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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS:

AUTHORITATIVE OR HERETICAL?

by

RICHARD ELMER REMSON III

Under the Direction of Timothy Renick

ABSTRACT

The Gospel According to Thomas is found in the second manuscript of codex II of a set of texts found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, collectively referred to today as the Coptic Gnostic Library. This gospel was readily identified as *Thomas* due to fragments of a Greek version of the text having already been discovered and identified in the 1890s at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt. However, the discovery near Nag Hammadi in 1945 C.E. was not of fragments, but it actually contained the entire text of *Thomas*. Thus, the finding of the entire text in Nag Hammadi brought about a set of questions that had not yet surfaced from the fragments of *Thomas* previously found at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt. For example, was *Thomas* actually written by Didymus Jude Thomas? If Thomas did not write it, then by whom was it written, and why did the actual author claim it to be written by Thomas?

INDEX WORDS: Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Mark, Early Christianity, Thomas as Heretical, Thomas as Authoritative, Didymus Jude Thomas, Didymos Judas Thomas, Nag Hammadi, Oxyrhynchus

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RICHARD ELMER REMSON III

Honors Thesis Director: Dr. Timothy Renick
Honors Program Director: Dr. Robert Sattelmeyer

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Honors Program
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
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Chapter I: Introduction

> *The* Gospel of Thomas (Gos. Thom.) *is a collection of traditional wisdom sayings, parables, prophecies, and proverbs attributed to Jesus. The Coptic text of the* Gospel of Thomas *is a translation of an original Greek text, of which fragments of three different manuscripts were found at the turn of this century at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, and published shortly thereafter. The earliest of these Greek fragments dates from ca. 200* C.E. *The existence of three different copies of the Greek text gives evidence of rather frequent copying of this gospel in the third century. Moreover, the fact that the* Gospel of Thomas *was repeatedly referred to by name in church writings of the third and fourth centuries confirms that it was widely read in the early church. The Coptic translation is the only complete version of the* Gospel of Thomas *extant today. It survives as one of fifty-two tractates that make up the remains of thirteen codices of a library that was buried in the fourth century and discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, Egypt.*
>
> -Ron Cameron, *The Other Gospels*, 23

The Gospel According to Thomas (henceforth *Thomas*) is found in the second manuscript of codex II of a set of texts found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, collectively referred to today as the Coptic Gnostic Library. This gospel was readily identified as *Thomas* due to fragments of a Greek version of the text having already been discovered and identified in the 1890s at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt. However, the discovery near Nag Hammadi in 1945 C.E. was not of fragments, but it actually contained the entire text of *Thomas*. Thus, the finding of the entire text in Nag Hammadi brought about a set of questions that had not yet surfaced from the fragments of *Thomas* previously found at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt. For example, was *Thomas* actually written by Didymus Jude Thomas? If Thomas did not write it, then by whom was it written, and why did the actual author claim it to be written by Thomas? What are the implications of such a claim?

The Gospel According to Thomas is presented as a dialogue between Jesus and Didymus Jude Thomas who was a close disciple and, by some accounts, the actual twin of Jesus. It is composed of one-hundred and fourteen sayings or *logia*. The mere fact that the gospel is presented as a dialogue of Jesus seems to imply the text's authority. Put simply, Jesus is directly quoted in *Thomas*. Thus, if the dialogue is indeed what it claims to be--direct quotations from Jesus--then the authority of the text is conclusive, at least within the Christian tradition. Yet *Thomas* is not included in the New Testament. Why is this the case?

When one looks at the actual text of *Thomas*, the words seem to resonate with themes similar to those found in the canonical gospels. For example, the *Gospel of Mark* 3:28-29, henceforth *Mark*, (to avoid confusion with the person Mark, I will italicize the title of the gospel throughout) in the New Testament asserts: "People will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemies against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (Oxford, 52 NT). *Logion* forty-nine in *Thomas* reads very similarly: "He who has blasphemed the Father will be forgiven, and he who has blasphemed the Son will be forgiven: but he who has blasphemed the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either on earth or in heaven" (Doresse, 362).

On the other hand, *Thomas's* dialogical format and some of its specific phrases and concepts are not consistent with what is typically found within the New Testament. For example the very first *logion* of *Thomas* reads:

> Here are the secret words which Jesus the living spoke, and which Didymus Judas Thomas wrote down. And he said: "Whoever penetrates the meaning of these words will not taste death!" (Doresse, 355)

In the New Testament, Matthew 16:28 offers a different understanding of what it means to not taste death: "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Oxford, 25 NT). The traditional Christian theology, although complex and difficult to summarize, understands the way to "not taste death" to be by accepting Jesus as Christ and the fact of his returning to save his kingdom. Contrastingly, the *logia* in *Thomas* seem to suggest that if one is able to understand the meaning of these *logia*, then that is what will keep one from death. Thus, as Ron Cameron suggests about the *logia* in *Thomas*, "their interpretation is crucial; recognizing their meaning, a matter of life and death" (Cameron, 24).

Some of the themes expressed by the *logia* within *Thomas* are definitely different from the themes found in the New Testament. The majority, however, are very similar. Plus, among scholars and theologians alike, Didymus Jude Thomas is viewed to have been a very close disciple to Jesus. Why, then, is it that the traditional Christian canon has no room for a manuscript that is supposedly intimately associated with Jesus?

Perhaps *Thomas* merely borrowed pre-existing themes from the canonical gospels, making *Thomas* superfluous. Or maybe the sayings of *Thomas* are inconsistent with the New Testament and were too difficult to incorporate into the canon without contradiction. Although the validity of such theories is impossible to prove absolutely, the following discussion will attempt to address a few of what I believe to be the more important issues raised.

First, I will identify and critically analyze the predominant scholarly theories regarding the dating of *Thomas* and the major implications of each scenario. The dating of *Thomas* is imperative to understanding its authority. For example, if the sayings in

Thomas date back further than those of the canonical gospels, then *Thomas* could exist as a window and witness to Jesus's actual sayings. However, if the sayings within *Thomas* are dated after those of the canonical gospels, then there is less reason to suggest *Thomas* represents the most legitimate renderings of the sayings of Jesus.

Second, I will compare *The Gospel According to Thomas* with *The Gospel of Mark* (henceforth *Mark*). I specifically chose *Mark* because, of the four canonized gospels, virtually all scholars believe it dates back earlier than Mathew, Luke, and John: "Mark was the first gospel, written sometime in the early 70s, not too long after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple" (Jenkins, 91). Thus, it will be easier to compare *Thomas* and *Mark* with only a limited set of historical conditions to consider. A thorough comparison of *Thomas* and *Mark* will allow the similar themes and the similar phrases within the two gospels to become evident. Illustrating how much of *Thomas* is actually found in *Mark* and in the New Testament will legitimize my argument suggesting that much of *Thomas* is already present in the New Testament.

