

THOMAS IN EDESSA?
ANOTHER LOOK AT THE ORIGINAL SETTING
OF THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

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Over the course of the last fifteen years, Jan N. Bremmer has constantly promoted, and made a significant contribution to, the study of Christian apocryphal texts, especially the second and third-century *Acts of John*, *Acts of Paul*, *Acts of Peter*, *Acts of Andrew*, and *Acts of Thomas*, to which the prestigious series he founded in 1995 and still directs, 'Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha', was originally dedicated.¹ In spite of the lack of external evidence, the anonymity of their authors, and the great fluidity of the texts, Bremmer was able to identify a plausible setting for at least four of these 'magnificent five' apocryphal acts of the apostles, originally written in Greek between the middle (*Acts of John* and *Acts of Paul*) and the end (*Acts of Peter* and *Acts of Andrew*) of the second century, probably in Pisidia and Bithynia (central and northern Asia Minor), the only exception being the *Acts of Thomas*, which was written in Syriac in the 230s, almost certainly in Edessa (Osrhoene).² As in the case of ancient novels, the apocryphal acts of the apostles were particularly appreciated by upper-class and well-educated women;³ in contrast however, their

¹ Previously known as 'Studies on the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles', ten volumes have been published so far—J.N. Bremmer (ed.), *The Apocryphal Acts of John* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995); idem, *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996); idem, *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles and Gnosticism* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998); P.J. Lalleman, *The Acts of John: A Two-stage Initiation into Johannine Gnosticism* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998); J.N. Bremmer (ed.), *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000); idem, *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001); idem and I. Czachesz (eds.), *The Apocalypse of Peter* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003); I. Czachesz, *Commission Narratives: A Comparative Study of the Canonical and Apocryphal Acts* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007); J.N. Bremmer and I. Czachesz (eds.), *The Visio Pauli and the Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007); J.N. Bremmer (ed.), *The Pseudo-Clementines* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009).

² J.N. Bremmer, "The Apocryphal Acts: Authors, Place, Time and Readership", in *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, 149–170 (152–154 and 157–159); idem, "The Acts of Thomas: Place, Date and Women", in *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, 74–90 (74–78).

³ Bremmer, "Apocryphal Acts", 160–170; idem, "Acts of Thomas", 79–90.

main focus was ‘on the martyrdom of an apostle, and chastity [was] the happy end, not marriage’.⁴

While these conclusions are quite reasonable and accepted by a large majority of specialists,⁵ we would like to seize the occasion of this homage being offered to such a renowned scholar of apocryphal literature in order to take issue with an old and debated question intimately related to the Edessene setting of the *Acts of Thomas*. Actually, when the late Henri-Charles Puech (1902–1986), Antoine Guillaumont (1915–2000), and Gilles Quispel (1916–2006) began studying the Sahidic (Coptic) texts copied in the second codex of the Nag Hammadi library, they discovered the first of two new pieces of Thomasine literature, the famous *Gospel of Thomas* (NHC 2.2), a collection of one hundred and fourteen ‘hidden sayings’ of Jesus independent from those preserved in the canonical gospels,⁶ followed later by the *Book of Thomas (the Contender)* (NHC 2.7), a less well-known dialogue between the risen Christ and his brother Judas Thomas.⁷ Impressed by the presence of many Aramaisms which were

⁴ Bremmer, “Apocryphal Acts”, 165.

⁵ See, in general, H.-J. Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction* (translation B. McNeil; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008). As for the Syriac origins of the *Acts Thom.*, this view was staunchly defended, more than a century ago, by F. Crawford Burkitt, “The Original Language of the *Acts of Judas Thomas*”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 1 (1899): 280–290; idem, *Early Christianity Outside the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899), 72–75; idem, “Another Indication of the Syriac Origin of the *Acts of Thomas*”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1901): 94–95.

⁶ In our opinion, the analysis of *meaningful* variants—to adopt a text critical category—clearly demonstrates the primary independence of the *Gos. Thom.* from the Synoptics and the Gospel of John, while some minor agreements could possibly betray but secondary oral and/or scribal influences. For a first orientation on this and other controversial questions, see D.W. Kim, “The Wind-blowing Desert: Thomasine Scholarship”, *Journal of Coptic Studies* 8 (2006): 87–101; S.J. Patterson, “The *Gospel of Thomas* and Historical Jesus Research”, in *Coptica—Gnostica—Manichaica. Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (eds. L. Painchaud and P.-H. Poirier; Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval and Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 663–684; N. Perrin, “Recent Trends in *Gospel of Thomas* Research (1991–2006): Part I, The Historical Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels”, *Currents in Biblical Research* 5 (2007): 183–206; C.L. Quarles, “The Use of the *Gospel of Thomas* in the Research on the Historical Jesus of John Dominic Crossan”, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69 (2007): 517–536; C. Gianotto, “Il *Vangelo secondo Tommaso* e il problema storico di Gesù”, in *Lenigma Gesù. Fonti e metodi della ricerca storica* (ed. E. Prinzivalli; Rome: Carocci, 2008), 68–93; P. Piovaneli, “‘Un gros et beau poisson’: L’Évangile selon *Thomas* dans la recherche (et la controverse) contemporaine(s)”, *Adamantius* 15 (2009): in press.

⁷ Valuable translations of both texts can be found in M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 133–156 (M. Meyer) and 235–245 (J.D. Turner and M. Meyer); J.-P. Mahé and P.-H. Poirier (eds.), *Écrits gnostiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 297–329 (J.-M. Sevrin) and 487–508 (R. Kuntzmann).

still detectable—so they thought—in the Sahidic version of the *Gospel of Thomas*;⁸ by some special readings it shares with Tatian's *Diatessaron*, the Syriac harmony of the four Gospels written between around 165 and 180 CE;⁹ by the identification of the apostle Judas Thomas as the 'twin brother' (Aramaic *tōmā*, Greek *didymos*) of Jesus,¹⁰ as well as the similarity of the ascetic perspectives on marriage and sexuality that the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Acts of Thomas* have in common, not to mention their additional connections to Mani's doctrine of the heavenly Double (Greek *syzygos*)¹¹ and the eastern Syrian spirituality of Aphraates or the *Liber Graduum*¹²—it was only natural that this first generation of scholars would think of Edessa as the best place to locate the original composition of Thomasine literature.

⁸ See A. Guillaumont, "Sémitismes dans les logia de Jésus retrouvés à Nag-Hammâdi", *Journal asiatique* 246 (1958): 113–123; idem, "NĒSTEYEIN TON KOSMON (P. Oxy. 1, verso, 1.5–6)", *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 61 (1962): 15–23; idem, "Les sémitismes dans l'Évangile selon Thomas. Essai de classement", in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions Presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (eds. R. van den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 190–204.

