

THE ESSENE DOCTRINE OF HYPOSTASIS AND RABBI MEIR

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Dedicated to the memory of Prof. Gershom Scholem

The point of departure of this contribution is Safrai's discovery of a similarity and a dissimilarity between an important theological motif in the Dead Sea Scrolls and a statement of Rabbi Meir. The Essene motif will be analyzed, as it enables us to understand the special Essene approach to the meaning of the immanence of God. As we have already discussed the motif of God's Power in the article "At the Right Hand of the Power" (above, pp. 42–46), the present discussion is a kind of supplement to that article.

The saying of Rabbi Meir under consideration is the first mishnah of chapter 6 of Avoth (Sayings of the Fathers). It is well known that this chapter is a later addition to the Mishnaic text *per se*. Our saying is taken from a tractate similar both in style and in spirit to *Seder Eliyahu*, printed in the critical edition as an appendix (*Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*).¹ From this history of the saying, it is already clear that R. Meir's original saying² was enlarged, rewritten and adapted to the

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1. *Pseudo-Seder Eliahu Zuta*, ed. M. Friedmann. Vienna, 1904, pp. 15–16 (beginning of chapter 2). See Friedmann's introduction there and his notes.
2. In *Pseudo-Seder Eliahu Zuta* the speaker is not Rabbi Meir, but Rabbi Eliezer. However, in all of the parallel versions, this saying is attributed to Rabbi Meir. In the *baraita* at the beginning of *Masekhet Kalah*, Ch. 8, this saying is quoted in the name of R. Meir, and it is added that he said it in the name of his teacher, R. Akiba. Rabbi Meir's name also appears in the version of *Perek Kin-*

ethical atmosphere of the circles from which *Seder Eliyahu* itself originated. We shall not quote here the entire saying as it appears both in Avoth 6:1 and in the other tractate, but shall restrict ourselves to the pertinent passage:

Rabbi Meir said: Whosoever labours in the Torah for its own sake merits many things; and not only so, but the whole world is indebted to him... Through him (the world) enjoys counsel and sound knowledge, understanding and strength, as it is said (Prov. 8:14), "Counsel is mine and sound knowledge. I am understanding, I have strength." ...To him the secrets of the Torah are revealed; he is made like a never-failing spring and like a river (that flows on) with ever-sustained vigour;³ he becomes modest, patient and forgiving of insult...⁴

The use of Proverbs 8:14 here is significant. In the original context, these are the words of Wisdom, which in Judaism is often identified with the Torah. To Wisdom, or Torah, belong counsel (*'etsah*), sound knowledge (*tushiyah*), understanding (*binah*) and strength or power (*gevurah*) and she grants them to "whosoever labours in Torah for its own sake."⁵ He is even granted that the secrets of the Torah are revealed to him; this means that by studying Torah, he acquires mystical knowledge of its hidden sense.

All the virtues enumerated in the quotation from Proverbs 8:14 are also qualities of God, and the last of these, strength (or power) is an important hypostatic term in both Judaism and in the New Testament.⁶ Such terms already appear in the Old Testament. Later on, they became even more central.⁷ In the New Testa-

yan Torah published by M. Higger in *Horeb* (1936), 285–296. There, as in all the manuscripts, the name R. Meir appears. See also W. Bacher, *Die Aggada der Tannaiten* II, Strassburg, 1890, p. 19, note 4 and v. I, Strassburg, 1903, p. 122.

3. This is the original reading and not "like a spring flowing with over-sustained vigour and like a never-failing river." This alternative reading is influenced by Avoth 2:8.

4. Both the emphasis upon occupation with the Torah and the precept of humility are also combined in another sentence of Rabbi Meir (Avoth 4:10).

5. In that part of the saying which we omitted, it is written that the Torah "gives him sovereignty and dominion and discerning judgment." This would seem to be an allusion to "strength and counsel, sound knowledge and understanding," but we cannot be certain that those are Rabbi Meir's own words.