Next, I will contrast *Thomas* with *Mark*. The contrast will allow for an understanding of how different some of the content in *Thomas* is from that of *Mark* and the New Testament. Could this difference in content be the reason *Thomas* is left out of the New Testament? While a thorough comparison and contrast of each of the canonical gospels with *Thomas* would be ideal, the spatial limitations of this discussion make this impossible.

Finally, I will be offering my own conjecture on the implications of including *Thomas* as one of the primary canonized gospels of the New Testament and on why it was left out in the first place. Speculation suggests the entire gospel was left out because

of the few sayings that are not consistent with claims in the New Testament. Further, these distinctive sayings within *Thomas* support the claim that some forms of early Christianity were very different from the Christianity that is practiced today. Using the dating scenarios and the comparison and contrast with *Mark*, I intend to show that *Thomas* is already in fact a part of the New Testament in a significant sense.

Chapter II: Dating *The Gospel According to Thomas*

The dating of the compilation and composition of *Thomas* is necessary to understanding the authority of *Thomas*. For example, if the sayings in *Thomas* do actually date back further than those of the canonical gospels, then the gospel could be a possible witness and window to Jesus' actual sayings. On the other hand, if *Thomas* was compiled after and in light of the canonical gospels, as Elaine Pagels suggests, then there is less of a reason to believe the gospel represents more authentic sayings attributed to Jesus. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to set out the possible dating scenarios for the compilation of both the Greek papyrus fragments found at the ancient site of Oxyrhynchus, Egypt and the fuller version found at Nag Hammadi, as well to discuss the dating of the original composition of the individual quotations found in *Thomas*. It is important to note at the outset that, even if it is proven that *Thomas* was compiled after the canonical gospels, there still exists the possibility that the sayings preserved within the gospel could have been composed much earlier than the canonical gospels. Now, it should be quite apparent that the dating of *The Gospel According to Thomas* is very important in understanding its ultimate authority and in understanding the implications that follow from each of the dating scenarios.

One of the issues that might assist in dating the text is to establish its authorship. Unfortunately, establishing authorship is nearly impossible, not only for *Thomas* but for the canonical gospels as well. When read as a complete text, *Thomas* claims to be a gospel written by Jesus's twin, Didymus Thomas. The first *logia*, or saying, provides an illustration of this claim: "Here are the secret words which Jesus the Living spoke, and

which Didymus Jude Thomas wrote down" (Doresse, 355). If this was indeed a gospel written by Didymus Jude Thomas, who was a close disciple and by some accounts the actual twin of Jesus, then the implications of the text are much more profound. Didymus Thomas knew Jesus and conceivably could have known secret teachings from Jesus. However according to most scholars, including Bart Ehrman, "it is a forgery of the teachings of Jesus written in the name of the one who should know them better than anyone: his twin brother, Didymus Jude Thomas" (Ehrman, 55). Why, then, does the author of *The Gospel According to Thomas* claim to be Didymus Jude Thomas? Are some of the gospels in the New Testament also forgeries in the sense that they were not necessarily written by the claimed or accredited author?

One possible explanation of why the author is claiming to be Didymus Thomas comes from the book *The Other Gospels*, where Ron Cameron writes, "Authorship is attributed to Didymus Jude Thomas, who was revered in the early Syriac church as an apostle and twin brother of Jesus. The name 'Thomas' may be used to locate the authority and secure the identity of the tradition of those communities which appealed to Thomas as their founder" (Cameron, 23-24). Cameron suggests that *Thomas* was forged for two particular reasons. One reason is that the writer was trying to "locate" and place authority within *Thomas* that may have not been present had it come from the actual author. In other words, if *Thomas* was named differently, perhaps reflecting the actual name of the author, then the authority behind the gospel could have been compromised or questioned. The second reason is addressed as an issue of identity. By claiming that *Thomas* was indeed written by Didymus Jude Thomas, Cameron suggests there is an attempt to secure and to promote the significance of the Thomas Christians, or those

communities who thought of Didymus Jude Thomas as their founder. In other words, there were communities in early Christianity that were established with Didymus Jude Thomas. Cameron suggests that *Thomas* attempts to ensure and protect the identity of these communities. Thus, by assigning Didymus Jude Thomas as the author, *Thomas* becomes much more authoritative to those within the Thomas tradition and at the same time confers authority to the Thomas communities. This argument parallels the explanation many scholars offer for why the canonical gospels have been attributed to the likes of Mark and Luke. "All the gospels originally circulated anonymously. Authoritative names were later assigned to them by unknown figures in the early church" (Funk, et al, 20). In other words, early church figures assigned names to add authority to the gospels. What better than to use those names that are known and respected followers of Jesus, such as Mark, Luke, and Thomas?

Jean Doresse provides a similar but not identical explanation of why *Thomas* was forged in his book, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics*. Doresse seems to add to Cameron's claims by writing:

> There was, then, a special tradition that Thomas, the twin of Christ, privileged to touch the divine body of the Risen Lord with his hand (so that right up to the Middle Ages his tomb was that of "Thomas of the ever-living hand"), was privileged also to receive the secret revelations of the Saviour. And it would appear that our gospel, by claiming Thomas as its author and by quoting in §14 the special role he plays, has tried to take advantage of this tradition. (Doresse, 340)

Not only does Doresse suggest that *Thomas* is a forgery, but he also agrees with Cameron that the author was attempting to authorize and identify with the Thomas communities. Doresse additionally proposes that the forgery is an attempt to take advantage of the Thomas traditions. According to Doresse, because Didymus Thomas was privileged and able to touch the body of the resurrected Jesus, he would have also been more likely to

receive secret teachings. Therefore, Doresse further explains, *Thomas* tries to take advantage of this tradition by claiming Didymus Thomas as its author and incorporating him into a special role in *logia* 14:

> Jesus says to his disciples: "Compare me, and tell me whom I am like." Simon Peter says to him: "Thou are like a just angel!" Matthew says to him: [on p. 35 of the Coptic manuscript] "Thou art like a wise man and a philosopher!" Thomas says to him: "Master, my tongue cannot find the words to say whom you art like." Jesus says: "I am no longer thy master; for thou hast drunk, thou art inebriated from the bubbling spring which is mine and which I sent forth." Then he took him aside; he said three words to him. And when Thomas came back to his companions, they asked him: "What did Jesus say to thee?" And Thomas answered them: "If I tell you <a single> one of the words he said to me, you will take up stones and throw them at me, and fire will come out of the stones and consume you!" (Doresse, 357)

So by using the authority already built into Didymus Thomas due to the account of his touching of the body of the resurrected Jesus, and by showing his special and secretive role in the above *logia*, Doresse says, the author is "taking advantage of" the community most connected to such claims, the Thomas Christians. I speculate Doresse is not using the phrase "taking advantage of" in the pejorative sense, but rather suggesting that the author of *Thomas* knew that they were fabricating authorship to ensure the acceptance of the gospel. What, then, does this discussion of authorship suggest about the dating of *Thomas*?

