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GNOSIS 7 (2022) 17–52

brill.com/gnos

Living Mysteries

Embodiment of Divine Knowledge in Jewish Apocalypticism

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Abstract

The study explores the early Jewish understanding of divine knowledge as divine presence, which is embodied in major biblical exemplars, such as Adam, Enoch, Jacob, and Moses. It demonstrates that the personification of divine knowledge in early Judaism and, especially, in the Jewish pseudepigrapha reveals a distinct "cultic" way of mediating the divine presence and, consequentially, the divine knowledge that can be designated as the "divine presence's epistemology."

Keywords

embodiment – Adam – apocalypticism – *imago Dei* – Judaism

1 Introduction

While in many Jewish apocalyptic stories their heroes routinely bring to earth celestial knowledge through prophecies and handwritings, they also deliver from the upper realm another type of revelation, namely, an embodied iconic knowledge about God and his glorious manifestations. This is reflected in the adept's transformed body which emulates God's form as the adept becomes his image, his face, or an embodiment of his name. We can see an early example of this type of iconic revelation, transmitted through the medium of the adept's body, already in the Book of Exodus, where Moses carries from the holy mountain not only the famous tablets of the Law but also the memory of the deity's theophany reflected on his face. Brian Britt observes:

 | DOI:10.1163/2451859X-00701002

> the frightening and miraculous transformation of Moses' face, and its subsequent concealment by a veil, constitute a kind of theophany. Just as the face of God is usually off-limits to Moses (with the exception of Exod 33:11 and Deut 34:10), so the face of Moses is sometimes off-limits to the people .... While these parallels may not bear directly on Moses' transformed face, they offer suggestive evidence that theophany and divine enlightenment can appear on the human face.[1]

Some biblical and pseudepigraphical accounts suggest that the theophany expresses the unique corporeal nature of the deity that cannot be fully grasped or conveyed in some other non-corporeal symbolism, medium, or language. The divine presence requires another presence in order to be transmitted. To be communicated properly and in its full measure, the divine iconic knowledge must be "written" on a new living "body" which can hold the ineffable presence of God through a newly acquired ontology. The transmission of the divine presence and knowledge through a "living organism" has a paramount cultic significance. This is why in ancient Near Eastern routines of making cultic images, the deity's statue must be "brought to life" through elaborate rituals known as the "washing of the mouth" (*mīs pî*) and the "opening of the mouth" (*pīt pî*). These cryptic rites illustrate that only by a "living embodiment" can the fullness of the divine theophanic knowledge be appropriately dispersed.[2]

In this epistemological framework, "'to know' means 'to become that same reality that is known,' to be transformed ... into actual object of knowledge, overcoming and removing the dichotomy between subject and object."[3] Instead of carrying only a description of the theophany in his mind or his books, an adept now carries the form and the act of the theophany in his body, thus preserving both the visible and concealed aspects of the theophanic presence.

Ontological transmission of heavenly knowledge is closely tied to an ancient understanding of divine knowledge not merely as introspection, but as a reality that is objectively present. Unfortunately, nowhere are the limits of our modern epistemological sensibilities manifested so clearly as in our misunderstanding of the ancient concept of knowledge and, more specifically, divine

1 Britt 2004, 85. Dozeman notes that "the function of Moses as mediator is not limited to his role as representative of the people before Yahweh, for he also acts in just the opposite role, namely as the representative of the divine presence to the people" (Dozeman 1989, 138–139).

2 On the connections between divine knowledge and visionary experience of God's theophany, see DeConick 1996, 99–174; idem 2001, 34–67; Gruenwald 1973.

3 Filoramo 1990, 41.

knowledge.[4] Yet, in an ancient epistemological framework, shared both by the Greco-Roman philosophical traditions and Near Eastern mythological milieus, the very source of any true knowledge, including divine knowledge, was always situated in its proper abode – the upper realm.[5]

This outlook appears dominant in the Platonic model of antiquity which postulated the existence of the noetic world of ideas, as well as in Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Greek myths about heavenly knowledge and its otherworldly revealers, who lawfully or illegitimately brought these mysteries to humankind. It should be noted that, at the time when the Jewish biblical and psuedepigraphical writings were produced, there was no other religious epistemological model that construed the origin of knowledge without referencing the upper divine realm.[6] Michael Stone points out that the authors of Jewish pseudepigraphical works "claimed – and presumably they believed – that the teachings they propagated stemmed from the trans-mundane realm."[7]

In early Jewish biblical and extra-biblical materials, divine knowledge was depicted as originating, as well as permanently and objectively existing in the heavenly realm in the form of celestial tablets, books, or patterns.[8] These heavenly media were often understood not merely as "books" or "tablets" in the conventional sense, but also as attributes or parts of celestial organisms – forms, limbs, and garments of heavenly beings on which divine knowledge

4 Reflecting on these challenges, Bahrani notes that "in studying these cultures, our interpretive task is made all the more difficult since we are dealing with a system of thought, a worldview that existed long before ours, yet we have no means of approaching it from outside our own ontological system" (Bahrani 2003, 122).

5 In this system of belief, even the ways in which knowledge is transmitted, such as through an alphabet or writing, originate from above. Reeves and Reed argue that in this worldview "writing and the material technologies associated with its practice are not considered … to be human inventions. They belong instead among a revelatory knowledge which originates from the supernal world" (Reeves and Reed 2018, 56).

6 As Bockmuehl points out "for these writers, 'mysteries' subsist in heaven at present but a glimpse of their reality and relevance can be disclosed to select visionaries who pass on this information to the faithful few (the 'wise', i.e. the righteous) to encourage them in waiting for the impending deliverance (1 Enoch 1:1–9, 37:1–5, etc.). At present the divine wisdom is known only through such revealed mysteries, since her abode is in heaven (1 Enoch 42:1–3; 48:1; 49:1)" (Bockmuehl 1990, 31–32).

7 Stone 2006, 11.

8 Exod 25:8–9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; Num 8:4. Charles argued that this concept can be "traced partly to Ps 139; Exod 25:9; Exod 26:30, where we find the idea that there exist in heaven divine archetypes of certain things on earth" (Charles 1912, 91). On heavenly books/tablets, see Baynes 2012; Bietenhard 1951, 231–254; Bousset and Gressmann 1926, 258 ff.; Eppel 1937; Martínez 1997; Münchow 1981, 44–49; Nötscher 1959; Paul 1973; Rau, 345–398; Volz 1934, 290–292, 303–304; Widengren 1950.

became permanently affixed.[9] Indeed, various Jewish apocalyptic and mystical accounts portray the celestial knowledge being inscribed on God's palms, his throne, his celestial curtain, or his servant's crown.[10] Like with any other celestial object – God's throne, chariot, or footstool – which are not made from "earthly" materials, including wood or metal, but instead from elements of his angelic retinue, heavenly knowledge can also be written on celestial bodies instead of on paper and parchment. Furthermore, in some early Jewish sources, heavenly knowledge became openly hypostasized in otherworldly beings, including the figures of the divine Wisdom, the divine Logos, the Angel of the Lord, the Messiah, the Son of Man, and others. These celestial figures themselves can be seen as embodied "heavenly tablets" which act as anthropomorphic deposits of celestial mysteries.

2 Divine Image and Embodied Divine Knowledge

The understanding of a human adept's transformed body as a deposit of divine knowledge is deeply rooted in biblical traditions about humankind's creation after the image of God.[11] In the biblical priestly traditions, the deity creates humanity in his own image and is, therefore, frequently described as possessing a human-like form.[12] This morphological resemblance signals that the human form from the beginning was intended to be a visual revelation of the

9 These traditions were perpetuated in Jewish lore for millennia. Idel points to a specimen of this belief in a late midrash, 'Aseret ha-Dibberot where the following tradition is found: "Before the creation of the world, skins for parchments were not in existence, that the Torah might be written on them, because the animals did not yet exist. So, on what was the Torah written? On the arm of the Holy One, blessed be He, by a black fire on [the surface of] a white fire" (Idel 2002, 47). See also Midrash Tanhuma: "How was the Torah written? It was written with letters of black fire on a surface of white fire, as is said: His locks are curled and black as a raven" (Berman 1996, 3). Reflecting on this passage Idel suggests that here the Torah is written on the "head of God, as the mention of the locks apparently implies" (Idel 2002, 49).

