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# **The *Gospel of Thomas* Revisited Once More**

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# The *Gospel of Thomas* Revisited Once More\*

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1. Prologue
2. The Original Language of *Thomas*
3. Dating *Thomas*, or the Relationship between *Thomas* and the Synoptic Gospels
4. Tendency of *Thomas*
5. Epilogue

## 1. Prologue

No lengthy justification is necessary in order to discuss on the *Gospel of Thomas*. While it has been an object of intense scholarly debate for several decades, no agreement has been yet achieved among scholars on major issues, such as how to understand the relationship between it and the canonical (especially Synoptic) Gospels, or in which language *Thomas* was originally written (Greek vs. Aramaic or Syriac). Thus *Thomas* still deserves as much attention as it has received at the time of its first publications in the 1950s.

The year 2012 saw the publication of two monographs on *Thomas*, both of which were authored by scholars of British origin who belong to the

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\* This article is a revised version of the paper read at the international conference 'Early Christian Centuries I' held in Melbourne, Australia, 3-5 October 2013.

younger generation of *Thomas* studies<sup>1</sup>. The fact that the monographs were written by British (i.e., English-speaking) scholars is worthy of mention, because in the studies of *Thomas* there seems to be a curious divide between scholars in Europe and those in North America (especially in the U.S.): while in North America many scholars specialized in the studies of *Thomas* adopt the view according to which *Thomas* was compiled independently of the canonical (especially Synoptic) Gospels, in European studies of *Thomas* its independence vis-à-vis the canonical Gospels is not so much favored as in the U.S. In such a *status quaestionis*, it is understandable that British scholars, i.e. English-speaking scholars of European origin, could play an important role, and that the aforementioned two scholars themselves mean to play such a role<sup>2</sup>. And the remarkable thing is that both of them plead for the dependence of *Thomas* vis-à-vis the canonical Gospels, i.e., against the view currently much favored in North America.

How are we to consider such a situation? Perhaps it would be better to stress here that, since I have come in touch with the problems surrounding *Thomas* while studying at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium (at Louvain-la-Neuve), I have a fairly peculiar background for the following discussion. Thus although I will try to present what the recent works of Gathercole and Goodacre have to say for the problems regarding *Thomas*, the presentation will often be interrupted by my personal reflections.

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<sup>1</sup> Simon J. GATHERCOLE, *The Composition of the Gospel of Thomas: Original Language and Influences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; Mark GOODACRE, *Thomas and the Gospels. The Case for Thomas's Familiarity with the Synoptics*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Gathercole seems to feel this necessity very keenly (see e.g. GATHERCOLE, p. 15). It should be noted in passing that, as is pointed out by Gathercole himself (see *ibid.*), many American scholars of *Thomas* studies regrettably do not refer to, if not to say read, secondary literature written in Europe, including the U.K.

## 2. The Original Language of *Thomas*

Since Goodacre does not discuss the problem of the original language of *Thomas* as such, let us take a look at Gathercole's monograph. Gathercole clearly pleads for the Greek original of *Thomas*, and in the Part I of his book ("The Original Language of Thomas") he presents the arguments for his case as follows:

1. The Problem of the Original Language of Thomas (pp. 19–23),
2. Methodological Problems with Semitic Theories (pp. 24–42),
3. Proposed Semitisms in Thomas: a Critical Analysis (pp. 43–104), and
4. Positive Evidence for a Greek-Language Origin (pp. 105–125).

At the outset of the discussion, he enumerates Semitic (Aramaic or Syriac) and Greek as the possible candidates of the original language, and in this context mentions the discussion of Garitte which, according to Gathercole, favors a Coptic original of *Thomas*, and adds that the position of Garitte has not since been followed<sup>3</sup>. This is a serious misrepresentation, however.