The dating of *Thomas* is quite complex. First of all, the full Coptic version of *Thomas* found near Nag Hammadi in 1945, which is not to be confused with the Greek fragments found in Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, was discovered amongst many other manuscripts. The dating of those particular manuscripts found in Nag Hammadi is of little debate. As a matter of fact, Ehrman writes, "the leather-bound books themselves were manufactured in the second half of the fourth century. We know this because the

spines of the leather bindings were strengthened with scrap papyrus, and some of the scrap came from receipts that are dated 341, 346, and 348 CE" (Ehrman, 54). Pagels and other religious studies scholars concur that the papyrus used to thicken the leather bindings date back to the second half of the fourth century. Thus, the dating of the manufacturing of the Coptic version of *Thomas* is not under much scrutiny or investigation because the manuscripts themselves clearly seem to date to circa 350 CE. However, there is still no certainty as to a specific year. Depending on how long the scrap paper had been stored before it was used; the actual date of the text may differ. Since there was scrap paper that was used in the manuscripts that dated from 341, 346 and 348 CE, it is difficult to assign any precise date with certainty.

On the other hand, the dating of the Greek fragments of *Thomas* that were found around the ancient site of the city of Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, is under much more debate and scrutiny. Although New Testament scholars had long speculated that these Greek fragments were indeed a part of a "single collection of words of Jesus which had been handed down by tradition" (Doresse, 338), this theory was not positively confirmed until the discovery of the full Coptic text in 1945.

Based on the datable fragments from Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, Professor Gilles Quispel and his colleagues, who first published a modern scholarly version of *Thomas*, suggest the date of c. A.D. 140 for the original. Professor Helmut Koester of Harvard University concurs that the original compilation was c. 140 but further suggests that the content may reflect some traditions as old as or older than those gospels of the New Testament (Pagels, xvi-xvii). We must be aware of the distinction between dating the compilation of *Thomas* at Nag Hammadi and dating the original composition of the

themes and *logia* that are included in *Thomas*. In other words, "the collection of sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas*, although compiled c. 140, may include some traditions even *older* than the gospels of the New Testament, possibly as early as the second half of the first century (50-100)—as early as, or earlier, than Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John" (Pagels, xvii). According to Pagels, there is no way to truly tell when *Thomas* was actually compiled. She holds the earliest possible date of compilation is sometime in the second half of the first century and the latest date is no "later than C. A.D. 120-150, since Irenaeus, the orthodox Bishop of Lyons, writing C. 180, declares heretics 'boast that they possess more gospels than there really are,' and complains that in his time such writings already have won wide circulation—from Gaul through Rome, Greece, and Asia Minor" (Pagels, xvi-xvii). Regardless of when *Thomas* was compiled, the date of its composition is what is most significant to this essay. As mentioned previously, if the date of composition comes before or during that of the canonical gospels, then the argument that *Thomas* is heretical because it was composed after the canonical gospels is de-legitimized.

If we accept that *Thomas* was compiled between 140 CE and 180 CE, a move towards understanding the dating possibilities of the original composition of the *logia* is next in order. Individual stories in the canonical gospels, for example, were compiled far before the gospels themselves were composed. Similarly, the sayings within *Thomas* could have been created long before the gospel was put together. Could the *logia* in *Thomas* have been recorded or composed at the same time or even before accounts in the canonical gospels? Scholars such as Ron Cameron seem to think so:

Since the *Gospel of Thomas* is independent of the writings of the New Testament,

> its date of composition is not contingent upon these or any other written documents we now possess. Its earliest possible date of composition would be in the middle of the first century, when other sayings collections first began to be compiled. The latest possible date would be at the end of the second century, shortly before the copies found at Oxyrhynchus were made and the first reference to the *Gospel of Thomas* was recorded by Hippolytus (a church writer who lived at the beginning of the third century). Since the composition of the *Gospel of Thomas* parallels that of the gospels of the New Testament, the most likely date of its composition would be in the second half of the first century, almost certainly in Syria. (Cameron, 25)

Not only does Cameron suggest that *Thomas* was composed independently of the canonical gospels, but he takes it one step further and suggests that its composition paralleled that of the canonical gospels, and it therefore may have been composed during the second half of the first century, which is when almost all scholars agree the canonical gospels were composed. It seems that Cameron is using composition and content interchangeably.

There are problems with Cameron's conclusion. While over half of the sayings in *Thomas* are found in the New Testament, as we will discuss in chapter three, one must also consider the other sayings and the fact that *Thomas's* compositional structure is dialogical rather than narrative. It seems that only those sayings in *Thomas* similar to the gospels are susceptible to Cameron's argument, which asserts that parallel content equals parallel dating. The contrasting sayings along with the dialogical structure are not addressed by his theory. Would it be safe to say that, since some of the composition/content parallels the content in the New Testament, then those portions were most likely composed in the second half of the first century along with their canonical counterparts? Or is it even reasonable to say that because two gospels are parallel in composition then they must have been written around the same time? I believe much more evidence is necessary for such a definite conclusion.

Many other scholars, such as Pagels, Doresse, and Ehrman, have suggested that some of the content in *Thomas* is parallel to that of the canonical gospels. In fact, Pagels uses these parallels to suggest that *Thomas* was composed before the gospel of John but after the gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke:

> John probably knew what the Gospel of Thomas taught—if not its actual text. Many of the teachings in the Gospel of John that differ from those in Matthew and Luke sound much like sayings in the Gospel of Thomas: in fact, what first impressed scholars who compared these two gospels is how similar they are. Both John and Thomas, for example, apparently assume that the reader already knows the basic story Mark and the others tell, and each claims to go beyond that story and reveal what Jesus taught his disciples in private. (Pagels, 39)

In other words, Pagels is suggesting that the author of the gospel of John apparently knew of the teachings included in *Thomas*. However, Pagels also states that *Thomas* presupposes prior knowledge of the other three canonical gospels, but not John. Therefore, Pagels ultimately suggests *Thomas* was written before the gospel of John but after the gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke. That would place its composition between the second half of the first century and the first half of the second century. Pagels' reasoning is that the content within *Thomas* seems to take the stories of Mark, Matthew, and Luke a step further and to disclose more secret teachings that Jesus allegedly taught his disciples privately. In my opinion, that is a very difficult statement to prove or disprove. Due to the fact that *Thomas* was written in such a dialogical format, it is very difficult to tell whether or not the composer is assuming prior knowledge of the canonical gospels or if the sayings are simply dialogues that resonate with many of the same themes found within the New Testament. While it is conceivable that *Thomas* could not have been written without referencing the other disciples and themes of the New Testament, such a conclusion is far from certain.

