On the Source and Rewriting of 1 Corinthians 2.9 in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic Traditions

(1 Clem 34.8; GosJud 47.10-13; a ḥadīth qudsī)

The article reopens the dossier of the sources, parallels and rewritings of 1 Cor 2.9, a saying that Paul attributes to a written source, when other sources put it into Jesus’ mouth (e.g. GosThom 17). The state of research shows that the hypothesis of an oral source is generally preferred but an accurate study of 1 Clem 34.8, a parallel too often neglected, supports the presence of a written source that existed before 1 Cor 2.9. GosJud. 47.10-13 will help to understand the attribution of the saying to Jesus. Finally, the article takes into account the well-known parallel in Islamic tradition, a ḥadīth qudsī.

Keywords: agraphon, 1 Corinthians, 1 Clement, Gospel of Judas, ḥadīth

1. Introduction

There are some questions in New Testament studies that are particularly humbling for researchers. Amongst these questions is the issue of the sources, parallels and rewritings of 1 Cor 2.9, a passage which Paul attributes to a written source as yet unidentified: ‘But, as it is

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1Sections 1-4 of the article are based on a French 2010 paper: C. Clivaz, ‘1 Co 2,9, ses sources et ses réécritures : trois nouveaux éléments pour un dossier sans fin (1 Clem 34,8 ; EvJud 47,10-13 ; un ḥadīth qudsī)’, IIIe colloque international de l’AELAC. Strasbourg 2010 (ed. R. Gounelle et al.; Prangins: Ed. Zèbre, forthcoming). The translation of this part is published with the agreement of the editor Rémi Gounelle. Section 5 develops researches of the Swiss National Science Fondation project no. 143810 (2013-2016), lead by Claire Clivaz, co-lead by David Bouvier, with Sara Schulthess as PhD student (University of Lausanne), co-direction with Herman Teule (Radboud University Nijmegen).
written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him”. 2 As Jean-Daniel Dubois said: ‘The search for possible parallels to the biblical saying quoted by the apostle Paul can create a certain sensation of dizziness’. 3 With regard to the source from which 1 Cor 2.9 could have come, Jean-Marie Sévrin stresses that ‘The number of hypotheses highlights the fact that none of them is conclusive, and the distance between Isa [6]4.4 and 1 Cor 2.9 is such that it cannot be said that Paul alleges the authority of the Isaiah text as it stands’. 4 For a list of the possible parallels and rewritings, the article by Klaus Berger (1978) remains the most exhaustive study, citing several dozen attestations. 5 Jean-Daniel Dubois indicates that the Encomium on John the Baptist 142.31–34 should be added to that list, 6 as well as the Islamic traditions regarding this saying, as mentioned in an article by Alfred-Louis de Prémare. 7 We also noted that Berger mentioned only one ‘Turfan Fragment’, 8 whereas Jean-Marie Sévrin mentions

2 NRSV. For the Greek text, Nestle-Aland 29 proposes the following: ἀλλὰ καθὼς γέγραπται· ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς ἐδείκνυ τοῖς οὐκ ἔδεικν καὶ οὐκ ἠκούσαν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου ἀνέβη· ἡ ὁτιομάσαν ἡ θέσες τοῖς ἅγιοι στράτευσεν αὐτόν.


two of them. Yet more surprising is his omission of the attestation of 1 Clem 34.8, although he does mention 2 Clement 11.7 and 14.15. In view of the present lack of any exhaustive survey of the parallels and rewritings of 1 Cor 2.9, this article proposes to contribute to the overall study of the question by examining three elements that are either new or not usually taken into account, namely: 1 Clem 34.8; Gospel of Judas 47.10–13; a hadīth qudsī.

In Section 2 of this article, we will begin by presenting an examination of the present state of research on the question of the source on which 1 Cor 2.9 draws, highlighting that the hypothesis of an oral source is generally preferred, whether explicitly or implicitly. Section 3 will demonstrate that 1 Clem 34.8 – a parallel too often neglected – serves to confirm the presence of a source that existed before 1 Cor 2.9. Section 4 will revisit the list of parallels that attribute the saying cited in 1 Cor 2.9 to Jesus, adding to it the parallel found in Gos.Jud. 47.10–13. In Section 5 the complex question of a hadīth (plural ahādīth), from the Islamic tradition that contains the saying of 1 Cor 2.9, will be examined. The hadīth is not usually included in the study of the sources, parallels and rewritings of Paul’s verse. In a mirrored

details about it.


11 For a more detailed state of research: Clivaz, ‘1 Co 2.9’.

sense, this cultural shift will give a better understanding of the presence, in a canonized text, of an ‘apocryphal scripture’ or even an ‘agrapphon scripture’, to adopt a paradoxical phrase. The fact that Paul can cite as scripture a text that apparently does not belong to the Hebrew Bible influences how this saying was perceived and interpreted. It is a saying that has often disturbed New Testament commentators, a point we shall come back to at the end of our study.