Gérard Garitte, who was professor of Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, was one of the first scholars in the world that worked on the text of the Coptic *Thomas*<sup>4</sup>. At his time it was already generally acknowledged that the Coptic *Thomas* contains the same texts as the three fragmentary

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<sup>3</sup> GATHERCOLE, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> His first article on *Thomas*, "Les Parables du Royaume dans l' «Evangile de Thomas»", co-authored by a Belgian New Testament scholar named Lucien Cerfaux, was published in 1957 (*Le Muséon* 70, pp. 307–327), i.e., two years before the international edition of *Thomas* was published simultaneously in several languages from the publisher E.J. Brill (A. GUILLAUMONT et al. (eds.), 1959). Four versions were published simultaneously, namely, (1) Coptic text + English translation, (2) Coptic + French, (3) Coptic + German, and (4) Coptic + Dutch.

papyri, published in the famous papyrological series *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century (P. Oxy. I 1, IV 654 and 655); thus Garitte minutely compared the Coptic and Greek texts. The result of this comparison was then published in 1960 in an article, in which Garitte argued that the *extant* Greek papyri attesting *Thomas* are translations from Coptic<sup>5</sup>. Thus *pace* Gathercole, Garitte did not discuss the original language of *Thomas* in itself, but simply discussed the relationship between the two *extant* (fragmentary) texts of *Thomas*, i.e., Greek and Coptic<sup>6</sup>.

To be sure, the idea that texts of Greek fragments are translations from Coptic is quite unfamiliar even to Coptic scholars. However, since I assume that Garitte is a great scholar as far as the problem of translation in the Christian Orient is concerned<sup>7</sup>, his discussion demands a serious re-

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<sup>5</sup> G. GARITTE, “Les «Logoi» d'Oxyrhynque et l'apocryphe copte dit «Evangile de Thomas»”, *Le Muséon* 73 (1960), pp. 151-172. The refutation of Garitte's arguments was then published in the same journal by A. Guillaumont (A. GUILLAUMONT, “Les Logia d'Oxyrhynchus sont-ils traduits du copte?”, *Le Muséon* 73 (1960), pp. 325-333); as mentioned in the preceding note, Guillaumont was one of the scholars who published the international edition of *Thomas*. Garitte immediately responded to Guillaumont's discussion by publishing in the same fascicle of the same journal another article (G. GARITTE, “Les «Logoi» d'Oxyrhynque sont traduits du copte”, *Le Muséon* 73 (1960), pp. 335-349).

<sup>6</sup> Gathercole's misunderstanding apparently derives partly from the fact that he indeed misunderstood Garitte's position as presented in the latter's articles, and partly from the misrepresentation of Garitte's position made by J.-M. Sevrin (see J.-M. SEVRIN, “L'Evangile selon Thomas. Paroles de Jésus et révélation gnostique”, *Revue théologique de Louvain* 8 (1977), p. 272).

<sup>7</sup> The list of Garitte's publications includes the following: G. GARITTE, *Documents pour l'étude du livre d'Agathange* (Studi e Testi, 127), Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1946, a monograph dealing with the literary tradition which starts from “The History of Agathangelus” originally written in Armenian and was then transmitted through various languages of the Christian Orient; G. GARITTE, “La Vie géorgienne de

examination.

Garitte's discussion rests mainly on the two following arguments.

- (1) P. Oxy. IV 654 l. 10: οἱ ἔλκοντες ἡμᾶς

GTh log. 3: εγὼ αἰχμὴν ἡμεῖς ἡμεῖς τὸν ὁδὸν τῆς ζωῆς

According to Garitte, the underlined Coptic text, which means “Those who lead us”, makes sense, whereas the underlined Greek text, which means “Those who draw (or pull) us”, is unintelligible. Garitte argues that the Greek translator misunderstood the Coptic text, and his argument is quite possible, if not to say probable.

- (2) P. Oxy. I 1 ll. 33-34: οὐδὲ ἰατρὸς ποιεῖ θεραπείας εἰς τοὺς γεινώσκον-  
τας αὐτόν

GTh log. 31: ἡμεῖς ὁδὸν τῆς ζωῆς ἡμεῖς τὸν ὁδὸν τῆς ζωῆς

According to Garitte, a normal Greek would not say *ποιεῖ θεραπείας*, but simply *θεραπεύει*; thus Garitte argues that the Greek expression *ποιεῖ θεραπείας* is a bad translation of the Coptic expression *ἡμεῖς ὁδὸν τῆς ζωῆς*, which itself is a normal Coptic rendering of *θεραπεύει*. And indeed, according to the search of Full TLG (Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, a famous project which consists in digitizing all known texts of ancient and Byzantine Greek) Corpus, instances of the expression *ποιεῖ* (in the active) with *θεραπείας* or *θεραπείαν*

