

# “EARLY CHRISTIAN BINITARIANISM”: FROM RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON TO POLEMICAL INSULT TO SCHOLARLY CONCEPT

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## *Introduction*

The pages to follow propose a critical consideration of the use of “binitarianism”, “binitarian monotheism” and related concepts (e.g., *Geistchristologie* / “Spirit Christology”, and “angelic” or “angelomorphic Pneumatology”) in scholarship on Christian Origins and Early Christianity. I will provide, first, a brief review of past and present uses of “binitarian monotheism”. This review must include the use of “ditheism” in the course of second-, third-, and fourth-century intra-Christian polemics, which, together with the rabbinic polemic against “two-power” theologies, falls conceptually under the same rubric of “binitarianism” or “binitarian monotheism”. As will become apparent, there are at least two distinct uses of this term, developed in distinct scholarly contexts, each informed by specific theological presuppositions, and assuming specific theological agendas. In the second part of the article, I argue that a doctrinal and methodological discrepancy exists between the early Christian phenomenon termed “binitarianism” and its scholarly descriptions, and that this discrepancy has become more evident thanks to recent scholarship on the early Christian tradition of “angelomorphic pneumatology”. If the observations proposed in this article are correct, it becomes necessary to ask whether the flaws of “binitarianism” and related concepts outweigh their usefulness for scholarly reconstructions of early Christian thought, and whether acknowledging their various flaws is enough to guarantee that they are no longer perpetuated in the further application of

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the concepts. Finally, in the case of a negative answer to the latter question, it is necessary to ask whether it is perhaps best to relegate "binitarianism" to the Gehenna of once famous now infamous concepts.

*Rabbinic "Two Powers in Heaven", Patristic "Ditheism", and the "Binitarianism" of the New History-of-Religions School*

Scholars of early Christianity associated with the "new history-of-religions school", such as Gilles Quispel, Jarl Fossum, Allan Segal, Larry Hurtado, or Richard Bauckham<sup>1</sup>, often note that Christian worship and theological reflection in the early centuries are characterized by a "binitarian" pattern. The terms vary in scholarship: Quispel uses "relative dualism"<sup>2</sup>, Segal prefers "binitarian", or "complementary dualism", or Jewish "two power" traditions<sup>3</sup>, Fossum settles for "heterodox Jewish binitarianism"<sup>4</sup>. Overall, "binitarian" seems the term most apt to suggest a bifurcation of the divinity that does not preclude a fundamentally monotheistic conception. Such binitarian monotheism, positing a "second power in heaven"—be it the Glory, the Name, the Angel of the Lord, the Wisdom, the Son of Man, etc.—is characteristic of the pre-rabbinic or non-rabbinic forms of Judaism investigated by Alan Segal and Daniel Boyarin (e.g., Philo's language of Logos as "second God"; the memrā-theology of the Targums). It is also the defining mark of the emerging Jesus-movement's high Christology, with the crucial distinction that the "second power", the Logos, "became flesh and lived among us" (Jn 1:14) and was worshipped as "Lord and God" (Jn 20:28) in a cultic setting<sup>5</sup>.

It is now generally accepted that the views of the Fourth Gospel, Philo, Justin Martyr—including the theology ascribed to the literary character "Trypho the Jew"—and Numenius represent variants of binitarian traditions that the Rabbis were at pains to refute. It should be noted, however, that the accusation of worshipping "two powers in heaven" was not limited to the Rabbinic theological and polemical arsenal. Similar accusations were raised by Christians of a more "Modalist" persuasion against others who appeared more insistent on the full reality of a pre-eternal Logos. For instance, Zephyrinus and Callistus accuse Hippolytus of ditheism<sup>6</sup>. Marcellus of Ancyra launches the same accusation against Asterius and Eusebius of Caesarea<sup>7</sup>. A few decades later, with pro-Nicene theology forging a way between the Scylla of Marcellus' allegiance to *homoousios* and the Charybdis of Eusebian subordinationism, "ditheism" is used as an insult in the polemical exchange between Gregory Nazianzus and his "pneumatomachian" adversaries. A millennium later, during the Hesychastic controversy, the adversaries of Gregory Palamas will renew the accusation of "ditheism", arguing that the "divine energy" effectively constitutes another God, and Palamas will not hesitate to return the favor: it is Barlaam and his followers that "fall into the

trap of the most impious atheism *and ditheism*," because to them the Taboric light is either a created divinity or a divine essence alongside the invisible essence of God.<sup>8</sup>

