



THE REVELATION OF SAINT JOHN AND POST-CHRISTIANITIES: A RESPONSE TO NASCENT MESSIANISM AND SPIRITUALISM?

Posted on November 1, 2021 by Father Edouard-Marie

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To comment on Revelation is first to search the Old Testament for insights. However, can we gain further insights, in the sense that Saint John was inspired in particular by texts such as those found in the caves of the Dead Sea? This idea has been advanced by certain exegetes, who sometimes go so far as to make Saint John (even Jesus himself) a disciple of the "Essenes," presumed to have inhabited the site of Qumran (roughly above one of the caves that had the manuscripts, namely, Cave 4).

It should be noted that this idea occurs in a larger discourse, frequently held at university departments of religious studies: That the Trinitarian faith, clearly expressed in the New Testament, is a derivative and late form of Christianity, which would not initially speak of the presence of God in Jesus (a presence which fulfills the biblical promise of God coming to visit his people). Since the New Testament never speaks of the Essenes, this very absence is taken as proof of the late writing of the Gospels, which would not have been composed by witnesses (apostles and disciples), and in Aramaic (in oral style), but written late and in Greek. Moreover, the reason for the alleged late drafting is that it would have been done in Greek, and it was done in Greek since it is presumed late. One can wonder if this "evidence," in the form of a vicious circle, is not part of a larger and a priori negation.

A recent example of "negationism" is the lavish book (subsidized by the French Ministry of Culture), [*Après Jésus: l'invention du christianisme \(After Jesus. The invention of Christianity\)*](#), in which we find denied the existence of Christians, East of the Roman Empire before the third century. A contradictory variant of this negation consists in postulating that the Christians of Mesopotamia, predominantly Jewish, certainly existed, but believed "in astrology, in magic and in the divinity of the natural elements," as per [Luigi Cirillo](#).

However, other exegetes have shown that even the Greek texts cannot be very late, or at least some of them, because they fall into seven unreducible families of manuscripts. For example Philippe Rolland who, at the end of his life, [published with Lucien Houdry a summary of the evidence](#): On the basis of a primitive "gospel of Jerusalem," they placed the official and final writing of the synoptics in Greek at the beginning of the 60s AD. Papias points to the first gospel: "Matthew organized (συνετάξατο) the words of the Lord in the language of the Hebrews (= Aramaic), and each one made the translation of it as he could (ἡρμήνευσεν δ' αὐτὰ ὡς ἦν δυνατὸς ταστος)" (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39.16).

The great recent rediscovery has been that these "families" are rooted in oral compositions in Aramaic, the manuscripts of which form only one family: It is these compositions, originally written down as a

reminder, collected for the most part in our "gospels," which originally (except for John) were used as lectionaries - and which were quickly translated into Latin and Greek. These new perspectives, answering questions which have haunted the world of exegesis for centuries (in particular: what are the gospels?), answer what the Eastern Churches have always affirmed: The New Testament gives an account, in a way contemporary, and first in Aramaic, of the faith of the apostles and disciples, for which they gave their lives.

What then are we to make, in relation to the Revelation of Saint John, of texts known since the discoveries at the Dead Sea, or other comparable texts already previously known, and which reflect a "faith" other than that of the apostles?

Questions To Be Addressed

Any possible comparison first raises the problem of the authors of these texts. For more than fifty years, they have been attributed to a sect called "Essenes" who supposedly inhabited the site of Qumran, near the Dead Sea. Today, most serious researchers have been led to relegate this idea of the "Essene monks" and their monastery of Qumran to the rank of an absurd belief - not without reservations, because it must be admitted that the academic world had fabricated a myth.

Once the origins of this accumulation of errors have been clarified, it will then be appropriate to look at the question of the dating of the later documents of the Dead Sea, among which we find passages of "apocalyptic" or eschatological style which can be compared to those of the Revelation of Saint John. But in what capacity can they be compared to it? If they are prior to the year 70 and therefore to Revelation, one might think that Saint John was inspired by them. But if they are contemporary - Saint John lived for almost 90 years - or later, the question requires a radically new look.

Some Reminders Relating To The Myth Of The "Essene Monks Of Qumran"

André Paul (1933-2019) had been one of the main popularizers of the Essene thesis. In 2000, he was still teaching that Jesus went to be trained with these Essenes. But he completely changed his mind in 2007. And in 2008 he published *Qumrân et les Esséniens (Qumran and the Essenes)* with the eloquent subtitle, *L'éclatement d'un dogme (The Shattering of a Dogma)*. And again, he was not familiar with the work of Professors Robert and Pauline Donceel-Voute, who studied the remains collected on the

ground of the Qumran site, remains which had been entrusted to the care of the Catholic University of Louvain. Their [conclusions are very clear](#) - in these places, there had never been anything other than a rich commerce in balms and perfumes (related to the balsam trees of the surroundings). This put a definitive end to the idea of a mythical monastic community there, with a scriptorium in the style of Western medieval abbeys.