10 Isa 49:16; 2 Bar. 4:2–6 (Klijn 1983, 622); 3 Enoch 41:1–3; (Alexander 1983, 292); 3 Enoch 45:1–6 (Alexander 1983, 296–299). For the *Pargod* traditions in rabbinic literature, see also; *b. Yoma* 77a; *b. Ber*. 18b; *b. Hag*. 15a–b; *b. Sanh*. 89b; *b*. Sotah 49a; *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 4:6; *Zohar* 1.47a; 11.149b–150a; *Maseket Hekhalot* 7.

11 This tendency was not unique to Judaism. Hundley writes that "as attested in Egypt and Mesopotamia, humanity was conceived of as theomorphic. In other words, rather than imagining gods as like us, the gods crafted us like them. By bearing a likeness to the supreme deities, humans thus garnered greater dignity and perhaps warranted more of the gods' concern than, e.g., a squirrel" (Hundley 2013, 145).

12 Gen 1:27; Ezek 1; Dan 7.

deity's nature, attributes, and shape. The theophanic functions of the *imago Dei* and its human holder recall ancient Near Eastern traditions of cultic statues and images, which were thought to cultivate and communicate the divine presence and iconic knowledge about God.[13] Michael Dick suggests that the Mesopotamian cult statue was "a special theophany or epiphany by which the deity's power and efficacy are made available to the iconodule" as it was considered to be "the main conduit of divine self-disclosure."[14]

In order to communicate the divine presence and truly become a theophany, the cultic statue must be "brought to life" through elaborate "activating" rituals often with the help of a deity.[15] Ancient Near Eastern ceremonies of the cultic statues' animations, known as the rite of the "washing of the mouth" (*mīs pî*) and the "opening of the mouth" (*pīt pî*), provide important evidence for such vivification ordeals.[16] Some Jewish biblical and pseudepigraphical accounts preserve memories of the initiations used for bringing some of the biblical exemplars to eternal life.[17]

Although idolatry was discouraged in the Jewish religious milieu, the idea of the cultic statue as a manifestation of the divine presence and a deposit of the iconic divine knowledge was paradoxically perpetuated in Israelite tradi-

13 Jacobsen suggests that in Mesopotamian traditions the divine image "remained a promise, a potential, and an incentive to a divine theophany, to a divine presence" (Jacobsen 1987, 29). Hundley notes that "in the past, scholars have denigrated ancient Near Eastern perceptions and practice as primitive, largely derived from a particular reading of the biblical prophets and from the different way of conceptualizing the divine. Recently, a scholarly vogue has been to correct this extreme portrait, and rightly so, yet in the process some have gone to the other extreme. In their efforts to rehabilitate iconic worship, some scholars have idealized it" (Hundley 2013, 144).

14 Dick 2005, 43; see also van der Toorn 1997, 235.

15 Middleton observes that the ritual "is understood as efficaciously vivifying the image, so that its various orifices are opened and it may speak, hear, see, and even (in a certain sense) walk" (Middleton 2005, 128). Hundley states that "for example, at the beginning of the mouth-washing ritual in Mesopotamia, before any ritual manipulation, the divine cult statue was already addressed as a god, yet did not become a fully functioning locus of divine presence until the end of the ritual" (Hundley 2013, 150). Sommer writes that "the texts that describe these rituals maintained that not only human artisans but the gods themselves participated in the fashioning (or 'birth') of the statue" (Sommer 2009, 19).

16 Regarding ancient rituals of washing of the mouth and the opening of the mouth of cultic statues, see Baldermann and Hanson 1999; Beale 2008; Berlejung 1998; Boden 1998; Dick 1999; Hurowitz 2003; idem 2006; Lundberg 2007; Schneider 2015; Smith 2010; Walker and Dick 2001.

17 One example can be found in *Joseph and Aseneth* where Aseneth's partaking of the celestial food is reminiscent of certain ritual practices, through which cultic images are given life by placing the divine Name in their mouths.

tions about the *imago Dei*.[18] Andreas Schüle indicates that the prohibition of idolatrous cultic images in Israel,

> did not put an end altogether to the idea of the 'image of God.' It is remarkable that very much at the same time when prophets like Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel poured scorn on the idols, the idea of the 'image of God' was very much alive in another strand of biblical tradition that is probably about contemporaneous with these prophets: according to the priestly telling of creation in Gen 1:1–2:4a it is not lifeless matter, not a man-made statue, but humans as living beings that are envisioned to be indeed the true image of God.[19]

Schüle further suggests that "we have strong reason to assume that the idea of Man as the 'image of God' in Gen 1–9 has been developed on the background of this ancient view of divine presence in the shape of images. This view, however, has been so transformed that not a material object, a statue, but Man as a living being took on the role of the image."[20]

The replacement of cultic statues made by human hands with living icons made by God was not novel, but was nevertheless, a portentous development, because human bones and flesh became the materials used to construct a new cultic image.[21] Mark Smith offers that "perhaps the use of Biblical Hebrew *ṣelem* for idols hints at the meaning of the human person as being in the image and likeness of God: unlike the lifeless images of false deities, the image of the human person in Gen 1:26–27 is alive and attests to the living God of Israel."[22] The deity's construction of the divine images in the form of the prelapsarian Adam and his eschatological counterparts – Enoch, Jacob, and Moses – constitute a portentous development for the hypostatization of celestial knowledge

18 On the conceptualization of humans functioning as cultic images in the Hebrew Bible, see Herring 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013.

19 Schüle 2005, 2.

20 In Mesopotamia and Egypt the cultic statues were also considered by their makers as "living things." Herring observes that "in Mesopotamia, the ontological life of the image is not only aesthetic. Indeed, the distinction between what is 'real' and what is 'representation' becomes blurred, so that the image is, itself, treated as a living thing" (Herring 2013, 18). See also Schüle 2005, 11.

21 In the Near Eastern sources *ṣalmu* was used to designate the relationship between deity and kings. On this see Herring 2011, 25–27; Curtis 1984. Herring notes that "the priestly use of *tselem* 'image' in the Hebrew Bible shares a similar conceptualization of presence with the Akk. *ṣalmu*" (Herring 2008, 489).

22 Smith 1988, 427.

because these figures are able to mediate the deity's power and efficacy to their audiences not merely through their utterings and books, but also through the medium of their transformed bodies.

Embodied divine knowledge in the form of the *imago Dei* was endowed with the power of God's presence, and as such commanded obedience and reverence from the rest of creation. This submission is required not only from those residing on earth, such as animals, over whom Adam is established as a king, but also from celestial citizens such as angels, who also must submit and bow down before this living manifestation of the divine presence.[23]

Furthermore, there are some other epistemological consequences of the resemblance. By virtue of being created in the image of God, prelapsarian humans are able to grasp the fullness of the divine knowledge. This represents one of the foundational tenets of the *imago Dei* religious epistemology which later Jewish and Christian accounts reiterate. These materials often connect the possession or loss of the divine image in humans with their ability to grasp the entirety of divine knowledge. The image of God becomes a gateway to divine knowledge. To regain the access that was lost by humankind after their fall in the Garden of Eden, eschatological heroes must not only recover the fullness of the *imago Dei* but become this entity. Schüle notes that possession of the image of God makes humans "capable of approaching God in prayer, worship and sacrifice that come from its own creative powers, from its wisdom and from its deep devotion to what is made in its own likeness."[24]

Because of this, some early Jewish extra-biblical accounts often strive to depict their heroes, represented by biblical exemplars, not merely as being recreated after the *imago Dei*, but as the image of God itself, understanding them as icons of the deity who incapsulated the ultimate knowledge about God in their newly acquired ontology. This occurs, for example, in the Books of Adam and Eve where the first human becomes the visual icon of the deity.[25] We should now proceed to a close investigation of this development.

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23 Schüle explains that "being the image of God determines Adam's role and place within the cosmos. It is one of the most highlighted aspects of the *imago Dei* that it is linked with the dominium terrae in Gen 1:28. Being the image puts Adam in a position that installs him as ruler over all other creatures" (Schüle 2005, 5).

24 Schüle 2005, 19.

25 Although the macroforms of these books represent products of later Christian milieus, these Christian compositions can be seen as important compilations of early Jewish Adamic traditions.