For the new history-of-religions school, the various "two-power" theologies rejected by Rabbinic Judaism and the "ditheism" mentioned by Gregory of Nazianzus and by earlier second-century polemicists offer examples of "binitarianism"<sup>9</sup>. This term, however, is an older coinage, introduced several decades prior to Quispel by scholars interested in a different phenomenon of early Christianity.

*"Binitarian, Binitarianism": The Original Scholarly Setting*

In 1898, Friedrich Loofs contributed an article on Christology to the *Realenzyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*. It is there that the use of "binitarischer Monotheismus" was first proposed to the scholarly world, as a designation of an early stage at which the heavenly reality of Christ was thought of not in terms of a preexistent λόγος, but rather as a πνεῦμα whose distinction from God only begins at the indwelling of the man Jesus<sup>10</sup>. As such, binitarianism is associated with *Geistchristologie*—another favorite Loofian term—and precedes the full-blown trinitarianism of classic conciliar theology. Examples of this view would be Ps-Barnabas, 2 Clement, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Loofs also uses "binitarianism" to label the identification of "Pneuma" and "Logos", as affirmed, implied, or echoed in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Dionysius of Alexandria, Tertullian, Lactantius, Cyprian, Hilary of Poitiers, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Aphrahat the Persian Sage<sup>11</sup>.

Loofs' concept of "binitarianism" was first adopted by his student, Waldemar Macholz, who dealt especially with Latin-speaking writers. It was then adopted by Loofs' teacher, Adolf Harnack<sup>12</sup>, and then gained currency in the scholarship of Joseph Barbel, Georg Kretschmar, Harry Wolfson, Raniero Cantalamessa, Manlio Simonetti, Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, Paul (John) McGuckin, and many others. A large group of early Christian writers have since been diagnosed with *Geistchristologie* and binitarianism, and the combination of the two is generally viewed as a sort of growing pains accompanying the development towards a mature trinitarian theology<sup>13</sup>.

In its original scholarly context, then, "binitarian" and "binitarianism" does not designate the quasi-personal status of a "second power" in certain strands of Second Temple Judaism. For Loofs and his followers "binitarian" and "binitarianism" refer to an inability to account theologically for a distinction between the Son and the Spirit. Indeed, Loofs' original article lists "binitarian monotheism" among three "naïve" conceptions of God held by second-century popular Christianity (*Vulgärchristentum*), alongside "naïve-pluralistic monotheism" (which sees Father, Son, and Spirit as "the objects of the Christian faith") and "naïve modalism"<sup>14</sup>.

The problem for which "binitarianism" provided a convenient shorthand had been discussed in earlier scholarship. Generally speaking, scholars such as Loofs, Harnack and, decades earlier, F. C. Baur, viewed the primitive theology of the "Jewish Christians" (*Shepherd*, 2 Clement, etc) as characterized by *Geistchristologie* in various forms, so that only an infusion of Greek thought, as one sees in the Logos-theology of the Apologists, of the Alexandrians Clement and Origen, eventually enabled the articulation of trinitarian doctrine<sup>15</sup>.

The discussion of the pre-Nicene trinitarian deficiency and the problems it raises for classical definitions of faith is a much older one, however, already in full swing in the seventeenth century. It is there that one finds scholarship not only bound up with specific theological agendas (as in the cases of Harnack and Loofs, who were "investigating the Deformation that justified the Reformation"<sup>16</sup>) but a scholarship overtly and enthusiastically enlisted in the service of confessional polemics. Such is the case, for instance, of Matthieu Souverain (1656–1700), a man of extensive philosophical and patristic learning and intense Unitarian leanings. His treatise, published simultaneously in French and English, in 1700, bears the title *Platonism Unveiled, Or an Essay Concerning the Notions and Opinions of Plato and Some Ancient and Modern Divines, his Followers, in Relation to the Logos, or Word, in Particular, and the Doctrine of the Trinity in General*<sup>17</sup>. Master of many languages and well versed in both patristic and rabbinic literature, Souverain argues that the scriptural references to the second and third person of the Trinity were initially meant in reference to God's *Shekinah* ("presence"). That early Christians misunderstood this circumlocution for God himself is only due to the growing influence of Greek thought over their theology; hence, the title of Souverain's work, unveiling the source of "the doctrine of Trinity in general".

