THE SON OF MAN’S ALTER EGO
JOHN 1.51, TARGUMIC TRADITION AND JEWISH MYSTICISM

One of the most discussed passages in the Gospel according to John is found in 1.51, ‘Amen, amen, I tell you, you shall see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’ There is general agreement among the commentators that the saying is related to Jewish exegetical occupations with the dream of Jacob found in Gen 28.12, ‘And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending upon it.’ The exact exegetical links between the two passages have not yet been pinpointed, however.

I

Translating the Fourth Gospel into Aramaic, C.F. Burney realized that the word rendered ‘upon it’ (לָכַד) in Jacob’s dream could also be translated ‘on him’.

Then it occurred to Burney to see what the Rabbis had to say about Jacob’s dream, and in Gen R. 68.12 he found a passage where שָׁלוֹם יִרְאוּדוֹן בּ is translated ‘ascended and descended upon him’, as well as ‘ascended and descended upon it’. The entire passage runs as follows:

R. Hyya and R. Yannai [disagreed]. One asserted: ‘They were ascending and descending upon the ladder.’ The other, however, said: ‘They were ascending and descending upon Jacob.’ The statement that they were ascending and descending upon the ladder is easily understood. The explanation that they were ascending and descending upon Jacob must be understood to mean that they were taking up and bringing down upon him: they were leaping and skipping over him, and rallying him, as it is said:

means that ‘some were exalting him and others were degrading him.’ 7 Jacob is not seen as a mediator.

Moreover, if the mediatorial role of the Son of Man is the point of the saying in John 1:51, we should not expect the angels to go up first and then come down. The angels would presumably first come down in order ‘to convey the message with which the evangelist has charged them’, 8 and then ascend in order to descend again with a new message.

Finally, it should be noted that the interpretation of Gen 28:12 in Gen R: 68:12 appears to be composite. After it has been said that the angels ‘were leaping and skipping over him, and rallying him’, the commentary takes a sharp turn, quoting Isa 49:3: ‘You, O Israel, in whom I glory’. This is followed by another address to Jacob: ‘You are he whose image is engraved on high.’ It is then explained that the angels ‘ascended on high and looked at his image, and descended below and found him sleeping’.

Jacob now seems to be in heaven as well as on earth; or, rather, his ‘image’ (עָלֵיוֹן or עָלֵיהֶם) is in heaven, while the patriarch is sleeping on earth. Probing this idea may give us the clue to the enigma of John 1:51, where it is said that the angels are ascending as well as descending upon the Son of Man.

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As for the continuation, Freedman in a note refers to Theodor’s interpretation: ‘Th. understands the three verbs in a derogatory sense - dancing and leaping in accusations.’ See J. Theodor & C. Albeck, מַעֲדִים וּמְדִירִים נָשִׂי (1903-36; 3 vols. paginated as one; Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1965) 788.

8 Ashton, Gospel 347.
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II

The idea that Jacob had an 'image' in heaven is found in many sources. The texts are for the most part interpretations of Gen 28.12. Thus, while Targum Onqelos has a version which is essentially a literal translation of the Hebrew, Pseudo-Jonathan, Neofiti I and the Fragmentary Targum all relate that the angels who escorted Jacob on earth went up to their colleagues in heaven and invited them to come down and look at the sleeping Jacob, whose features the angels desired to behold.

Tg Ps.-Jon:

[...] they went up to the high heavens, spoke and said: 'Come, see Jacob the pious whose image (γεγραμμένος) is engraved on the throne of glory which you desire to look at.'

Thus the rest of the holy angels of the Lord descended to look at him.

Tg Neof and Frg Tg, MS Paris:

[They] went up to announce to the angels on high saying: 'Come and see (Jacob) the pious man whose image (γεγραμμένος) is engraved on the throne of glory which you desire to look at.'

And behold, angels from before the Lord were ascending and descending, and looking at him.

The tradition in Gen R. 68.12 would seem to be an elaboration upon the interpretation found in the Targums. The former exploits the ambiguity of the Hebrew זָא and thus is able to present Jacob in an ambivalent light. Still, the end of the tradition retains the favourable view of Jacob as the one whose 'image' is engraved on high.

Whatever text is seen as primary, they both share the idea that Jacob has a heavenly 'image'. It is this notion which gives us the key to the interpretation of John 1.51.

