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Literary Craftsmanship in Mark 13:32-37

Mark 13,28-37 is often considered as the third and last major part of the eschatological discourse (13,5b-37). In verses 28-31 the Markan Jesus underscores that one should know that "all these things" will take place in the near future: "this generation will not pass away". In verses 32-37, however, ignorance of the exact time is emphasized and therefore one must take heed and watch: "you do not know when the time will come". While verses 28-31 can be characterized as announcement of the nearness of what will occur, verses 32-37 contain an explicit exhortation; the information that is given here functions as a motivation for the admonishment.

This study intends to investigate the Markan redaction of 13,32-37, more specifically to look at Mark as author of this passage and evaluate his literary craftsmanship. The first part will read the text carefully and point out its grammatical and logical unevennesses. In the second part the question will be asked what particular sources may have influenced the evangelist while composing this passage. The third and final part intends to indicate the structural and functional place of this concluding passage in the whole of the Markan apocalypse and at the same time throw light on Mark's unusual but impressive literary craftsmanship<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This article re-considers part of my doctoral thesis of which the first half was published under the title "Die Redaktion der Markus-Apokalypse. Literarische Analyse und Strukturuntersuchung" (Analecta Biblica, 28), Rome 1967. For Mk 13,32-37 see esp. pp. 228-255 and 279-285.291-292. Cf. also *J. Lambrecht*, "Die Logia-Quellen von Markus 13", *Bibl* 47 (1966) 321-360; *Once More Astonished*, New York <sup>2</sup>1983, pp. 132-139; and "The Line of Thought in Mark 13,9-13", in *FS Cardinal Albert Vanhoye*, Rome 2007.

For a good overview of publications on Mark 13, see *G.R. Beasley-Murray*, *Jesus and the Last Days: The Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse*, Peabody, MA 1993. Also in 1993 *R.H. Gundry* published his voluminous commentary "Mark. A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross", Grand Rapids, Michigan. On pp. 747-750 and 792-800 he most carefully assembles the data in Mk 13,32-37 which suggest a contact with what he calls a pre-Lukan text. He himself, however, pleads with exemplary caution for the authenticity of v. 32 and the pre-Markan origin of the parable of the Doorkeeper. *J. Dupont*, *Les trois apocalypses synoptiques. Marc 13; Matthieu 24-25; Luc 21* (Lectio divina, 121, Paris 1985, pp. 40-46, also speaks of "la parabole primitive", e.g.: "Il n'importe guère ici de reconstituer jusque dans le détail la parabole primitive. On peut douter qu'elle soit parvenue à Marc sous sa forme originale" (p. 41).

## I. AN UNEVEN TEXT

The passage 13,32-37 consists of a saying (v. 32), a command with motivation (v. 33), an expanded comparison (v. 34), again a command and motivation followed by a negative purpose clause (vv. 35-36), and a final command which applies to all (v. 37).

*Verse 32* Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ἢ τῆς ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν,  
οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι ἐν οὐρανῷ οὐδὲ ὁ υἱὸς, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ.

The particle δέ of v. 32 indicates a contrast between the knowledge that all these things will take place before the end of this generation (vv. 28-31) and the complete ignorance of "that day or the hour". The phrase ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη presents itself as a stereotyped phrase but the prompt addition of ἢ ἡ ὥρα as well as the mention of ὁ καιρὸς in v. 33 suggest that Mark means the exact day or hour, not the Day of the Lord. In v. 24 the expression "in those days" points to what immediately precedes the coming of the Son of Man. It would seem that "that day" points to the day of his coming (cf. vv. 26-27). This interpretation is confirmed by v. 35: the "master of the house" will come at a time one does not know. Yet the appearance in v. 32 of the admittedly stereotyped phrase "that day" remains somewhat strange. "The use of 'that' with 'hour' in 13:11 and the meaning of 'or' in the phrase 'that day or hour' ... favor that 'that' modifies 'hour' as well as 'day' (cf. Matt 10:14)"<sup>2</sup>.

