

Logion 65¹

65.1 πεχαϩ ξε ογρωμε ν̄χρη[...]ς νεγντ[αϩ] ν̄ογμα ν̄ελοολε αϩτα`αϩ
ν̄[ϩ]ν̄ογοειε ωινα εγναρ̄ ρωβ` εροϩ` ν̄ϩχι [ν̄]πεϩκαρ̄ποσ ν̄τοοτοϩ 65.2 αϩ-
χοοϩ ν̄πεϩρ̄μ̄ρ̄αλ̄ ξεκαασ ενογοειε να† ναϩ` ν̄πκαρποσ ν̄πμα ν̄ελοολε 65.3
αγεμαρτε ν̄πεϩρ̄μ̄ρ̄αλ̄ αϩριογε εροϩ` νε κεκογει πε ν̄σεμοοϩτϩ` απρ̄μ̄ρ̄αλ̄ βωκ`
αϩχοοσ επεϩχοεισ 65.4 πεξε πεϩχοεισ ξε μεωακ` ν̄π(ογ)σογων(ϩ)` 65.5
αϩχοοϩ ν̄κερ̄μ̄ρ̄αλ̄ ανογοειε ριογε επκεογα 65.6 τοτε απχοεισ χοοϩ ν̄πεϩ-
ωηρε πεχαϩ` ξε μεωακ` σεναωιπε ρητϩ` ν̄παωηρε 65.7 αν`ογοειε ετ̄ν̄μαγ
επει σεσοογν ξε ν̄τοϩ πε πεκληρονομοσ ν̄πμα ν̄ελοολε αϩβοπϩ` αϩμοοϩτϩ`
65.8 πετεγ̄ν̄ μααξε ν̄μοϩ` μαρεϩσωτ̄ν̄

65.1 *He said, 'A [...] man had a vineyard. He leased it to farmers so that they would work it, and he would receive its produce from them. 65.2 He sent his servant so that the farmers might give him the produce of the vineyard. 65.3 They seized his servant and struck him, nearly killing him. The servant went*

¹ **Bibliography for GTh 65:** McCaughey, 'Two Synoptic Parables in the Gospel of Thomas', 24–28; Schrage, *Verhältnis*, 137–145; J.D. Crossan, 'The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen', *JBL* 90 (1971), 451–465; J.A.T. Robinson, 'The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen: A Test of Synoptic Relationships', *NTS* 21 (1975), 443–461; K. Snodgrass, 'The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen: Is the Gospel of Thomas Version the Original?', *NTS* 21 (1975), 142–144; W.G. Morrice, 'The Parable of the Tenants and the Gospel of Thomas', *ExpT* 98 (1986–1987), 104–107; B. Dehandschutter, 'La parabole des vigneronns homicides (Mc., XII, 1–12) et l'Évangile selon Thomas', in M. Sabbe, ed. *L'Évangile selon Marc: Tradition et Rédaction* (BETL 34; Leuven: Unversity Press/Leuven: Peeters, 1988), 203–220; B.B. Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 237–253; Sevrin, 'Un groupement de trois paraboles contre les richesses', 425–439; W.E. Arnal, 'The Parable of the Tenants and the Class Consciousness of the Peasantry', in M. Desjardins & S.G. Wilson, eds. *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), 135–157; J. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2006); E. Van Eck, 'The Tenants in the Vineyard (GThom 65/Mark 12:1–12): A Realistic and Social-Scientific Reading', *HTS* 63 (2007), 909–936; C. Quarles, 'The Use of the Gospel of Thomas in the Research on the Historical Jesus of John Dominic Crossan', *CBQ* 69 (2007), 517–536 (524–534); C. Gianotto, 'Il Vangelo secondo Tommaso e il problema storico di Gesù', in E. Prinzivalli, ed. *Lenigma Gesù. Fonti e metodi della ricerca storica* (Rome: Carocci, 2008), 68–93 (73–78); J.P. Meier, 'The Parable of the Wicked Tenants in the Vineyard: Is the Gospel of Thomas Independent of the Synoptics?', in C.W. Skinner & K.R. Iverson, eds. *Unity and Diversity in the Gospels and Paul: Essays in Honor of Frank J. Matera* (SBLECL 7; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 129–145; Gathercole, *Composition*, 188–194.

and told his master. 65.4 The master said, "Perhaps ⟨they⟩ did not recognize ⟨him⟩." 65.5 He sent another servant. The tenants struck this one too. 65.6 Then the owner sent his son and said, "Perhaps they will respect my son." 65.7 Since those tenants knew that he was the heir to the vineyard, they seized him and killed him. 65.8 He who has ears, let him hear.'

