Ambiguity in Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: 4Q400, the First Song

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Abstract

The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice seems to have been intended for communal worship for a group with a strong priestly identity, but ambiguity of terminology with respect to whether angelic or priestly participation is intended is pervasive throughout the text. This article compares examples of ambiguity in terminology for divine beings in the first Song to lexical equivalents in the Hebrew Bible. This introductory Song, 4Q400, appears to be concerned with the establishment of priests to serve in the holy of holies in a context similar to the ancient mythological Divine Council, but the human requirements of repentance, purification, and holiness appear to be central. In view of the multivalent quality of poetry in general, possible alternate readings to those of Carol Newsom are considered. The cumulative effect of various ambiguous indications in the rest of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice is also taken into account. The possibility that the ambiguity is deliberately employed to create fluidity between godlike beings and participants in the liturgy is discussed. The possible significance of such a conclusion is considered in terms of what purpose a deliberately structured fluidity between angelic beings and sectarians could serve, for instance in terms of Fletcher-Louis's (2002) suggestion that the "theological anthropology" may have ascribed an angelic or divine identity to the righteous.

Keywords: Song One of Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice; Fletcher-Louis; ambiguity; hidden polemic; rhetorical devices

Introduction

The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (hereafter SOSS) seems to have been intended for communal worship for a group with a strong priestly identity, but ambiguity with respect to angelic or priestly/sectarian participation is pervasive throughout the text. The entire text conveys a sense of being in the communal presence of worshippers in the heavenly

sanctuary, but it is not always clear who are angels and who are humans, and not even clear that the narrative space is a place called heaven. In my DPhil dissertation, which ranged over a broad spectrum of biblical and extra-biblical Jewish texts, ambiguity was found to be one of the major identifying characteristics of Jewish angelology (Evans 2007, 260, 282–284). I have been encouraged in my examination of ambiguity in SOSS by Walter Brueggemann's recognition of "the pervasive, Western, Christian propensity to flatten, to refuse ambiguity, to lose density, and to give universalizing closure" (Brueggemann, Placher and Blount 2002, 81). Considering the poetic quality of much of SOSS, and the multivalent quality of poetry in general, possible alternate readings to those presented by Newsom (1998) are considered in this article.[1] It is especially important to consider the issue of ambiguity in the broader context of the underlying struggle to establish monotheism in the face of the polytheistic origins of Jewish angelology and angelic vice regent traditions.[2]

The motive for a deliberately structured ambiguity is considered in terms of rhetorical devices utilised in the interests of conveying "hidden polemics" as described by Amit (2000, xii, 3, 4, 97). For instance, Sommer (2009, 10, 11, 76) observes what he calls "a hitherto unnoticed debate" within the Hebrew Bible about God's nature. He notes many examples of the fluidity of divine selfhood in Israelite texts, and that the issue of God's presence concerns sacred space (Sommer 2009, 41, 43, 55). The Priestly and Deuteronomistic sections condemned all physical portrayal of God and attempted to combat the perception of multiplicity in the presence of God. God's presence was nowhere other than in the sacred Jerusalem temple, but in the J and E sections of the Hebrew Bible God's body and self have a mysterious fluidity and multiplicity.[3] Sommer (2009, 54) regards angels as "merely a representation of divine presence in human affairs"—in some biblical passages angels are "part of God, though not all of God"— the angel was simply an expression of God's presence, accessible precisely because it did not compass God's entirety.[4] The possibility is explored that Sommer's perception of fluidity of divine agents can be extrapolated to a deliberately constructed

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[1] See Newsom's (2000, 888) comment on the need to explore the poetic qualities in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

[2] See Schiffman (2010, 59) who points out that the post-biblical Hebrew poetry in SOSS has "intimate links" to the later *hekhalot* mystical poetry. Also consider Deutsch (1999, 157); Evans (2007, 285); Collins (2000b, 13); Sommer (2009, 137).

