

## AGRAPHA ('SCATTERED WORDS OF JESUS')

### (a) Definition of the concept

The Greek term *agrapha* means literally 'unwritten' words: in the present case, 'unwritten' logia of Jesus. However, such a designation is not particularly meaningful, since the utterances of Jesus which we shall study in this chapter have not been handed down to us in an oral version, but are usually found embedded in larger textual contexts. Roughly speaking, agrapha are logia of Jesus which we find outside the canonical gospels (hence the term 'extracanonical sayings'), logia which (with a few exceptions) our sources ascribe to the *earthly Jesus*. We could translate *agrapha* as 'words not recorded in the book', since they are not in the canonical 'book' of four gospels; the literal meaning, 'unwritten', would then mean that they are not contained in that part of 'Scripture' (the 'Writings') where we otherwise find the tradition about Jesus. It has also become customary to speak of 'unknown' or 'scattered' words of the Lord. Even a brief examination of the collected agrapha shows, however, that this does not resolve all the problems of definition and demarcation.

Although there were earlier attempts at a definition, this concept was first introduced to scholarship by Alfred Resch in the late nineteenth century. In his collection, which remains a fundamental work, he listed 194 agrapha, drawn mostly from the textual tradition of the New Testament and the works of the church fathers. He distinguishes these from the 'apocrypha', a term he applies principally to fragments of apocryphal gospels, as well as to extracanonical sayings of apostles and even to Old Testament quotations whose exact source cannot be verified. Unfortunately, this distinction between agrapha and apocrypha was later abandoned; the term 'agrapha' often covers material from the remains of the Jewish-Christian gospels, the fragments of apocryphal gospels on papyrus, and especially the newly discovered Gospel of Thomas. This, however, is unhelpful, since the logia of Jesus transmitted in such texts normally possess their own independent literary context, which supplies the framework in which they ought to be discussed. They should not be isolated from this context and listed among the agrapha.

After Resch's work, Michael Asin y Palacios collected a wealth of material from Muslim authors. In two fascicles of the *Paralogueia Orientalis*, he offers a total of 233 Arabic texts with a Latin translation and explanation. Exegetes have paid astonishingly little attention to this collection.

Instead, German-speaking scholarship took another path. In his well-known and influential book *Die hebräische Jesussprüche*, a work of great

merit, Joachim Jeremias limited himself to the study of eighteen agrapha (or twenty, if we include the two logia discussed in the appendix), characteristically including also texts from the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Nazareans, the Gospel of Thomas and the gospel fragment POxy 840. Otfried Hofius, who has taken it upon himself to look after Joachim Jeremias's inheritance, again drastically reduces the number of agrapha, so that ultimately only seven are included in the sixth edition of NI Apo 1.

This reduction is governed by the principle that the extracanonical logia which merit discussion should be comparable to Jesus' logia in the synoptic gospels in terms of form, contents and tradition-history. For Jeremias in particular, another important factor is whether historical authenticity can at least be taken seriously as a possibility, and we should note that this question is linked with a clear evaluation of the texts at issue: 'Only here and there among the rubble and trash do we glimpse the sparkle of a precious stone' (*Die hebräische Jesussprüche*, 112). It is indisputable that such questions must be discussed, but it is highly doubtful whether they should govern the initial selection of texts, especially in view of the virtual impossibility of achieving certain results: this means that subjective assessment will always play some role. Ultimately, this critical process of reduction has led agrapha-research into a cul-de-sac.

In view of this, more recent collections propose new paths. In his useful collection, William D. Stroker cites 266 texts (though these include virtually the entire Gospel of Thomas). Klaus Berger and Christiane Nord offer a total of 270 agrapha. They make use of the first fascicle of Asin y Palacios's publications of logia of Jesus in Muslim writers, but they ignore his second fascicle.

It is clear that a more precise analysis reveals the concept of 'agrapha' to be a very nebulous category. What is left – especially if we make a decided plea for separate treatment of the Jewish-Christian gospels and the Gospel of Thomas?

One can continue to employ 'agrapha' as a heuristic instrument which allows us to detect logia of Jesus which are transmitted outside the gospels and do not fall under our other categories (e.g., 'fragments of apocryphal gospels'). Alfred Resch showed that most of these are logia quoted by the church fathers, together with other material of various provenance. If it is necessary to pose the question of authenticity, this should not be done too prematurely.

