

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' (בו) in Jacob's dream could also be translated 'on him'.¹ 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 **עלִים וירדִים בו** is translated 'ascended and descended upon him', as well as 'ascended and descended upon it'. The entire passage runs as follows:

R. Hiyya 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:

¹ *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1922) 115.

'Israel in whom I glory' [Isa 49.3]; 'you are he whose image (אִיקוֹן) is engraved on high.' They ascended on high and looked at his image (אִיקוֹן), and descended below and found him sleeping.²

According to Burney, the author of the Fourth Gospel knew and accepted the translation that the angels ascended and descended upon Jacob, and he substituted the Son of Man for the Jewish patriarch. Burney - followed by other scholars³ - argued that the Son of Man, actually 'Man', is the inclusive representative of the new humanity which supersedes Israel, epitomized in the person of Jacob. Even if this is an idea which would generally commend itself to the author,⁴ it cannot explain the phrase that the angels both ascend and descend upon the Son of Man - a 'bizarre spectacle' indeed.⁵

The message conveyed by the picture is not simply 'that there is no other *route* between heaven and earth than the Son of Man'.⁶ The view that John 1.51 represents the Son of Man as the revealer sidesteps the real issue, namely that of the *connection between* the figure of the Son of Man and the ascent and descent of the angels.

Also, if the source of the author is taken to be the tradition found in *Gen R.* 68.12, it must be pointed out that Jacob is certainly not seen as the 'route between heaven and earth' in the Rabbinic exposition reading 'on him'. The text says that the ascent and descent of the angels upon Jacob meant that 'they were taking up and bringing down upon him (מעלים ומורדים בו): they were leaping and skipping over him, and rallying him.' This apparently

² The translation follows that by Burney rather closely. H. Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel* (1929; Amsterdam: Grüner, 1974) 33, provides a service to Johannine scholars by giving the Hebrew original.

³ E.g., Odeberg, *Gospel* 39-40; C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1953 and reprints) 245-6.

⁴ For a refutation of this idea at 1.51, see R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 105, n.3.

⁵ J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991) 347.

⁶ Ashton, *Gospel* 347, voicing a common opinion. For a survey of the history of interpretation, see F.J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man* (BSR 14; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1976) 23-41.

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' (אִיקוֹן < אֵלֹהִים or אִיקוֹנִין < אֵלֹהִים) 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.

⁷ This is the translation of מעלים ומרדים בו (where the Qal verbs in the Biblical text are turned into Hiphil forms) by H. Freedman, in *Midrash Rabbah* (10 vols.; ed. H. Freedman & M. Simon; London: Soncino, 1939 and reprints) 2.626. J.Z. Smith, 'The Prayer of Joseph', *Religions in Antiquity. Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough* (*Numen* Sup 14; ed. J. Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1968) translates: 'They praised him and slandered him' (58). In a note Smith suggests a more literal translation: 'They raised him up and put him down.'

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, מדרש רבה בראשית רבה (1903-36; 3 vols. paginated as one; Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1965) 788.

⁸ Ashton, *Gospel* 347.

II

The idea that Jacob had an 'image' in heaven is found in many sources.⁹ 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.¹⁰

Tg Ps.-Jon :

[...] they went
up to

the high heavens,
spoke and said:
'Come, see Jacob
the pious whose
image (אִיקוֹנִין)
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)¹¹
the pious man whose
image (אִיקוֹנִין)
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.

⁹ I am grateful to Dr. Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones for help in identifying the texts.

¹⁰ The following table is adapted from C. Rowland, 'John 1.51, Jewish Apocalyptic and Targumic Tradition', *NTS* 30 (1984) 501-2. For the parallel Hebrew texts, see C.C. Rowland, *The Influence of the First Chapter of Ezekiel on Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (Diss.; Cambridge, 1974) 151. See also below, p. 141, n. 19.

¹¹ The *Fragmentary Targum* includes the name of the patriarch, while *Targum Neofiti I* does not.

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 כּוּ 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.)'.¹² 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 τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is taken only with the second participle, καταβαίνοντας;¹³ Rowland's laborious argument to that effect is not convincing.¹⁴ 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 (דמוּת) above

¹² 'John 1.51', 504.