In *Hidden Gospels*, Philip Jenkins offers yet another method used to date *Thomas*. Jenkins suggests that because the format of *Thomas* so closely resembles the hidden gospel *Q*1, which is the core collection of the hypothesized gospel *Q*, then it must have been written during the same time period:

> The task of dating is difficult because *Thomas* has obviously gone through several stages of composition and editing, but the logic proceeds as follows:
>
> Q in its final form can be no later than 70 or 75.
> Q1, the core collection, must be earlier still, perhaps as early as 45 or 50.
> *Thomas* closely resembles the hypothetical Q1, and at least in its original version, probably stems from the same period.
> Therefore a core of *Thomas* may date from the 50s, which would make it actually older than any of our existing four gospels, and close to Jesus himself. (Jenkins, 61-62)

Also concurring with Jenkins and Cameron, the members of the Jesus Seminar -- Robert W. Funk, John Dominic Crossan, Burton Mack, Stevan L. Davies, Stephen J. Patterson, and John Kloppenborg -- suggest that the "work is wholly independent of the New Testament gospels; most probably in existence before they were written. It should be dated AD 50-70" (Funk, et al, 474). The above method of dating *Thomas* is logical and seemingly provides more structured evidence than any of the previous arguments.

In conclusion, Pagels proposes that *Thomas* displays a prior knowledge of three of four canonical gospels and therefore dates back to the latter part of the first century or early part of the second century. On the other hand, Jenkins, the members of the Jesus Seminar and Cameron all seem to suggest *Thomas* was composed autonomously of the canonical gospels and was written in the first century, circa 50-70 CE. Given the nature of this dispute, I argue that a better understanding of the dating of *Thomas* may be attainable after comparing and contrasting the content of the text to the earliest of the canonical gospels, *Mark*. It is to the comparison of *Thomas* and *Mark* that I turn in the

next chapter. Then I will return to a final analysis of the dating possibilities in the concluding chapter with the comparison of *Thomas* and *Mark* in mind.

Chapter III: Comparison of *Thomas* and *Mark*

When developing a comparison of *Mark* and *Thomas*, one must understand that an ideal comparison is unattainable due to the fact that *Thomas* is primarily known to us through a Coptic translation (the fragments of the text found in Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, were actually in Greek but do not contain enough *logia* for a useful comparison) and *Mark* is known to us in its original form of Greek. Differences in translations will therefore be identified and analyzed throughout the comparison in this chapter and throughout the contrast in the next chapter. Additionally, in an effort to minimize theological bias, I will be using the translation of *The Gospel of Mark* provided by *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* and the translation of *The Gospel According to Thomas* provided by Jean Doresse in his book, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics*. Both are respected scholarly translations. This, of course, does not eliminate theological bias completely. There are still subjective judgments made by the translations. However, it is best that the sources being used for this comparison are produced from a scholarly perspective rather than a theological one, since the point of this thesis is to offer scholarly, not theological, commentary on the authority of *Thomas*.

It will become quite evident throughout this chapter that many of the *logia* in *Thomas* are scattered throughout the canonized gospels. However, something to keep in mind is that even similar passages are not always identical. As mentioned previously, although a thorough comparison of each of the canonical gospel would be ideal, this is simply not possible because of the spatial limitations of this discussion. However, in

Mark alone there are twenty-six verses that are similar to or the same as *logia* within *Thomas*.

The Other Gospels, edited by Ron Cameron, is a collection of non-canonized gospels. Cameron's introduction to *Thomas* asserts that the sayings in *Thomas* exist as extremely close parallels in *Mark* but vary significantly with regard to presentation. In addition, Cameron provides some categorical distinctions to help us in organizing the similarities:

> Most of the sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* have parallels in the "synoptic" gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke in the New Testament. Analysis of each of these sayings reveals that the sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* are either preserved in forms more primitive than those in the parallel sayings in the New Testament or are developments of more primitive forms of such sayings. The particular editorial changes which the synoptic gospels make, including the addition of a narrative structure and the inclusion of traditional sayings and stories within a biographical framework, are totally absent from the *Gospel of Thomas*. (Cameron, 24)

In other words, there are differences in the contexts in which each of these gospels are presented. According to Cameron, *Mark* (one of the synoptic gospels which also include Matthew and Luke) includes a narrative structure and the insertion of traditional sayings and stories within a biographical framework which are absent from *Thomas*. Thus, by taking parallel passages out of their narrative and biographical contexts, the similarities that exist between *Thomas* and *Mark* should become much more obvious. This is precisely what this chapter is designed to accomplish. Additionally, Cameron suggests that the sayings in *Thomas* are related to the verses in the New Testament in one of two possible ways. Specifically, the sayings in *Thomas* are either more primitive forms of those parallels found in *Mark* or they are further elaborations of *Mark*.

In *Lost Christianities* scholar Bart Ehrman also suggests that the sayings in *Thomas* are similar to those verses found in the New Testament gospels. Ehrman offers a convenient summary of the similarities:

> Over half of the sayings found in the Gospel of Thomas are similar to sayings found in the New Testament Gospels (79 of 114, by one count). In some instances, these similarities are quite close. Here, for example, you can find the well-known 'parable of the mustard seed':
>
> The disciples said to Jesus, "Tell us what the kingdom of heaven is like." He said to them, "It is like a mustard seed. It is the smallest of all seeds. But when it falls on tilled soil, it produces a great plant and becomes a shelter for all birds of the sky." (Ehrman, 55)

Ehrman and Cameron have provided some of the necessary organization for this chapter, but I will also use the following model, which expands upon Cameron's categories from above. First of all, there are *logia* within *Thomas* that are practically identical to those verses found in *Mark*, but they seem to remain in more primitive forms than those in *Mark*. Speculation suggests that these primitive and more succinct *logia* may represent a closer approximation of the way Jesus originally uttered the sayings. Second, there are verses found in *Mark* that illustrate the addition of a narrative structure and sometimes combine two or more of the *logia* found independently in *Thomas*. Third, there are *logia* within *Thomas* that are similar to those verses found in *Mark*, but either begin or end differently. Fourth and finally, there are *logia* found within *Thomas* that heavily contrast with *Mark*, and further, many of these *logia* also differ from the other canonical gospels and New Testament as a whole. This chapter will discuss the first three of these four groups. The fourth group--the contrast--will be discussed in the following chapter.