⁹ See G. Quispel, "L'Évangile selon Thomas et le Diatessaron" (1959), in idem, *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1975), 31–55; idem, *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas: Studies in the History of the Western Diatessaron* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 174–190; idem, "Gnosis and the New Sayings of Jesus" (1971), in idem, *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 2, 180–209; idem, "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited", in *Colloque International sur les textes de Nag Hammadi (Québec, 22–25 août 1978)* (ed. B. Barc; Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval and Leuven: Peeters, 1981), 218–266. On Quispel and his critics, see W.L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 272–300.

¹⁰ First noticed by H.-C. Puech, "Une collection de paroles de Jésus récemment retrouvée: l'Évangile selon Thomas" (1957), in idem, *En quête de la Gnose. II: Sur l'Évangile selon Thomas. Esquisse d'une interprétation systématique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978) 33–57 (42–45); idem, "Histoire des religions. I: Doctrines ésotériques et thèmes gnostiques dans l'Évangile selon Thomas: christologie, eschatologie, sotériologie" (1970), in idem, *En quête de la Gnose. II*, 200–219 (211–216). On the Thomas Didymos tradition, also see R. Kuntzmann, *Le symbolisme des jumeaux au Proche-Orient ancien. Naissance, fonction et évolution d'un symbole* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1983), 164–182.

¹¹ See H.-C. Puech, "Histoire des religions. I: Doctrines ésotériques et thèmes gnostiques dans l'Évangile selon Thomas: christologie, eschatologie, sotériologie" (1971), in idem, *En quête de la Gnose. II*, 219–241.

¹² G. Quispel, "The Syrian Thomas and the Syrian Macarius" (1964), in idem, *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 2, 113–121 (120), describes it as a combination of 'the Christian message of celibacy with a theology of Paradise regained: Adam, complete and pure, fell into sexuality by eating the forbidden fruit, but Christ restored the original purity and therefore abolished marriage'. Quispel's perception of the Jewish Christian and encratic origins of eastern Syrian Christianity was especially dependent on the works of Francis Crawford Burkitt (1864–1935), Jean Daniélou (1905–1974), and Arthur Vööbus (1909–1988). See, e.g., Quispel, "Gospel of Thomas Revisited", 236.

Quispel is the specialist who has elaborated the most comprehensive hypothesis about the composition of the *Gospel of Thomas*. We can gain an understanding of his views from the clarification he presented at the International Conference on the Nag Hammadi Texts held in Quebec, in 1978:

The author of the Gospel of Thomas lived in Edessa in Mesopotamia. He was an encratite, rejecting women, wine and meat, and therefore taught that only bachelors could go to heaven. His religious ideal was typically Syrian, the *ihidaja* or *monachos*, i.e. the androgynous man or woman. He did not intend his document to be esoteric, but an exoteric, accessible writing containing divine Sayings whose saving sense could be grasped by spiritual men.

[T]he author of the Gospel of Thomas, when composing his Gospel in Edessa in the course of the second century [about 140 CE], used a written Jewish Christian source [that is, the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans*], which contained a tradition independent of our Gospels and cannot have been other than a Gospel in the current sense of the word.

[He also used an encratite source (that is, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*) and] a Hermetic gnomology for formulating those Hellenising sayings which speak about the knowledge of the Self and which have no parallels in the Gospel of the Egyptians and do not form doublets with Jewish Christian Logia.¹³

In the same period, parallel to Quispel's efforts to enroll the *Gospel of Thomas* into the Edessene encratic tradition, Helmut Koester was beginning to single out a Thomasine community that would represent the missing link between the earliest Jesus movement and later 'Gnostic' groups.¹⁴ Building on the insights of Walter Bauer (1877–1960) about the

¹³ Quispel, "Gospel of Thomas Revisited", 234, 253, and 266 respectively. In his opinion (265), the author of the *Gospel of Thomas* is responsible for *logia* 1, 14–15, 18, 24, 29, 43, 49, 51–53, 59–60, 75, 85, 105, 108, 110–111a; the Jewish Christian Gospel is the source for *logia* 2, 5–6, 8–10, 12, 16–17, 20, 23, 25–28, 30–36, 38–42, 44–48, 54–55, 57–58, 61a, 62–66, 68, 69b, 71–73, 76, 77b–79, 81–82, 84, 86, 88–90, 93–100, 103–104, 107, 109, 113; to the encratic source belong *logia* 4, 11, 19, 21–22, 37, 69a, 70, 74, 77a, 83, 91–92, 101–102, 106, 114; finally, *logia* 3, 7, 50, 56, 67, 80, 87, 111b–112 are taken from an hermetic anthology.

¹⁴ H. Koester, "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI: The Origin and Nature of Diversification in the History of Early Christianity" (1965), in J.M. Robinson and H. Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 114–157 (126–143); H. Koester, "One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels" (1968), in Robinson and Koester, *Trajectories*, 158–204 (166–187); H. Koester, "Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels" (1980), in idem, *From Jesus to the Gospels: Interpreting the New Testament in Its Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 3–23 (9–14); idem, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM Press and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 20–21 and 75–128.

‘heretical’ origins of Christianity in Osrhoene, Koester posited this as a hypothetical location for an early mission of ‘Judas, the (twin) brother of Jesus, (...) the Apostle of Edessa.’¹⁵ On the one hand, a rigorous form critical analysis of the *logia* of the *Gospel of Thomas* had convinced him that such an apocryphal gospel belongs to the earliest stages of the transmission of Jesus’ sayings. The situation of the *Gospel of Thomas* is therefore comparable to that of the synoptic sayings source Q, with the difference that the first—or better, its *Urtext*

must have been a[n earlier] version of Q in which the apocalyptic expectation of the Son of Man was missing, and in which Jesus’ radicalized [that is, realized] eschatology of the Kingdom and his revelation of divine wisdom in his own words were the dominant motifs.¹⁶

On the other hand, the new evidence provided by the *Book of Thomas (the Contender)*, to be inserted into a chain of eastern Syrian traditions going

