *hōs xenos* (= *hos šmmo*), which sounds very similar to *hōs ex henos* (= *hōs ebol hn oua*).
- 50 The manuscript reads “If someone is destroyed, ...”
- 51 The lacuna in the manuscript also allows the restoration of “[gracious (or: good)] person.”
- 52 Or: “servant” (also in 65:3, 5)
- 53 The manuscript reads “Perhaps he did not recognize them”; the text is presumably corrupt.
- 54 Literally: “know that he is.”
- 55 One should possibly emend to: “Whoever knows all but is lacking in himself, <he> is utterly lacking.”
- 56 Perhaps the text is corrupt and originally read, analogously to Matt. 5:8, “Blessed are the persecuted, <insofar as they are pure> in their hearts.”
- 57 The restoration of the lacuna is adopted from April de Conick; cf. Hans-Martin Schenke, “Bemerkungen zu #71 des Thomasevangeliums,” *Enchoria* 27 (2001) 120–126.
- 58 Or: “nobody.”
- 59 The manuscript erroneously reads “illness.”
- 60 Cf. Matt. 25:1–13.
- 61 Or: “powerful persons.”
- 62 Cf. Saying 56.
- 63 Or: “reject,” “refuse,” “deny.”
- 64 The manuscript reads “of.”
- 65 Other translations prefer “angels” to “messengers;” cf. the note to Saying 13:2.
- 66 Or: “easy”
- 67 Or: “right moment.”
- 68 Cf. Saying 38.
- 69 The manuscript erroneously uses the singular.
- 70 Alternative restorations are possible, for instance: “lest they [destroy] <them>” or “lest they break <them> [into pieces].”
- 71 Or: “to the one from whom you will not get it (the interest).”
- 72 Perhaps the text in 97:3 is corrupt and to emend: “she had not noticed anything <whileshe> toiled.”
- 73 Or: “noble.”
- 74 The lacuna can be filled as follows: “For my mother, who has [given birth to me, has destroyed me]”. Another possibility: “For my mother has [deceived me].”
- 75 Or: “lying.”

- 76 Or: “at what part (of the night).”
- 77 Cf. Gospel of Philip (Nag Hammadi Codex II,3, p. 52,21–24). As the text has been transmitted, an original negation may have been left out, so that we can understand the text as follows: “Whoever will not know Father and mother...”
- 78 Or: “children of humanity.”
- 79 Possibly: “The one who <will> find the world (and) become wealthy.”
- 80 Or: “deny,” “reject,” “refuse.”
- 81 We find here an ellipsis; perhaps we can assume the following Greek text: *(ē) ouk (oidate) hoti* “(or do you) not (know) that...”
- 82 With regard to *nʹhoout*, we understand the *n-* to function in an attributive sense belonging to *oupna*. It should not be understood as a particle of identity.
- 83 Most of the translations and editions understand the *je* in a causal sense. But we are convinced that here it is used to introduce direct speech without an antecedent, presented in an elliptical form. We presuppose an imaginary *tijō de mʹmos nētnʹ*? (“but I say to you”).

## Chapter 2: Understanding the Gospel of Thomas Today

- 1 The complete story of this discovery was not told until James M. Robinson investigated the circumstances in the 1970s and published his account in “The Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 42,4 (1979) 206–24 and “Getting the Nag Hammadi Library into English,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 42,4 (1979) 239–48. Robinson’s essay in the present volume offers an updated version.
- 2 These fragmentary Oxyrhynchus papyri identified today as parts of the Gospel of Thomas are known by their publication numbers, POxy 1, POxy 654, and POxy 655. Grenfell and Hunt originally published POxy 1 in a pamphlet entitled: *Logia Iesou: Sayings of Our Lord* (Egypt Exploration Fund; London: Henry Frowde, 1897). They published POxy 654 and 655 as *New Sayings of Jesus and Fragment of a Lost Gospel from Oxyrhynchus* (Egypt Exploration Fund; London: Henry Frowde/New York: Oxford University Press, 1904). These three fragmentary papyri, each of which comes from a different hand, were also published as part of the larger Oxyrhynchus find. POxy 1 appeared in *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 1 (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898) pp. 1–3; POxy 654 and 655 appeared in *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 4 (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1904) pp. 1–28.
- 3 It was the French scholar, Henri-Ch. Puech, who made the connection that would pull these ancient fragments back into the limelight. Puech noticed that the sayings of P. Oxy 654 actually corresponded to the Prologue and first seven sayings of the newly discovered Coptic Gospel of Thomas, the six sayings of P. Oxy 1 to Sayings 28–33 (+77b), and