2. The State of Research on the Sources of 1 Cor 2.9: Written or Oral?

The only source prior to 1 Cor 2.9 that offers a parallel to the saying and on which there is currently any consensus\(^\text{13}\) is *The Book of Biblical Antiquities* 26.13 of Pseudo-Philo (L.A.B.), where God says to Cenez\(^\text{14}\) as he speaks of the time ‘when the sins of my people are filled up’:

And then I will take [these stones] and many others even better, from that place which no eye has seen nor ear heard neither has it never come up into the heart of man, until the like will come to pass unto the world and the just shall have no need for the light of the sun nor of the shining of the moon, for the light of these precious


\(^{14}\)Cf. Josh 15.17; Judg 1.3.
It should be noted from the outset that in this version of the saying it is God who speaks, and that ‘which no eye has seen nor ear heard neither has it never come up into the heart of man’ refers to a place: we will return to these aspects later. Among the other hypotheses concerning independent sources and/or ones prior to 1 Cor 2.9, those relating to the Testament of Jacob have been abandoned. The idea that it is a simple re-writing or an oral tradition to do with Isa 64.3 – which goes back to Jerome – does not stand up to scrutiny, because of the differences in content and vocabulary between the saying of 1 Cor 2.9 and the text of Isaiah, whether in Hebrew or Greek. Finally, the suggestions that the saying depends on Gospel of Thomas 17 or an Elijah apocryphon have recently been rejected by


17 Cf. Jerome, Pachomius 57.9 (see A. Veilleux, ed. and trans., Instructions, Letters and Other Writings of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples (Pachomian Koinonia 3; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1982).

18 See J. Verheyden, ‘Origen and the Origin of 1 Cor 2,9’, The Corinthian Correspondence (ed. R. Bieringer; BETL 125; Leuven: Peeters, 1996) 491–511, here 493. In n. 8 on the same page, Verheyden presents the state of research on this point. See also Sévrin, “‘Ce que l’œil n’a pas vu’”, 307. As for Berger, he proposes Isa 6.10 and 30.20 as the basis of his reconstruction of the history of the tradition, which confirms that there is no need to look to Isa 64.3 (Berger, ‘Zur Diskussion’, 277). But some scholars are still defending an implicit quotation. See e.g. H.-J. Inkelaar, Conflict over Wisdom. The Theme of 1 Corinthians 1-4 Rooted in Scripture (CBET 63; Leuven: Peeters, 2011) 231–69. H. H. D. Williams, The Wisdom of the Wise. The Presence and Function of Scripture within 1 Cor. 1:18-3:23 (AJECAGJU 49; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 157–208.
Christopher Tuckett and Joseph Verheyden.

In *GosThom* 17, the saying, only available in Coptic, is ascribed to Jesus: ‘Jesus said “I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard, and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind”’. In 2003, Christopher Tuckett showed that the hypothesis of a dependence on *GosThom* was unsustainable. Amongst other arguments, Tuckett first underlines the fact that Paul does not link the saying to a ‘word of the Lord’ but to a ‘scripture’, which poses the difficulty of explaining why Paul would have removed from the mouth of Jesus a *logion* that would have formerly been attributed to him. Tuckett concludes that ‘the saying in 1 Cor. 2:9 *may* have been known and used by the Corinthians. But there is nothing to suggest that Paul knew the saying in the form of a saying of Jesus’.

We would reinforce Tuckett’s arguments by underlining that it is striking to note that Origen, in the two passages of his *Commentary on Matthew* where he mentions 1 Cor 2.9, makes

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20. See Tuckett, ‘Paul and Jesus Tradition’.


24. Origen, *CommSer* 28 (Mt 23.37–39) and 117 (Mt 27.9–10); see E. Klostermann, ed., *Origenes Werke*. XI.
absolutely no mention of the *GosThom*, even though he knew it.25 There is also nothing to indicate that Origen knew the *logion* of *GosThom* 17, but even if he did know it, he does not mention a source that would have attributed the saying to Jesus. These observations confirm Tuckett’s demonstration: Paul does not take up the saying from a source that he attributes to Jesus.26 In consequence, an investigation still remains to be made, for Tuckett does not say when or why the saying became a *logion* attributed to Jesus. We will examine this point in Section 4.

Turning to Origen’s proposed hypothesis of an ‘Elijah apocryphon’ as the source of the saying, Joseph Verheyden has clearly demonstrated that it cannot be sustained.27 Drawing first on the work of David Frankfurter, he reiterates that there is no attestation of an ‘Elijah apocryphon’ before Origen.28 The saying in question is not found in what today is known as *The Apocalypse of Elijah* and it cannot be a fragment of a lost text nor of any other ‘Elijah apocryphon’.29 He then goes back to the two passages in Origen’s *Commentary on Matthew*


26. Tuckett’s article opens up the debate on the supposed age of certain *logia* of the *GosThom*. *GosThom* 17 preceding 1 Cor 2.9 has played a not insignificant role in this respect, especially in the writings of Helmut Koester. See Tuckett, ‘Paul and Jesus Tradition’, 57.

