

Thomas' Proverbs and Parables in Mark

One of the most interesting facets of the study of the Gospel of Thomas, the Coptic manuscript that has made such an impact on Biblical studies at the end of the present century, is that so many sayings in the canonical Gospel of Mark are also found in Thomas. In the chapters on Jesus' public ministry (Mark 1:1-8:22 and 11:1-12:44), thirty five separate sayings may be counted that are neither Markan redaction nor occasional comments by Jesus in the course of stories about his miracles. Of those 36, no fewer than 21 can also be found in Thomas in one form or another.

There are three possible explanations for this state of affairs. First, perhaps Thomas drew sayings from Mark and the other synoptic gospels that depend on Mark. Second, Mark may have drawn sayings from Thomas. Third, both Thomas and Mark separately may have drawn sayings from the same oral or written sources. John Horman (1996) has argued in detail that Thomas and Mark drew upon a common written Greek text.

The theory that Thomas drew sayings from Mark does not seem tenable. Stephen Patterson (1993) has recently argued persuasively that there are no good reasons to believe that any of the synoptic gospels served as a source for Thomas. Another case for the independence of Thomas has been made recently by Bradley McLean (1995). Some have sought to show that there are Markan or Lukan or Matthean redactional elements in the Gospel of Thomas (Blomberg 1984, Tuckett 1988). However, there are several ways that independent material in Thomas could misleadingly appear to have been derived originally from redacted passages in the synoptics:

1. The scribes who copied Thomas almost certainly harmonized elements of Thomasine sayings with the canonical versions with which they were familiar. Such harmonization is a well known phenomenon in the text traditions of the synoptic gospels themselves especially in the Coptic textual tradition.
2. It is likely that whoever translated Thomas from Greek to Coptic did so in light of his knowledge of the sayings as they are found in the canonical gospels and so some harmonizing is to be expected in Coptic Thomas.
3. Coincidence and chance undoubtedly played a role. If, for example, Luke made a slight change in a saying that he found in Mark, Thomas may have coincidentally thought it proper to make the same change in a saying that he found in oral tradition, or oral tradition may have contained that supposed change.
4. Insofar as fragments of passages in Luke or Matthew are said to indicate redaction, this presupposes that we have at hand for comparison a perfect version of the same text of Mark that Matthew or Luke used. We do not. In some cases, what appear to be minor redactional changes made by Matthew or Luke may actually reflect the original text of Mark.

5. Redactional material in Luke or Matthew may derive from those authors' knowledge of material in Thomas. Gregory Riley (1995) has recently argued that Luke 12:14 and 5:39 indicate that some parts of Luke's gospel "must post-date and be dependent on sayings formed in Thomas Christianity."

Such considerations would be without much merit if there were a considerable number of sayings in Thomas that certainly reflect the redactional tendencies of Mark or Matthew or Luke. There are few, if any, that do. Those arguing for the dependence of Thomas on the synoptics are therefore forced to concern themselves with a single word here, a phrase there. Such textual details are best accounted for by harmonization processes such as those enumerated above. Today, thanks especially to Patterson's work, we can say that the independence of Thomas from the synoptics is as reliable a conclusion as is the existence, at one time, of the document we call Q. Neither conclusion will ever be universally accepted, but I think both should be.

As for the date of Thomas, Patterson (1993:120) argues that

While the cumulative nature of a sayings collection understandably makes the Gospel of Thomas difficult to date with precision, several factors weigh in favor of a date well before the end of the first century: the way which Thomas appeals to the authority of particular prominent figures (Thomas, James) against the competing claims of others (Peter, Matthew); its genre, the sayings collection, which seems to have declined in importance after the emergence of the more biographical and dialogical forms near the end of the first century; and its primitive christology, which seems to presuppose a theological climate more primitive even than the later sayings of the synoptic sayings gospel, Q. Together these factors suggest a date for Thomas in the vicinity of 70-80 C.E.

These are solid lines of reasoning. When scholars put forth a later date for Thomas they generally do so because Thomas is said to show the influence of gnostic ideas. However, even if this were so it would not be determinative of a date, only of the cast of mind of the particular community from which Thomas originated and perhaps of the interests of Thomas' copyists through the centuries. Gnostic or proto-gnostic ideas certainly circulated in the first century in Christian circles (e.g. the Gospel of John). I would say that we can date both Thomas and Mark to the same period, ca. 70 C.E..

There are no clear signs of Markan redaction in any Thomas sayings, and in some cases the Thomas version of a saying is undoubtedly in a more primitive form than the corresponding saying in Mark. Examples include Mark's construction of an elaborate narrative scene (6:1-6) from a simple proverb found as Thomas 31, "a prophet is not accepted in his own town; a physician does not heal those who know him." Again, Mark has created a complex kerygmatic allegory out of an unallegorized parable of Wicked Tenants found as Thomas 65. And Thomas 14c in combination with 45b may have given rise to Mark 7:14-23, a complex commentary that includes Jesus' supposed cancellation of the Torah law concerning food.

Since there are many of the same sayings in Mark and Thomas, we really have only two explanations to consider. One is that Thomas and Mark are drawing from the same well of tradition, the other is that Mark made use of Thomas.

I will first analyze the 36 sayings of Jesus that are to be found in Mark's two sections of public preaching and healing, chapters 1 through 8:21, and in Mark's chapters 11 and 12 which record disputation in and around Jerusalem. The material I characterize as "sayings" is that material that may have circulated as such independently of Mark's gospel. I exclude as "sayings" comments by Jesus that do not make any freestanding point, particularly statements made in the course of healings and exorcisms. I also exclude material that seems evidently to be the redactional creation of Mark, the most lengthy example of which is the discussion of the function of parables and the meaning of "the Sower" found in chapter four.[\(1\)](#)

Markan Audiences and Thomas Sayings

Twenty-one of the 36 Markan sayings have parallels in Thomas: 58%. [\(2\)](#)

Of the 21 sayings where Jesus addresses his "Associates," 16, or 76%, have parallels in Thomas.[\(3\)](#)

Of the 9 sayings labeled "parables" by Mark, 8 are to be found in Thomas (89%).

Of the 21 Thomas paralleled sayings, 20 are either addressed to Associates or characterized as parables or both (95%). The only exception is the "render unto Caesar" chreia.

Conversely, Jesus addresses or refers to "authorities" in 15 sayings, only 5 of which are paralleled in Thomas, 33%. Of those 5, however, 4 are labeled parables.[\(4\)](#)

Of the ten sayings that are addressed to or refer to "authorities," but which are not labeled parables, seven cite the Tanakh. The one citation of the Tanakh that is to be found in Thomas paralleled material is labeled, uniquely, a parable.

Throughout chapters 1-8:22 and 11-12 of the Gospel of Mark, whenever Jesus speaks to his associates or when he is said to speak in parables, a full 75% of the time he does so with words paralleled to one degree or another in the Gospel of Thomas.