- the fragmentary sayings of P. Oxy 655 to Sayings 24 and 36–39. See his “Une collection des paroles de Jésus récemment retrouvée: L’Evangile selon Thomas,” in Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres, *Compte rendu des séances de l’année 1957* (1958) 146–166; see also “The Gospel of Thomas,” in E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, Vol I: *Gospels and Related Writings* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 278–307.
- 4 This little phrase has been surprisingly difficult to translate. Most translations render it as a simple past: “Jesus said.” But the Coptic phrasing could, under certain circumstances, be rendered as a present. Since the Greek fragments have an unambiguous present-tense version, the Berlin Working Group has chosen to render the Coptic as a present as well, unless the context suggests a past tense as more appropriate. Others, meanwhile, still translate the phrase using the simple past, and the debate continues.
  - 5 Grenfell and Hunt dated it thus on the basis of the script and the level at which it was discovered at Oxyrhynchus (see *Logia Iesou*, p. 6). Harold Attridge dates it to “shortly after A.D. 200” in his “Introduction” to the Greek fragments of Thomas in B. Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7 together with XII, 2 Brit. Lib. Or. 4926 (1), and P. Oxy 1, 654, 655*; Vol. 1: *Gospel According to Thomas, Gospel According to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes* (Nag Hammadi Studies XX; Leiden: Brill, 1989) 97.
  - 6 The Nag Hammadi Codices are dated on the basis of the cartonnage used in the manufacture of their bindings; see James M. Robinson, “Introduction,” in James M. Robinson and Richard Smith, eds., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco: Harper & Row / Leiden: Brill, 1988) p. 16. Nag Hammadi Codex II has been dated by Søren Giversen: “An absolute dating places it as contemporary with Br. M. Pap. 1920 and therefore from 330 to 340, or more loosely from the first half of the fourth century” (*Apocryphon Johannis* [Acta Theologica Danica 5; Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963] p. 40). The Coptic dialect of our copy of the Gospel of Thomas, and its implications for the history of the text, is discussed by Bentley Layton in his “Introduction” to *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7* (see note 5), p. 7.
  - 7 The location of the Gospel of Thomas within the genre LOGOI SOPHON, or “sayings of the wise,” was the contribution of James M. Robinson in his article, “LOGOI SOPHON : Zur Gattung der Spruchquelle,” pp. 77–96 in E. Dinkler, ed., *Zeit und Geschichte. Dankesgabe an Rudolf Bultmann* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1964); revised ET: “LOGOI SOPHON : On the Gattung of Q,” pp. 71–113 in idem and H. Koester, *Trajectories Through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971). Robinson’s thesis was extended and explored more thoroughly by John S. Kloppenborg in *The Formation of*



- Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).
- 8 *Hist eccles* 1.13.11.
- 9 *Itinerarium Egeriae* 17.1; 19.2.
- 10 *Acts Thom* 170.
- 11 The *Acts of Thomas* have been a never-ending source of confusion on this score, but the matter is clarified by A. F. J. Klijn in “John XIV 22 and the Name Judas Thomas,” pp. 88–96 in *Studies in John Presented to Prof. J. N. Sevenster on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (NovTSup 23; Leiden: Brill, 1970), and in his recent edition of the *Acts of Thomas* (Second Revised Edition; NovTSup 108; Leiden: Brill, 2003). In the earliest Syriac manuscript (Sinai 30), the protagonist of the story is simply called “Judas,” and it is clear that this is “Judas of James,” who is listed last in the opening apostolic list. But in the later Greek manuscripts used by Bonnet to reconstruct a Greek version, upon which most translations of the *Acts of Thomas* were based (*Acta Apostolorum* II.2 [1903]), one may find him referred to as Judas Thomas, or simply Thomas – thus the title, the *Acts of Thomas*. Klijn summarizes: “It seems we are dealing with a textual tradition in which Judas has been corrected into Thomas” (*Acts of Thomas*, 6). This has contributed to the erroneous idea that the Syrian church conflated these two apostles, Judas and Thomas – an idea entertained in the last edition of this work and widely shared in the literature.
- 12 Helmut Koester suggests this in his “Introduction (to the Gospel of Thomas),” in B. Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7*, vol. 1, p. 39.
- 13 Again, it was Puech who made the initial connection to Syria. See “The Gospel of Thomas,” 287. In spite of problems with Puech’s original suggestion, this has become the consensus. See Stephen J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1993) pp. 118–20, for a summary of the issues.
- 14 *Hist eccles* 1.13.11.
- 15 Koester, “Introduction,” 40–41.
- 16 Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 2: *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter/Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), p. 310.
- 17 Koester, “Introduction,” 40.
- 18 This term occurs in *Thom.* 86, and is here probably not to be taken in the titular sense, but as the Semitic circumlocution for “human being.”
- 19 This term occurs in *Thom.* 74, but it is not clear that it should be taken as referring to Jesus, or that it should be understood as titular in any sense.
- 20 This is the hypothesis of Howard Jackson, whose study, *The Lion Becomes Man: The Gnostic Leontomorphic Creator and the Platonic Tradition*; SBL Dissertation Series 81 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), has thus far proven to be definitive for this saying.

