

Unveiling the Face: The Heavenly Counterpart Traditions in *Joseph and Aseneth**

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1 Introduction

From one of the Manichaean psalms we learn that in the final moments of his life Mani was beholding his heavenly double with “eyes of light.”¹ This was not the only encounter this Syrian visionary had with his upper celestial identity. The *Cologne Mani Codex* tells us that the heavenly counterpart first manifested himself to Mani at the age of twelve and he continued his visits, to assist with revelations, until Mani’s death. In several texts Mani’s celestial *alter ego* is designated as a spirit and even called the Paraclete,² the same title the Holy Spirit bears in the Fourth Gospel. The conception of the adept’s heavenly correlative also appears in several early Christian accounts, including the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Clement of Alexandria’s *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, and Aphrahat’s *Demonstrations*. Similar traditions can be found in early heterodox Christian accounts, including the *Gospel of Thomas*, *Pistis Sophia*, and various apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.

Modern biblical scholars have long puzzled over the conceptual roots of this heavenly counterpart imagery, wondering which religious milieus could have introduced it to mainstream and heterodox Christian literature. In the second half of the twentieth century the traditions of the heavenly double received some scholarly attention due to the discoveries of the Nag Hammadi library and the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as renewed interest in Jewish and Muslim mystical trends.

* It is a great privilege to offer this essay for a volume honoring Professor Michael Stone, a scholar from whom I have learned so much.

1 “I was gazing at my familiar with my eyes of light ...” I. Gardner and S.N.C. Lieu, eds., *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 101.

2 See *Keph.* 14:4–7, *Keph.* 14:27–15:3, *Keph.* 15:19–24, and *Keph.* 16:19–21 in I. Gardner, *The Kephalaia of the Teacher: The Edited Coptic Manichaean Texts in Translation with Commentary* (NHMS 37; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 20–22.

The rise of Jungian psychology also played a part in invigorating fascination with the concept of a heavenly twin.³ Around that time the most original and advanced studies of the subject were by members of the Eranos Seminar: a para-scholarly gathering⁴ inspired by the ideas of Carl Gustav Jung. Three distinguished participants of the Eranos Seminar, Henry Corbin,⁵ Gilles Quispel,⁶ and Gershom Scholem,⁷ each made important contributions to the topic in their respective fields of study. While Scholem and Corbin mostly concentrated on the uses of the heavenly twin imagery in later Kabbalistic and Sufi materials, their younger colleague, Quispel, focused on early Christian and Manichaeic texts that are rife with vivid accounts of the heavenly *alter egos* of the luminaries in these traditions.

The multidisciplinary investigations of the Eranos Seminar are landmarks in the field. The research methodology, however, had its limits. While some Christian, Manichaeic, Islamic, and later Kabbalistic materials were scrutinized meticulously for the presence of the heavenly counterpart imagery, the

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- 3 In modern times there have been several studies attempting to apply the concept of a double to an interpretation of human experience and human development. One of the most influential applications has emerged from the psychoanalytical approach. C. Stang notices that Sigmund Freud, for example, used the concept of a double, symbolized by the figure of Narcissus, for developing his theory of selfhood. For Freud, “narcissism” was a necessary developmental stage that must be surpassed on the way to proper adult selfhood. Stang demonstrates that Freud regarded the double, in its benign and malevolent versions, as a developmental stage that ultimately supported his theory of repression and explanation for the emergence of the superego. C.M. Stang, *Our Divine Double* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 11–12.
- 4 According to Corbin, the Eranos Seminar was “the meeting of acting, autonomous individualities, each in complete freedom revealing and expressing his original and personal way of thinking and being outside of all dogmatism and all academicism.” H. Corbin, “The Time of Eranos,” in J. Campbell, ed., *Man and Time: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), xx. On the history of the Seminar, see H.T. Hakl, *Eranos: An Alternative Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (trans. C. McIntosh; London: Routledge, 2014).
- 5 H. Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism* (trans. N. Pearson; New Lebanon, N.Y.: Omega, 1971) 28–37, *idem*, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (trans. W.R. Trask; Bollingen Series 66; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 20–24, and *idem*, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi’ite Iran* (trans. N. Pearson; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 9–10.
- 6 G. Quispel, “Das ewige Ebenbild des Menschen: Zur Begegnung mit dem Selbst in der Gnosis,” *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 36 (1967): 9–30, and *idem*, “Genius and Spirit,” in J. van Oort, ed., *Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica. Collected Essays of Gilles Quispel* (NHMS 55; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 103–118.
- 7 G. Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (New York: Schocken, 1976).

early Jewish, especially pseudepigraphical, accounts received considerably less or almost no attention. This study attempts to fill this scholarly gap by concentrating on heavenly counterpart traditions in *Joseph and Aseneth*,⁸ a Jewish pseudepigraphon in which the *Doppelgänger* imagery might be said to have reached its most advanced development in the context of early Judaism.⁹

2 Heavenly Visitor

In recent years *Joseph and Aseneth* has received substantial attention from scholars. One important feature of the text that sets it apart from other early Jewish visionary accounts is that the recipient of the revelation is a female seer, Aseneth. She is depicted in the pseudepigraphon as a daughter of an Egyptian priest, who later becomes the wife of the Jewish patriarch Joseph. In this greatly

8 Scholars have dated *Joseph and Aseneth* anywhere from the second century BCE to the fourth century CE, with the majority favouring a date between the first century BCE and the second century CE and a location in a Jewish community in Egypt. On the date of the text see M. Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (SPB 13; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 108–109, C. Burchard, “Zum Text von ‘Joseph und Aseneth,’” *JSJ* 1 (1970): 3–34, R.D. Chesnutt, *From Death to Life: Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth* (JSPSup 16; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 80–85, A. Standhartinger, *Das Frauenbild im Judentum der hellenistischen Zeit: Ein Beitrag anhand von “Joseph und Aseneth”* (AGAJU 26; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 14–20, G. Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 81–100, and R. Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph: A Late Antique Tale of the Biblical Patriarch and His Egyptian Wife, Reconsidered* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 225–239.

9 For published texts of *Joseph and Aseneth*, see V.M. Istrin, “Apokrif ob Iosife i Asenefe” *Drevnosti. Trudy Slavjanskoy Kommissii Imperatorskogo Moskovskogo Arheologicheskogo Observatoria* 2 (1898): 146–199, Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*, C. Burchard, *Joseph und Aseneth kritisch herausgegeben von Christoph Burchard mit Unterstützung von Carsten Burfeind & Uta Barbara Fink* (PVTG 5; Leiden: Brill, 2003), *idem*, “Joseph und Aseneth serbisch-kirchenslawisch: Text und Varianten,” *Gesammelte Studien zu Joseph & Aseneth* (SVTP 39; Leiden, Brill, 1996), 53–102, P.-R. Tragan, *Josep i Àsenet: Introducció, text grec revisat i notes* (LIS 4; Barcelona: Alpha, 2005), U.B. Fink, *Joseph und Aseneth Revision des griechischen Textes und Edition der zweiten lateinischen Übersetzung* (FSBP 5; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), *idem*, “Joseph und Aseneth. Text, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen,” in E. Reinmuth, ed., *Joseph und Aseneth* (Sapere 15; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2009), 56–137; *idem*, *A Minor Edition of the Armenian Version of Joseph and Aseneth* (HUAS 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2010). In this study I will be mainly using the longer version of the text, supplemented at points by readings of the shorter version.

expanded version of the biblical episode,¹⁰ Aseneth undergoes a conversion and metamorphosis which turns her from a former idolater into a being who will be fed on the heavenly bread of life.

Aseneth's transformation comes to the fore in chapters 14–18 of the pseudepigraphon, which depict her encounter with an angelic visitor, portrayed in the text as Joseph's heavenly double. *Jos. Asen.* 14.2–10 reveals the following depiction of Aseneth's heavenly guest:

And Aseneth kept looking, and behold, close to the morning star, the heaven was torn apart and great and unutterable light appeared. And Aseneth saw (it) and fell on (her) face on the ashes. And a man came to her from heaven and stood by Aseneth's head. And he called her and said, "Aseneth, Aseneth." And she said, "Who is he that calls me, because the door of my chamber is closed, and the tower is high, and how then did he come into my chamber?" And the man called her a second time and said, "Aseneth, Aseneth." And she said, "Behold, (here) I (am), Lord. Who are you, tell me." And the man said, "I am the chief of the house of the Lord and commander of the whole host of the Most High. Rise and stand on your feet, and I will tell you what I have to say." And Aseneth raised her head and saw, and behold, (there was) a man in every respect similar to Joseph, by the robe and the crown and the royal staff, except that his face was like lightning, and his eyes like sunshine, and the hairs of his head like a flame of fire of a burning torch, and hands and feet like iron shining forth from a fire, and sparks shot forth from his hands and feet.¹¹

In contrast to some other Jewish and Christian accounts, where the discernment of the heavenly counterpart imagery sometimes requires substantial exegetical efforts, in *Joseph and Aseneth* the tradition of the celestial *alter ego* is transparent as the heavenly visitor is said to be in the likeness of Joseph. In other words, the mysterious guest is not merely Joseph's heavenly correla-

10 The story of Joseph and Aseneth's marriage is briefly only mentioned in Gen 41:45: "Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Aseneth, daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, as his wife." All biblical quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise indicated.

11 C. Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," in J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Volume 2: Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayer, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 177–247 at 224–225.

tive, but his celestial double.¹² Some features and attributes of Joseph's *Doppelgänger* deserve our close attention.

Reflecting on the titles and functions of the heavenly man, scholars have noted similarities to the earthly Joseph's offices and roles. As one may recall, *Joseph and Aseneth* defines the angelic figure as commander in chief of the heavenly armies. Celia Deutsch notices that this position corresponds to the office which "earthly" Joseph is holding in Pharaoh's court.¹³ The wardrobe and the insignia of Joseph's heavenly counterpart also mirror "earthly" Joseph's accoutrement.¹⁴ Thus, the text tells us that the celestial man has "the robe and the crown and the royal staff" like Joseph. In is noteworthy that in chapter 18 of *Joseph and Aseneth* the female seer also receives exactly the same set of the *Doppelgänger's* raiment¹⁵—the luminous robe, the golden crown, and the scepter.¹⁶

