

Post Scriptum In Extensis

"*The Vision of Isaiah* is comparatively timeless [opposed to the other two sections of the *Ascension*] and has been dated anywhere from first century to late in the second century." ('The Ascension of Isaiah: Community Situation, Date, and Place in Early Christianity,' Robert G. Hall, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 109, no. 2; SBL: (Summer, 1990), p. 301)

"From internal evidence, as well as from quotations in writings of the second and following centuries, it is safe to conclude that the three parts of the book were written during the first century C. E." (*Jewish Encyclopedia*; "Isaiah, Ascension of"; Crawford Howell Toy, Enno Littmann, (1906) (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/8237-isaiah-ascension-of>))

"The conclusion is that we have here a unique text where the early Christian myth of salvation finds its fullest expression in first century literature." -- Jonathan Knight, *The Christology of the Ascension of Isaiah: Some Further Thoughts*, Abstract; (ResearchGate: Jan., 2013).

(https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291273050_The_christology_of_the_ascension_of_isaiah_some_further_thoughts)

Our commentary has utilized the Charles translation with particularly riveted focus upon his notes and commentary {i.e. *The Ascension of Isaiah; Translated from the Ethiopic Version, which, Together With The New Greek Fragment, the Latin Versions and the Latin Translation of the Slavonic, is Here Published in Full, Edited with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* by R. H. Charles, D. D., Professor of Biblical Greek, Trinity College, Dublin; Adam and Charles Black (London: 1900)}, in large part because (1) aside from its apparent albeit sometimes necessary archaisms, it stands as perhaps the best translation; (2) it renders separable the Latin *Vision* in its earliest extant manuscript tongue as well as in the provided English translation as given; and (3) Charles' commentary exemplifies, often unwittingly and certainly unconsciously, the direly inaccurate results of an interpretive historical bias, therefore slant, toward an historical Jesus presumed thoroughly known *sine cum grano salis* in world history. Inasmuch as much water has passed under the bridge, leaving as neglected as *The Ascension of Isaiah* has been from the second through twentieth centuries of the common era, something resembling a torrent of activity has so passed in the past twenty-five years, with a tempo steadily increasing in volume and speed. Charles' translation and commentary remain as a kind of promontory and bulwark midstream, though, as evidenced by certain 'blind spots' retained by current *Asc. Is.* and not unrelated scholarship up until today. What is one to make, for example, of Knibb's erudition that Jerome had to have known the first recension (G1, L1) of the *Ascension* when he directly confronts the issue of an apparent Pauline quote of it (I Cor. 2:9) that only exists in the other (G2, L2) recension? {*Early Christian Writings*; <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ascension.html> (§ 8). "It thus seems likely that the three sections of the *Ascension* were brought together in the third or fourth century A.D., and this is confirmed by the fact that Jerome seems to have known the complete book." Except that (as Charles has shown) the combined version featured G1(L1) at the expense of G2(L2), and in any case if Knibb is correct (and he's not) it would hardly explain deletion of xi. 34 (I Cor. 2:9) from his own translation in Charlesworth's *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, volume 2*, Garden City, NY: (Doubleday, 1985), pp. 164-176. The passage in question is thus, having first been regarded as questionable from Jerome to Charles, since been acknowledged as less questionable yet somehow or other still subservient to the 4th century authority of Jerome (!).

Something similar seems to have gone on with regard to the issue of the possibility that *Asc. Is.* was known to (not to mention influential for) Paul at all, reflected in an abeyance to draw logical conclusions from previously drawn logical conclusions:

"Whatever the intention of the author of *I Enoch*, the relationship to Paul's experience is important. Like Enoch, Paul claims to have gazed on the Glory, whom Paul identifies as Christ; Paul understands that he has been transformed into a divine state, which will be fully realized after his death; Paul claims that his vision and transformation is somehow a mystical identification; and Paul claims to have received a calling, his special status as intermediary. Paul specifies the meaning of this calling for all believers, a concept absent in the Enochic texts, although it may have been assumed within the original community....Complete surety about the history of this tradition is elusive. Paul does not explicitly call Christ the Glory of God....Whatever the date of *Enoch* 70-71, the stories of Enoch's ascension in *I Enoch* 14 antedated Paul and would have influenced his conception about heavenly journey. Further, as long as the date of *I Enoch* 70-71 cannot be fixed exactly and the evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls remains ambiguous, Paul himself remains the earliest author explicitly expressing transformation in Judaism. If his discussion of transformation can be related to apocalyptic mysticism in Judaism, he also becomes the only Jewish mystic of this period to relate this experience confessionally." [Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate, and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, p. 42.]

By enumerating the parallels between Paul's religious experiences and those of Enoch in order to conclude an influence of the book on the apostle, it is readily clear that such argumentation should make the case that Paul was likewise, if not moreso, evenso instead, effected thoroughly by the thoughtforms of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, rather than the Enochic text. We can easily and accurately substitute 'Isaiah' for 'Enoch' in Segal's stated reasons: 'Like Isaiah in the *Vision*, (1) Paul claims to have gazed on the Glory, whom Paul identifies as Christ; (2) Paul understands that he has been transformed into a divine state, which will be fully realized after his death; (3) Paul claims that his vision and transformation is somehow a mystical identification; and (4) Paul claims to have received a calling,' (in this case 'revelation of the mystery kept hidden for long ages' since Isaiah), 'his special status as intermediary' (unto the Gentiles---in *Acts of the Apostles* HE (Paul) is even described as the Isaiahic "Light of the Gentiles") '(5) Paul specifies the meaning of this calling for all believers, a concept absent in the Enochic texts' (but abundantly present in *the Vision of Isaiah* as the arisen Beloved 'will send out his preachers *in universum orbem terrarum*.)' Given that Paul in *I Corinthians* quotes *Vision of Isaiah verbatim* ought to be an *argumentum verecundiam* for Pauline familiarity with *Asc. Is.* versus Enoch on the face of it.

One cannot but think that the verdict for a late(r) date for *Asc. Is.* and the *Vision* in particular is largely due to its explicit Trinitarian understanding of the Deity, albeit it in an attenuated form. But the work of Alan Segal has demonstrated that the Christian development of the dogma rests not in an ascending divinization of the Son over time but an utterly scriptural Jewish idea *in initium*. The strident monotheism of Christian dogmatic principles had rendered impossible for centuries even a scant likelihood that Old Testament proclivities toward alternate manifestations of divinity as an expression of *The Shema* (Deut. 6:4) were allowable in any conceivable *Heilgeschichte*.

In our commentary we have emphasized the specific meaning accorded the term "*in specie vestra*" (εἶδος) for the sake of the Greek beneath our text. On this matter Segal can write:

"Though it would be impractical to review all work currently underway on apocalyptic and merkabah mysticism, its relationship to Christianity and Paul's writings can be briefly summarized. In the Hebrew Bible, God is sometimes described in human form. Exod. 23:21 mentions an angel who has the form of a man and

who carries within him or represents 'the name of God.' A human figure on the divine throne is described in *Ezekiel* i, *Daniel* 7, and *Exodus* 24, among other places, and was blended into a consistent picture of a principal mediator figure who, like the angel of the Lord in *Exodus* 23, embodied, personified, or carried the name of God, YHWH, the tetragrammaton. This figure, elaborated on by Jewish tradition, would become a central metaphor for Christ in Christianity...."