- 21 For more on the problem of *Thom.* 65 and 66 see Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, pp. 48–51; for a general treatment of the relationship between Thomas and the synoptics see pp. 17–93.
- 22 It would be wrong to state that there is currently a consensus around this issue in the still lively debate. However, this sort of piecemeal approach has proven attractive to many as a reasonable way to proceed. Still, new proposals are in the offing that may add yet more clarity to the issue. Recently, for example, Hans-Martin Schenke has proposed on the basis of *Thom.* 68 that the Gospel of Thomas must have been written after the Bar Kochba rebellion in 135 C.E., when Jews were banished from Jerusalem by the Romans (“On the Compositional History of the Gospel of Thomas,” *Forum* 10 [1994 (1998)] 9–30). In his recent commentary, Richard Valantasis has suggested, based on common concerns he sees in John, Ignatius, and Thomas, a date just after the turn of the first century (*The Gospel of Thomas* [London and New York: Routledge, 1997] pp. 12–21).
- 23 See esp. Theissen’s book, *The Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (trans. by John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).
- 24 For a discussion see Karen King, *What is Gnosticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2003) and Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- 25 The interpretation of the Gospel of Thomas presented here is argued more fully in S. J. Patterson, “Jesus Meets Plato: The Theology of the Gospel of Thomas,” in J. Frey, et al., eds., *Das Thomasevangelium, Entstehung – Rezeption – Theologie* (Beihefte zur neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 157; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008) 181–205.
- 26 T. F. Glasson, “The Gospel of Thomas, Saying 3, and Deuteronomy xxx.11–14,” *Expository Times* 78 (1966/67) 151–52.
- 27 H. –D. Betz, “The Delphic Maxim, GNWQI SAUTON in Hermetic Interpretation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 63 (1970) 471–77.
- 28 *Leg* 1.22.59.
- 29 For the concept in Jewish tradition see Deut 14:1–2; 32:5, 19; Is 30:1; 43:6; 45:1; Eze 16:20–21; Hos 2:1; *Additions to Esther* 16:16: “the Jews are the sons of the most high, mighty, living God.” So also among the rabbis: bShab 31a; mAbot 3:15; Mekhilta on Ex 15:18, et al. In early Christianity, see, e.g. Rom 8:14–17; Matt 5:45; Luke 6:35, etc.
- 30 Philo, *Opif* 134.
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 See 1 Cor 15:42–50 (esp. 15:49); the idea remained popular among the followers of Paul – see Col 3:10–11; see R. Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) 70; on the concept in Thomas see S. Davies, “The Christology and Protology of the Gospel of Thomas,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992) 668–9.

- 33 The subject is treated fully by D. MacDonald, in *There is No Male and Female* (Harvard Dissertations in Religion 20; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).
- 34 Cf. *Thom.* 4, 23; similarly Thomas 16, 49, 75; also 11 (“On the day when you were one, you became two.”) and 106:1 (“When you make the two into one, you will become sons of man.”).
- 35 For a detailed treatment of this saying in the context of early Christian asceticism, see R. Valatas, “Is the Gospel of Thomas Ascetical? Revisiting an Old Problem with a New Theory,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7 (1999) 55–81.
- 36 *Leg All* 2.2.
- 37 E.g., *Immut* 10.45.
- 38 *Opif* 135.
- 39 Flesh (*sarx*) is a synonym for body (*soma*) in Thomas – cf. *Thom.* 87.
- 40 Plutarch, *Mor* 135E-F (*Tu san*); 681D-F (*Quaest com*).
- 41 Philo, *Leg All* 1.33–35.
- 42 See Thomas 3, 22, 27, 46, 49, 82, 107, 109, 113:1.
- 43 Thomas 20, 54, 114.
- 44 Thomas 57, 76, 96, 97, 98, 99, 113:4.
- 45 See esp. Sayings 3 and 50.
- 46 *Opif*: 30.
- 47 *Somm* 1.75.
- 48 DeConick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (Supp to *Vigiliae Christianae* 33; Leiden: Brill, 1996)100–105.
- 49 DeConick, *Seek to See Him*, 129–43.
- 50 See discussion in DeConick, *Seek to See Him*, 105–7.
- 51 So, e.g., the approach taken by R. M. Grant and D. N. Freedman in *The Secret Sayings of Jesus* (Garden City: Doubleday/London: Collins, 1960).
- 52 For an account, see S. J. Patterson, “The Gospel of Thomas and the Synoptic Tradition: A Forschungsbericht and Critique,” *Forum* 8 (1992) 45–97.
- 53 For a discussion of this view and its proponents see Patterson, “Thomas and the Synoptics,” pp. 50–63, 79–82. The most thorough attempt to prove Thomas’ dependence in this way was that of W. Schrage, *Das Verhältnis des Thomas-Evangeliums zur Synoptischen Tradition und zu den koptischen Evangelienübersetzungen. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur gnostischen Synoptikerdeutung* (BZNW 29; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964). But Schrage’s failure to consider the implications of redaction critical analysis in his study, and his unwarranted assumption that influence at the level of the Coptic translations would necessarily mean dependence at the point of original composition, left his work deeply flawed. Among the recent, more thoughtful treatments from this point of view is the study by C. M. Tuckett, “Thomas and the Synoptics,” *Novum*

