There is good reason to think that the 13 Kingdoms section of the Nag Hammadi Apocalypse of Adam was originally independent. Its origin, meaning and significance have been unclear. What follows is an effort to show, by examination of an important formulaic element regularly repeated in it, that it originated in an Egyptian milieu and to draw clarifying conclusions from that.

I

The Sethian gnostic Apocalypse of Adam (Apoc. Adam), is the fifth and final tractate in Nag Hammadi Codex V, and shares with three of the others the use of the word “apocalypse” in its title. Compared with the others, it more nearly resembles the works that are called apocalypses in the Jewish tradition. It purports to be a revelation received in antiquity by a figure of special religious significance (in this case Adam). The revelation is a salvation-historical prophecy (ex eventu) in which the issue is the salvation of a chosen people, who are opposed by demonic powers and aided by divine interventions. Its transmission (through Seth) and preserva-
tion are carefully accounted for (85, 19-22). The considerable discussion in the past over whether any Christian elements could be detected in *Apoc. Adam* has subsided, with scholarship now generally adopting the view that *Apoc. Adam* is non-Christian, although secondary Christian touches are not denied. Whether it is also pre-Christian remains undecided. However, it has usually been dated very early in relation to the other works in the Nag Hammadi Library. A first century C.E. date would not be surprising.

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Françoise Morard has recently renewed the argument that the account of the punishment of the third illuminator presupposes the Christian account of the passion of Christ. She notes that it was only in Christianity that the expectation of the messiah and the suffering servant were combined (*L’Apocalypse d’Adam* [NH V,5]: Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi; Section “Textes” 15 [Québec: l’Université Laval, 1985], 100). However, the illuminator in *Apoc. Adam* is never identified with the messiah and is not said to have secured redemption for human-kind by his suffering, which would be crucial for identification with the suffering servant as understood in early Christianity. If there is a Jewish based tradition behind the account of the punishment of the illuminator, it would most probably be that of the suffering prophet (see Mt 23:37).