¹⁵ Robinson and Koester, *Trajectories*, 133. G. Quispel, *Makarius, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 66–67, was more inclined to accept as historically reliable the tradition of an apostolic Jewish Christian mission to Edessa behind the legend of Judas Thomas sending there Addai, one of the seventy disciples, according to the Syriac text quoted by Eusebius (who calls the disciple Thaddeus, in *h.e.* 1.13.4, 10) and the late fourth – early fifth-century *Doctrina Addai*, on which see J.B. Segal, *Edessa: ‘The Blessed City’* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970); A. Desreumaux, *Histoire du roi Abgar et de Jésus* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993); H.J.W. Drijvers, “The Protonike Legend, the *Doctrina Addai*, and Bishop Rabbula of Edessa”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997): 298–315; S.H. Griffith, “The *Doctrina Addai* as a Paradigm of Christian Thought in Edessa in the Fifth Century”, *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 6 (2002) (<http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol6No2/HV6N2Griffith.html>); A. Mirkovic, *Prelude to Constantine: The Abgar Tradition in Early Christianity* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2004). Walter Bauer’s view—expressed in his influential work *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (translation R.A. Kraft and G. Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 35–39—that the Addai legend was but a late attempt to provide a perfectly apostolic pedigree to a Church whose origins were not so orthodox, has been, however, confirmed by further studies such as H.J.W. Drijvers, “Addai und Mani. Christentum und Manichäismus im dritten Jahrhundert in Syrien”, in *III Symposium Syriacum, 1980: Les contacts du monde syriaque avec les autres cultures (Goslar 7–11 septembre 1980)* (ed. R. Lavenant; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1983), 171–185, that stresses the anti-Manichaean nature of the Abgar saga, a certain Addai being one of the most prominent collaborators of Mani. Moreover, Addai(os) is also the name of the envoy that James, the brother of Jesus, sends out of Jerusalem—not necessarily to Edessa—to ensure the transmission of his revealed knowledge in the *1 Apoc. Jas.* (NHC 5.3, p. 36, line 15–p. 38, line 11; Al Minya Codex 2, p. 23, line 10–p. 25, line 14). Manifestly, the mention of the apostle Thaddeus/Addai in the stories about the christianization of Edessa is but a secondary recuperation of older traditions originally not necessarily linked to the Osrhoene.

¹⁶ Robinson and Koester, *Trajectories*, 186. Koester was relying here on the seminal study of J.M. Robinson, “*LOGOI SOPHON*: On the Gattung of Q”, in Robinson and Koester, *Trajectories*, 71–113.

from the *Gospel of Thomas* to the *Acts of Thomas*, seemed to substantiate the very existence of an ancient Thomasine school in Edessa.¹⁷

In spite of some criticism,¹⁸ it was on these premises—especially on the foundations laid down by Quispel and Koester—that the most important advances in the research on the *Gospel of Thomas* and its original setting have been accomplished during the last twenty years. Leaving aside the delicate question of the—in our opinion, legitimate—use of the *Gospel of Thomas* in the Third Quest for the Historical Jesus,¹⁹ we would like to focus on the extraordinary contribution to Thomas studies recently made by April D. DeConick, an American heir of Quispel's work, beginning with her hypothesis of early contacts and polemical exchanges between the group of Thomas and the community of the Beloved Disciple.²⁰

¹⁷ Firstly mentioned almost *en passant* in Robinson and Koester, *Trajectories*, 80–84, 127 and 136; Puech, *En quête de la Gnose. II*, 236–237, the inclusion of the *Book of Thomas (the Contender)* into the Thomas tradition has been more vocally advocated by J.D. Turner, *The Book of Thomas the Contender from Codex II of the Cairo Gnostic Library from Nag Hammadi (CG II, 7)* (Missoula, MT: Scholar's Press, 1975), 232–237; J.D. Turner and B. Layton, “Tractate 7: The Book of Thomas the Contender Writing to the Perfect”, in *The Coptic Gnostic Library: Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7. II: On the Origin of the World, Expository Treatise on the Soul, Book of Thomas the Contender* (ed. B. Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 171–205 (177). Also see B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 357–409; S.J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1993), 121–157 (inscription of the community of Thomas in the continuity with the *Wanderradikalismus* of the Jesus movement); G.J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 157–175; Meyer, *Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, 779–783.

¹⁸ Doubts about the Thomasine identity of the *Book of Thomas (the Contender)* have been expressed by H.-M. Schenke, *Das Thomas-Buch (Nag-Hammadi-Codex II, 7)* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1989), 65, and P.-H. Poirier, “Évangile de Thomas, Actes de Thomas, Livre de Thomas. Une tradition et ses transformations”, *Apocrypha* 7 (1996): 9–26; idem, “The Writings Ascribed to Thomas and the Thomas Tradition”, in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (eds. J.D. Turner and A. McGuire; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 295–307. More drastically, the reality of a Thomasine community has been questioned by P.H. Sellev, “Thomas Christianity: Scholars in Quest of a Community”, in *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* (above, n. 1), 11–35.

¹⁹ On the scholarly achievements of the late Robert W. Funk (1926–2005), John Dominic Crossan, and other members of the Jesus Seminar, see the surveys quoted above, n. 6.

²⁰ A.D. DeConick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 72–73; eadem, “‘Blessed Are Those Who Have not Seen’ (Jn 20:29): Johannine Dramatization of an Early Christian Discourse”, in *Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years* (above, n. 18), 381–398; eadem, *Voices of the Mystics: Early Christian Discourse in the Gospels of John and Thomas and Other Ancient Christian Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); eadem, “John Rivals Thomas: From

Actually, Gregory J. Riley had already argued that the well-known episode of doubting Thomas in John 20:24–29,

Unless I see in his hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe,

points to a debate on the corporality of the resurrection, apparently denied by those invoking the authority of Thomas.²¹ As for DeConick, she has convincingly argued that the target of the Gospel of John's hostility was but the mystical practice of the Thomasine faithful. Such an antagonism is noticeable in the question and answer dialogues between Jesus and Thomas in John 14:3–7 (where Jesus posits himself as the only 'way' [ἡ ὁδός] through which 'one comes to the Father') and 14:20–23 (to a new query by 'Judas, not Iscariot', Jesus replies that in the future he will 'disclose' himself [ἐμφανίξειν, the same technical term that Philo employs to describe the vision of the divine glory in Exodus 33:13 and 18] to those who love him not in a visible way, but making his abode with them), as well as in the doubting Thomas episode, in which Jesus' final words ('blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed') stress the fact that faith is far more important than vision.²² According to DeConick, it is even

historically plausible that the Johannine author created a 'faith mysticism' as a polemical response to the mystical ascent soteriology such as that found in the *Gospel of Thomas*.²³

Community Conflict to Gospel Narrative", in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition: New Directions* (eds. T. Thatcher and R. Fortna; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 303–312.

²¹ Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered*, 69–126.

²² DeConick, "Blessed Are Those Who Have not Seen"; eadem, *Voices of the Mystics*, 68–85; eadem, "John Rivals Thomas". The centrality of faith against vision in Johannine theology had been previously emphasized by C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 179–186.

²³ DeConick, *Voices of the Mystics*, 68. In a similar vein, E.H. Pagels, "Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the *Gospels of Thomas* and John" (1999), in eadem, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (New York: Random House, 2003), 30–73 and 197–206, thinks that the Gospel of John was written in response to the theses of the *Gospel of Thomas*. While I. Dunderberg, "John and *Thomas* in Conflict?", in *Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years* (above, n. 18), 361–380; idem, "Thomas' I-sayings and the Gospel of John" and "Thomas and the Beloved Disciple", in *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas* (ed. R. Uro; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 33–64 and 65–88; idem, *The Beloved Disciple in Conflict? Revisiting the Gospels of John and Thomas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), is more skeptical about the possibility of any kind of relation, literary or otherwise, between the two gospels.

