THE REVISED AND UPDATED TRANSLATION OF SACRED Gnostic Texts

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME

EDITED BY

MARVIN MEYER

ADVISORY BOARD

WOLF-PETER FUNK • PAUL-HUBERT POIRIER
JAMES M. ROBINSON

INTRODUCTION BY

ELAINE H. PAGELS
The Second Revelation of James has a rather complicated literary structure. Although it contains little real dialogue, it presents itself as a lengthy report that an anonymous priest gives to a certain Theudas, who is said to be the father of James the Just, apparently in an attempt to muster help in the dangerous situation in which James finds himself as he is facing the death penalty for his activities; and the work ends with a short narrative describing the stoning of James while he is uttering a prayer. The main part of the priest's report consists of a discourse that James is said to have recently given to the assembled crowd of people (and that has provoked the accusation of blasphemy against him). Within this discourse, James legitimizes himself as a proclaimer of true knowledge and reports about the special revelation Jesus imparted to him after his resurrection. These discourses of Jesus, stylized as doubly reported, are the central part of the writing and represent its "revelation" in a narrower sense.

A striking feature of the literary makeup of Gnostic enlightenment as found in Jesus's address to James is the unique use made of the brotherly relationship between Jesus and James. Although their physical relationship as seen in this text is not quite clear (mostly because of lacunae in the manuscript), the discussion of this issue is soon elevated to a metaphysical level, following the programmatic words, "Your father is not my Father, but my Father has become a father to you" (51,19–22). In other words, the revelation of transcendent knowledge (gnōsis) is here expressed in terms of a new father-son relationship that James is entitled to, a wakening call (52,13–18) with regard to the true God of eternal life instead of the one he has worshiped so far, the God of the Old Testament whose promises only extend to the visible land as an inheritance. This focus on the opposition between two gods—one with terrestrial and the other with celestial promises, one acting as

---

1. For the epithet "second" in the title of the text, see the introduction to the First Revelation of James.
a judge and the other with compassion—bears a strong resemblance to Marcion's Antitheses.

Thus the fragmentary pieces found in the Second Revelation of James of some sort of Gnostic myth (especially pp. 53–54) are placed under the general topic of a change of orientation in terms of a switch from one father to another. Since the creator god has set out to capture and assimilate “those who are from the Father,” Jesus has come down to set into motion a process of liberation, and he has chosen James as his principal tool in this process. The ensuing hymnic description of James’s multifld responsibility as liberator (55,15–56,14), apparently based upon his historical role as Jesus’s vicar in Jerusalem and expanding this role into transcendent dimensions, is comparable only to the unique status that James is given in Gospel of Thomas 12, somehow focusing the entire salvation process on his person.

James’s death prayer, which concludes the Second Revelation of James, fits the literary context in which it is presented here—that is, his approaching death as a result of being stoned—only to a limited extent. It is in fact a prayer for death and, as such, one of the finest examples of a barely investigated type of prayer found in several corpora of Gnostic affiliation.2 In agreement with other examples of this kind of prayer, the prayer of James features the request that this life of earthly existence come to an end by maintaining that “the hour has come,” and it includes a request for help in surmounting the hostile powers that will oppose the departing person during ascension. Whether or not such prayers were part of a ritual in certain Christian Gnostic communities (a “mass for the dead” or for those about to die), we do not know.

Although there is nothing in the Second Revelation of James to indicate the precise time and place of its composition, the claim it lays to the James tradition makes it likely that the writing originated in a portion of the exiled Jerusalem community, most likely in some part of Syria, and its closeness to Marcionite theology may suggest a time during the second century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2. Cf., e.g., the Acts of Thomas, Pistas Sophia, and Manichaean and Manichaean sources (for more details, see Wolf-Peter Funk, “The Second Apocalypse of James”).
The Second Revelation of James

The Revelation of [James]

The Discourse of James (44.11–16)

This is the discourse that James the Just delivered in Jerusalem and Mareim wrote down.

