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## Beyond the Veil of the Temple: The High Priestly Origin of the Apocalypses

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**The veil of the temple** was woven from blue, purple, crimson and white thread, and embroidered with cherubim (2 Chron. 3.14); the veil in the tabernacle had been similar, (Exod. 26.31; 36.35)<sup>1</sup>, It was a valuable piece of fabric, and both Antiochus and Titus took a veil when they looted the temple (1 Mac. 1.21-2; Josephus *War* 7.162). In the second temple it was some two hundred square metres of fabric and when it contracted uncleanness and had to be washed, three hundred priests were needed for the job (*m. Shekalim* 8.4-5). Josephus says it was a Babylonian tapestry (*War* 5.212), a curtain embroidered with a panorama of the heavens (*War* 5.213). The veil separated the holy place from the most holy (Exod. 26.33), screening from view the ark and the cherubim or, in the temple, the ark and the chariot throne<sup>2</sup>. We are told that only the high priest entered the holy of holies, once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Josephus, who was himself a priest (*Life* 1), says that the tabernacle was a microcosm of the creation, divided into three parts: the outer parts represented the sea and the land but '...the third part thereof... to which the priests were not admitted, is, as it were, a heaven peculiar to God' (*Ant.* 3.181). *Thus the veil which screened the holy of holies was also the boundary between earth and heaven.* Josephus was writing at the very end of the second temple period, but texts such as Psalm 11 'The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven', suggest that the holy of holies was thought to be heaven at a much earlier period, and the LXX of Isaiah 6, which differs from the Hebrew, implies

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<sup>1</sup> The hanging at the entrance to the holy of holies is *paroket* (LXX and Philo *katapetasma*) distinguished from the hanging at the entrance to the tabernacle *masak* (LXX *epispastron*, Philo *kalumma*).

<sup>2</sup> There was a debate after the temple had been destroyed as to whether there had been a veil in the first temple, as *m. Yoma* describes the high priest walking between the curtains to reach the ark: 'To what are we referring here? If it be to the first sanctuary, was there then a curtain? Again, if the second, was there then an ark?'

that the *hekhal* was the earth<sup>3</sup>. The Glory of the LORD filled the house in v. 1, and the seraphim sang that the Glory filled the earth , v. 3.

The biblical description of the holy of holies in the first temple is that it was overlaid with fine gold (2 Chron. 3.8) and that it housed 'the golden chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant' (1 Chron. 28.18). Later texts say that Aaron's rod and a pot of manna were kept in the ark, and that the anointing oil was also kept in the holy of holies (*Tosefta Kippurim* 2.15). That is what the writers of the second temple period chose to remember as there were none of these things in the temple of their own time; they had all been hidden away in *the time of Josiah* (*b. Ho-rayoth* 12ab; *b. Kerithoth* 5b).

In the visionary texts, however, the holy of holies is vividly described, suggesting not only that the visionaries knew the holy of holies, but also that they had a particular interest in it. Isaiah saw the throne in the temple with heavenly beings beside it; Enoch entered a second house within the first house, a place of fire where there was a lofty throne surrounded by the hosts of heaven (1 En. 14). The undateable *Similitudes* of Enoch have the same setting: the throne of glory and the hosts of heaven. These images were memories of the cult of the first temple, and it was the visionaries who kept the memory alive: Enoch in the Book of Jubilees is depicted as a priest, burning the incense of the sanctuary (*Jub.* 4.25) and Ezekiel, who saw the chariot, was also a priest (Ezek. 1.3)

*Those who entered the holy of holies were entering heaven.* When Solomon became king, the Chronicler recorded that 'he sat on the throne of the LORD and all the assembly bowed their heads and worshipped the LORD and the king' (1 Chron. 29.20-23). Something similar was said of Moses in later texts when much of the old royal ideology was transferred to him: Ezekiel the tragedian described how a heavenly figure on the summit of Sinai stood up from his throne and gave it to Moses (Eusebius *Preparation of the Gospel* 9.29); Philo said that Moses 'entered into the darkness where God was and was named god and king of the whole nation' (*Moses* 1.158). For both Ezekiel and Philo, this transformation took place on Sinai, one of the many examples of Moses sharing the royal traditions associated with the holy of holies, but there can be no question of this being Hellenistic syncretism as is usually suggested.<sup>4</sup> *Acquiring the titles and status of God and King must be related in some way to the Chronicler's description of Solomon's*

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<sup>3</sup> LXX Isa. 6.1 reads: '...the house was filled with his glory', anticipating the angelic song, v. 3, 'the whole earth is full of his glory. By implication, the house is the earth.

<sup>4</sup> W.A. Meeks 'Moses as God and King', in *Religions in Antiquity. Essays in Memory of E.R. Goodenough*. Ed. J. Neusner Leiden 1970 p. 371 '...an elaborate cluster of traditions of Moses' heavenly enthronement at the time of the Sinai theophany... closely connected with Scripture but at the same time thoroughly syncretistic.' See also n. 38.

*coronation*, and to the psalmist's description of the procession into the sanctuary, when he saw his God and his King (Ps. 68.24).

Other texts imply that a transformation took place in the holy of holies: those who entered heaven became divine. Philo said that when the high priest entered the holy of holies *he was not a man*. We read Leviticus 16.17 as: 'there shall be no man in the holy of holies when he (Aaron) enters to make atonement...' but Philo translated it: 'When the high priest enters the Holy of Holies he shall not be a man', showing, he said, that the high priest was more than human (*On Dreams* 2.189). In 2 Enoch there is an account of how Enoch was taken to stand before the heavenly throne. Michael was told to remove his earthly clothing, anoint him and give him the garments of glory; 'I looked at myself, and I had become like one of his glorious ones' (2 En. 22.10). This bears a strong resemblance Zechariah 3, where Joshua the high priest stands before the LORD, is vested with new garments and given the right to stand in the presence of the LORD. As late as the sixth century Cosmas Indicopleustes, an Egyptian Christian, wrote a great deal about the temple and its symbolism, and we shall have cause to consider his evidence at several points. Of Moses he said: the LORD hid him in a cloud on Sinai, took him out of all earthly things 'and begot him anew like a child in the womb' (Cosmas *Christian Topography* 3.13), clearly the same as Psalm 2; 'I have set my king on Zion... You are my son. Today I have begotten you' but using the imagery of reclothing with heavenly garments, rather than rebirth.