Textual Comment

Three minor points can be dealt with briefly. The word $\bar{\epsilon}\mu\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\lambda}$ ('servant') in 65.2–3, 5, is written in a way which has suggested to some that it is intended as a *nomen sacrum*; this is not correct (see note on GTh 64.1 above). In 65.4, the manuscript perhaps has $\mu\epsilon\omega\alpha\lambda$ for $\mu\epsilon\omega\alpha\kappa$, and clearly has $\bar{\eta}\pi\epsilon\upsilon\bar{\sigma}\omega\mu\omicron\upsilon$, which most editors emend to $\bar{\eta}\pi\omicron\upsilon\bar{\sigma}\omega\mu\omicron\upsilon$.

This saying also has one of the most difficult textual problems in *Thomas*. The question is over the identity of the man, for which there are two main options: is he 'a kind man' ($\omicron\upsilon\bar{\rho}\omega\mu\epsilon\ \bar{\eta}\chi\bar{\rho}\bar{\eta}[\sigma\tau\omicron]\epsilon$), or is he 'a usurer' ($\omicron\upsilon\bar{\rho}\omega\mu\epsilon\ \bar{\eta}\chi\bar{\rho}\bar{\eta}[\sigma\tau\bar{\eta}]\epsilon$).² The decision is relevant to how the scene in GTh 65 is set: is the owner of the vineyard positively or negatively valued? We will examine first the 'kind man' interpretation.

Understanding the protagonist as a 'kind man' was instinctive to some early interpreters of *Thomas* given that (i) in the Synoptic parallel, the vineyard owner represented God. Grant and Freedman simply assume the owner to be a positive figure.³ Nordsieck notes further that (ii) $\chi\bar{\rho}\bar{\eta}\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ appears nearby, in GTh 90, and (iii) given *Thomas*'s dualistic outlook, it is likely that one party is good and the other evil, and so it makes sense to see the owner as good in contrast to the undoubtedly wicked tenants.⁴ One might add (iv) that the adjacent saying about the rejection of the stone looks like a reference to the rejection of something *good*, which might reinforce the point that the tenants are defying someone good. Finally, (v) the epithet $\chi\bar{\rho}\bar{\eta}\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ can have a connotation of naivety as well as moral goodness, which might fit well as a description of the owner with his futile attempts to get his produce.⁵

² In favour of $\chi\bar{\rho}\bar{\eta}\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ are Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 139; Ménard, 166, and Blomberg, 'The Parables of the Gospel of Thomas'; for $\chi\bar{\rho}\bar{\eta}\sigma\tau\bar{\eta}\varsigma$, see e.g. Arnal, 'The Parable of the Tenants'; Kloppenborg, *Tenants in the Vineyard*.

³ Grant & Freedman, 171–172.

⁴ Nordsieck, 253.

⁵ LSJ, 2007 (' $\chi\bar{\rho}\eta\sigma\tau\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ ') II 4b, '(sometimes) simple, silly'.

On the other hand, none of these points is unassailable. In particular, one cannot, against (i), assume that the meaning of the parable in *Thomas* will be the same as that in the Synoptics. Against (iv), it is not necessarily the case that adjacent sayings in *Thomas* are mutually illuminating.

In part because of these criticisms, a number of interpreters (probably now in the majority) see the owner as a negative figure, and so give a text and translation which refers to a usurer.⁶ Pokorný remarks that (i) there is nothing in the parable to suggest that the figure is positive.⁷ Indeed, (ii) it looks as though the deal arranged is rather an extortionate one: according to 65.1 the tenants do all the work and the owner receives all the produce.⁸ Certainly there is no kindness involved in the deal; it is strictly business.⁹ Although *χρηστος* does appear in *Thomas*, (iii) more immediate are references in GTh 63 to *ἄχρημα* (63.1) and *ἴνα ἄχρω ἴνα ἀχρημα* (63.2). GTh 64 perhaps refers to claims upon debts in 64.3, which would support a reference to a *χρηστικς*; the same parable also has a reference to the collection of rent. Lending at interest also appears in GTh 95 and 109.¹⁰ Finally, Arnal argues (iv) for *χρηστικς* on the basis of *Thomas*'s tendency to describe the professions or social standing of his characters.¹¹