The construction οἶδα περί + genitive is a hapaxlegomenon in Mark and, except for Mt 24,36 which is taken over from Mk 13,32, in the whole New Testament. The verb οἶδα, here and in vv. 33 and 35, contrasts with γινώσκω in vv. 28 and 29. The climax "no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son" ends on ὁ υἱὸς, which in its absolute form is another hapax in Mark. The contrast with the equally absolute ὁ πατήρ is no doubt intended. Moreover, the expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου may have been avoided here by Mark after the mention of his coming in vv. 26-27. One spontaneously assumes that the Son of Man knows about his own future coming.

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<sup>2</sup> Gundry, Mark, p. 794.

The clause εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ (= "but only the Father") after "nor the Son" should remind the reader of Jesus' question in 2,7: τίς δύναται ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας εἰ μὴ εἶς ὁ θεός, and Jesus' reaction in 10,18: τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν; οὐδείς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ ὁ θεός<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, a kind of subordination of the Son to the Father should not surprise us too much in the gospel of Mark.

*Verse 33a* Βλέπετε, ἀγρυπνεῖτε·

*33b* οὐκ οἴδατε γὰρ πότε ὁ καιρὸς ἐστίν.

At the beginning of v. 33 there is no connecting particle, but the reader spontaneously adds a "therefore". Because no one knows that day or hour, *therefore* one should stay awake". In this verse Mark uses the second person plural. The imperative βλέπετε constitutes a repetition of what one finds at the beginning of vv. 5, 13 and, more or less, 23 (ὕμεις δὲ βλέπετε); this can hardly be accidental with regard to the structure of the discourse. A second imperative, ἀγρυπνεῖτε, is added without καί. We may be tempted to understand this last verb metaphorically, but what follows deals with the night time. The verb in its literal sense fits with the imagery of the comparison.

An explicit motivating clause follows: "for (γάρ) you do not know when the time is". The verb οἴδατε corresponds with οἶδεν of v 32, and ὁ καιρὸς (literally: "the determined time") narrows further down "that day" of the same verse. Of course, πότε reminds the reader of the first question in v. 4: πότε ταῦτα ἔσται; The coming of the Son of Man is part of the answer to "when will this be?"

*Verse 34a* Ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἀπόδημος ἀφείς τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ

*34b* καὶ δοὺς τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἐκάστω τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ

*34c* καὶ τῷ θυρωρῷ ἐνετείλατο ἵνα γρηγορή.

V. 34 contains the image while in vv. 35-36 the application follows. V. 34 is both grammatically and logically a broken construction. The lengthy sentence remains unfinished; a main verb is lacking. It is often taken for granted that ὡς is the equivalent of the elliptic rabbinical beginning of a parable (*le*) and that we have to supplement mentally "it is (like...)". Or, better, is one entitled to expect after the ὡς clause a οὕτως clause (see Mt 24,37 = Lk 17,26)? But verse 35 begins with

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. also Mk 10,40 with the theological passive at the end: οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμὸν δοῦναι, ἀλλ' οἷς ἠτοίμασται.

an imperative followed by οὖν ("therefore"). It can perhaps be put forward that instead of καὶ ἐνετείλατο (v. 34c) we should have either καὶ + participle aorist of this verb or its finite form without καὶ .

The adjective ἀπόδημος (v. 34a) is a hapax in the New Testament and means "on a journey, away from home". One must suppose that the two circumstantial participles aorist ἀφείς and δούς, as well as ἐνετείλατο, refer to antecedent actions, but this is grammatically speaking not so clear. Furthermore, leaving his house and giving his authority or power to his servants (v. 34ab) suggest that the journey of the master will take several days. Yet, the injunction for the doorkeeper to be on the watch (v. 34c) makes one rather think of the master's absence during the day and his return at night. Finally, verse 34ab contains only the comparison with a master on a journey who has delegated his authority to his servants, while in v. 34c one has the impression that a real story, a small parable begins but is not continued. The command to watch (v. 34c) is not further specified.

No doubt, awkward and broken constructions are characteristic of Mark. Moreover, ἵνα after ἐνετείλατο may betray the influence of the Latin ("impero ut") and can be found in similar expressions in Mark<sup>4</sup>. One may also ask whether Mark by means of the phrase ἐπὶ θύραις in v. 29 is not pointing forward to the θυρωρός of the parable. The verb γρηγορέω at the end of the verse will be repeated in vv. 35 and 37. Its significance is not that different from ἀγρυπνέω in verse 33.