27. Verheyden, ‘Origen’.


29. Verheyden, ‘Origen’, 500: ‘There is no such quotation in the extant text of the *Apocalypse of Elijah*. Attempts to locate the passage in the parts that are lacking, in an hypothetical longer *Vorlage*, or at the end of the text (as its conclusion), all have proven to be unsuccessful. There is no evidence in the manuscripts that the end is missing.’
and highlights the theologian’s hesitation as well as the speculative aspect of his reasoning.\(^{30}\)

Above all, Verheyden draws attention to a passage in the *Panarion* of Epiphanius where there is evidence in the manuscript tradition of confusion between ‘Elijah’ and ‘Isaiah’, one that could easily have arisen because of the similarity in the Greek between ΗΛΕΙΑΣ and ΗΣΑΙΑΣ.\(^{31}\) Verheyden backs up his ‘suspicion’ with information from Jerome’s *Commentary on Isaiah*. Jerome places the *Ascension of Isaiah*, where a parallel to 1 Cor 2.9 is found in *AscIs* 11.34, side by side with the *ApocEl* to explain the source of the saying of 1 Cor 2.9:\(^{32}\) ‘the addition of “Ascensio Isaiae” could be a tacit correction of what he had read in Origen’.\(^{33}\) Verheyden thus supports Kretschmar’s hypothesis;\(^{34}\) it is very likely that Origen had access to the *AscIs*, especially if the hypothesis of Enrico Norelli regarding the composition and circulation of this text (one work written in two stages), is taken into account.\(^{35}\) But Verheyden categorically asserts that “there can be no doubt that [AscIs] 11,34 was taken from 1 Cor 2,9”\(^{36}\), while leaving open the question of the sources of 1 Cor 2.9.

However, by rejecting the possibility of an ‘Elijah apocryphon’ and by leaving Paul’s

\(^{30}\) Verheyden, ‘Origen’, 506.


\(^{33}\) Verheyden, ‘Origen’, 509.


\(^{36}\) Verheyden, ‘Origen’, 510.
reference to a written source without any explanation, Verheyden’s article implicitly lessens the probability of a written source for 1 Cor 2.9 and opens the door to the hypothesis of an oral source.37 This hypothesis comes up against some serious objections: first, Paul says that he is quoting a scripture in 1 Cor 2.9, which cannot simply be Isa 64.3 as Verheyden recognizes. Secondly, L.A.B. 26.13 represents an independent Jewish source existing prior to 1 Cor. 2.9; AscIs 11.34 as a second attestation of an independent source is still a possibility to be discussed, according to Enrico Norelli.38 Thirdly, there were other attestations that could confirm the existence of an independent source to 1 Cor. 2.9: We believe that 1 Clem 34.8 does just that, as we will see in Section 3. Little account has been taken of this occurrence in examining 1 Cor 2.9 and it may be noted that the scholars who do not consider it are also those who explicitly or implicitly favour an oral source for 1 Cor 2.9.

This is seen especially in the work of Klaus Berger who has conducted the most exhaustive study of the parallels to 1 Cor 2.9 but nevertheless omitted 1 Clem 34.8. For Berger, 1 Cor 2.9 does not attest to a literary source but to an ‘apokalyptische Schultradition’.39 He stresses that, ‘[a]part from the Gospel of Thomas, the Turfan fragment and the letter of Pseudo-Titus, which consider this tradition to be the word of the earthly Jesus, this passage is viewed as a

37 As suggested by Prigent, Koch and Barbaglio, who advanced the Jewish synagogal liturgy as milieu from which the saying of 1 Cor 2.9 could have come. See P. Prigent, ‘Ce que l’œil n’a pas vu, 1 Cor. 2.9. Histoire et préhistoire d’une citation’, TZ 14 (1958), 416–29, here 426–9; D.-A Koch, Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums. Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986) 62; G. Barbaglio, ‘L’uso della scrittura nel Proto-Paolo’, La Bibbia nell’antichità cristiana. I. Da Gesù a Origene (ed. E. Norelli, Bologna: Dehoniane, 1993) 65–85, here 73: ‘La soluzione più probabile è che anche qui Paolo dipenda dalla tradizione orale, a sua volta influenzata dalla corrente apocalittica’.


quotation by Paul alone. In all the other texts named here [...], the tradition is fully integrated into the context’. Berger is so concerned with bringing his discussion to a close by reducing the importance of the sources that present the saying as words of Jesus, that he forgets to mention other occurrences cited in his own article, namely the Arabic Apocryphal Gospel of John 37.56 and the Apocalypse of Peter (Ethiopic and Karshuni versions) where this saying is attributed to Jesus. Besides, there are further occurrences not mentioned by Berger where the saying is placed on the lips of Jesus or attributed to him in indirect speech: Acts of Peter 39 (Latin) or Martyrdom of Peter 9 (Greek); Enc. on John the Baptist 142.31–34; GosJud 47.10–13; and finally the Festal Letter 39.9 of Athanasius.