¹³ See already M.-J. Lagrange, *Evangile selon Saint Jean* (4th ed.; Paris: Lecoffre, 1927) 52.

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 ירד, 'descend', which was used for the *ascent* 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 (דמות דיוקני) below.¹⁵ 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, דמות דיוקני, but not in the case of Adam, who was דיוקני itself.¹⁶ Adam is here God's 'image' (עטאָא), while Abraham is the 'likeness' (דמות) of that image. In *b Hul* 91b Jacob is the 'likeness' (דמות) of God's 'image' (עטאָא), the latter being identical with the patriarch's 'likeness' (דמות) in heaven.

That it is prohibited to look at Adam, the very דיוקן of God, suggests influence from the traditions about the Glory of God, the vision of whom was not for everyone.¹⁷ Rowland thus appears to be right that the אֵיקוֹנִין or דמות 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.¹⁸ 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.

¹⁵ *b Hul* 91b.

¹⁶ *b B Bat* 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 אַכְהַרִּיאֵל יְיָ 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, 1960) 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 'unrevealable Name' (NHC III.2, 43.17-19).

Now there are a couple of versions of the *Fragmentary Targum* which do not contain the verb 'engraved' or 'fixed' (קביע);¹⁹ both the *editio princeps* and MS Vatican (Ebr. 440) read: 'Come and see Jacob, the pious man, whose image is on his throne of glory (דאיקונין דידיה בכורסי יקריה)'.²⁰ The preposition ב does not have to mean that the איקונין of Jacob is 'engraved' upon the throne; reading of the text without a side-glance to the parallels would not necessarily yield such a construal.

Was this version actually the original one? The external evidence certainly does not tell against such a hypothesis, for the Vatican MS stems from the 13th century and is probably our earliest Palestinian Targum manuscript.²¹

Proceeding to the internal evidence, it may first be noted that the omission of the verb קביע differs from the parallels in the *Pseudo-Jonathan Targum* and *Targum Neofiti I*. This suggests that the longer reading in some manuscripts of the *Fragmentary Targum* is the result of a harmonizing of the sources.

Moreover, the omission of the verb undoubtedly represents the *lectio difficilior* and thus should be accepted. What does it mean that Jacob's 'image' is 'upon' (ב) the throne of glory? The reading was no doubt changed to the easily understandable and less provocative statement that the patriarch's 'image' was 'engraved' on the throne.

This leads us to the basic rule of textual criticism. It is to be noted that the shorter reading of the *Fragmentary Targum* can easily explain the addition of the verb 'engraved', while it would remain difficult to explain why a scribe would leave out the verb and create a reading which appears to be rather provocative.

¹⁹ Rowland did not consider this evidence. See the tables in F. Lentzen-Deis, *Die Taufe Jesu nach den Synoptikern* (FTS 4; Frankfurt a.M.: Knecht, 1970) 220-1.

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 דיקרא.

²¹ P.S. Alexander, 'Jewish Aramaic Translations of Hebrew Scriptures', *Mikra* (Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum 2/1; ed. M.H. Mulder; Assen: Van Gorcum & Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 218-21.

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 εἰκῶν used in the Targums and *Gen R.* 68.12 are synonymous with צלם and דמות,²³ as is also suggested by the use of דמות for Jacob's heavenly εἰκῶν in *b Hul* 91b. אִיקוֹנִין or דְּיוֹקְנָא 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* דְּיוֹקְנָא renders צלם in *Gen* 1.27 and 9.6, and דמות in *Gen* 1.26 and 5.1. In *Gen* 5.3, אִיקוֹנִינָא is used for צלם. See the discussion by Rowland, *Influence* 141-50, who observes that דְּיוֹקְנָא '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 and 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 אִיקוֹנִין used for the statue of a king and צלם 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 *Shabu'ot*, 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 (דאיקונין דיעקב הוה מזדקף לקיבליה).'²⁸ 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, שרידים מיצירתם הפיוטית של המתורגמים הקדומים, *HaSifrut* 4 (1973), 363-4.

²⁹ 3 *Enoch* 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. At the top of the ladder, Jacob sees 'the face (πρόσωπον) as 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.