The obvious conclusion of this state of affairs should be that, at a certain point in time and space, some members of the Johannine community came into contact with either an oral or a written form of the Thomasine doctrines and decided to refute them through the medium of didactic dialogues between Jesus and the disciples that would later be included in the actual Gospel of John. These exchanges should have happened at a relatively early date, probably in Greek, possibly in an area close enough to the final settlement—either in Ephesus or in Antioch—of the Johannine community.²⁴

One should also note that DeConick applies the methods and insights of ‘performance criticism’ inspired by anthropology, ethnography, and folklore studies to early Christian gospels, including the Gospel of John and the *Gospel of Thomas*.²⁵ She conceives of these ancient texts as the repositories of multilayered communal memories transmitting a series of teachings constantly reactualized according to the historical evolution of the groups responsible for them. This means that, before having been fixed in the only integral copy discovered so far, the *Gospel of Thomas* was a dynamic entity, a work truly ‘in progress’ or, adopting William McKane’s terminology, a ‘rolling book’ or ‘corpus’.²⁶

²⁴ In this connection, S.L. Davies, “The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992): 663–682 (682), wonders if it would be possible to locate the origins of both gospels in the same (proto-Johannine) community. On the Johannine community, see the classical works of O. Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle: Its Place in Judaism, among the Disciples of Jesus and in Early Christianity. A Study in the Origin of the Gospel of John* (translation J. Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1976); R.A. Culpepper, *The Johannine School: An Evaluation of the Johannine-school Hypothesis Based on an Investigation of the Nature of Ancient Schools* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975); R.E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); M. Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (translation J. Bowden; London: SCM Press and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), as well as H.W. Attridge, “Johannine Christianity”, in *The Cambridge History of Christianity. I: Origins to Constantine* (eds. M.M. Mitchell and F.M. Young; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 125–142.

²⁵ See, e.g., W.J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982); J.M. Foley (ed.), *Oral Tradition in Literature: Interpretation in Context* (Columbia, MS: University of Missouri Press, 1986); J. Goody, *The Power of the Written Tradition* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000). One of the first specialists to successfully apply them to early Christian literature was W.H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

²⁶ A.D. DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas: A History of the Gospel and Its Growth* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 3–63; eadem, *The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation: With a Commentary and New English Translation of the Complete Gospel* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 2–24; eadem, “Read-

Instead of feeling discouraged by the perspective of such a great fluidity, DeConick has not hesitated to become engaged within what she calls a ‘new *traditionsgeschichtliche* approach.’ In order to retrieve the original kernel of the earliest Jesus sayings buried under the different strata of secondary sedimentation, she has patiently removed interpretative sentences, questions and answers and other retrospective dialogues, not to mention anachronisms such as concerns about the death of the eyewitnesses, the delay of the *parousia*, or the arrival of new converts of Gentile origins, so typical of Christian communities in the second half of the first century CE.²⁷ The result of DeConick’s restoration of the original colors of the *Gospel of Thomas* is a core of five great discourses, each of them opening with an exhortation to seek the truth or a promise to receive a revelation of the divine mysteries (*logia* 2, 17, 38:1, 62:1, 92) and closing with a saying about the end of the world (*logia* 16:1–3, 36, 61:1, 91:2, 111:1).²⁸ The first speech is about ‘eschatological urgency’; the second, on the ‘eschatological challenges of discipleship’; the third, on the ‘exclusive commitment to Jesus’; the fourth, on ‘the selection of the worthy few’; and the fifth, on ‘the imminent Kingdom of God.’²⁹ The antiquity of this original kernel is demonstrated not only by the presence in it of all the *logia* that the *Gospel of Thomas* shares with the sayings source Q, but also by some significant parallels—both formal and theological (Jesus as prophet

ing the *Gospel of Thomas* as a Repository of Early Christian Communal Memory”, in *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (eds. A. Kirk and T. Thatcher; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 207–220; eadem, “The *Gospel of Thomas*”, *Expository Times* 118 (2007): 469–479 (474–476). For the concept of ‘rolling book / corpus’, see W. McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah. I: Introduction and Commentary on Jeremiah I–XXV* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), xlix–xcix.

²⁷ DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel*, 64–110. Needless to say, such an approach is very close, *mutatis mutandis*, to the methodology used to ‘strip away’ the various redactional accretions from canonical and extracanonical written sources in Historical Jesus research, as well as the stratigraphic approach applied to the sayings source Q by J.S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); idem, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); idem, *Q, the Earliest Gospel: An Introduction to the Original Stories and Sayings of Jesus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

²⁸ Thus, e.g., the fifth and last discourse begins with *logion* 92 (in DeConick’s translation, ‘Jesus said, “Seek and you will find. However, the questions you asked me previously but which I did not address then, now I want to address, yet you do not seek [answers]”) and ends with *logion* 111:1 (‘Jesus said, “The heavens and the earth will roll up in your presence”).

²⁹ DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel*, 113–122.

of God promoted to the angelic dignity and appointed to execute the Judgment)—that it shares with the corpus of the *Pseudo-Clementines*.³⁰

In this context, DeConick's reconstruction of the development of the Son of Man tradition leads her to conclude that the Christology of the kernel

is extremely early, predating even [the] *Quelle* which represents the Son of Man traditions at stage two. The Kernel represents a necessary incremental stage in the development of the Son of Man Christology immediately preceding the first attempt to identify Jesus specifically with the Son of Man figure from Daniel. It is a stage parallel to the earliest Jerusalem church and Paul's letters that recognizes Jesus as God's great angel of Judgment but has not yet narrowed his identification to that [that is, 'the one like a son of man'] which is given to him in the later *pesher* [of Daniel 7]. This would date the *terminus ad quem* for the Kernel to roughly 50 CE.³¹

Accordingly, DeConick attributes the kernel of the *Gospel of Thomas*, originally performed in Aramaic, between approximately 30 and 50 CE, to no other than the Jerusalem Church. In the following years, as a result of the different crises experienced, between 50 and 120, by the Thomasine community,³² the apocalyptic expectations of this oral *Urevangelium*³³ were reinterpreted and redirected, with the help of encratic and hermetic traditions, towards more mystical perspectives.³⁴

Needless to say, it would be impossible to summarize in a few paragraphs the extraordinary complexity of DeConick's, what we would like

³⁰ DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel*, 124–130, 134–135, 147, 151–152, 154, and 242–243, building on G. Quispel, “L’Évangile selon Thomas et les Clémentines” (1958), in idem, *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 2, 17–29. Actually, what DeConick seems to have in mind is the *Grundschrift* (sometimes identified with the *Periodoi Petrou* quoted by Origen and Epiphanius) of the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* and *Recognitions*, or perhaps one of its hypothetical Jewish Christian sources (the *Kerygmata Petrou* and the *Anabathmoi Iakobou*). The latter are generally regarded as Jewish Christian (Ebionite) texts written in the second century CE, while the ‘Basic Writing’ is dated to the first half of the third century. See the recent review of scholarship carried out by F. Amsler, “État de la recherche sur le roman pseudo-clémentin”, in *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines—Plots in the Pseudo-Clementine Romance. Actes du deuxième colloque international sur la littérature apocryphe chrétienne, Lausanne—Genève, 30 août – 2 septembre 2006* (eds. F. Amsler, A. Frey and C. Touati; Lausanne: Zèbre, 2008), 25–45.

