Proof for a Hebrew Vorlage behind the Gospel of Thomas,
Its Priority to the Synoptics, and the Simonian Distortion of the Text

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Self-published, academia.edu, 2024

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In an earlier paper regarding the Gospel of Thomas (GosThom), I argued that some modern difficulties in translation are due to the Coptic's overly-literal rendition of a Semitic-language original, one which notably lacks its common idiom.[1] All previously examined mistranslations have been argued for most ingeniously by scholars but are clear examples of *ad hoc* exegesis: e.g. "the All" as implying Metaphysical Monism or Pan(en)theism, "single one(s)" as mystical hermaphroditic[2] union or sexual intercourse, and "strip(ping) naked" as a Metaphysical Dualist liberation from the material world.[3] This paper will continue in that vein, exposing further unsound readings of the Coptic using the same method of mirror-retrotranslation, but narrowing down the possibilities to specify Hebrew[4] as the language behind the Coptic text (to the exclusion of Syriac and Western Aramaic).[5] In the process other unwarranted imputations of

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[1] See Joseph Gebhardt-Klein, *Evidence for a Semitic-Language (Hebrew or Aramaic) Original behind the Coptic Gospel of Thomas* (self-pub., academia.edu, 2022).

[2] For the sake of precision and clarity, "hermaphroditic" is used for doctrines entailing mixed sex—just like in the biological sciences—in contradistinction to the broader term "androgynous," which commonly signifies any variation between binary gender norms: e.g. a man who wears lipstick and high heels is androgynous, but tomato plants are true hermaphrodites.

[3] The case was not that no one later (and probably quite early) interpreted the text accordingly, but that the Semitic substratum was originally without such imputations.

[4] Therein is also demonstrated the relative priority of GosThom to the New Testament's synoptic gospels, while simultaneously refuting Nicholas Perrin's argument for a late production of the text from the Diatessaron. See Nicholas Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (Boston: Brill, 2002).

[5] Despite the elimination of hypothetical Syriac originality, Syriac is nevertheless reconstructively valuable due to the attestation of a Syriac translation which did at one time exist: see René Falkenberg, "A Manichaean Reading of the Gospel of Thomas" (Brill, 2021). Accordingly, Syriac retrotranslations will continue to be given alongside Hebrew for comparative purposes and for students of Manichaeism.

strange dogma to the work will be refuted—such as the alleged lack of a resurrection of the dead and affirmation of self-generated Deity—while also demonstrating GosThom's reliance on a Hebrew vorlage underlying the synoptics, which hypothesis scholars have overlooked in their eagerness for theological profundity at the cost of popularizing defective translations. Lastly, an early stage of Simonian syncretism will be uncovered as the likely culprit for the text's continuing heterodox status.

One problematic logion is logion 100, the parallel to Mt 22:15–22, Mk 12:13–17, and Lk 20:20–26's "render unto Caesar" episode. Antoine Guillaumont's version begins like so: "They showed Jesus a gold (coin) and said to Him: Caesar's men ask taxes from us..."[6] Alternatively the expression "Caesar's men" (ϫⲉⲛⲉⲧⲏⲡ ⲁⲕⲁⲓⲥⲁⲣ) has been rendered by Jean Doresse as "The people who belong to Caesar,"[7] both of which sound rather stilted and neither of which have any parallel in the Christian New Testament. The term translated by Doresse as "belong" (ⲏⲡ) actually has a literal meaning of "count, esteem," as given by the KELLIA's Coptic Dictionary Online.[8] Accordingly, a fluid translation would be something like "those who *are counting* for Caesar." However, this literal rendering is itself awkward. Who are "those who are counting for Caesar"? What are they counting? Clearly something has been bungled and glossed over by modern translators. The verbal expression "those who are counting" is standing in place for a word whose natural idiom has been lost in translation, and there is nowhere more appropriate to search for that than in Semitic languages where nouns are commonly formed from verbal roots.

If the Coptic verb is traced back via translation to the Hebrew bible, it can be seen that it has correspondence to the *hapax legomenon* root כסס in Ex 12:4's "counting" of the Paschal lamb. The root also exists in Syriac and is used copiously throughout the gospels but in the fossilized Aphʿel verbal stem's substantivized form ܡܟܣܐ for "publican, collector, tax-gatherer,"[9] such as found in Mt 5:46, Mk 2:15, and Lk 3:12. Notably, the Hebrew is not just used literally for "counting," but also idiomatically in its Aphʿel participle מוֹכֵס for "revenue farmer, publican,

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[6] Antoine Guillaumont, Henri-Charles Peuch, Gilles Quispel, Walter Till & Yassah ʿAbd al-Masih, eds., *The Gospel According to Thomas* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959), 51.