3 Biblical Exemplars as Embodied Theophanic Knowledge

3.1 *Adam*

Similar to the ancient Near Eastern traditions of cultic images which include "rituals of activation" for cultic divine images, such as the "washing the mouth" and the "opening the mouth," Adam's introduction to the world in the Books of Adam and Eve also includes a ritual.[26] Some scholars see rudiments of this ritual element (that parallels Mesopotamian "activation ceremonies") already in the biblical accounts of the protoplast's creation, reflected in the initial chapters of the Book of Genesis.[27]

In the Books of Adam and Eve, after the protoplast's creation, the archangel Michael brings Adam into the divine presence and forces him to bow down before God. Then all of the angels are ordered to bow down to Adam.[28] At this point we also have a paradigm shift in understanding who Adam really is. A significant feature of the story is that Michael, who summons the celestial citizens for the act of veneration, does not ask them to venerate *Adam*, who according to biblical traditions and previous narration was created *in* the image of God. Instead, Michael commands them to bow down before *the image and the likeness of God*. Adam, who previously was described as created after the image of God, is now identified as the image of God.

Here humanity is an extension of the divine presence. Crispin Fletcher-Louis rightly observes that "Adam as God's image is by no means an incidental detail of the Worship of Adam Story."[29] It represents a striking departure from the biblical profile of the protoplast. George van Kooten notes that "in *LAE*, the phrase 'image of God' becomes wholly identical with Adam. The remark of Gen 1:26 that Adam is created in the image and after the likeness of God is passed over in silence. Adam simply is God's image and, within this mindset, he is the object of worship by the angels."[30]

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26 Hundley notes that "the Mesopotamian statue functions much like a newborn, who must mature and be instructed and empowered to fulfill its intended role" (Hundley 2015, 208).

27 Schüle 2005; Beckerleg 2009.

28 The Latin version of the Books of Adam and Eve 13.2–14.1 reads: "The Lord God then said: 'Behold, Adam, I have made you in our image and likeness.' Having gone forth Michael called all the angels saying: 'Worship the image of the Lord God, just as the Lord God has commanded.'" The Armenian version of the Books of Adam and Eve 13.2–14.1 reads: "God said to Michael, 'Behold I have made Adam in the likeness of my image.' Then Michael summoned all the angels, and God said to them, 'Come, bow down to god whom I made'" (Anderson and Stone 1999, 16).

29 Fletcher-Louis 2015, 265.

30 Van Kooten 2008, 29.

In the Georgian version of the Books of Adam and Eve, Michael commands two angels to "bow down before the likeness and the image of the divinity."[31] The Latin version also speaks of the divine image: "Worship the image of the Lord God, just as the Lord God has commanded."[32] Likewise in the Armenian version, although Adam's name is not mentioned, he appears as the divine manifestation itself: "Then Michael summoned all the angels, and God said to them, Come, bow down to the god whom I made."[33]

The results of Michael's order to "activate" the cultic image of the deity are mixed.[34] Some angels agree to bow down before it, while others, including Satan, refuse to give obeisance. The Latin version reiterates the tradition of the image of God when Michael personally invites Satan to "worship the image of God Jehovah."[35] In contrast to Michael's command, which does not invoke Adam's name but instead refers to him as the "image of God," Satan's response specifically mentions Adam's name. Satan sees Adam not as the icon of the divine presence, but instead as a creature which is "younger" or "posterior" to the antagonist. Satan's refusal to venerate Adam introduces the theme of "opposition" to the divine image.

Both motifs – angelic veneration and angelic opposition – play an equally significant role in the construction of Adam's unique upper identity as the image of God.[36] These pivotal events are comparable to the Mesopotamian

31 Anderson and Stone 1999 16E.

32 Anderson and Stone 1999, 16E.

33 Anderson and Stone 1999, 16E. Patton observes that "Adam's role as the effective symbol of God's presence in heaven is the result of a divine command" (Patton 1994, 299). She goes on to say that "because this image of God was created and ordained as such by God, Satan's refusal to worship Adam is paramount to Satan's refusal to worship God" (300).

34 I suggest that here the angelic veneration can represent a role of activation or vivification of the divine image, known in Egyptian and Mesopotamian milieus. In these traditions "each image had to undergo a ritual of consecration and without such a rite, the inanimate, manmade object could not be imbued with life. With animation, the statue becomes 'activated'" (Collins 2005, 29).

35 "*Adora imaginem dei Jehova*" (Anderson and Stone 1999, 16–16E). See also Latin *Vita* 15:2: "Worship the image of God. If you do not worship, the Lord God will grow angry with you" (Anderson and Stone 1999, 17E).

36 The motif of angelic opposition has been regularly marginalized in previous studies of the story, while the motif of angelic worship has been exaggerated. This is evident in the specific labeling of the account as "Worship of Adam Story" (Fletcher-Louis 2015, 256) or "Exaltation of Adam" (Anderson 2000). Fletcher-Louis argues for an early pre-Christian provenance of this motif by noting that "Philo is almost certainly a witness to it in his treatise *On the Creation of the World*, where he says that when man was created the other creatures were so amazed at the sight of him that they worshipped (*proskynein*) him as one by nature ruler and master (§ 83)" (Fletcher-Louis 2015, 262).

rites of "animation," through which a new cultic image was "brought to life" in order to be able to fully communicate the divine presence. In Adam's story, angelic veneration and angelic opposition test the "authenticity" of the new "statue" of God as a true witness to the divine presence. In eschatological versions of the ritual, angelic veneration and opposition will lead a human protagonist, such as Enoch, Jacob, or Moses, into his new supra-angelic ontology, when he will be fully embraced as the "image" of the deity.

3.2 *Enoch*

Understanding of the divine image as the personified divine knowledge is further developed in Enochic lore when the seventh antediluvian patriarch acts as a chosen vessel for the most recondite mysteries of God. This development receives additional epistemological complexity in Enochic lore because of the exemplar's well-established affiliation with esoteric knowledge, a trait which the seventh antediluvian hero inherits from his Mesopotamian antecedents.[37] Indeed, in early Jewish pseudepigraphical writings, Enoch is refashioned as a visual icon of the deity – an image that served in Enochic accounts, like in Adamic lore, as an important revelatory device. Like Adam, Enoch personifies the divine knowledge and is designed to embody the most recondite mysteries of God, pertaining especially to the deity's anthropomorphic form.

We can clearly see these developments in 2 Enoch where a constellation of familiar motifs recalls Adam's initiation into the office of the *imago Dei*. Here, however, the eschatological setting replaces the original protological setting and a new hero, the patriarch Enoch, supplants the protoplast as the embodiment of the divine image. The remediation of this process is meticulously documented in 2 Enoch. The storyline of this text, which was probably written in the first century C.E., before the destruction of the Second Jerusalem Temple, deals with Enoch's heavenly journey to the throne of God.[38] There, in the deity's sacred abode, the seventh antediluvian hero undergoes a luminous metamorphosis which turns him into a celestial being predestined to be a new cultic icon of the divinity. An important nexus of conceptual developments that are relevant to our study occurs in chapters 21 and 22 which narrate Enoch's transformation. The patriarch's metamorphosis includes several familiar features reminiscent of Adam's initiations in the Armenian, Georgian, and Latin versions of the *Books of Adam and Eve*.

37 Orlov 2005, 23–39.

38 On the date of *2 Enoch*, see Charles and Morfill 1896, xxvi; Charles and Forbes 1913, 429; Milik and Black 1976, 114; Böttrich 1996, 813; Orlov 2005, 323–328 and 2012.

The story depicts angels bringing Enoch to the edge of the seventh heaven. By God's command, the archangel Gabriel invites the seer to stand in front of the deity forever. Enoch agrees, and Gabriel takes him to the deity's form where the patriarch gives obeisance to God. God then personally repeats the invitation for Enoch to stand before him forever. Following this invitation, the archangel Michael brings the patriarch before God's face. The deity then summons his angels with a resounding call: "Let Enoch join in and stand in front of my face forever!" In response, God's glorious ones give obeisance to Enoch saying, "Let Enoch yield in accordance with your word, O Lord!"[39]

Michael Stone suggests that 2 Enoch 21–22 recalls the account of Adam's elevation and veneration by angels which occurs in the Armenian, Georgian, and Latin versions of the *Books of Adam and Eve*.[40] Stone interjects that along with the motifs of Adam's elevation and veneration by angels, the author of 2 Enoch also appears to be aware of the theme of angelic disobedience and refusal to venerate the first human. Stone draws the reader's attention to the phrase "sounding them out," found in 2 Enoch 22:6, which another translator of the Slavonic text rendered as "making a trial of them."[41] Stone argues that the expression "sounding them out" or "making a trial of them" implies that it is the angels' obedience that is being tested.[42]

Similar to the Adamic story, the account of Enoch's transformation into the divine image exhibits an epistemological dimension. Through his new visual icon, in the form of heavenly Enoch, God once again is able to reveal to his creation both the visible and invisible aspects of his nature.