The following presentation and discussion of a few selected agrapha is intended primarily as an exemplary illustration of what we have just affirmed. We present most of those logia which are found in all of the standard collections; we have also endeavoured to include examples drawn from the variety of sources in which agrapha can be found. Some examples help to show more clearly the problems of demarcation and definition. They also indicate why agrapha came into existence.

## (b) Textual examples

### (1) *Giving and receiving*

If we define *agrapha* as logia of Jesus found outside the canonical gospels, our earliest examples can be found in the New Testament itself. The most important instance is in Luke's Acts of the Apostles. In the farewell discourse which Paul holds in Miletus to the elders of the Ephesian community, he states:

In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, now he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' (Acts 20:35)

The logion which Luke's Paul quotes is not found in the gospels, not even in that of Luke himself – although it would fit in very well there, given that Luke gives greater emphasis than the other evangelists to the societal motifs in the message of Jesus. Luke has even been called 'the evangelist of the poor': we need not discuss here whether such a designation is wholly appropriate. At any rate, Paul's words and his conduct (cf. his reference at 20:33f. to his refusal to accept support from the communities, since he prefers to work with his own hands) show that, even if his circumstances are somewhat different from those of Jesus, he is a genuine disciple and follower of the Lord.

Nevertheless, this text does not attain the radical dimension of some of Jesus' logia in the gospel, which demand a complete renunciation of private property; and we are not surprised to note that non-Christian and non-Jewish ethics in antiquity likewise emphasised the priority of giving over receiving. It suffices to quote one passage from Thucydides (2.97.4): '[The Thracians] introduced a custom different from that in the realm of the Persians . . . that one should prefer to give rather than to receive. It was more shameful not to give, if one was asked to do so, than not to receive, if one had made a request.'

### (2) *The coming of the Lord*

Paul himself quotes a few logia of Jesus in his letters. Since most of these have parallels in the synoptic tradition about Jesus, they cannot be considered *agrapha*: this applies to the prohibition of divorce (1 Cor 7:10f.), to the interpretative words in the account of the Last Supper (1 Cor 11:24f.), to Paul's remarks on the right of itinerant missionaries to receive material support (1 Cor 9:14), and to the affirmation that all foods are pure (Rom 14:14). Resch and Berger and Nord argue that the commandment that women should keep silent (1 Cor 14:34f.) should be included among the *agrapha*, but this is unlikely, even though the expression 'command of the Lord' is found a few verses later (v. 37). The 'word of the Lord' at 2 Cor 12:9 – 'My grace is sufficient for you' – is something that Paul himself heard said by the risen Lord. The main candidate for inclusion in a list of *agrapha* is 1 Thess 4:15–17:

[15] For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; [17] then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.

No quotation marks are employed within this English translation, since it is unclear where the supposed 'word of the Lord' is to be found: in v. 15 alone (beginning with the words 'we who are alive') or perhaps rather in the substance of vv. 16–17? It is at any rate clear that we must assume that Paul has set his own imprint very deeply on any such logion: he speaks everywhere of 'the Lord' in the third person, and this scarcely accords with the perspective of a 'word of the Lord', which would surely have used the first person. It also remains unclear whether Paul intends to refer to a logion of the earthly Jesus or to a revelation of the risen Lord. Since we are not exclusively interested in the question of authenticity, it is not so important to discuss the hypothesis that this passage refers to a word uttered by an early Christian prophet, which Paul picks up and makes more authoritative by attributing it to Jesus himself.

### (3) *Use and abuse of freedom*

A further quarry of *agrapha* is the manuscript transmission of the New Testament. Occasionally, gospel manuscripts contain additions which may be secondary from a text-critical perspective, but nevertheless appear to have access to a still-extant oral tradition about Jesus. Thus, for example, the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis (abbreviation: D) from the fifth century offers, between the pericope about the disciples who pluck ears of corn (Lk 6:1–5) and the healing of the withered hand on the sabbath (Lk 6:6–11), the following short narrative, which fits the context and is complete in itself. Like an *apophthegm*, it consists of a brief indication of the situation and a pointed logion of Jesus (Lk 6:5 D; the original v. 5 in Luke, 'The Son of man is lord of the sabbath', is omitted at this point by D, which inserts it only after Lk 6:10):

When on the same day he saw a man doing work on the sabbath, he said to him: 'Man! If you know what you are doing, you are blessed! But if you do not know it, you are accursed and a transgressor of the law.'