So it can be seen that attributing the saying of 1 Cor 2.9 to Jesus, whether in direct or indirect speech, is far from anecdotal, as Berger, followed by Sévrin, claimed. Furthermore,


44 Sévrin, ‘“Ce que l’œil n’a pas vu”’, 312: ‘Except the Gospel of Thomas, only the Turfan fragments, Martyrdom of Peter and the letter of Pseudo-Titus can be considered as witnesses for a tradition of this sentence as parable of Jesus’ (our translation).
Berger’s main affirmation – that only Paul makes this saying into a quotation – is unsustainable in the light of 1 Clem 34.8, which will now be discussed.

3. 1 Clem 34.8: A Neglected Attestation of an Independent Written Source of 1 Cor 2.9

In 1 Clem 34.8, the saying is as follows: ‘For he said: “no eye has seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which he has prepared for them that wait for him”’. 45 Without claiming to have examined the secondary literature exhaustively, it can be observed that the attestation of 1 Clem 34.8, even though it is the oldest after 1 Cor 2.9, is generally not mentioned46 or else it is mentioned only in passing. 47 Tuckett has observed in a note Wolfgang Schrage’s suggestion that there was an independent tradition in 1 Clem 34.8, taken up in 2 Clem 11.7, but neither Schrage nor Tuckett investigate the matter any further. 48


46 This is seen in e.g. Berger, Barbaglio, Dubois and Verheyden.


48 Tuckett, ‘Paul and Jesus Tradition’, 63, n. 50; he refers to W. Schrage, Der erste Brief an die Korinther (EKKNT 7/1; Zurich: Benzinger, 1991) 246, n. 139.
There is only a single author who has devoted some attention to an analysis of this parallel: Johannes B. Bauer, in his article from 1957.

Bauer is of the opinion that *1 Clem* 34.8 is much closer to Isa 64.3 than 1 Cor 2.9 is: he thinks that the passage in *1 Clem* cites a collection of *testimonia* on Isa 64.3 or an apocryphon that develops from the verse. Drawing on the analysis of rabbinic sources of Strack and Billerbeck, he observes that ‘the earliest explicit exegesis of Isa 64.3 is given by R. Schimeon b. Chalaphata (around 190), in the *Midr. Qoh.* 1.8’. These are pointers to a Jewish milieu, just like *L.A.B.* 26.13, even if it is precarious to base a chronology on a midrashic tradition. Two important facts stand out in Bauer’s analysis: *1 Clem* 34.8 presents another version of the saying of 1 Cor 2.9 which is closer to Isa 64.3; and he understands *1 Clem* 34.8 as referring to a written source. This second point is fully supported by an analysis of the whole of *1 Clement*.

Indeed, *1 Clem* contains no less than thirty occurrences of introductory formulas with λέγει, such as the expression λέγει γάρ that introduces *1 Clem* 34.8. They all introduce quotations that come from sources considered as ‘scriptures’. My first observation is that the expressions with λέγει introduce unknown texts a total of six times. The analysis of the occurrences of

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49 See J. B. Bauer, ‘ΤΟΙΣ ΑΓΑΠΩΣΙΝ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ... Rm 8,28 (1 Cor 2,9, 1 Cor 8,3)’, *ZNW* 50 (1959), 106–12, esp. 108–11, mentioned by Sévrin, ‘“Ce que l’œil n’a pas vu”’, 311, n. 17.


53 Cf. *1 Clem* 8.2.3; 8.4.1; 8.4.6; 10.2.4; 10.6.1; 13.1.3; 14.5.2; 15.2.1; 15.4.1; 15.6.2; 17.2.2; 17.6.1; 18.2.2; 21.2.1; 23.3.1; 26.2.1; 26.3.1; 28.2.3; 29.3.1; 30.4.1; 34.3.1; 34.6.1; 34.8.1; 36.5.2; 37.5.1; 42.5.3; 46.3.2; 52.3.1; 56.6.1; 57.3.1.
λέγει shows that 1 Clem quotes at the end of the first century CE the ‘canonical’55 Jewish Scriptures in exactly the same way as the apocryphal ones. It is all the more comprehensible that Paul should do the same forty years earlier in 1 Cor 2.9. Secondly, the saying presented in 34.8 is spoken by someone56 whose identify is left unspecified; in 34.7, the singular subject immediately preceding is God,57 which leads us back to the saying of L.A.B. 26.13, where it is precisely God who pronounces this saying,58 but where ‘what eye has not seen’ describes a place and not promises (1 Clem 34.8). A last point which is particularly striking is that 1 Clem knows 1 Corinthians perfectly well and explicitly quotes this letter of Paul’s,59 but without relating the saying cited at 1 Clem 34.8 either to Paul or to 1 Cor 2.9.

