

Luke 11.27-28 // Thom. 79a: A Case of Thomasine Dependence

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Note: this is a pre-publication draft article, last updated 1 February 2007 (23.48), not yet in its final form. Comments to Goodacre@duke.edu . Thanks!

(1) Introduction

The question of the relationship between Thomas and the Synoptics remains highly contested. There is no agreement over whether there is anything in Thomas that might indicate direct acquaintance with texts in one or more of our Synoptic Gospels,¹ or whether the parallels are primarily due to shared oral tradition.² One of the difficulties

¹ Or whether the reverse might be possible, Synoptic dependence on Thomas. This has not often been argued, but see Stevan L. Davies, “Mark’s Use of the Gospel of Thomas”, *Neotestamentica* 30 (1996), 307-334.

² Broadly speaking, one might say that in North America the tendency is increasingly to treat Thomas as completely independent of the Synoptics, at best only influenced late in the text’s evolution by scribal harmonisation (See particularly the important and influential work Stephen J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 1993), whereas in Europe the tendency is to postulate a

is that Thomas does not lend itself easily to methods honed in synoptic criticism over the last century or so. Where there are parallels to its sayings, there is rarely verbatim agreement with synoptics texts,³ nor (famously) is it easy to trace agreement in order between Thomas and the Synoptics.

In this climate we will be grateful for any help that might be provided by a fresh consideration of a hitherto neglected parallel. One text that might have been given more attention is the saying in Luke 11.27-28 // Thomas 79a. I shall argue that this parallel shows clear signs of Thomas's direct acquaintance with Luke's Gospel.

stronger element of Synoptic influence on Thomas (see, for example, C. M. Tuckett, note 8 below) but these matters are not clear cut.

³ There is, however, more verbatim agreement between Thomas and the Synoptics than is sometimes realised. Saying 26 in P Oxy 1.1-4, for example, features a thirteen word verbatim agreement with Luke 6.42 (position of ἐκβαλεῖν agreeing with Matt.7.5b). The Oxyrhynchus fragments also exhibit verbatim agreement in several other places of six to eight words (Luke 17.21 // P. Oxy. 654.15-16, Thom. 3; Mark 10.31 // P Oxy. 654.25-27, Thom. 4; Luke 8.17 // P Oxy 654.27-31, Thom. 5). It is, of course, more difficult to judge the degree of verbatim agreement between the Synoptics and Coptic Thomas. The best candidates are Matt. 9.37-8 // Luke 10.2 // Thom. 73; Matt. 8.20 // Luke 9.58 // Thom. 86; and the parallel currently under consideration.

(2) How Similar are the Texts?

It is common in discussions of the relationship between Thomas and the Synoptics for scholars to by-pass an important question. Before asking whether or not one text is likely to have influenced another, one should perhaps ask a prior question. Are the texts even similar enough to make a thesis of direct knowledge necessary?⁴ Let us begin our investigation, therefore, by asking this prior question of our texts – how similar are they? The texts on which we are focusing read as follows, with translations appended:

Luke 11.27-28: Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ λέγειν αὐτὸν ταῦτα ἑπαρασά τις φωνὴν γυνὴ ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Μακαρία ἡ κοιλία ἡ βαστάσασά σε καὶ μαστοὶ οὓς ἐθήλασας. αὐτὸς δὲ εἶπεν, Μενούν μακάριοι οἱ ἀκούοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ φυλάσσοντες.

‘And it came to pass while he was saying these things that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that

⁴ Take for example J. D. Crossan, *Four Other Gospels: Shadows on the Contours of Canon* (Minneapolis: Seabury, 1985), 36. In spite of speaking of the need for “proper methodology”, Crossan begins by asking about whether or not redactional traits from one text are present in another. The prior question is surely: is there any verbatim or near-verbatim agreement between the texts in question such as to suggest the possibility of direct knowledge one way or the other?

bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!” But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”

Thomas 79a:

ΠΕΧΕ ΟΥC21M[Ε] ΝΔϣ 2Μ ΠΜΗΩΕ ΧΕ ΝΕΕΙΔΤC [Ν]Θ2Η
 ΝΤΔ2ϣΙ 2ΔΡΟΚ ΔΥΩ ΝΚΙ[Β]Ε ΕΝΤΔ2CΔΝΟΥΩΚ ΠΕΧΔϣ ΝΔ[C] ΧΕ
 ΝΕΕΙΔΤΟΥ ΝΝΕΝΤΔ2CΩΤΜ ΔΠΛΟΓΟC ΜΠΕΙΩΤ ΔΥΔΡΕ2 ΕΡΟϣ 2Ν ΟΥΜΕ

‘A woman in the crowd said to Him, “Blessed are the womb that bore you and the breasts that nourished you.” He said to her, “Blessed are those who have heard the word of the Father and have truly kept it.”’