The best known example of such a transformation text is in the Book of Revelation. The vision begins in the *hekhal* where John sees the heavenly figure and the seven lamps, originally the menorah. Then he is invited to enter the holy of holies; a voice says: 'Come up hither and I will show you what must take place after this' (Rev. 4.1). He sees the throne and the Lamb approaching the throne. Once the Lamb has taken the scroll *he is worshipped by the elders in the sanctuary and then becomes identified with the One on the throne*. Throughout the remainder of the book, the One on the throne and the Lamb are treated as one, with singular verbs. The Lamb has become divine<sup>5</sup>.

The veil was the boundary between earth and heaven. Josephus and Philo agree that the four different colours from which it was woven represented the four elements from which the world was created: earth, air, fire and water. The scarlet thread represented fire, the blue was the air, the purple was the sea, that is, water, and the white linen represented the earth in which the flax had grown (*War* 5.212-213). In other words, *the veil represented matter*. The high priest wore a vestment woven from the same four colours and this is why the Book of Wisdom says that Aaron's robe represented the whole world

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<sup>5</sup> The singular nature of the two is seen clearly at Rev. 22.3-4; the MSS at 6.17 are ambiguous, but the singular identity is implicit at 7.9-10; 20.6; 21.22; 22.1.

(*Wisd.* 18.24; also Philo *Laws* 1.84; *Flight* 110). He took off this robe when he entered the holy of holies because the robe was the visible form of one who entered the holy of holies. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, which explores the theme of Jesus as the high priest, there is the otherwise enigmatic line: his flesh was the veil of the temple (Heb. 10.20). In other words, the veil was matter which made visible whatever passed through it from the world beyond the veil. Those who shed the earthly garments, on the other side of the veil, were robed in garments of glory. In other words, they became divine.

The age of these ideas of apotheosis beyond the veil of the temple or on Sinai is a matter of some importance for understanding the religion of Israel and the origin of Christianity. They are unlikely to be simply the result of Hellenistic syncretism because whoever wrote Exodus 34 knew that when Moses came down from Sinai his face was shining. He had become one of the glorious ones, because he had been with God and his face had to be covered by a veil<sup>6</sup>.

When Philo described the apotheosis of Moses on Sinai he said that he entered the darkness where God was; ‘...the unseen, invisible, incorporeal, and archetypal essence of all existing things and he beheld what is hidden from the sight of mortal nature’ (*Moses* 1.158). This is what the Qumran texts describe as the *raz nihyeh*, (4Q300, 417), what 1 Peter describes as ‘the things into which angels long to look’ (1 Pet. 1.12). Elsewhere Philo explained that this invisible world was made on the first day of the creation

...a beautiful copy would never be produced apart from a beautiful pattern... so when God willed to create this visible world he first fully formed the intelligible (i.e. invisible) world in order that he might have the use of a pattern wholly God-like and incorporeal in producing the material world as a later creation, the very image of the earlier (Creation 16)

This description of the two creations, the invisible creation which was the pattern for the visible is usually said to be Philo retelling the Genesis account in terms derived from

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<sup>6</sup> In later texts, only the Prince of the Divine Presence passes within the veil, b. Yoma 77a, cf. Clement of Alexandria Excerpts from Theodotus 38: ‘(The fiery place of the throne) has a veil in order that things may not be destroyed by the sight of it. Only the archangel enters in, and to typify this, the high priest every year enters the holy of holies’; and 3 En. 22B.6: ‘The glorious king covers his face, otherwise the heaven or Arabot would burst open in the middle, because of the glorious brilliance, beautiful brightness, lovely splendour, and radiant praises of the appearance of the Holy One, Blessed by He.’ The Targum to Job 26.9 is similar. See also ‘The Measures of God’s Glory in Ancient Midrash’ in *Messiah and Christos. Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity* presented to David Flussner. Ed. I. Gruenwald, S. Shaked, G. Stroumsa Tübingen 1992 pp. 53-74 esp. pp. 55-60 where he discusses the veil as the cover for ‘the measure of God’s glory’ which he suggests is a reference to some esoteric knowledge.

Plato, but this I doubt. Philo was from a priestly family<sup>7</sup>, and it is not impossible that he was giving the traditional explanation of the creation stories which owed nothing to Plato.

When familiar texts and habits of reading are questioned, interesting possibilities present themselves. What, for example, were the *forms (surot)* of the *`elohim* and the *forms of glory* in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (4Q405 19)? M. Idel has suggested that these *forms of glory* are evidence for reconstructing the oldest Jewish mystical traditions<sup>8</sup>, that these forms in the sanctuary were an part of the priestly world view. Perhaps they occur also in Psalm 85, where Righteousness looks down from heaven, and in Psalm 89 where Righteousness, Justice, Steadfast love and Faithfulness are the LORD's attendants. Is the language of personification any longer appropriate?

There are also the many occasions when the divine title *sur* might not mean Rock but some word indicating the heavenly form. In Isaiah 44.8 for example, where 'Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock', is followed immediately by an attack on idols and images. The reference here is more likely to be to *the form* and its copy, than to a Rock and then an idol. More or less contemporary with this is Deuteronomy's emphatic denial that any form of the LORD, *ʿemunah*, was seen at Horeb: 'You heard the sound of words but saw no form' (Deut. 4.12), an indication of how this understanding of form might have been lost. Other examples of *sur* are: Deut. 32.4,15,18,31 where the context is fatherhood, 'the rock that begot you' or comparison with other gods 'they scoffed at the Rock... and stirred him to jealousy with strange gods'; Ps. 73.26, where the context is a sanctuary vision of judgement on the wicked and the psalmist expresses confidence in the Rock in heaven; also Pss 28.1; 89.26; 95.1 and Hab. 1.12; in none of which is 'rock' represented in the LXX.