I will begin with the *logia* within *Thomas* that are practically identical to those verses found in *Mark*, but most of which seem to remain in more primitive forms in *Thomas*. Actually, Ehrman's previously cited example of the parable of the mustard seed seems to fit into this group quite appropriately. This familiar Christian parable has traditionally been known through *Mark*. However, it is not as well known that this parable also exists as saying twenty-three in *Thomas*. According to Jean Doresse's translation of *Thomas*, the 'parable of the mustard seed' is interpreted from the Coptic manuscript found at Nag Hammadi as follows:

> The disciples say to Jesus: "Tell us what the Kingdom of heaven is like!" He says to them: "It is like a grain of mustard: it is smaller than all the <other> seeds, but when it falls on ploughed land it produces a big stalk and becomes shelter for the birds of heaven." (Doresse, 358)

(Words signified by '< >' like "<other>" above were added by the translator but were not included in the Coptic text itself.) Note the difference in the wording when compared to the parable of the mustard seed in *Mark* 4:30-32 from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (henceforth Oxford):

> He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." (Oxford, 53 NT)

While Oxford's and Doresse's translations are quite similar overall in that they contain a dialogue of Jesus explaining how heaven is like a mustard seed, small discrepancies do exist. For instance, the Oxford translation of *Mark* contains more words and concepts than Doresse's translation of *Thomas*. The extra words describe the growth of the shrub

and how the birds are able to utilize the shrub. However, the translations do remain similar enough to see the 'parable of the mustard seed' in spite of the wording differences.

Referring to the first model, is the parable of the mustard seed contained in *Thomas* a more primitive form of the parable of the mustard seed in *Mark?* Well, when comparing the translations, the answer appears to be yes. This is supported by the small differences noted above. "It produces a big stalk and becomes shelter for the birds of heaven" from *Thomas* becomes "It grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade" in *Mark*. This addition of the concepts of "nests" and "shade" leads me to believe that the version found within *Thomas* is preserved in a form more primitive than the parallel parable found in *Mark*.

The parable of the four soils provides another illustration of this type of relationship in the two texts. Let's see if this parallel also follows the model. *Thomas* records:

> Jesus says: "See the sower went out. He filled his hand and scattered <the seed.> Some fell on the path: birds came and gathered them. Others fell on rocky ground: they found no means of taking root in the soil and did not send up ears of corn. Others fell among thorns; <these> stifled the grain, and the worm ate the <seed.> Others fell on good soil, and this <portion> produced an excellent crop: it gave as much as sixty-fold, and <even> a hundred and twenty-fold!" (Doresse, 357, *logion* 9)

Oxford's translation of Mark 4:3-9 reads slightly differently but does seem to maintain a similar message:

> Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly,

> since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundred-fold. (Mark 4:3-9)

The differences between these two translations are much more obvious than those differences in the parable of the mustard seed. First of all, instead of beginning with "Jesus says," the Oxford translation begins with "Listen!" This minuscule difference may seem arbitrary, but it is actually quite notable because most if not all of the *logia* found within *Thomas* begin with "Jesus says" or something very similar to that phrase, hence the dialogical structure. Many scholars suggest that *Thomas* is indeed the more primitive text because of this simple dialogical structure.

Next, the wording within each of the parables that follows the introductory phrase is also very different. For example, when the parables describe the seeds falling amongst rocky ground there are very distinct differences in wording. "Others fell on rocky ground: they found no means of taking root in the soil and did not send up ears" in *Thomas* becomes "other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away" in *Mark*. The additional explanation of how the seed took root but had no depth of soil and was scorched by the sun in *Mark* may suggest that the simpler version found within *Thomas* is preserved in a more primitive form.

The parallels between *Mark* and *Thomas* are evident yet again when we compare *logion* 49 with Mark 3: 28-29:

> Jesus says: "He who had blasphemed the Father will be forgiven,

> and he who has blasphemed the Son will be forgiven: but he who has blasphemed the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either on earth or in heaven." (Doresse, 362, *logion* 49)

The *logia* above explains that a blasphemy against the "Father" or the "Son" is forgivable, whereas a blasphemy against the "Holy Spirit" in unforgivable on earth and in heaven. In *Mark*, the wording in the translation is very obviously different, however again the message seems to remain similar:

> Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemies against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin. (Mark 3:28-29)

This verse collectively summarizes most blasphemies as being forgivable and explains that only the blasphemies against the "Holy Spirit" will not be forgiven.

Thus, in many ways *Thomas* reads like a primitive form of *Mark*. Of course, these results could simply be a reflection of the complex editorial changes that have been made to the Bible. If *Mark* has experienced processes that included the addition of a narrative and more elaborate wording over time, then maybe older, proto-versions of *Mark* (if such existed) contained short and more concise wording too. Nonetheless, the versions we actually possess of these two texts suggest that *Thomas* is the simpler and perhaps more primitive text.

Next, the second model includes passages between the two texts in which *Mark* contains the addition of a narrative structure and/or combines two or more of the *logia* of *Thomas* into one larger verse. An exemplification of an added narrative structure is found when comparing *logion* 103 in *Thomas* to Mark 3:31-33. *Thomas* reads:

> The disciples said to Him, "Thy brethren and thy mother are outside." He said to them: "You and (?) those (?) who do the will of my Father, They are my brethren and my mother." (Doresse, 369)

In Mark 3:31-33 the passage becomes twice as long:

> Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:31-33)

This is an excellent example of an added narrative found within *Mark* that is not in *Thomas*. Specifically, the *logion* within *Thomas* is two sentences of brief dialogue: The disciples say, "Thy brethren and thy mother are outside," and Jesus replies, "You and those who do the will of my Father, they are my brethren and my mother." In *Mark*, there are added descriptions such as: "A crowd was sitting around him," and "then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him." In *logion* 103 from *Thomas* there is no description of Jesus's mother and/or brothers coming and calling for him, they are just there. Referring to the second model, does the passage in *Mark* illustrate an addition of a narrative? Absolutely.

