

La Première Apocalypse de Jacques (NH V,3). La Seconde Apocalypse de Jacques (NH V,4)

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James, the brother of the Lord, was one of the three most important figures of the Christian church in its early days, the other two being Paul and Peter. He was also the figure most identified with the church in Jerusalem. Eusebius and Josephus concur in presenting him as a respected figure both among Jews and Christians, and in *Acts* and Paul's letters he is seen as the head of the mission to the Gentiles. In short, his was a name of considerable status. But this status was also curiously ambiguous. He was the head of a branch of the church, but it was a branch that was quickly bypassed by the success of the Pauline mission, and then physically annihilated during the Jewish revolts. It is this name, with its associations with Judaism and the mythical early days of the church, that two gnostic authors chose to use as the guarantor of their revelations, both of which were preserved under the same title, the *Apocalypse of James*. (The Nag Hammadi collection also includes a third text ascribed to James, the *Apocryphon of James*.)

The two Apocalypses of James are the third and fourth texts in Nag Hammadi codex V. As mentioned above, the two texts have the same title: the numeration has been added by modern scholars. They are preceded in this codex by *Eugnostos the Blessed* and the *Apocalypse of Paul*, and are followed by the *Apocalypse of Adam*. The language of our texts is Sahidic, a dialect of Coptic, but the language of the original would have been Greek. Although they are far from the worst preserved of the Nag Hammadi texts, nonetheless the two Apocalypses are full of lacunas, ranging in extent from single letters to several instances where six complete lines are lost. Thanks to Codex Tchacos, we now possess a second version of the so-called first *Apocalypse of James*. The study of this version of the *Apocalypse of James* has now made it possible to fill in several gaps in our understanding of the Nag Hammadi version of this text, caused by the poor state of preservation of the start of Nag Hammadi codex V.

The first *Apocalypse* begins brusquely, with "C'est le Seigneur qui m'a parlé" (24,10). This sentence was probably not in the original text, but rather was added later, as it is the only occasion in the text in which the narrator speaks of himself in the first person. The first section of the text is structured as a conversation between the Saviour and James, and takes place immediately before the Crucifixion. James is identified as the Lord's brother, although "tu n'es pas mon frère selon la matière" (24,15-16) – a deeper sense of the word is obviously meant. The Lord then gives instruction concerning the unnameable "Celui-qui-est" and his own relation to that being. Both the Lord's and James' martyrdoms are predicted, and Jerusalem is personified and castigated as being the one who "donne la coupe d'amertume...aux fils de la lumière" (25,16-18). There follows a discussion of cosmology and of salvation, the nature of which is complete identification with "Celui-qui-est." Upon learning of the archontic powers that oppose the Lord, James delivers a beautiful hymn describing his descent. After promising to return, the Lord departs and accomplishes "les choses qui convenaient" (30,13).

The promise is fulfilled several days later, when the Lord appears to James as he is walking on a mountain. They exchange a kiss, and James' worries are allayed, as the Lord declares that "ce peuple [the Jews of Jerusalem, presumably] ne m'a fait aucun mal" (31,21-22). Then the Lord instructs James regarding what to say after he himself is martyred. It should be noted that the distinction between earthly and heavenly opponents is explicitly denied here: the Jewish people are a type of the archons, the evil rulers of this world, and although the instruction that the Lord offers to James is concerned with spiritual beings and presumably *post mortem*, it is introduced merely with "Si on (te) saisit, et si (tu) subis ces souffrances, une multitude s'armera contre toi ..." (33,2-4). James is coached on the correct answers to give to those who will seek to impede his ascension to "Celui-qui-est." He is then

ordered to reveal what he has been told only to Addai, presumably the disciple of that name, who will perhaps tell Levi (the text is extremely lacunous here). Further instruction is delivered concerning the nature of the archons, the seven female disciples of Jesus (although later only four seem to be named: Salome, Mariam, Martha and Arsinoe), and the correct way for disciples of the Lord to behave. James goes forth to gather the 12 and rebuke them, it seems for being too content with themselves. The text ends with what seems to be a description of the martyrdom of James.