These observations confirm that the passage refers to an earlier written, independent source of 1 Cor 2.9. In this source, the saying appears as reported speech, apparently attributed to God, with an eschatological note and in a form different from that of 1 Cor 2.9. The plausibility of a written source that preceded 1 Clem, no longer extant, is supported by the fact that 1 Clem otherwise attests to a wide circulation of texts among the early Christian

54 Cf. 1 Clem 17.6,1; 23.3,1; 26.2,1; 29.3,1; 34.3,1; 34.8,1.
55 We use the term here with care for it does not have the same sense at the end of the first century CE that will be given to it later, whether for the Hebrew Bible or the Christian Scriptures.
56 We do not agree with Jaubert, who translated λέγει by ‘il est dit’ (it is said) (Jaubert, Clément de Rome, 157). Roberts and Donaldson added in square brackets ‘the Scripture’ as subject but meant here 1 Cor 2.9 (cf. n. 45).
57 Cf. 1 Clem 34.7-8: ‘Crions vers lui avec instance comme d’une seule bouche, afin d’avoir part à ses grandes et magnifiques promesses. Car il dit: “L’œil n’a pas vu et l’oreille n’a pas entendu, et cela n’est pas monté au cœur de l’homme, tout ce qu’il a préparé pour ceux qui l’attendent.”’ (Jaubert, Clément de Rome, 157). We have changed ‘il est dit’ (it is said’) to ‘il dit’ (‘he says’).
59 Cf. 1 Clem 47.1–4.
60 The long passage from an unknown text quoted in 1 Clem 23.3–4 confirms that the author had access to texts that we no longer have today. In concluding Section 3, we will therefore assert that two texts attest to the existence of an independent source for the saying quoted at 1 Cor. 2.9: L.A.B. 26.13 and 1 Clem 34.8. There is ambiguity concerning AscIs 11.34 in the present state of research. 61

4. When Was This Saying Placed in the Mouth of Jesus?

If the oldest attestations of this saying place it in the mouth of God, when and why was it put into the mouth of Jesus, as shown by the witnesses mentioned in Section 2? No doubt the list is not exhaustive: GosThom 17; two Turfan fragments, M554 and M589; 62 Epistle of Pseudo-Titus 1.1; the Arabic Apocr. GosJohn 37.56; 63 Apocalypse of Peter (Ethiopic and Karshuni versions), 64 Acts of Peter 39 (Latin); Martyrdom of Peter 9 (Greek); Encon. on John the Baptist 142.31–34; GosJud 47.10–13; and Athanasius’ Festal Letter 39.9. Of these texts, one that is worth highlighting is GosJud 47.10–13, a new passage to add to the list of parallels of 1 Cor 2.9.

It is still impossible to say whether Paul was the first to have given a Christological interpretation to the saying but, whatever the case, the way he sets it in the context of 1 Cor

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62 Cf. Sévrin, “Ce que l’œil n’a pas vu”, 308, n. 7.

63 See Section 5.

64 Cf. n. 42 above.
2.6–16, playing with the traditions of his addressees, marks a significant step in the history of its interpretation. After Paul, the Christological focus is widespread but in general the eschatological perspective is maintained. The fact that \(I\) Clem 34.8 has no trace of a Christological reading of the saying, highlights the probability to a greater extent that this is an echo of a source independent of 1 Cor 2.9. In the traditions following Paul, the Christological focus is clearly seen both in the fact that the saying becomes a \textit{logion} of Jesus (right up to Athanasius’ \textit{Festal Letter} 39.9) and by the interpretation of the mention of ‘what eye has not seen’ as a reference to Jesus.

Jean-Daniel Dubois noted ‘the vitality of this biblical saying in the debates among Gnostics and non-Gnostics’, a vitality that needs to be taken into account in order to establish the history of the tradition. For Dubois, the \textit{Prayer of the Apostle Paul} develops the Christological aspect of the saying, so much so that he suggests translating \textit{PrPaul} A 27 as ‘grant who no angel eye will see’, instead of ‘grant what no angel eye will see’. It can be seen here that the Christological reading of the saying is secondary and that it will be increasingly understood as the original saying. The ambiguity of the description ‘things that

\[\text{Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn rightly points out that the earliest literary attestation of the contrast πνευματικός – ψυχικός is found in 1 Cor 2; he highlights how Paul mixes his ideas with the vocabulary of his addressees; see H. W. Kuhn, ‘The Wisdom Passage in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 between Qumran and Proto-Gnosticism’, Sapiential, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran. Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies Oslo 1998. Published in Memory of Maurice Baillet (ed. D. K. Falk, F. G. Martínez, E. M. Schuller; StTDJ 35; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2000) 240–53, esp. 245, 247.}\]

\[\text{66 This argument could also be used in favour of the independence of the tradition mentioned in \textit{AscIs} 11.34.}\]

\[\text{67 Dubois, ‘L’utilisation gnostique’, 379.}\]

the eye has not seen’ is also found in the attestation of GosJud 47.10–13:

Jesus said, ‘[Come], that I may teach you about the [(things)…] that [no (?)] human will (ever) see. For there exists a great and boundless aeon, whose extent no generation of angels could (?) see, [in] which is the great invisible Spirit, which no eye of an [angel] has ever seen, no thought of the heart has ever comprehended, and it was never called by any name.'