[7] Jean Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An Introduction to the Gnostic Manuscripts Discovered at Chenoboskoin*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Viking, 1960).

[8] See TLA lemma no. C5513 (ⲱⲡ), in: *Coptic Dictionary Online*, ed. by the Koptische/Coptic Electronic Language and Literature International Alliance (KELLIA), https://coptic-dictionary.org/entry.cgi?tla=C5513 (accessed 2023-11-21).

[9] J. P. Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), 272.

custom-collector (considered a robber in Jewish law)."[10] The Coptic has rendered this term with extreme literalness from the Hebrew plural participle מוֹכְסִים "are counting," while losing the idiom of "publicans, tax-collectors;" and this confusion certainly did not arise from Syriac, since the Syriac substantive ܡܵܟ݂ܣܵܐ could not readily be mistaken for a plural participle. Some retrotranslations of the passage can now be given as follows:

100　ΑΥΤΣΕΒΕ I͞C ΑΥΝΟΥΒ ΑΥѠ ΠΕΧΑΥ ΝΑ-ϥ` ΧΕΝΕΤΗΠ` ΑΚΑΙΣΑΡ` ΣΕѠΙΤΕ M͞MON N͞N͞ϢѠM`

וַיַּרְאוּ לְיֵשׁוּעַ אֶת־טֶבַע וְאָמְרוּ לוֹ הֵם שֶׁמּוֹכְסִים לְקֵיסָר דּוֹרְשִׁים מֵאִיתָּנוּ אֶת־מַס׃

ܘܚܘܝܘ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܛܒܥܐ ܐܝܟ݂ܢܐ ܠܡ ܡܢܘ ܕܡܟܣܐ ܠܩܣܪ ܗܢܘܢ ܗܢ ܚܡܣ ܠܢܐ.

And they showed Yeshua a coin[11] and said to him: "Those who are publicans (lit. counting) for Caesar demand of us the taxes."

Notably, this literal retrotranslation of the Coptic into Hebrew brings an entirely new sense of meaning to the text, one which is more sensible than before. And yet, it is a perfectly literal translation from Coptic into Hebrew (evidently since the Coptic has translated the Hebrew oblivious to its idiom). In other words, you couldn't translate the Coptic any more literally into Hebrew without the natural idiom emerging.

One of the more difficult logia from GosThom is logion 35. This logion is paralleled in all three synoptics (Mt 12:29, Mk 3:27, and Lk 11:21–22), and yet its Coptic (the only surviving Thomasine language) is elusive in meaning. Many differing translations have been produced, but they demonstrate an ambiguity involving the pronominal suffix -ϥ ("him/it") of the verb ΧΙΤ (take) and the presumable adverb N͞ΧΝΑϨ (by-force).[12] For example, Marvin Meyer's translation reads: "You cannot enter the house of the strong and take *it* by force without tying the person's hands. Then you can loot the person's house"[13] (italics added for clarity). Meyer interprets the *enclitic object* of N͞ϥΧΙΤϥ, "and (he) take *it*," to be referring to "the house" of the strong man. However, Jean Doresse considers it to be referring to "the strong man" himself, instead

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[10] Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* (Judaica Treasury: 1971, 2004), 741–42.

[11] Though some translators might insist that the Coptic ΝΟΥΒ means "gold" or "gold coin," the word is polyvocal and can mean any type of "coin" or "money" without specificity: this confusion would be like looking up the English homograph "bat" and assuming conjunctively that it denotes a "nocturnal flying mammal" which is also "used in the game of baseball" (!).

[12] See Michael W. Grondin's interlinear translation for a breakdown of the Coptic text: *Grondin's Interlinear Coptic/ English Translation of The Gospel of Thomas*, rev. ed. (self-pub., 1997–2002).