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- 12 Later rabbinic material appears to be also knowledgeable about the motif of Joseph's heavenly counterpart. Thus, *Gen. Rab.* 60.15 details the following tradition: "And she said unto the servants: what man is this (*ha-lazeh*) that walketh in the field to meet us? R. Berekiah said in the name of R. Hiyya his father: She saw that he was comely, [*halaseh* having the same meaning] as in the verse, Behold, this (*ha-lazeh*) dreamer cometh (Gen 37:19). The Rabbis said: It refers to his guardian (angel), *halazeh* meaning, this one [the angel] is for his service." H. Freedman and M. Simon, *Midrash Rabbah* (10 vols.; London: Soncino, 1961), 2.536.
- 13 C. Deutsch, "Aseneth: Ascetical Practice, Vision, and Transformation," in D. Arbel and A. Orlov, eds., *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Elijor* (Ekstasis 2; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 325–348 at 333.
- 14 Thus, *Jos. Asen.* 5.5 tells the following about the "earthly" Joseph's appearance: "And Joseph was dressed in an exquisite white tunic, and the robe which he had thrown around him was purple, made of linen interwoven with gold, and a golden crown (was) on his head, and around the crown were twelve chosen stones, and on top of the twelve stones were twelve golden rays. And a royal staff was in his left hand ..." (Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," 2.208).
- 15 On this, see Chesnutt, *From Death to Life*, 110–111; R.C. Douglas, "Liminality and Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth," *JSP* 3 (1988): 31–42 at 35.
- 16 Thus, *Jos. Asen.* 18.3–6 reads: "And Aseneth remembered the man (from heaven) and his commandment, and she hurried and entered her second chamber where the chests (containing) her ornaments were, and opened her big coffer and brought out her first robe, (the one) of wedding, like lightning in appearance, and dressed in it. And she girded a golden and royal girdle around (herself) which was (made) of precious stones. And she put golden bracelets on her fingers and on her feet golden buskins, and precious ornaments she put around her neck in which innumerable costly (and) precious stones were fastened and a golden crown she put on her head, and on that crown, in front on her brow, was a

Dale Allison brings our attention to some other important parallels between Joseph's angelic double and earthly Joseph by noting that

each character is in charge of his master's kingdom (4:7; 14:8; 15:12; 21:21). Each bears the title *archon* (1:3; 4:7; 14:8; 15:12; 20:9; 21:21). Each appears as a great heavenly light (6:2; 14:2). Each rides a chariot and initially arrives from the east (5:4; 6:1; 17:7). Each, when he appears, causes Aseneth to tremble with fear (6:1; 14:11).¹⁷

It is apparent that the celestial figure reflects features of several mediatorial figures prominent in early Jewish lore. For example, it has been noted that in the portrayal of Joseph's *Doppelgänger* one can detect the influence of the Adamic currents, and possibly the tradition of the protoplast's image. Kraemer notes that "the designation of the angelic double of Joseph as Anthropos may point ... to his association with the primal Adam, who is himself the Image of the Divine and thus probably closely associated, if not to be identified, with the Name-Bearing Angel."¹⁸

The fiery features of Aseneth's guest also recall the fiery transformation of the seventh antediluvian patriarch Enoch into the supreme angel Metatron. Scholars previously reflected on the similarities between Aseneth's celestial visitor and Metatron, who often appears in Jewish lore as a celestial double of a human protagonist.¹⁹ Thus Kraemer observes that "a careful exam-

big sapphire stone, and around the big stone were six costly stones. And with a veil she covered her head like a bride, and she took a scepter in her hand" (Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," 2.232).

17 D.C. Allison, Jr., *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 299. Kramer also notices some of these parallels. She observes that "Joseph becomes the commander of Pharaoh's house, as his angelic double in *Aseneth* is the commander of the house of the Lord (14.7). The human Joseph in *Aseneth* indeed rides in the chariot of Pharaoh's 'second-in-command,' while his angelic double ascends back to heaven in a fiery celestial chariot. Both the earthly and the heavenly Joseph wear 'garments of fine linen,' although those of the angel are distinguished by their fiery light" (Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 126). Reflecting on Joseph's garments and the attires of his heavenly twin, Kraemer further observes that "clearly, the source(s) or perhaps the explanation for the details of the description of Joseph must be found elsewhere, as also for the description of Joseph's angelic double, who appears in 14.8–9 ... Joseph's clothing bears a broad resemblance to both priestly and royal garments in numerous ancient traditions" (*ibid.*, 164).

18 Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 123.

19 Deutsch observes that "even the title 'chief of the Lord and commander of the whole host

ination of the attributes of the angelic double of Joseph demonstrates his affinity with numerous ancient angelic figures, particularly, although by no means exclusively, that of Metatron, a complex figure known from orthodox rabbinic sources as well as from various Hekhalot texts.²⁰ Several scholars have also noticed resemblances between Joseph's double and the archangel Michael,²¹ who is responsible for changing Enoch's garments in *2 Enoch* and is envisioned in some early Jewish and Christian texts as the heavenly double of Melchizedek.

Some details in the peculiar interactions between the celestial visitor and Aseneth also deserve our attention. The first important detail includes the angel's actions during the adept's change of garments.²² As in some other Jewish and Christian *Doppelgänger* accounts, in *Joseph and Aseneth* the heavenly double appears to be assisting in changing the garment of the initiate.²³ Thus, in *Jos. Asen.* 14.12–15, the celestial visitor orders the female adept to remove the defied garments of mourning and dress herself in a new linen robe:²⁴

And the man said to her, "Proceed unhindered into your second chamber and put off your black tunic of mourning, and the sackcloth put off your

of the Most High' evokes the angelic beings of early Jewish materials and later hekhalot texts" ("Aseneth: Ascetical Practice, Vision, and Transformation," 332).

- 20 Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 125
- 21 On Aseneth's heavenly visitor as the archangel Michael, see Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneith*, 178, and Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," 2.225, note k. However, Kraemer cautions against such precise identifications by arguing that through such parallels "Philonenko and Burchard impute to the angelic figure a fixed identity that obscures the fluidity of traditions about angels in the ancient sources" (*When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 125). I agree with Kraemer on this.
- 22 Jung Hoon Kim sees the anthropological significance of the garments' change. He observes that "Aseneth's abandoning her original, idolatrous garments and instead adorning herself with a new linen robe and a wedding garment seems to have particular relevance to the Pauline concept of putting off the old man and putting on the new man (Col 3.9–10; Eph 4.22–24; cf. Gal 3.27; Rom 13.14)." See J.H. Kim, *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus* (JSNTSS 268; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 60. Kim further observes that "every step of her [Aseneth's] conversion is represented by her changing garments, which point to the transformation of her very being" (*ibid.*, 69).
- 23 Putthoff notes that "the Anthropos's promise serves as a paradigm for Aseneth's experience as it will unfold hereafter (cf. 8.9). She will experience a continued transformation from this day forward." T.L. Putthoff, "Aseneth's Gastronomical Vision: Mystical Theophagy and the New Creation in Joseph and Aseneth," *JSP* 24 (2014): 96–117 at 101.
- 24 Kraemer notices the similarities between Aseneth's re-clothing and the developments found in *2 Enoch* and *3 Enoch*. On this, see Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 127–128.

waist, and shake off those ashes from your head, and wash your face and your hands with living water, ‘and dress in a new linen robe (as yet) untouched’ and distinguished and gird your waist (with) the new twin girdle of your virginity. And come (back) to me, and I will tell you what I have to say.” And Aseneth hurried and went into her second chamber where the chests (containing) her ornaments were, and opened her coffer, and took a new linen robe, distinguished (and as yet) untouched, and undressed the black tunic of mourning and put off the sackcloth from her waist, and dressed in her distinguished (and as yet) untouched linen robe, and girded herself with the twin girdle of her virginity, one girdle around her waist, and another girdle upon her breast. And she shook off the ashes from her head, and washed her hands and her face with living water. And she took an (as yet) untouched and distinguished linen veil and covered her head.²⁵

Jos. Asen. 15.10 further elaborates this symbolic change of Aseneth’s wardrobe, hinting at the possibility that her new attire might represent the garments of prelapsarian humanity. The angel’s words imply such a possibility as he utters the following cryptic statement: “And now listen to me, Aseneth, chaste virgin, and dress in your wedding robe, the ancient and first robe which is laid up in your chamber since eternity.”²⁶

3 Becoming “Male”

Although it has been previously suggested that Aseneth might acquire her own celestial identity in the form of heavenly figure called “Metanoia” (Μετάνοια), it is clear that the acquisition of the upper Self in the case of a female adept is not entirely conventional and straightforward. One notable feature that assists our understanding the novel mechanics of Aseneth’s acquisition of the heavenly double is a statement made by her heavenly visitor in chapter 15, where he tells the Egyptian virgin that she can remove the veil from her head because her head is now as a young man (ἡ κεφαλή σου ἐστὶν ὡς ἀνδρὸς νεανίσκου).²⁷ *Jos. Asen.* 15.1–2 reads:

²⁵ Burchard, “Joseph and Aseneth,” 225.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 227.

²⁷ Burchard, *Joseph und Aseneth kritisch herausgegeben*, 186.

And she went to the man into her first chamber and stood before him. And the man said to her, "Remove the veil from your head, and for what purpose did you do this? For you are a chaste virgin today, and your head is like that of a young man." And Aseneth removed the veil from her head.²⁸

But how is the newly acquired "maleness" of Aseneth related to the *Doppelgänger* lore? It is possible that the transition to the identity of a male person signifies here the seer's acquisition of the heavenly identity. In this respect, it is instructive that in some heterodox Christian materials, the heavenly Self or guardian angel of a human being was envisioned as a "male," while its earthly counterpart was understood as a "female." In these conceptual developments, as Peter Brown points out, "the spirit of each individual was male to the random, female soul. But even the spirit was female to the dominant guardian angel that hovered, as yet undiscovered, close to it. Redemption took the form of a reunion with that guardian angel ... [reestablishing] ... the severed link between the conscious person and its angel, a being that stood for the latent, truest self."²⁹

One of the specimens of such understanding can be found in Clement of Alexandria's *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 21:1, which preserves the following Valentinian tradition:

The Valentinians say that the finest emanation of Wisdom is spoken of in "He created them in the image of God, male and female created he them." Now the males from this emanation are the "election," but the females are the "calling" and they call the male: beings angelic, and the females themselves, the superior seed. So also, in the case of Adam, the male remained in him but all the female seed was taken from him and became Eve, from whom the females are derived, as the males are from him. Therefore the males are drawn together with the Logos, but the females, becoming men, are united to the angels and pass into the Pleroma. Therefore the woman is said to be changed into a man, and the church here on earth into angels.³⁰

28 Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," 225–226.

29 P. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), 115.

30 R.P. Casey, *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria* (Studies and Documents 1; London: Christophers, 1934), 57. E. Thomassen argues that in this passage "the distinction male/female is equivalent to that of angel/cosmic human"; see "Valentinian Ideas

Nonetheless, the concept of Aseneth's *Doppelgänger* in our pseudepigraphon appears to be not as straightforward as in the aforementioned Christian traditions with their tendencies to envision the upper Selves of human beings as male figures. As one may recall, despite Aseneth's paradoxal acquisition of a novel male identity, her heavenly *alter ego* in the form of Metanoia will be clearly envisioned in our pseudepigraphon as a female figure. It is also significant in that, unlike some of the other heavenly counterpart accounts, where embodied *alter egos* are often present at the seers' initiations, Metanoia herself is markedly absent at the scene of initiation and instead it is Aseneth herself who receives knowledge about her female upper Self from the mouth of a male *Doppelgänger*.

