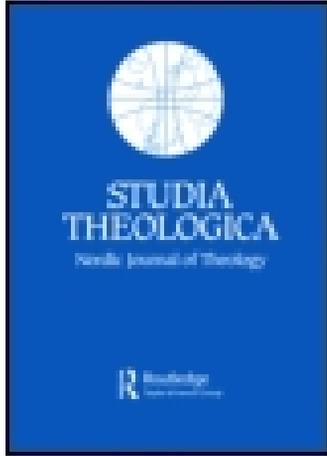


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Salt as a Metaphor in Instructions for Discipleship.¹⁾

By

WOLFGANG NAUCK.

The four passages with which we are concerned in this paper are Mk. 9,49—50, Lk. 14,34—35, Mt. 5,13 and Col. 4,6. It is clear that these four sayings must be regarded as metaphorical. The problem is how to understand each of these metaphors. The interpretations of them, which have hitherto been put forward, are manifold and varied. We shall first of all consider briefly the intention and character of metaphorical terms in general.

It is evident that the writer or speaker who uses a metaphorical term assumes that his hearers are familiar with the metaphor which he employs. If it required an explanation, it would be valueless as a vehicle of communication. Accordingly, in order to discover the meaning of a metaphor no longer in use, we must examine usages current at the time when the metaphor was employed. We must try to find out the thought that was conjured up by the metaphorical term not only in the mind of the author but also in the minds of his readers. We must take care, then, not to interpret a metaphor merely with reference to its literary context. I believe that Rabbinic words taken from a certain code of instructions for the disciples of Scribes provide a parallel enabling us to understand the New Testament metaphor of "salt".

¹⁾ This paper was written during my year of study at Westminster College, Cambridge. I am much indebted to those who magnanimously enabled me to study there and I should like to avail myself of the opportunity to express my thanks for the fellowship which was granted to me by the Principal, professors and students of this college. Further thanks are due to Professor D. Dr. Jeremias, Göttingen, for several valuable suggestions.

I

I would suggest a comparison between Mk. 9,50b (ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἄλα καὶ εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἀλλήλοις) and a sentence at the beginning of the uncanonical Rabbinic treatise *Dereḳ 'Erec Zūṭā'*¹⁾: דרכן של תלמידי חכמים: ענו ושפל רוח זריו וממולה עלוב ואהוב לכל אדם. "The ways of disciples of Scribes: (They should be) modest and (of) humble spirit, industrious and salted, suffering insult and (they should be) liked by all men".

Since we are dealing with a non-canonical treatise, it is especially important to determine the time of its composition and the probable date of origin of the passage in question. Needless to say, we must follow the lines laid down by scholars with special knowledge in this field²⁾. The date of composition can be determined only approximately. It seems almost certain that large passages must be attributed to an editor who lived after the completion of the Babylonian Talmud, that is after c. 500 A.D. The first four sections, however, manifestly date from a "much earlier period"³⁾. "From their contents they may have been an independent collection already in existence at the time of the Tannaim"⁴⁾. Thus there are reasons to which we shall return immediately for dating our passage earlier than 200 A.D.

Turning to the text itself, our passage is addressed to תלמידי חכמים as a general catalogue of virtues which they are expected to exhibit. The words concerned are: זריו וממולה. זריו means industrious⁵⁾. ממולה is an infrequently used participle pu'al of the Hebrew verb מלח, to salt. The pi'el, which, however, is never found, would carry a reflexive sense and would have to be rendered "to salt oneself". The participle pu'al, accordingly, must be translated by "salem habere"⁶⁾ or, perhaps, more exactly, by "having been salted oneself". This word must be understood metaphorically⁷⁾, since otherwise it would be meaningless. The best rendering would, perhaps, be "sagacious", "wise" or "bright". Thus we may translate: A disciple of Scribes should be industrious and bright.

¹⁾ A. Tawrogī, *Der talmudische Tractat Derech Erez Sutta*, Königsberg 1885, S. 1.

²⁾ Cf. L. Ginzberg, in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York and London 1903, Vol. IV, p. 528-530; H. L. Strack, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midraš*, 5. Aufl., München 1921, S. 73f.

³⁾ L. Ginzberg, *op. cit.*, p. 529; cf. also A. Tawrogī, *op. cit.*, S. III.

⁴⁾ L. Ginzberg, *ib.*

⁵⁾ Cf. M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*, London and New York, Vol. I (1895), p. 413.

⁶⁾ Cf. J. Levy, *Neuhebräisches und Chaldäisches Wörterbuch über Talmudim und Midraschim*, Bd. III, Leipzig 1853, S. 126.