These arguments are not impregnable either. Against (i), although there is nothing clearly positive about the owner, there is nothing clearly negative either. Point (ii) is not necessarily correct in seeing an exploitative arrangement: read literally, the tenants get nothing at all, but it is hard to imagine that sheer slave labour is referred to in GTh 65. Arnal's argument (iv) is not decisive, as *Thomas* also likes to describe their attributes (e.g. the 'wise' fisherman in GTh 8.1; the 'rich' man in 63.1). Two further points not often recognised should also be noted against the *χρηστικς* or 'usurer' interpretation. First, the contest between the two options is not an even one: the Greek word *χρήστης* is considerably less common than *χρηστός*. The former does not appear in the LXX, NT, Philo or Josephus, by comparison with hundreds of occurrences of the latter.¹² For what it is worth, TLG shows that *χρήστης* in the nom. sing. appears 49 times in its corpus, *χρηστός* in the nom. masc. sing. 1683 times. Secondly, it is

6 Pokorný, 111.

7 Pokorný, 113.

8 Arnal, 'Parable of the Tenants', 140–141; Plisch, 161.

9 Plisch, 160.

10 Some of these parallels are noted by Dehandschutter, 'Parabole', 218, and Sevrin, 'Trois paraboles', 437.

11 Arnal, 'Parable of the Tenants', 142–143.

12 According to Bibleworks software.

sometimes assumed, as we have seen, that $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma$ fits the parable much better, but in fact there is nothing to suggest in the parable that the protagonist—even if a villain—is specifically a *usurer* at all. $\chi\rho\eta\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma$ means ‘creditor’, ‘usurer’, ‘debtor’, according to LSJ,¹³ but the man in GTh 65 is apparently none of these things: he is a landlord.

In the end, it is probably necessary to admit defeat and acknowledge that it is simply very difficult to know. Hedrick is one example of a commentator who wisely sees that the better part of valour is discretion in this instance.¹⁴

Interpretation

This is the eighth of *Thomas's* parables (on these, see *ad* GTh 8). The interpretation of this parable (cf. Mk 12.1–9; Matt. 22.33–41; Lk. 20.9–16) only partially hinges on the unknown designation of the vineyard-owner just discussed, and so it is possible to see some of the key points. There are two main types of interpretation.¹⁵

The first sees a reference to a saviour figure. Popkes takes the reference to the killing of the son as a reference to the death of Jesus, comparing GTh 55 and 71.¹⁶ Schrage, similarly, saw the killing as the refusal of the Gnostic messenger,¹⁷ and McCaughey saw this accentuated in the statement ‘perhaps he did not recognize them’ (or *vice versa*) in 65.4.¹⁸ One difficulty with this interpretation lies in its indebtedness to the Synoptic interpretation. In particular, *Thomas* does not think, as do the Synoptics, in terms of the coming of Jesus as the climax in a series of divine embassies; compare the negative picture of prophets in GTh 52. This view also depends entirely on the vineyard-owner being ‘good’. *Thomas* has none of the christological overtones in the Synoptics: Mark’s mention of the son as ‘beloved’ (12.6) is absent, as is the note in Matthew and Luke that the son is killed *outside* the vineyard.¹⁹

13 Gianotto, ‘Il Vangelo secondo Tommaso e il problema storico di Gesù’, 76, translates ‘ricco’ (‘rich’), but I have not been able to find this as an equivalent of $\chi\rho\eta\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma$.

14 Hedrick, 124.

15 Scott’s interpretation of the parable as about the failure to grasp wisdom is probably too distant from the particulars of the parable (*Hear then the Parable*, 245).

16 Popkes, ‘Die Umdeutung des Todes Jesu im koptischen Thomasevangelium’, 515.

17 Schrage, *Verhältnis*, 144–145.

18 McCaughey, ‘Two Synoptic Parables’, 25.

19 McCaughey, ‘Two Synoptic Parables’, 26.

The second main interpretation sees the parable as a tale of the woes of involvement in commerce.²⁰ This view is almost certainly correct. GTh 65 is the last in a trio of parables about being involved in business.²¹ In fact, however, it is not so much the morality of business which is treated here but rather the fruitlessness and even danger of it.²² In this respect, the parable of the Tenants matches its two predecessors:

- GTh 63: The Rich Fool—he intends to fill his store but dies;
 GTh 64: The Banquet—the guests intend to attend a banquet, but cannot because of business transactions;
 GTh 65: Wicked Tenants—the owner intends to receive fruit but suffers loss (and tenants seek a vineyard but thereby become murderous).

Like the rich fool and those invited to the banquet, then, the vineyard owner misses out on what he had hoped for because he had not reckoned on the ruthlessness of the tenants.²³ This climactic parable of the three thus highlights not only that the relevant characters miss out on what they had hoped to gain, but also that involvement in worldly transactions can actually lead to catastrophic loss.²⁴

Notes

65.1 A ... man had a vineyard. The dispute over the lacuna here is discussed above. Like Luke, indeed even more so, *Thomas* omits the reference to Isaiah in the scene-setting.²⁵ Isaiah 5 also surfaces later in Mk 12.9 and parallels, but *Thomas* has ended the parable by this time.

