

Commentary on the Vision of Isaiah

{being an Erudite and Faithful Augmentation of the translation of R. C. Charles, D. D. (1900); with innumerable scholarly References including a Concluding Postscript and Accompanying Text interlaced with Pauline passages demonstrating the reliance of the Apostle to the Gentiles upon The Vision as Holy Scripture wherein lay The Original Gospel (&tc.)}

I.

From the Stack Exchange Biblical Hermeneutics website (<https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/1431/what-scriptures-is-paul-referring-to-in-1-cor-154/38983#38983>):

"What Scriptures is Paul referring to in 1 Cor. 15:4? In 1 Cor., when Paul is laying out the tradition of the resurrection to his readers, he lays out a tradition with his own testimony at the end. 1Cr 15:3-8 'For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.'

"However, there is no quotation in Old Testament that the Messiah would be raised on the third day. This, then, must be an example of midrash, something applied to the Messiah that on the surface speaks of something else. For example, Matthew (2:15) applies a statement in Hosea (11:1) to Jesus, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.' What Old Testament Scripture is Paul drashing* (*An Anglicization of the Hebrew verb, drash meaning "seek" and used by the rabbi to explore Scripture and find its [sic] application to other issues which were not stated in the text.) from here?"

"Why Assume Paul Means the Old Testament? I conclude that he is referring to the Old Testament and not a Christian document because Paul uses the word *graphe* 14 times in his letters. 8 of these are followed by direct quotations of the Old Testament. Rom 4:3 'For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS".' Rom 9:17 'For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH".' Rom 10:11 'For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED".' Rom 11:2 'God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 3 "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE".' Gal 3:8 'The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU".' Gal 3:22 'But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.'

(Here it is used as a synonym for Law which appears in both 21 and 24.) Gal 4:30 'But what does the Scripture say? "CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN".' 1Ti 5:18 'For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages".' In the others, he is clearly alluding to the Old Testament. Rom 1:2 'which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,' Rom 15:4 'For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.' Rom 16:26 'but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;' 2 Tim 3:15 refers to the Holy Writings which Timothy had been trained in before he heard Paul's preaching. As Timothy's mother and grandmother were Jewish, logically, those holy writings would be the Old Testament. Paul continues with: 2Ti 3:16 'All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;'

"If we add in *grapho*, the verb form of *graphe*, Paul uses that 62 times. Sometimes he refers to his own letters or general letters. More often, he quotes from the Old Testament. For example: Rom 15:9 'and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME".' 1Cr 9:9 'For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING".' God is not concerned about oxen, is He? 2Cr 9:9 'as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER".'

"If we add in the Paul narratives from Acts, there are 2 times when *graphe* is used in reference to Paul (Luke uses the word at other times, also in reference to the Old Testament). These are: Act 17:2 'And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,' Act 18:28 'for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.' In Acts 17, he is speaking in the synagogue. That would require basing his sermon off an Old Testament passage. Even if he then began quoting rabbinic interpretations of the Old Testament, he would have to start from an Old Testament scripture. The same is true of debating the Jews in public. He had to base his reasoning first on written Torah.

"Which leaves only two occurrences of *graphe*, those under discussion: 1Cr 15:3 For 'I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,' From Paul's usage of the word *graphe* and *grapho* elsewhere overwhelmingly being to the Old Testament, we may reasonably conclude that in 1 Cor 15:3 and 4, he is also making his basis on the Old Testament (if you include the times that Paul alludes to the Old Testament or quotes it without an introduction, the evidence is even more overwhelming that he is thinking of the Old Testament)."

All this was followed by a fairly lengthy brotherly discussion featuring fairly commonplace make-think ingenuity unconsciously or deliberately meant to divert from the actual point so raised with its attendant evidence, which is formidable. So the present author kicked in with:

"The reason for all the difficulty finding a canonical OT passage explicitly stating that the Christ will rise from death in three days is because one doesn't exist. *Hosea* clearly is about those who are refreshed by God after He's chastised them (see context), provided they return and seek knowledge of Him. Also it is in the plural; that is unavoidable. Plus, there is nothing in the passage about death, nor resurrection really. Paul is no doubt referring to sacred writing not found in the canonical Old Testament. And in fact there is one such book the Apostle also quotes as Scripture in I Cor., which also mentions an ascension of Christ from Hades 'after three days.' ...I am referring of course to the Latin version of the *The Ascension of Isaiah* ch. 6-11 version dated to the end of the first century, but which should in my judgment be dated c. 20-30. The OT canon wasn't solidified by the rabbis until the council of Jamnia 100 a.d. It should be kept in mind that in certain circles these deuterocanonical works were regarded as authentic, so that Paul would have regarded the *Ascension of Isaiah* as an authentic Scripture."

To this a moderator (I believe), Steve Taylor, rejoined with: "An interesting angle of approach - I suppose you'd similarly argue that Jesus was also quoting some kind of deuterocanonical work in Luke 24:46? That would be rather intriguing as I'm not aware of him quoting any other works in the records we have." – Steve Taylor

....Notice that they failed to cite the quotation in I Corinthians 2:9 of the *Ascension of Isaiah* as 'Scripture' altogether!

Over against the now controversial view that the Council of Jamnia fixed the OT canon in 100 c.e. is that of the new consensus represented glowingly in the *Westminster Theological Journal* 38.4 (Spr. 1976) 319-348 by Robert C. Newman in *The Council of Jamnia and the Old Testament Canon*:

"In the Babylonian Talmud, completed about A.D. 550, we read: 'Our Rabbis taught: Since the death of the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachai, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel,' so that inspiration was thought to have ceased long before the beginning of the Christian era. Among earlier Talmudic material, there is a Baraita (from about A.D. 2006) which likewise assigns the Scripture to ancient authors..." (p. 320)

Be that as it may, it only serves to explain how *Asc. Is.* legitimized itself: (1) by claiming to have been a report of the experience of the historical prophet Isaiah (who lived before "the death of the prophets") and (2) by claiming it had been a text composed of knowledge hidden from public knowledge 'until the last days'.

These two somewhat lengthy quotations---one from an evangelical hermeneutical website, another from a reputable theological journal---are useful for that which they inadvertently tend to establish for purposes to follow: (1) That there was no Old Testament canon as such prior to 70 c.e., and (2) that use of the term "Scriptures" in Paul did not by some sort of external necessity confine itself to books that later became what is now regarded as the canonical bible for Jews. Interestingly, the Stack Exchange passage does not mention among Paul's scriptural quotations 1 Cor. 2:9, ἀλλὰ καθὼς γέγραπται, ἀ ὄφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν καὶ οῦς οὐκ ἤκουσεν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη, ἀ ἡτοίμασεν ὁ Θεός τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν, which begins, "as it is written." Jerome proposed – and indeed, insisted by means of longwinded fulmination – that the apostle was but paraphrasing Isaiah 64:4: "For from days of old

they have not heard or perceived by ear, Nor has the eye see a God besides You, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him." But the meaning of this renders an apparent assertion that from olden times no one has heard or seen another god, besides he who has been seen and heard by those who wait for him. Which is only to say that God is the only god, besides which there is no other, as evidenced by those who have experienced him by sight or sound. Somewhat the opposite of the assertion made by 1 Cor. 2:9, which states that no one has experienced by eye or ear what God has prepared for those who love him. Isaiah says that those who wait upon God experience him and no other God and that it has always been this way; Paul's quotation of Scripture states that no one has experienced God in terms of what God has in store for them.

Jerome even tries to attribute Irenaeus with having uncovered the interpolation of 1 Cor. 2:9 into the *Ascension of Isaiah* by a demonic slew of gnostic heretics in *Adversus Haereses* Book I, according to the original Jerome commentary on Isaiah* {*Eusebii Sophronii Hieronymi Ecclesiae Doctoris Commentarium in Isaiam Prophetem Libri Duo Deviginti, Pars 4, Cap. LXIV—Vers. 4,5 (p. 154); from *Documenti Lineamenta, Divina Bibliotheca II, Liber Isaiae Prophetae, Documenta Catholica Omnia, Cooperatorum Veritatis Societas*}. But a perusal of Irenaeus at just that place in his famous work yields no mention of *Ascension of Isaiah* or its analogue 1 Cor. 2:9. Indeed, the Gnostic doctrine that Christ remained on earth for 545 days before ascending, not found in L2 of *Asc. Is.*, and the fact that Jerome fails to cite the notice in Irenaeus regarding the doctrine, just adds more evidential weight to L1 and associated offspring and parentage (G1) having been later than L2, which "Vision" has Christ ascending immediately upon liberation of the righteous from the angel of Sheol.

Which version of *Asc. Is.* did St. Jerome know? Charles says it was L2, meaning just the *Vision*; Knibb L1, except that *Asc. Is.* L1 doesn't even contain the verse in question (!). ("Early Christian Writings" site contains Knibb's remark. Charles: see p. 80-81, fn. for vs. 34).

Jerome seeks to maintain that the passage in the *Ascension* that appears verbatim in I Cor. 2:9 is a kind of loose paraphrase meant to capture the essential idea behind Isaiah 64: 4,5, as he writes, "*Paraphrasim hujus testimonii, quasi [adv., conj. = 'as if, as though, as it were, about'] Hebraeus ex Hebaeis, assumit apostolus Paulus de authenticis libris in Epistola quam scribit ad Corinthios, non verbum ex verbo reddens* [i.e., 'not word for word' etc.]..." The 'testimony' of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, even as Charles mentions and as cited by Roger Parvus is (as Maurice Casey noted) not specifically about its use by Paul as a quotation in I Corinthians, but a witness to the truth of Psalm 60:8 and II Timothy 3 about its readers being foolishly led astray into heresy and sin, "*oneratae peccatis, quae ducuntur desideriis variis, semper discentes, et numquam ad scientiam veritatis pervenientes...*" Thus, Jerome.

II.

Indeed, a closer examination of the differences between the Latin of the "first recension" from G1 and the *Vision*, consisting only of chapters 6-11 (minus 11:2-22) makes the case that the *Vision of Isaiah* indeed stood alone at the outset, and there are abundant reasons for strongly suspecting it to have been composed closer to the beginning of the first century than its finish.

The best way to grasp the apparent necessity of this assertion and realize its cogency as a conclusion is to experience the text as presented by R. C. Charles (1900), who theorized the most likely provenance of available manuscripts by means of textual analysis then laid them out in an English translation. His summary of manuscript descendency still stands as the likeliest derivation of manuscript dependency in spite of some theoretical "emendations" by later scholars e.g. Knibb, Norelli, Knight and others. But by wishing to present the *Asc. Is.* as a completed whole he undoubtedly regarded the Ethiopic version (along with portions of *The Greek Legend*) as primarily authoritative in such a way that the obviousness that the primary text ought to be accorded the *Vision*, which stands alone as 6-11 (minus the massive late interpolation of 11: 2-22) as published by Dillmann ("L2" according to Charles) was overlooked. As Richard Carrier, Earl Doherty and other mythicists have rightly pointed out this historicist bias renders to this day the cognitive impossibility of the bulk of current Jesus scholarship to be even slightly capable of acknowledging even the scant possibility of a mythological interpretation of a "Christus Victor" in spite of the growing possibility that this indeed makes better sense of all the evidence available.

The effort to uncover the "historical Jesus," which began in earnest with the publication of Albert Schweitzer's *Quest for the Historical Jesus* right around the time the Anglican clergyman R. C. Charles was publishing his take on *The Ascension of Isaiah*, has followed a disappointing pattern in accordance with a law of diminishing returns, until what we have been left with, admittedly among honest historicists, is a Jesus who was born, was crucified, was probably baptized by John the Baptist, perhaps was buried, and was subsequently experienced by some of his followers as still alive after his death. The gospel accounts differ in irreconcilable ways on the manner of his birth, when he was born, who he appeared to after death, when he ascended into heaven, his words and deeds, the fate of his betrayer, the why and when of his execution—virtually every element of his earthly life which had been regarded for centuries as more or less accurate reports of these eventualities.

Eventualities as so described by the gospels the earlier writings of his apostles, such as Paul, seem utterly unaware of. That a large swath of apostolic writings in the form of letters were not even written by the apostles who claim to be their authors, and that the gospel authors are themselves unknown individuals writing from forty to seventy years after the events they purport to describe, has not been helpful. At times Jesus historians have argued for his historicity by means of various species of forlorn rationalization bordering on a preposterously counterintuitive ontology. (For example: "It is highly unlikely that a first century Jewish rabbi would have said, taught, or believed x. Yet it was something so unusual and unlikely it had to have been recorded as x. Therefore Jesus must in fact have said, taught, and believed x," etc. One can see the psychological force in this that renders the actual existence of said rabbi by means of x part and parcel of an unassailable mystery.)

III.

Inasmuch as a kind of consensus has been reached declaring the finished product of the combined portions of the *Asc. Is.* to have been formed in the late 2nd or early 3rd centuries, the dating of individual components is largely discernible by means of their specific theological content. The *Testament of Hezekiah*, for example, contains prophecies about the coming of antichrist as a Nero figure so must be dated post-68 c.e. and is usually given a date of the end of the first century. It also

prophesies certain deleterious elements of church life highly reminiscent of the likes of *I Clement* and the late pastorals, placing it at the early 2nd century. *The Martyrdom of Isaiah* contains legendary features oft cited by church fathers and can safely be dated 1st century or perhaps even at 1st century b.c.e.

Because the *Vision of Isaiah* contains a surprisingly developed version of the Holy Trinity and a portrayal of the pre-existent Son of God, "the Beloved" in heaven, the tendency has been to date its authorship to a time when Christianity had sufficiently developed these theological ideas. Since the earliest dogmatic formulations regarding the Holy Spirit and the triune nature of God began with Tertullian (c. 180), [A *History of Christian Thought*, Paul Tillich, Simon and Schuster, (New York: 1967), p. 46.], the *Vision* must be dated late 1st, early 2nd century. Also because it contains "docetic elements," although this assertion—which hardly had to have begun with Charles—has of late been boldly refuted. {see "The Ascension of Isaiah and Docetic Christology," Darrell Hannah, *Vigiliae Christianae*, (1999) pp. 191-192: "The purpose of the successive transformations theme, then, is to stress the angelic and demonic powers' ignorance of the Beloved's true identity. Our author's treatment of this motif is not that different from St. Paul's assertion in 1 Corinthians that 'we speak a wisdom from God hidden in mystery, which God foreordained before the ages for our glory, which no one of the rulers of this age knew. For if they had known they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory' (1 Cor. 2.7-8) λαλούμεν θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ την ἀποκεκρυμμένην, ἡν προώρισεν 6 θεός προ των αιώνων εις δόξαν ημών ἡν ούδε'ις τών ἀρχόντων του αιώνος τούτου εγνωκεν· εἰ γαρεγνωσαν, ούκ αν τον κύριον τής δόξης ἔσταύρωσαν. Indeed, one could understand the whole of the second-half of the *Ascension of Isaiah* as a midrashic explanation of this Pauline pronouncement."} *Ergo*, one could understand this Pauline pronouncement as a summation of the soteriological meaning of the *Vision of Isaiah* (!).

Thoroughly refutable as well is any assertion that the *Vision* is late because of its Trinitarian leanings, which are blatant. The work of the late Alan F. Segal (*Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism*, 1977) demonstrates that the idea of two powers was not regarded as forbidden in Jewish thought until 100 c.e., and had antecedents in the bible (Dan. 7: 9ff., Ex. 23: 20-23; 15:13). Michael S. Heiser has explored Segal's research further (2004), concluding that "the ancient Israelite knew two Yahwehs—one invisible, a spirit, the other visible, often in human form. The two Yahwehs at times appear together in the text, at times being distinguished, at other times not." (<https://twopowersinheaven.com/>)

Inasmuch as the textual analysis of manuscripts and their likely provenance by Charles in his Introduction to his multiple translations of *The Ascension of Isaiah* remains the 'gold standard' for assessing the historical significance of the overall work, there are a number of unsustainable assumptions and conclusions which, on close examination, require decisive revision. Some of these we turn to now:

- (1.) From the ostensible fact that descriptions in chapters x. and xi. of the descent from heaven, crucifixion, descent into Sheol, and arising from Sheol are obviously parallel sequences of eventualities with an overriding sequential similarity, it does not follow that they were both original to the initial *Vision of Isaiah*; yet Charles makes just this assertion as an article of 'proof' for the originality of xi. 2-22

on p. xxiii., saying that "we naturally expect Isaiah to witness these events in the vision of xi., seeing that he witnesses all else that is mentioned in x. 8-14." This is something of a phony logical conundrum: If he witnessed the events as described in xi., we would expect to see that reported in xi.; if he did not witness the events as described in xi., we would not. Since we do expect to see them, they must have been germane to xi., (because we expect to see them). But what one does or does not expect to see transpire as a feature of a literary product has little to do with the actual occurrence of the ensuing description to have been anticipated. One also "would expect to see" an ending to the *Gospel of Mark* featuring resurrection appearances, rather than the abrupt conclusion at 16:8, yet the latter is original. One would "expect to see" a conclusion to the early second century *Acts of the Apostles* that at least mentions the death of Paul, rather than the rather abrupt and congenial ending that we do have.