⁷⁾ Cf. J. Levy, *op. cit.*, III, S. 126; M. Jastrow, *op. cit.*, II (1903), p. 788.

It becomes evident that this rendering is not merely possible, but is required, when we consider another passage in which these words occur in the same order and in the same forms¹): R. J^ehūdā (c. 200 A.D.) says: "If his son is industrious and bright (זריז וממולח), the study of the Tora by the son has precedence over its study by his father"²). The repeated occurrence of these words, and especially the remarkable form ממולח, strongly suggests that these words belong to a fixed and, presumably, frequently recorded order of instructions for disciples of the Tora³) who are to be ordained.

A third passage in which these words occur in the same context is to be found in another uncanonical treatise, Kallā rabbāṭī⁴). The passage concerned is to be regarded as a commentary on the text which we found in Der. 'Er. Z. The Bāraitōt give the wording of the code of instruction⁵) in exactly the same order and in the same words of Der. 'Er. Z. Their respective G^emārōt comment briefly upon them.

The Bār. reads: זריז וממולח. Here the word ממולח is used⁶). The G^emārā', however, suggests that other authorities read ממולח: איכא דאמרי [plur.] ממולח [sing.] איכא דאמר ממולח. This is confirmed by the words following in the text, which say that the k^etīḥ is ממולח. The word is explained as follows: ת"ח [= תלמיד] חכמים. First we find the same words as in Der. 'Er. Z.⁷); then the passage runs: "and he should not be like a cooking-pot in which is no salt". The words under consideration are ascribed here again to R. J^ehūdā⁸).

These considerations hint at the same time at the early origin of our words. They seem to confirm the tentative suggestion of L. Ginzberg that we should regard the oldest parts of the treatise Der. 'Er. Z. as the מגלת חסידים, the certainly very old "scroll of the pious" mentioned in 'Āḥōt de-Rabbi Nāṭān⁹).

¹) Kidd. 29b.

²) Cf. also the English translation in: The Babylonian Talmud, ed. I. Epstein, Seder Nashim, London 1936, p. 141.

³) It might be worth mentioning that the words שפל רוח occur once more in Der. 'Er. Z., cap. II (S. 14), and in the same connection in Kallā rabbāṭī (cf. note 4), which confirms the view that the wording of the introductory instruction of Der. 'Er. Z. is taken from a relatively fixed pattern.

⁴) מסכת כלה רבתי (Editio Wilna [Rom], Vol XIV [1927]), cap. III, fol. 52c. d.

⁵) Ib. fol. 52c, line 69: זריז וממולח: דרכן של תלמידי חכמים ענין ושפל רוח זריז וממולח.

⁶) Some manuscripts of Der. 'Er. Z. also read ממולח (from מלא) instead of ממולח.

⁷) Fol. 52c, line 69ff.

⁸) Ib. line 69.

⁹) Ed. Schechter, Aboth de-Rabbi Nathan, Wien 1887, cap. XXVI, S. 52. Here it is said: במגלת חסידים: אומר אם רוצה את להדבק לך אהוב הוי גושא גותן בטובתו.

It appears very probable that this scroll, as we find it in Der. 'Er. Z. (cap. 1), contained instructions for the conduct of life and the "ways" in which to walk as a disciple of the Tora intended for the Pharisaic members of the circles of Scribes¹). An early origin of these orders is made probable by the further fact that the utterance of R. J^ehūdā hannāsi in Kidd. 29b referred to above has to be dated about 200 A.D. Moreover, R. J^ehūdā is obviously using a fixed terminus technicus which must have been well known at that time. There is, therefore, in my opinion no bar to antedating the origin of the pattern of these instructions to the New Testament age. Indeed, all evidence suggests an early date of origin.

II

Before applying these results to Mk. 9,50b, I would give some of the most common explanations of this verse: "The salt is the Christian message, and its programme of peace and love"²); or: in order "to keep the peace . . . they (the disciples) must have in themselves the purifying salt of true Christian charity and readiness for sacrifice"³). Again it has been suggested, as another explanation, the "salt" should be a metaphor for "göttliche Kraft und Weihe, wie etwa die Tora dem Salz gleicht"⁴). And a further proposal regards the salt as "the word of God judging all mankind"⁵), according to the Rabbinic saying "the Tora equals the salt"⁶).