The acquisition of paradoxal maleness³¹ by a female seer potentially has a profound anthropological significance, as it might hint at a peculiar way in which the eschatological restoration of fallen humanity will inversely mirror its protological fall. Such an understanding relies on Jewish and Christian traditions in which the division of the primordial androgynous humankind into two genders was understood as the "fall."³² These theories also postulate that in the eschatological time this original androgynous humanity again will be restored and the human being will no longer be divided into a male and a female.³³ Some

about Salvation as Transformation," in T.K. Seim and J. Økland, eds., *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity* (Ekstasis 1; Berlin/New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2009) 169–186 at 179. The similar idea might be also reflected in *Zostrianos* 131:6–7 (NHC VIII,1, 131, 6–7): "Flee from the madness and the bondage of femaleness, and choose for yourself the salvation of maleness" (J.H. Sieber, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII* [NHS 31; Leiden: Brill, 1991], 223).

- 31 The motif of Aseneth's becoming "male" might be also hinted at in another important motif in the text, namely, her eight-day transformation which some scholars believe corresponds to the eight-day period culminating in the circumcision of a new-born Israelite male. On this, see M. Thiessen, "Aseneth's Eight-Day Transformation as Scriptural Justification for Conversion," *JSJ* 45 (2014): 229–249.
- 32 DeConick notes that "many Christian and Greek thinkers associated sexual differentiation with the fall and embodiment of the soul" (*Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* [SVC 33; Leiden: Brill, 1996], 17). DeConick detects the evidence for this in Logion 11 of the *Gospel of Thomas*, which "alludes to the pre-condition of Adam's Fall when the human separated into two sexes: 'On the day when you were one, you became two.' The division of the sexes was closely associated with Adam's sin. In order to return to the pristine state, this division must be rectified" (ibid., 17). See also J.H. Waszink, *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani. De anima* (SVC 100; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 419–420.
- 33 Cf. *Zohar* II.167b: "... the Archetypal Adam took shape and form without the co-operation of the Female, but a second Man was engraved and formed from the seed and energy

early Jewish and Christian traditions often understand this process of restoration as inversely mirroring the protological fall of androgynous humankind in the eschatological time. Thus Eve, literally taken from Adam in the Garden of Eden, will be incorporated into him in the end-time,³⁴ and in so doing again becoming the “male.”³⁵ In such a perspective, and as with so many early Jewish accounts, eschatology is predestined to mirror protology. One specimen of such an anthropological understanding is Logion 114 of the *Gospel of Thomas*, where Jesus tells Simon Peter that he will make Mary a male:

Simon Peter said to them, “Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.” Jesus said “I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.”³⁶

Reflecting on this passage, April DeConick notes that “Thomas seems to be referring to the Genesis story in Logion 114 where Jesus states that woman must become ‘male’ in order to enter the Kingdom. Since Eve was taken from Adam’s side, so she must reenter him and become ‘male’ in order to return to the prelapsarian state of Adam before the gender division.”³⁷ In this understanding, the female adept’s incorporation into the Anthropos, represented here by Christ,

of the first within a female. Archetypal Adam took shape and bodily image out of the substance of the Future World without the conjunction of male and female.” H. Sperling and M. Simon, eds., *The Zohar* (5 vols.; London and New York: Soncino, 1933), 4.78.

34 In this anthropological perspective even human males in their current fallen condition also require restoration. In this respect Marjanen rightly observes that when these texts “speak about the transformation of ‘female’ into ‘male’ they mean everybody, both men and women. Men too are ‘female,’ if their life is controlled by cosmic powers.” A. Marjanen, “Women Disciples in the Gospel of Thomas,” in R. Uro, ed., *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 89–106 at 102–103.

35 DeConick, *Seek to See Him*, 18, notes that in this anthropological perspective, “salvation is based on returning to Adam’s Pre-Fall state before the division of the sexes, and subsequently before the tasting of the forbidden fruit, sexual intercourse. This notion ... is best paralleled by the saying from the encratite *Gospel of the Egyptians*: ‘When Salome asked when what she had inquired about would be known, the Lord said, When you have trampled on the garment of shame and when the two become one and the male with the female (is) neither male nor female’ (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.13.92).”

36 B. Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7 together with XIII, 2,* Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(I), and P. Oxy. I, 654, 655* (NHS 20; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 1.93.

37 DeConick, *Seek to See Him*, 18.

returns her condition to the original protological mold, thus reversing the gender separation of fallen humanity.³⁸

It appears that in *Joseph and Aseneth*, one can discern a very similar dynamic of the unification of the female adept with the heavenly Anthropos, who is portrayed in the text as the heavenly double of Joseph. Here, the heavenly Joseph and his earthly bride, in the form of Aseneth, are predestined to become a new Adam and a new Eve, who will restore humanity to their prelapsarian and possibly even pre-gendered unified state. Ross Kraemer rightly observes that

the divine couple of Joseph and Aseneth restore the damage done by Adam and Eve, affording human beings a means to return to their original angelic state and, indeed, acquiring precisely the immortality that God feared Adam and Eve might acquire had they remained in Eden (Gen 3:22–24).³⁹

It is also significant that the unification of the primordial couple here is executed through the process of a nourishment overlaid with erotic overtones, when Aseneth's heavenly visitor feeds the seer with a mysterious honeycomb. The new Adam thus nourishes the new Eve with the food of angels. I have argued elsewhere that such feeding with the heavenly food must be seen as a redeeming reversal of the nourishment with the forbidden food by which the primordial couple lost its heavenly state.⁴⁰ Kraemer observes that

Genesis 3.1–5 and following may be read (and, indeed, has been so read) to imply that Eve learned of the forbidden fruit not from God directly but rather from Adam, and therefore, it is Eve's disobedience to her husband that leads to their shared mortality. By contrast, it is Aseneth's obedience to the angelic double of her husband, Joseph that obtains immortality for

38 For a similar motif see also *Gos. Thom.* 22: "Jesus saw infants being suckled. He said to his disciples, 'These infants being suckled are like those who enter the kingdom.' They said to him, 'Shall we then, as children, enter the kingdom?' Jesus said to them, 'When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female; and you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness; then will you enter [the kingdom]'" (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 2–7, 1.63).

39 Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 209.

40 A. Orlov, *Divine Scapegoats: Demonic Mimesis in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015), 80–96.

her. And although the masculine figure also eats, thus formally reversing the actions of Adam and Eve, he is already an angelic being, and it is hardly necessary for him to eat angelic food in order to receive immortality.⁴¹

We should now explore the account of the seer's nourishment more closely.

4 Nourishment from the Heavenly Counterpart

In *Joseph and Aseneth* the protagonist's unification with her *Doppelgänger* is executed in part through the act of nourishment portrayed as her consumption of the mysterious honeycomb offered by the heavenly Anthropos. This constellation of motifs where nourishment coincides with an acquisition of a celestial double appears to be hinted at in some Christian texts as well. In Logion 108 of the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus says, "He who will drink from my mouth will become like me. I myself shall become he."⁴² It is reminiscent of a type of nourishment where angelic food seems to be come from the mouth of the heavenly initiator, and is reflected in *Joseph and Aseneth* through Aseneth's double affirmation about the provenance of the honeycomb from the mouth of the celestial visitor.⁴³ *Jos. Asen.* 16.8–11 reads:

And the comb was big and white as snow and full of honey. And that honey was like dew from heaven and its exhalation like breath of life. And Aseneth wondered and said in herself, Did then this comb come out of the man's mouth, because its exhalation is like the breath of this man's mouth? And Aseneth was afraid and said, "Lord, I did not have a honeycomb in my storeroom at any time, but you spoke and it came into being. Surely this came out of your mouth, because its exhalation is like breath of your mouth."⁴⁴

41 Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 209.

42 Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 2–7, 1.91.

43 Concerning this motif, A. Portier-Young notes, "[O]bserving that its breath is also like the breath of the mouth of her visitor, she infers that the honeycomb has emanated from his mouth, having come into being by his speech (16.9). The angel confirms her suspicion, smiling at her understanding; she now demonstrates knowledge of heavenly mysteries (16.12)." See A.E. Portier-Young, "Sweet Mercy Metropolis: Interpreting Aseneth's Honeycomb," *JSP* 14 (2005): 133–157 at 139.

44 Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," 2.228.

Andrea Lieber suggests that the provenance of the angelic food in *Joseph and Aseneth*, coming from the mouth of the celestial being, has roots in the biblical manna traditions.⁴⁵ In fact, in the Book of Deuteronomy, the archaic manna tradition has already been reformulated in terms of an aural paradigm when the symbolism of heavenly nourishment is juxtaposed with imagery of the word coming from the deity's mouth. Thus, Deut 8:3: "He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."⁴⁶ The unusual means of nourishment in *Joseph and Aseneth* seems to be closely tied to the nature and the function of Aseneth's heavenly guide who is portrayed in our text as the Angel of the Name. Thus Kraemer argues that "it is particularly in the longer text that the angelic figure is more closely aligned with the figure developed in other sources as the Name-Bearing Angel—the virtual double of God."⁴⁷

The metamorphosis of Aseneth is profoundly affected by this means of nourishment. In fact, the text demonstrates that the nature of the female seer was transformed by the ingestion of the divine Name. It is not coincidental that such transformation is executed aurally, from the mouth of the angel of the Name to the mouth of an earthly creature. As we remember the heavenly man, who bears some characteristics of the Angel of the Name, puts the angelic food that originated from his mouth into the mouth of the female seer.

If in *Joseph and Aseneth* the human seer is indeed transformed by means of her ingestion of the divine Name, such initiatory practice points to an important ancient trajectory. Other scholars have noted, for example, that 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.⁴⁸ These rituals are rooted in ancient Mesopotamian and Egyp-

45 A. Lieber, "I Set a Table before You: The Jewish Eschatological Character of Aseneth's Conversion Meal," *JSP* 14 (2004): 63–77 at 68.

46 Cf. Matt 3:4: "And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

47 Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 127.

48 M. Schneider, "Joseph and Aseneth and Early Jewish Mysticism," *Kabbalah* 3 (1998): 303–344 [in Hebrew]. Concerning Aseneth's conversion and the tradition of opening the statue's mouth with the divine Name, see also M. Philonenko, "Initiation et mystère dans Joseph et Aséneth," in C.J. Bleeker, ed., *Initiation* (SHR 10; Leiden: Brill, 1965) 147–153; C. Burchard, "The Present State of Research on Joseph and Aseneth," in J. Neusner et al.,

tian⁴⁹ animation ceremonies of cultic statues known as the rite of the “washing of the mouth” (*mīs pī*) and the “opening of the mouth” (*pīt pī*).⁵⁰ Some scholars have argued that these trends exercised a formative influence on some later Hermetic⁵¹ traditions and Kabbalistic stories about the creation of the artificial humanoid.⁵²

eds. *Religion, Literature, and Society in Ancient Israel, Formative Christianity and Judaism* (NPAJ 2; Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), 31–52, G. Bohak, “Asenath’s Honeycomb and Onias’ Temple: The Key to Joseph and Asenath,” in D. Assaf, ed., *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division A* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1994), 163–170, and G.Y. Glazov, *The Bridling of the Tongue and the Opening of the Mouth in Biblical Prophecy* (JSOTSS 311; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 379.