In Jonathan Z. Smith's estimation, Souverain represents the moment when, after a century and a half of unsophisticated attacks against trinitarian doctrine, "the needed sophistication began to enter the theological discussion"<sup>18</sup>. Indeed, take one step back from Souverain's sophisticated discourse and it becomes abundantly clear that the same ideas were put forth by Unitarian theologians at war with the early Church's "absurd", "monstrous", "heathen", "horrible" fabrication—the doctrine of the Trinity. Beginning with Michel Servetus' treatise *On the Errors of the Trinity* (1531) and continuing with similar productions in Italy, Switzerland, Poland, England, Scotland, and Ireland, "this sort of anti-trinitarian controversy literature grew until, in 1710, George Bull could complain, with acerbity, of the endless soundings of the Unitarian's battle-alarm: 'Platonism, Platonism, say they, first corrupted the pure tradition of the apostles' ".<sup>19</sup> The error, for them, is traceable to Justin Martyr. This is not without irony, since the mantra of scholarship in the past century has been that Justin is not a good enough trinitarian!<sup>20</sup>

It is clear that in their original (Loofian) setting, *Geistchristologie* and "binitarianism" are not objective descriptors of an early Christian phenomenon, but notions carrying significant theological freight. This

appears eminently clear when one considers that the coining of these terms was called for by the earlier Unitarian polemics against Logos Christology and trinitarian doctrine. Less discussed, however, is the fact that the use of “binitarianism” by representatives of the new-history-of-religions-school is equally determined by theological presuppositions.

*Binitarianism: “A Primitive Effort at What Later Became Trinitarian Doctrine”?*

I have shown that, for Loofs and his followers, “binitarianism” describes the early Church’s attempts at altering an original low view of Jesus of Nazareth by positing his preexistence in terms of “spirit” and, later, by articulating a Logos doctrine of Hellenic import—hence the binitarian confusion of Logos and Pneuma labeled *Geistchristologie*. By contrast, for the “new history-of-religions school”, it is a term describing the cultic worship of Jesus alongside God at the time of Christianity’s emergence from the complex matrix of first century Judaism.<sup>21</sup> Early Christian binitarianism, as defined by Hurtado or Segal, is also “a primitive effort at what later became trinitarian doctrine”<sup>22</sup>. It is significant in this respect that Segal authored a study entitled “‘Two Powers in Heaven’ and Early Christian Trinitarian Thinking”<sup>23</sup>, and that, towards the end of his magisterial volume, Hurtado speaks about “[t]he struggle to work out doctrinal formulations that could express in some coherent way this peculiar view of God as ‘one’ and yet somehow comprising ‘the Father’ and Jesus, *thereafter also including the Spirit as the third ‘Person’ of the Trinity*”<sup>24</sup>.

A discrepancy becomes noticeable between the early Christian phenomenon under discussion, on the one hand, and its scholarly description, on the other. For second-century Christians, all talk of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit starts with the concrete life of the Church: ascetical reshaping of the person, participation in liturgy, prophetic and visionary experience. By contrast, the scholars who coined and popularized the notion of “binitarianism” did so in light of a theoretical framework for thinking God as Trinity, which, regardless of whether it was part of their personally assumed faith or acquired through study (or, sometimes, set up as a straw man prepared for polemical threshing), amounts, to quote Rahner’s famous *Trinity*, to a metaphysical concept of Trinity existing in “splendid isolation”, disconnected from salvation history, and therefore irrelevant to theology and to the Christian experience and piety<sup>25</sup>. Judged by this standard, anything that falls short of positing “three Persons in heaven” would be less than trinitarian. John Behr has argued (convincingly, in my opinion) that much of the difficulty stems from a misunderstanding of the latter term—“trinitarian”—and from a faulty reading of Cappadocian triadology:

The witness of the apostles and the Fathers of the fourth century—the supposed architects of our “Trinitarian theology” (I put this phrase in quotation marks, because none of them thought of themselves as elaborating a “Trinitarian theology”)—is simply that *what* we see in

Christ, as proclaimed by the apostles, is *what* it is to be God, yet *other* than the God whom Christ calls upon as Father and makes known through . . . the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> This basic scriptural grammar of Trinitarian theology—that the one God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made known in and through the Spirit—is preserved in the most abstract discussions of the fourth century, in the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople, and in liturgical language. Yet this fundamental grammar is overlooked when the point of these discussions is neglected and the resulting formulae are taken in abstraction, as referring to an "immanent" Trinity—one God existing in three Persons—which is then presupposed and superimposed upon the scriptural revelation.<sup>27</sup>

Let us then examine Gregory of Nazianzus' criticism of his adversaries' theological grammar in *Orat.* 31.13–14. I focus on Gregory's use of "ditheism" not only because it is quite relevant for the discussion at hand, but also because "[t]he climax and conclusion of Nazianzen's dialogue with the Pneumatomachi of Constantinople came in *or.* 31, the best known of Gregory's theological orations and his definitive statement on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit"<sup>28</sup>, and because in subsequent centuries, Gregory became the normative trinitarian thinker, the "theologian" *par excellence*<sup>29</sup>.

Gregory adopts the following strategy against those who possess a theology of the divine Son but refuse to grant the same status to the Spirit:

This is indeed the approach I would adopt towards them. "Though", I should say, "you are in revolt from the Spirit, you worship the Son. What right have you, to accuse us of tritheism—are you not ditheists (τί φατε τοῖς τριθείταις ἡμῖν. . . ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐ διθεῖται)? . . . If you do revere the Son . . . we shall put a question to you: What defense would you make, were you charged with ditheism? . . . The very arguments you can use to rebut the accusation will suffice for us against the charge of tritheism". Thus we win our case by using the prosecution to plead our cause<sup>30</sup>.

It is obvious that "ditheism" is used here as a rhetorical put down of his adversaries. Their accusation—namely, that adding a third term to the divinity amounts to "tritheism"—applies to their own addition of the Son to the "one God" of Scripture; and they know full well that such a charge is refuted by stating that the distinction of the hypostases does not preclude the fundamental oneness of the divinity. Lewis Ayres notes that Gregory of Nazianzus's adversaries "would have a point if it were first true that pro-Nicenes taught that God was a duality to which we then discussed whether another should be added"<sup>31</sup>. However, while they indeed are ditheists—that is, they believe in distinct "powers", which happen to be two—Gregory's own theology is not "tritheistic" according to the same logic, since it does not count several powers but, as he states repeatedly, one single Godhead and Power:

Finally, then, it seems best to me . . . also to persuade all others . . . to worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *the one Godhead and Power* (τὴν μίαν θεότητα τε καὶ δύναμιν);

the sound Faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, *the one Godhead and Power* (τὴν μίαν θεότητά τε καὶ δύναμιν);

the worship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, *the one Godhead and Power among the three* (τὴν μίαν ἐν τοῖς τρισὶ θεότητά τε καὶ δύναμιν);<sup>32</sup>

We have one because there is a single Godhead. Though there are three objects of belief, they derive from the single whole and have reference to it . . . To express it succinctly, the Godhead exists undivided in beings divided. It is as if there were is a single intermingling of light, which existed in three mutually connected suns<sup>33</sup>.

There exists, indeed, a fundamental disagreement between the “ditheism” in question and Nazianzen’s theological grammar<sup>34</sup>. For Gregory, “the unity of God lies in the fact that there is only one first principle in God . . . the Son and the Spirit . . . sharing an identical divine nature, which they derive from the Father”.<sup>35</sup> By contrast, the charge of “ditheism” brought by Gregory of Nazianzus corresponds to the Rabbinic charge against those who worship “two powers in heaven”<sup>36</sup> and thereby also to the scholarly notion of “binitarianism”.