- Testamentum* 30 (1988) pp. 132–57. Tuckett proposes a saying-by-saying approach, refusing to rule out any possibilities prematurely.
- 54 In *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* (pp. 17–99) my own analysis unearthed several such places, including *Thom.* 32 (cf. Matt 5:14b); *Thom.* 39 (cf. Matt 23:13); *Thom.* 45:2–4 (cf. Luke 6:45); *Thom.* 104:1 (cf. Luke 5:33); and *Thom.* 104:3 (cf. Luke 5:33–35). There are also a few places where the order of sayings in Thomas seems to have been influenced by the synoptic gospels, including *Thom.* 32 and 33:2–3; *Thom.* 43 and 45:4; *Thom.* 47:3–5; *Thom.* 65–66; and *Thom.* 91:2 and 93–94.
- 55 J. M. Robinson and C. Heil, “Zeugnisse eines schriftlichen, griechischen vorkanonischen Textes: Mt 6,28b )\*, P. Oxy. 655 I,1–17 (EvTh 36) und Q 12,27,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89 (1998) 30–44; J. M. Robinson, “The Pre-Q Text of (the Ravens) and the Lilies: Q 12:22–31 and P. Oxy. 655 (Gos. Thom. 36),” pp. 143–80 in *Text und Geschichte: Facetten theologischen Arbeitens aus dem Freundes- und Schülerkreis. Dieter Lührmann zum 60. Geburtstag* (MThSt 50; Marburg: Elwert, 1999); *idem*, “A Written Greek Sayings Cluster Older than Q: A Vestige,” *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (1999) 61–77; and Robinson and Heil, “The Lilies of the Field: Saying 36 of the Gospel of Thomas and Secondary Accretions in Q 12.22b-31,” *New Testament Studies* 47 (2001) 1–25.
- 56 This was the conclusion I drew in Part I of *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, pp. 9–110. Most scholars working on Thomas today share this view. However, this does not preclude other creative solutions that might better account for the sometimes puzzling evidence that confronts us in Thomas at every turn. Recently Hans-Martin Schenke has pointed to a number of narrative spurs in Thomas, which suggest to him that many of these sayings may have been extracted from a narrative gospel, though not any of the narrative gospels known to us today (“Compositional History of the Gospel of Thomas”). Risto Uro has argued that the Gospel of Thomas may have been influenced by the synoptic gospels indirectly, in a process he calls “secondary orality,” wherein the oral tradition would have been influenced by the synoptic texts, and then in turn influenced the text of Thomas (“‘Secondary Orality’ in the Gospel of Thomas: Logion 14 as a Test Case,” *Forum* 9,3/4 (1993) pp. 305–29). His views are similar to those of Klyne Snodgrass, “The Gospel of Thomas: A Secondary Gospel,” *Second Century* 7 (1989–90) pp. 19–38.
- 57 For a description of Sethian Gnosticism see H.-M. Schenke, “The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism,” in B. Layton, ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the Conference at Yale, March 1978* (Leiden: Brill, 1981) vol. 2, pp. 588–616. For the dating of Eugnostos the Blessed, see Douglas M. Parrott’s introduction of “Eugnostos the Blessed and The Sophia of Jesus Christ (III,4 and BG