This presupposes the biblical Jewish precept governing sabbath observance, which includes a prohibition of work (cf. the story of the man who collected wood on the sabbath day and was punished by death: Num 15:32–36). The logion with which Jesus reacts to this breaking of the law consists of three parts: the address 'Man!', a conditional blessing and a conditional curse. Both times, the condition runs: 'If you know/do not know'. Hence, the emphasis lies on knowledge, though

this is not to be interpreted here in a purely gnostic sense (*gnosis* means 'knowledge'), as if the logion intended to assert that the true gnostic – and he alone – is superior to every law. Nor does it seem that the primary interest of this logion is the continuing validity or obsolescence of the Jewish law; rather, the law serves as a practical example.

It is more helpful to situate this logion within a discussion among Christians about the meaning of Christian freedom, especially when we recall the serious threat posed by a Christian libertinism (cf. 'All things are lawful', 1 Cor 10:23 – Paul at once adds, 'But not all things are helpful ... but not all things build up'). Right knowledge would then mean the awareness that freedom is not a state where one is not bound in any way at all, but rather a new state of being bound in faith and love (cf. W. Käser, 'Exegetische Erwägungen zur Selbpreisung des Sabbatarbeiters Lk 6,5 D', *ZThK* 65 [1968] 414–30; T. Nicklas, 'Das Agraphon vom "Sabbatarbeiter" und sein Kontext: Lk. 6:1–11 in der Textform des Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis (D)', *NT* 44 [2002] 160–75).

#### (4) *Unbelief and repentance*

The gospel of Mark ends very abruptly at 16:8 with the flight of the women from the tomb they have found empty. This conclusion was felt to be unsatisfactory, as we see from a number of manuscripts which present Mk 16:9–20, a second century compilation from the other gospels' accounts of the apparitions of the risen Jesus; there exist shorter conclusions too. This secondary longer conclusion relates in v. 14 that Jesus 'upbraided the eleven for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen'. Without any transition, vv. 15–18 present a missionary address by the risen Jesus; v. 19 then relates his ascension to heaven, and v. 20 summarizes the great success of the disciples' preaching after Easter. Vv. 15–18, which have the form of direct speech, have sometimes been included among the agrapha, although these are words of the risen Jesus.

The fifth-century Freer gospel codex (abbreviation: W1, which is preserved today in the Freer Library in Washington [named after its benefactor]), inserts the so-called "Freer logion" between vv. 14 and 15. Jerome seems familiar with this logion, which consists of a little dialogue between Jesus and his disciples (cf. J. Frey, 'Zu Text und Sinn des Freer-Logion', *ZNW* 93 [2002] 13–34). This would entitle us to follow NTApo I and include it among the 'Conversations between Jesus and his disciples after the resurrection'. The most obvious functions of this text are to soften the abruptness of the transition between Jesus v. 15 and to explain how it was possible for the disciples to fall into unbelief again after Easter (Mk 16:14 W);

And they excused themselves with the words, 'This accion of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who through the unclean spirits does not allow the true power of

God to be comprehended. Therefore, they said to Christ, 'reveal your righteousness now.' And Christ replied to them, 'The measure of the years of Satan's power is filled up. But other fearful things draw near, also (for those) for whom I, because they sinned, was delivered to death, that they might turn back to the truth and sin no more in order to inherit the spiritual and imperishable glory of righteousness (preserved) in heaven.'

In view of Satan's apparently undiminished sovereignty over this age of the world (cf. 2 Cor 4:4), the disciples ask the Lord to inaugurate the state of perfection as soon as possible. The risen Jesus confirms that the power of Satan has already been broken through his work on earth (cf. Lk 10:18) and his death on the cross (cf. Jn 12:31). Nevertheless, the events of the last days, with the terrible phenomena that will accompany them, must still be awaited, in order that as many sinful persons as possible may have the chance to do penance in time and thus come to share in eternal life (cf. 2 Pet 3:9).