3.3 *Jacob*

Another biblical exemplar that many Jewish accounts fashion as a personified image of God is the patriarch Jacob. Later rabbinic materials dramatically expand the biblical account of Jacob's vision of the ladder to include the patriarch's celestial image being engraved on the throne of the Divine Glory. Various rabbinic corpora attest to this refashioning of the patriarch's story. Rachel Neis reminds us that "the notion that Jacob's features were engraved on God's throne is found in midrashic sources, targumim, and liturgical poetry (*piyyut*)."[43] For

39 Andersen 1983, 138.

40 The Adamic story of the angelic veneration of Adam and Satan's disobedience is attested in many Jewish, Christian, and Muslim materials. See, e.g., Slavonic version of *3 Bar.* 4, *Gos. Bart.* 4, Coptic *Enthronement of Michael, Cave of Treasures* 2.10–24, and *Qur'an* 2:31–39; 7:11–18; 15:31–48; 17:61–65; 18:50; 20:116–123; 38:71–85.

41 Charles and Morfill 2004, 28.

42 Stone 2000, 47.

43 Neis 2007, 43.

example, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan offers the following description of the patriarch's celestial identity in the form of the image engraved on the celestial throne:

> He [Jacob] had a dream, and behold, a ladder was fixed in the earth with its top reaching toward the heavens … and on that day they (angels) ascended to the heavens on high, and said, "Come and see Jacob the pious, whose image is fixed (engraved) in the throne of Glory, and whom you have desired to see."[44]

This account depicts the patriarch not merely as the heavenly *imago Dei* but also as a personification of theophanic knowledge that is being revealed to angels. The theophany, thus, is radically reshaped through the presentation of the exemplar's heavenly image as the center of the epiphanic event. The tradition of Jacob's image on the throne illustrates that God's theophany is not a rigid entity frozen forever in eternity. It is an everchanging fluid event, and a specific epistemological situation in which the theophany is conditioned by the story and the persona of the exemplar who undergoes a paradoxical transformation from a human seer to an embodiment of the divine manifestation.[45] This theophany has the "face" of Jacob's image which perplexes the angels.

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44 Maher 1992, 99–100. Another Palestinian text, Targum Neofiti also offers a similar portrayal: "And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was fixed on the earth and its head reached to the height of the heavens; and behold, the angels that had accompanied him from the house of his father ascended to bear good tidings to the angels on high, saying: "Come and see the pious man whose image is engraved in the throne of Glory, whom you desired to see." And behold, the angels from before the Lord ascended and descended and observed him" (McNamara 1992, 140). Additionally, the Palestinian text, the so-called Fragmentary Targum is also cognizant of Jacob's heavenly image fixed upon the Throne of Glory: "And he dreamt that there was a ladder set on the ground, whose top reached towards the heavens; and behold the angels that had accompanied him from his father's house ascended to announce to the angels of the heights: 'Come and see the pious man, whose image is fixed to the throne of Glory …' " (Klein 1980, 1.57 and 2.20).

45 We can see these tendencies in Mesopotamian traditions where the representation of the divine presence conditions the deity. On the connection between the deity and his statue Hundley notes that "not only was the deity present in the image, but the well-being of the image also seems to have been connected to that of the deity. Thus, it follows logically that how the worshipers treated their deity in the form of its image determined how the deity treated them and their nation" (Hundley 2013, 140–141). Later in his study Hundley reiterates this view by arguing that "in addition, the entity was frequently linked to its image in such a way that what affected the image affected the entity as well" (Hundley 2013, 150).

The association between Jacob's heavenly image and the deity's throne was widely circulated in rabbinic literature.[46] Some of these materials describe Jacob's heavenly identity as an icon of the deity. Rachel Neis states that "the rabbinic texts set up a visual symmetry, between an earthly Jacob and a divine iconic Jacob."[47] The possibility that Jacob's celestial persona might appear in some materials as an "icon" deserves closer attention. In this respect, two rabbinic passages are especially noteworthy. The first passage, found in Genesis Rabbah 82:2, details the following tradition:

> R. Isaac commenced: An altar of earth shalt thou make unto me … in every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come unto thee and bless thee (Exod 20:24). If I bless him who builds an altar in My name, how much the more should I appear to Jacob, whose features are engraved on My Throne, and bless him. Thus it says, And God appeared unto Jacob … and blessed him. R. Levi commenced: And an ox and a ram for peace offerings … for to-day the Lord appeared unto you (Lev 9:4). If I appear to him who offered a ram in My name and bless him, how much the more should I appear to Jacob whose features are engraved on My throne, and bless him. Thus it says, And God appeared unto Jacob … and blessed him.[48]

Secondly, Lamentation Rabbah 2:2 is also cognizant of Jacob's heavenly identity in the form of the celestial image:

> Similarly spoke the Holy One, blessed be He, to Israel: Do you not provoke Me because you take advantage of the likeness of Jacob which is engraved upon My throne? Here, have it, it is thrown in your face! Hence, He hath cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel.[49]

46 Kugel comments that "this particular motif is widely distributed in rabbinic texts. Thus, for example, in Numbers Rabba (Bemidbar 4:1) the verse from Isaiah 43:4, 'Because you are precious in my eyes, you have been honored' is explained: 'God said to Jacob: Jacob, you are so precious in my eyes that I have, as it were, fixed your portrait (iqonin) on the heavenly throne.' Similarly, one reads concerning the opening verse of chapter 2 of Lamentations: 'How the Lord in his anger has beclouded …' Said God to Israel: Do you truly aggravate me? It is only the fact that the portrait (iqonin) of Jacob is engraved on my throne. Here then, take it! And he threw it in their faces. And likewise in Genesis Rabbah 78:3, on the verse 'For you have wrestled with God and with men and have prevailed' (Gen 32:28) we read: 'You are the one whose portrait is engraved on high'" (Kugel 1990, 113).

47 Neis 2007, 46.

48 Slotki 1961b, 752.

49 Slotki 1961a, 151.

These rabbinic passages portray Jacob's image engraved on the throne as a cultic image or an "icon" of the deity in a manner that is similar to how the *Books of Adam and Eve* depict the prelapsarian Adam. Rachel Neis suggests that in Lamentations Rabbah 2:2, "God accuses Israel of taking advantage of the presence of this icon and provoking him with their behavior. He threatens to cast down the icon of Jacob from his throne."[50] This motif also appears in Numbers Rabbah 4:1 where angels worship the deity both through Jacob's name and his image: "The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Jacob: Jacob, thou art exceedingly precious in my sight. For I have, as it were, set thine image on My throne, and by thy name the angels praise Me and say: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting and to everlasting."[51]

By comparing these rabbinic developments with the familiar Adamic accounts it becomes clear that the traditions about Jacob's heavenly image were not merely later rabbinic inventions. Rather they are developments with ancient roots in early pseudepigraphical accounts. One of the early pseudepigraphical Jewish sources which explores Jacob's role as the *imago Dei* is the Prayer of Joseph.[52]

The Prayer of Joseph exhibits several important details that relate to Jacob's role as the image of God. First, in one fragment Jacob mentions his unique place in God's creation by uttering: "I, Jacob, who is speaking to you, am also Israel, an angel of God and a ruling spirit. Abraham and Isaac were created before any work (προεκτίσθησαν). But … I am the firstborn (πρωτόγονος) of every living thing to whom God gives life."[53] Jacob's self-designation as πρωτόγονος is intriguing and likely illustrates his role as the image of God, the same office that

50 Neis 2007, 45.

51 Slotki 1961c, 95.

52 For the primary texts of the *Prayer of Joseph*, see Denis 1970, 295–298.

53 Van der Horst and Newman note that "the word used for 'pre-created,' προεκτίσθησαν, is a prefixed form of the more frequently appearing κτίζω. The word is used to emphasize the idea that Jacob existed before the creation of the world and its order. The Greek term is found in later Christian literature to refer to the status of Christ as pre-existent, yet the idea resonates with rabbinic traditions that posit the preexistence of certain items before creation, variously among them the Torah, the temple, the heavenly throne, repentance, and wisdom" (van der Horst and Newman 2008, 250–251). Smith 1983, 713. Van der Horst and Newman note that "the LXX of Exod 4:22 speaks of Israel as God's πρωτότοκος, 'firstborn son.' This word is not found elsewhere in scripture, but Philo uses the term to refer both to the Logos (*Conf.* 63, 146; *Somn.* 1.215) and to Israel as a first-born (*Post.* 63; *Fug.* 208), or to Israel in the character of the Logos (*Agr.* 51). This idea of Jacob being 'the firstborn' is also mentioned in the Prayer of Joseph in which Jacob is … the 'firstborn of all living'" (Van der Horst and Newman 2008, 256).