Immediately following *Thomas logion* 103 is another perfect example to fit into group two of the model. *Logion* 104 reads:

> They showed Jesus a piece of money and said to him: "The people who belong to Caesar ask us for taxes." He said to them: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, give to God what is God's, and what is mine give me." (Doresse, 369)

Notice the added narrative format in Mark 12:14-17:

> "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor,

> or not? Should we pay them, should we not? But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it." And they brought one. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him. (Mark 12:14-17)

The comparison above quite obviously fits the second model by illustrating the considerable addition of narrative. Verse 12:14-17 in *Mark* actually reads more like a story with quite a bit of dialogue. On the other hand, *logion* 104 in *Thomas* is composed of two dialogical sentences and two introductory phrases. The juxtaposition again suggests the possibility of *logion* 104 being in a more primitive form than the parallel passage found in Mark 12:14-17.

One final example, which may contain the addition of a narrative structure but definitely exemplifies the combining of two separate *logia* from *Thomas* into three consecutive verses in *Mark*, is illustrated below:

When *logia* 38:

> Jesus says: "What thou hearest with thine ear, and the other ear, proclaim from the roof-tops! For no-one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel or in a hidden place." (Doresse, 361, *logia* 38)

is combined with *logia* 5,

> Jesus says: "Know what is before your face , and what is hidden from you will be revealed to you. For nothing hidden will fail to be revealed!" (Doresse, 356)

it closely resembles *Mark* 4:21-23:

> He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand? For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" (Mark 4:21-23)

To see the parallel clearly, the *logia* in *Thomas* should be combined and the first sentence in *logia* 38 should become the last sentence in *logia* 5, even though it is arguably the most dissimilar sentence in the parallel. The resulting passage reads:

> Jesus says: "For no-one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel or in a hidden place. Know what is before your face, and what is hidden from you will be revealed to you. For nothing hidden will fail to be revealed! What thou hearest with thine ear, and the other ear, proclaim from the roof-tops!"

Now the similarities between the passages are easier to see. As a matter of fact, it becomes quite evident that there is not an added narrative but only the combining of *logia* in *Thomas* to make a new passage in *Mark*. Regarding the parallel's relationship to the first model, I suggest the *logia* in *Thomas* also are simpler than their counterparts in *Mark*. For example, "for nothing hidden will fail to be revealed" in *Thomas* becomes "for there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light" in *Mark*. The added concepts of "disclosure" and "secret" in Mark 4:21-23 again suggest that the *logia* in *Thomas* are in a more primitive form than the verses in *Mark*.

Does the addition of a narrative imply *Thomas* as a whole is preserved in a more primitive form? According to Ehrman, "many of these sayings are pithier and more succinct than their canonical counterparts. It is possible that Thomas presents a more accurate version of the sayings – that is, a closer approximation to the way Jesus actually said them" (Ehrman, 55-56). Thus, if the *logia* from *Thomas* are consistently shorter and more succinct than those narratives in *Mark*, then there is a distinct possibility that they represent a more primitive--and earlier--form of the similar verses found in *Mark*.

Our third model consists of cases in which the *logia* within *Thomas* are similar to those verses found in *Mark*, but either begin or end differently. *Thomas logion* fifteen begins unlike any passage found in *Mark*:

> Jesus says to them: "When you fast, you will beget sin for yourselves; when you pray, you will be condemned; when you give alms, you will do evil to your souls! <But> when you enter any land and travel over the country, when you are welcomed eat what is put before you; those who are ill in those places, heal them.

However, the end of *logion* 15:

> For what enters your mouth will not defile you, but what comes out of your mouth, it is that which will defile you!" (Doresse, 358)

seems to be quite similar to Mark 7:15:

> There is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile. (Oxford, 58 NT)

In this particular parallel, note that Mark 7:15 makes no reference to a mouth; rather it seems implied. *Logion* 15, on the other hand, explicitly references the mouth. This is of course contrary to the general pattern we have observed of *Thomas* being more succinct.

A second example of the third model is provided by *logion* 60 of *Thomas* and Mark 8:34. These passages begin slightly differently, however they end up quite similarly. *Logion* 60 of *Thomas* reads:

> Jesus says: "He who does not hate his father and mother cannot be my disciple; and if he does not hate his brother and sister and does not take up the cross like me, he will not become worthy of me!"

Mark 8:34 reads:

> He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

First of all, there is no mention of hating one's parent and siblings in Mark 8:34, though this does appear in the gospels in Luke 14:26. Nevertheless, Mark 8:34 does mention denying oneself, which could arguably be compared to denying or hating one's parents and siblings. That notion aside, the passages do indeed begin slightly differently. When applied to the third model, the last halves of the passages do resemble one another, but this similitude is less obvious than the previous example. However, the overall messages are illustrated as follows: *Logion* 60 of *Thomas* suggests denying or hating one's parents and siblings and taking up the cross is the way to become worthy of Jesus. Similarly, Mark 8:34 suggests denying oneself and taking up the cross is the way to become worthy of Jesus. The differing beginnings of these otherwise similar passages sets the stage for the contrast in the next chapter in which the *logia* within *Thomas* that heavily differ from *Mark* and the New Testament will be presented and analyzed.

In conclusion, as Doresse explains, "some of these passages are given in almost the same form that they have in the New Testament" (Doresse, 342), while others contain similar words and themes with slight variations. Overall, we have seen that much of the "material contained in the *Gospel (of Thomas)*, then, is identical with the canonized gospels" (Doresse, 343). Thus far, merely eight of the twenty-six parallels between *Mark* and *Thomas* have been identified. Yet it is obvious that although these eight parallel passages sometimes differ in wording, their overall themes remain very similar and are many times identical. Certainly, it is now quite evident that significant portions of *Thomas* are already found in *Mark* and the New Testament. It may even be the case that the *Thomas* passages are older than those in *Mark*. Why, then, was *Thomas* left out of the New Testament? Perhaps, the differences we will explore in the following chapter will

help us to understand this issue. Speculation suggests that passages from *Thomas* that differ in both style and doctrine from those of the gospels may have conflicted with the Orthodox teaching at the time of the New Testament's canonization.

Chapter IV: Contrast of *Thomas* and *Mark*

> *The "living Jesus" of these texts speaks of illusion and enlightenment, not of sin and repentance, like the Jesus of the New Testament. Instead of coming to save us from*
> *sin, he comes as a guide who opens access to spiritual understanding. But when the disciple attains enlightenment, Jesus no longer serves as his spiritual master: the two have become equal—even identical.*
>
> - Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, XX

Ironically, after spending so much time and effort in chapter three arguing about how *Thomas* is in part already included in *Mark* and the New Testament, I will now argue how different the remaining portions of *Thomas* are from *Mark* and the New Testament. The dissimilar and contrasting *logia* in *Thomas* are the fourth and final category of comparison introduced in the previous chapter. The differences discussed will not necessarily be between the actual passages of the two gospels, but rather between the nature of the teachings and the doctrines within the texts overall. The point is that certain passages and themes found in one text cannot be found in the other. Hence, the following discussion is different and trickier than that found in the previous chapter. I will have to argue at times that themes are not found in one text or the other, and short of citing the entire text, this is difficult to establish. Thus, we should note this as potentially problematic and proceed with caution.