- 8502,3),” in Robinson and Smith, eds., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, p. 221.
- 58 See above, note 24.
- 59 See esp. MacDonald, *No Male or Female*.
- 60 Cf. Helmut Koester’s remarks in “Gnostic Sayings and Controversy Traditions in John 8:12–59,” in C. W. Hedrick and R. Hodgson, Jr. eds., *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986) 97–110.
- 61 J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*; 2nd Revised Ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972) pp. 196–7.
- 62 J. Bauer, “Echte Jesusworte,” in W.C. van Unnik, *Evangelien aus dem Nilsand* (Frankfurt: Verlag Heinrich Scheffer, 1960) 124–130.
- 63 R. McL. Wilson, *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas* (London: A.R. Mowbray, 1960) 75–78.
- 64 R. W. Funk, B. B. Scott, and J. R. Butts, *The Parables of Jesus: Red Letter Edition* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1988) p. 61.
- 65 As noted by B. B. Scott, *Hear, Then, the Parable* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989) pp. 237–38.
- 66 The most thorough attempt to assess the transmission history of the sayings of Jesus taking Thomas into account is that of John Dominic Crossan, *In Fragments: The Aphorisms of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983). Crossan has also worked to integrate Thomas into the discussion of Jesus’ parables; see his *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973). More recently one may also see the influence of Thomas in several major works on parables: Scott, *Hear, Then, the Parable*, James Breech, *The Silence of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), and Charles Hedrick, *Jesus’ Parables as Poetic Fictions: The Creative Voice of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994). One of the pioneers in this work, however, was Joachim Jeremias, who had already begun to integrate Thomas’ parables into revised editions of his *Parables of Jesus* in 1962.
- 67 Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (trans. by W. Montgomery; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1948; German original published in 1906). A non-apocalyptic understanding of Jesus has been advocated especially by John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991). Marcus Borg (*Jesus: A New Vision* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987]) shares this view, but is not so influenced by Thomas in arriving at it. This view of Jesus is also widely shared by scholars who have participated in the Jesus Seminar and the Historical Jesus Section of the Society of Biblical Literature (see Borg’s polling of these two groups in “A Temperate Case for a Non-Eschatological Jesus,” *Forum* 2/3 [1986] pp. 98–99). For an account of how Borg, Crossan and others have come to this conclusion, see Stephen J. Patterson, “The End

of Apocalypse: Rethinking the Eschatological Jesus," *Theology Today* 52 (1995) pp. 29–48.

- 68 For a review of the scholarship done on Thomas to date see the surveys of F. T. Fallon and R. Cameron, "The Gospel of Thomas: A Forschungsbericht and Analysis," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* 2/25.6; W. Haase and H. Temporini, eds. (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1988) pp. 4195–4251 and G. J. Riley, "The Gospel of Thomas in Recent Scholarship," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994) pp. 227–252. For a thoughtful consideration of future prospects for research, see Philip Sellew, "The Gospel of Thomas: Prospects for Future Research," pp. 327–46 in John D. Turner and Anne McQuire, eds., *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

### Chapter 3: The Story of the Nag Hammadi Library

- 1 An abridgement of a Plenary Address given at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Nag Hammadi Discovery on November 19th 1995. It was published in: *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*, ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 44; Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1997) 3–33. An earlier draft of this lecture was given at the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity on September 21st 1995.
- 2 Henri-Charles Puech and Jean Doresse, "Nouveaux écrits gnostiques découverts en Egypte," *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres: Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Année 1948* [1948] 89.
- 3 "It was about 1946": Doresse, "Une bibliothèque gnostique copte," *La Nouvelle Clío* 2 (1949) 61.
- 4 "Toward 1945": Doresse, "Sur les traces des papyrus gnostiques: Recherches à Chénoboskion," *Académie royale de Belgique: Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences morales et politiques*, 5ème Série, 36 (1950) 433; see also *Les livres secrets des gnostiques d'Egypte*, I: *Introduction aux écrits gnostiques coptes découverts à Khénoboskion* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1958) 145; II: *L'Évangile selon Thomas ou les paroles secrètes de Jésus* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1959) 1; "Les gnostiques d'Égypte," *La Table Ronde* 107 (1956) 86.
- 5 "Une importante découverte: Un papyrus gnostique copte du IVème siècle," *La Bourse Egyptienne*, January 10, 1948, reprinted in *Chronique d'Égypte* 23 (1948) 260. This dating is erroneously based on the date of the acquisition of Codex III by the Coptic Museum, not the discovery itself.