[13] Marvin W. Meyer, *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 39.

interpreting that it is not "possible for someone to enter the house of a strong man and do *him* violence if he has not tied his hands…"[14] Who or what is getting taken or done up with force or violence here? It is not clear from these contradictory translations. Indeed, the Coptic ϫⲛⲁϩ (translated in the above examples as "force," "violence") actually has a few other meanings: "forearm, wing" and "strength," and even "scapular (vestments of monks)" in the compound ⲙⲟⲩⲣϫⲛⲁϩ,[15] having cognates ϫⲉⲛϩ "garment," and ϫⲛⲉϩ "container or measure?"[16] And yet the same Coptic expression (ⲛ̄ϥϫⲓⲧϥ ⲛ̄ϫⲛⲁϩ) is used (with expansion) for Ex 21:16's וְנִמְצָא בְיָדוֹ, "and he be found in his hand," or idiomatically, "…in his possession." In other words, past attempts to interpret the Coptic via a literal one-to-one correspondence of terms have failed to adequately explain the text, although they are figuratively suggestive of a lost idiom.

Notably, the synoptic parallels have a radical disagreement in just this place: Lk 11:22 has the strong man's "armor" (πανοπλίαν) taken away, whereas Mt 12:29 and Mk 3:27 have his "vessels" (σκεύη) taken away. How did these divergent readings arise from the same primitive saying? The Syriac of Lk 11:22 provides one important clue. It translates the term πανοπλίαν ("armor") with ܙܝܢܐ ("weapon, arms, armor"), which in the Targums is used for the Hebrew כֵּלָיו, as evidenced by Aramaic זֵינָךְ and זֵין in Gn 27:3 (Heb. כֵּלֶיךָ) and Dt 22:5 (כְּלִי). The Hebrew can also mean "vessel, receptacle; bag &c.," and "outfit, apparel, garment, tool, weapon,"[17] which gives no doubt as to Hebrew being the origin for the divergent synoptic readings of Mt 12:29 and Mk 3:27 with Lk 11:22. Notably, Syriac and other Aramaic dialects do not explain this discrepancy because the semantic transformation hinges upon Hebrew. An accommodating translation would be something like "armament," or "arms."

To date no plausible connection between GosThom and the synoptic parallels has been proposed for this logion; however, the above presents an obvious solution: the Coptic has speciously extended the idiom of the Hebrew כֵּלָיו (by "his arms") to the abstract ϫⲛⲁϩ (by "force"), unless a Coptic equivalent to "by arms" ⇒ "by force" is lacking from modern lexicons

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[14] Jean Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An Introduction to the Gnostic Manuscripts Discovered at Chenoboskoin*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Viking, 1960).

[15] TLA lemma no. C7271 (ϫⲛⲁϩ), in: *Coptic Dictionary Online*, ed. by the Koptische/Coptic Electronic Language and Literature International Alliance (KELLIA), https://coptic-dictionary.org/entry.cgi?tla=C7271 (accessed 2023-08-15).

[16] Walter E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 777.

[17] M. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* (Judaica Treasury: 1971, 2004), 641.

(which is possible considering GosThom's obscure Akhmimic dialect).[18] At any rate, logion 35 attests doubly not just to a Hebrew original behind the synoptics, but also to GosThom's unique proximity to that original, representing one of three interpretations for כליו: in Mt 12:29 and Mk 3:27 (כֵּלָיו ⇒ σκεύη, ܟܐܢܐ) as plural "vessels/garments," in Lk 11:22 (כְּלָיו ⇒ πανοπλίαν) as singular "armor," or (⇒ ܙܝܢܐ) "weapon," and in GosThom 35 (כֵּלָיו ⇒ ⲭⲚⲀⲌ) as the abstract "force/violence." Accordingly, some retrotranslations of the passage can be given as follows:

> 35   ⲠⲈⲬⲈ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲘⲚ̄ ϬⲞⲘ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲈⲞⲨⲀ ⲂⲰⲔ ⲈϨⲞⲨⲚ ⲈⲠⲎⲈⲒ Ⲙ̄ⲠⳞⲰⲰⲢⲈ Ⲛ̄ϤⲬⲒⲦϤ Ⲛ̄ⲬⲚⲀⲌ ⲈⲒ ⲘⲎⲦⲒ
> Ⲛ̄ϤⲘⲞⲨⲢ Ⲛ̄ⲚⲈϤϬⲒⳤ ⲦⲞⲦⲈ ϤⲚⲀⲠⲰⲰⲚⲈ ⲈⲂⲞⲖ Ⲙ̄ⲠⲈϤⲎⲈⲒ
>
> וַיֹּאמֶר יֵשׁוּעַ לֹא יוּכַל אֶנָשׁ לְהִכָּנֵס לְבֵית הַגִּבּוֹר וְיִקָּחֵהוּ מִכֵּלָיו אֶלָּא אִם יִקְשׁוֹר
> אֶת־יָדָיו וְאָז יָבוֹז אֶת־בֵּיתוֹ:
>
> ܘܐܡܪ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܐ ܐܢܫ ܡܨܐ ܠܡܥܠ ܠܒܝܬܗ ܕܚܝܠܬܢܐ ܘܢܣܒܝܘܗܝ, ܡܢ ܙܝܢܗ ܐܠܐ ܐܢ
> ܢܐܣܘܪ ܠܐܝܕܘܗܝ, ܘܗܝܕܝܢ ܢܒܘܙ ܒܝܬܗ܀
>
> And Yeshua said, "No one is able to enter into the house of the strongman and take of his arms unless he bind his hands, and then he will loot his house."