#### *Binitarianism, Geistchristologie, and Angelomorphic Pneumatology*

The case has been made that binitarianism and *Geistchristologie* are often coupled with angelomorphic Pneumatology<sup>37</sup>. The latter notion, referring to the use of angelic imagery for the activity of the Holy Spirit, is not entirely new in scholarship, but has only recently been proposed as a central concept for the study of Christian Origins<sup>38</sup>.

A number of representative early Christian texts—the book of Revelation, the *Shepherd*, Justin’s *Dialogue and Apologies*, Clement’s *Eclogae prophetae*, *Adumbrationes*, and *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, and Aphrahat’s *Demonstrations*—feature a multi-level cosmos populated by an angelic hierarchy dominated by the seven angels “first created”, within which communication between the divine and the human world is passed on from Christ to the seven archangels and further down along the angelic hierarchy until it reaches the highest representative of the Christian community: not the bishop, as some centuries later in Ps.-Dionysius’ *Hierarchies*, but the prophet, or, in the case of Aphrahat, the ascetic holy man. The described theological framework would qualify as “binitarian” because there is little or no mention of the Holy Spirit in this hierarchy, and because, when “spirit” is mentioned it is often used as a designation for Christ or for angelic spirits. In fact, Georg Kretschmar refers to this early Christian view as the “God–Christ–angels triad” (*die Trias Gott–Christus–Engel*)<sup>39</sup>.

It appears, however, that the mysterious group of seven highest celestial beings does double duty, as it were: it is depicted in undeniably angelic imagery, yet it also conveys a pneumatological content. This overlap between angelology and Pneumatology appears perhaps clearest in Clement of Alexandria. Clement refers to the seven not only as "first created beings" (πρωτόκτιστοι), "first-born princes of the angels" (πρωτόγονοι ἀγγέλων ἄρχοντες), angels contemplating the Face of God (Matt. 18:10), "the seven eyes of the Lord" (Zech. 3:9; 4:10; Rev. 5:6), or the angelic "thrones" (Col. 1:16)<sup>40</sup>; he also equates these seven highest angels with "the heptad of the Spirit"<sup>41</sup>. This is why it seems that the most suitable term to designate this phenomenon is "angelomorphic" rather than "angelic" Pneumatology, by analogy with the widely used "angelomorphic Christology"<sup>42</sup>. With the advent of the Arian and Pneumatomachian confrontations, angelomorphic Pneumatology became a theological liability and was eventually discarded.

The occurrence of binitarianism in tandem with angelomorphic Pneumatology, in passages describing or presupposing charismatic endowment and prophecy, has important consequences for the manner in which the "binitarian framework" mentioned earlier ought to be understood.

### *Binitarianism and the Trinitarian Mystagogy of Early Christianity*

For early Christians the Holy Spirit is not so much a "third power in heaven" as the very condition for the possibility of a confession of Jesus Christ as divine preexistent Son of God and Lord. Hurtado comes closer to this understanding by insisting that among the contributing factors that led to a fusion between Jewish monotheism and early Christian worship of Jesus, one should pay attention to the factor of "religious experience"<sup>43</sup>. It is this "religious experience", usually called "being in the Spirit" (Rev. 1:10) or being "filled with the Spirit", that makes possible "binitarian monotheism"—worship of Jesus—and that is retained by trinitarian formulas of faith. Thus, Paul states that the earliest and fundamental proclamation of christological monotheism—"Jesus is Lord"—was a confession made ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ (1 Cor. 12:3); similarly, before stating that Stephen saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God, and that he prayed to him (Acts 7:59–60, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit . . . Lord, do not hold this sin against them"), the author of Acts describes Stephen as "filled with the Holy Spirit", ὑπάρχων πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου (Acts 7:55–56).