[3] For instance, Deuteronomic ideology with regard to such issues as the centrality of the Temple, and resistance toward the polytheistic implications of angels. Sommer (2009, 54) perceives that in the Bible "these two perceptions of divinity seem to parallel and reinforce each other". See Collins's (2011, 23, 26, 29, 41) observation on the comment on the great degree of variation in biblical texts revealed after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Clines (1995) and Brueggemann (2002, 81) have commented on the pervasiveness of ideological motivation in textual exegesis. Cf. Sommer (2009); Amit (2000, 3, 4).

[4] Sommer (2009, 74) relates this realisation to Ezekiel's reflection of the desire of the transcendent God to become immanent.

representation of the fluidity between the divine beings and the human participants in the liturgy of *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* in terms of Amit's description of a hidden polemic.

In this article examples of lexical ambiguity in terminology for divine beings in the Hebrew Bible and the LXX are identified and then related to lexical equivalents in the first Song, 4Q400. By means of comparison, the ambiguous aspects in the introductory first Song are identified and the possibility of multivalent readings is considered in their context in SOSS. The cumulative indications of ambiguity are considered in terms of what purpose a deliberately structured fluidity between angelic beings and sectarians could serve at Qumran and in the broader Hellenistic context.[5]

Ambiguous Terminology for Divine Beings in the Hebrew Bible

The root source of ambiguity in Jewish angelology may well be connected to the terms *elohim* (אלהים) and *el* (אל).The latter term may represent the original God of early Israel, as witnessed by the name (Smith 2001, 143). In Israel's early tradition God was perceived as administering the cosmos with a hierarchical bureaucracy of divine assistants called *elohim* (אלהים). This concept of the Divine Council reflects the bureaucratic rule in Syria-Palestine in which the scribes functioned (Handy 1994, 176,177). In Ugaritic mythology *El* is the aged creator god—father of the gods who engendered the other gods in the pantheon (Mullen 1980, 108). The ambiguity arises because of the connection of אל with Akkadian *ilu(m)*, which was used in both the singular and plural sense in reference to any individual god, as well as to divine beings in general (Hartman 1972, 674–676).

Traces of this connection are to be found in Psalm 82, where "God (*Elohim*) has taken his place in the council of God (*El*); in the midst of the gods (e*lohim*) he holds judgment" (אלהים נצב בעדת אל בקרב אלהים ישפט).[6] Guided only by the context, the two appearances of אלהים are conventionally understood respectively as "God" and "gods". God, first as *Elohim* (אלהים) and then as *El* (אל), is the primary figure and supreme judge surrounded by the gods *elohim* (אלהים).[7] At v. 6 again, the context indicates that אלהים is intended as plural, i.e., "gods". By verses 6 and 7, *El*'s relation with the surrounding *elohim* becomes even more ambiguous because of the parallelism in verses 6 and 7: "children

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[5]   Cf. Collins (2000a, 5; 2011, 23); Amit (2000, xii).

[6]   Psalm 82 is dated to the late era of the kings which ended in 587 B.C.E., and is well preserved (Kraus 1989, 154). All translations are from the NRSV unless otherwise stated. Note that here *Elohim* is spelled אלהים, whereas in SOSS *Elohim* is spelled אלוהים.

[7]   In the second position in verse 1 אלהים is part of a genitive construction, and thus must mean "God (אל) in the midst of gods (אלהים)". The LXX translation reflects the understanding of this appearance as plural: accusative plural θεούς.

of the Most High (ובני עליון), all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like mortals (כאדם) and fall like any prince" (השרים).

Here the אלהים *elohim* "gods" are linked to the princes השרים notably described as mortal.[8] The indication in this context that the princes, though offspring of God, will "die like mortals", gains significance for this study when we come across the word "princes" in the first fragment of SOSS (4Q400, Frg 1i, line 12): "holy of holies, priests. They are princes …"