As can be seen from the number of uncertain words in brackets, the manuscript has many lacunae. Despite this, it can be seen that: 1) it is Jesus who pronounces the saying; 2) this version is close to that of the PrPaul A, 27 with the mention of an ‘eye of an angel’; 3) the saying refers to either the ‘great invisible Spirit’ or the ‘great and boundless realm’ with which the great Spirit is associated: it is impossible to decide given the current state of the Coptic text, which the two standard English translations also render. If one follows the second interpretation, then there would be a description of a place in this passage, the ‘great realm’, just as in L.A.B. 26.13. In fact, other parallels relate the saying of 1 Cor 2.9 to a place, namely Paradise, as in the ḥadīth qudsī of the Islamic tradition, commenting on the Surat as-Sajda 32.17–20.

5. The Saying ‘What Eye Has Not Seen’: An ‘Apocryphal Scripture’ in Christianity and Islam

Alfred-Louis de Prémare summarizes the situation thus:

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70 For the Coptic text, see Kasser, Wurst, Meyer, The Gospel of Judas, 213.

The canonical corpus of the Ḥadīṯ reproduces the following text, which is attributed to the prophet Muhammad by the links of transmission that go back to one or other of his companions: ‘God said, “I have prepared for my holy servants what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, and what has not entered into the heart of man”’. The context is, very generally, that of a description of the Paradise promised to faithful believers, linked to the explanation or illustration of a verse of the Quran, Surah 32.17-20.72

This text entered Islamic tradition at a very early date and later became popular. We find it in the earliest general collections of the Ḥadīṯ: those of al- Buḥārī, Muslim, al- Tirmidhi, Ibn Māğa, Ibn Ḥanbal.73

In most cases, this ḥadīth is found in the mouth of God, through his apostle, which makes it a ḥadīth qudsī (sacred narrative). In some instances, the ḥadīth is associated with the Torah, according to the lines of transmission, but it is never linked with the apostle Paul.74 Denise Masson simply supposes that Bukhārī ‘quotes Saint Paul without giving his name’,75 but there is nothing to say that 1 Corinthians was the channel of transmission and we cannot exclude another source.

The saying as found in the aḥādīth is particularly interesting: it is pronounced by God (as in 1 Clem 34.8), addressed to his ‘servants’ and is describing a place, namely Paradise. We see that the saying transmitted by the Islamic traditions has features in common with L.A.B. 26.13. In the introduction of his study, Prémare evokes the Isrāʾīliyyāt, a broad notion in the Islamic tradition, described as follows by Encyclopaedia of Islam:

An Arabic term covering three kinds of narratives, which are found in the commentators on the Ḳurʾān, the

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72 de Prémare, “‘Comme il est écrit’”, 27 (our translation).
73 de Prémare, “‘Comme il est écrit’”, 49 (our translation).
74 Cf. de Prémare, “‘Comme il est écrit’”, 40–2.
This opinion is repeated in Denis, Haelewyck, Introduction, 613, n. 16.
mystics, the compilers of edifying histories and writers on various levels. 1. Narratives regarded as historical, which served to complement the often summary information provided by the revealed Book in respect of the personages in the Bible (Tawrāt and Indjīl), particularly the prophets. 2. Edifying narratives placed within the chronological (but entirely undefined) framework of ‘the period of the (ancient) Israelites’. 3. Fables belonging to folklore, allegedly (but sometimes actually) borrowed from Jewish sources. The line of demarcation between this class and the preceding one is difficult to establish.76

Thus, it would not be surprising to find in a ḥadīth a Jewish (or Christian) extracanonical tradition. This raises the question: can we exclude the New Testament channel? It would not be the only time that the aḥādīth show influences from the New Testament. The parallels are mostly not very close as in our case, but Tacchini mentions two others influences from the letters of Paul in the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Eph 2.20–22; 1 Cor 12.12 and 25–26).77 Cook distinguished three other cases of Pauline influence.78 All these sayings have transmission chains but are never related to Paul, contrary to aḥādīth with Gospels influence, which often refer to Jesus.79


77 Tacchini, ‘Paul the Forgerer’ 131–2. To find Pauline traditions in Islamic texts is rather unexpected: ‘these Pauline influences in the Sahih of Bukhari allow us to affirm that even the despised Paul contributed to the construction of Islam’, Tacchini, ‘Paul the Forgerer’ 132.


Traits of the New Testament in early Islamic literature lead to the question of the early translations of the New Testament into Arabic. In his reference article, S. H. Griffith demonstrated that the Gospels were first translated during the first Abbasid century (750-850). After this period appeared the six great hadith collections (kutub as-sittah) of Bukhārī (d. 870), Muslim (d. 875), Abū Da'ud (d. 888), Tirmidhī (d. 892), al-Nasā’ī (d. 915) and Ibn Māja (d. 886), collecting materials allegedly going back to the time of the Prophet. Can we then avoid the comparison between the text of the hadith and the Arabic versions of the verse? The hadith in the different collections is uniform: ‘Allah said, “I have prepared for My righteous slaves what as no eye has ever seen, nor an ear has ever heard nor a human heart can ever think of.”’ We have chosen to compare it to three of the oldest manuscripts of

81 Unfortunately, the great majority of studies on the New Testament Arabic versions focus on the Gospels, neglecting the Pauline letters. But in view of the manuscript tradition, we maintain that the Pauline letters were translated at the same time as the Gospels.
83 In the English translation of the Šahih al-Bukhārī of Muhsin Kahn (Al Saadawi Publications and Dar-us-Salam, 1984?) http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/hadith/bukhari/, the hadith is referenced as follow: Vol. 9, Book 93, Hadith 589, but with no reference to Arabic edition; this numeration is popular (e.g. Tacchini uses it).

