

THE “MOVEMENT AND REST” IN GOSPEL OF THOMAS 50

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Abstract. The fiftieth logion of the *Gospel of Thomas* is an enigmatic triad of questions and answers told by Jesus to his disciples. The answer to the third question “What is the sign of your (pl) Father which is in you (pl)?” reads “it is movement and rest.” This phrase has no known parallels in similar literature and its meaning is unclear. The current article evaluates different explanations offered in recent scholarship before assessing the words “movement” and “rest” in the *Gospel of Thomas* as a whole. It then gives an overview of four possible contexts: Genesis, Jewish Hermeticism, Platonism, and Aristotelianism. The article concludes with claiming that a Platonist view makes most sense: Just as the Demiurge in Plato’s *Timaeus* placed the rotating soul – which moves while staying at rest – into the head of humankind, so the sign of the Father in his elect disciples is movement and rest.

Keywords: Gospel of Thomas, Movement, Rest, Plato, Platonism, Genesis, Jewish Hermeticism, Aristotelianism.

1. Introduction

Because of the nature of the *Gospel of Thomas* (*GosThom*), where Jesus’ sayings are recorded often without context, it is a challenging task to interpret individual sayings.¹ Logion 50 is a good example. It is a triad of questions and answers told by Jesus to his disciples to prepare them for an interrogative confrontation with outsiders or heavenly powers, either during their earthly lives or *post mortem*.² The language used in this logion can be connected to language used

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² There are three main lines of interpretation: (1) DeConick proposes a mystical ascent in the present: A. D. DECONICK, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas*, (Vigiliae Christianae Supplements 33), Brill, Leiden, 1996, 43–99. (2) Gathercole argues for a post mortem ascent: S. GATHERCOLE, “*Quis et unde? Heavenly Obstacles in Gos. Thom. 50 and Related Literature*”, in M. BOCKMUEHL and G. G. STROUMSA (ed.), *Paradise in Antiquity. Jewish and Christian Views*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, 82–99. (3) Several