C. Rowland suggests that Jacob's 'image' is 'in fact identical with the form of God on the throne of glory (Ezek. 1.26f.)'. Thus, the angels are able to gain knowledge of one of the mysteries of the divine throne-chariot by descending to earth and looking at Jacob, for the figure of whom the Evangelist substituted the Son of Man.

A difficulty with this interpretation is that the phrase ἐπὶ τοῦ θόντος τῶν ἀνθρώπων is taken only with the second participle, καταβάνοντας; Rowland's laborious argument to that effect is not convincing. John apparently speaks of an ascent which is parallel in importance to the descent. If John 1.51 is dependent upon a Jewish exegesis of Gen 28.12, it would seem that the end of the version in Gen R. 68.12 fits the bill better than the Targumic texts quoted above: the angels ascended to look at Jacob's 'image' and descended to look at the sleeping patriarch.

It can be shown that this version is old. A certain baraita reads: 'A tanna taught: They ascended to look at the likeness (הירח) above

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9 I am grateful to Dr. Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones for help in identifying the texts.
11 The Fragmentary Targum includes the name of the patriarch, while Targum Neofiti I does not.

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12 John 1.51', 504.
14 Cf. Ashton, Gospel 343, n. 19. G. Quispel, 'Nathanael und der Menschensohn', ZNW 47 (1956) 283, suggested that the adverbial phrase should be taken with the participle ἀναβαίνοντας. Quispel cites Justin, Dial ch. 58, where the 'God, Angel and Lord' appearing on the top of the ladder is said to be the Son. Philo says that it was the 'Archangel, even the Lord' (Somn I.157). Quispel seems to take the descent of the angels to be a descent to Nathanael, but this is clearly not the meaning of the text. He also proffers the alternative interpretation that the participle 'descending' hints at the technical term תֶּה, 'descend', which was used for the ascen to the Merkabah throne. But the Son of Man is certainly not to be removed from earth.
and descended to look at the likeness of My [i.e. God’s] image (ראהו רוחיה) below:’ The earthly ‘likeness’ possesses a second-grade similarity to God, whereas the ‘likeness’ in heaven is God’s ‘image’.

When R. Banaah wanted to see the graves of the patriarchs, he was allowed to do so in the case of Abraham, רוחו רוחיך, but not in the case of Adam, who was רוחו רוחיך itself. Adam is here God’s ‘image’ (体现在), while Abraham is the ‘likeness’ (ראהו) of that image. In b Hul 91b Jacob is the ‘likeness’ (ראהו) of God’s ‘image’ (体现在), the latter being identical with the patriarch’s ‘likeness’ (ראהו) in heaven.

That it is prohibited to look at Adam, the very רוחו רוחיך of God, suggests influence from the traditions about the Glory of God, the vision of whom was not for everyone. Rowland thus appears to be right that the רוחו רוחיך of Jacob may in fact be a manifestation of God’s Glory, whom the angels as well as the mystics wanted to gaze upon.

However, it would not seem correct to assume that the original idea was that the ‘image’ or ‘likeness’ of Jacob was simply engraved on the heavenly throne. The baraita quoted above says nothing to that effect, and there is no evidence saying that the image of the Glory was engraved on the throne. Finally, if the Targumic versions quoted above are right about the ‘image’ of Jacob being engraved on the heavenly throne, it would not be easy to argue for a connection with John 1.51, for the Fourth Gospel does not teach that the Son of Man has an engraved image in heaven.

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15 b Hul 91b.
16 b B Bait 58a.
17 See above, pp. 33-6, 99.
18 However, there would seem to be evidence that his name was engraved on the throne. In a mystical text which still seems to be unpublished, the name of רוחו רוחיך is said to be engraved on the ‘throne of glory’; see G.G. Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1966) 54, who argues that Akatriel YHWH here is the name of the Glory. In the Gnostic Gospel of the Egyptians the great aeon Domedon has a ‘throne of glory’ inscribed with his ‘unrevealed Name’ (NHC III.2, 43.17-19).