#### (5) *Variations on the golden rule*

The name 'apostolic fathers' (not in itself a particularly meaningful term) is applied to a group of early Christian writings with chronological proximity to the New Testament. One of these is the first Letter of Clement, probably composed by bishop Clement of Rome and sent to Corinth between 93 and 97 c.t. When he writes at 13:1, 'Especially remembering the words of the Lord Jesus which he spoke when he was teaching gentleness and long-suffering,' Clement is definitely referring to the earthly Jesus, and he continues (13:2),

For he [Jesus] spoke thus:

'Be merciful, that you may obtain mercy.

Forgive, that you may be forgiven.

As you do, so shall it be done to you.

As you give, so shall it be given to you.

As you judge, so shall you be judged.

As you are kind, so shall kindness be shown to you.

The measure which you use to measure

will be used to measure you.'

It is not easy to understand why this little composition, consisting of seven logia of Jesus, is not included in some collections of agrapha, since all the formal requirements for inclusion are satisfied here. Apart from the sixth logion, which exhorts the readers to be kind, we perceive everywhere echoes of the Sermon on the Mount, and all the logia are variations and concretizations of the golden rule (cf. Mt 7:12), which is explicitly formulated in the third exhortation. However, in view of the early date of this text, its author is probably still drawing directly on the oral tradition about Jesus, rather than using the Gospel of Matthew as his immediate source.

## (6) Conditions of entry into the kingdom

The Letter of Barnabas, composed c. 130 c1, refers less clearly to logia of the Lord, but we should mention the remarkable account and interpretation of the Old Testament rite of the scapegoat (Barn 7:6-11) which concludes with an application placed on the lips of Jesus. In formal terms, this looks like a logion of Jesus (Barn 7:11):

Those who wish to see me and attain to my kingdom must lay hold of me through tribulation and suffering.

These words formulate a condition of entry into the kingdom of God, as e.g. at Mt 5:20. In such contexts, however, which are steeped in the atmosphere of the Old Testament, we must always ask whether a word spoken by Jesus is not meant to be understood as an utterance of the pre-existent Christ, who already knows what will happen in the future and anticipates his earthly history by relating the biblical promises to his own self.

## (7) Paradisal conditions

The next agraphon, which is particularly extensive, is transmitted to us only in a series of textual refractions. In the early second century, Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, undertook researches and published the logia of Jesus which he had been able to discover in a collection in several volumes entitled: *Exposition of the words of the Lord*. Irenaeus of Lyons quotes from this work, but he also appeals at the beginning of the following text to presbyters who had heard this logion from the apostle John, before he speaks, towards the end of our text, about its attestation in Papias (*Adversus Haereses* 5.33.3ff.):

The elders who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, related that they had heard from him: how the Lord used to teach in regard to these tunes, and say: 'The days will come, in which vines shall grow, each having ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each true twig ten thousand shoots, and in each one of the shoots ten thousand clusters, and on every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give one thousand litres of wine. And when any one of the saints shall lay hold of a cluster, another shall cry out, "I am a better cluster, take me; bless the Lord through me." In like manner [the Lord declared] that a grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears, and that every ear should have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour; and that all other fruit-bearing trees, and seeds and grass, would produce in similar proportions; and that all animals feeding on the productions of the earth should become peaceful and harmonious among each other, and be in perfect subjection to human beings. And these things are borne witness to in writing by Papias, the hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp, in his fourth book; for there were five books compiled by him. And he says in addition: 'Now these things are credible to believers.' And he says that when the traitor Judas did not believe this and asked, 'How can such growth be

brought about by the Lord?', the Lord declared, 'Those who shall come to these tunes shall see.'

In this passage, Judas – the prototype of unbelief – is surely the representative of all those hearers who were sceptical about this prediction of the future, which promises that paradisaical conditions will return in the messianic age, still thought of here in innerworldly terms. Contemporary Jewish apocalyptic is also familiar with the motif of the miraculous fertility of the earth as a characteristic of the messianic age; it suffices here to quote one text from the Apocalypse of Baruch (SyrBar 29:5), 'The earth also shall yield its fruit ten thousandfold; and on each vine there shall be a thousand branches, and each branch shall produce a thousand clusters, and each cluster produce a thousand grapes, and each grape produce a cot of wine.'