On the basis of the principles suggested above for interpreting a metaphorical term, which require one to find a corresponding expression and not merely a more or less similar thought within the environment, I would understand the words ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἄλα in the sense of ממלח, to be bright. Two considerations add weight to this suggestion:

1. The *context* shows that Mark himself understood this saying as a part of Jesus' teaching to his disciples. According to Mk. 9,35 Jesus

¹) This suggestion is confirmed by a passage in Der. 'Er. Z. cap. IV (S. 22), where it is said: "The disciples of Scribes (תלמידי חכמים) behave decently in company—but the עמי הארץ do not so". The opposition against the 'am hā-'ārec is, as is well known, a specific feature of Pharisaic circles.

²) B. H. Branscomb, *The Gospel of Mark* (Moffat), London 1937, p. 175.

³) A. E. J. Rawlinson, *St. Mark* (Westminster Comm.), London 1925, p. 131; cf. also E. P. Gould, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (I. C. C.), Edinburgh 1897, p. 182.

⁴) E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (H. A. W. Meyer), 10. Aufl., Göttingen 1937, S. 197.

⁵) P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, Bd. II, München 1924, S. 23. Cf. also J. Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (N. T. Deutsch), 5. Aufl., Göttingen 1949, S. 132.

⁶) Sōp^erīm XX, 8: תורה כמלח. This treatise, however, has to be used especially carefully, because few sources and authorities have been quoted in it and its final redaction has to be dated rather late. (Cf. L. Blau, in: *The Jewish Encyclop.*, Vol. IX, p. 427f. and H. L. Strack, op. cit., S. 72f.).

sat down¹) and called the Twelve around Him and spoke to them. Here Mk. begins a discourse of Jesus to the disciples alone on several subjects; this continues to 10,1, where it is said καὶ ἀναστὰς. Accordingly, the first coincidence between the text of Mk., Der. 'Er. Z., Kallā and also Ḳidd. is that we find in each case the metaphor "salt" occurring in instructions concerning discipleship.

2. The *text* itself yields perhaps a further clue. For the second half of Mk. 9,50b (καὶ εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἀλλήλοις) resembles the continuation of the passage in Der. 'Er. Z.: They should be suffering insult and should be liked by all men; in the words of our passage: they should have peace with all men. There does not seem to be a logical connection between the two thoughts, as exegetes often like to see in this saying. They are mentioned in juxtaposition merely because they were combined in Rabbinic instructions for disciples of the Tora too.

Thus, comparing the Rabbinic form מוּלַי with ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἄλα we see this to be a case of literal translation of a Hebrew word into Greek. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the Primitive Church takes as a basis a written form of a Rabbinic code.

The interpretation of the salt-metaphor here advanced is, interestingly, confirmed by documents of the Eastern and Western Churches²). For the connection between "salt" and "wisdom" in the Eastern Church we turn to Ephrem the Syrian: (1) "The prophet's sweet salt (מֶלַח) is scattered to-day among the Gentiles. Let us gain a new savour (טַעַמָא)³ by that by which the ancient people lost their savour. Let us speak the speech of wisdom (פּוֹרְשׁוֹנָא)⁴". (2) ". . . and the hundred and fifty Psalms that he (David) wrote, in you (Jesus) were seasoned (מִדְּךָ), because all the sayings of prophecy stood in need of your sweetness, for without your salt (מֶלַחְךָ) all manner of wisdom (חֻכְמַתָא) were tasteless (פּוֹכָה)⁵"⁶. (3) ". . . it is by his (Jesus') salt that the foolish have lost their savour (בְּמִלְחָה פּוֹכָה שְׂכֵלָא)⁷".

¹) The sitting down (יּוֹשֵׁב) and the lecturing (דּוֹרֵשׁ) are associated with the Jewish method of teaching in Rabbinic schools (cf. e. g. Lev. r. 16 [116b]; Midr. Cant. 1,10 [91b]; p. B^er. 4, 7d, 4) and Synagogues (cf. Lk. 4,20; Mt. 26,55).

²) I am much indebted to the Rev. R. Symonds, B. A., M. A., Theological College Lincoln (England), who kindly called my attention to the following references.

³) טַעַמָא 1. gustus, 2. prudentia (cf. C. Brockelmann, Lexicon syriacum, Edinburgh and Berlin 1895, p. 137).

⁴) Ephraem Syri opera omnia (Graece, Syriace, Latine), ed. S. G. Assemanus, Roma, Vol. II (1740), p. 401, line 7-3 from the bottom.—Cf. J. Morris, Select Works of St. Ephrem the Syrian, Oxford 1847, p. 8 (1st Rhythm).

⁵) פּוֹכָה 1. nullum saporem habuit, 2. evanuit memoria (cf. C. Brockelmann, op. cit., p. 271).