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saint Cyriaque et son modèle arabe”, *Bedi Kartlisa* 28 (1971), pp. 92-105, an article which demonstrates that the Georgian version of the Life of Saint Cyriacus was translated from Arabic, a path of transmission which is not so well trodden; and G. GARITTE, “Traduttore traditore di se stesso”, *Bulletin de la Classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques de l'Académie Royale de Belgique*, 5e série, 57 (1971), pp. 39-80, an article which derives from a magisterial lecture given at the Royal Academy of Belgium, and which deals very broadly with various directions of translation as observed in the Christian Orient. The latter two articles are republished in G. GARITTE, *Scripta Disiecta 1941-1977*, vol. 2 (Publications de l'Institut orientaliste de Louvain, 22), Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain. Institut orientaliste, 1980.

are fairly rare<sup>8</sup>. I think Garitte's judgement that the Greek expression ποιεῖ θεραπείας is not normal remains valid.

Thus although it might be surprising, I think we have to accept these arguments of Garitte, and to think that the Greek fragments preserved in the

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<sup>8</sup> The following 20 instances have been found, in which ποιέω *in the active*, used together with θεραπείας or θεραπείαν, means θεραπεύει: (1) Pseudo-Galenus Med., De optima secta ad Thrasybulum liber. {0530.043} Volume 1 page 161 line 6; (2) Palladius Med., Commentarii in Hippocratis librum sextum de morbis popularibus. {0726.001} Volume 2 page 144 line 7; (3) Alexander Med., Therapeutica. {0744.003} Volume 1 page 447 line 14; (4) Alexander Med., Therapeutica. {0744.003} Volume 1 page 477 line 17; (5) Alexander Med., Therapeutica. {0744.003} Volume 1 page 515 line 9; (6) Socrates Scholasticus Hist., Historia ecclesiastica. {2057.002} Book 4 chapter 23 line 110; (7) Chronicon Paschale, Chronicon paschale. {2371.001} Page 709 line 17; (8) Timotheus Gramm., Excerpta ex libris de animalibus (e cod. Paris. gr. 2422). {2449.003} Section 31 line 15; (9) Marcus Diaconus Scr. Eccl., Vita Porphyrii episcopi Gazensis. {2806.001} Chapter 24 line 2; (10) Oracula Tiburtina, Prophetia. {2960.001} Line 65; (11) Georgius Cedrenus Chronogr., Compendium historiarum. {3018.001} Volume 1 page 688 line 19; (12) Georgius Cedrenus Chronogr., Compendium historiarum. {3018.001} Volume 2 page 31 line 1; (13) Irene Chumnaena Rhet., Epistulae. {3184.001} Epistle 16 line 67; (14) Sylvester Syropulus Hist., Historiae. {3252.001} Book 2 chapter 37 page 144 line 6; (15) Georgius Cantacuzenus Palaeologus Rhet., Epistula ad Constantinum Palaeologum qui missus est in Ragusam. {3306.001} Line 26; (16) Theophanes Confessor Chronogr., Chronographia. {4046.001} Page 392 line 12; (17) Theophanes Confessor Chronogr., Chronographia. {4046.001} Page 478 line 24; (18) Geoponica, Geoponica. {4080.001} Book 5 chapter 35 section 2 line 3; (19) Theodoretus Theol. et Scr. Eccl., Historia ecclesiastica. {4089.003} Page 265 line 6; (20) Suda, Lexicon. {9010.001} Alphabetic letter alpha entry 4251 line 1.