When we look at the occurrence of Thomas-paralleled material in Mark, it is usually grouped together. Of the 21 paralleled sayings, three occur in the sequence 2:18-22, two in the sequence 7:14-23, three in the sequence 12:1-17, and no fewer than eleven are found in the sequence 3:27-4:32 although here we do find one saying (4:25) that is not also in Thomas and the sequence is interrupted by redactional material at 4:10-20. Only two Thomas-paralleled sayings are freestanding, while 90% of them are aggregated.

These sequences are not random aggregations (as the sayings in Thomas usually are) but constructions meant to make consistent points. Mark is taking sayings that in isolation may mean practically anything and aggregating them in a narrative to produce meaning. Mark constructed sequences of sayings in order to make points, drawing those sayings from diverse places in the source he used. Matthew did the same by drawing sayings from diverse places in Mark and Q and then integrating them into five topical discourses.

One could say that the sayings Jesus addresses to his associates and the sayings which are labeled parables are sayings of certain form-critical types (let us say 'wisdom' sayings) and not necessarily sayings from a certain source. Thus the categorization I have found may have been the result of form-critical consciousness on Mark's part, i.e. Mark may have believed that Jesus spoke to his associates in wisdom sayings, but not in the same manner to the authorities; to them he customarily quoted scripture. Thus the pattern of utilization of Thomas paralleled sayings as found in Mark would not be based on Mark's use of a source but on Mark's categorization of those sayings.

Is it possible, then, ever to know whether Mark drew sayings from Thomas or whether both Mark and Thomas were taking advantage of a common mine of material? I think it is. If there were sayings or connections in Thomas that are specifically Thomasine, that we have some reason to think were specific to that text, and if we can see evidence that Mark used those sayings, then it becomes probable that Mark used Thomas and not some other source of information.

Mark's Use of Thomas 65-66

I believe we have at least two examples of sayings that occur in Thomas and Mark, and that are specific to Thomas, and that we can see were redacted by Mark. They are the sayings-set 65-66 in Thomas which is parallel to Mark 12:1-12 and Thomas' saying 13 which is parallel to Mark 8:27-33.

Those who argue that the Gospel of Thomas is dependent upon the synoptic gospels often point to the fact that in Thomas as well as in the synoptics the parable of the Wicked Tenants is followed immediately by a citation from Psalm 118:22 "Show me the stone that the builders rejected: that is the cornerstone." Craig Blomberg (1985:181) argues, for example, that Thomas must have been influenced by a synoptic gospel because in Thomas saying 66 follows 65 "for no apparent reason other than that they appear in that sequence in the synoptics." Indeed, like many sayings in Thomas, the sequence 65 - 66 appears to be based on nothing at all; there are rarely any clearly understandable reasons for Thomas' sequencing of sayings apart from possible catchword connections.

The problem with Blomberg's line of thought is that it requires us to assume a precise reversal of generally understood patterns of the growth of traditions. The parable of the Wicked Tenants in the synoptics is considerably more allegorically specific in the direction of the kerygma of post-resurrection Christianity than is the parable in its Thomasine form.

Here is Thomas' form of the parable and the citation from Psalm 118:

65. He said, A good man had a vineyard. He leased it to some tenant farmers so that he would receive its profit from them. He sent his servant so that the farmers would give him the profits of the vineyard. They seized his servant, they beat him and almost killed him. The servant went back; he told his master. His master said, perhaps they did not recognize him. He sent another servant. The tenants beat this one as well. Then the master sent his son. He said, perhaps they will respect my son. The tenants seized him, they killed him, since they knew he was the heir of the vineyard. He who has ears let him hear.
66 Jesus said, Show me the stone which the builders have rejected. It is the cornerstone.

Here is the form the parable and citation take in the Gospel of Mark, 12:1-12

And he began to speak to them [chief priests, scribes, elders] in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a pit for the wine press, and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country. When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. And they took him and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent to them another servant, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and him they killed; and so with many others, some they beat and some they killed. He had still one other, a beloved son; finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' And they took him and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants, and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read this scripture: 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" And they tried to arrest him, but feared the multitude, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them; so they left him and went away.

In Mark's version of the parable, the "beloved son" who is killed and cast outside of the vineyard is certainly intended to signify God's "beloved son" Jesus. Further, Mark tells us of a long sequence of servants sent; it is generally assumed that these represent the sequence of rejected prophets. The eschatological conclusion to the parable implies the replacement of the tenants (i.e. Jewish leaders) with others (i.e. Christians), as is made clear by the fact that the audience of Jewish leaders is said to find the parable told against them. A passage from Psalm 118 is integrated into the telling of the parable in a manner that suggests that after Jesus' rejection and death he has been divinely vindicated. Mark's version begins with a clear allusion to Isaiah 5:1-7 concerning details of the construction of a vineyard. The passage from Isaiah reinforces the point supposedly made by the parable, for it too concludes with God's destruction of those who dwell in the vineyard:

"And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall and it shall be trampled down. . . . For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his

pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!"

The version in Mark, and the slightly variant versions in Matthew and Luke, reflect well known synoptic themes, especially including God's vengeance on Israel for the death of Jesus and the other prophets and the theme of Jesus' ultimate vindication.

But Thomas' version contains none of this. The parable is simple and straightforward. It is structured on the common folkloristic trilogy of events with the last one the climactic one: twice servants are sent, then the son is sent (and he is not "beloved" son in the Thomas version). The material in Isaiah 7 is missing in Thomas. As in the parable of the Unjust Steward, the villains of the piece are not reprimanded in the end.

It does not seem possible that Thomas could have had the form- critical expertise necessary to excise allegorical elements from a synoptic passage so as to construct a version of a parable that is quite similar to the probable original version. Much more probably, the version we find in Thomas is the more original and it was taken from oral tradition. The synoptic versions are highly allegorized later adaptations.

But what then of the fact that in Mark (and the two other synoptics) and in Thomas we find the passage from Psalm 118, verse 22, immediately following the parable?(5) In Mark (et al.) the passage from the psalm is intended to be read as a concluding scriptural comment on the foregoing passage, a comment that implies the vindication of Jesus after his death. But the passage is not really appropriate for that purpose as the whole allegorical apparatus of the parable (vineyard, tenants, servants, master) is replaced with another allegorical apparatus (builders, cornerstone). Unless one is told that the Psalm citation comments on the parable, as one is told in the synoptics, one would hardly be expected to think that either of the two has anything to do with the other.

And indeed, in Thomas the two do not have anything to do with each other. They just occur in sequence, and sequencing in Thomas rarely implies that the succeeding saying comments on the preceding saying. In this case, saying 65, the parable, is separated from saying 66, the Psalm citation, by two separate Thomasine literary devices. First, the parable's conclusion is emphasized by the tag line: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," which signifies that the parable has been brought to completion, and second, by the device of beginning saying 66 with "Jesus said." It is on the basis of an introductory "Jesus said" that modern scholars separate most of Thomas's sayings into individual units.