6. The most important work about hypostatic aspects of Rabbinic Judaism until now is J. Abelson, *The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature*, London, 1912, reprinted New York, 1969. Abelson treats the terms Shekhinah, Memra and the Holy Spirit. See also, now, E.E. Urbach, *The Sages*, Jerusalem, 1979, Ch. 3–5. He criticizes Abelson on p. 41.

7. The term Shekhinah appears neither in the New Testament nor in classical Jewish prayers. At the end of the 17th benediction of the *Amidah*, God is spoken of as "He who returns His Shekhinah to Zion," but these words did not appear in the original version of this prayer (see Ismar Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst*, Frankfurt a. Main, 1931, reprinted Hildesheim, 1962, pp. 56–57). It appears that in the time of the Second Temple the Shekhinah was only used to designate God's indwelling in the Temple (and probably also for His indwelling in the heavens) — see II Macc. 14:35. Later on, after the destruction of the Temple, the word Shekhinah became the principal hypostatic term, and the other hypostatic terms were restricted by this development.

ment, God's hypostasis is identified with Christ — but it is not our task here to analyze this concept, so fruitful for Christian doctrines. Both in the New Testament⁸ and in rabbinic literature, various hypostatic terms were used instead of speaking about God Himself, often without any further qualification, although “ever so many passages speaking of Shechinah and Holy Spirit in a highly personified sense can be paralleled in different parts of the Talmud and Midrash, by passages of exactly the same import, but speaking of God's ‘Shechinah,’ God's ‘Holy Spirit.’”⁹ As far as can be seen, both according to Rabbinic Judaism and to early Christian thought, hypostatic terms never appear side by side with one another; God's Glory, Word, Power, Majesty, Spirit and Wisdom express differing aspects of one concept and not a number of emanations.¹⁰

In the Essene writings, the hypostatic terms Glory and Power never appear as a simple designation of God; they always speak about *God's* glory or power.¹¹ This is significant, because in the Ethiopic Book of Enoch (14:20) which is close to the Dead Sea Sect, we read that the Great Glory is sitting on the throne.¹² What was the Essene concept of the hypostatic character of Judaism? Two passages in the sectarian Manual of Discipline may shed further light on this matter; both are from the prayers at the end of the Manual. First, 11:4–8:¹³

For the truth of God is the rock of my steps, and His might (*gevurah*) is the support of my right hand. From the source of His righteousness is my justification. The light in my heart stems from His marvelous mysteries. Mine eye has gazed on what is for ever. Sound wisdom (*tushiyah*) which was hidden from man, knowledge and a skillful plan hidden from the sons of men, well of righteousness and reservoir of might (*gevurah*) with the spring of glory (*Kavod*) from the assembly of flesh: to those whom God has chosen He has given (all) this for an eternal possession...

The other passage (1QS 10:11–12) reads:

And to God I will say, ‘My righteousness!’ and to the Highest, ‘Author of my good, source of knowledge, and well of holiness, height of glory (*kavod*), might of all (*u-gevurat kol*) for eternal majesty!’

8. Jesus already used the simple designation “Power” in speaking about God. See David Flusser, “At the Right Hand of the Power,” *Immanuel* 14 (1982), pp. 42–46.

9. Abelson, op. cit., p. 38; see also p. 224.

10. See also Saul Lieberman, “Two Lexicographical Notes,” *JBL* 65 (1964), pp. 67 ff. and in his *Texts and Studies*, New York, 1974, pp. 210–215. An exception which proves the rule is the Holy Spirit. In ancient Judaism and in the New Testament it is both an hypostasis — and therefore interchangeable with other hypostatic terms — as well as the spirit of Divine inspiration. See Abelson, p. 260.

