Wisdom of Solomon for this specific topic? It is common knowledge that the Wisdom of Solomon is in continuity with Prov and Sir. Much more straightforward is the statement on the Qumran psalm: "Personified Wisdom was thought of as being present at the meal as a teaching figure who had the function of inspiring the praise of God" (p. 70). But then one wonders if this is wisdom as nourisher.

My first reaction to the title was, why hasn't this ever been studied before? I think now the answer is that the topic is ultimately not very rewarding. With a great deal of erudition and research the author has exhausted the topic but the yield is small. The real value of this work is to have located and gathered together disparate sources. Even if one does not agree with the various conclusions, one is indebted to the writer for his industrious assembling of evidence that is not easily assessed.

Roland E. Murphy


After completing the three stages of the publication of the Hebrew texts of Hekhalot mysticism, which included the Synopsis, the Genizah fragments and the concordance1) — Prof. Peter Schäfer has begun a new project: The translation of the Hekhalot texts into German. The first volume of this project2) is now before us, and it covers the paragraphs 81 to 334 in the synopsis, a unit which includes the text of Hekhalot Rabbati, according to the previous publications of this text. This is the beginning of a very ambitious series of publications, intending to open ancient Jewish mystical texts to non-Hebrew readers, and make its study possible by historians of religion and mysticism in general.

Prof. Schäfer opened this volume with an extensive introduction, which presents before the reader the main texts of Hekhalot mysticism, including a bibliography of their publications; a description and evaluation of the various manuscripts (both those included in the synopsis and others which contain texts of Hekhalot Rabbati); a discussion of the date of this work, its structure and content, and a summary of the main points in each section.

The main problem, before the translation itself, was to determine the Hebrew text to be translated. Schäfer avoided, in the synopsis, giving any precedence to one version of the text over the other by printing all
seven manuscripts used in that work side by side and enabling the reader to evaluate them. Here this was impossible, because the translation had to rely on one text. Prof. Schäfer did not forsake in this volume his reluctance to impose a version of his selection on the reader, and therefore chose to use for the translation the most extensive text available (in most cases this was New York 8128). In cases of major differences between the texts he translated both versions, side by side, and, as a rule, gave in the notes the readings of other manuscripts, including a translation of the differences. In this way he came as close as possible in such a work to giving the German reader the full scope and variations of the various Hebrew texts, thus avoiding the imposition of his own preferences among the versions on the reader. When faced with the problem of the presentation of holy names, divine and angelic, which constitute an important element of these texts, and whose meaning and reading is often obscure, Schäfer printed the transliteration of all the texts, not neglecting minor differences.

Here I have to present an objection to his decision: If so much effort has been made to present the text in a scholarly, reliable and accurate manner, why not include the Hebrew text? A thirty-pages appendix at the end of the book could have sufficed to print the text chosen for the German translation (without repeating the notes containing variations), and this volume would have become the standard publication of Hekhalot Rabbati, enabling all scholars, those who read Hebrew and those who do not, to use the same basic work when dealing with this subject. I strongly recommend that in the next volume in this series this omission be corrected, and that it include the Hebrew texts of the material in both volumes.

The notes to the translation include brief explanations, though clearly a full commentary was not intended in this publication. Schäfer’s purpose was to present the text and not an interpretation of Hekhalot mysticism. Still, a translation by nature is a commentary, and presents the author’s choice among various possible meanings.

The unit included in this volume is, generally speaking, “Hekhalot Rabbati”, but its textual unity raises serious problems, many of them studied by Prof. Schäfer himself in a detailed article3). The text commonly known as “Hekhalot Rabbati”, as printed, for instance, by A. Jellinek4) ends at paragraph 277, especially when following manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library 1531, which may be regarded, following G. Scholem, as the best version in our possession. Even this text undoubtedly includes some later additions, especially in Ms. New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary 8128, which is the most comprehensive text which reached us. Among them the most important is the messianic homily in paragraphs 122-151, found in the New York and Budapest manuscripts. A special text— and a special problem— is the Sar Torah