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EZEKIEL 1:26 IN JEWISH MYSTICISM AND GNOSIS\*

BY

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Myth and dream can express what discursive reasoning cannot: a certain awareness that God is revealing himself in a symbol, and yet is beyond that imagery. The Eastern Church has admitted this in stating that monks on Mount Athos could behold the uncreated primordial Light, whereas the essence of the deity remained inscrutable.

Hebrews of Antiquity and Cabbalists call this manifestation of the hidden "Un-ground" the *kabod*. The Hebrew word *kabod* means: "weight, glory, splendour." It can be used not only to denote the power and majesty of the Lord in nature and history, but also to describe an outward manifestation of ultimate Reality, seen by a prophet in ecstasy, but invisible to the natural eye.

One of the first to use it in this latter sense was the prophet Ezekiel. His was an extraordinary experience, until then unknown, as it would seem, either in Israel or elsewhere. His eyes had seen the coming of the Glory of the Lord. And possibly it is because this experience was so deeply felt and authentic that his words are so extremely difficult to follow or to visualize.

During the time that he was in exile, far from his native Jerusalem somewhere in Babylonia near the Grand Canal between the Euphrates and the Tigris, in the year 593 before the beginning of the Christian Era, he saw the divine throne approaching the place where he stood. And thereon appeared "the likeness as the appearance of a Man" (*demuth kemareh Adam*). God, when he reveals himself, is like man. He really is Man. Or, rather, his *kabod* is. Ezekiel finds it necessary to formulate this qualification: "This was the appearance of the likeness of the Glory (*kabod*) of the Lord". And for this prophet the manifestation of *kabod* was an experience of light.

This vision of Ezekiel has inspired the greatest of all prophets, the one who is called Deutero-Isaiah and is said to have lived about 550 in exile in Babylonia. At the very beginning of his writing he describes how, at the

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end of time, his people in procession will go through the land of all the nations between Babel and Israel. The *kabod* will precede them and be their rear guard; all the peoples on their way will behold the splendour of this Glory: "the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together" (Is. 40:5). The manifestation of Light was obviously a visionary experience for Isaiah. Everywhere in the Old Testament the *kabod* has the distinctive features of a human form, though of divine majesty.

I am not going out of my way to show that this *demuth kemareh Adam* is identical with the Son of Man of Jewish apocalyptic literature. It is a well known fact that Son of Man, Aramaic *baranash*, means nothing but "man", and designates the eschatological judge of all mankind. Let it suffice here to say that the description of the first chapter of Ezekiel influenced the concept of the Son of Man. The so called first book of Enoch, in part found at Qumran and probably originating in the sect of the Essenes, contains the following passage:

"And there I saw one, who had a head of days, (God),  
And his head was white like wool,

And with him was another being whose countenance had the appearance of a man,  
And his face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels" (46, 1).

There can be no doubt that the words "whose countenance had the appearance of a man" echo the expression "likeness as the appearance of man" in Ezekiel 1:26. In other words, the Son of Man described in this passage is identified by the author of 1 Enoch with the *kabod*, the glorious manifestation of God as Man.

Justin Martyr makes an allusion to Jewish theologians, when he enumerates passages from the Old Testament in which Christ is called *Anthropos*, among other titles:

"And do not think, sirs, that it is superfluous to quote these passages so frequently. I do this because I am aware that some people want to vindicate these passages for their own theological positions. They proclaim that the Power which comes from the Father of the universe and revealed itself to Moses or Abraham or Jacob is called Angel when he comes to men, because through that Power God's messages are announced to men, and that he is called Glory (*doxa*) because he appears sometimes in a vision that is beyond the capacity of human understanding, and that he is sometimes called Man (*anér*) and *Anthropos*, because he appears arrayed in such forms if so pleaseth God" (*Dial.c. Tryphone* 128, 2).

These Jewish theologians identify the Power issuing from God with the Glory and with the *Anthropos*; it is clear that they have the vision of Ezekiel in mind. The true inheritors of Apocalypics also in this respect were the Jewish mystics of the first centuries of our era.

When Apocalypics lost its touch with history and switched over to timeless contemplation, after the fall of the second temple in A.D. 70, the

vision of Ezekiel became typical and exemplary for the experiences of certain rabbis. Akiba and Ishmael were quoted as having ascended to the third (or seventh) heaven or paradise and to have beheld there the *kabod* of God, though not God himself in his essence.

