The first Apocalypse of James (CG V, 3) though relatively short and badly mutilated in parts, is a valuable document for our understanding of the religious world out of which, or perhaps into which, Christian Gnosticism moved. In this apocalypse three elements stand out immediately for special comment: (1) the use of Valentinian formulae, (2) the figure of “James the Just,” and (3) the appearance of the name Addai, who is to receive the tradition from James.

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The Valentinian formulae of the apocalypse occur in what may be regarded as the second half of the apocalypse. The first half (24, 10-30, 11) consists of preliminary instruction by Jesus to an anxious James and ends with a promise to reveal everything (29, 20-21) after the crucifixion. The crucifixion is then passed over in a few words (30, 12-14), and James again meets the Lord (30, 14-31, 14). Various revelations are made to James (31, 14 ff.). Of particular importance are the formulae which are transmitted to him to protect him as he confronts the celestial “tax-collectors” on his soul’s upward journey (33, 2 ff.).

Similar formulae are preserved by Irenaeus 2 and Epiphanius 3. In the apocalypse the setting for them is different; and they are broken up into a series of answers to one of the tax-collector’s questions. But the texts are still so closely related that it is possible to practice textual criticism with the help of the Coptic. In two instances the Latin text of Irenaeus proves superior to the Greek text of Epiphanius 4. The content of these formulae is specifically

3) Pan. 36.3.1-6.
4) Greek: “I am . . . a son for the present;” Latin and Coptic: “I am . . . a
Valentinian; consequently the apocalypse in its present form cannot ante-date the rise of Valentinianism.

The appearance of the figure of James suggests that these elements of Valentinianism along with other Gnostic teachings were taken over or developed by a group which imagined itself to be in continuity with the original Jewish Christian congregation in Jerusalem. It has been argued by Alexander Böhlig that traces of Jewish Christian theology (as it comes to expression in the older strata of the Pseudo-Clementina) can in fact be found in our apocalypse ¹). Some of his examples are not entirely convincing. Others are ambiguous. For example, the ambivalent attitude toward "the female" not only as a sexual category but also as a theological category ²) can be illustrated just as well from Valentinian sources ³) and the last saying of the Gospel of Thomas ⁴) as from the Pseudo-Clementina ⁵).

It must also be admitted at once that the figure of James is important in circles other than Jewish-Christian. But since the Jewish epithet "the Just" ⁶) is added to his name, we are inevitably reminded of the James who appears in this guise in the Gospel of the Hebrews ⁷) and in the fragments of Hegesippus ⁸). The title occurs elsewhere—in Origen’s paraphrase of Josephus’ remarks on James ⁹) and in Clement of Alexandria’s account of the primitive succession of teachers ¹⁰). This is not the place to attempt to evaluate the sources of these traditions. But the Gospel of the Hebrews takes precedence in time if in no other way. This consideration together with the massive importance of James in the Pseudo-Clementina, make it likely that Jewish Christianity was a reality

²) 38, 12-23: 40, 21-41, 20.
³) Exc. ex Theod. 21.3 (cf. 68, 79).
⁴) Logion 114.
⁵) Hom. 3.22-23.
⁷) Jerome, Vir. Ill. 2.
⁸) Eusebius, H.E. 2.23.4.
¹⁰) Eusebius, H.E. 2.1.3-5.