³¹ DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel*, 152–153.

³² In DeConick's opinion (*Recovering the Original Gospel*, 95), Thomasine Christians left Jerusalem and relocated ‘in Syria sometime before James' death in 62 CE’.

³³ DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel*, 131–148.

³⁴ DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel*, 159–237; eadem, “The *Gospel of Thomas*”, 478–479; eadem, “Mysticism and the *Gospel of Thomas*”, in *Das Thomasevangelium. Entstehung—Rezeption—Theologie* (eds. J. Frey, E.E. Popkes and J. Schröter; Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 206–221.

to call, 'neo-Quispelian' approach to the *Gospel of Thomas*. Among her major realizations, there is this new trajectory she has traced so firmly from the community of James, in the 50s, to that of Thomas, in the 120s. If it were possible to locate the latter at that time in Edessa, it would be relatively easy to assume that the Aramaic kernel of the *Gospel of Thomas* was progressively adapted—more than translated—into Syriac to become the first gospel of the Osrhoene. In DeConick's opinion, such a linguistic shift from Western to Eastern Aramaic is confirmed by the presence of Aramaisms detectable in the sayings of the original kernel, while later accretions would betray but Syriac influences.³⁵ This is, however, the only weak point of her otherwise admirable reconstruction.

In order to understand the philological and text-critical possibilities and impossibilities of the *Gospel of Thomas* one should keep in mind that, on the one hand, the only integral witness at our disposal is the Sahidic secondary version from Nag Hammadi, copied around the middle of the fourth century CE. On the other hand, the text of the Greek *Gospel of Thomas* is partially and imperfectly known through three fragmentary papyri found in Oxyrhynchus:³⁶ *P. Oxy.* 4.654 (middle or late third century) containing the *incipit* and *logia* 1–7; *P. Oxy.* 1.1 (late second or early third century),³⁷ with remains of *logia* 26:2–33:1; *P. Oxy.* 4.655 (third cen-

³⁵ DeConick, *Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation*, 11–15 and 19–21.

³⁶ The reference edition is that of B. Layton, T.O. Lambdin and H.W. Attridge, "Tractate 2: The Gospel according to Thomas", in *The Coptic Gnostic Library: Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7 together with XIII, 2**, *Brit. Lib. Or.* 4926(1), and *P. Oxy.* 1, 654, 655. I: *Gospel According to Thomas, Gospel according to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes* (ed. B. Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 37–49 (introduction by H. Koester), 50–93 (Sahidic text and English translation), 95–128 (Greek fragments) and 264–289 (Coptic and Greek indices by S. Emmel). The Oxyrhynchus fragments have been recently republished by D. Lührmann, *Fragmente apokryph gewordener Evangelien in griechischer und lateinischer Sprache* (Marburg: Elwert Verlag, 2000), 106–131, and A.E. Bernhard, *Other Early Christian Gospels: A Critical Edition of the Surviving Greek Manuscripts* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 16–48 and pls. 1–5. Also see L. Hurtado, "The Greek Fragments of the *Gospel of Thomas* as Artifacts: Papyrological Observations on Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1, Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 654 and Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 655", in *Thomas-evangelium* (above, n. 34), 19–32.

³⁷ *P. Oxy.* 1.1 and 4.654 could possibly be as early as the second century, at least in the opinion of the Danish papyrologist S. Giversen, "The Palaeography of Oxyrhynchus Papyri 1 and 654–655", unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, held in Boston, November 20–23, 1999, quoted by C.W. Hedrick, "An Anecdotal Argument for the Independence of the *Gospel of Thomas* from the Synoptic Gospels", in *For the Children Perfect Instruction: Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften's Thirtieth Year* (eds. H.-G. Bethge, S. Emmel, K.L. King, and I. Schletterer; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 113–126 (115, n. 17).

ture), with *logia* 24:3, 36–39; as well as a handful of patristic quotations or allusions (possibly taken from *logia* 2, 4:1, 5:2, 8:1–3, 11:3, 17, 22:4–5, 23:1, 27, 39:3, 68, 75, 77, 82, 87, 89, 99:2–3, 113:4, 114:2).³⁸ From a practical point of view, the texts of the three Greek fragments do not even overlap and, if we do not wish to take into account the meager and problematic evidence provided by the patristic documentation, all we can do for text-critical purposes is to compare the readings of a Coptic *codex unicus* with those of a collage of Greek papyri containing about twenty sayings, totaling approximately 17 % of the entire *Gospel of Thomas*.

The most significant consequence of such an extremely poor textual tradition is a certain degree of textual indeterminacy, which means that we can not have any absolute certainty about the accuracy and the authenticity of the actual text of the *Gospel of Thomas*. One peculiar reading could be the result of a scribal innovation or mistake at virtually every step of the Greek and Coptic manuscript tradition, especially at the level of those “minor agreements” (such as the shared presence / absence of a determinator, a pronoun, or an adverb) that have been so often invoked to justify the scholarly myths of the dependence of the *Gospel of Thomas* on synoptic redactional elements³⁹ or on Tatian’s *Diatesseron*.⁴⁰

³⁸ According to the new selection recently made by M. Pesce, *Le parole dimenticate di Gesù* (Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla and Mondadori, 2004), 58–73 and 570–582.

³⁹ Many distinguished specialists still share this point of view. See e.g. C.M. Tuckett, “Thomas and the Synoptics”, *Novum Testamentum* 30 (1988): 132–157; idem, “Das Thomasevangelium und die synoptischen Evangelien”, *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift* 12 (1995): 186–200; F. Bovon, “Les sentences propres à Luc dans l’Évangile selon Thomas”, in *Colloque international ‘L’Évangile selon Thomas et les textes de Nag Hammadi’* (Québec, 29–31 mai 2003) (eds. L. Painchaud and P.-H. Poirier; Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval and Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 43–58; J. Frey, “Die Lilien und das Gewand: *EvThom* 36 und 37 als Paradigma für das Verhältnis des Thomasevangelium zur synoptischen Überlieferung”, in *Thomasevangelium* (above, n. 34), 122–180. The well-known example of *logion* 5 that would depend on Luke 8:17 was also recently repeated with approval by J. Halsey Wood Jr., “The New Testament Gospels and the *Gospel of Thomas*: A New Direction”, *New Testament Studies* 51 (2005): 579–595 (583–584). Contrast DeConick’s (*Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation*, 61) legitimate reply: ‘I question the limited scope of the agreement in this case (. . .). Is this phrase [i.e., ὁ οὐ, instead of Mark 4:22, ἐὰν μὴ ἴνα] enough to prove Lukan dependence especially when the rest of L. 5.2 is wildly divergent from Luke 8.17, particularly the final clause of the passage which is not known in the Thomasine parallel?’