⁶) Ed. Assemanus, Vol. II, p. 428, line 5ff. from the bottom; cf. J. B. Morris, op. cit., p. 49 (10th Rhythm).

⁷) Ed. Assemanus, Vol. III (1743), p. 95, line 19 from the bottom; cf. J. B. Morris,

I think that we can see a dim reflection of the connection of thought between salt and wisdom also in a traditional formula in the Western Church. It seems to be preserved in the so called Gelasian Sacramentary I, 31¹⁾. This liber sacramentorum was probably composed in the seventh, or in the early years of the eighth century²⁾. Here it is said: "Et post hanc orationem ponis sal in ore infantis et dicis: Accipe N.N. *sal sapientiae* propitiatus in vitam aeternam". Although the prayers which precede and follow this do not reveal that the authors of the sacramentary knew about the connection between salt and wisdom, it is very probable that the old association is reflected in the formula. Traditional formulae often preserve old ideas which otherwise lost currency.

III

Having suggested a new interpretation of Mk. 9,50b, we are committed to a new approach to all the other passages in which the metaphor "salt" occurs. We shall first consider the Markan version, after which we shall turn to Luke's text, then Matthew's, and finally we shall ask whether our explanation could also apply to Col. 4,6.

1.

In the passage about salt in Mk. 9,49-50 the first verse is one of the most difficult sentences in the New Testament. "Célèbre crux interpretum. Comment peut-on être salé au feu? Et quel rapport a cet étrange axiôme avec ce qui précède?"³⁾

a.

Before turning to the text itself, we must consider its context. The instruction given by Jesus to His disciples is either a composition by Mark himself or a part of the tradition which he is using. The sentences are single sayings more or less inconsequentially strung together but connected by key-words⁴⁾. This observation of a purely external

op. cit., p. 273f. (52nd Rhythm). It may be noted, that the Pešitta in Mt. 5,13 not only reads the word מלח but also פכה.

¹⁾ Cf. H. A. Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary, Liber Sacramentorum Ecclesiae Romae*, Oxford 1894, p. 47; L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship, its Origin and Evolution*, transl. by M. L. McClure, 5th edition, London 1919, p. 297.

²⁾ Cf. H. A. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. XVII and LIff.

³⁾ P. L. Couchoud, *Notes de Critique sur St. Marc et St. Matthieu*, in: *Journal of Theol. Stud.*, Vol. XXXIV (1933), p. 124.

⁴⁾ Cf. the commentaries.

connection between the parts of the passage entitles us to try to interpret any given saying without regard to its context.

b.

The enigmatic verse 49 (πᾶς γὰρ πυρὶ ἀλισθήσεται) does not make sense if we connect it with the preceding thought about the fire of Hell. It must be a disconnected saying¹). We need not repeat the greatly differing variants of v. 49²). At any rate, the suggestion that the original reading was πᾶσα δὲ οὐσία ἀναλωθήσεται³) does not appear tenable.

Four reasons weigh against this suggestion: 1. These words could not be connected with both the preceding and the following verses through key-words, which we have seen to be the method by which Mk. puts together Jesus' instruction to the disciples. 2. Οὐσία is never used in the New Testament in this rather metaphysical and Hellenistic sense (cf. Lk. 15,12). 3. The proposed version is too immediately intelligible. This makes it suspicious. For according to a reasonable exegetical principle it is unlikely that the text, originally so simple, should have been mutilated as the result of misunderstanding or a copyist's error in almost all the versions preserved. 4. Only one Latin manuscript, an African version from the fourth or fifth century, suggests the reading under discussion.

We must try, then, to discover the meaning of the lectio difficillima: πᾶς γὰρ πυρὶ ἀλισθήσεται⁴). There seems to be no difficulty in understanding this verse when it is detached from the preceding verses. The γὰρ, admittedly, might suggest that πῦρ here, as in the antecedent verses, means the *punishing fire* of Hell. This, however, can not be drawn from the text. The sense is that everyone has to go through the *purifying fire* of God's chastisements⁵).

¹) So far as I can see, this has been discerned by A. E. J. Rawlinson, op. cit., p. 131; E. Klostermann, Das Markus-Evangelium (Lietzmann), 2. Aufl., Tübingen 1926, S. 109; A. Fridrichsen, Würzung mit Feuer in: Symbolae Osloensis, Fasc. IV (1926), p. 36; and J. Jeremias, Unbekannte Jesusworte, Zürich 1948, S. 50.

²) Cf. P. L. Couchoud, op. cit.