Although one might think that 20 instances are not few, there are some 90 instances in which ποιέω *in the middle* is used together with θεραπείας or θεραπείαν. This latter expression (ποιέω *in the middle* together with θεραπείας or θεραπείαν) is related to the peculiar use of the middle voice of ποιέω (see LSJ A. II. 5), and as we see, the number of instances between the active and the middle is quite different. Thus GUILLAUMONT, art. cit. (see n. 5 above), p. 329 is not correct when he argues, quoting the instance of Plato, *Politicus* 298e (θεραπείας ποιείσθαι), that “que l'on ait le moyen ποιείσθαι au lieu de l'actif ποιεῖν importe peu”. I think Garitte's judgement that the Greek expression ποιεῖ θεραπείας is not normal remains valid.

papyri (at least, two of the three fragments) are translations from Coptic. And this has a serious consequence, since in pleading for the Greek original of *Thomas*, Gathercole naturally presupposes that, in the textual tradition of *Thomas*, the Greek fragments are prior to the Coptic text<sup>9</sup>. Since we follow Garitte, this presupposition cannot be accepted<sup>10</sup>.

A remark should be added here. Although I accept Garitte's arguments, I do not think that the Coptic text of *Thomas* was not translated from Greek. It is probable that the Coptic text of *Thomas* is indeed a translation from Greek, because the beginning of log. 64 has the following passage:

ⲡⲉⲕⲉ ⲓϥ ϫⲉ ⲟⲩⲣⲱⲛⲉ ⲛⲉϥⲛⲓⲧⲁϥ ϩⲛⲱⲛⲓⲟ.

Although the word ⲱⲛⲓⲟ of this passage is generally translated as “guests” or “visitors”, ⲱⲛⲓⲟ originally means “foreigner”, and not “guest”<sup>11</sup>; so the correct translation of this passage should be “Jesus said: A man had foreigners”, which is of course awkward. Furthermore, the context shows that the guests who are invited in this logion are most probably not foreigners nor strangers. Thus it is probable that here the Coptic translator translated a

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<sup>9</sup> His discussion on “Positive evidence for a Greek-language origin” (pp. 105–125) is based on this presupposition.

<sup>10</sup> As mentioned above, Goodacre does not discuss the problem of the original language of *Thomas* at all; he of course presupposes the priority of the Greek fragments of *Thomas* to the Coptic text, and immediately goes on to discuss the relationship between *Thomas* and the canonical (especially Synoptic) Gospels, apparently on the supposition that *Thomas* was originally written in Greek.

<sup>11</sup> According to the most thorough Coptic dictionary, i.e., W.E. CRUM, *A Coptic Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939, the meaning of ⲱⲛⲓⲟ (565b–566b) is explained with the following Greek words: ξένος, ἀλλότριος, ἀλλογενής, προσήλυτος, γειώρας. Except for ξένος, all these words express the notion of being foreign. As for ⲱⲛⲓⲟ as an adjective, its meaning is explained by the Greek word ἕτερος, which of course means “different”.

Greek word ξένος using the Coptic word ⲭⲏⲛⲟ, and because of that the meaning of the Coptic passage sounds strange<sup>12</sup>.

To return to the problem of the original language of *Thomas*, how are we to consider the problem, if we are deprived of using the Greek fragments for the discussion? Two things can be done. The one is to discuss on the theory of Semitic (Aramaic or Syriac) origin, and this is indeed done in a detailed manner by Gathercole<sup>13</sup>; interested readers could simply refer to his discussion.

The second thing we can do for the problem of the original language of *Thomas* is to simply compare passages taken from *Thomas* and the Gospel of Luke. Although both Gathercole and Goodacre make much more detailed comparisons, I propose this rough comparison, because, when one discusses that such and such passage of Matthew or Luke is a Matthean or Lucan redaction etc., that kind of discussion involves (if not to say presupposes) various hypotheses regarding the so-called Synoptic problem, such as Markan priority and Q-hypothesis, which are unacceptable to me<sup>14</sup>. And I am certain that there is no *communis opinio* as to which passage of Matthew or Luke is a Matthean or Lucan redaction respectively. If that is the case, it is better to avoid having recourse to any of those hypotheses.

If one looks at the following passages taken from *Thomas* and Luke,

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<sup>12</sup> However, it should be added that the Greek word ξένος is used in Syriac in a transcribed form, i.e., ܕܡܫܟܝܢܐ. Thus one cannot exclude the possibility that the Coptic word ⲭⲏⲛⲟ is a translation not of the Greek word ξένος but of Syriac word ܕܡܫܟܝܢܐ, the latter of which is of course a transcription of the Greek word.