Furthermore, saying 66 can only serve as an interpretation of saying 65 if it has already been established that 65 is an allegory referring to the rejection of Jesus. And Thomas does not offer saying 65 as an allegory of Jesus in any way. But Mark does and Mark sees 66 as a comment upon that allegory even though the terms of the allegories are completely unrelated. Mark makes of two unrelated traditional sayings one complex discourse.

Rather than hypothesizing the highly unlikely process of the author of Thomas carefully and critically removing allegorical elements from both the synoptic version of the parable and the Psalm citation, I think it is much more reasonable to conclude that Mark found the juxtaposition of the parable of the Wicked Tenants parable and the psalm citation in Thomas. He then constructed the allegory we find in his gospel from that original and used the Psalm citation as a concluding climactic proof-text to support his allegory all of which he presents as a narrative, an argument within the Jerusalem Temple between Jesus and various priests and elders.

Jacob Neusner has found a process in the historical development of Mishnaic sayings traditions that seems analogous to what has happened in the development from Thomas to Mark. Neusner (1994:71) writes that

The phenomenon to which I wish to call attention is relatively obvious, and synoptic analysis will substantiate it. In a version of a pericope appearing in an early collection, the exegesis of a scripture is given anonymously, then attributed to a master. In a version appearing in a later stratum, the exegesis is turned into a story about the master, concerning whom the original scripture then is cited not infrequently.

In Thomas we have a primitive form of a parable and then what we know to be a Psalm citation, although in Thomas it is nothing more than a proverbial saying attributed to Jesus and not a scriptural quotation. In Mark we find these two elements woven together into a complex allegorical statement made by Jesus about himself, one having to do with the motifs of the persecution of the prophets, and the death and vindication of the beloved son -- all coupled to a statement about God's eventual replacement of "Israel" with others. It is likely that Mark got the impetus to create his complex of sayings from the material he found in Thomas, and not the other way around.

There is no reason whatsoever to believe that the Wicked Tenants parable and the Psalm 118 proverb were connected in oral tradition prior to their appearing in Thomas. As they stand in Thomas they have nothing to do with each other, and they are clearly separated into two distinct unrelated units. Thomas generally juxtaposes sayings randomly and there is no more reason to think that sayings 65 and 66 were meaningfully connected prior to Thomas having written them down in that order than that Thomas' sayings 66, 67, 68 were meaningfully connected; those three also have nothing to do with each other.

It is all very well to take notice of the fact that so many of Mark's sayings are to be found in Thomas, but that fact can only suggest that the possibility of direct influence be considered. By itself it does not prove that such influence took place. However, the above analysis does much more than simply observe that Thomas sayings 65 and 66 occur both in Thomas and in Mark and that the Thomas versions seem more primitive. It gives us a direction of influence, a causal arrow, from Thomas specifically to Mark.

Mark's Use of Thomas 13

The relationship between Thomas 13 and Mark 8:27-33 raises many intriguing questions. It might be argued that both stories are of principal importance in their respective gospels; Thomas 13 validates the primacy of Thomas' author and may be considered a charter for those who follow Thomas, Mark 8:27-33 initiates Mark's central section and so is the crucial turning point in his gospel's structure.[\(6\)](#)

At first these stories seem related only in some very general way, yet upon closer observation their remarkable structural similarities become apparent. The following similar structural elements are present:[\(7\)](#)

1. Jesus asks his disciples about himself
2. Initial mistaken responses are given
3. A seemingly proper response is given
4. A secrecy motif occurs
5. True teaching is given by Jesus
6. One or more disciples are condemned

It seems impossible that these two could be coincidentally so similar. Either one of them is a revision of the other, or both are revisions of some third unknown version.

Could the Thomas version be a revision of the story we find in Mark? I see no reason to think so. Matthew and Luke show how Mark's story could be revised in order to praise a disciple rather than to condemn one; Thomas does not revise in this manner at all. Further, there is no sign that Thomas has revised any other saying in Mark.

Mark 8:27-33 contains a textbook set of specific Markan redactional themes. Having surveyed discussions on the issue, Brown et al. (1973:64-69) conclude that only 8:29 and 8:33, Peter's confession and Jesus' rebuke "get behind me Satan" might not be Markan redaction. Indeed, they believe the latter also might well be redactional if "one posits the creation of such a saying by an anti-Petrine group" (1973:67). Mark himself is anti-Petrine (e.g. Peter's incompetence at the Transfiguration, his disobedient slumbers at Gethsemane, his triple denial) and so 8:33 too is probably Markan redaction.

We find the passion prediction account that is repeated in two other instances in Mark's central section, as well as the use of the messianic secret motif, and a statement that Jesus spoke clearly in contrast to his previous speech in parables. All of these are unquestionably Markan redaction. Further, one may strongly suspect that the condemnation of Peter stems from Mark's theory of the incompetence and culpable inadequacy of the disciples. If so, then Jesus' condemnation of Peter in verse 33, that he thinks as men think and not as God thinks, presupposes the previous passage wherein we are told how men think, which is found in verses 8:27-28. If verse 33 is redactional, the

punch-line as it were, then most probably 27-28 are redactional too, for they serve to set up and give meaning to the punch-line.

Verses 30, 31, 32 are textbook cases of Markan redaction, and probably verses 27, 28, 33 are as well. In fact the whole of Mark 8:27-33 probably should be regarded as a Markan construction influenced conceivably by a tradition of a Petrine confession (cf. John 6:69). Yet the structure of that Markan construction remains the same as the structure of Thomas 13.

Because of their similarity in structure Thomas 13 and Mark 8:27-33 are probably versions of the same original, not wholly independent inventions. Because of the overwhelming redactional character of Mark 8:27-33 it is certain that Mark's version is an extensive revision of some original. Either that original was Thomas 13, or the two are both versions of some third unknown original.

Number 13 is the most important single passage in the Gospel of Thomas because it justifies the authority of the purported author of the text, authorizes the secret sayings the text purportedly conveys, offers a means by which one might attain to the excellence Thomas has attained, and specifically rejects two early and widely held alternative views of Jesus. Quite a lot for a few lines!

In the opening section of 13 two points of view are repudiated. First, Jesus is not to be understood as a righteous *aggelos*. This term has sometimes been translated "angel" but there is no early attested notion of Jesus as an angel and no real justification for that translation. Rather, *aggelos* should retain its common meaning "messenger" with the likely implication "messenger of the Lord." A messenger of the Lord is a prophet. The Septuagint speaks of Haggai the prophetes as the *aggelos* of the Lord, (Haggai 1:12-13). The book Malachi begins (in the Septuagint) with an identification of the prophet as *aggelos*; Mark's quotation of Malachi 3:1 makes similar use of the term in reference to John the Baptist, "Behold, I send my *aggelos* before your face...." And, indeed, many scholars (e.g. Sanders 1985, Fredriksen 1988) believe that Jesus was thought to be a prophetic messenger during his lifetime.