This Glory of God was called the "creator in the beginning" or "the body of the *Shekhinah*". The enormous dimensions of this divine body were enumerated with great delight. And the *kabod* was identified with the beloved of the Song of Songs.

The esoteric doctrine concerning this appearance of God in a bodily form was called in Hebrew: *Shiur Komah*, the measure of the body, namely the body of God. The mystical book of the same name contains a detailed and provocative description of the limbs of God, his head, his feet etc. The Book of the *Shiur* begins in the following way:

"This is the extent of the body about which it is spoken in the Book of the *Shiur*: 'Great is the Lord and mighty is his power' (Ps. 147:5). The height of the Holy One, blessed be he, is 236.000 parasangs. The extent of one parasang of him is three miles. And one mile is 10.000 els. And one el is three times the span of one hand. And one span of one hand contains the whole world". Etc. etc.

The knowledge of the dimensions of this enormous body is a saving Gnosis:

"R. Ishmael spoke: 'When I spoke about this to R. Akiba, he said to me: Anyone who knows this *extent* of our creator and the Glory of the Holy One, blessed be he, who is hidden from all creatures, - he is sure of having a share in the world to come, and it will be well with him in this world on account of the good of the world to come, and he will prolong his days in this world'".

The word used here, *š b h*, is an equivalent of Aramaic *šiva*. The extent, dimension, form or body of God is identical with his Glory. Form, Adam, Body, Glory are interchangeable and refer to the manifestation of God.

A striking parallel to this body of the *Shekhinah* in Jewish mysticism is the Mandaeen concept of the *Adam Qadmaia*, the primordial Man, masterfully described by Lady E.S. Drower in her book: *The Secret Adam* (Oxford 1960). This metaphysical Adam is God's first-born Son and should be distinguished from the bodily physical Adam whom he preceded by many myriads of years. He is also called *Adakas*, a contraction of *Adam Kasia*, Secret Adam, or *Adakas Ziwa*, Adam the *Kabod*. The fact that this first emanation is both celestial Man and Glory shows that this Mandaeen speculation has Israelitic roots and ultimately goes back to the first chapter of Ezekiel. The quoted passage in the mystical book *Shiur Komah* about the identity of the "dimension,, and the Glory of God is a beautiful parallel to it and proves that the concept of *Adakas Ziwa* is very old indeed.

Even the name *Adam Qadmaia* is old. This is proved by the fact that in

several Gnostic writings the divine, heavenly Adam is called: thé *Geradamas*. Irenaeus, in his version of the myth of the Apocryphon of John (*Adv. Haer.* 1, 29, 2) only speaks of a "*Homo perfectus et verus, quem et Adamantem vocant quia neque ipse domatus est*".

But in the version of the *Apocryphon of John* in Codex II of Nag Hammadi (8, 34-35) this divine *Anthropos* is called thé *Geradamas* (*Pigeraadamas*). The same form is found in the Nag Hammadi writing Melchizedek (IX, 1; 6,6): "the Man of Light, immortal aeon *Pi Geradamas*". In the *Three Steles (Prayers) of Seth* (VIII, 5; 118, 20) the Old Testament Seth addresses his heavenly father Adam with the following words: "I bless thee, father *Geradamas*, I as thine own son". In *Zostrianos*, a book discovered in the same library (VIII, 1) *Geradamas* is mentioned several times (6, 23; 13, 6; 51, 7).

*Geradamas*, *Geron Adam*, seems to be the Greek translation of *Adam Qadmaia*, or *Adam Kadmon*, just as Ophites is a translation of Naassenes and Gnostics of Mandaeans. In medieval Jewish mysticism the term *Adam Kadmon* is first found in an early 13<sup>th</sup> century cabbalistic treatise. But Jews from the beginning of our era have anticipated it. And this confirms the hypothesis that the views of the Mandaeans on the heavenly Adam or Adam the Glory are old and of Jewish origin.

Not only the Jewish mystics, but also Philo mentions a heavenly Man, whom he identifies with the *Logos* and sometimes calls "Man after his (God's) image" (*Conf.* 146) or "Man of God" (*Conf.* 41). This divine Adam is an *idea*, incorporeal, neither male nor female, by nature incorruptible (*Op.* 134). Here an important development has taken place. The notion of the *kabod*, in the Greek of the Septuagint *homoiōma hōs eidōs anthropou*, has integrated the Greek and platonic idea of man.