"The Septuagint, the second-century B.C.E. translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, identifies the figure on the throne in Ezek. 1:26 with the form (*eidōs*) of man. This term has a philosophical history dating from Plato's *Parmenides* 130c, where *eidōs* means the idea of man. For Platonists, *eidōs* meant the unchanging immortal idea of man that survives death. Because of Plato's fortunate use of language, Hellenistic Jews could reinterpret the phrase "form of man" to mean *eidōs*. So for Hellenistic Jewish mystics like Philo, the figure of man on the divine throne described in *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, and the *Psalms* (forming the basis of the son of man speculation) was also understood as the ideal and immortal man. His immortality and glorious appearance were things Adam possessed in the Garden of Eden and lost when he sinned. In this form, the traditions concerning the son of man are centuries older than Christianity, and Paul, as we shall see, uses them to good advantage." (See Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate, and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*, (Yale Univ. Press, New Haven), pp. 34-71.)

We see a similar stance regarding an early date for the *Vision* in Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce, "The Ascension of Isaiah and the Johannist Constellation," in *The Ascension of Isaiah, Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha*, 11; Bremmer J.N., Karmann T.R., Nicklas T., eds., Peeters (Leuven: 2016), p. 218:

"The activity of the Johannist prophets seems, therefore, also to presuppose the existence of some forms of Johannist 'schools', or a kind of cooperation among prophets in their activities. These prophets examine the Jewish Holy Scriptures (John 2:22) and Jewish books, e.g. the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (8:56), the *Vision of Isaiah* or the *Asc. Is.* (12:41); they collect (and give an interpretation to) the words of Jesus (2:22; 14:26; 15:26; 16:14). Probably, this prophetic activity was the place in which many Johannist writings were produced."

Note that without directly saying so, the author perhaps unwittingly as much as admits that GJohn is dependent upon the prior existence of *Asc. Is.* Frankfurter elaborates upon this very early 'prophetic milieu' in Asia Mino: "The cluster of prophetic texts here attributed to Asia Minor revolve principally around the claims and problems of prophetic milieus: (1) visions of and access to the heavenly world; (2) the authority a prophet claims from such experiences; (3) the prophet's general authority to clarify the nature of present crises and afflictions; and (4) the inevitable conflicts over purity, status, and rival authorities in a prophetic subculture. For these prophetic milieus, Judaism provides the framework for imagining the heavenly world and gaining entry to it, for constructing prophetic authority and its heroes, for prophetic speech, and for the notions of the purity of the Elect and the sins of the enemy." It is difficult not to extrapolate an hypothesis regarding Christian origins at such a junction featuring apostles like Paul and authoritative scriptural revelations e.g. the *Vision of Isaiah*. [D. Frankfurter, 'Beyond 'Jewish Christianity': Continuing Religious Sub-Cultures of the Second and Third Centuries and Their Documents,' in A.H. Becker / A. Yoshiko Reed (eds.), *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) pp. 131-143.]

"Whatever the date of Daniel or the earliest son of man traditions," Segal writes, "this angelic figure, the figure that the Bible sometimes calls the *Kavod* or the principal angel of God, is pre-Christian and is a factor in

Paul's description of Christ. There is adequate evidence that many Jewish mystics and apocalypticists sensed a relationship between the heavenly figure on the throne and important figures in the life of their community. The roots of this tradition are pre-Christian. Further, Jewish scholars have overlooked Christianity as evidence for the existence of these traditions in first-century Judaism. Paul did not have to be a religious innovator to posit an identification between a vindicated hero and the image of the *Kavod*, the manlike figure in heaven, although the identification of the figure with the risen Christ is obviously a uniquely Christian development. Paul is the only Jewish mystic to report his own personal, identifiably confessional mystical experiences in the fifteen hundred years that separate Ezekiel from the rise of Kabbalah." ---except for the author of the *Vision of Isaiah*!!! Segal elaborates by way of footnote regarding Paul: "Whether Paul identifies the figure purely on the basis of his vision or because of previous instruction in mystical and apocalyptic Judaism, either as a Pharisee or a Hellenistic Jew, or because he has been taught to do so by another Christian in his community, is a question that admits of no practical solution. But the question does not demand a specific solution, since we know how closely individual mystic experience adheres to communal rules. *Paul's visions make most sense as a new Christian development within an established Jewish apocalyptic and mystical tradition.* Paul or his close contemporary no doubt learned some of it and likely had experiences in a Christian community that confirmed, indeed educated, his visionary experience that Christ was the figure on the throne. This is altogether natural; it is impossible to separate the traditional parts from the parts that are his own revelation, for the elements of apocalyptic and mystical revelation, as we have seen, are traditional in many respects. Only the identification of the Christ as the figure on the throne was novel by most Jewish standards, yet this would have been normative in Christian community. Each Jewish sect had its distinctive beliefs and Christianity is no exception. Paul's experiences are, when seen in this light, not unique so much as characteristic of Jewish mystical thought; indeed, they give us good evidence that the mystical ascent of adepts to heaven was known in the first century."

It is easy to conclude that "the identification of the Christ as the figure on the throne was novel by most Jewish standards," until one posits the likelihood the *Vision of Isaiah* was known in its present form in the early part of the first century. Segal believes "Paul's visions make most sense as a new Christian development within an established Jewish apocalyptic and mystical tradition," but make even more sense if part and parcel to that Jewish apocalyptic and mystical tradition was an authoritative scriptural adherence to a cultic document proclaiming an hitherto unknown account of the heavenly ascent of the great prophet. On this score the judgement of Neusner bears repeating: "...for this period [first century C.E.] no such thing as 'normative Judaism' existed from which one or another 'heretical' group might diverge" [Neusner, Jacob, "A Life of Yohanan ben Zakkai. Ca. 1-80 C.E.," *Studia Post-Biblica* (Leiden 1970), p. 25; quoted in "Orthodoxy in First Century Judaism? A Response to N.J. McEleney," David E. Aune, *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1976), pp. 1-10.]

Studies in Jewish mysticism vis-à-vis Christianity is an area that is inhibited, here as elsewhere, only by direct evidence that would expose the *Vision of Isaiah* as a powerful indice of 'ein urchristlicher Geist' that effectively became the foundation of Christian belief. In "Early Jewish mysticism, Jewish apocalyptic and writings of the New Testament—a triangulation", Richard H Lemmer, *Neotestamentica*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1996), p. 366-367 ('2.3 Other Sources') the author posits "Other sources are, for example, *Ezekiel the Tragedian* and *Ascension of Isaiah*. Despite the fact that the latter dates from BCE" [!], specifically according our text a very early date. He goes on to note that Hauer [Hauer, C., "When history stops: Apocalypticism and Mysticism in

Judaism and Christianity" pp. 207-221 in Crenshaw, J. L. and Sandmael, S., *The Divine Helmsman. Studies on God's Control of Human Events – presented to Lou Silberman*, New York: Ktav. (1980)] endorses the idea that "although the first century of the Christian era and the early decades of the second century should supply the earliest evidence of Jewish mysticism, in a form that appears to be on one continuum with Kabbalism, it does not imply that Jewish mysticism only originated during the first century CE. However, some of the earliest documentation is found in this era. A plausible argument for the paucity of sources on the mystical traditions is: (a) that there may have been some influential rabbis who were against these traditions; and (b) given the esoteric nature of this phenomenon there would also have been a reticence to publicise the most guarded secrets too widely." But the *Vision of Isaiah* is admittedly anything but an *argumentum ex silencio*! Then Lemmer concludes (p. 374) "Nevertheless, by the same token that there is definitely an intertwining of elements between mysticism and apocalypticism, it may be assumed that Pauline writings somehow reflect apocalyptic elements. Or maybe even more; namely apocalyptic thought structures." I.e., as we amply demonstrate in the section 'Paul and the Vision of Isaiah,' the apocalyptic thought structures of the *Vision*.

