Mark’s use of the Gospel of Thomas
Part two

Stevan Davies
Kevin Johnson

ABSTRACT
Following up on an earlier study, the thesis that Mark made use of the Gospel of Thomas is investigated further in this article. Some twenty sayings common to Mark and Thomas are examined. Among the consequences following from Mark’s use of Thomas is the possibility of performing more sophisticated redaction criticism of the Gospel of Mark.

1 INTRODUCTION
I am pleased to have been given an opportunity to elaborate on my previous article in Neotestamentica. In that article, I argued that Mark’s use of the Gospel of Thomas could be inferred from the sheer amount of Thomasine material in the Second Gospel, Mark’s consistency in utilising that material, and most importantly the likelihood that certain sayings in Mark were derived from the Gospel of Thomas itself and not from some other source, for example oral tradition.

The present essay examines, in moderate detail, some twenty sayings common to Mark and Thomas. In many of these sayings, we find evidence of the Markan redaction of sayings that appear in the Gospel of Thomas. The principal purpose of the present essay is to show that the thesis that Mark drew upon Thomas is consistent and that when one subtracts what appears to be Markan redaction, in many cases one is left with Thomasine material. It will further be shown that Mark’s use of this material exhibits patterns, particularly in clustering the material together and in characterising the material as parables.

I will survey the twenty sayings in Markan order. It should be noted that aside from catchword connections, Thomas has virtually no conceptually compelling order of sayings and an author utilising Thomas would have been under no obligation to preserve, or even to be influenced by, the order in which sayings appear in that text.
UNIT ONE: MARK 2:18-22

Mk 2:18-20
(A) John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to him, ‘Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?’
(B) And Jesus said to them, ‘While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.’
(C) ‘But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.’

GThom 104
(A) They said to Jesus, ‘Come, let us pray today, and let us fast.’
(B) Jesus said, ‘What sin have I committed, or how have I been undone?’
(C) Rather, when the bridegroom leaves the bridal suite, then let people fast and pray.’

Saying 104, in its Thomasine context, contrasts unification within the bridal suite, where the two sexes become one, the male and female are a single one, and unity prevails, with a time when the unification has been broken, the bridegroom leaves the bridal suite, those united are disunited, and the one becomes two (cf GThom 11). Unification is the Gospel of Thomas’ most pronounced redactional motif and probably has to do with return to the primordial beginning (cf GThom 18) where humans were unified in the sense that they were then the male/female Image of God of Genesis chapter one (cf Davies 1992). In GThom 22 unity occurs when the male and female are a single one. The concept of making the two one through the union of the sexes surfaces in Mark 10:7-9.

While Mark’s setting mentions only the practice of fasting, Thomas 104 also adds the element of ‘prayer’ to the saying. For Thomas, those who are unified have no need to pray or to fast for they should be beyond sin and condemnation (cf GThom 14) reflecting an understanding of prayer and fasting as modes of repentance. Luke too knows a version of the pericope that was similar to the one found in Thomas, for Luke, like Thomas, includes

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1 A passage said to be from the Gospel of the Hebrews reads ‘Look, the mother of the master and his brothers said to him, “John the Baptist is baptising for the remission of sins. Let us go and be baptised by him.” But he said to them, “What sin have I committed, that I should hasten and be baptised by him? Unless perchance this very thing that I have said is ignorance.”’ Whether this pericope is only coincidentally similar to the Mark/Thomas passage under discussion, or whether it shows knowledge of both Markan (reference to John the Baptist) and Thomasine (reference to Jesus’ sinlessness) versions is impossible to say.
'fast and pray' in the introductory matter (Lk 5:33: 'They said to him, "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking"'); it is likely that Mark dropped prayer from the version he used.

Mark 2:18-20 appears to have been revised from some original in order to present a characteristically Markan motif, which is that Jesus spoke during his lifetime of his forthcoming crucifixion (cf Mk 8:31, 9:31, 10:33). Virtually all scholars who have examined Mark 2:18-20 have concluded that Mark intends to contrast a time prior to the crucifixion (when fasting was not practiced) with the practice of his church in later days by writing, 'But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day,' wherein, of course, the bridegroom represents Jesus himself. Therefore, element (C) in Mark is almost certainly Markan kerygmatic redaction. Yet Thomas 104 is evidence that Mark is not simply inventing the frame within which he makes his redactional points but that he is revising a framework already in existence.

There is a clear thematic sequence in Mark from 2:15-3:6 having to do with questions of Jewish religious observance concerning which Jesus is shown to be in conflict with Pharisees. Interest in facilitating the creation of this sequence, coupled with an intention to show Jesus hinting at his forthcoming crucifixion, will account for much of Mark's redaction of Thomas 104.

Rudolf Bultmann, noting that the setting of the bridegroom pericope in Mark is introduced by a question concerning the fasting practices of Jesus' disciples rather than of Jesus, stated that Mark had probably revised an original that focused on Jesus himself (Bultmann 1963:18-19). In the passage under discussion and two other times in his gospel Mark portrays the disciples as engaged in questionable activities for which Jesus is held responsible: in Mk 2:23 Jesus and his disciples are walking through a field of grain, but it is the disciples who pick the grain. In Mk 7:2 (which introduces a saying found in Thomas 14c) we hear that Jesus' disciples eat without first washing their hands. In both of these cases Mark informs us that 'the Pharisees' find these actions objectionable. In all three Jesus defends the actions in a manner that allows, or even requires the reader to assume that the disciples' practices are his as well. For these reasons, element (A), like element (C), can be seen to be Markan redaction.

The identification in Mark of 'John's disciples and the Pharisees' as Jesus' interlocutors, in contrast to the simple 'they' of Thomas, indicates that an earlier form of the saying has been preserved in Thomas. As Wilson wrote (1960:142-143):
It is generally recognized that in oral tradition the tendency of the development is towards a rounding and conventionalising of the material, with the elimination of descriptive detail and the omission of personal names, and this is precisely what we find in many cases in the Gospel of Thomas. The interest attaches to the saying, not to its setting; the occasion on which it was uttered, the situation to which it was directed, the people to whom it was addressed, are at this stage unimportant. A further stage appears with the attempt to restore some of the details; to identify the characters and supply the names of the speakers; sometimes the identification is fairly easy, but on other occasions this tendency leads to the ascription of a question to different people in different lines of tradition.

Such differing attributions may be seen in Mark and in the Gospel of the Hebrews while Thomas contains no attribution at all. Again, element (A) shows signs of Markan redaction.

Element (B) in Thomas is consistent with a Thomasine theme found in GThom 14a, that Jesus, like all those who are 'unified,' is without sin and so neither condemned or undone. Those who are unified or in the bridal suite do not fast or pray for they are in the condition of the beginning before law or sin or need for redemptive practices.