(2.) Charles goes on to give his reasons for believing xi. 2-22 to be original to G and why L1 is primary to L2 (G2), writing in his Introduction at pp. xxiv.-xxvi. "...for from x. 9 to xi. 19 the concealment of the real nature of the Christ is the underlying thought of the entire passage." But wouldn't the noteworthiness of the consistency of this theme have an evidential value for an hypothesis that declares a certain ease in creating narrative facticity for an historical Jesus by basing it upon the rudimentary fact that his sojourn on earth, whether long or short, was hidden entirely from the heavens and the earth? This means that the only avenue to truth regarding his historical presence had to have been by means of spiritual vision of the same *ex post facto*. That is to say: the dogmatic constituent germane to the earliest community, that the Beloved's presence was hidden from observation by archons and detection by humans lent itself to the creation of 'The Legend Of The Earthly Sojourn' that functioned as the basis of a rudimentary spiritual one-upmanship culminating in duelling apostolic 'witnesses' with assorted claims of having known the Beloved prior to having been 'sent' by him, in an earthly manner. Thus ch. xi. 2-22 presents a hidden history obtained via the Holy Spirit, curiously without specifics e.g. Pontius Pilate (rather it is 'the king' who is the responsible legal authority), the 1-3 year ministry in detail (it being summarized by vs. 18, much as xi. 1b ("Et vidi similem" etc.) is a purported summary of xi. 2-22 [!]). It should be noted that xi. 22 "And I saw when he sent out the Twelve Apostles and ascended" is decidedly, obviously late. "The Twelve Apostles" are, according to Mark 3, commissioned for sending out relatively early in Jesus' career, but xi. 18 has Jesus sending them out in seeming alignment with the Lukian passage of *Acts* where at the ascension they are 'sent out' by being commanded to remain in Jerusalem. The final upshot in all this is that xi. 2-22 stands for an early legend regarding an incarnation of Jesus motivated by apologetic concerns regarding Docetism, clearly the case from the Ignatian epistles, for the issue the earliest version of *The Vision of Isaiah* presents to us is one of the Beloved's death and its actuality. Paul's discovery that the rudiments of the 'gospel unto the nations' consists in a sacrificial death designed to erase the sins of humanity in the sight of God meant that the Beloved had to have been Messianic, Davidic, demigodish, capable of suffering and death. *The Vision of Isaiah* in its original form (G→L2) presents a death-in-disguise, whose only purpose was to enable entrance into Sheol by deceiving the Angel of Death: the *signum* or *characterem* in that case could only be the overriding appearance of mortality the result of a cruel execution in order to gain entrance.

(3.) "Next from the command which Isaiah hears given to Christ to descend to the earth and to Sheol (x. 8) and afterwards to ascend therefrom (x. 14), we naturally expect Isaiah to witness these events in

the vision in xi. seeing that he witnesses all else that is mentioned in x. 8-14." ...Here the thinking is that since Isaiah witnessed in his vision the descent of the Beloved, as described by the Father, he must therefore be witness of his capture and subsequent death at the hands of the *princeps mundi*, along with his descent into Sheol where he successfully liberates the souls of the just after duking it out in some sense with the Angel of Death. But xi. 2-22 has little or nothing to do with the otherworldly realities of demonic and angelic activities vis-à-vis the Beloved, dealing only with his supernatural birth and how his presence in the world was rather unsuccessfully kept a secret (vs. 11, 12) "And a voice came to them, 'Tell this vision to no one.' And the story regarding the infant was noised abroad in Bethlehem." Yet this birth was unknown to all the princes and gods of this world (vs. 16). But as an adult his wonderworking powers aroused the envy of Satan, who got the children of Israel to have him executed, not knowing who he is (vs. 18). He then rises from death "after the third day to remain days." This in clear contradistinction to the passage Charles claims it must parallel yielding its originality: an ascension from Sheol bound for the seventh heaven has become a resurrection from mortal death. To this difficulty Charles' response is all but homiletic: "But the genuineness of xi. 2-22 is still more apparent, if we consider that in the short account of G2 in xi. there is not a single reference to the crucifixion, descent into Sheol, and resurrection on the third day, though from ix. 12-17 we cannot do otherwise than expect a definite portrayal of these events in the vision."

(4.) "In the next place the words '*Et non cognoverunt eum*' have occurred before (ix. 14) in all versions in reference to those who crucified Christ, and in xi. 19 in E this significance is preserved where the same phrase recurs. In SL2, however, this phrase is given a setting and a relation which are foreign to it so far as our authorities go. We have already dwelt above on the thorough inadequacy with which the earthly life and destinies of the Messiah are treated in SL2. We conclude, therefore, that xi. 2-22 are derived from G, the archetype, and that here, as in x. 25-28, xi. 27-30, the editor of G2 has abridged the text of G."

Charles is referring to the fact that this mention of the unknowability of the Beloved in L2, which is linked to his presence in the world, is different in kind from an expression of his unknowability by the murderous *princeps mundi* (ix. 14) ..."And I saw one like unto a son of man, and he dwelt with men in the world, and they did not recognize him" (xi.1b, f.) versus "and the god of that world will slay him....not knowing who he is" (ix. 14b). Thus Charles believes that since *Asc. Is.* with xi. 2-22 inclusive runs "And after this the adversary envied Him and roused the children of Israel against him, not knowing who he was, and they delivered Him to the king, and crucified Him, and He descended to the angel" etc. (xi. 19), this must be original to G because ix. 14, also original to G, contains the concept of the Beloved being executed by those who did not know who he was, although in one account it is humans at the instigation of Satan, while in the other it seems to be Satan himself. First off, it is not merely those who crucify him who do not know who he is in xi. 2-22, but virtually everyone. Secondly, in xi. 19, Charles translates the Ethiopic "and crucified him" whereas the original L2 ix. 14 has "and suspended (hung) him on a tree"---the difference, if we are to take into full consideration the fact of what Isaiah 'saw', is formidable, the former decidedly post-Pauline. Finally, it is hard to see how the "thorough inadequacy with which the earthly life and destinies of the Messiah are treated in SL2" have taken a great qualitative leap in xi. 2-22; suffice to say that if there was no extensive 'earthly life and destiny of the

Messiah' to speak of SL2's treatment of the matter is bolstered by a type of honesty; Charles' complaint would have us think that the fullest account is the most reliable, reminiscent of St. Bonaventura's belief it is always better to err on the side of piety at the expense of veracity than on the side of brevity on behalf of paucity. [See below.]

(5.) If we presume the existence of an historical Jesus then it must be asked how a legend e.g. that of xi. 2-22 about his earthly life will have been (1) so perfunctory in detail regarding the events nearer to the time of his death and the writing of xi. while yet so relatively expansive in explanation for the events surrounding his birth and very early life; and (2) so short in explanatory detail about events in connection with the defeat of the angel of death and liberation of the just in Sheol. If the account of the earthly sojourn in xi. 2-22 predates the synoptic gospels then the *Gospel of Mark* appears to be a kind of compensation for (1), not mentioning his birth at all. The birth narratives of GLuke and GMatthew appear then as expansive emendations of xi. of the *Vision*.

(6.) (p. xxi.): "The main differences of G1 from G are due to the editor of the entire work: whereas those of G2 from G are due to the editor of this independent edition of vi.-xi." True, provided that the differences of G1 from G are not due to the editor of G! The idea that *The Greek Legend*, though based on G1, is in large part derivable from the archetype G is merely an assumption. The fact that "*The Greek Legend* has preserved a large clause (xi. 19, 20) out of the large section peculiar to E" ought not bode well for any assertion about the lack of primitivity of G2 (L2, S) vis-à-vis *The Greek Legend*'s abundant similarity to L1 (G1) toward an imputed closer relation to G. There is nothing in any of these MSS preclusive of the hypothesis that L2 (*ergo* G2) is a mildly emended facsimile of the original *Vision* (G), and which would be dismissive of evidence for the same. Repeatedly what Charles considers to be "additions" to L2, compared to L1, by an editor or reductions to the text of L1 by the editor of L2 turn out to be the elimination of stylistic or thematically irrelevant redundancies or 'additions' that turn out just as easily to have been reductions by the editor of G1, as a close examination of ch. vii—which Charles cites as containing the decisive textual indices---has provided.

The curious form of conclusiveness Charles relies upon in all this is best seen in the example he provides as a footnote on page 67 regarding ix. 35-36, verses "used by the heretic Hieracas...according to Epiphanius, (*Haer. Ixvii. 3.*)". Charles writes: "It will be observed that this account is much fuller than that which is given in E or L2S, and that it preserves details which are only found separately in E and L2S. Thus E speaks of the Holy Spirit being 'on the left,' and this statement discovers itself in the above quotation. On the other hand the word '*ambulantem*' in S ('*ambulans*' in L2) has its counterpart in περιπατών in the quotation. Thus the above text is more primitive than either E or SL2, and may in some respects represent the lost archetype G."

An English translation of the relevant passage runs as follows: [from Epiphanius, *Panarion*, Ixvii. 3, 4. Frank Wilson, translator: "...the so-called *Ascension* {Asc. Is. 9:33f} tells us that Isaiah said,--'The angel that walked before me showed me, and he showed me and said, "Who is that on the right hand of God?" And I said "Sir, thou knowest." He said "This is the Beloved. (5) And who is the other, who is like him that hath come from the left?" And I said, "Thou knowest". <He said>, "This is the Holy Spirit, that speaketh in thee and in the prophets." And, 'Isaiah says, 'he was like unto the Beloved.' "

Charles' version of the text (E) has (33.) "And whilst I was still speaking, I saw another Glorious One who was like Him [the Beloved], and the righteous drew nigh and worshipped and praised, and I praised together with them. But His glory was not transformed into accordance with their form. (34.) And thereupon the angels drew near and worshipped Him. (35.) And I saw the Lord and the second angel, and they were standing. (36.) And the second whom I saw was on the left of my Lord. And I asked: 'Who is this?' and he said unto me: 'Worship Him, for He is the angel of the Holy Spirit, who has spoken in thee and the rest of the righteous'."

L2 (G2) has (33.) *Et vidi alium gloriosissimum simile ejus in omnibus, et justi appropinuaverunt ad eum et adoraverunt eum et cantaverunt, et ille cantabat cum eis et non transfiguravit se in visu illorum.* (34.) *Cum eis, et venerunt angeli et adoraverunt eum, et ego adoravi eum et cantavi.* (35.) *Et iterum vidi alium in gloria magna.* (36.) *Et ambulans*⁸ [fn. 8 p. 126: "L2 reads *ambulans*, but wrongly: see quotation from Epiphanius..."] *interrogavi angelum: Quis est? et dixit mihi: Adora eum; iste enim est angelus Sancti Spiritus loquens in te et in omnibus justis.*" = (33.) "And I saw another most glorious like him in all things, [i.e., the Beloved] and the righteous drew near to him and they adored and they praised and that one praised with them and he did not transfigure himself for them to see. (34.) With them angels came and they worshipped him and I worshipped him and praised. (35.) And again I saw another in great glory. (36.) and walking along ('going about') I asked the angel: 'Who is this?' And he said to me: 'Worship him; for he is the angel of the Holy Spirit who speaks in you and in all the righteous'."

If anything is in error in terms of the version of Epiphanius it is that of E, which says nothing about the posture or movement of Isaiah, although L2 ('walking') does, and we can safely assume from the version in *Panarion* (P) that "the angel that walked before me" implies Isaiah is following, walking as well. Thus the *ambulans* of L2 is not an 'error' if (as Charles says) P 'in some respects goes back to the archetype G,' and it is not 'in error' even if P is not closer to G than the others or not. Indeed, if P is closer to the archetype than the other two, the mention of 'standing' in G1 (E) is contradistinctive to the meaning given in 'walking' in L2 and P, but constitutes a somewhat late addition in accordance with postPauline Christological hermeneutic interpretation: the Beloved "sitteth on the right hand of God." But according to E if he is sitting, then the angel of the Holy Spirit, who is given as "the second who I saw was on the left of my Lord"---that is to say, occupying a position in respect to the Son that the Father is given to occupy. For if the Son "sitteth on the right hand of the Father" then to the Son's immediate left ought to be the Father, not the Holy Spirit. So the Psalmist and the later Creeds, the New Testament generally and including the *Ascension of Isaiah*. Hence the brief notice, "And I saw the Lord and the second angel, and they were standing." (P in Epiphanius agrees: "Who is that standing on the right hand of God?" Isaiah asks.) Apparently the editor of G1 noticed the incipient confusion of placing the angel of the Holy Spirit on the right hand of the Son, who is in turn on the right hand of the Father, suggesting a hierarchy where the Holy Spirit is sent by the Son just as the Son is sent by the Father, so that the Holy Spirit is not sent by the Father. (An imbroglio that precurses the *filioque* controversy that remains the principle theological rationale for the Orthodox/Roman Catholic split to this day.) Hence if the Son and Holy Spirit are standing the scriptural contradiction is eliminated. In P the angel of the Holy Spirit "come from the left" hand side of God the Father.

Thus, P shows the correct positioning of the Persons whether they are standing or enthroned; L2 (G2) avoids the difficulty altogether and seems more original for that reason; E (G1) is derived from an erroneous interpolation placing the Holy Spirit on the wrong side of the Beloved and leaving out the Father, because of an issue involving what of the Father any man can and cannot see rooted in the Pentateuch. A closer examination of the issue again shows Charles to have misapprehended the situation in some detail.

(7.) Charles maintains that when Isaiah asks his angel to name the question first posed before him in the first heaven that this is an error and it is the third heaven that is meant. But an examination of the text reveals that a question is asked the angel in the first heaven, while a question is asked in the third heaven but not according to L2 (vii.27). Thus it is safe to say that the reference to a question being asked the angel in the first heaven (ix. 19) is not an error: 19. *Et dixit illi: De quo te interrogavi in primo coelo,* (20.) *Ostende mihi, hoc enim promisisti.* 21. *Adhuc me loquente secum, ecce quidam angelus de astantibus, gloriosor ducente me omnibusque angelis,* 22. *Et ostendit mihi librum* (etc.)...Thus L2 does not make the content of the inquiry a demonstration of 'how everything done in that world is here made known,' but rather asks for the promised answer to a question asked in the first heaven, which results a book of deeds being shown Isaiah by another angel yet more glorious *omnibusque angelis*. What Isaiah's actual question was in the first heaven isn't provided, but it is clear that "first heaven" and not "third heaven" is original to the text. This fact demonstrates that G1, L1, E is later than G2, L2, (S) which is another way of saying that L2 is closer to the original G.

(8.) In his introduction (pp. xi.-Ixxiv) Charles states (p. xxix ¶ 7) that "In certain passages SL2 present a shorter text than E. If SL2, in other words G2, represent faithfully the text as it stood in the archetype G, then it is clear that in such passages the fuller text of E or G1 is the work of the editor of G1. This is no doubt true in a few cases." But if this logic is insurmountable, only wouldn't it be true in 'every' case? Charles avers that the "short summaries which L2 offer of x. 25-26 and xi. 22-30" are not original, and the longer text of E is because "the text of E observes due proportion which is wanting in SL2: Here undoubtedly the editor of G2 abridges the text of G." But the supposed exclusion has to do with the giving of passwords at the gate of each heaven during the Beloved's descent, whereas L2 only presents the necessity of stating this for terrain bossed by the *princeps mundi*, the firmament and the air. The 'change' may be due to the editor of L1, who has introduced phrases for the sake of appearance ('due proportion,' in Charles' anachronistic literary criteriology).