Note that this myth, originally unrelated to a specific place, had a distant origin. It begins with a pagan interpolator of the only Greek text by Flavius Josephus that we have (a copy of the 9th century), a fairly anti-Semitic author, close to Roman power, who was inspired by the [Philosophoumena](#), attributed to Hippolytus. The myth emerged in the modern era, notably with Voltaire and was much discussed in the 18th century; and then it resurfaced a second time after 1947, following the [discoveries of the so-called "Dead Sea" scrolls](#), before collapsing in the 21st century. This story, still very little known, was summarized in the first volume of my [Le Messie et son prophète](#) (*The Messiah and His Prophet*).

One of the problems with this myth is that it functioned like a tree hiding the forest, the forest being the multitude of Jewish community associations, especially in the Diaspora, whose goal was the preservation of worship and its own freedom. The writings attributed to the legendary "Essenes" must therefore be redistributed to their various true authors, in particular to Jewish or even Greek Christian communities, or even to groups of ex-Judeo-Christians who had deviated from the preaching of the apostles.

The Dating Of The Latest Dead Sea Texts

Confusion surrounds the dating of these manuscripts; they are usually said to have been buried before the year 70 (end of the First "Jewish War"), which tends to present them all as pre-Christian. However, this *terminus ad quem* is arbitrary: such a deadline has no other reason than to harmonize the age of the manuscripts with the myth of the "Essenes of Qumran," whose existence one cannot decently posit after the year 70 AD. Now, it should be considered that the eleven caves of the Dead Sea - twelve now and located many kilometers from each other, certainly have different histories; to assign a priori the same date for the caves is absurd.

In addition, in 95 AD, the Pharisee Synod of Yabneh decided to suppress a number of writings deemed to be non-conforming; and if they contained the name of YHWH, it was out of the question to destroy them, they were to be stored in inaccessible caches. Many of the Dead Sea writings meet this criterion,

some have even been burned on one side, as a sign of being excluded. It is therefore most certainly in the year 135 AD (end of the Second "Jewish war") that we must locate the *terminus ad quem*.

An additional argument for the year 135 comes from the discovery, at the end of 2016, of a twelfth manuscript cave in the Judean Desert. This Cave 12 of the Dead Sea (very difficult to access) contained manuscript jars - they were most likely broken and looted in the 19th century - but a few fragments of manuscripts were found on the ground. However, it was occupied during the Second "Jewish War," as evidenced by the coins linked to this second uprising and the remains of weapons found there. Recall that two fragments of the New Testament in Greek were found in Cave 7: 7Q4 (1Tim 3,16.4,3) and 7Q5 (Mk 6,52-53).

Moreover, it was obvious that the Dead Sea Scrolls dated from various periods and in particular after the year 70 AD. Some of them bear witness to different versions, in which there are additions - which presupposes successive editorial periods. Some of these additions have a "Christian" aftertaste, which corresponds well to a period between 70 and 135 AD.

What We Learn From The Testament Of Zabulon

Consequently, it is no longer appropriate to present these additions as pre-Christian, nor those passages of the same ideological bent found in the caves, or known long before the discoveries of 1947. There is no need to invent "Christian interpolators" who, in the end, during the second or third century, falsified supposedly pre-Christian texts; and for this reason, all the more mysterious, as these passages are not really Christian. Obviously, the simple solution is that these texts with their "Christian" passages go back as they are to 1st or early 2nd century versions. Nothing like an example to understand.

In the [*Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*](#), the simplest (and very well attested) example is that of passage 9.8 of the [*Testament of Zabulon*](#), which is presented in two versions, between which versions the manuscripts are more or less evenly distributed. It should be noted in passing that the additions in question are less interpolations than rewritings which lengthen the passage. The first version is short, the other is significantly longer.

The short version reads: *"After that, the Lord himself, the light of righteousness, will arise for you, and you*

will return to your land. And you will see Him in Jerusalem, because of His holy name" (Test. Zab. 9.8).

The second, longer version reads:

"After that, the Lord himself will raise for you, the light of righteousness [unchanged quote from Hosea 10:12], and healing and compassion will be in his wings. He will deliver from Beliar all the captivity of the children of men, and every straying spirit will be trampled underfoot; and He will convert all nations to serve Him zealously. And you will see God in the form of a man chosen by the Lord, in Jerusalem, because of his name."

The lesson of the short version does not summarize that of the longer version, for it is clearly anterior: it simply evokes the eschatological vision of the victorious return to the Country, a biblical vision taking as a model either the return from Exile with Nehemiah, or even the Exodus. Perhaps this is a prophecy of comfort after the insurrection of 66-70 AD, which forced all those who did not want to take part to flee the country.

The lesson in the longer version, which is obviously later, is that it may well be a "Christian prophecy" ex post facto? In fact, if the author were a Christian, he would not have written that the Lord would have "chosen" to take the "form of a grown man." Rather, Christian theology says that the "(announced) visit of God" to His people took place in that He "took flesh," not in that He took a "form" (an already existing body). We find a comparable formulation in two others Testaments ("God takes a body" [Test. Simeon 6: 7]; God "appeared in the form of a lowly man/came in the flesh" [Test. Benjamin 10: 7;8])' and it indicates that God invests and manipulates an adult man, as suggested in another way, notably in Fragment 3 of Ms. 4Q286-287: "...Holy Spirit [rep] daring on His Messiah...." This corresponds to the conception of a Messiah Jesus inhabited by the Spirit (= adopted by God) from his baptism in the Jordan, a conception that the Sabellians or Mandaean of Mesopotamia had, and later the disciples of [Paul of Samosata](#) had, that is, the [monarchianists](#), and many others.