## (8) Near and far

We shall discuss the papyrus fragments in the next chapter of this book, but we present one text as an example here, not least because the agraphon occurs – somewhat surprisingly – in a context which is otherwise familiar. This is a fragment of papyrus found at Oxynchus and dated to the fourth century (POxy 1224):

And the scribes and <Pharisees and priests, when they sa<w him, were angry <chat with sinners in the midst iv <reclined at table. But Jesus heard <it and said: 'The he<althy need not the physician. ... And pray for your enemies. For he who is not <against you.> is for you. He who today> is far-off – tomorrow will be near to you>.'

We know lines 1-6 from the account of the meal with tax collectors in Mk 2:16f. Lines 7-8 contain an echo of Mt 5:44, and lines 8-9 are well known to us from Mk 9:40. The agraphon comes in lines 9f. Another reconstruction is also possible: 'Those who stood far off – their hour will be tomorrow' (cf. perhaps Is 57:19, 'Peace, peace to the far and to the near, says the Lord; and I will heal them').

## (9) Drustions

This brings us to the apologists. In his *Dialogue* with the Jewish rabbi Trypho (or Tarphon), Justin quotes the following words of Jesus, which are attested in part in the synoptic gospels (*Dialogue* 35.3):

For he [Jesus] said, 'Many will come in my name [Mk 13:6], externally clothed in

sheep's clothing. But inwardly they are ravenous wolves (Mt 7:15), and: 'There will be divisions and factions,' and: 'Beware of false prophets ...'

When Jesus speaks in the gospels of the end of the world, he regularly predicts divisions, which will cut across even the closest family ties (e.g. Lk 12:52f.), but it is not here that we find the closest parallel to the words: 'There will be divisions and factions'. This parallel is in Paul (1 Cor 11:18f.):

In the first place, when you assemble as a church, I hear that *there are divisions* among you, and I partly believe it, for *there must be factions* among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

The parallel led Alfred Resch to conclude that Paul is quoting here from an eschatological discourse of Jesus; but it is more probable that an affirmation by Paul has been subsequently transformed into a logion of Jesus. This logion is found in other early Christian and patristic texts, e.g. in the Pseudo-Clementine homilies (where it occurs twice), in the Syriac Didascalia, in Lactantius and Didymus.

#### (10) *The standard employed at the judgement*

In the same work, Justin quotes another logion in which Jesus as it were freezes fast the state in which the Lord at his coming finds each individual, and makes this state the criterion of judgement (*Dialogue* 47.5):

Wherefore also our Lord Jesus Christ said, 'In whatsoever things I shall take you, in these I shall judge you.'

The fourth-century Syriac *Liber Graduum* ('Book of Steps'), which indicates the various stages by which Christian perfection may be attained, has a different formulation, but makes the same point. The Lord will send out his angels at the end of the world (cf. Mt 13:41) to assemble all human beings for the imminent judgement, and we are told (*Sermo* 3.3, and frequently):

As you are found, so you will be carried off!

This affirmation occurs, not as a logion of Jesus but as a 'word of God' or a prophetic utterance, eighteen times in patristic literature, beginning with Clement of Alexandria. It may be based on Ezek 33:20, 'O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways', perhaps as mediated by the Jewish Apocryphon of Ezekiel.

#### (11) *Praying without cease*

We remain in fourth-century Syria, and turn to the church father Aphrahat. In his discourse on prayer, he writes (*Demonstrations* 4.16):

Our Lord said: 'Pray and do not become weary.'

In the introduction to the parable of the unjust judge and the widow who comes with her petition, which belongs to the special Lukan material, we read: 'And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart (18:1)'. Once again, we must choose between the alternatives, Resch held that Luke had taken a logion of Jesus and cast it into narrative form; but it is more likely that later writers changed the indirect speech in Luke into direct speech on the part of Jesus.

#### (12) *Close to the fire*

We come now to Origen, the greatest exegete and theologian of the early church. In his sermons on the book of Jeremiah, which survive only in Rufinus' Latin translation, he prefaces the quotation of an apographon with words remarkable for their caution. Nevertheless, he does in fact quote it — he does not reject it out of hand (*In Jeremianam Homiliae* 3.3):

I have read somewhere as a word of the Saviour (and I wonder whether someone has taken over the role of the Saviour, or has quoted from memory, or whether what is said here is true). At any rate, the Saviour says in that place: 'The one who is close to me is close to the fire. The one who is far from me is far from the kingdom.'