Mark's pericope speaks of a pre-wedding gathering wherein it is assumed that people will not fast, which is then contrasted to a time 'when the bridegroom is taken away from them.' This can only be the time when the bridegroom leaves in order to go enter the bridal suite for, if the scene is a wedding, and the groom departs from his friends, he goes to be with the bride. Here Mark seems to have made a subtle and interesting reversal of the Thomasine motif that leaving the bridal suite leads to fasting and prayer. Mark has replaced that motif with one implicitly identifying the bridal suite with the crucifixion of Jesus so that, after Jesus has entered the bridal suite there will be fasting and prayer.

Mark evidently revised Thomas 104 by specifying the questioners (John's disciples and Pharisees), shifting the focus from Jesus to disciples of Jesus, eliminating reference to prayer altogether, and taking the opportunity to have Jesus hint at his crucifixion while validating the practice of fasting in the post-Easter church.

Since Mk 2:18-20 is structurally the same as GThom 104, while incorporating specifically Markan themes, and because GThom 104 is the more primitive version on form-critical grounds, there appears to be a causal arrow pointing from the Gospel of Thomas to the Gospel of Mark. The only alternative is that both are tendentious revisions of some completely unknown original.

Mk 2:20-22
20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.
'No one sews a patch of unshrank cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse.

And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins.'

GThom 47

(A) It is impossible for a man to mount two horses or to stretch two bows.

(B) And it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters; otherwise he will honour the one and treat the other contemptuously.

(C) No man drinks old wine and immediately desires to drink new wine.

(D) New wine is not put into old wineskins, lest they burst; nor is old wine put into a new wineskin, lest it spoil.

(E) An old patch is not sewn onto a new garment, because a tear would result.

Thomas’ sayings (A) (B) are linked by the catchwords ‘two’ and ‘impossible.’ Sayings (A) (B) (C) in the Gospel of Thomas are a series having to do with the proverbial actions of an individual: ‘a man,’ ‘a servant,’ ‘a man.’ The sequence is broken at (D) evidently because of a catchword connection in the mind of the compiler linking the reference to wine in (C) with (D) and, subsequently, the motif of ‘old/new’ in (E), which coheres with the preceding references in (C) and (D). Such catchword-connected sequences are typical of Thomas’ organisation.

The statement in Thomas 47(E) ‘An old patch is not sewn onto a new garment, because a tear would result’ is a scribal error probably following from a too casual reading of catchwords. It is nonsense, in terms of tailoring, it has no connection to any redactional Thomasine theme, and it is easily explicable; a scribe who has just written ‘old, new’ in the previous clause (D), continued on erroneously to write ‘old, new’ in (E). When this error occurred in the transmission of the Thomas text is impossible to determine.

The proverbs (C) (D) (E) in Thomas constitute a rather coherent set (revising the scribal error):

(C) Old not preferred to new
(D) New not put into old
   Old not put into new
(E) New not sewn onto old

Mark adds additional material to Thomas’ simple proverbs in each case. In Thomas the sequence of explanations is:

(D) New wine is not put into old wineskins, lest they burst;
   Nor is old wine put into a new wineskin, lest it spoil.
(E) A [new] patch is not sewn onto an [old] garment, because a tear would result.
In Mark these explanations are considerably elaborated:

(D) 22 No one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins.

(E) 21 No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse.

The material in Thomas is proverbial, simple, and its contrasting parallel structure is evidence of a barely elaborated oral tradition. Mark omits half of the parallel-structure proverb and elaborates at considerable length on the remaining half in a manner that is needlessly redundant (if a wineskin bursts it does not require saying that both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined). Redundancy can also be seen in the passage discussed above, where Mark has constructed a rhetorical question and its answer: 2:19 'How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them.' Such duplication is a pervasive factor in Mark's writing (cf Neirynck 1988).

Mark, of course, knows nothing of our Coptic Thomas-manuscript's scribal error. By giving an explanation of why it is a bad idea to sew unshrunk cloth onto cloth that has shrunk, Mark moves the saying from the realm of the proverbial to the realm of narrative discussion. For a proverb per se, even Thomas' explanations, 'lest they burst,' 'lest it spoil,' 'because a tear would result,' are unnecessary. Mark continues the elaboration of the proverbial into narrative, a tendency also visible in Matthew's and Luke's versions, for they continue the process even further, specifying how the wine will be ruined, informing us that it will run out of the burst wineskins (Mt 9:17, Lk 5:37).

Taking scribal error into account, Thomas' versions of these sayings are certainly more original than Mark's. Possibly the fact that they are adjacent in Mark as they are in Thomas may indicate that Mark found them connected in Thomas. Mark's reversal of their order might have been caused by his desire to conclude his narrative (2:22) with the statement 'New wine is for new wineskins.' The passage about the cloth patch must precede the passage about wine in order for that statement to be a triumphant conclusion. It has often been observed that one purpose of Mark's narrative is to make a point about the incompatibility of the old (John's disciples, Pharisees) and the new (Jesus) (cf Schweitzer 1970:67).

At a later stage in the developing tradition Luke revised Mark's construction by the addition of a proverb and an explanation of it: (5:39) 'And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, "The old is better."' As the proverb Luke added is found in Thomas 47C, adjacent to the material
that Luke has taken from Mark, Luke's addition of the saying may indicate his knowledge of Thomas or that sheer coincidence led Luke to add a 'wine' saying to a 'wine' cluster. However, it may be asking too much of coincidence to presume that both Mark and Luke coincidentally connected proverbs that are adjacent in Thomas. Thomas' parallel structure and its lack of elaboration demonstrate that Thomas is not deriving these proverbs from the canonical gospels.

3 UNIT TWO: MARK 3:20–35

Mark 3:20–35 is a self-contained unit comprised of an event, an interpolation and a subsequent concluding event. Jesus' family sets out to take charge of him on the grounds that he is 'outside himself' (3:20-21). A discussion follows, the principal theme of which is controversy over what is within him, that is, is he possessed by an unclean spirit, or the holy spirit, concluding with 3:31–35 when the family arrive and are not received. This whole section of the gospel is built from four units of tradition, three of which are to be found in the Gospel of Thomas. The first unit is also to be found in Q.

The introductory sections differ in Mark (3:22-26) and Q/Lk (11:14-18): in Mark the discussion of exorcisms seems to refer back to 3:11, in Q we have a specific story of the exorcism of a mute. Mark has added 3:23 to introduce a series of sayings as 'parables.' The inclusion of two proverbs, kingdom/house divided and the explanation of them in reference to 'Satan divided' evidently existed in tradition and was not supplied by Mark (cf Kloppenborg 1987:124).

The remainder of Mark 3:20–35 has no sayings or other elements in common with the remainder of the 'Beelzebul controversy' in Q. Rather, all the rest is parallel to passages in the Gospel of Thomas.