The question of the references of the hadith collections is particularly complicated and can not be discussed here, but computer tools available on Internet are a great help to find the Arabic text in the different collections: http://sunnah.com. For more information about the website: http://sunnah.com/about. Here the reference of the hadith in another collection: Ibn-Šaraf An-Nawawī (Abū-Zakariyah Yahyā), Ṣiyūd as-sāliḥīn (Beirut: Mu’assasat ar-risālah, 1980) 304, no. 1881.
the Pauline letters: Vat. Ar. 13 (ninth-tenth century),\textsuperscript{84} Sin. Ar. 151 (year 867),\textsuperscript{85} Sin. Ar. 155 (ninth century).\textsuperscript{86} It is interesting to see that the three manuscripts have a very similar text.

Except for the difference between ‘those who love him’ (الذين يحبونه) and ‘my righteous servants’ (العبادي الصالحين), the formulations are very close between the verse in Arabic and the hadīth.\textsuperscript{87} Can we conclude that there is some literary dependance, in one way or the other? A particular detail retained our attention: in both traditions the verb خَطَّر (khaṭara) is used to express ‘what has not come up into the heart of man’. خَطَّر [khaṭara] does not mean ‘to come up’ but means primarily ‘to move’, ‘to agitate’ (for instance as a camel does with its tail or a man with his sword or spear).\textsuperscript{88} Associated with على قلب [‘alā qalb] or على بال [‘alā bāl] it has the secondary meaning of ‘to occur to somebody’s mind’. This verb is not used in the Quran,\textsuperscript{89} and does not seem to appear in other ahādīth\textsuperscript{90} (as the first or second meaning). It could even be possible that the meaning ‘to occur to somebody’s mind’ was developed during this period in association with the saying, either from the hadīth, from the Arabic versions or

\textsuperscript{84} ولاكن كم انا مكتوب ان التي لم تراه العيون والاذان لم تسمع وعلى قلب انسان لم يخطر [...] للذين يحبونه

Early Christian Arabic manuscripts are unvocalized. There is as yet no edition of the Vat. Ar. 13. We are currently working on the edition of 1 Corinthians in Vat. Ar. 13.

\textsuperscript{85} بل كما هو مكتوب ان العين لم تر و الاذان لم تسمع ولم يخطر على قلب الإنسان ما اعد الله للذين يحبونه


\textsuperscript{86} ولاكن كم هو مكتوب ما لم ترى عين ولم تسمعان ولم يخطر على قلب انسان ما قد اعد الله للذين يحبونه

M. D. Gibson, \textit{An Arabic Version of the Epistles of St Paul to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians with Part of the Epistles to the Ephesians} (Studia Sinaitica II; London: Cambridge University Press, 1894).

\textsuperscript{87} Here the few differences: the hadīth uses the negation لـ, the New Testament manuscripts have the negation لم; the hadīth uses for the ‘heart of man’ قلب بشر [qalb baṣar], the manuscripts have قلب انسان [qalb insān].


\textsuperscript{89} H. E. Kassis, \textit{A Concordance of the Qu’ran} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

\textsuperscript{90} We used the research tools of http://sunnah.com/. See n. 83.
from another source. Yet, how can we then explain that this expression which is not the direct translation of ‘to come up’, appears both in the hadith and the three Arabic versions?\(^1\)

Here we also have to underline the intriguing uniformity of 1 Cor 2.9 in the three manuscripts. In fact, Sin. Ar. 151 was translated from Syriac,\(^2\) Sin. Ar. 155 from Greek\(^3\) and Vat. Ar. 13 shows influences from both Greek and Syriac.\(^4\) Consequently, the manuscripts have often very different texts; in 1 Cor 2.9, it is interesting to see that the manuscripts have a very similar verse. Did the hadith know one Arabic version to have the similar vocabulary? Or on the contrary did the translators of the Pauline letters know the hadith tradition to have a uniform verse? Both are unlikely, but not impossible. Should we then suppose that the hadith and the Arabic versions know another source or that they were both influenced by a popular saying?

Furthermore, we should also consider the Arabic Apoc. GosJohn 37.56, where we found: ‘what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, and what has not entered into the heart of man, I have prepared for those who believe in me before the ages’.\(^5\) ‘The eschatological promises in the apocryphal text and in the hadith are very close. In both cases, we have an ‘I-formulation’,

\(^{1}\) Furthermore, other versions of the New Testament such as the Vulgate, the Peshitta, the Harklean version, the Sahidic and Bohairic versions, have all translated ἀνέβη by ‘to come up’. Only the Ethiopic version has the verb ‘to think’ (Thanks to Charlotte Touati for this hint).