There seems little doubt that these two texts, unique to Thomas and Luke, are closely parallel. The difficulty comes in attempting to work out the degree of similarity between these two texts in different languages. Are they close enough to claim near-verbatim identity? Is the relationship strong enough to suggest what we would normally call literary dependence of some kind?

The only differences of substance between the two texts are (1) the absence in Thomas of any equivalent to Luke’s ἐπαρσά . . . φωνήν and (2) the absence in Thomas of any equivalent of Luke’s μενοῦν. There is nothing present in Thomas’s version, on the other hand, that is absent from Luke.

Other variations are minor, **ΝΚΙΒΕ ΕΝΤΑΖΑΝΟΥΩΚ** (“the breasts that nourished you”) for **μαστοὶ οὓς ἐθήλασας** (“breasts that you sucked”), for example, **ΝΝΕΝΤΑΖΩΤΜ** (“[those] who have heard”) for **οἱ ἀκούοντες** (“those who hear”), and **ΜΠΕΙΩΤ** (“of the father”) for **τοῦ θεοῦ** (“of God”). We should probably regard the indefinite article (**ΟΥ**) in **ΟΥΖΙΜΕ** (“a woman”) as equivalent to Luke’s indefinite pronoun in **τις γυνή** (“a certain woman”).⁵

⁵ Cf. Greeven’s translation of Thomas 79 into Greek, which begins **Εἶπεν αὐτῷ τις γυνή ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου**. (Albert Huck, *Synopsis of the First Three Gospels*, 13th edition, fundamentally revised by Heinrich Greeven (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1981), 154). This is very close to Luke 11.27. Greeven’s choice is no doubt correct, and can be paralleled in Coptic versions of the New Testament where the same move is often made. Greeven’s full translation is as follows: **Εἶπεν αὐτῷ τις γυνή ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου· μακαρία ἡ κοιλία ἡ βαστάσασά σε καὶ οἱ μαστοὶ οἱ θρέψαντές σε. Εἶπεν αὐτῇ· μακάριοι οἱ ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ πατρὸς (καὶ) φυλάξαντες αὐτὸν ἐπ’ ἀληθείας**. Bethge’s retranslation is quite similar but reverses the position of **τις** and **γυνή** and has **ἀληθῶς ἐφύλαξαν αὐτὸν** rather than **φυλάξαντες αὐτὸν ἐπ’ ἀληθείας**. See Kurt Aland, *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (Editio quindecima revisa; Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996, 1997). Appendix 1: Evangelium Thomae copticum, prepared by Hans-Gebhard Bethge.

The two texts are close to each other. Most of the variations seem to be the kind that translation of a Greek original would explain.⁶ If we were looking at this degree of agreement among the Synoptics, we would usually incline towards literary dependence of some kind. Thus, while it is possible that a saying like this could have come independently via oral tradition to both Thomas and Luke, the closeness between the two sayings will suggest that it is worth looking further for signs of direct knowledge one way or the other.⁷ I would like to suggest that there is good evidence

⁶ Unfortunately we have no Oxyrhynchus papyri here to help us with this saying. It is at least worth noting, however, that Coptic Thomas is further from the Synoptics than is Greek Thomas in the case of the closest parallel to any Synoptic saying, Thom. 26 (P Oxy 1) // Matt. 7.5 // Luke 6.42.

⁷ There is a third possibility that Thomas and Luke are both dependent on Q or earlier versions of Q (hinted, for example, by H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990). Q theorists are split over whether to include Luke 11.27-28 in Q (see Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels: Synopsis, Critical Notes and Concordance* (Foundations and Facets: New Testament; Sonoma, Polebridge, 1990), ad loc. The International Q Project's Critical Text does not include Luke 11.27-28). While for Q sceptics this will in any case be a non-question, I hope to demonstrate that Thomas shows knowledge of Luke in the form in which we have it, and that this version is heavily redacted by Luke. Thus, even if one wants to postulate an origin in Q, the version familiar to Thomas will be Luke's and not Q's.

of such knowledge for this saying and that it runs in the direction from Luke to Thomas.