Mk 3:27
In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house.

GThom 35
It is not possible for anyone to enter the house of a strong man and take it by force unless he binds his hands; then he will (be able to) ransack his house.

These two are virtually identical. It is possible that Mark changed 'bind his hands' simply to 'bends' (or 'ties up') to enable the saying to fit more precisely into the context of the 'binding' of an unclean spirit. The idea of 'binding' an unclean spirit is, of course, ubiquitous in works about magic in the ancient world.
Mk 3:28–29

(A) I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them.
(B) But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.

GThom 44

(A) Whoever blasphemes against the Father will be forgiven, and whoever blasphemes against the Son will be forgiven,
(B) but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either on earth or in heaven.

The interpretation of Thomas 44 is a puzzle. Only in Thomas 44A does one hear about 'the Son.' In Thomas' saying 3 Christians are potentially 'Sons of the Living Father,' and in saying 37 we hear that Christians may see 'the Son of the Living One' in a context wherein one cannot be sure if this means the realisation of their potential, or if it means that they will see Jesus. Apart from saying 44 it would be impossible to find certain evidence that the Gospel of Thomas regards Jesus as 'the divine Son' in any trinitarian sense. The same saying is also found in, of all places, a Tuscan-Italian translation of part of the Diatesseron: 'He who shall speak a word against the Father, it shall be forgiven him; and he who shall speak a word against the Son, it shall be forgiven him; but he who shall blaspheme against the Holy spirit, to him it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the other' (Neller 1983:158, Quispel 1957:189–207).

Coincidentally, Mark 13:32 'No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father,' presents a similar puzzle. Here the Son is evidently higher than the angels, but the simple term 'the Son' is not otherwise attested in Mark and the passage does not fit easily with other evidence for Mark's view of Jesus. Q/Lk 10:22 is testimony to the antiquity of such an unusual use of 'the Son.'

Mark may have generalised Thomas' two specific instances of blasphemy into a sweeping statement that 'all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them' for blasphemy against the Father is surely metonymic for blasphemy per se, that is, blasphemy against God. It is much more difficult to understand how Mark could have done this with the Q (12:10) version of the saying: 'whoever will speak a word against the son of man will be forgiven.' The equation of Q's 'a word against the son of man' with Mark's (lit.) 'all blasphemies that men may blaspheme' is difficult to imagine. If Mark read Thomas 44 to equate 'the Son' and 'the Father,' which it does seem to do, and if Mark did not wish to make that equation (as he does not in 13:32), we can understand Mark's motivation to revise the saying in some manner. Thomas 44 may be an intermediate step in the development of the saying.
from one concerned with *speaking words against* 'the son of man' [Q], to one concerned with *speaking words against* 'the Son' and 'the Father' [Tuscan Diatesseron], to one concerned with blaspheming 'the Son' and 'the Father' [Thomas], finally to one concerned with all possible blasphemies [Mark].

Thomas and Mark differ in their conclusions as to whether blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will remain unforgiven in all places (Thomas: earth/heaven) or throughout all time (Mark: eternally). The Q version has no such ending. Neither Mark (13:31) nor Thomas (11 and 111) regard 'the heavens and the earth' as eternal.

Mk 3:31–35

(A) Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him.

(B) A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, 'Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.'

(C) 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' he asked.

(D) Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.'

GThom 99

(B) The disciples said to Him, 'Your brothers and your mother are standing outside.

(D) He said to them, 'Those here who do the will of my Father are my brothers and my mother.'

(E) It is they who will enter the Kingdom of my Father.

Element A is evidently Markan redaction, connecting the pericope with his introductory material at 3:20–21.

Mark (B), in which Jesus is sitting inside surrounded by a crowd is consistent with 3:20: 'Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat,' and is to be found as a redactional motif also at 2:1–4 where the crowd similarly causes difficulties: 'Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.' Mark's tendency to portray Jesus speaking to a crowd is too ubiquitous in his gospel to need further comment. It is quite likely that the more original form of this pericope contained 'disciples' rather than 'crowd.' Matthew understands the members of the crowd to be Jesus' disciples and revises Mark accordingly, back coincidentally toward Thomas 99.

Mark often adds rhetorical questions as introductions to, or revisions of, traditional sayings, for example 2:19, 4:21, 4:30, 7:18, 12:16, which he also seems to have done in (C). The question is unnecessary; Thomas 99 makes
exactly the same point without it. Mark’s descriptive phrase ‘Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, Here are my mother and my brothers!’ is probably redactional insofar as it presupposes the redactional Markan setting and provides an answer to the redactional rhetorical question.

Thomas’ gospel generally avoids the direct use of the word ‘God,’ preferring instead the euphemisms ‘Father’ and ‘Heaven.’ We find the phrase ‘my Father’ in Thomas 61 and 64 as well as here in 99. Further, kingdom of the Father appears in 57, 76, 96, 97, 98, 113. So Thomas’ use of ‘my Father’ here is simply consistent with other such usage. Matthew, in his revision of Mark 3:35 similarly uses ‘my Father in Heaven’ because, on the matter of using euphemisms for God, Matthew and Thomas are in agreement, an agreement that presumably stems from standard pious Jewish practice. Mark may have altered ‘Father’ to ‘God’ to avoid ambiguity in a pericope where mother and brothers and sisters are under discussion. In fact the Thomasine ‘Father’ is a meaningful element in its own right, serving to define the members of the new family in reference to their obedience to the Father of the family.

Thomas’ blanket statement ‘It is they who will enter the kingdom of my Father’ may have been too sweeping for Mark. He turns immediately (in chapter four) to casting doubt on the ability of the crowds to understand parables, and throughout his gospel casts doubt upon the worthiness of the disciples.

Examining the statements regarding Jesus’ family members, we find that Thomas’ order is:

(B) Brothers/mother
(D) Brothers/mother

Mark’s order is:

(A) Mother/brothers
(B) Mother/brothers
(C) Mother/brothers
(D1) Mother/brothers
(D2) Brothers/sisters/mother

If Mark’s (A) and (C) are conceded to be redactional, and Mark’s (B) is practically a reiteration of (A), and (D1) is the answer to (C), Mark is using a phrase consistently in both redaction and revision. But he shifts at (D2), which is the grand conclusion of the pericope, to the usage found in Thomas (adding ‘sisters’ for good measure). There is no reason for this shift except, perhaps, that here Mark reverts to the order in his source.
4 UNIT THREE: MARK 4:1-34

Mark's chapter 4:1-34 is a sustained presentation of ideas relating primarily to parables and the broadcasting of the message (logos). It separates readily into 13 separate units.