- 6 From an interview with Doresse by Georges Fradier, *UNESCO Features* 2 (August 1, 1949) 11: "It was a year ago, on the shore of the Nile..."
- 7 For more detailed presentations see my "Introduction" in Marvin W. Meyer and James M. Robinson eds., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, translated by members of the Coptic Gnostic Library Project of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity (Leiden: Brill, 1977); "The Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *BA* 42 (Fall 1979) 206–24, unabridged with footnotes as "From the Cliff to Cairo: The Story of the Discoverers and the Middlemen of the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi (Québec, 22–25 août 1978)*, Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, ed. B. Barc, Section "Etudes" 1 (Québec: Les presses de l'Université Laval, 1981 [1982]) 21–58; "The Discovering and Marketing of Coptic Manuscripts: The Nag Hammadi Codices and the Bodmer Papyri," *Sundries in honour of Torgny Säve-Söderbergh* (Acta Universitatis Uppsaliensis, *Boreas: Uppsala Studies in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilizations* 13 (1984) 97–114, reprinted in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity, eds. B.A. Pearson and J.E. Goehring (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 1–25.
- 8 For the details, see my review article, "The Jung Codex: The Rise and Fall of a Monopoly," *RelSRev* 3 (1977) 17–30.
- 9 *Die drei Versionen des Apokryphon des Johannes im Koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo*, Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Koptische Reihe 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962 [1963]).
- 10 *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift ohne Titel aus dem Codex II von Nag Hammadi im Koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo*, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Institut für Orientforschung 58 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962).
- 11 *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen aus Codex V von Nag Hammadi im Koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo*, Sonderband of the *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität* (Halle-Wittenberg: Martin-Luther Universität, 1963).
- 12 A poignant anecdote illustrates the oddity and injustice of the situation: the greatest living Coptologist of the time, Hans Jakob Polotsky, originally of Berlin, but by then of Jerusalem, expressed his amazement that, after his European colleagues had consistently denied him access to the new discovery, the texts should suddenly be offered to him by students from an unknown Institute for Antiquity and Christianity in California, of all places, who had come to Ann Arbor to study Coptic with him at a summer school in 1967.
- 13 The standard numeration of Nag Hammadi tractates lists first, in Roman numerals, the number of the codex, then, in Arabic numerals, the number of the tractate in the sequence of that codex.

- 14 Pahor Labib, *Coptic Gnostic Papyri in the Coptic Museum at Old Cairo*, Vol. 1 (Cairo: Government Press, 1956). This is the only volume of this edition to appear.
- 15 Kurt Rudolph, "Gnosis und Gnostizismus, ein Forschungsbericht," *ThR* n. F. 34 (1969) 89–120, 181–231, 358–361. The third installment, with the subtitle "Nachträge," consists primarily of corrections I had sent him after reading proofs of the first two installments. He speaks quite openly, e.g. p. 359, of "the ongoing work of the editing team in Claremont (USA)" under my leadership.
- 16 James M. Robinson and Marvin W. Meyer, eds., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, translated by members of the Coptic Gnostic Library Project of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity (Leiden: Brill, 1977; paperback edition 1984 / San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977, paperback edition 1981); third, completely revised edition, Richard Smith and James M. Robinson eds. (San Francisco: Harper & Row / Leiden: Brill, 1988; paperback edition: San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990; unaltered fourth revised edition: Leiden: Brill, 1996).
- 17 *Nag Hammadi Codices III,2 and IV,2: The Gospel of the Egyptians (The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit)*, edited with translation and commentary by Alexander Böhlig and Frederik Wisse in cooperation with Pahor Labib; NHS 4, eds. M. Krause and James M. Robinson, sub-series The Coptic Gnostic Library, ed. Robinson; (Leiden: Brill, 1975).
- 18 *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1; III,1 and IV,1, with BG 8502,2*, edited by Frederik Wisse and Michael Waldstein; Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 33; eds. James M. Robinson and H.-J. Klimkeit, sub-series The Coptic Gnostic Library, ed. Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 1995).
- 19 *Nag Hammadi Codex VII*, edited by Birger A. Pearson; Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 30, eds. James M. Robinson and H.-J. Klimkeit, sub-series The Coptic Gnostic Library, ed. Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 1996 [actually November 1995]).
- 20 Johannes Leipoldt, "Ein neues Evangelium? Das koptische Thomasevangelium übersetzt und besprochen," *ThLZ* 83 (1958) 481–96.
- 21 See my review article, "The Jung Codex: The Rise and Fall of a Monopoly."
- 22 *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, prepared with Introduction and Index by Robert H. Eisenman and James M. Robinson, 2 volumes (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1991; second revised impression, 1992).
- 23 On November 22, 1991 the Research and Publications Committee had (to quote its minutes) "directed that the statement on access be sent to funding agencies, publishers, primary repositories, be published in *RSN*, and be circulated through the American Council of Learned Societies