No better thumbnail description of the overall 'milieu' of the situation in first century Syrio-Palestine exists than that of Schiffman [Schiffman, Lawrence H., "At the Crossroads: Jewish-Christian Schism," *Jewish-Christian Relations*, (http://www.jcrelations.net/At_the_Crossroads__The_Jewish-Christian_Schism.2217.0.html?L=3):

"The direct Roman control, in turn, led to the rise of a variety of opponents – effectively rebel groups – that sought a return to the spirit of the early Maccabean period. They claimed that only true Jewish independence would make possible the fully unfettered practice of Judaism; a claim severely challenged by the status of Judaism as a legitimate religion in the Roman Empire but justified by the inability of almost all Roman procurators to respect the particular needs of the people and the land they ruled. For some of the protesters and rebels, apocalyptic messianism was certainly a motivation. Some even identified their leaders as messianic figures. This was an era in which many Jews were convinced that messianic redemption was to dawn immediately. Ironically, the same issues led the Romans to appoint Herod the Great as what they considered a King of the Jews. His rule from 38 B.C.E. to 4 B.C.E. turned out to be the most turbulent of all; his pagan activities, murderous antics, and repressive rule led to greater and greater revolutionary activity despite his rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple as a wonder of the ancient world. His demise led in turn to even more revolutionary turmoil, and, with the exception of the brief rule of Agrippa I, the internal divisions of pro- and anti-Roman forces in the Jewish community, as well as the general chaos of incompetent, direct Roman rule, soon plunged Judea into the unsuccessful Great Revolt which led to the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. Perhaps most importantly for our purpose, the combination of aggressive foreign rule and Jewish resistance took shape against a background of apocalyptic expectation, a factor contributing to the rise of Christianity. It was against this background that the sectarianism of Second Temple Judaism became prominent. Religious ferment was not new to the Jewish people. Previous to the Maccabean Revolt the issue under debate, which eventually led to the full-scale revolt, was the extent to Hellenise. Extreme Hellenizers sought an identification of Judaism with Hellenistic religious ideas and practices, so great that most Jews balked strongly. But even the Maccabees were willing to accommodate to Hellenism in some degree. It was after the successful revolt, when the Hasmonean rulers went down the path of Hellenism, that the well-known sectarian divisions became so prominent. This era in the history of Judaism can be seen as a time of debate and confusion whereby differing Jewish ideologies sought to lay claim to legitimacy as the continuators of the tradition of the Hebrew Bible in an era in which the historical and cultural trends of Hellenism and the political instability posed a formidable

challenge.... It is worth sketching the various approaches to Judaism known from this period in order to show the complexity of the Jewish religious landscape in this period and this will provide the backdrop for the rise of Christianity. At the outset, it is important to remember that the largest number of Jews in the second and first centuries B.C.E. were part of an amorphous group usually termed the *am ha-aretz*, 'the people of the land'. This group constituted the traditional Jewish peasantry that practiced what has been termed the 'common Judaism' of the late Second Temple Period. They observed the Sabbath and festivals and basic purity regulations, worshipping on festival days in the Temple. But these Jews were not so strict in following the laws of tithing agricultural produce or in maintaining the Temple purity of non-sacral food. These Jews were uninvolved in the disputes of the elites, yet most seemed to have supported and followed the Pharisaic leaders and a small number entered the nascent Jesus movement in the mid-first century."

Thus, there is nothing to preclude the notion that the *Martyrdom* and *Vision* predate the Temple destruction in 70 c.e., for the mystical-apocalyptic tradition can be shown to have existed, along with its concomitant theologizing, contemporaneous with Paul and his fellow apostles. The failure of various messianic figures in the collective mind of the *am ha-aretz*, "the people of the land," had to have been conducive to a popular piety that saw the deliverer/redeemer to be of heavenly, rather than earthly, origin with a universalistic, cosmic bent *beyond* the incipient angelism of Enochian rumination and experience, documented by the greatest known prophet yet now revealed to all humanity in the last generation. Its timely appearance ('revelation') was proof of the validity of the 'revelation' it contained (a type of *superstitio*, in Roman terms). That the descent and death and ascent of the *unigenitus filius* were hidden was sufficient to procure its eventual *revelatum* through a host of pseudohistorical eventualities which, mystically seeable "by the eyes of the Spirit" resulted in extravagant documentation of his time "resembling a man dwelling among men." Such is the stuff of messianic heroes who secretly, mysteriously traipse the earth only to be wrongheadedly executed by the powers that be at a place and time where insufficient gratitude for life necessitated missing out on the most important liberation undertaken by God on behalf of humanity in the history of creation.

"The narrative texts from the Gospels offer a lot of information about the character of Jesus, but not about the experiences of the dead Jesus. After his death on the cross, the character Jesus plays no further role in the narrative. He only returns to the scene once he has risen, and is therefore alive again. In every Gospel, there is therefore a gap in the narrative timeline that runs from Friday to Sunday...The presence of this gap effects the great reserve with which the Bible speaks about the hereafter, and also reflects a resurrection theology which arose rather late in biblical times, and did nothing to remove this reserve once it had emerged." ["Descent into the Netherworld: A Biblical Perspective" (in *Studies in Theology and Religion*, Volume: 24, "The Apostles' Creed 'He Descended Into Hell'"), Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, Brill (June 18, 2018), p. 9-10.] Perhaps, but

"In the end, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the *Asc. Is.*, together with a few other ancient ascent apocalypses, are the earliest representatives of *Merkavah* and what will be later become *Hekhalot* mysticism. (See, most recently, J.R. Davila, 'The Ancient Jewish Apocalypses and the Hekhalot Literature', in *Paradise Now*, 105-25; R. Boustani and P.G. McCullough, 'Apocalyptic Literature and the Study of Early Jewish Mysticism', in J.J. Collins (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* (Oxford and New York, 2014) 85-103.) In spite of their undeniable differences – differences that I would locate more at the level of narrative choices and theological options than that of cosmological views and socio-religious perspectives – the *Asc. Is.* could even be considered to be the first and oldest *Hekhalot* text. If this kind of revelatory writing temporarily disappeared after the catastrophic end of the Second Jewish War, this does not mean that the mystical circles

that produced them suddenly ceased to exist. Actually, those practitioners were able to remerge a few centuries later with a new agenda and a new series, we could say, of publications. If the *Asc. Is.* and cognate writings can contribute to shed some light on the origins of Jewish mysticism, the opposite is also true, and late antique *Hekhalot* texts can play a significant role in the socio-rhetorical recontextualization of Second Temple and early Christian texts (obviously taking into due account the methodological issues raised by R.S. Boustán, 'Rabbinization and the Making of Early Jewish Mysticism', *JQR*) that have been primarily, if not exclusively, read through the lens of theological idealism. More specifically, the study of all the phenomena that prominently figure in *Hekhalot* literature – inspired exegesis, ascetical and theurgic techniques, encounters with great angels, revelations of heavenly secrets, angelic liturgies, mystical experiences, and apothotic transformations – could provide the key to unlocking the (relative) mystery of the Jewish origins of Christology, in the *Ascension of Isaiah* and elsewhere." [Pierluigi Piovanelli, 'A Door into an Alien World': Reading the Ascension of Isaiah as a Jewish Mystical Text' ("Concluding thoughts: The place of the Ascension of Isaiah in Jewish mystical literature") in *The Ascension of Isaiah*, Jan N. Bremmer, Thomas R. Karmann, Tobias Nicklas, eds., Peeters p. 143-144.]