(9.) Charles (p. xxvi) also raises the question of why the editor of L1 would have omitted the original *vide simile filii hominis* (xi.1), writing that "the exclusion of such a phrase by the editor of G1 is quite intelligible; for, from the close of the first century A.D. its use as a Messianic title was avoided, no doubt because it was thought to imply the exclusive humanity of Christ." If this is so, it's non-use by Paul in the middle of the first century is equally telling, just as is its use as a title in the original (L2) *Vision*. For the phrase also means "one who looked like a man," which fits in nicely with the interpretation of verses mentioning the transformation of the Beloved into an angelomorphic, humanlike appearance prior to entrance into Sheol. Charles also says that there is no reason for the editor of G1 to have deleted "such a striking statement" as "what is really I Cor. 2:9" at xi. 34 of L2 when actually there are plenty of intratextual reasons for doing so. More than once all of our manuscripts have Isaiah seeing what no

man has seen before, making it untrue to say that no ear has heard the heavenly praises or seen the divine beings and crowns and thrones etc., for Isaiah has already. What God has prepared "for those who love Him" has thus been seen and heard by Isaiah: the statement was in all probability deleted by the editor of G1 because it presents a *prima facie* contradiction to the sum total of eventualities presented in the vision thus far. The verse as it stands nevertheless says 'you have seen what no man has seen, and no one has seen or can imagine it'. Plus if G1 was developed from a G that in all important respects was a precursor to L2 then it is possible that after the historical Jesus became a matter of dogmatic truth for Pauline communities was when G1 was compositionally expanded from the archetype G.

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#### IV. A Commentary on R. C. Charles' Version of *The Vision of Isaiah* (1900)

Pages from the Charles text of *The Ascension of Isaiah* in all of its versions, along with the *Greek Legend*, including his key for the use of various critical marks (Intro. P. 78) is readily available at <https://archive.org/details/cu31924014590529/page/n197>. Enclosed here is his English translation of just the *Vision* (with certain emendations and corrections of my own), gleaned simply enough by eliminating the bracketed portions of the English translation indicating they are parts of the text only present in the Ethiopic (E) and first Latin recension (L1), derived from G1; the *Vision* being from L2 (hence G2). It is useful to read the *Vision* (ch. vi.- xi.) in its entirety by concentrating upon its extant text (L2) first, for it becomes apparent that L1 (E), which Charles and others regard as closer to the original, is more likely to have been the result of numerous additions to the original *Vision*, rather than the brevity of L2 having been the result of an abridgment and curtailment of L1. Charles believed the original (G) to have undergone a recension (G2) prior to its translation into Latin (L2) and likewise L1 (E) to have been a translation from a separate recension G1 from the parent G. But once we hypothesize G2 to have in all likelihood been a more or less faithful rendition of the prototype G, L2 is revealed as much closer, if not nearly identical to, the original; whereas L1 could be considered the result of the historicizing of Jesus and development of Christian doctrine in that direction. Reasons for so thinking will become apparent as we move along. For proponents of an historical Jesus a summation from that perspective on *The Ascension of Isaiah* as a whole is succinctly simple: "The prominence of Isaiah in the New Testament and especially the fourth evangelist's citation of Isa. 6:10 and 53:1 in reference to Jesus may very well account for the Christianization of the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*. Indeed, the very basis for accusing Isaiah of heresy lay in his claim of having seen God, something that the great lawgiver Moses was never privileged to experience (*Mart. Ascern. Isa.* 3:7-9; cf. Isa 6:1; Exod 33:20; John 12: 37-41). Sirach's assertion that knowledge of what was to occur at the end of time was granted to Isaiah (Sir. 48:24-25) no doubt encouraged early Christians to append to this pseudepigraphal book visions...(etc.)" ; Craig Evans, "Scripture-based Stories in the Pseudepigrapha," p. 59 in *Justification and Variegated Nomism, Volume I: Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, D. A. Carson, Peter Thomas O'Brien, Mark A. Seifrid, eds., J.C.B. Mohr, (Germany: 2001).

vi.

1. In the twentieth year of the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, came Isaiah the son of Amos, and Josab the son of Isaiah to Hezekiah to Jerusalem.

2. And he sat down on the couch of the king,

vi. 2. In many instances Charles "restores" words 'omitted' by L2 "but supported by *Greek Legend*." Here the words "having entered" are considered original to the *Vision* because they appear in the *Greek Legend*.

3. All the princes of Israel were seated and the eunuchs and the councillor of the king. And there were there prophets and sons of the prophets: they had come from the villages and from the mountains and the plains when they had heard that Isaiah was coming from Galgala to Hezekiah

vi. 3. It's hard to see why L2 will have deleted "forty" here; but easy to see why it might have been added.

4. to salute him

vi. 4. The "laying on of hands" in order to prophesy (E, L1) is an anachronism: the practice isn't found in the OT. Clearly an addition to the text, not an omission by L2. (See <https://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/hbd/1/laying-on-of-hands.html>). Notice throughout how the words bracketed as not in L2 but in L1 seem redundant and unnecessary.

5. And that they might prophesy:

6. And when Isaiah was speaking the words of truth and faith, they all heard the voice of the Holy Spirit.

7. And the king summoned all the prophets and all the people who were found there, and they came. And Micaiah and the aged Ananias and Joel sat on his right hand.

8. And it came to pass when they had all heard the voice of the Holy Spirit, they all worshipped on their knees, and glorified the God, the Most High

9. who had bestowed such an excellence of words on a man in the world.

10. And as he was speaking in the Holy Spirit in the hearing of all, he became silent and he saw not the men that stood before him,

11. Though his eyes indeed were open. Moreover his lips were silent.

12. Inspiration of the Holy Spirit was with him.

14. And the people who stood near did not think but the prophets recognized that the holy Isaiah had been taken up.

vi. 10-14. Here again a line is given as deleted by the editor of L2 but regarded as genuine because it appears in *Greek Legend*: "And his mind was taken up from him" (twice). This redundancy explains what is happening in terms of the appearance of the seer before onlookers have drawn the same conclusion: an obvious addition. Without it the phrase "but his breath was in him" is best understood as the "explanatory gloss" of imagination occurring as given in L2. The editor of L1 is perfectly aware of this by immediately adding "for he was seeing a vision." L2 suggests the entire reading at the end (vs. 14) and the deletion of the negative ("not") points back to this addition. Note vs. 13, which differentiates the angels of the firmament from "the angels of glory of the world," in contradistinction to the "angels of the air" during the descent of the Beloved. This addition seeks to establish the worldly angels as distinct from the evil powers of the firmament in spite of the Pauline "spirits of the air" (Eph. 2: 1,2) which he regarded as evil. This is in support of the interpolation xi. 2-22 and a fleshy incarnation, and support in them for an earthly Jesus (e.g. in the Temptation [GMatt] and at Gethsemane).

15. And the vision which the holy Isaiah saw was not from this world but from the world which is hidden from all flesh.

vi. 15 (L1, L2) "And the vision which the holy Isaiah saw was not from this world but from the world which is hidden from the flesh." (Musn't it therefore exclude the xi. 2-22 scenario?)

vi. 15. (p. 46) "The vision...was not from the world but from the world which is hidden from the flesh." See Doherty (*The Jesus Puzzle; The Source of Paul's Gospel*) on Paul's extensive and crucial metaphysical notion ἐν σαρκὶ -- "according to the flesh." Interestingly, if xi. 2-22 is part of the original *Vision*, one must ask how the seer could have experienced it, if the vision was from another, utterly hidden world entirely. Hence L1 (G1) – "hidden from his flesh," though idiomatic, Charles has altered to "the flesh" in deference to L2 (G2)'s "all flesh," denoting ontological categories of existence rather than a personalized epistemology *idem per idem*. Verse 15 supports the contention 2-22 was added later, since L2 has "hidden from all flesh."

vi. 15. Doherty = distinction felt and propagated with dogmatic ontological explicitness throughout Paul, as Doherty noted; "*omni carni*" points to the greater antiquity of L2 with respect to G, as opposed to the idiomatic "flesh" or "his flesh" of E.

16. And after Isaiah had seen this vision, he narrated it to Hezekiah, and to Josab his son

vi. 16. L2 "et cum cessavit a visione" literally, and with his learning the vision, ("reversus") he returned, informed Hezekiah and his son Josab. Charles' notion that the entirety of vi. 17 – vii.18. are absent from L2 due to homioteleuton is naïve. It's obviously the attempt of a later editor to harmonize the occurrence of the vision with xi. 36-40, an attempt to explain the absence of knowledge of this important prophecy of Isaiah until 'now' – the revelation of the wisdom of the ages by God to Paul and others in the first century.

vi. 16 (fn): It seems incredible that as much as all of verse 17 is lacking in L2 "due to homoloteleuton", because the rhymed ending ("Josab his son") is found in the middle of the supposed deleted portion as well, making it more likely it was an addition meant to further historicize the account of the *Vision*.

vi. 17. (in G1, E): "...when the wisdom of this world was taken from him and he became as one dead" also points to a Pauline mystagogical anthropology ["for we do not preach in terms of the wisdom of this world" etc. "...alive in Christ, dead to the world" (etc.)]. These are among the reasons for ascertaining the passage to have been added to the original G2 (L2) on the basis of the developing orthodoxy, much as the letters of Ignatius of Antioch leaned reflexively on Pauline categories of thought and diction.

## vii.

1. and Micaiah and the rest of the prophets, saying

vii. 1. *Dicens* = saying. The editorial addition of 'and' to the text by Charles was necessitated by mistranslating a present active participle into an indicative active past tense (inexplicably).

2. When I prophesied the hearing you saw, I saw a glorious angel not like unto the glory of the angels which I used always to see, {but of that angel possessing such glory and light that I cannot describe}.

vii. 2 ff. (+fn): In II Cor. 11:14 Paul warns that "even Satan can masquerade as an angel of light." Here the seer witnesses an angel of light (orig. *lumen*, L2) unlike anything he's been familiar with. The editor of L1 no doubt deleted "*lumen*" and replaced it with "*sanctum [et] claritatem*" to preserve the legitimacy of the entire vision, and the change had to have been made in light of the authoritativeness of Paul *via* II Corinthians (4.) "For this purpose I have bent sent" ---an obvious addition (redundancy). (8.) "One more eminent than the greater Himself" (L2 lit.) points to the 'two powers in heaven' theory of A. Segal. (10.) A fundamental iteration of Doherty's hypothesis, making plausible a crucifixion above the earth yet not quite in heaven. Charles regards use of the term "Satan" rather than "Sammael" evidence that L2 is "apparently less original" than L1, but is that valid reasoning? "Satan" also appears in *Job*. One would think that Sammael was substituted for Satan by the compiler of the three parts of the *Ascension*, seeking conformity with the *Martyrdom* and *Testament*, much as the heavy addition of names and circumstances earlier in the *Vision* sought to do.

One is tempted to wonder about the validity of the reasoning meant to justify the overall assessment of textual provenance, an ostensible dubiousness characteristic of Charles and evident in Knibb's intro to his translation of *Asc. Is.* found in J. Charlesworth's *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* vol. 2 {Anchor, Doubleday, N.Y. (1985)}. For on p. 146 he asserts as part and parcel of the given of scholarly consensus, presumably, the reasons for concluding L2 deleted elements of L1 (G1): in order to render the text 'more orthodox' in appearance, then cites xi. 2-22 as solitary example. The assertion can be true, in other words, if and only if xi. 2-22 belonged to the original *Asc. Is.* (G for Charles), something Knibb asserts is so "because of its primitive nature." (He also asserts that Jerome 'seems' to be in possession of the complete *Asc. Is.* (L1), a practical impossibility since his commentary deals with a passage (I Cor. 2:9) found only in L2 !) For Charles, xi. 2-22 is original to the *Vision* simply because the seer otherwise will not have included anything resembling the history of the Beloved's incarnation, career, and crucifixion beyond the perfunctory statement of his accompanying angel in ix. In fairness to Charles, it must be remembered that at the time of his writing at the turn of the last century much more of the canonical gospel accounts were regarded as having a real historical basis than are so regarded today. For Knibb *et. al.*, the problem remains of believing xi. 2-22 to be independent of the Matthean nativity story yet dependent in the sense of it having been written after said accounts had obtained an historical tradition (in some sense) behind them. Charles also cites the celebrated passage in the Ignatian epistles (c. 110-116) mentioning that the virginity of Mary, the Lord's birth and death were hidden from the world, saying that said passage refers to the secret, hidden nature of the Marian virginity and birth of the Beloved as its purpose, altogether neglecting the fact it also states that his death was hidden from the spiritual archons who, in xi. 2-22, are eminently responsible as its cause. I.e., they killed him not knowing who it was they slew, presumably. In xi. the demonic forces arouse the children of Israel to have 'the king' put him to death out of envy. But if the demonic powers do not know his identity, why would they encourage their earthly surrogates to slay him? It is clear that xi. 2-22 of *Vision* seeks to enact a scenario where the demonic *princeps mundi* envies the Beloved for his wonderworking career in human form then incites his earthly minions to have him killed, and it is they who "believe he is flesh and a man." But the *princeps mundi* and fellow demonic instigators are given in the original *Vision* to slay him not knowing who he is, and this wholesale ignorance is transferred to human actors in xi. 2-22. Hence the addition of L1, "and they will think he is flesh and a man," intended somewhat lamely as a corrective device. But all of this accrues to the position that ix. 2-22 could not be part of the original *Vision*.

But the passages regarding his fate in chapter ix. make the fact of the death ambiguous, so it could just as well be the case that as an angel of the air the Beloved was slain on a tree in form only to enter Sheol alive enough to overcome its angel and liberate the righteous. I.e., one must die in some sense in order to enter the realm of the dead, so the whole question of whether it was a real (i.e. 'undocetic') death or not is understandable. Plus there is nothing in the *Vision* to suggest that his death was the direct metaphysical means of redemption in some substitutionary way, as Paul asserts. Again, all of this leads to a conclusion that the "primitive nature" of xi. 2-22 should be regarded as a stylistic consideration meant to enhance a literary presentation on behalf of a visionary report, mimicking the perfunctory and ambiguous nature of an otherworldly reminisce. The same epistemological vagueness of description and anomalous consciousness is evident in Paul's own account of his visionary experience(s) in II Corinthians.

Something likewise ephemeral and latently mysterious is presented in the Ignatian account, where the birth of the Lord, virginity of his mother, and subsequent death, are revealed to the world by means of the appearance of a star and its subsidiary heavenly bodies forming a kind of dancing chorus: this original seer thus could not have been the Isaiah of the *Vision*.

3. Having seized me by my hand and I said unto him: who art thou and what is thy name and whether art thou raising me on high? For strength was given me to speak with him.

vii. 3. (an alternate rendering--) 'Having taken me by the hand he led me into the midst of the deep [*in altum*] and I said: Who are you and what is your name? And to over what are you addressed? Power was given me to speak with him.'

4. Then he said to me: 'When I have raised thee on high and made thee see the vision, on account of which I have been sent, then thou wilt understand who I am: but my name thou dost not know:

vii. 3-4 (L1, L2) "...raised me on high..." (S, L2) and Dillmann: "*dixit me in altum*"; L1 doesn't have "*in altum*" in 3 or 4.

vii. 3-4.; "*in altum*": Charles' translation of vs. 3 records the phrase "he raised me on high" as an emendation of the text, as we shall see for the sake of an enhancement of an interpretive slant. The critical note he references L1 "*et accessit et tenuit manum meum*" [*tenuit* = he held] without "*in altum*". He asks in the critical note "Is *et accessit* = καὶ ἀγῆλθε corrupt for καὶ ἀνήγαγε?" (*ἀγῆλθε* is third person singular aorist active [late] for *νέρχομαι*, *νειμι* = 'to go up' [Odyssey] and also 'to come up from the netherworld' [Sophocles]), then asserts "S preserves the true text: *et cum accepisset me manu duxit me in altum* = καὶ λαβών με χειρί ἀνήγαγέν με Cf. Gk. Leg. 22. 9." Unfortunately the supporting citation in *Greek Legend* actually is a direct parallel to vii. 9., not vii. 3-4: "*Ascendimus*" etc. Charles asserts that *imposuero* (L1 vs. 4) [= impose, establish] must be the result of a corruption, *ἐναγάγω* for *ἀναγάγω*, though *imposuero* means "I will establish, impose" so *Cum te imposuero et ostendere tibi visionem* = "With you I will establish and make clear to you the vision (L1)" in contradistinction to L2 "When I will bear/carry you in the midst of the deep I will reveal to you the vision through which my mission is known to you." (v. 4.) The problem with vss. 3-4's repetition of "*in altum*" is that the angel first takes him by the hand and leads him *in altum*, then after Isaiah asks where he is being taken the angel says he will know when he is taken *in altum*. Latin dictionaries give 'profound depth' as much as 'lofty height' for meanings; Whitaker's gives the principle noun meaning to be "the deep, the sea, deep water" and then "a height\depth, a remote period/source" as per Paul's "mystery hidden for ages" concept, which Doherty rightly conjectures to have meant primordial eventualities or at the least an inspecific historicity or actual ahistorical eventuality. L2 vs. 3 "*Accipiens me manu duxit me in altum*," by L2 vs. 4 "...quando te feram *in altum*." It is not until vs., 5 when, clearly, it is stated "*et quando te elevabo, videbis.*" (L1: "When with you I am raised you will see." At the time; at that point; not yet.) Verses 4 and 5 are not repetitive.

