2

Personified Divine Attributes as Divine Agents

We now turn to the three types of figures portrayed as agents of God, beginning with examples of divine attributes. These items, especially personified Wisdom and Logos, have already received attention from scholars interested in tracing the Jewish background of early Christology.[1] In some studies Wisdom and Logos are described as the most important factors in the Jewish tradition as far as understanding the development of the belief in the exalted Jesus as a divine being is concerned.[2]

It is quite clear that early Christians, Paul (e.g., Col. 1:15–20) and the author of the prologue to the Gospel of John (1:1–4), for instance, seem to have drawn upon the language used by Jews to describe Wisdom, Logos, and Torah in articulating the significance of the exalted Jesus (cf. also Heb. 1:1–4).[3] But there remain questions as to what this represents. For W. Bousset, the personified divine attributes were hypostases, divine beings semidistinct from God, and the ancient Jewish interest shown in them constituted an erosion of genuine monotheism.[4]

I contend, however, that the personified divine attributes were basically vivid ways of speaking of God's own powers and activities and were not characteristically perceived by Jews as constituting an erosion of their commitment to one God. The "weakened monotheism" of postbiblical Judaism described by Bousset and others is an erroneous construct.

Moreover, I argue that the language used to describe the activities and roles of divine attributes often reflects divine agency. That is, the description of divine attributes as chief servants of God does not really indicate major modifications of Jewish theology but instead shows the metaphorical use of language used in other contexts to describe chief angels or exalted patriarchs.

PERSONIFIED DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

Wisdom

The description of divine attributes as personified beings is a well-known feature of ancient Jewish religious language. Wisdom is the most familiar example, with roots deep in the history of ancient Israel.[5] Although it might be argued that such passages as Job 15:7-8 and 28:12-28 dimly reflect the personification of Wisdom, scholars agree that it is in the Book of Proverbs where we encounter the first clear example of Wisdom personified as a personal being (see Prov. 1:20-33; 3:13-18; 8:1—9:12). Here Wisdom, a female figure, addresses the readers, inviting them to commune with her. Of particular interest is the passage in Prov. 8:22-31, where Wisdom speaks of herself as present at the creation of the world as God's companion, indeed, as his "architect" or "master workman" (RSV).[6]

In later Jewish writings, this personification of Wisdom continues, as demonstrated in *Wis.* 6:12—11:1. Here Wisdom is "the fashioner of all things" (7:22), "an associate in his [God's] works" (8:4), the one by whom God "formed man" (9:2), her influence reaching to all things (8:1). She is closely associated with God as "a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty," "a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness" (7:25-26), and is pictured as sitting by God's throne (9:4). Similarly, in *Sirach* (*Ecclesiasticus*), Wisdom is pictured as a member of God's heavenly council (24:2) with eternal existence (v. 9), who appeals to the readers in intimate terms to learn from her (vv. 19-22; cf. also 4:11-19).

Jewish texts also demonstrate the identification of Wisdom with Jewish religious life in general and with the law of Moses (*tôrāh*) in particular. For example, even in Proverbs there is the linking of Wisdom with the fear of God and obedience of his commands (e.g., Prov. 1:7, 29; 2:1-6). In *Sir.* 24:8, the command to Wisdom, "Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance," can only be a reference to the giving of the law through Moses. This link of Wisdom with Torah is made unambiguously clear in *Sir.* 24:23: "All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law which Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob."[7] Similarly, in the meditation on Wisdom in *Bar.* 3:9—4:4, the same connection is made explicit (esp. in 4:1; note the allusion to Deut. 30:11-12 in *Bar.* 3:29-30).

Evidently the point of this identification is to glorify the obligations of Torah by making them the essence of heavenly Wisdom, thus making the Jewish religious "life style" the earthly embodiment of the divine plan and the living out of divine truth. Here is certainly a polemic against challenges to Jewish religious distinctives in the ancient world. Perhaps scholars are also correct in suggesting that the Jewish treatment of the female figure of Wisdom may have been influenced by and intended partially as a polemic against the descriptions of certain goddess figures of pagan religions.[8] But whatever the possible sources of the imagery employed, the link of Wisdom with the religious obligations of Judaism (Torah) and the description of the figure of Wisdom as an agent of the God of ancient Israel show that we are dealing with a category of thought that was contextualized into and was governed by the fundamental religious commitments of Jewish faith.[9]

In *Wisdom of Solomon,* which is commonly thought to have come from a Diaspora setting, although the explicit link of Wisdom and Torah is not made, it is nevertheless clear that the writer's meditations on Wisdom are motivated primarily by his Jewish faith. This is evident from the way that the author connects Wisdom with the sacred history of Israel. After warning the kings of the earth to keep God's law and "walk according to the purpose of God" (*Wis.* 6:1-11), apparently alternate terms for divine Wisdom, the author promises to trace the course of Wisdom "from the beginning of creation" (6:22). Then follows the story of Solomon, who is given Wisdom (7:1-22), and a prolonged meditation on Wisdom's nature and role in God's creation and rule of the world (7:22—9:18) which includes the most elaborate personification and the most lofty praise of Wisdom found in ancient Jewish literature. Thereafter, the author links Wisdom with major events in biblical history, beginning with the creation of Adam (10:1-2) and extending through Abraham (10:5), Lot and Sodom (10:6-8), Jacob (10:9-12), Joseph (10:13-14), and the exodus/wilderness/conquest story (10:15—12:11), the last receiving the most elaborated treatment. To be sure, this author demonstrates some familiarity with Greek thought, but for him the key manifestations of Wisdom and the index of its content are given in the Jewish scriptures with their testimony to the acts of God. The vivid personification and exaltation of Wisdom in this book also must be seen in the context of the author's firm commitments to the uniqueness of God and the special election of Israel which are made clear in *Wis.* 12:12—19:22.

Thus it appears that in the later stages of postexilic Wisdom thought, as evidenced in *Sirach, Baruch,* and *Wisdom of Solomon,* there is also the most emphatic and explicit link of Wisdom with the God of Israel and

with the revelation of God and God's will in the Jewish scriptures. This definition of Wisdom as Torah continues into the rabbinic literature in which the personification of Wisdom is replaced by the vivid personification of *tôrāh*, which assumes much of the significance and role of Wisdom (e.g., *Midr. Ber. R.* 1:1, 4).[10]

For my purposes, however, the most important aspect of the personification of Wisdom is the description of her as *God's chief agent*, where the language of divine agency is used to refer to an attribute of God. Although Prov. 8:22-31 presents Wisdom mainly as God's companion in the creation of all other beings, the more active role given to her in *Wisdom of Solomon* (e.g., 7:22; 8:2) seems to reflect the idea of God's use of a chief servant in carrying out God's work. Note again the description of Wisdom: as having dominion over the whole earth (8:1), God's "associate in his works" (8:4), the one seated by God's throne (9:4; cf. v. 10) who is given knowledge of all divine purposes (9:9-11). The previously cited language of 7:25-26 ("a breath of the power of God," "a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty," "a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness") both subordinates Wisdom to God and elevates her to a position of great prominence in comparison with all other creatures, such as the sun and stars (7:29-30).

Although *Sirach* 24 (unlike *Wisdom of Solomon*) does not describe Wisdom as the agent of creation, the prominence given to her in God's heavenly assembly (v. 2), her exalted position enthroned in heaven (v. 4), and her connection with all of creation (vv. 5-6) certainly convey a priority among God's entourage. The divine command to Wisdom to make Israel her dwelling place and "inheritance" (v. 8) and to have "dominion" in Jerusalem (vv. 10-12) suggests that Wisdom is portrayed here as God's viceregent for the guidance and care of his elect people.