The Greek version of these words is quoted by the Alexandrian theologian Didymus the Blind, who died c. 398. They are reminiscent of synoptic logia such as Lk 12:49, 'I came to cast fire on the earth; and would that it were already kindled!', or Mk 9:49; 'Every one will be salted with fire.' The image of fire symbolizes the intensity with which the good news of God's sovereignty wishes to take hold of human beings, purifying and transforming them; and this good news is to spread like a bush fire. We may also recall a proverb attributed to Aesop: 'One who is near Zeus is near the lightning', which, however, is a warning against drawing too close to the god.

This logion about the fire and the kingdom is nr. 82 in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas; strictly speaking, therefore, the Nag Hammadi discoveries mean that this logion no longer has the status of an apographon. Since Origen mentions a 'Gospel of Thomas' in another text, it is certainly possible that he found this logion in a Greek version of the Gospel of Thomas which we know in Coptic.

#### (13) *The path into the kingdom of heaven*

In his treatise on baptism, Tertullian recounts the story of Jesus on the Mount of Olives and quotes Mk 14:38, 'Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.' He pursues the theme of the temptation of the disciples during Jesus' passion, and adds (*De baptismo* 20.2):

For this word had already been spoken: 'No one can attain the kingdom of heaven unless he passes through temptation.'

It seems that Tertullian situates this legion in the context of the Last Supper (perhaps because of Lk 22:20f.), either as a part of the discourse at table or en route to Caesarea. The other eight patristic witnesses (including the Didascalia and the Apostolic Constitutions) do not present it as a legion of Jesus. The same theme occurs in Acts 14:22, when Paul and Barnabas tell the communities which they have founded on their pastoral journey: 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God', and at Jas 1:12: 'Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life.'

#### (14) Saving one's life

Clement of Alexandria made excerpts from the writings of Theodotus, a pupil of the second-century gnostic teacher Valentinus. According to Clement, Theodotus transmitted the following words as a legion of Jesus (*Excerpta ex Theodotus* 2.2):

This is why the Saviour says: 'Save yourself and your life.'

These words are startlingly reminiscent of the command issued by the angel to Lot at Gen 19:17 when he tells him to get out of Sodom: 'Flee for your life! This scene is recalled in the eschatological discourse of Jesus (Lk 17:29,32), who also emphasizes the urgency of flight from the terrible events of the last days (cf. also Mk 13:14-16), and this means that the imperative is not necessarily: 'Save your soul!' (although that would certainly have been in accord with the gnostic perspective). It can also be understood to mean: 'Seek a safe place of refuge in good time, before the catastrophe comes.'

#### (15) Great and small

Clement of Alexandria supplies a further legion, which we could also quote in versions by Origen, Eusebius or Ambrose. In his great work *Stromateis* ('Carpets'), an encyclopedic collection, he writes (*Stromateis* 1.158.2):

'For if you ask for that which is great,' he [Jesus] says, 'the small too will be added to you [by God].'

Some other patristic writers expand this by adding a second member: 'Ask for the heavenly, and you will also receive the earthly.' We can trace these ideas back to a legion in Q: 'Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well' (Mt 6:33, par. Lk 12:31).

#### (16) Money-changers

Clement of Alexandria is one of about 70 witnesses to what is by far the most popular agraphon among the theologians of the early church, who

all considered it an authentic legion of Jesus. In its pure form, however, it is found not in Clement but in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies (which have nothing to do with him, but are pseudepigraphical writings of Clement of Rome). In Homily 2.51.1, we read:

Our teacher has fittingly said: 'Be good money-changers!'

This short form is often quoted in combination with 1 Thess 5:21f.: 'Test everything; hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil'; sometimes the legion and Paul's words are conflated. This link was suggested by the adjective *dokimoi* in the legion ('good' or 'approved'), which is related to the imperative employed by Paul, *dokimazete* ('test'); besides this, 'every form of evil' in v. 22 was often understood as 'every bad coin' - a perfectly possible way to take the Greek words.

