CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

JOHANNESEVANGELIUM UND GNOSIS*

INTRODUCTION

This imperfect and tentative essay was published in Dutch in *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* in early 1957. At that time I knew only the Community Role of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the esoteric Jewish writing called III Enoch. Now all the writings from Qumran and Nag Hammadi have been published as well as the *Shiur Qoma* (the Measuring of God’s Body) by M. Cohen (Tübingen 1985) and the other documents of Early Jewish Gnosticism by P. Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen 1981). In the light of these publications I must have made many errors and mistakes in the present article. I leave to my opponents to sift them out.

The gist of my argument has been accepted and developed by Jarl Fossum (*The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord*, Tübingen 1985). Jan Helderman (*Die Anapausis im Evangelium Veritatis*, Leiden 1984) tested and acknowledged the Jewish origins of the speculations on Christ as the Name of God in the Gospel of Truth.

Roelof van den Broek (*De taal van de Gnosis*, Baarn 1986) established that the metaphysical Anthropos in the *Letter of Eugnostos* and other Gnostic writings from Nag Hammadi is a far echo from Ezekiel 1,26, on the luminous Glory or *kabod* of God in the shape of heavenly Adam.

April D. DeConick (*Seek to see Him*, Leiden 1996) proves that the Gospel of Thomas used not only an independent Judaic Christian source of Sayings of Jesus but also an esoteric Jewish mystical source with Hermetic overtones, to be located in Alexandria. To the latter she assigns Logion 13, in which Jesus reveals to Thomas three secret words, which Thomas does not dare to articulate, because then the disciples will stone him. She argues that these three words are: *ehje asjer ehje*, the equivalent of Greek: *ego eimi ho ôn* (Exodus 3,14) (cf. the equivalent

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expression “The Father and I are one”, John 10,30). In that case the esoteric Jewish source of “Thomas” would be an instructive and important parallel for the Fourth Gospel and perhaps show that the latter’s Christology has very deep roots in primitive Christianity.

For all these reasons my juvenile sin has happened to become seminal and might deserve a place in the history of hermeneutic scholarship.

On the relation of John and Jewish Christianity, see the article in Gnostic Studies, II, 1995, 210–229.


Ithamar Gruenwald, Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism, Leiden 1980, has at last published a survey of Jewish mysticism of the first centuries after Christ, which was largely ignored or explained away till then by Gentile scholars. This may perhaps excuse the above publication of 1957 by an outsider.

I


Dies scheint die Auffassung Mosheims zu bestätigen:

Valentinus fere Christum iam professus esse videtur, antequam ad philosophiam sese conferret: ex quo evenit ut philosophiam quam adoptabat, ad