A 1-2 Setting of the sequence
B 3-8 The parable of the sower
C 9 Traditional admonition
D 10-13 Comments on mystery and parables
E 14-20 Allegorical exegesis of the parable of the sower
F 21 Proverb about a lamp
G 22a Proverb about hidden/revealed
H 23 Traditional admonition
I 24 Proverb about measure used
J 25 Proverb about the one who has
K 26-29 Parable of the sown seed
L 30-32 Parable of the mustard seed
M 33-34 Conclusion of the sequence

A, E, and M, were almost certainly written by Mark. The remainder of the material, B, C, D, F, G, H, J, K, L, is found in the Gospel of Thomas. There is one exception: I, 'The measure you use will be the measure used on you, and then some,' which does not appear in the Gospel of Thomas. A version of this saying is said to be found in Q (Mt7:2//Lk6:38) although it occurs but once in Matthew and Luke. It did circulate independently of Q in the form Mark used: cf 1 Clement 13:2.

We will examine the material common to Mark and Thomas one unit at a time, making comparison between the versions in Mark and Thomas and, on occasion, a version in Q.

4.1 Sub unit B

Mk 4:3-8

3 Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed.
4 As he was scattering the seed,
some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.
5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.
6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.
7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain.
8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.
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GThom 9
(A) Now the sower went out, took a handful (of seeds),
(B) and scattered them.
Some fell on the road; the birds came and gathered them up.
(C) Others fell on the rock, did not take root in the soil, and did not produce ears.
(D) And others fell on thorns; they choked the seed(s) and worms ate them.
(E) And others fell on the good soil and produced good fruit: it bore sixty per
measure and a hundred and twenty per measure.

Mark 4:3–4 and Thomas 9(A)–(B) are essentially identical. Mark 4:5–6 is a
considerably extended discussion of a scenario present in Thomas 9(C) in a
few words. Mark 4:7–8 are, again, essentially identical to Thomas 9(D)–(E).
One might then wonder what it could have been that motivated an expa­
sion of Thomas 9C by Mark, and the answer may be that the allegorical
understanding of this particular element of the parable was of particular
interest to Mark. In 4:14–20 he explains the parable as follows:
4–15 Satan steals the message sown into some people.
5–6 = 16–17 Persecutions threaten the message sown into some people.
7–18–19 Worldly desires choke out the message sown into some people.
8–20 Some listen, take in the message, and produce fruit.

Mark's chapter 13 is good evidence that Mark was aware of, concerned
with, and troubled by the persecutions suffered by his community. It is prob­
able that Mark expanded the parable from Thomas' simple 'Others fell on
the rock, did not take root in the soil, and did not produce ears' to the more
complex 'Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It
sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up,
the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root' in
order to allow an allegorical exegesis that equates such seed with Christians
in circumstances of persecution.

Tuckett (1988:153–157) believes that the idea of seed not producing roots
when sown on rock is Thomasine redaction, but no redactional considera­
tions are necessary to account for a simple fact of nature. If anything, the
version in Thomas has more versimilitude, for the seed cannot root in rock, and
no more is said. But in the Markan version the seed takes root in shallow
soil, produced plants, and then withered because 'they had no root' due to
the activity of the sun on the plants. While not botanically accurate this
redaction enables Mark to create an allegorical explanation concerning those
who receive the message but then, later, 'when trouble or persecution comes
because of the word, they quickly fall away.'

Horman (1979:342) ends his lengthy study of this parable in Mark and
Thomas with the conclusion 'Thus, Mark's version, as it stands, has been
tendentiously altered, and precisely at the point at which it diverges radically
from Thomas.’ He goes on to say that ‘there seems to be no direct relation between Thomas’ version of the parable and Luke’s’ and that ‘there is no clear evidence that Thomas drew his version of the parable from Mark or Matthew’ (1979:343). He believes that both Mark and Thomas found this parable in a common source, but it is more likely, as the present essay argues, that Mark found the parable in Thomas itself.

4.2 Sub units C and H

The Gospel of Thomas contains the phrase ‘Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear’ twice (8, 21), and the phrase ‘Whoever has ears let him hear’ four times (24, 63, 65, 96). Mark uses the former phrase twice (4:9 and 4:23), in both cases following a saying found also in Thomas. While the phrase is not used to conclude the same sayings in Mark and Thomas, it is possible that Mark believed the phrase to be an introductory clause to the parable of the sower, (it is undoubtedly an introductory clause in Thomas 24) for one reads in Thomas 8b-9: ‘Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear. Jesus said, “Now the sower went out, took a handful (of seeds), and scattered them...”’ and so on. Mark may have moved this introduction so as to make it a conclusion; he did not have the (sometimes misleading) benefit of our text’s division of Thomas’ sayings into separated numbered units. Interestingly, Mark begins the parable of the sower with the imperative ‘Listen!’ and does so again when he writes, in verses 4:23-24 “‘If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Listen!”, he continued. “With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more.”’ Mark seems to use ‘Listen!’ here as a semi-synonym to the phrase under discussion and may also have done so at the beginning of the parable of the sower, replacing the phrase ‘if anyone has ears to hear, let him hear’ in his source with ‘Listen!’ and then moving the phrase to conclude the parable. While the phrase is a commonplace in early Christianity, its use as an introduction/conclusion in Thomas 8b-9/Mark 4:3-9 lends some credence to the idea that Mark here adopted the phrase from its use in Thomas.

4.3 Sub unit D

Mk 4:10-13

10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables.

11a He told them, ‘The secret (mysterion) of the kingdom of God has been given to you.

11b But to those on the outside everything is said in parables

12 so that, “they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”’
Then Jesus said to them, ‘Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?’

Verse 10, 11b, and 13 are obvious Markan redaction, and the use of Isaiah 6:9-10 in 4:12 is probably redactional as well. It is likely that this sequence is built around the following saying found in Thomas:

GThom 62a
Jesus said, ‘It is to those [who are worthy of my] mysteries (mysteria) that I tell my mysteries (mysteria).

Mark 4:10-13 is a redactional construction of Mark’s designed to further discuss parables, the principal theme of his chapter 4, making use of Isaiah 6:9-10 in verse 12. Embedded at its center, surrounded by redactional material, is a passage probably adapted from the Gospel of Thomas.

Helmut Koester (1990a:100-101) writes,

The theory that the parables of Jesus are ‘mysteries’ (mysteria) is completely alien to Q. However, this theory may have served very early as a theme for the collection of some of Jesus’ parables. The respective statement in Mark 4:11-12 is not attributable to Mark’s redactional work, but must have been part of the source used by Mark 4. What is strange in the text of Mark is the use of the term ‘secret’ (mysterion), and especially its use in the singular as a characterization of the entire parable-teaching of Jesus as a ‘mystery.’ The term does not occur anywhere else in the canonical gospels except for the two synoptic parallels of Mark 4:11 (Matt 13:11; Luke 8:10) which both read the plural ‘secrets’ or ‘mysteries’ (mysteria). In any case, it is not a typical Markan term at all. Matthew and Luke may have preserved the original text of Mark 4:11, and thus also of Mark’s source. In that case, each of the parables is designated a ‘secret’ which requires interpretation. That the term ‘secrets’ belongs to an older tradition of the parables is confirmed by the Gospel of Thomas where the same designation appears in the plural (#62) in the introduction to a collection of three parables... Rich Fool (#63), Great Banquet (#64), and Wicked Tenants (#65).