Ambiguous Terminology for Divine Beings in SOSS, First Song

These ancient sources of ambiguity provide clues to the source and significance of the fluidity of terminology in SOSS. Both texts, Ps 82 and 4Q400, portray the same quality of fluidity in the use of the word *elohim* and in both contexts the difference between angels and mortals/humans is blurred. *Elim* occurs in early Hebrew poetry where the original referent is the family of *El*, or the members of the Council of *El* (Cross 1977, 255), and at Qumran the plural of *El*, אלים, is a regular angelic designation (Davidson 1992, 238; Davila 2000, 101). Newsom translates all the terms *elim* (אלים), *eli* (אלי), and *elohim* (אלוהים) as "gods" or "god-like beings" depending on the context. In her comments and discussion, she denotes them all as angels.[9] Fletcher-Louis (2002, 32) leaves both אלהים and אלים untranslated because he recognises that there are many texts from the Second Temple period which describe the righteous, especially the king, the priest and Moses, in angelic or divine terms.[10]

Another source of ambiguity is the term קדשים, an alternate term at Qumran for אלהים בני. The word קדש is found in the Ugaritic texts in connection with the Assembly of El and is also used in MT Deut 33:2 ("ten thousands of holy ones"). In Ps 89:7b–8a parallel format reveals the connection of the "Holy Ones" as members of the Divine Council. Conservative Jewish scholars still interpret the phrase "sons of God" as referring to humans (Levine 1988, 50); in a Hellenistic milieu the term "son of God"

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[8]   NRSV notes an alternative translation for the latter phrase: "fall as one man, O princes". Cf. Ezek 28:1–10.

[9]   In 4Q400 Frg 1i, line 20, Davila translates אלים as "gods" but in the same fragment at line 4 he translates the plural of El אלי as *elim*, also meaning "gods". The later Hellenists saw gods and angels as identical in function and essence. In the words of Macarius (Apocritus), a Hellenic philosopher: "If you say that angels stand before God, who are not subject to feeling and death, and immortal in their nature, whom we ourselves speak of as gods, because they are close to the divinity, why do we dispute about a name? … The difference therefore is not great, whether a man calls them gods or angels, since their divine nature bears witness to them." (Cook 2000, 235). At 4Q403 1ii, line 5, Davila (2000, 128) renders אלוהי as "divinities". García Martínez (1994, 423) and Mizrahi (2015, 61) render the term אלי as "gods".

[10]   As a result, Fletcher-Louis arrives at a different understanding of the underlying meaning of the text and consequently his work takes a different direction, one which is explored in this article.

would have called to mind a miracle-worker, and if the human connection was clear, a first century C.E. Palestinian Jew would have understood it simply as a reference to a just and saintly man. In addition to the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the phrase appears in Philo and rabbinic literature with reference to those who remain faithful to the divine commandments: "When the Israelites do the will of the Holy One, blessed be he, they are called 'sons.'" The concept of Israelites as "sons (son) of God" expresses the intimate and unique relationship between Yahweh and Israel.[11]

Eventually the phrase "son of the gods/God" was fused with the concept of angels, as seen in MT Dan 3:25, לבר־אלהין.[12] A Hebrew fragment from Qumran of Deut 32:8 (4Q Dt j 1) that reads בני אלהים "sons of God" rather than the MT "sons of Israel" implies agreement with the OG "the angels of God" (Collins 1993, 292). This passage suggests that the boundaries of the earth were established according to the number of God's angels, κατὰ ἀριθμὸν ἀγγέλων θεου, implying to the teachers of ancient Judaism that angels had been assigned positions of authority over the nations. This has caused divergent interpretations of Dan 10 and 12:1, where angels are referred to as "princes" of Persia and Greece, and Michael as "the great prince" over God's people (Guthrie 2002, 18). The uncertainty in distinguishing the terminology for the righteous human beings from the meaning of "angels" (Di Lella 1977, 3) has repercussions in later texts such as Dan 7:13 where there is scholarly contention about whether the כְּבַר שְׁמַיָּא refers to an angelic figure. For instance, at Deut 32:2 the LXX transliterates the Hebrew word קדשׁ as Καδης, but in Acts 7:53, Stephen's speech when referring to Deut 33:2, is reported as using the term αγγέλων.