One assumption in need of being challenged is the apparent lack of a "resurrection of the dead" in logion 51:

> His followers said to him, "When will the rest for the dead take place, and when will the new world come?" He said to them, "What you look for has come, but you do not know it.' (Meyer trans.)[19]

Most translations of this logion employ either "rest" or "repose" in respect to the dead—as if there is no resurrection and the dead just "roll over and go back to sleep," or per the acronym R.I.P. ("rest in peace"). However, this fails to approach the text from an original Semitic-language milieu. The words which would likely correspond to the Coptic ⲀⲚⲀⲠⲀⲨⲤⲒⲤ[20] in the Old Syriac and Peshitta translations of the gospels are no doubt Jn 11:25's ܢܘܚܐ and ܢܝܚܐ, literally meaning "rest" or "consolation," but idiomatically understood as synonymous with

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[18] N.b.: any resemblance of "forearm" to the English idiom "arms" is superficial since the English comes from the unrelated Latin "arma."

[19] M. W. Meyer, *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 43.

[20] The Coptic of Jn 11:25 uses ⲀⲚⲀⲤⲦⲀⲤⲒⲤ due to following the Greek, but a proper translation from Syriac or Hebrew could only be expected as ⲀⲚⲀⲠⲀⲨⲤⲒⲤ: i.e. logion 51 uses ⲀⲚⲀⲠⲀⲨⲤⲒⲤ instead of ⲀⲚⲀⲤⲦⲀⲤⲒⲤ because it is from Hebrew and not Greek. See George W. Horner, ed., *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect, Otherwise Called Memphitic and Bohairic*, vol. 2 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1898), 472–73; also: G. W. Horner, ed., *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect, Otherwise Called Sahidic and Thebaic*, vol. 4 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1920), 186–87.

"resurrection," "resuscitation," and "revival,"[21] and still used today with that sense in Syrian Orthodox liturgy.[22] Notably, this is not the ordinary Syriac equivalent for "resurrection," ܩܝܡܬܐ (lit. "standing up"), employed commonly in the gospels for the Greek ἀνάστασις, but rather one evoking rich exegetical landscapes.[23] The Hebrew and Aramaic cognates נֶחָמָה and נֶחֶמְתָּא carry with them the same root meaning, "consolation, relief," but are idiomatically understood as an eschatological "restoration," such as in the "restoration of Israel."[24] Nicholas Perrin in his attempted Syriac reconstruction of catch words from GosThom erroneously suggested the Syriac ܢܝܚܐ,[25] lit. "solemn-rest," which would rather be the term employed for the Hebrew שַׁבָּתוֹן, or "sabbath of solemn-rest," in logion 27, further demonstrating that Syriac is not the original behind the Coptic's conspicuous Hebrew transliteration "ⲥⲁⲃ`ⲃⲁⲧⲟⲛ."[26] Again, some retrotranslations can be given as follows:

51   ⲡⲉⲝⲁⲩ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲛⲉϥⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲝⲉⲁϣ ⲛ̄ⲍ̄ⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲁⲛⲁⲡⲁⲩⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧ`
         ⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϣ ⲛ̄ⲍ̄ⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲡⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲃ̄ⲃ̄ⲣ̄ⲣⲉ ⲛⲏⲩ ⲡⲉⲝⲁⲩ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲝⲉⲧⲏ
         ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ϭⲱϣⲧ` ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲏⲧⲥ̄ ⲁⲥⲉⲓ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲱⲧⲛ̄ ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ

         וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ תַּלְמִידָיו בְּאֵיזֶה יוֹם יִהְיֶה נֶחָמַת הַמֵּתִים וְאֵיזֶה יוֹם יָבוֹא הָעוֹלָם הֶחָדָשׁ ׳
         וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם מַה שֶׁאַתֶּם מְצַפִּים לָהּ בָּאָה אֶלָּא אַתֶּם לֹא יֹדְעִים אֶת־זֹאת׃