³) Ib.; agreed by E. Lohmeyer, op. cit., S. 197.

⁴) The other variant readings are equally lectiones faciliores. Above this, the key-word (πῦρ) is missing in the text of D it (πᾶσα γὰρ θυσία ἅλι ἀλισθήσεται; cf. Lev. 2,13 and Num. 18,19); and the reading of ACΘKlat (πᾶς γὰρ [ἐν C] πυρὶ ἀλισθήσεται [ἀναλωθήσεται Θ] καὶ πᾶσα θυσία ἅλι ἀλισθήσεται) turns out to be a secondary conflation of two variant readings (cf. A. Fridrichsen, op. cit., p. 38; cf. also below p. 173)

⁵) A. Fridrichsen, p. 36—38, suggests the interpretation of "fire" as a seasoning.

In confirmation of our view we may reflect on two questions: (a) The connection of "salt" and chastisement, and (b) the association between "fire" and chastisement.

With regard to (a): The salt-metaphor can bear the meaning of a purifying and preserving power. The chastisements are intended to purify and preserve the believers in order that they may be acceptable before God at the last judgement, in like matter as the salt makes the sacrifice acceptable before God in Jewish cultus:

R. Šim'ōn b. Lākiš (c. 250 A.D.) has said¹): "The word 'covenant' is connected with 'salt' and 'chastisements'; cf. Lev. 2,13: Never leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your cereal-offering, and Ez. 20,37²): I will cause you to come under the chastisement of the covenant. As in the case of 'covenant' and 'salt', the salt makes the sacrifice meet (to be offered), so in 'covenant' and 'chastisement' the chastisement makes the sin meet (to be forgiven); as the salt purifies the flesh so the chastisements purify the whole body of man".

With regard to (b): It is important to distinguish between the punishing fire of Hell after the last judgement and the purifying fire of the time of temptation prior to the last judgement. That man who passes successfully through the trial by fire before the consummation will not be thrown into the fire of Hell.

We shall now deal briefly with "fire" as a purifying agency. In Judaism we find this idea attaching to the metaphor "fire" as well as to that of "salt"³).

Rabbinic literature ascribes to the fire, according to Num. 31,23⁴), a purifying effect: "He who buys useful objects from a gentile must . . . heat thoroughly in fire (before using them) what usually will be thoroughly heated"⁵). In Sanh.

agency. Yet the Hellenistic parallels he refers to are not convincing enough to follow this understanding. They speak of the fire as necessary for preparing meals rather than seasoning them. Moreover, the whole passage suggests a Semitic background of thinking.

¹) B^r. 5a (the unshortened text as it is found in *Dikdūḳē Sōp^erīm* [W. Bacher, *Die Agada der palästinischen Amoräer*, Strassburg, I (1892), S. 355]); cf. P. Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, I, S. 235.

²) Cf. W. Bacher, *ib.*

³) Cf. P. Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, II, S. 20f.

⁴) Num. 31,23: "Everything that can stand fire, you must put that through fire to cleanse it".

⁵) 'Ab. Zārā 5,12; cf. also 'Ab. Zārā 75b (Bār.); 'Ab. Zārā 76a; S. Num. 31,23 §158 (60b).

39a is mentioned the cleansing bath of fire which God had undergone after having buried Moses.

In the New Testament we find several passages for the interpretation of which it is illuminating to distinguish between the fire-metaphor used for the punishing fire after the last judgement and the purifying fire prior to that judgement.

The following are the principle examples: (1) When Jesus says: "I have come to throw fire on earth, would that it were kindled already" (Lk. 12,49), he was thinking of the purifying fire before the judgement rather than of the punishing and final fire. The words mean: I wished that the last time had begun already. (2) 1. Pt. 1,7¹⁾. (3) Only the meaning of purifying fire gives a satisfactory sense to 1. Cor. 3,13–15. (4) Finally, I would refer in this connection to the agraphon recorded by Origen²⁾: The saviour himself says: "He that is near me, is near the fire. He that is far from me, is far from the kingdom". Certainly, this saying speaks about the purifying fire or, as J. Jeremias says, the "eschatological fire"³⁾.

We must interpret Mk. 9,49 along the same lines. If it is asked, "comment peut-on être salé au feu?"⁴⁾, we now can answer: The metaphor "salt" and the metaphor "fire" are alternative expressions for the purification through divinely ordained suffering and persecution⁵⁾. Thus, the words *καὶ πᾶσα θυσία ἀλι ἀλισθήσεται*, appearing in some manuscripts, turn out to be a correct gloss.

c.