Piovanelli's incisive detection of very early *Hekhalot* via our text is illuminating (p. 131): "Thus, in the case of the *Hekhalot Rabbati Rabbi Išmael* is actually taught the exact hymns that the visionary has to recite in order to successfully ascend to heaven (§§ 81-93), in which are emphasized the *gedullah*, or 'greatness', and the exceptional knowledge that the *yored Merkavah* is promised to acquire on high, for the excellent reason that, 'truly, nothing of what is done in the world is hidden in the seventh heaven' (*Asc. Is.* 9:23). For the promise of similar benefits, see *Sefer Hekhalot* § 7; *The Chapter of R. Nehuniah ben ha-Qanah* § 311 // *Merkavah Rabbah* §§ 705-6a; § 377 // 940; § 500 // 712 // 854. An attempt to understand the sociological consequences of such claims is offered by G.A. Wewers, 'Die Überlegenheit des Mystikers. Zur Aussage der Gedulla-Hymnen in *Hekhalot Rabbati* 1,2-2,3', *JSJ* 17 (1986) 3-22. Cf. N. Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World: Pagans, Jews and Christians* (London and New York, 2001) 82, who considers the gift of divination promised in the *Gedullah*-hymns as 'a sort of domestication' in comparison with the achievement of immortality that should have been, in her opinion, the original goal of the practitioners of the *Merkavah*. The most plausible attempts to reconstruct the social world of the *Hekhalot* mystics and their audiences are those of I. Chernus, 'Individual and Community in the Redaction of the *Hekhalot* Literature', *HUCA* 52 (1981) 253-74, and J.R. Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot: The People behind the Hekhalot Literature* (Leiden, 2001).

Without alluding to our text, April DeConick describes quite beautifully the overall situation of Paul vis-à-vis Jewish mysticism by means of the great progress research has undergone in this area within the past few years, and for our purposes is worth quoting in full:

"The ancient Jews and Christians believed that they experienced the sacred, and they wrote about it. These people were deeply religious people whose texts are filled with feelings about and hopes for religious experience as they understood and imagined it. In this regard, Paul's own first-hand testimony cannot be emphasized enough, because it demonstrates that the first Christian Jews believed that they were recipients of ecstatic experiences both in the form of rapture events and invasions of heaven. (Gal 1:12; 1 Cor. 15:8; 2 Cor. 12:2-4.) In the context of this latter discourse, Paul also implies that he knows of other Christian Jews, perhaps associated with the mission of the Jerusalem church, who boast of mystical experiences. (cf. 2 Cor. 11:21-12:11.) This is implied by the author of Colossians too. (Col 2:16-18.) It makes no difference to me whether or not we describe these narratives of the heroes as literary or experiential literature because this

distinction misses the point. The point we need to recognize is that the early Jews and Christians who were reading these texts believed that the stories were reports of actual encounters with God. The images and descriptions in these texts deeply affected the way that the early Jews and first Christians described and interpreted their own perceived experiences, and the way that they framed their hopes for future experiences. So this fundamental belief – that the sacred could be experienced – was supported by their reading and exegesis of their scriptures. In turn, it was this belief that the early Jews and Christians wrote about in new texts which they characterized as “revealed” scriptures containing heavenly gnosis, the *razim* or “mysteries” of God. Many of these works – from the Jewish and Christian apocalypses to the Nag Hammadi texts – freely retell the biblical narratives under the auspices of an alternative revelation from an angelic being or primeval authority. In several ways, they were providing in these works counter-readings of the old scriptures, recomposing the stories through a new hermeneutic for a contemporary audience. {fn.: Cf. H. Najman, “Interpretation as Primordial Writing. Jubilees and its Authority Conferring Strategies,” *JSJ* 30 (1999) 379-410; H. Najman, “Torah of Moses. Pseudonymous Attribution in Second Temple Writings,” in C.A. Evans (ed.), *The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity. Studies in Language and Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) 202-216; H. Najman, *Secoding Sinai. The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003) 41-69; H. Najman, “The Symbolic Significance of Writing in Ancient Judaism,” in H. Najman and J.E. Newman (eds.), *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation. Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004) 139-173.} In these new texts, the ancient Jews and Christians shared their revelation of the “things hidden” of the past, present and future, reinterpreting and rescribing the past to serve their present experiences and future hopes. What these Jews and Christians seem to me to be saying is that intellectual pursuit of God and 'truth' can only advance a person so far spiritually. It can get the person to the gate of the highest heavenly shrine, so to speak, but no further. They insist that knowledge of the sacred itself comes only through the direct experience of God, that is by actually meeting him face to face. It was this experiential encounter, they thought, that transformed them, that pulled them beyond the limits of their ordinary human senses and perceptions. This new godlike perspective, they believed, would lead to new understandings and revelations, allowing them to reinterpret the concealed truths and hidden histories locked within their sacred scriptures." April D. DeConick, *What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?*, pp. 7-10 (<https://www.marquette.edu/maqom/definition.pdf>) {fn: On Paul's familiarity with mystical Judaism, see especially now A. F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 34-71; C. Morray-Jones, "Paradise Revisited (2 Cor. 12.1-12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate. Part 1: The Jewish Sources" and "Part 2: Paul's Heavenly Ascent and its Significance," *HTR* 86 (1993), pp. 177-217 and 265-292; J Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000)." On II Cor. 3:18-4:6 see esp. Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate, and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*, (Yale Univ. Press, New Haven), pp. 34-71} ... April D. DeConick, *What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?*, pp. 7-10 (<https://www.marquette.edu/maqom/definition.pdf>)

Our survey should rightly conclude with the excited remarks of Piovanelli:

P. Piovanelli, ‘A Door into an Alien World’: Reading the Ascension of Isaiah as a Jewish Mystical Text, p. 126-127, in *The Ascension of Isaiah*, Jan N. Bremmer, Thomas R. Karmann, Tobias Nicklas eds., Peeters pub. (2001);

"In the course of the last fifteen [now +] years, a certain number of historians of Second Temple Judaism, Early Christianity, and Late Antiquity from the Universities of California at Berkeley, Princeton, and Oxford have begun to radically rethink the chronology and modalities of 'the Parting of the Ways', the separation of