The absence of this ambiguous term "sons of God" in SOSS has implications for the possibility of alternative readings in respect of whether the "godlike ones/angels" and the "righteous Israelites" are definitely two separate groups or have become gradually merged.[13] Amit's (2000. xii, 93, 94, 97) identification that a hidden polemic is never directly mentioned in the text is possibly applicable in this instance. In SOSS "holy ones" (קדשׁים) is clearly an alternative term to "sons of the gods" (בני אלים).

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[11] Cf. Ex 4:22b "Israel is my (first-born) son ..." In the Hebrew Bible the privilege of sonship is focused upon the king, but the royal sonship is a microcosm of the divine sonship of all Israel.

[12] The earliest attestation of בני ה אלהים being interpreted as "angels" appears to be *I Enoch* 6–11 (late 3rd century B.C.E.) (Pearson 1995, 361).

[13] Byrne (1992, 156) states that the term בני reflects the common Semitic use of "son" to denote membership of a class or group, and בני אלהים literally means "sons of gods" in the general sense of "divine beings."

The First Song 4Q400 Frg 1i, Lines 1–6a[14]

In this introductory part of the first song, the Instructor calls the "god-like ones of all the holiest of the holy ones" to praise God הללו לאלוהי (Newsom 1998, 185).

1. [For the instructor. Song of the whole-offering of the] first [Sabba]th on the fourth of the first month. Praise[15]

2. [the God of   ], O godlike ones of all the holies of the holy ones; and in His divinity

[לאלוהי   ה אלוהי כול קדושי קדושים ובאלוהותו

3. among the eternally holy the holies of the holy ones, and they have become for Him priests of ….

[בקדושיעד קדושי קדושים ויהיו לו לכוהני

4. ministers of the presence in His glorious shrine. In the assembly of all the gods of

[מֹשרתי פנים בדביר כבודו בעדה לכול אלֹי

5. godlike ones. He inscribed His statutes concerning all spiritual matters and precepts of

[אלוהים חרת חוקיו לכול מעשׁי רוח ומֹשפטי

6a. knowledge, people of discernment, honoured by God. *Vacat*

[דעת עם בינות כבודי אלוהים *vacat*

Lines 2–6 form a very dense introduction to the setting of SOSS, in which the participating characters are all mentioned. The ambiguity which pervades the entire text manifests in these first six lines. The word for God, *Elohim*, is indistinguishable from "godlike ones" except by context.[16] The translation by García Martínez (1994, 423) is used to unravel this tightly knit text.

Frag. 1 col. 1.

1 [Of the Instructor. Song for the holocaust] of the first [Sabbath,] the fourth of the first month. Praise

2 [the God of …,] you, the gods, among the holy of holies; and in the divinity

3 [Of his kingdom, rejoice. Because he has established] the holy of holies among the eternal holy ones, so that for him they can be priests[17]

4 [who approach the temple of his kingship,] the servants of the Presence in the sanctuary of his glory. In the assembly of all the deities

5 [of knowledge, and in the council of all the spirits] of God, he has engraved his ordinances for all spiritual works, and his

6 [glorious] precepts [for those who establish' knowledge of the people of the intelligence of his glory, the gods who approach knowledge.

For analysis of this passage García Martínez's translation is interrogated as follows:

Who is talking? The Instructor.

To whom? The participants in the Liturgy.

What is the instruction? Praise.

Praise who? The God of …

Where? In the divinity of His kingdom.

In García Martínez's reconstruction of the lacuna at the beginning of line 3 a second instruction follows: "Rejoice." Why? Because He has established the holy of holies.[18] Where is this holy of holies? Among the "eternally holy ones".

The first ambiguity arises here: we are not told exactly where the "eternally holy ones" are, only that the holy of holies is where the "eternally holy ones" are busy being priests for God. In García Martínez's reconstruction his use of "because" directs us to the next "why" question: Why has God established the holy of holies? So that they (the "eternally

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[17] Note that in line 3 García Martínez makes a reconstruction which is not extant in Newsom's presentation, and neither is it present in the photograph of the fragment which she presents in DJD. I have not been able to establish the source of García Martínez's reconstruction.