11. It has been pointed out to us by Jacob Guggenheim that this is also the situation in rabbinic prayers.

12. See Flusser, “At the Right Hand of the Power,” op. cit.

13. Our translations are primarily based upon the important work by A.R.C. Leancy, *The Rule of Qumran and Its Meaning*, London, 1966.

The similarity between the two passages is striking. *Inter alia*, both combine the concept of a divine well from which Might and Glory originate; the well is also the source of wisdom. It seems that there is some connection between this concept and what, according to the Ethiopic Book of Enoch (48:1), that patriarch saw in a vision:

And in that place I saw the well of righteousness which was inexhaustible; and around it were many wells of wisdom; and all the thirsty ones drink of them, and were filled with wisdom.

Here, Enoch saw in a vision the dwellings of the blessed ones, a piece of mystical geography, while the well in the sectarian writings is an expression of a theological concept. The Essene concept of well is evidently somehow connected with a similar passage in John 7:37–38, wherein Jesus is depicted as having said: “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me; whoever believes in me, let him drink. As Scripture says, “Streams of living water shall flow out from within him.”¹⁴ It seems that what is quoted here is actually a non-biblical writing: most scholars today agree that, at least according to the Gospel, Christ is referred to. In any event, in the Gospel the saying does not refer to God.

Far more important for our investigation is to decide whether, according to sectarian thought, it was possible to identify the fountain, from which the emanations come, with God Himself. According to IQS 11:4–8, the source comes from God but is not identical with Him. When we read the other passage (IQS 10:11–12), we receive the impression that God Himself is the source of knowledge and the well of holiness, but it could also be understood that the author of the hymn wished to say that God is not only the “author of my good,” but also the author of “the source of knowledge,” etc. — but such an interpretation of the text seems to be less probable. The best discussion of the concept of the well in the Dead Sea Scrolls is to be found in the commentary *ad locum* in the book of the scholar to whom we are indebted for our translation.¹⁵

It is important to observe that God is in this poetic writing actually identified with the source of knowledge. Elsewhere in the scrolls he opens or gives such a source to his chosen one, ...the author, as in IQH and in this hymn. The phrases to be found in the scrolls which employ the word ‘source’ (or ‘fount’) reveal clearly the essential ideas in the profound thinking of the sect or its founder: IQS 11:3; IQH 2:18; 12:29 again speak of the source of knowledge; the frgt. 1Q 36: 12:2 speaks of a well of knowledge; IQS 11:5f. of the source of God’s righteousness; IQH 6:17 of a well of light from an eternal source; 8:8, 20f.; 10:31;

14. See R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i-xii)* (The Anchor Bible), New York, 1966, pp. 319–329 and R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium II* (Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Bd. 4), Freiburg, 1977, pp. 209–217. The syntactic structure of this passage can be understood in various ways.

15. Leaney, op. cit., pp. 246–7.

IQSb 1:3,6 all of an eternal source. This eternal source, then, is the source for chosen men of their knowledge and of righteousness imparted to them by God and, as here, sometimes identified with God.

According to ancient Jewish religious thought, there is no substantial difference if the source of knowledge comes from God or if He Himself is the source of knowledge. In the Bible, the two views already exist side by side. In Jer. 2:13 God says about Israel, "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters." In Ps. 36:10 the other aspect is expressed: "With You is the fountain of life, by Your light do we see light." But according to Essene poetry, the spring of knowledge is not necessarily God, nor dependent upon God; its grace is given to man from God's abundance. God instructs him and he feels "in his heart to open a spring of knowledge unto all who understand" (IQH 2:17-18). Or, in other words: "And Thou, my God, Thou hast placed in my mouth... a spring of living waters that faileth not... They shall not cease and they shall become an overflowing stream... and seas unsearchable" (IQH 8:16-17). The similarity between this passage and Ben Sira 24:30-31 is striking, and it is even probable that this ancient Jewish sage influenced the words of the inspired-Essene poet. The contact between Essene mysticism and a motif of Jewish Wisdom-literature is here palpable. Do we not already read in Proverbs 18:4: "The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a gushing stream"? Do not forget that in ancient Judaism Wisdom is identical with Torah! Thus, we can understand that Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai called his disciple "a spring flowing with ever-renewed vigour" (Avoth 2:8),¹⁶ and, as we have already seen, R. Meir said (Ibid., 6:1) that "Whosoever labours in Torah for its own sake... is made like a never-failing fountain and like a river flowing with ever-sustained vigour." We are fully aware that this sapiential image is autonomous and independent of the Essene motif of the divine spring. To the contrary: we have seen that the sapiential motif most probably influenced the Essene author of the Hymns. On the other hand, it is significant that, according to Rabbi Meir, the secrets of the Torah are revealed to one who is intensively occupied with the Torah. This hints at a mystical, esoteric knowledge.