If ‘parables’ have to do with ‘mysteries,’ Mark and Thomas are in agreement that those mysteries are concerned with the Kingdom (cf Thomas 20, 57, 76, 96, 97, 98; Mk 4:26, 30). The idea that those who hear are worthy of the mysteries, as Thomas would have it, does not fit well with Mark’s appraisal of the twelve (cf 4:13!, 8:17-21, 14:50 and, almost, passim). Accordingly, Markan redaction of Thomas 62a is explicable; the mystery has to do with the Kingdom, and the fact that it is given to the twelve does not imply that they were worthy of it or that it was fully comprehended by them.

In Koester’s opinion Mark may have made use of various small sayings collections, at least one of which allowed the characterisation of parables as mysteries, but it appears much more likely that Mark made much use of the larger collection of sayings known to us as the Gospel of Thomas. Indeed,
Koester notes that ‘The introduction (to Mark 12:1) says: “And he began to speak to them in parables” but only one parable follows’ (1990a:102). That one is the parable of the Wicked Tenants, found in Thomas as saying 65, one of the triple set of parables introduced by 62a. Koester continues, ‘Whether or not this parable of Mark 12 derives from the same collection as the parables of Mark 4, it is evident that the sources of Mark and the Gospel of Thomas were closely related’ (1990a:104).

Here Koester may be multiplying entities unnecessarily; appeal to a common source need not proceed further than to Thomas itself.

It is very significant that when Mark characterises sayings as ‘parables,’ in every instance he does so in reference to material that is found in the gospel of Thomas. In his chapter three (23–35) Mark begins by saying: ‘So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables,’ followed by a proverb in parallel form not found in Thomas (a kingdom/house divided) and then Thomas 35, and 44, concluding (31–35) with an event found in Thomas 99, Jesus’ redefinition of his family. In Mark’s chapter four the term ‘parables’ is found seven times, as are eight sayings that are in Thomas, all of which will be discussed in the present section of this essay. In his chapter seven he cites the saying found as Thomas 14c and follows that with an explication that seems to be based in part on Thomas 45b, writing (7:15–17) ‘Nothing outside a man can make him “unclean” by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him “unclean.” After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable.’ Finally, in his section 12:1–11 Mark cites as parables Thomas 65 and 66, with the introduction: ‘He then began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard...”’ and the conclusion: ‘Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them,’ ending with 12:13–18, an event found in Thomas 100, the ‘render unto Caesar’ colloquy. These are the only instances where Mark uses the term ‘parables’ and they are all instances making principal use of Gospel of Thomas material. It should be very difficult to affirm that if Mark had a ‘parables source’ that source was something other than the Gospel of Thomas.

4.4 Sub unit F

Mk 4:21

He said to them, ‘Do you bring in a lamp (literally: does a lamp come) to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don’t you put it on its stand?

GThom 33

(A) Jesus said, ‘Preach from your housetops that which you will hear in your ear (and in the other ear)."
(B) For no one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, nor does he put it in a hidden place, but rather he sets it on a lampstand so that everyone who enters and leaves will see its light.

The proverb in Thomas 33b is similar, but not identical, to the version found in Q (Lk 8:16, 11:33//Mt 5:15). Neither version is demonstrably more like the passage in Mark because Mark has revised the proverb into a set of rhetorical questions unlike either the Q or the Thomas versions.

Mark’s rhetorical questions follow very clumsily after the parable of the sower unless we assume that Mark considers the lamp’s illumination to be an equivalent metaphor for sown seed, which is in turn metaphorical for the spreading of Jesus’ message (logos). This is not difficult to assume, but one might wonder how Mark got the idea to shift metaphors from seed to lamp. Quite possibly Mark was influenced here by Thomas 33A, which unequivocally links discussion of the spreading of Jesus’ message to the subsequent lamp imagery.

4.5 Sub unit G

Mk 4:22
(A) For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed,
(B) and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open.

GThom 5
Jesus said, ‘Recognise what is in your sight, and
(A) that which is hidden from you will become plain to you.
(B) For there is nothing hidden which will not become manifest.’

GThom 6b
Jesus said, ‘Do not tell lies, and do not do what you hate, for all things are plain in the sight of heaven.
(A) For nothing hidden will not become manifest, and
(B) nothing covered will remain without being uncovered.’

Both Thomas and Q share this proverb with Mark. We have fragments of the Greek of Thomas 5 and 6b and it is substantially different than that of the Q version of the saying (Lk 12:2//Mt 10:26). However, the Greek of Thomas 5b (P Oxy 654.29-30) is in parts identical to Mark 4:22a, and the Greek of Thomas 6b (P Oxy 654.38-40) shares one key element (faneron) with Mark 4:22b, proving that Mark’s version of this proverb is more akin to the Thomas version than it is to the Q version.
4.6 Sub unit J
Mk 4:25
Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

GThom 41
Jesus said, ‘Whoever has something in his hand will receive more, and whoever has nothing will be deprived of even the little he has.’

This proverb occurs in Q (Lk 19:26 // Mt 25:29). We do not have the Greek of the Thomas version. From the evidence available all one can say is that the Thomas, Mark, and QLk versions are virtually identical. QMt has evidently been expanded by Matthew.

4.7 Sub unit K
Mk 4:26–29
He also said, ‘This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground.
27 Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.
28 All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.
29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.’

GThom 21
(E) When the grain ripened, he came quickly with his sickle in his hand and reaped it. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.’

Thomas E is a citation of Joel 3:13. While it is virtually impossible today to make any coherent sense of the whole of Thomas 21, one must bear in mind that our division of Thomas material into numbered units, which are usually (but not invariably) based on instances of ‘Jesus said,’ is a modern device that was not part of the original text. Thomas is quite capable of citing a Hebrew Bible sentence as an isolated unit (cf Thomas 66).

Mark’s gospel provides a parable that has Joel 3:13 as its conclusion. The question should be, then, whether Mark has expanded Thomas 21e, or whether Thomas has deleted everything but the scriptural citation, or whether Thomas and Mark cited Joel coincidentally.

Mark’s chapter four principally discusses the spread of the message (logos) through the metaphor of the sowing of seeds, as is obvious from 4:2-20. Therefore, Mark is not interested as much in harvesting as in the sowing that produces the harvest. If Mark knew the Thomas citation of Joel 3:13, he
could not reasonably use the passage in his seed-sowing chapter four without reference to how it was that the harvest came to be: which must be that someone sowed the seed that germinated and grew.