the protoplast occupies in the Adamic pseudepigraphical accounts.[54] According to Howard Schwartz, the expression "suggests that Jacob was a kind of proto-human, an Adam-like figure."[55] Jarl Fossum offers another key parallel, previously noticed by other experts as well: namely, a possible connection with Col 1:15, where Christ's role as "the image of the invisible God" (εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου) is tied to his designation as πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως ("the firstborn of all creation")[56] According to Fossum, "the closest parallel to the phrase in Col 1:15b is found in a fragment of the Prayer of Joseph preserved by Origen."[57]

A second detail that suggests the presence of the *imago Dei* concept in the Prayer of Joseph is the motif of angelic opposition which often played a pivotal part in the inauguration rituals found in Adamic and Enochic lore. In the Prayer, Jacob mentions that the angel Uriel envied him, wrestled with him, and argued that his name was above Jacob's.[58] Although the Prayer of Joseph draws on the biblical story of Jacob's struggle with a supernatural opponent at the river Jabbok, angelic jealousy and the angel's arguments about his superiority are new additions. As Richard Hayward observes, "the Bible gives no motive for the supernatural attack on Jacob [at Jabbok] … The Prayer, however, attributes the attack to jealousy, and adds something entirely foreign to both the Bible and Philo: what is at issue between the two combatants is their relative status as angels, and their exact positions within the celestial hierarchy."[59] Uriel's jealousy and arguments about his superiority recall the angels' opposition to Adam as the divine image in the inauguration story in the Books of Adam and Eve.

There, as we recall, the chief antagonist Satan also expresses similar feelings of jealousy that justify his refusal to worship Adam because of Adam's inferior celestial status in comparison with his own, more exalted, position.[60]

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54 Hayward notes that "Philo uses this word only six times in his writings, always to speak of the Logos (*Conf*. 63, 146; *Somn*. 1.215), Israel as a first-born (*Post*. 63; *Fug*. 208), or Israel in the character of the Logos (*Agr*. 51)" (Hayward 2005, 200). He further suggests that "when Philo calls Israel πρωτόγονος therefore, it may be that he has in mind once again a being who belongs both on earth and in heaven" (Hayward 2005, 200).

55 Schwartz 2004, 366.

56 Windisch 1914, 225n1.

57 Fossum 1995, 24.

58 "He envied me and fought with me and wrestled with me saying that his name and the name that is before every angel was to be above mine" (Smith 1983, 713).

59 Hayward 2005, 205.

60 The Latin version of the Books of Adam and Eve 12:1 reads: "Groaning, the Devil said: 'O Adam, all my enmity, jealousy, and resentment is towards you, since on account of you I was expelled and alienated from my glory, which I had in heaven in the midst of the angels. On account of you I was cast out upon the earth'" (Anderson and Stone 1999, 15E). The Latin and the Armenian versions of the Books of Adam and Eve 14:2–15:1.

The appearance of angelic jealousy and resistance affirms the presence of the *imago Dei* in these traditions. In view of these connections, it is possible that the Prayer of Joseph envisions Jacob's heavenly identity as the eschatological image of God.

3.4 *Moses*

Although Adam's inauguration lacks any explicit references to the hero's endowment with knowledge, stories of other exemplars' induction into the *imago Dei* coincide with this gift. This occurs, for example, in 2 Enoch. Another early example appears in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian where Moses's inauguration into the divine image coincides with his ability to observe "the whole earth all around" and "beneath the earth and above the heavens." Verses 67–90 of this early Jewish drama unveil another early Jewish account that contains some traces of the inauguration ritual. Given its quotation by Alexander Polyhistor (ca. 80–40 B.C.E.), the *Exagoge's* account can be taken as a witness to traditions of the second century B.C.E.[61] Preserved in fragmentary form by several ancient sources, *Exagoge* 67–90 reads:[62]

> Moses: I had a vision of a great throne on the top of Mount Sinai and it reached till the folds of heaven. A noble man was sitting on it, with a crown and a large scepter in his left hand. He beckoned to me with his right hand, so I approached and stood before the throne. He gave me the scepter and instructed me to sit on the great throne. Then he gave me a royal crown and got up from the throne. I beheld the whole earth all around and saw beneath the earth and above the heavens. A multitude of stars fell before my knees and I counted them all. They paraded past me like a battalion of men. Then I awoke from my sleep in fear.
>
> Raguel: My friend, this is a good sign from God. May I live to see the day when these things are fulfilled. You will establish a great throne, become a judge and leader of men. As for your vision of the whole earth, the world below and that above the heavens – this signifies that you will see what is, what has been and what shall be.[63]

61 Meeks 1967, 149.

62 The Greek text of the passage was published in several editions including: Denis 1970, 210; Snell 1971, 288–301; Jacobson 1983, 362–366.

63 Jacobson 1983, 54–55.

In this account, like in Enoch's and Jacob's inaugurations, Moses becomes the new "face" of the divine theophany. Over the course of the adept's transformation, the divine theophany itself undergoes a radical reshaping when the former occupant of the divine throne, a "noble man," hastily departs from his celestial seat and leaves it to his new owner – the son of Amram. This shows how fluid the divine theophany is when a beholder moves to the center of the event.

The *Exagoge*'s description recalls several details of the protoplast's induction in the Books of Adam and Eve. Moses assumes the role of the prelapsarian Adam by supplanting him as the eschatological image of God. Silviu Bunta convincingly advances this argument in his unpublished dissertation, "Moses, Adam, and the Glory of the Lord in Ezekiel the Tragedian." Bunta sees the unnamed enthroned figure, whose place Moses takes, as having emblematic Adamic features that echo the protoplast's association with the *kavod* in the Jewish pseudepigrapha and Qumran materials.[64]

One of the crucial Adamic allusions, in Bunta's opinion, is the fact that the *Exagoge* defines the enthroned figure as φῶς. Jewish theophanic traditions often use φως to designate the deity's glorious manifestations as well as his anthropomorphic human "icons," who radiate the luminosity of their newly acquired celestial bodies. These traditions often play on the ambiguity of the term which, depending on the accent, can designate either "a man" (φώς) or "light" (φῶς), indicating both the luminous and the anthropomorphic nature of the divine or angelic manifestations.[65] Luminosity is also an essential attribute of the *imago Dei* theophanic complex. Bunta observes that "Adam is particularly associated in late Second Temple Judaism with the ambivalent term φως."[66]

Moses's exaltation in the *Exagoge* entails two major developments. First, Moses replaces the "noble man" on the throne while being endowed with an exalted status. Second, a multitude of stars react to him by falling before his knees and by parading before the prophet "like a battalion of men."[67] These two elements are reminiscent of the two pivotal stages of Adam's inauguration in the Books of Adam and Eve. As we recall, there, the protagonist is first created in the image of God and becomes God's icon. Then he is venerated by the angelic hosts. It is possible that in the *Exagoge* the reader encounters the ini-

64 Bunta 2005, 89–92.

65 On the φως traditions see Quispel 1980, 6–7; Fossum 1985, 280 and 1995, 16–17; Bunta 2005, 92–93.

66 Bunta 2005, 86.

67 Jacobson 1983, 55.

tiatory ritual of endowment into the office of the divine image, which in the Books of Adam and Eve coincides with angelic veneration. Angelic adoration is likely also present in the *Exagoge*.[68] The account describes a "multitude of stars" falling down before Moses.[69] In Enochic writings the stars often designate angelic beings.[70] Because of the Enochic influences on the *Exagoge*, the multitude of stars kneeling before the seer likely refers to angelic veneration. Indeed, some scholars consider that the kneeling stars represent angelic hosts.