⁴⁰ Previously suggested by Tjitze Baarda and the late Han J.W. Drijvers (1934–2002), such a thesis has been freshly revamped by N. Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002); idem, “NHC II, 2 and the Oxyrhynchus Fragments (P. Oxy 1, 654, 655): Overlooked Evidence for a Syriac *Gospel of Thomas*”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 58 (2004): 138–151; idem, *Thomas: The Other Gospel* (Louisville, KY, and London: Westminster John

Equally difficult are the attempts to solve textual problems, such as corrupted readings or passages, or to explain the differences between the *Gospel of Thomas* and the Synoptic Gospels postulating misunderstandings or alternative interpretations of an ambiguous Semitic substratum. On one hand, this kind of linguistically oriented approach to the gospels, dear to positivist philologists of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, is no longer favored by specialists, who now prefer to employ more sophisticated exegetical and literary criteria.⁴¹ On the other hand, in the specific case of the *Gospel of Thomas*, because of the severe limitations of its manuscript tradition, it is virtually impossible to ascertain, on purely linguistic grounds, if it originally existed in an Aramaic or Syriac written form.⁴² As in the case of the canonical Gospels and their sources, we should more prudently content ourselves with the working hypothesis of a (probably) Aramaic origin of the oral traditions used to produce the first written documents.⁴³

Knox Press, 2007); idem, “The Aramaic Origins of the *Gospel of Thomas*—Revisited”, in *Thomasevangelium* (above, n. 34), 50–59. Perrin’s main argument, based on the eventual presence of no less than five hundred and two catchwords in a Syriac retroversion of the *Gospel of Thomas*, has been convincingly refuted by P.J. Williams, “Alleged Syriac Catchwords in the *Gospel of Thomas*”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009): 71–82. Concerning Perrin’s approach, the criticism that Petersen (*Tatian’s Diatessaron*, 298 [n. 109]) had directed to Drijvers is still topical: ‘He fails to address the objections already mentioned: 1) distinctive Diatessaronic harmonizations are missing from *Thomas*; 2) the links are strangely vague, yet elsewhere when the *Diatessaron* influences a work, its footprints are large (cp. Aphrahat’s text, etc.). To these points one might also add that *Thomas* has a very low Christology (one could even say, *no* Christology), something which is hardly Tatianic (he began the *Diatessaron* with John 1:1!). *Thomas*’ low Christology bespeaks a time much earlier than the Tatianic or—especially!—the post-Tatianic period.’

⁴¹ See C.A. Evans, “Introduction: An Aramaic Approach Thirty Years Later”, in M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (third edition; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), x–xxv.

⁴² In this case, we perfectly agree with Perrin (*Thomas and Tatian*, 29) that ‘firm distinctions between the two dialects, at least as far as GT [i.e., *Gospel of Thomas*] is concerned, are hard to come by’. Accordingly (*Thomas and Tatian*, 34–35), ‘[t]he distinctively western Aramaic character of the sayings in question can only be upheld if one presupposes the primitive nature of all the sayings. Otherwise, all hints here of an Aramaic GT may also be used as evidence for a Syriac GT.’

⁴³ DeConick’s interpretation of *logion* 30:1–2 provides an excellent example of a Semitic *Vorlage*. According to her new transcription of *P. Oxy.* 1.1, the Greek text reads in translation (*Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation*, 135–136), ‘[Jesus said,] “Where there are [three.] gods (θεοι) are there. And when there is one alone, [I say] that I am with him”’. Her explanation of this strange statement (p. 137) is that ‘the Greek translation ΘΕΟΙ was a mistranslation of a Semitic plural form of “Elohim”. The saying must have been, “When there are three (people), Elohim is there”. (...) The Greek translator was sloppy since he mistook Elohim, the Hebrew name for God, for ΘΕΟΙ’. However, an even

Be that as it may, the comparison between the Sahidic full text of Nag Hammadi Codex 2 and the fragments of the Greek papyri is still a determining factor in the identification of the language of the *Vorlage* from which the Coptic version has been translated. The vocabulary of the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* includes no less than 130 words borrowed from Greek.⁴⁴ Normally, if a number of loanwords from a given language A are circulating in the translator's language B, when the latter translates a document written in A into B, he or she will tend to use those words taken into B from A any time he or she will find them in his or her model.⁴⁵ Therefore, if the Coptic version was translated from the Greek, we should expect that each Greek loanword in the Sahidic text corresponds to the original Greek term in the Greek model. This being the case—as shown in the table below⁴⁶—, we can confidently affirm that it is now, at least, perfectly clear 'what language might lie behind the Coptic': it was Greek, not Syriac.⁴⁷

simpler solution that would present the advantage of freeing the Greek translator from the responsibility of such an amazing misunderstanding, would be to assume an original reading 'Elim' and interpret the first part of the *logion* as, "When there are three (people), Elim (i.e., angels) are there". This would mean that the members of the Thomasine group believed that, when they were praying together, the angels were among them, as was probably the case for the Qumran (the 'Elim' of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, passim*) and the Corinthian (the 'angels' mentioned in 1 Cor. 11:10) communities.

⁴⁴ Listed in Layton, Lambdin and Attridge, "The Gospel according to Thomas", 280–282.

⁴⁵ This criterion has already proven to be extremely useful in identifying Greek as the language of the model used by the translators of the Ethiopic *Book of Enoch*. See P. Piovanelli, "Sulla *Vorlage* aramaica dell'Enoch etiopico", *Studi Classici e Orientali* 37 (1987): 545–594 (554).

⁴⁶ The correspondences are perfect in 36/41 cases (= 88%). If we choose to not take into account those Greek words that are too heavily reconstructed (in square brackets) or preserved only in the patristic quotations (in parentheses), then we still obtain 20/24 cases (= 83%). The situation is, moreover, particularly unequivocal in the case of *logia* 6, 27, and 39.