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20 M.L. Klein, The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch according to Their Extant Sources (AnBib 76; 2 vols.; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980) translates: ‘on the throne of glory’ (2.12). Not having seen the editio princeps (Venice, 1590/91), I have used the reprint in the London Polyglot, which reads כתרו.
These text-critical deliberations are also conclusive when considering the source-critical question of priority among the three Palestinian Targums. The reading of the Fragmentary Targum, which must have been 'whose image is upon his throne of glory', has to be given priority over that of the Pseudo-Jonathan Targum and Targum Neofiti I, 'whose image is engraved upon the throne of glory'.22

III

The Hebrew forms of the Greek loan-word εἰκών used in the Targums and Gen R. 68.12 are synonymous with אלהים לְצָלַם and as is also suggested by the use of כְּבָדַת הַר מֵי מִדְתָּה כְּבָדָה in b Hul 91b. The Targum רְוִיקִיתָא מְרוֹמְקִיתָא can thus be seen to denote a bodily form,24 even that of God, that is, the divine Glory.25 The 'image' of Jacob on the heavenly throne is apparently the Glory of God.

22 For other texts speaking about Jacob's image being 'engraved' upon the throne, see Num R. 4.1; Gen R. 82.2; Lam R. 2.1; Hekhalot Rabbati 9.2-3. The idea is probably presupposed in Pirque de R.Eliezer, where it is said that the 'face' of Jacob is 'on the throne of glory' (ch. 35, end). See also L. Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews (6 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909-28 and reprints) 5.290, n. 134.

23 In Targum Pseudo-Jonathan renders אלהי כְּבָדַת הַר מֵי מִדְתָּה in Gen 1.27 and 9.6, and כְּבָדַת in Gen 1.26 and 5.1. In Gen 5.3, כְּבָדַת is used for כְּבָדָה. See the discussion by Rowland, Influence 141-50, who observes that כְּבָדַת 'can be said to be moving towards a hypostasis of God' (145). This is certainly the case in b B Bat 58a. In the Adamic literature Adam is said to be the 'image' of God (Adam und Eve ch. 14; Apoc Mos chs. 33 and 35). In Ps.-Clem Hom III.17 Adam is also the 'image' of God.

24 Traditions ascribed to the early Tannaitic period contain analogies between כְּבָדַת and כְּבָדָה used for the statue of a king and כְּבָדָה used for the human body (Mek de R. Ishmael, Bahodesh 8.73-8; Lev R. 34.3). From this usage it was a short step to use the former term for the human body. See M. Smith, 'The Image of God: Notes on the Hellenization of Judaism', BJRL 40 (1958) 473-512.

25 On the interchangeability and material suggestion of the different terms for 'image', 'likeness', 'form', and 'glory', see above, p. 29, n. 65, and p. 35, n. 83.

There is abundant evidence for the idea of Jacob or Israel as a heavenly being.26 In the Prayer of Joseph Jacob-Israel describes himself with very lofty epithets, including 'the firstborn of every living thing', 'the archangel of the Power of the Lord', 'the chief captain among the sons of God', and 'the first of those who serve before the face of the Lord'.27 Jacob-Israel is the principal angel of God, even the divine Glory, for the title 'the archangel of the Power of the Lord' can be seen to be equivalent in meaning to 'the Power (of the Lord)', which was used interchangeably with 'the Glory' in the mystical texts.

An Aramaic hymn for ShabUot, which appears to contain extremely early material, gives a very interesting description of Moses' ascension to heaven: 'The angels trembled and the Opanim quaked, that saw Moses ascending in the cloud. The hairs of his body rose with one accord, for the image of Jacob was rising before him (רְוִיקִיתָא מְרוֹמְקִיתָא). However, God calls on Moses to draw near to the throne.

Here Jacob's 'image' is not an engraved image; it is a bodily form rising opposite Moses who enters heaven. Did Jacob rise from his throne? If so, he would seem to have a throne in front of the site of God's throne (like Enoch-Metatron in the Third Book of Enoch),29 for God calls to Moses from his own throne.30

The idea that Jacob was enthroned as the Glory in heaven turns up even, or - perhaps we should say - appropriately, at Ezek 1.26. MS Montefiore includes the following reading: ' [...] another version: the form of Jacob our father, above it from on high.

26 Smith, 'Prayer', 262-5, has collected most of the evidence.

27 For the full text and discussion, see above, pp. 24-8.

28 J. Heinemann, סְירָדָה מִגְשִׁים הַמִּסְרָע הַמַּשָּׁרָה: הַסְּפִּירָה הַבָּברְבֶּדֶת (1973), 363-4.

29 3 Enoc 10.1-2; 16.1-2; 48(C).8. It is said explicitly to be the Merkabah throne (16.2).