(נ'יא צורת יעקב אבונא עלוהי מלעילא).³¹ The term צורתה, 'form', is another word belonging to the same semantic field as צלם, 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 עלוהי מלעילא was taken to mean that the 'form' of Jacob was *engraved on* the throne, קביעא בכורסיה.³³ 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 צורתה, דמות, or איקונין denotes his body.³⁴

Can we trust the attribution of the idea of Jacob's heavenly דמות 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

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.

³³ *Neofiti I. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* reads קביעא בכורסי. The *Fragmentary Targum*, MS Paris, has קביע בכורסי.

³⁴ There is to be found an amulet with the inscription IAKOB AKOYBTA IAW BEPΩ, which H.C. Youtie, 'A Gnostic Amulet with an Aramaic Inscription', *JAOS* 50 (1930) 214-20, reads as 'Jacob the likeness (עקובהא) of Yahweh, His Son (ברו)'. In order to derive the translation 'likeness' from עקובהא, 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.

³⁵ Alexander, 'Translations', 243.

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 δαίμων 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 Elysus had a vision of a young man looking like his dead son, Euthonous. When Elysus asked who he was, the youth answered: 'I am the δαίμων of your son.'⁴¹

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

³⁶ 9.4; 47.3; 60.2. Cf. *Jub* 31.20.

³⁷ 71.14. Cf. below, p. 147, n. 48.

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 *I 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.

⁴⁰ G. Quispel, 'Das ewige Ebenbild der Menschen. Zur Begegnung mit dem Selbst in der Gnosis', *Eranos* 36 (1967) 9-30; A.D. De Conick, "Seek to See Him": *The Influence of Early Jewish Mysticism and Hermeticism on the Gospel of Thomas* (Diss.; University of Michigan, 1993) 255-68, with extensive bibliography.

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 (אֵיִקוֹנִיָּא) walks before the man, and heralds proclaim before him, saying: "Make way for the image (אֵיִקוֹנִין) of God."' ⁴³

The interpretation of the text is uncertain; אֵיִקוֹנִיָּא 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 אֱלֹהִים 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 אֱלֹהִים'.⁴⁵ Esau's 'guardian angel' (actually, נָסִי, 'prince') is like him.

When Moses fled Pharaoh, he was aided by an angel who 'descended in the likeness of Moses (בְּדַמּוֹת מֹשֶׁה)'.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 (דְּמוּת) of Solomon descended and sat on his throne.⁴⁷ Again דְּמוּת is found used for the guardian angel.

⁴² *De gen Socr* 585E.

⁴³ *Deut R.* 4.4. See Str-B 2.707 for parallel texts and discussion.

⁴⁴ Thus אֵיִקוֹנִיָּא, corresponding to Hebrew אֵיִקוֹנִין; the singular אֵיִקוֹן derives from εἰκῶν. But since אֵיִקוֹנִין also was used as a singular, from εἰκόνας, אֵיִקוֹנִיָּא too may be taken as a singular. In the parallel in *Midr Ps ad* 17.8 we read: 'Make way for the אֵיִקוֹנִיָּא 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.

In one of the versions of the *Legend of the Ten Martyrs*, the angel Metatron is R. Ishmael's heavenly counterpart. God praises R. Ishmael before Metatron: 'I have a servant (עבד) on earth, as you are My servant on high. His glory (זיו) is like your glory, and his appearance (מראה) is like your appearance.'⁴⁸ Here we find still another word belonging to the same semantic field as 'glory' and 'likeness' (cf. the description of God's כבוד as כבוד אדם in Ezek 1.26).

The Jewish tradition about a guardian angel can be shown to be quite old. In the Acts of the Apostles there is to be found a story about Peter's miraculous escape from prison. Arriving at the house of Mary the mother of John Mark, Peter is recognized by the maid, who announces his arrival to the others being present. They cannot believe that Peter is out of jail and offer the following explanation: 'It is his angel.'⁴⁹

Jacob's 'image' or 'likeness' in heaven apparently was regarded as his guardian angel. While R. Hama took the אלהים who fought with Jacob to be Esau's guardian angel, others regarded the angel who named the patriarch 'Israel' as Jacob's own angel. In Jewish tradition, the name Israel was even the name of the angel himself. The earliest Jewish text where this is found would seem to be the *Ladder of Jacob*, where the angel Sariel says: 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but your name shall be similar to my name, Israel.'⁵⁰