The Beginning of the Priest’s Report (44.16–45.25)

One of the priests told it to Theudas, the father of this just man, since he was a relative of his.

He said, [Hurry] and come with [Mary] your wife and your relatives … … [45] So hurry. Perhaps, [if] you yourself lead us to him, [he will] come to his senses. For look, there are many who are disturbed at his [slander]. They are extremely angry [with him, for he has said], “They [do not] pray … .” [He has said] these things often, and other things too.

He used to say these things while the multitude of the people was seated. But on this occasion he entered and sat down <not> in his customary place but on the fifth flight of steps, [which] is the favored place.


2. Mareim is named as the scribe who copied down the discourse of James. 3. Here Theudas is said to be the husband of Mary and the father of James. It is conceivable that Theudas is envisioned as the second husband of Mary, after Joseph. According to the Protevangelium of James, Joseph was already an old man at the time of the birth of Jesus, and it may be imagined that he died shortly thereafter. That, however, is only a guess. Cf. Kaiser and Plisch, in Nag Hammadi Deutsch, 2.426.

4. About twelve lines missing or untranslatable.

5. James is described as speaking at the temple, perhaps at the Nicanor gate (cf. the “beautiful gate” mentioned in Acts 3:2). See also the scene in Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.66–73.
The Discourse of James: James Speaks of Jesus and of Himself (45,25–47,20)

While all our [people6 . . . . 7] James spoke:

"... [46] [Blessed] is the person [who] . . . out of . . . , [and will come] to . . . , [of whom it is said] that he is . . . . I am the one who received revelation from the fullness8 of imperishability, who was summoned by the one who is great, who obeyed the [master].9 It is he who passed through the [ worlds without being recognized], who [came down after] stripping off his clothing, and walked about naked, who was found in perishability though destined to be brought up to imperishability.10

"This same master [came] down as a son who can see, and as a brother. He was [rejected] when he was on his way to [the one whom] the [Father] produced, in order that [he might . . . him] and induce him to free himself [from the fetters of] death . . . . .11 [47] [who] came to [me in faithfulness] . . . . .12 Now again am I rich in knowledge.13 I have a unique deliverer— one who alone was conceived from above and was the first [to] come from . . . . I am . . . [to the Father] whom I have come to know. What was revealed to me was hidden from everyone, yet that will be revealed through him. I < . . > the two who see.14

James Recalls the Life and Words of Jesus (47,21–49,end)

"It was once proclaimed, ‘He will be judged with the unrighteous.’15

He who lived [without] blasphemy died through [blasphemy].
He who was cast out [has been exalted].
He who [was] . . .
is . . . .16 [48]

"[It was the master who] said,
I shall come forth from the flesh in fulfillment. I shall surely die, but I shall be found in life. I came to the world to be judged, and I shall come forth victorious.

"I do not judge, [and I do] not [confuse] the servants of his [will], whom I hurry to set free. And if [I] help them, I wish to take them above the one who wants to rule over them. In a secret [way] I am the brother who scorned this pitiless one. ....... 18 [49]

I am the first among those who shall rise. 19 I am the first [son] who was conceived and who will destroy the dominion of [them] all. I am the beloved. I am the just one. I am the son of the Father.

I speak as [I] have heard. I command as [I] have received the command. I teach you as I have [found].

Look, I speak, that I may come forth. Pay attention to me, that you may see me. If I have come into being, who am I? For I have come as I am [not], and I shall not appear as I am. 20

"I lived on the earth for only a short time. [I] did [not] have .......? 21 [50]

James Describes an Appearance of the Risen Christ (50,4–51,13)

"One time when I was sitting and meditating, the one whom you hated and persecuted opened the door and came in to me, and he said to me,

Hello, my brother; brother, hello.
"As I raised my [head] to look at him, mother said to me, 'Don't be afraid, my son, because he said to you, "My brother." You were both nourished with the same milk. That is why he says to me, "My mother." He is not a stranger to us; he is your stepbrother. [I am] not . . . ."\(^22\)

"[After] she [had spoken these words . . . . . . . . . \(^23\) He said] [51] to me, 'My [brother], . . . these words . . . [Those] whom I shall [find will] come forth. [But] I am the stranger, and none of them knows me in [their] thoughts, because they know me only in [this body]. But it would be fitting that others would come to knowledge through you.