[18] In the context, we assume "He" refers to God.

holy ones") can be priests for Him (God). Now a more specific description of the "eternally holy ones" follows in lines 4–5a. They approach the "temple of His kingship."[19] Where is it? A triple parallelistic description indicates that it is: a) in the sanctuary of His glory; b) in the assembly of all the "deities of knowledge;" c) in the council of all the "spirits of God."

By using García Martínez's translation, we are able to come to the conclusion that the "holy of holies"/"temple of his kingship"/"sanctuary of his glory" is not situated in any tangible, physical place.[20] It is anywhere where the "eternally holy ones" are, in the "community of all the deities of knowledge"/"council of all the spirits of God". By comparison, Newsom's translation of lines 4–5 does not contain the vital continuity that García Martínez provides, and which makes sense of the entire introduction. If the term אלי were אלים it could be assumed to be angels (Newsom has "gods"), then who are the "god-like ones (אלוהים)? Newsom's "gods of the godlike ones" as angels does not make sense. Davila's translation (2000, 97) also bears witness to this difficulty: "[...] attendants of the Presence in the inner chamber of His glory, in the assembly belonging to all the gods of [...] divinities." Newsom (1998, 177) continues by stating that the "text further describes the institution of laws for the angels who serve in the heavenly temple, as well as their priestly responsibilities for propitiation, for judgment, and for teaching." But keeping the ambiguity of the phraseology in mind, it is not so certain that these functions pertain to the role of the angels per se. These functions sound more like those of an earthly, human council. Furthermore, the description of the "eternally holy ones" gathers momentum: the "eternally holy ones" who are "priests for God" are also "the servants of the Presence in the sanctuary of His glory." Thus we have the following categories/agents in line 6 present in the "holy of holies":

1) The Presence;

2) All the deities of knowledge;

3) All the spirits of God;

4) The "eternally holy ones" who are "priests for Him," and which are in parallel to "servants of the Presence."

Here the second ambiguity arises. Are categories 2 and 3 parallel terms for the same category? Or are categories 2–4 separate categories? Fletcher-Louis (2002, 304, 305),

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[19]   Newsom does not reconstruct this phrase at all.
[20]   García Martínez's translation of "the assembly of all the deities of knowledge" is not present in Newsom's presentation of the fragment. She translates what García Martínez has reconstructed as "the council of all the spirits of God" as "godlike ones" and "all spiritual matters".

contra Newsom's commentary on the Seventh Song, stresses that the "spirits" are "*nowhere called upon to praise God*". If Fletcher-Louis's objection is rejected, the question arises whether the second and third categories are parallel terms. If they are, do they perhaps also blend into the fourth category, the "eternally holy ones" who are priests and servants of the Presence? However, two important phrases which follow now provide a factor to take into consideration when deciding on the answer. The first (lines 5–6a) introduces specific requirements for spiritual work: "he has engraved his ordinances for all spiritual works, and his [glorious] precepts …"[21] The second statement (line 6) is crucial: "knowledge of the people of the intelligence of his glory".[22]

What are we to make of these last two descriptions in the context of the whole of this introduction? Taking the entire context of SOSS into account, I would like to suggest that what is intended in these last two phrases before the *vacat* in line 6 is that God has engraved/inscribed his ordinances/statutes concerning all spiritual matters and precepts for the knowledge of people of discernment, the motivation being to glorify God (cf. Fletcher-Louis 2002, 378, 379).

The clear indication in the introduction that there are precepts in the "holy of holies" leads logically to the section which follows now which describes priests and princes in the holy of holies who "do not tolerate anyone whose path is warped. There is no impurity in their holy offerings." Here in this ambiguous passage "princes" are mentioned in connection with priests. As in the allusion to princes in Psalm 82, humans/mortals could well be implied here. The holy precepts are stressed, and the subject of knowledge is expanded. Fletcher-Louis (2002, 282–286, 305) argues convincingly that an angel reading in this section is highly problematic. The implication here is that it is the humans who draw near to "knowledge" and have the ability or potential to "understand these things" (cf. Newsom 1998, 180). What is very interesting, and crucial, is that in this middle section, line 15b, the statement is made that "he purifies the pure shining ones, so that they deal with all those of depraved path".[23] Significantly, in lines 16 and 18 the statement "in favour of all those converted from sin … his favours for compassionate, eternal forgiveness" indicates that God's "compassionate, eternal