         ܐܡܪܘ ܠܗ ܬܠܡܝܕܘܗܝ، ܒܐܝܢܐ ܝܘܡ ܢܗܘܐ ܢܘܚܡܐ ܠܡܝܬܐ ܘܒܐܝܠܝܢ ܝܘܡ ܢܐܬܐ
         ܥܠܡܐ ܚܕܬܐ . ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ ܡܐ ܕܡܣܟܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܠܗ ܐܬܐ ܐܠܐ ܠܐ ܝܕܥܝܢ
         ܐܢܬܘܢ ܠܗ

         And his disciples said to him: "Which day will the revival of the dead be, and which day does the new world come?" And he said to them: "What you expect has come, but you do not know it."

Another passage in need of examination comes from logion 50, which is most obtuse:

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[21] See J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), 331; William Jennings (Revised by Ulric Gantillon), *Lexicon to the Syriac New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 138.

[22] See Antón Bousquet, *Between the Twilights: An Interlinear Translation of the Syriac Orthodox Breviary*, 2nd Ed. (Koadig, 2019–2021), 153.

[23] Anne Eason, "Introduction to the Book of Consolation," chap. 1 in *The Passion of the Word*, vol. 1 (self-pub., academia.edu, 2024).

[24] M. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* (Judaica Treasury: 1971, 2004), 895–96.

[25] N. Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 102.

[26] Though שבתן does occur in Aramaic, it is only used in Palestinian Targumic translations of the Hebrew Pentateuch.

Jesus said, 'If they say to you, "From where have you come?", say to them, "We have come from the light, where the light came into being all of its own accord..." (Gathercole trans.).[27]

Simon Gathercole says the expression "where the light came into being all of its own accord" relates to a doctrine of "self-generation," or "the Gnostic myth in which 'Autogenes' (whose name means 'self-generated') is associated with light (he is 'god of light' in *Gos. Jud.* 47,20–21; cf. *Ap. John* II 7,15–32)."[28] This is *prima facie* possible; however, the simple expressions for "self-generated" (e.g. ⲀⲨⲦⲞⲄⲈⲚⲈⲤ, ⲀⲨⲦⲞⲄⲈⲚⲎⲦⲞⲤ, etc.) in the Gospel of Judas and Second Apocryphon of John do not look anything like GosThom's "came into being all of its own accord" (ϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲘⲘⲀⲨ ⲈⲂⲞⲖ �*ⲓ*ⲦⲞⲞⲦⲩ̀ ⲞⲨⲀⲀⲦⲩ̀).[29] Michael Grondin's interlinear literally translates the Coptic as "ϣⲱⲡⲉ (came-into-being) Ⲙ-ⲘⲀⲨ (there,) ⲈⲂⲞⲖ (outward) ⲌⲒ-ⲦⲞⲞⲦ-ⲩ̀ (by-his-hand) ⲞⲨⲀⲀⲦ-ⲩ̀ (himself)."[30] Following Grondin's literal translation and adopting Gathercole's "self-generated" interpretation, Martijn Linssen takes his translation "by-the-hand-of" (ⲌⲒⲦⲞⲞⲦ) as allusive to the Egyptian god Atum's coming into being via "self-masturbating"[31] (his hand hermaphroditically personified as the goddess Iusaaset/Iusaas), which although creative is perhaps not entirely wrong (as will be seen from a syncretic standpoint), despite that it completely ignores the common Semitic idiom of agency, "by means of him," for "by-his-hand": ܒܐܝܕܗ, בידו.

Samuel Zinner correctly acknowledges the Semitic idiom of agency, but also sides with a reflexive "self-generated" interpretation of the Coptic, claiming it "idiomatically means the light was 'made by itself,' or 'came from itself'",[32] hypothesizing a reading parallel to Ode 32 of the *Odes of Solomon*'s "ܗܘܐ ܡܢ ܢܦܫܗ." Indeed, if the Coptic ⲞⲨⲀⲀⲦⲩ̀ (presumably "himself/itself") were equivalent to Syriac ܢܦܫܗ (cognate to Heb. נפשו), then that might be a possible translation;

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[27] Simon Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2 of *Texts and Editions for New Testament Study*, ed. S. E. Porter and W. J. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 406.

[28] S. Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2 of *Texts and Editions for New Testament Study*, ed. S. E. Porter and W. J. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 408.