(3) *The Lukan Nature of Luke 11.27-28*

It has long been recognised that if one wants to make a good case for Thomas's partial dependence on one or more of the Synoptics, it is necessary to point to features in parallel texts that are distinctive of or redactional in the Synoptic text in question.⁸ Ideally, though, one requires more than this to establish dependence in any one parallel beyond reasonable doubt.

(1) If Thomas parallels the whole of a saying or pericope that as a whole bears the pervasive, distinctive stamp of an evangelist, this will be telling. While odd features here and there might be suggestive, they will not be enough on their own to establish a case for dependence.

⁸ For a clear exposition of this methodology, with discussion of specific examples, see the seminal article C. M. Tuckett, "Thomas and the Synoptics", *NovT* 30 (1988), 132-57. Tuckett does not, however, discuss our example.

(2) The saying in question needs to be in some way uncharacteristic or anomalous in Thomas. This is hardly an easy demand because Thomas is an eclectic text, full of oddities. But if, for example, we were to find a distinctively Lukan feature that was at the same time strikingly odd in Thomas, the burden would rest on those who would claim Thomasine independence for that saying.

Now it is surprising that Luke 11.27-28 // Thom. 79a seems to have evaded serious attention so far in the discussion of the relationship between Thomas and the Synoptics.⁹ For here we have, as I will attempt to demonstrate, a text with a

⁹ The parallel is discussed in Wolfgang Schrage, *Das Verhältnis des Thomas-Evangeliums zur synoptischen Tradition und zu den koptischen Evangelienübersetzungen: zugleich ein Beitrag zur gnostischen Synoptikerdeutung* (Beihefte zu Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche, 29; Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1964), 164-8. Schrage makes much of the change to second person plural in Thom. 79b, supposedly making sense only on the understanding that it has in view the address to “Daughters of Jerusalem” in the parallel Luke 23.28-29. But this is weak since Luke 23.29 itself does not have a second person plural here. For a brief comment on Schrage’s thesis here see Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 60, n. 217. However, Patterson’s comment that “nothing of Luke’s redactional hand is to be found” here in Thomas (*ibid.*, 60) is premature in the light of the evidence presented in this article. Cf. also

distinctively Lukan character that is wholly present in Thomas where it is in some ways anomalous. Let us first take the Lukan features in turn. In each case we will look at the feature to see whether or not it is in some way unusual or anomalous in Thomas.

(a) Foil Questions and Comments from Anonymous Individuals

There are several examples in Luke of foil questions or comments from anonymous individuals which lead up to Jesus' sayings. *τις*, in particular, is common:

9.57: καὶ πορευομένων αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ εἶπέν *τις* πρὸς αὐτὸν·
ἀκολουθήσω σοι ὅπου ἔαν ἀπέερχῃ . . . (contrast Matt. 8.19, εἶς
γραμματεὺς εἶπεν)

11.27: Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ λέγειν αὐτὸν ταῦτα ἐπαρασά *τις* φωνήν
γυνῆ ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Μακαρία . . .

12.13: Εἶπεν δὲ *τις* ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου αὐτῷ, διδάσκαλε . . . ' (cf. Thom. 72:
[πε]χε ογρ[ωμ]ε νλγ χε . . .).

K. Snodgrass, "The Gospel of Thomas: A Secondary Gospel", *Second Century* 7 (1989-90), 19-38 (36-7).

13.23: Εἶπεν δέ τις αὐτῶ· κύριε, εἰ ὀλίγοι οἱ σωζόμενοι . . . (contrast Matt. 7.13).

14.15: Ἀκούσας δέ τις τῶν συνανακειμένων ταῦτα εἶπεν αὐτῶ· μακάριος ὅστις φάγεται ἄρτον ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ. (Contrast Matt. 22.1 and Thom. 64)

Now foil comments and questions are common in the Synoptics¹⁰ and they are found in Thomas too (e.g. 91, 99, 100 and 104). The distinctive feature about the five cases listed above is that these are the only places in the Synoptic tradition where teaching is introduced by foil comments from anonymous individuals, always τις.¹¹ This feature comes at least five times in Luke and it is probably due to his own redaction, especially since, on three of the occasions (9.57, 13.23 & 14.15) there is a contrast

¹⁰ For an analysis, see Mark Goodacre, *Goulder and the Gospels: An Examination of a New Paradigm* (JSNTSup, 133; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 146-9.