<sup>13</sup> See the aforementioned sections 2. “Methodological problems with Semitic theories”, and 3. “Proposed Semitisms in Thomas: a critical analysis”.

<sup>14</sup> My position regarding the Synoptic problem is presented in my article: TODA S., “The Reasons Why the Synoptic Problem should be Reconsidered Once Again”, *Hitotsubashi Journal of Arts and Sciences* 53 (2012), pp. 47–78. This article can be viewed on internet at <http://hermes-ir.lib.hit-u.ac.jp/rs/bitstream/10086/25375/1/HJart0530104700.pdf>.

1. GTh log. 16: ογι̃ τ̃ου γαρ ναχωπε ρ̃η ογηει. ογι̃ ωοντ̃ ναχωπε εχ̃η̃ σ̃ηαυ̃  
αυω σ̃ηαυ̃ εχ̃η̃ ωοντ̃ π̃ειωτ̃ εχ̃η̃ π̃ωηρε̃ αυω π̃ωηρε̃ εχ̃η̃ π̃ειωτ̃.

Lc 12: 52-53 (par Mt 10: 35): ἔσονται γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν πέντε ἐν ἐνὶ οἴκῳ διαμεμερισμένοι, τρεις ἐπὶ δυσὶν καὶ δύο ἐπὶ τρισίν, 53 διαμερισθήσονται πατὴρ ἐπὶ υἱῷ καὶ υἱὸς ἐπὶ πατρὶ

one can say that only *Thomas* and Luke agree with each other regarding “five” and “three against two”.

2. GTh log. 31: η̃η̃ προφητης̃ ωηη̃ ρ̃η̃ πεϳ̃η̃ε

Lc 4: 24 (par Mt 13: 57, Mc 6: 4; cf. Jn 4: 44): οὐδεὶς προφήτης δεκτός ἐστιν ἐν τῇ πατρίδι αὐτοῦ

Only *Thomas* and Luke have the expression “acceptable” (Coptic: ωηη, Greek: δεκτός).

3. GTh log. 39: η̃φαρισ̃αιος̃ η̃η̃ η̃γραη̃η̃ατεγ̃ς̃ αχ̃χι̃ η̃ωαω̃τ̃ η̃τ̃τηω̃ς̃  
αυ̃ροπογ̃

Lc 11: 52 (par Mt 23: 13): Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς νομικοῖς, ὅτι ἤρατε τὴν κλεῖδα τῆς γνώσεως

Only *Thomas* and Luke have the expression “key of knowledge” (Coptic: ωαωτ̃ η̃τ̃τηω̃ς̃, Greek: κλεῖδα τῆς γνώσεως).

4. GTh log. 47: η̃αρε̃ ρ̃ωη̃ε̃ σε̃ ρ̃η̃ας̃ αυω̃ η̃τεγ̃η̃ογ̃ η̃ε̃πε̃ω̃η̃ει̃ α̃σω̃ η̃ρη̃  
η̃ρη̃ρε̃

Lc 5: 39 (cf. Mt 9: 14-17, Mc 2: 18-22): οὐδεὶς πῶν παλαιὸν θέλει νέον

This passage belongs to the famous pericope concerning “new wine into fresh wineskins”, but the expression of this passage is, beside *Thomas*, attested solely in Luke.

5. GTh log. 79: ογῑ 2π̄ροογ γαρ ηαμ̄ωπε π̄τεπ̄χοος κε ηεειατ̄ε̄ π̄θη  
ταει ετε π̄παω λγω π̄κιβε ηαῑ επιπογ̄† ερωτε

Lc 23: 29: ὅτι ἰδοὺ ἐρχονται ἡμέραι ἐν αἷς ἐροῦσιν· μακάριαι αἱ στεῖ-  
ραι καὶ αἱ κοιλίαι αἱ οὐκ ἐγέννησαν καὶ μαστοὶ οἱ οὐκ ἔθρεψαν.

The expression of this passage is, beside *Thomas*, attested solely in Luke.