Matthew is said to believe Jesus is a wise *philosophos*. A translation "philosopher" is not incorrect (a cynic philosopher, perhaps), but we must not overlook the literal meaning of the term: "lover of wisdom." Some recent scholarship has reached the conclusion that the Gospel of Thomas, at least at an early stage of its development, presents Jesus as a sage, a wisdom teacher, a philosopher (Crossan 1991, Downing 1988). Burton Mack (1990) writes that one would be well advised to see the tradents of the Gospel of Thomas on a sapiential trajectory from the beginning, cultivating the sayings of Jesus as a sage in conscious contrast at some point to other Jesus people who were known to entertain the apocalyptic option. "The sapiential sayings turned cryptic in the process of their cultivation wherein Jesus' invitation to be different was eventually internalized as self-awareness."

The views of "Simon Peter," and of "Matthew", that Jesus is an *aggelos*, prophetic messenger of the Lord, that Jesus is a *philosophos*, lover of wisdom, are the two conceptions of Jesus which, at the present stage of scholarly inquiry, are most commonly said to correspond to the conceptions about Jesus' his first followers actually held. Thomas 13 certainly evidences a turn toward the cryptic.

Thomas' story seems to leave us with a mystery: what were the three secret sayings? Surely a text advertising itself in its incipit to contain Jesus' "secret sayings" will reveal the only sayings therein which are specified as secret. Evidently the sayings would have been understood by the remaining disciples as blasphemous in some sense or another, but that is all we can surmise from that context. However, saying 108 gives a deliberate clue: one who drinks from Jesus is one to whom the hidden things will be revealed. That Thomas is such a person is evident in number 13. Why he is will be discussed below in detail.

The theme found in 108, that "things that are hidden will be revealed," also occurs in Thomas 5b and 6:

5. Jesus said, "know what is in front of your face, and what is hidden from you will be disclosed to you. For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.

6. His disciples asked him, "Do you want us to fast? How should we pray? Should we give in charity? What diet should we observe?"

Jesus said, "Don't lie, and don't do what you hate, because all things are disclosed before heaven. After all, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and there is nothing covered up that will remain undisclosed.

James and Thomas aside, the disciples of Jesus are portrayed in the Gospel of Thomas as a collectivity who invariably ask eschatological or Christological questions in need of correction by Jesus. Here Jesus' response their questions is platitudinous and evasive. But in Thomas 13, Thomas is discovered to be one to whom things that are hidden are to be revealed, and Jesus says three things to him. Immediately thereafter Thomas 14 seems to provide the blasphemous answers to the earlier questions of saying 6 which were bracketed by the hidden/revealed motif. Thomas 14 is:

Jesus said to them, 'If you fast, you will give rise to sin for yourselves; and if you pray, you will be condemned, and if you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits. When you go into any land and walk about in the districts, if they receive you, eat what they will set before you, and heal the sick among them. For what goes into your mouth will not defile you, but that which issues from your mouth - it is that which will defile you.'

Presumably the final redactor of Thomas intends these three sentences to be the three secret sayings delivered to Thomas [although I suspect that a former version of the text contained only the three responses repudiating fasting, prayer and almsgiving].

To understand the relationship between the Thomas and Mark stories we must first fathom the status of Thomas in number 13. As it stands it is almost completely enigmatic, but a key to understanding it is found in Thomas 108:

Jesus said, He who will drink from my mouth will become like me. I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him.

Similarly, in Thomas 13 we read that "Jesus said, 'I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring which I have measured out.' And he took him and withdrew and told him three things." Thus, drinking from Jesus, or from Jesus' spring, leads in both cases to hidden things being revealed. Evidently Thomas 13 claims that, because Thomas is one who is "like Jesus", one of whom Jesus might say "I myself have become he," therefore Thomas no longer should acknowledge Jesus as his master.

Thomas' status is the key point for comparison. Understanding 13 by reference to 108 indicates that Jesus and Thomas have not only changed status relationships (no longer master - disciple) but also perhaps that Thomas has changed identities. Understood in light of 108, Thomas has become like Jesus, has attained whatever categorical identification Jesus is said to occupy (master, or even Christ), and Thomas has become Jesus. Thus, Thomas can identify himself with Jesus, for in 108 Jesus says of one who drinks "I myself will become he." Hence, perhaps, Thomas must confess that "my mouth is utterly unable to say what you are like."

It sounds on the face of it almost inconceivable that Christians would have believed that under certain circumstances they might be said to be the same as Jesus, to be in whatever category Jesus is in, and even less conceivable that people might claim to be Jesus, to claim "not I but Jesus." But we know that some people did this and we know that Mark was not at all pleased with them. Indeed, Paul may have been such a person, for he tells us that "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me," (Gal. 2:20) and that Christ speaks through him (2 Cor. 13:3).

In Mark's chapter 13, the little apocalypse, we read passages couched as predictions that are generally taken by scholars to refer to the time and conditions of Mark's own community. There are two examples germane to the present argument. First, in Mark 13:5 "Jesus began to say to them, 'See that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name saying, "I am he," and they will deceive many.'" Second, in Mark 13:21-22 we read that "If anyone says to you, then, 'Look, here is the Christ! Look, there he is!' do not believe it. False Christs and false prophets will arise and will perform signs and wonders in order to mislead, if that were possible, the elect.'" Mark was evidently concerned that people were claiming the identity of Jesus, saying "I am he" and that there were people claiming to be Christ and claiming to be prophets.[\(8\)](#)

If, then, there were people claiming to be Jesus or to be categorically identified with Jesus (e.g. to be Christs) then Thomas 13, understood in terms of Thomas 108, gives Thomas the right to make such a claim. Jesus is not his master, for he drank, and so he is

as Jesus is and can be identified with Jesus. Thomas would be one of those of whom Jesus says "I will be he" and so Thomas could claim "I am he."

The metaphor common to Thomas 13 and 108 is drinking and it is through "drinking" that transformation occurs. This metaphor is common in early Christian usage and here, as elsewhere, it refers to receiving the Spirit.⁽⁹⁾ In the Gospel of John (7:37-41) we hear that

"Jesus stood up and proclaimed, 'If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water,' Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Drinking from Jesus is a metaphor here for receiving the Spirit from Jesus. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 12:13, after Paul has discussed the Spirit in some detail, he writes that

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit."

The metaphor of the Spirit as a liquid that is poured out can be found in Acts 2:15-33, following Joel 2:28-29, and in Romans 5:5, and Titus 3:6 where the Spirit is poured out through Christ.⁽¹⁰⁾ The story of Pentecost includes reference to the fact that those who had received the Spirit seemed to be intoxicated, and in Ephesians 5:18 we hear: "do not get drunk on wine, in which lies debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit." There was unquestionably a metaphorical connection in earliest Christianity between receiving the Spirit and drinking, with the corollary that the experience of the Spirit might be likened to intoxication. Thomas 13 and 108 fit well into this metaphoric system.

