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THE *DIALOGUE OF THE SAVIOR* AND THE MYSTICAL SAYINGS OF JESUS¹

BY

APRIL D. DE CONICK

*Dedicated to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday and Jarl Fossum
on the Occasion of his 50th Birthday*

The critical and careful research of H. Koester and E. Pagels on the *Dialogue of the Savior* established that this text is based on a sayings source closely related to the older sayings tradition which appears in the *Gospel of Thomas*.² This conclusion is built on the acknowledgement that the *Dialogue* attempts to provide an interpretation of Jesus' sayings, seeming to satisfy the demand of Logion 1 of *Thomas*:

Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death.³

Many of the sayings in the *Dialogue* closely resemble sayings found in the *Gospel of Thomas*. In addition, Koester and Pagels show that the sayings in the *Dialogue* seem to be structured thematically in response to Logion 2 of *Thomas* (P. Oxy. 654):

Let him who [seeks] not pause [until] he finds. When he finds, [he shall marvel]. When he [marvels], he shall rule. [When he has ruled, he shall rest].⁴

Thus, it is plausible to conclude from their analysis that the *Dialogue of the Savior* has a close structural relationship with *Thomas* or one of its sources.

But what about theological ties? Is there evidence that the author of the *Dialogue* is creating a commentary in response to the type of soteriology associated with the *Gospel of Thomas*? It is the thesis of this paper that the evidence suggests that the proper religio-historical context for the *Dialogue* is the early Christian discussion which surrounded the mystical soteriological scheme popularized by the early Thomas Christians. This scheme taught that it is necessary to ascend into heaven and seek a *visio Dei* which will transform the mystic into his original immortal state and grant him citizenship in the Kingdom.⁵

This scheme has been influenced by mystical notions not uncommon in first-century Jewish esoteric circles. These notions focus on ascent, vision, and transformation such as are expressed in the Jewish

apocalyptic literature⁶ and in the writings of the Jewish theologian Philo of Alexandria.⁷

Esoteric Hermetic teachings about “the way of immortality” (*Disc. Eig. Nin.* 63.10-11) which is the ascent to, encounter with, and absorption into God,⁸ also impacted this soteriological paradigm which was fostered by the Thomas Christians.⁹ This is historically plausible now that J.-P. Mahé has demonstrated that the Hermetic sayings in the Armenian and Greek *Definitions* predate the second century treatises in the *Corpus Hermeticum*.¹⁰

One of the most significant sayings which reflects this scheme is Logion 59 of the *Gospel of Thomas* where Jesus literally commands his followers to be mystics:

Look at the Living One while you are alive, lest you die and then seek to see him and you will be unable to see (him).¹¹

This Logion blantly states that the consequences of *not* achieving the *visio Dei* during the mystic’s lifetime is ineluctable death. The transformation from the human to the divine can only occur through the pre-mortem visionary experience, which is the direct encounter with the deity (cf. L. 108).

So, according to Logion 24, the disciples beg Jesus to “show us the place where you are, since it is necessary for us to seek it”. And, in Logia 49-50, Jesus provides his disciples with the proper knowledge regarding their origins and identity so that they can successfully return to the divine world, ascending past the angelic guards posted at the entrances to the successive heavenly spheres (cf. L. 11).

Once one enters the divine throne room, one must follow the proper etiquette of worship as Jesus explains in Logion 15:

When you see the one who was not born of woman, prostrate yourselves on your faces and worship him. That one is your Father.¹²

This etiquette is based on the foundational text in the Jewish mystical tradition, Ezekiel 1:26-28 where the prophet sees seated upon a heavenly throne, “the likeness at it were of a man (רמאות כמראה אדם)”. He describes “the appearance of the likeness of the Glory (כבוד) of the Lord” to be that of a shining man of light. When he gazes on the Glory, the *Kavod*,¹³ he exclaims that “I fell upon my face” (cf. *1 Enoch* 14.24; *2 Enoch* 22.4).

God’s *Kavod*, however, can only be seen by prepared mystics. Other-

wise it is hidden from view,¹⁴ enshrouded with light (*I Enoch* 14.20ff.; *2 Enoch* 22; Philo, *De fuga* 165). So we find in Logion 83:

It [the light] will become manifest, but his [the Father's] image will remain concealed by his light.¹⁵

Jesus reveals in the *Gospel of Thomas* that it is necessary to prepare for the visionary ascent experience by voluntarily becoming an encratite¹⁶ and observing at least portions of Torah teaching. So Logion 27 reads:

If you do not fast from the world, you will not find the Kingdom. If you do not observe Sabbath as Sabbath, you will not see the Father.¹⁷

One of the purposes of this lifestyle is to purify oneself of the world of the senses and to return to the sinless condition of the prelapsarian Adam: only when one becomes like a "child" and strips and renounces the body and its sexuality, is one able to "see" the Son of the Living One without fear (L. 37).¹⁸ In this purified state, when one encounters the fire of God's countenance, one will be transformed rather than consumed (cf. L. 13, 82-83).

In contrast to the mythological language of ascent, the visionary experience can also be explained in the psychologic terms of Self-vision (L. 83) and Self-knowledge (L. 3b, 67, 111b) which is the full realization of one's divinity. This is the language of the Hermetics who taught that one can only "become God" (cf. *C.H.* 13.3, 10, 14) by learning that the true Self is divine and the material body is nothing (cf. *C.H.* 1.15).¹⁹ This teaching is quite poignant in *Thomas* which speaks about the nothingness of materiality (L. 56, 80) as well as the divinity of one's Self. This knowledge ultimately gives one access into the Kingdom and the divine. Thus the *Gospel of Thomas* speaks of being saved by bringing forth one's divine inner Self (cf. L. 24, 29, 70a) and acquiring knowledge of this Self (L. 3b, 111). This is summarized in Logion 67:

Whoever knows everything but is deficient in self-knowledge, he is deficient in everything.²⁰

The *Dialogue of the Savior* is familiar with *Thomas*' Jewish-Hermetic soteriological scheme and, as we shall see, preserves it throughout the course of the text. The disputable point in this scheme, according to the author of the *Dialogue*, is the insistence that the transformative mystical experience is a pre-mortem encounter. The *Dialogue* insists that immortalization cannot be realized until after the body has been discarded *at death*.