5. Because thou wilt return into this thy body but when I will raise thee on high,  
you will see.

vii. 5. L1 adds, "For this purpose have I been sent." [contra "for eyes have not seen" etc. (xi. 34)]; L1: "*in carnem*" = ἐν σαρκὶ

6. And I rejoiced because he spake courteously to me.

7. And he said unto me: 'Hast thou rejoiced because I have spoken courteously to thee?' And he said: 'And thou wilt see how a greater also than I am will speak courteously and peaceably with thee!'

vii. 6, 7 (L1 L2); (acc. to Charles): "And I rejoiced because he spoke courteously to me. And he said unto me, 'Hast thou rejoiced because I have so courteously to thee?' And he said: 'And thou wilt see how a greater also than I am will speak courteously and peaceably with thee.'

8. And one more eminent than the greater Himself thou wilt see; for this purpose have I been sent from the seventh heaven in order to explain all these things unto thee.'

vii. 8. This verse states explicitly that the visionary Isaiah will indeed see God and live, *contra* the statement of Moses in Exodus; again, the accompanying angel explains this eventuality as part and parcel of his purpose.

vii. 8. "And †His father also who is greater† thou wilt see; for for [sic] this purpose have I been sent from the seventh heaven in order to explain all these things unto thee." †...† fn: "Corrupt. L1 = *eminentiorum ipsius majoris*. So practically S except it has a doublet. Here read 'one more eminent than the greater Himself'." But L2 reads (7.-8.): "*Et dixit mihi: Gavisus es, quia humilitar respondi tibi, et majorem me videbis humilitorer et sapientiorem volentem loqui tecum 8. meliorem et dulciorem; in hoc enim missus sum, ut notiferem tibi omni haec.*" I.e., there is nothing in L2 vii.7-8 that suggests the solution of Charles: "one more eminent than the greater Himself," which in any case is ambiguous whether this refers to the Father or the Beloved: 7. "...et *majorem me*" = and one greater than me "*videbis*" – you will see "*humilitorem et sapientiorem*" = the first 'unknown' in Whitaker; seems to be "you will see more humble and of wisdom [pl. hence 'wise deeds']" In any case hardly 'mistranslations,' as Charles reluctantly suggests, even if from the two Gk. words he mentions (fn. 19). "*volentem*" [present active participle acc.] = be willing, preferring "*loqui tecum*" = speaking [pres. Inf.] to you 8. "*meliorem*" = more right, good, kind. "*et dulciorem*" = "and sweeter". The sense of 7. and 8. for L2 seems to be "And he said to me, 'you are happy since I responded to you humbly, and you will see a greater one more humble and wisely willing to speak with you. More right and good and sweeter in this being sent, in order to inform you of all these things.'" Obviously this is no assertion about the Father and the Beloved's status in terms of eminence vis-à-vis one another, in L2.

9. And we ascended to the firmament, I and he, and there I saw Satan and his hosts, {resisting respect for God}, and there was great fighting therein and the powers of Satan were envying one another.

vii. 9. By way of footnote Charles tries to explain that the use of 'Sammael' (L1) rather than 'Satan' (L2) as the name of the leader of the hosts of the firmament is more original. But the use of this name may only be due to the editor who combined the *Martyrdom* and *Vision* whereas 'Satan' stood in the original of the *Vision, in solum* (L2).

10. And as above so on the earth also; for the likeness of that which is in the firmament is here on earth.

vii. 10. "...for the likeness of that which is in the firmament is here on the earth" –a statement made by Isaiah himself.

vii. 10. The Latin of L2 is *verbum verbi* Platonically explicit: "Because just as (in the same way) is in the earth so much (such size, extent) is in the firmament, forms (*formae* = figures, appearances, patterns) surely of the firmament here (they) are in the earth."

vii. 10. "*Quia sicut est in terra tanto est in firmamento, formae* [nom. pl.] *enim* [= indeed, in fact, just as] *firmamenti* [gen. loc.] *hic* [adv. = here] *sunt* [are] *in terra* [abl. = on earth]."

This notion, so prevalent in the Graeco-Roman world regarding its cosmology (not to mention fatalism!) may have found something resembling a perpetual justification for the creation of an allegory e.g. GMark in the mind of Christian authors in the immediate aftermath of the calamity of 70 c.e.

11. And I said unto the angel: 'What is this envying?'

12. And he said unto me: 'This war till he, whom thou shalt see will come and destroy him with the breath of his power.'

vii. 12. L2 'omits' the line, "so it has been since this world was made until now," which is present in L1. The origin of evil in the world was thought in Judaism to have been the result of the interactions of the angelic "sons of God with the daughters of men" and the concept of it having begun with The Fall in Eden soon after the creation of man was something of an apocryphal innovation Paul started or was at least not clearly a majority view [see I Cor. 15:22ff; Rom. 5:12ff. Gustav Adolf Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (1950) {orig. (L. Strachen, trans.), London, Hodder and Stoughton (1912)}, p.107 and p. 176 top (citing Phil 2:9; I Cor. 15: 50,-52; Phil. 3:2, I Cor. 15:35-51).] [See Frederick Robert Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, Cambridge, University Press (1903), pp. 242-249.] It's interesting that the *Assumption of Moses* contains both the Pauline idea of Satan "masquerading as an angel of light" and a notion that the envy of Satan that caused The Fall took place only after his fall from heaven, meaning that event had to have occurred after the creation, not "since the world was made" as in the L1 version of the *Vision/Asc. Is.*] [re. Rom. 5: Tennant p. 255 ¶ 2: "Sin

'entered the world,' S. Paul says, "by one man, and death through sin; and so," i.e. through the sin of one and through the causal connexion just asserted to exist between sin and death, "death made its way to all men because all sinned" (*καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπου ὄθανατος διῆθεν, ἐφ' ὃ πάντες ἥμαρτον*). The difficulty of the passage centres in this, its first verse; but its purport cannot be apprehended until these words be taken in connexion with verses 18 and 19, in which the thought, long delayed by parentheses, at last completes itself by means of an anacoluthon." Be that as it may, key for our purpose is the solitary metaphysical-cosmological mini-assertion at the outset: sin entered the world by means of one man. (The author also notes that "the same phrase is used in *Wisdom* and was perhaps a common formula.")

Thus to assert (as Knibb does) that elements of the text e.g. this were omitted by the editor of G2 (L2, S) to preserve an enhanced appearance of orthodoxy could not be true if orthodoxy is defined in Pauline terms. But that L1 should have eliminated the phrase inasmuch as it asserts the intrinsic evil of the world from its creation, pointing to the metaphysical evil of matter, should have been the case; yet the assertion is present in L1, but absent in L2. Here again, the reason behind the conclusion that the editor of G2 (L2) eliminated portions of the text still present in L1 for the sake of enhancing the appearance of orthodoxy seems mistaken (likewise the Gnostic statement that after the ascension the Beloved remained in the earth for 545 days is also found in E, G1, L1 and not L2, S.)

vii. 12. "...donec veniet, quem vis videre, et interficiet eum" = until he will come, whose power is seen, and will destroy him "spiritu virtutis ejus" – 'with the breath of his power'. This is found only in L2 and recalls activity of the coming Messiah found in *Ezra* 2 (4) where he arises from the sea ('deep') and so similarly blasts all the unrighteous. We will notice these possible alternative [sic] translation considerations of *altum, alto* etc. for *Asc. Is.* forthwith.

vii. 12. The destruction of the *princeps mundi* and his minions will take place sometime (and L2 adds "by the breath of his power") but it is clear from the vagueness of x.12 that L1 regards this as coterminous timewise with the ascension from Sheol while L2 renders this a 'second coming' at an indefinite time in the future. Thus L2 more closely aligns itself with an eschatological timetable similar to that expressed in *Revelation*. But *Vision* makes it clear that the Beloved ascends from Sheol with "certain of the righteous" past all the angelic beings through the air, firmament, and six heavens into the seventh, the abode of God and the righteous.

13. And afterwards he raised me in him to that which is above the firmament: which is the first heaven.

14. And there I saw a throne in the midst, and on his right and on his left were angels

vii. 14. That the angels occupying thrones are part of an order of angels called "thrones" is a non-issue.

vii. 14. fn. Uses of the word Θόρον seems to mean not an angelic rank or type, even according to Charles, as "original to the text" by means of unanimous example, meaning that its implied use

otherwise is due to editorial addition by L1 (G1). (This throughout ch. vii.). Charles is in error calling upon chapter three of the *Testament of Levi* for an opposite conclusion: the subordinate "in which" there implies an inanimate "throne" location there from which praise proceeds, notwithstanding the obvious implication that it is accompanied by an angelic being to give voice; likewise with "dominion".

15. But those who stood on the right had the greater glory, and they all praised with one voice, and those who were on the left gave praise after them, but their voice was not such as the voice of those on the right, nor their praise like the praise of those.

vii. 15. "and there was a throne in the midst" is one of many redundancies L1 added to the original text (see verse 14).

16. And I asked the angel who conducted me, and I said unto him: 'To whom is this praise sent?'

vii. 16. The accompanying angel explains that praises from the various enthroned angels are directed to the seventh heaven, making one wonder how at least one scholar erroneously thinks the heavenly praises could be directed to the angels enthroned at the center of each particular heaven (!).

17. And he said unto me: 'to the great glory of God who is above the seventh heaven: and to His Beloved Son, from whom {where?} I have been sent.'

vii. 17. Here Charles gives the whole store away regarding how he garners insights into what ought constitute the original text. Citing the Ethiopic texts as obviously erroneous, he prefers that of L1 because of its resemblance to the Greek of Isaiah (5:15?) ( $\tauοῦ κατοικοῦντος τὸν αἰώνα$ ) but "who inhabits eternity" could only have *qui est perpetua saeculi* (L1) by editorial derivation and the reformulation by E could only be with knowledge of the unoriginal nature of the text as presented by L1 (perhaps G1); making it clear that L2 is correct: there was originally (G) nothing there! vi.8 may have inspired the addition, for "rests among his holy ones" (minus the L1 inclusion about "the upper world") could refer to the Pauline "holy ones" made righteous by the Holy Spirit on earth (the saints) which makes the reference to earthly powers in the presence of the seer on earth.

vii. 17. Isaiah asks to whom the praise of 'the heaven' (first heaven) is sent, and the angel responds that it is to the God of great glory who is above the seven heavens, "*et filio ejus dilecto*," for which reason the angel was sent to Isaiah. The phraseology runs (1) to the great God (2) who is above the seven heavens (3) and to that son [dat.] beloved [dat.] (4.) from whom or which place (*unde*) I have been sent to you (ego, only in L2). A sort of *locum tenens* role of the Beloved is ambiguous since the positions of phrases (2) and (3) are not reversed.

18. And again he raised to the second heaven, the height of that heaven the same as from the heaven to the earth.

vii. 18. "...and to the firmament" is redundant inasmuch as the world includes the air above it and the firmament controlled by the *princeps mundi* ("as above, so below"). Here again, the appearance of a word by the editor of L1 (G1) rather than a deletion to L2 for the sake of "orthodoxy."

vii. 18 fn. "and to the firmament": that Charles brackets this as unoriginal yet asserts it goes back to G1 indicates the lack of faithfulness of that recension to the original. The addition's intention seems to have been to blur a cosmological distinction between the firmament and earth, rendering an earthly appearance of the Beloved as epistemologically coextensive in a geographical sense as to location as one in the air between firmament and earth, on behalf of a concept of incarnation.

19. And I saw there as in the first heaven, angels on the right and on the left.

20. And there was great glory in the second heaven, and the praise also was not like the praise of those who were in the first heaven.

21. And I fell on my face to worship him, but the angel who conducted me did not permit me, but said unto me: 'Worship neither throne nor angel of that heaven—for this cause I was sent to conduct thee—except him who I tell thee of {*sed tantum*, *quem ego dixerō tibi* = 'but only who I will have told you'—fut. perf.}

vii. 21. "Et (etc.)" Contrary to Charles' contention about a mistranslation on the basis of ἀφῆκε (=permisit), *dismisit* makes perfect sense given vii. 25. The fallen countenance of Isaiah upon worship of an angel did not warrant dismissal according to his accompanying angel; only a commanding warning. From the text presented regarding Isaiah's ascending it would seem that angels in each heaven praised God for the glory of the angels given those occupying their respective thrones.

22. For above all the angels, thrones have been placed, and above garments and crowns which thou shalt see.'

vii. 22. (re. footnote in Charles): (There is nothing about the L2 version of this verse that precludes the meaning of verse 23.)

23. And I rejoiced with great joy, that those who have knowledge of the Most High and His Beloved will afterwards ascend thither by the angel of the Holy Spirit.

vii. 23. Love of God and the Beloved isn't given as criterion for entrance into heaven, but knowledge—a very Pauline idea, even if it seems at first glance a protognostic soteriological gambit (see I Cor. 13). Increasing knowledge of Christ is a forte' of the apostle (I Cor. 12:8; 13-15, II Cor. 6:6; 11:6, Col. 2:2. "The ordinary word for knowledge in classic Greek is γνῶσις (gnosis). But Paul added an intensive prefix to it, changing it to ἐπίγνωσις (epignosis), giving it a stronger meaning." [Steele, Daniel, *Half Hours With St. Paul*, ch. XXIII].)

vii. 23 alt. trans. "...for such is the perfection for the knowledgeable of the Highest and Eternal and His esteemed Son, because they will ascend in Him by the angel of the Holy Spirit." (cit. Paul "...my first wish is to depart from this body and be with Christ" etc.)

vii. 23. Isaiah rejoices in L2 that he who "*talis est consummatio scientibus altissimus et aeternalem et dilectum filium ejus quia sicut angelo Sancti spiritus sic hi ascendent in illum*". L1 has Isaiah rejoicing "that those who love the Most High and His Beloved will afterwards ascend thither by the Holy Spirit." For L2 the requirement is knowledge of the highest and eternal, and his Beloved Son. Knowledge, not love, as per even Paul ultimately in I Cor. 13:12 when, after citing the indispensability of love, notes that "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known." I Cor. 15:34 "Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame." II Cor. 10:5 "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God" II Cor. 4:6 "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." I Cor. 8:5-7: "For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. 7 However not all men have this knowledge." See also I Cor. 12:8 ('the spirit of knowledge'), II Cor. 6:6, 11:6; Philip. 3:8; Phile. 6; Col. 1: 5, 9-10, 25b-27, 2:1, 3:10; Eph. 1:17, 3:4 "In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ" etc.; Eph. 4:17 "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them." (The historical Jesus has it later that love, not knowledge of God is the greatest commandment.)

24. And he raised me to the third heaven, and in like manner I saw those upon the right and upon the left, and there was a throne there in the midst; the memorial of this world is there unheard of.

25. But the glory of my spirit was undergoing transformation as I ascended to each heaven in turn and I said: 'Nothing of that world is here named.'

vii. 25. "Glory of my spirit" undergoing transformation (rather than 'appearance' (L1)), more closely aligns the experience of Paul in the third heaven than imputed reliance upon familiarity with *Enoch*, plus it is highly reminiscent of the Pauline "from glory to glory" of Christian experience in the Pauline cult.

26. And he answered me, and said unto me: 'Nothing is named on account of its weakness, and nothing is hidden there of what is done.'

vii. 26. [In the third heaven] "nothing is mentioned on account of its weakness" aligns with Paul's plea to God to remove his own weakness in ascent but is told by God that His grace is sufficient.

27. And the praise wherewith they praised and the glory of him who sat on the throne was great.

vii. 25.-27. fn. Charles: "The more remote each heaven is from the earth, the smaller is the impression made upon it by the things of earth. Yet none of the things of earth can escape the knowledge of the inhabitants of the heavens." This in direct contradiction with Ignatius' remark that the birth of the Lord, his mother's virginity, and his death were all events 'unknown to all the heavens'. Charles is prepping for the acceptability of xi. 2-22 in some sense. If Charles is correct in his overall interpretation of the meaning of heavenly stratification in terms of earthly knowledge, the torture and execution of the Beloved by the *princeps mundi* could not logically have transpired on earth: they would not have been utterly unknown in the heavens, as they were.

28. And again he raised me to the fourth heaven, and the height from the third to the fourth heaven was greater than from the earth to the firmament.

29. And there again I saw those who were on the right hand and those who we on the left

31. And again the glory of him who sat on the throne was greater than that of the angels on the right and their glory was beyond that of those who were below.