As a parable Mark 4:26-29 is weak and neither Matthew nor Luke made any use of it. The man’s actions, which the Kingdom of God is supposedly like, include sleeping and rising and knowing nothing of how the growth of the seed takes place. Neither the man, nor God, are principals, for ‘all by itself the soil produces grain.’

We can profitably look to First Clement for an example of a seed-sowing metaphoric sequence (or ‘parable’) much like Mark’s, one that Clement invented on the spot for his own purposes:

1 Clement
24:7 Let us observe the fruits, how and in what manner the sowing takes place.
24:8 {The sower goes forth} and casts into the earth each of the seeds;
24:9 and these falling into the earth dry and decay:
24:10 then out of their decay the mightiness of the Master’s providence raises them up, and from being one they increase and bear fruit.

This is no more a profound set of observations than Mark’s is; it is a simple description of the growth of plants. Mark, like Clement, wrote a commonsense description of agricultural facts to produce a ‘parable,’ one that certainly does not sound much like a parable of Jesus’. Mark may have thought that the conclusion of Thomas 21 ‘Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear’ signaled that the immediately preceding Joel passage was, or should be, parable-like in form.

As Mark expanded upon the Thomas 66 citation of Psalm 118:22 in 12:11 by connecting that citation and an allegorical revision of Thomas 65 (as discussed at length in Davies 1996), so here Mark seems to have created a ‘parable’ or more properly speaking an agricultural description focused on sowing and the growth of seed, for which Thomas 21e is a climactic conclusion: the man who sowed the seed returns to action and harvests the crop. In light of Mark 2:2-20 one must presume that he who sows and harvests (and who sleeps and rises and who does not know why the seed grows) is Jesus.

It cannot be demonstrated certainly that this clumsy construction derives from Mark’s expansion of Joel 3:13//Thomas 21e ‘When the grain ripened, he came quickly with his sickle in his hand and reaped it. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.’ But that may well have been the case.
4.8 Sub unit L

Mk 4:30-32
(A) Again he said, 'What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it?
(B) It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed
(C) you plant in the ground. Yet when planted,
(D) it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants,
(E) with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade.'

GThom 20
(A) The disciples said to Jesus, 'Tell us what the Kingdom of Heaven is like.'
(B) He said to them, 'It is like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds.
(C) But when it falls on tilled soil,
(D) it produces a great plant
(E) and becomes a shelter for birds of the sky.'

These versions of the mustard seed parable are similar in general, but in detail they reveal what appear to be redactional alterations by Mark to the Thomaising original. Since Mark's chapter four presents the disciples as failing to understand the parables without private explanations from Jesus, (cf 4:13, 33-34) it would not fit Mark's purpose to show them asking for a parable in a manner that indicates their understanding of parables. The construction of duplications and rhetorical questions is a redactional tendency of Mark's (e.g. 4:13: 'Then Jesus said to them, “Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?”' Mk 4:21: ‘Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don’t you put it on its stand?’ and 2:19: ‘And Jesus said to them, “While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.”'). Mark (A) appears to be Mark's own creation.

In Mark the mustard seed is sown, and its sowing is mentioned twice. Mustard, however, is a weed and not a crop. Mustard (Brassica nigra) is an annual colonising herb that takes over patches of disturbed ground until driven out after a year or two by hardier plants. Readers in appropriate climates may confirm this for themselves. Thomas' description of mustard as a plant that grows when its seed accidentally falls on tilled soil is botanically correct.² It is anything but unlikely that Mark has added the idea of 'sowing' mustard in order that this parable might accord with the principal concern of

² Many who comment on Thomas 20 follow an early guess that 'tilled soil' must mean the prepared soul of the Gnostic, but this is impossible to demonstrate and seems to betray ignorance of the habits of Brassica nigra.
The Q version of the mustard seed parable has altered the conclusion to make allusion to one or more Hebrew Bible passages, perhaps Psalm 104:12, Daniel 4:10-12, Ezekiel 17:23, 31:6, and some scholars believe that Mark's version also contains such an allusion. This, however, is difficult to believe, for if we read only the version in Mark without consideration of Q no such allusion is evident. Nor is it evident in Thomas 20, which appears to be the most original form of the parable.

5 UNIT FOUR: MARK 6:1-6

(A) Mk 6:1-4
1 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples.
2 When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. 'Where did this man get these things?' they asked. 'What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles!
3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?' And they took offense at him.
4 Jesus said to them, 'Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honour.'

(B) Mk 6:5-6
5 He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.
6 And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.

GThom 31
(A) No prophet is accepted in his own village;
(B) no physician heals those who know him.

Thomas gives us a proverb in parallel structure, reflecting the fact that a person who claims supernatural powers is more likely to find that his powers are affirmed by people other than those with whom he grew up or those who know him well. [One must not, of course, confuse 'physician' in the modern sense with 'physician' in the sense of a healer in the ancient world.] Whether
this proverb is original to Jesus, or whether it was a commonplace is difficult to determine, but the latter seems likely.

Mark appears to have used this proverb to construct a narrative. It was, after all, Mark’s purpose to create a narrative ‘biography’ and he does not seem to have had at hand a wealth of material to draw upon. Accordingly, his narrative contexts for sayings, and conceptions of the reactions of Jesus’ audiences, are generally drawn from his own speculations. The second element of the Thomas proverb seems to have given rise to Mark’s story of Jesus’ limited ability to heal in Nazareth; nowhere else in the gospel does Mark hint at any such inability. Further, the implication that Jesus’ ‘relatives and his own house’ give him no honour is almost certainly added by Mark who also constructed 3:20-35 to show Jesus’ relatives’ failure properly to appreciate him.

The argument that Mark 6:1-6 is based on Thomas 31 is by no means new. Bultmann, Dibelius, and others made this argument many years ago from a comparison between Mark and the version of Thomas known to them, *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 1.

### 6 UNIT FIVE: MARK 7:14-23

Mk 7:14-23

(A) 14 Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, ‘Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.

15 Nothing outside a man can make him “unclean” by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him “unclean.”

(B) 17 After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable.

18 ‘Are you so dull?’ he asked. ‘Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him “unclean”?

19 For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.’ (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods ‘clean.’)

20 He went on: ‘What comes out of a man is what makes him “unclean.”’

(C) 21 For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,

22 greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

23 All these evils come from inside and make a man “unclean.”’

GThom 14c and 45b

(A) 14c For what goes into your mouth will not defile you, but that which issues from your mouth—it is that which will defile you.'
45b A good man brings forth good from his storehouse; an evil man brings forth evil things from his evil storehouse, which is in his heart, and says evil things. For out of the abundance of the heart he brings forth evil things.'