In his classic work on the ascent of the soul, W. Bousset noted that soul journeys in Jewish and Christian literature are to be distinguished as one of two types: 1. eschatological (after the body's death); and 2. ecstatic (during the life of the performer).²¹ It is noteworthy that this same distinction is found in the Hermetic writings. In *Poimandres*, the ascent and mystical encounter, the absorption into God, does not occur until after death when the body is discarded at the various planetary spheres. Other Hermetica maintain that the encounter with the divine can occur during the initiate's lifetime (*Disc. Eig. Nin.* 57.28-58.22; *C.H.* 10; 13; cf. 11.20; 12.1; *Asc.* 6.22).

It seems that the author of the *Dialogue* is at issue with this very distinction, promoting the eschatological premise rather than the ecstatic as *Thomas* had done. In order to understand the mystical scheme in this fashion, the author of the *Dialogue of the Savior* reinterprets three themes which are central to the *Gospel of Thomas*: 1. the return to the "Place of Life"; 2. the *visio Dei*; and 3. transformation.

1. Return to the "Place of Life"

In Logia 49-50 of the *Gospel of Thomas*, the human is said to originate from the "place (ΠΜΛ)" where the Light came into being. Thus the "solitary and elect (ΝΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ ΑΤΩ ΕΤΣΟΤΤ)" will return to it:

Blessed are the solitary and elect, for you will find the Kingdom. For you are from it, and to it you will return.

If they say to you, "Where did you come from?", say to them, "We came from the light", the place where the light came into being on its own accord and established [itself] and became manifest through their image. If they say to you, "Is it you?", say "We are its children", and "We are the elect of the Living Father". If they ask you, "What is the sign of your Father in you?", say to them, "It is movement and rest".²²

According to other passages in *Thomas*, it is clear that this "place" is a locale associated with "life" and the divine world. In Logion 4, this place is called the "Place of Life (ΠΤΟΠΟΣ Μ̅ΠΩΝΖ)". Jesus, according to Logion 24, now dwells in this "place". The disciples ask Jesus to show them "the place (ΠΤΟΠΟΣ) where you are, for we must seek it". This "place" is not a place to which one will simply return at death. Rather, it is a place that the disciples are commanded to "seek" because, in this Logion, they lay the demand upon Jesus to show them

the place where he is, since they must seek it. This suggests that Jesus has returned to this heavenly place through his ascension. In light of Logion 59 where Jesus says that the person must “seek” to see God before death, it would seem that according to Logion 24, it is necessary for his followers, in the present, to imitate Jesus’ ascension to his heavenly “place” and secure a vision.²³

The *Dialogue of the Savior* opens with a saying of Jesus in which he acknowledges that the time has arrived for salvation when we will “abandon our labor and stand at rest. For whoever will stand at rest will rest forever (ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲱⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲓ ⲕⲏⲧⲁⲛⲁⲡⲁⲅⲥⲓⲥ ⲕⲏⲁⲙⲧⲟⲛ ⲙⲙⲟⲕ ⲛⲱⲁⲛⲉⲣ)” (1).²⁴ This saying reflects a mystical soteriology where immortality is attainable in the present.

The author of the *Dialogue*, however, places this saying within a futuristic context which serves to interpret it in a futuristic manner. This context is that of the ascent of the soul at death. Comparable to Logion 49-50 of *Thomas*, Jesus announces that he has come to teach the “elect and solitary (ⲛⲃⲓⲛⲥⲱⲧⲡ ⲙⲛⲛⲙⲟⲛⲟⲭⲟⲥ)” the way they will ascend to heaven, returning to God:

When I came, I opened the path and I taught them about the passage which they will traverse, the elect and solitary (1).²⁵

The author insists that the passage into rest, this ascent about which Jesus has come to instruct his followers, will occur at “the time of dissolution(ⲡⲉⲟⲅⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲙⲡⲱⲗ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ)”when one sheds the body and journeys to God past the terrifying heavenly guards or powers.²⁶ The Coptic phrase ⲡⲉⲟⲅⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲙⲡⲱⲗ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ is a euphemism for “death” in this passage. In the Sahidic New Testament, ⲱⲗ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ is used in this sense to translate the Greek word ἀνάλυσις which is a metaphor in Classical and Early Christian literature referring to death.²⁷ In Philippians 1:23-24, ⲱⲗ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ translates the infinitive phrase τὸ ἀναλῦσαι in order to distinguish between death and the continuation of human existence. The Coptic is rendered:

But I am constrained, having the wish of the two: the being dissolved (ⲡⲱⲗ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ), to be with the Christ; for that is far preferable; but the remaining still in the flesh (ⲕⲏ ⲧⲥⲁⲣⲉ) is a necessary (thing) because of you”.²⁸

Thus Paul argues here that even though “to die is to gain” (Phil. 1:21), it is necessary for him to remain in this life for now.

It is noteworthy that in 2 Timothy 4:6, the Coptic phrase such as we

find in the *Dialogue* 3, πεογοειω ᾠπαβωλ εβολ renders the Greek ἀνάλυσις:

For I, my contest was finished, and the time of my dissolution approached (α πεογοειω ᾠπαβωλ εβολ ρων ερογν).²⁹

In this passage, πεογοειω ᾠπαβωλ εβολ refers to Paul's death. Clearly the author of the *Dialogue* also means for his readers to understand the phrase πεογοειω ᾠπαβωλ εβολ to be a euphemism for death. It is this climatic statement in the introduction to the *Dialogue* that represents the author's lens or filter through which the entire tractate must be interpreted.

H. Koester and E. Pagels already noted this tension in verses 1-3.³⁰ This paradox is understood by them as an emphasis on both a "realized eschatology" and an "elaboration of a futuristic eschatology". They resolve this by suggesting that this reflects the author's understanding of the baptismal rite mentioned in verse 35. They conclude that the author's theological position on baptism indicates that he believes that baptism is "a process that involves going through dissolution, i.e. through death, and entering into the place of life".³¹ Thus "the author of *Dial. Sav.* understands baptism in the same way as it is interpreted in Eph 2:1-6 and Col 3:1-4: those baptized having died, already have attained true life (2-3 [121:18-122:24]). They already dwell above (1 [120:9-120])."³²

It must be noted, however, that the *Dialogue of the Savior* does not state that the believer who has been baptized has already experienced death. More accurately, the text says that the time has arrived for the believer to enter the state of rest. And the one who will do this, will rest forever. This state, the text insists, cannot be actualized until *after* death and ascent to the heavenly place. Both death and the ascent are described as future events which one can only anticipate now.