\(^{2}\) Staal, *Mt. Sinai Arabic Codex* (CSCO 453), V–VII.


\(^{4}\) See n. 84.

but in the case of *Apocr. GosJohn* as a part of an eschatological discourse of Jesus. *Apocr. GosJohn* 37.56 also used the expression َخَطَّارَا ْعَلَى قَلْب بَشَرَ [khaṭara ‘alá qalb baṣar]. The text is preserved in Arabic in two manuscripts from the twelfth and the fourteenth century but the researchers agree on an early translation from the Syriac, going back to the beginning of the ninth century.  

With the ḥadīt and *Apocr. GosJohn* 37.56, we face the same ‘bulk of communications between early Islam and Jewish and Christian traditions [that occurs] via the medium of Arabic as a language used by all three parties’ as for narratives about Mary’s life and Jesus’ childhood in Quranic material or Christian apocryphal texts. As for the *Isrā‘īliyyāt*, the potential interactions between New Testament apocrypha and early Islamic literature were also underlined by De Prémare: ‘The text “What the eye has not seen” could equally have been used by the ḥadīt from a Christian pseudepigraph’.  

In short, we have textual similarities between three different Arabic versions of Paul, an Arabic Christian apocryphal text and a popular Islamic tradition, something that still has to be explained. Besides, the ḥadīth itself shares common features with *L.A.B.* 26.13 by describing a place, and also with *I Clem* 34.8, as an eschatological promise pronounced by God and not by Jesus (Jesus’ sayings not being rare in the *ahādīth*, see n. 78). Do we find here the trace of the independent written source?

6. Conclusion

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97 Horn, ‘Syriac and Arabic Perspectives’, 291

98 de Prémare, “Comme il est écrit”, 34 (our translation).
We have here some clues and many gaps to be filled with a certain amount of historical imagination. Yet even so, taking into the Islamic traditions regarding the saying of 1 Cor 2.9 does help to widen the debate and offers interesting attestations of the saying transmitted without any reference to a Christological context, placed in the mouth of God, describing a place, that is, Paradise. For research on the Christian apocrypha and Islamic scholarship on the hadith to be mutually beneficial, a number of steps still need to be taken for the two disciplines to adapt to one another. Fikret Karcic, who takes note of the methodological differences between the Western academic approach and Islamic studies, sees one thing clearly: electronic means of research can only be of service in charting the innumerable versions of the hadith. Given the use of the expression ‘the apocryphal continent’, it would be fitting to speak of an ‘ocean’ of ahadith as a corollary. The path taken by the hadith that speaks of Paradise, which ‘eye has not seen’, as hadith qudsī of a very respectable age, presents an interesting mirror image of the ‘apocryphal scripture’ to which 1 Cor 2.9 alludes.

In working through this question, it is a constant surprise to find that not only Paul, but also 1 Clem makes no distinction between the canonical Hebrew Scriptures and those that were not canonical. In the third century CE, Origen apparently does not yet have any difficulty in


101 See Section 3 above and the analysis of the expressions using λέγει in 1 Clement.
thinking that Paul cited an unknown apocryphon, whereas a century later Jerome and Athanasius will no longer accept it. This quotation by Paul of an ‘apocryphal scripture’ has sometimes posed a difficulty for contemporary New Testament exegetes. This is illustrated, for example, by William Walker who uses textual criticism in an unconvincing way to attempt to view 1 Cor 2.6–9 as an interpolation. Another example is Judith Kovacs who feels obliged to show in every way possible that 1 Cor 2.6–16 is in absolute conformity with Pauline thought. It is most likely this concern that is expressed in the repeated tendency to opt for the hypothesis of an oral source behind the saying of 1 Cor 2.9. Hopefully, by seriously underlining the fact that Paul states that he is quoting a scripture in 1 Cor 2.9 and by a careful consideration of 1 Clem, the text cited in 1 Clem 34.8 can be included alongside L.A.B. 26.13 among the independent written sources of the saying of 1 Cor 2.9. Similarly, considering the Islamic tradition reinforces the hypothesis of a written source, in the light of the ḥadīth that provides the saying. Meanwhile, a broad approach of the diverse attestations including Gos.Jud 47.10–13, serves to underline that the Christological interpretation of the saying is not found before 1 Cor 2.9 but from then on is increasingly accentuated, either by the transformation of the saying into a logion of Jesus or by making the description of the saying apply to the person of Jesus. Therefore, against Paul’s interpretation, eschatology continues to prevail in the interpretative history of the saying: the description of ‘what eye has not seen’ is left in suspense as a future expectation. In conclusion, we can only be pleased

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106 Cf. the discussion in Section 2 above.
about the fact that Paul read other texts, and that Muhammad and his followers were interested in the ‘tales of the ancients’. Without their curiosity, the saying ‘what eye has not seen’ would perhaps not have left its trace in 1 Cor 2.9 and in the hadīth.

107 He is reproached for this (cf. Surah 25.4–5).