In his presentation of Thomas 14c Mark follows his usual practice of constructing a context for a saying, in this case one which may begin at 7:1 ff. It is certain in Mark's rendition that what goes in a man enters by mouth (which is specified that way in Thomas, and also in Mt 15:11 due, presumably, to Matthew's desire to specify what was implicit in his text of Mark).

In Thomas ‘that which issues from your mouth—it is that which will defile you’ implies that what is at issue are words. Mark, however, specifies that what comes out are ‘evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly’ and, as these things do not come out of the mouth, Mark seems to have eliminated ‘mouth’ from the saying. For Mark these things come out from the ‘heart’ and not solely from the ‘mouth.’

The idea of such things coming from the heart may have been inspired by Thomas 45b wherein both words and evil things in general are under discussion. Mark seems to have greatly expanded 45b not to make a different point, but to add specificity: thirteen separate items. He presumably deleted the first half of 45b because what a good man brings forth is not the subject he wishes to discuss in 7:20–23. The proverb found as Thomas 45b is to be found also in Q (where it is combined with the saying found in Thomas 45a: Mt 7:16b//Lk 6:44b cf also James 3:12). The Q and Thomas versions are essentially identical except for phrasing variations typical of sayings altered through oral transmission.

7 UNIT SIX

Mk 9:35, 10:31, 10:43–44

9:35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, ‘If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.’

10:31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.’

10:43–44 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

GThom 4b (POxy 654.21–27)

Many that are first will be last, and last, first, and they will become a single one.

Mark uses this saying, with variations, to state a fundamental thesis of his central section. The version in 10:31 is word-for-word identical (except for
the conjunction *de* to the version found in a Greek fragment of Thomas discovered at Oxyrhynchus.

The phrase ‘and last, first’ has dropped out of the much later Coptic translation of Thomas. Whether the concluding redactional phrase ‘and they will become a single one’ was present in the version of Thomas available to Mark is uncertain, but it may well have been added after that time; the Oxyrhynchus fragments were written at least 70 years after the writing of Mark. In Thomas 16 and 23 a similar redactional phrase is also crudely added to the end of sayings. Be that as it may, Mark could have chosen to leave out any element in any saying available to him.

8 UNIT SEVEN: MARK 11:15–19

Mk 11:15–19

15 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.

16 And as he taught them, he said, ‘Is it not written: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations”? But you have made it “a den of robbers.”’

17 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

18 When evening came, they went out of the city.

GThom 64b

Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my Father.

I will briefly survey the elements of Mark’s passage: ‘On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there.’ [This is a summary statement defining what happened.] ‘He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.’ [This is a narrative expansion of the previous sentence, unnecessary, strictly speaking, but appropriate to do, if one is writing a narrative, which Mark is doing.] ‘And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations”? But you have made it “a den of robbers.””’ [The scriptural pastiche (Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11) serves to justify the activity that has been narrated. A similar pastiche of scriptural passages is used by Mark in revision of GThom 65–66 (Mk 12:1–12).] The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.’ [Passages such as this are common in
Markan controversy-redaction, where Judean leaders plot against Jesus and 'crowds' are foils for his teaching and usually support him.

The whole Markan pericope is summed up at the beginning 'Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there,' which appears to be a narrativisation of Thomas 64b 'businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my Father.' The controversy conclusion and scriptural pastiche probably derives from Mark. Whatever 'places of my Father' may have meant to the compiler of Thomas, the applicability of the phrase to the Jerusalem Temple seems obvious.

The idea that the Markan story originated from Mark's narrativisation of a saying is not new. Nearly forty years ago Maurice Goguel wrote,

At the outset the record must have been a great deal simpler than it is now. Originally it would have said that Jesus protested against the presence of the sellers of merchandise and money-changers in the Temple. Quite naturally the saying of Jesus was transformed into an incident, and, at the third stage of development, the saying and the story to which it had given rise were combined (Goguel 1960:415).

More recently, William Arnal (1997) has written:

I do not think that the quotation from scripture presented here as a saying of Jesus represents the starting point for this narrative tradition, but rather a scriptural elaboration of its supposed significance. It is sayings-material external to this pericope which I regard as having fostered its genesis.

If we judge from the Markan frame of the cursing of the fig tree that the incident in the Temple symbolises an attack on the Temple itself we can see an interesting example of literary construction. Beginning with 64b: 'Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my Father' Mark constructs a narrative (as he does with Thomas 31 to construct 6:1-6) beginning 'Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there,' moving then to description of the activity, adding scriptural citations to provide apparent motivation, incorporating as he often does a plot by Judean leaders who are contrasted to inoffensive crowds, and finally framing the whole with the figtree incident to allow for broader symbolic interpretation.

The original Gospel of Thomas never had the neat and misleading numbering system that modern versions contain, so that we say 'this is one saying' of passages that are compilations of various sayings. The division of units by 'Jesus said,' is simply one organising approach (and, one might observe, it is not even consistently carried out in the modern system of numeration, e.g 92, 93). One cannot say 'why did Mark take only one element of a saying cluster' when the idea that there is one discreet cluster arose in the 1950's. Here Mark has taken 64b apart from the parable 64a. It may, as
it stands, be a Thomasine comment upon the parable, but it is not inherently part of that parable and there is no reason to suppose that what is, to us, an obviously separable unit was not seen to be a separable unit in ancient times. Similarly, Mark seems to have taken the last line of Thomas 21 as a separate unit (it is a separate unit) ‘he came quickly with his scythe and harvested it’ and made it into the long and somewhat incoherent parable of the seed growing secretly.

9 UNIT EIGHT: MARK 11:22-23

Mk 11:22-23
22 ‘Have faith in God,’ Jesus answered.
23 ‘I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.’

GThom 48
If two make peace with each other in this one house, they will say to the mountain, “Move away,” and it will move away.

There are no fewer than eight versions of this saying in canonical/Thomas material. From 1 Corinthians 13:2 ‘if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing’ we see that the conjunction of faith and moving mountains was a Christian commonplace. It occurs also in Matthew 17:20 ‘If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, “Move from here to there” and it will move,’ which is related to Q/Luke 17:6 ‘If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, “Be uprooted and planted in the sea,” and it will obey you.’ One must assume that the image of ‘mustard seed’ was in Q.

Matthew 21:21, Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” and it will be done,’ is a version of the passage in Mark.

Matthew 18:19 ‘I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven,’ echoes the theme found in Thomas 48. Whatever we are to make of it, it seems to have been the custom for itinerant Christians to offer ‘peace’ to householders. We hear in Luke 10:5-6 ‘When you enter a house, first say, “Peace to this

3 There is an alternative version of this saying in Thomas 106: Jesus said, ‘When you make the two one, you will become sons of man, and when you say, “Mountain, move away,” it will move away.’
house.” If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.’ In accord with this Thomas 48 presupposes a time when two have made peace in a house, which is probably an earlier theme than Matthew’s ‘when two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for.’

