

*Abstract*

In this article I examine the process through which the Jewish religious groups, excluded from the circle of the priesthood of Jerusalem, operated a theological «conquest» of the temple. The focus is on the Essene movement, within which two acquisitions of the religious prerogatives of the temple developed: the Qumran community substitutes the Jerusalem liturgy, putting the adept in direct communication with the angels (Paul and Pauline tradition are tied to this discourse), and the Enochic tradition substitutes Aaronic priesthood with that of Melchizedek (2Enoch and similarly the Letter to Hebrews). In this respect Christianity develops the theological reflection of the Essenes, adapting it to the faith in the risen Christ. The earthly temple, as a place of religious and political power, is emptied and humbled: its spiritual tasks are transferred to Christ.

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