6. GTh log. 89: τεπ̄π̄ηοει λη κε πενταστ̄ηιο π̄παω π̄ρογη̄ π̄τοᾱ οη  
πενταστ̄ηιο π̄παω ηρωα

Lc 11: 40: ἄφρονες, οὐχ ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔξωθεν καὶ τὸ ἔσωθεν ἐποίησεν;

The idea that he who made the inside made also the outside is, beside *Thomas*, attested solely in Luke (although the order is reverse).

These six comparisons clearly show that among the Synoptic Gospels Luke has special relationship with *Thomas*. It appears that somewhere Luke and *Thomas* had contact, which one can regard as a direct one. Where did such a direct contact happen?

Among the three Synoptic Gospels, Luke is the only Gospel that leaves no trace at all of relationship with a Semitic language. We know that there is a legend according to which the Gospel of Matthew was compiled in Hebrew<sup>15</sup>, and we also know that the Gospel of Mark contains several passages in which Aramaic words or expressions are quoted<sup>16</sup>. None of the things of this kind are known concerning Luke; one can say that the textual tradition of Luke revolved exclusively within the Greek-speaking milieu. And if it appears that somewhere Luke and *Thomas* had a direct contact, where did it happen? The place of contact should be somewhere within the Greek-speaking milieu,

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<sup>15</sup> Eusebius Caesarensis, *Historia ecclesiastica*, III 39.16.

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. F.W. DANKER (ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3. ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, s.v. Βοα-  
νηγές; ταλιθα; εφθαθα.

and this means that contact was had in Greek. Thus it is probable that the original language of *Thomas* is Greek.

### 3. Dating *Thomas*, or the Relationship between *Thomas* and the Synoptic Gospels

Dating *Thomas* and discussing the relationship between *Thomas* and the Synoptic Gospels are considered almost the same thing; in fact, both Gathercole and Goodacre, for instance, try to show verbal agreements between *Thomas* and the Synoptic Gospels, and with these agreements in hand, they immediately argue that *Thomas* is later than the Synoptic Gospels, thus dating *Thomas* in a relative manner. It is clear that, in such a discussion on the relationship between *Thomas* and the Synoptic Gospels, Markan priority is presupposed<sup>17</sup>. However, this discussion contains a grave methodological error: Markan priority is a hypothesis which can work in the discussion on the relationship between the Synoptic Gospels, but for the relationship between the Synoptic Gospels and *Thomas*, Markan priority cannot be presupposed, simply because it is not demonstrated in that regard. Concerning the relationship between *Thomas* and the Synoptic Gospels, no discussion in which Markan priority is presupposed can be accepted. From this viewpoint, one has to say that Gathercole's discussion in the part II "The Synoptic Gospels and *Thomas*" is an unhappy discussion.

Goodacre's discussion should still retain us here, because beyond discussing the relative chronology of the Gospels (including *Thomas*) on the basis of Markan priority, Goodacre also proposes some concrete evidence for

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<sup>17</sup> This fact is explicitly mentioned in GATHERCOLE, p. 146: "The method to be adopted here ... can be summed up as follows: Markan priority is assumed as a foundation", and implicitly understood in GOODACRE.

the dating of *Thomas*, based on the discussion made by the late German coptologist Hans-Martin Schenke. Schenke's discussion is concerned with log. 68:

ΠΕΧΕ ΙϞ ΧΕ ΠΤΩΤΠ̄ 2ΠΗΑΚΑΡΙΟC 2ΟΤΑΗ ΕΥΩΑΗΗΕCΤΕ ΤΗΥΤΠ̄ ΠCΕΡ̄ΛΙΩΚΕ  
ΠΗΩΤΠ̄. ΑΥΩ CΕΗΑ2Ε ΑΗ ΕΤΟΠΟC 2Π ΠΗΑ ΕΗΤΑΥΛΙΩΚΕ ΠΗΩΤΠ̄ 2ΡΑ Π2ΗΤΥ.  
(Goodacre's translation) Jesus says, "Blessed are you when they hate you  
and persecute you. But they (themselves) will find no place at the place  
where they have persecuted you."