Thus I think we can understand Thomas 13 and 108 to be saying, respectively, that Jesus said: "He who will receive the Spirit from me will become like me. I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him." And that "Jesus said, 'I am not your master. Because you have received the Spirit from me.' And he took him and withdrew and told him three things."

Thomas 108 echoes the idea, found in many cultures, that one who receives the spirit of a supernatural person can be identified with that person. This is called "spirit possession" in anthropology. From this perspective it would not be at all surprising to find Christians who believed that if one received the Spirit of Jesus from Jesus one could thereby be identified with Jesus. One's identity depends on the spirit that is active in one's body, and if that is the spirit from Jesus, then one has Jesus' identity. Thus Jesus says in 108 "I will be he," and so, as Mark reports, people came claiming Jesus' name saying "I am he.

Mark profoundly disagreed with this behavior, as we see in 13:5. Furthermore, throughout his gospel, Mark wrote to condemn Jesus' disciples' claims to special privileges and personal primacy. In Thomas 13 we have implicit agreement that Thomas might claim to be "as Christ is, and to be he" and a firm statement about the primacy of

Thomas over the other disciples. Had Mark known of this saying, in its present form, in its present location (where it guarantees the primacy of the scribe and author of the Gospel of Thomas) we can understand how and why Mark would have revised it into 8:27-33.

In the first place, Mark constructs responses to the question "who do men say I am" in order to parody the idea of identification through reception of the spirit from a person. People are said to think that Jesus is John the Baptist or that he is Elijah (or another prophet). Peter is condemned in verse 33 for thinking in this manner.

Why would anyone think that Jesus was to be identified with John, who had died only months before? According to Mark, they thought so because of the powers working in him (6:14). Because Jesus received the Spirit at the instance of his baptism by John therefore, by virtue of the principle that one may be identified with the one whose spirit one receives, Jesus may be identified as John. Hence, if it is asserted that one receives the spirit from Jesus and so can be identified with Jesus, it should follow that since Jesus received the spirit from John, Jesus can be identified with John. Or, indeed, if John can be equated with Elijah (as seems to be the case in Mark 9:13; cf. Mt 17:13) then Jesus can therefore be identified with Elijah.

Mark 8:27-28 is a parody of the Thomasine line of thought, an argument *reductio ad absurdum*. Mark evidently argues that 'since it is absurd to think that Jesus is either John or Elijah, although he did receive the Spirit at his baptism by John in a manner similar to Elisha's reception of the Spirit from Elijah, similarly it is absurd to think that any Christian may claim to be Jesus on the grounds of receiving the spirit from Jesus.' This is how men think and how Peter thinks but, according to Mark, it is not how God thinks. Apparently how God thinks is that any *imitatio Christi*, any claim to be like Jesus, must be based on the divinely ordained career of the Son of Man, to be delivered up, suffer, die, and rise again. I will return to the motif of *imitatio Christi* in a later section of this essay.

It seems to be the case that the individual named Thomas was of no consequence to Mark; Thomas is mentioned once in a listing of the Twelve, but that is all. Mark sought to downplay any claims to primacy made by Jesus' disciples, and particularly any claims made by Peter, James and John. Having no particular interest in Thomas, it seems that Mark eliminated Thomas from the story and substituted Peter, possibly adding a reference to a pre-existing Petrine- confession tradition (cf. John 6:69). Mark radically revised the story into a parody, both of Thomas 13 and of the Petrine- confession tradition. In essence Mark 8:27-33 is a seeming confession that might lead toward the idea of Petrine primacy (cf. Matthew's and Luke's redaction of it) but no -- in fact we hear that it led to Jesus' condemnation of Peter as Satan. That is parody. Norman Petersen (1994) has argued that in other principal ways Mark's gospel is written as a parody of pre-existing textual traditions.

In Mark's gospel we do not have a story glorifying one disciple at the expense of the others (as in Thomas) but the opposite, a story where one disciple is subordinated to the

others, for we read in Mark that Jesus "turning and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God but of men.'" In light of Mark 3:22-29, where it is the unforgivable sin to call someone Satan who has received the Spirit, when Jesus calls Peter Satan he thereby unequivocally denies the possibility that Peter has the Spirit of God.

In regard to Thomas' implicit claim in GT 13 that there are secret sayings of Jesus which are available only to special transformed individuals, I refer the reader to the detailed argument made by Theodore Weeden (1971). Following Eduard Schweizer (1965), he argues that Mark 4:11-12, as well as the parable of the sower and its interpretation, belonged to the tradition used by Mark's opponents. Mark 4:11 may be parallel to Thomas 62a: "Jesus said, 'It is to those who are worthy of my mysteries that I tell my mysteries.'" Helmut Koester (1990:53) has commented on this question, agreeing that Mark 4:11-12 are not part of Markan redaction but belong to the older collection of parables that Mark incorporated and noting the similarity of GT 62 to that passage. In Mark we find: "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God," Mark may have adapted Thomas 62a in order to concede that Jesus' delivered his mysteries to the disciples, yet to deny that he did so because the disciples were accounted worthy; for Mark the disciples are never "worthy." Weeden believes "the positions customarily attributed to Mark and his received material respectively are really just the reverse. Mark's received material argues for hidden, exclusive, esoteric teaching. Mark argues for openness, revelation on a nonexclusive basis," (Weeden 1971:144). He finds evidence in Mark's gospel that some in Mark's community had been won over by the appeal of a secret gospel and that Mark mounted a polemic against it (Weeden 1971:148). Mark, he argues, did this by demonstrating the absurdity of the hermeneutical principle embedded in their secret gospel, i.e. Mark shows that it is not the case that only certain insider "disciples" understand Jesus' message but that the reverse occurs and it is the outsiders who correctly perceive and understand Jesus (Weeden 1971:148).

In the general conclusion to his book, Weeden discusses what he sees as Mark's very clever use of his opponents' positions and material. Mark, he contends, took their hermeneutical principle (4:11-12) and reversed it to show the blindness of those who claimed to be "select and secretly enlightened;" He cites several examples to show that Mark in various ways takes material used by his opponents and turns that material against them through parody or irony (Weeden 1971: 165-168).

Weeden's book makes no reference whatsoever to the Gospel of Thomas. Yet if one outlines the characteristics of the text he hypothesizes Mark's opponents used, characteristics of that hypothetical text are characteristics of Thomas. In the incipit to the text the Gospel of Thomas declares itself to be a collection of secret sayings. It claims that Jesus revealed mysteries to a worthy elite (62a). In Thomas 13 a disciple elevated to the level of Jesus is the guarantor of the legitimacy of the secret teachings contained in the whole of the Gospel. Thomas shows no knowledge of, and has no interest in, anything like a suffering-servant messiahship and for Thomas neither the crucifixion nor the resurrection have any meaning; they are never mentioned. From Weeden's analysis one cannot conclude with certainty that Thomas was the secret text of Mark's opponents, but

one may certainly conclude that if such a document existed, Thomas is the same sort of thing as that document was and contains very many of the same sayings that that document contained.