This brings us to the 'good money-changers' and helps us to understand both the meaning and perhaps the genesis of the legion. The point is not that a good money-changer is one who looks to his own profit, or one who acts as a banker who pays interest (as in Mt 25:27). He shows his true quality by recognizing false coins immediately; he examines each coin with care, so that he will not be fooled. Hence, the legion is a metaphorical summons to the discernment of spirits. It may even have developed from the exegesis and application of 1 Thess 5:21f.

#### (17) The disciples' lack of understanding

For our next agraphon, we turn to another genre of texts, viz. the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. In the Acts of Peter, the Roman senator Marcellus, who has fallen away from the Christian faith, repents and asks Peter to intercede for him. Marcellus attempts to put himself in a milder light by recalling that Peter himself did not have a firm faith during Jesus' lifetime, and that he had sometimes doubted. He emphasizes this point as follows (Acts of Peter 10):

I have heard that he [Jesus] too said: 'Those who are with me have not understood me.'

The disciples' lack of understanding is a frequent topos in the Gospel of Mark, and also finds expression at Jn 14:9, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip?' This agraphon takes up in concentrated form an important trait in the gospels' portrait of the disciples.

#### (18) Belief in signs

Our first example of traditions about Jesus in Islam which are not found in the canonical gospels is Sure 3.49 in the Koran:

I come to you with a sign from your Lord: I make something for you out of clay that looks like birds. Then I breathe into it, and if God wills, the clay will turn into real birds. And if God wills, I shall heal the blind and the lepers, and make the dead

alive. And I will tell you what you eat and drink up in your houses. If you believe, this is a sign for you.

The surprising element in this Sure is not the allusion to Jesus' miracles of feeding the crowds, but the reference to the remarkable visual miracle of breathing life into birds formed of clay. This is related in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas (2:2-4; see ch. 5b below), and this is surely the source on which the Koran draws, just as the nearby Sure 3:44 reflects the episode in the Protevangelium of James (8-9; cf. ch. 5b below) in which lots are drawn. Much of what the Koran knows about Jesus has passed through the filter of apocryphal traditions.

#### (19) Jesus as forerunner

The Koran contains other agrapha (cf. Sure 5:72; 43:63; 61:14), but we quote here only Sure 61:6, since Jesus is interpreted here as the forerunner of Muhammad. This lets us see how obvious theological interests could contribute to the production of new agrapha:

And then Jesus, the son of Mary, said: 'Children of Israel! I have been sent to you by God, in order to confirm what went before me, that is the Torah, and to proclaim a messenger with a highly blessed name who will come after me.'

#### (20) The world as a bridge

One Islamic agraphon has become famous, thanks to the unusual circumstances of its discovery in 1900 in an inscription on a mosque at Farapur Sikri in India; allegedly, it can still be read there today. The inscription dates from 1601, but the logion is attested in Islamic writers at a much earlier date (cf. nr. 46 and nr. 75 in the collection by Michael Asin y Palacios). It runs as follows:

Jesus, on whom be peace, said: 'The world is a bridge. Go over it - do not settle on it!'

There is a shorter parallel to the contents of this logion, with its impressive warning against excessive entanglement in the things of this world, in nr. 42 of the Gospel of Thomas: 'Be passers-by!'

#### (21) A modest lifestyle

We conclude with one more Islamic story about Jesus. It does not indeed contain a direct logion, but as we shall see, it would not have been difficult to formulate one. The text is nr. 81 in Asin y Palacios:

The only things the Messiah carried on his person were a comb and a drinking vessel. When he saw a man combing his beard with his fingers, [the Messiah] immediately threw away the comb. When he saw another taking water with his hands from a river to drink, [the Messiah] immediately threw away the drinking vessel.

Here, a comparison with the *Lives of the Philosophers of Diogenes Laertius* shows that a 'wandering legend' has been applied to Jesus. We are told about the Cynic Diogenes of Sinope (*Vitar Philosophorum* 6.37):

When he saw a child drinking from its cupped hands, and he threw away the cup from his knapsack and said: 'A child has been content with less than I.' He also threw away his bowl when he saw a child that had broken its own plate and now used a hollow piece of bread as a vessel to hold its lentil broth.

In the Islamic version, the bowl has merely been replaced by a comb. Diogenes Laertius' version also shows that the narrative really demands an apophthegmatic logion in direct speech.

