Nonetheless it is an illuminating and valuable book which fills a gap in the history of early Christian Eucharists and distinguishes itself from other works on the subject by its original and innovating methodological approach.


After rather obscure speculations about the author’s ‘Point of Discourse’ and the ‘Interpretative Trajectory toward the Synthetic End Point’, DeConick offers a complete survey of Vision Mysticism in the Ancient World. Its roots certainly lay in the pietic and worship praxis of the Greek and Hellenistic mystery religions. From there it spread to Hermetism (also a mystery religion), which is at least as old as the first century of the Christian Era. The recently recovered Demotic text *The Book of Thoth* even predates the Greek Hermetic writings.

Although the notion that the vision of a god makes one divine is Greek in its origin, early Jewish apocalypticists and mystics, precursors of later Merkabah mysticism, seem to have welded this idea into their traditions about celestial journeys. Ezekiel the Dramatist, who lived in the second century BC, describes how Moses is divinized after having seen the Glory (kabôd) of God, called Man. If certain postmodernist thinkers, mourning after God’s death, deny that there is an authentic religious experience behind these and similar texts, they should at least admit that the ancients believed they experienced the Sacred. I agree and add that John, the author of the Apocalypse in the New Testament, may have had a similar experience: ‘and the child (Jesus) was caught up unto God and to his throne’ (12:5). There Jesus seems to have identified himself with the kabôd, having become ‘one like unto the Son of Man’, no other than the Man of Ezekiel the Dramatist.

DeConick continues to show that Philo Judaeus also frequently describes Moses’ attempts to behold God after he has ascended to heaven. The first certain reference, however, to Merkabah mysticism occurs in the Qumran literature: this may represent a community of Jewish mystics who liturgi-
cally built a heavenly Temple in their midst and entered it to worship alongside the angels before God's throne chariot (cf.: *cum omnibus archangelis et angelis* of the *Missa Romana*). This, then, is a completely new and probably correct background both for the Vision Mysticism and the reaction against it of the author of the Fourth Gospel. In her Ann Arbor dissertation *Seek to See Him* (E.J. Brill, 1996), DeConick has argued that the ontological elevation and space travel of the soul, which she calls ‘Ascent and Vision Mysticism’, is the real issue of the Gospel of Thomas. Logion 50 does describe how the soul, before or after death, is interrogated by the Archonts, custom house officers in the air, and knows all the required answers:

*If they ask you: ‘Where are you from?’,*  
say to them: ‘We have come from the Light...’.  
*If they ask you: ‘Who are you?’,*  
say: ‘We are the sons and the elect of the Living Father’.  
*If they ask you: ‘What is the sign, that your Father is within you?’,*  
say to them: ‘It is a movement and a rest’.

The aim and purpose of the author of the Fourth Gospel is to refute this concept. He edited the Johannine tradition which originated in Palestine and was subjected to Syrian influences, before it reached Ephesus, where it was fixed. The original sense of ‘I am the door’ may have been that Jesus was the open door in heaven which admitted the faithful to the spiritual world above. (In fact, there existed a version of this logion: ‘I am the gate (pylé)’). For John, Jesus in the flesh was the only door. Nobody has ever seen God, but his incarnate Son reveals him. The Logos of the Prologue of his Gospel is not Wisdom, but the Name of God, he embodies the kabôd exclusively; and during his historical absence, the Paraclete, which is present in the community, represents him. Here John uses Judaic Christian traditions transmitted by Elkasai and the *Ascension of Isaiah* of two Paracletes, the Messiah and the Holy Ghost, standing before God’s throne and interceding for the sinful believers. But according to John, the Ghost is down here, on earth.

From this convincing argumentation the present reviewer concludes that then the Gospel of John is trinitarian and that the classical dogma of the Early Church (One Being (*ousia*), three modes of being (*hypostaseis*)) is a correct translation of Judaic Christian tradition.

DeConick then tries to prove that the discourse between Vision Mysticism and John’s polemic against it is continued in later writings. She quotes passages from the *Acts of John* (‘written in Syria’), the *Gospel of the Saviour*