- to other learned societies interested in literary and artifactual remains (encouraging their participation in policy development). The Committee approved further distribution as widely as possible." I had it republished in the *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 92 (1992) 296.
- 24 As recently as October 1, 1995 Tov had reported by email to the "Judaïos: First Century Judaism Discussion Forum," denying rumors that the Israeli authorities had "dropped their objection to the Huntington action" (which had on September 22, 1991 removed all restrictions on the microfilms that for years had been stored there by Elizabeth Hay Bechtel, inaccessible to the public), and affirmed that "all of us are still in the middle of deliberations." On October 6, 1991 he wrote to the Huntington, proposing a meeting to discuss the problem, and requested that the Huntington "delay all access to the scrolls for one month, until the said meeting." The meeting never took place.
- 25 By pure coincidence, I presented an address proposing such policies the same weekend that the Huntington Library made its announcement. It has hence been widely published: *Manuscript Discoveries of the Future* with an appendix containing the title page, table of contents, introduction and sample plates from: *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Occasional Papers, The Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, ed. J.L. Reed, 23 (Claremont: IAC, 1991); abridged by myself, "Avoiding Another Scrolls Access Furor," *Los Angeles Times*, September 28, 1991, Section F, 13-14; abridged by the editor, "Handling Future Manuscript Discoveries," *BA* (December 1991): 235-240; abridged by Hershel Shanks, "What We Should Do Next Time Great Manuscripts Are Discovered," *BAR* 18/1 (January-February 1992): 66-70; reprinted in unabridged form in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 92 (1992) 281-96.
- 26 In handling the 152 Sixth Century C.E. charred Greek documentary papyri rolls from the Byzantine church in Petra, a conscious effort seems to have been made to introduce clear new policies: "It will be recalled that all parties involved had signed an access/publication agreement and we are happy to report that the final division of the scrolls for publication purposes between the two groups was agreed to in late 1995." Pierre M. Bikai, "Update on the Scrolls," *ACOR Newsletter* 7.2 (Winter 1995) 11.
- 27 See Hans-Martin Schenke, "The Relevance of Nag Hammadi Research to New Testament Scholarship" (a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Chicago, November, 1994).
- 28 The tractate *Zostrianos* (VIII,1) concluded with an encoded subscript: "Zostrianos; Oracles of Truth of Zostrianos, God of Truth; Teachings of Zoroaster." But the text is not Zoroastrian, but Sethian, building on 2 *Enoch*.

- 29 *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1: *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. by James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983) 707–11 (MacRae's introduction), 712–19 (MacRae's translation).
- 30 "From Jewish Apocalypticism to Gnosis" (a paper presented at the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Nag Hammadi Discovery: Copenhagen International Conference on the Nag Hammadi Texts in the History of Religions, September 19–24, 1995 at the Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters).
- 31 *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28–31, 1978*, Vol. 2, *Sethian Gnosticism*, edited by Bentley Layton, Studies in the History of Religions 41, Supplements to *Numen*, (Leiden: Brill, 1981). See especially Hans-Martin Schenke, "The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism," 588–616, and also my contribution, "Sethians and Johannine Thought: The *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the Prologue of the Gospel of John," 643–62, as well as the "Discussion," 662–670, and the "Concluding Discussion," 671–685.
- 32 See Schenke, "Gnosis: Zum Forschungsstand unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der religions-geschichtlichen Problematik, *VF* 32 (1987) 2–21.
- 33 Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 1.29: "Barbelo-Gnostics"; 1.30: "Ophites" and "Sethians") and Epiphanius (*Panarion* 26: "Gnostics"; 39: "Sethians"; 40: "Archontics."
- 34 Jean-Marie Sevrin has worked out the baptismal dimensions of Sethianism, *Le dossier baptismal séthien: Etudes sur la sacramentaire gnostique*; Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, Section "Etudes" 2 (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986).
- 35 Ernst Käsemann, invited to make a presentation at a Faith and Order conference, asked me to verify the English translation of his essay that had been prepared for him. His key term, "eschatologischer Vorbehalt," came through in English in a completely unintelligible way that would lead the audience inevitably to miss the point. So I coined for him the English formulation "eschatological reservation."
- 36 See Gerd Lüdemann, *Heretics: The Other Side of Early Christianity* (London: SCM and New York: Westminster/John Knox, 1996) 120–42 for a full presentation of Colossians, Ephesians, the Pastoral Epistles, and *The Treatise on Resurrection* in this regard.
- 37 *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Uebersetzung*, vol. 1, *Evangelien*, 5th edition, ed. W. Schneemelcher (Tübingen: Mohr / Paul Siebeck, 1989). English tr. *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1. *Gospels and Related Writings*, ed. R. McL. Wilson (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992): *The Apocryphon of James* (I,2), *The Gospel of Thomas* (II,2), *The Gospel of Philip* (II,3), *The Book of Thomas (the Contender)*