There are also the expressions characteristic of the visionary texts: what did Ezekiel mean when he said he had seen the likeness, *dʿmut*, of the living creatures, the 'likeness' of the throne, the 'likeness' of a man? Or the Chronicler when he wrote of the plan, *tabnit*, for the temple which was revealed to David (1 Chron. 28.19). A plan, *tabnit*, for the tabernacle was revealed to Moses on Sinai, (Exod. 25.9,40). and the LORD comforted Zion by reminding her that the city was engraved on his hands, its walls were ever before him (Isa. 49.16).

And what is meant by *mashal*? It can be understood as a parable or as a proverb. The 'Parables' of Enoch, however, are visions. When he sees the stars and their movements and then asks the angel: 'What are these?' and the angel replies: 'The LORD has shown

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<sup>7</sup> According to Jerome *On Illustrious Men* 11.

<sup>8</sup> Fishbane, see n. 6 above, pp 64-66, discussing the work of M. Idel that the *surot* in 4Q 405 19 are early evidence for mysticism, and his own suggestion that *sur* and *dʿmut* referred to the man on the throne.

you their parable, they are the holy who dwell on the earth'(1 En. 43.4). He is taught about the correspondence between earth and heaven. Job 38.33 has a similar meaning. Jesus' parables give the other side of the picture; he teaches what the Kingdom of heaven *is like* by using everyday stories and images.

These are all facets of the forms and their copies: the language of the visionaries, the undoubtedly ancient belief in a heavenly archetype of the temple, and the parable/proverb. In another context, for example the writings of Philo, this would be identified with some confidence as the influence of Plato's forms and their copies, but the age of the material in the Old Testament excludes that possibility. Since Philo was of a priestly family, perhaps his treatment of the creation stories, the creation of the invisible world beyond the veil of the temple and then the visible world as its copy, is not an example of the Platonising of Hellenistic Judaism but rather a glimpse of the ancient priestly world view even at the end of the second temple period.

*The holy of holies was also beyond time. To enter was to enter eternity.* Philo says that the veil 'separated the changeable parts of the world... from the heavenly region which is without transient events and is unchanging (Questions on Exodus 2.91). The best known example of a timeless experience is the vision of Jesus in the wilderness when he was taken to a high place and saw 'all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time' (Luke 4.5). In the Apocalypse of Abraham the patriarch was taken up to heaven where he saw the stars far below him (*Ap. Abr.* 20.3). The Eternal One then said to him: 'Look now beneath your feet at the firmament and understand the creation that was depicted of old on this expanse...' (*Ap. Abr.* 21.1). Abraham sees the firmament as a screen on which the history of his people is revealed to him. The detail which links this experience of the firmament to the holy of holies is to be found in 3 Enoch, an undateable text which describes how R. Ishmael the high priest ascended to heaven. Now Rabbi Ishmael lived after the temple had been destroyed and cannot have been a high priest, and the versions of 3 Enoch which we have were compiled long after that. Nevertheless, the association of ascent, high priesthood and the sanctuary experience persisted, and thus we find here in 3 Enoch the explanation of the vision described in the Apocalypse of Abraham. The firmament on which Abraham saw the history of his people was the veil.

In 3 Enoch, R. Ishmael ascended to heaven and met Metatron, the great angel who in his earthly life had been Enoch, and who became his guide:

Metatron said to me: Come, I will show you the veil of the All Present One, which is spread before the Holy One, blessed be He, and on which are printed all the generations of the world and all their deeds, whether done or yet to be done, until the last generation. I went with him and he

pointed them out to me with his fingers, like after teaching his son (3 En. 45)<sup>9</sup>

The visionary saw history depicted on the veil, on the other side, so to speak, of matter and time. This probably explains the experience of Habakkuk, centuries earlier, who stood on the tower, a common designation for the holy of holies<sup>10</sup>, and saw there 'a vision of the future, it awaits its time, it hastens to the end,... it will surely come it, will not delay' (Hab. 2.2-3). He recorded what he saw on tablets.

Enoch has the fullest account of history seen in the holy of holies. Three angels who had emerged from heaven took Enoch up to a *tower* raised high above the earth and there he saw all history revealed before him, from the fall of the angels to the last judgement (1 En 87.3). When history was revealed to Moses, however, it was on Sinai, according to the account in Jubilees. He was told: Write down for yourself all the matters which I shall make known to you to on this mountain: what was in the beginning and what will be at the end and what will happen in all the divisions of the days... until I shall descend and dwell with them in all the ages of eternity (*Jub.* 1.26). According to this account, Moses did not see a vision; the story was dictated to him by the angel of the presence and he learned of history only up to his own time. 2 Baruch, on the other hand, says that Moses on Sinai received a vision rather than instruction and that it included knowledge about the future. He showed him... 'the end of time... the beginning of the day of judgement... worlds that have not yet come' (2 Bar. 59.4-10 cf. 2 Esdr. 14.4). Something similar was said of Jesus by the early Christian writers Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria and Origen: that he was the high priest who had passed through the curtain and revealed the secrets of the past, the present and the future<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> See also the *Ascension of Isaiah* 10-11 where Isaiah in heaven sees the whole history of the incarnation; and b. Sanhedrin 38b 'the Holy One... showed Adam every generation.'

<sup>10</sup> 1 En. 89.73 describes the sanctuary of the second temple as a tower before which impure bread was offered. The *Assumption of Moses* 2.4 reads: 'The court of his tabernacle and the tower of his sanctuary...' An interpretation of Isa. 5 in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, attributed to R. Yosi reads; 'He built a tower in the midst of his vineyard... this is his sanctuary *Tosefta Sukkah* 3.15. This passed into Christian usage e.g. Hermas, *Parables* 3.2.4; 9.3.1. The Son of God is LORD of the tower *Parables* 9.7.1.

<sup>11</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Philippians* 9: 'To Jesus alone as our high priest were the secret things of God committed; Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 6.7: '...the knowledge of things present, past and future revealed by the son of God; *ibid.* 7.17: '...the true tradition came from the LORD by drawing aside the curtain...'; Origen *Celsus* 3.37: 'Jesus beheld these weighty secrets and made them known to a few'. Also my 'The Secret Tradition' in JHC 2.1 (1995) pp.31-67.