30 The picture would seem to be similar to that in the Ladder of Jacob, whose ground-work is a Jewish tract written in Greek; see H.G. Lunt, in OTP 2.401-11. One of the top of the ladder, Jacob sees the face (πρόσωπον) of a man, carved out of fire (1.4). Actually, it is a bust, 'including the shoulders and arms, exceedingly terrifying [...] ' (1.6). Above this bust of fire, God stands and calls out to Jacob. In the fiery bust of the terrifying man we are probably correct to see the heavenly 'image' of Jacob.
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The term 'form', is another word belonging to the same semantic field as 'זון' (Zon) = גרדון (Gerdon) = זון (Zon), etc.; it carries a pronounced material overtone.

D. Halperin suggests that this 'anti-anthropomorphic interpretation' of Ezek 1.26 provides the exegetical basis for the idea of Jacob's image being engraved on God's throne.32 However, it is not likely that the phrase 'международнeph' was taken to mean that the 'form' of Jacob was 'engraved on the throne, קְפַרִין חֵרִים (Kefrin Chirim). The missing link is found in the variant omitting the verb. Jacob was seen as the Glory, the man-like figure upon the Merkabah throne. His כָּלָּחַ יְשֵּׁר (Kalach Yesher) denotes his body.34

Can we trust the attribution of the idea of Jacob's heavenly מַעֲרָת (Mara) to the Tannaitic period? One of the dating criteria in Targumic research is to test if a certain haggadah can be found in early texts: 'If it can be shown that a targum contains a large number of early traditions, then there is a least a prima facie case for seeing a stratum of that targum as early.'35 Although the Targums provide the only evidence for the heavenly enthronement of Jacob as the Glory, the idea of the enthronement of a human being on the 'throne of glory' can be shown to be quite early. In the First Book of Enoch God's throne is called the 'throne of glory'36. In the 'Similitudes' the 'Elect One' or 'Son of Man', who is identified as the patriarch Enoch,37 is enthroned upon the 'throne of glory'.38 If 'glory' does not qualify the throne but its occupant, Enoch is actually identified with the Glory of God.39 In any event, the 'Similitudes of Enoch' present an early parallel to the Targumic description of Jacob being seated upon the 'throne of glory'.

IV

Granted that Jacob is enthroned in heaven, it may be asked how he can be found sleeping on earth at the same time. Now there was a wide-spread view in the Greco-Roman world that every person had a δαίμονα or genius, and this guardian spirit could also be said to look like the person to whom he belonged.40 Plutarch reports that a certain Elysius had a vision of a young man looking like his dead son, Euthonous. When Elysius asked who he was, the youth answered: 'I am the δαίμονα of your son.'41

The Pythagoreans called the guardian spirit εἴδωλον, 'image'. In another work Plutarch relates that the Pythagoreans knew if a person's εἴδωλον appearing in a dream belonged to a dead or

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31 I am grateful to my student, the Rev. Dr. Charles Gieschen, for acquiring a photocopy of Ezek ch. 1 in MS Montefiore No. 7 from Jews' College, London. A Targum to Prophets, Psalms, Job, and Proverbs, the manuscript was completed on December 26, 1486.

32 The Faces of the Chariot (TSAJ 16; Tübingen: Mohr 1988) 121.


34 There is to be found an amulet with the inscription IAKOB AKOYBTA (אֲכָל בֶּפֶע), which H.C. Youtie, 'A Gnostic Amulet with an Aramaic Inscriptio', JAOS 50 (1930) 214-210, reads as 'Jacob the likeness of Yahweh, His Son (יְהוֹ)'. In order to derive the translation 'likeness' from קֵיבַר קָבָר, Youtie has to cite an Arabic cognate. The Aramaic word is a hapax legomenon meaning 'buttocks' (b Sanh 96a). Perhaps that is the meaning also in the inscription on the amulet, alluding to Exod 33.18-34.4. See above, pp. 98-100.


36 9.4; 47.3; 60.2. Cf. Jub 31.20.


38 45.3; 55.4; 61.8; 62.2 (reading 'has seated him' instead of 'has sat down'); 69.29. For a monograph on illustrious men being enthroned in heaven, see P.B. Munoa, Four Powers in Heaven: The Influence of Daniel Chapter 7 on the Testament of Abraham (Diss.; University of Michigan, 1993). In the Testament of Abraham both Adam and Abel are assimilated to the figure of the Glory (Rec. A, chs. 11-13; Rec. B, chs. 8-11). In Rec. B Adam's throne is said to be one of 'great glory' (8.5). For the enthronement of Moses in heaven, see above, pp. 74-75.