32. And I ascended to the fifth heaven.

33. And again I saw.

34. And the glory of those on the right hand was greater than that of those.

36. And their praise was more glorious than that of the fourth heaven.

37. {And I marvelled at so great a multitude of angels seen in order of unlike goodnesses, and holding each a separate glory, praising a rising one appearing from the depths whose name is not revealed to all flesh [*omni carni*], because he gives such great glory to the angels over single heavens. And answering the angel said to me: You wonder how it is that they are not all of one kind? Indeed you've not seen the unsurpassable powers and the thousands of thousands of angels.}

vii. 37. "...whose name is not known to any flesh" points strongly to a strict metaphysical differentiation between the sphere or realm of the flesh (ἐν σαρκὶ \*) and the heavenlies. (\*σάρξ, gen. σαρκός, ḥ, A.II.3. the physical or natural order of things, opp. the spiritual or supernatural, "σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα" 1 Ep.Cor.1.26; "ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες" Ep.Phil.3.3; τὸν κύριον τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης ç.) [Perseus/Tufts].

vii. 37. "And I marvelled, beholding such multitude of angels arrayed in the ranks of their diverse goodnesses, each having his own glory, glorified him who is on high (whose name is not revealed to all flesh), because he gave so much glory to the angels who are above each heaven." Lance Owens of The Gnostic Society Library" (orig. trans. In Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., New York: Columbia University Press (1991), p. 449 ff.

vii. 37. As we have seen, in the fifth heaven Isaiah is astonished at the sight of the entire multitude of angels *videns divsis bonitatibus ordinatorum, et singuli gloriā habentes glorificant existentem in alto* –appearing (seen as) unlike, separate [adj.] goodnesses [abl. pl?] arranged [gen. perf. pass. ppl.] = ordered by diverse appearance, and each holding [pres.act.ppl] glorifying [3rd pl. act.] *existentem* = one arising [3rd person acc. pres. act. ppl. = one stepping forth, appearing; arising; becoming, being] *in [+abl]* in, on, at (space); in accordance with/regard to/the case of; within (time) *alto* [abl. sing.] the\_deep, the\_sea; deep water; a height/depth; remote/obscure period/source ['*in alto*' ]. These determinations are via Whitaker's Latin Dictionary and other options through LEXIGOS. Re. the Gk. Behind '*in altum*', '*in alto*'.....βάθος [ά], εος, τό, (βαθύς) A depth or height, acc. as measured up or down, Ταρτάρου βάθη A.Pr.1029;: with Preps., ἐκ βάθεος in depth, Herodotus.1.186;... [etc.] 2 metaphysics, ...cf. Ep.Rom.11.33;... B.: pl., βάθη depths, Plato, *Timaeus* 44d, etc.; deep water, opp. shallows near shore, LXX Ps.68(69).2, *alia*. [Liddell & Scott (1940) <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.11:2:1.LSJ>]

The translation based on that of Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, "Heresies of the High Middle Ages" (2nd ed., New York: Columbia University Press, (1991)) modified by Lance Owens in the online *Gnostic Society Library (Cathar Writings and Rituals)* has "beholding such a multitude of angels arrayed in the ranks of their diverse goodnesses; each, having his own glory, glorified Him who is on high". Charles avoids these words in his translation altogether (!). His S has *in altitudinibus* [abl. pl.]='height, altitude; depth; loftiness, profundity, noblemindedness, secrecy' which makes sense given the words immediately following are "whose name has not been revealed to all flesh (*omni carni*)," putting us back in the realm of apparently Pauline dogmatic metaphysical assertions.

The angel asks Isaiah why he wonders about this arrangement according to variation in splendor of appearance, this actual difference in kind, given he's not seen the extent of the innumerable angelic hosts and their unconquerable powers thus far at all (*et millia millium angelorum*).

## viii.

1. Again he raised me into the air of the sixth heaven, and I saw there such great glory as I had not seen in the fifth heaven.
2. And I looked {at} an angel in great glory,

3. And their praise was holy and wonderful {alternatively 'And deeds of power were honourable and surpassing'}

viii. 3. In the air of the sixth heaven the angels were greater than in the fifth. *Et facta virtutum* [gen.pl.] *erant honorabilia et praecedentia, canticum eorum sanctum et mirabile erat* = And the deeds of the powers were honourable and surpassing, their praise was holy and wonderful. ---the first clause of this sentence existing only in L2. (See "The Cosmology of the Ascension of Isaiah: Analysis and Re-assessment of the Text's Cosmological Framework," L. Roig Lanzillotta, in *The Ascencion of Isaiah*, J.N. Bremmer, T.R. Karmann, and T. Nicklas eds.; Peeters Publ., Leuven, Belgium: (2016).)

4. And I said to the angel who conducted me: 'What is this which I see, my lord?'

5. And he said to me: I am not thy lord, but thy fellow slave {\servant}.

7. And he said to me: Concerning the sixth heaven, {and how this throne is not nor angels on the left, but of the power of the seventh heaven they have grouped where the precious son of God is. 8. For it is to he alone to whose voice all the heavens and angels give answer, I am sent to raise thee here that thou may seest this glory,

viii. 7. states that the name of the Elect One has not been made known, followed by the supremacy of that name asserted as that of the living one to whom all praises are directed, making this Christology in line with late Pauline developments (L1). Vs. 9 refers to the Beloved (L2). That the praises were directed to the unnameable Father belongs to the prePauline, original *Asc. Is.* Thus viii.10. is eliminated from the text entirely though not in L1, a total theological gloss (let us say) '*pro incarnatus est.*' "Undergoing (successive) transformations until He resembles your form and likeness." (See the note re. '*in specie vestra*' below.) 'Form and likeness,' not to mention 'resembles' and 'transformation' could allude to Greek words meaning quite a bit more than εἴδος (as in "σκῆμα καὶ μορφή" = '*forma et figura*').

viii. 7. The angel explains that in the sixth heaven there is no arrangement of angels on the left and right, nor thrones, "but by the power of the seventh heaven, where He that is not named," then L1 adds "dwelleth and the Elect One, whose name has not been made known, and none of the heavens can learn his name." This addition was apparently meant to locate the Beloved in the seventh heaven, finally, and obfuscates the roles of Father and Son by inserting this just prior to 8., which says that it is "He alone to whose voices all the heavens and thrones give answer." According to L2 this is the Father, but L1 evinces the more Pauline "to whom every knee shall bow" by making the worship of the Son by supernatural beings something prior to his descent and ascension. The conclusion of 8. and all of 9. is about the Father, who Isaiah does glimpse, but then verse 10 of L1 lays it down that the prior reference is really to the Beloved and adds this Son will undergo "transformation until He resembles your form and likeness." The abrupt change of subject of verse 11 seems to confirm verse 10 as an editorial addition to the original text. "Form and likeness" in that sense (10.) is Charles' rendering of a verse absent entirely from L2, S. (Knibb has this verse, which is from the Ethiopic, in his translation.)

## 9. And the Lord of all the heavens and the angels and powers.

"The apocalyptic question as to whom the lordship over the whole world belongs is still valid for the church as long as it has to live in this world. This apocalyptic question is formulated by Paul in terms of the alternative between the lordship of Christ and the lordship of the ruling powers of this cosmos. But whereas Christ has overcome these powers and is now exalted as cosmocrator, the same is not the case for the church and the Christian. The struggle is now reflected in the life of the Christian who is called to freedom but is still, as one living in this world, in danger of losing his share in the lordship of Christ and of falling victim again to the cosmic powers. Not in enthusiastic libertinism, but only in the bodily obedience of the Christians does the church prove itself, according to Paul, to be a new creation and to make visible that Christ is the lord of this world." 'Apocalyptic and Gnosis in the Book of Revelation and Paul,' Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 92, no. 4, JBL: (Dec., 1973), p. 575; {after E. Käsemann p. 574 fn. 45}.

11. I indeed say unto thee, Isaiah; no man about to return in flesh of that world has seen what thou seest or perceived what thou hast perceived and what thou wilt see. {nor has seen what you saw or is able to see...}.

viii. 11. Interesting that L1 includes the word "ascended," which seems to have been added in order to reference other writings. Enoch 'ascended,' but he was not "about to return into a body of that world" ("*nemo in carne [év σαρκὶ] illius mundi volens [willing] converti...*"). So too Levi, Ezra, etc. But this would include St. Paul, which lends further weight to a contention that the *Vision of Isaiah* was composed and known prior to the experiences of the apostle.

12. For it has been permitted to thee in the lot of the Lord to come hither.

14. And he said to me: When from the body thou hast ascended hither, then thou wilt receive the garment.

viii. 11, 14. "the body" (re. Isaiah's): In verse 11 the phrase is literally *in carne* = *éν σαρκὶ* and verse 13 doesn't have the term 'body' at all. But this supports Doherty's notion of the realm of the flesh as an entire ontological category 'yet again'. Revealingly, Charles accurately translates 11 "*in carne illius mundi*" – in the flesh of that world (!). Verse 23 renders the distinction explicit, when Isaiah reports his wish not be returned *ad mundum illum carnalem*—to the flesh of that world, to that world of flesh.

15. And then wilt become equal to the angels of the seventh heaven.'

16. And he raised me up into the sixth heaven, and there were now none on the right or on the left nor a throne in the midst, but all had one appearance and their praise was equal.

viii. 16. In the sixth heaven all the angels have "had one appearance and their praise was equal," unlike the fifth heaven. *habeant omnes unam speciem* – 'appearance', which is to say they appeared identical

to one another notwithstanding their different natures as in the fifth heaven: now it becomes apparent that this difference mirrors the disguise of the Beloved in his descent where in the end he appears *in specie vestra*, and it is crucial to note that later when the Beloved descends into the sixth heaven he does not alter his appearance to reflect their "form" (x. 19).

17. {And it was given me also and I also praised along with them and that angel who was with me also, and I had their greatness and our praise was one with theirs.}

18. And there they praised the Father of all and his Beloved Son and the Holy Spirit, all with one voice.

viii. 18. L2 (G2) originally and correctly has "And there they all praised the Father of all," rather than L1 (G1)'s "they all named the primal Father," since the Father is unnameable. Both recensions agree however that the triune God is praised "with one voice." L1 has verse 26 add "for those who trust in the Lord who will descend in your form," a clear allusion to the incarnation of vss. 2-22 of ch. 11 but an impossibility given the successive transformations into angelic form as given by the original story of the Beloved's descent. .... "Where dwelleth he that is not named" has already been stated, meaning the Father. There v. 18 --- "And they all named the primal Father" must not be original, as Charles admits, siding with L2: "they praised the Father of all."

19. And {it} was not like the voice of the angels in the fifth heaven,

20. But their voice was different there, and there was much light there

21. And then, when I was in the sixth heaven, I thought the light in the fifth heaven to be but darkness.

viii. 19-21. The sixth heaven is qualitatively superior to all the others, in terms of heavenly glory. The darkness of the fifth heaven in comparison to the sixth is noted and the darkness of the world is compared to the darkness of all those heavens beneath the sixth.

22. And I rejoiced and praised Him who had bestowed such blessedness on those who receive His mercy.

23. And I besought the angel who conducted me that I should not henceforth return to the world of the flesh.

24. I say indeed unto you that there is much darkness there.

25. And the angel who conducted me said: 'If in this light thou dost rejoice, how much more wilt thou rejoice, when in the seventh heaven thou seest the light, where sits the heavenly Father and His only-begotten Son.

26. {Where are the throng and thrones and crowns of the just are situated.}

viii. 25-26. The angel says all of this is nothing compared to the seventh heaven, where the Father and his Only-begotten Son are ("unigenitus"). This sudden description of the Beloved Son and Elect One as a son only-begotten is interesting, for if our hypothesis about the early provenance of the *Vision* and L2 is correct this would mean that the Johannine community was in possession of this notion of Jesus via the Christology of the *Vision* and was in possession of this idea before it adopted the λόγος Christology of Philo, expressed by the GJohn prologue. And yet that prologue goes beyond the logology of Philo and appears more in line with the kind of trinitarian notion explicit in the *Vision*. (GJohn 1: 1-2: "Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν."). The Johannine 'prologue' for that matter turns out to be more 'primitive' a version given the primacy of the prototrinitarian theology of the *Vision*.

viii. 26. At fns. 12, 17 p. 117 Charles asserts "*exercitus* = στόλοι corrupt for στολαί = *vestes* as in E. See ix. 2. (So already Gesenius.)," but the relatively less used meaning of 'band' or 'gang' works nicely. Charles' penchant for selecting pseudojustifications for the primacy of G1\L1\E is nearly methodical.

27. And concerning your not returning in your flesh

Again, viii. 27 speaks of Isaiah returning to the body according to Charles but the actual text has the more generalized "*in carnem tuam*" – in your flesh.

28. And as one who hears this I am very sad.

viii. 28. *tristatus* = third standing or situation; the first two were his presence in the fifth heaven and the promise of his standing in the seventh. Charles opts for 'corrupt,' having been flummoxed by this word and the present active sense of the seer's reaction.

ix.

ix. This brings our running commentary to the crucial [*non sic*: an etymological jest] and climactic chapter nine. The footnote pertaining to verses 2 and 4 are very revealing. Regarding verse 4 Charles concedes the original text identifies the forbidding being as he on whom is directed the praises of the sixth heaven, yet declares in the footnote for 2 that "from hence" is erroneous preferring (as always) the text of *Greek Legend* since "the second voice is from the seventh heaven [permitting], the first voice being from the sixth [prohibiting]." Not so if the original text is regarded as decisive: then both voices proceed from the seventh heaven, which also only makes sense because that is where Isaiah and his angelic companion are, "the air of the seventh heaven." But the first verse supports Doherty's

contention that the earliest Christians and indeed Paul regarded ἐν σαρκὶ to be a veritable ontological /theological realm or 'world'. We remember that it was the mind or spirit of Isaiah that was taken up and transformed, not his entire bodily self. But the verse has God asking how far shall the ascent be of him who dwells in the flesh. The answer is given by the Son of God himself, that his heavenly body is already prepared for him in heaven for a future occasion and this allows his spirit and mind to transport to the highest heaven, where he is already allowed to reside. Nevertheless he is understood as having still belonged to that other realm, that of the flesh – an entirely different yet fixed ontological category. The Latin of L1 and L2 has "*volens in carne vivere*" = wishing, intends, prefers to live, dwell "*in carne*," not the sense of 'dwell' e.g. in "*habitare*," as in 'lodge' as a matter of mere placement; rather more on the matter of a realm of existence, where one survives, thus strongly indicating an ontological category utterly separate from the realm of the spirit. (Paul says, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Even Galatians 4 renders the distinction with finality: "What's born of flesh is flesh; what is born of spirit is spirit").

1. And he took me into the air of the seventh heaven, and moreover I heard a voice saying: 'How far will you ascend that dwells in the flesh?' And I feared and trembled.

ix. 1. 'feared and trembled.' See Philippians 2:12

2. And {I heard} from hence another voice saying: 'It is permitted to the holy Isaiah to ascend hither; for here is his garment.'

3. And I asked the angel who was with me 'Who is he who forbade me and who is he who permitted me to ascend?'

4. And he said unto me: He who forbade you this is he on whom is the praise-giving of the sixth heaven.

ix. 4. Minus a prolonged glance it appears the prohibiting voice belonged to an angel: *Prohibens est, qui est super cantantes angelos sexti coeli, angelus.*

5. And He who permitted you this is the Son of God, but His name thou canst not hear till thou hast left the flesh.

ix. 5. See Charles p. 119. "...*donec de carne exibis*" = until from the flesh you will rise, move out, escape, emerge....See fn 9: "add *tua* from S, E". This demonstrates antiquity of L2, proclaims the Pauline notion (via Doherty) of a realm ἐν σαρκὶ (*in carne*).

ix. 5. The inherent contradiction of this verse has been noted, but if L2 is original compared to L1, the contradiction is dissolved: to be told one cannot hear the name of the Beloved then to hear his name is an obvious contradiction. For this verse L2 has simply "*Et praecipiens est filius Dei, et nomen ejus non potes audire, donec de carne exibis.*" .... Yet if we were to grant the text of L1 as original, we have a clear

contradiction: the angel gives the name of the Son of God then straightaway states in the same breath that Isaiah cannot hear and know his name "till thou hast ascended out of thy body." The Latin again literally has ascended from 'the flesh.' But hasn't Isaiah ascended thus far? It seems confusing until we grasp that the previous question , "How far will he ascend who dwells in the flesh?" refers to the seer's future actual ascension upon his death, and that his vision is not an ascension from the realm of the flesh *per se: donec de carne exhibis*. Verse 6 however starts with *quando nos ascendimus in septimum coelom*, which Charles rightly renders "and he raised me up," although more accurately 'we arose at that time.'