Finally, we turn to v. 50a: *καλὸν τὸ ἅλας · ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας ἀναλον γένηται, ἐν τίνι αὐτὸ ἀρτύσετε*; here again, numerous suggestions have been made to clarify these words. In arriving at an interpretation we must first consider the relation of this saying to its context. It seems impossible to maintain an organic connection of v. 50a with v. 49⁶⁾. Two considerations militate against this connection: Firstly,

¹⁾ These instances, with which Rev. 3,18 is to be compared, are noted by J. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, S. 50.

²⁾ Orig., In Jerem. Homil. XX, 3; cf. M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford 1924, p. 35; J. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, S. 49.

³⁾ J. Jeremias, *ib.*

⁴⁾ Cf. above p. 170 note 3.

⁵⁾ Although the common reading to be found in our editions of the Greek New Testament is free from objections either in grammar or in interpretation, I should like to suggest that the text of AC min. 1342 which read *πᾶς γὰρ ἐν (ᾗ?) πυρὶ ἀλισθήσεται* may be earlier.

⁶⁾ See, however, E. P. Gould, *op. cit.*, p. 181; E. Lohmeyer, *op. cit.*, S. 197; W. R. Hutton, *The Salt Sections*, in: *Expository Times*, Vol. LVIII (March 1947), p. 166–168.—W. R. Hutton, who regards *ἐν τίνι* as "a dative in the pregnant construction"

the saying is to be found in different contexts both in Matthew and in Luke; it is therefore an isolated logion. Secondly, in v. 50a—without any logical coherency—the reference is to something which is a possession of the disciples of Jesus¹). But the question is, is it peace, the Gospel, the Spirit, or something else? It is here that the interpretations differ.

The saying occurs in Rabbinic literature²). During a very subtle discussion between R. J^ehōšūa' b. Ḥānanjā (c. 90 A.D.) and the philosophers of the Atheneum in Rome, he tells them a fable about a mule that brought forth a young one. They ask him if it is possible for a mule to bear a foal. He replies: "This is after all a fable only". Then they ask: "If salt becomes savourless, with what can it be salted? (מִלַּחַץ כִּי סָרִיא בְּמֵאֵי מִלַּחֵי לֵה)". He answers: "With an after-birth of a mule". They ask him: "Has the mule an after-birth?" He returns: "Can salt become savourless?"

The usual interpretation of this Rabbinic passage is that R. J^ehōšūa' is making fun of the saying of Jesus, and in the view of the Rabbi "Israel is a salt that does not become insipid, and therefore stands in no need of seasoning, least of all by Jesus or his followers"³). This interpretation, however, seems to me to be perhaps questionable. For, firstly, there is—except for the coincidence of our quotation with the New Testament saying—no basis in the Rabbinic text itself for such an interpretation. At any rate, no Rabbinic scholar could have understood such an allusion if he had not been familiar with the saying in the Christian Gospel. Then, the Rabbinic passage itself constitutes a strong counter-argument against the presumption of anti-Christian polemics. For if we ask for the meaning of this curious dialogue, the only reply seems to be that the Rabbinic sentences display the absurdity of each other's arguments. Thus, it is not the necessity of seasoning⁴) but rather the *impossibility* of salt to lose its savour, that is expressed by the fable of the mule that brought forth and the saying about the unsalted salt. This Talmudic saying "has all the look of a proverbial phrase"⁵).

and accordingly suggests the rendering "but if the salt be unsavoury, what shall ye salt therewith", overlooks perhaps two facts: 1. The Rabbinic parallel that reveals clearly the dat. instrum.; 2. he seems to overlook that this suggestion cannot explain the αὐτό.

¹) A. E. J. Rawlinson, op. cit., p. 131; E. Klostermann, op. cit., S. 109; J. Schniewind, op. cit., S. 132.

²) B^ek. 8b.

³) T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, London 1949, p. 132; cf. P. Billerbeck, op. cit., Bd. I, S. 236; G. Kittel, *Die Probleme des palästinischen Judentums und das Urchristentum*, Stuttgart 1926, S. 123.

⁴) Cf. T. W. Manson, op. cit., p. 132.

⁵) I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, Vol. II, Cambridge 1924, p. 183.

But whether this interpretation of the Rabbinic passage is correct or not, it has no relevance to the interpretation of the saying of Jesus, because R. Je-hōšūa's use can tell us neither the sense in which Jesus himself intended it, nor what Mk. meant by putting it in connection with the instructions for the disciples. This, indeed, is what we have to try to find out.