[29] Michael Grondin's interlinear literally translates the Coptic as "ϣⲱⲡⲉ (came-into-being) Ⲙ-ⲘⲀⲨ (there,) ⲈⲂⲞⲖ (outward) ⲌⲒ-ⲦⲞⲞⲦ-ⲩ̀ (by-his-hand) ⲞⲨⲀⲀⲦ-ⲩ̀ (himself)." M. W. Grondin, *Grondin's Interlinear Coptic/English Translation of The Gospel of Thomas*, rev. ed. (self-pub., 1997–2002).

[30] M. W. Grondin, *Grondin's Interlinear Coptic/English Translation of The Gospel of Thomas*, rev. ed. (self-pub., 1997–2002).

[31] Martijn A. T. Linssen, *Complete Thomas Commentary, Part I & II (logion 0-55)* (self-pub., academia.edu, 2022), 436; also, cf. "creating yourself; you mould your own flesh. One who fashions but is not fashioned," in R. O. Faulkner *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, ed. C. Andrews (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 41.

[32] See Samuel Zinner, "Gospel of Thomas Logia 49–50 As a Source of Odes of Solomon 32," rev. ed. (self-pub., academia.edu, 2017), 1. Despite that this article argues for a Hebrew vorlage, Zinner may in fact be right about GosThom logion 50 being the source for *Ode* 32 (as seen from either a cross-linguistic or syncretic standpoint).

however, that is neither the Coptic's primary meaning nor does it agree with its historical correspondence of terms to Semitic languages. In fact, "himself" or "itself" (ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲧϥ) is secondary: the KELLIA's *Coptic Dictionary Online* gives "alone" for the lexeme ⲟⲩⲁⲁ followed by "self."[33] If one looks up the correspondences to this term in the Hebrew bible (and the Syriac Peshitta for comparison), it can be seen that it more consistently corresponds to the Hebrew לְבַד ("alone"), equivalent to Syriac ܒܠܚܘܕ—e.g. 2 Sam 18:24's "him alone," לְבַדּוֹ and ܒܠܚܘܕܘܗܝ, Prov 5:17's "you alone," לְבַדְּךָ and ܒܠܚܘܕܝܟ, etc.—rather than "himself," נַפְשׁוֹ (or, ܢܦܫܗ). In other words, past arguments regarding this logion are unsoundly based on modern translations of the Coptic which myopically self-confirm fanciful theological hermeneutics: i.e. they do not reflect the term's historical usage with its ancient cross-linguistic correspondents.

Some headway can now be made. If the expression "ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲍⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧϥ ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲧϥ" is literally backtranslated into Hebrew, it comes out "בְּיָדוֹ לְבַדּוֹ," i.e., "by means of him alone." Some retrotranslations of the passage into Hebrew and Syriac can now be given as follows:

50 ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓⲥ̅ ϫⲉⲉⲩϣⲁⲛϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̅ ϫⲉⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲧⲱⲛ ϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲩ ϫⲉⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲛⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲍⲙ̅ ⲡⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ ⲡⲙⲁ ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲡⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ ϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲙ̅[ⲙⲁ]ⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲍⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧϥ ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲧϥ...

וַיֹּאמֶר יֵשׁוּעַ אִם יֹאמְרוּ לָכֶם מֵאַיִן נִהְיֵיתֶם אִמְרוּ לָהֶם בָּאנוּ מֵהָאוֹר מֵהַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ הָאוֹר נִהְיָה בְּיָדוֹ לְבַדּוֹ...

ܘܐܡܪ ܝܫܘܥ ܐܢ ܢܐܡܪܘܢ ܠܟܘܢ ܡܢ ܐܝܟܐ ܐܬܟܘܢܬܘܢ ܐܡܪܘ ܠܗܘܢ ܐܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܢܘܗܪܐ ܐܝܟܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܢܘܗܪܐ ܒܐܝܕܗ ܒܠܚܘܕܘܗܝ,...

And Yeshua said: "If they will say to you, 'Whence did you come into being?' tell them, 'We have come from the light, the place where the light came into being by means of him alone...'"

Not only is this more consistent with the Coptic's correspondence to Semitic languages in translation, but it also shows the text to be exegeting the familiar role of Jesus' "only-begotten" Sonship from the Father as the intermediary hand or instrument of creation (which would be nonsensical if he were "self-generated," i.e. "self-begotten").[34] Jewish tradition is rife not just with the popular idiom of agency but also its anthropomorphic significance, which should not be

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[33] TLA lemma no. C4901 (ⲟⲩⲁⲁ), in: *Coptic Dictionary Online*, ed. by the Koptische/Coptic Electronic Language and Literature International Alliance (KELLIA), https://coptic-dictionary.org/entry.cgi?tla=C4901 (accessed 2023-01-16).