Christianity from Judaism, traditionally dated to the aftermath of the First Jewish War and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. I am especially thinking here of the different contributions published in the programmatic volume *The Ways That Never Parted*, edited in 2003 by Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, and the innovative works of Daniel Boyarin, from *Dying for God* (1999) and *Border Lines* (2004) to the more recent *The Jewish Gospels* (2012). Particularly enlightening for the study of the origins of Christology is Boyarin's reprise of some conclusions of the late Alan F. Segal (1945-2011) on the Jewish heresy – at least from the rabbinic point of view – of the 'Two Powers in Heaven', concerning the existence of an angelic or hypostatic figure in heaven more or less equivalent to God. The positive identification of such a semi-divine figure – with Michael, the One like a son of man, Melchizedek, Yaqhoel, or other heavenly figures – and the possibility for the mystic to be apotheotically transformed into him – as in the case of Enoch becoming Metatron, provide an excellent explanation, in Boyarin's opinion, to both the awakening of a Messianic consciousness in Jesus [? i.e., 'a consciousness ascribable to a Jesus' –jb] and the origins of a 'binitarian' understanding of the divine nature among some first-century Judeans, including Jesus' followers. Even if it goes without saying that some aspects of such a reconstruction are still open to discussion. Boyarin is certainly right when he argues that those phenomena were perfectly at home in the extremely rich and stimulant intellectual climate of Second Temple Judaism, and that Jesus and/or his disciples made use of some, without inventing all of them." (P. Piovanelli, "'A Door into an Alien World': Reading the Ascension of Isaiah as a Jewish Mystical Text," p. 126-127, in *The Ascension of Isaiah*, Jan N. Bremmer, Thomas R. Karmann, Tobias Nicklas eds., Peeters pub. (2001). {from his footnotes: A.H. Becker and A.Y. Reed (eds.), *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, 2007 [Tübingen, 2003]). For a similar view, see now also T. Nicklas, *Jews and Christians? Second Century 'Christian' Perspectives on the Parting of the Ways* (Tübingen, 2014). D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, 1999), *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, 2004), 'Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to Which Is Appended a Correction of My Border Lines)', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 99 (2009) 7-36, and *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (with a foreword by J. Miles; New York, 2012). Cf. my review of *The Jewish Gospels in Judaïsme ancien /Ancient Judaism* 1 (2013) 290-93. A.F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden, 1977). See D. Boyarin, 'The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John', *HThR* 94 (2001) 243-84, 'Two Powers in Heaven: Or, the Making of a Heresy', in H. Najman and J.H. Newman (eds.), *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* (Leiden, 2004) 331-70, 'Beyond Judaisms: Metatron and the Divine Polymorphy of Ancient Judaism', *JSJ* 41 (2010) 323-65, 'The Sovereignty of the Son of Man: Reading Mark 2', in A. Weissenrieder and R.B. Coote (eds.), *The Interface of Orality and Writing: Speaking, Seeing, Writing in the Shaping of New Genres* (Tübingen, 2010) 353-62, 'How Enoch Can Teach Us about Jesus', *Early Christianity* 2 (2011) 51-76, *The Jewish Gospels*, 71-101 and 175-79, 'Daniel 7, Intertextuality, and the History of Israel's Cult', *HThR* 105 (2012) 139-62, 'Is Metatron a Converted Christian?' *Judaïsme ancien / Ancient Judaism* 1 (2013) 13-62, and 'Enoch, Ezra, and the Jewishness of "High Christology"', in M. Henze et al. (eds.), *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall* (Leiden, 2013) 337-61. Personally, I share the concern of C.H.T. Fletcher-Louis, 'A New Explanation of Christological Origins: A Review of the Work of Larry W. Hurtado', *Tyndale Bulletin* 60 (2009) 161-205, to whom the anachronistic neologism 'binitarianism' and its derivatives definitively 'sound like an attempt to smuggle in a fully "Trinitarian" Christian orthodoxy' (165). For an overview of the current research on the Jewish angelomorphic background of the earliest development of

Christology carried out by Christopher Rowland, Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis, Charles A. Gieschen, Darrell Hannah, Larry W. Hurtado, Richard Bauckham, Carey C. Newman, Loren Stuckenbruck, and other specialists interested in the Jewish roots of early Christian discourses, see P. Piovanelli, 'From Enoch to Seth: Primeval Patrons in Jewish-Apocalyptic and Christian-Gnostic Traditions', *Judaïsme ancien / Ancient Judaism 2* (2014) 79-112 at 85-91. It is precisely from this perspective that the *Asc. Is.* has been studied by J. Knight, *Disciples of the Beloved One: The Christology, Social Setting and Theological Context of the Ascension of Isaiah* (Sheffield, 1996), and 'The Origin and Significance of the Angelomorphic Christology in the Ascension of Isaiah', *JTS* 63 (2012) 66-105; L.T. Stuckenbruck, 'Worship and Monotheism in the Ascension of Isaiah', in C.C. Newman *et al.* (eds.), *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* (Leiden, 1999) 70-89; R.G. Hall, 'Astonishment in the Firmament: The Worship of Jesus and Soteriology in Ignatius and the Ascension of Isaiah', *ibid.*, 148-55.}

Needless to say, if the *Ascension of Isaiah* (i.e. the "Vision") is "the earliest representative of *Hekhalot* mysticism" and Paul is the earliest known exponent of what became *Hekhalot* mysticism then all that remains is an ostensible 'causal link' between the two, one in terms of the other. We do indeed have two instances of the apostle quoting the *Ascension of Isaiah* authoritatively as Holy Scripture. One of my favourite lines of all I've ever read on this or any other subject comes from "Isaiah's vision in the ascension of Isaiah and the early church," by Darrell D. Hannah in the *Journal of Theological Studies* p. 93 (1999), where he begins a sentence of conclusion with, "While the evidence hardly leads to any incontestable solution and a certain amount of speculation is inevitable, it seems likely that..." As it is, Pauline theological reliance upon the ontological world of *The Vision of Isaiah* is ostensible to the point of transcending the merely hypothetical.

Paul and The Vision of Isaiah

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,
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
4. to salute him
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. [I Cor. 12:3b "...no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by 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. [I Cor. 2:10 "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God."]

9. who had bestowed such an excellence of words on a man in the world. [I Cor. 14:1 "Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries."]

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. [Col. 4:3b. "...that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ..."]

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

15. And the vision which the holy Isaiah saw was not from this world but from the world which is hidden from all flesh. [Col. 1:25b-27 "...preaching of the word of God, 26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His holy ones, 27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."]

16. And after Isaiah had seen this vision, he narrated it to Hezekiah, and to Josab his son ["Paul describes his own spiritual experiences in terms appropriate to a Jewish apocalyptic-mystagogue of the first century. He, like Enoch, relates his experiences of heavenly travel, in which he sees the secrets of the universe revealed. He believes his salvation to lie in a body-to-body identification with his heavenly savior, who sits on the divine throne and functions as God's glorious manifestation. He identifies this experience with his conversion, although it apparently characterizes a lifetime of spiritual discipline rather than a single event. As we have seen, the significance of this experience is later reworked by the church when Paul's life is made into the model for gentile conversion. In the later context, the mystical aspects of Paul's experiences are downplayed, and his new understanding of law becomes the primary value of his conversion." *Paul The Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*, Alan F. Segal, Yale University Press, (New Haven and London: 1990), pp. 34-71.]

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

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}.

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. [Romans 7:10 "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you, thus escaping the realm of the flesh while yet in the body."]

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:

5. Because thou wilt return into this thy body but when I will raise thee on high, you will see. [Romans 10:6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), 7 or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved"]

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! [Gal. 1:11 "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."]

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.' [Romans 1:1... ὀρισθέντος Υἱοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν "...having been declared Son of God in power according to [the] Spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead."]

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. [II Cor. 10:2 "I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα). 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying speculations and every

lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God..." II Cor. 11:14 "No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."]

10. And as above so on the earth also; for the likeness of that which is in the firmament is here on earth. [1 Cor. 15:44 "It is sown a physical body it is raised a spiritual body. There is a physical body and there is a spiritual body" - σπείρεται σώμα ψυχικόν εγείρεται σώμα πνευματικόν. ἔστι σώμα ψυχικόν και ἔστι σώμα πνευματικόν.]

11. And I said unto the angel: 'What is this envying?' [Gal. 5:19 "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another."]

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.' [II Thess. 6b-8 "...when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marvelled at among all who have believed ---" Romans 7:20 "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 because the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body."]

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

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.

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

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

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 dixero tibi* = 'but only who I will have told you'—fut. perf.} [Gal. 1:8 "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!"]

22. For above all the angels, thrones have been placed, and above garments and crowns which thou shalt see.' [Romans 7:28 "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."]

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. [Philippians 3:8 "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of [the knowledge of] knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Philippians 4:1 Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, beloved" - (οὕτως στήκετε ἐν Κυρίῳ, ἀγαπητοί = lit. "in this way stand firm in [the] Lord, *the Beloved*") Eph. 1:6 "to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in *the Beloved*."]

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. [2 Cor. 12: 1b "...I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— 4 was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak."]

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. [2 Corinthians 3:18 "And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit."]

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.'

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

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'}

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}. [Col. 2:18 "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his

stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind...5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake."]

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, [Philippians 2:10 "...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth"]

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

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...}. [2 Corinthians 4:18 "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (See I Cor. 2:9).]