Thus, the author of the *Testament of Zabulon*, 9.8, a late version, offers very little apostolic "Christianity;" and it is even more evident when one notices that here it is God who invests a man with His Spirit, and not the Word (*Logos* or *meltā* in Aramaic) who "becomes flesh" (Jn 1:14). The difference is not minimal; it is of a Trinitarian nature. We are therefore not faced with a "naive Christology," as [Marc Philonenko](#) [thinks](#), but with a radical reinterpretation. Certainly, the first expressions of the apostolic faith do not have the precision of the later formulations or forms (especially conciliar); but they are biblical and

clearly Trinitarian.

We should not focus on the term "form," which renders the Greek, *morphe*. We find it with the qualifier of "human" in the Letter to the Ephesians (XVIII) of Ignatius of Antioch (martyred around 107); but it is precisely not the question of a God who is to come in this "form" but who "appears" it in: "Then... the old kingdom was ruined, when God appeared in the form of a man, for a newness of eternal life." In fact, behind the Greek expression, *morphe Theou*, we must see the Aramaic *dmwt dlh*, "consanguinity-likeness of Aloha," which refers to Genesis, when God created man "in his image (Hebrew *tselem*, shadow-image) and his likeness-aspect (Hebrew *demuwth* - see also Ezekiel 1:13)." We are very far from the negation of the divinity of the Messiah (Jesus), implied by the messianist formula "to come in a man."

Where do these confusions come from?

A Lack Of Knowledge Of The Historical (Aramaic) Context?

A lack of knowledge of apostolic Syro-Aramaic Christianity and of the first drifting away is certainly a cause of confusion. Few scholars have understood that expressions referred to as "non-Trinitarian Christians" (in the Testaments, or other parallel writings referred by these scholars as "inter-Testamentary") were in fact shifts from the apostolic faith expressed in the New Testament (and not the other way around).

Even before the discoveries of the Dead Sea, the idea circulated that the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs could have inspired the New Testament writings - when in fact in the matter of influence, one should consider the reverse. Thus, according to [R.H. Charles](#), *Gad* 6:3-6 would have given Matthew 18: 15-35 (+ Luke 17:3); *Daniel* 5:3 would have given Matthew 22:37-39; *Joseph* 1:5-6 would have given Matthew 25:35-36; *Levi* 6:2 would have given Luke 2:19; *Levi* 14:4 would have given John 1:9; *Benjamin* 6:4 would have given John 5:41; *Simeon* 2:8 would have given Acts 12:11. Charles also pointed out 70 terms common to these Testaments and to the Pauline corpus.

Indeed, Jesus did not promise a triumph to come but world trials preceding the Judgment of his Coming: Luke 21: 9-11;27: *"And when you shall hear of wars and seditions, be not terrified: these things must first come to pass; but the end is not yet presently. Then he said to them: Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there shall be great earthquakes in divers places, and*

pestilences, and famines, and terrors from heaven; and there shall be great signs... And then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty." Matthew 24: 7:29-30: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be pestilences, and famines, and earthquakes in places... And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty."

This is all the more evident here as this shift is expressed in a co-text which apocalyptically emphasizes earthly success. On the contrary, in Luke 21 and Matthew 24, Jesus does not announce an earthly success. This is a post-Christian doctrine, focused on the kingdom of God to be built (or imposed) on the earth. That is, a "messianist" doctrine - and even the first of its kind in history. Such a doctrine could only have arisen as a distortion of a prior Announcement of the Kingdom of God to come, that which Jesus gave but whose realization on earth depends on his Second Coming.

In fact, when we put things in their place, we realize that we must consider the existence of two distortions or primitive drifts of the apostolic faith, one of which is messianism which claims to save the world - the other being focused on the future of the individual person (Irenaeus of Lyon, in [*Against Heresies*](#), essentially focused on the Gnostic drifts of the apostolic faith, and marginally on the messianist drift.). These deviant doctrines are unlikely to have been clearly developed before the year 70; they certainly were developed in the years following the destruction of the Temple, so shocking to Jewish religious consciousness (and to some extent also to Judeo-Christians, despite Jesus' warnings).

Thus, when we read the later versions of the Testaments today, there is no longer any need to ask the insoluble question of supposed late "Christian interpolators" - they are post-Christian rewritings, inspired by messianist ideology, created by Jewish Christians who opposed the teaching of the apostles (i.e., ex-Judeo-Christians); and this after the crisis of the destruction of the Temple.

Saint John Confronted By Post-Christian Currents?