It appears that Mark understood Thomas 13 to affirm the principle that one disciple should have primacy, and probably also the principles of Thomas 108 that certain Christians who have "drunk" the Spirit may be identified with Jesus or claim to be Christ. These principles are ones Mark is known to have opposed. By the use of motifs characteristic of him, Mark created a parody of Thomas 13 so that a disciple's implicit primacy quickly turns into his condemnation, a condemnation that stems from his supposed thinking "as men think" which Mark implies is the thesis that because Jesus received the spirit from John (or Elijah) therefore he was John (or Elijah).

If this analysis seems extreme, allow me to reiterate certain key points. First, the structural similarities between Thomas 13 and Mark 8:27-33 demonstrate that both are versions of the same story. Second, the redactional features of Mark 8:27-33 prove that Mark's version is a completely re-written version of some original story. Third, there is no evidence that Thomas used Mark, and many reasons to think he did not.[\(11\)](#) Fourth, the principal points made by Thomas 13 and 108, that one disciple may have pre-eminence over all others and that a person may be equivalent to or identified with Jesus through receiving his Spirit are points that we know for certain that Mark objected to strongly (13:5, 21-22 specifically, and generally throughout his chapters 8 through 10). If Mark revised Thomas 13 we can understand rather well why he did so. His insertion of motifs typical of his principal redactional concerns so as to produce a parody would have been how he did so and, indeed, this would have been in line with his general strategy throughout his gospel. It seems methodologically unsound to dismiss these factors and substitute the hypothesis that both Mark and Thomas revised some other story completely unknown to us for reasons about which we can know nothing. But that is the alternative to the thesis that Mark revised Thomas 13

Mark's Use of Thomas 22

The hypothesis that Mark used Thomas as a source is supported by the fact that a considerable number of the sayings found in Mark are also found in Thomas. Further, it seems very unlikely that the coincidental sequence of Thomas 65 and 66 could have been constructed into Mark 12:1-12 without reference to Thomas and it is probable that Mark used the key story of Thomas 13 in his construction of 8:27-33. Now, if there was influence flowing from Thomas to Mark, then we may look in Mark for other examples than those already cited, examples that are less obvious. One example may be found in Mark's use of Thomas' saying 22, a saying that allows certain Christians to make claims for special excellence. If one could claim correctly to be like a child one would enter the Kingdom. If one could claim correctly to have made the two into one, etc., one would enter the Kingdom. If one could claim correctly to have fashioned an eye in the place of an eye, etc., one would enter the Kingdom. I am not going to attempt an explanation of what these curious claims mean, except to suggest that they probably have to do with restoring the condition of the Image of God found in Genesis 1:27 (Davies 1992). Rather,

I am interested in them here only as affirmations which some Christians surely made that entitled them to claim particular excellence.

Mark may have severed Thomas 22 into its three component parts, one having to do with being like infants, one having to do with making the two one, the male and female into a single one, and one having to do with replacing an eye with an eye, etc.. Then, I believe, Mark generalized those sayings so that they no longer give primacy to any particular Christians by virtue of specific metaphoric meaning.

It may be the case that Mark took an odd metaphorical reference in Thomas 22c, which is "when you fashion eyes in the place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness; then will you enter [the Kingdom]," and revised it to the moralistic passage 9:43-48:

And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into gehenna, where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

Thomas demands obscurely that people should not have the eyes, hand, foot that they have, but those things in some other form. Mark, however, would have us believe that some should not retain the eye, hand, foot that they have but cut them off altogether. Such people could certainly not claim statuses of special excellence!

In Thomas 22b we hear:

When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male will not be male nor the female female [then you will enter the Kingdom of Heaven]

Making the two one is the most common Thomasine redactional theme that there is. But the remainder of this saying is not a Thomasine invention for it is also attested in diverse other places (e.g. Second Clement). In any event, Mark may have transformed it into a commentary on marriage and divorce in 10:2-9, twice reiterating the two become one theme and using in conclusion a traditional anti-divorce saying:

And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to put her away." But Jesus said to them, "For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the

beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

Thus Mark may have revised Thomas 22b away from commending the abstract the idea of making the two one and making the male and the female one and the same, into a reference to Genesis 2:24, 5:2 in support of a prohibition against divorce, one applicable to all people.

Finally, Mark may have made use of Thomas 22a, where we hear that Jesus saw infants being suckled and then said to His disciples, "These infants being suckled are like those who enter the Kingdom. "They said to Him, "Shall we then, as children, enter the Kingdom?" We read in Mark 10: 13-16 that:

people were bringing children to him, that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child [i.e. in the manner of a child] shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

The two are similar, but in Thomas adults who are able to enter the Kingdom are likened to children, while in Mark literal children are exemplars of persons who are able to enter the kingdom. The Markan version is a redactional attack on the behavior of Jesus' disciples while the Thomas version is instructions for the disciples to follow. In Thomas we find a simile, in Mark a supposedly factual statement: the kingdom of God belongs to children. In Mark "like a child" is not a simile but a paradigm.

By his construction of a narrative Mark substitutes literal children for Thomas' simile likening successful disciples to children. Mark does much the same thing with a saying attested both in Q (Lk 10:16 and Mt 10:40) and in John (13:20) to the effect that Jesus said: "whoever receives a messenger of mine receives me, and whoever receives me receives the One who sent me." That statement affirms the primacy of anyone who is entitled to claim to be a messenger of Jesus. But in Mark 9:36-37 we find the statement revised through narrative to affirm the reception not of messengers of Jesus but of any child:

And he took a child, and put him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

Here Mark takes a claim that is specific to particular people, giving them special standing and, through the construction of a narrative, renders the saying so as to apply to anyone who receives any child in Jesus' name. He may have done much the same thing in revising Thomas 22a into 10:13-16.

If Mark drew upon traditions separate from Thomas then what we have here is an interesting coincidence. But perhaps Mark was drawing upon Thomas and doing so in ways that support his constant and repeated contention that Christians should not aspire to particular statuses of excellence. Mark seems to have been quite capable of radically revising such sayings (e.g. Thomas 13) in light of his own particular agenda. Even so, if the passages reminiscent of Thomas 22 were scattered throughout Mark's gospel they would probably not have drawn my attention. But they are not scattered throughout. They are located in one particular place, in the commentary following on the second passion-prediction sequence 9:33-35, and they are almost contiguous, 9:43-48, 10:1-12, 13-16, separated only by two verses (9:49-50). If the proposition that Thomas is a source for Mark is seriously considered, then the proposition that this sequence of sayings is due to Mark's revision of Thomas 22 must be considered too.

Imitatio Christi in Mark and Thomas

What does it take to be like Christ? Humility and servant status is one well known Markan answer. Another is that, as Norman Perrin (1982: 255-257) has observed, in Mark's gospel John the Baptist preaches and is delivered up to execution, then Jesus preaches and is delivered up to execution, finally Christians preach and are to be delivered up (Mk. 13:9-13). Thus, for Mark imitatio Christi is not the performance of signs and wonders but sharing in the sufferings of the Son of Man. His chapter 13 contains ample evidence that the Christians of his community were sharing such sufferings.