- 49 One of the crucial aspects of the Egyptian ritual of the “opening of the mouth” was an establishment of a connection between the statue and its *Doppelgänger*, also known as the “Ka.” Thus, A. Bolshakov observes that “without changing anything in the outer appearance of the statue, the ‘opening’ transformed its very nature: initially an animated substance, it became linked to the Double.” See A.J. Bolshakov, *Man and His Double in Egyptian Ideology of the Old Kingdom* (ÄAT 37; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), 173.
- 50 Regarding ancient rituals of washing of the mouth and the opening of the mouth of cultic statues, see P.J. Boden, “The Mesopotamian Washing of the Mouth (*Mīs Pī*) Ritual” (Ph.D. diss.; Johns Hopkins University, 1998), A. Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder: Herstellung und Einweihung von Kultbildern in Mesopotamien und die alttestamentliche Bilderpolemik* (OBO 162; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1998), M.B. Dick, ed., *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), C. Walker and M.B. Dick, eds., *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian Mīs Pī Ritual. Transliteration, Translation, and Commentary* (SAALT 1; Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2001), V.A. Hurowitz, “The Mesopotamian God Image, from Womb to Tomb,” *JAOS* 123 (2003): 147–157, N.H. Walls, ed., *Cult Image and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East* (ASOR 10; Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2005), V.A. Hurowitz, “What Goes In Is What Comes Out: Materials for Creating Cult Statues,” in G.M. Beckman and T.J. Lewis, eds., *Text, Artifact, and Image; Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion* (BJS 346; Providence: BJS, 2006), 3–23, G.K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), M.S. Smith, *God in Translation. Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), and M.J. Lundberg, “The *Mis-Pi* Rituals and Incantations and Jeremiah 10:1–16,” in J. Goldingay, ed., *Uprooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 210–227.
- 51 M. Idel, “Hermeticism and Judaism,” in I. Merkel and A.G. Debus, eds., *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe* (Washington, DC: Folger Library, 1988), 59–76; *idem*, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990).
- 52 G. Scholem, “The Idea of the Golem,” *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (trans. R. Manheim, New York: Schocken, 1965), 159–165, and E.L. Greenstein, “God’s Golem: The Creation

In *Joseph and Aseneth*, the peculiar metamorphosis that is effected through the mouth of the celestial being is replete with protological symbolism. These transformational accounts replicate the paradigmatic event of the creation of humankind when the spirit of life was blown from the mouth of the deity into the mouth of the lifeless human body molded from the dust of the earth.⁵³ Such protological connections are highlighted in *Joseph and Aseneth* when the angelic food, the honeycomb, is compared with the spirit of life. Through the ingestion of the divine Name, then, Aseneth becomes in effect a “new Protoplast,” returning to the prelapsarian condition of humanity.⁵⁴ Such “vivifications” of the seers bring to mind later Jewish Golem legends in which the lifeless body of the artificial humanoid becomes alive when God’s name is inserted into his mouth.⁵⁵

5 The Ritual of the Bridal Chamber

The striking intimate routines, overlaid with erotic overtones, which occurred during the initiation of the seer by her angelic visitor, bring us to another important symbolic dimension of Aseneth’s metamorphosis—the concept of the bridal chamber.⁵⁶ It is significant that Aseneth’s conversion and transformation

of the Human in Genesis 2,” in H. Reventlow and Y. Hoffman, eds., *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (JSOTSS 319; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 219–239.

53 With respect to these traditions, see C.L. Beckerleg, “The ‘Image of God’ in Eden” (Ph.D. diss.; Harvard University, 2009).

54 In both texts, the spiritual feeding has salvific and eschatological significance. It returns a human seer to the protological condition when the protoplast was fed by the light of God’s presence. As Chernus rightly notes, this tradition of the protoplast’s spiritual nourishment also appears to be reflected in *3 Enoch* (I. Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism* [Studies in the History of Midrash; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1982], 75–76). Thus, *3 Enoch* 5:3 says that “the first man and his generation dwelt at the gate of the garden of Eden so that they might gaze at the bright image of the Shekhinah” (P. Alexander, “3 [Hebrew Apocalypse of] Enoch,” in J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* [New York: Doubleday, 1983], 1.223–315 at 259). An early witness to such a tradition of the protoplast’s feeding on the divine glory might also be reflected in *2 Enoch*, in which the deity orders the angel to open the heavens so Adam will gain access to the vision of Glory.

55 Concerning these traditions, see Idel, *Golem*, 31, 91–92, 103, and 139.

56 Several words should be said about the spatial settings in which Aseneth meets her heavenly visitor. In *Jos. Asen.* 14.5, Aseneth wonders how her heavenly visitor can enter her chamber: “And she said, Who is he that calls me, because the door of my chamber is closed,

unfold in the midst of her preparation to become Joseph's bride.⁵⁷ Yet although the marriage between the Jewish patriarch and the Egyptian maiden has not yet been consummated,⁵⁸ the interaction between Aseneth and Joseph's heavenly double is laden with the peculiar actions usually only allowed to take place

and the tower is high, and how then did he come into my chamber?" (Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," 2.224). Scholars previously noticed that the structure of Aseneth's palace is reminiscent of the tripartite structure of the Jerusalem Temple. So she encounters her heavenly guest literally in the "holy of holies" of her palace. Thus, Lieber observes that Aseneth's "chamber is configured like a temple. Her bedroom is situated in the third, innermost chamber of the palace, and she is attended by seven virginal guardians ... That the anthropomorphic angel appears in such a space is no surprise, as the setting is actually rather appropriate. Aseneth's chamber is the central component of what is effectively both palace and temple" (Lieber, "I Set a Table before You," 67). Similarly Putthoff argues that Aseneth's "quarters have become an incubation chamber, modelled on Ezekiel's temple (Ezek 40–46), where she has summoned the divine to a meeting" (Putthoff, "Aseneth's Gastronomical Vision," 100). On the temple structure of Aseneth's house see also Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth*, 68. If the interaction between the seer and the angel takes place in the "holy of holies" of Aseneth's temple, it is noteworthy that in some Christian traditions of the bridal chamber, it was closely associated with the Holy of Holies. Thus, Uro notes that "the bridal chamber is compared to the holiest room in the temple of Jerusalem, "the Holy of the Holies" (*Gos. Phil.* 69 [§76]; cf. 84 [§125]), and is generally used as expressing the highest revelation" (R. Uro, "Gnostic Rituals from a Cognitive Perspective," in P. Luomanen et al., eds., *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism* [BIS 89; Leiden: Brill, 2007], 115–137 at 120.) On the imagery of bridal chamber, see also R. Uro, "The Bridal Chamber and Other Mysteries: Ritual System and Ritual Transmission in the Valentinian Movement," in M. Nissinen and R. Uro, eds., *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 457–486.

57 Throughout the narrative Aseneth is envisioned as a bride. Quispel, "Genius and Spirit," 113, notes that in the sacrament of the bridal chamber an adept becomes a bride.

58 It appears that some heterodox Christian materials operated with the notion of the celestial and terrestrial bridal chambers co-existing simultaneously and in some ways mirroring each other. Such traditions might be present in *Joseph and Aseneth* where two consummations are present: the celestial and the terrestrial that mirror each other. In relation to these conceptual currents, Uro observes that "scholars' interpretations of the different uses of the bridal chamber vary greatly and it may be impossible to reach an agreement about the meaning and the content of the imagery in the *Gospel of Philip*. What seems to be relatively certain, however, is that the gospel envisions at least two bridal chambers: the 'great' celestial bridal chamber (*Gos. Phil.* 71 [§82]; see also 84–86 [§§125–127]) and a 'mirrored bridal chamber,' which could be understood as a kind of worldly counterpart of this celestial bridal chamber" (Uro, "Gnostic Rituals from a Cognitive Perspective," 124).

between married partners. Thus, the heavenly Anthropos orders the female seer to be undressed and redressed, grasps her head with his hand, speaks about her anointment,⁵⁹ removes her veil, and later places the food from his mouth into the seer's mouth. It is also significant that the celestial Anthropos, in his own words, is in love with Aseneth's heavenly counterpart—Metanoia. All the actions of the angelic visitor in this regard suggest that although the physical consummation between Aseneth and Joseph has not yet taken place, the spiritual counterpart of the act is already unfolding in the form of the heavenly union between the female seer and Joseph's heavenly counterpart.⁶⁰ It is therefore possible that here the earthly person and the heavenly being are forming a so-called "*syzygia*, the *mysterium conjunctionis* between a [human being] and his [or her] angel or transcendental Self."⁶¹ Although the concept of the bridal chamber has been preserved in its most articulated form in early heterodox Christian materials, *Joseph and Aseneth* provides a possible proof that the origins of this concept might be rooted in early Jewish accounts.

It is important for our study that in early Christian testimonies dealing with the bridal chamber's imagery, one of the members of the *syzygia* is often envisioned as a heavenly double of a human being. Thus, analyzing the Valentinian

59 In the view of the traditions of Aseneth's anointment with the "blessed ointment of incorruption," some scholars note that "the bridal chamber imagery is, on several occasions, associated with some ritual procedures, especially with chrisem (*Gos. Phil.* 67 [§ 66]; 67 [§ 67]; 74 [§ 95]; cf. 84 [§ 125])" (Uro, "Gnostic Rituals from a Cognitive Perspective," 124). On the oil imagery in *Joseph and Aseneth*, see R.D. Chesnutt, "Perceptions of Oil in Early Judaism and the Meal Formula in *Joseph and Aseneth*," *JSP* 14 (2005): 113–132.

60 DeConick argues that in Valentinian traditions the heavenly counterpart of the adept is represented sometimes by a gender counterpart. She notes that "according to the *Gospel of Philip*, the angel with whom you are to be reunited is your sexual opposite. In 65:8–11, it is explained that no one can escape the sexual advances of the unclean spirits unless one has taken on the appropriate 'male power' or 'female power' which are respectively 'the bridegroom and the bride.' Thus 'if the image and the angel are united with one another' the original androgyny is restored, and the unclean spirit can no longer violate the person (65:24–26). In the case of the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, the angels are the 'male' aspect of the original androgynous Man of Genesis 1:27, while the 'superior seed' represents the female aspect. This seed was removed from Adam and became Eve. Those of the female 'superior seed' must 'become men' uniting with the male angel. In this way, the original androgyny of the primal Man is restored since Eve has reentered Adam. Thus: 'we are raised up 'equal to angels', and restored to unity with the males, member for member: Therefore, our angels are our 'bridegrooms'" (DeConick, *Seek to See Him*, 149–150).

61 Quispel, "Genius and Spirit," 104.

notion of the *syzygia* or the *mysterium conjunctionis* between a human being and his angel, Quispel suggested that this angel was “conceived as image and counterpart (*iqonin*) both in Judaism and primitive Christianity.”⁶²

The presence of the bridal chamber imagery in *Joseph and Aseneth* has been previously acknowledged by several scholars.⁶³ Ross Kramer also notices some connections between Aseneth’s transformation into a “male” and the bridal chamber imagery found in the *Acts of Thomas*.⁶⁴ She observes that

... in this same vein, we might also consider a narrative in the *Acts of Thomas* concerning a newly married young royal couple. The night of their wedding, Jesus, in the form of his twin brother, the apostle Judas Thomas, appears in their bridal chamber before they can consummate the marriage and dissuades them from doing so, persuading them instead to adopt permanent chastity. The next morning, the bride is found sitting uncovered. Her mother, seeing her this way, asks why she sits with her husband, unashamed, as though long-married, an inquiry seconded by her father. The bride responds: “That I do not veil myself is because the mirror of shame has been taken away from me: I am no longer ashamed or abashed, since the work of shame and bashfulness has been removed from me.”⁶⁵

Kraemer further argues that “here, as in *Aseneth* 15.1, where the angelic figure instructs Aseneth to remove her head covering, sexuality and covering are clearly linked; the unveiled woman is ‘asexual.’”⁶⁶ It is also noteworthy that in both accounts, the female seer’s anthropological metamorphosis coincides with the apparition of the *Doppelgänger*. This union between the heavenly and the earthly is laden therefore with profound changes in the nature and social behavior of the initiated.