But let us return to the Essene divine well. We have found no evidence to justify the assumption that this theology has a connection with Essene baptism, and we have also seen that the idea has biblical roots. There is also another possible source of the Essene concept of divine spring. In the theological treatise contained in the Manual of Discipline we read that "in the spring of light are the generations of truth, and from the well of darkness come the generations of perversity" (IQS

16. Even closer to IQH 8:16-17 and to Ben-Sira 24:30-31 is the parallel to Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai's words in *Avoth de-Rabbi Nathan*, Version A, Ch. 14 (ed. S. Schechter, Vienna, 1887, reprinted New York, 1945, p. 58).

3:19). There is evidently a mystical *Weltanschauung* behind these words. It seems that the Sect once thought that there are two springs through which both evil and good or truth flow into the world from outside, and that at the end of time the well of darkness will be closed and thereby the irruption of wickedness shall cease.¹⁷ It is thus probable that the divine spring is a further development of the spring of light found in the theological survey in the Manual of Discipline. This identification between the cosmic spring of light and the divine well which grants man wisdom and other gifts is not merely a fruit of modern speculation. In a passage speaking about the eschatological cosmic aspect of the well of knowledge, the Essene poet says that “the spring of light shall become an everlasting well, inexhaustible” (1QH 6:18–19). We can only hope that, in the future, publications of new texts from Qumran will clarify the stages of evolution which led to the mystical concept of the well of knowledge. The idea itself is an important spiritual contribution, showing the creative religious power of pre-Christian Judaism.

The entire complex of ideas related to the divine well is tied to the Essene concept of the immanence of God, a problem which has found different solutions in ancient Judaism and in Christianity. According to Essene thought, the divine spring not only grants knowledge and wisdom, but is also a “well of righteousness and reservoir of might (*gevurah*) with the spring of glory (*kavod*)” while God is the “author of my good, source of knowledge and well of holiness, height of glory (*kavod*), might of all (*gevurat kol*) for eternal majesty,” and God has given all this to those whom He has chosen as an eternal possession. Thus, the divine well contains, among other things, both the glory and the might (or: power) and pours them — so to say — upon the Sons of Light. Glory and Power are two eminent hypostatic terms, but they do not appear here merely in their hypostatic function. Not only do they form, together with other qualities, the content of the divine well, but they are also imparted to the elect. In contrast both with Talmudic Judaism and Christianity, as represented by the New Testament, the Essene hypostatic terms are neither expressions of various facets of *one* Divine hypostasis, nor a way of speaking about the Deity itself. They are not interchangeable; they are God’s powers and, as they are also granted to men from the divine well, together with other gifts such as knowledge and wisdom, they are kind of emanations of God. An Essene will speak not only about the “power” of God in the singular, but also, in the same sense, about the “powers” of God (but the word “glory” [*kavod*] is impossible in Hebrew in the plural, for which reason they used the somewhat awkward expression, “all glory” [*kol kavod*] to convey the concept of “glories.”). The author of the Thanksgiving Scroll praises God (9:16–18): “In respect to Thine *powers* there is no equal in strength and to Thy glory there can be no [estimate and] for Thy wisdom there can be no measure