Plato, the founding father of idealism, never uses this concept. It seems to occur for the first time in Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 65, 7, according to whom: "*homines quidem pereunt, ipsa autem humanitas, ad quam homo effingitur, permanet*". According to the Middle Platonic thinker who was the source of Seneca, the idea of man is contained in the mind of God.

The same concept is found in Ps. Justin, *Cohortatio ad Graecos* 30, where it is said that Plato misunderstood Moses, when he stated that there are ideas of heaven, earth and *man*:

"Moses mentioned the word 'man' first (in Genesis 1:27), and then after the many creatures he mentions the formation of man with the words: 'And God made man by taking dust from the earth' (2:7). Therefore he (Plato) thought that the first mentioned man preexisted before the other man that came into being, and that the man fashioned from earth had come into being later after the preexistent idea".

The Valentinians were also familiar with the view that there were ideas of heaven, earth and man (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1, 5, 3). Philo never mentions the three together. And this suggests that there already existed in his time in Alexandria a Jewish tradition, to which Philo is indebted and which tried to combine the idea of Man with the Bible. In the quoted passage Philo says that this ideal Man was neither male nor female. He even polemicizes against the view that Man was androgynous:

"God made man", he says, "made him after the image of God. Male and female He made - not now 'him' but 'them'. He concludes with the plural, thus connecting with the genus mankind the species which had been divided, as I said, by equality" (*Heres* 164).

Philo's polemic against the androgyny of heavenly Man seems to show that there existed in Alexandria a Jewish circle which proclaimed that the heavenly Adam was both male and female.

What was the nature of Philo's teaching? Harry Wolfson devoted a great part of his long life to proving *more geometrico* that Philo was a systematic and consistent philosopher. Erwin Goodenough, on the other hand, was of the opinion that Philo was a mystic. And Arthur Darby Nock, the editor of the *Hermetica*, considered Philo as a mine of petrified philosophical common places. It is amusing to visualize the three, every day silently disagreeing with each other, at the Scholars Table in the Faculty Club of Harvard University.

Things do appear in a different light, however, when we discover that Philo is indebted to and reacting against an already existing Jewish mythology and that his alleged philosophy appears as a contradictory rationalization of powerful symbols thinly veiled. According to him, Wisdom received the seed of God when she had union with him (*Ebr.* 30). This should be compared with a passage in the Hermetic Prayer of thanksgiving, already known in Greek from the Louvre Papyrus 2391 and from the Latin Asclepius, but now better preserved in a Coptic version (Nag Hammadi Codex VI, 63, 33 ff.). According to it, the divine Mother is a uterus conceiving through the phallus of the Father. The imagery is so crude that it was passed over in silence up till now. But what seemed to be a clumsy and innocent allegory of an absent-minded philosopher turns out to be the survival of a shocking mythological symbol.

Philo also called the *Logos* a second God (*In Genes.* II 62). This proves that he reflects the traditions of the heretics (*minim*), who, basing themselves upon ambiguous passages of the Old Testament, concluded that there were "two powers in heaven", God and the Angel of the Lord, who created the world.

It is these heterodox Jews of the diaspora, who were older than Philo, who are most relevant for our theme. In the first place it will be clear that they influenced the Hermetic *Poimandres*. In this writing it is told that God generated a son, the *Anthropos*, who is his Form, to whom he delivered all creatures and who is androgynous, both *Phōs* (Man, Adam, Light) and *Zōé* (Eve). But it must have been also in these circles that the Gnostic idea of *Anthropos* originated. In the writing on *The Origin of the World* the relation of this ideal Man with the *kabod* of Ezekiel is still very clear. In the process of creation a light reveals itself. We are told that it originated on the first day, and this makes it clear that *The Origin of the World* is a commentary on Genesis, where the light is said to have been created on the first day. This light comes from the *Ogdoas*, the celestial abode above the seven planets: "When this Light was manifested, an Image of Man revealed itself in it, which was amazing" (108, 8-9). The angels of the planets, the rulers of this world, had seen this Man of Light. They fashioned a body after the image of this heavenly Adam in the hope that he would fall in love with his bodily image.

It is typically Jewish to think that the image of God is to be found in the body. But it is also a heretical idea. Later on the rabbis pretend that Adam was created on the eve of the Sabbath, i.e. at the last moment of the sixth day of creation. They thus reacted against Jewish heretics, who taught that Adam, the heavenly Adam of Ezekiel, the *demuth kemareh Adam*, was the first born of creation, to be identified with the primordial light of the first day, and so God's partner in the work of creation.