By definition, the writings of Saint John owe nothing to later texts. As for earlier texts, one could largely mention the Book of Enoch, whose apocalyptic style has an air of resemblance to the Revelation of Saint John. This text may date back to the 3rd century BC, but it went through different versions - it was a bestseller. There is much talk of visions, angels and demons punished by the fire in which kings and

the powerful, who follow them, also burn. These are spiritual commonplaces. Saint John was not inspired by this especially when he describes a lake of fire engulfing the beast, the false prophet and the devil (Rev. 19:20; 20:10); and all those who were not found written in the book of Life (Rev 20:15). His images are much more significant.

There remain therefore the writings which were contemporary with him, and those which interest us, especially are those which, after the year 70, testify to doctrines opposed to those of the apostles, whether in a Messianist sense or in the sense of an exaltation of the "spiritual me" - that is to say the current of masters who claimed a more or less magical "spiritual knowledge," who therefore qualified as "Gnostics" (in any case explicitly since [Carpocrates](#), at the beginning of the second century), and who, more often than not, claimed to be the "true Christians." (Gnosis is a "reinterpretation of Christian doctrine," writes [Robert M. Grant](#)). Did Saint John want to respond to the promoters of these currents which distorted faith in Jesus Christ?

We note first that in its own way, each of these two currents is led to deny the death and resurrection of the Messiah Jesus. Since the Messianist perspective is the salvation of the world, it is unthinkable that the Messiah failed in the project of world domination that God is presumed to have entrusted to him, to the point of dying on a cross - which is a curse in the biblical view (Deuteronomy 21:23). Thus, someone else was substituted for him and he was taken to Heaven, where he awaits the moment to return to earth, to resume work and to succeed in conquering the world. (In a passage from the [Testament of Levi](#), written as a reproach to the Jews who reject Jesus as Messiah, it is not specified that Jesus died: *"The man who renews the Law by the power of the Most High, you hail him with the title of Impostor. Then by your malice, you then throw yourself on him to kill him, without knowing if he will rise up and let his innocent blood fall on your heads. But I say to you, because of him, your holt sanctuary will be razed to the ground"* (16:3-4). Curiously, we read in the Koran: *"[The Jews say:] We really killed the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, messenger of God. But they neither killed nor crucified him, but someone resembling him was put before them [before their eyes]... but God raised him up to him"*(Sur. 4.157-158).

As the Messiah is a superman, he will reign 400 years. The number 400 can be read in the Latin, Georgian and Proto-Arabic versions of the Fourth *Book of Ezra* 7: 28-31. Islam inherits this expectation of a re-descending of "the Messiah Jesus" (*al-masih 'Isa* in the proper words of the Koran), an essential expectation in the historical preaching of Muhammad, according to many hadith-s (Amir-Moezzi), and far from the character created by legend. But Islamic theology (well after the Koran) divided the 400 years by ten: after having killed the dragon and defeated his armies, Jesus only lives 40 years.

As for the spiritualist perspective (known as "Gnostic"), it too cannot envisage that the Messiah Son of God is really dead - and therefore he did not really rise from the dead either. It was his body, or an appearance, that was crucified - the Master was no longer there, he had already left his body - and he was made to say: "I am not the one who is fixed to the cross" ([Acts of John, No. 99](#)). This has been called "Docetism;" but it is simply a feature of all spiritualist systems.

(The Acts of John is subtly Gnostic, it never attacks the Christian faith head-on. In No. 101, we read, *"Nothing, therefore, of the things which they will say of me have I suffered: nay, that suffering also which I showed unto thee and the rest in the dance, I will that it be called a mystery.... that I am, not what I said, but what thou art able to know, because thou art akin thereto. Thou hearest that I suffered, yet did I not suffer; that I suffered not, yet did I suffer; that I was pierced, yet I was not smitten; hanged, and I was not hanged; that blood flowed from me, and it flowed not; and, in a word, what they say of me, that befell me not, but what they say not, that did I suffer. Now what those things are I signify unto thee, for I know that thou wilt understand."* Regarding the negation of the cross, there is Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistola ad Smyrnaeos*, 2 - P.G. V, 707: *"All this he suffered for us, so that we may be saved. And he truly suffered, as he also truly rose from the dead, not, as some unbelievers say, that he suffered only in appearance."* As well, *Ad Trallianos*, 10 - P.G. V, 682, and *Epiphanius, Panarion*, 24.3 - P.G. XLI, 311).

In his Revelation, Saint John is clear. The angel, spokesperson for Jesus, tells of his pre-existence and his Easter mystery: *"Thus saith he who is the First and the Last, he who was dead and who [re] lived"* (Rev 2:8 FG). And John saw a vision, in the middle of the throne, of a Lamb slain (Rev 56). He is the Word-Speech [*Logos*, Aramaic, *meltā*] of God (Rev 19:13). God and the Lamb sit together on the Throne, from which flows the river of living waters (Rev 22:1). The first response to the distortions of Revelation received by the apostles and disciples is the affirmation of it.

However, Saint John goes further; his Revelation takes into account the nascent post-Christian currents. Without claiming to be exhaustive, let's take a closer look.

