The Fable of the Dog in the Manger in the Gospel of Thomas

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The Oxyrhynchus Logia

TOWARDS the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of this century two youthful English scholars, Grenfell and Hunt, spent a good deal of time digging in the dump heaps of the ancient Hellenistic Egyptian town named Oxyrhnchus (the modern Behnesa), about 125 miles south of Cairo and ten miles west of the Nile. They were searching for discarded waste papyrus that had been written upon. They were richly rewarded for their efforts, for they found hundreds of papyrus documents, both literary and non-literary in character. The most notable, perhaps, were two fragmentary Christian documents in Greek, one, Pap. Ox. 654, is dated plus or minus 200 A.D., the other, Pap. Ox. 1, was inscribed soon after 200 A.D.

These ancient Christian documents contain about a dozen unrelated sayings attributed to Jesus, each introduced by a simple formula, "Jesus says." The word "poverty" is all that remains of one saying. Pap. Ox. 654 has retained the introduction to its collection of sayings, in a mutilated form, which has been reconstructed somewhat as follows:

> These are the words which . . . .
> Jesus the living one spoke . . . .
> and to Thomas, and he said . . . . whoever (hears) these words . . . . death will he not taste.

On the basis of this introduction some scholars assumed—rightly as another later discovery proved—that the sayings in this document, and quite likely in the other one as well, came from a Gospel of Thomas.

Some of the logia are variants of sayings in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Among these are the following: "A city which is erected on the top of a high mountain and firmly established can neither fall nor remain hidden," which is similar to Matt. 5:14b: "A city set on a hill cannot be hid." Is the first an expansion of the Matthean form, or does it preserve another tradition of what Jesus said? Another reads: "A prophet is not acceptable in his own country; neither does a physician work cures on those who know him." In Mark 6:4 the saying has the following form: "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." Matt: 13:57 has but the first part: "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own house." The form of the parallel in Lk. 4:23-24 is somewhat different: "Doubtless you will say unto me this parable: Physician, heal thyself; whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thine own country. And he said: Verily I say unto you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country." It is possible that at this point (as he does elsewhere) Luke is following a source other than Mark.

The Oxyrhynchus logion and Luke reflect a striking resemblance in that the wording of the first part of the logion is the same as that of the last part of the Lukan passage. Moreover, both have a statement concerning a physician, Luke before the saying about the prophet, the logion after. However, the wording about the physician differs in these two accounts. Is the logion an abbreviation and reworking of the Lukan passage? Or does it reflect a

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source other than Luke? I think the latter, because the two brief teachings in the logion are parallel teachings, the second one repeating the meaning of the second in accord with Jewish synonymous parallelism. Rather, I would suspect that the Lukan form is an expansion of the more Jewish form preserved in this logion.

There are others which are not paralleled in the Synoptic Gospels. The most celebrated one of these is: "Lift up the stone, and there thou wilt find me; cleave the wood, and I am there." Another one absent from the Synoptic Gospels, but which circulated in the early church, hence was known to scholars before the find made by Grenfell and Hunt, states: "If you do not fast as to the world, you will not find the Kingdom of God; and if you do not keep the Sabbath as Sabbath, you will not see the Father." The following somewhat mutilated statement is still another logion: "And the Kingdom . . . is within you . . . he who knows, will find this . . . .you will know yourselves . . . . you are of the Father, of the . . . . you know yourselves." The somewhat Gnostic saying (save for the opening words) is scarcely considered to have been an authentic teaching of Jesus.

The Discovery of the Gospel of Thomas

These Oxyrhynchus logia, together with some additional finds, created a sensation when they were first published, but in time the interest subsided, only to be sharply revived around the year 1945 when the complete Gospel of Thomas, in a Coptic version of a Greek original, was discovered in one of thirteen leather bound papyrus manuscripts containing some forty-five other early Christian writings, most of them hitherto unknown to the world of scholarship. The discovery was made accidentally by some Egyptian fellahin who unearthed the jar containing them in the neighborhood of Nag Hammadi (sometimes referred to as Chenoboskion), about 125 miles south of Oxyrhynchus. The manuscripts date from about the third and fourth centuries. These ancient documents, which are more or less Gnostic in character, are as significant for the study of early Christianity as the Dead Sea scrolls are for the study of Judaism.