62 Ibid., 104.

63 See Burchard, “Joseph and Aseneth,” 233–234, and Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 61.

64 In relation to the status of these apocryphal materials in early Christianity, Averil Cameron argues that “the apocryphal Acts cannot be marginalized; they too were integrally related to the general culture of the second and third centuries. But more specifically, they provided for Christians a set of texts in which the Christian self was expounded, first in narrative terms and then in terms of asceticism; the writing of Christian texts would shape Christian lives” (A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* [SCL 55; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991], 116).

65 Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 198.

66 Ibid., 261.

Although our analysis of the bridal chamber traditions has been mainly executed through the spectacles of later heterodox Christian developments, it is significant that the authors or transmitters of the text themselves were applying this technical terminology to the conceptual developments found in the text. Thus, some manuscripts of the shorter version⁶⁷ specifically mention that Aseneth's heavenly counterpart, Metanoia, has prepared a *heavenly bridal chamber* (νυμφῶνα οὐράνιον)⁶⁸ for those who love her.⁶⁹ It again demonstrates that in the minds of the authors (or handlers) of the text, the details of Aseneth's transformation and the acquisition of her heavenly identity were closely associated with the imagery of the bridal chamber.

6 Heavenly Counterpart of Aseneth

Aseneth's figure can be viewed as a conceptual center of heavenly counterpart traditions. As has been already noticed, her attributes imitate both descriptions of the earthly Joseph and his heavenly double. Thus, her heavenly identity is closely tied to the heavenly identity of Joseph with whom she forms the *mysterium conjunctionis*. This complex web of conceptual developments in which the female seer is identified with the upper correlative of Joseph becomes even more complicated through the imagery of Aseneth's own heavenly counterpart in the form of Metanoia (Μετάνοια). In *Jos. Asen.* 15.7–8 the heavenly Anthropos pronounces to the seer:

And your name shall no longer be called Aseneth, but your name shall be City of Refuge, because in you many nations will take refuge with the Lord God, the Most High, and under your wings many peoples trusting in the Lord God will be sheltered, and behind your walls will be guarded those who attach themselves to the Most High God in the name of Repentance. For Repentance is in the heavens, an exceedingly beautiful and good daughter of the Most High. And she herself entreats the Most High God for you at all times and for all who repent in the name of the Most High God, because he is (the) father of Repentance. And she herself is guardian of all virgins, and loves you very much, and is beseeching the Most High

67 On the terminology of the bridal chamber in *Joseph and Aseneth* see Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," 227, n. u, and Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*, 184.

68 Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*, 184.

69 Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 61, and E.M. Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 70.

for you at all times and for all who repent she prepared a place of rest in the heavens. And she will renew all who repent, and wait on them herself for ever (and) ever. And Repentance is exceedingly beautiful, a virgin pure and laughing always, and she is gentle and meek. And, therefore, the Most High Father loves her, and all the angels stand in awe of her. And I, too, love her exceedingly, because she is also my sister. And because she loves you virgins, I love you, too.⁷⁰

In respect to this conceptual development, Ross Kraemer observes that as the angel is the celestial double of Joseph, so Aseneth also has a celestial *alter ego* named Metanoia. The uniqueness of this account in comparison with its parallels is that here the first celestial double conveys to the seer a revelation about the second double. It is also intriguing that the Anthropos and Metanoia are envisioned as siblings, since the Heavenly Man tells Aseneth that Metanoia is his sister. Such relationships mirror a paradoxical bond between earthly Joseph and Aseneth who are repeatedly identified in the text as brother and sister.⁷¹

Kraemer draws her attention to the differences in features and functions of Aseneth's heavenly double in longer and shorter versions.⁷² Thus, in her opinion, the longer version revises "the portrait of Metanoia to conform to Wisdom⁷³ traditions more closely."⁷⁴ The identification of Aseneth's *Doppelgänger* with the mediatorial figure of the hypostasized Sophia is not coincidental. As we will see later in our study, in early Jewish lore various mediatorial figures often become envisioned as the divine mirrors, in whom human adepts are predestined to encounter their own upper identities. Such a function of the hypostasized Sophia as a mirror of the deity is already hinted in early descriptions of this important mediatorial figure. Thus, from Wis 7:25–26 one learns that "she [Wisdom] is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror (ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον) of the working of God, and an image (εἰκών) of his goodness." This striking passage can serve as a good illustration of the *Doppelgänger's* proclivities of this distinguished sapiential mediator, since Wisdom here is portrayed

70 Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," 226–227.

71 See, e.g., *Jos. Asen.* 7.8 and 7.11.

72 Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 130.

73 For the identification of Metanoia with Wisdom in the shorter and the longer versions of *Joseph and Aseneth*, see Standhartinger, *Das Frauenbild*, 189–204.

74 Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 61. Kraemer also notes that "Metanoia closely resembles the portraits of Sophia and other feminine manifestations of the divine in gnostic texts" (84).

not only as the mirror (ἔσοπτρον) of God, but also as His image (εἰκῶν)—the concept which, as we will see below, will become so important in several heavenly counterpart accounts where the celestial image became synonymous with the adept's otherworldly Self.⁷⁵ Kraemer further notes that the figure of Aseneth's heavenly double in fact is much more complex than the persona of Joseph's heavenly identity, since ancient Jewish sources very rarely envision an explicitly female angel in the heavenly cosmology.⁷⁶

It is also intriguing that some functions of Aseneth's celestial *alter ego* in the form of Metanoia appear reminiscent of the roles of Metatron, another example of a heavenly counterpart, as we have seen. Thus, Kraemer notes that both characters share certain attributes and features, namely, "both are intercessory figures, mediating between the human and the divine."⁷⁷ Both are described as exceedingly beautiful.⁷⁸ Kraemer also draws attention to one of Metatron's titles, "Beloved."⁷⁹ This title is closely connected with the title of the seventh antediluvian hero, who already in Mesopotamian lore became designated as "the beloved of gods."⁸⁰ In respect to these traditions Kramer suggests that "just as Metanoia is beloved by God in heaven (and in the longer version, by the angel as well), so also Metatron is said in some texts to be much loved in heaven."⁸¹

75 On this juxtaposition of the symbolism of "mirror" and "image," see H. Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief* (KEK 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924), 128, J. Jervell, *Imago Dei. Gen 1,26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen* (FRLANT 76; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 185, and S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (second ed.; WUNT 2/4; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1984), 232.

76 Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 26, observes that the "description of Metanoia, and indeed the entire personification of Metanoia, is unique to the texts of *Aseneth*."

77 *Ibid.*, 5: "Aseneth receives a new name, City of Refuge, indicating her future role as the refuge and protection of all those who devote themselves to God in repentance, a role already played by Aseneth's heavenly double, the divine Metanoia (Repentance), the daughter of God."

78 *Ibid.*, 131.

79 L.H. Schiffman and M.D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 145: "I adjure you [Metatron], more beloved and dear than all heavenly beings, [faithful servant] of the God of Israel, the High Priest, chief of [the priest]s, you who poss[ess seven]ty names; and whose name [is like your Master's] ... Great Prince, who is appointed over the great princes, who is the head of all the camps."

80 W.G. Lambert, "Enmeduranki and Related Matters," *JCS* 21 (1967): 126–138 at 132: "... Enmeduranki [king of Sippar], the beloved of Anu, Enlil [and Ea]."

81 Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 131.

It is also noteworthy that in the case of Aseneth-Metanoia the functions of the heavenly and earthly identity appear to be strictly delineated in such a way that might point to the simultaneous existence of Aseneth and her heavenly double in their respective realms. Thus, Kraemer notes that “on earth, Aseneth will henceforth shelter those who devote themselves to God through repentance [*metanoia*], while in heaven, Metanoia herself continually petitions God on behalf of all those who repent.”⁸² Deutsch also reflects on these similar, but yet delineated, functions of the seer’s celestial and earthly counterparts. She observes that Aseneth in her new identity becomes a heavenly/earthly being. She will assume a role correspondent to that of the angel Repentance or Metanoia, exercising a corresponding earthly role on behalf of all those who repent.⁸³ Deutsch also brings attention to Aseneth’s heavenly counterpart’s endowment with scribal duties, the office which is often attested in various *Doppelgänger* accounts. She observes that Aseneth “is transformed in Lady Wisdom’s image ... The association with personified Wisdom indicates that her new role will also have a scribal element, something that will be confirmed by her association with Levi as the narrative progresses.”⁸⁴

As in the case of Joseph’s heavenly correlative, who emulates the features and attributes of the earthly Joseph, Aseneth’s heavenly counterpart bears some traits of the earthly protagonist. In this respect Kraemer notes that to the extent that Metanoia is Aseneth’s divine double, Metanoia’s traits are also those of Aseneth. She also notes that these common attributes are expanded and given more explicit expression in the longer text.⁸⁵

7 Unveiling Aseneth’s Face

After Aseneth’s interaction with the celestial visitor, an encounter laden with profound anthropological and spiritual metamorphoses, the story unveils another striking account of transformation, this time involving changes to Aseneth’s face:

And her foster-father saw her, and behold, her face had fallen from the affliction and the weeping and the fasting of the seven days, and he was

82 Ibid., 130.

83 Deutsch, “Aseneth: Ascetical Practice, Vision, and Transformation,” 335.

84 Ibid., 335–336.

85 Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 27.

distressed and wept, and he took her right hand and kissed it and said, "What have you, my child, because your face has fallen so (much)?" And Aseneth said to him, "My head is stricken with heavy pain, and the sleep kept away from my eyes and therefore my face has fallen." And her foster-father went away and prepared the house and the dinner ... And Aseneth remembered the words of her foster-father, because he had said to her, "Your face has fallen." And she sighed and was much distressed and said, "Woe is me, the humble, because my face has fallen. Joseph will see me and despise me." And she said to her foster-sister, "Bring me pure water from the spring, and I will wash my face." And she brought her pure water from the spring and poured it into the basin. And Aseneth leaned (over) to wash her face and saw her face in the water. And it was like the sun and her eyes (were) like a rising morning star, and her cheeks like fields of the Most High and on her cheeks (there was) red (color) like a son of man's blood and her lips (were) like a rose of life coming out of its foliage, and her teeth like fighting men lined up for a fight and the hair of her head (was) like a vine in the paradise of God prospering in its fruits and her neck like an all-variegated cypress, and her breasts (were) like the mountains of the Most High God. And when Aseneth saw herself in the water, she was amazed at the sight and rejoiced with great joy, and did not wash her face, for she said, "Perhaps I (will) wash off this great beauty." And her foster-father came to say to her, "Everything is prepared as you have commanded." And when he saw her he was alarmed and stood speechless for a long (time) and was filled with great fear and fell at her feet and said, "What is this, my mistress, and what is this great and wonderful beauty? At last the Lord God of heaven has chosen you as a bride for his firstborn son, Joseph?" (*Jos. Asen.* 18:3–11)⁸⁶

This portentous motif of the seer's transformation in the watery mirror deserves our close attention. The important feature of the narrative is the *trouphous'* statements, manifested at the beginning and at the end of the account.