Revelation In The Face Of The Messianist Distortion Of Revelation

We have already looked at passages from the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs in their later versions, which are heavily borrowed from Messianist ideology dreaming of an Israel that will rebuild the Temple (destroyed in 70 AD - *Test. Levi* XVII, 10), and ruling over the whole world through a King-Priest (*Test. Levi* XVIII, 3-4).

Another writing, also found in the caves of the Dead Sea in several copies (seven in all – which speaks to its importance), the *War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*, is still more explicit. It reads: *"The first attack of the Sons of Light shall be undertaken against the forces of the Sons of Darkness... when the exiles of the Sons of Light return from the Wilderness of the Peoples to camp in the Wilderness of Jerusalem.... On the day when the Kittim [the Romans] fall there shall be a battle and horrible carnage before the God of Israel, for it is a day appointed by Him from ancient times as a battle of annihilation for the Sons of Darkness"* (Col. 1: 1-9; 1QM1-14).

What has been called the *Rule of the Community* prescribes *"to love all the children of light, each according to his good for the divine purpose, and to hate all the children of darkness, each according to his guilt in the vengeance of God"* (1QS 1.9-10). And if this is not understood, it clearly calls for an *"eternal hatred towards men of perdition"* (1QS 9.21-22). [André Dupont-Sommer](#) translates "men of perdition," as "men of the pit," which Josephus uses to designate the ungodly (*Jewish War* II, 11,155). A similar expression, "way of the Pit," can be found in another cave writing, *The Wiles of the Wanton Woman*.

A fragment of an *Isaiah Commentary*, found in Cave IV, speaks of the descendant of *"David who will appear in the last [days]... And God will sustain him with [a spirit] mighty [... and give him] a glorious throne, [a] [sacred] diadem and ceremonial vestments... scepter in his hands, and he will reign over all the G Gentils and even Magog [and his army... all] the peoples will be submitted to his sword"*(4Q161 10 22-26).

Note the logic of the system. If we are to save the world and establish the will of God in it, we must hate those who oppose the global takeover, since they are enemies of God, no matter how sympathetic they may appear. Similar beliefs are expressed later in the Quran: "It was not you who killed them, it was God who killed them" (Quran 8,17); "Fight them (to death that is to say go so far as to kill them) so that God by your hands may chastise them" (Quran 9,14).

We should also note the mistrust taught towards women, who, concerned about their home, always run the risk of diverting man from the eschatological combat prescribed for him. A fragmentary text, also taken from one of the caves in the Dead Sea and aptly entitled, *The Wiles of the Wicked Woman*, reads: *"Her [woman's] eyes she casts here and there, and she flutters her eyelashes shamelessly... in order to make the humble to rebel from God and to turn their steps far from the ways of righteousness... in order to lead man astray into the ways of the Pit and to seduce the sons of men with flattery."* As the translator points out, *there is no allegorical meaning to seek: the prostitute here is the image of woman herself.*

We can note weaker anti-feminist passages in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs; the strongest is in the Testament of Judah: "The angel of God showed me that women will always rule, over kings as well as over the poor. From the king, they take away his glory, from the brave, his strength, from the poor the least support in his poverty" (15.5-6. Trans. In *la Bible* [1987], p. 867).

On the other hand, in the Koran, the messianist logic goes all the way: "From your wives and your children [comes] an enemy for you (*min azwâji-kum wa awlâdi-kum' adûwan lakum*); take care!... Your goods and your children are only a seduction (*fitnah*, temptation)" (Sura 64.14-15). The translator Kechrid captures the meaning well: "You have an enemy in your wives and in your children." Wives and children represent a potential danger, because from them (*min* here clearly means, "derived from") comes opposition (an enemy) to the Cause – which verse 15 confirms. "By making his wife submit," explains Antoine Moussali, "the man assures his own submission and that of his wife to the good of the *ummah* which has the responsibility for the rights of God" ([*Judaïsme, christianisme et islam. Etude comparée*](#), p. 171).

To understand the source from which these messianist delusions come, we must look at the teaching of Jesus who certainly spoke of the "children of light" (John 12:36 and 1 Thessalonians 5: 5). But he never used the phrase "sons of darkness" – and it is not found anywhere in the New Testament either. We only read this, at the end of a parable: "for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light" (Luke 16,8). The difference between "sons of this world" and "sons of darkness," in the same opposition to "sons of [the] light" is blatantly obvious: the expression "sons of darkness" implies a condemnation, almost a predestination of the world to Hell, while "sons of this world," admittedly a negative expression, leaves the door open. The messianist ideology classifies those of this earth, mankind, into two camps: "the good" on the one hand and, on the other, those who do not follow the good and who are therefore bad.

In fact, this idea of classifying people, never more current than today in media propaganda, comes from a dramatic secularization of the sorting conducted by God in the Hereafter and *during the Judgment which belongs only to Him* – a conviction that permeates the whole of the New Testament and particularly Revelation. The shift from a Judgment carried out by God (and by his Angels) to a judgment conducted by messianist powers through exterminations and genocides is a radical distortion.

Jesus had guarded against such distortion ahead of time; it is the parable of the wheat and the cockle: "Even as cockle therefore is gathered up, and burnt with fire, so will it be in the culmination of the

present time (*en te sunteleīai tou aīonos* – *aīon*, epoch). The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals, and them that work iniquity. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13: 40-42).