Verse 35a γρηγορεῖτε οὖν·

35b οὐκ οἴδατε γὰρ πότε ὁ κύριος τῆς οἰκίας ἔρχεται,

35c ὁπὲρ ἢ μεσονύκτιον ἢ ἀλεκτοροφωνίας ἢ πρωΐ,

Verse 36 μὴ ἐλθῶν ἐξαίφνης εὐρῆ ὑμᾶς καθεύδοντας.

In the application of vv. 35-36 the second person plural appears again. Instead of a οὕτως-clause Mark begins with the imperative of the last verb in v. 34a and a consecutive οὖν. Then a motivating clause follows, the first half of which is taken from v. 33: οὐκ οἴδατε γὰρ πότε. The rest and v. 36 is no longer pure application. The parable re-appears: "(when) the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning - lest he come suddenly

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<sup>4</sup> Cf., e.g., C.H. Turner, "Marcan Usage: Notes, Critical and Exegetical, on the Second Gospel", JThSt 29 (1927-28) 356-359.

and find you asleep". The fourfold division of the night is Roman, not Jewish (cf. the threefold division in Lk 12,38). In 6:48 Mark mentions "the fourth watch of the night" and for ἀλεκτοροφωνίας reference can be made to 14,30.68 and 72. Since the second person plural is used ("you do not know"), ὁ κύριος τῆς οἰκίας (v. 35b) undoubtedly intends through the parabolic image the coming Son of Man (cf. vv. 26-27).

The adverb ἐξαίφνης is a hapax in Mark. The fact that grammatically the negative purpose clause of v. 36 depends on γρηγορεῖτε at the beginning of v. 35 illustrates once more Mark's irregular and jerky style.

Verse 37a ὁ δὲ ὑμῖν λέγω πάντων λέγω,  
b γρηγορεῖτε.

We rightly take this verse as the closing sentence of the whole discourse<sup>5</sup>. Yet for the evangelist, as the repetition of γρηγορεῖτε shows, v. 37 in the first place focuses on the exhortation present in vv. 33-36. This also applies to the initial relative pronoun ὃ, which looks forward to γρηγορεῖτε in v. 37b<sup>6</sup>.

Strictly speaking the contrast between ὑμῖν and πάντων is between the four disciples mentioned in v. 3 and all the disciples mentioned in v. 1. Yet, most probably Mark himself has his readers in view.

## II. SOURCE TEXTS

It is possible, even plausible that Mark was acquainted with the parousia parables which appeared to have constituted a cluster already in the Q-document. We refer to:

- the Watchful Servants (cf. Lk 12,36-38)
- the Thief at Night (or the Burglar or the Householder) (cf. Lk 12,39-40 = Mt 24,43-44)
- the Servant Left in Charge (cf. Lk 12,41-46 = Mt 24,45-51)
- the Pounds (cf. Lk 19,12-27 = Mt 25,14-30).

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Gundry*, Mark, p. 800: "... the generalization in 13:37 provides a well-rounded conclusion to the discourse".

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Gundry*, Mark, p. 800.

As can be seen, the sequential order is respected by both Luke (especially first three) and Matthew (last three). Although the Watchful Servants is not present in Matthew, there are serious grounds to assume that this parable is part of Q as well<sup>7</sup>. What elements of these parables can also be found in Mk 13,32-37?

*a) Q 12,36-38: the Watchful Servants*

The elliptic beginning *καί ὑμεῖς ὅμοιοι*: "and you (be) like men" in Q 12,36 can be compared with that of Mk 13,34a *ὡς ἄνθρωπος*: "(it is) like a man on a journey"<sup>8</sup>.

In Q, as in Mk 13,34, servants (plural) of the master are mentioned. The master is absent but will return from the marriage feast at night. He is not on a journey and this corresponds to the shift in Mk 13,34c, the task of the doorkeeper for the night. In both passages of Q and Mk the fact of uncertain knowledge of the exact time is essential. The second and third watches in Q 12,38 point to the Jewish threefold division of the night; Mk 13,35 has the Roman fourfold division. Yet Q and Mark agree in the fact that watches are mentioned.