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[21] Newsom's translation is very similar: "He inscribed His statures concerning all spiritual matters and precepts of …"

[22] García Martínez (1994, 423) has "knowledge of the people of the intelligence of his glory", Davila (2000, 97) has "knowledge, a people of understanding, glorified by God", Fletcher-Louis (2002, 280) has "knowledge, the people of His Glorious discernment, *elohim*!" García Martínez also ignores the *vacat* and continues with these words after the *vacat*: "the gods who approach knowledge". Newsom, more accurately places a full stop before the *vacat*: "knowledge, people of discernment, honoured by God." Ulrich and Flint (2010, xv) explicitly state that a *vacat* is an "interval for paragraph-division, indicating that the writing space was intentionally left blank".

[23] Newsom has "he purifies the pure ones".

forgiveness" is accessible to "all those who converted from sin" if they do convert from sin and are thereby sufficiently purified to become "eternally holy ones".[24]

It is striking that the word קדש appears so many times in this fragment. For example "holiest of the holy ones" in lines 2, 3, 10, 19; "holiest holiness" in lines 7–8, 8–9, 12; "holiness": "all matters of" in line 17; "statutes of" in line 15; "of the sanctuaries" in line 7; and "holy of holies" in line 10. The fragment concludes by restating in lines 19–20 that "He established for Himself priests of the inner sanctum, the holiest of the holy ones ... priests of the highest heavens כוהני מרומי רום. כוהנים". García Martínez (1994, xlix, li, lvl) sees in the Qumran texts a development of theological beliefs, amongst others, that "the requirements of purity were to be emphasized to reach a level enabling communion with the world of angels". The function of the priests is clearly to serve before God: "pries[ts of] the inner sanctum who serve before the King of holiest …" (line 8). It is clear that the "priests are the holy ones", but who are these priests? Are they gods, angels, or human priests/sectarians, or all three? The term קדושים might refer to either the angels or to the members of the Qumran community. Newsom (1998, 179) suggests that the "holy ones" may be "a special class of angelic beings with priestly functions, i.e., the angels of the presence", but I would like to suggest that they could well be, not "a special class of angels", but human priests.

In her preliminary study of SOSS Newsom (1985, 63) noted that at Qumran קדש can mean members of the Qumran community, and that this "points to the extended sense in which the life of the entire community could be considered as priestly". She points out that the "peculiar blessing of the priesthood" (Newsom 1985, 63) is priestly service shared with the angels in the eschatological or heavenly temple. One wonders why Newsom (1998, 177) later sees this fragment as a description of the establishment and organisation of the angelic priesthood: "priests of the inner sanctum" and the "holiest of the holy ones".

Fragment 2 lines 6–7a confirms the likelihood that it is the human participants in the liturgy who compare their humble state to that of the "holy ones of the holy of holies": "How shall we be considered [among] them? And how shall our priesthood (be considered) in their dwellings?" (Newsom 1998, 187–188).[25] The human speakers abase themselves by negatively comparing their own priesthood—their "offering of tongues of dust" to the "knowledge of the אלים gods" (Frg 2 line 7). But then in the beginning of the Second Song, 4Q401 Frg 16 line 4 a new concept is introduced by means of the question "who can understand these things?". The answer follows in the following

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fragment, 17, line 4: "those who have knowledge of the understanding of hidden things" (Newsom 1998, 210, 211). I therefore interpret this passage as referring to human priests. Despite their despairing tone the participants (speakers) resolve to "exalt/extol the God of knowledge". This hopeful ending must have been an encouragement to the sectarian participants in the liturgy to aspire to attain this perfect degree of purity/holiness for themselves.