20 Sevrin, 'Un groupement de trois paraboles contre les richesses', 438

21 See esp. Sevrin, 'Un groupement de trois paraboles contre les richesses'; e.g. Dehandschutter, 'La parabole' 217–218 also links to previous two.

22 Rightly, Valantasis, 144: 'the way of commerce satisfied neither party'; Hedrick, 125, sees the point as 'the hazards of involvement with the "world"'.
 23 Kloppenborg, *Tenants in the Vineyard*, 250, links the protagonist of GTh 65 with characters in GTh 63–64.

24 Pace Van Eck, 'The Tenants in the Vineyard', 933–934, it is unclear that the vineyard owner emerges as an honorable character.

25 It is probably not a conscious 'deletion' (so Grant & Freedman, 172); rather *Thomas* omits the scene-setting in order to get to the point of the story, or simply because he is most familiar with the Lukan version.

65.1 He leased it to farmers so that they would work it, and he would receive its produce from them. By comparison with the Synoptics (and common sense), the deal appears very much an unequal one: they work, and he receives the produce (cf. ‘*some* of the produce’ in Mk 12.2).²⁶ Indeed, one might even say that this is an unrealistic element in contrast to that of the Synoptics.²⁷ This may simply be a compressed statement, however, unless—as is not obvious—the parable is meant to be completely unrealistic at the outset. Hedrick notes that the reference could be to ‘its’ (the vineyard’s) or ‘his’ (the owner’s) produce.²⁸

65.2 He sent his servant. As in the previous saying, the servants should not be seen as divine figures, despite the peculiar writing of $\rho\mu\bar{\epsilon}\alpha\lambda$ (see Interpretation of GTh 64 above).²⁹

65.2 So that the farmers might give him the produce of the vineyard. *Thomas* shares with Luke a final clause with this syntax, rather than Matthew’s and Mark’s ‘so that he might receive some of the produce from the farmers.’³⁰

65.3 They seized his servant and struck him, nearly killing him. The servant went and told his master. In contrast to the Synoptics, *Thomas* alone has a servant reporting back to the vineyard owner.

65.4 The master said, “Perhaps they did not recognize him.” This sense is the result of an emendation: the text reads instead, ‘Perhaps he did not recognise them’, which is improbable. This clause is rightly understood by Meier as an attempt to rationalise the sending of a further envoy:³¹ this is a feature of *Thomas*’s parables.³² The ‘perhaps’ is probably the result of the influence of Luke’s ‘perhaps’ in Lk. 20.13 (cf. GTh 65.6).

65.5 He sent another servant. The tenants struck this one too. The second in the sequence of envoys, who receives the same harsh treatment as the first, but is not killed like the son.

65.6 Then the owner sent his son and said, “Perhaps they will respect my son.” The son is the third, climactic envoy. As in 65.4, the ‘perhaps’ is probably the result of the influence of Luke’s ‘perhaps’ in Lk. 20.13.

26 Arnal, ‘Parable of the Tenants’, 140–141; Van Eck, ‘The Tenants in the Vineyard’, 924.

27 *Contra* the emphasis in Kloppenborg, *Tenants in the Vineyard*, 3, and *passim*.

28 Hedrick, 124.

29 *Contra* Valantasis, 144–145.

30 K. Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), 52.

31 Meier, ‘The Parable of the Wicked Tenants’, 140.

32 See comment on 41.2 above, and further, Osborn, ‘Parable and Exposition’, 11–22.

65.7 Since those tenants knew that he was the heir to the vineyard, they seized him and killed him. In anticipation of Kloppenborg's argument for a quasi-legal background here (he sees *Thomas* as reflecting legal reality better than the Synoptics),³³ Montefiore comments that 'it is hardly necessary to imagine that the original story turned on a nice point of law. It seems that the labourers in the parable were the kind of people who believed that possession is nine-tenths of the law.'³⁴ Notably, *Thomas* ends the story earlier than do Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who all describe the vineyard owner as avenging himself, killing the tenants and giving the vineyard to others. The quotation from Psalm 118 in the Synoptics' versions appears in *Thomas* in a discrete saying next in GTh 66.

65.8 He who has ears, let him hear. On *Thomas*'s use of this aphorism, see comment above on GTh 8.4.

33 Kloppenborg, *Tenants in the Vineyard*, 330–334.

34 Montefiore & Turner, *Thomas and the Evangelists*, 49–50.