"Our rabbis taught: 'Adam was created (last of all beings) on the eve of Sabbath'. And why? Lest the *minim* should say: 'The Holy One, blessed be He, had a partner in his work of creation'" (b. Sanh. 38 b; Tos. Sanh. VIII 7).

Here it becomes absolutely certain that the Gnostic *Anthropos* is derived from heterodox Jewish circles, which are older than Philo and therefore pre-Christian, and who speculated about the *kabod* which comes from God, is manifesting itself, and then withdraws back into its origin. But at the same time this concept presupposes a pun on *ho phōs*, the man, and *to phōs*, the light, and therefore must have originated in the Greek diaspora.

The *Letter of Eugnostus*, which shows no traces of any Christian influence, is still more explicit than *The Origin of the World*. According to this teacher, the Unknown God dwells in an invisible supercelestial region beyond the visible world. He is God beyond God and therefore not a Father in the real sense of the word. Rather the *Anthropos*, the Son generated by him and mirroring his image as a reflection (and therefore predic-able) should be called Father:

"In the beginning he (God) conceived the idea to let his *Eikon* come into being as a Great Power. Immediately the *arché* of that light manifested itself as an immortal *androgynous Man*. The name of his malehood is called: the perfect (begetter). The name of his womanhood (is): (the) allwise begettress *Sophia*. It is also said that she resembles her brother who is her consort" (76, 19-77,6).

The *eikōn* (*demuth*) and Glory of God, has here a male, generative aspect, *Gennétor*, and a female, productive aspect, which is *Sophia*.

It is impossible to quote here all passages, in which the Gnostic *Anthropos* is mentioned. Let it suffice to say that they all are derived from the meditations on the Glory of God in heterodox Jewish circles. Even the Primordial Adam of the Mandaeans must have the same origin.

The views of Valentinus are based on this already existing Gnostic tradition. In a fragment transmitted by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* II 8, 36, 2-4) Valentinus says that Adam, when he was fashioned with the name "man", inspired the awe of the preexistent *Anthropos*, because he was obviously present in him. The *Anthropos* is here the ideal prototype of Adam, as in the Gnostic myth. And yet Valentinus seems to have given a new interpretation to the traditional symbol. According to him Man is the spiritual body of Christ, born from Mary, and the vehicle of Christ during his life on earth, in short the human Jesus. Thus, Man, for Valentinus is the symbol and prototype of progressing, ascending, to its origin in God returning mankind. This is echoed by his pupil Heracleon:

"When the redemption was preached, the Perfect Man received *Gnosis* in the first place, that he might return in haste to his unity, the place from which he originated" (*Tract. Trip.* 123, 3-8).

Mani taught very much the same. The new Coptic and Iranian sources have only confirmed what Theodore bar Konai transmitted in his *Liber Scholiorum XI*:

When the evil tried to penetrate into the realm of Light, God decided to go down himself and fight against it. Thereupon he called forth the Mother of Life. And she in her turn evoked the Primal Man (in Syriac: *naša kadmaja* = Hebrew: *Adam kadmon*). He goes forth to combat against darkness, is overpowered by the hostile powers, but later returns to the world above from which he originated.

The Coptic Manichaean Psalms (Allberry 9, 22-10, 22) have added the important qualification, that the "armour" or "soul" of the *Archanthropos*, left behind in matter, is "the Maiden, who is his soul". She is dispersed in matter and the whole worldprocess serves to restore her to Man, so that his original androgyny (Man and Virgin at the same time) be restored.

We may ask now to what extent these new texts are relevant for the interpretation of Saint Paul's concept of the heavenly Man. Confronted with Jewish Christians most probably coming from Palestine and boasting of their ecstatic experiences ("visions and revelations by the Lord"), he

involuntarily admits to having been caught up fourteen years ago as far as the third heaven and to have been caught up into Paradise, where he heard unutterable words which is not permitted for a man to speak (2 Cor. 12:1-4). By identifying "paradise" and "third heaven" Paul uses the terminology of Jewish mysticism. A Jew would have understood by implication that Paul had seen the "likeness as the appearance of a Man" like Ezekiel and later R. Akiba and R. Ishmael. And certainly Paul would have agreed, but for him this Manifestation, this Glory, which he had seen and heard, identified itself with Jesus.