Furthermore, verse 35 emphasizes the need for knowledge of one's origins. Without this knowledge, one will not know the path to return home and so will not be able to ascend to that place. The text expands on this by posing the question: if he does not have this knowledge, what good is baptism to him? The author seems to be in dispute here with the view that baptism insures one's return to God at death. Rather, the author explains by inserting the reference to baptism into this verse that baptism does not guarantee that one will return to the heavenly place. Knowledge of one's true origins is necessary to mediate this.³³

Instead it is plausible that, in verses 1-3, the author of the *Dialogue* is attempting to resolve the tension which had developed as the inevitable result of mystical practices. The problem centers around the fact that if one believes that a person is deified as the result of a pre-mortem *visio Dei* as *Thomas* taught, then why did that person still die? The solution to this troubling dilemma, according to the *Dialogue*, was to emphasize that the immortalization is only a potential now which will not be fully realized until after death. Thus Jesus declares in the introductory verses that the time has arrived for salvation but that this state of rest will become permanent only after the dissolution of the body at death.

Related to this is the usage of *monachos* in verses 1-2. Like *Thomas*, which is the first extant text to employ the noun *monachos* (L. 16, 49, 75), the *Dialogue* 1-2 is one of the earliest witnesses to the use of the noun *monachos*.³⁴ Significantly, this word is not employed as a noun by Classical Greek authors, Philo of Alexandria, the Septuagint, Greek and Latin Christian literature of the first three centuries, any Gnostic writings, nor, according to G. Quispel, any of the sources that the author of *Thomas* used when writing his gospel.³⁵ The employment of *monachos* by the author of the *Dialogue* in the same context as we find in *Thomas*, the only other text to use this word at this time in history, may signal that the author of the *Dialogue* was familiar with the actual text of *Thomas* rather than the sayings tradition behind it.

Studies on this word have demonstrated that *monachos* is the Greek translation of the Syriac word, *ihidaja*, which means “single person” or “bachelor” before it came to mean “monk” at a later date.³⁶ Like *Thomas*, the *Dialogue*, in verse 1, contends that only the unmarried person belongs to the elect and will ascend back to heaven.

This anti-marriage attitude represents an encratite influence which is visible in a couple of other places in the *Dialogue of the Savior* as well. In verse 91, for instance, the Lord commands:

Pray in the place where there is [no woman].³⁷

In Logion 92, this is interpreted to mean: “Destroy the works of womanhood”. This is further explicated to refer to the literal cessation of bearing children. Thus the *Dialogue* promotes the encratite belief that procreation must cease before salvation can occur. This is comparable to the saying of Jesus found in the encratite *Gospel of the Egyptians*: “I came to destroy the works of the female” which is interpreted

by the encratites to mean “by ‘female’ desire, and by ‘works’ birth and corruption” (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.9.63-64; cf. 3.3.12, 3.6.45, 3.9.67, 3.12.86, 3.16.100).

In other encratite writings, the condition of death is associated with procreation.³⁸ This is clearly stated in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* where Salome asks the Lord: “How long shall death hold sway?” Jesus answered; “As long as you women bear children” (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.6.45; cf. 3.9.63-64, 3.9.67). Likewise, in verses 56-59 of the *Dialogue*, Matthew and Jesus converse regarding this subject. Matthew begins the exchange:

Tell me, Lord, how the dead die [and] how the living live (56).³⁹

It can be argued that Jesus is explaining here that it is really only after death that a person comes alive and then “what is alive will be called upon” (57). He continues by explaining that if you are “born of truth”, you will not die. But if you are “born of woman”, you will die (59). This expression is employed here to imply that the continuation of an unenlightened physical condition will result in death. But the enlightened individual, the one who ceases procreating, is guaranteed life after the death of his body. This notion is expressed in different terms in verse 35, where Jesus says:

If one does not understand how the body, which he bears, came into existence, he will [perish] with it.⁴⁰

Encratism, therefore, is a prerequisite to ascent and immortality just as it is according to the *Gospel of Thomas*. The difference lies in the author’s insistence in the *Dialogue* 3 that only after physical death can the immortality of the encratite be realized or completed.

In verse 96, Jesus emphasizes the fact that the journey to heaven is difficult, but “you [will] go via [the path] which you have [known]”. The powers may become monstrous in size and make things difficult for the one traversing, but they will not be able to reach the place of God. So difficult is the journey to the highest heaven that Jesus exclaims in reference to his own post-mortem ascension:

I [tell] you [that] it is difficult even [for] me [to reach] it!⁴¹

This notion is extremely important to the author since he repeats Jesus’ exclamation in verse 52. But Jesus insists that even though the way of ascent is very difficult and potentially dangerous, “You will find the

means to overcome the powers above as well as those below” (20). These words are reassuring to the intended audience of the *Dialogue*, encouraging those who were experiencing doubt and anxiety about the reality of their ascent to God and his “place”.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the *Dialogue*, Jesus states that the wise person is someone who is able “to come [forth from this cosmos] and enter [the place of life] so that [he] might not be held back [in] this impoverished cosmos” (26). Matthew exclaims that he wants “[to see] that place of life”. He describes this place in a similar manner as Logion 50 of *Thomas*: it is the place “where there is no wickedness, [but rather] there is pure [light]!” (27).

The author of the *Dialogue of the Savior* makes it clear, however, that this cannot be expected to happen as long as one is embodied. This is poignantly stated in the subsequent Jesus saying which the author has strategically placed at the pinnacle of this discussion between Matthew and Jesus:

Brother [Matthew], you will not be able to see it [as long as you are] carrying flesh around (28).⁴²

The metaphor of shedding the body does not have to refer to removing the body *at death*⁴³ and this saying outside of this context may have alluded to a mystical pre-mortem visionary ascent. But I would argue that the author of the *Dialogue* understands this metaphor as a post-mortem event and that he intends his reader to understand it likewise since in verse 3, he maintains that the ascent to the Father cannot occur until “the time” of “dissolution” or “death”. Moreover, in the succeeding verse 29, Matthew agrees with Jesus that, because he still is living in a human body, he cannot yet have the transforming vision of the place of pure light. Since he cannot ascend yet, he asks Jesus to at least help him “[know it]” now (29).