History seen in the sanctuary, whether this was described as a tower or as Sinai, was history seen outside the limitations of space and time *and this explains why histories in the apocalyptic writings are surveys not only of the past but also of the future as everything was depicted on the veil.*

Those who passed through the veil also *passed into the first day of creation* as the building of the tabernacle was said to correspond to the days of creation. Again, the evidence for this belief is relatively late, but given the cultural context of the first temple, it is not unlikely. Solomon's kingdom was surrounded by cultures which linked the story of creation to the erection of temples<sup>12</sup>, and there are canonical texts which could be explained in this way. Various attempts have been made to relate the commands given to Moses and the account of the seven days in Genesis 1. One was that the gathering of the waters on the third day corresponded to making the bronze sea, and making the great lights on the fourth day corresponded to making the menorah. The birds of the fifth day corresponded to the cherubim with their wings and the man on the sixth day was the high priest<sup>13</sup>. It is more satisfactory to keep the traditional order for creating the tabernacle: tent, veil, table, lamp, and link this to the first four days of creation. The earth and seeds of the third day would then be represented by the table where bread was offered and the great lights of the fourth day by the menorah<sup>14</sup>.

*There is no disagreement, however, over the correspondence between the first and second days of creation and the first two stages of making the tabernacle.* The LORD told

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<sup>12</sup> For a summary and bibliography of these traditions in Canaan, Mesopotamia and later Jewish sources, see M. Weinfeld 'Sabbath, Temple and Enthronement of the LORD. The problem of the Sitz in Leben of Genesis 1.1-23' *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*, ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981, pp. 501-512; J. D. Levenson *Creation and the Persistence of Evil. The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* Harper San Francisco 1988 pp. 78-79; N Wyatt 'Les Mythes des Dioscures et Ideologie Royale dans les Littatures d'Ougarit et d'Israel, *Revue Biblique* 1996 pp. 481-516.

<sup>13</sup> *Midrash Tanhuma* 11.2. See also J. Blenkinsopp 'The Structure of P' *CBQ* 38 (1976) pp. 275-292. Levenson op. cit. n. 12 pp. 78-99. P.J. Kearney 'Creation and Liturgy. The P redaction of Ex.25-40' in *ZAW* 89 (1977) pp. 375-387, who worked out one possible scheme of correspondences between the seven days of creation and the construction of the tabernacle, based on the LORD's speeches to Moses in Exod. 25-31. F.H. Gorman 'Priestly Rituals of Founding: Time Space and Status' in *History and Interpretation* ed. M.P. Graham, Sheffield Academic Press 1993 pp. 47-64 recognises that the summary in Exod. 40.16-38 is the clearest link between creation and tabernacle, but does not work out how each day corresponds to each part of the tabernacle.

<sup>14</sup> None of the material cited in nn. 13,14 makes the link between the traditional order for the construction of the tabernacle and the order of the days of creation.



Moses to begin erecting the tabernacle on the first day of the first month (Exod. 40. 2). In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and on the first day Moses set up the outer covering, the basic structure of the tabernacle (Exod. 40.17-19). On the second day, God made the firmament and called it heaven and on the second day Moses set up the veil and screened the ark (Exod. 40.20-21). This implies that those who passed beyond the veil and entered the sanctuary entered the first day of creation, a curious idea, but one for which there is much evidence, and one that explains how the firmament separating heaven and earth was also the temple veil on which history was depicted in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*: 'Look now beneath your feet at the firmament and understand the creation... and the creatures that are in it and the age prepared after it...' (*Ap. Abr.* 21.1-2)

The tabernacle and all its furnishings were also believed to be a copy of what Moses had seen on Sinai: 'See that you make them after the pattern which is being shown you on the mountain' (Exod. 25.9,40). The Chronicler said that the temple was built according to a heavenly revelation received by David (1 Chron. 28.19), another example of the similarity between Moses traditions and those of the royal cult. The verses in Exodus do not actually say that Moses saw a *heavenly tabernacle* which was to be the pattern, *tabnit*, for the tabernacle he had to build, but some later texts do assume this. Solomon in the Book of Wisdom says he was commanded to build a temple, 'a copy of the holy tent which was prepared from the beginning' (Wisdom 9.8), and 2 Baruch lists what Moses saw on Sinai and includes the pattern of Zion and the sanctuary (2 Bar. 59.4). Given the importance of the subject matter, there are surprisingly few references to the heavenly sanctuary that Moses saw on Sinai<sup>15</sup>.

The other two aspects of the tradition, that the temple was a microcosm of the creation and that its construction corresponded to the days of creation suggest that what Moses saw on Sinai was not a heavenly tabernacle but rather, *a vision of the creation which the tabernacle was to replicate*. This would account for Philo's observation that the tabernacle 'was a copy of the world, the universal temple which existed before the holy temple existed' (Questions on Exodus 2.85), and for the curious line in the Letter to the Hebrews, that the temple on earth 'is a shadow and copy of heavenly things' (Heb. 8.5). A

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<sup>15</sup> M.E. Stone 'Lists of the Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature' in *Magnalia Dei; the Mighty Acts of God. In Memory of G.E. Wright* ed. Cross, Lemke and Miller, New York 1976 pp. 414-452: 'This interest in the measures of Zion seems curiously unstressed in the apocryphal and Rabbinic literatures,' p. 415. Ezekiel did see the temple in his vision Ezek. 40-48.

heavenly temple is not mentioned in this verse even though some translations insert the word *temple* at this point, e.g. R.S.V<sup>16</sup>.

The idea that Moses on Sinai had a vision of the creation finds its clearest expression in the writings of Cosmas, the sixth century Egyptian Christian. He explained that the earth was rectangular and constructed like a huge tent because Moses had been commanded to build the tabernacle as a copy of the whole creation which he had been shown on Sinai. This is what he wrote:

When Moses had come down from the mountain he was ordered by God to make the tabernacle, which was a representation of what he had seen on the mountain, namely, an impress of the whole world.