Where did St. Paul learn to give this interpretation to his experience? In Jerusalem Jesus was considered to be the Son of Man, the eschatological judge of the world and the coming Messiah of Israel. But Paul never uses the expression "Son of Man", and for him Christ is not a title, but a name, Jesus Christ. In Antioch, where he was active as a missionary for some time, he could have heard that Jesus in his human existence had been a descendant of David but in his (later) spiritual mode of being had been inaugurated as Son of God since his resurrection (Rom. 1:4). But Paul had also been for a considerable time in the congregation of Damascus after his conversion in about A.D. 32. And the story about his experience on the road to Damascus, as told by Luke, contains some very clear allusions to the visionary experience of Ezekiel. Paul fell to the earth and heard a voice saying to stand upon his feet because he is to be sent... exactly as Ezekiel did, according to the first two chapters of the prophet. And whereas Ezekiel was dumbfounded, Paul was blinded after his vision. For those familiar with the meaning and purpose of such hints in ancient literature, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the author of Acts is paralleling the vocation of Ezekiel and the vocation of St. Paul. As the *kabod* appeared to the prophet in Babylonia in 593 B.C., so the *kabod* appeared to Saul near Damascus in A.D. 32. As far as I know, nowhere else in his Gospel or Acts does Luke show any familiarity with the vision of Ezekiel. Therefore it is plausible that he took his story from an existing source. The *couleur local* (Straight Street) and the prominence of a Damascene Christian, Ananias, in the story suggests that this source originated in Damascus.

Familiarity with Ezekiel's first chapter and its interpretation in Jewish mysticism transpires also in the hymn quoted by the apostle (Phil. 2:6-11), but not due to him personally, but to a hymn already in use in a Christian congregation, possibly Damascus. That community must have been Jewish Christian and not Gentile Christian. For the hymn alludes to

the Jewish and biblical concept so repulsive for Gentiles and Gentile Christians that God has a shape, and, still more shocking, that the image of God in man is to be found not in his soul, reason, free will or Self, but in the outward bodily appearance of the human male. It says that, because Christ was the Form of God, he felt fully entitled to be God's peer. And yet he gave up this high rank and accepted the Form of a slave, by assuming the human frame. In a similar way the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* (3, 7, 2) contain a Jewish Christian tradition to the effect that God has a Form (*morphé*) and that the body of man carries the form of God. In the same work (17, 7) it is said that God has a form (*morphé*) which is beautiful, and all members of a body, face ears etc. and that this *sōma* is incomparably more brilliant and radiant than our sight or the light of the sun. He has this beautiful *morphé* for the sake of man in order that the pure in heart may be able to see him.

The implication of *morphé* obviously is that it is a divine body, is identical with *kabōd*, Glory, and equivalent with *eikōn*, for man is made after the *eikōn* of God and thus is a faint copy of the divine *morphé*, *demuth*. All this is in accordance with Merkabah mysticism. There is even a most striking parallel to the hymn's opposition of God's form and man's form in the *Shiur Komah*:

"His (God's) *demuth* is hidden from every one,  
but nobody's *demuth* is hidden from Him".

God's *demuth*, form, is the *kabod*, man's *demuth* is the image of God in him. The same contrast is found in the *Poimandres*, reflecting Hellenistic Jewish views in this passage. In this writing it is said that *Anthropos*, though the Form (*morphé*) of God and equal (*isos*) to Him (12) and even possessing demiurgic powers, has come to inhabit the irrational Form (14: *morphé*) of the human body produced by lower Nature. So man has become a slave of the planets, an *enharmonios doulos* subject to Fate. The hymn of Philippians agrees with the *Poimandres* in supposing that man has become a slave of the planetary and other astrological powers: "the Form of a slave".

The question then arises whether St. Paul, or his source, is to be explained in terms of Hellenistic, heterodox Judaism.

a. For Paul Christ is also *Pneuma*, he has given his *Pneuma* into the heart of every single faithful one: "The Lord is at the same time the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17). But he is also the heavenly *Anthropos*, in whom the *Pneuma* originates, which is going to function as the vital principle, the centre of the existence of the new, spiritual man: "The last Adam is in-

strumental in conveying the quickening, life giving *Pneuma*" (1 Cor. 15:45).