The identification of the Gospel of Thomas is provided by the introduction, which is similar to that of Pap. Ox. 654: "These are the secret words which the living Jesus spoke and Didymos Judas Thomas wrote. And he said 'Whoever finds the explanation of these words will not taste of death;" and by a simple colophon at the end: "The Gospel according to Thomas." The writing itself contains some 114 disconnected sayings attributed to Jesus (among them some parables and a fable, that of the dog in the manger), most of them introduced with the formula: "Jesus said." Unlike the canonical gospels, there are no deeds of Jesus recorded in this gospel, so that it probably should not be termed a gospel. A comparison readily shows that the logia of the Oxyrhynchus papyri not only are all from the Gospel of Thomas, but are arranged in practically the same sequence. Accordingly, these Oxyrhynchus papyri, dated plus or minus 200 A.D., show that the gospel is from the second century. Other evidence helps to date them possibly as early as 140 A.D. In its present form it exhibits some Gnostic tendencies, indeed, it may have provided the secret, saving Gnosis of a quasi-Gnostic sect, as implied in part of the introduction: "Whoever finds the explanation of these words will not taste of death." This promise is somewhat similar to that made in the final verses of the twentieth chapter of the somewhat Gnostic Gospel of John (which may have been the original conclusion of this gospel): "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God; and that by believing ye may have life (i.e., eternal life) in his name." Apart from this

promise of immortality the Gospel of Thomas bears very little direct relationship to John, if any.

The "Agrapha" or "Unwritten Sayings" of Jesus

As was evident in the sampling provided by the Oxyrhynchus logia, the sayings in the complete Gospel of Thomas are a mixture. A considerable number of the sayings and parables are variants of sayings and parables in the Synoptic Gospels. Others, though differing in content, are similar in both their forms and teachings to Synoptic sayings and parables. Still other sayings and the one fable are very different from what is provided in the canonical Gospels. Quite a few of the sayings, even some that are paralleled in the canonical Gospels, have been modified in the direction of Gnostic views, and a few are wholly Gnostic in character.

Many of the sayings in the Gospel of Thomas were heretofore unknown to modern scholarship; some, however, have been preserved in other sources, notably in patristic writings; they are technically called "agrapha," that is, "unwritten sayings" of Jesus. Usually but a single saying is cited at a time. A few agrapha may indeed represent authentic sayings of Jesus, others are clearly unauthentic, and still others are dubious. A selected number of these unwriten sayings are given by J. M. Ropes in the article "Agrapha" in the extra volume of Hastings' **Dictionary of the Bible.**

Actually (this will be a novel idea to most readers) all of the teachings ascribed to Jesus, even those in the canonical Gospels, were originally "agrapha." Because, in so far as we know, Jesus never wrote any of his teachings down, instead, he taught them orally (as did Mahomet later on). Moreover, they were not written down as he spoke, for it is most unlikely that any of his Jewish listeners in Palestine were tachygraphers, as were some of the Greeks and Romans of that time. The teachings that were remembered by his hearers were transmitted by word of mouth, from one person to another, at first in his native Aramaic, and later in Greek versions, for Greek speaking Jews at first, and then for Greek speaking Gentiles who, even by Paul's time, comprised the greater portion of those who came to be called Christians. Even before the first Gospel of record appeared, the Gospel of Mark, composed about 70 A.D., some of these agrapha had been gathered together into collections, and some of these collections, consisting possibly of parables, or of "conflict" narratives, or of short sententious sayings and maxims, may have been written down, as was possibly true of the passion narrative preserved in Mark.

In the process of the transmission, both oral and written, among the sayings attributed to Jesus a saying may have been preserved without much alteration; a saying may have been modified to a greater or lesser degree by changes in wording (including those occurring in translation from Aramaic to Greek), by additions, and by omissions; and, thirdly, teachings that he never uttered might have been assigned to him. Even in those instances of the written transmission when Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source many changes of one kind or another were made, some minor, others major in character.

The process of the oral transmission of agrapha continued long after the canonical Gospels were written. Among the evidence not only for the continuing survival of the agrapha but also for the high evaluation placed upon them in some quarters is provided by Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in the second quarter of the second century: "For I did not think that what was to be gotten from books (i.e., written accounts of Jesus' deeds and teachings) would profit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voice" (Eusebius, **Church History** III.39:4). The Gospel of

Mark, with which he was acquainted, would be among these written accounts. According to what he stated in the same context the "living and abiding voice" consisted of "the commandments given by the Lord to faith," which Papias, rightly or wrongly, considered to have been faithfully transmitted by the original discipiles to their followers and successors in the church. He also supplies evidence for the existence of what he believed to have been teachings that were falsely attributed to Jesus, for he states that he was careful to separate those that he considered to be the truth (i.e., authentic) from "strange (unauthentic) commandments."

The process of the transmission of "agrapha" continued beyond Papias' own times. Indeed, at least fifty-one are preserved in Mohammendan sources. For example; "Jesus said: 'The world is a place of transition, full of examples; be pilgrims therein, and take warning by the traces of those that have gone before.'" Likewise: "Jesus said: 'Take not the world for your lord, lest it take you for its slaves. Lay up your treasure with him who will not waste it." More than half of the fifty-one listed by Ropes have the same unusual introductory formula: "Jesus said," that prefaces all but a few of the 114 sayings in the Gospel of Thomas. I am not aware that this coincidence—if it is a sheer coincidence—has been noted before. Despite this rather strange similarity, the Mohammedan sayings bear little likeness to those preserved in Thomas. There are also a few agrapha in Talmudic sources. Relatively few of the extant agrapha relate deeds of Jesus; most of those reporting deeds that are preserved are patently unauthentic.

