THE APOCALYPSE OF ZOSTRIANOS (NAG HAMMADI VIII .1)
AND THE BOOK OF THE SECRETS OF ENOCH

BY

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The Coptic Apocalypse of Zostrianos (Nag Hammadi VIII. 1)\(^1\) is the account of a heavenly trip during which divine mysteries are revealed to the initiate, Zostrianos, by an angelic being. The framework of revelation of this gnostic treatise seems to be linked with similar frameworks used in several Jewish Pseudepigrapha, describing the ascensio ad caelum of the Patriarchs. We find in these Jewish texts, as well as in Zostrianos, traces of a ritual of royal enthronement\(^2\) of Mesopotamian origin that has become, in late Jewish, Jewish-Christian and gnostic writings, a ritual of the heavenly ascension of the initiate. The initiate, taken from earth by an angel, is led to heaven, where he ascends progressively through the levels of aeons. Taken in charge by an angelic entity, he is purified, anointed, clothed with heavenly garments, crowned and enthroned. He receives a certain number of revelations, until he reaches the highest knowledge that God commands him to record in order to hand it down to his genos after having come back to earth.

While this framework of the heavenly trip employed in Zostrianos generally recalls Jewish Pseudepigrapha, two elements of this heavenly trip refer to a precise text. In fact, the episode of the identification of Zostrianos with the angelic Glories (Zostrianos VIII. I. 5. 15–20) and that of the revelation of the mysteries (VIII. 1. 128.15–20) seem to us to have been taken, or, so to say, quoted, from the Slavonic Book of the Secrets of Enoch (II Enoch)\(^3\). Let us examine these two passages of Zostrianos.

Zostrianos, accompanied by an angel of light, passes through the thirteen aeons of the inferior sphere without being stopped by their archons. After this first ascent, he receives a baptism. We read in VIII.1.5.15–20: “I was baptised and I received the image of the Glories there. I became like one of them. I left the airy earth and passed by the copies of aeons, after washing there seven times in a living water, one for each of the aeons”. Let us recall now what is said in II Enoch ch. IX. Enoch, having
ascended to the seventh heaven, is put before the face of the Lord. The Lord exhorts his Glorious Ones to let Enoch stand before Him: "and the Lord said to Michael: take Enoch and take him out of his earthly garments and anoint him with good oil and clothe him in garments of glory. And Michael took me out of my garments and anointed me with good oil,... and I looked at myself and I was as one of his Glorious Ones and there was no difference of aspect". The relation between the two formulae is evident:

**Zostrianos**
I received the image of the Glories there. I became like one of them.

**II Enoch**
I looked at myself and I was as one of his Glorious Ones and there was no difference of aspect.

These formulae call for some commentary. The two passages tell us that both Zostrianos and Enoch become equal to the Glories (or the Glorious Ones in II Enoch). First of all, who are these Glories and what is the consequence for the initiate of becoming himself a Glory? According to the angelology of the author of II Enoch, the Glorious Ones are the highest order of the Archangels: we read in II Enoch IX: "they serve the Lord, not leaving him by night, nor going away by day, standing before the Lord's face and doing his will". Michael and Gabriel have to be counted, according to this text, among the Glorious Ones. Also in Zostrianos, the class of the Glories has a privileged position among the angelic categories: the Glories are the positive counterpart of each aeon and it is their mission to save the initiate: "they are perfect thoughts that do not perish, being models of salvation" (VIII. 1.46.20).

The identification of the initiate with the Glories is found at two different moments of the heavenly trip in II Enoch and in Zostrianos.

In the Jewish Pseudepigraphon, the identification with the Glorious Ones is the final result of the Patriarch's ascent. Enoch, having by then reached the seventh heaven and after having overcome the hostility of the angels, is clothed with heavenly garments and anointed by Michael. From this moment on, Enoch can understand the divine revelations that Vreveil communicates to him on the order of God, and write them down. Having accomplished this task, Enoch will have the right to sit on the left of God, closer to God than Michael.

In Zostrianos, on the contrary, the identification with the Glories takes place at the beginning of the heavenly trip. To become like a Glory is, in