From the point of view of Palestinian mysticism it is understandable that Paul calls the Messiah Jesus, whom he identifies with the *kabōd*, the heavenly or *last* Man. Already in Ezekiel and in Isaiah the *kabōd* had an eschatological function. But it is not clear, from this perspective, that this *Anthropos* is also the *Pneuma* and conveys the *Pneuma* to man. And we must remember that for a Jew *Pneuma*, Hebrew: *ruah*, had feminine connotations.

In a Hellenistic perspective this is better understandable. In the first place *pneuma* was used sometimes in Hellenistic circles to translate the Hebrew equivalent (*nešamah*) of "breath of life", which God breathed into the nostrils of Adam (Gen. 2:7). On two occasions, *Legum Allegoria* 3, 161 and *Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat* 81, Philo has *pneuma zōés*, spirit of life, instead of *pnoé zōés*, the usual reading in our editions of the Septuagint. Also the *Vetus Latina*, which has very old roots in the Jewry of Carthage, has *spiritus*, a translation of *pneuma*. Thus this variant existed independent of Philo and possibly prior to him.

In the second place, it is only in Hellenistic sources that the heavenly Adam had such a double aspect as he has in Paul. As we have seen, according to the *Poimandres* (17) the divine *Anthropos* consists of *Phōs*, Light or Man (Adam) and *Zōé*, Life or Eve. In the *Letter of Eugnostus* the immortal Man has a male side, *Gennétor*, and a female side, *Sophia*. The Naassene Sermon, transmitted by Hippolytus (*Refutatio* V 6, 3–11, 1) says that in the Primordial Man *Zōé* originated (8, 4): "This *Zōé* is the unutterable race of perfect man". She is the soul, the breath of life which vivifies all men, but especially the earthly body of Adam whom the earth had produced by herself and which lay without breath, without motion, as an image of the celestial. This soul has come down from that Man above, or Primal Man, or *Adamas*, into this moulded figure of clay (7, 3). This is a good parallel for the view of Paul that Christ is at the the same time the heavenly *Anthropos*, and the *Pneuma*, whom he conveys to the faithful.

b. Paul also says in his first letter to the Corinthians that "unto them that are called" Christ is the *Dynamis* of God and the *Sophia* of God (1:24). For this concept there is a good parallel in apocalypticism and mysticism. Gershom Scholem, in his *Jewish Gnosticism* (67) has shown convincingly that *Geburah* or *Dynamis* was an appellative or metonym of the divine Glory among the apocalypticists. This esoteric use continued in

the circles of Merkabah mystics. In the *Ma'asseh Merkabah* quoted by Scholem it is said:

"R. Akiba said: 'When I ascended and beheld the *Dynamis*, I saw all the creatures that are to be found in the pathways of heaven'".

And the *Visions of Ezekiel* contains the following passage:

"The Holy One, blessed be He, opened to him (i.e. to Ezekiel) the seven heavens and he beheld the *Dynamis*... and he beheld the *kabod* of God".

When Paul calls the Son of God, and not God himself, the *Dynamis*, he is nearer to the esoteric than to the exoteric terminology of Palestinian rabbis. But as far as I know, there is no evidence in the mystical writings of Palestinian Pharisees which would elucidate the double aspect of the *Anthropos*. Philo is of no help either. In all his writings he never quotes Ezekiel 1:26, and when he speaks about the Glory of God, which he does rarely, he does not identify it with the *Dynamis*, but with the *dynameis* (the ideas, *Spec. Leg.* 1, 45).

In the *Letter of Eugnostus*, which we quoted before, Man is at the same time male, *Gennétor*, and female, *Sophia*. He is also "a great Power (*Dynamis*)". This is a striking parallel to the double aspect of the Pauline Christ, and must reflect a tradition of Hellenistic Judaism.

c. On several occasions Paul identifies Christ with the *Ecclesia* (1 Cor. 12:12–13; Gal. 3:28). At the same time he seems to say that Christ is the body of God, in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily (Col. 2:9).

If we want to understand this concept, the writing *Shiur Komah*, the Extent of the Body (of God), might be of some help. There it is told how the *kabod* upon the throne is both the heavenly Adam and the body of the Holy One, praised be He, the measures of which are given in detail:

"R. Ishmael spoke: 'I have seen the King of kings, sitting upon a high and elevated seat, and his powers stood before him, at his right and at his left...'

R. Ishmael spoke: 'How great is the extent of the *body* of the Holy One, praised be he, who is hidden from all creatures? The front of his feet fills the whole world, for it is said: the heaven is my seat and the earth the stool of my feet (Is. 66:1). The height of the front of his feet is 30000000 parasangs.' Etc. etc.'