No one, I believe, will dispute the observation that the numerous sayings in the Gospel of Thomas that are not parallel to sayings in the canonical Gospels should be termed "agrapha." This conclusion, it would seem, is all but self-evident. Moreover, a case can be made for the observation that many, if not all, of the sayings in the Gospel of Thomas that are more or less parallel to sayings in the Synoptic Gospels are not derived from these Gospels, but that they are also agrapha, sayings that survived in oral or written sources similar to those that the writers of the Synoptic Gospels were acquainted with and used. This belief, it should be noted, does not imply that the sayings in Thomas are either more or less authentic than parallel sayings in the canonical Gospels. Each saying attributed to Jesus, wherever it is preserved, should be tested and judged on its own merits as to its probable authenticity, by the strict application of the widely accepted methods of literary-historical criticism. In connection with the Gospel of Thomas this should be done without the prior assumption that when a saying parallels a canonical saying the compiler of the Gospel of Thomas has used canonical saying as his source.

Synoptic Parables Parallelled in the Gospel of Thomas

The term "parable" is from the Greek word "paraballein," literally, "to cast alongside of," but in a secondary meaning, "to compare," hence a "parable" (like the Hebrew equivalent "mashal") is a comparison. Both the words "parable" and "mashal" are used rather broadly to include various types of comparison. However, in connection with the parables of Jesus (and of the rabbis) "parable" will be used to denote a short more or less fictional story or narrative dealing with human actions used to illustrate or explain some religious or ethical teaching, usually by the rabbis, to explicate scripture passages (as the Parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates the scriptural command "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"). Frequently Jesus and the rabbis used distinctive introductions to parables: "A parable, it is like . . . "; "The Kingdom of Heaven is like"; "Wherewith it is to be compared?" "Whereunto shall I liken the Kingdom of God?" "For it is as when a man . . ."; At times, how-

ever, there are no introductory words, for example: "A man planted a vineyard."

The narrative parables are popular folk-tales, and, as B.D.T. Smith has pointed out, they more or less obey the so-called "laws" of non-literary story telling: the rule of repetition; the rule of three; the rule of two; the rule of contrast; the rule of end stress; the rule of single theme.[1] To be sure, there are exceptions to these rules in both the rabbinic and the synoptic parables.

Jesus did not invent the parable form, as many believe, and is implied by Carothers when he writes about the creativeness of Jesus.[2] Indeed, there is a beautiful parable in the Old Testament, which Nathan was said to have used in rebuking King David, that of the Ewe Lamb and its Poor Owner (II Sam. 12:1-4). The rabbinic parables are very numerous. At one time I began to prepare a collection of the extant rabbinic parables, but there were so many of them that I did not complete the task. The Jewish parable was, for the most part, confined to Palestine and Babylon. As Smith has observed: "There are no parables in the writings of Philo of Alexandria; the Jewish parable is indigenous to Palestine, and though it was transplanted to the schools of Babylon, it never flourished there. Seen against the background of Talmud and Midrash, the Gospel parables are revealed as supremely beautiful examples of an established art."[3]

This is not to say that Jesus did not invent any of the parables attributed to him. However, if some of them were original with him it is impossible to separate these from those which he borrowed from the parables that already were current as a teaching vehicle in the Palestinian Judaism of his day, both in the synagogue and in the rabbinic schools of instruction. It is difficult to accept Oesterley's judgment, which he says is unprejudiced, that he is "convinced that any impartial reader of the two sets of parables, the Gospel and the Rabbinical, will be forced to admit that the latter compare very unfavorably with the former."[4] A learned rabbi once gave me the reverse of this evaluation! Actually, the quality of both the Gospel and of the rabbinical parables varies.

How many parables are preserved in the Gospels? The answer depends upon how "parable" is defined. The following tabulation, agreeing in part with the listing by Bowie in Vol. VII of **The Interpreter's Bible,** p. 166, is fairly reliable. All told, there are about thirty-five different narrative parables. Of these, six are related in all three Gospels; four in both Matthew and Luke, but not in Mark. There are but eight in Mark, six of which are in the other two Gospels. This leaves two that are in Mark alone. Matthew has twenty-one; six are in the other two Gospels, four in Luke; and eleven are unique. Luke has twenty-two; six are in the other two Gospels, four are shared with Matthew, and eleven are uniquely in Luke. Significantly enough, there are no parables in John.

Quite surprisingly, there are eighteen parables in the Gospel of Thomas, ten more than are in Mark, two less than in Matthew, and but three fewer than in Luke. Of these eighteen parables, fourteen are paralleled in one or more of the Synoptic Gospels, and four are unique, are found nowhere else in Christian writings. Outside of the Synoptic Gospels, this is the richest store of parables by far to be found in any other Christian writing. Here and there a parable will be cited in some Christian

[1] B.T.D. Smith: *The Parables of theSynoptic Gospels,* University Press, Cambridge, 1937, pp. 35-36.