The succeeding verse develops this notion of knowledge. As we found in *Thomas*, so we find here in the *Dialogue*, that the experience of the heavenly world is equated with transformative Self-knowledge since the Lord replies to Matthew:

[Everyone] who has known himself has seen [it in] everything given to him to do [alone] and has come to [resemble] it in his [goodness] (30).⁴⁴

According to Jesus, the one who knows his true Self, has already seen and resembles the divine which is associated with the place of life and

light. Therefore, like *Thomas* (L. 70a; cf. L. 24, 29), the *Dialogue* can speak about seeking that which is “within you” (16) or gaining the knowledge of your true origins (35). Without this knowledge, the return to God cannot occur as Jesus says in verse 35:

Whoever will not understand how he came will not understand how he will go, and he is no [stranger] to this cosmos...⁴⁵

In verse 77, the concern of the author of the *Dialogue* is again voiced in the futuristic question which the disciples ask Jesus: “What is the place to which we will go ([Ε]Τ̄Ν̄ΝΑΒΩΚ)?” Although the Lord’s reply is fragmentary, it can be reconstructed to read that they will “stand (ΩΖΕ ΕΡΕΤ=) in the place (ΠΜΑ)” that they “will be able to reach (ΕΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΝΑΩΠΩΖ)” (78).⁴⁶

The motif of the elect person “standing” in the heavenly “place” is referred to elsewhere in the *Dialogue*. As I already noted, in verse 1, the solitary (ΜΟΝΟΧΟΣ), the elect encratites, are told that Jesus’ message has inaugurated a new era: the time has come for them to abandon their labor and “stand at rest (Ν̄Τ̄Ν̄ΑΖΕ ΕΡΑΤ̄Ν̄ Ζ̄Ν̄ ΤΑΠΑΠΑΥΣΙΣ)”. The person who “will stand at rest (ΠΕΤΝΑΩΖΕ ΕΡΑΤ̄̄ Ζ̄Ν̄ΤΑΝΑΠΑΥΣΙΣ) will rest forever (ϞΝΑΜ̄ΤΟΝ̄ Μ̄ΜΟϞ̄ Ν̄ΩΑΕΝΕΖ)”.⁴⁷ Jesus proceeds to teach them that ascent to heaven is the avenue to this “standing” state when they will achieve immortal rest. But the author emphasizes that the actual ascent will not happen until after death (3). Thus, according to verses 77 and 1-3, it can be posited that the author understands this “rest” as a potential which will be actualized at the time of death.

It is significant that the *Gospel of Thomas* also plays on the theme of becoming a “standing” one, connecting it with the solitary encratite lifestyle and the return to Paradise (L. 16, 18, 23).⁴⁸ The notion that one will “stand” in the heavenly “place” makes perfect sense in the context of ascent. In Jewish apocalyptic texts, “standing” is associated with angelic behavior. Thus the angels and archangels in Jewish apocalyptic texts are described as those who “stand” before God (*1 En* 39.12f., 40.1, 47.3, 68.2; *2 En* 21.1; *Test. Abr.* 7-8; cf. *1 En* 49.2). When a person ascended and was transformed, he took his place with the angels “standing” around God’s throne. Thus Isaiah saw the righteous in heaven: “They were like the angels who stand there in great glory” (*Asc. Isa.* 9.9-10). This suggests that the one who was transformed would participate in the cultic service before God’s throne. But con-

nected to this is the idea that as a “Standing One”, a person gained immortality. Thus, in 2 *Enoch* 22.10, Enoch becomes an angel and is commanded in 22.6 to “stand” before the face of God unto eternity.

It is in the Samaritan and Simonian traditions that the imperishability of the “standing” condition is emphasized.⁴⁹ The title “Standing Ones” is used to identify the angels.⁵⁰ Associated with this is immortality. Thus we read in a Samaritan hymn: “He [God] is standing forever; He exists unto eternity. Standing Ones [angels] and mortals are under His rule”.⁵¹ When Moses ascended to receive the Torah, “he joined with the angels”, as Deuteronomy says “Stand by Me now” (*Memar Marqa* 4.12).⁵² Because God and his angels are imperishable according to Samaritan traditions, when a mortal like Moses is transformed into a “Standing One”, this means that he not only has been elevated to the position of an angelic being, but is partaking of God’s everlasting nature as well.⁵³

Even though the *Dialogue* employs this metaphor comparably, teaching that the final state of immortalization will occur when the person has ascended and “stands” in heaven like an angel, the *Dialogue* develops this theme substantially. In verse 17, the Lord is asked to tell the disciples, “where [the soul is standing] (εωζε ερατ̄) and where [the true mind] exists”. This theme is elaborated upon in verse 34 which describes heaven and its foundation. Jesus states:

[For] you are from [that] place (πμα). [In] the hearts of those who speak out of [joy] and truth you exist.⁵⁴

This is compared to the Word coming forth among men “in [the body] of the Father”. Ultimately, the Word will return to its heavenly place. The inference is that the soul will also return to that place even though it now resides within the human body. The soul, therefore, must now “stand (ωζε ερατ̄) in the darkness” of human existence, if ever it will be able “to see the Light” one day (34; cf. 17). Thus the *Dialogue* insists that “in this we have taken our stand (ντανωζε ερατ̄)” and are “revealed in the kosmos (ενογον̄ εβολ̄ ννκοσμικον)” (83).⁵⁵

According to these texts, “standing” is the property of the soul and is associated with its origin in the divine world. It now inhabits the human body. Thus it “stands” there, being revealed in the kosmos until it is released at death and ascends to the heavenly “place” where it will “stand” forever in a state of rest.

2. *The visio Dei*

The *Dialogue of the Savior* distinguishes between two types of visions: “transient” or “ceasing” (οὐωσϙ) visions and “the eternal (ψαeneϙ) vision” (44), which is “the great (νοϑ) vision” of the “Eternal Living One (επετψοοπ ψαeneϙ)” (42). This great vision is the transformative *visio Dei* of which *Thomas* speaks in Logia 15, 27, 37, 59, and 83. The author of the *Dialogue* insists that this great vision of the divine cannot occur while one is carrying the flesh around which he understands to be a metaphor for the dissolution of the body at death (cf. 28). The visions that occur during one’s lifetime, he categorizes as only transient visions which do not effect immortalization.

Such is the vision that is given to Judas, Matthew, and Mary when they are escorted by Jesus to the edge of heaven. They see an “exceedingly high place” and “the place of the abyss below” (36). They speak with the Son of Man (37) and watch a soul escorted by two spirits ascend to heaven and be transformed when it meets its heavenly counterpart (40).⁵⁶ Such visions are nowhere discouraged in the *Dialogue*. But the point is made in the discussion between the disciples and Jesus following this vision that these kinds of visions are only transient visions. The “great” vision of the Eternal Living One is yet to come (42).