Logos

In addition to Wisdom, there are other important examples of the personification of divine attributes to be considered. Philo of Alexandria is a major source, giving us perhaps the most elaborate discussions of not one but several. His emphasis upon the role of the divine "Word" (*Logos*) is well known among students of antiquity, but in some passages he portrays God as acting upon the world by means of the divine Logos and as many as five other attributes which he terms collectively the *dynameis* ("powers"), which he sometimes arranges in a kind of hierarchy. Philo's imagery is rich and somewhat diverse, and his treatment of these matters,

not always easy to arrange in a systematic form, has been expounded at length by specialists.[11] Here I will present a few examples of Philo's discussion of Logos and other divine attributes and briefly outline what these items seem to represent in his thought.

The frequency of the term *logos* in Philo's extant writings (over fourteen hundred occurrences!) and the difficulty in systematizing his use of the term are both well known. His thought involves a bold attempt to draw upon the thought of the Jewish Wisdom tradition as well as Platonic and Stoic philosophy in order to present a religious point of view loyal to traditional Jewish religious concerns but sensitive to philosophical questions of his day. Certainly in some passages Philo's language could easily be taken to imply the belief that the Logos is an actual intermediary being, a lesser god, through whom God conducts his relationship with the world. Indeed, in *Quaest. Gen.* 2.62, Philo calls the Logos "the second god" (*ton deuteron theon*) and states that the "God" in whose image Adam was created in Gen. 1:27 is actually the Logos, which the rational part of the human soul resembles. It is impossible (according to Philo) to think of anything earthly being a direct image of God himself. In *Quaest. Exod.* 2.13, Philo seems to identify the Logos with the "angel" sent by God to lead Israel in the wilderness (referred to in Exod. 23:20-21), and here Philo also calls the Logos "mediator" (*mesitēs*).

Philo also uses a wide array of other honorific terms to describe Logos: "first-born" (*prōtogonon*), "archangel," "Name of God" (*Conf. Ling.* 146), "governor and administrator of all things" (*kybernētēs kai oikonomos*, see *Quaest. Gen.* 4.110-11). Philo also describes the full complement of divine attributes, which includes, in a descending order of priority, "the creative power" (*hē poietikē*), "the royal power" (*hē basilikē*), "the gracious power" (*hē hileos*), then the two "legislative" powers (*nomothetikē*) by which God prescribes and prohibits acts; and over all these is placed the "Divine Word" (*theios logos*), the chief of God's "powers" (*dynameis*; see, e.g., *Fug.* 94-105, where the "powers" are discussed in connection with the Old Testament images of the cities of refuge [94-99, 103-105] and the furnishings of the tabernacle of Moses [100-102]).[12]

In *De Confusione Linguarum*, Philo discusses at some length a notion of God as the heavenly sovereign who has surrounded himself with innumerable "powers" which are employed in his rule of the created order (168-175). Philo also refers to the angels who wait upon these heavenly powers. The full heavenly host is thus like an "army" with "contingents" and "ranks." Here we have clear evidence of the phenomenon in

which God's rule of the world is patterned after the ancient imperial court. Over this court God is "King." On the basis of other references in Philo (e.g., *Conf. Ling.* 146, where the "first-born Logos" is said to hold the "eldership among the angels, their ruler as it were," *tōn angelōn presbytaton, hōs an archangelon*), we conclude that he pictured the divine Logos as God's vizier or chief steward over the heavenly assembly. In *Fug.* 101–102, Philo likens the relationship of the Logos and the five chief "powers" to that of a charioteer wielding the reins of his horses, with God himself as the master, seated in the chariot and giving directions to his charioteer, who wields "the reins of the Universe."[13]

I suggest then that these texts concerning divine Wisdom and the Logos reflect two ancient Jewish linguistic practices: (1) the personification of divine attributes, a practice observed in connection with many divine attributes; and (2) the description of particular personified divine attributes, especially Wisdom and Logos, as the chief servant of God, his viceregent. It is the second practice which is of most relevance to my case. The personification of divine attributes is an interesting phenomenon that seems to have been characteristic of ancient Jewish religious thought of all periods and appears to be the result of reflection upon God's nature and activities.[14] As I have already indicated (see chap. 1), this language of personification does not necessarily reflect a view of these divine attributes as independent entities alongside God. Hypostasis is not particularly helpful in trying to describe how personified divine attributes were understood by ancient Jews of the Greco-Roman period.[15] The personification of God's attributes is of course often vivid, and, especially in the case of Wisdom, mythic imagery from the surrounding religious world is employed. Such language would seem to justify the conclusion of some scholars that divine attributes such as Wisdom were seen as actual beings in God's service, if the language is taken literally. I am persuaded, however, that this conclusion is a misunderstanding of this particular type of ancient Jewish religious language.[16]

Although my position puts me in conflict with other major studies,[17] I am not alone. J. D. G. Dunn's investigation of the Jewish background of the doctrine of the preexistence of Christ takes a similar position with regard to the meaning of personified divine Wisdom and Logos.[18] In my judgment, Dunn properly insists that the personification of Wisdom and the Logos must be understood within the context of the ancient Jewish concern for the uniqueness of God, perhaps the most controlling religious idea of ancient Judaism. E. Schüssler Fiorenza has also emphasized the necessity of interpreting the sort of mythic imagery employed to portray divine Wisdom with due regard for the theological concerns and religious convictions and needs of ancient Judaism. She points out that the meaning of the imagery can be understood only by inquiring into its function in specific religious contexts.[19] In a thoughtful discussion of H. Ringgren's classic study *Word and Wisdom*, R. Marcus made a similar point, warning against the fallacy of equating imagery used in various religions without sensitivity for the functional meaning of the imagery in the setting of particular religious cultures.[20]

Thus, for example, J. E. Fossum's claim that in such texts as Prov. 8:22–30 and *2 Enoch* 30:8 Wisdom is to be taken as "an independent deity" is in my judgment simply unwarranted and imports into such passages connotations never intended by the writers.[21] Similarly, although he is correct to emphasize that in ancient Judaism the name and word of God are redolent with significance, Fossum's view that they "seem to have a kind of substantive existence" and that each amounts to a kind of "independent entity" (citing Isa. 30:27; 55:10–11; Jer. 10:6; Pss. 20:1; 54:6; 143:13; Joel 2:26; Prov. 18:10; Mal. 1:11; *Wis.* 18:15–16) strikes me as a failure to appreciate the character of ancient Jewish religious language.[22] That the divine Name, divine Wisdom or Word, and other divine attributes are referred to in ancient texts in language of personification is not sufficient reason to conclude that these items were understood by ancient Jews as personal beings or as things somewhere in "between personalities and abstract beings" (e.g., hypostases). While personified divine attributes behave in the linguistic world of ancient Jewish texts as personal beings, this is not necessarily indicative of the function of divine attributes in the conceptual world and religious life of the people who created the texts.[23]

To illustrate my point, I cite an example from *Joseph and Asenath* (a first-century Jewish composition). Here we have an elaborate personification of Penitence (15:7–8), an essentially human action, as "the Most High's daughter . . . the mother of virgins . . . a virgin, very beautiful and pure and chaste and gentle." She entreats God on behalf of the repentant and "has prepared a bridal chamber for those who love her." We are told that "God the Most High loves her, and all his angels do her reverence." It is unlikely that Penitence is to be taken as a real "intermediary," yet the personification language is just as rich as for Wisdom and similar figures. Surely this text shows the prevalence of personification in the religious language of ancient Jews and is a warning against much that has been concluded on the basis of such vivid rhetoric.[24]

Nor is it determinative for the meaning of such items in ancient Juda-

ism that in other ancient religious groups there were gods of Wisdom, Justice, and so forth, and secondary gods who acted on behalf of the high gods. Such information may shed light on the possible origin and influences upon the language and imagery used by ancient Jews in describing divine attributes, but the actual significance of the language must be determined by the function of the language in the religious life of ancient Jews. Much history of religions work can be characterized as zealous but misguided in its use of alleged parallels and sources involving the equivalent of the "etymological fallacy"—religious terms and symbols are assumed to carry the same meaning and function anywhere they appear.