⁴⁷ Pace Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian*, 8; idem, *The Other Gospel*, 88–90. *Vorlage*-studies are notoriously difficult, especially in the case of poorly preserved texts and in the absence of any evidence of the pre-existing original models. Thus, for example, the discovery of the Aramaic fragments of *1 Enoch* in Qumran Cave 4 in 1952 confirmed but a few of the previously suggested hypothetical restorations of the lost Hebrew or Aramaic *Vorlagen* of the secondary Ethiopic version. On one hand, early scholars, such as C.F. August Dillmann (1823–1894) and Robert H. Charles (1855–1931), were basically right in assuming a Semitic *Urtext* behind the Ethiopic and Greek versions of *1 Enoch*. On the other hand, they were hopelessly wrong in the majority of their attempts to reconstruct the actual words of such a Hebrew or Aramaic *Vorlage*.

	<i>logion</i>	Greek	Coptic
1.	1	[ἐρμηνεία]	ΖΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑ
2.	2:2	ὅταν	ΖΟΤΑΝ
3.	3:2	θάλα[σσα] ΖΑΛΑССΑ
4.	3:3	καί	ΑΛΛΑ
5.	3:5	[ὅτε]	ΖΟΤΑΝ
6.	3:5	–	ΤΟΤΕ
7.	3:5	[δέ]	ΔΕ
8.	4:1	τόπος	ΤΟΠΟΣ
9.	5:2	[γάρ]	ΓΑΡ
10.	6:1	[μαθητής]	ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ
11.	6:1	νηστεύ[ω]	ΝΗΣΤΕΥΕ
12.	6:1	[ἐλεημοσύνη]	ΕΛΕΗΜΟΣΥΝΗ
13.	6:1	παρατηρέω	ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΕΙ
14.	6:5	γάρ	ΓΑΡ
15.	7:1	[μα]κάρι[ος]	ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ
16.	(8:1)	θάλασσα	ΖΑΛΑССΑ)
17.	24:3	[κό]σμος	ΚΟΣΜΟΣ
18.	27:1	νηστεύω	ΝΗΣΤΕΥΕ
19.	27:1	κόσμος	ΚΟΣΜΟΣ
20.	27:2	σαββατίζω	ΕΙΡΕ ΝΗΣΑΜΒΑΤΟΝ
21.	27:2	[σ]άββατον	ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟΝ
22.	28:1	κόσμος	ΚΟΣΜΟΣ
23.	28:1	σάρξ	ΣΑΡΞ
24.	28:3	ψυχή	ΨΥΧΗ
25.	31:1	προφήτ[ης]	ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ
26.	31:2	ποιέω θεραπείας	Ρ-ΘΕΡΑΠΕΥΕ
27.	32	πόλις	ΠΟΛΙΣ
28.	32	Οὔτε (...) οὔτε	ΜΗΝΘΟΜ ... ΟΥΔΕ
29.	37:1	μαθητής	ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ
30.	39:1	[Φαρισαῖος]	ΦΑΡΙΣΑΙΟΣ
31.	39:1	[γραμματεὺς]	ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΕΥΣ
32.	39:1	[γνώσις]	ΓΝΩΣΙΣ
33.	39:3	[φρόνι]μος	ΦΡΟΝΙΜΟΣ
34.	39:3	[ἀ]κέραι[ος]	ΑΚΕΡΑΙΟΣ
35.	(68:1)	μακάριος	ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ)
36.	(68:1)	διώκω	ΔΙΩΚΕ)
37.	(68:2)	τόπος	ΤΟΠΟΣ)
38.	(68:2)	διώκω	ΔΙΩΚΕ)
39.	(87:1)	σῶμα	ΣΩΜΑ)
40.	(87:2)	ψυχή	ΨΥΧΗ)
41.	(89:1)	ποτήριον	ΠΟΤΗΡΙΟΝ)

We can, therefore, assume that the Sahidic version of the *Gospel of Thomas* probably came into existence between the end of the third and

the beginning of the fourth century as a translation from a Greek text that was already circulating in Egypt at least, a century earlier.⁴⁸ There is no undisputable linguistic evidence pointing to a preexisting Aramaic or Syriac *Urtext* but, according to the global stance we take towards the question of its origins—to be located either among the oral teachings of the Jerusalem community or among the written productions of Syriac Christianity in Edessa—, we can more or less plausibly argue for an orally transmitted Aramaic source and / or a definitive or original edition written in Syriac.

One of the main reasons, however, for associating the *Gospel of Thomas* with the Osrhoene is, as we have mentioned, the identification of Thomas, its ideal author, with Judas, the ‘twin brother’ of Jesus, a designation that is normally deemed to be known only in eastern Syria and northern Mesopotamia.⁴⁹ This is certainly true for Syrian and Syriac authors who wrote, to begin with the *Acts of Thomas*, after the end of the second century. Prior to that date, the only Christians who were apparently aware of such identification were the members of the Johannine community.⁵⁰ They were, as we have seen, in conflict with their Thomasine brothers and sisters,⁵¹ and this probably happened, towards the end of the first century, in the Greek-speaking areas of western Syria and / or Asia Minor,⁵² as if, in their trip from Jerusalem to Edessa, the Aramaic-speaking tradents of the earliest Thomas traditions had made a midway stop in a Greek-speaking or bilingual community identical or in contact with the Johannine one. This is not, however, the first detectable presence of Thomas traditions in Greek-speaking milieus. Actually, elements of the Thomasine *kerygma* were possibly already available to and used by Paul to instruct Gentile converts or sympathizers in Thessalonica and Corinth in the middle of the first century CE.

What is really amazing is that such a Pauline connection has been implied, so to speak, between the lines since Koester’s first studies on

⁴⁸ See above, n. 37. Obviously enough, this does not mean that any of the three surviving Greek fragments come from the particular manuscript that was used to produce the Coptic version.

⁴⁹ See above, n. 10.

⁵⁰ See the references to ‘Thomas (one of the twelve), who is called Didymus’ in John 11:16; 20:24; 21:2, and the Thomasine question that ‘Judas, not Iscariot, asks Jesus in John 14:22. Also note that, in contrast to the Synoptics, the Gospel of John does not provide a detailed list of the twelve disciples.

⁵¹ See above, n. 20–23.

⁵² See above, n. 24.

the *Gospel of Thomas*,⁵³ before being recently taken on by DeConick.⁵⁴ This line of research has been subsequently developed, albeit in a rather hesitant way, by a few American scholars such as Stevan L. Davies and Stephen J. Patterson, who have closely followed Koester's steps.⁵⁵ Conversely, British exegetes Christopher M. Tuckett and Simon Gathercole do not hesitate to deny the reality of any link between the *Gospel of*

⁵³ Thus, after the passage quoted above, n. 16, Koester (in Robinson and Koester, *Trajectories*, 186) goes on as follows, 'Such a version of Q is, however, not secondary, but very primitive. At least Paul's debate with his opponents in 1 Cor. seems to suggest that the wisdom theology which Paul attacked relied on this understanding of Jesus' message. These opponents propagated a realized eschatology. They claimed that divine wisdom was revealed through Jesus. And at least one saying which Paul quotes in the context of his refutation is indeed found in Ev. Thom. 17 (= 1 Cor. 2:9)' (emphasis added). Also see his comments on 'Wisdom in Corinth' in H. Koester, "Gnostic Writings as Witnesses for the Development of the Sayings Tradition", in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978. I: The School of Valentinus* (ed. B. Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 238-261; idem, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 55-62. In recent years, more theological and pastoral concerns have led Koester to re-emphasize Pauline communitarian perspectives against what he perceives as a much too individualistic Thomasine morality. See his "Thomas Jefferson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the Apostle Paul", in idem, *Paul and His World: Interpreting the New Testament in Its Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 195-206.