17. This view is hinted at in 1QH 3:12, 16–18 and in a fragment of the sectarian Book of Mysteries (*Qumran Cave I*, Oxford, 1955, p. 103).

and to [Thy] tru[th there is no bound].” Especially interesting to our discussion are the following words of the same Scroll:

And I declare Thy glory (*kevodka*) among the sons of men, and in the abundance of Thy goodness my soul delighteth. For I know that truth is in Thy mouth and in Thy hand is righteousness, and in Thy thought is all knowledge; and in Thy might is all power (*kol gevurah*) and all glory (*ve-khol kavod*) is with Thee... (1QH 11:6–8).

Though the divine well is not mentioned, the list of God’s blessed attributes which are with Him is otherwise very similar to the other lists which we quoted above. God Himself is not defined by these good qualities; these are all in God’s possession and, as we have seen before, they are graciously granted to those who are worthy of them. In addition to truth and righteousness, goodness and knowledge, the two hypostatic terms power and glory appear here. The author does not simply speak about power and glory; he praises God by saying: “In Thy might is *all* power and *all* glory is with Thee,” just as he has spoken before about “the abundance of Thy goodness” and about “*all* knowledge.” In the following sentence he says: “In Thy goodness there is abundance of forgiveness.” All this shows that “power” and “glory” are not used here in an hypostatic sense. As we have seen, an Essene can even speak about power in both the singular and the plural.

Before drawing conclusions from our analysis, let us return to Rabbi Meir’s saying. He quotes Prov. 8:16: “Counsel is mine and sound knowledge, I am understanding, I have strength (*gevurah*).” These are the words of divine Wisdom. For Rabbi Meir, as for others, Wisdom was identical with the Torah. “Whosoever labours in the Torah for its own sake” is benefited through Him by these four gifts, namely, various kinds of knowledge, and strength. There is no doubt that an Essene could adopt this saying as his own, as it betrays a similar concept. Even strength (or power) appears here in a non-hypostatic sense (although it is conditioned by the Biblical verse). The difference is that the Jewish sage speaks about occupation with the Torah in its strict, traditional meaning: rabbinic study of the Torah for its own sake rather than pneumatic acquisition of wisdom — which also requires study. But, though the character of rabbinic learning and its aim differs from Essene mysticism, both the Essene concept and the rabbinic saying express the notion that a man who has acquired wisdom transmits its fruit for the benefit of others. The mystical aspect is also not absent from the saying of Rabbi Meir: according to him, whoever learns the Torah intensively has its hidden secrets revealed to him. He becomes “like a never-failing fountain and a river that flows with ever-sustained vigour.” The same image is already applied by Ben-Sira to himself (24:30–31), while the Essene teacher uses the image about his own mystical knowledge (1QH 8:16–17).

Rabbi Meir's saying does not reflect the entire Essene theological concept. The rabbi does not mention the divine heavenly fountain which imparts to the enlightened the sublime gifts contained in it. It may be that he would not oppose the concept were the well to be understood as the written and oral law in the traditional rabbinic sense. Though we do not wish to minimize the differences between the rabbinic world of Rabbi Meir and the spiritual atmosphere of Essenism, the points of contact between his saying and Essene concepts seem to us to be so strong that it is difficult for us to exclude the possibility of some impact of Jewish non-rabbinic mystical thought upon Rabbi Meir's saying. We do not think that a direct or indirect influence of the sectarian thinking of the Essenes is very likely. It is far more probable that any connection that does exist between the two is based upon a common ancient ground of Jewish pneumatic speculations. If we are right, our comparison between this rabbinic saying and certain passages from the Dead Sea Scrolls confirms Scholem's thesis about the origins of Jewish mysticism and its impact upon Rabbinic Judaism.¹⁸