- (II,7), *The Dialogue of the Savior* (III,5), *The (First) Apocalypse of James* (V,3), *The (Second) Apocalypse of James*, and *The Letter of Peter to Philip* (VIII,2); vol. 2, *Apostolisches; Apokalysen und Verwandtes*. English tr. *Writings Related to the Apostles, Apocalypses and Related Subjects: The Apocalypse of Paul* (V,5), *The Acts of Peter and the Twelve* (VI,1), and *The Apocalypse of Peter* (VII,3).
- 38 Stephen J. Patterson, "New Testament Apocrypha," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York etc: Doubleday, 1992) 1.295–296.
- 39 Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Vol. 2, *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); *The Apocryphon of James* (I,2), *The Gospel of Truth* (I,3; XII,2), *The Apocryphon of John* (II,1; III,1; IV,1; BG 8502,2), *The Gospel of Thomas* (II,2), *The Hypostasis of the Archons* (II,4), *The Book of Thomas (the Contender)* (II,7), *The Gospel of the Egyptians* (III,2; IV,2), *The Letter of Eugnostos the Blessed* (III,3; V,1), *The Sophia of Jesus Christ* (III,4), *The Dialogue of the Savior* (III,5), *The (First) Apocalypse of James* (V,3), *The (Second) Apocalypse of James* (V,4), *The Apocalypse of Adam* (V,5), *The Paraphrase of Shem* (VII,1), *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (VII,2), and *The Three Steles of Seth* (VII,5).
- 40 C.-H. Hunzinger, "Unbekannte Gleichnisse Jesu aus dem Thomas-Evangelium," in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias*, Beiheft 26 zur ZNW, ed. W. Eltester (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1960; 2nd ed. 1964) 209–20.
- 41 C.-H. Hunzinger, "Aussersynoptisches Traditionsgut im Thomas-Evangelium," *TLZ* 85 (1960) 843–46.
- 42 "Das Gleichnis von den bösen Weingärtnern (Mark. 12.1–5)," *Aux Sources de la tradition chrétienne: Mélanges offerts à M. Maurice Goguel à l'occasion de son soixante dixième anniversaire* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1950) 120–31.
- 43 Stephen J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas And Jesus* (Sonoma: Polembridge, 1993), especially Ch. 2. A Question of Content: *The Autonomy of the Thomas Tradition*, 17–93.
- 44 See *The Books of Elijah Parts 1–2*, collected and translated by Michael E. Stone and John Strugnell (SBL Texts and Translations 18, Pseudepigrapha Series 8, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Harold W. Attridge (Missoula, MO: Scholars, 1979) 41–73 for the many attestations for this saying. In Nag Hammadi it recurs in I,1: A,23–27 (pp. 58–59) and III,5: 140,1–4 (pp. 56–57), in the latter case also ascribed to Jesus, as it is also in other texts (pp. 50–53). See also Takashi Onuki, "Traditionsgeschichte von Thomasevangelium 17 und ihre christologische Relevanz," in: *Anfänge der Christologie: für Ferdinand Hahn zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Cilliers Bretenbach und Henning Paulsen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1991) 399–415, and Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas And Jesus*, 85, and the extensive literature cited by both.

- 45 Nikolaus Walter, "Paulus und die urchristliche Jesustradition," *NTS* 31 (1975) 498–522.
- 46 John S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels: Synopsis, Critical Notes and Concordance* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1988).
- 47 In a letter of October 4, 1995.
- 48 *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum: Locis parallelis evangeliorum apocryphorum et patrum adhibitis* editit Kurt Aland, Editio quindecima revisa (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996 [1997]) 517–46.
- 49 After the SBL presentation R. McLaughlin Wilson listed to me distinguished American New Testament scholars of preceding generations, to relativize talk of the discipline only now coming of age in America. But the scope of the presentation was that of the sociology of knowledge – the structures of the discipline – not individuals, in which one can only agree heartily with Wilson. Among our predecessors my own role model is at least for me preeminent, Ernest Cadman Colwell. Indeed a major part of his distinction consisted in his involving himself actively in such a restructuring of the discipline – in his specialization, New Testament textual criticism, he organized the International Greek New Testament Project, and implemented it by means of the ongoing Textual Critical Seminar of SBL. His coming to grips with the restructuring called for in terms of the sociology of knowledge would have been even more prominent, had not taken place in the generation dominated by biblical theology on the right, and demythologizing, existentialistic hermeneutics on the left.
- 50 Lüdemann, *Heretics*, 230, n. 9: "It was a truly historical moment when at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Francisco in December 1977 this pioneering work of North American biblical scholarship was presented to the public. It made symbolically clear that the former predominance of German exegesis had come to an end forever."

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