Discussion

> Exegesis is at least a major aspect, if not the most significant component, of the elusive framework sought by scholars in order better to understand the development of ideas about angels in late biblical and post-biblical texts. (Olyan 1993, 11)

Allusions in the First and Second Songs mention attributes which are usually applied to angels, such as holiness and purity, but these attributes could also be interpreted to apply to humans. After praising the "highest gods" (אלי אלים) the human speakers abase themselves by negatively comparing their own priesthood: their "offering of tongues of dust" to the "knowledge of the 'אלים'" (Frg 2 line 7). But then, in the beginning of the Second Song, 4Q401 Frg 16 line 4 a new concept is introduced by means of the question "who can understand these things?" The answer follows in the following fragment 17 line 4: "those who have knowledge of the understanding of hidden things" (Newsom 1998, 210, 211). The possibility must be considered that the diffuseness of distinction is deliberately intended by the author. The term משרתי פנים (line 8) is translated as "ministers of the Presence", but the question of whether these are angels or priests remains unclear. Are they the purified ones, by implication those who have repented? At 4Q305 23 i.12, Davila understands "those who repent of sin" as angels. The adjacent fragmentary column, Frg 1ii (Newsom 1998, 184, 185) expounds the Glory of God in the holy of holies, and line 3 has a rare direct address to God: "the beauty of Your kingdom" which is unlikely to be uttered by angels. The next relevant fragment, 3i (Newsom 1998, 191–193) again refers to purity, and Frg 3ii +5 (Newsom 1998, 194) refers ambiguously to deputy princes: "praise songs of His holiness […] of the deputy princes". Song Seven Frg 1i reinforces the blurring between human and divine categories: the phrase "you who rejoice and chant with tongue and mouth" suggests that human priests are included with other addressees who are clearly divine, especially considering that SOSS is a liturgical text intended for worship by the sectarians on certain Sabbaths.[26]

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[26] Direct address to God is extremely rare in SOSS only occurring here and in 4Q400 Frg 2 line 1 (Your glory, Your kingship) and its parallel text 4Q401 Frg 14i lines 5–7 (For You are honoured, Your glorious kingdom, Your glory, Your royal majesty). "Your kingdom" does not necessarily refer to something such as a heavenly temple. After line 3 the fragment continues with a reference to God in

The difference in understanding between Fletcher-Louis (2002c, 166) on the one hand and Newsom (1998, 264; 2000, 888), Davila (2000, 90), and Davidson (1992, 244) on the other, comes clearly into focus here because Fletcher-Louis believes that it is the human priests who have been purified of sin and can therefore function as angels. On the other hand, at 4Q400 Frg 1i line 16 and at 4Q305 Frg 23i line 12 Davila (2000, 103) understands "those who repent of sin" as angels.[27] If Fletcher-Louis believes that those who repent of sin can only be humans because repentance is not available to angels, then he has no option but to believe that the humans must be functioning as angels because they have been purified. The only alternative is to understand the angels as the ones who repent, as do Newsom (2000, 888) and Davila (2000, 103). Davidson (1992, 244) concedes that the idea of close association between the sect members and the angels is a very important one, but supports Newsom in contending that the distinction between angels and sectarians is always maintained in Qumran literature. I would like to suggest that the interpretation/exegesis by Newsom, Davila, and Davidson that it must be the angels who repent tends towards the type of "universalizing closure" observed by Brueggemann, and is inconsistent with later developments in Jewish angelology.

Fletcher-Louis' (2002, 116, 162–166) explains the self-identity at Qumran as a shared community between angels and men in which status (and identity) has become fluid between the two types of being. To Fletcher-Louis (2002, 392) SOSS represents a form of "ritualized and communal heavenly experience". He claims that Newsom's "dualistic conceptual paradigm" must be replaced with an understanding of the cult as a "microcosm of the universe within which the demarcation of sacred space 'on earth' creates an area within which the human worshippers can participate in the life in heaven" (Fletcher-Louis 2002, 254–258, 277). He conceives of the "angelised and deified sectarians" as the righteous being taken up into the divine life and that of the angels. Perhaps when Fletcher-Louis later (2002, 284, 285, 292) speaks of the "community of human priests as God's angels", an "angelomorphic priesthood", he may be falling into the same trap as Newsom, Davila, and Davidson by fixing his view of

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the third person: "His regal majesty, His realm, the glory of the King of god-like beings, the God of knowledge."