Emphasis on the notion that visions before death are transient, is not unknown in other mystical circles. For instance, in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, Isaiah is escorted around the various heavens and speaks with angelic figures there. He sees the righteous who have been transformed into angelic beings. Even though Isaiah begins to notice a transformation of the “glory” of his face as he ascends (7.25), he is not completely and permanently transformed to be equal to the glorious righteous. He can only observe the glorious ones praising God (9.33). Although he glances at the Great Glory momentarily, his eyes become closed to this vision and Isaiah must be content to watch the righteous who continually partake of the great vision, “gazing intently upon the Glory” (9.37-38). Isaiah’s angelic escort promises Isaiah while they are in the sixth heaven that, even though he has viewed sights unseen by other humans, he can only now *anticipate* becoming like the angels after death. His human days are not yet complete (8.23-28)! Thus Isaiah will not be immortalized until after he returns from his heavenly journey and dies a human death. Only then will he receive a garment and become like the angels.⁵⁷ His angelic escort explains in 8.15:

[When from the body by the will of God you have come up here], then you will receive the robe which you will see (in the seventh heaven), ... and then you will be equal to the angels who (are) in the seventh heaven.⁵⁸

3. *Transformation*

The *Dialogue of the Savior* knows of a tradition comparable to that found in *Thomas* where a person would encounter his heavenly counterpart:

When you see your likeness, you rejoice. But when you see your images which came into being before you, and which neither die nor become manifest, how much you will have to bear! (84).⁵⁹

It appears that the author of the *Dialogue* understands this to be a post-mortem experience. Thus in verse 40, the soul that ascends at death apparently meets its heavenly counterpart which is described as “big”. It becomes this heavenly being, resembling the angels who receive it:

The small one became like the big one. They were [like] those who received them.⁶⁰

The closest parallel to this text in Christian literature can be found in the *Gospel of Eve* quoted by Epiphanius (*Pan.* 26.3.1). In this passage, someone’s ascent and subsequent vision are described:

I stood upon a high mountain and saw a tall man and another short one, and I heard something like the sound of thunder and I approached to hear and he spoke to me and said, “I am you and you I, and wherever you are, there I am...”⁶¹

It is probable that, in this text, the person is describing a vision of himself and his heavenly counterpart. His transformation is implicit in the complete identification of “I” and “you”.

It may be that these two former passages are related to the tradition that when the person ascends to heaven, he can anticipate being transformed into cosmic proportions. This is alluded to, for example, in the second century text, *The History of the Rechabites* 5.3-4. Here Zosimos is told by his guide:

“If you wish to see me...gaze toward the height of heaven.” And gazing above, I saw his face (to be) like the face of an angel.⁶²

Zosimos has encountered a righteous person who had been brought to this island of Paradise long ago by “angels of God”, angels who placed

him and his comrades “in the air above the land” in “this place (in) which you (now) see (us)...” (10.7). Subsequently, this person who is now acting as Zosimos’ guide, was transformed into gigantic proportions and is called an “Earthly Angel”.

In addition, this idea is associated with the prototype mystic, Enoch. When he journeyed to heaven, he says:

I was enlarged and increased in size till I matched the world in length and breadth (3 *Enoch* 9.2).⁶³

Jesus’ own ascent and transformation is described in similar terms in the passage from the *Acts of John* 90 which states that “his head stretched to heaven”.⁶⁴ The *Gospel of Philip* describes Jesus’ transformation likewise:

But when he appeared to his disciples in glory on the mount, he was not small. He became great...” (58.5-8).⁶⁵

This theme is expanded upon in verses 67-68 of the *Dialogue* where Matthew asks: “How does the small join itself to the big?”. Jesus responds that you will only achieve this state of rest when you “abandon the works (ἔργα) which will not be able to follow you”. Within the context of this encratite document, “works” probably refers to sexual intercourse and procreation, the “works (ἔργα) of womanhood” which are mentioned in verse 92. Thus only when the person becomes an encratite, is he able to ascend and meet his heavenly counterpart.

Not surprisingly, this transformation is described in terms of donning a garment. In fact, in the heavenly vision of Judas, Matthew, and Mary when the two spirits bring the soul to heaven,⁶⁶ the command is made to give the soul its “garment”. Then the soul is said to be transformed, becoming like its angelic counterpart.

The employment of this image can be seen in verse 84 where Judas and Matthew want to understand what type of garment they will be given after they die:

We [want] to understand the sort of garments we are to be [clothed] with [when] we come forth from the destruction of the [flesh] ([ἐ]ν ψανῇ ἐβολ ἡμῶν τὰ κοῦτα [καρ]ῆ).⁶⁷

The Lord responds that “the children of truth” will not continue to have “transitory(προσκόουσι)garments” with which to “clothe yourselves”. Rather, this garment which represents the body, must be stripped off (85).

The notion that the body is a garment which must be cast off is a metaphor rooted in speculation concerning Genesis 3:21 where God made “garments of skins” for Adam and Eve and “clothed them” as a consequence of their sin.⁶⁸ It is not unusual for Jewish and Christian writers to point out the fact that this garment of flesh must be stripped off before one can ascend into the divine realm.⁶⁹

This is precisely the meaning inherent in Logion 37 of *Thomas* which states that in order to gain the *visio Dei*, one must first strip off the material body and renounce it by becoming a celibate, a “child” innocent of sex like Adam before the Fall:⁷⁰

His disciples said, “When will you become revealed to us and when shall we see you?” Jesus said, “When you disrobe without being ashamed and take up your garments and place them under your feet like little children and tread on them, then [you will see] the Son of the Living One, and you will not be afraid”.⁷¹

It seems that in verses 84-85, the *Dialogue* is commenting on this Logion, stating that the true “children” are those who will no longer continue to wear the “transitory garments”. The author’s point, however, is that the time when this will be experienced is not during a pre-mortem visionary ascent such as *Thomas* assumes. Rather the flesh will be destroyed and will fall away at death, and a fresh garment will be given them at that moment. This is the permanent instant of immortalization.

These garments are even called “the garments of life (ⲛⲁⲕⲃⲥⲱ ⲙⲡⲱⲛⲁ)” in verse 52. Judas inquires, “How will [our] garments be brought to us” (51). Then the Lord states:

There are some who will provide for you, and there are others who will receive [you]. For [it is] they [who will give you] your garments. [For] who [will] be able to reach that place [which is the reward]? But the garments of life were given to man because he knows the path by which he will leave. And it is difficult even for me to reach it! (52).⁷²

Here the donning of the garments is associated with ascent to heaven when the angelic officials will give the garments to the person who has been able to reach that “place”. These garments are described as garments of “life” because they represent the immortalization of the individual.