The creation Moses had seen was divided into two parts:

Since therefore it had been shown him how God made the heaven and the earth, and how on the second day he made the firmament in the middle between them, and thus made the one place into two places, so Moses, in like manner, in accordance with the pattern which he had seen, made the tabernacle and placed the veil in the middle and by this division made the one tabernacle into two, the inner and the outer (Cosmas 2.35)

The Book of Jubilees has a similar tradition; that Moses on Sinai learned about the creation from the Angel of the Presence. Jubilees does not link Moses' vision to the tabernacle and so cannot have been Cosmas' only source, even supposing that he knew it at all<sup>17</sup>. The sequence in Jubilees is the same as in Genesis 1, except that Jubilees gives far more detail about Day One, the secrets of the holy of holies. There are seven works on Day One: heaven, earth, the waters, the abyss, darkness and light- all of which can be deduced from Genesis- and then the ministering angels, who are not mentioned in Genesis<sup>18</sup>. These angels of Day One are the spirits of the weather: wind, clouds, snow,

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<sup>16</sup> Blenkinsopp op. cit. n. 13 shows how P relates the creation of the world, the construction of the sanctuary and the division of the land, p. 278. We should not forget that Gen. 1 is attributed to Moses insofar as he was the 'author' of the Pentateuch.

<sup>17</sup> R. Devreesse *Essai sur Theodore de Mopsueste, Studi e Testi* 141 Vatican City 1948 p. 26n. finds similar ideas in Theodore's work on Exodus, written early in the fifth century.

<sup>18</sup> R.H. Charles *The Book of Jubilees* London A&C Black 1902, p. 11. The angels were variously said to have been created, not begotten, on the second day or the fifth. On the basis of Ps. 104, R. Johanan taught that they were created on the second day because the LORD formed the firmament in v. 3 and the angels in v. 4. R. Hanina said on the fifth day because they were winged creatures. *Gen. R.* 1.3: 'Whether we accept the view of either... all agree that none were created on the first day, lest you should say Michael stretched out in the south and Gabriel in the north, while the Holy One, Blessed by he, measured it in the middle [quoting Isa.

hail frost, thunder and lightning, cold and heat; they are the spirits of the seasons and also 'all of the spirits of his creatures which are in heaven and on earth' (Jub. 2.2). The angels who witness these works of the first day 'praise and bless the LORD'<sup>19</sup>. A similar account occurs in the Song of the Three Children; before inviting the earth and everything created after the second day to *praise the LORD and exalt him for ever*, there is a long list of the works of the Day One: the heavens, the angels, the waters above the heavens, the powers, the stars, the rain, dew, winds, fire, heat, summer and winter, ice and cold, frost and snow, lightnings and clouds, *the phenomena whose angels praise the LORD on Day One according to Jubilees*. The angels of day One were a sensitive issue. Later Jewish tradition gave the seven works of Day One as heaven and earth, darkness and light, waters and the abyss, and then the winds, whereas Jubilees has the angels.

It has long been accepted<sup>20</sup> that Genesis 1 is a reworking of older material and is related to other accounts of creation known in the Ancient Near East. One of the main elements to have been removed is any account of the birth of the gods, even though Genesis 2.1-4 retains traces of the older account: 'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them... These are the generations of the heavens and the earth.' In Job 38.7<sup>21</sup>, however, we still read of the sons of God who shouted for joy on the first day of creation when the foundations of the earth were laid, and *sons of God* implies that they were begotten, not created. The rest of Job 38 describes the works of Day One: the boundary for the waters, the gates of deep darkness, the storehouses of snow and hail, wind, rain and ice, the pattern of the stars. And the point of all this is to ask Job: 'Where were you when all this was done?' a strange question for the LORD to ask Job unless there was a known tradition of someone who witnessed the work of creation and thus

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44.24] Who was associated with me in the creation of the world?' *Targum Ps. J. Gen. 1.26*: 'And the LORD said to the angels who ministered before him, who had been created on the second day of the creation, let us make man.' If the secret knowledge of the sanctuary included the birth of the angels i.e. the gods of Day One (and also of the king?), this suggests that the material antedates the reforming monotheism of the Deuteronomists. See my book *The Great Angel* London SPCK 1992. This is consistent with my proposal for the meaning of *sur* in the passages connected with divine fatherhood, namely, that they were deliberately obscured and removed.

<sup>19</sup> See also 1QH 6 (formerly 1), 1QH 17 (formerly 13), for similar themes and the *raz nihyeh* of 4Q 417.

<sup>20</sup> Since H. Gunkel *Schpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* Göttingen 1895

<sup>21</sup> Wyatt op. cit. n. 12 shows that Ps. 8.4 also describes the birth of the sons of God.

became wise<sup>22</sup>. There is a similar pattern in Job 26: wisdom and knowledge are part of the issue, and Job speaks of God stretching out the north over the void, *tohu*, binding up the waters, rebuking the pillars of heaven and 'covering his throne', v. 9, usually emended to 'covering the moon'.<sup>23</sup> 'Covering the throne' is not usually associated with the process of creation, unless the reference is to the veil which screened the sanctuary and did in fact cover the throne. Wisdom, as the serpent in Eden had said, made humans divine, exactly what happened to those who entered the sanctuary and, by implication, witnessed the creation.

Enoch, the high priest figure who entered the holy of holies, did know about these things; in 2 Enoch he is taken to stand before the throne in heaven, anointed and transformed into an angel. Then he is shown the great secrets of the creation. The account is confused, but closely related to the account in Genesis even though some of the details seem to be drawn from Egyptian mythology. Enoch is enthroned next to Gabriel and shown how the LORD created the world, beginning with heaven, earth and sea, the movement of the stars, the seasons, the winds and the angels (2 En. 23). He sees Day One. *Enthronement* is an important and recurring feature of these texts and another indication of their origin<sup>24</sup>. It is significant that the sanctuary hymn in Revelation 4.11 is about enthronement and creation:

Worthy art thou our LORD and God  
to receive glory and honour and power,  
for thou didst create all things  
and by thy will they existed and were created.

In the Parables, Enoch stands in the holy of holies before the throne and learns about the hidden things, 'the secrets of the heavens' (1 En. 41.1), the works of Day One: the holy ones, the lightning and thunder, the winds clouds and dew, *'the cloud that hovers over the earth from the beginning of the world'*, the various stars in their orbits with their

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<sup>22</sup> B. Lang *Eugen Drewermann interprete de la Bible* Paris Cerf 1994 p. 167, developed in 'Lady Wisdom. A Polytheistic and Psychological Interpretation of a Biblical Goddess' in *A Feminist Companion to the Bible* ed. A. Brenner and C. Fontaine Sheffield Academic Press 1997 suggests that the wise man was initiated by studying the myth of creation and then being reborn as a divine child in the presence of Wisdom who showed him the creation. Also Wyatt op. cit. n. 12 on Job 15.7-8 and Ps. 110.