Larry Hurtado, for example, suggests that the obeisance of the stars "may represent the acceptance by the heavenly hosts of Moses' appointed place as God's chief agent. Stars are a familiar symbol for angelic beings in Jewish tradition (e.g., Job 38:7) and are linked with divine beings in other religious traditions as well."[71] Fletcher-Louis goes even further by comparing the astral prostration in the *Exagoge* with the angelic veneration found in the Books of Adam and Eve.[72] If the *Exagoge* indeed contains the veneration motif, it is possible that here, as in other accounts, Moses is implicitly envisioned as personifying of the divine image.[73]

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68 Moses's enthronement can be also read as an Adamic motif. In this respect Fletcher-Louis reminds us that "in the *Testament of Abraham* A 11:4–12, the first formed Adam sits on a gilded throne at the gate of heaven, most marvelous and adorned with glory, with a form like that of God himself ('the Master')" (Fletcher-Louis 2015, 252). On the possibility of angelic veneration of Moses in the *Exagoge*, see Bunta 2005, 167–183. Bunta presents four similarities between the portrayal of Moses in the *Exagoge* and traditions about the angelic veneration of Adam: "1. In both traditions the human heroes are appropriately venerated by angels; 2. In both traditions the veneration reflects the human's attainment of a privileged status within the divine entourage; 3. Both traditions reflect an ironic polemic against angels; 4. Within this imagery, both traditions construct a complex dialectic of identity which emphasizes the dichotomous condition of humanity. On one hand, humanity is reminded of its earthliness, its mortal substance, and on the other hand, the body's divine likeness deserves angelic veneration" (Bunta 2005, 183).

69 Jacobson 1983, 54–55.

70 As Collins explains, "the stars had long been identified with the angelic host in Israelite tradition … Ultimately this tradition can be traced back to Canaanite mythology where the stars appear as members of the divine council in the Ugaritic texts" (Collins 1977, 136). I.e. Judg 5:20; Dan 8:10; *1 En* 86:3–4 (Knibb 1978, 2.197); *1 En* 88:1 (Knibb 1978, 2.198); *1 Enoch* 90:24: (Knibb 1978, 2.215).

71 Hurtado 1988, 59 and 2000, 73.

72 Fletcher-Louis 2002, 7, 70, 101, 344.

73 It is possible that Moses's coronation in the *Exagoge* also represents his endowment with the divine image. Wayne Meeks points out that in some Jewish and Samaritan traditions, Moses's "crown of light was nothing less than the visual symbol for the image of God. Jacob Jervell, moreover, has shown that in Jewish Adam-speculation the image of God was typically regarded as 'gerade auf dem Antlitz eingepragt.' Jervell argues that this conception of the *imago* was especially connected with the notion that Adam had been God's vice-

4 Ancient Near Eastern Cultic Images and the Divine Presence

Previously we suggested that the stories where the biblical exemplars assume their role as the image of God might be rooted in ancient Near Eastern traditions of cultic images. We should now more closely examine these underlying ancient developments. In recent decades there has been a dramatic shift in the scholarly understanding of the ancient Near Eastern traditions of the divine images and how they cultivated the divine presence. Current scholarly approaches reflect a move from a negative attitude towards ancient Near Eastern cultic statues, epitomized in the apologetic rhetoric of some biblical narratives, to a more nuanced understanding of divine images as paradoxical conduits of the divine presence.[74] Michael Hundley argues that in ancient Near Eastern cultic milieus, the divine presence was "concretized and localized in the form of a cult image. More than simply living in a space marked off as sacred, the deity was persuaded, often through elaborate rituals, to in some way inhabit a tangible, human-made form, its cult image."[75]

Also, in recent years, there have been consistent efforts to challenge the traditional status of ancient Near Eastern cultic images as mere "representations" or "religious pictures" of a deity. One of the main representatives of this approach, Angelika Berlejung, suggests that "a cultic statue was never solely a religious picture, but was always an image imbued with a god, and, as such, it possessed the character of both earthly reality and divine presence."[76] Stephen Herring reiterates the same position noting that "*ṣalmu* does not mean statue, relief, or sculpture – or, at least not the way we understand these terms. The concept of 'portrait' as a replica of the referent is inaccurate since it is not a natural replica but conventionally coded and culturally mediated representation."[77] The understanding of a cultic image as a representation is rooted in

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regent, the first 'king of the world.' When the *imago* is identified with Moses' divine crown of light, it is quite clear that the same kind of connection is implied. The similarity is not accidental, for further examination of the enthronement traditions about Moses shows that these stories link Moses very closely with Adam" (Meeks 1968, 363). On this tradition, see also Smith 1958; Jervell 1960, 45.

74 Winter observes that "nowhere is the power of sacred images more evident than in the energies required to argue against them in biblical texts: from the prohibition against the making and worship of images in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:4–5) to the passionate denunciations of Isaiah (30:22; 44:9–20; 46:6) and Ezekiel (23:30), reiterated in Psalm 115, 1 Corinthians 8:4, and throughout the exegetical literature" (Winter 1992, 13).

75 Hundley 2013, 140.

76 Berlejung 1997, 46. Winter designates that the cultic image is "not standing for but actually manifesting the presence of the subject represented" (Winter 1992, 14).

77 Herring 2008, 485. Bahrani offers that "the reason for steering away from the word portrait

the Greek philosophical legacy, which profoundly affects the mainstream Western concept of *mimesis*, or imitation.[78] Yet, some experts object to approaching Near Eastern cultic images through the spectacles of *mimesis*. Zainab Bahrani identifies that:

> the axiomatic notion that representation is a means of imitating real things in the world must be set aside, as much as possible, in dealing with works of art from Near Eastern antiquity, even if this means risking an emphasized alterity with all its consequences … [In the ancient Near Eastern cultures] visual representation functioned according to a system unrelated to *mimesis* or preceptualism. Therefore, even the term representation carries certain meanings that might be considered a natural aspect of image making but have the potential of turning into obstacles when applied to a study of Mesopotamian images.[79]

In her comments on the aesthetics of ancient Near Eastern cultic images, Bahrani argues that "rather than being a copy of something in reality, the image itself was seen as a real thing. It was not considered to resemble an original reality that was present elsewhere but to contain that reality in itself. Therefore, instead of being a means of signifying an original real thing, it was seen as ontologically equivalent to it, existing in the same register of reality."[80] Bahrani further asserts that in ancient Near Eastern cultures *ṣalmu* was clearly understood as "a part of a configuration that enables presence through reproduction"

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when discussing *ṣalmu* should be in the implied separation between sitter and portrait, inherent in its use. The portrait is a copy of the real person (whether one thinks of it as encoded or pure). *Salmu*, on the other hand, has the potential of becoming an entity in its own right, a being rather than a copy of a being" (Bahrani 2003, 125).

78 Hundley shows that "in the modern western world, the relationship between sign and referent, in our case between a deity and its image, is often one of mimesis. The image is merely a copy of the original, which points to the real but contains none of its essence. In other words, although it looks like the original and reminds one of it, it is of a different order entirely. In the ancient Near Eastern world, images often seem to have been something entirely different, something much more than mere imitation. The image in particular was frequently considered part of the real, partaking of its essence yet doing so without diminishing that of the original. In a divine cult image, one encountered a deity not just as a resemblance but also in reality, without in any way diminishing the deity in all its heavenly plenitude. In fact, the image enhanced the divine plenitude by extending the deity's sphere of influence to the city and increasing cultic veneration" (Hundley 2013, 149–150).

79 Bahrani, 2003, 122.

80 Bahrani 2003, 127.

as it "becomes a real manifestation."[81] Instead of using terminology of "representation," or "imitation," Bahrani suggests that the Near Eastern divine image is better understood as "a mode of presencing," envisioned as "a doubling or a multiplication," and not as "a copy in the sense of mimetic resemblance," thus, representing rather "a repetition, another way that the person or entity could be encountered."[82]

At the end of her study Bahrani concludes that the ancient Near Eastern cultic image should be approached "in terms of a metonymy of presence in which the presence is never a plenitude or unique because it always carries a measure of absence."[83] She argues that "rather than approaching it in terms of *mimesis*, a *mimesis* that is distinctive of a post-Greek metaphysics and closely linked to the notion of a possible pure phoneticism, this function of the image can be read or understood as part of a system of circulation of presence, difference, and deferment."[84]

In this perspective the cultic image was not exclusively a representation of the deity, but rather the embodied divine presence. According to Benjamin Sommer, "a *ṣalmu*, then, did not merely direct the worshipper's mind toward a god who dwelled in some other sphere; it did not depict the god. Rather, once the *mīs pî* or *pīt pî* ritual was complete, the divine presence entered into the statue, and the *ṣalmu* was the god."[85]

It is difficult, if not impossible, from the modern epistemological situation, to comprehend exactly how each individual cultic image attained the fullness

81 Herring notes that "the image in ancient Mesopotamia should not be conceptualized as a mere statue or monument, since modern conceptions of portraiture are too often attached to those readings. *Ṣalmu* is not a replica but is conventionally and arbitrarily motivated by means of a rite of constitution, or transformation. Moreover, the separation between the image and the referent is not at all apparent. After the transformational ritual, the image becomes an extension or manifestation of the referent" (Herring 2008, 488–489). Bahrani 2003, 131.