¹¹ A recent study drew attention to this feature as an aspect of the distinctive Lukan “new character narrative”. See Patrick L. Dickerson, “The new character narrative in Luke-acts and the synoptic problem”, *JBL* 116/2 (1997) 291-312.

with Q / Matthew.¹² It only occurs twice in Thomas (Thom. 72, Thom. 79),¹³ both times parallel to Luke.¹⁴

Further, Luke 11.27 is like 14.15 in its “cloying piety”.¹⁵ On both occasions we have a macarism on the lips of someone other than Jesus (contrast Thomas 64). And 11.27

¹² For Q sceptics, these will be examples of Lukan redaction of Matthew. For Q theorists, these will be examples of Lukan redaction of Q -- on none of these occasions do the International Q Project here reconstruct the Critical Text of Q with Luke’s wording.

¹³ The standard reconstruction of the text at Thom. 72, **ΟΥΡ[ΩΜ]Ε**, has to be correct.

¹⁴ There is another hint that Thomas might be following Luke in Thom. 72 // Luke 12.13-15. Jesus replies to the man ἄνθρωπε (Luke 12.14), a form of address found on three other occasions in Luke and never elsewhere in the Gospels: 5.20, 22.58 and 22.60 (all redactional additions to Mark). Thomas has **Ω ΠΡΩΜΕ** in parallel, found elsewhere only at Thom. 61. For the theory that Thomas 72 preserves a more primitive version of this logion than Luke, see Gregory J. Riley, “Influence of Thomas Christianity on Luke 12.14 and Luke 5.39 and the development of a distinctive theological orientation through an organic oral interaction between early Christian communities (Pauline, Johannine, Thomasine)” *HTR* 88 (1995), 229-235.

¹⁵ So Michael Goulder, *Luke: A New Paradigm* (JSNTSup, 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 91. For comment see my *Goulder and the Gospels*, 146-50.

is like 12.13 in that the person asking the foil question or making the comments is someone “from the crowd” (contrast Thom. 72), which brings us to our next point.

(b) *The Crowd*

One of the most striking features of the parallel is the occurrence in Thomas of the term “the crowd” (πληθος), its sole occurrence in the text. We inevitably find ourselves asking, “What crowd?” for it is the first and last we hear of them. Indeed in the previous saying (Thomas 78), it is implied that Jesus and his disciples are not part of the kind of large group travelling through Israel that we see in Luke’s Central Section but are, rather, those who have “come out to the countryside”. There is a marked contrast with Luke where “the crowd/s” are present throughout, and no more so than in the Central Section (11.14, 11.27, 11.29, 12.1, 12.13, 12.54, 13.14, 13.17, 14.25, 18.36). They are, then, superfluous and irrelevant here in Thomas but coherent, important and pervasive here in Luke.¹⁶

¹⁶ Cf. Schrage, *Das Verhältnis*, 165.

(c) Gynaecology

Thomas refers to gynaecological details only here in 79 (the second half of which is parallel to Luke 23.29).¹⁷ By contrast, of all the evangelists, Luke is the one most inclined to mention gynaecological details. Womb (κοιλία) occurs again at 1.15, 1.41, 1.42, 1.44, 2.21, 23.29, Acts 3.2 & 14.8.¹⁸ And μαστοί (breasts) occurs only in Luke among the (canonical) Gospels, here and at 23.29. Indeed the combination of elements, Jesus' mother, womb and blessing, occurs also in 1.41-4, clearly a co-text of 11.27-28:

1.41: “And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 1.42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry: ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 1.43 And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 1.44 For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy.’”

¹⁷ Note, however, that 2H occurs also in Thomas 69, but here it means “belly”. Further, in Thomas 22, there is reference to infants “taking milk” or “being suckled”. I am grateful to Mike Grondin for this point.

¹⁸ κοιλία = womb occurs elsewhere in the Gospels only at Matthew 19.12. Other uses of κοιλία (= belly) occur at Matt. 12.40, Matt. 15.17 // Mark 7.19 and in some mss of Luke 15.16.