12. For it has been permitted to thee in the lot of the Lord to come hither. [Col. 1:9-10 "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the [real knowledge] knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the [real knowledge] knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light."]

14. And he said to me: When from the body thou hast ascended hither, then thou wilt receive the garment. [2 Cor. 5:5 "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge."]

15. And then wilt become equal to the angels of the seventh heaven.' [2 Cor. 5:8 "we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." Gal. 3:27. "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."]

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.

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. [*The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall SJ,

and Gerald O'Collins SJ, (Oxford : 2002): "Gordon Fee proposes that Paul, always a rigorous monotheist, became a latent (economic) trinitarian as the result of his experience of the risen and exalted Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit as the eschatological renewal of the promised Presence of God. In turn, the chapter examines Paul's primary trinitarian/soteriological passages, which are invariably expressed in triadic form when reflecting on the experience of salvation, and always presuppose 'equal with but distinct from'."] {Not exactly an unprecedented discovery...-jb}

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.

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. [I Cor. 15:50 "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable."]

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, then in the seventh heaven thou seest the light, where sits the heavenly Father and His only-begotten Son. [Romans 8:34 "who is at the right hand of God" ὅς κἀκί ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ Θεοῦ, Col. 3:1b "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."]

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

27. And concerning your not returning in your flesh [Gal. 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."]

28. And as one who hears this I am very sad. [Philippians 1:21 "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake."]

ix.

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?' [Romans 7:8 "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not." Romans 7: 4,5: "... so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were in the flesh..." Paul regards those who are baptized thus joined to Christ in his death as, though alive, no longer ἐν σαρκί. Gal. 5:16 "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."]

And I feared and trembled. [Philippians 2:12 "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου)]

2. And {I heard} from hence another voice saying: 'It is permitted to the holy Isaiah to ascend hither; for here is his garment.' [Philippians 3:20 "For our commonwealth is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."]

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.

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.

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

7. And there I saw all the righteous [Romans 6:5 "For if we have become [united with the likeness] united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be [with] in the likeness of His resurrection..."]

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. [I Thess. 1:10. "...and to wait for His Son from the heavens (ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν), whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come."]

10. But they sat not on their thrones, nor were their crowns of glory on them. [Philippians 4:19 "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."]

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?' [I Thess. 2:12 "...so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."]

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. [I Thess. 3:13 "...so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the [presence] coming (παρουσία) of our Lord Jesus with all His saints." I Thess. 2:19 "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His [presence] coming (παρουσία)? 20 For you are our glory and joy." - γαρ ημων ελπις η χαρα η στεφανος καυχησης η ουχι και υμεις εμπροσθεν του κυριου ημων ιησου εν τη αυτου παρουσια]

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} [I Cor. 1:18 "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."] σταυρός, ὁ, [A] upright pale or stake, σταυροῦς ἐκτός ἔλασσε διαμπερές ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα πυκνοὺς καὶ θαμέας Od.14.11, cf. Il.24.453, Th.4.90, X. An.5.2.21; of piles driven in to serve as a foundation, Hdt.5.16, Th.7.25. ...[II] cross, as the instrument of crucifixion, D.S.2.18, Ev.Matt.27.40, Plu.2.554a; ἐπὶ τὸν σ. ἀπάγεσθαι Luc.Peregr.34; σ. λαμβάνειν, ἄραι, βαστάζειν, metaph. of voluntary suffering, Ev.Matt.10.38, Ev.Luc.9.23, 14.27: its form was represented by the Greek letter T, Luc.Jud.Voc.12....[b] pale for impaling a corpse, Plu.Art.17] slaying not knowing who he is.

[Gal. 3:1f. Ὡ ἀνόητοι Γαλάται ! τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανεν, ἄτῃ ἀληθείᾳ, μὴ πείθεσθαι οἷς κατ' ὀφθαλμοὺς Ἰησοῦς

Χριστὸς Προεγράφη ἐσταυρωμένος ? (= {word for word} "Ὁ foolish Galatians Who you has bewitched the truth not to obey whose before eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed having been crucified?") [Gal. 3:13. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a [lit. 'wood'] tree.'" Romans 4:23-25 "Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him [Abraham], 24 but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification." ...Πιστεύουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν ἐγείραντα Ἰησοῦν τὸν Κύριο ἡμῶν ἐκ νεκρῶν , ὃς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν , καὶ ἠγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν.]

15. And he will descend into Hades and make it and the phantoms of hell desolate. [I Cor. 1:30 "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ἀπολύτρωσις" {3 key concepts of Paul's message re. Christ} (ἀπολυτρόω = to release on payment of ransom, *c. gen. pretii, Philipp. ap. Dem.*) [Philippians 2:5 "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient

to the point of death, even death of a cross. (Θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ) 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."]

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, [I Cor. 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..." Col. 2:12 "...having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. {ἐγείραντος = 'raised,' not 'resurrected'}.]

17. Having certain righteous persons with him. [Romans 6:7 "for he who has died is freed from sin." = By baptism one is no longer in the realm of ἐν σαρκί; the dead in Sheol are free from sin, and only require rescue from there. Col. 3:2 "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."] And he will send forth his preachers into the whole world and will ascend into the heavens. [Col. 1:15ff. "[Who] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For [in] by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things [endure] hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. 19 For [all the fullness was pleased to dwell] it was the Father's good pleasure for all the [i.e. of the deity] fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in the heavens."]

18. Then they will receive their thrones and crowns. [Col. 1:22 "...yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—" (lit. word for word) "now however He has reconciled [you] in the body of the flesh through death" (νυνὶ δὲ ἀποκατήλλαξεν ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου,)]

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

20. reveal to me as you promised me.}

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. [Philippians 4:3 N-DFS GRK: ὀνόματα ἐν βίβλῳ ζωῆς NAS: "whose names are in the book of life"] And he gave to me and I read it, and lo! The deeds of Jerusalem [L1: Israel] [Rom. 9:4 "...to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα), who is over all, God blessed unto the ages forever. Amen."]

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....} [Romans 2:5a-6b...ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὃς Ἀποδώσει ἐκάστῳ, κατὰ τὰ ἔργα. ...revelation of righteous judgement of God who will give to each according to his works.]

23. And I said: 'In truth (*vidi veritate*) there is nothing hidden in the seventh heaven, which is done in {the} world.' [I Cor.6:9 "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" Eph. 5:8 "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light 9 (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)..."] [Romans 2:7-16. "7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. 9 There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; 10 but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 11 For God does not show favoritism. 12 All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. 14 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) 16 This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares."(NIV)] 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}.

24. I saw many garments and thrones and crowns situated. [Col. 1:12 "...giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light."]

25. And I said to the angel: {Those stoles and crowns for whom stored up and thrones?} [I Cor. 6:2 "Or do you not know that the [holy ones] saints will judge the world?" I Cor. 3:8 "You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you. {allusion to thrones of the righteous in heaven?}"] [I Cor. 6:11 "... but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."]

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]. [Col. 1:13 "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His Beloved Son." Col. 2:20a "If you have died with Christ [lit. away from (ἀπὸ)] the elementary principles of the world..." I Cor. 6:11 "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." I Cor. 15:42 "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 So also it is written, 'The first

man, Adam, became a living soul.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. 47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. 48 As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly."]

27. And turning about I saw the Lord in great glory [*et conversus vidi dominum in gloria magna*] and I became exceeding frightened. [Col. 2:9 "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." II Cor. 4:4b "...the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."]

28. {And they approached to him all the righteous and adored him saying in one voice and a voice just as the former. [Eph. 5:13 "But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. 14 For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you'."]

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. [2 Cor. 3:18 "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."]