A possible objection may be raised on the basis of early Christian texts that seem to be perfect examples of "three powers in heaven" theology. In the *Ascension of Isaiah*, for instance, after an explicit reference to Father, Son, and Spirit, the visionary seems to worship each of the three distinctly, and then reports on God receiving the worship of the angel identified as "my Lord" (e.g., Christ) and the angel of the Holy Spirit. Very similar passages occur in Irenaeus' *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* and in Origen, the latter

using the same imagery in conjunction with Isaiah 6 (God enthroned and attended by seraphim in the Temple) and Hab. 3:2 LXX (“you will be known between the two living beings”).<sup>44</sup> These texts are worth quoting at length:

And there [in the sixth heaven] they all named the primal Father and his Beloved, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, all with one voice; And I saw one standing (there) whose glory surpassed that of all . . . And the angel who led me said to me, “Worship this one”, and I worshipped and sang praises. And while I was still speaking, I saw another glorious (person), who was like him . . . And I saw the LORD and the second angel . . . and I asked the angel who led me and I said to him, “Who is this one?” And he said to me, “Worship him, for he is the angel of the Holy Spirit who has spoken in you and also in the other righteous. And I saw the Great Glory while the eyes of my spirit were open . . . And I saw how my LORD and the angel of the Holy Spirit worshipped and both together praised the LORD.<sup>45</sup>

This God, then, is glorified by His Word, who is His Son, continually, and by the Holy Spirit, who is the Wisdom of the Father of all. And the powers, of this Word and of Wisdom, who are called Cherubim and Seraphim, glorify God with unceasing voices.<sup>46</sup>

My Hebrew master also used to say that those two seraphim in Isaiah, which are described as having each six wings, and calling to one another, and saying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts” [Isa. 6:1] were to be understood of the only-begotten Son of God and of the Holy Spirit. And we think that that expression also which occurs in the hymn of Habakkuk . . . ought to be understood of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. For all knowledge of the Father is obtained by revelation of the Son through the Holy Spirit.<sup>47</sup>

It is evident that even in these passages, which present a seeming perfect case of “three powers in heaven”, the angelomorphic Holy Spirit is first and foremost “the angel of the Holy Spirit who has spoken in you and also in the other righteous” (*Asc. Isa.* 9:36), and, for Origen, the ground of all theognosy. In other words, the Spirit is the guide, the enabler, and the interpreter of the prophetic and visionary experience of worshipping Jesus alongside God.

An unexpected witness to similar views can be found in the very heart of Justin Martyr’s binitarian theology. It has been said again and again that “in strict logic there is no place in Justin’s thought for the person of the Holy Spirit because the Logos carries out his functions”<sup>48</sup>. In this respect, Justin Martyr’s well-known passage in the *Dialogue with Trypho* is noteworthy:

I shall now show you the Scriptures that God has begotten of himself as a beginning before all creatures. The Holy Spirit indicates this power by various titles, sometimes *the Glory of the Lord*, at other times *Son*, or

*Wisdom, or Angel, or God, or Lord, or Word.* He even called himself *Commander-in-chief* when he appeared in human guise to Joshua, the son of Nun. Indeed, he can justly lay claim to all these titles from the fact that he performs the Father's will and that he was begotten by an act of the Father's will<sup>49</sup>.

Overlooked or minimized by scholars who find in this passage a strong confession of Justin's all-encompassing Logos-theory, which would preclude the articulation of a robust Pneumatology, is the fact that the identification of the second power as such is a function of the Holy Spirit: the Glory of the Lord, Son, or Logos is proclaimed as such *by the Holy Spirit* (ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου καλεῖται).

It is this notion (that the worship of Jesus alongside God starts with the Holy Spirit) that is echoed by the well-worn liturgical and theological principle "in the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father", and that offers the key to the correct interpretation of what "classic fourth-century trinitarian theology" intends to communicate. As Christopher Beeley writes about Gregory of Nazianzus:

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is . . . the epistemic principle of all knowledge of God in Christ . . . [T]here is no contradiction between the Spirit's status as the eternal God known by Gregory (like an object) and its role as the one who enables Gregory to know God in Christ (like a quasi-subject). . . . [B]ased on Psalm 35.9 ("In your light we shall see light"), he writes first that the three lights of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are a single light and one God, and then adds that, according to the "theology of the Trinity", the one divine light of the Trinity is seen specifically in the Son: "out of light (the Father) we comprehend light (the Son) in light (the Spirit)" (*Or.* 31.13)<sup>50</sup>.