[2] J. Edward Carothers: *The Pusher and Puller,* Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1968, p. 109.

[3] B.T.D. Smith: *The Parables of the Gospels,* University Press, Cambridge, 1937, p. 15.

[4] W.O.E. Oesterley: *The Gospel Parables in the Light of their Jewish Background,* The Macmillian Co., New York, 1936, p. 11.

writing, but actually these citations are surprisingly infrequent. Just as the rabbinic parables did not flourish outside of Palestine, and certainly not in the outside world of Hellenistic Judaism (just as there are no parables in Philo's writings, so there is none in Paul's letters), in like manner parables did not flourish in the Gentile Christian world. To repeat a previous statement, there is no parable in the Gospel of John; indeed, save in the Synoptic Gospels there are no parables anywhere else in the New Testament. The Greek speaking Christians were not receptive to the Jewish parables. Moreover, it is very unlikely that a Greek Christian would invent a parable.

Leaving the Gospel of Thomas out of our consideration for a while, the only parables found in extra-canonical writings are citations of parables in the Synoptic Gospels, with one possible exception. This is a form of the parable of The Talents, in Matt. 25:14-30, cited by Eusebius from the lost Gospel according to the Hebrews (Theophany XXII). According to the Matthean parable, a master gave talents to three of his servants before going on a trip. Two of the servants doubled the talents given them by investing them, the third, however, hid the talent given him in the earth. On his return the master rewarded the first two, but he rebuked and punished the one who hid his talent.

Eusebius gives the following account of the parable: "The Gospel which has come down to us in Hebrew characters gave the threat as made not against him who hid (his talent), but against him who lived riotously; for (the parable) told of three servants, one who devoured his lord's substance with harlots and flute girls, one who gained profit manyfold, and one who hid his talent; and how in the issue one was accepted, one merely blamed, and one shut up in prison." This version quite obviously, is similar to the Matthean one, even to the use of the rather rare word "talent" which is found but in one other place in the New Testament, and other early Christian literature, that is, in the parable of The Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18:24). However, the teaching in the one is quite different from that of the other. Was the Matthean parable the source for the one in the apocryphal gospel? Or did the writers of both gospels have a common source which they modified? The parable of the minae in Lk. 19:11-28 provides another version. It might be noted that the rules of three, of contrast, of end stress, and of a simple theme are reflected in all three of the versions.

The following are the parables in the Gospel of Thomas which parallel parables in one or more of the Synoptic Gospels: 1) The Sower (Logion 9; in Matthew, Mark, and Luke); 2) The Mustard Seed (20; in Matthew, Mark, and Luke); 3) The Householder and the Thief (21; see 36; in Matthew and Luke); 4) The House of the Strong Man (35; in the other three Gospels); 5) Old Patches on New Clothes (47; in the other three Gospels);; 6) New Wine in Old Wine Skins (47; in the other three Gospels); 7) The Tares (57; in Matthew); 8) The Rich Fool (63; in Luke); 9) Invitations to a Banquet (64; a variant in Matthew, another in Luke); 10) the Wicked Laborers in the Vineyard (65; in the other three Gospels); 11) The Pearl of Great Price (76; in Matthew); 12) The Leaven (96; in Matthew and Luke); 13) The Lost Sheep (107; in Matthew and Luke); 14) The Hidden Treasure in the Field (109; in Matthew).

As was mentioned above, there are four unique parables in the Gospel of Thomas. One might be called The Catch of the Big Fish; (logion 8); the second is The Children in the Field (21); the third, The Woman and the Jar of Meal (97); and the last is The Killing of the Great Man (98).

Comparison of Certain Parables in Thomas and the Synoptics

Two possible parables, present in Thomas and all three of the Synoptics,

are Old Patches on New Clothes and New Wine in Old Wine Skins. The Markan form, apparently the source for the parallels in both Matthew and Luke reads as follows: "No man seweth a piece of undressed cloth on an old garment: else that which should fill it up taketh from it, the new from the old, and a worse rent is made. and no one putteth new wine into old wine skins, else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth and the skins; but they put new wine into fresh wine skins" (Mk. 2:21-22). Matthew is in very close agreement with the Markan form, which has probably been used as a source. Luke is in fairly close agreement, but includes the phrase (not in Mark or Matthew) "and also the piece from the new will not agree with the old" (Lk. 5:36b). Moreover, the Lukan version concludes with an observation which has no necessary connection with what preceded it: "And no man having drunk old wine desireth new, for he saith, The old is good" (Lk. 5:39). Is it possible that as in other parallel passages in the Synoptics Luke has actually used some source other than Mark?