The image of donning a new garment after death is commonly used as a metaphor for immortalization. This idea can be found in Judaism which teaches that a heavenly garment awaits the arrival of the person

in heaven.⁷³ One of the most interesting of the Jewish texts which refer to this notion is found in *1 Enoch* where we are told that on the day of judgment, “garments of life” will be given to the elect:

The righteous and elect ones shall rise from the earth and shall cease being of downcast face. They shall wear garments of glory. These garments of yours shall become the garments of life from the Lord of the Spirits (62.15-16).⁷⁴

4. Conclusion

The process of immortalization is the theme which is emphasized in the *Dialogue of the Savior*. This text attempts to provide the reader with the correct interpretation of Jesus’ mystical sayings, an interpretation which would guarantee his transformation into the divine. Like *Thomas Logion 1*, Jesus says in the *Dialogue*:

[If you have understood] everything which I have [told you], you will [become immortal...] (82).⁷⁵

In the *Dialogue of the Savior*, the author reassures his reader that he can anticipate a transformative ascent experience similar to that promoted by the *Gospel of Thomas*. The reader comes face to face in the *Dialogue* with the powerful force of these hopes. These hopes are summarized in a Jesus saying in verse 18:

If someone [sets his soul] up high, [then he will] be exalted.⁷⁶

Unlike *Thomas’* soteriological scheme which emphasized a pre-mortem ascent experience, the *Dialogue* understands it to be a post-mortem event. The author, throughout the *Dialogue*, seems to be dependent upon several *Thomas Logia* which he reinterprets to underscore his own soteriological paradigm. Thus, the author continuously instills in the reader his belief that this exaltation or immortalization will be fulfilled only after the flesh is stripped off and destroyed at the time of death.

NOTES

¹ A version of this paper was delivered at the annual SBL convention in Chicago, 1994, in the Thomas Christianity Consultation under the title: ‘The *Dialogue of the Savior*: A Commentary on the Mystical Tradition Associated with Thomas Christianity’. Helmut Koester, a member of my dissertation committee, prompted me, in his review of my doctoral thesis, to investigate possible connections between the mysticism that I found in the

Gospel of Thomas and that in the *Dialogue of the Savior*. This article is the product of that investigation. My thanks to G. Quispel and J. Fossum for their critical reviews of previous drafts of this work.

² H. Koester and E. Pagels, 'Introduction', *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5. The Dialogue of the Savior*, NHS 26 (ed. S. Emmel; Leiden, 1984) 2-8. See also the foundational study of this text by M. Krause, 'Der Dialog des Soter in Codex III von Nag Hammadi', NHS 8 (Leiden, 1977) 13-34.

³ B. Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2-7 together with XII,2 Brit.Lib.Or. 4926(1), and P. Oxy I, 654, 655 1*, NHS 20 (Leiden, 1989), 52; English translation by Lambdin, 53.

⁴ For the most recent reconstruction of the Greek text, see the Appendix by H.W. Attridge, 'The Greek Fragments', in Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2-7*, 113; For the English translation, refer to H. Koester's and E. Pagels' discussion of the *Dialogue of the Savior* in Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5*, 7.

⁵ For a comprehensive discussion and detailed support for the following overview, refer to A.D. De Conick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas, Supp VC* (Leiden, 1996). The motif of the *visio Dei* is a mysteriosophic and Hellenic idea. On this point, see G. Quispel, 'Judaism, Judaic Christianity and Gnosis', *The New Testament and Gnosis. Essays in honour of Robert McLachlan Wilson* (eds. A.H.B. Logan and A.J.M. Wedderburn; Edinburgh, 1983) 46-48.

⁶ G. Scholem has argued that the Hekhalot materials are connected with the esoteric traditions surrounding Ezekiel 1 and discussed by the Tannaim and Amoraim. In turn, these mystically-oriented Rabbis had been influenced by apocalyptic writings where descriptions of heavenly journeys and the vision of the God upon his throne are found. See his works: *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1941) 40-79; *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1960); *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (trans. R. Manheim; New York, 1965); *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem and New York, 1974) 8-21; *Origins of the Kabbalah* (ed. R.J.Z. Werblowsky; trans. A. Arkush; Princeton, 1987) 18-24; *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the KABBALAH* (ed. J. Chipman; trans. J. Neugroschel; foreword by J. Dan; New York, 1991). I. Gruenwald has been the major proponent and developer of this thesis: see especially his book, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, AGJU 14 (Leiden, 1980). A challenge to this view has been proposed by some scholars who believe that Rabbinic traditions about Ezekiel chapter 1 do not presuppose actual endeavors to ascend but are merely exegetical and speculative developments. Moreover, the Hekhalot tradition originates in circles marginal to Rabbinic Judaism during the post-Talmudic era. See D.J. Halperin, *The Merkavah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven, 1980); *idem*, *The Faces of the Chariot* (Tübingen, 1988); P. Schäfer, 'Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature', *JSJ* 14 (1983); *idem*, 'The Aim and Purpose of Early Jewish Mysticism', in his *Hekhalot-Studien, Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum* 19 (Tübingen, 1988); *idem*, 'Merkavah Mysticism and Rabbinic Judaism', *JAOS* 104 (1984) 537-554; M. Himmelfarb, 'Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the Hekhalot Literature', *HUCA* 59 (1988) 73-100. The recent analysis of the *ma'aseh merkavah* traditions by C. Morray-Jones has led him to conclude that the mystical traditions found in the Hekhalot materials were inherited from the Jewish apocalyptic circles. Some Tannaim developed these traditions while others were suspicious of these traditions because they were also being developed by some groups who were thought to be heretical at that time: *Merkavah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1988).

For a recent and thorough treatment of transformational mysticism, see C. Morray-Jones, 'Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition', *JJS* 48 (1992) 1-31; on this subject, refer also to M. Lieb, *The Visionary Mode: Biblical Prophecy, Hermeneutics, and Cultural Change* (London, 1991); M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York and Oxford, 1993) esp. 47-71; De Conick, *Seek to See Him*, 105-115.

⁷ There is a growing opinion among scholars that Philo's mysticism should be understood as a form of early Jewish mysticism. K. Kohler first determined that elements of Merkavah mysticism can be found in Philo: 'Merkabah', *The Jewish Encyclopedia* 8 (ed. I. Singer; New York, 1904) 500. H. Chadwick has suggested that agreements between Paul and Philo may be the result of a common background in Jewish mysticism: 'St. Paul and Philo of Alexandria', *BJRL* 48 (1966) 286-307. On Paul's familiarity with mystical Judaism, see especially now A.F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven and London, 1990) 34-71; C. Morray-Jones, 'Paradise Revisited (2 Cor. 12.1-12): The Jewish Sources' and 'Part 2: Paul's Heavenly Ascent and its Significance', *HTR* 86 (1993) 177-217 and 265-292. See also the works of P. Borgen, *Bread From Heaven*, 177; *idem*, 'God's Agent in the Fourth Gospel', *Religions in Antiquity, Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, Studies in the History of Religions 14 (ed. J. Neusner; Leiden, 1968) 137-148; 'Some Jewish exegetical traditions as background for Son of Man sayings in John's Gospel (John 3:13-14 and context)', *ETL* (1977) 243-258. Refer also to W.A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, NTSup 14 (Leiden, 1967) 192-195. For a fuller discussion, see De Conick, *Seek to See Him*, 34-37.