According to Schenke followed by Goodacre, since the word "they" means persecutors of Christians, i.e., Jews, the sentence "they will find no place at the place where they have persecuted to you" can only refer to Palestine, "or more especially, to Jerusalem"; thus it "points to the banishment of the Jews from Jerusalem after the year 135 C.E."<sup>18</sup>

It would be marvellous if one can find such a clear indication of time in *Thomas*, in which lack of narrative, or rather lack of any temporal framework, is so conspicuous. And in reality, the situation does not seem so clear-cut: in log. 68, it is possible to translate verbal forms of 3rd person plural (used four times: ΕΥΩΑΗΗΕCΤΕ, ΠCΕΡ̄ΛΙΩΚΕ, CΕΗΑ2Ε, ΕΗΤΑΥΛΙΩΚΕ) not in the active but in the passive (which is a perfectly normal practice when translating Coptic texts), and in that case the translation would be as follows (other slight modifications are also incorporated):

Jesus said, "Blessed are you when you are hated and persecuted. And  
no place will be found at the place where you were persecuted."

Based on this translation, which I think should be definitely preferred to Goodacre's, one would not be able to argue as Schenke did. It is safer to think that *Thomas* provides no clear evidence regarding *terminus post quem*.

Then how can we try to date *Thomas*, in a manner either absolute or

<sup>18</sup> GOODACRE, p. 170, quoting Schenke, "On the Compositional History", p. 28.

relative, if we cannot have recourse to Markan priority, and if *Thomas* has no clear evidence regarding the time of its composition? In my view, if one can recognize any tendency in *Thomas* and this tendency can be situated in time, that will in some way serve as an argument for dating *Thomas*.

#### 4. Tendency of *Thomas*

Here I come back again to my special background by quoting some articles of Jean-Marie Sevrin, another professor (now emeritus) of the Catholic University of Louvain. Although his articles on *Thomas* are largely neglected in the U.S. and in Europe, in my view they succeed in recognizing in *Thomas* a tendency which can be called in a sense Gnostic.

Sevrin's argument is best understood when looking at the series of parables which are found in log. 63, 64 and 65 (Sevrin sums up these three as "parables against the riches"<sup>19</sup>). The following is his French translation of log. 65<sup>20</sup>.

(1) Il a dit: Un homme, un [usurier], avait une vigne, qu'il donna à des vigneronns pour qu'ils la travaillent et qu'il en perçoive le fruit de leurs mains. (2) Il envoya son serviteur pour que les vigneronns lui donnent le fruit de la vigne. (3) Ils saisirent son serviteur et le frappèrent, peu s'en fallut qu'ils ne le tuent. Le serviteur s'en alla et (le) dit à son maître. (4) Son maître dit: Peut-être *ne les a-t-il pas connus*. (5) Il envoya un autre serviteur; les vigneronns frappèrent l'autre aussi. (6) Alors le maître envoya son fils. Il dit: Peut-être respecteront-ils mon fils? (7) Ces

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<sup>19</sup> Jean-Marie SEVRIN, "Un groupement de trois paraboles contre les richesses dans l'Evangile selon Thomas. EvTh 63, 64, 65", in: *Les paraboles évangéliques. Perspectives nouvelles. XIIe congrès de l'ACFEB, Lyon (1987)*, Paris: Cerf, 1989, pp. 425-439.

<sup>20</sup> Accessible on internet at [http://www.naghammadi.org/traductions/textes/evangile\\_thomas.asp](http://www.naghammadi.org/traductions/textes/evangile_thomas.asp); italics mine.

vignerons, lorsqu'ils *connurent* que c'est lui l'héritier de la vigne, s'emparèrent de lui et le tuèrent. (8) Celui qui a des oreilles, qu'il entende !