The parallel in Thomas 47b is rather brief: "No man drinks old wine and immediately desires to drink new wine; and they do not put old wine into a new wine skin. They do not sew an old patch on a new garment, because there would come a rent." In addition to being brief, the sequence differs from that in the Synoptics; with the new wine preceding the old patch. Furthermore, the observation concerning the value of the old wine which forms a conclusion to the Lukan version forms a kind of introduction to the version in Thomas. The word "rent" is found in Mark, Matthew, and Thomas, but not in Luke. All these resemblances and differences are puzzling. Has Thomas used and abbreviated the Lukan version, completely reversing the order? Or do we have evidence of a common source used by Mark, Luke, and Thomas?

It is in order to mention that there are three versions of the parable of The Invited Guests, Matt: 22:1-14; Lk. 14:15-24; and Thomas 64, the shortest of the three. Despite the differences, they all share in stating the reluctance of the invited guests to accept an invitation to a meal, giving their excuses. However, the excuses in these three versions differ. According to Matthew, one invited guest had to go to his farm, and a second to look after his merchandise, while the rest treated the messengers shamefully and killed them. According to Luke, one invited guest wanted to see a field that he had purchased, a second had to test five recently purchased yoke of oxen, and the third had recently married. Thomas relates that one had to see some merchants against whom he had some claims, a second had bought a house, a third had to arrange for a wedding dinner for a friend, and a fourth (this is contrary to the rule of three) wanted to collect rents from a recently purchased farm. In all three of the versions the host sent his servants out to the highways or streets to invite all whom they saw to the dinner. Surely, Thomas is not directly dependent upon either the Matthean or the Lukan version. More plausibly, Matthew, Luke, and Thomas had access to a more or less common source.

The parable of The Pearl of Great Price, Matt. 13:45-46, is well known: "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls; and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it." The parallel in Thomas 76 is similar, but the differences suggest that Matthew and Thomas were using a common source: "The Kingdom of the Father is like a man, who possessed merchandise (and) found a pearl. That merchant was prudent. He sold the merchandise, he bought the one pearl for himself." (Matthew prefers Kingdom of Heaven; Luke, Kingdom of God; and Thomas, Kingdom of the Father).

Another brief parable, that of The

Leaven, is preserved by Matthew, Luke, and Thomas. The form in Matt. 13:33 reads: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal till it was leavened." The form in Lk. 13:20-21 is very similar, save for a introductory formula: "Whereunto shall I liken the Kingdom of God? It is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it all was leavened." Doubtless Matthew and Luke used a common source for this parable. The version in Thomas 96 differs: "The Kingdom of the Father is like (a) woman, (who) has taken a little leaven (and has hidden) it in dough (and) has made large loaves of it. Whoever has ears, let him hear." Again, the similarities with a Synoptic version are evident, but the differences suggest the use of a non-canonical source rather than either Matthew or Luke. The phrase, "Whoever has ears let him hear," is used in several places in Thomas.

Since our purpose is to suggest that Thomas, as well as Matthew, Mark, and Luke, had access to sources, oral or written, of traditions concerning the teachings of Jesus, that is, to agrapha, rather than to give a detailed study of each of the fourteen parables in Thomas that parallels one or more of the canonical Gospels, one or two more illustrations may suffice. One, The Hidden Treasure, Matt. 13:44, states briefly: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field; which a man found, and hid, and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." The teaching of this form of the parables is the same as that of The Pearl of Great Price, namely, the supreme worth of the Kingdom above everything else. The version in Thomas is longer and somewhat different: "The Kingdom is like a man who had a treasure (hidden) in his field without knowing it. And (after) he died he left it to his (son. The) son did not know about it, he accepted that field, he sold (it). And he who bought it, he went, while he was plowing (he found) the treasure. He began to lend money to whomever he wished." According to this version, the teaching does not center upon the great worth of the Kingdom, but upon the view that the Kingdom does not come automatically; instead, a man must work for it. Neither the first owner nor his son plowed the field, but the third owner (the rule of three again, also of end stress,) by working the field found the treasure, the Kingdom.

Finally, in this series of comparisons, there is the Parable of the Rich Fool, found in Lk. 12:16-20 and Thomas 63. The Lukan version is the longer: "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, since I do not know where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him: Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." It has been suggested that this parable with three soliloquies and one direct address is a dramatic rewriting of a passage in Eccus. 11:19: "When he saith, I have found rest, and now I will eat of my goods, yet he knoweth not what time shall pass, and he shall leave them to others and die." The theme of the folly of reliance upon material goods is a common one, however, and is presented more simply in the parallel in Thomas: "There was a rich man who had much money. He said, I will use my money that I may sow and reap and plant and fill my storehouses with fruit, so that I lack nothing. This is what he thought in his heart. And that night he died. Whoever has ears let him hear." Is it reasonable to suppose that this version

is an abbreviation of the Lukan parable? The basic theme is the same in both acounts, but the differences are so marked that it is difficult not to conclude that there were two versions, one used by Luke, the other by Thomas, of a parable traced back to Jesus.