[34] Cf. Irenaeus, *Haer*. III 18,1, "I have clearly demonstrated that the Word was existing in the beginning with God— by whose hand everything came into being": see J. Gebhardt-Klein, *Syriac Fragments of Irenaeus Against the Gnostics and Docetics* (self-pub., academia.edu, 2023), 7.

ignored.[35] The reading also finds agreement with an account in the Syriac Clementine *Recognitions* narrating an early distortion of doctrine regarding the self-generate and hermaphroditic Deity of the Simonians:[36]

> They set up the nonexistent in the place of the existent, and they spoke as if He had come into being by means of Himself, for they withdrew into madness and to plants would liken the Self-Existent One Who did not come into being. They were rash with the things of the Greeks... for they have not known Him when they say that He exists or that He does not exist. For by the fact that He begat Himself, He would exist, but by the fact of being begotten from Himself, He would not exist. He would not therefore exist because of being begotten, nor would He exist because He begat... (Rec. 3:3).[37]

While some have doubted the antiquity of this portion of the Clementines (Rec. 3:2–11)—often called "the ten missing chapters" because the Latin translator Rufinus of Aquileia thought it so blasphemous he omitted it over its supposed agreement with 4th-century Eunomian doctrine regarding the "ungenerate" nature of Deity[38]—such an allegation is superficial at best, since most philosophy since Aristotle has scoffed at the notion of self-generation, understood as a form of *causa sui* (to the exclusion of Stoicism and Spinoza), and Orthodox Christianity has traditionally viewed the Father as *agenetos* (ungenerate/unbegotten). Furthermore, the content of this portion of the Clementines makes far more convincing counterpoints[39] to a pre-Christian pagan work from Nag Hammadi, *Eugnostos the Blessed*, which was probably composed in Egypt in the first century BCE and most interestingly reworked into a Christian form, *The Sophia of Jesus Christ*, "soon after the advent of Christianity in Egypt – the latter half of the first century C.E.,"[40] exemplifying just what the Clementine passage testifies to, i.e. an early Christian appropriation

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[35] Meir Bar-Ilan, "The Hand of God: A Chapter in Rabbinic Anthropomorphism," in *Rashi 1040–1990: Hommage a Ephraim E. Urbach, Congres europeen des Etudes juives*, ed. G. Sed-Rajna (Paris: CERF, 1993), 321–35.

[36] Cf. Rec. 3:2–3's "plants," some of which (e.g. tomatoes) are true hermaphrodites, and the doctrine elsewhere (Rec. 1:69) specified "male-female" and attributed to Simon.

[37] J. G. Gebhardt, *The Syriac Clementine Recognitions and Homilies* (Nashville, TN: Grave Distractions Publications, 2014), 85.

[38] The garbled Latin translation was added to Rufinus' translation in manuscripts by a Gothic Arian, but has been rendered unintelligible until the discovery of the Syriac Clementines. See D. J. Chapman, "On the Date of the Clementines," pts. 1–2, *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 9–10 (Leipzig: Druck von W. Drugulin, 1908): 21–34, 147–59.

[39] (1) Eugnostos calls God the Self-Father and Self-Begetter, while the ten chapters refute the idea that God could be his own father or begetter of himself. (2) Eugnostos holds a hermaphroditic Godhead, while the ten chapters deny hermaphrodism of God. (3) Both texts discuss the "likeness of God" and concepts of power and temporality: Eugnostos holds the likeness subordinate not in time, but in power; whereas the ten chapters hold the converse: the likeness is temporally subordinate, but equal in power. (4) Both texts call the Father the Unbegotten: although Eugnostos gives this title to God without blinking after affirming that God is also Self-begotten and Self-Father, the ten chapters explicitly hold this conjunction of terms logically contradictory. (5) Eugnostos holds divine-feminine Wisdom near to God, while the ten chapters' Holy Spirit is likewise feminine and in close proximity to "the Self-Existent One Who did not come into being." Post-Nicene Syriac literature regendered the Holy Spirit as masculine to deemphasize feminine association with divinity—also demonstrating a pre-Nicene (rather than Eunomian) origin.

of dogma pertaining to self-generated Deity.[41] To corroborate this syncretic borrowing, Eusebius' history both attributes a gospel to Thomas (HE 3.25.6) and accuses the followers of Simon Magus of its doctrinal distortion when alluding to logion 2 (HE 2.13.7):

> Those matters which are kept more secret by them than these, at the first mention of which they say *one would be astonished,* and to use an oracular phrase with them, *would be confounded, they happen in truth to be so full of amazement,* folly, and madness, such as they are, that it is not only impossible to commit them to writing but even to utter them with the lips to modest men on account of their excessive baseness and obscenity.[42] (ita.)