I have noted above the widespread scholarly opinion that early Christian "binitarianism" represents the primitive stage of the process leading to a subsequent incorporation of the Holy Spirit in the sphere of the divine, and thus to full trinitarianism. Pre-Nicenes, generally speaking, are described as having a deficient or non-existent pneumatology. Of Justin Martyr, for instance, it is said that "in strict logic there is no place in [his] thought for the person of the Holy Spirit because the Logos carries out his functions" or that "Justin has the Spirit intervene only when he cannot do otherwise"<sup>51</sup>. The very same judgment has been passed, again and again, on Clement of Alexandria.<sup>52</sup> As for the *Shepherd of Hermas*, scholars have often spoken of its hopelessly confused views on Christ and the Spirit.<sup>53</sup>

Leaving aside the tedious discussion of specific texts, which I have undertaken at length in my study of angelomorphic Pneumatology (noted above), I think it important to make two brief observations. First, it must be of some significance that, for all the scholarly problematization of early Christian *Geistchristologie* and binitarianism, the "obvious" theological deficiencies of

*Shepherd of Hermas* never scandalized its contemporaries or later Orthodoxy.<sup>54</sup> Tertullian did criticize (in his characteristically corrosive manner) Heras' treatment of remarriage; but on doctrinal matters—specifically the notion of *πνεῦμα*—he did not mind borrowing from “the *Shepherd* of depraved people”!<sup>55</sup> The same holds true for the angelomorphic Pneumatology of Clement of Alexandria.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, it is important to note that the binitarianism observed by scholars of early Christianity coexists with the repeated invocation of trinitarian formulas. In the words of H. E. W. Turner,

If, however, there is a persistent tendency in the early centuries to interpret the Christian doctrine of the Godhead in a bi-personal rather than in a tri-personal manner . . . [t]here is no reason to believe that those who worked normally with a Binitarian phrasing in their theology were other than Trinitarian in their religion. There is no trace, for example, of an alternative Twofold Baptismal Formula. . . . Christians lived Trinitarianly before the doctrine of the Trinity began to be thought out conceptually.<sup>57</sup>

The abundant occurrence, in the *Shepherd*, Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and Aphrahat, of trinitarian formulas drawn from the New Testament, catechetical instruction, baptismal rite, the Eucharist, or the blessing of food, is well-known and not disputed in scholarship. What I think needs to be questioned is the tendency to dismiss them as “mere formulas” of received tradition, which would be irrelevant to the thought of this or that pre-Nicene writer. The implied separability and opposition of “doctrine”, “liturgy”, and “the inner life” simply do not characterize any segment within the broad spectrum of second-century Christianity.

### *Conclusions*

A survey of past and present uses of “binitarian monotheism” reveals that there are at least two quite distinct uses of this term, developed in distinct scholarly contexts, each informed by specific theological presuppositions, and assuming specific theological agendas. An evident doctrinal and methodological discrepancy exists between the early Christian phenomenon termed “binitarianism” and its scholarly descriptions.

Doctrinally speaking, the problem pertains to the theoretical model for thinking God as Trinity that continues to be assumed as normative in scholarship on early Christian binitarianism. To a large extent, we are dealing with a faulty reading of Cappadocian triadology, which has only recently begun to be addressed. From a methodological perspective, the problem arises from the discontinuity between the implied readers of much of early Christian literature, and the actual readers in academia. The texts that exemplify early Christian binitarianism typically claim to be rooted in a pneumatic religious experience that the readers are exhorted to emulate beginning with

the very act of reading. When this mystagogical element is set aside—a matter of professional necessity, because a scholarly reading is by definition one that maintains a critical distance to the text—the ancient writers are often found to lack explicit references to the Holy Spirit, and are thus labeled "binitarian".

It is important to remind ourselves that "binitarianism", "Spirit Christology", or "angelomorphic Pneumatology" are more reflective of our own difficulties with the theological language of certain early Christian texts than of the theological reality signified by that language. These terms are not meant as descriptions of the divine, but rather as an aid to understand how an author or a text chooses to speak about things divine.

It is also important to remind ourselves that early Christians view doctrine as divine revelation, dispensed pedagogically by God in order to be appropriated mystagogically. More precisely, the texts claim the function of spiritual pedagogy, and assume the reader's response in the form of a mystagogical appropriation of the text. This notion, generally characteristic of Gregory Nazianzen's thought,<sup>58</sup> is precisely what underlies the famous passage of *Orat.* 31.25–27, with its discussion of the gradual revelation of the Father, then also of the Son, and finally of the Spirit. As Beeley notes, this oft-cited passage is just as often misinterpreted by readers who do not understand it as reworking the Origenian mystagogical framework<sup>59</sup>.