This comes in material usually thought to have been carefully crafted by Luke and its similarity in theme and vocabulary to 11.27-28 is difficult to miss. It might be objected, of course, that there is some apparent tension between Luke 1.41-44, in which Mary is blessed, and 11.27-28, in which Jesus corrects the woman's macarism with “Blessed rather . . .”. Might this apparent tension reflect an ill fit between these two texts of the kind that might compromise the pervasive Lukan character of 11.27-28, limiting the effectiveness of this argument for Thomasine dependence on that text? Two points might be made in response. First, in spite of the common translation “rather”, μενοῦν should not be taken in an adversative sense. The corrective “Yea, rather” of the King James Version is certainly preferable, for when Luke wants to express contradiction, he uses οὐχί, λέγω ὑμῖν (12.51, 13.3, 5).¹⁹ Second, due attention should be paid, as always in Luke, to *order*. 1.41-44 is the appropriate place for a macarism that is, in any case, on “the fruit of your womb”, Jesus. In the Central Section of Luke, on the other hand, the woman is detracting from what is important,

¹⁹ Cf. M. E. Thrall, *Greek Participles in the New Testament: Linguistic and Exegetical Studies* (New Testament tools and studies, 3; Leiden: Brill, 1962), 34-5. She notes too that for affirmation Luke uses ναί (7.26, 10.21, 11.51, 12.5); cf. also C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 163, “an introduction to a new statement correcting or modifying a foregoing statement”.

hearing the word of God and doing it, perhaps the major theme of these chapters and indeed of the whole Gospel, and we turn to this next.

(d) Hearing the Word of God and Keeping It

Luke 11.28 features phraseology and motifs that are distinctively Lukan. “Hearing the word of God” (ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ) is a major preoccupation of Luke and one of the clearest aspects of his agenda.²⁰ It recurs often and particularly in redactional changes to Mark.²¹ In 5.1, for example, Luke writes:

²⁰ This feature is picked up briefly by Risto Uro, “the words ‘hear the word of God and keep it’ (cf. Luke 8.21) have a Lukan flavor. The similar expression in Thomas may therefore reveal a Lukan redaction”: “Is Thomas an Encratite Gospel?”, Risto Uro (ed.), *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas* (Studies of the New Testament and Its World; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), Chapter 6 (148, n. 29). See too the slightly different version of the same essay, “Asceticism and Anti-Familial Language in the Gospel of Thomas” in Halvor Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), Chapter 12 (221).

²¹ This is working, of course, on the assumption of Markan Priority. For those who do not accept Markan Priority, it is worth noting that all the examples also make sense on the assumption that Luke’s sole written source was Matthew.

5.1: “While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God (ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ), he was standing by the lake of Gennes'aret . . .” (cf. Mark 1.16-20 // Matt. 4.18-22).

Similarly, Luke accentuates the theme in his version of the interpretation of the Sower:

8.11: “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ). 8.12 The ones along the path are those who have heard . . . (οἱ ἀκούσαντες)” (cf. Mark 4.14-15: “The sower sows the word (ὁ λόγος). And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown; when they hear . . . (ὅταν ἀκούωσιν . . .)”); cf. also Matt. 13.18-19).

Most striking, however, is Luke’s redaction of the saying at the conclusion of the Mother and Brothers pericope, which appropriately comes at the conclusion of Luke’s parable chapter, acting as a comment on it:

8.21: ‘But he said to them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it (οἱ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀκούοντες καὶ ποιοῦντες).’ (contrast Mark 3.35: “Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother”); so too Matt. 12.50).

This example is all the more striking because it is closely related to the passage under discussion, Luke 11.27-28 – family ties are in question and Jesus corrects a worldly

misapprehension with a spiritual pronouncement. And here, as in his redaction of Mark 3.35, Luke uses his distinctive language of hearing the word of God and doing (ποιέω, 8.21) or keeping (φυλάσσω, 11.28) it.

But might one not say that the idea of hearing the word of God and doing it is something of a cliché, a commonplace in the Bible and in early Judaism? Even if this is true, authors choose their clichés in accordance with their interests, and what we will want to know is how far this term is a penchant specifically of Luke. A glance at the other Gospels, as well as at Acts, suggests that the term is one that Luke has a special interest in. We find that “word of God” (λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ) occurs only once in Matthew and once in Mark (Matt. 15.6 // Mark 7.13) and the usage here is in marked contrast to the usage in Luke. Here it is clearly referring to Scripture and not to the preaching of the gospel, which tends to be the sense in which the term is used by Luke. It is used in this sense not only in the Gospel in the passages quoted above, but often in Acts (4.31, 6.2, 6.7, 8.14, 11.1, 12.24, 13.5, 13.7, 13.46, 17.13 and 18.11), and sometimes one “receives” the word of God (δέδεκται ἡ Σαμάρεια τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, Acts 8.14; καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ἔδεξαντο τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, Acts 11.1) or “hears” it (ἀκοῦσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, Acts 13.7). Similarly, the term “word of the Lord” (ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου) occurs regularly in this connection in Acts (8.25, 13.44, 13.48, 13.49, 15.35, 15.36, 16.32 and 19.10), on two occasions (8.25 and 19.10) again with ἀκουεῖν.