The Four Parables that Are Peculiar to The Gospel of Thomas.

Let us now briefly consider the four parables that are unique in Thomas, that are not preserved in the Synoptic Gospels nor in any other extant Christian writing. The first one, The Catch of the Big Fish (8) is superficially similar to the parable of The Dragnet in Matt. 13:47-48. This Matthean parable states that "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach, and they sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away." Whatever may have been Jesus' application of this parable, verses 49-50 use it to illustrate the eschatological belief that at the end of this world-age angels shall separate the evil people from the good and cast them into the furnace of fire, a teaching that is very similar to that attributed to the parable of The Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:40-42).

Despite Jesus' close association with fishermen and the fishing industry, this is the only parable in the Synoptic Gospels that relates a fishing episode. Moreover, there are very few rabbinic parables that deal with fishing. Consequently, the newly recovered fishing parable in Thomas is doubly interesting: "Man is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea; he drew it up from the sea full of small fish; among them he found a large good fish, that wise fisherman, he threw all the small fish into the sea; he chose the large fish without regret. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear." The theme of this parable is different from the Matthean one. Instead of the fisherman keeping many good fish, he kept but one, large good fish. I suggest that this is a Kingdom parable, similar to the parable of the Pearl of Great Price and the Matthean form of The Hidden Treasure in the Field, and like them teaches that the Kingdom is of supreme worth. The teaching is not new, but the parable is new to us, and is a welcome addition to the teachings of Jesus that have been preserved. As is true of other parables, the beginning is somewhat abrupt; it might better have started with the introduction, "The Kingdom is like unto a man, etc."

The next unique parable under consideration, The Children in the Field (21), is somewhat different in both its form and application. In reply to the query, "Whom are your disciples like?" (note the introduction to this parable), Jesus replied: "They are like little children who have installed themselves in a field which is not theirs, When the owners of the field come, they will say, 'Release to us our field.' They take off their clothes before them to release it (the field) to them and to give back their field to them." Originally, this parable may have been used by Jesus to illustrate the teaching: "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom as a little child shall in no wise enter therein," which is contained in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (Mk. 10:15; Matt. 18:3b; Lk. 18:17). Whatever the form and meaning this parable may have originally possessed, it has been modified in the course of transmission to illustrate Gnostic views. For the Gnostics this world of matter and the material human body of flesh that imprisoned the soul were irredeemably evil; accordingly, the goal of the Gnostic was in some way or other to free the soul from the body of flesh and to leave the world of matter. With this in mind, apparently the garments which the children (Gnostics) in the parable shed are their bodies of flesh, and the field that they leave is the evil world of matter. If this re-

construction is correct, then the form of this parable in Thomas illustrates how modifications might take place during the process of handing down teachings of Jesus from one generation to another.

The third unique parable, in Thomas 97, reflects a domestic misfortune: "Jesus said: 'The Kingdom of the Father is like a woman who was carrying a jar full of meal. While she was walking on a distant road, the handle of the jar broke. The meal streamed out behind her on the road. She did not know it, she noticed no accident. After she came into her house, she put the jar down, she found it empty." The meaning of this short parable is not clear. It possibly was intended to teach watchfulness, lest the Kingdom be gradually and imperceptibly lost to the person who thought that he had acquired it. Its chief importance for us, perhaps, is that it testifies to the persistence of teachings ascribed to Jesus which are not in the canonical gospels.

The fourth one (logion 98) should be considered on the basis of its teaching, not on the assassination which it relates: "The Kingdom of the Father is like a man who wishes to kill a powerful man. He drew the sword in his house, he stuck it into the wall, in order to know whether his hand would carry through; then he slew the powerful man." It should not be assumed that this parable approves of assassination; instead, the preparation for killing the powerful man and his eventual assassination are used to dramatize the necessity of careful preparation for the Kingdom. This teaching is similar to that of the parable in Lk. 14:28: "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have enough to complete it." It is even closer to the parable of the King who is considering engaging in war (without Jesus necessarily voicing an approval of war) in Lk. 14:31: "Or what king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" There seems to be no cogent reason for rejecting the parable in Thomas as an authentic teaching of Jesus if the two in Luke are considered to be authentic.

The Gospel of Thomas and the Dog in the Manger

The presentation up to now may appear to be a somewhat lengthy and possibly unnecessary preface to the fable of the dog in the manger which in Thomas 102 is given as a teaching by Jesus. However, it has been essential to show, in part, the kind of document the Gospel of Thomas actually is, its date, its nature, and its contents, which have been shown by samplings. Also, I hoped to demonstrate that the Gospel of Thomas is not a derivative gospel, as too many scholars have averred, based upon Matthew, Mark, and Luke for any teachings it has in common with one or more of these Gospels. Instead, I have attempted to illustrate the view that in these instances of parallelism (especially of the parables) the Gospel of Thomas may well have been based on sources that had been handed down by oral tradition similar to sources that the canonical Gospels are ultimately derived from, which might be termed "agrapha," in fact in some cases these may have been the same sources. Moreover, I have given some attention to the unique parables in the Gospel of Thomas, and have concluded that these have as much right to be considered to be authentic teachings of Jesus (with modifications) as the parables in the canonical Gospels, or, in other words, that canonicity should not be the criterion of authenticity.