[27] Boccaccini identifies the Essene movement as Enochian in orientation, which would support Fletcher-Louis's attitude that "those who repent of sin" as at 4Q400 I 11b cannot be angels, thus humans are being referred to here. García Martínez's Groningen hypothesis (1994, liii) and Boccaccini's Enochic/Essene hypothesis (1998, 188) propose that the origins of the Essene movement and the Qumran community are quite separate, and that the Qumran sectarians split off from the Essene movement and retreated to Qumran. However, Boccaccini clarifies that the mainstream Essenes were moderate and accepted the need for repentance because of the principle of human responsibility for sin as reflected in the later *Epistle of Enoch*, as opposed to the very conservative Qumran sectarians who adhered to the doctrine of individual predestination as reflected in the *Book of Watchers* (Boccaccini 1998, 186, 188).

the phenomenon in concrete whereas it retains a fluidity throughout the text.[28] But this is where Amit's concept of a deliberate "hidden polemic" in the interests of persuasive rhetoric becomes relevant.[29] One of her criteria for identification of a hidden polemic is that the actual subject at which the rhetoric is aimed is never mentioned in the text itself. Ambiguity in terms of a built-in fluidity of boundary between the activity of angels and priests is pervasive throughout, but never directly mentioned. Thus, Fletcher-Louis's suggestion that there are good grounds for thinking that the "transformed heavenly humanity" at Qumran would want to compare itself to the *cherubim* (Fletcher-Louis 2002, 285, 300, 301, 392), is not so far-fetched, especially when one considers the identification of the four apostles Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as Ezekiel's living beings in the early medieval illuminations in the Lindisfarne Gospels.

Conclusion

My argument is that the fluidity between angelic and human activity in the text of SOSS is not only a characteristic of Jewish angelology, but is deliberately built into the text of SOSS. In this text, as already in Ezekiel 1 and 10, the entire heavenly activity is ethereal, as is human spirituality. The similarity of the goal of *merkabah* mysticism to that of the effect of the participation in SOSS stimulates the question of a connection here. It seems to me that the author expressed the idea that access to the divine world was achievable through participation in praise of God, repentance, purification, and could even lead to some form of messenger activity. Ultimately, the language of the SOSS liturgy is a poetic expression of what I see that Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision originally conveyed: the potential of, and encouragement to, the human community to participate in God's divinity.

The first, introductory Song introduces a concern with purification, not an element associated with angels. The call to praise includes human worshipers, who are to join together in unified praise and worship with the angels. It seems that, as so often in the books of the Hebrew Bible, the introductory passages may be programmatic for the entire text. Is it possible that here the call to participation in the liturgy of praise leads to purification and an increase in holiness, and thereby the active sectarians attain a sense of becoming one with the angelic host? Do the actively praising, singing, exalting sectarians become purified during the execution of the liturgy, and therefore gain access to some degree of deification? Could there be a progression through these thirteen songs in which the delimitation of identity between the angels and the sectarian worshipers becomes increasingly blurred as the liturgy progresses? In the sectarians' participation

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[28] Fletcher-Louis (2002, 274–277) does admit that the tour of the heavenly temple was well known at Qumran, but does not agree with Newsom that the concept is that of a temple tour based on Ezekiel 40–48.

[29] See Eph 2:6 for an example of how the issue addressed indirectly in this text played out in early Christianity.

in the liturgy of praise, do they become purified and increase in holiness and to such an extent that they become one with the angelic host?[30] One might ask whether, two thousand years later when infinitely minute gravitational waves have been detected in a cultural context in which we have the potential for interplanetary travel, is the modernist manner of flattening potential "to give universalizing closure" (Brueggemann, Placher and Blount 2002, 81) still relevant?

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[30] A follow-up examination of the Thirteenth Song is envisaged as it may confirm the results of this exploration of ambiguity in the First Song.

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