39 When the Son of Man is introduced in 1 Enoch, he is described as one 'whose face was like the appearance of a man' (46.1). This is reminiscent of the representation of the Glory in Ezek 1.26.


41 Cons ad Apol 109B-D.
living person: if the ‘image’ did not cast a shadow or wink, the person was dead.\(^{42}\)

The Jews adapted this idea. An interpretation of Ps 55.18a (‘He will redeem me unharmed [...]’) runs as follows:

‘When is this?’ ‘When many are with me’ (Ps 55.18b). ‘Who are they?’ ‘The angels who guard the human being.’ R. Joshua b. Levi says: ‘The image (אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן) walks before the man, and heralds proclaim before him, saying: “Make way for the image (אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן) of God.”’ \(^{43}\)

The interpretation of the text is uncertain; אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן may be a plural used as a collective noun.\(^{44}\) In any case, a Greek loan-word for ‘image’ can be seen used for the angel(s) protecting the human being.

There is also unambiguous Jewish evidence for the idea of a singular guardian angel. R. Hama b. Hanina (middle of the 3rd cent.) says that the אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן who fought with Jacob was the ‘guardian angel’ of Esau, since Jacob said to Esau: ‘[...] to see your face is like seeing the face of אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן’.\(^{45}\) Esau’s ‘guardian angel’ (actually, אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן, ‘prince’) is like him.

When Moses fled Pharaoh, he was aided by an angel who ‘descended in the likeness of Moses’ (among מַעֲדֵי רֵה בְּרֵד מִשְׁמָה).\(^{46}\) In this tradition, ascribed to Bar Kappara (early 3rd cent.), another familiar word for the heavenly double is used.

There was also a tradition to the effect that on a certain occasion an angel in the likeness (רֵד מִשְׁמָה) of Solomon descended and sat on his throne.\(^{47}\) Again אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן is found used for the guardian angel.

\(^{42}\) De gen Socr 585E.


\(^{44}\) Thus אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן, corresponding to Hebrew אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן; the singular אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן derives from אֵיתָן. But since אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן also was used as a singular, from אֵיתָן, אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן too may be taken as a singular. In the parallel in Midr Ps ad 17.8 we read: ‘Make way for the אֲדֹנֵי אֵיתָן of God.’

\(^{45}\) Gen R. 77.3 and 78.3, quoting Gen 33.10. Gen 32.24-25 says that a ‘man’ wrestled with Jacob, but v. 31 implies that the ‘man’ was ‘Elohim’. Hos 12.3-4 calls him both ‘Elohim’ and ‘angel’.

\(^{46}\) Deut R. 2.26-27; y Ber ch. 9, 13a.

\(^{47}\) Qoh R. II.2, §3.
The Jewish groundwork of the *Ladder of Jacob* has been dated tentatively to the first century C.E. This is a plausible date, for in the following century Justin Martyr witnesses to the tradition that the angel who fought with Jacob was called 'Israel' and designated the patriarch with the same name:

He was called 'Israel', and Jacob's name was changed to this also;
Israel was his name from the beginning, to which he altered the name of the blessed Jacob when he blessed him with his own name [...];
Jacob was called 'Israel', and Israel has been demonstrated to be the Christ, who is, and is called, Jesus.51

Justin apparently knows a tradition to the effect that Israel is the principal angel, and he appropriates this name for the Son.52 The apologist even claims that 'Jacob' is a name of Christ.53 This obviously presupposes the mystical identity of Jacob with his heavenly counterpart, even Israel.