We know *Thomas* is formatted differently than *Mark* and the other canonical gospels because it maintains dialogical structure as its primary arrangement. Also known is that seventy-nine out of the one hundred and fourteen *logia* within *Thomas* are

considered similar and/or parallel to verses found in *Mark* and the New Testament. I have previously speculated that the remaining thirty-five *logia* within *Thomas* could help identify the reasoning behind its dismissal from the New Testament. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to illustrate some of the more profound examples of *logia* within *Thomas* that deeply differ from *Mark* and the New Testament. I will begin with notions of origin and spirituality, then move on to notions of salvation, liberation, and identity. Also, in an effort to understand the implications of such differences, the underlying doctrine and theology of the *logia* will be identified and analyzed where necessary.

Elaine Pagels previously suggested that the author of *Thomas* knew what the synoptic gospels taught because he or she is claiming to take that ordinary knowledge found in the synoptic gospels one step further. Pagels's claim about the author of *Thomas* is supported by the very first *logion*, which suggests that the material found in *Thomas* is secretive and of deep meaning:

> Here are the [secret] words which Jesus the living spoke and which Didymus Jude Thomas wrote down. And he said: "Whoever penetrates the meaning of these words will not taste death!" (Doresse, 355)

Pagels then uses this presumption to advocate a later date for *Thomas* than the canonical gospels. Notable, however, is the possibility that the author could have simply known the teachings within the synoptic gospels without explicitly knowing the synoptic gospels themselves. In other words, the author may have been familiar with the teachings, through perhaps oral transmission, before they were composed and compiled as gospel. Ehrman also suggests the author of *Thomas* had knowledge of the teachings of the synoptic gospels. Further, Ehrman believes *Thomas* "presupposes some such viewpoint and that if readers read the text with these presuppositions in mind, they can make sense

of almost all the difficult sayings" (Ehrman, 60). While I think that the assumption that the author of *Thomas* knew the synoptic gospels is premature, I do believe that the author of *Thomas* does seem to have some presuppositions in mind.

Addressing the first of the five notions, origin, Pagels provides an example from *Thomas* that definitely differs from the notion of origin in *Mark* and the New Testament:

> Orthodox Christians believe that Jesus is Lord and Son of God in a unique way: he remains forever distinct from the rest of humanity whom he came to save. Yet the gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* relates that they have both received their being from the same source:
>
> > Jesus said, "I am not your master. Because you have drunk from the bubbling stream which I have measured out…He who will drink from my mouth will become as I am: I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him." (Pagels, XX)

The teaching above is known as *logion* fourteen in *Thomas*. As Pagels suggests, it is quite out of the ordinary when compared with the traditional doctrine of the New Testament. It undermines the traditional orthodox understanding of Jesus as distinct by proposing Didymus Thomas and Jesus are one in the same and that they originated from the same source. In other words, the traditional line of hierarchical demarcation between Jesus and Thomas does not exist in this teaching. Instead, there is equality and impartiality amongst the two, which is evident through the words in the *logion*, "he who will drink from my mouth will become as I am," and "I myself shall become he" (Pagels, XX).

Still dealing with origin, another example within *Thomas* that heavily contrasts with *Mark* and the New Testament is found in *logia* fifty-four and fifty-five. It seems as though these *logia* could be elaborating on the previous example from Pagels by further

suggesting, "human spirits did not originate in this material world but in the world above" (Ehrman, 60):

Logion fifty-four reads:

> Jesus says: "Blessed are the solitary and the elect, for you will find the Kingdom! Because you were issued from it, you will return to it again."

and *logion* fifty-five reads:

> Jesus says: "If people ask you: 'Where have you come from?' tell them: 'We have come from the Light, from the place where the Light is produced […] outside itself <or: of itself? >. It […(p.42)…] until they show (?) […] their image.' If someone says to you: 'What are you?' say: 'We are the sons and we are the elect of the living Father.' If <people> ask you: 'What sign of your Father is in you?' Tell them: 'It is a movement and a rest.'" (Doresse, 363)

In the first example of *logion* fourteen, Pagels proposed that Thomas and Jesus are of the same being or composition. These *logia* provide further evidence for Pagels's previous proposition by suggesting people such as Thomas are identical to Jesus and are from the "Light" and are the "elect" of the living father. Therefore, according to this ideology, humans came from the light, "where there is no enmity, no division, no darkness; we ourselves came from the one God and are his elect, and he is our ultimate destination" (Ehrman, 60). All of this seems to provide further evidence supporting the notion of Jesus being equal rather than superior to humankind.

Salvation is also reached much differently and may even take on a slightly different form, such as liberation, in *Thomas*. We know from the first *logion* that "whoever penetrates the meaning of these words will not taste death" (Doresse, 355). However, what is the meaning of these words and how does "penetrating meaning" cause one not to taste death? Referring to *logion* forty-two, Ehrman proposes that coming to

the "realization of the worthlessness of this material world, and then escaping it, is like taking off the clothing of matter (body) and being liberated from its constraints" (Ehrman, 60). Thus in *logion* forty-two, when Jesus' disciples ask him when he will appear to them and when they will be able to see him, he replies: "when you strip yourselves without being ashamed, when you take off your clothes and lay them at your feet like little children and trample on them" (Doresse, 361). At that point, Jesus says, "you will become children of Him who is living, and you will have no more fear" (Doresse, 361). If Jesus's appearance to his disciples and their ability to see him are analogies for salvation or liberation, then stripping and not being ashamed is the way to reach this. Ehrman elaborates and proposes "salvation means escaping the constraints of the body" (Ehrman, 60). The correct path to salvation--or liberation--thus becomes the stripping away of your body (or the material world). Furthermore, this ideology sheds light on Jesus as being a conduit for secretive knowledge and wisdom as opposed to the savior of the humankind. In other words, he does not demand our repentance from sin, or acknowledgement of him as the Son of God or the messiah as in *Mark* and the New Testament; instead, he answers questions and offers guidance about our spirituality. Perhaps these *logia* offer a different perspective of Jesus and/or early Christianity than that found in the gospels.

If Ehrman's interpretation of *Thomas* is correct, and salvation/liberation is attained through escaping the constraints of the body, then salvation/liberation would not come to this world in the form of Jesus's fiery return as in the Book of Revelation in the New Testament, but rather it comes from liberation from the bodily world itself.