Further possible vocabulary contacts are: *πότε* and the verb *ἔρχομαι* in Q 12,36 and Mk 13,35 (already in v. 33); the Markan thematic *γρηγορέω* in Q 12,37 and Mk 13,33.35.37. In both parables a *κύριος* is present. Most striking is that the construction *οὓς ἐλθὼν ὁ κύριος εὕρησει γρηγοροῦντας* in Q 12,37 appears fairly similarly in Mk 13,36: *μὴ ἐλθὼν ἐξαίφνης εὕρη ὑμᾶς καθεύδοντας*. In Mk the grammatical subject is the master as in Q; not to be found "sleeping" more or less equals "watching".

*b) Q 12,39-40: The Thief at Night*

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<sup>7</sup> For a listing of the reasons pro and contra this assumption, see *J.S. Kloppenborg, Q Parallels: Synopsis, Critical Notes & Concordance*, Sonoma, California 1988, p. 136. The parable is not dealt with by *H.T. Fleddermann, Q. A Reconstruction and Commentary (Biblical Tools and Studies, 1)*, Peeters, Leuven, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> In 4,26 (the Growing Seed) Mark utilizes a verb in the introduction: *οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς ἄνθρωπος βάλῃ...*, as well as in 4,30-31 (the Mustard Seed): *πὼς ὁμοιωσάμεν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ ἐν τίνι αὐτὴν παραβολῇ θῶμεν; ὡς ...*

In Q 12,39 "the hour" (not in Mt 24,43)<sup>9</sup> and Q 12,40 "the hour" and "the Son of Man" are mentioned; one thinks of Mk 13,32 where we also find "the hour" and the admittedly differing title "the Son". Moreover, there is the verb οἶδα ("to know") in Q 12,39 as well as in Mk 13,32.33 and 35. The expression ὁ κύριος τῆς οἰκίας in Mk 13,35 looks very much like a variant of ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης of Q 12,39. In Mk 13,35 one also finds the verb "to come" which is present in Q 12,40<sup>10</sup>.

The uncertain time is emphasized in the Thief at Night: ἡ ὥρα οὐ δοκεῖτε (Q 12,40; Mt 24,44: ἡ οὐ δοκεῖτε ὥρα) and also in the Doorkeeper: ἐξαίφνης (Mk 13,36).

c) *Q 12,42b-46: The Servant Left in Charge*

Three data must be mentioned. (1) In the Q-parable and Mk 13,32-37 the terms "day" (Q 12, 46), "hour" (Q 12,46) and καιρός (Q 12,42b) are present. (2) The construction in Q 12,43: ὃν ἐλθῶν ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ εὐρήσει οὕτως ποιῶντα, should be compared with that in Mk 13,36: μὴ ἐλθῶν ἐξαίφνης εὕρη ὑμᾶς καθεύδοντας. The grammatical subject, the participle "coming", the verb "to find" followed by an accusative and a qualifying participle are present in both verses. (3) Some expressions are more or less equivalent in content: compare in Q 12,42 the setting over his household with the putting in charge in Mk 13,34; compare also οὐ γινώσκει in Q 12,46 with οὐδεὶς οἶδεν in Mk 13,32.

The contrast between πρὸς ἡμᾶς and πρὸς πάντας in Q 12,41 must be compared with that in Mk 13:37: ὑμῖν and πᾶσιν .

d) *Q 19,12-26: The Pounds*

There is no general consensus among Q-specialists whether or not the parable of the pounds is part of Q. However, there are good grounds are in favor of

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<sup>9</sup> According to *Fleddermann*, *Q. A Reconstruction and Commentary*, p. 624, Q had φυλακή in 12,39 (cf. Mt 24,43).

<sup>10</sup> On Mk 13,35 as secondary and depending on redactional Q, see *Fleddermann*, *Q. Reconstruction and Commentary*, pp. 630-631.

this hypothesis<sup>11</sup>. But the reconstruction of the introduction of this hypothetical Q parable is delicate since Luke added the Claimant to the Throne to his version while Matthew in 24,14-15 may have been influenced by Mk 13,34. Yet, one can assume that the following text is very much like the original beginning of the Q-parable of the pounds<sup>12</sup>:

"There was a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his money. To one he gave five pounds, to another two, to another one (, to each according to his ability?). Then he went away".

The data of a man who leaves his house and delegates his authority to his servants is very much the same in Q as in the first half of Mk 13,34<sup>13</sup>.