This identification would also seem to be found in the *Prayer of Joseph*, where the Angel and Glory of the Lord appearing on earth says: 'I, Jacob, who am speaking to you, am also Israel [...] I, whom men call "Jacob", but whose name is "Israel" [...]'.54 As is suggested by the evidence of the *Ladder of Jacob* and Justin, this statement should not simply be taken to mean that Israel has become incarnated as Jacob. Rather, the text would appear to assume a mystical identity between two beings, one heavenly and one earthly.55

That Jacob is said to share the name of his guardian angel is a concomitant of the idea that the latter is his 'image' or 'likeness'.56

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51 Dial 75.2; 125.5; 134.6. Cf. ch. 58.
52 Cf. above, p. 23.
53 Dial 114.2; 130.9; ch. 135. See also Novatian, *Contra Noet 5*.
55 Guided by his intuition, Ashton, *Fourth Gospel*, says that the author 'is more concerned to establish the identity of the two figures than to arbitrate between them' (345). However, Ashton does not provide any religious-historical material to support his insight. In the magical papyri, the celebrant is united with the deity through 'name' and 'image': 'For You are I, and I am You. Your name is mine, and mine is Yours. For I am Your image (ἐσωτέρον)' *(PGM VIII.37-8)*. See also
56 PGM IV.216-7, where μορφή is the concomitant of δώμα. In *Sefer Raziel* 6b the 'face' of Jacob on the throne is considered to be that of Israel.
57 As the ancestor of the nation, Jacob incorporates in his person the people of Israel, whose heavenly representative in other traditions was said to be the Son of Man (Dan ch. 7) or Michael (e.g., 1 QM 17.6). See U.B. Müller, *Messias und Menschensohn in jüdischen Apokalypsen und in der Offenbarung des Johannes* (SNT 6; Gütersloh: Mohr, 1972) 27-9, 48-51.
59 In 8.58 Jesus claims to share the divine Name ὅ ὅν, which in Exod 3.14 denotes the eternal self-existence of God; see above, p. 127.
60 V.13a-b has been the subject of much discussion. V. 13a does not speak of Jesus' ascent at the end of his life on earth, but denies that anyone has ascended to heaven and come down with revelations about 'heavenly things' (v.12). If εἰ μη, introducing v.13b, is not allowed to carry the sense of ἀλλά, the text would seem to say that Jesus actually has ascended to heaven on at least one prior occasion. V.13a-b appears to rework material
Although the last clause is lacking in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, it has impressive support, including Western authorities, the Peshitta, Syr A, the Itala versions, Cop B, and an array of Patristic evidence. Since it makes a most difficult saying in the mouth of Jesus, one wonders what the reason would be for its addition if the original did not include it. As a matter of fact, we would seem to have evidence to the effect that it was part of the original and found so difficult that it had to be changed. Syr C reads: ‘who was in heaven’; Syr E has: ‘who was from heaven’. Another way of dealing with the difficulty was simply to omit the clause.

Time and again Jesus says that he is not alone, but together with the Father who has sent him. Jesus belongs inseparably to the sphere of τὸ ἐν οὐρανῷ. The author of the Fourth Gospel would even appear to go as far as saying that Jesus was in heaven at the same time as he was on earth. His imagination may have been sparked by the tradition that Jacob had a heavenly counterpart, who was even the Glory of God, the man-like figure on the heavenly throne, with whom the patriarch was united in a mystical way. In John 1.51 the author clearly adapts an exegesis of Gen 28.12 to the effect that the angels ascended and gazed on the Glory upon the heavenly throne, and then descended and looked at Jacob. This furnishes the interpretative key to the statement that the angels ascended as well as descended on the Son of Man.

VI

The Jewish interpretation of Gen 28.12 relating that Jacob had an image which was ‘engraved’ on the throne of glory has clouded the interpretation of John 1.51. The earliest version of the Jewish tradition held that Jacob’s heavenly ‘image’ or ‘likeness’ actually was identical with the body of the Glory seated upon the throne. The angels ascended to look at the Glory and descended to look at the patriarch.

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62 Tg Ezek 1.26 reads ‘likeness as the appearance of Adam’. The prophet is addressed as ‘son of Adam’ throughout the Targum. Since ‘Adam’ in Aramaic does not mean ‘man’ but is a proper name, S.H. Levey, The Targum to Ezekiel (The Aramaic Bible 13; Wilmington: Glazier, 1987) 6-9, takes Ezekiel as a ‘counterpart of Adam’, who had been vouchsafed heavenly mysteries including a vision of the Merkabah throne (e.g., Adam and Eve ch. 25). This may be right, but Ezekiel’s sobriquet, ‘son of Adam’, obviously also implies some mystical association with the figure on the heavenly throne with the ‘likeness as the appearance of Adam’.

63 Although Jesus in the preceding verses has spoken to Nathanael in the singular, v.51 uses the plural pronoun ‘you’.