Let us now summarize our findings in connection with Jewish and early Christian hypostatic theology. It is evident that Jewish hypostatic views deeply influenced the Christian understanding of Christ's divinity. Not only do all the Jewish hypostatic terms occur in the New Testament, but Christ himself is identified with the Word, the Glory, the Power, the Spirit and the Wisdom of God. As in Rabbinic Judaism, in early Christianity these terms are also interchangeable, because they all designate God's immanence or the Deity itself. The origins of this concept are older than rabbinic Judaism, as in the Old Testament we already meet, e.g., the Glory and the wisdom in similar contexts. It would seem that it was not only rabbinism which developed the hypostatic view. In order to shed more light upon this problem, it will be necessary to study the precise function of hypostatic terms in all of the branches of ancient Judaism. The importance of the Word (*logos*) in the theology of Philo of Alexandria is well known. Less known is that Ezekiel, the Hellenistic-Jewish author of a dramatic poem about the Exodus, says that the divine Word (*logos*) spoke to Moses in the burning bush, because it is impossible for a mortal man to see God Himself.¹⁹ We have already seen that in the Ethiopic Book of Enoch (14:20) God is presented as the Great Glory, sitting on the

18. A Comparison between the Dead Sea Scrolls and Hekhaloth mysticism will surely bring interesting fruits, even if the parallels do not betray a historical relationship. In Hekhaloth Rabbati 26:4 we read that God has revealed to Moses all His power (כל גבורותיו; see IQH 11:8). A further study is badly needed.

19. Quoted in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* IX 29:8, ed. K. Mras, Berlin, 1954, I, p. 530. On the Hellenistic Jewish author Ezekiel, see A.M. Denis, *Introduction aux Pseudépigrapbes Grecs d'ancien Testament* (Studia Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha, I) Leiden, 1970, pp. 273-77. Also see, especially, the important new article by P.W. van der Horst, "De joodse toneelschrijver Ezechiël," *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 36:2 (1982), 97-112.

heavenly throne. Thus, the hypostatic approach was not restricted to Rabbinic Judaism.

The Book of Enoch was created within the broader apocalyptic movement out of which the Dead Sea sect originated. Essenism does not simply repeat the views of its predecessors, but changes and develops them in an original way in the course of its history. One may even speak about a progressive pneumatic demythologisation of Essenism. (For example, if in the earlier Essene writings and in the broader movement Belial was a personal devil, the leader of demonic forces, in the Thanksgiving Scroll Belial becomes an impersonal designation of wickedness.) A mystical element already existed in the broader movement. We may suppose that, because of the progressive Essene demythologization, the mystical trend of Essenism was strengthened in the direction of spiritualization. We assume that the hymns at the end of the Manual of Discipline and the Thanksgiving Scrolls, from which we quoted before, were written in the final stage of the history of the sect. But it is also possible that the spiritual, mystical character of those hymns may be explained by the simple observation that hymnal poetry fits such mystical thought.

It is precisely in this Essene hymnal poetry that we have found the noble idea of the spring of knowledge which comes from God or is identical with the Deity itself. This divine spring is a well of knowledge, holiness, glory, power and God's righteousness and of other virtues of God, all of which are granted to those who are worthy of them, the teacher transmitting them to the members of the holy community. Among these virtues are various aspects of wisdom, as well as power and glory, which in other systems function as hypostatic terms. Here they express, as it were, God's forces or even His emanations. But in other sectarian texts as well the hypostatic meaning of such terms is weakened, even if the hypostatic element never completely disappeared from Essene thought.²⁰

20. There is an interesting passage in the sectarian Temple Scroll (29:7–10) in which God speaks with Moses about the Temple. He says that He shall sanctify the Temple by His glory (בכבודו) and will place His glory upon it. This is a biblical concept, expressed in pseudobiblical style. This is also the only passage in the Temple Scroll in which the word "glory" appears.