82 Bahrani 2003, 135.

83 Reiterating Bahrani's argument, Hundley concludes that "in order to achieve a plenitude of presence, one accumulates metonymic representations of the divinity and, under the auspices of ritual, combines them so that the cult image becomes a fully functioning divine locus, without in any way diminishing the deity in its heavenly plenitude" (Hundley 2015a, 26). Bahrani 2003, 205.

84 Bahrani 2003, 205.

85 Sommer 2009, 21. Sommer further notes that "it is clear that a divine statue in Mesopotamian thinking was no mere sign pointing toward a reality outside of itself. Rather, the *ṣalmu* was an incarnation, whose substance was identical with that of the god; through a specific ritual what had been a physical object became a body of the god" (Sommer 2009, 22). Hundley comes to a similar conclusion by observing that "once cultically enlivened, the statue becomes the same god on earth as in heaven" (Hundley 2015a, 26).

of the divine presence.[86] Gebhard Selz admits that the ancient conception of divine presence "seems problematic, even contradictory to us, but evidently was not to the mind of ancient man."[87] Indeed, these conundrums surrounding ancient Near Eastern cultic images illustrate the inherent limitations of modern Western epistemologies which are unable to resolve the paradox of the divine presence in cultic images. In this regard, Bahrani asserts that one of the stumbling blocks is "the larger ontological binary system of Western metaphysics that distinguishes between a signifier and a stable signified," and which is unable to grasp "the ontological worldview of the ancient Near East where the distinction between object and referent was not as clear as it is today."[88]

Another obstacle is that ancient Near Eastern cultures operated with different presuppositions about what constitutes "reality." The great Sumerologist Thorkild Jacobsen draws attention to this crucial issue, which in his opinion, separates a modern human being from its ancient counterpart. It is this that prevents him or her from grasping the true meaning of cultic images in ancient societies. The modern mind assigns a distinct ontological status to the "spiritual" world which Jacobson believes is different from the ancient perception of the "spiritual" reality. Jacobsen suggests that

> we moderns – most of us at least – live in two intersecting worlds, the world of tangible things and the world of intangibles; we are dualists, of mind and of matter, of material and of spiritual. As to what is real, our main criterion is that of coherence. A dream may be extremely vivid and the dream experience may seem very real; yet, if on awakening we find that it stands in no causal connection with the stream of experience before we went to sleep, we dismiss it as unreal, it was a dream merely. For the ancients there was no such dismissal. Their world was one, they were monists. They too distinguished between experience when awake and dreams, but to them the difference was not, as for us, one of kind, that is, real or unreal, but one of degree.[89]

86 Hundley relates that "each divine manifestation in the form of an image is also both essentially the same as the original and distinct from it. Likewise, the fullness of the original entity is found not only in that original, but also in all its various copies" (Hundley 2013, 148).

87 Selz 1997, 183.

88 Bahrani 2003, 121; Herring 2008, 480.

89 Jacobsen 1987, 18–19.

Similarly, Stephen Herring offers that "the ancient Mesopotamians did not recognize a distinct separation between the material and spiritual world; a distinction taken for granted today."[90] Jacobsen further highlights the difference between the ancient perception of reality and the modern paradigm, acknowledging that,

> as ideas may come slowly to mind and then be realized in action, we distinguish between the idea and its realization sharply. Not so the ancients. For them it was a single process of an existent gradually becoming more and more substantive, enduring, and lasting. Since things and events thus exist before they become in our terms 'real,' they can be sensed, much as a doctor can tell the existence of a disease from its symptoms before its actual outbreak.[91]

Jacobsen illustrates this gradual "becoming" through the spectacles of transformative rituals by which ancient Near Eastern cultic statues were brought to life. He highlights that in the course of such ceremonies,

> the statue mystically becoming what it represents, the god, without, however, in any way limiting the god, who remains transcendent. In so "becoming," the statue ceases to be mere earthly wood, precious metals and stones, ceases to be the work of human hands. It becomes transubstantiated, a divine being, the god it represents. This incredible ability to become transformed was achieved through special ritual acts and through the power of the word to create and change reality.[92]

The important concept introduced here in relation to the ancient Near Eastern cultic images is "transubstantiation."[93] Jacobsen points out that "the god – or rather the specific form of him that was represented in this particular image – was born in heaven, not on earth. In the birth the craftsmen-gods that form an embryo in the womb gave it form. When born in heaven it consented to descend and to 'participate' in the image, thus transubstantiating it. The image as such remains a promise, a potential, and an incentive to a theophany, to a divine presence, no more."[94]

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90 Herring 2008, 482.

91 Jacobsen 1987, 20.

92 Jacobsen 1987 22–23.

93 On the history of the term, see Goering 1991, 147–170.

94 Jacobsen 1987, 29. Herring concludes that "the Akkadian *ṣalmu*, then, does not refer to a

Approaching ancient Near Eastern cultic images through the concept of transubstantiation might raise objections from some audiences, because this term has been used for centuries by Catholic theologians to reflect on the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist.[95] However, the analogy is useful, since it elucidates the ancient concept of the divine presence in modern religious praxis. Although such understanding of the divine presence survives in modern culture only as an incomprehensible mystery, it nevertheless serves as an enduring memorial of another ancient rationality of the divine presence.[96] The ancient mentality incapsulated in the theology of the Eucharist is an important gateway into the divine presence in ancient Near Eastern cultures. Herring, therefore, argues that "the benefit of this analogy is that many in the West are intimately familiar with it."[97]

Developing Jacobsen's insights, Michael Dick insists that the Eucharistic analogy, where the bread and wine during the Eucharistic ritual become the real presence of Jesus while still subsisting under the appearance of bread and wine, "helps us understand the theology of the ancient Near Eastern cult image," since "by the words of the Eucharistic prayer and the invocation of the Holy Spirit (in Orthodox tradition), the bread and wine 'made by human hands' become the real presence of Jesus."[98] Importantly, in the Eucharist, the bread and wine are not only symbolic "representations" of God but his "real presence." To illustrate this difference, Dick references a tradition in Theodore of Mopsuestia's *On Matthew* 26:26: "He (Jesus) did not say, 'This is the symbol of my body and blood'; but 'this is my body, and this is my blood,' teaching us not to see the nature of the object, for, in becoming Eucharist, the objects are changed into the body and blood of Christ."[99]

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mere statue of a deity or a king. Instead, what we are dealing with here is a complicated ontological belief, where, by means of a transformative ritual, the 'real' presence of the referent is transubstantiated into the representation with the result that the representation exists as a valid substitute of said referent" (Herring 2011, 25).

95 Pelikan offers that "at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the doctrine of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist achieved its definitive formulation in the dogma of transubstantiation" (Pelikan 1978, 268).

96 McMichael highlights this gap between the "Eucharistic presence" and our modern understanding of "presence" by noting that "Christ comes among the Eucharistic assembly in ways that do not comply with conventional presence. His Eucharistic presence transcends the conceptual boundaries we draw between presence and absence" (McMichael 2010, 36). He further notes that "Christ's presence is not the product of a thought experiment; we do not approach him through an extension of ideas" (McMichael 2010, 40).

97 Herring 2011, 21.

98 Dick 2005, 51.

99 Dick 2005, 52.

Furthermore, the Eucharistic tradition provides an important key to unlocking another perplexing enigma of ancient Near Eastern cultic images, namely, how multiple cultic representations appearing in multiple locations can manifest a single deity.[100] Dick comments that "the Eucharistic species are not coterminous with the heavenly Jesus, so that the Eucharistic presence can be found simultaneously in churches throughout the world or within several chapels in the same church."[101] Dick suggests that "the difficulty of reconciling heavenly and earthly presences lies with the modern mind, which directed by the fear of logical contradictions has problems reconciling these elements … There was a similar problem in the history of eucharistic theology, wherein many objected, how could Christ be both 'at the right hand of the Father in heaven and in the Eucharist in various churches on earth?' "[102]

Exploring the paradoxes of the divine presence in ancient Near Eastern cultic images enables us to better understand how the biblical exemplars mediated the divine presence. We should now proceed to investigate these connections.