Charles' extensive footnote (p. 60) seeking to explain the internal contradiction found in verse 5 is utterly inadequate. The notion that mention of the Beloved's name is allowable for the more original recension of G1 while both recensions explicitly state in the same verse that his name cannot be known by Isaiah "until thou hast ascended out of the body" (he erroneously translates "carne" as "body") cannot be justified by recourse to a 'similar idea' in Revelation 19:12. That this name of Christ refers "to some secret name known only to the blessed" isn't sustainable: the passage in Revelation states that "he hath a name written which no one knoweth but he himself" – and this precludes possibility of knowledge of the name even by the blessed---including Isaiah!

(The footnote for verses 7-10 (p. 60) is equally lame, where Charles complains that L2 S speaks "only of certain righteous individuals being already in heaven"; the text has it Isaiah saw all the righteous. L1 throwing in with names e.g. Adam, Enoch, Abel seems redundant.)

6. And he raised me up into the seventh heaven, and I saw there a wonderful light and indescribable and angels innumerable.

ix. 6. L2 alone has "*et inenarrabile*" (=indescribable) which the editor of L1 deleted, since in verse 21 Isaiah describes the book-bearing angel as "*gloriosor...omnibusque angelis*" – an impossible comparison if the angels of the seventh heaven cannot be described. Thus L1 deletes that description as well. Michael is also noted as that angel "*praeminens omnes angelos in gloria sua*," another comparative deleted by L1 (vs. 23). It is the light of that heaven which is indescribable.

7. And there I saw all the righteous

9. stript of their garments of the flesh, and I saw them in their garments of the upper world, and they were standing there in great glory.

10. But they sat not on their thrones, nor were their crowns of glory on them.

11. And I asked the angel and I said: 'How is it that they have received the garments, but have not the thrones and the crowns?'

12.-13. And he said unto me: crowns and thrones of glory they do not receive, {until the Son first introduces thrones and crowns when he is in your form.}

ix. 12-13. This verse (which Charles claims is defective) iterates that although the just have received garments thrones and crowns are not received until the Son first introduces them when "*erit in specie vestra*."

The extent of the translator's willingness to misrepresent the text out of theological motive is again evident in the note for verses 12-13 (p. 61), where he states flatly, "The angel replies that the righteous in the seventh heaven will not receive their thrones and crowns till the Beloved descends and becomes man on earth" – a full-blown incarnational declaration. All the text says though is that crowns and thrones are not received by the just in heaven "till the Beloved will descend in the form in which you will see him descend" (according to his translation). But really says simply *erit in species vestra*: "*Dixitque mihi: Non receperunt modo, donec filius hic primum istos introducit thronos et coronas, quando erit in specie vestra*" = And he said to me: they don't receive only until here first such the son introduces thrones and crowns, when (since, because) he will be in your form.

The word "form" appears throughout this translation of chapters 9 & 10\* (\*But for the instruction given by God to the Son in 10:10 to be careful to adopt the "shape" of angelic beings in the firmament, a verse missing entirely in L2!), although the actual Latin words so translated are different words meaning diverse types of appearance unveiling difference of ontological status accorded the appearance of the Son in his descent. God commands the Son on his mission of descent "thou wilt become like unto the likeness of all who are in the five heavens [10:9]". Here the word in L2 & L1 for 'likeness' is "*figura*"\* (\*in the sixth heaven, where "he had not been transformed after the shape {=*figura*} of the angels there.") Subsequent mentions of the manner of these successive transformations use the term "*forma*" [10: 20, 21, 23 24, 26, 27] (– "like unto the form" –), until the realm of the angels of the air beneath the firmament, [10:30].

Recall that back in chapter 9:12,13, recension L2 has it that, according to the accompanying angel, "Crowns and thrones of glory they [the just in heaven] do not receive, till the Beloved will descend in the form in which you will see him descend. Nevertheless they know whose will be thrones, and whose the crowns when He has descended, and been made in your form," according to Charles. But the passage in fact says nothing of descent "in the form which you will see him descend," only that they will not receive crowns and thrones until they are introduced, when "he will be in your form." And the distinction between use of '*specie*', '*figura*', '*forma*' is crucial toward comprehending why the original visionary portion of *Ascension of Isaiah* (ch. 6-11) isn't proposing anything resembling a Beloved "*in carne*" at all. As we've noted, the subsequent description of the descent of the Beloved speaks of lack of transformation of the Beloved upon entering the sixth heaven and registers this lack of resemblance as *figura* rather than *forma*: (19.) "*non enim transfiguravit se in figura eorum.*" But in subsequent heavens it's entirely a matter of (20.) "*ubi statim transfiguravit se secundum formam angelorum illorum...erat enim forma sicut illorum.*" The fifth heaven has *transfigurevunt*, the fourth *appauit* (=appeared). These terminological distinctions undoubtedly have Greek usages behind them reflecting differences of meaning tantamount to ontological position in the cosmological scheme of *Vision*. Note the following from *Copious and Critical English-Latin Lexicon*, Joseph A. Riddle and Thomas Arnold, (Amer. ed., Charles Authon, New York: Harper & Bros, (1864), p. 317:

"FORM, s. *figura* (the shape, with reference to its outline; the shape, considered merely mathematically, without reference to color, beauty, &c., σκῆμα): *forma* (μορφή), the form, considered esthetically, as the visible outward expression of the internal or real nature of anything to which it corresponds; hence often a pleasing form, beauty, especially of a maiden): *species* (εἶδος), the shape, considered physically, as being the outward form that conceals the internal nature, to which it is opposed; hence, also, of a form appearing in a vision. Thus *figura* denotes only the outline or lineaments; *forma*, or at least *species*, takes in the color, magnitude, &c., Död.): *facies* (the natural quality in which anything corporeal presents itself, the whole exterior of a body, the whole form): *statūra* (form in respect of length, breadth, and thickness, in which, however, the last two are subordinate): *habitus* (with and without *corporis*, σκῆμα, the natural constitution and form of body; opposed to *cultus*; i.e., external habit, ἔξις, in respect of form; ...."

From *Lexigos Latin* {online}, William Whitaker (Notre Dame): *specie*, n. gen. sing., f.; n. abl. sing., f.— sight, appearance, show; splendour, beauty; kind, type.

So that the Beloved descends from the seventh to sixth heaven not taking on the outward shape or outline of angelic beings in that heaven, but in his descent through the fifth, fourth, third, second and first heavens he does manifest himself unto angelic beings there, portraying the *forma* (μορφή) of them heaven per heaven, evincing a "visible outward expression of the internal or real nature" of these beings, by transformation and appearance. At the portal of the firmament the Beloved gives the 'password' or 'mark' (*characterem*) appropriate for entrance there, for the first time according to L2, but then does not do so when descending to the angels of the air. He becomes like them "*sicut unus ex eis*" but transformation of form is apparently not undertaken since not mentioned.

The accompanying angel had mentioned to the seer that the righteous would receive crowns and thrones when the Beloved "*erit in specie vestra*," meaning "the shape considered physically, as being the outward form that conceals the internal nature, to which it is opposed (*Copious opus citatum*)" and can even mean "of a form appearing in a vision" (*ibidem*). Thus the Son is not transformed into a man who disguises his divine nature, but is in an angelic form that is anthropomorphic like a man to disguise his identity as the glorious Son of God. He does not become of human form (μορφή) but is in an angelic form of a kind similar to that of a man in order to disguise who he is: like unto the spiritual, formerly earthly righteous '*in carne*' who L2 says now are with the "*visiones inferni*" (9:15). (Charles adds interestingly enough by way of footnote "Gives excellent sense. *Visiones* = φαντάσματα."). L1 has none of this, although "*erit in specie vestra*" can include a form as it appears in a vision and is equivalent to the Greek εἶδος.

One thing apparent from emphasis given narratively in L2 is the consequence enabled by this ontological disguise: the Beloved was apprehended by the *princeps mundi* who noticed an interloping angel of the firmament absconding into territory inhabited and superintended by angels of the air, snatching him and suspending him on a tree ("*in ligno*") thus slaying him. L2 originally reflected by Dillmann's reproduction stated that he was thus first hung then killed; Charles reverses the order no doubt to render this eventuality consistent with events as recorded as history in Gospel accounts. The original L2 uses the verb *occidet* (= he slew, killed) twice for emphasis; the Knibb translation curiously

doesn't mention the Son being killed at all. Charles regards one mention of *occidet* in the passage as "an obvious interpolation" and refers to the other as a proper emendation of the text by Dillmann.

Margaret Baker (*The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God*, SPCK, London (1992), p. 221) points out that "since there were various traditions as to how Yahweh manifested himself, so there were several versions of how it was that Jesus came to be that second God. There were manifestation traditions and there were exaltation traditions, although those who were at home in this world would doubtless have known the two were aspects of one belief. The former recorded the manifestation of Yahweh in angels, the latter implied that divine status was conferred on certain human beings, e.g. Moses, when they were exalted into the presence of God."

14. And the prince of that world will stretch out his hand about the Son and hang {suspend} him up on a tree {*ligno* = tree, post, wood} slaying not knowing who he is.

ix. 14. Word for word: 'And the prince of world will spread (stretch out) his gang (band of soldiers) and suspend him on a tree and kill unwittingly, that is.' It is interesting how in certain places in the text and in certain ways alternative translation, just as legitimate, can leave an opening for a pious historical imagination.

15. And he will descend into Hades and make it and the phantoms of hell desolate.

16. And he will seize the prince of death, and will plunder him, and will crush all his powers, and will rise again the third day,

L2 has it that the Son underwent death at the hand of the *princeps mundi* in order to descend *ad infernum* where, a human shade like its occupants, he was able to liberate them after entering that realm as indistinguishable from them, at first. In his *Letter to the Trallians* Ignatius complains of his heretical opponents that they deny that "God suffered." The position is nonsensical from the standpoint of the gospels as historical records of the crucifixion of an earthly Jesus of Nazareth, but is abundantly explicable from the *Vision of Isaiah*, as is the apparent confusion about the "true" nature of that death. That is, the descent unto death of the Beloved only makes sense provided his appearance in the world as a man is *in specie vestra* (εἴδος) and not as a man being transformed into man *in carne* (μορφή). The salvific act of the righteous by the Son consisted in his liberation (= redemption in Paul) of the same by his overwhelming and suddenly glorious presence in Sheol and subsequent ascension ("et surget tertia die"), not a phantasmagorical human sacrifice --- that was the new element added by the religious genius of Paul of Tarsus on the basis of perhaps the earliest 'Christian' text, the *Vision of Isaiah*. Paul includes it in his preaching as Scripture, quoting it verbatim at I Cor. 2:9 and referring to it again in the same letter as a component of the gospel he \received\ (I Cor. 15), for there is no other OT writing that states explicitly that the Christ "rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures."

*The Jewish Encyclopedia* ("Angelology," Ludwig Blau and Kaufmann Kohler) states that angels "appear to man in the shape of human beings...and are not at once recognized as angels (Gen. 18:12; 19:5; Judges

6:17; 13:11; II Samuel 29:9)...Though superhuman, they assume human form. This is the earliest conception... [and] in Zechariah angels of various shapes are delegated 'to walk to and fro through the earth' in order to find out and report what happens (Zech. 6:7)." (This article also states that rabbinic theories as to the composition of angels included the idea "that angels are half fire, half water, and God makes peace between the opposing elements.")

*Vision of Isaiah* (L2) raises the question of how the Son of God, by changing his form into that of angelic beings (therefore a being "like a son of man who dwells on earth with men") could be so mistaken (L1: "they thought he was flesh and a man") until we possess typical and well-known Jewish theorizing on the capacities of angels:

"In three respects demons resemble angels; in three others, mankind. Like the angels they have wings, they move from one end of the earth to the other, and are prescient. Like men they eat and drink [this appears to have been controversial], propagate themselves, and die. In three respects man resembles the angels; in three others, the animals. Like animals they eat and drink, propagate themselves, and discharge waste matter." In any case, the passage from the same article points to the plausibility of belief that angels of the firmament and air, such as the kind the Son used as a disguise, are amenable to death. The soteriology implied by the accompanying angel's recitation of descent and liberation of the quasi-righteous in Sheol renders the extent it is obvious verses e.g. ix. 10 are additions to the original L2. Charles explains by footnote (p. 70) that he "bracketed" the phrase "and the angles who are in Sheol" since "the release of the souls in Sheol could not have been effected without a recognition of Christ on the part of the angels of Sheol." According to the L1 addition the salvific act of liberation is effected when the Father 'calls' to all the angels of the heavens and all below for destruction "in the last judgment" (Charles). But the original angelic recitation of events does not call for the destruction of the angel of death, only his defeat and despoilment. {I Cor. 15:24 "then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death."} The original text (L2) states (vss. 8-15) as follows: "Go forth and descend through all the heavens, and thou wilt descend to that world: to the angel in Sheol thou wilt descend. And thou wilt become like unto the likeness of all who are in the five heavens. And none of the angels of that world shall know...judge...of that world and the world that is dominated by them. For they have denied Me and said: 'We alone are and there is none beside us.' And afterward from the gods of death Thou wilt ascend and sit on my right hand. And thereupon the princes and powers and all angels and principalities will worship Thee." The part added by the editor of L1 notes that the Beloved will descend to the firmament as an addition to "that world" but not all the way to perdition. By verse 11 this change renders "that world" to include the firmament and Sheol with the seven heavens, then notes that "none of the angels of that world shall know" that the Beloved is allied with the seven heavens until the Father calls the angels of the heavens to action for the destruction of the angels of "that world" (Sheol and the firmament) and the judgment and destruction of 'that world' "and the world that is dominated by them." Then (vs. 14) the Beloved "will ascend to Thy place" at the right hand of God.

17. Having certain righteous persons with him. And he will send forth his preachers into the whole world and will ascend into the heavens.

ix. 17. *in universum orbem terrarium*—a phrase of nearly uniquely medieval-sounding comprehensiveness for the text.

ix. 14-17. In answer to Isaiah's inquiry as to why the righteous in heaven possess heavenly garments but not crowns and thrones as of yet the angel answers by means of a description of the activities and eventualities of the Beloved following his descent. The prince of "that world" will extend his hand and suspend him upon a tree (*in ligno* = tree, wood) and slay him not knowing who he is. He will descend into the realm of the dead. Charles translates ix. 15-17 of L2 thus: "And he will descend into Hades and make it and the phantoms (*visiones* = φαντάσματα) of hell desolate. And he will seize the prince of death, and will crush all his powers, and He will rise the third day, Having certain righteous persons with Him, and He will send forth His preachers into the whole world and will ascend into the heavens." (pp. 62, 63 footnotes) One of the reasons Charles supposes verse 17 and iii. 17-18, xi. 22 to be by the same author is that all are given to mention the Twelve Apostles (see note p. 21 and p. 78.) But in point of fact ix. 17 L2 says nothing at all about "the Twelve Apostles," but says only "his preachers." (*Et mittet suos praedicatorum in universum orbem terrarium* is not in L1, E, causing Charles to proclaim somewhat lamely "This subject referred to in iii. 17 and xi. 22 though not here.") Thus we have here another argument for the primitiveness of L2 (*igitur G2*) in terms of the archetype G. But for one possibly interpolated mention in the Pauline epistles (I Cor. 15) "The Twelve" appear only as part of the historical Jesus legend in the gospels, and interestingly enough, that Corinthian list of appearances has both "the twelve" and "all the apostles" (?!), which amounts to an argument in favour of interpolation of the former. (There is the added problem of 'the twelve' witnessing the resurrected Jesus while they were but a band of eleven!).

Indeed, the concept of 'preachers sent' (ἀπόστολος) may have been derived from the authority of our text, and even personages e.g. Apollos and Barnabas are regarded as apostles in *Acts of the Apostles*. Thus the claim of having been 'sent' by Christ to preach the gospel precludes an exclusive earthly commissioning of 'The Twelve' as an historical happening.

That the account of the "crucifixion" given by L2 of the *Vision* is given by an angel speaking of future events to the seer as they are both in the sixth heaven is primitive there can be no doubt, and explains how accounts of the event as given in the gospels were imaginatively constructed from Scripture without any reliance upon eyewitness memory at all. We remember that Isaiah has been told that no man will see, or could see, what he has seen and heard; Ignatius (*To the Ephesians*) stated that the death of the Lord was hidden from view as well, and that His very coming into "the world" was known only by the appearance of a star: his birth and death "mysteries wrought in the silence of God." (Ignatius directly contradicts this in the reputedly authentic *To the Trallians* however.)