86 Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," 231–233. In relation to this episode Burchard, 232, asks and concludes "Does this scene reflect magical practice involving the mirror effect of water in a basin (Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*, p. 193)? Probably not, because the text neither says that Aseneth had anything but washing in mind, nor that she was transformed because she looked into the water. Aseneth's sudden beauty is in partial fulfillment of 16:16. She comes close to being an angelic creature (see 20:6; cf. Acts 6:15; 2 Cor 3:18)."

These reactions attempt to draw attention to the pivotal theme of the passage, namely, the striking metamorphosis of Aseneth's face.⁸⁷ We learn that in the beginning the *tropheus* is unimpressed with Aseneth's appearance and notices that Aseneth's face "has fallen." Yet, at the end of the narrative when he sees her again after she gazed into the mirror of the "pure water,"⁸⁸ he is speechless and filled with fear, and he falls at her feet.⁸⁹ Such a peculiar set of human reactions is reminiscent of the Jewish theophanic accounts in which human visionaries encounter angelic and divine manifestations, including the anthropomorphic *Kavod*, often labelled in these accounts as the "Face." Moreover, as has been previously noted, the *tropheus's* response mirrors Aseneth's own earlier reaction to her celestial visitor.⁹⁰ It is clear that the vision of the "face" in the water dramatically altered the maiden's countenance.⁹¹ Reflecting

87 So A. Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology* (WUNT 207; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 78: "the transformation that Aseneth thus undergoes appears very striking, even in context of the story as romance."

88 Earlier, in *Joseph and Aseneth* 14, the Heavenly Man orders Aseneth to wash her face with living water: "wash your face and your hands with living water." Deutsch, "Aseneth: Ascetical Practice, Vision, and Transformation," 346, notes the correspondences between the two events. She remarks that "in both visions world and life-world of the narrative, Aseneth washes herself in 'living water' (14:15; 18:8–9)."

89 Thus Deutsch, "Aseneth: Ascetical Practice, Vision, and Transformation," 346: "final ablution brings Aseneth the realization that her face is now 'like the sun,' and that her beauty has intensified in the course of her inner transformation (18:8–9). She, like Joseph, is 'like the sun.' The transformation is confirmed by her foster-father, who is alarmed at her beauty, and then 'was filled with great fear and fell at her feet,' responding as to a vision in the pattern of biblical and apocalyptic narratives (18:10–11)."

90 Bringing attention to the *tropheus's* reaction, Kraemer observes that "the response of the *tropheus* to Aseneth's new appearance is itself quite interesting. His reaction to her spectacular beauty follows precisely the pattern of Aseneth's own response to the angelic figure: he is alarmed, speechless, and frightened, and he ultimately falls at her feet" (*When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 71). In relation to this episode G. Brooke also observes that "her [Aseneth's] angelic status is confirmed by the reaction of the first person to see her: and when he saw her he was alarmed and stood speechless for a long (time), and was filled with great fear and fell at her feet and said, 'What is this, my mistress, and what is this great and wonderful beauty?' (18.11). This is the common response of those who experience an angelophany." See G. Brooke, "Men and Women as Angels in Joseph and Aseneth," *JSP* 14 (2005): 159–177 at 168.

91 Deutsch observes that "through various ascetical performances Aseneth refashions herself. She does not make the ascent; rather, the heavenly Man descends to speak with her. Nonetheless, his appearance makes it clear that in the vision, Aseneth crosses the bound-

on this dramatic change, Christoph Burchard suggested that “she comes close to being an angelic creature.”⁹²

Aseneth’s vision in the water calls to mind contextual parallels. Marc Philonenko and other scholars attempted to link it to the magical culture of the text’s broader Greco-Roman environment, and to lecanomancy rituals in particular.⁹³ While connections with Hellenistic magic were duly acknowledged in previous studies, possible ties to some Jewish mystical accounts of theophanic encounters through water have often been forgotten in these attempts to clarify the background of Aseneth’s metamorphosis.

Other scholars have drawn attention to the importance of the water rituals in Merkavah and Hekhalot mysticism.⁹⁴ In light of the aforementioned parallels

aries between earthly and heavenly. This is confirmed in 18:9 by her altered appearance” (“Aseneth: Ascetical Practice, Vision, and Transformation,” 336).

92 Burchard, “Joseph and Aseneth,” 232. See also *Jos. Asen.* 20.6: “And they saw Aseneth like (the) appearance of light, and her beauty was like heavenly beauty” (234).

93 See Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*, 193, note 18,7. On Mesopotamian and Greco-Roman lecanomancy, see G. Pettinato, *Die Öwahrsagung bei den Babyloniern* (StSem 21–22; Roma: Istituto di studi del vicino oriente, 1966), D. Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 39–40 and 205–206, and N. Anor, *Reading the Oil Omens: A Study of Practice and Record of Mesopotamian Lecanomancy* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2010). See also Quispel, “Judaism and Gnosis,” in J. van Oort, ed., *Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica. Collected Essays of Gilles Quispel* (NHMS 55; Leiden: Brill, 2008). Reflecting on this praxis, Quispel, 553–555, notes that “the most instructive example for our purpose is a lekanomanteia, a revelation of the deity through dish-divination ... The divinity has manifested itself to the magician in the water of the dish after he has invoked the god and impelled him to come down. The magician looks upon the water and sees there the reflection of the Lord: this vision grants participation in the divine nature (*isotheou physeōs kurieusas*) ... In chapter 14 of the *Poimandres* this theme has been applied to the Anthropos, that is the *kabod* of Ezekiel 1:26: he looks through the harmony of the seven spheres and shows his form. Nature becomes enamoured of him when she sees his reflection in the water and his shadow on the earth. Thereupon Man falls into the irrational body and becomes man. He becomes enamoured of his reflection in the water and wants to dwell there ...”

94 G.W. Dennis, “The Use of Water as a Medium for Altered States of Consciousness in Early Jewish Mysticism: A Cross-Disciplinary Analysis,” *Anthropology of Consciousness* 19 (2008): 84–106. Rebecca Lesses draws attention to this peculiar mystical ritual: “You will observe through the bowl—divination on whatever day or night you want, in whatever place you want, beholding the god in the water and hearing a voice from the god which speaks in verses in answer to whatever you want” (R.M. Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations, and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* [Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998], 329).

between *Joseph and Aseneth* and the Merkavah tradition these motifs deserve to be explored more closely. Martti Nissinen argues that “in the Hekhalot literature, water not only appears as a ritual precondition for divine revelation, but also as the site where revelation takes place, and, most notably, as a medium for inducing the altered state of consciousness.”⁹⁵ Moreover, in the Hekhalot accounts the vision of water or its “likeness” often serves as a test for a visionary when the adept enters the sixth celestial palace.⁹⁶

The possibility of theophanic vision in the water might be already present in the earliest formative account of the Merkavah lore—the first chapter of the Book of Ezekiel. Thus, some Jewish mystical accounts attempt to interpret Ezekiel’s revelation as a vision received in the mirror of waters, namely, the waters of the river Chebar. In one such mystical interpretation, reflected in the text known to us as the *Visions of Ezekiel* the following striking explanation can be found:

While Ezekiel was watching, God opened to him seven firmaments, and he saw the Power. They coined a parable. To what may the matter be likened? To a man who went to a barber shop, got a haircut, and was given a mirror to look into. While he was looking into the mirror, the king passed by. He saw the king and his forces through the doorway. The barber turned and said to him, “Turn around and see the king.” He said, “I have already seen the mirror.” So Ezekiel stood by the river Chebar and looked into the water, and the seven firmaments were opened to him and he saw God’s glory, and the *hayyot*, angels, troops, seraphim, and sparkling-winged ones joined to the *merkavah*. They passed by in the heavens and Ezekiel saw them in the water. So it is written: At the river Chebar (Ezek 1:1).⁹⁷

Reflecting on this passage, David Halperin observes that “looking into the river Chebar, Ezekiel sees the primordial waters, and the *Hayyot* and other merkavah beings in them (understood to mean, reflected in them).”⁹⁸ Some scholars

95 M. Nissinen, “Sacred Springs and Liminal Rivers: Water and Prophecy in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean,” in E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin, eds., *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 29–48 at 35.

96 On this motif, see C.R.A. Morray-Jones, *A Transparent Illusion. The Dangerous Vision of Water in Hekhalot Mysticism: A Source-Critical and Tradition-Critical Inquiry* (JSJS 59; Leiden: Brill, 2002).

97 D. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Response to Ezekiel’s Vision* (TSAJ 16; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1988), 265.

98 *Ibid.*, 230.

argue that such a practice of seeing the *Kavod* in bodies of water possibly became a mystical ritual, known to Jewish apocalypticists and mystics. Thus, Halperin argues that the passage from the *Visions of Ezekiel* is “a reflection of the actual practice of early Jewish visionaries, who used natural bodies of water as mirrors in which they could see supernatural beings appear in the sky. Water-divination of this sort, using a vessel filled with water (often with oil added) as a mirror in which the medium can see divine images, seems to have been common enough in the ancient world.”⁹⁹ Such a ritual allowed a mystic to bridge realms since “when the merkavah appears in the waters, the upper realms are merged into the lower.”¹⁰⁰ It is also noteworthy that *Leviticus Rabbah* 1:14¹⁰¹ and *Zohar* II.82b¹⁰² make a connection between the revelation on the river Chebar and Moses’ vision of the *Kavod* reflected in a mirror. In view of these developments it is possible that Aseneth’s transformation in the watery mirror might be informed by some Mosaic *Kavod* traditions that needed to be explored more closely.

8 Heavenly Counterparts as “Embodied” Mirrors

I have previously proposed that in the course of the seer’s identification with his/her heavenly counterpart, the adept becomes a “reflection” or a “mirror” of the divine Face.¹⁰³ This process occurs in the front of the divine *Kavod*, typically labelled as the divine Face (*Panim*), and with the help of the angelic servants of the Face. It involves the adept’s becoming the Prince of the Face (*Sar ha-Panim*)¹⁰⁴ or the entity engraved on the Face,¹⁰⁵ or even the Face itself. In some cases, the seer’s heavenly identity becomes “reflected” or “inscribed”

99 Ibid., 231.

100 Ibid., 237.

101 Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 4.17.

102 Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 3.248.

103 A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (TSAJ 107; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2005), 165–176, *idem*, “The Face as the Heavenly Counterpart of the Visionary in the Slavonic Ladder of Jacob,” in C.A. Evans, ed., *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture* (2 vols.; SSEJC 9; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 2.59–76.