These observations prepare the way for what I hope will be judged to be an objective consideration of this fable, to see whether or not it might be included among the authentic sayings of Jesus. At the outset there might be some doubts in the reader's mind whether Jesus coul d have used a mundane, popular tale of this type, even though the reader might readily

accept his use of the similar popular tale known as a parable.

First of all, a fable is a brief folk tale in which animals (or at times inanimate objects) talk and act like humans, in order to illustrate some moral or ethical teaching. Accordingly, though differing somewhat in form, functionally a fable serves the same didactic purpose as a parable. Many of the fables originated in India, in the Jataka bestial tales in which animals were thought to have been former births of the Buddha. Other fables originated in Greece. Some of the Indian fables, losing their original religious function, traveled to the Mediterranean world and were incorporated with collections of Greek and other fables, collections known as Aesop's Fables or the Fables of Kybises. Numerous fables, some of Indian origin, some of Greek, and some of unknown origin, circulated among the Jews. Some thirty of these fables are preserved in Talmud and Midrash. Rabbi Meir (second century) was reputed to have known some 300 fox fables (Sanh. 38b). A somewhat obscure passage in Suk. 28a has been interpreted by Joseph Jacobs, a recognized authority on fables, to mean that Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, who died about 80 A.D., read both the fables of Aesop and of Kybises.

Actually, there are two fables in the Old Testament itself. In the first, related in Judg. 9:8-15, the trees, desiring to have a ruler, vainly appealed to the olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine (note the rule of three), who all refused. However, the bramble accepted, but in doing so promised a reign of tyranny. In the other fable, found in II Kgs. 14:9, after a thistle had asked a cedar to give his daughter to his son as a wife, a wild beast passing by trod the thistle down. These fables were not related for their own sake, but were used with political applications. The statement in I Kgs. 4:33 that in addition to having some 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs Solomon spoke of trees, of beasts, of birds, and of reptiles, might imply that he was considered to have been a fabulist.

With this very brief survey of the fable in mind, let us turn to the fable in Thomas 102, prefaced by the familiar phrase, Jesus said: "Woe to them, the Pharisees, for they are like a dog sleeping in the manger of oxen, for neither does he eat nor does he allow the oxen to eat."

This fable of the dog in the manger has ancient attestation. Supposing that it might have originated with the Jataka tales of ancient India, I made an inquiry of the Boston Public Library, which has a rather rare six volume set of these tales (**The Jataka, or Stories of the Buddha's Former Birth**, Cambridge, at the University Press, 1897). Mrs. Sarah Flannery of the library staff wrote that she could find no tale of the dog in the manager in this rather complete collection. It has traditionally been assigned to the ancient collection known under the name of Aesop, and may have been originally a Greek rather than an Indian tale. It is given in Carl Halm's **Fabulae Aesopae Collectae**, 1875, no. 228, p. 111. The Greek text may be rendered as follows: "A certain dog was lying down in a manger; she did not eat any of the barley; neither would she allow the horse eat it who can." Presumably, this fable may be dated before the Christian era, because folk tales have a lengthy history of transmission.

This same fable was used by the Greek satirist, Lucian of Samosata, around the middle of the second century. In **Timon** (The Misanthrope) 14, Zeus who is represented as talking to Riches said that Interest and Accounts were shutting out everyone else from enjoying Riches, "like the dog in the manger, that neither ate the barley nor permitted the hungry horse to eat it."

Again, Lucian in his satire, **Adversus Indoctum (The Ignorant Book Collector)** 30 rebuked the miserly book collector by citing this same fable: "So it is with you; you might, to be sure, lend your books to some one else, but you cannot use them yourself. But you never lend a book to anyone. You act like the dog in the manger, who neither eats the grain herself, nor lets the horse eat it who can." In both instances Lucian's application of this fable is self-evident.

There is probably no reason why this fable, as was true of other Greek fables, could not have circulated among the

Jews of Palestine. However, it is not one of the thirty that are cited in the rabbinic sources. Even so, doubtless many fables of Indian, Greek, and other origins circulated among the Jews which were not preserved in written form. It is not improbable that this particular one did circulate in Palestinian Judaism, and was known to and used by Jesus in his teaching.

Or, to approach the matter from another angle, there is no cogent reason for accepting the statement by Robert Grant that implies that the compiler of Thomas knew of this fable, and placed it in Jesus' mouth as a criticism of the Pharisees. He states: "Its presence in these literary or semi-literary sources (cited above) does not mean that it was unknown outside them. Thomas could have picked it up anywhere."[5] But, it might be said that Jesus also could have picked it up. Another reason why the compiler of Thomas might not have picked it up and ascribed it to Jesus as a criticism of the Pharisees is that in the time when this gospel was compiled the antagonisms were not between Jesus and the Pharisees, but between the Christian Church and the Jews. The Pharisees as such were no longer an issue.