The second *Apocalypse* begins more expansively than did the *First Apocalypse*, declaring itself to be "le discours qu'a prononcé Jacques le Juste dans Jérusalem" (44,13-15). In it, James identifies himself as one "qui a reçu révélation de la part du plérôme d'incorruptibilité" (46,6-8), and exalts himself as the possessor of hidden knowledge. Given the fragmentary state of the text at this point, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether James is quoting the Lord or speaking of himself.

As happened in the first *Apocalypse*, the possibility that there could be any real physical kinship between the Lord and James is explicitly denied (50,5-23, 51,19-20). It is clearly stated that they have different fathers, although now James has been adopted by the Lord's father. However, it is also said that they were nourished on the same milk, presumably Mary's. The most reasonable way to combine this fact with the lack of physical kinship is to assume that the author of this text sees Mary solely as the vessel of the Lord, the conduit through which he was introduced to the world.

Following this, James launches into a stinging denunciation of the vanity and ultimate powerlessness of the chief archon. Then the Lord is quoted, discussing James' role as mediator between humanity and the divine. It ends with the Lord kissing James, as happened also in the first *Apocalypse*, and with James urging the people to renounce "ce chemin dur, (qui) est changeant" (59,1-2) and to follow the Lord, by way of himself, James the Just. Finally, there is a prediction of the imminent destruction of the Temple. This ends his first discourse, after which the priests decide to kill him. They throw him off the Temple, and then stone him to death. He dies while praying to "mon Dieu et mon Père" (62,16) to deliver him from the world and to bring him into the true life.

It is easy to see that these two *Apocalypses* are quite different. However, there are aspects common to both of them, the most obvious of these being the figure of James. As we have seen above, James was a figure with strong ties to Judaism. Professor Veilleux points out that in the *Apocalypses* there is simultaneously both a recognition of this, and an effort to separate James from orthodox Judaism. In the second *Apocalypse*, this separation is blatant: James is brutally murdered by the priests of the Temple. The first *Apocalypse* is less dramatic (then again, it would be difficult to be *more* dramatic), but equally significant. Whereas James' first conversation with the Lord took place in Jerusalem, the risen Lord appears to him on a mountain outside of Jerusalem. As the Lord appears to him, he is in the midst of prayer, "comme c'était sa coutume" (30,30-31,1). Immediately "il cessa la prière" (31,3), and embraced and kissed the Lord. As Veilleux notes, "Cette mention de la prière (juive) n'a probablement pour but que de souligner la rupture avec le judaïsme impliquée dans ce qui suit" (p. 83).

Other similarities between the two texts that Veilleux notes include their structure and their preoccupation with the theme of salvation, as well as an overriding desire "à établir fortement l'autorité de Jacques et sa mission exclusive de révélateur et même de sauveur" (p. 15). As they were undoubtedly written by different authors, these similarities "indiquent très clairement qu'ils proviennent tous les deux du même milieu, qui ne pouvait qu'être judéo-chrétien" (*ibid.*).

In addition to this comparative analysis, Veilleux also looks at the texts individually. Particularly in the case of the first *Apocalypse*, he finds many links with Valentinian speculation on the subjects of cosmogony and the role of the female element. There are also very explicit links in terms of their relative conceptions of soteriology. Veilleux shows in detail how a section in the first *Apocalypse* (32,28-35,25) expresses ideas about the nature of the soul that are ascribed to the Marcosians, a sect of Valentinians, by Irenaeus and Epiphanius. Among the Marcosians, these ideas are expressed as instructions given to the dying, concerning what one is to say to the cosmic authorities after death, in order to ensure that one's soul escapes their power. In the first *Apocalypse*, many of these same ideas, couched in surprisingly similar terminology, are taught to James by Jesus, who tells him that they are the proper answers to the questions that three "péagers" (33,8) will ask him. The context for this is not explicitly said to be after death, but rather after enduring suffering. However, it is likely that

James' death is to be understood: the author has also referred to Jesus' Passion and death as "ses souffrances" (30,14).

This volume includes the Coptic text of both *Apocalypses*, with French translations given in parallel columns, as well as Greek and Coptic indices for both texts. It also includes Professor Veilleux's Introduction, and his notes to both texts.