5 Epistemology of the Divine Presence

Our study suggests that the complex and often paradoxical relationship between God's presence and the divine image in ancient Near Eastern milieus is

100 Hundley notes that "in various texts, especially in mythology, deities were typically addressed holistically, such that a single deity could have multiple manifestations. While humans possess a single body that can only be in one place at a time, the gods were thought to be capable of simultaneously occupying multiple different bodies and manifesting in multiple different locations … In fact, ancient Near Eastern deities could concurrently inhabit multiple different statues, even multiple images in the same temple. In addition to highlighting divine prestige, multiple images seem to have allowed for a division of labor. For example, while one image was used on procession, another could remain in the temple to receive regular service … Rather than possessing a fixed amount of presence or power that had to be divided between manifestations (as the previous paragraph may suggest), ancient Near Eastern deities appear to have been divisible without diminishment, such that each could theoretically possess the full complement of divine powers" (Hundley 2015b, 210). Hundley further suggests that "nonetheless, while each could be fully divine, each was not the fullness of the deity. Rather, the cult image was but one of a deity's many manifestations or aspects. Divine plenitude instead lay in the aggregate, the accumulation of a deity's multiple manifestations, names, and potencies" (Hundley, 2015b, 211).

101 Dick 2005, 54.

102 Dick 2005, 56.

relevant for our ongoing investigation of the biblical exemplars acting as eschatological versions of the *imago Dei* in Jewish apocalyptic accounts. Through elaborate transformative rituals, the biblical patriarchs and prophets were transubstantiated into ontological extensions of the divine presence. These rituals reveal a distinct "cultic" way of mediating the divine presence and, consequentially, the divine knowledge. This is different from the transmission of knowledge through a discursive media in scribal and sapiential trends. This distinct way of the cultivation and transmission of knowledge can be designated as the "divine presence's epistemology," or "cultic epistemology."

In Jewish traditions, the human body became the *mesu*-tree material used to produce new cultic images of the deity. Translated human beings, embodied in the biblical patriarchs and prophets, become the cultic statues of God during their inductions into the office of the eschatological image of God. Unlike ancient Near Eastern cultic statues whose inner transubstantiation remained concealed from the human eye, the initiations and metamorphoses of the biblical heroes provide a unique glimpse into the dynamics of cultic statues' vivifications, now, from the firsthand reports originated from the "statues" themselves. The direct testimonies from biblical exemplars that became the personified cultic images reveal that the epistemology of the cultic statue's production is exceedingly complex.

While many scribal and sapiential accounts clearly demarcate the subject of knowledge from the object of knowledge, the initiations into the divine image reveal a peculiar epistemological situation where the subject and object of knowledge are dissolved into a single entity. This epistemological situation occurs, for example, in Jewish apocalyptic accounts where the exemplar represents both the subject and the object of the vision. In these accounts the exemplar is depicted as a beholder of the theophany and the theophany itself.

This highlights the unique epistemological framework in which pseudepigraphical exemplars were transformed from the learning subject into knowledge itself, thus overcoming the dichotomy between epistemological subject and object. Through an interaction with the divine presence, the exemplar's nature and form undergo a dramatic metamorphosis which makes him the ontological mirror of this theophanic reality. In many Jewish pseudepigraphical accounts, therefore, the heroes progress in the course of the story from beholding the theophanic events to embodying the divine theophanies and becoming a heavenly personification of divine presence and knowledge. In this epistemological architecture, the transmission of the divine knowledge cannot be accomplished without the exemplar's embodiment of the divine knowledge.

This also facilitates a different perspective of the divine theophany itself. The theophany is not a rigid, frozen object, but an everchanging reality, in which its

beholder eventually dissolves into the theophanic event. Paraphrasing Hans-Georg Gadamer's famous dictum, a theophany fulfills its purpose only if its beholder loses himself or herself in it.

These epistemological peculiarities offer insights into the enigmatic praxis of pseudepigraphy. In the cultic epistemology of the divine presence the subject and object of divine knowledge collapses. This collapse also occurs in the concept of the authorship. In the ancient mind, as a beholder of the divine presence becomes an embodied theophany, a seeker of knowledge must also become the embodiment of knowledge. This is different from our contemporary notions of author and authorship which presuppose that the object of knowledge and the subject of knowledge are not the same. In our conventional structure, knowledge is posited as the subject's property. It is an object that belongs to the creative subject who generated and cultivated the knowledge.

This may be why some Jewish pseudepigraphical traditions that were conceived in the aesthetics of the ancient Near Eastern cultic images remain largely misunderstood in contemporary epistemological settings. A contemporary setting imagines an exemplar solely as a "mule" who delivers divine knowledge externally to earthly adepts. Yet, this situation often occurs in ancient scribal and sapiential traditions, which may contribute to why Jewish scribal and sapiential ways of the divine knowledge's transmission are more transparent for a modern mind. In them, even if knowledge becomes a part of an adept's intellect and memory, the gap between the subject and object of knowledge is still maintained. This is why the notion of "the discourse tied to the founder," often used by students of the Jewish pseudepigrapha, is different from the concept of authorship in "divine presence epistemology," where the founder and his discourse cannot be separated. The discourse is the founder and the founder is the discourse.

6 Jewish Divine Mediators and the Divine Presence Epistemology

The limitation of our modern mind to understand the transference and cultivation of the divine presence in ancient Mesopotamian, Jewish, and Christian milieus profoundly affects our approaches to Second Temple mediatorial figures. The same set of epistemological insights that we have uncovered in our investigation of the pseudepigraphical exemplars can now be applied to the divine mediators in general. Indeed, the process of paradoxical transference and delegation of the divine presence to mediatorial figures in the context of Israelite monotheism remains a puzzling issue in recent scholarship. Yet, the

paradox of such transference cannot be resolved in a contemporary epistemological framework. The futility of scholarly debates illustrates the limits of our modern rationality to grasp the delegation and cultivation of the divine presence in multiple cultic "hosts." The modern mind also has similar difficulties in understanding the multiplicity of Near Eastern cultic images.

Many of the seminal studies about Jewish mediators have been conducted from the viewpoint of Christian traditions that attempt to understand divine mediation through the lens of later Christological beliefs. However, it is more appropriate to approach Second Temple mediators, and especially their roles in mediating the divine presence and knowledge, from the point of view of Near Eastern "divine image" traditions. This is especially necessary for exemplars whose stories, like Enoch's, are rooted in ancient Near Eastern sacerdotal traditions.

A "divine presence epistemology" also provides alternative insights into how the divine presence could be simultaneously present in multiple mediatorial figures.[103] The multiplicity of enigmatic agents that embody the divine presence often puzzles interpreters when viewed through the lens of monotheistic Judaism. Furthermore, these figures are often explored through later Christological and trinitarian developments that seek to emphasize the uniqueness of divine personhood. In fact, much of the research done on early Jewish divine mediators has been conducted from the perspective of Christological trends that replaced Near Eastern notions of divine presence and divine representation with Platonic counterparts, such as *mimesis*. However, instead of taking a "step forward" to later Christian developments, a step back to ancient Near Eastern roots of mediatorial trends may provide a better understanding of how multiple figures simultaneously mediated the divine presence.

Scholars have proposed that the fluidity of cultic images found in ancient Near Eastern milieus was challenged in the Hebrew Bible by the postulation of a single divine embodiment located in a certain place. Benjamin Sommers argues that while "the biblical authors responsible for the Pentateuch's JE narratives and various scribes and poets with some connection to the northern

103 Hundley notes that "in light of the often multiple simultaneous manifestations of a single deity, one might suspect that each manifestation was a diluted form of the single deity. In other words, the more forms a deity occupied simultaneously, the less of the deity's potency each form would possess. However, there is no evidence that deities were imagined to possess a fixed amount of power. Instead, each manifestation could potentially possess all of the deity's powers in equal measure … In fact, multiplying manifestations generally makes the deity and each of its manifestations more, not less, potent" (Hundley 2015b, 19–20).

kingdom" accepted the possibility that God "could have many bodies and a fluid self," Deuteronomic and priestly layers of the Hebrew Bible rejected this possibility.[104][105] According to Sommer, "these same traditions regard divine embodiment as fixed, and they strongly condemn the stelae and *'asherahs* so crucial to the notion of multiplicity of divine embodiment."[106] In this respect, the multiplicity of divine mediators and "divine fragmentation" in extra-biblical pseudepigraphical accounts constitutes an alternative model that is deeply rooted in ancient Near Eastern cultic traditions.

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104 Sommer 2009, 58.
105 Sommer 2009, 58.
106 Sommer 2009, 58.

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