The harvest will not be made by the workers of the parable. Under what circumstances will this be done? This is precisely the object of the Book of Revelation which, in particular and like other passages of the New Testament, announces a time to come of the "kingdom of the righteous," as Saint Irenaeus says. But such a time is after the Judgment of those who will be on the earth. If one reverses the prospect and pretends to bring about the Kingdom of God before He intervenes Himself, one is doing the work of Satan who pushes the hatred of "others," as is always seen.

There was already a certain danger of distortion from the Old Testament, because of the awareness of belonging to the "chosen people." This is why Jesus affirmed: "You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you" (Matthew 5: 43-44). With messianism, the "negation of the other," to use the expression of Claude Levi-Strauss, is no longer a danger – it is an established doctrine.

In Revelation, God's faithful are busy learning a new song (Rev 14: 1-3), or singing the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev 15, 1-3), not exterminating the sons of darkness in great carnage. Jesus is the only one who can dispense judgment. He holds "the two-edged sword [*ḥarbā*, *pūmēh*]" (Rev 2,12). It is "the sword [*ḥarbā*] of my mouth [*pūmēh*]," he says (Rev 2,16) that is, the Word of God (cf., Isaiah 49:2). He is aided by "the powers of Heaven [which] follow him on white mares," carrying a sword "in" their mouths [*pūmhon*]" (Rev 19:15). Satan-Dragon is conquered by the sons of the woman, "conquered by the blood of the Lamb and by the power of the Word [*melā*] of his testimony" (Rev 12:11), not by the armed hand of warriors. "Babel the great" destroys itself; or more exactly is destroyed because of "the Beast" and the "false prophet" who, for their part, are then thrown into the lake of fire by the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19).

Only the one who wears the golden crown (Rev 14,14) can bring peace on earth and, through his angel, bind Satan (Rev 20,1-10). It is priestly work, that of the Lamb who is at the same time high priest of the Holy City which is a Temple (a cube, Rev 21:16;22). As the song of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders already said, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. And hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests,

and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev 5:9-10 FG).

Without having fully covered the question, we see that Revelation responds in a way to the nascent messianism, which has already formed itself into a frightening doctrine. Likewise, this writing of Saint John also responds to the other nascent post-Christianity, spiritualism.

Revelation In The Face Of The Spiritualist Distortion Of Revelation

The reproaches made to the seven churches at the beginning of Revelation relate to temptations that can sometimes be called spiritualist-Gnostic. We have seen above (see also note 22) that this current fundamentally denies the death and therefore the resurrection of Jesus. Why?

Close to the "seat of Satan," the Church which was in Pergamum, the third Church, was confronted by the Nicolaitans who professed a certain doctrine that detracted from the moral sense rooted in created nature (Rev 2:14). Certain members of the community had fallen into this trap, one which was not very different from the teaching of "Balaam," king of Moab, to which chapters 22 to 24 of Deuteronomy are devoted – but he was also known outside the Bible. Balaam was the figure known as the corruptor of the faith according to the Epistle of Jude (1:11) and the 2nd Epistle of Peter (2:15). Such a corruptor of the religious and moral sense makes one think of gnosis.

If we go directly to the Seventh Church, that of Laodicea, we suspect here not a confrontation but a spiritualist shift. This church thinks, "I'm rich, I don't need anything," all the while it is "destitute and naked." Spiritual sufficiency is the hallmark of the Gnostics, who believe they have accessed the depths of God but who are "neither hot nor cold" – such is the first reproach made to this Church – they play spiritual but their works are miserable (Rev 3: 14-18).

Despite its good works and burning love, the Fourth Church, that of Thyatira, was grimly grappling with a false prophetess (whose biblical figure is Jezebel), who was dragging this church into esotericism and "the depths of Satan, as they say" (Rev 2:23-24). This is another trait gnosis, and not the least. Of course, the Gnostics do not officially claim to be Lucifer, although there is today in the United States an openly dedicated "Church" of Satan, with a storefront, and many other satanic public manifestations. According to their doctrine, they dedicate themselves to the Angels and to "God," a God who is not the good Creator but a kind of pantheistic entity nevertheless marked by a negative pole, either hidden or

brought to light according to the Gnostic schools, and always related to matter. Man must to extricate himself from material reality, in order to probe spiritual depths. "Admirable Sophists," writes Saint Irenaeus (he died in 201 AD) not without humor; "they scrutinize the depths of the unknown Father and recount the supra-celestial mysteries into which the angels wish to lose their gaze" (Saint Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, II, 37, 6 et 38,1).

In practice, each having its "master," these currents are multiple and include both moral depravity and forms of asceticism based on the capture of spiritual powers – angelic, in fact. Magic and angel worship are never far away, and the angels who play these games are not from God. Besides, John writes: "And I fell before his [Angel's] feet, and bowed myself down to him. And he said to me: No! I am your companion and that of your brothers, those to whom there is [who have] the testimony of Jesus. Bow down more to God" (Rev 19.10 FG). And he makes us hear the angel of "Good Hope" who invites the inhabitants of the earth to recognize the Creator: "Bow down to [Him] who made the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the springs of 'waters!'" (Rev 14.7). The only angel who awaits the prostration of men is Lucifer.