Additionally, *logia* two and three further suggest that salvation/liberation from this world comes from inside of you rather than from Jesus returning:

> Jesus says: "If those who seek to attract you say to you: 'See, the Kingdom is in heaven!' then the birds of heaven will be there before you. If they say to you: 'It is in the sea!' then the fish will be there before you. But the kingdom is within you and it is outside of you!"
>
> "When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will know that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you will be in a state of poverty, and it is you <who will be> the poverty!" (Doresse, 355)

These *logia* suggest the key for salvation/liberation is to know yourself and who you really are. Ehrman says, "for that reason, the Kingdom of God is not something coming to this world as a physical entity that can actually be said to *be* here in this world of matter," rather, "the Kingdom is something spiritual, from within" (Ehrman, 61). As with the orthodox Christian view, in this account salvation/liberation would technically still be coming from Jesus because he is the one who provided the secret spiritual knowledge and wisdom for salvation. However, the parallel falls short because Jesus is simply acting as a spiritual guide rather than explicitly saving the world by his blood on the cross.

In conclusion, it should now be clear that although seventy-nine *logia* within *Thomas* are similar or parallel to corresponding verses in *Mark* and in the New Testament, there are numerous and important differences. The notions of origin, spirituality, salvation, liberation, and identity found in *Thomas* are fundamentally different from those found in *Mark* and the New Testament. The *logia* from *Thomas* suggest salvation is attained from within and therefore you are the savior of yourself, whereas, the doctrine from *Mark* suggests Jesus is the one and only savior and he will be

"doing the saving." With the previously explained cautions about the risks of hasty thematic comparison in mind, all of this nonetheless leads me to believe that the differences between *Thomas* and *Mark* are a significant part of the reason *Thomas* was left out of the New Testament.

Chapter V: *The Gospel According to Thomas* Revealed

In chapter one I discussed the purpose of this thesis and identified the primary goals as follows: to identify and analyze the main dating theories, to compare and contrast *The Gospel According to Thomas* with *The Gospel of Mark*, and finally to hypothesize on the implications of including *Thomas* as part of the canon. Using these goals as a model for this chapter, I will revisit findings from chapters two through four to find out if the aims have been reached.

Regarding the predominant dating theories that were proposed, scholars agree on the dating of the Coptic version of *The Gospel According to Thomas* that was found near Nag Hammadi, Egypt. The papyrus used to thicken the leather bindings of the manuscript came from scrap paper, and some of this scrap paper came from receipts that were dated circa 350 CE. Thus, the dating of the manuscript itself is not under much scrutiny or investigation. Also, the Greek fragments of *Thomas* found in the ancient Oxyrhynchus, Egypt have been dated to circa 140 CE by Gilles Quispel and Helmut Koester of Harvard University. Again, however, these datable compilations are not the focus of our inquiry.

On the other hand, the dating of the composition of *Thomas* (as opposed to the dating of the compilation of *Thomas*) is far more problematic and has major implications. If the date of the composition of *Thomas* is before or during that of the canonical gospels, then the argument that *Thomas* is heretical because it was composed after the canonical gospel is delegitimized. Inversely, if *Thomas* is dated after the canonical gospels, then it is less likely that it represents a closer approximation to Jesus's words. Although, we are

not able to precisely date *Thomas's* composition and may never be able to, there is a relationship between the dating theories with regards to the comparison of *Mark* and *Thomas*. Cameron, Jenkins, and the members of the Jesus seminar (Funk, Crossan, Mack, Davies, Patterson, and Kloppenborg) propose a date of composition for *Thomas* that is earlier than or the same as the canonical gospels. In the comparison of *Mark* and *Thomas*, these scholars primarily focus on the pithier and more succinct *logia* in *Thomas*, a focus which supports their dating theory.

Pagles, on the other hand, is the only scholar I examined who suggested a later date for *Thomas*. She suggests *Thomas* must have been written after the canonical gospels because it presupposes knowledge of the synoptic gospels (Mark, Matthew, and Luke). In my opinion, Pagels's argument fails to consider that the presupposed knowledge could have come from early oral transmission rather than the compiled gospel manuscripts themselves. Therefore, *Thomas* still could have been written earlier or as early as the canonical gospels. Thus, regarding the presupposed knowledge of the canonical gospels, there is still no way to truly tell exactly when *Thomas* was written. However, the earlier date of 50 to 70 C.E. is clearly supported by the majority of scholars.

I previously hypothesized that the comparison of *Thomas* and *Mark* would assist us in legitimizing or discarding the dating theories. Unfortunately, the comparison of the texts ended up being just as complex, or perhaps more complex, than the dating theories. There were definitely some important points worthy of reiteration. The comparison established quite a strong relationship between *Mark* and *Thomas*. Twenty-six of the *logia* in *Thomas* were similar or parallel to verses in *Mark*. Further, seventy-nine of the

one-hundred-and-fourteen *logia* in *Thomas* are comparable to verses in the New Testament. The comparison not only assists us to legitimize the early dating theory, but it also speaks to the authority of *Thomas*. Beginning with the early dating theory, the comparison illustrates the majority of the parallels of *Thomas* as more pithy and simpler than those verses found in *Mark*. The simpler wording along with the other evidence provided in chapter two seem ultimately to suggest an early date for *Thomas* circa 50 to 70 C.E. Regarding the authority of *Thomas*, the strong correlation we found in the comparison seems to add further, if still inconclusive, legitimacy to the authority of *Thomas*. In other words, if seventy-nine *logia* are already incorporated into the New Testament, then in a sense *Thomas* maintains its authority through those corresponding verses. Granted not all aspects of *Thomas* parallel *Mark*, but the similarities were plentiful and substantive enough to establish the texts as at least strongly linked. Finally, considering both the likelihood of a date for *Thomas* earlier than or as early as the canonical gospels and the strong correlation found in the substance of the two texts, *Thomas* seems to be quite authoritative at least as a text which sheds light on the beliefs of early Christianity.

Furthermore, if *Thomas* is dated earlier than or at the same time as the canonical gospels and is nonetheless seen as heretical, then how does one explain the similarities? What is the nature of the heresy? Should the corresponding passages of the New Testament then become heretical, as well? It seems plausible that the nature of the heresy would not lie within the similarities in the comparison, but instead is better understood in light of the differences outlined in the contrast of chapter four. In the contrast, we find much more probable evidence to suggest *Thomas* as heretical. However, considering the

early date of *Thomas* and its established authority, even the contrasts with the gospels seem to say less about its heresy and more about the diversity of early Christianity. Perhaps *The Gospel According to Thomas* ultimately provides a window and witness to the diverse landscape of early Christianity.

Chapter VI : Bibliography

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