In Thomas, as discussed above, imitatio Christi is the ability to identify oneself with Jesus through receiving the spirit from Jesus. Mark's revision of Thomas 13 into 8:27-33 testifies to Mark's thorough rejection of that idea. In Thomas 13 and 108 the metaphor that leads to the ability to imitate Christ, to be as he is, is drinking, "He who drinks from my mouth will be as I am and I will be he," and because Thomas drank from the spring Jesus measured out he is preeminent among the disciples.

In Mark's gospel (10:39) the same metaphor is used for the same purpose, to indicate the proper mode of imitation of Christ. Perhaps motivated by Thomas' saying 12 where James is given preeminence, Mark has Jesus proclaim that while James and John seek preeminence among Jesus' followers, he must deny them this (10:35-40). Yet he says to them "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized". We know what Jesus' baptism entailed, reception of the spirit and the inception of the career of the suffering Son of Man, and we know what Jesus' cup entailed, for we understand the metaphor through hearing Jesus' prayer in Mark 14:36: the cup is Jesus' being delivered up, suffering, and dying. But Mark is careful to inform us that James and John and Peter were sound asleep at that time, despite

Jesus' orders that they stay awake. And so Mark instructs his readers that James and John could not have understood what the cup they were to drink entailed.

It seems to be the case that in earliest Christianity the metaphors of "baptism" and "drinking" were interchangeable in reference to reception of the spirit. Paul writes that "In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit." (1Cor. 12:13). James and John are to be baptized and to drink. There is no reason for them to think anything other than that this is a dual reference to their future reception of the spirit (cf. Mk. 1:9-11). But we, Mark's readers, know better, for we know what Jesus said at Gethsemene. And they do not. We have here an example of Mark's dramatic irony.

Mark may have shifted the motif of drinking found in Thomas 13 away from any Thomasine idea of identification with Jesus through reception of the spirit towards his own characteristic motif of identification with Jesus through suffering. Mark affirms that James and John (who may represent Christians generally) will share in the spirit (they will be baptized with Jesus' baptism) and share in his sufferings (they will drink the cup that he drinks) but in Mark's gospel, while the meaning of the first is known to all, including James and John, the meaning of the second is hidden from them (yet known to anyone who reads Mark).

Mark begins his central section with 8:27-33 which apparently revises the Thomas 13 story without any use of the drinking motif, and he concludes his central section with 10:35-45 wherein the metaphor of drinking is crucial, but understood in a very different way than it is understood in Thomas 13. Whereas in Thomas first James (12) and then Thomas (13) are given primacy by Jesus, in Mark's central section first Peter and then James and John are denigrated and the very idea of any disciple's achieving primacy is parodied.

Conclusion

We are accustomed to think of an evangelist's use of sayings sources in light of Matthew and Luke's use of Q. But we do not have Q, we have only a reconstruction based on their use of it. What there was in Q which neither Matthew nor Luke used -- that we cannot know. We tend to think they used all of it, but that comes from defining Q as what they used! We do have Thomas. We can see, I suggest, that Mark made use of some of the Gospel of Thomas in his construction of narratives and discourses in his chapters 1 through 8 and in his chapters 11 and 12. We can see something quite different happening in Mark's central section, for there he takes on principal points that he finds his source to have made and constructs a thoroughgoing revision, or parodistic refutation of them. The question 'why did Mark not use so many of the Thomas sayings that he potentially could have used?' can only be answered tautologically: he did not use those elements that he did not believe would serve his purposes. Burton Mack (1991) has made an attempt to argue that Mark did use Q and thus also to give explanations to explain why Mark chose not to use most of it, but his is a difficult case to make, especially as the very idea of Q is founded on the thesis that it is lacking in Mark!

For Thomas, we have only a few Greek fragments from manuscripts copied perhaps 70 years after Mark's gospel was completed, and a Coptic text copied perhaps 250 years after the writing of Mark. It is certain that the Gospel of Thomas as we know it, a version principally dependent on the Coptic translation, differs from whatever version Mark may have used in the order of sayings, probably in the number of sayings, probably also because various redactions in sayings were made throughout the centuries that separate the time of Nag Hammadi from the time of Mark. Ideally, the present essay should contain critical commentary on each Thomas/Mark parallel. But, of course, limited space makes this impossible. For such commentary one may turn to Stephen Patterson (1993); John Horman (1979) in an essay almost one half as long as the present essay, argued at length for the priority of one saying, the Thomas version of the parable of the Sower. He concludes that "there seems to be no direct relation between Thomas' version of this parable and Luke's" and that "there is no clear evidence that Thomas drew his version of the parable from Mark or Matthew." Indeed, "Mark's version, as it stands, has been tendentiously altered, and precisely at the point at which it diverges radically from Thomas." Assuming, mistakenly, I believe, that "Mark, for his part is not likely to have used Thomas," he can only conclude that "Thomas and Mark have used a common source" (Horman 1979:342-343).

The variability of the Thomasine textual tradition does not invalidate the use of Thomas as an essentially first-century text, but it does require one to proceed with some caution in assuming that any particular saying in Thomas as we have it was also present in that form in a text available to Mark. There will be cases where Markan versions of what may have been Thomasine sayings appear in the second gospel in less redacted forms than the Thomas versions available to us; for example, Mark 3:28-29 is coherent, but the corresponding saying in Thomas, saying 44, is incoherent. On the other hand we should guard against the idea that a Thomasine saying that sounds strange to us (e.g. 104) must therefore be a later development from a synoptic saying (e.g. Mark's kerygmatic 2:10-20) with which we are quite familiar. Similarly one might almost instinctively reject as a late redaction Thomas 48, "If two make peace with each other in a single house, they will say to the mountain, 'move from here!' and it will move," yet that version may be original. It seems to have grown out of the same social circumstance that is envisioned in QLuke 10:5-6; an itinerant Christian arrives at a house, gives the greeting of peace, and is either welcomed or rejected. In the Lukan passage we hear what happens when an itinerant's greeting of peace is rejected; in Thomas we hear what happens when that greeting is accepted. Mark's version (11:23), like that of Q, shows the influence of a metaphor also known to Paul (1 Cor. 13:2) although there is no reason to believe that Paul regarded the metaphor as a saying of Jesus.[\(12\)](#)

It may sometimes be tempting to construct "designer texts," documents unknown to science that serve the purpose of solving difficult problems. One might construct from imagination a

proto-Thomas for Mark to have used, one happily lacking every one of the difficulties and complexities of the actual Gospel of Thomas. But that would be an exercise in fantasy. We might imagine one or more proto-Thomases that contain almost nothing but

unredacted synoptically paralleled sayings, or various pre-Markan sayings complexes, or perhaps parables sources, to serve to account for this or that segment of Mark's Gospel. Unfortunately, while designer texts have the virtue of solving whatever problems they are designed to solve, doing so without the possibility of any rebuttal, they suffer from one fatal flaw: they do not exist.