<sup>23</sup> MT and LXX have here 'face of the throne, but an emendation to 'face of the moon is usually proposed, by reading *keseh* rather than *kisseh*.

<sup>24</sup> Wyatt op. cit. n. 12; also Weinfeld op. cit. n. 12 p. 507.

names. Josephus says that the Essenes undertook *to preserve the books of the sect and the names of the angels* (War 2 142)<sup>25</sup>.

The fullest account of this material is in 1 Enoch 60 where the angel shows Enoch the hidden things: 'What is first and last in heaven in the height, and beneath the earth in the depth, and at the ends of the heaven and at the foundation of the heaven.' He then sees the winds, the moon and stars, thunders and lightnings, the angels of hail and frost, dew, mist and clouds. Later he sees the great oath which establishes the creation and binds all its elements into their appointed places (1 En. 69.16-25). The very earliest Enoch material describes how he sees the works of Day One; on his first heavenly journey, Enoch learns about the stars, thunder and lightning, the place of great darkness, the mouth of the deep, the winds, the cornerstone of the earth and the firmament of heaven, the paths of the angels and the firmament of heaven at the end of the earth (1 En. 18). In the Apocalypse of Weeks, another early text embedded in 1 Enoch, there is an expansion after the description of the seventh week. At the end of the seventh week, the chosen righteous ones were to receive sevenfold i.e. *heavenly* knowledge about all the creation: they would behold the works of heaven, understand the things of heaven, ascend to see the end of the heaven and know the length and breadth of the earth and its measurements, they would know the length and height of heaven, its foundations, the stars and where they rest. (1 En. 93. 11-14). It is interesting the R.H. Charles in his edition of 1 Enoch says that these verses are 'completely out of place in their present context.'<sup>26</sup>

What Job had not seen, Enoch saw in the holy of holies. There is not just one isolated example of such a vision of creation; it is a recurring theme throughout the entire compendium of texts. And what Enoch saw in the holy of holies, Moses, as we should expect, has seen on Sinai. According to 2 Baruch, Moses saw: 'the measures of fire, the depths of the abyss, the weight of the winds, the number of the raindrops,... the height of the air, the greatness of Paradise,... the mouth of hell... the multitude of angels which cannot be counted... the splendour of lightnings, the power of the thunders, the orders of

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<sup>25</sup> The names of the angels were a part of the secret knowledge. The names, as recovered from the Aramaic, 'were for the most part derived from astronomical, meteorological and geographical terms', J.T. Milik *The Books of Enoch Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* Oxford 1976 p. 29. In other words, their names reflected their functions as the angels of Day One: Fire of El, Thunder of El, Comet of El, Lightning of El, Rain of El, Cloud of El etc.

<sup>26</sup> R.H. Charles *The Book of Enoch* Oxford 1912, p. 231: 'The verses are completely out of place in the present context', citing several eminent scholars who had drawn the same conclusion. They had not made the link between the sevenfold knowledge, the resurrected ones and the secrets of creation. For a better understanding see Stone op. cit. n. 15 pp. 424-425.

the archangels and the treasuries of the light... ' (2 Bar. 59.1-12)<sup>27</sup>. When Ezra asks about the LORD's future plans for his people, he is assured that the One who planned all things would also see them to their end. Everything had been decided 'before the winds blew and the thunder sounded and the lightning shone, before the foundations of paradise were laid and the angels were gathered together, before the heights of the air were lifted up and the measures of the firmaments were named, before the present years were reckoned' (2 Esdr. 6.1-6). Ezra is told that everything was planned in the holy of holies, before time.

The speaker in Proverbs 8 also saw the works of Day One. The speaker was begotten<sup>28</sup> before the mountains, the hills and the earth, and was with the Creator when he established the heavens and the fountains of the deep and when he set limits to the waters and marked out the foundations of the earth. *This chapter emphasises that the speaker was witness to the works of Day One.* The one who was newly born witnessed the creation, exactly what Cosmas, many centuries later, said of Moses.

Then having taken him up into the mountain, he hid him in a cloud and took him out of all earthly things... and he gave him a new birth as if he were a child in the womb... and revealed to him all that he had done in making the world in six days, showing him in six other days the making of

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<sup>27</sup> There are similar traditions about Adam; 'The LORD showed him the pattern of Zion before he sinned' 2 Bar. 4.3. Jer. 4.23-28 implies a similar experience.

<sup>28</sup> LXX and Targums have 'created' for Hebrew qnh. Evidence for qnh meaning create rather than acquire see C Westermann *Genesis 1-11 A Commentary* tr. J.J. Scullion London 1984 p. 290. For the contrary view see R.N. Whybray *Proverbs* London 1994 pp. 129-130. More likely than 'created' is 'begotten', cf. 'brought forth' Prov. 8.24,25. She was established, v. 23, cf. Ps. 2.6, where the king is 'established' on the holy hill, but another possibility is that nskty here should be read as 'I was hidden' from skk, see W. McKane *Proverbs* London 1970. Wisdom brought forth and hidden i.e. behind the veil, is possible in the context.

Deutero-Isaiah changed the older divine title 'Begetter of Heaven and Earth' as in Gen. 14.9, and substituted 'Maker or Creator of Heaven and Earth', see N. Habel 'Yahweh, Maker of heaven and Earth. A Study in Tradition Criticism' *JBL* 91 (1972) pp. 321-337.