James Tells What Jesus Said Regarding Two Fathers

\(51,14-54,15\)

"I tell you, listen and understand.

For many, when they hear, will be fainthearted,
but you, understand in the way I can tell you.

Your father is not my Father,
but my Father has become a father to you.\(^24\)

Like this virgin, about whom you hear, you [have chosen] rest [for yourself, in that you escaped].'

"When I [did not understand, he said], 'Listen . . . virgin . . . .'

"[I said], ' . . . . .\(^25\) [52] this virgin. [I] have [understood] how [she returned].'

"He said to me, '[Pay attention. Anyone who] unsettles what I [promise] does not [act] as I wish. For to this you are to turn [your] face, and this [also] is to your advantage.

Your father, whom you consider rich,
will grant that you inherit
all that you see.\(^26\)
But I proclaim to you
that I shall give you
what I shall say,
if you listen.
So open your ears,

\(^{22}\) On the relationship between Jesus, James, and the other members of the family, cf., e.g., the Protevangelium of James. Here the view of the relationship is unclear. It may be thought that Jesus is James's stepbrother, foster brother, or cousin. The text may be read as "he is the brother [of] your father" (Coptic peon [m]pekeiōt pe) or "he is the brother [by way of] your father" (Coptic peon [ha] pekeiōt pe). \(^{23}\) About four lines missing or untranslatable. \(^{24}\) Cf. John 20:17; perhaps also Gospel of Thomas 55:101. \(^{25}\) About two lines missing or untranslatable. \(^{26}\) This father is the father below—i.e., the God of the Jewish scriptures.
and understand,
and walk accordingly.

"When they come for you, being dispatched by one considered glorious and intending to bring confusion and violence, [pay no attention to them], but . . .
And . . . . 27 [53] he set his hand [to something he] did not [understand], nor did [those] sent by him to prepare this present [creation]. Later, when [he] is put to shame, he will [be troubled] that his work, which is far removed [from] the eternal realms, 28 comes to nothing. His inheritance, which he boasted about, claiming it was great, will prove to be insignificant. His gifts are not blessings and his promises are evil intrigues. You are not of <the children> of his compassion, but he does violence against you. He wants to do injustice against us. And he will have dominion for a period of time appointed for him. 29

"But understand and know the Father who has compassion, who was not given an inheritance, whose inheritance is unlimited, with an unlimited number of days. 30 Rather, it is an eternal [day], and it is [light]. It exists [in places the creator [54] himself cannot] perceive and he merely uses, for he is not from those places. Because of this he [utters curses], and because of this he boasts, that he may not be rebuked. For this reason he is superior to those who are below, who were looked down upon, in order to be perfected in them. After he captured those who are from the Father, he seized them and shaped them to resemble himself, and so they are with him.

James Recalls What Jesus Said About Salvation and the Mediator of Salvation (54,15–56,14)

"I saw from on high those who came into being, and I have explained how they came into being. They were visited while they were in another form. While I was watching, [I] recognized that those I know are like me. In the presence of those who came into being, they will [depart], for I know that everyone who [was] forced down to this place [55] will come [to me like] little children. [I] want to give [them] a revelation through you and the [Spirit of] power, and the Spirit will give revelation [to those] who are yours, and through you those who wish to enter may go through a good door. They turn around, that from now on they may walk on the path that leads before this door. They follow you and enter, [and you] accompany them inside and give each of them a share of the reward. 31

For you are not the deliverer
nor a helper of strangers.

