

**TWENTY-FIVE AGRAPHA:
OR EXTRA-CANONICAL
SAYINGS OF OUR LORD**

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Twenty-five Agrapha: Or Extra-canonical Sayings of Our Lord by Blomfield Jackson

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ANNOTATED BY

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PREFACE

A COLLECTION of the best authenticated extra-canonical Sayings of our Lord may be useful to some who, like myself, have found the inconvenience of having to search for them in comparatively costly and inaccessible books. The treatment of the subject in the works of Resch and Ropes is exhaustive, but their contents are not available to the average English reader. The references in the more generally known writings of Bishop Westcott and the late Dean Plumptre are less complete, and contained in volumes of which the cost puts them out of the reach of many.

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INTRODUCTION

(1) WHAT are the *Agrapha*? The word *ἀγραφα*, meaning *things unwritten*, has been used alike by classical and ecclesiastical writers of religious traditions, as contrasted with written laws: e.g. Lysias, in his Oration Against the Impiety of Andocides (*Lys.* 104. 8), mentions the unwritten laws expounded by the Eumolpidæ.¹ Clement of Alexandria speaks of the tillage of the Church as twofold—partly unwritten, partly written (*ἡ μὲν ἀγραφος ἡ δὲ ἐγγραφος*, *Strom.* I. i. 7, p. 319; cf. *Strom.* V. vii. 61, p. 771). In the remarkable passage of St. Basil in the tractate *De Spiritu Sancto* (§ 66), on Scripture and Tradition, he argues, "Were we to attempt to reject such customs as have no written authority (*τὰ ἀγραφα τῶν ἐθνῶν*) on the ground that their importance is small,

¹ Cf. the famous passage of Sophocles (*Ant.* 454), where Antigone appeals to the unwritten (*ἀγραπτα*) laws of the gods.

we should unintentionally injure the Gospel in its very vitals." Cf. Anastasius Sinaita, 40 c.

But at least from the latter part of the eighteenth century, the term *agrapha* (*ἀγραφα*) has been applied by theologians to extra-canonical utterances or writings, and bears the sense of unscriptural, or uncanonical, rather than unwritten, or traditional. There is obviously a distinction between the application of the term to St. Basil's "unwritten" customs, such as trine immersion in Holy Baptism, and the use of the Sign of the Cross, and its employment as descriptive of Sayings which, if not actually scriptural, rest on early literary authority. This later limitation or adaptation, however convenient, is not strictly correct.

Jean Baptiste Cotelier († 1686), the author of the *Ecclesiæ Græcæ Monumenta*,¹ drew attention to uncanonical Sayings.

The subject was also treated of by Johann Ernst Grabe († 1711), a learned Prussian who took Holy Orders in England, and whose *Spicilegium SS. Patrum et Hæreticorum sæc. I.—III.*, 1698, was the first work to give a compendious list of the *Agrapha*.²

There followed—Johann Albrecht Fabricius († 1736), *Codex Apocryphus N. T.*,

Nathaniel Lardner († 1768), *Credibility of the Gospel History*,

J. G. Körner († 1785) of Leipzig, *De sermonibus Christi ἀγράφοις*, the first, according to Ropes (*Sprüche*,

¹ In his edition of the *Ap. Fathers*. Cf. Resch, *Agrapha*, 3.

² Resch (*Agrapha*, 4) calls him 'Engländer,' but he was born at Königsburg in 1666, and was not more an Englishman than Antonio de Dominis before him, or Joseph Wolf after him.

p. 2), to use the term *Agrapha* of the extra-canonical Sayings of the Lord,

Martin Joseph Routh, the venerable President of Magdalen College, Oxford († 1854), in his *Reliquiæ Sacræ*,

Rudolph Hofmann, author of *Leben Jesu nach den Apocryphen* (Leipzig, 1851),

Rudolph Anger, in his *Synopsis* (1852),

Ch. K. J. Bünsen († 1860), in his *Analecta Ante-Nicæna*.

More recently the *Agrapha* have been illustrated by Bp. Westcott, in an appendix to his *Introduction to the study of the Gospels*; by the American theologian Bernhard Pick in his *Life of Jesus from extra-canonical sources*; by the late Dean Plumtre, in Bishop Ellicott's *N. T. Commentary for English Readers*; by J. T. Dodd, *Sayings ascribed to the Lord by the Fathers and other primitive writers*; Oxford, 1874; and by Ad. Hilgenfeld, *Novum Testamentum extra Canonem receptum*.

The comprehensive work of Alfred Resch, *Ausser-canoniche Evangelienfragmente*, a most complete and exhaustive treatment of the subject, appeared in 1889 among the *Texte und Untersuchungen* edited by von Gebhardt and Harnack.

This has since been criticised and pruned (1896) by James Hardy Ropes, Instructor of the Divinity School of Harvard University, an American author writing in German (*Die Sprüche Jesu die in den kanonischen Evangelien nicht überliefert sind: eine kritische Bearbeitung des von D. Alfred Resch gesammelten Materials*: Leipzig, 1896).

(2) Many of the Sayings sometimes included among the *Agrapha* are mere variations or loose

quotations of Sayings recorded in the Gospels, e.g. the first of Resch's 'Logia,'¹—

"All things whatsoever thou mayest wish not to befall thee, be not thou a doer of to another" (πάντα δὲ ὅσα ἐὰν θελήσῃς μὴ γίνεσθαι σοι, καὶ σὺ ἄλλῳ μὴ ποίει. *Didache*, i. 2). This is obviously a mere variation of Matt. vii. 12 and Luke vi. 31, and no more constitutes a distinct Saying or Agraphon than the familiar "Do unto others as I would they should do unto me" of the English Catechism. So the charge is to be found slightly varied in the *Apology* of Theophilus of Antioch (ii. 34): "All things whatsoever a man may not wish to befall himself, let him not do to another;" and in Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* ii. 23, 139), "What thou hatest, thou shalt not do to another." Again, St. Clement of Rome (*ad Cor.* xiii.) quotes as among the "words of the Lord Jesus," ἐλεᾶτε ἵνα ἐλεηθῆτε, "show mercy that ye may be shown mercy." The precise words do not occur in the Gospels. They are to be found in the Ep. of Polycarp (*ad Phil.* ii. 3), and they may be a traditional Saying, but are more probably a loose quotation or 'conflation' of St. Matthew's μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες (v. 7), and St. Luke's γίνεσθε οὖν οἰκτιρμοῦνες (vi. 36).

¹ The use of the Greek word λόγια 'Logia) to indicate 'Sayings' involves the unwarrantable assumption that the 'Logia' expounded by Papias (Euseb. *Ecc. Hist.* iii. 39) and studied by the Empress Pulcheria and her sisters (Theodoret, *Ecc. Hist.* v. 36) were not the Gospels but bare Sayings. Cf. Polycarp, ed. S.P.C.K. p. 38, and note, and Bp. Lightfoot's *Essays on Supernatural Religion*, ed. 1889, p. 172. The publication in 1897 of the fragmentary 'Sayings' discovered at Oxyrhynchus under the title 'Logia' has helped to popularise the improper limitation of the words. Cf. also note on p. 62.