If the retrotranslations of my previous paper and those given above are on point, then the doctrines of hermaphroditic[43] and self-generated Deity are in fact originally absent from GosThom, though it is probable that from an early period the text was syncretically interpreted in such a way as to be conducive to an audience steeped in extraneously foreign dogma. Perhaps other difficult readings of the text can likewise be accredited to secondary Simonian interpretation overlaid upon an overly-literal Coptic translation of a Hebrew vorlage.[44]

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that Hebrew stands behind the Coptic of the Gospel of Thomas in a variety of cases and also behind the synoptics in one important instance as its earliest prototype, that the text well-attests to the resurrection of the dead (as a "revival" or

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[40] See Douglas M. Parrott, trans. and comm., "Eugnostos the Blessed" and "The Sophia of Jesus," in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. James M. Robinson (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 221. Parrott argues that the work's enumeration of Stoics, Epicureans, and astrologers as comprising all philosophers points to a date no later than the first century BCE.

[41] Ruairidh MacMhanainn Bóid plausibly argues that Simon's alleged *Apóphasis Megálē* (wherein a doctrine of self-generation occurs) was authoritative to all Samaritans (Sebuaeans and Dositheans alike) and interestingly glossed by a non-Samaritan. Specialists should defer to the author's new book: R. M. Bóid, *A Samaritan Plan of Religious History*: https://www.academia.edu/107952789/.

[42] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.13.7.

[43] While some might argue "single one(s)" refers to Plato's hermaphroditic Primal Man in *Symposium* 189c–193e or Talmudic claims of an Egyptian falsification of Gn 1:27 (e.g. TB Megilla 9a), such attempts make nonsense out of logion 4 and paint Jesus as some sort of mystical Greco-Egyptian pedophile: a portrait at odds with the historical Galilean Jew who would sooner drown such criminals with a millstone in the depths of the sea per Mt 18:6. However, such representation finds parallel in the Syriac Clementines' Simon the sorcerer, a Greek-educated (Rec. 2:7) Jesus-imposter (Rec. 3:47) whose unclean experiments involved murdering a child (Rec. 2:15, 3:49). Others might argue logion 22's "make male and female into a single one..." (Meyer trans.) refers to hermaphroditic union, but at face value (with emendation from my previous article) it is not saying they become a "single one" of mixed sexes, but that there is a status reversal of "one another" such that they become neither, which rather finds agreement in Mt 22:30's "they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven." (NRSV)

[44] The hermaphroditic union or sexual intercourse commonly imputed to "single one(s)" and occurring between the old man and the little child in logion 4 is probably also evidenced in popular claims of Simon's shape-shifting powers: e.g. "Qui ingressus cœpit stare ante illum et subito mutare effigies, ita ut fieret subito puer et posthæc senior, altera uero hora adolescentior. mutabatur sexu, ætate, et per multas figuras diaboli ministerio bachabatur" (Entering, he began to stand before him and suddenly to change his appearance, so that suddenly he became a boy, and afterward an old man, then at another hour a youth. He changed sex, age, and in many forms was transformed by the devil's ministry): see Richard Adelbert Lipsius and Max Bonnet, eds., *Acta apostolorum apocrypha: post Constantinum Tischendorf* (Lipsiae: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1891), 132–33.

"restoration"), that it is originally devoid of the dogma of self-generated Deity, and that Simonian distortion is a precedent for its continuing presumed heterodox character. To the extent that this paper has strength in its argument, it is only because there is some truth here that has been waiting to be discovered—not because of any form of presentation. Many other proofs could be evinced, and perhaps some will be given in time. Nevertheless, this article and its predecessor can suffice that a text remains to be studied with genuine mysteries, one in Hebrew and preceding the synoptic gospel tradition, syncretically interpreted since remote antiquity, but just not the one which many today have made it out to be.[45]

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[45] Thanks go to Ruairidh MacMhanainn Bóid, Michael W. Grondin, and René Salm for providing valuable feedback to an earlier draft of this paper.

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