Even in the case of Philo, whose discussion of personified divine attributes is perhaps the fullest in Jewish antiquity, it is doubtful that Logos and other divine powers amount to anything more than ways of describing God and his activities. Thus, when Philo calls the Logos "god" or "second god," he seems to mean only that the Logos is God as apprehended in his works of creation and redemption by means of human reason. Philo's discussions of the divine attributes are, in part, designed to say that the creation and the sacred history in the Old Testament really do reveal God but do not and cannot ever reveal God fully. The hierarchy of divine powers is also used by Philo as a teaching device to urge his readers to seek an ever more lofty understanding of God and to recognize the ultimately ineffable nature of God.[25]

The important question, however, is not whether the personification of divine attributes represents a vivid way of describing God's nature and actions, or a conception of these attributes as quasi-personal entities, or a view of them as extensions of God's nature, so to speak, out into the world. Instead, the important matter is that these personified attributes do not seem to have acquired a place in the cultic devotion of Greco-Roman Judaism That is, there is no indication that these figures functioned as the objects of prayer and adoration in the religious life of Jews of that period. We read nothing of Jewish sects in which Wisdom, Logos, the Name, or other divine attributes were adored alongside God.[26] In *Wisdom of Solomon* 6—10 we find a lengthy recitation of the significance of divine Wisdom, in rhetoric that seems almost hymnic. But there is no indication that such rhetoric reflects religious devotion to the figure of Wisdom, as an object of cultic veneration alongside God. Thus, whatever the personification of divine attributes represented for ancient Jews, it did not involve a threat to the uniqueness of God or a modification to the shape of ancient Jewish devtotion.[27]

THE LANGUAGE OF DIVINE AGENCY

In addition to the linguistic practice of personification, the ancient Jewish texts cited earlier also reflect the description of certain divine attributes as the chief agent of God. I have already given some examples of why this is so and I will examine a few more here. The description of divine attributes as if they were God's viceregent or grand vizier is interesting because to some extent it corresponds to and reflects an aspect of the conceptual background of the understanding of the role of the exalted Jesus in earliest Christianity. There are differences, of course: (1) These divine attributes were not thought of as real entities alongside God, as I have argued; and (2) at a very early point the exalted Jesus did come to function as an object of religious devotion in the life and cultic setting of Christian groups. This role of the exalted Jesus in the devotional life of earliest Christianity marked the Christian binitarian mutation in ancient Jewish piety and gave Christian devotion its distinctive binitarian shape.

This mutation was not, however, unrelated to factors in the Jewish religious matrix in which it developed, and an important factor to be reckoned with is what I have termed the concept of divine agency. Although personified divine attributes were not real beings alongside God, ancient Jewish texts employ divine agency language in referring to them. This shows that divine agency was a familiar element of Jewish tradition.

Of course, the ultimate background of this language of divine agency is the ancient royal court, as E. R. Goodenough pointed out with reference to Philo's description of the "powers."[28] But the description of divine attributes as God's grand vizier drew not only upon the earthly model of the royal court but also upon Jewish traditions about the heavenly court. The figurative description of Wisdom or the Logos as God's chief agent invoked not only the political experience of ancient Jews but also their religious thought. It should not be seen in isolation from the larger pattern of the divine agency concept which was a feature of their religious thought. This is made clear in *Sir.* 24:2, for example, where Wisdom is made prominent among the heavenly host, and in Philo where the Logos is linked with the principal angel of Exod. 23:20–21 who is said to bear the name of God (e.g., *Quaest. Exod.* 2.13; *De Agr.* 51; *Migr. Abr.* 174).

The personification of divine attributes was intended to focus attention upon particular aspects of God's nature and (e.g., in Philo) occasionally to magnify God by emphasizing that he is greater than any of his works indicate. The appropriation of the language of divine agency to describe particular personified divine attributes was intended to highlight even

more the significance of the attribute so described. Thus when *Wisdom of Solomon* describes Wisdom as God's "associate in his works" (8:4), the one who sits by God's throne (9:4, 10), and "knows and understands all things" (9:11), the intention is to make Wisdom the direct expression of God's nature and purposes. The same point is made by means of different imagery in 7:24–26 where Wisdom is described as God's "breath," "emanation," "reflection," and "image." The variation in imagery makes all the figurative language used secondary to the main point symbolized: adherence to Israel's God and the way of life he has ordered is the way of true Wisdom with assurance of great reward.[29]

Similarly, Philo's references to the Logos employ a variety of figurative terms: "High Priest" (*Migr. Abr.* 102; *Fug.* 108–18; *Somn.* 2.183), "image of God" (*Fug.* 101), "first-born" (*Conf. Ling.* 63), and others drawn from the Old Testament and the cultural life of his readers, as well as general terms such as "model" (*Somn.* 1.75), to emphasize the importance of the Logos as a revelation of God. In the variety of symbolic language there is also the language of divine agency, in which the Logos is described as God's chief agent who is above all other servants of God: he "who holds the eldership among the angels, their ruler as it were" (*Conf. Ling.* 146), God's "governor and administrator of all things" (*Quaest. Gen.* 4.110), God's "viceroy" (*hyparchos, De Agr.* 51). Philo several times refers to Exod. 23:20–21, with its description of a principal angel in whom the name of God dwells, to describe the importance of the Logos. This shows that Philo also was familiar with the tradition of a heavenly chief servant of God; the same text is alluded to by other ancient Jews where other figures (especially principal angels) are placed in such a role. In Philo's case, however, this tradition is appropriated to describe the Logos as the highest revelation of God perceptible to the intellect.[30]

The description of personified divine attributes as God's chief agent thus offers interesting linguistic parallels to the description of the exalted Christ in the New Testament. More important, it is one indication among others that the Jewish tradition was familiar with the concept that God's rule might include such an office. Wisdom and the Logos, portrayed in the language of divine agency, in part form the Jewish background of the early Christian understanding of the exalted Jesus, but they also point to the more fundamental conceptual background from which the language was borrowed. This concept, that God has a chief agent in heaven above all other divine servants, served the early Christians in their attempt to accommodate the exalted Jesus alongside God. In the next two chapters I shall examine additional evidence of this conceptual background.

3

Exalted Patriarchs as Divine Agents

The glorification of Old Testament patriarchs is standard fare in post-exilic Judaism.[1] Prominent figures include Adam, Seth, Enoch, Abraham, Jacob, and especially Moses. Perhaps the best example we have of this is *Sirach* (*Ecclesiasticus*) 44—49, which apparently distills and adapts an elaborate body of traditions about some of the figures mentioned there. Here I only want to focus on some examples of the ones who are exalted to a heavenly position as God's chief agent. As I have indicated (chap. 1), interest in certain exalted patriarchs constitutes one of three categories of divine agency thought. Along with the other two categories of divine agency thought (personified divine attributes and chief angels), the patriarchs reflect the ability of ancient Judaism to accommodate exalted figures alongside God. This may have enabled the first Christians to come to grips with their conviction about the exaltation of Jesus.

So far I have argued that the descriptions of divine attributes as God's chief agent were a figurative use of divine agency language (chap. 2). But when we turn to the descriptions of the exalted patriarchs, we are dealing with real figures distinct from God, who are pictured as having a glorious place of heavenly power and honor. These patriarchs were in this way real precursors of the exalted Jesus and, like Jesus, were figures who led an earthly, historical existence. Unlike Jesus, however, they were all from the distant past.[2] I shall now proceed to illustrate the way certain Old Testament heroes are described, especially as God's chief agent.