Moreover, in Q as well as in Mk 13,34 we meet the term ἄνθρωπος. Q probably had ἀποδημῶν (cf. Mt 24,14) which is very similar to ἀπόδημος in Mk 13,34. The phrase ἐκάστω κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν (probably in Q; cf. Mt 24,15) should be compared with ἐκάστω τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ in the same Mk 13,34.

#### e) *Conclusions*

This analysis leads, it would seem, to six important and mutually connected conclusions.

- (1) The sheer number and diversity of identical or similar data in the four Q-parables on the parousia and in Mk 13,32-37 cannot be explained by accident.
- (2) The data with regard to vocabulary and grammatical construction very much point to a Greek written source text, Q, not to a loose oral tradition.
- (3) The presence of these data in one and the same passage in Mark suggests that the four parables constituted a cluster already in the Q document.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Fleddermann*, *ibid.*, pp. 837-838.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *J. Lambrecht*, *Out of the Treasure. The Parables in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louv. Theol. & Past. Monogr., 10), <sup>2</sup>1998, pp. 219-232.

<sup>13</sup> According to *Fleddermann*, *Q. Reconstruction and Commentary*, p. 841, the phrase was absent in Q: "Matthew did add the following expression ἐκάστω κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν, adapting an expression he found in Mk 13,34".

(4) Since the Markan composition is later than Q, the evangelist must have known this cluster and used it. In 13,32-37 Mark is most probably heavily dependent on Q.

(5) This dependence explains to a great extent the unevenness in this passage, both the brokenness of some grammatical constructions and the shift with regard to content in 13,34, and further also the fact that the new parable of the doorkeeper is unfinished and not regularly formed.

(6) Yet the use of Q did not diminish the Markan literary creativity. In vv. 33-36 Mark created his own parable and integrated the whole vv. 32-37 structurally into his eschatological discourse in a remarkable manner indeed.

It is this last conclusion which needs a more elaborate and appropriate illustration.

### III. MARK AS AUTHOR

Is it possible to picture the way in which Mark integrated 13,32-37 into the discourse? We must first consider the structure of this discourse and then discuss the text, again verse by verse, guided by the question how Mark as author most plausibly composed his text.

#### *The passage as a whole*

Chapter 13 of the Markan gospel can be divided into an introduction (vv. 1-4) and as to Mark an exceptionally extensive discourse (vv. 5-37). The introduction begins when Jesus leaves the temple and contains first a question of one of the disciples and the answer of Jesus, i. e., the prediction of the destruction of the temple (vv. 1-2). Then, as Jesus sits on the Mount of Olives, four disciples ask him privately: "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are all to be accomplished?" (vv. 3-4). The eschatological discourse presents itself as the answer: "And Jesus began to say to them" (v. 5a).

The short central part of the discourse is the announcement of the future coming of the Son of Man preceded by premonitory signs "in those days, after that tribulation" (vv. 24-27). The lengthy first part, however, deals with more than that

great tribulation alone. Much exhortation is also offered. Five sections can be distinguished in it. Both vocabulary and content show that the order is concentric<sup>14</sup>:

- a : impostors (vv. 5b-6)
- b : wars (7-8)
- c : Persecutions (9-13)
- b': war - great tribulation (vv. 14-20)
- a': impostors (vv. 21-23).

The structural markers cannot be overlooked. In sections a, c, and a' βλέπετε is present (vv. 5, 9 and 23). Section b begins with ὅταν δὲ ἀκούσητε (v. 7) and section b' with ὅταν δὲ ἴδητε (v. 14): this means a progression from "hearing say" to "seeing". The wars and catastrophes in b are not yet the end, just the beginning of the birthpangs. The tribulation in b', however, is such as has not been seen on earth. All over this first part there is announcement and warning. The disciples must take heed that no impostor, no false Christ or false apostle, leads them astray (a and a'). And according to c there will be dire persecutions; but those who endure to the end will be saved. In this first part which depicts the period before the very end, the evangelist provides both announcement and admonition.

Mark continues in v. 24 ἀλλὰ ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμεραῖς μετὰ τὴν θλίψιν ἐκείνην and refers to the cosmic signs (vv. 24-25) which immediately precede the visible and unmistakable coming of the Son of Man in clouds with great power and glory (v. 26). His elect will be gathered from everywhere. In the second and central part there is no longer warning, only announcement.

