

TRANSITORINESS AND FINIS as, respectively,  
the linear and punctiliar modes of sense-making about time-passage...Elliott #1300  
2.79

1. Amos Wilder's doctoral thesis (1932) proved that Jesus strands together a time-less wisdom and an apocalyptic intensity: he was both Wise One and fiery Prophet of the End-Time. As these contrapuntal messages lie deep in my own heart and lie open in my ministry (with a variety of moods to fit the modes, making me unsimple to understand), this thinksheet takes Joachim Jeremias' agraphon #20 (the last of the "unwritten"-in-the-canonical-Gospels sayings of Jesus, in his UNKNOWN SAYINGS OF JESUS [SPCK/64]) and expounds it by this dual criterion as authentic, whereas J.J. rejects it because it fails to refer to one of the two strands (117): "There is no reason why Jesus should not have taken up and used this crisp maxim, Be sojourners. Live like transients. But it is not very likely, especially in view of the absence of any eschatological features." His language is crabbed, for after saying "There is no reason" he gives a reason, and that in his mind a sufficient reason for concluding that the saying is not dominical in origin.

2. In a tape I made of Viktor Frankl in 1952, this sentence is the first: "We fail to provide our lives with meaning if, instead of contemplating the full granaries of the past, we set our attention upon the stubblefield of transitoriness." *Tempus fugit* (the Roman Stoic "Time flees," used actively as incentive and passively for soul-resignation) and *Omnia mutantur* (the Greek, here in Latin, cool observation that "All things change," sometimes mottoed as "This, too, will pass") is Jesus' minor mode, and he usually uses it in some time-context (as Is.40's "All flesh is as grass"). As I age, my appreciation for this quiet, meditative, accepting set of soul grows, providing me with a profounder power of distancing, a truer skill of setting the moment in the year and the year in eternity--not just for myself, but for those with whom I live and minister. As messianism is youth's temptation (to be a fiery prophet of the end-time, driven by urgency), philosophism is age's (to be a wise one smiling Buddhalike at the passing scene). The Gospel holds engagement and detachment in tension: Lord, may I ever!

3. Here, now, is my reconstruction of the history of logion (agrapion) #20:

(1) In the pre-Jesus Jewish Wisdom tradition we humans are often called strangers and sojourners upon earth. E.g., Ps.119.19,54; 1Chron.29.15; Lev.25.23; Ps.39.12; Wis.2.5, 5.9.

(2) Jesus doubtless picked up from (1) gems on transitoriness, giving them his own flavor and (usually) his eschatological dynamic. Here are some exx. from the center of L.: 12.20; 16.9,19,27f. Live life forward, as probationary, as soon over (whether from the eschaton or one's own death) and as having future-life (this-worldly/other-worldly, this-age/next-age) consequences. And (Mt.6.21) travel light, not clinging to earthly treasures. I think he used the expression "Be sojourners" (logion 24 in Gospel of Thomas, probably the earliest form of the maxim: "Become passers-by"--live your life as passing through rather than as settling down--an Arabic Muslim form adding, "knowing that the root of all sins is the love of the world"--both Islamic and Christian tradition attributing the saying to Jesus, and Jewish tradition to "a philosopher"). See L.12.40: "Be on guard." Another tradition adds "The world is like a transition" [*transitus*; cf. what a monk says as he scatters faded roses before the pope: *Sic transit gloria mundi*, "So passes the world's glory"].

(3) Taking such sayings of Jesus, early Christian prophets ran metaphorical expatiations on them. One such metaphor is the bridge, as this carved into a new mosque (AD1601) in India: "Jesus...has said: *The world is a bridge. Pass over it. But build not your dwelling there.*" (A Jewish version: "do not stay on it.") (Cf. Transcultural Allegory "The Bridge.") Gnostics picked it up, and thus Gos.Thomas' "Become passers-by." While the bridge metaphor warns us against settling down, a Jewish takeoff from the Wis.lit. uses the antechamber metaphor: prepare! ...Cf. Heb.3f, 11.10, 13; 13.14 ("no lasting city"); 1P.2.11....The antechamber metaphor connects with Jesus' feast-figure, as to those invited/accepted/refused (Mt.22.11-13; 25.11f).