ENOCH SPECULATIONS

Among the patriarchal figures to whom great attention was given in ancient Judaism is Enoch. Mentioned only briefly in Gen. 5:18–24, he

became a figure of great importance in postexilic literature, and from the brief biblical reference there grew an elaborate tradition concerning him.[3] For example, in *Jubilees* (2d century B.C.E.),[4] Enoch is described as the first man "to learn to write and to acquire knowledge and wisdom" (4:17) and he is credited with a book about "the signs of heaven" (i.e., the calendrical matters with which *Jubilees* is so concerned). Further, according to *Jubilees*, Enoch was given a "vision in his sleep" in which he saw everything that is to happen "till the day of judgement," and wrote all this too (4:18-19). While spending "six jubilees of years" with the angels of God, he learned "everything on earth and in the heavens" (4:21). He was finally taken away and conducted into the Garden of Eden "in majesty and honour," where he records all human deeds until the day of judgment (4:23-24) and where "he burned the incense of the sanctuary" (4:25), apparently indicating that he was seen as having a priestly role in his glorified state. *Jubilees* 4:17-26 also indicates that a significant body of Enoch lore was already established at the time the book was written. The passage contains several basic themes associated with Enoch in a number of other ancient sources.[5]

The tradition that Enoch wrote books is reflected also in *Jub.* 21:10. In the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* there are many references to writings bearing his name (see *T. Sim.* 5:4; *T. Levi* 10:5; 14:1; *T. Judah* 18:1; *T. Zeb.* 3:4; *T. Dan* 5:6; *T. Naph.* 4:1; *T. Benj.* 9:1).[6] Indeed in *2 Enoch* 10:1-7, we are told of 360 books (or 366) written by Enoch! His heavenly scribal activity as recorder of human deeds is referred to in *T. Abr.* 13:21-27 and in *2 Enoch* 11:37-38; 13:57, 74 (cf. also *Jub.* 10:17). In this capacity he witnesses against evildoers in the last judgment (*Jub.* 10:17).[7]

In keeping with the tradition of Enoch as the writer of books, we possess writings attributed to him. There is the well-known *1 Enoch* (*Ethiopic Enoch*), which appears to be a composite of material ranging from the early second century B.C.E. to any time from the first to the third century C.E.[8] There is also *2 Enoch* (or *Slavonic Enoch*), another apparently composite work dating from the first or second century C.E.[9] These sizable writings are composites of the work of various persons writing in Enoch's name over several centuries, a further indication of the significance of Enoch, especially for those wishing to disclose information about the heavenly world or about the last days.

Apparently, on the basis of the statement in Gen. 5:24, "Enoch walked with God," there developed the tradition of "righteous Enoch," whose great righteousness qualified him to act as the impartial recorder of human deeds and as witness against human sins at the last judgment.

That "he was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5:24) may have given biblical justification for the tradition that Enoch ascended into the heavens and saw all the heavenly secrets. Of course, we must reckon with other influences, apart from the Old Testament text, which helped to shape the body of Enoch tradition at various stages.[10]

My main concern is with the ways in which Enoch came to be described as God's chief agent. There are two variations: (1) the apparent identification of Enoch as the "Son of man" of *1 Enoch* 37—71, a figure who carries out messianic tasks in connection with the manifestation of eschatological redemption and judgment; and (2) the tradition that Enoch was transformed into a glorious heavenly being like an angel, which reached its zenith in the identification of Enoch with Metatron, the heavenly prince, in *3 Enoch*.

Enoch as Son of Man

The "Son of man" figure appears in several passages in the section of *1 Enoch* often called the Parables or Similitudes (chaps. 37—71).[11] He is clearly a figure of great importance, for we are told of his righteousness, familiarity with divine secrets, triumphant position (46:3), victory over the mighty of the earth and judgment of the wicked (46:4-8; 62:9; 63:11; 69:27-29), preordained status in God's plans (48:2-3, 6; 62:7), and salvific role on behalf of the elect (48:4-7; 62:14). Further, it appears that this figure is the same one described in these chapters as the "Chosen One" (or the "Elect One") and as the "Messiah" (or the "Anointed One"), for practically identical functions are attributed to all three figures (see, e.g., 49:2-4; 51:3-5; 52:4-9; 55:4; 61:4-9; 62:2-16). In all these references, this figure is clearly messianic in function and stature, and passages from the Old Testament are alluded to in portraying his significance as the fulfillment of redemptive hopes (e.g., note 48:4 with its allusion to Isa. 42:6; 49:6, describing the "Son of man" in terms like the "Servant of the Lord" of Isaiah).

This figure seems to act as judge on God's behalf ("in the name of the Lord of Spirits," e.g., *1 Enoch* 55:4) and in this capacity sits upon a throne that is closely linked with God: "On that day the Chosen One will sit on the throne of Glory" (45:3; see also 51:3; 55:4; 61:8; 62:2, 3, 5-6; 70:27).[12] The meaning of this is not that the figure rivals God or becomes a second god but rather that he is seen as performing the eschatological functions associated with God and is therefore God's chief agent, linked with God's work to a specially intense degree.

The association of this figure with God's throne is also similar to the

conception of the Davidic king in some Old Testament passages, who likewise is pictured as ruling in God's name and whose throne is likened to God's (e.g., Ps. 45:6; or *Sir.* 47:11, where we are told concerning David that God "exalted his power for ever" and gave him "a throne of glory in Israel"). Therefore one must recognize that the descriptions of the Chosen One (and of Metatron in later tradition) on a "throne of glory" may very well be drawing upon traditional imagery once associated with the Jewish monarchy and that sitting on such a throne does not involve deification but more accurately designates the figure as supreme over all others in God's service.

The effects of the heavenly divine agent concept may be seen especially in *1 Enoch* 46:1-3, where, employing imagery from Dan. 7:9-14, the writer pictures the "Son of man"/"Chosen One" in a heavenly scene, prominently associated with God, possessing an angelic aspect, and privy to all heavenly secrets.[13] In this theophanic scene, the writer pictures God and "another," manlike in appearance, whose face was "full of grace, like one of the holy angels," who "will reveal all the treasures of that which is secret."[14] The writer of *1 Enoch* 46 apparently saw the figure in Dan. 7:13-14 as a real being bearing heavenly (angelic) qualities and as God's chosen chief agent of eschatological deliverance. Whether this interpretation reflects the meaning intended by the author of Daniel 7 or was a later development, in either case I suggest that such an interpretation is evidence of the concept of a heavenly divine agent, a figure next to God in authority who acts as God's chief representative.[15]

In addition to blending together features of the manlike figure from Dan. 7:13-14, the "Servant" of Isaiah 40—55, and the Davidic Messiah, the Parables of *1 Enoch* (chaps. 37—71) conclude by indicating that Enoch was apparently designated the powerful figure called "that Son of man" and "the Chosen One." In *1 Enoch* 71, Enoch ascends into the heavens (71:1, 5), where he encounters the heavenly inhabitants (71:1, 7-9) and God himself (71:2, 10-13). Enoch is informed that he is in fact the prominent figure mentioned in the previous chapters (71:14-17). This indicates clearly a tradition that the Enoch of Gen. 5:18-24 had been exalted by God to the position of chief agent for the salvation and preservation of the elect.[16] Even if this tradition is no earlier than the late first century C.E. (the probable period for the composition of chaps. 37—71),[17] the description of Enoch as God's chief agent is an example of the ability of ancient Judaism to accommodate this or that figure in a position in God's rule like that of vizier of the royal court.

Enoch as an Angel

The other variation on Enoch as God's chief agent is the idea that at his ascent he was transformed into an angelic being and made head over all the heavenly court. This is unambiguously attested only in *3 Enoch* (about the fifth century C.E.),[18] which identifies Enoch as "Metatron" (4:2-3), a powerful heavenly being referred to in other ancient Jewish texts as well.[19] In 4:8-9, God tells the heavenly host that he has chosen Enoch to be "a prince and a ruler over you in the heavenly heights" (cf. also 10:3-6). In *3 Enoch* 9, we are told of Enoch's transformation into a gigantic being from whom "no sort of splendor, brilliance, brightness, or beauty" was missing, and in *3 Enoch* 10—12 we read of Metatron/Enoch's throne "like the throne of glory" (10:1), his majestic robe (12:1-2) and crown (12:3-4), and we are told that God orders Metatron/Enoch to be called "the lesser *YHWH*," with a clear allusion made to Exod. 23:20-21 ("my name is in him," 12:5).