⁸ See J.-P. Mahé's excellent comprehensive study which argues that a synthesis of belief about this immortalization process can be drawn from the diverse Hermetic literature: 'La Voie d'Immortalité à la Lumière des *Hermetica* de Nag Hammadi et de Découvertes plus Récentes', *VC* 45 (1991) 347-375.

⁹ Without doubt, Hermeticism was a religious current in Syria, the land of *Thomas'* origins (De Conick, *Seek to See Him*, 7-11), at least as early as the second century. According to H. Drijvers, Hermeticism is found in Syria, going back to the cult of the god Nebo who was identified with Hermes in Edessa and Harran: 'Edessa und das jüdische Christentum', *VC* 24 (1970) 9, 21, and 25; *idem*, 'Bardaisan of Edessa and the Hermetica', *Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap ex Oriente Lux* 21 (Leiden, 1969/70) 195-196. Archaeological evidence combined with Muslim records yields evidence for the existence of a group around 165 C.E. known as the Sabians in Harran, a village thirty miles from Edessa; J.B. Segal, 'Pagan Syriac Monuments in the Vilayet of Urfa', *AS* 3 (1953) 97-119; *idem*, 'The Sabian Mysteries. The planet cult of ancient Harran', *Vanished Civilizations* (ed. E. Bacon; London, 1963) 201-220; *idem*, 'Some Syriac Inscriptions of the 2nd and 3rd Century A.D.', *BSOAS* 14 (1954) 97-120. Bardaisan of Edessa was influenced by Hermetic thought and his ideologies have parallels in *Poimandres* 15.24-26 and *Corpus Hermeticum* 12.5-9; Drijvers, 'Bardaisan', 198-207. In a discussion about the power of fate, Bardaisan mentions the 'Books of the Egyptians' which Drijvers interprets to have been Hermetic writings: *Ibid.*, 190. Thus the author of the *Gospel of Thomas* could have had access to Hermetic ideas while writing his gospel in Syria. On the other hand, it may be that Hermetic theology had welded with Jewish-Christianity in Alexandria prior to the composition of *Thomas* in Syria and was incorporated into this gospel by way of an Alexandrian gospel source. In support of this pic-

ture, one could point to the tradition that Barnabas introduced Christianity in Alexandria from Jerusalem (Ps.-Clem. *Hom.* 11.9).

¹⁰ J.-P. Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Égypte* 2, BCNH 7 (Québec, 1982).

¹¹ English translation is my own. For the Coptic, refer to Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 2-7, 74.

¹² Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 2-7, 60; English translation by Lambdin, 61.

¹³ For a thorough treatment of *kavod* and its synonymms, see J. Fossum, 'Glory כבוד δόξα', *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. K. van der Toorn *et. al.*; Leiden, 1995).

¹⁴ For a complete discussion on the 'hidden' *Kavod*, refer to De Conick, *Seek to See Him*, 100-105.

¹⁵ Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 7, 84; English translation and interpretation of the antecedents '[the light]' and '[the Father's] are my own. For a discussion of this translation, refer to De Conick, *Seek to See Him*, 100-105.

¹⁶ According to G. Blond, 'encratism' or 'self-control' is not only a sectarian phenomenon, but also a widespread tendency even within the catholic church characterized by abstinence from sexual activity and carnal marriage, dietary regulations restricting the intake of meat and wine, and voluntary poverty, 'Encratisme', *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* IV (eds. M. Viller, F. Cavallera, and J. De Guibert; Paris, 1960) 628-642. But according to Clement of Alexandria in his discussion about encratism in his *Stromateis* 3, encratism is best understood as a *lifestyle* adapted by several Christian groups which held negative world views. Encratism is better defined as a lifestyle of asceticism which was 'too' extreme, according to Clement's analysis, since marriage as well as procreation were denied. The Pastoral Epistles clearly are in debate with this lifestyle which characterizes their Jewish-Christian opponents (1 Tim 4:3; Col 2:18, 20-23). G. Quispel reviews encratism and the history of scholarship, about this topic in 'The Study of Encratism: A Historical Survey', *La Tradizione dell'Enkrateia*, Atti del Colloquio Internazionale—Milano 20-23 Aprile 1982 (ed. U. Bianchi; Rome, 1985) 35-81; see also his 'L'Evangile selon Thomas et Les Origines de l'Ascèse Chrétienne', *Gnostic Studies* 2, Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 34,2 (Leiden, 1975) 98-112. He argues that encratism was a phenomenon which was developed by Alexandrian Christianity and transported to Syria from Egypt. According to the writings of E. Peterson, however, encratism was early and had a Palestinian origin: 'Einige Beobachtungen zu den Anfängen der christlichen Askese', *Frühkirche, Judentum, und Gnosis* (Freiburg, 1959) 209-220; *idem*, 'Einige Bemerkungen zum Hamburger Papyrusfragment der "Acta Pauli"', *ibid.*, 183-208; *idem*, 'Die "Taufe" im Acherusischen See', *ibid.*, 310-332. For a recent treatment of encratism and the *Gospel of Thomas*, refer to De Conick, *Seek to See Him*, 1-9.

¹⁷ On Logion 27, see A.D. De Conick, 'Fasting From the World: Encratite Soteriology in the Gospel of Thomas', *The Notion of 'Religion' in Comparative Research, Selected Proceedings of the XVIth IAHR Congress, Rome 3rd-8th September, 1990* (ed. U. Bianchi; Rome, 1994). *Idem*, *Seek to See Him*, 126-143, expands on this previous work.

¹⁸ On Logion 37, see A.D. De Conick and J. Fossum, 'Stripped Before God: A New Interpretation of Logion 37 in the Gospel of Thomas', *VC* 45 (1991) 123-150.

¹⁹ On the theme of Self-knowledge in Hermeticism, see G. Quispel, 'Hermes Trismegistus and the Origins of Gnosticism', *VC* 46 (1992) 1-19.