That v. 50a at least must be connected with its context, has been recognized by all interpreters¹). Detached from the context the words of v. 50a could mean anything or nothing. Therefore, since the possibility of connecting them with v. 49 has provisionally been ruled out, we have to regard these words as attached to v. 50b: "be wise and be at peace with one another". One is naturally inclined to attach the metaphor "salt" in v. 50a to the meaning of "salet habere" in v. 50b. This can be confirmed by an unexpected circumstance. For in the parallel version of our saying (Mt. and Lk.) the word *μωραίνεσθαι* is employed, which in Greek usually denotes human characteristics (to be foolish) rather than qualities of things (to be savourless²); whereas in the Semitic version of our saying quoted above the word *כרי* is used, which is more commonly attached to qualities of things (savourless) than to human characteristics (foolish).

The word *μωραίνεσθαι* is used in Greek literature almost exclusively for "to be foolish, silly, stupid" and the like³). According to Liddell and Scott the adjective alone, *μωρός*, occurs three times with the alternative meaning "insipid, flat" in connection with taste⁴). In the New Testament we find approximately the same proportions: Out of 20 instances, where a word of the stem *μωρ-* occurs, only our two bear the alternative meaning "insipid, flat, savourless".

On the other hand we make a similar observation concerning the Aramaic equivalent (*כרי* or *כרא*) employed in the above quoted Rabbinic parallel. It is, however, significant that the proportion of the meanings "foolish" and "insipid" is reversed in the Aramaic. Words of the root *כרי* must usually be translated "insipid, savourless" etc. It can, however, carry also the meaning "foolish,

¹) Here the problem arises, whether we are at all entitled to connect v. 50a with v. 50b. For, it is true, the parallel versions of Mt. and Lk. are lacking the words of Mk. 9,50b. This question can, however, not be answered a priori. The further results of this essay may grant us, as it seems, a positive answer. If it can be shown, that Mt. and Lk. follow a similar trace of thought to the Markan version, then we are entitled to interpret Mk. 9,50a as well as Lk. 14,34f. and Mt. 5,13 on the background of the advanced interpretation of Mk. 9,50b.

²) Since Mk. (*ἀναλον γίνεσθαι*) has here the better Greek expression, the form of Mt. and Lk. is likely to be the more original.

³) Cf. H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, New edition by H. St. Jones, Oxford, Vol. II (1940), p. 1158f.

⁴) *Comica Adespota* 956 (ed. O. Schroeder); *Diocles Medicus*, fragm. 138 (ed. M. Wellmann); *Dioscorides*, *De materia medica* 4,19 (ed. M. Wellmann).

unwise or stupid"¹). There is another Hebrew verb to which the same features apply: תפל. The interesting conjecture advanced by Lightfoot and M. Black²) comes to a similar conclusion. These scholars want to see as the basis of μωραίνεσθαι the Hebrew תפל, which also signifies "unsavoury" or "foolish".

Now, why did the translators use the word μωραίνεσθαι in connection with "salt"—a most striking way, indeed, to put it? The answer cannot be difficult after all that has been said: They were anxious to maintain the background of the saying according to which "savourless" and "foolish", "salt" and "wisdom" were associated.

Mk. 9,50a does not reveal so clearly this background, because ἀναλον γίνεσθαι is used instead of μωραίνεσθαι. However, verse 50b confirms that the same thought stands behind the composition of Mk. 9,50a and b. The saying of Jesus refers (according to Mk.) to the wisdom of His disciples: As it is impossible that salt loses its savour—so it is impossible for them to lose the wisdom of the elect unless they lose their discipleship as well. As savourless salt is no longer salt—so a foolish disciple of Jesus is no longer His disciple. Therefore: be wise and be at peace with one another.

We ask, what kind of wisdom is meant here? Certainly it is not the intellectual σοφία of the Greeks. It is, as often in Judaism, an active and practical wisdom, a knowledge that is worked out in acts. In our passage, Mk. 9,50, it is the eschatological wisdom. It means the wisdom of the disciples of Jesus which is lived out, realized in their religious attitude, in their faith and in their conduct of life, keeping in mind the last events to come. We may compare for instance Mt. 10,16 and Eph. 5,15f.³). The wisdom which is required in both of these instructions for discipleship shows one how to conduct his life in the eschatological time. Perhaps now we can say that there is also an organic connection of thought between Mk. 9,49 and 50: The eschatological events should condition the life of Jesus' disciples.

2.

The other Synoptic versions can be considered very briefly. Firstly, the saying occurs in Lk. 14,34–35. Luke or his tradition clearly attaches the same association of ideas to the use of the metaphorical term "salt" as we found it in the Markan version.