If the Beloved will appear on earth at all, it is only seen and known by Isaiah as something future: "I saw one resembling a son of man and he dwelt among men in the world." This could be taken in the Ezekielian sense of "man," therefore what Isaiah envisioned was 'one who resembled a man' among

men; or it could mean an allusion to the Danielic "Son of Man," an ostensibly heavenly character with a divine appearance. But couldn't any first century c.e. visionary 'apostle' have maintained pretty much the same thing? For as Earl Doherty has noted, this 'appearing' is synonymous with 'experiencing,' and on this score the author of the *Gospel of Mark* could be said to have 'experienced' Christ in the world through the inspired action of his writing: it isn't self-conscious literary allegorizing if one is convinced one is writing 'the truth'. Likewise, the interpolated xi.2-22 should best be grasped as a kind of spiritual vision midrash of *Asc. Is. xi. 1* (L2). The temptation to think the verse 'must be' an abbreviation or 'stand in' for a sometime deleted account resembling an historical narrative is intuitively vacuous.

After being told that no one has seen or heard what he has seen or heard, nor will anyone be able to do so in the future, Isaiah says he saw the Beloved on earth dwelling among men. If you begin with a series of assertions about events no one is able to witness nor has seen, one easily enough may feel enabled to freely report on these eventualities as though they'd actually occurred.

The original preachers sent were persons who experienced the Beloved in his ascent from the underworld through realization of the truth of events as recited by the authority of Isaiah in the *Vision*. Feeling the onset of "the end of the age" (something coterminous with the unveiling of the *Vision* according to its final verses, xi. 37-38), and were preserved in their experiences of the *mysterium tremendum* by the Holy Spirit. [See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, John Harvey, trans., Oxford University Press., (1923).] This explains the Petrine experience of "the transfiguration." "He dwelt among men in the world" was then duly expanded into a full-blown earthly sojourn (GMark) culminating in birth narratives (*Asc. Is. xi. 2-22*, G Luke, G Matt) seeing further elaborative development in works such as the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, the *Protoevangelium of James*, the *Nativity of Mary*, etc.

It is a kind of process commonplace in the history of Christianity, and among believers of all stripes generally, perhaps best described by Etienne Gilson (*The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons (1937), pp. 51-52): "Let us consider, for instance, his discussion of the theological problem of grace and free will. This, says St. Bonaventura, is the mark of truly pious souls, that they claim nothing for themselves, but ascribe everything to God. Excellent as a rule of personal devotion, and as long as it is restricted to the sphere of religious feeling, such a principle can become dangerous when used as a criterion of theological truth. Confronted with the classical question: what is to be ascribed to grace and what to free will, St. Bonaventura was of the opinion that in such cases a theologian should always play safe. He can err in two different ways: either by giving too much credit to nature, or by giving too much credit to God. From an abstract point of view, in whichever way he may be wrong, he will be equally wrong. Not so from the point of view of religious feeling, for St. Bonaventura maintains that 'however much you ascribe to the grace of God, you will not harm piety by so doing, even though, by ascribing to the grace of God as much as you can, you may eventually wrong the natural powers and the free will of man. If, on the contrary, you wrong grace by crediting nature with what belongs to grace, there is danger. . . . Consequently that position which . . . ascribes more to the grace of God and, because it establishes us in a state of more complete indigence, better harmonizes with piety and humility, is for that very reason safer than the other one.' And then comes the final touch: 'Even though that position were false, it would not harm piety or humility; it is therefore fitting and safe to hold it.' ...*Summa summarum*: the faith of a mustard seed yields mighty trees. The practical application

of St. Bonaventura's doctrinal disposition on the efficacy of pious disingenuity can be best seen in the 'Acta' of St. John of Cupertino ([https://www.esalen.org/sites/default/files/resource\\_attachments/Ch-1-Supp-Joseph.pdf](https://www.esalen.org/sites/default/files/resource_attachments/Ch-1-Supp-Joseph.pdf)).

But before the *Gospel of Mark* inaugurated this trend through an inspired (and inspirational) fabrication of an historical Jesus the notion of 'incarnation' had first to have been propagated within a purely mythological context becoming framework both quasi-historical and sublime, believable and incisive. And traces of this earliest development should be discernible, if only incoherently, in what later became biographical details of the historical Jesus. It is to this possibility of discerning one such 'trace' to which we will sometime turn: the mother of the Lord....*sed prius pauci primum!*

18. Then they will receive their thrones and crowns.

19. {And I said to him: Concerning you were asked in the first heaven

20. reveal to me as you promised me.}

I. Charles maintains that when Isaiah asks his angel to name the question first posed before him in the first heaven that this is an error and it is the third heaven that is meant. But an examination of the text reveals that a question is asked the angel in the first heaven, while a question is asked in the third heaven but not according to L2 (vii.27). Thus it is safe to say that the reference to a question being asked the angel in the first heaven (ix. 19) is not an error: (19.) *Et dixit illi: De quo te interrogavi in primo coelo,* (20.) *Ostende mihi, hoc enim promisisti.* (21.) *Adhuc me loquente secum, ecce quidam angelus de astantibus, gloriosor ducente me omnibusque angelis,* (22.) *Et ostendit mihi librum* (etc.)...Thus L2 does not make the content of the inquiry a demonstration of 'how everything done in that world is here made known,' but rather asks for the promised answer to a question asked in the first heaven, which results in a book of deeds being shown Isaiah by another angel yet more glorious *omnibusque angelis*. What Isaiah's actual question was in the first heaven isn't provided, but it is clear that "first heaven" and not "third heaven" is original to the text. This fact demonstrates that G1, L1, E is later than G2, L2, (S) which is another way of saying that L2 is closer to the original G.

II. In his introduction (pp. xi.-lxxiv) Charles states (p. xxix ¶ 7) that "In certain passages SL2 present a shorter text than E. If SL2, in other words G2, represent faithfully the text as it stood in the archetype G, then it is clear that in such passages the fuller text of E or G1 is the work of the editor of G1. This is no doubt true in a few cases." But if this logic is insurmountable, only wouldn't it be true in 'every' case? Charles avers that the "short summaries which L2 offer of x. 25-26 and xi. 22-30" are not original, and the longer text of E is because "the text of E observes due proportion which is wanting in SL2: Here undoubtedly the editor of G2 abridges the text of G." But the supposed exclusion has to do with the giving of passwords at the gate of each heaven during the Beloved's descent, whereas L2 only presents description of the necessity of this for terrain bossed by the *princeps mundi*, the firmament and the air. The 'change' may be due to the editor of L1, who has introduced phrases for the sake of appearance ('due proportion,' in Charles' avowedly literary criteriology).

21. And while I was still speaking with him, behold one of the angels stood nigh, more glorious than the glory of that angel, of all the angels who raised me up from the world.

22. And he revealed to me a book and he opened it, and the book was written, but not as a book of this world. And he gave to me and I read it, and lo! The deeds of Jerusalem [L1: Israel] were written therein {alt.: 'and the deeds disclosed were shown to me, and I saw scripture not (as it were) certainly that of the world, and was read there, and behold the acts of Jerusalem were there written, and the works of all humanity, about whatever, and I was....'}

ix. 22. "Part 2 = (ch. 6-11) the ascension, relates Isaiah's ascent through the seven heavens, his vision of hierarchies of angels and the heavenly books, and his fleeting glimpse of the person of God." ... "Knowledge of the configuration of the heavens here is vital here in order to grasp the function of the heavenly books." ("The Heavenly Book Motif in Judeo-Christian Apocalypses 200 bce-200 ce", Leslie Baynes, (*Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism* 152) Leiden and Boston: Brill, (2012), p. 180, 181.) An important error. *Asc. Is.* has the singular *librum. Eth. Enoch* xlvi. 3 has "books [pl.] of the living." But Paul, (like *Revelation*) and the *Vision*, has the singular: "Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life"(Philippians 4:3). It often seems inexplicable scholarship sees a familiarity or at least affinity of Paul with *Enoch* rather than the *Vision* based on knowledge pertaining to the heavenly hierarchies.

23. And I said: 'In truth (*vidi veritate*) there is nothing hidden in the seventh heaven, which is done in {the} world.' And I asked the angel: who is he yonder the thoroughly notable angel in his glory? And responding he said to me: that is the great angel Michael always praying for humility, kindness {humanity}.

Rom. 9: 16 "It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy."

24. I saw many garments and thrones and crowns situated.

25. And I said to the angel: {Those stoles and crowns for whom stored up and thrones?}

26. And he said to me: Those crowns many are permitted {given} from that world who believe [rely on] his words, concerning which I told you [*credentes verba illius de quo locutus sum tibi*: L2].

ix. 26. *Et dixit mihi: coronas multi ammittunt de illo mundo credentes verbo illius, de quo locutus sum tibi.* i.e., those who believe the words of God about the descent and mission of the Son. Thus it would seem one gains eternal life as one of the just by believing that this will happen, not that it will have

happened or has already taken place. The angel is explicit: the 'words of him, as I told you,' but the angel hasn't spoken about any words of God or the Beloved as of yet, so he must be referring to his own words regarding the descent and mission of the Son. Charles' translation, as well as that of so many others, takes for granted that a postgospel *Vision* can only mean by *credentes verbo illius* words spoken by Jesus of Nazareth.

27. And turning about I saw the Lord in great glory [*et conversus vidi dominum in gloria magna*] and I became exceeding frightened.

The ambiguity latent in a perceived difference between E and L2 (hence G1 and G2 in terms of G) found its solution in the work of Playoust, here related in full:

"The text of the passage where Isaiah encounters the Great Glory (*Asc. Isa.* 9:37–39) is so fraught that it is doubtful whether he sees him at all. In the Ethiopic version, he does see him, but only for a moment, and he conveys no information about what he sees. In the Latin (L2) and Slavonic versions, Isaiah does not see God at all. Each version tells other parts of the narrative appropriately to account for this, but redactional analysis carried out by Antonio Acerbi and Enrico Norelli of the versions in these verses and elsewhere has indicated that the Ethiopic is secondary here. (Acerbi, *L'Ascensione di Isaia*, 100–102 (re. 7:7–8), 123–124; Norelli, *Ascensio Isaiae: Commentarius*, 496–498.) Thus in its earliest recoverable form, the *Ascension of Isaiah* says that Isaiah does not see God, which means that Isa 6 cannot have been operating in the manner sketched above at this early stage. The possibility of a human seeing God and living to tell the tale was a long-standing question for those using the Scriptures of Israel. Famously, in Exod. 33:20 the Lord tells Moses that it is impossible, and yet the Hebrew text of Exod. 24:9–11 offers a counterexample in the case of the Israelite elders, leading to an alteration of the latter passage in the LXX. Isa. 6:1 LXX, in which Isaiah sees the Lord seated on a throne, seems to be a flagrant contradiction too, and this problem is raised in *Asc. Isa.* 3:9, where Isaiah is accused of lying about his vision because it goes against what Moses said in Exod. 33:20. The more original form of the *Ascension of Isaiah* seems to be offering a narrative-theological solution to this exegetical problem, by trading upon the ambiguity of the word κύριος ('Lord') in Early Christian usage. Acerbi and Norelli have pointed out the prevalence of the term 'Lord' or 'my Lord' in the sense of the Beloved in Isaiah's ascent-vision, and I endorse their suggestion that the more original form of the *Ascension of Isaiah* is construing the Lord whom Isaiah sees in Isa 6 as the Beloved, not the Father of the Beloved. The existence of such an interpretation of 'Lord' in Isa 6 (and in some other passages in the scriptures of Israel), as the Son instead of the Father, is found in John 12:41 and some other Early Christian texts. That is, the *Ascension of Isaiah* in its more original form is finding a way for both Moses and Isaiah to be correct. On the other hand, for the Ethiopic, where Isaiah does see God, Isaiah is being portrayed as receiving an exceptional privilege that surmounts the limitation on living humans that Moses recorded. I must admit that there are some technical problems with the details of this reconstruction of the more original form of the text, since the extant witnesses for *Asc. Isa.* 3:9 lean away from the ambiguous word 'Lord' and toward 'God' or the Ethiopic word for 'LORD' that specifically means 'God.' However, this is not an insurmountable problem, since it is clear from Isaiah's encounter with the Great Glory that there was a shift over time in how this feature of the text was understood. If, in the earlier stage of the work's history, the Lord whom Isaiah

sees is the Beloved, the question remains as to whether there is a specific moment in Isaiah's ascent vision that corresponds to Isa 6. Norelli points, in passing, to Isaiah's initial sight of the Beloved (9:27–32). This is a possibility, but I wish to put forth a new interpretation: I propose that a better match is afforded by the final event in Isaiah's ascent-vision, the heavenly session of the Beloved at the right of the Great Glory. After Isaiah encounters the Great Glory, he watches as the Beloved descends to earth, lives there, is crucified, descends into Sheol, rises up again, and ascends to the seventh heaven amid his worship and glorification by the angels. Next comes the time when 'the Lord' (i.e., the Beloved) sits at the right of the Great Glory. This is the first occasion on which he is seated, since before his descent he was standing. His enthronement has trappings of exaltation (cf. Θρόνου ὑψηλοῦ, Isa 6:1); and the whole company of heaven is engaged in singing his glory, just as the two seraphim do in Isa 6:3. Hence the match of the Beloved's heavenly session to the throne-vision in canonical Isaiah is very close. Moreover, the ascension of the Beloved and his enthronement at the right of God can be seen as the peak moment of Isaiah's ascent-vision, and it is only fitting that the vision ends at that point, with the angel telling Isaiah that what he has observed is unique." *Iterum*: "Thus in its earliest recoverable form, the Ascension of Isaiah says that Isaiah does not see God, which means that Isa 6 cannot have been operating in the manner sketched above at this early stage."

Here again, sense is made of the text once the provenance of L2,G2 is recognized as the text in all respects close, if not nearly identical, to the original *Vision of Isaiah*.

Catherine Playoust, "*Written in the book that I prophesied publicly*": *The Discernment of Apocalyptic Wisdom According to the Ascension of Isaiah*, Paper for the Wisdom and Apocalypticism in Early Judaism and Early Christianity Section of the SBL (Annual Meeting, 20 Nov 2006.), pp. 7-10.

28. {And they approached to him all the righteous and adored him saying in one voice and a voice just as the former.

29. And Michael drew nigh adoring with the same, all the angels worshipping and sang}.

30. And I was again transformed and became like an angel.

31. And thereupon the angel who conducted me, said to me: 'Worship and praise this One,' and I worshipped and praised.

32. And the angel said unto me: 'This is the Lord of all the praisegivings which thou hast seen.'

33. And while he was still speaking, I saw another Glorious One who was like Him, {*in omnibus*} and the righteous drew nigh and worshipped and praised, and I praised together with them. But my glory was not transformed into accordance with their form.

"This God, then, is glorified by His Word, who is His Son for ever, and by the Holy Spirit, who is the Wisdom of the Father of all. And their Powers (those of the Word and of Wisdom), which are called Cherubim and Seraphim, with unfailing voice glorify God, and the entire establishment of heaven gives glory to God the Father of all." -- Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, ch. X. (St. Irenaeus of Lyons died c. 202)

34. With them, and thereupon the angels drew near and worshipped him, and I worshipped him and praised.

"I conclude then that the Fourth Gospel, Justin, Irenaeus and Ps.-Cyprian all agree that the divine figure who appeared to Isaiah was not the Father, but the Son. (This may be implied in the *Epistola Apostolorum* as well.) There is one possible exception to this in Irenaeus' shorter work, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, to which I will return later and discuss in some detail because it seems to be in some sense related to the exegetical tradition which identifies the Seraphim with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Be that as it may, it is significant that the Fourth Gospel, Justin, Irenaeus and Ps.-Cyprian all agree in finding the pre-incarnate Christ, rather than God the Father, in Isaiah's vision. They stand in contrast to the exegetical tradition, found in Origen, which sees in the occupant of the divine throne and in the two Seraphim the three members of the Trinity. Before turning to Origen, I will first examine the *Ascension of Isaiah* as the earliest surviving representative of this exegetical tradition." 'Isaiah's vision in the ascension of Isaiah and the early church', Darrell D. Hannah; *Journal of Theological Studies*, (1999), p. 84  
([https://www.academia.edu/26807528/Isaiahs\\_vision\\_in\\_the\\_ascension\\_of\\_Isaiah\\_and\\_the\\_early\\_church](https://www.academia.edu/26807528/Isaiahs_vision_in_the_ascension_of_Isaiah_and_the_early_church))

35. And again I saw the second angel in great glory.

36. And they were standing I asked the angel 'Who is this?' And he said unto me: 'Worship Him, for He is the angel of the Holy Spirit, who speaketh in thee and the rest of the righteous.'

37. And {post haec} I saw the great glory, the eyes of my spirit being open, and I could not thereupon see, nor yet could the angel who was with me, nor all the angels whom I had seen worshiping my Lord.