In my book *The Great Angel* London 1992 I suggested that Deutero-Isaiah and the exilic reformers fused the older deities El and Yahweh, thus establishing monotheism, and at the same time they suppressed the older mythology of the sons of God. '(Deutero-Isaiah) removed the idea that the Creator God was the Procreator, the Father of gods and men... The idea of a procreator God with sons seems to have fallen out of favour with those who equated Yahweh with El...' p. 19. This is further evidence that the sons of God of Day One were part of the tradition of the first temple and suggests the reason for their disappearance.

the world, performing in his presence the work of each day.... (Cosmas 3.13)<sup>29</sup>

Later mystics describe a similar experience. Jacob Boehme, for example, a seventeenth century German mystic, described a similar experience of learning everything in an instant, and of being a child:

'Thus now I have written, not from the instruction of knowledge received from men, nor from the learning or reading of books, but I have written out of my own book which was opened in me, being the noble similitude of God, the book of the noble and precious image was bestowed on me to read, and therein I have studied as a child in the house of its mother, which beholdeth what the father doth and in his childlike way doth imitate the father.

... the gate was opened to me in that one quarter of an hour. I saw and knew more than if I had been many years together at university... and I knew not how it happened to me... for I saw and knew the Being of all Beings... the descent and original of this world and of all creatures through divine wisdom...<sup>30</sup>

Philo describes the works of Day One as the invisible and incorporeal world. 'First the maker made an incorporeal heaven and an invisible earth and the essential form of air and void' (*Creation* 29). That was Day One in Genesis. After a lengthy discussion, Philo describes the second day: 'The incorporeal cosmos was finished... and the world apprehended by the senses was ready to be born after the pattern of the incorporeal. And first of its parts the Creator proceeded to make the heaven which... he called the firmament' (*Creation* 36). In other words, everything made on or after the second day was part of the visible world but the works of Day One were beyond matter, beyond the veil. Elsewhere, Philo confirms this by saying that Moses entered this 'unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things and saw what was hidden from mortal sight' when he entered God's presence to be made God and King (*Moses* 1.158). On the third day, says Philo, the creator began 'to put the earth in order' (*Creation* 40)

Beyond the veil of the temple was the holy of holies with the heavenly throne, the invisible world and Day One of creation. The LXX translator of Genesis knew this and so

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<sup>29</sup> The figure present at the creation became the Torah in later tradition. Thus six things preceded the creation of the (visible) world: the Torah, the throne of Glory, and the plans for the patriarchs, Israel, the temple and the Name of the Messiah *Gen. R.* 1.4.

<sup>30</sup> For recent discussion of possible influences on translators see J. Dines 'Imaging Creation: the Septuagint Tradition of Genesis 1.2' in *Heythrop Journal* 36.4 (1995) pp. 439-350.

chose to render the enigmatic *tohu wabohu* (Gen. 1.2) by 'unseen' and 'unsorted', reminiscent of Plato's description of the unseen world of ideas, and this has been suggested as a possible influence on the translators<sup>31</sup>. But Plato's account of creation, especially in the *Timaeus*, is itself of uncertain origin and the question of who influenced whom must remain open.<sup>32</sup>

Knowledge of these secrets gave power over the creation and this is probably why there are several texts which forbid access to certain matters. There is a line in the Gospel of Philip, now thought to be a first or second generation Christian text: 'The veil at first concealed how God controlled the creation.' In the *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan* we find (A39): 'Because of sin it was not given to man to know the likeness (*d<sup>e</sup>mut*) on high; for were it not for this (sin) all the keys would be given to him and he would know how the heavens and the earth were created...' <sup>33</sup>

Best known must be the prohibitions in the *Mishnah* restricting the reading of both the story of creation and Ezekiel's description of the chariot, on the grounds that one should not think about 'what is above, what is below, what was before time and what will be hereafter' (*m. Hag. 2.1*)<sup>34</sup>. What the Creation and the Chariot have in common is that they both belong to the world beyond the veil, the timeless place which also revealed the past and the future. Some centuries earlier than the *Mishnah* is the warning in Ben Sira: 'Seek not what is too difficult for you, nor investigate what is beyond your power. Reflect upon what has been assigned to you, for you do not need what is hidden' (Ben Sira 3.21-22). We are not told what the hidden things were. Earlier still, and most significant of all, is the prohibition in Deuteronomy: 'The secret things belong to the LORD our God: but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children' (Deut. 29.29). Secrets

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<sup>31</sup> Letter to an Enquirer' in R. Waterfield *Jacob Boehme: Essential Readings* Wellingborough Aquarian Press 1989 pp. 65-66.

<sup>32</sup> It is frequently observed by commentators that Plato introduces wholly new ideas of creation with a purpose and without the jealous gods of the Prometheus myth, e.g. F.C. Cornford *Plato's Cosmology* London 1937 pp. 31-33. For the first time the world is described as the creation of a father, maker or craftsman and the stars are held to be divine, D. Lee *Plato, Timaeus and Critias* London Penguin 1977 pp. 7-8.

<sup>33</sup> Fishbane op. cit. n. 5 discusses Sifre Deut. 355 when Israel asked Moses to tell them about the glory on high, requesting esoteric knowledge that had not been revealed to them. Moses said: 'You may know about the glory on high from the lower heavens' and there follows a parable about the great king hidden behind a jewelled curtain.

The mystic's instant acquisition of knowledge is well known, see n. 29 and text above.

<sup>34</sup> Neusner translates the corresponding passage in *Tosefta Hagigah*: 'above, below, within, beyond'.



are said to exist.<sup>35</sup> It is interesting that such knowledge is still forbidden; the Pope, addressing a group of cosmologists in Rome in 1981, reminded them that science itself could not answer the question of the origin of the universe.<sup>36</sup>

Proverbs 30 must refer to the world beyond the veil of the temple; it links sonship, ascent to heaven, knowledge of the Holy Ones and the works of Day One:

Who has ascended to heaven and come down?

Who has gathered the wind in his fists?

Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment?

Who has established all the ends of the earth? (Prov. 30.4)<sup>37</sup>.

To which Deuteronomy replies: '(This commandment) is not in heaven, that you should say: Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' (Deut. 30.11). Job's arguments were shown to be 'words without knowledge' (Job 38.2) because he had not witnessed the works of Day One.

Most of the detailed evidence for this tradition of the world beyond the veil has been drawn from relatively late texts, but the warnings against secret knowledge suggest that it was a matter of controversy from the beginning of the second temple period. No one text from the later period gives a complete picture, indicating the fragmentation of an earlier corpus rather than the conglomeration of strands which had formerly been separate and even alien<sup>38</sup>.