Mark’s saying clearly is separated from the added introduction ‘have faith in God,’ but 1 Corinthians 13:2 shows that the motif of moving mountains was affiliated with ‘faith’ at an early time and so Mark’s addition is understandable. Whether Mark made more vivid an original ‘move from here’ to ‘throw yourself into the sea’ (and so Lk 17:6 would have been influenced by the Markan version known to Luke) or whether ‘throw yourself into the sea’ was in the version of the saying adapted by Mark is difficult to determine, but the idea that the miracle would occur simply by believing that it will happen is probably Mark’s own attempt to make sense of the material available to him. The question of whether Mark adapted Thomas or some other saying akin to the version in Q comes down to the question of whether the Q version contained the ‘into the sea’ motif or whether Luke, who used both Q and Mark, adapted that motif from its use in Mark. Matthew’s Q version concludes ‘you can say to this mountain, “Move from here to there” and it will move,’ which is quite similar to the Thomas version of the saying and may reflect Q leaving the question of where the ‘tree’ motif of Luke came from quite open, with the possibility that it derives ultimately from Mark (cf Matthew 21:21 ‘not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain...’). If Mark derived this saying from Thomas he appended it to another Thomas saying as is his usual practice, the saying generating the narrative of the ‘cleansing of the Temple’ (see below).

10 UNIT NINE: MARK 12:13-17

Mk 12:13-17
13 Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words.
14 They came to him and said, ‘Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?
15 Should we pay or shouldn’t we?’ But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. ‘Why are you trying to trap me?’ he asked. ‘Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.’
16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, ‘Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?’ ‘Caesar’s,’ they replied.
17 Then Jesus said to them, ‘Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.’ And they were amazed at him.
They showed Jesus a gold coin and said to Him, ‘Caesar’s men demand taxes from us.’ He said to them, ‘Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, give God what belongs to God, and give Me what is Mine.’

Mark’s passage begins with typical Markan controversy narrative: 12:13-14a. The use of redundancy, as in 12:14b-15 and again in 12:16a is typical of Mark (Neirynck 1988). The idea of Pharisees and Herodians trying to trap Jesus is redactional Mark, as is the conclusion ‘they were amazed at him.’ Mark has either constructed this scene out of whole cloth or, more likely, is revising a more succinct original.

‘They’ in Thomas say, ‘Caesar’s men demand taxes from us,’ and the practical question ‘shall we pay taxes to Caesar’ is implied. The questions addressed to Jesus in Mark are not practical but theoretical, that is, whether it is, in general, for Judeans as a whole, right to pay taxes. A negative answer will legally entrap Jesus. Because such entrapment is a Markan motif, one must strongly suspect that the questions were constructed by Mark. The narrative in Mark’s passage is clever: “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. Yet, however clever it is, it is nonetheless spelling out what is implicit in Thomas 48, for every gold coin of the period bore the portrait and the inscription of Caesar. One might rethink the passage as ‘they brought him a United States dollar’ and he asked ‘whose portrait and whose inscription?’ The questions are good narrative, but they are not needed for understanding a response in the context ‘they showed him a dollar and he said to pay the United States what belongs to the United States.’

11 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, allow me to review just a few basic facts about the Gospel of Thomas. First, because of its formal qualities, a barely organised list of sayings, it is presumptively more primitive than any other known compilation of Jesus material. Second, very many of the paralleled sayings in Thomas have been less redactionally altered than their counterparts in canonical material, and this includes Q material. Koester writes, in this regard, that ‘It can be said with confidence that the Q parallels in the Gospel of Thomas always represent, or derive from, more original forms of these sayings’ (Koester 1990b:60). Third, the fragments of Thomas found at Oxyrhynchus are from an earlier date than are manuscript fragments from most other New Testament writings. These facts do not prove that Thomas existed prior to or at least at the time of Mark, but it should give rise to the presumption that it did.
If Mark did not invent the sayings discussed in these two articles in *Neotestamentica* from his own imagination, and no one argues that he did, then he took them from some earlier source. That source may have been oral tradition; Q, Thomas, Special Matthew, and Special Luke certainly attest to the fact that oral tradition was multifaceted and contained a very considerable number of sayings attributed to Jesus. It is not at all clear why it should be that Thomas and Mark both coincidentally made use of so many of the same sayings drawn independently from oral tradition. We have absolutely no reason to think that the agendas and intentions of the authors of Mark's and Thomas' gospels were in any ways similar so that they would coincidentally prefer the same material. If Mark is drawing purely from oral tradition, he should not also be clustering sayings together that by coincidence are sayings found in Thomas, nor should we expect him preferentially to classify as 'parables' those sayings that also happen to be in Thomas.

It might be argued that Mark used written sayings collections other than Thomas that contained material also found in Thomas, and so the hypothesis that Mark used Thomas itself can be laid aside. Such arguments entail the construction of hypothetical documents specifically designed to confirm the arguments that appeal to those documents. One can only conclude that, on the one hand, such arguments cannot be refuted (for one cannot say there could not possibly have been such documents) and yet, on the other hand, those who make such arguments cannot appeal for support to anything outside of their own speculations. Thomas' strength is its actual existence. From it we can see what Mark used and how Mark used it. And yet Thomas' existence is its weakness for Thomas' existence allows innumerable questions to be raised as to its origin, provenance, intentionality, and so forth, questions from which hypothetical texts and oral tradition remain forever happily free. It might be asked why Mark did not use more of Thomas than he did; the answer is a simple one: he used what suited his purposes and he ignored what he chose to ignore.

If the thesis that Mark used Thomas is accepted several major consequences follow. We will be able to perform redaction criticism of Mark in revolutionary ways never before imagined to be possible. We can confirm that Thomas pre-dates Mark and so the history-of-Christianty-ideas must be revised to include a Thomassine Christianity pre-dating the canonical gospels. If Thomas was available to Mark, then Thomas (or traditions contained within or deriving from Thomas) may have been available to the two authors who revised Mark: Matthew and Luke. Accordingly, all arguments for Thomassine dependence on the synoptics that make use of the fact that there are supposedly Matthean or Lukan elements in sayings that also appear in
Thomas must be reconceived in light of the fact that we can no longer blithely assume an arrow pointing always away from the canon toward Thomas; rather, the possible influence of Thomas on the whole non-Markan canon must be taken into consideration.

I have attempted to demonstrate in two Neotestamentica articles that the preponderance of evidence indicates that the Gospel of Thomas served as a source for the Gospel of Mark. I hope that these articles initiate further discussion by others who may examine the matter in greater detail.

WORKS CONSULTED


Steven Davies, Department of Religious Studies, College Misericordia, 301 Lake Street, Dallas, Pennsylvania 18612-1098, USA.
Kevin Johnson, 58 Fourth Street, Worcester, Massachusetts 01602, USA.