The canonical Gospels do relate disputes, even strong antipathies, between Jesus and the Pharisees, whose "scribes" (rabbis) were the more or less official teachers of the Palestinian Judaism of his day, and who were closely associated with the synagogues, places of worship and instruction. They were teachers not only of the written Torah or Law (the Old Testament), but also of the Oral Torah, interpretations of the Scripture which had been handed down to them by earlier teachers, and which they both expounded and expanded. Basically, Jesus, who was a synagogue Jew, was in agreement with the Pharisees. According to Matt. 5:19 he praised them highly: those who "shall do and teach" the commandments (i.e., Torah) shall be called "great in the Kingdom of Heaven." Similarly, in Matt. 3:1-3 he praises the scribes and Pharisees who "sit on Moses's seat," i.e., who are learned in the Law. He urges his hearers to do and observe what they bid them to do.

Even so, according to the Gospel records, he also criticized the Pharisees most severely, not only because they did not always practice what they taught, but because of their meticulous interpretations of the Torah which made it all but impossible for people to observe the commandments of the Law. He stigmatized them as hypocrites, as men who were guilty of ostentatious displays, as persons who were proud, as teachers who paid strict attention to the minor commands of the Law but left the weightier ones undone, of being whited sepulchres of being concerned about outward ritual cleanliness, but not of inner purity. A number of these rebukes are prefaced by the imprecation: "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees," in one instance, "Woe unto you lawyers (scribes)."

One of the woes, which appears in two forms in the canonical Gospels and also in Thomas 40 is of special interest, not only because it is paralleled in Thomas, but also because it has essentially the same teaching against the Pharisees that the fable presents, namely, that the Pharisees have knowledge which they do not utilize but which they do not permit others to use. The form in Matt. 23:13 reads: "But woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because ye shut the Kingdom of Heaven against men: for ye enter not yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter." Similarly, in quite a different context we read in Lk. 11:52: "Woe unto you lawyers! For ye took away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them

[5] Robert M. Grant and David Noel Freedman: *The Secret Saying of Jesus;* Doubleday and Co., New York, 1960, p. 190. I am indebted to Grant for the references to Halm and Lucian.

that were entering ye hindered." The form in Thomas is similar to that in Luke, but lacks the introductory woe, and is directed against the Pharisees and scribes (as in Matthew), not the lawyers: "The Pharisees and scribes received the keys of knowledge; they have hidden them. They did not enter in, and they did not let those (enter) who wished." Parenthetically, it is not necessary to assume that Thomas has used either Matthew or Luke for this logion; he could have cited an agraphon.

To repeat, this saying in any of its three forms has the same criticism of the Pharisees that is illustrated by the fable of the dog in the manger, who would not permit the oxen to eat the food that is there, yet will not eat it himself. It is introduced by a woe, "Woe to them, the Pharisees," as is true of strictures of the Pharisees, elsewhere. Clearly, the attribution of the use of this fable by Jesus as a criticism of the Pharisees, fits into the Sitz im Leben (life situation) used as a criterion in the application of Formgeschichte (Form Criticism) to various sayings and deeds in the canonical Gospels. Just as Lucian used this fable against Interests and Accounts, and more especially against the miserly book collector, so Jesus might well have used it, as he could have used an appropriate parable, against the Pharisees.

Furthermore, the use of this particular fable about a dog might have been especially appropriate, for among the Jews it was considered to be an unclean animal and became a word of contempt. In rabbinic sources it was used to refer to shameless and relentless people, to the heathen, and to the Samaritans. In Matt. 15:26 Jesus is represented as referring to the Gentiles as "dogs." Paul, in Phil. 3:2, uses "dogs" as a strong epithet against the circumcision party: "Beware of the dogs, of the evil workers, of the concision." The book of Revelation, which has a Jewish background, collocates "dogs" with "the sorcerers, and the fornicators and the murderers, and the idolaters, and everyone who loveth and maketh a lie" (Rev. 22:15), the same evil doers who are consigned to the lake of fire and brimstone in Rev. 21:8. If Jesus himself shared this same Jewish attitude towards dogs, his use of this parable would make it a very strong invective against the Pharisees.

In conclusion, I readily admit that no new and startling information has been presented in this paper. Practically all of the teachings in the Gospel of Thomas that may be considered somewhat authentic, whether they are parallels to teachings in the Synoptic Gospels or not, add very little if anything to our knowledge of his teachings, for they convey much the same message that is in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. However, it may be important to get a bit further to the so-called "gospel before the Gospels," that is, to the process of transmission of teachings of Jesus which came to be included in the canonical Gospels, to the process, as it were, of Gospel making.