We have what we have and we do not have what we do not have. And what we have is a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus called the Gospel of Thomas, and reasons to think that Mark used it, and adapted it, and sought to refute elements of it. Consideration of the sheer number of Thomas sayings used by Mark, and the evident Markan adaptation of specifically Thomasine elements such as the juxtaposition of sayings 65 and 66 and the story crucial to the Thomas gospel that validates the primacy of Thomas himself should lend credence to the idea. The alternative thesis, that both drew sayings only from the unknown indefinable source we call oral tradition, is not an inherently superior hypothesis but an appeal to the unknowable.

As knowledge of their sources leads to clearer understanding of Matthew and Luke through knowledge of their redaction of those sources, so knowledge of Mark may increase considerably if it is recognized that we may have at hand a late written version of one of the texts he used, one we call the Gospel of Thomas. We may be able to see that Mark used his source sometimes in the same way as did Matthew and Luke, that he sequenced sayings found in diverse places in his source in order to construct out of them coherent discourses relevant to the narrative contexts he created for them. And we may see that Mark also used his source differently than did Matthew or Luke, for in his central section he may have taken on important points made by stories and sayings in his source and radically revised them. I hope that in the future attention can be paid to these possibilities.[\(13\)](#)

Appendix 1: CHART

1:16-18 Fishers of men Associates

2:16-17 Sick need physician Authorities

2:23-28 Lord of Sabbath Authorities Tanach

3:24-26 Divided Kingdom Authorities Parable

4:24 Measure given Associates

6:7-13 Missionary Talk Associates

7:1-13 Corban Authorities Tanach

8:11-12 No sign given Authorities

=====

11:15-18 Temple event Authorities Tanach

11:25 Forgive in Prayer Associates

12:18-27 Seven brothers'wife Authorities Tanach

12:28-34 First commandments Authorities Tanach

12:35-37 Not David's son Authorities Tanach

12:38-42 Beware of scribes Authorities Tanach

12:43-44 Widow's mite Associates

2:18-20 Bridegroom fast Associates Thomas 104

2:21 Patch tears away Associates Thomas 47b

2:22 New/Old Wine Associates Thomas 47a

3:27 Strong Man House Authorities Parable Thomas 35

3:28-30 Blasphemy Spirit Authorities Parable Thomas 44

3:31-35 New Family Associates Thomas 99

4:3-9 Sower Associates Parable Thomas 9

4:11 Mystery Associates Thomas 62b

4:21 Lamp Associates Thomas 33b

4:22 Hidden Revealed Associates Thomas 6c

4:23 Ears to Hear Associates Thomas 21f etc.
4:25 Rich get richer Associates Thomas 41
4:26-29 Seed to Reaper Associates Parable Thomas 21e
4:30-32 Mustard Seed Associates Parable Thomas 20
6:1-6 Dishonored Prophet Associates Thomas 31
7:14-15 Into Does not defile Associates Parable Thomas 14c
7:16-23 Comes out defiles Associates Thomas 45b

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11:19-24 Moves Mountains Associates Thomas 48
12:1-9 Vineyard servants Authorities Parable Thomas 64
12:10-11 Cornerstone Authorities Tanach/Parable Thomas 65
12:13-17 Render to Caesar Authorities Thomas 100

Appendix 2: STRUCTURE

JESUS ASKS HIS DISCIPLES ABOUT HIMSELF

THOMAS: Jesus said to his disciples, "Compare me to something and tell me what I am like."

MARK: Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

INITIAL MISTAKEN RESPONSES ARE GIVEN

THOMAS: Simon Peter said to him, "You are like a just messenger."

Matthew said to him, "You are like a wise philosopher."

MARK: They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." -----

A SEEMINGLY PROPER RESPONSE IS GIVEN

THOMAS: Thomas said to him, "Teacher, my mouth is utterly unable to say what you are like." Jesus said, "I am not your teacher. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring that I have tended."

MARK: "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ."

A SECRECY MOTIF OCCURS

THOMAS: "And he took him, and withdrew,"

MARK: "Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him."

TRUE TEACHING IS GIVEN BY JESUS

THOMAS: and spoke three sayings to him.

MARK: He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

ONE OR MORE DISCIPLES ARE CONDEMNED

THOMAS: When Thomas came back to his friends they asked him, "What did Jesus say to you?"

Thomas said to them, "If I tell you one of the sayings he spoke to me, you will pick up rocks and stone me, and fire will come from the rocks and devour you."

[Jesus takes Thomas aside and speaks words we do not hear; we are told that the disciples' reaction to these words would be to condemn Thomas.]

MARK: He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

[Peter takes Jesus aside and speaks words we do not hear; we are told that Jesus' reaction to those words was to condemn Peter.]

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1. The uncertainties inherent in all of these judgements about the nature of sayings in Mark means that the statistics given below should be taken to reveal general patterns and not anything more precise than that.

2. See Appendix 1: Chart.

3. As Jesus' "associates" I include both his disciples and the other people whom Jesus addresses either in large groups or in more intimate assemblages but not those who are categorically labeled as scribes, pharisees, priests, etc.

4. By "authorities" I mean those people labeled herodians, priests, lawyers, elders, scribes, sadducees and pharisees in Mark's Gospel.

5. I am grateful to William Arnal for suggesting the following lines of reasoning to me.

6. Mark: 8:27 And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Phillipi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" 28 And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others one of the prophets." 29 And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."

30 And he charged them to tell no one about him. 31 And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God but of men."

Thomas: 13 Jesus said to his disciples, "Compare me to someone and tell me whom I am like." Simon Peter said to him, "You are like a righteous angel." Matthew said to him, "You are like a wise philosopher." Thomas said to him, "Master, my mouth is wholly incapable of saying whom you are like." Jesus said, "I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring which I have measured out." And he took him and withdrew and told him three things. When Thomas returned to his companions, they asked him, "What did Jesus say to you?" Thomas said to them, "If I tell you one of the things which he told me, you will pick up stones and throw them at me; a fire will come out of the stones and burn you up."

7. See Appendix 2: Structure

8. I presume that such people were active in the Christian movement, for that is Mark's concern and interest. It is hard to believe that Mark would be concerning himself with Jewish messianic activists of the Roman war period for fear that they would lead astray Mark's non-Palestinian Christian elect!

9. In light of the mistaken view put in the mouth of Matthew that Jesus is like a wise lover of wisdom, the idea that Thomas has drunk from the fountain of wisdom (e.g. Proverbs 18:4) cannot be the intention of Thomas' passage.

10. Cf. also Isaiah 44:3 and Ezekiel 39:29.

11. Any theory that Thomas was so skilled in form critical analysis that he could systematically revise Markan sayings into more primitive forms lacking Markan redactional characteristics is simply untenable.

12. On the sociology of the Christian greeting "Shalom," cf. James Robinson (1995: 259-274).

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