The authoritative names of R. Akiba and R. Ishmael were chosen to legitimize a mysticism which definitely and consciously desired to remain within the boundaries of rabbinic, orthodox, Pharisaic Judaism. There is in these texts a complete absence of any sentiment of divine immanence, no trace of a mystical union between the soul and God. The infinite gulf between the soul and the Ultimate is not even bridged at the climax of mystical ecstasy.

The notion of the Body of God seems also to have been current in the

diaspora. Philo polemicizes against opponents who hold that God has a body (*Somn.* 1, 236). At the same time he maintains that the *Logos* is the head of all things, under whom, as if it were his feet or other limbs, is placed the whole world (*In Exodum* 2, 117). Such passages make it plausible that the Mandaean views about the body of the Cosmic Adam are very old and of Jewish origin.

This Primordial Adam of the Mandaeans has a spiritual and cosmic body with organs and parts which perform menial functions like digestion and evacuation. The Cosmic Adam is androgynous, like the *Anthropos* of the *Poimandres* and like the *Adam Kadmon* of Medieval Cabbalism. There can be no doubt at all that this Adam the *Kabod* originates in Ezekiel. But on his way through the Hellenistic world he has integrated certain views of the Orphic Mysteries.

In an Orphic hymn, quoted in the Derveni papyrus of the fourth century, it is said that "Zeus is the head, Zeus the middle, Zeus the end of every thing". This then seems to presuppose the view that the Cosmic God of the All, as the *Makrokosmos*, is a *Makranthropos*. He was androgynous, *progenitor genetrisque deum, deus unus et omnes*.

The Jewish Gnostics who were the ancestors of the Mandaeans applied this to their Primordial Adam. According to the Mandaeans the bodies of the earthly Adam and Eve (of Genesis) were fashioned first and later on the soul (*nišimta*, the same word as the Hebrew *nešamah* in Genesis 2:7), which originates in the heavenly Adam, fell into these bodies. The aim of the Mandaean deathmass is that this soul be incorporated into the body of the Primordial Adam again and receive a spiritual body. This concept must be older than the Pharisaic mysticism of Palestine. The orthodox have adapted it to their categories of thought.

Paul agrees with the Palestinian mystics in the conviction that God has a body, but with the opponents of Philo and the Mandaeans in the idea, that the Spirit of the heavenly Man dwells in the heart of men and receives a spiritual body. Nor is there any evidence that Paul became familiar with these Hellenistic meditations on Ezekiel 1:26 in a Jewish surrounding. From the very beginning he seems to have identified the Manifestation of God with Messiah Jesus and the same is the case with the pre-Pauline hymn in the Letter to the Philippians. This never happens either in Philo or his predecessors and must have been a Christian innovation before Paul.

Where did he become familiar with this tradition? Paul does transmit Jerusalem traditions about the second coming and the Antichrist, but

eschatological Jerusalem saw Jesus mainly as the Son of Man, a term which, as we said, Paul ignores. Paul also was familiar with Antiochene traditions that Jesus died for us and brought the completion (not the end) of the Law. This interpretation of Christ did not presuppose the pre-existence of Christ, no eternal Adam. Paul had been initiated into the new religion and baptised in Damascus. The Christians there must have been "Hellenists", who were persecuted because, like Stephen, they dared to challenge the Law (the "Hebrews" in Jerusalem were left unmolested, Acts 8:1). We can easily imagine that for them Jesus was the Glory, the Form, the Manifestation of God, into whose Body man was incorporated through baptism, which conveyed the Spirit, the Spirit of the heavenly Man.

This then means that Paul was not directly related to the mystical traditions of the Palestinian Pharisees. If he has been a Pharisee, and even a pupil of the Jerusalem teacher Gamaliel, his use of mystical terminology does not prove that these traditions existed already in strictly orthodox circles in Palestine in the first century of our Era. Paul is nearer to the Hellenistic traditions which existed before Philo, and thus, certainly before Paul's conversion in 32. If this be true, then Paul was initiated into a Gnostic interpretation of Christianity, which almost from the very beginning (about A.D. 32, the time of Paul's conversion) served as an alternative for the primitive eschatology of Jerusalem and the liberal interpretation of Antioch.

*Bilthoven, N. Houdringelaan 32*