Given the late date of *3 Enoch*, we must be cautious about taking the ideas in it as indicative of Enoch traditions in the pre-Christian period. The earlier Enoch materials have references to some sort of powerful experience of Enoch in connection with his ascent into heaven but do not explicitly say that he was transformed into an angelic being. For example, in *1 Enoch* 71:11, when Enoch sees God in heaven he says, "My whole body melted, and my spirit was transformed."[20] Also, in *2 Enoch* 22:5-10 we read that God calls Enoch to "stand in front of my face forever" (vv. 5-6). God tells Michael to "extract Enoch from his earthly clothing," to "anoint him with my delightful oil, and put him into the clothes of my glory," after which Enoch looks at himself and comments that he "had become like one of his glorious ones" (vv. 8-10). In *2 Enoch* 24:1-3, God invites Enoch to sit on his left and says that secrets left unexplained even to angels are to be made known to him.[21] It is therefore possible that those whose speculations are reflected in *3 Enoch* took such references as the basis for the idea that Enoch was transformed into a principal angelic being and, for reasons we cannot trace with confidence, identified this being as Metatron. The Metatron speculations may be too late to be of direct importance for the background of earliest Christology. I cite the tradition of Enoch as Metatron only to illustrate an example of speculations about exalted patriarchs in ancient Judaism, with no necessary implication that this tradition was drawn upon by the earliest Christians.

However, this tradition about Enoch as Metatron is worth noting for three reasons.

1. The description of Enoch as God's chief agent, Metatron, may be compared with and may be a development partly from the identification of Enoch as the "Chosen One"/"Son of man" in *1 Enoch* 71. The latter is a chief agent whose primary work and authority appear to be exercised upon the earth, although he is described in heavenly scenes. Metatron's authority and role are primarily heavenly.

2. The idea of Enoch's transformation into a heavenly being may have drawn upon the sort of tradition reflected in the passages in *1 Enoch* and *2 Enoch* cited, where Enoch undergoes some sort of change experience in connection with his ascent. If so, then it may be proper to think of these passages as reflecting an earlier tradition of Enoch as not just ascended but also exalted and given some sort of heavenly glory.

3. The idea that Enoch was made a heavenly being and was given authority second only to God's is also to be seen in connection with the speculations circulating in ancient Judaism about other patriarchal figures. Thus the Enoch/Metatron idea, though possibly late in origin, may be only a variation of the sort of interest in exalted patriarchs that was a part of pre-Christian Jewish tradition.[22]

EXALTED MOSES TRADITIONS

Another Old Testament patriarch in whom a good deal of interest was shown is Moses. Indeed, W. A. Meeks has concluded that "Moses was the most important figure in all Hellenistic Jewish apologetic."[23] Given these extensive investigations of Moses in ancient Jewish sources,[24] I want to give special emphasis to indications that Moses was sometimes portrayed as God's chief agent.

Sirach

Notice the reference to Moses in *Sir.* 45:1-5, originally in Hebrew by a Palestinian Jew in the early second century B.C.E.[25] In 45:2, the Greek text says that God made Moses "equal in glory to the holy ones [angels]."[26] The Hebrew text is defective in this verse but appears to compare Moses to *'elôhim*, a term used in the Hebrew Bible often with reference to God (e.g., Gen. 1:1) and sometimes with reference to angels (e.g., Ps. 82:1). The ancient Greek translator has clearly taken the term in the latter sense here (as was also done, e.g., in the LXX at Ps. 8:5), but it is probable that the original writer meant to allude to Exod. 4:16 and 7:1, where Moses is said to be as "a god" to Aaron and Pharaoh respectively.[27] Also, Moses is said to have been chosen "out of all mankind" (*Sir.* 45:4), and, in the Mt. Sinai ascent, received the law from God "face to face" (v. 5). These statements are hints that a body of tradition glorifying Moses in such superlative terms was familiar to the writer. This tradition seems to have included the idea that Moses' Mt. Sinai ascent involved a direct encounter with and vision of God, perhaps a heavenly ascent such as appears to be attributed to him in Pseudo-Philo (11:14; 13:8-9), where we are also told that Moses "was covered with invisible light—for he had gone down into the place where is the light of the sun and moon."[28]

Testament of Moses

In the document called the *Testament* (or *Assumption*) *of Moses* he is described as chosen and appointed "from the beginning of the world, to be the mediator [Latin: *arbiter*] of his covenant" (1:14; cf. 3:12). Moses is also celebrated as "that sacred spirit, worthy of the Lord . . . the lord of the word . . . the divine prophet throughout the earth, the most perfect teacher in the world," the "advocate" and "great messenger" whose prayers on earth were Israel's great security (11:16-19). The idea of Moses as chosen before the creation of the world is similar to the way the "Son of man"/"Chosen One" is described in *1 Enoch* 48:2-7. This shows that the motif of foreordination could be applied to various figures who were seen as of central importance in God's redemptive work. The description of Moses as specially foreordained and as "mediator" of the covenant between God and Israel certainly seems to reflect a view of him as God's chief agent.

Exagōgē of Ezekiel

Moses is also featured in the fragmentary *Exagōgē of Ezekiel.* It was a play written in Greek by a Jewish poet called Ezekiel, originally written in the second century B.C.E.[29] The play seems to have been concerned with the deliverance of the Jewish people from Egypt described in Exodus 1—15. The most important passage for us (H. Jacobson's lines 68-89) pictures Moses relating a dream to his father-in-law, Raguel, who then offers an interpretation.

Moses says that he saw on Mt. Sinai "a great throne" which reached "the fold [or "layers"] of heaven" and on it a "noble man" wearing a crown with a scepter in his left hand. In answer to the beckoning of the enthroned man, Moses approached him, whereupon he was given the scepter and the crown and was instructed to sit on the throne, which the humanlike figure then vacated. Once seated on the throne, Moses saw

"the whole earth all around" and "beneath the earth and above the heavens" as well. Further, a "multitude of stars (*plēthos asterōn*)" fell before him and passed in front of him as if in battle order, and he "counted them all," thereafter awaking (lines 68–82). Then there follows an interpretation of the scene by Raguel (lines 83–89), who says that the vision prefigures a day when Moses will set up a "great throne" and "will judge and lead mortals (*brabeuseis kai kathēgēsē brotōn*)." Moses' vision of the whole earth and regions above and below is said to signify that he "will see what is, what has been and what shall be (*ta t' onta ta te pro tou ta th' hysteron*)."

Because the text is only a fragment of the original work, and because Moses' vision is composed of symbolic items requiring interpretation, it should not be surprising to find that the scholarly discussion of this passage has produced major disagreements. It is clear that the dream and Raguel's interpretation both include the themes of Moses as ruler/leader and as prophet/seer.[30] But the more precise significance of the passage is disputed. Some interpreters see it as reflecting a view of Moses as God's viceregent (Meeks), or even as implying a deification of Moses (P. W. van der Horst), and draw upon Moses traditions in Philo, rabbinic literature, and other sources to illumine the text.[31] On the other hand, another recent interpreter argues that the passage is to be seen as a deliberate critique of, and contrast with, the very same themes of mystical ascent and quasi-deification which Meeks and van der Horst see as the interpretive key![32] From still another standpoint, C. R. Holladay has argued that Jewish apocalyptic and mystical traditions are not the background of the scene but rather classical Greek traditions of the relationship of Zeus and Apollo and that the writer intended to present Moses in the image of a *mantis* ("seer").[33] Here I restrict myself to a few comments relevant to my concerns.