³³ This understanding of baptism is comparable to that forwarded by another Syrian Christian, Theodotus who says in his *Excerpts* 78: 'But it is not only the washing that is liberating, but the knowledge of who we were, and what we have become, where we were or where we were placed, whither we hasten, from what we are redeemed, what birth is and what rebirth' (R.P. Casey, 'The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria', *Studies and Documents* 1 [1934] 88-89).

- ³⁴ F.-E. Morard, 'Encore quelques réflexions sur monachos', *VC* 34 (1980) 395-401.
- ³⁵ G. Quispel, 'Revisited', 237.
- ³⁶ M. Harl, 'A propos des *Logia* de Jésus: le sens du mot *monachos*', *REG* 73 (1960) 464-474; F.-E. Morard, 'Monachos Moine, Histoire du term grec jusqu'au 4^e siècle', *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* (1973) 332-411.
- ³⁷ Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III*, 5, 88-89.
- ³⁸ This is a Greek idea since Heraclitus, *Frag.* 20: "Once born, they desire to live and that also means to be destined to die, or rather to be absorbed into the eternal cycle of the cosmos. And they leave behind children born to die" (H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* 1 [Berlin, 1956] 155). Cf. Quispel, 'Encratism', 50-51.
- ³⁹ Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III*, 5, 78-79.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 68-69.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 90-91.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 64-65.
- ⁴³ On this refer to De Conick and Fossum, 'Stripped Before God', 127-131.
- ⁴⁴ Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III*, 5, 64-65.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 68-69.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 84. Translation of verb tenses are mine.
- ⁴⁷ Translation my own.
- ⁴⁸ On this, see the discussion in De Conick, *Seek to See Him*, 89-92. This may represent the cultic notion that the Christian worship service was believed to take place in heaven together with the angels. Cf. Eph. 2:6. This participation cult is also evident at Qumran. On this, see C. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (Atlanta, 1985).
- ⁴⁹ J. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord*, WUNT 36 (Tübingen, 1985) 119ff.; M. Williams, *The Immovable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity*, NHS 29 (Leiden, 1985), has not made note of this distinction but interprets the notion of stability *only* according to the philosophical tradition which understood it to mean immutability; for a discussion, see the review of *Immovable Race* by G. Quispel, *VC* 40 (1986) 411-412.
- ⁵⁰ Fossum, *Name* 55ff., 120ff., and 139ff.
- ⁵¹ A.E. Cowley, *The Samaritan Liturgy* (Oxford, 1909) 27.18.
- ⁵² Cf. Marqa calls Moses a 'Standing One': "Mighty is the great prophet, who clad himself in the Name of the Godhead and received the five books. And he was standing between the two assemblies, between the Standing Ones and the mortals" (Cowley, *Samaritan Liturgy*, 54.31f.). See Fossum, *Name*, 124, for a complete discussion of this passage.
- ⁵³ This differs from Philo's use of 'standing' to denote immutability; *ibid.*, 119ff.
- ⁵⁴ Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III*, 5, 66-67.
- ⁵⁵ English translation is my own.
- ⁵⁶ On this subject, see the discussion below.
- ⁵⁷ See M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford, 1993) 55-56.
- ⁵⁸ English translation from M.A. Knibb, 'Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah', *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 2 (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; New York, 1985) 168.
- ⁵⁹ Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 7, 84. English translation by Lambdin, 85. For a comprehensive interpretation of this passage, refer to De Conick, *Seek to See Him*, 148-174.

- ⁶⁰ Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III*, 5, 72-75.
- ⁶¹ P.R. Amidon, *The Panarion of St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis* (Oxford, 1990) 79.
- ⁶² J.H. Charlesworth, *The History of the Rechabites. Volume I: The Greek Recension, Texts and Translations 17, Pseudepigrapha Series 10* (Chico, 1982) 32-33.
- ⁶³ English translation by P. Alexander, '3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch', *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha 1* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth: New York, 1983) 263.
- ⁶⁴ On this, refer to J. Fossum 'IESUS NUDUS: The Transformation of Jesus in the Acts of John', paper read at the SBL Mid-West Meeting, Wheaton College, Illinois, 1991, and at the SBL International Meeting, Rome, 1991. He suggests that this may represent one of the earliest references to Shiur Qomah Christology. See now his article, 'Partes posteriores Dei; The "Transfiguration", of Jesus in the *Acts of John*, in his forthcoming book, *The Image of the Invisible God*.
- ⁶⁵ Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 7, 154, 156; English translation by W.W. Isenberg, 155, 157.
- ⁶⁶ The idea that the deceased or ascending person was carried into heaven by two divine beings was popular in ancient Christianity. On this, see E. Peterson, 'Beiträge zur Interpretation der Visionen im Pastor Hermas', *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis* (Freiburg, 1959) 262-264. Fossum suggests that the presence of Elijah and Moses is due to the tradition that two heavenly beings were escorts of the deceased or ascending person; see Fossum, 'IESUS NUDUS', now 'Partes posteriores Dei'. Refer also to the *Gospel of Peter* where two figures descend from heaven to Jesus' tomb and provide his support while he walks out of the tomb. Note that the heads of the two figures are described as 'reaching to the heavens' while Jesus who was led by the hand overpassed the heavens (36-40). This idea is connected with the empty tomb stories in the New Testament gospels which told of one or two heavenly beings in the tomb of Jesus after his resurrection (cf. Matt 28:2-3 reports only one 'angel'; Mk 16:5 reports one young 'man' in white; Lk 24:4 reports two dazzling 'men'; John 20:12 reports two 'angels' in white). Also see the *Martyrdom of Matthew* 30: 'Then with two angels he departed to heaven'.
- ⁶⁷ Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III*, 5, 86. English translation mine.
- ⁶⁸ For a more complete discussion with references, see De Conick and Fossum, 'Stripped Before God', 124-131.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 127-131.
- ⁷⁰ This interpretation is based on the arguments presented in *ibid.*, 123-149.
- ⁷¹ Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 7, 68; English translation by Lambdin, 69.
- ⁷² Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III*, 5, 76-79.
- ⁷³ On this theme, refer to L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews 5. Notes to Volumes I and II: From Creation to the Exodus* (Philadelphia, 1925 and reprints) 103-104, n. 93, 112-113, n. 104; W. Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter*, HNT 21 (3rd ed. H. Gressmann; Tübingen, 1926) 318; E. Preuschen, *Die apokryphen gnostischen Adamschriften* (Giessen, 1900) 52, and nn. 24 and 69; Str.-B. 4, 940ff., 1138.
- ⁷⁴ English translation by E. Isaac, '1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch', *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha 1*, 44.
- ⁷⁵ Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III*, 5, 86-87.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

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