It is very difficult to determine by analysis what exactly the spiritualist denaturation of Christianity is, since there is the impression of finding contradictions from one system to another; and there are always incomprehensible subtleties. Gnosés defy rationality – they are its tomb. However, if we ask ourselves the question of their origins, rather than trying to submit them to a broad analysis, things become clearer.

The text of Revelation speaks of a woman who claims to be a "prophetess" and who deceives the faithful of Thyatira. It must be understood that, first of all, there are authentic prophets and prophetesses, and that the normal Christian life is (or should be) through the living link with God which is called "the Holy Spirit," a link with the divine Life which unites to Jesus Christ, who leads to the Father. When we speak of the "Trinity," we are not simply speaking of a Revelation (of God) – we are at the same time speaking of a participation of human life in this "Trinitarian" life; that is, of a certain human experience. This diverse and personal experience is certainly not reduced to prophetic inspirations, through which angels give intuitions on behalf of God about the present or the future – but these inspirations are very important: "And those whom God has appointed in the Church are first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then doers of mighty deeds, those who have the gifts of healing, helping others, administering, and various kinds of tongues," writes St. Paul (1Co 12:28).

Obviously, the gift of prophecy is the most striking, along with that of miracles. And, moreover, prophecy is most important for Christians, even though rationalism, which has invaded the Latin Church since the Renaissance (and already before in academic circles), ended up suffocating it. But these brilliant gifts can become objects of lust, though they are free gifts given for the common good of the community. Hence this warning from Saint Paul: "It was he [Christ] who established some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, to equip the saints [the new people of God] for the work of ministry in building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12).

Sadly, many work for their own power, fame, or wealth, and this has even become the self-centered norm of the world we live in. The Acts of the Apostles tell us about a certain Simon, who was a magician before being baptized, and who "was astonished when he saw the great signs and mighty deeds that were taking place" (Acts 8:13). And, "When Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed by the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power too so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 8:18-19). Of course, the apostles rejected this.

If we want to understand the spiritualist approach, it is fundamental to look at the common intention that underlies the abundant diversity of the gnostic beliefs or practices that go from intellectualism to magical forms of religiosity – in order to have access to the spiritual power of the spirits; that is to say, of the angelic world. This is a counterfeit of the Christian experience of the action of the Spirit and of the angels of God – for it is no longer with the Holy Spirit and these angels that one comes into contact. As much as messianisms are counterfeits of the redemptive action of Christ (it is a question of liberating and saving the world in the place of Christ, while basically claiming to do so in His name), spiritualisms are counterfeits of the Spirit (it is a question of liberating the human being from that which prevents him from accessing the world of spiritual powers; that is to say, of helping each one to save himself, primarily by following the "true" path opened by the guide Jesus).

(Raymond Aaron has clearly shown that totalitarian atheistic messianisms are in reality "secular religions." Hannah Arendt's work must also be reread from this angle. Gnosis, writes [Jacques Lacarrière](#), appears in history from the first centuries of Christianity, preached by a character mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, by the name of Simon Magus. And we find there the essential principles that characterize it – the creation of the world is the work of a false God, the true God is unknown to man, the world is there only to separate him from Him. For Simon Magus, the only way for man to break the illusion of the world and to reach plenitude is to live out his desires freely. Desire, in all its forms, is the only divine part that resides in the human being).

Often, we take too lightly the beginning of the treatise, *Against Heresies*, where St. Irenaeus relates with precision how the proliferation of spiritualisms is historically rooted in Simon the Magician and his very inventive disciples – Menander, then Saturninus, Basilides, Carpocrates, Cerinthus, etc. It is especially Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* who endeavors to trace the genealogy of the first branches of spiritualism, and gives many details concerning their respective doctrines. But about the Nicolaitans, founded according to him by the disciple of the apostles named Nicholas, he says nothing more (I, 26,3) than Revelation.

Everything was at stake in the Jewish world, already well-established wherever access to great trade was possible, from Spain to China and from the steppes in the north to Ethiopia (Nubia at the time) in the south. It was a Jewish world which was prompted to take a position with regard to Jesus, which was far from simple. To want to look at spiritualisms as a type of extension of Greek philosophy (or a development of Indian Brahmanic thought) is a dead end that goes back a long way. "The *Philosophoumena*, a work of the 2nd or 3rd centuries," [notes Roland Hureaux](#), "examines the relationship of the gnostic doctrines with Greek philosophy, endeavoring to show, and not in a very convincing way, the filiation of this to those. The work is attributed without certainty to Hippolytus of Rome (170-234)." The spiritualist doctrines, which excel in taking on very diverse forms, do not hesitate to integrate elements of local or philosophical traditions, according to the inspiration of this or that teacher.

