CHAPTER SIX
TRADITION IN Eph 5.14

"This is why it is said: Wake up sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine upon you."

Some of the passages in Ephesians which contain definite or possible OT influence are considered by many scholars to reflect early Christian 'hymnic' material. This applies to chs 1.10-23, 2.13-18 and above all to ch 5.14b. In addition, some instances of OT use fall within parenetical sections which are often regarded as "inexhaustible hunting grounds" for various types of traditions. This automatically brings to the forefront the question of whether the relevant OT material has been mediated to the author of Ephesians through possibly liturgical early Jewish-Christian tradition or whether he obtained it directly from the OT. In the case of ch 5.14b the possibility of underlying Christian material which itself made use of the Jewish Scriptures must be considered. The complex issue of detecting and form-critically evaluating such 'hymns' cannot be circumvented.

One of the striking features of Eph 5.14b (see also ch 4.8) is the preface διὸ λέγετι. Despite being introduced as a quotation, the text is not found in anything approaching this form in the OT. This feature is not unique within the Pauline corpus. The origin of the quotations in 1 Cor 1.31; 2.9; 3.19b; 9.10; 15.33 and 2 Cor 4.6 is equally unclear, even though in each case an introductory formula is used. Some scholars regard Eph 5.14b as a fragment of a hymn, others have attempted to explain the verse as a weaving together of a number of OT texts. As the discussion of διὸ λέγετι in my previous

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1 "Hymnic" is here not necessarily to be taken literally. Most scholars use the term for poetic phrases or texts which are thought to have been used in early Christian worship.

2 See Schille, Hymnen, 58ff; Deichgräber, Gotteshymnus, 161ff; Sanders, "Elements", 220-3 and Fischer, Tendenz, 118-20.

3 See Schille, Hymnen, 24ff and Deichgräber, Gotteshymnus, 165 as well as my discussion and the chart above in chapter three.

4 Barth, "Traditions", and Gnilka, "Traditionen".

5 See also 1 Tim 5.18b and 2 Tim 2.19b.
chapter showed, to infer from the introductory formula that the quoted text must stem directly from the OT would be unwarranted.\(^6\)

In view of this uncertainty, we must ascertain the source of Eph 5.14b. Is this verse best seen as a collation of a variety of OT materials, or as a reflection of early Christian liturgical stock? The answer may prove beneficial in tracing the relevant motifs in further Biblical or non-Biblical texts. Finally v14b needs to be interpreted against its discursive background. The chapter outline is as follows:

**Fragment of a Hymn?**
An Altered Scriptural Quotation?
The Form-Critical Problem
Evidence from Qumran
Rabbinic Evidence
The Flow of Thought
Conclusion

**Fragment of a ** **Hymn?**

What are the basic criteria to be used in the search for hymnic fragments or *formelhaftes Glaubensgut* (Stauffer) in the NT and how far are they applicable to this text? In 1941 Stauffer listed twelve such criteria. Schille set out further methodological considerations in 1965.\(^7\) Two years later Deichgräber followed; later still Wengst published his important monograph.\(^8\) In 1982 Barth gave new attention to the subject, specifically with Ephesians in view.\(^9\) I shall summarise briefly the main arguments put forward by these scholars for the detection of early Christian poetic material.

1. Extensive use of confessional terms like faith, confess, testify etc.
2. Disruption in style, syntax and terminology of the co-text.
3. Repeated use of the same text by the same author.
4. Avoidance of conjunctions, complicated syntax and articles.
5. Brevity in expression.
6. Antithetical statements.

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\(^6\) In Gal 4.22, for instance, the formula γέγραπται γάρ introduces a statement which presupposes two separate chapters of the OT (Gen 16 and 21), but quotes from neither.

\(^7\) Stauffer, *Theologie*, 322 and Schille, *Hymnen*.

\(^8\) Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus* and Wengst, *Formeln*.

\(^9\) Barth, "Traditions", 9-12.