The fivefold concentric structure of the first part cannot be the result of a sloppy or casual redaction; this structure is by no means accidental. Mark has composed this part with great care and talent. What about the third part which again is longer than the second one, although not so extensive as the first? In the final part we once more encounter announcement as well as warning and exhortation, but here the end itself, the coming of "the lord of the house" (v. 34) is in view.

Verse 37 concludes the discourse. The contrasting δέ of v. 32 marks a caesura. The parable of the fig tree with its application in vv. 28-29 is followed by the sayings of vv. 30-31. Then, in vv. 32-36, Mark first composes another saying (v. 32)

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<sup>14</sup> See the structured Greek text in *Lambrecht*, Redaktion, pp. 289-291.

and adds his parable of the doorkeeper with its application (vv. 33-36). Perhaps one can take the more general logion of v. 31 ("Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away") as the center of the third part. If this is done, a second fivefold concentric structure appears<sup>15</sup>:

- a : parable (fig tree) with application (vv. 28-29)
- b : saying about the certain near arrival (v. 30)
- c : the abiding character of Jesus' words (v. 31)
- b' : saying about the uncertain day or hour (v. 32)
- a' : parable (doorkeeper) with application (vv. 33-36).

The b' element contrasts with b; although the arrival will occur within this generation, the exact time remains unknown, even to the Son. In addition to the parables with their application, other parallel elements between vv. 28-29 and 33-36 should not go unnoticed: compare the repetition of  $\gamma\iota\nu\omega\sigma\kappa\epsilon\tau\epsilon$  ὅτι ἐγγύς ἐστίν in a (vv. 28-29) with the repetition of οὐκ οἶδατε γὰρ πότε in a' (vv. 33 and 35). Furthermore, one guesses that  $\theta\upsilon\rho\omega\rho\hat{\omega}$  in v. 34 is intended by Mark as a reference to ἐπὶ θύραις in v. 29. There is also a parallelism between the imperatives βλέπετε at the beginning of v. 28 and μάθετε at the beginning of v. 33. Of course, the symmetry between a and a' is antithetical since the first arrival is knowable while the second remains unknown and since a period of time ("this generation") stands over against the exact time (that day or the hour, ὁ καιρὸς).

This brief analysis of the third part indicates that the Markan composition is full of art; it certainly betrays the literary craftsmanship of the evangelist. Those who prefer to take verse 31 together with verse 30 must equally recognize that according to their division the chiasmic structure a (28-29) b (30-31) b' (32) a' (33-36) can hardly be less intentional.

### *The individual verses*

#### Verse 32

Even if  $\gamma\iota\nu\omega\sigma\kappa\epsilon\tau\epsilon$  in Mark 13,29 (and 28?) is an indicative and not an imperative - which must remain doubtful - the whole verse is easily understood by the reader as an appeal: when it is seen that these things take place, one should know

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<sup>15</sup> See the structured Greek text in *Lambrecht, Redaktion*, pp. 291-292.

that it (or he?) is near. In the ensuing verse 30 Mark emphasizes the certainty of this nearness by limiting the time to just one generation: "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place". In verse 31 even more emphasis is added: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away". Then suddenly, in v. 32, Mark writes an adversative δέ ("but") and now stresses the most general uncertainty: nobody knows, not even the angels, not even the Son, only the Father. Nobody knows the precise day and hour within the limited time period of one generation<sup>16</sup>.

Most probably verse 32 is composed by Mark himself without a source text. The verse functions perfectly within the third part of the discourse. The verb οἶδεν refers back to the double γινώσκετε in vv. 28-29. The hapax construction οἶδα περί + genitive is not so strange that Mark could not have written it uninfluenced by source or tradition. In the contrast ὁ υἱὸς - ὁ πατήρ he understandably avoids the title "Son of Man". Verses such as 2,7 and 10,18 show that "subordination" of the Son to the Father appears acceptable for Mark. The narrowing down of the time by the addition of ἡ τῆς ὥρας to "that day" will be continued in the parable by πότε (vv. 33 and 35) and ὁ καιρὸς (v. 33). As to the motif of not knowing the day or the hour, Mark may be dependent on Q 12,46 (the Servant Left in Charge: day) and Q 12 39 (the Thief at Night: hour).