¹) Targ. Koh. 10,1: תפלי חכמים (i. e. "he makes the wise man stupid").

²) M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, Oxford 1946, p. 123f.

³) Cf. also below p. 177 f.

Here again we have an instruction of Jesus about discipleship (cf. 14,26). The saying about the wise builder of the tower and the wise king lead up to the saying v. 33: "So with everyone of you, who will not part with all his goods—he cannot be a disciple of mine". The passage 14,28–33 concerns the wisdom of Jesus' disciples, the wisdom in view of the eschatological events. Accordingly, the explanation of the salt-metaphor advanced here is fully applicable to the Lukan parallel¹).

3.

Matthew, in 5,13, employs the salt-saying, but gives it a different meaning. He applies it to Jesus' disciples personally: You are the salt. This divergence of Matthew compared with the other two Synoptics is, however, not surprising in face of the fact that Matthew sometimes goes his own way, especially in composing the discourses, using the recorded sayings for his own purpose.

It seems to me, that Matthew's interpretation of the saying of Jesus about salt differs not so much from the understanding found in Mk. and Lk. as one is inclined to assume at first sight. K. Bornhäuser²) advanced the suggestive observation that the sayings in Mt. 5,13 and 14 begin with the emphasized *ὑμεῖς*: *You are the salt of the earth! You are the light of the world!* The Sermon on the Mount has to be understood in the light of a strong opposition to the Scribes and Pharisees. Not *they* are the salt of the earth, not *they* are the light of the world, but the disciples are the salt and the light. So, Jesus calls his disciples the real teachers, the true wise men³) in opposition to the Jewish wise men (חכמים=γραμματεῖς). Comparing v. 13b with v. 15 we can say: As savourless salt is no salt any longer and, therefore, useless, good for nothing, and as a lamp put under a bushel gives no light any longer and is, therefore, useless and good for nothing—so a disciple who is not "seasoned" and "bright" is useless and good for nothing. So, we recognize in Mt. 5,13ff. two short parables with one and the same scope.

Interestingly enough, we find a similar combination of "light" and "wisdom" in Eph. 5,8ff. which seems to confirm our interpretation of Mt. 5,13ff.: Walk as

¹) For Lk. 14, 35a cf. F. Perles, in: Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft XIX (1920), S. 96; T. W. Manson, op. cit., p. 132.

²) K. Bornhäuser, Die Bergpredigt, in: Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie II/7, 2. Aufl., Gütersloh 1927, S. 45.

³) Ib. p. 48.

children of light (v. 8) . . . Look therefore carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise (v. 15). The περιπατεῖν (Ἰβη) reveals again a Christian H^olāḱā of discipleship with regard to the eschatological situation (v. 16: redeeming the time, because the days are evil).

4.

Finally, we find the metaphor "salt" in Col. 4,6: Ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι, ἅλατι ἠρτυμένος, εἰδέναι πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἑκάστῳ ἀποκρίνεσθαι. These words also are regarded by commentators as difficult and mysterious. The interpretations so far advanced differ from one another and tend to be somewhat vague.

These words, and indeed the whole passage receive, as it seems to me, new light, when we apply the metaphor "salt"="wisdom" to Col. 4,6. That is to say, Col. 3,1-4,6 is also an instruction for believers. These codes of instructions for disciples of Jesus and the ordinary Christians certainly originate in those Jewish orders of instruction quoted at the beginning of this paper.

As translation of Col. 4,6 I suggest: "Your talk should always be with grace, it should be wise, and you should learn how to answer every man". Here again we find, as in Mk., Der. 'Er. Z., and Kallā rabbāṭī, after the metaphor 'seasoned with salt' an instruction about personal relations and attitudes. These thoughts are linked together throughout the various traditions. The connection with the preceding verse is evident and confirms our suggestion: ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε πρὸς τοὺς ἕξω. And again the eschatological situation is indicated: τὸν καιρὸν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι.

The *result* of this investigation of the sayings containing the salt-metaphor in the New Testament is: 1. a surprising constancy of the Jewish tradition of instructions for disciples of the Tora, continued in the Early Church as instructions for the Twelve and for all the members of the Christian congregations; 2. the clarification of the association of "salt", "fire" and chastisement through suffering. And 3. a key has appeared for the interpretation of the salt-metaphor in Mk., Lk., Mt., and Col., the key being *wisdom in the time of fulfilment*.

In the instruction to the Christians according to Col. 3,16 it is said: The word of Christ should dwell in you abundantly, with all wisdom.