⁵⁴ DeConick, "Mysticism", 207-208: 'It seems to me that the wisdom traditions in Thomas are being played with. [They are being] made subservient to the dominance of the revelation of mysteries, in much the same way as Paul appears to be doing in 1 Corinthians. [Follow full quotations of 1 Cor. 1:20-25; 2:6-13.] Paul is certainly talking here about something other than ordinary Jewish wisdom. I would suggest that he is talking about apocalyptic mysteries, revealed charismatic knowledge that had been hidden with God since time primordial (1 Cor. 2:7-8)'. More could also be said about the relations between the mysticism of the *Gospel of Thomas* and Paul's 'shamanism' advocated in the recent studies of J. Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), and B. Chilton, *Rabbi Paul: An Intellectual Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

⁵⁵ For Davies ("Christology and Protology", 668), 'Thomas offers a view of Christian transformation not terribly different from the Pauline view' and (669), 'Thomasine and Pauline ideas are similar'. S.J. Patterson, "Paul and the Jesus Tradition: It Is Time for Another Look", *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (1991): 23-41, focuses on Pauline or Corinthian analogies with themes embedded in *logia* 2, 14:2-3, 17, 51, 53, 114. In his opinion (38), '[t]hroughout 1 Corinthians Paul argues against those in Corinth whose enthusiasm has carried them into the kingdom of God ahead of Paul's schedule. The Thomas tradition clearly stands with these enthusiasts against Paul'. Also see, on the language of incarnation used in *logion* 28, A. Marjanen, "The Portrait of Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas*", in *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas* (eds. J.M. Asgeirsson, A.D. DeConick and R. Uro; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 209-219 (212-213).

Thomas and Paul.⁵⁶ In our opinion, however, for all the specialists who do not have any theological objection to accepting the existence of a primitive kernel of *Thomas* traditions as old as the fifties of the first century there should be no doubt that,

[e]ven though one should not press the point as far as saying Paul's opponents in 1 Corinthians were *Thomas* Christians, the *Gospel of Thomas* does provide some basic insights into the potential of the sayings tradition to produce precisely the sort of views Paul was combating in Corinth⁵⁷

—the sort of enthusiastic views that Paul initially contributed to spread and was later forced to restrain and regulate.

In conclusion, if we go back—as Ethiopian scribes used to say—to our initial discourse, we would like to stress the fact that there are too many methodological uncertainties in locating, as Quispel, Koester, DeConick, and the large majority of specialists usually do, the final edition of the *Gospel of Thomas* in Edessa as early as 120 CE. Historians prudently date the arrival of Christianity in the region no earlier than the second half of the second century⁵⁸ and the obscurity that surrounds the production and publication of the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Odes of Solomon*, and other works that supposedly belong to the corpus of early Syriac literature,⁵⁹ cannot help overly anticipating such a *terminus post quem*. It is more likely that Edessa was but the point of arrival of a *Thomasine* group of

⁵⁶ C.M. Tuckett, "Paul and Jesus Tradition: The Evidence of 1 Corinthians 2:9 and *Gospel of Thomas* 17", in *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict. Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall* (eds. T.J. Burke and J.K. Elliott; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 55–73; S. Gathercole, "The Influence of Paul on the *Gospel of Thomas* (§§ 53.3 and 17)", in *Thomasevangelium* (above, n. 34), 72–94.

⁵⁷ Patterson, "Paul and the Jesus Tradition", 40.

⁵⁸ See S.K. Ross, *Roman Edessa: Politics and Culture on the Eastern Fringes of the Roman Empire, 114–242 CE* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 117–138. Retrospectively, the skepticism of B. Ehlers Aland, "Kann das *Thomasevangelium* aus Edessa stammen? Ein Beitrag zur Frühgeschichte des Christentums in Edessa", *Novum Testamentum* 12 (1970): 284–317, was more justified than the rather impressionistic counter-arguments of A.F.J. Klijn, "Christianity in Edessa and the *Gospel of Thomas*: On Barbara Ehlers, 'Kann das *Thomasevangelium* aus Edessa stammen?"; *Novum Testamentum* 14 (1972): 70–77.

⁵⁹ See the insightful observations—in spite of his theory of a Diatessaronic dependence of the *Gospel of Thomas* (above, n. 40)—of H.J.W. Drijvers, "Facts and Problems in Early Syriac-Speaking Christianity" (1982), in idem, *East of Antioch: Studies in Early Syriac Christianity* (London: Variorum, 1982), chapter 6; idem, "Apocryphal Literature in the Cultural Milieu of Osrhoëne" (1990), in idem, *History and Religion in Late Antique Syria* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 1994), chapter 3, as well as S. Ashbrook Harvey, "Syria and Mesopotamia", in *The Cambridge History of Christianity. I* (above, n. 24), 351–365.

itinerant (?) preachers and their gospel⁶⁰ that had already made a long journey from their original homeland in Judaea. If we wish, in the future, to look for a more central place in which to locate the elaboration—almost certainly in Greek—of a collection of sayings of Jesus as early and influential as the *Gospel of Thomas*, we will be better advised to gaze at Antioch on the Orontes as the most plausible point of departure for its later dissemination in the Greek- and Syriac-speaking Christian communities of the first and the second centuries.⁶¹

⁶⁰ A. Pasquier and F. Vouga, “Le genre littéraire et la structure argumentative de l’Évangile selon Thomas et leurs implications christologiques”, in *Évangile selon Thomas* (above, n. 39), 335–362 (359), prefer to speak—perhaps correctly—of ‘structures sociales qui en ont assuré la constitution et la diffusion.’

⁶¹ As insightfully suggested by M. Desjardins, “Where Was the *Gospel of Thomas* Written?”, *Toronto Journal of Theology* 8 (1992): 121–133. On Christianity in Antioch, see, in general, R.E. Brown and J.P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 11–86; W.A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (second edition; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); M. Slee, *The Church in Antioch in the First Century CE: Communion and Conflict* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2003); M. Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation between Judaism and Christianity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003). Also note that DeConick, *Voices of the Mystics*, 154–157, argues, on the basis of the evidence provided by the *Ascen. Isa.*, that ‘many early Syrian Christians believed in a vision mystical soteriology’ (157).