In Barthélemy and Milik, *Qumran Cave I*, Oxford, 1955, p. 154, there is a fragment of a prayer from Qumran whose content, as far as it is preserved, contains the history of the world from the Creation to Moses, who is described as a truthful shepherd, a humble man (רועה נאמר מ[נ]שה א[י]ש). Regarding the gift of the Torah, it is said there: "And Thou hast renewed to them Thy covenant in the appearance of glory (במראה כבוד, see Ex. 24:17) ...in order to make known to them glorious rules (or teachings יסורי כבוד)." The second mention of glory must not be understood in an hypostatic sense, while the first is a quotation from the Bible. Milik incorrectly thought that the passage about the Torah and Moses describes the eschatological future, as did also Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, Leiden, 1977, p. 195. (For a partial translation of the text, see G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls, Qumran in Perspective*, London, 1977, p. 62. He also did not understand the text precisely.)

The relative lack of importance of the hypostatic element in Essenism is important to the history of the origins of Christianity, in which hypostatic theology helped to augment the divine nature of Christ. This occurred in the second stratum of Christianity, referred to by R. Bultmann as the *kerygma* of the Hellenistic communities, which includes the Evangelist John, Paul and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. One of the co-authors²¹ has shown that this Christian stratum is indirectly influenced by Essenism on the following points: the world is divided into the realms of good and evil, while mankind is divided into two camps: the Sons of Light — who are the community itself — and the Sons of Darkness, or those who are of the Devil. This division is preordained by the sovereign will of God. The Sons of Light are the Elect of Divine Grace and were granted the Spirit which frees them from the sin of flesh. The company of the Elect is a kind of spiritual temple; this company is constituted by a new covenant with God, a covenant which is eschatological and in addition to the old covenant made with Israel.²² By all this, we do not wish to say that these Essene elements have the same function in Christianity as in the Essene religious system. Not only is Christianity another faith, a religious revolution, but other Jewish elements were also included in this new religious system.

We hope that our research has shown that hypostatic theology, which also has Jewish sources, did not enter the second stratum of Christianity via Essenism. The hypostatic view there is weakened and does not play an important role. The question therefore arises from whence hypostatic theology, which became a central formative element, came into early Christianity. There are many possibilities. As the language of the second stratum of Christianity was Greek, a possible candidate is Hellenistic Judaism, but such a type is unknown. What we do know is that there was a hypostatic element in Hellenistic Judaism, but this was mainly concentrated upon one hypostasis, that of the Word (*logos*). A Hellenistic Judaism less philosophical than that of the Wisdom of Solomon might have transmitted its hypostatic theology to the *kerygma* of Christian Hellenistic communities — but all these are mere speculations. In any event, we may assume that the hypostatic system was developed in Palestinian Judaism, as it is a very important component of Rabbinism. If this Christian way of thinking stems from Rabbinic Judaism, then the hypostatic evidence for the divine nature of Christ might have been caused by the direct influence of rabbinic thought in this point upon some branches of the Mother Church in Palestine in the pre-Pauline period, in which case, Hellenistic Christianity inherited hypostatic theology from the Apostolic Church, or it might have gone from Rabbinic Judaism to Early Christianity through the intermediary of the Hellenistic Jewish Diaspora. In any

21. D. Flusser, "The Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity," *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, 4 (1958), pp. 215–266.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

case, an Essene influence upon Christianity in this respect must be excluded, because in Essene writings the hypostatic view was weakened and transformed, being far less central than in Rabbinism and the second stratum of Christianity.

But our research has also brought other results. We have been able to identify an important religious idea of the ancient Jewish Essene sect, the concept of the divine well of knowledge. This is a valuable religious achievement, both in respect to the very nature of the Deity and to the way in which God inspires men. The entire idea reflects a very ancient stage of Jewish mysticism. Can we trace a path from this stage to later Jewish mystical thought? The saying of Rabbi Meir is a hint that further research in this field may be fruitful.

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