Verse 32 is thoroughly Markan. However, given Mark's dependence on Q the expression "pure creation by the evangelist" should be avoided<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Gundry, Mark, p. 749 refers to the numerous shifts: from nearness (v. 30) to certainty (v. 31) to ignorance and incalculability (vv. 32-35) to "suddenness" (v. 36).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. S. Légasse, *L'évangile de Marc. Tome II (Lection divina. Commentaires, 5)*, Paris 1997, p. 825: "Cette dernière ignorance [i.e., of the Son] a donné beaucoup de mal aux commentateurs et aux théologiens, d'autant plus qu'ils ne renonçaient pas à y voir une parole authentique de Jésus. Une chose est sûre: Marc, en rapportant le tout, n'a pas plus éprouvé de malaise qu'à propos du toucher de l'hémorroïsse dont Jésus ignore la provenance (5,30), autrement il aurait agit comme Luc qui ... a entièrement omis la sentence". Yet see also, e.g., J. Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus (Mk 8,27-16,20) (EKK II/2)*, Zürich – Köln / Neukirchen-Vluyn 1979, p. 207: "Das Wort wird in einer Situation drängernder Parusieerwartung als deren Korrektur entstanden sein und kann kaum auf Jesus zurückgeführt werden"; and differently J. Donahue and D.J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark (Sacra Pagina, 2)*, Collegeville, Minnesota 2002, p. 376: "These sayings [also 10:40] are not the kind of material that early Christians would have created on their own, and so they may well represent the authentic voice of Jesus and provide an important perspective on the meaning of the incarnation (see Phil 2:6-11)".

## Verse 33

Commencing with βλέπετε Mark indicates that, just as in vv. 5b and 9, a new section begins. Verse 33 structurally belongs to the parable of vv. 34-36. In v. 5b Mark writes: "take heed that no one leads you astray", in v. 9a: "but take heed to yourselves", and in v. 23a: "but take heed". In v. 33a, as in v. 23a, βλέπετε is used absolutely without a direct object (so v. 9) or a dependent μή-clause (so v. 5b). The second imperative, ἀγρυπνεῖτε, is added without a conjunction<sup>18</sup>. "Take heed" itself is an asyndeton, but the reader interprets both imperatives as the logical appeal which follows from v. 32 which itself functions as the reason: one must take heed and keep awake because neither day nor hour are known. V. 33b provides an almost identical reason as that in v. 35: "for you do not know when the time/the master of the house will be/come".

We can take ἀγρυπνεῖτε as a variation on the verb γρηγορέω which Mark takes from Q and by threefold repetition will make the thematic word of his parable. With καιρός, too, Mark anticipates the parable: here no longer day or hour, but "the determined time" which points to the night situation that Mark will describe in v. 35b. The verb οἶδατε is taken from the preceding verb.

All in all, the Markan character of the whole of v. 33 can hardly be denied.

## Verse 34

No sound expansion of v. 34ab can be provided without assuming Mark's knowledge of the Q parable of the Pounds: ἀπόδημος, the master's departure from home and the giving of authority to his servants (for this last item, cf. also the parable of the Servant Left in Charge). Moreover, the phrase ἐκάστω τὸ ἔργον seems to be a rewriting of κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν (Q, cf. Mt 25,15). In v. 34ab Mark points to the situation at the beginning of the Pounds, but in v. 34c he shifts to that of the Watchful Servants (Q 12,36-38): see the verb γρηγορέω and the context of the master's absence for one day followed by the night during which the doorkeeper must watch. Mark focuses on one servant, the θυρωρός. The elliptic beginning ὡς ἄνθρωπος (v. 34a) may be an imitation of that in Q 12,36 (καὶ ὑμεῖς ὅμοιοι).

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<sup>18</sup> Gundry, Mark, p. 798, discusses the variant reading in v. 33b "and pray" of which I defended the authenticity in Redaktion, p. 798.

The most plausible hypothesis is that Mark combined, however poorly, elements out of the two parables and thus leaves his readers with an unfinished broken text in the third person, half comparison and half parable about how an *ἄνθρωπος ἀπόδημος* acted.

It is not necessary to postulate a pre-Markan parable of the doorkeeper.