104 On the angelic princes of the Face see Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 172–176.

105 I previously suggested that the metaphor of “engraving” on the *Kavod* might signify that the seer’s identity became reflected in the divine Face, as in a mirror. On this see A. Orlov, “In the Mirror of the Divine Face: The Enochic Features of the Exagoge of Ezekiel the Tragedian,” *Selected Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha* (SVTP 23; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 176.

on the divine Face in the form of the “image,” thus suggesting that the divine Face/*Kavod* itself can be understood as a mirror. Such an understanding of the deity’s glorious Visage might be already present in some early Jewish and Christian materials, including the Pauline interpretation of the Mosaic imagery found in 2 Corinthians 3.

The vision of the divine Face represents the pinnacle of the seer’s visionary experience in many apocalyptic accounts where various adepts become identified with their otherworldly identities.¹⁰⁶ This role of the divine Face as the goal of visionary experience became prominent in early Jewish pseudepigraphical accounts as well as later Jewish mystical lore. Thus, in various Hekhalot materials the imagery of the divine Face continues to play a paramount role, being understood as the “center of the divine event” and the teleological objective for the ascension of the *yorde merkavah*. This motif’s importance is illustrated in *Hekhalot Rabbati*, which considers the Countenance of God “the goal of *yored merkavah* and simultaneously revokes this statement in a paradoxical way by stressing at conclusion that one cannot ‘perceive’ this Face.”¹⁰⁷ Analyzing this account, Peter Schäfer observes that for the visionary in the Hekhalot tradition, the Countenance of God is an example “not only of overwhelming beauty, and therefore of a destructive nature,¹⁰⁸ but at the same time the center of the divine event.”¹⁰⁹ God’s Face thereby becomes the consummation of the heavenly journey since, according to Schäfer, “everything God wishes to transmit to the *yored merkavah* ... is concentrated in God’s Countenance.”¹¹⁰ Is it possible, then, that the divine Face itself could be understood in these traditions as a medium of revelation, a sort of a looking glass which reflect divine disclosures?

In this respect it is intriguing that some Jewish interpretations of Moses’ encounter with the divine Face on Mount Sinai suggest that the prophet received his revelation on the great mountain through a mirror. Thus, the tradition in *Lev. Rab.* 1:14:¹¹¹

106 P. Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 18.

107 Ibid.

108 This theme looms large in the Hekhalot tradition where one can often find the “danger motif” applied to the Face imagery. On this see Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, 17, P. Schäfer, with M. Schlüter and H.G. von Mutius, *Synopse zur Hekhaloth-Literatur* (TSAJ, 2; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1981), §§ 102, 159, 183, 189, and 356.

109 Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, 18.

110 Ibid.

111 For the discussion of this rabbinic passage see M. Fishbane, “Through the Looking-Glass: Reflections on Ezek. 43.4, Num. 12.8 and 1Cor. 13.8,” *HAR* 10 (1986): 63–75 at 71, and

What difference is there between Moses and all other prophets? R. Judah b. Il'ai and the Rabbis [gave different explanations]. R. Judah said: Through nine mirrors did the prophets behold [prophetic visions]. This is indicated by what is said, And the appearance of the vision which I saw, was like the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city; and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell upon my face (Ezek 43:3); but Moses beheld [prophetic visions] through one mirror, as it is said, With him do I speak ... in a vision, and not in dark speeches (Num 12:8). The Rabbis said: All the other prophets beheld [prophetic visions] through a blurred mirror, as it is said, And I have multiplied visions; and by the ministry of the angels have I used similitudes (Hos 12:11). But Moses beheld [prophetic visions] through a polished mirror, as it is said, The similitude of the Lord doth he behold. R. Phinehas said in the name of R. Hoshai'ah: This may be compared to a king who allowed himself to be seen by his intimate friend [only] by means of his image. In this world the *Shekhinah* manifests itself only to chosen individuals; in the Time to Come, however, The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all the flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it (Isa 40:5).

This passage postulates that not only Moses' vision of the divine *Kavod* (labeled in biblical Mosaic accounts as the "Face" or *Panim*) has occurred in a mirror, but other paradigmatic Jewish seers, including Ezekiel, similarly received their visions of the divine *Kavod* in a looking glass. It is critical that such speculations do not represent later rabbinic inventions, but have ancient roots in Second Temple Jewish lore. Thus, already Philo demonstrates the familiarity with such tradition in his *Leg.* 3.100–103:

There is a mind more perfect and more thoroughly cleansed, which has undergone initiation into the great mysteries, a mind which gains its knowledge of the First Cause not from created things, as one may learn the substance from the shadow, but lifting its eyes above and beyond creation obtains a clear vision of the uncreated One, so as from Him to apprehend both Himself and His shadow. To apprehend that was, we saw, to apprehend both the Word and this world. The mind of which I speak is Moses who says, "Manifest Thyself to me, let me see Thee that I may

M.D. Litwa, "Transformation through a Mirror: Moses in 2 Cor. 3:18," *JSNT* 34 (2012): 286–297 at 291.

know Thee" (Exod 33:13); for I would not that Thou shouldst be manifested to me by means of heaven or earth or water or air or any created thing at all, nor would I find the reflection of Thy being in aught else than in Thee Who art God,¹¹² for the reflections in created things are dissolved, but those in the Uncreated will continue abiding and sure and eternal.¹¹³ This is why God hath expressly called Moses and why He spake to Him. Bezalel also He hath expressly called, but not in like manner. One receives the clear vision of God directly from the First Cause Himself. The other discerns the Artificer, as it were from a shadow, from created things by virtue of a process of reasoning. Hence you will find the Tabernacle and all its furniture made in the first instance by Moses but afterwards by Bezalel, for Moses is the artificer of the archetypes, and Bezalel of the copies of these. For Moses has God for Instructor, as He says "thou shalt make all things according to the pattern that was shown to thee in the mount" (Exod 25:40), but Bezalel is instructed by Moses. And all this is just as we should expect. For on the occasion likewise of the rebellion of Aaron, Speech, and Miriam, Perception, they are expressly told "If a prophet be raised up unto the Lord, God shall be known unto him in a vision" and in a shadow, not manifestly; but with Moses, the man who is "faithful in all His house, He will speak mouth to mouth in manifest form and not through dark speeches" (Num 12:6–8).

These traditions in which the son of Amram is depicted receiving his revelations in a mirror are intriguing, since they provide an additional support to the idea that the divine *Panim* (or the divine *Kavod*), might be envisioned in some early Jewish accounts as the celestial looking glass.

The concept of the divine Face as the mirror of revelation might also be present in some early Christian materials. Thus, in 2 Cor 3:18 the Apostle Paul

112 Reflecting on this phrase, J. Lambrecht notes that "it is obvious that Philo thinks here of 'seeing in a mirror.'" J. Lambrecht, "Transformation in 2 Cor 3,18," *Biblica* 64 (1983): 243–254 at 248.

113 For Philo, a mirror clearly reflects the original. Cf. *Somn.* 2.31 § 206: "Yet we need little thought in our quest of him, for the dreamer's vision is the closest possible reproduction of his image, and through careful study of the dream we shall see him reflected as it were in a mirror" *Philo* (trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker [10 vols.; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–1964], 5:535–537), and *Decal.* 21 § 105: "But nothing so much assures its predominance as that through it is best given the revelation of the Father and Maker of all, for in it, as in a mirror, the mind has a vision of God as acting and creating the world and controlling all that is" (*ibid.*, 7.61).

assures his readers that “all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another ...” This text has generated enormous attention from the scholarly community. Some scholars have suggested that the Pauline passage draws on the aforementioned Mosaic motifs in which the great prophet saw revelations on Mount Sinai through the divine mirror.¹¹⁴ If this is correct, it would appear that the Pauline speculation affirms even more forcefully the transformational tendencies of the aforementioned Mosaic “mirror” imagery, by implying that the seer not only receives a revelation in the mirror of the divine Face, rendered in the Pauline passage with the standard formulae of *Kavod*, but himself becomes the image of the *Kavod*. Such conceptual developments have led some scholars to argue that Paul’s vision of the *Kavod* in the mirror should be read in the framework of the heavenly counterpart traditions. Thus, Alan Segal previously proposed that in 2 Cor 3:18, “Paul gives us a totally different and at once conceivable notion of a bodily transformation” which comes “with its own experience of the self—not a soul but *an angelic alter ego*.”¹¹⁵ Segal compares this Pauline understanding of the “angelic *alter ego*” with the *Doppelgänger* complex of the *Book of the Similitudes*, arguing that “as long as the date of 1 *Enoch* 70–71 cannot be fixed exactly ... Paul himself remains the earliest author explicitly expressing this kind of angelic transformation in Judaism.”¹¹⁶

DeConick also discerns the presence of the heavenly counterpart imagery in 2 Cor 3:18, arguing that “Paul speaks here of *the face-to-face encounter with one’s self* by implementing the middle form of the verb *κατοπτρίζω* which means ‘to produce one’s own image in a mirror’ or ‘to behold oneself in a mirror.’”¹¹⁷ In her opinion, such a “rendering suggests that the vision is *a vision of one’s divine Self*. When one sees oneself in a mirror, one is viewing the Lord’s Glory. This vision creates change, transforming the person, degree by degree, into the divine Glory which is seen in the mirror. It is obvious that this text belongs to one of the oldest strata of vision mysticism of early Christianity.”¹¹⁸

114 Litwa, “Transformation through a Mirror,” 286–297.

115 A. Segal, “The Afterlife as Mirror of the Self,” in F. Flannery et al., eds., *Experientia. Volume 1: Inquiry into Religious Experience in Early Judaism and Christianity* (SBLSS 40; Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 20 [emphasis mine].

116 Segal, “The Afterlife as Mirror of the Self,” 24.

117 A. DeConick, *Voices of the Mystics: Early Christian Discourse in the Gospels of John and Thomas and Other Ancient Christian Literature* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 65–66 [emphasis mine].

118 *Ibid.*, 65–66 [emphasis mine].

DeConick underlines the transformational tendencies of the Pauline passage, which in her opinion belong to the so-called “vision mysticism.” She concludes that “a vision of the *Kavod*, the Image of God, literally resulted in the ‘re-stamping’ of God’s image on the soul, restoring it to the original Form and Glory.”¹¹⁹

Importantly, the “mirror” in 2 Cor 3:18 is represented by a divine mediator who is also envisioned as the exemplar of the religious tradition, in this case Jesus Christ. Referring to this passage, Jan Lambrecht observes that “Paul wants to suggest that Christ is the ‘mirror’ of God. In that mirror we see the glory of the Lord; in Christ we see God reflected in all his glory! According to this explanation Christ is both mirror and image. *He is mirror and also a mirrored reflection, an image of God.*”¹²⁰ Lambrecht’s nuanced observation is helpful for our investigation. The understanding of a mediatorial “mirror” that occupies an intermediate position in the course of the human adept’s transformation and unification with his or her heavenly identity represents a familiar motif.¹²¹ It recall the notions of celestial “mirrors” found in various Jewish apocalyptic and mystical accounts where some mediatorial figures are depicted as the mirrors of the divine Face,¹²² at the same time serving as the reflections of the celestial identities of human seers. This understanding of the mediator as an intermediate mirror, which is instrumental for the seer’s transformation, might be found already in Philo. Thus, David Litwa argues that in Philo “the Logos¹²³

119 A. DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas: A History of the Gospel and Its Growth* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 205.