27. About three lines missing or untranslatable. 28. Aelius. 29. Cf. First Revelation of James 31–34. 30. This father is the Father above—i.e., the exalted God and Father of Jesus. 31. On the role of James the Just as a leader in the early church, cf. also, among other texts, the First Revelation of James; Gospel of Thomas 12; Galatians 1–2; Gospel of the Hebrews; Protoevangelium of James; Hegesippus Memoirs (Hypomnemata); Ascents of James (Anabathmoi Iakibou).
You are an illuminator and deliverer
of those who are mine,
and now those who are yours.
You shall give revelation,
and you shall bring good among them all.

You [they shall] admire
because of all your miracles.
You the heavens bless.
You he shall envy,
[who] called himself the [jealous one].
You . . . . . . .
[Those who live] in forgetfulness
are instructed in these things with [you].

Because of you
[they] will be taught about [these things]
and come to rest.
Because of you
they will come to reign
and become kings.
Because of [you]
pity will be taken
on those to be pitied.

As you are the first
who clothed yourself,
so also are you the first
who will strip off your clothes.
And you will become as you were
before you took off your clothes.'

James Recounts the End of the Revelation (56.14–57.19)

"He kissed me on the mouth and embraced me, saying, 'My beloved! Look, I shall reveal to you what the heavens have not known, nor their rulers. Look, I shall reveal to you what that one did not know—the one who boasted [and said, "I am God, and there is no other] [57] except me. I am alive, because I am a father. Don't I have [power] over everything?'" Look, I shall reveal [to you] all things. My beloved, understand and know these things, [that] you may come

32. Cf. Exodus 20:5. 33. Three lines missing or untranslatable. 34. Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:8; Gospel of Thomas 2. 35. Cf., e.g., Isaiah 44:5; 45:5-6, 21; 46:9; Second Discourse of Great Seth 53:64; the Secret Book of John.
forth from this womb\textsuperscript{36} and be as I am. Look, I shall reveal to you what [is hidden]. Reach out your [hand] and embrace me.'

"At once I reached out my [hands], but I did not find him as I thought he would be. After this I heard him say, 'Understand, and embrace me.' Then I understood, and I was afraid, yet I rejoiced with great joy.

James Professes the Divinity of Jesus (57,20–58,end)

"Therefore I say to you, you who judge have been judged. You did not spare, but you have been spared. Be sober and [recognize him. For the one] you [judged is actually not the one you] thought . . . . . .\textsuperscript{37} [58] you did not know.

He was [the one]
whom he who created heaven and earth and dwelled in it
could] not [see].\textsuperscript{38}
He was the one [who] is life.
He was the light.

He was the one who will be
and will provide an ending for [what] has begun
and a beginning for what will come to an end.
He was the holy Spirit
and the invisible one
who did not come down on the earth.
He was the virgin,
and what he wishes happens to him.
I saw he was naked,
and there was no garment clothing him.
What he wills happens to him . . . . . .\textsuperscript{39} [59]

James Urges the Members of the Audience to Walk with the Lord (59,1–60,23)

"Abandon this difficult path, which is so irregular, and walk in accordance with the one who wants you to become free people [with] me, after you have overcome every dominion. He will not [judge] you for what you have done, but he will have mercy on you, [for] it was not you who did these things but [your] Lord. He was [not] someone wrathful, but he was a kind father.

You have judged yourselves,
and so you will remain in their fetters.
You have burdened yourselves,

\textsuperscript{36} Or "from the body." \textsuperscript{37} One line missing or untranslatable. \textsuperscript{38} In his blindness the creator of this world could not see the exalted divine being of Christ.
\textsuperscript{39} Three lines missing or untranslatable.
and you will repent, 
but you will not profit at all.

Look upon the one who speaks, 
and seek the one who is silent.

Know who came to this place, 
and understand who went away.

I am the just one, 
yet I do <not> judge.

