CHAPTER THIRTEEN

7Q5—STATUS QUAESTIONIS AND FUNDAMENTAL REMARKS TO QUALIFY THE DISCUSSION OF THE PAPYRUS FRAGMENT*

When the findings from those caves with only a few scrolls were published in 1962 (2–3Q, 5–10Q), nobody suspected that years later the presence of a papyrus fragment with two verses of the Gospel of Mark would be maintained. The purpose of this study is twofold: (I) after a presentation of the status quaestionis that is as neutral as possible those proposals for identifying the text of the papyrus fragment are critically assessed, which proposals determine the recent discussion. (II) With the help of fundamental palaeographical and general papyrological notes to be made at the appropriate places, the discussion of 7Q5 (and, thus, of other heavily fragmentary remnants of manuscripts) should be had on a firm base, objectified, and consequently be seen in neutral terms.

1. A summary of the Proposals for Identifying the Fragments from Cave 7

Only for 7Q there is an exclusive and strikingly characteristic connection between papyrus as writing material and the Greek language. First of all, only some of the papyrus fragments found in 7Q and the textual


2 See, for instance, Ekschmitt, Ugarit–Qumran–Nag Hammadi, 172: “Du aber sei in allem nüchtern” (‘But in regard you should be sober’) directed at the supporters of the identification; Thiede, The Earliest Gospel Manuscript?, 24 and Hunger, 7Q5, 39: “Weil, so schließt er messerscharf, nicht sein kann, was nicht sein darf” (‘For, he reasons pointedly, that which must not, can not be’) using a poem by Morgenstern against the opponents of the identification. For further examples, see Rohrhirsch, ‘Zur Relevanz’, 81–2. About the contributions in Mayer, Christen und Christliches, see Backhaus, ‘Qumran und die Urchristen’, 364–8.

3 It has repeatedly been claimed that academic interaction should be based on objectivity and fairness. Cf. Pickering, The Identity, 145; Rohrhirsch, ‘Zur Relevanz’, 81–82; De La Potterie, ‘Eine unerwartete Bestätigung’, 58; Spottorno, ‘Can Methodological Limits’, 66–8, 77.
remains reprinted on the hardened soil (7Q19) could be identified and reconstructed: 7Q1 (fragment 1 = Exod 28:4–6; frg. 2 = Exod 28:7; thus, 7Q1 = 7QpapLXXExod) and 7Q2 (Ep Jer 43b, 44; thus, 7Q2 = 7QpapEpJer gr). All the other fragments were presented in the familiar way in the editio princeps with critical transcriptions and accompanying facsimiles.⁴

Then the Spanish Jesuit José O’Callaghan made proposals for identifying 7Q4–7, 7Q9–10, and 7Q15 ten years after the first edition had been published,⁵ which immediately aroused debate and above all⁶ met with rejection of his proposals.⁷ O’Callaghan attempted to substantiate his hypotheses (especially in regard to 7Q4 and 7Q5) in consecutive special studies and to reply to objections.⁸ Here are his proposals for identifying the fragments in detail:⁹

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⁹ However, he himself differentiates between identifications “possibles” (7Q10, 7Q15 due to the few letters left) and “probables” (all the others). Cf. O’Callaghan, “¿Papiros neotestamentarios…?”, 92 n. 1; idem, ‘Tres probables papiros neotestamentarios’, 84–9; idem, ‘Les Papyrus de la grotte 7’, 188, 193; idem, Los Papiros Griegos, 34–76.