First, although Holladay rightly has pointed to the wider literary and thematic background with which the writer and audience (especially pagans) may have been acquainted, in my opinion, the Jewish tradition about Moses cannot be dismissed as a likely influence upon Ezekiel.[34] As Meeks has shown, this tradition presented Moses in the roles of king and prophet, the two themes emphasized in the vision and Raguel's interpretation.[35] Given the other evidence of interest in the exalted Moses in the Hellenistic period, it is altogether likely that the author knew of the tradition of the exalted Moses and drew upon it in his construction of the dream scene, although he seems to have exercised some freedom in the way he did so.

Second, as to the disagreement over whether Ezekiel intended to affirm

Meeks, van der Horst) or modify (Jacobson) the tradition of a Mosaic heavenly ascent and exaltation, in either case the text is further evidence that there was such a tradition at the time Ezekiel wrote. Representatives of both positions agree that Ezekiel was familiar with such a Moses tradition and emphasize either similarities or differences between this text and other ancient Jewish texts.

Thus it seems that the *Exagōgē of Ezekiel* can be taken as another indication of a pre-Christian Jewish presentation of Moses in terms of divine agency. Whether the enthroned figure in the vision is God or a heavenly figure, such as a principal angel, representing God,[36] in either case Moses is given a divinely appointed position as ruler, together with the appropriate symbols of such status, the scepter and the crown. His exalted position is also reflected in the deference shown to him by the "stars," which bow to him and parade for his inspection.[37] The stars could be taken as symbolic of the people over whom Moses is to be placed as leader and judge (alluding perhaps to Gen. 37:9–10, the dream of Joseph). Or, more likely in my judgment, they may represent the acceptance by the heavenly hosts of Moses' appointed place as God's chief agent. Stars are a familiar symbol for angelic beings in Jewish tradition (e.g., Job 38:7) and are linked with divine beings in other religious traditions as well.[38]

The seating of Moses on a divinely appointed throne is paralleled in the description of the "Chosen One" of *1 Enoch*, who is to be seated similarly in the eschatological judgment (e.g., 45:3; 51:3; 55:4; 61:8).[39] The cosmic insight given to Moses (lines 77–78, "the whole earth . . . beneath the earth and above the heavens") is similar to the descriptions of the revelation of heavenly secrets given to Enoch (e.g., *Jub.* 4:21; *1 Enoch* 14—36; 72—82). This is a further indication that the vision reflects a view of Moses as divinely chosen and equipped to take a prominent role in God's rule of the creation. Even if Jacobson is correct that Ezekiel wished to reject the idea of Moses as given cosmic rule and insight, and intended to reduce Moses' place to that of divinely appointed earthly leader and prophet, the *Exagōgē* is at least indirect evidence of a tradition that Moses was viewed as God's chief representative in heaven.[40]

Philo

The fullest witness to a pre-Christian interest in Moses as God's exalted agent, however, is Philo of Alexandria (approximately 50 B.C.E. to 50 C.E.). Not all of Philo's witness is directly relevant to my concerns, and very full treatments have already been produced.[41] Thus I will focus on Philo's portrayal of Moses as God's chief agent.

The best place to begin is in Philo's writing on the life of Moses (*Vit. Mos.* 1.155–159).[42] In this passage Philo writes that, on account of Moses' rejection of the advantages of Pharaoh's palace, God rewarded him by appointing Moses "partner (*koinōnon*) of His own possessions" and "gave into his hands the whole world as a portion well fitted for His heir" (1.155). As his evidence, Philo says that "each element obeyed him [Moses] as its master," no doubt alluding to the signs and wonders in the biblical account done at Moses' command (1.156). Then Philo makes one of a number of allusions in his writings to Exod. 7:1, where Moses is called "god" (*'elôhim* in Hebrew and *theos* in Philo's Greek Bible; cf. also Exod. 4:16), and says that Moses entered "into the darkness where God was, that is into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things," there beholding "what is hidden from the sight of mortal nature" (1.158).[43] Philo appears to have known of a tradition in which Moses' ascent on Mt. Sinai involved some sort of direct encounter with God, perhaps a heavenly ascent.

The context of this passage makes it fairly clear, in my judgment, that in Philo's thought the major significance of Moses' position as God's "partner" is that Moses is the perfect "model" (*paradeigma*) for all others who would aspire to godliness (1.158–59). But it is also likely that this represents his own particular interpretation of the image of Moses as God's chief agent and that he is drawing upon a tradition of divine agency in which Moses was the featured figure and was regarded as God's viceroy or grand vizier.[44]

This is perhaps substantiated when Philo refers to Deut. 5:31. After the Israelites are told, "Return to your tents," God distinguishes Moses by inviting him to "stand here by me," and makes him the spokesman of the divine commands. Philo's references to Deut. 5:31 indicate that he took the words to Moses as constituting an invitation to be associated with God in some special capacity. Again, in each case the context of each reference shows that Philo interprets this association with God in terms of the spirituality which he advocates, presenting Moses' "place" with God as an example of the acquisition of the divine characteristics which he commends to his readers. But it seems likely that Philo is once more adapting to his own purposes a tradition of Moses in a special role before God and that Philo was not the first to fasten upon the reference in Deuteronomy as justification for regarding Moses as occupying a divinely appointed position of authority.

For example, Philo refers to Deut. 5:31 in proof of his view that certain people are distinguished by God to advance even higher in knowledge of

God and in manifestation of his purposes than such Old Testament heroes as Abraham or Isaac (*Sac.* 8). God appoints some special people to be stationed "beside himself," that is, to share in God's own unchanging perfection. Philo continues his discussion of Moses (*Sac.* 9) by saying that God gifted him above the sort of special excellence found in kings and rulers: "He appointed him as god" (*eis theon*, alluding to Exod. 7:1). Then (*Sac.* 10) Philo finds further evidence of Moses' special status in the scriptural tradition that "no man knows the place of his grave" (alluding to Deut. 34:6). Philo takes this as an indication that Moses did not undergo the same sort of change as ordinary mortals do at death, just as God does not change.

In discussing types of human character in *Post.* 27–31—Moses is the supreme example of the highest kind of attunement to God—Philo draws upon Deut. 5:31 and other Old Testament passages to make his point. Philo takes Deut. 5:31 to mean that God makes "the worthy man (*ho spoudaios*) sharer of His own Nature (*tēs heautou physeōs*), which is repose (*eremias*)" (*Sac.* 28). A similar point is made in *Gig.* 49, also by reference to Deut. 5:31. Clearly Deut. 5:31 was a favorite text of Philo's both for exalting Moses and for presenting his view of spirituality.

The ethicizing nature of Philo's interpretation of Moses' exalted status must not be overlooked. For Philo, Moses was deified in the sense that Moses was blessed with a special measure of the divine qualities such as true tranquillity and with special knowledge of God's nature and purposes. This special knowledge is embodied in the law given through Moses as a heritage to Israel. Philo can describe Moses as so endowed by God with these qualities that he became a living embodiment of them, "like some well-wrought picture, a piece of work beautiful and godlike, a model for those who are willing to copy it" (*Vit. Mos.* 1.158), or as "chief prophet and chief messenger" (*archiprophētēs kai archangelos*, e.g., *Quaest. Gen.* 4.8) and "man of God" (*anthrōpos theou*, e.g., *Mut.* 125–129). Moses never really becomes anything more than the divinely endowed supreme example of the religious life commended by Philo. Moses' participation in divine qualities as "partner" offers encouragement to others to "imprint, or strive to imprint, that image in their souls" as well (*Vit. Mos.* 1.159). If his endowment with divine qualities can be thought of as a transformation, it is a transformation to which Philo exhorts his readers also.[45]

In the larger context of the references to Moses in other Jewish documents, Philo's interpretation of the figure of Moses may indicate that Philo has adapted to his purposes a tradition of Moses as God's appointed and honored

agent. In short, Philo may be taken as further evidence for the divine agency concept in ancient Judaism (applied to Moses), although Philo has apparently given the tradition of Moses as divine agent his own hortatory and philosophical twist, as other evidence suggests.[46]