#### (22) Getting up again after a fall

It is impossible to estimate even roughly the antiquity of an agraphon found in the ancient Greek rite of anointing the sick. It forms a catena with three logia found in the gospels; all four are introduced by the same formula (cf. J. Karawidopoulos, 'Ein Agraphon in einem liturgischen Text der griechischen Kirche', *ZNW* 62 [1971] 299f.):

You [Jesus] who said: 'Whenever you fall, get up again, and you will be saved' ...

Here too, the biblical background is not difficult to discern: in Jer 8:4, we read: 'Thus says the Lord: "When men fall, do they not rise again? If one turns away, does he not return?"' The words ascribed to Jesus here have a clear theological meaning: they intend to hold open the possibility of repentance and penance for Christians who have committed grave sins after receiving baptism.

#### (c) Summary

This chapter has demonstrated the great variety of sources in which we find agrapha; let us recapitulate briefly.

In the New Testament, we have the Acts of the Apostles and the epistolary literature (for example, 1 Pet 4:8, 'Love covers a multitude of sins', and Eph 4:26, 'Let not the sun go down on your wrath', have become words of Jesus), as well as the manuscript tradition of the Gospels - one example might be the three short logia in the 'homeless' pericope about Jesus and the woman taken in adultery (Jn 7:53-8:11). To these we must add the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles and liturgical texts of the early church; the works of the apostolic fathers, the apologetists and patristic writers are all sources of primary importance. We also find logia in the Koran and other Islamic authors, whereas rabbinic writings have little to offer.

The logia in these sources have very different forms. We find a short imperative: 'Be good money-changers!' But we also find a relatively long discourse which paints an elaborate picture of the paradisaical conditions

in the messianic kingdom. Some texts are in dialogue form or framed by a rudimentary narrative, while in other cases only the logion itself has been preserved. Our selection includes a pure narrative without direct speech (cf. nr. 21); it would however be easy to add a pointed aphorism to the story, and it may be that some such logion has fallen a victim to the processes of transmission.

In many cases, we have been able to identify reasons for the secondary genesis of agrapha. Narrative accounts or indirect speech in the canonical gospels have been transposed into direct words of Jesus; some already-existing logia have been further elaborated and given a new arrangement. Words from the epistolary literature have been put on Jesus' lips. Sometimes the Old Testament was the quarry supplying the material for a logion; popular proverbs and 'wandering legends' were localized in Jesus' person. Well-intentioned theological considerations and clear ideological intentions inspired the imagination and thus made their own contribution to the creation of logia. Nor should we overlook one important motivating factor: an utterance presented as words of Jesus had greater authority and a higher paradigmatic value.

We cannot completely bracket off the question of historical authenticity. Is it possible to attribute at least some of the agrapha to Jesus himself? Are they historically genuine? This is where the critical principle of reduction, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, comes into its own; wherever one can make a plausible case for the secondary creation of a logion, we must rule out its authenticity. No doubt there exist border cases about which one could debate endlessly. At any rate, after we have excluded all dubious instances, a number of potentially authentic logia remain. I would include among these the narrative of the man who worked on the sabbath, the logia about the far and the near and about the fire and the kingdom, and (with some reservations) the money-changers and the world as a bridge. Ultimately, however, we must admit that we do not possess any criteria that would permit a certain judgement about authenticity and inauthenticity.

The meagre harvest of the 22 logia examined here is in fact exemplary – the result would not be essentially different if we were to study 220. This means that the agrapha have only limited value for research into the historical Jesus. Despite the assertions one sometimes hears, the agrapha are not going to force a revolutionary reassessment of the picture of Jesus which we find in the canonical gospels.

Let me emphasize once again that the question of authenticity is only one aspect. All the agrapha retain their value for the history of tradition, when we understand them as a reflection of the fascination which the figure of Jesus has always exercised: they belong to the history of the impact he made on others. Similarly, the spiritual power in some agrapha does not depend exclusively on the question of their genuineness. One can meditate on the logia about the good money-changers and the world as a bridge, and draw helpful inspiration for one's own conduct. No matter who first coined them, they remain

'spiritual classics' and have their rightful place among the utterances of the great spiritual masters and teachers.

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