38. But I saw the righteous beholding with great power the glory of that One.

Darrel Hannah sees the Trinitarian nature of the Deity in the *Ascension* as "evidence of a corrective exegetical tradition": (p. 99): "I believe, then, a case can be made for an exegetical tradition which interpreted Isaiah's vision of the Lord flanked by Seraphim as a vision of the Trinity, running from the first decades of the second century, as attested in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, to the thirties of the third century, as attested in Origen. It even reappears, in a modified form, in the fourth century in the Arian or semi-Arian *Apostolic Constitutions*. This tradition stands out because it contrasts with the majority

view—attested in the Fourth Gospel, Justin, Irenaeus, and Ps.-Cyprian—that the divine figure who appeared to Isaiah was the Logos rather than God Himself." Then after a forthright, cogent and abundantly persuasive demonstration of this conclusion he finalizes its significance, asserting: "If I am correct in my supposition that the author of the *Ascension of Isaiah* has corrected the exegetical tradition which he or she inherited, then it must have originated before the *Ascension* was written—perhaps sometime in the closing decades of the first century. The fact that New Testament documents such as the Gospel of Matthew (28:19) and Paul's two epistles to the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. 12:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:13) contain triadic statements suggest that such an early date is not impossible. This means that already by the end of the first century or, at the latest, in the opening decades of the second, Christians were reading the vision of the sixth chapter of *Isaiah* in a 'trinitarian' manner."

...Actually, what it means is that, since 'Paul's two epistles to the Corinthian church' belong to the middle of the first century, Christians were reading the vision of the sixth chapter of *Isaiah* in a "trinitarian" manner" in all likelihood courtesy of a 'Pauline manner' he himself garnered via *The Vision of Isaiah* no later than 50 c.e. Mr. Hannah actually cites the evidence for so thinking himself....{'Isaiah's vision in the ascension of Isaiah and the early church,' Darrell D. Hannah; *Journal of Theological Studies*, (1999), p. 99.}

39. And my Lord drew nigh to me and the angel of the Spirit worshipped, and they both together praised. And thereupon all the righteous worshipped. And the angels worshipped and all the angels praised.

"In the later chapters of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, Isaiah ascends through the heavens, is himself transformed and sees the Beloved (a savior figure) descending through the seven heavens to appear as a man. The seer tells of the way in which he was transformed during the descent into the form of the angels in the five lowest heavens and then the angels of the firmament which separate earth and heaven (ch. 19). It is only after his appearance on earth that the Beloved returns again to the highest heaven, but this time without being transformed (10:15 and 11:25ff.). There is great sorrow among those lower heavenly powers that they had not recognized the Beloved as he descended and this revelation of the hidden descent leads to the conquest of the lower powers. According to 10:12 this descent and ascent is the means whereby the dominion of the 'gods of this world' is shattered. The point is that the moment of victory comes on the way back to heaven again when the powers are forced to admit that they have been deceived and so worship the Beloved. This theme is one which may have influenced other passages such as I Tim. 3:16 (where the chiastic structure suggests that ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι, ὥφθη ἀγγέλους refers to events in heaven), Phil. 2:10f., and in other forms is found also in Eph. 1:21, Col. 2:15 as well as I Cor. 2:9. ... The link between Phil. 2:7 and *Asc. Isa.* via the use of cognate in Phil. 3:21 deserves to be considered. Phil. 2 like *Asc. Isa.* depends for its soteriology on the humility of the Beloved as a prelude to his exaltation. In both works there is a list of transformation: 'being found in human likeness' is the result of the descent of the divine being who was in the likeness of God."

(Christopher Rowland, C.R.A. Murray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, p. 191.)

X.

1. And thereupon I heard the voices and the giving of praise, which I had heard in each of the six heavens, ascending and being heard there:
2. And all whose glory I could not behold {= *ego gloriam non poteram videre* = 'I was not able to see the glory' }.
5. And all the praises which are sent up from the six heavens are not only heard but seen.

"Now this world is encompassed by seven heavens, in which dwell powers and angels and archangels, doing service to God, the Almighty and Maker of all things: not as though He was in need, but that they may not be idle and unprofitable and ineffectual. Wherefore also the Spirit of God is manifold in (His) indwelling, and in seven forms of service is He reckoned by the prophet Isaiah, as resting on the Son of God, that is the Word, in His coming as man. The Spirit of God, he says, shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, (the Spirit of knowledge) and of godliness; the Spirit of the fear of God shall fill him. Now the heaven which is first from above, and encompasses the rest, is (that of) wisdom; and the second from it, of understanding; and the third, of counsel; and the fourth, reckoned from above, (is that) of might; and the fifth, of knowledge; and the sixth, of godliness; and the seventh, this firmament of ours, is full of the fear of that Spirit which gives light to the heavens. For, as the pattern (of this), Moses received the seven-branched candlestick, that shined continually in the holy place; for as a pattern of the heavens he received this service, according to that which the Word spake unto him: Thou shalt make (it) according to all the pattern of the things which thou hast seen in the mount." – Irenaeus, *Proof of Apostolic Preaching*, ch. IX.)

6. And the angel said to me: 'This is the Most High of the high ones, dwelling in the holy world, and resting in His holy ones, who will be praised by the Holy Spirit through the lips of the righteous.'

Rom. 10:6 "But the righteousness that is by faith says: 'Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?"' (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 or "Who will descend into the deep?"' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."

7. And I heard the voice of the Most High saying to my Lord:
8. 'Go forth and descend through all the heavens, and thou wilt descend to that world: and to the angel in Sheol thou wilt descend.

Admr.McKinney, {David A. Burnett, THE TIME HAS BEEN SHORTENED, (Early Judaism, Christian Origins, the Prophetic Imagination, Et Cetera)}, The Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah and the Destruction of the Powers of This Cosmos (<http://www.dburnett.com/?p=1635#comment-79771>):

"That Jesus must appear in human form in order to complete the transformation of the righteous into their immortal state is clear to me: Jesus serves as the first fruits of human apotheosis. What is less clear, though, is why Jesus had to descend into the firmament and carry out the mission in order to judge and destroy the rulers of the firmament. It is also curious to me that when Jesus does ascend, he does not pronounce judgment on the powers and he does not destroy anyone. So here are my questions: According to the *Ascension of Isaiah* (or other narratives which might invoke a similar theme), how and when is this judgment and destruction supposed to take place and why was it necessary for Jesus to carry out this mission in order to judge and destroy the powers of the firmament?" Reminiscent of a query once received of St. Augustine by a catechumen: "If God is all good, why did he create hell?" "He created hell," replied the divine doctor, "in order to put people who ask questions like that."

#### 9. And thou wilt become like unto the likeness of all who are in the five heavens.

x. 9. *{Transfigurans te secundum formam illorum}* = 'You will transform after [according to] their forms'; *nota bene* no mention of specifically 'five heavens.' This was obviously an addition to the "urtext" G, for there is nothing in G2 or G1 to suggest a rationale for its arbitrary deletion. The interpolation continues via L1 (G1) as all of vs.10}.

11. And none of the angels of that world shall know *{cognoscent}* you, neither angels nor princes of that world.

12. And you will judge the prince of that world and his angels and the ruler of mankind. {II Cor. 4:4}

13. For they have denied Me and said: ""We alone are and there is none beside us."

14. And afterwards you will not be transformed in each heaven but in glory wilt Thou ascend and sit on My right hand.

15. And thereupon the principalities and powers and all the angels which are the rulers of heaven and earth and under the earth wilt worship Thee.

x. 15. Phil. 2:10; Hebrews 1:6; Deut. 32:43 (LXX).

16. And I heard a great glorious instruction of my Lord.

x. 16. "...*praecipiendo* [fut. passive part., abl.; wishes to say first person] *domino meo* [abl. 'of, from, by']"

17. Then the Lord left the seventh heaven and descended into the sixth heaven.

18. And the angel instructing me said to me: 'Understand and see what kind of transformation {change of form} and descent of the Lord will be?

19. With their seeing by the angels they praised and glorified and he did not transform into their form {*figura*} and I sang with them.

20. With his descent into the fifth heaven there he transfigured after the form {*formam*} of those angels, and they did not praise him and didn't worship him, because he was in their form {*forma*}.

21. And he descended into the fourth heaven, and appeared in their form {*formam*},

22. And they did not praise him, as he was in their form {*forma*}.

23. He went to the third heaven,

25.-28.and into the second and the first changing {*transfigurans*} into each of theirs {*singulos eorum*}. They did not praise nor adore as he was similar to them {*similes eorum*}, and he gave the password to the doorkeeper of each heaven {*ostendebat enim characterem per singulos coelos custodibus portarum.*}

29. He descended to the firmament and gave the sign {*signa*}, and was in their form {*forma*} and they did not glorify, giving praise to him.

30. And he descended to the angels who were in this air, just as out of each of them. {...*sicut unus ex eis.*}

31. And he did not give the sign {*signum*}.

xi.

1. And after this the angel said to me, 'Understand, Isaiah son of Amos; in this is my mission from God to show you all things. Never before you has been seen, nor after you will any be able to see, what you have seen and heard.' And I saw one like a son of man, and he dwelt with men in the world

19. Not knowing who He was.

Charles (p. xxvi) also raises the question of why the editor of L1 would have omitted the original *vide simile filii hominis* (xi.1), writing that "the exclusion of such a phrase by the editor of G1 is quite intelligible; for, from the close of the first century A.D. its use as a Messianic title was avoided, no doubt because it was thought to imply the exclusive humanity of Christ." If this is so, its non-use by Paul in the middle of the first century is equally telling, just as is its use as a title in the original (L2) *Vision*. For the phrase also means "one who looked like a man," which fits in nicely with the interpretation of verses mentioning the transformation of the Beloved into an angelomorphic, humanlike appearance prior to entrance into Sheol. Charles also says that there is no reason for the editor of G1 to have deleted "such a striking statement" as "what is really I Cor. 2:9" at xi. 34 of L2 when actually there are plenty of intratextual reasons for doing so. More than once all of our manuscripts have Isaiah seeing what no man has seen before, making it untrue to say that no ear has heard the heavenly praises or seen the divine beings and crowns and thrones etc., for Isaiah has already. What God has prepared "for those who love Him" has thus been seen and heard by Isaiah: the statement was in all probability deleted by the editor of G1 because it presents a *prima facie* contradiction to the sum total of eventualities presented in the vision thus far. The verse as it stands nevertheless says 'you have seen what no man has seen, and no one has seen or can imagine it'. Plus if G1 was developed from a G that in all important respects was a precursor to L2 then it is possible that after the historical Jesus became a matter of dogmatic truth for Pauline communities was when G1 was compositionally expanded from the archetype G.

23. And He was in the firmament, and He had not changed Himself into their form, and the angels above the firmament saw Him and they worshipped. And they said: 'How did our Lord descend in our midst, and we perceived not the King of Glory?'

25. And from the first heaven He ascended more glorious, and He did not transform Himself, but all the angels

26. at a distance again worshipped Him and praised Him and said: 'How did our Lord escape us whilst descending, and we perceived not?' And thusly He descended into the third heaven,

28. And in the fourth heaven and in the fifth, into the sixth heaven.

31. In all the heavens their praise was continuously joined to him.

32. And I saw how He ascended into the seventh heaven, and all the righteous and all the angels and powers I was unable to see praised Him.

Rom. 10:16 "But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. 18 But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world'."

'The Origin and Significance of the Angelomorphic Christology in the Ascension of Isaiah', Jonathan Knight, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (APRIL 2012), pp. 66-105; Abstract: "The conclusion of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, 11.32–3, a carefully staged scenario, is determinative for the exegesis of the entire text. It picks up the notion of Christ's journey to the right hand of God from first-century Christology and embellishes it with a formal description of pre-existence, commission, and descent which the authors composed in the light of Jewish apocalypticism. They introduced the disguised descent and Trinitarian vision, setting these within the context of the seven-storied cosmology. The Beloved One's subordination to the Most High determines the way in which all other beings in the cosmos are described. This explains the strong emphasis on hierarchy in the text. The description of the disguised descent derives from the Jewish angelological pattern held in common with the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. The result is a unique synthesis which elucidates one of the ways in which first-century Christianity {!} explained its beliefs about Jesus and should inform future discussion of christological origins. Source-critical work still needs to address the present form of the *Ascen. Isa.* and the relationship of its different elements, including the possibility of historical change and development."

### 33. {L2 '*Angelum mirabilem vidi sedere a sinistris*' = 'I saw the great angel sitting by the left'}

'Isaiah's Vision in The Ascension of Isaiah and the Early Church,' Darrell D. Hannah; *Journal of Theological Studies*, (1999), p. 89, fn. 30: "Cf. Williams, 'Angels Unawares', p. 356: 'The Ascension [of *Isaiah*] itself, incidentally, does not raise the question of the identity of the seraphim in *Isaiah* 6; but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the picture of the Son and Spirit standing (apparently) each side of the Father and singing hymns of praise to him owes something to the vision of the prophet in the Temple.' Cf. similarly Kretschmar, *Trinitatstheologie*, p. 78."

'Isaiah's Vision in The Ascension of Isaiah and the Early Church', Darrell D. Hannah; *Journal of Theological Studies*, (1999), p. 91. "In *Contra Celsum* vi.i8 it would appear that Origen regarded Isaiah's Seraphim as symbols of the Son and the Holy Spirit and that he did not deduce from the use of these symbols the conclusion that the Son and the Spirit belonged to the angelic realm. {fn. 36} In *Commjohn*. i.31.218, Origen cites the phrase Μαξαλης βουλης ἄγγελος from Isaiah 9.5 [6?] to support his contention that 'the Saviour accordingly became, in a diviner way than Paul, all things to all, that he might either gain all or perfect them; it is clear that to men he became a man, and to the angels an angel'. Indeed, Origen leaves open the possibility that just as Christ suffered for humanity he will one day suffer for angels (*Princ. fr.30*). This, however, does not imply a separate 'angelic incarnation', for Origen assumed that humans and angels shared the same rational nature and were distinguished only by differing levels of perfection (*Commjohn*. ii.23.144-8; *Princ. iv.4.9*). On this whole issue see J. W. Trigg, 'The Angel of Great Counsel: Christ and the Angelic Hierarchy in Origen's Theology', *JTS NS*, 42 (1991), p. 45; Crouzel, Origen, p. 193; and J. Barbel, *Christos Angelos. Die Anschauung von Christus als Bote und Engel in der gelehrten und volkstümlichen Literatur des christlichen Altertums*, (Bonn: Hanstein Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1941) pp. 284-97" ... p. 93. "...both Origen (*CommRom.* on 3:25-6) and Philo (*Mos.* ii.97) assert that the Hebrew word 'cherubim' means 'full knowledge' (ἐπιγνώσις)... ("If Origen had not

explicitly attributed his equation of the Seraphim with the Son and the Spirit to [an unidentifiable person he calls] 'the Hebrew', one might be tempted to conclude that he had read the *Ascension of Isaiah* and found this identification there." p. 93)

34. And he said unto me: 'Isaiah, son of Amoz, it is enough for thee; for thou hast seen what no son of flesh has seen. What eye hath not seen nor ear hard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, how great things God hath prepared for all that love Him.'

xi. 34: quoted by St. Paul as scripture as I Cor. 2:9. "'I preserve thee,' xi.34, is a mistaken version of [Gk.] apallasso se, 'I dismiss thee;'" (*The Ascension of Isaiah; Pseudepigrapha*, (undated); William John Deane (biblehub: [https://biblehub.com/library/deane/pseudepigrapha/the\\_ascension\\_of\\_isaiah.htm](https://biblehub.com/library/deane/pseudepigrapha/the_ascension_of_isaiah.htm))

35. He said to me: 'And thou wilt return into thy garment until thy days are completed. Then thou wilt come hither.'

36. These things Isaiah saw {*Haec videns Ysias dixit circumstantibus se et audientes mirabilia cantaverunt omnes et glorificaverunt...* = These the seer Isaiah told those standing around him and all hearing praised wonders and glorified...'} and hearing wonderful things they all praised and glorified. And he spake to Hezekiah the King: 'I have spoken these things.'

37. Both the end of this world; {[Whittaker's Dict.]: *Consummatio* (= 'accumulation, process/result of addition; total/sum; purpose; acme/zenith; final result, conclusion, completion, achievement; consummation; perfection;') *saeculi* (=age; generation, people born at a time; breed, race; present time/age; century; time; past/present/future (Plater); [*in ~ => forever*]; worldiness; the\_world; heathenism') *hujus* (= 'of this'))}

38. And all this vision will be consummated in the last generations. {38. *Et opera implebuntur* And the work will be fulfilled in *novissimis generationibus* the last generations.}

39. And Isaiah made him swear that he would not tell it to the people of Israel, nor give these words to any man to transcribe.

40. And you {pl.} watch in the Holy Spirit in order that you may receive your garments and thrones and crowns of glory which are laid up in heaven. And he ceased to speak and went out from King Hezekiah.

*Explicit visio Ysaiae prophetae.*

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