Another of Philo's favorite Old Testament texts in his discussions of Moses is Exod. 7:1. This text may be alluded to in the Hebrew of *Sir.* 45:2, where Moses is compared to *'elôhim*, which seems to reflect a tradition of Moses as specially favored by God and given special status. Since Philo refers to Exod. 7:1 in ten instances, it is proper to conclude that in the linking of Moses to the title "god" Philo found an important basis for his own presentation of Moses as the divinely set forth model of godliness and insight into the divine nature.[47]

Holladay[48] shows that Philo's use of Exod. 7:1 is always governed by his fundamental conviction that it is improper for any human to be thought of literally as a god and by his desire to present Moses as the model of the virtues Philo affirms. These virtues are influenced heavily by Hellenistic philosophical traditions of the wise and virtuous king.[49]

The fullest indication of how Philo took the term "god" as applied to Moses is in *Det.* 161–162. After citing the phrase from Exod. 7:1 that Moses was appointed "a god unto Pharaoh," Philo quickly notes that "he did not become such in reality" (161) and gives as the meaning "that the wise man is said to be a god to the foolish man," for when compared with a foolish man (e.g., Pharaoh) the wise man (e.g., Moses) "will turn out to be one conceived of as a god, in men's ideas and imagination, not in view of truth and actuality" (162).

E. R. Goodenough acknowledged that in some passages Philo expressly repudiated the idea that Moses was really deified but argued that Philo was inconsistent and that in other passages he really meant to ascribe deity to Moses (e.g., *Sac.* 9–10; *Prob.* 43; *Quaest. Exod.* 2.29, 46; *Mut.* 19, 24–26, 127–28; *Post.* 28–30).[50]

But when the passages cited by Goodenough are examined in context, his interpretation does not hold. In every case the language of deification is thoroughly controlled by Philo's allegorical approach in which Moses is used as the model of the benefits of godliness and the philosophical virtues that were so important in his thought, as Holladay has cogently demonstrated.[51] Philo's thought is complex, but it is an unwarranted exaggeration to impute to him a doctrine of the real deification of Moses along the lines of pagan deification of heroes.

No more persuasive is Goodenough's argument that the sheer frequency with which Philo referred to Moses as "god" must show "that it really represents one of his attitudes toward Moses." [52] The frequency of Philo's use of the language of divinity in describing the significance of Moses is better accounted for by factors described by Meeks.

Meeks has shown that Philo's treatment of Moses blends the motifs of the Hellenistic conception of the ideal "divine" king and Jewish traditions of the exalted Moses as "the divine viceroy, the envoy of God"; the Jewish traditions involved speculations about Moses' ascent on Mt. Sinai as a mystical ascent to God.[53] Meeks has also given an important reason for the blending of these Hellenistic and Jewish traditions in his discussion of Philo's polemic against the aspirations of pagan rulers to be regarded as divine beings.[54] That is, the prominence of Philo's treatment of Moses in the language of divinity is heavily accounted for by the social and political situation of Jews in Philo's time.

Philo engages in a careful attempt to counter the claims to divinity by pagan rulers by offering the true example of kingship in Moses, who alone was properly qualified to be given the title "god" on account of his superlative embodiment of the virtues of the wise ruler. This attempt was motivated not only by the need to give reason for the Jewish reluctance to assent to the divinity of human rulers—widely accepted in the eastern regions of the Roman world—but also by the desire to show his fellow Jews that their own tradition provided the only hero truly worthy of being seen as an ideal man.

Therefore the meaning of the language of divinity as applied to Moses is governed by Philo's fundamental refusal to grant real divinity to any human, including Moses, and by his thorough reinterpretation of such language in terms of the virtues he lauds. Deification language was commonly used in his time to promote religious and political practices he could not accept. Philo desired to reply to these practices by reinterpreting the language to show that it could properly be applied only in an ethicized sense and only to Moses—the paradigmatic leader and lawgiver of his own people.

Philo's emphasis upon Moses as specially favored by God with a unique status was not his own invention. Instead, Philo was able to draw upon Jewish tradition in which Moses was portrayed as God's "viceroy, the envoy of God" (Meeks), an example of divine agency. Although Philo's treatment of Moses was conditioned by the factors in his own social setting just described, the major place of Moses in Philo and the easy way he was able to draw upon the biblical texts about Moses as God's chosen instrument suggest strongly that a Moses tradition was already at hand.[55]

OTHER EXALTED PATRIARCHS

Other Old Testament patriarchs were of course pictured in similar honorific categories in pre-Christian Judaism (e.g., Adam and Abraham).[56] For my purpose I turn to one last example and piece of evidence for my case. It is a document quoted by Origen under the title the *Prayer of Joseph,* and the passage quoted deals with the patriarch Jacob.[57] What survives is only a portion of a much larger document,[58] and we cannot be sure of the exact date or larger intent of the original work, but the available portion certainly gives a fascinating portrayal of Jacob.

Jacob says that he is "an angel of God and a ruling spirit (*angelos theou kai pneuma archikōn*)" and thereafter refers to himself as "he whom God called Israel, a man seeing God," "the firstborn of every living thing (*prōtogonos pantos zoou*)." Then Jacob relates an encounter with the angel Uriel (probably alluding to the episode in Gen. 32:24–30, where Jacob strove with "a man") and says that Uriel claimed that "his name and the name of him that is before every angel" was superior to Jacob's name. To Uriel's assertion Jacob replies by telling him "his [Uriel's] name and what importance he held among the sons of God," stating that Uriel was the eighth after Jacob in rank (*ogdoos emou*) and that Jacob was "Israel, the archangel (*archangelos*) of the power of the Lord and the chief captain (*archichiliarchos*) among the sons of God," the "first minister before the face of God (*ho en prosopō theou leitourgos prōtos*)."

The passage also appears to describe Jacob/Israel as having "descended to earth" and "tabernacled among men."[59] In his discussion of this text, J. Z. Smith has emphasized this motif and has claimed the text as evidence of what he calls "*the* fundamental pattern of hellenistic Mediterranean religious," a myth of a descending-ascending heavenly figure, like that reflected in gnostic sources.[60] I simply want to comment on the significance of the titles claimed by the figure of Jacob in this document.

Whatever the origin and significance of the idea of a descending angelic being who then dwells among humans as one of them, the aforementioned titles seem to be clear examples of divine agency language, here applied to a major Old Testament patriarch. "Chief captain" and "first minister" place Jacob in the role of God's principal agent. The title "firstborn" also clearly carried a sense of prominence as well as temporal priority. (Smith has collected references from ancient Jewish sources to all the self-descriptive terms used by Jacob in the passage.[61]) While we are dealing only with a fragment of a document of an uncertain provenance, I

contend that this is another example of the fascination with certain Old Testament patriarchs which has been influenced by divine agency thinking. That is, Jacob appears to be placed in a role roughly similar to that ascribed elsewhere to Enoch and Moses.

The representation of Jacob as an archangel can be compared with the transformation of Enoch into the heavenly being Metatron. In *Prayer of Joseph*, however, it appears that Jacob is thought of as a preexistent angelic being who came down to earth; the descent motif is new. Nevertheless, both cases show that the three categories of divine agency speculation I have described (see pp. 17–18) are somewhat fluid and that some figures could be labeled as exalted patriarchs or as principal angels.[62] My three categories are of value only as a means of organizing the material. The more important matter is that the wide assortment of figures pictured as God's chief agent indicates the popularity of the tradition that God's rule involved some exalted figure in such a role.

EXALTED PATRIARCHS AND JEWISH RELIGIOUS DEVOTION

With this survey of important examples of exalted patriarchs portrayed as God's chief agent in view, I want to offer some final observations about the meaning of the data on two fronts: (1) the religious significance for ancient Jews of portraying their patriarchal figures in such a role; and (2) the effect of such glorified figures upon the practical religious devotion of ancient Jews.