But is “hearing the word of God and keeping it”, and so on in any way anomalous in Thomas? It seems clear that it is distinctive of Luke among the canonical Gospels,

and what we will want to know is whether or not the theme is at home in Thomas. Demonstrating this will not be straightforward: Thomas is, after all, an enigmatic text that is notoriously difficult to interpret, and many themes in the Gospel appear only once.

It becomes clear when we look carefully at Thomas, however, that both the theme and the language in which it is expressed are out of character. The term “word” in the singular (ΠΛΟΓΟΣ) occurs only here in Thomas.²² It follows, of course, that “word of the Father” is otherwise entirely absent from Thomas. But more importantly, the theme is not consonant with one of the key, repeated emphases of Thomas, the importance of hearing the words (plural) of *Jesus*. In Saying 19, for example, we hear:

“If you become my disciples and listen to my words, these stones will minister to you”.

Likewise in 38, Jesus says:

²² The term translated “word” here is ΛΟΓΟΣ which is, of course, a Greek loan word. It may be significant that the preferred term in Coptic Thomas is ⲠⲗⲰⲈ (Incipit, Thomas 1, 13 (twice), 19 and 38). Perhaps Coptic Thomas’s Greek Vorlage here had λόγος. But note that λόγος (plural) occurs twice in P.Oxy 654 (Incipit and Thomas 1).

“Many times have you desired to hear these words which I am saying to you, and you have no one else to hear them from.”

Again the stress is on listening to Jesus’ words, which appear to be exclusive to him, something clear also from Thomas 17:

“I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind.”

Nor will even the most casual reader of Thomas fail to notice the repeated formula that is familiar from the Synoptics but much more common in Thomas:

“Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear!” (sayings 8, 21, 24, 63, 65, 96).

Whoever wrote the incipit and the first saying in Thomas clearly appreciated this repeated emphasis on the importance of properly listening to Jesus’ sayings:

‘These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down. And he said, “Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death.”’²³

²³ Cf. Also 43: “Who are You, that You should say these things to us?”

In short, a key theme in Thomas is that one finds life by properly listening to the sayings of Jesus.²⁴ The matter of “hearing the word of the Father and truly keeping it” in Thomas 79 is not at home here, and it is not at home because it has come to Thomas from Luke, for whom this is, by contrast, a major and distinctive emphasis.

(4). Conclusion

Thomas 79a and Luke 11.27-28 are parallel texts which, when allowance is made for differences in language, have very similar wording. In several key respects, this wording is distinctively Lukan. The style, thought and terminology of this passage are common elsewhere in Luke and are paralleled in agreed redactional reworking of Mark and Q / Matthew. There is a Lukan foil question framed with τῆς, an interest in gynaecology and, most importantly, a thoroughly Lukan stress on “hearing the word of

²⁴ Cf. H. Koester, who rightly notes that the fundamental theological tendency of the Gospel of Thomas is “the view that the Jesus who spoke these words was and is the Living One, and thus gives life through his words” (“ΓΝΩΜΑΙ ΔΙΑΦΟΡΟΙ: The Origin and Nature of Diversification in the History of Early Christianity”, *HTR* 58 (1965), 279-318, reprinted in James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories Through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 114-57, this quotation 139.

God (my Father) and keeping it”.²⁵ Since the same features are, on the whole, anomalous in Thomas, the likely conclusion from the data will be that Thomas is, for this pericope at least, dependent on Luke’s Gospel.²⁶

²⁵ I leave open the question of whether or not Luke is responsible for the creation of this passage *in toto*. In view of the pervasive Lukan nature of these verses, Lukan creation seems to me quite likely, but accepting this is not necessary to the argument for Thomasine dependence. It might be that Luke had a source in Q or oral tradition for these verses and that he redacted the source in characteristic manner. The key point is that Thomas shares the distinctively Lukan elements, whether these are due to (total) Lukan composition or (mere) Lukan redaction.

²⁶ I am grateful to Stevan Davies for some helpful, critical comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I would also like to thank Stephen Carlson and Michael Grondin for helpful comments.