In this parable, Sevrin proposes to read the word “connaître” (Coptic: ⲕⲟⲟⲩⲏⲩ)<sup>21</sup> as a key word which shows the judgement of the author of *Thomas*: he argues that, for the author of *Thomas*, those who “know” are on the positive side, and those who “do not know” are on the negative side. In light of this interpretation, it follows that the servant of the possessor of the vineyard, who “does not know”, is on the negative side, and that the vineyard workers (“vignerons”), who “knew” and killed the son of the possessor of the vineyard, are on the positive side! And Sevrin links this interpretation with an important textual modification: in the beginning of this logion 65 there is a word which reads on the manuscript ⲟⲩⲣⲱⲛⲓⲉ ⲡⲭⲣⲏⲓ ⲓⲥ, and although this lacuna is often filled as ⲡⲭⲣⲏⲓⲥⲧⲟⲓⲥ “good, useful”, which does not make good sense, Sevrin proposes to read ⲡⲭⲣⲏⲓⲥⲧⲏⲓⲥ “usurer”, an interpretation which I think makes perfect sense. And if this interpretation of Sevrin is correct, then it would follow that the aforementioned tendency can also be called anti-capitalist.

Related to this anti-capitalist tendency is another key word “suffer” (Coptic: ⲉⲓⲥⲉ), which shows toil and trouble of those who work (e.g. the vineyard workers!)<sup>22</sup>. That those who “suffer” (French: peiner) are on the positive side is clear from log. 58, which I quote again in Sevrin’s translation

<sup>21</sup> See SEVRIN, “Un groupement”, pp. 435-436. Frequent use of this word in *Thomas* is also noted by GOODACRE, p. 182, but Goodacre fails to recognize the tendency recognized by Sevrin.

<sup>22</sup> Special attention to this word “suffer” (Coptic: ⲉⲓⲥⲉ) is paid in J.-M. SEVRIN, “L’interprétation de l’Evangile selon Thomas, entre tradition et rédaction”, in: J.D. TURNER & A. MCGUIRE (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, p. 357.

(italics mine):

Jésus a dit: Heureux l'homme qui *a peiné*, il a trouvé la vie.

And in light of this interpretation, the aforementioned possessor of the vineyard can be characterized as someone who does not “suffer”, i.e., does not take toil and trouble on himself. An investor who himself does not work is to be condemned. Likewise it appears that, according to the author of *Thomas*, the man who in log. 63 had much capital and conceived plans of investment is on the negative side. This reading or interpretation of Sevrin can also be extended to other logia, and as far as I can see, no logion contradicts this interpretation.

This anti-capitalist tendency of *Thomas*, identified by Sevrin and which he regards also as a Gnostic tendency<sup>23</sup>, deserves much more attention. And if this interpretation can be accepted, then it would follow that, since Gnosticism is normally considered to have flourished in the second century, i.e., the period after the New Testament, a document which reveals such a tendency should be dated later than the New Testament. Such a discussion is admittedly vague as a discussion of dating, but since no firm evidence can be obtained for the moment, we should be content with a vague discussion like this.

## 5. Epilogue

Referring to the two recent studies on the *Gospel of Thomas*, we have

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<sup>23</sup> On this point Sevrin argues that, since *Thomas* contains the idea which identifies gnosis with life, *Thomas* can be called Gnostic. See J.-M. SEVRIN, “La rédaction des paraboles dans l'*Évangile de Thomas*”, in: M. RASSART-DEBERGH & J. RIES (eds.), *Actes du IV<sup>e</sup> congrès copte. Louvain-la-Neuve, 5-10 septembre 1988*, vol. 2: *De la linguistique au gnosticisme* (Publications de l'Institut orientaliste de Louvain, 41), Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain. Institut orientaliste, 1992, p. 353.

seen how to deal with the important problems surrounding *Thomas*. At the end of this article, however, it should be stressed that the interest in *Thomas* was initially, and I should say soundly, linked with other documents which transmit Jesus's sayings (so-called *Agrapha*), and that the excessive concentration of scholarly resources on the problems surrounding *Thomas* (especially the relationship between *Thomas* and the Synoptic Gospels) ironically and strangely contributed to lessening the aforementioned initial (and much broader) interest in Jesus's sayings. Now is it not high time to go back to the quest of original problems? I am convinced that it is this quest that will allow us to properly situate *Thomas*, as well as the *Gospel of Judas* which was an object of journalistic sensation some years ago, in the context of the second century which was a most confused and thus most attractive century for the history of ancient Christianity.