The fascination with Old Testament patriarchs was no doubt promoted by and served a variety of religious concerns, as has been shown in studies of Moses traditions (Meeks) and Enoch traditions (P. Grelot).[63] For example, the stories of heavenly ascents and revelations of heavenly secrets may have been intended to give assurance of the validity of the teaching conveyed in the documents that present the stories. But I am concerned here mainly with the motif of a patriarch described as God's chief agent, as enthroned and/or in other terms given priority over all the rest of God's creation. This theme, I suggest, was prompted by at least two major concerns, both of which can be inferred from the representative significance of the figures in question.

1. The Old Testament patriarchs represented for ancient Jews the roots of their religious tradition and heritage. Thus the exaltation of such a figure to the role of God's chief agent would have signified that, in the veritable cafeteria of religious options in the ancient world, the Jewish tradition represented the highest, the most authentic, revelation of God's

purposes—indeed, the only genuinely valid tradition. Although this supremacy might not be demonstrable in the earthly realm, ancient Jews would have seen the heavenly exaltation of their representative heroes as signifying that in the highest realm of reality, ultimate reality, their religious tradition had been given prominence. In the eyes of earthly rulers, Judaism might be only one peculiar religion among others, but for God, the heavenly king over all, to appoint Moses, Jacob, or Enoch as his honored viceroy or vizier surely meant that the religious tradition they represented was in fact the divinely endorsed truth, above all other claims to truth. Our discussion of Philo's treatment of Moses offers but one example of how this representative significance of a patriarchal figure was important.

2. I suggest that the exalted patriarchs served for some Jews as assurance of the eschatological reward for which they themselves hoped. I have already noted *T. Mos.* 10:9, which promises that the elect will be set "above the stars where he [God] himself dwells," no doubt representative of the aspirations of many Jews of the postexilic period. Similarly, Dan. 7:27 promises the "saints of the Most High" that they will receive "the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven," "an everlasting kingdom," to which all will give obedience. In Dan. 7:13–14 the enthronement of the humanlike figure in heaven—an angelic being or a purely symbolic figure or an earthly Messiah—is clearly connected with this exaltation of the elect. In similar fashion it seems likely that the installation of Moses or other patriarchs was seen as prefiguring, and giving assurance of, the ultimate vindication of the Jewish faithful.[64] This is very likely the reason why the exaltation of patriarchal figures to heavenly rule and honor is especially emphasized in ancient texts that reflect a strong eschatological hope.

If the exalted patriarchs functioned mainly as representative figures, their exalted status validating the religious tradition they represented and prefiguring the reward of the elect who followed their righteous example, then what can we say about the effect of the interest in these exalted figures upon Jewish religious devotion? Although the portrayal of patriarchal figures in the role of God's chief agent is an interesting aspect of postexilic Judaism, the evidence does not indicate that the accommodation of such figures involved a substantial modification of the shape of Jewish devotion to one God.

The most thorough attempt to present a contrary view of these matters was Goodenough's argument that Philo is evidence of "an elaborate

transformation of Judaism into a mystic philosophy," a Judaism "so thoroughly paganized that its postulates and its objectives were those of Hellenistic mysteries rather than those of any form of Judaism we have hitherto known."[65] I have already referred briefly to Goodenough's notion that Philo was not always consistent with his Jewish monotheistic background and occasionally drifted into an attitude that represented a real deification of Moses. Indeed, Goodenough thought he had found a prayer to Moses in Philo (*Somn.* 1.164–165).[66] Here Philo urges his readers to develop a keen sense of the allegorical meaning of "the most sacred oracles" and appeals to Moses to assist in this endeavor:

> O Sacred Guide (*hierophanta*), be our prompter and preside over our steps and never tire of anointing our eyes, until conducting us to the hidden light of hallowed words thou display to us the fast-locked lovelinesses invisible to the uninitiate.

Subsequent scholarship has tended to reject Goodenough's theory that Philo represents a Jewish "mystery cult,"[67] but the claim that Philo saw Moses as a "god" and that the passage quoted here is a genuine prayer to Moses persists in recent literature.[68] It seems to me, however, that to take such a passage in isolation, ignoring the overall evidence of Philo's attitude toward claims of deified humans and without regard for the strong indications of his commitment to the uniqueness of God is to import into the text a sense foreign to Philo's mind.[69] The appeal to Moses is in all likelihood a rhetorical flourish, the actual meaning of which is that Moses, through his "sacred oracles" (the Torah), has the power to overcome human dullness and awaken the insensitive to the deeper significance of what he wrote.[70] In any case, this single appeal to Moses is itself hardly evidence of real prayer to Moses in the practical religious life of Philo or any other Jew of his time.

Given the significance of the exalted patriarchal figures as representatives of the righteous, I see no reason for thinking that interest in these figures and their exalted status reflected any substantial modification in Jewish devotion to God. There is no evidence that these exalted patriarchs functioned as objects of worship in Jewish groups. As I have previously noted (see chap. 1), the studies of Jewish piety in the postexilic period indicate that it was essentially directed toward God alone. The use of divine agency language to portray exalted patriarchs further shows the fluidity and wide acceptance of the idea that God might have a chief agent figure in his service. Apparently, however, this idea did not significantly

compromise the exclusive devotion to one God that generally characterized and distinguished Judaism in the pre-Christian centuries of the post-exilic period.

Finally, one should note that the portrayal of Old Testament patriarchs as God's chosen agent has some similarity to the way the exalted Jesus was seen in earliest Christianity. However, Jesus was obviously not a venerable figure of established representative significance for Jews. Thus the conviction that God had appointed Jesus as his chief agent did not arise simply from the Jewish tradition. It did not represent simply another example of an attempt to portray the vindication of the Jewish elect by use of a figure with obvious connotations. Instead, however much the early Christian notion of the exaltation of Jesus drew upon and was related to the kind of traditions we have been considering, it also represents a religious development with features of its own. The Jewish tradition supplied the language and conceptual models for articulating Jesus' exaltation by God as chief agent of the divine will. But the impact of Jesus' ministry and the religious experiences of early Christians were the impetus for this conviction.

Further, the conviction that Jesus had been made God's chief agent did not arise from a concern to affirm the significance of Israel and her tradition over against competing claims or from the desire to give assurance that the exaltation of the elect was a reliable hope. Jewish tradition already had adequate figures who could be made to serve these concerns, and claims of their exaltation would not have constituted the sort of controversial and audacious claim put forth by the early Christians. Unlike exaltation of Old Testament heroes whose general worthiness was well accepted, the identification of the crucified Nazarene in divine agency language must have flowed from a religious development as much concerned with him as with traditional religious aspirations.

It is an interesting question as to whether there may have been other Jewish groups in which a contemporary figure received the sort of veneration given to the exalted Jesus in early Christian circles. Based on the available evidence, the most probable answer seems to be a negative one. There are first-century figures such as Dositheus and Simon Magus, but investigations of the traditions concerning these figures seem to demand great caution in describing the early first-century religious developments that may have been connected with them. For example, Dositheus may have been a miracle worker and may have claimed to have prophetic authority for his message which may have involved new interpretations of

the Mosaic law, but we can claim almost nothing else with any confidence as to what any first-century following of him may have involved.[71]

Similarly, the several major investigations of Simon Magus traditions show that almost every question associated with this figure remains open. It appears that there may have been some sort of cultic veneration of Simon in second-century circles, but claims that such veneration of Simon characterized a first-century following and that such a group is indicative of Samaritan spirituality must be treated as speculative.[72]

As far as these two figures are concerned, we have nothing like the unambiguous evidence in the New Testament that the exalted Jesus quickly acquired a place as an object of cultic veneration alongside God in Christian circles of the first century. There may have been other Jewish sects in which other contemporary figures received the same sort of veneration, but such a possibility is best treated as hypothetical. In sum, it is likely that the cultic veneration of Jesus was not only a mutation in the divine agency tradition but it was also a mutation of a somewhat singular nature at the time of its origin.