#### Verses 35-36

For the application Mark changes back to the second person. There is after *ὡς* no *οὕτως*. The comparison brings the evangelist to a conclusion (*οὖν*) and, by means of the last word of v. 34c, but now in the imperative, he exhorts the four disciples: "Watch therefore". He then once more motivates his appeal by repeating v. 33b. However, in v. 35bc he interweaves image and reality. The phrase *ὁ κύριος τῆς οἰκίας* is the equivalent of *ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης* in Q 12,39 (the Thief at Night) and the enumeration of the nightwatches is but an (Roman) elaboration of what can be found in Q 12,38 (the Watchful Servants).

In v. 36 Mark provides a further warning by means of a negative purpose clause which strangely enough as to grammar depends on the imperative of 35a and neglects, as it were, the intervening v. 35bc. "Sleeping", the opposite of "watching", is the danger. As regards content the negative purpose clause of v. 36 repeats the positive purpose clause of v. 34c<sup>19</sup>. The construction with "coming", the verb "to find" with the master as subject, a direct object and following participle (*ἐλθὼν εὕρη ὑμεῖς καθεύδοντας*) is borrowed, it would seem, from Q 12,37 (the Watchful Servants: *οὓς ἐλθὼν ὁ κύριος εὕρήσει γρηγοροῦντας*).

One sees no valid ground to postulate a pre-Markan source or tradition for vv. 35-36. Mark's knowledge and use of Q's parousia parables, as well as his creative redaction, are an indispensable but sufficient ground to explain the composition of these two verses. The hapax *ἐξαίφνης* in v. 36 is no evidence to the contrary.

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<sup>19</sup> "Repetition" belongs to Mark's style. Cf. *Gundry*, Mark, p. 749: "Three-step parallelism characterizes these last verses and highlights the need to watch and therewith the predictive ability of Jesus". Verse 35a (stay awake) takes up verse 33a; verse 35b (for you do not know) verse 33b; and verse 36 (lest coming suddenly he finds you...) verse 34 (see pp. 749-750). One can also mention that Mark is fond of *γάρ*-clauses (see vv. 33 and 35) and circumstantial participial phrases (see vv. 34 and 36).

## Verse 37

Lk 12,41 "Lord, are you telling this parable *for us* or *for all*?" does not belong to Q (12,42b-46: the Servant Left in Charge)<sup>20</sup>. If there is dependence, it must have been Luke on Mk 13,37a: "And what I say *to you* I say *to all*". The exact nuance of  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu$  in Mark is disputed: all other disciples or all future readers.

The editorial origin of v. 37 cannot not be put in doubt. By the repetition of  $\gamma\rho\eta\gamma\omicron\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\tau\epsilon$  in v. 37b, the third use of this verb in vv. 33-37, Mark emphasizes the exhortative character of the final part of the discourse and, in this way, of Mk 13 as a whole.

## CONCLUSION

The chiasmic structural parallelism between vv. 28-30 (or 31) and vv. 32-36 (and 37) is the astonishing result of Mark's literary craftsmanship. The lack of grammatical and stylistic correctness is perhaps not less Markan, be it in a negative way. It can probably be assumed that for the evangelist one could not be attained without the other.

This study appears to justify the hypothesis that Mark knew and used the parousia parables of Q and that the four parables constituted already a cluster in Q. Borrowing but a few elements and motifs from all four, Mark was able to compose, in vv. 33-36, his own short parable of the doorkeeper, parallel to that of the fig tree in vv. 28-29. But he first presents, in the logion of v. 32, complementary information, i.e., the necessary addition to v. 30<sup>21</sup>. All this results in a chiasmic or more probably, thanks to v. 31, a remarkable concentric structure within vv. 28-37. These verses together constitute the third major part of the elsewhere also heavily Markan eschatological discourse.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Fleddermann*, Q. Reconstruction and Commentary, pp. 626-627.

<sup>21</sup> There is no contradiction between verse 30 and verse 32, between "knowledge of general nearness once the abomination of desolation is seen" and "ignorance of the exact time" (*Gundry*, Mark, p. 794). We may also refer to p. 796: "As a whole, the parable and the foregoing and succeeding sayings, i.e. vv. 32-37, look primarily like a digest and amalgam of earlier traditions...".