⁴⁸ A. Jellinek, בית המדרש (6 vols. in two: Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1938) 6.21. R. Ishmael is the seventh in a chain of saints: Adam, Jacob, Joseph, Saul, Absalom, R. Abbahu, and R. Ishmael (23). Usually, Enoch is the seventh son of Adam (e.g., Gen 5.1-18; *Jub* 7.39; *1 Enoch* 60.8; 93.3; *Jude* 14). Enoch was said to have ascended and become identical with the Son of Man (*1 Enoch*) or Metatron (*3 Enoch*).

⁴⁹ 12.15. Recently D. Daube, 'On Acts 23: Sadducees and Angels', *JBL* 109 (1990) 495-6, has suggested that the passage witnesses to the idea that people after death enter into an interim state as angels or spirits. Although Daube would seem to be right that this attested idea explains the Sadducean statement that 'there is no resurrection nor angel nor spirit' (Acts 23.8), Acts 12.15 appears to witness to the idea of the angelic counterpart of human beings. In the second century, this idea is found in different quarters of Christianity; see the works cited above, p. 145, n. 40.

⁵⁰ 4.3. With transposition of one letter, the name שריאל becomes ישראל.

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

⁵¹ *Dial* 75.2; 125.5; 134.6. Cf. ch. 58.

⁵² Cf. above, p. 25.

⁵³ *Dial* 114.2; 130.9; ch. 135. See also Novatian, *Contra Noet* 5.

⁵⁴ Origen, *Comm in Joh* II.31.

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 religio-historical material to support his insight.

⁵⁶ 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 (εἰδωλον)' (*PGM* VIII.37-8). See also

However, the heavenly 'image' of Jacob is no ordinary guardian angel; it is the Angel Israel, even the Glory of God.⁵⁷

V

Finally coming back to John 1.51, we now have to ask if the Gospel contains the idea that Jesus, like Jacob-Israel, is both in heaven and on earth at the same time. It would seem that this actually is an aspect of John's Christology which has gone rather unappreciated.

John 1.18 says: 'No one has ever seen God; the Only-Begotten, the one being in the bosom of the Father (ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς), has revealed him.' It is not improbable that ὢν denotes the continuous timeless existence of the revealer with God: even when he is on earth and brings the revelation, the Son is in the Father's bosom.⁵⁸

The original text of 3.13 would seem to have read: 'No one has gone up into heaven except the one having come down from heaven, the Son of Man, *who is in heaven* (ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ).'⁵⁹ In this statement, which is uttered by Jesus, we again find the suggestion of the revealer's timeless existence with God.

PGM IV.216-7, where μορφή is the concomitant of ὄνομα. 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: Mohn, 1972) 27-9, 48-51. According to Origen, Christ is the guardian angel of the mature believer; see now J.W. Trigg, 'The Angel of Great Counsel: Christ and the Angelic Hierarchy in Origen's Theology', *JTS* 42 (1991) 35-51.

⁵⁸ In 8.58 Jesus claims to share the divine Name ὁ ὢν, which in Exod 3.14 denotes the eternal self-existence of God; see above, p. 127.

⁵⁹ 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 μὴ, 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^h, the Itala versions, Cop^{bo}, 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^s 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.⁶⁰ Jesus belongs inseparably to the sphere of τὰ ἄνω.⁶¹ 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.

from different traditions and weld 'pre-existent' Christology and 'transformation' Christology. For the latter, see above, pp. 71-108.

⁶⁰ E.g., 8.16, 29; 10.30; 16.32.

⁶¹ 8.23.

The doubling of Jacob-Israel can be explained by the idea of a heavenly guardian angel who looked like the human being to whom he was allotted. There was a mystical identity between the two, as is evidenced also by the fact that the heavenly being and the human shared the same name. The Gospel according to John teaches that the Son of Man is in heaven at the same time as he is on earth.⁶² Adapting the tradition about the angels ascending to the Glory and descending to Jacob, the author promises his readers a spiritual vision of the heavenly Glory of God in the Son of Man on earth.⁶³

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'.