Early evidence for what I am proposing is to be found in Isaiah 40. This chapter seems to be a conjunction of all the elements of the hidden tradition which can only be reconstructed otherwise from a variety of later sources. The chapter is set in the holy of holies;

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<sup>35</sup> See also 2 Esdr. 14.6, 40-48, that there are 24 public books of Scripture, but 70 others only for the wise, which held the secrets of understanding, wisdom and knowledge. Also my article 'The Secret Tradition' op. cit. n. 11.

<sup>36</sup> *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 73 (1981) 669-670

<sup>37</sup> Wyatt op. cit. n. 12 shows how this passage was part of the royal wisdom tradition. He reconstructs the impossible vv. 2-3 on the basis of the LXX to be: I surpass all men and possess the intelligence of Adam, for God has taught me Wisdom and I know the knowledge of the holy ones. The one who ascends to heaven must be the king who becomes the co-creator, gathering the winds and the waters, and he also becomes divine.

<sup>38</sup> I disagree with Meeks op. cit. n. 2, p. 369: 'We must reckon with the possibility, therefore, that the legends [about Moses] are composites of the strands which at some earlier stage served disparate functions.' The legends had indeed served another purpose, but had been transferred as a whole from the royal tradition.

the prophet hears the voices calling as did Isaiah<sup>39</sup>. The LORD sits 'above the circle of the earth' and 'stretches out the heavens like a curtain'; there is a glimpse of history as 'princes and rulers are brought to nothing'. The LORD 'measures the waters and marks off the heavens with a span...' the weighing and measuring terms which characterise the creation accounts of the sanctuary tradition about Day One. There is reference to enlightenment, knowledge and understanding: 'Who taught him knowledge and showed him the way of understanding?' There is the challenge: 'To whom will you liken God?' a reference to the belief that temple was a copy of what had been seen, followed by derision of the idol which the workman casts 'an image that will not move.' The prophet is told to look at the host of heaven whom the LORD has created and named, a reference to the sensitive issue of the sons of God on Day One. There is the question: 'Why do you say: My way is hidden from the LORD?' And finally, the prophet is reminded of *what he knows because he has been present in the sanctuary to see the works of creation*: 'Have you not known, have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? (Isa. 40.21). It is significant that the Targum understands this as a revelation of the process of creation: 'Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has not *the work of the orders of creation* been announced to you from the beginning?... (T. Isa. 40.21). This is how that passage in Isaiah was understood at the end of the second temple period.

If this reconstruction of the world beyond the veil is correct, it illuminates several issues. First, the mixture of subjects in the apocalyptic texts can be explained: throne visions, lists of the secrets of creation and surveys of history which deal not only with the past but also with the future are *the knowledge given to those who passed beyond the veil of the temple*, the *raz nihyeh* of the Qumran texts. Second, it suggests that the material in the apocalypses originated with the high priests since they were the ones who passed through the veil into the holy of holies. It gives a context for understanding the known priestly writings of the Hebrew scriptures with their concern for measurements and dates, and their conception of history as an unfolding plan<sup>40</sup>. Third, it establishes that this tradition was controversial as early as the exile and invites a closer look at what happened to the temple cult in the seventh century, the process so often described as 'Josiah's reform'. It explains, for example, why the description of the temple in 1 Kings mentions neither the chariot throne nor the veil and why the essential features of the

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<sup>39</sup> Deutero-Isaiah heard voices but, unlike Isaiah, he saw no form as he was influenced by the Deuteronomists cf. Deut 4.12.

<sup>40</sup> Blenkinsopp op. cit. n. 13 esp. pp 275,291: '...beneath (P's) surface one can still make out the contours of an encompassing mythic pattern. It is also possible to interpret the ritualism of P as embodying a concern for man's concrete existence in relation to the cosmos... *his entire existence on the temporal and spatial axis*' (my emphases).

world beyond the temple veil - the cherubim, the anointing oil - were later said to have disappeared from the temple not as a result of the Babylonians but *in the time of Josiah*

If we adopt the widely accepted exilic dating of Isaiah 40, the sanctuary traditions which I have been reconstructing have implications which reach beyond Old Testament study. The early apologists, both Jewish and Christian, maintained that Plato learned from Moses, that he was Moses speaking Attic Greek. The most notable of these was Eusebius of Caesarea, who, in his work *The Preparation of the Gospel*, argued the case in great detail and listed all those who had held such views before him. Eusebius and the other apologists were probably correct.

My reconstruction suggests that the priests of the first temple knew an invisible, heavenly world on which the tabernacle or temple had been modelled; that they spoke of forms: the *form* of a man and the *form* of a throne; that they described the heavens as an embroidered curtain; that they knew the distinction between time, outside the veil, and eternity within it. They knew that time was the moving image of eternity. They knew of angels, the sons of God begotten on Day One, as Job suggests. They concerned themselves with the mathematics of the creation, the weights and the measures. They believed that the creation was bonded together by a great oath or covenant. They believed that the stars were divine beings, angels, and they described a creator whose work was completed not by motion but by Sabbath rest. What I have reconstructed as the secret tradition of the world beyond the temple veil would, *in any other context be identified as Plato's Timaeus*<sup>41</sup>, written in the middle of the fourth century BCE

It is nearly forty years since Ksemann suggested that Apocalyptic, far from being something on the periphery of New Testament study was in fact 'the mother of all Christian theology'<sup>42</sup>, the legitimate development of ideas in the Old Testament. On the basis of my reconstructions, I suggest that the sanctuary traditions which survive in the apocalypses were not the development of ideas in the canonical OT, but their antecedents. The apocalyptic texts were not the original product of a Hellenising, oppressed minority group late in the second temple period, but the repository of Israel's oldest traditions, what I have called *The Older Testament*<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> The passages in *Timaeus* are: the creation is good, 29; the invisible world, 28; the forms, 29, 38, 52; time and eternity 37; angels created first but the story of their origin is not known, 41; the mathematics of creation 53,69; the bond of creation, 31,378; angels as stars 38; resting as the culmination of creation 30.

<sup>42</sup> *Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie* ZTK 57 (1960) pp. 162-185.

<sup>43</sup> My book *The Older Testament. The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity*. London 1987.