120 Lambrecht, “Transformation in 2 Cor 3,18,” 249 [emphasis mine].

121 In *Cologne Mani Codex* 17, Mani’s heavenly counterpart is labeled as the “greatest mirror-image” (μέγιστον κάτοπτρον). See L. Koenen and C. Römer, eds., *Der Kölner Mani-Kodex: Über das Werden seines Leibes. Kritische Edition* (Papyrologica Coloniensia 14; Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1988), 10. The imagery is similarly applied to the upper Self in *Acts of Thomas* 112: “... when I received it, the garment seemed to me to become like a mirror of myself. I saw it all in all, and I too received all in it ...” A.F.J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (second ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 185. For a discussion of these passages, see A. Henrichs et al., “Der Kölner Mani-Kodex (P. Colon. inv. nr. 4780),” *ZPE* 19 (1975): 1–85 at 79, n. 41, I. Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism: Studies in Apocalypticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism* (BEATAJ 14; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1988), 256, and J.C. Reeves, *Heralds of that Good Realm. Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions* (NHMS 41, Leiden: Brill, 1996), 91–92, n. 18.

122 Some patriarchal figures are envisioned as “mirrors” in later Jewish mystical lore. According to *Zohar* I.168a, “to look at Jacob was like looking at the ‘clear mirror’” (Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 2.144).

123 On the Logos as the intermediate mirror of God, see Philo’s *Her.* 230–231, ed. Colson and

serves as a layer of mediation—the metaphorical mirror—between Moses and the primal God ...”¹²⁴ Often such divine mediators are themselves understood as vice-regents or embodiments of the deity. Litwa suggests that “for Philo, the mirror through which Moses sees God is God himself in the person of the Logos.”¹²⁵

The image of the mediatorial mirror resurfaces in later Jewish mystical testimonies, including *Sefer Hekhalot*, where another mediator, this time Metatron, is posited as the divine mirror in which Moses sees his revelations. In *3 Enoch*, as in the Bible, the son of Amram discovers that his luminous face is a mere reflection of the glorious Visage of the deity. Yet, in comparison with the biblical accounts there is one decisive difference: this divine Face is now represented by his long-lasting contender, Enoch-Metatron.¹²⁶ One can discern in this text a possible reference to the paradoxical hierarchy of the “mediatorial mirrors” in which the seers, who have become the reflections of the divine Face, now serve as the embodied mirrors for subsequent human adepts.

Early Jewish and Christian traditions illustrate this enigmatic succession of the “mirrors” when they depict Enoch, Jacob, Moses, or Jesus Christ¹²⁷ becoming the personified reflections or the “mirrors”¹²⁸ of the divine Face at the time

Whitaker, *Philo*, 4:399: “One is the archetypal Logos above us, the other the copy of it which we possess. Moses calls the first the ‘image of God,’ the second the cast of that image. For God, he says, made man not ‘the image of God’ but ‘after the image’ (Gen 1:27).”

124 Litwa, “Transformation through a Mirror,” 293.

125 *Ibid.*, 294.

126 N. Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity* (BSJS 22; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 43. Deutsch notes that “it also appears that some sources understood Metatron to be the hypostatic embodiment of a particular part of the divine form, most notably the face of God. As I have argued elsewhere, it is likely that this tradition underlies the title *Sar ha-Panim*, which is associated with Metatron. Rather than ‘prince of the face [of God],’ this title is better understood as ‘prince who is the face [of God].’ Indeed, at least one Merkabah passage explicitly identifies Metatron as the hypostatic face of God: ‘Moses said to the Lord of all the worlds: ‘If your face does not go [with us], do not bring me up from here.’ [Exod 33:15]. The Lord of all the worlds warned Moses that he should beware of that face of his. So it is written, ‘Beware of his face.’ [Exod 23:21]. This is he who is written with the one letter by which heaven and earth were created, and was sealed with the seal of ‘I am that I am’ [Exod 3:14] ... This is the prince who is called Yofiel Yah-dariel ... he is called Metatron.’ *Synopse* §§ 396–397.”

127 On Christ as the hypostatic Face of God, see Clement’s *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 10:6, ed. Casey, *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 49: “but they ‘always behold the face of the Father’ and the face of the Father is the Son, through whom the Father is known.”

128 Cf. *Odes Sol.* 13.1–2: “Behold, the Lord is our mirror. Open (your) eyes and see them in him.

when their own glorious “presences” are able to transform the next generations of human adepts. An example of this tradition is the scene of Enoch’s metamorphosis in *2 Enoch*, whose transformed face the elders of the earth later approach in order to be redeemed and glorified.¹²⁹ Moses’ face is also predestined to serve as the embodied mirror of God’s Countenance.¹³⁰ Scholars previously noted the peculiar parallelism between the deity’s Face and the face of the prophet. Thus, Brian Britt observes that “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.”¹³¹

9 Divine Image

The discussion of the section above sheds light on some of the details of Aseneth’s vision in water. One intriguing feature of *Jos. Asen.* 18 is that the seer’s

And learn the manner of your face, then announce praises to his Spirit. And wipe the paint from your face, and love his holiness and put it on. Then you will be unblemished at all times with him.” J.H. Charlesworth, “Odes of Solomon,” in J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Volume 2: Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayer, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 725–771 at 747.

129 *2 En.* 64.4–5: “O our father, Enoch! May you be blessed by the Lord, the eternal king! And now, bless your [sons], and all the people, so that we may be glorified in front of your face today. For you will be glorified in front of the face [of the Lord for eternity], because you are the one whom the Lord chose in preference to all the people upon the earth; and he appointed you to be the one who makes a written record of all his creation, visible and invisible, and the one who carried away the sin of mankind.” F. Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 91–213 at 190.

130 On Moses’ face as a divine hypostatic entity in later Jewish mysticism see M. Idel, “Moses’ Face as a Divine Hypostasis in Ecstatic Kabbalah,” in H. Tirosh-Samuels and A.W. Hughes, eds., *Moshe Idel: Representing God* (LCJP 8; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 103–122 at 114–117.

131 B. Britt, *Rewriting Moses: The Narrative Eclipse of the Text* (JSOTSS 402; London, New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 85.

visage is depicted first as “fallen”¹³² and then as “luminous.”¹³³ Such a transition might entail an anthropological significance. It recalls two conditions of the Protoplast, namely, the radiant one before the transgression in the Garden of Eden and the dimmed one afterwards. Here Aseneth appears to undergo a reverse metamorphosis, which restores the human condition to the prelapsarian state by regaining the full manifestation of the divine image. Since we have already learned that in some early Jewish accounts, the *panim* and the *tselem* imagery is often closely interrelated and even interchangeable, it is possible that in *Joseph and Aseneth* the portrayal of Aseneth’s “face” is connected with the concept of the divine image.¹³⁴ If so, the praxis of the eschatological restoration of the divine image through gazing into water evokes a memory of not only aforementioned Pauline and Mosaic currents, but also Jewish and Christian protological accounts, where the mediators of the divine image are portrayed as gazing into the water. Thus in *Corpus Hermeticum* 1.14, the primordial Anthropos, understood in this text as the embodiment of the divine image¹³⁵ (τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς εἰκόνα ἔχων),¹³⁶ is portrayed as staring into the water, giving existence to its lower material counterpart:

Having all authority over the cosmos of mortals and unreasoning animals, the man broke through the vault and stooped to look through the cosmic framework, thus displaying to lower nature the fair form of god. Nature

132 Burchard, “Joseph and Aseneth,” 232: “‘What have you, my child, because your face has fallen so (much)?’ And Aseneth said to him, ‘My head is stricken with heavy pain, and the sleep kept away from my eyes/ and therefore my face has fallen.’”

133 Ibid.: “And Aseneth leaned (over) to wash her face and saw her face in the water. And it was like the sun ...”

134 In rabbinic materials the symbolism of Adam’s image is often juxtaposed with the symbolism of his luminous face. Cf. *Lev. Rab.* 20.2: “Resh Lakish, in the name of R. Simeon the son of Menasya, said: The apple of Adam’s heel outshone the globe of the sun; how much more so the brightness of his face! Nor need you wonder. In the ordinary way if a person makes salvers, one for himself and one for his household, whose will he make more beautiful? Not his own? Similarly, Adam was created for the service of the Holy One, blessed be He, and the globe of the sun for the service of mankind” (Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 4.252).

135 *Corp. Herm.* 1.12 reads: “The man was most fair: he had the father’s image; and god, who was really in love with his own form, bestowed on him all his craftworks.” B.P. Copenhagen, *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation, with Notes and Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.

136 *Corp. Herm.* 1.12, ed. A.D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum* (4 vols.; Paris: Société d’Édition “Les belles lettres,” 1945), 1.10.

smiled for love when she saw him whose fairness brings no surfeit (and) who holds in himself all the energy of the governors and the form of god, for in the water she saw the shape of the man's fairest form and upon the earth its shadow. When the man saw in the water the form like himself as it was in nature, he loved it and wished to inhabit it; wish and action came in the same moment, and he inhabited the unreasoning form. Nature took hold of her beloved, hugged him all about and embraced him, for they were lovers.¹³⁷

It is intriguing that the next verse of the *Corpus* (1.15) appears to postulate the existence of the human being's *Doppelgänger* based on this pivotal primordial act of looking into the water: "Because of this, unlike any other living thing on earth, mankind is twofold—in the body mortal but immortal in the essential man."¹³⁸ This tradition, in which the divine image is reflected in the water, appears to be widespread in early Christian literature. Analyzing this motif in the heterodox Christian materials, Gedaliahu Stroumsa notes that

... as in the *Poimandres*, also in some of the other texts the image of God is said to appear in the water. Thus, in the *Apocryphon of John*, the Son of Man reveals upon the water the appearance in human (*ἀνδρέος*) form (*τύπος*) of Anthropos, the invisible Father of the All. In the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the image of Incorruptibility revealed upon the water is explicitly called the image of God. In the *Origin of the World*, it is Pistis who reveals the likeness of her greatness upon the water.¹³⁹

These traditions in which the divine image is described as reflected in the water might constitute the conceptual background of eschatological restoration of Aseneth's *panim*, which in the *Doppelgänger* lore is often associated with the divine image.

Concluding our study, we must acknowledge that the seer's vision in the watery mirror serves as a climax of the heavenly counterpart ideology, the conceptual trend so essential for the theological universe of *Joseph and Aseneth*. In this perspective all major protagonists of the story—the Anthropos, Joseph, and Aseneth—appear to be envisioned as "mirrors" of each other as they are portrayed again and again with similar theophanic attributes and features

137 Copenhagen, *Hermetica*, 3.

138 Ibid.

139 G.G. Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ," *HTR* 76 (1983): 269–288 at 275.

which provoke similar reactions from their beholders. Such imagery of embodied “mirrors” plays a paramount role in the conceptual framework of the text where all major characters are predestined to emulate, in their own paradoxal way, the mirror of the divine *Kavod*.

The Embroidered Bible

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