I am not a master, 
but I am a helper.

"He, the master, was rejected before he stretched out his hand. [But] as for me, [he has] opened [my ears] ...... 40 [60] He makes me hear the <silencing> of your trumpets, your flutes, and your harps [for this] house. It is the Lord who has taken you captive, closing your ears that they may not hear the sound of my speech, yet you [will be able to pay] attention in your hearts, and you will call me 'the Just.' Thus I say to you <in the name of the Lord>, 41 look, I have given you your house, which you say God has made, through which the one who dwells in it has promised to give you an inheritance. I shall tear down this house, to the ruin and derision of those who live in ignorance." 42

The Conclusion of the Priest’s Report

(60,23–61,15)

Look, those who hold the office of judge are deliberating, to pass [judgment on all he said ...... 43 [61] on] that day. All the [people] and the crowd were confused, and it was clear that they were not convinced. He got up and left after saying these things.

Another day he came in again and spoke for a few hours. I was with the priests, and I said nothing of our relationship, because they were all saying with one voice, “Come, let us stone ‘the Just.’”

The Martyrdom of James: The Execution

(61,15–62,12)

They arose and said, “Yes, let us kill this man, that he may be removed from our midst. For he will be of no use to us at all.”

40. Three lines missing or untranslatable. 41. This phrase has apparently been mistakenly copied in line 7 of the manuscript. We read it here in line 14. 42. On threats against the temple, cf. accounts of Jesus and charges against Jesus in the New Testament gospels, the story of the martyrdom of Stephen in the Acts of the Apostles, and James traditions in Hegesippus’s Memoirs. 43. Two lines missing or untranslatable.
They were there, and they found him standing by the pinnacle of the temple, next to the mighty cornerstone. They determined to throw him down from the height, and they did just that.

[When] they [looked at him], they saw [he was alive. So] they arose [and went down], [62] and they seized him and [abused] him, dragging him on the ground. They stretched out his body and rolled a stone on his abdomen, and they trampled him with their feet and said, "O you who have gone astray!"

Since he was still alive, they raised him up again, made him dig a hole, and forced him to stand in it. They covered him up to his abdomen and stoned him in this manner. 44

The Death Prayer of James (62,12–63,29)
But he reached out his hands and uttered this prayer—not the prayer he was accustomed to speak:

My God and Father,
who saved me from this dead hope,
who made me alive through the mystery of your good pleasure,
do not let these days in the world be prolonged for me,
but let the day of your light, in which [no night] remains,
[shine upon me].
[Bring me to where my] [63] salvation is,
and deliver me from this [place of] sojourn.
Let not your grace be squandered on me,
but let your grace be pure.
Save me from an evil death.
Bring me from the tomb alive,
for your grace is alive in me,
the desire to accomplish a work of fullness. 45
Save me from sinful flesh,
because I have trusted in you with all my strength,
for you are the life of life.
Save me from an enemy that would humiliate me,
and do not let me fall into the hands of a harsh judge.
<Save me> from sin,
and forgive me all the debts of my days.
For I am alive in you,

44. On the martyrdom of James, cf. also First Revelation of James 43–44; Josephus Antiquities of the Jews 20,200; Eusebius of Caesarea Church History 2,1; Manichaean Psalm Book 142,25–26; 192,8–9. On the Jewish regulations for stoning established in the Mishnah, see Sanhedrin 6.6. The account here in the Second Revelation of James reflects rather accurately the Mishnaic regulations. 45. Pleroma.
your grace is alive in me. I have renounced everything, but you I have confessed. Save me from evil affliction. Now is the [time] and the hour. Holy [Spirit], send me salvation. Light [from] light, crown [me] with [imperishable] ... power.

**The Death of James and the Conclusion to the Account**

(63,30–32)

When he finished speaking, [he] fell silent. After this his word [was written down. This is] the account...

---

46. i.e., he died. 47. Logos.