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

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

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, whop 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 worshipping my Lord.

38. But I saw the righteous beholding with great power the glory of that One. [I Cor. 15:50 "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised

imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."]

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.

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.

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.'

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.

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

{*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. [2 Cor. 4:4 "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."]

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. [Romans 7:34 "...Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised from the dead who is at the right hand of God..." Col. 3:1 "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." I Cor. 15:27 "For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, 'All things are put in subjection,' it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. 28 When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all..."]

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. [Col. 1:23 "...if indeed you continue in [the] faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, [became]was made a minister." {Phil. 2:10; Hebrews 1:6; Deut. 32:43 (LXX)}.]

16. And I heard a great glorious instruction of my Lord. [I Thess. 4: 2 "For you know what commandments we gave you [through] by the authority of the Lord Jesus."]

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.*} [Eph. 2:1, 2 "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience."]

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. [Romans 5:14b "...of Adam who is a type of the coming [One]." ...Ἀδάμ , ὅς ἐστιν τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος.]

19. Not knowing who He was. [I Cor. 2:6 "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; 7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; 9 but just as it is written, 'Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him.' 10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God."]

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?' [Col. 1:23c "...proclaimed in all creation under heaven" (Κηρυχθέντος ἐν πάσῃ κτίσει τῆ ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν)] [Eph. 6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."]

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. [Eph. 3:3ff. "that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the

Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, {book of life of all humanity as shown Isaiah. Thus, Paul's novel development is via *Asc. Is.*}

31. In all the heavens their praise was continuously joined to him [Col. 2:15 "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through 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.

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

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 heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, how great things God hath prepared for all that love Him.' [See I Cor. 2: 9; Paul quotes *Asc. Is.* xi. 34 as Scripture. Romans 7:18 "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."]

35. He said to me: 'And thou wilt return into thy garment until thy days are completed. Then thou wilt come hither.' [I Cor. 6:13b "Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. 14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? {Since God raised up Christ from the realm of the dead, so you should regard your bodies as unfleshed and living---'spiritual bodies'} So 'glorify God with your bodies'." {'As below, so above'. Reflect the new cosmic salvific reality!}]

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.} [Eph. 3:3ff. "that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel"; Eph. 3:9f. "...and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; 10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in

accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord;"] [Romans 7:38 "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."]

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. [Eph. 1:9 "He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth."] [I Cor. 1:5b "awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."]

Explicit visio Ysaiae prophetae.

[Romans 16:25. "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 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; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen."]

Summa summarum

The discovery that Paul not only knew the *Vision of Isaiah* but understood it as a fundamental authority and key for the gospel he preached has tremendous ramifications for our comprehension of the meaning of Christianity for history and our inevitable definition of the person of the one the apostle(s) grasped as the Beloved and only-begotten son of God they named 'anointed God who saves', according to the etymology. (Yeshua = God saves; Christos = anointed one). It is now generally recognized that the descriptive title became a common name, in the case of the latter; it being germane to the mystery of his person how it was his given name comes to mean exactly what his followers perceived his life's mission to be. (It ranks in the realm of startling coincidences alongside that of the exclamation I once heard from a little girl: "Isn't it amazing that Jesus was born on Christmas?"). Scholars such as Robert M. Price and Earl Doherty have already surveyed the terrain ploughed and reploughed by over a century of 'quests for the historical Jesus', concluding that actual, reliable information to be had about the carpenter from Nazareth is non-existent in places we ought to find it and less than scant in the places centuries of 'numbing piety' has always found it. What remains remarkable and, on the other hand so commonplace it is unremarkable, is the apparent fact that millions of persons over the course of twenty centuries who have no idea what he was actually like (an apparent fact made embarrassingly poignant by and for even the writers of gospels) are certain they have experienced his presence. It is as the old gospel hymn goes: "He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me and

talks with me along life's narrow way. He lives, He lives, salvation to impart! Don't ask me how I know he lives; he lives within my heart." (*Sic semper erat, et sic semper erit.*)

The gospels began, and continued, basically *ad susceptum perficiendum, adaequatio intellectus nostri cum re*: ("in order to achieve what has been undertaken, conformity of our minds to the fact") – the cosmic fact of the universal freeing (ἀπολύτρωσις) of humanity past, present, and future. Notable for the *Vision* is the fact that the Beloved appeared to "dwell on earth among men" (*habitare*) before his descent into Sheol to liberate souls there and before ascending past the firmament through the heavens to 'sit on the right hand of the Father': this key gap in the activities of the Beloved, plus the fact that he sent forth his preachers after his return from Sheol, became the basis of the gospel accounts. Interestingly enough, if you look at the oldest surviving creed or 'rule of faith,' the ancient Roman Symbol, (at least a century before 390 c.e.) the bulk of it (in "{ }") mirrors by derivative theological statement what we can gather as such from the *Vision*:

{ "I believe in God the Father almighty; and in Christ Jesus His only Son, our Lord, } Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, Who under Pontius Pilate { was crucified and buried, on the third day rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father, } whence He will come to judge the living and the dead; { and in the Holy Spirit }, the holy Church, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the flesh "

The 'more up to date' Nicene Creed—cloaked more heavily in metaphysical jargon—(325 c.e.) is even more illuminating in this regard:

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father. By whom all things were made, both in heaven and on earth. Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man. He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. Whose kingdom shall have no end. And in the Holy Ghost."

Given that Paul held that "there is a spiritual body, just as there is a physical body" (I Cor. 15), one could read *incarnatus est* as the flesh of just that body—in short, the universal creed of the church long after the principle of the four gospels describing the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth was acknowledged would have been an acceptable credo for a Christian who believed nothing more or less than what the *Vision of Isaiah* described and taught. Even the phrase "and was made man" finds its acceptability in the Philonic notion that the Adam created by God was an εἶδος of man; and even Paul (I Cor. 15) describes Christ as "the heavenly man."

One thing I've noticed as a member of the Anglican clergy for twenty odd years (and they were odd enough!) was the way parishioners—particularly Inuit folk who inhabited my Cathedral parish in the Canadian Arctic—sought to hear the proclamation of the lectionary gospel located in the liturgy just after the epistle reading, and just prior to the subsequent sermon: they sought to understand the purpose of a story, not the meaning of an incident—even in gospel readings featuring miraculous eventualities rather than the telling of a parable (which *is* but a story!). And I think that this is the way the incredible stories about Jesus in the gospels were always taken, with the idea that they are given as riddles to be deciphered in the name of an 'as if' regarding them—a mysterious, divine meaning that can only be fully grasped by believing the stories *as if* they were true

reports of actual occurrences. The concept of *Weltgeschichte* is first of all a spacious, factual view of history unknown from Herodotus and Plutarch to the Enlightenment via the Renaissance; pondering the meaning of an historical Jesus for the sake of history is a relatively new adventure---for centuries no one even bothered to ask even if the bible was factually reliable in that sense. It wasn't until the 18th century that Reimarus (b. 1694) even dared notice some discrepancies in the various accounts of what actually transpired at the Easter tomb. (His writings were discovered by Lessing along with permission to anonymously publish them following his death.) The Wikipedia *obiter dictum* on Reimarus states: "Hermann Samuel Reimarus (22 December 1694, Hamburg – 1 March 1768, Hamburg), was a German philosopher and writer of the Enlightenment who is remembered for his Deism, the doctrine that human reason can arrive at a knowledge of God and ethics from a study of nature and our own internal reality, thus eliminating the need for religions based on revelation." (– move over Steven Pinker!) How often do we still judge that because it feels right it therefore must be true! How often do we castigate a mathematical equation or physical theory for its lack of 'elegance'! How far distant are we, really, from that psychological disposition that used to persuade intellectuals of yore that there must be only four gospels 'because of the four points of the compass,' or 'the four winds'---elegant balance. (Lately I've treated myself to one historical mythicist's YouTube rumination entitled "Bayes' Theorem: Key To The Universe.")