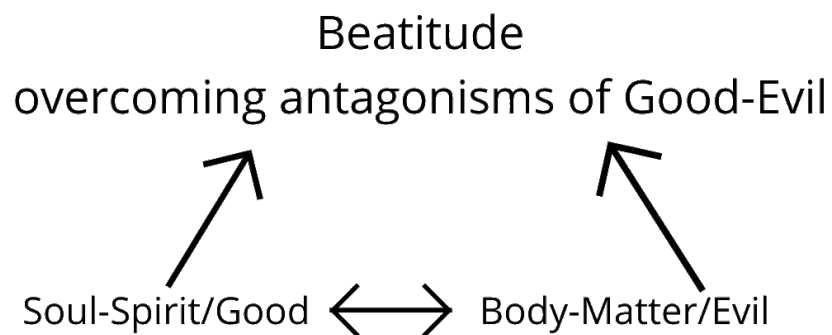
The knowledge of "hidden things" – occult powers, the future, etc. – is what Gnostics seek. Among the fragments found in the Dead Sea caves, only two, 4Q301 and 1Q27 – per present state of research – insist on the importance of knowledge by advocating a certain disdain for the world and an elitism – we are still far from gnosis. Moreover, we have seen that the manuscripts of the caves were often marked by that other post-Christianism, namely, messianism. On the other hand, when in Revelation it is a question of the "false prophet" at whose instigation the blood of the saints and prophets of the moment is shed (16:6), it is indeed of the Gnoses and their anti-Christianism that we are talking about: "I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come forth from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet. These are demonic spirits with the power to work miracles. They were sent to the kings of the entire world to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty... In her [Babylon the great] In her was found the blood of the Prophets, of the saints, and of all who have been slain on the earth" (16:13-14; 18:24).

Escaping The Trap Of Post-Christian Dialectics

We have perceived the dialectic of current history.

Messianisms oppose their saviors against the enemies of God and who are doomed to be exterminated so that the world may be saved. There is, of course, the vision of a negative and obscurantist past, of a present filled with struggle and sacrifices to be made for the Cause, and of a future that will be filled with joy. Communism and Nazism functioned on this dialectic, and it has not yet finished functioning today.

Spiritualisms also have their dialectic, subtle as it should be – the dialectic of the divine man. Their common conviction can be stated as follows: Jesus is "God;" we all are "God," but some more than others. In order to become divine and to dominate the spiritual world, man must free himself from his antagonisms, from the appearances of good and evil, and from suffering – the latter being the sign of the still unresolved clash between flesh and spirit. The dialectic by which Gnosticism justifies itself can be schematized in a single way – only the themes differ from one Gnostic group to another. Saint Paul again writes: "[you are] built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone" (Eph2:20); and, "[the mystery of Christ] was not disclosed to human beings in previous generations, but now it has been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph3:5):



The idea of metempsychosis, linked to the presumed imperfection of a previous life and taken up from old Indo-European traditions, is external to this system, and very marginal; it is mentioned by Iranaeus, Epiphanius, and the *Philosophoumena* – only when speaking about Basilides.

Philosophers will immediately notice here a Hegelian functioning – thesis, antithesis, synthesis – well known to be central in the dialectic of history. There is nothing surprising in this. The two dialectics, that

of history and that of the divine man, are never more than two antagonistic counterfeits of the one and only dialectic that is true and that reveals in particular – the Revelation of Saint John.

And this is how we escape the traps of messianisms and spiritualisms, announced by Jesus himself – the former under the term, "false messiahs," and the latter under that of "false prophets" (Mt 24:24). Revelation reveals to us the struggle, both historical and trans-historical, between the angels of God and the saints on the one hand, and the angelic and human forces of evil on the other. There are never two fixed human opposites that confront each other, even at the time of the Judgment, because Judgment will be the work of God alone and of his angels, and because the history of each person is played out in the course of his or her life. Nor is there a division in man in the sense of a part that is good (his spirit) and another that is evil (his body).

This apocalyptic revelation is much stronger and more precise than a similar passage in the letters written by St. John many years earlier. For example: "Dear children, this is the last hour. You have heard that the Antichrist was coming, and now many antichrists have already come. Thus, we know that it is the final hour. They went out from us, but they never really belonged to us" (1Jn 2:18-19); and: "Many deceivers have gone forth into the world, those who refuse to acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Any such person is the Deceiver and the Antichrist" (2Jn 7). John does not yet see what exactly is at stake and what is to come.

For that, the revelation of an angel becomes necessary, through which Jesus speaks to him (Rev 1:1-2).

Theologian and Islamologist, Father Edouard-Marie Gallez is the author of the magisterial [Le messie et son prophète](#) (The Messiah and His Prophet), published in Paris in 2005 (and awaiting an English translation), which is an 1100 -page study that reconnects the origins of Islam to factual history by showing that the Koran and Islamic legends developed gradually over time. This study paved the way of current research into early Islam. For more information, see <http://rootsofislamtruehistory.com> and <http://thegreatsecretofislam.com>. Father Edouard-Marie also participates in research groups on early Christianity and its influence.

The [*featured image*](#) shows an illustration from the Ottheinrich Bible (folio 295r, Revelation, chapter 12). ca. 1530-1532.