II. What will undoubtedly change for Christianity will be certain biblical interpretations long assumed unassailably true for seeming aeons, such as Paul's celebrated passage *To the Galatians*. But even here, a minor shift in the meaning of a few words in a legitimate way is all that is necessary; so that Gal. 4:4ff would come to look like this regarding a Christ who came "in the likeness of human flesh":

First, we take the ostensible meaning of a passage in Romans [3:19], which says: "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under [lit.'in'] the Law, [even Christ, in Galatians 4:4], so that every mouth may be closed and all the world [κόσμος] may become accountable to God; (20) because by the works of the Law [or 'of law'] no flesh [σὰρξ] will be justified in His sight; for through the Law [or 'through law'] comes the knowledge of sin."

Therefore according to Gal. 4:4 Christ is 'come under the law', therefore he is conscious of sin and thus no works of the law he would do could justify him. (In and of itself an odd thing to seek to maintain: No flesh could be justified in God's sight so how is it possible that Christ could *be* born 'under the law'? How could a sinless Son of God be guilty of sin just because by becoming flesh he is conscious of the knowledge of sin by being under the law?) The only alternative is that Christ was not born of sinful human flesh and therefore is not himself irredeemably under the law. Otherwise wouldn't the Christ be able to say, along with Paul (in Romans 7)

"14 For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. 16 But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. 17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. 19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me." Paul's solution for the lot of us is baptism (I Cor. 6:11):

"Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." But can this explain why Jesus had to be baptized in GMark?

III. The Pivot

(Galatians 4:1 ff.) "1 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, 2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. 3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world [or, rudimentary or principles]. 4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, [i.e., our heavenly mother (Jerusalem from above)], born under the law, [i.e., as part of the elementary principles of the corrupt world which he entered] 5 so that He might redeem those who were under law, [and born of fleshy, earthly woman] that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, [as though come from woman, come under the law] but a son; and if a son, then an heir through [the gracious act of] God. 8 However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods [i.e. the elementary principles of the corrupt world]. 9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? 10 You observe days and months and seasons and years. 11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain. 12 I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong; 13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; 14 and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself {as in, 'as that angel of God Jesus Christ'?!}. 15 Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. 16 So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? 17 They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them. 18 But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you. 19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you— 20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you. 21 Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. 23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh [κατὰ σάρκα], and the son by the free woman [Jerusalem from above] through the promise. 24. This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. 25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother {insofar as we are 'in Christ'} 27 For it is written, 'Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; For more numerous are the children of the desolate, Than of the one who has a husband.' 28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh [κατὰ σάρκα], persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. 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.' 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman. [Since no longer of the flesh but 'in Christ']". We can construct a Christ who was born of the heavenly Jerusalem, thought as female; but what does 'law' have in common with "*stoicheion*"? According to Gary DeLashmutt ("Paul's Usage of ta stoicheia tou kosmou");

(<https://www.xenos.org/essays/pauls-usage-ta-stoicheia-tou-kosmou>), "The general meaning of the noun form (*stoicheion*) was 'what belongs to a series.' It developed five different but related meanings from this same period (fourth century B.C.) and later pre-Christian literature. *Stoicheion* was used to mean variously 'the length of a shadow on the sundial,' 'part of a syllable or a word,' 'the essential elements of the cosmos,' 'smallest parts (of anything) which stand in relation to one another,' and 'the stars or astral bodies as elements of fire.' According to Dellling, [in Gerhard Friedrich, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. VII, pp. 682,683; which actually is "the authorized and unabridged translation of the famous *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, known commonly as 'Kittel'"], *stoicheion* came to be identified with 'stellar spirits associated with those heavenly bodies' only after the New Testament was written." Perhaps, yet "in physics στοιχεῖα were the component parts of matter, often in Sophocles and Euripides...the word first being used by Plato (*Theatetus* 201e)." Regarding which Dirk Obbink (ed.) says in his *Philodemus and Poetry: Poetic Theory and Practice in Lucretius, Philodemus, and Horace*, (Oxford: 1995), p. 121 "Thus Plato's move of using the Greek word for a letter of the alphabet, στοιχεῖον, first as a metaphor then as a regular word both for the elements of the material universe and for the letters as elements of speech---a move which was first imitated for the Latin word *elementum* in the first century B.C. by Cicero and Lucretius---had for ancient readers a magical resonance we can only recapture by historical thinking." In any case, notwithstanding the primitive astrological use of the word not coming into vogue until post-Eusebius (perhaps under the influence of *Ephesians*) for our purposes it's important to establish as thoroughly Pauline the concept of 'elements' in our passage to at least refer to elementary constituents of matter, and not vocalized or unvocalized letters of the alphabet, as surely the meaning. And the material elements that have sway over our present realm are nothing more or less than causal factors that only behave κατὰ σάρκα, and whoever is subservient to them remains (metaphysically hence salvifically speaking) ἐν σαρκί. Thus the description of Christ coming into the world 'under the law' can legitimately be said to mean, by derivation, that he was under the sway of the elemental materiality that composes the world, its constituent elements (e.g. the constituent elements of fire and water of which angelic beings are composed; see above from *Jewish Encyclopedia* ("Angelology"), etc.) These elements not only display 'principles' in their observed behavioural capacity but *are* principles of the world as such, thus evincing possession of something of an idealized version of themselves. If all this seems rather vague and sketchy, we should remind ourselves that not only are atoms composed of many times more empty space than anything resembling solidity, but subatomic particles have become notorious for an ability to pop out of existence then reappear instantaneously great distances away. That all this is in spiritual terms the equivalent of being 'under law' one may as well read in a post-Newtonian sense: it is the sort of thing a postmodernist mythicist theologian can sink himself into.

"According to the Dream Theory [*Theatetus*] (201d-206b), the world is composed of complexes and their elements. Complexes have Logos, while elements have none, but can only be named. It is not even possible to say of an element that 'it is' or 'it is not,' because adding Being or non-Being to it would be tantamount to making it a complex. Elements cannot be accounted for or known, but are perceptible. Complexes, on the contrary, can be known because one can have a true belief about them and give an account of them, which is 'essentially a complex of names' (202b)." *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy; a peer-reviewed academic resource*. (<https://www.iep.utm.edu/theatetu/#SH3d>)

"Come from woman (heaven), come under the law (subservient to the material cosmos, thus *ipso facto* ἐν σαρκί)" is an interpretation made possible by Paul in mythicist terms, because the Christ that Paul held to *was*

a mythological being himself! From this more accurate reading of the gospel of the apostle we can see how a tad more reflection upon it was able to garner full-blown assertions about "the divine spark imprisoned in fleshy matter" *a la gnosticisme* and the like. But even after a scholarly consensus will have determined, (and they will so determine sooner rather than later) that quote, the historical Jesus is a myth unquote, Christianity will go on with the Jesus of the gospels as the subject of the virtue of pious imagination, and the miraculous will not simply cease because it is irrational; life, phenomenal behaviour, the cosmos, have never been rational; something true whether you prefer to make facts essential for reality or not.

My second-favorite YouTube vid geared to put anyone overly-serious in a light-hearted mood is a talk by someone entitled "Can You Prove That Reality Exists?" (I am holding it in reserve, but I strongly suspect that its conclusion will put probability on the side of an unimpeachable version of certitude that it does. There are reasons why Plato, at the end of his life, kept beneath the pillow on his deathbed a copy of Aristophanes.)