A text like the *Shepherd of Hermas* aims at drawing the reader into reenacting the same type of dynamic message-appropriation which it narrates. Again and again we see that with Hermas' spiritual development his perception of celestial realities and his ability to comprehend their meaning also improve<sup>60</sup>. The *Shepherd's* own solution to solving the theological puzzles it sets before the reader is contained in the dialogue between Hermas and the *angelus interpres*: "Sir, I do not see the meaning of these similitudes, nor am I able to comprehend them, *unless you explain them to me*" (*Herm. Sim.* 5.3.1).

This solution, of course, is of no use to the scholarly, critical, reading of the *Shepherd*, which is defined precisely as non-involved, non-mystagogical. Admitting that one cannot understand the Christology and Pneumatology of the *Shepherd* unless one becomes existentially involved in the text, undergoes a conversion to the Lord, exercises oneself ascetically, becomes immersed in the church's *leitourgia* and *diakonia*, and gradually learns theology by illumination, is not what the guild of patristic scholars is set up to do. Let me then return to the arena of scholarship.

I have expressed my dissatisfaction with the current use of "binitarianism", "Spirit Christology", and "angelomorphic Pneumatology" in the field of Early Christian Studies. The numerous examples of expired and sometimes embarrassing terms, once hailed for their power to illuminate and guide the scholarly quest—e.g., "late Judaism", "early Catholicism", "Pharisaic legalism", "Jewish Christianity", "Gnosticism", "semi-Pelagianism", "semi-Arianism", "Messalianism"—is a reminder that all such concepts have only

relative utility and a limited lifespan. Scholars create concepts in order to grasp and render intelligible their objects of study; these are by necessity imperfect lenses: even as they bring into focus certain phenomena, they necessarily overlook others, and are perhaps distorting the overall picture to a certain degree.

Despite the concerns I have voiced in this article, I think that, at the current state of scholarship, the categories of angelomorphic Pneumatology, Spirit Christology, and binitarianism are heuristic devices still useful in our attempt to understand early Christian discourse. Until students of early Christianity forge concepts that allow for a better grasp and a more nuanced description of the phenomena under discussion, I propose that we restrict ourselves to the adjectival use of “binitarian” (e.g., “binitarian tendency”, “binitarian framework”), so as to avoid the inevitable yet indefensible reification into “early Christian binitarianism”<sup>61</sup>. Evidently, this proposal is meant only as a temporary solution. The very fact that the use of these scholarly concepts should be regulated by an ever growing apparatus of nuanced definitions, caveats, and clarifications, signals the need for a paradigm shift. Sooner or later the research paradigm of the new history-of-religions school will collapse under the weight of accumulated “anomalies”, and a new paradigm will allow us to understand a bit more, a bit better. I can think of no better goal for my article than to hasten that day.

#### NOTES

- 1 See Jarl E. Fossum, “The New *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*: The Quest for Jewish Christology”, *SBLSP* 1991, ed. E. Lovering (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991), pp. 638–646. See also the discussion in Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), pp. 11–13.
- 2 Gilles Quispel, *Gnostic Studies* (2 vols; Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut in het Nabije Oosten, 1974), vol. 1, p. 220.
- 3 Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), pp. 244–245, 263.
- 4 Fossum, “Gen. 1:26 and 2:7 in Judaism, Samaritanism and Gnosticism”, *JSJ* 16 (1985), pp. 202–239, at p. 234.
- 5 A collection of relevant articles is found in J. R. Davila et al. (eds), *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (JSJSup 63; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999). See also Quispel, “Der gnostische Anthropos und die jüdische Tradition”, in *Gnostic Studies* vol. 1, pp. 173–195; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, passim; Fossum, “Gen. 1:26 and 2:7”; Paul A. Rainbow, “Jewish Monotheism as the Matrix for New Testament Christology: A Review Article”, *NovT* 33 (1991), pp. 78–91; idem, “Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?” *JJS* 42 (1991), pp. 1–15.
- 6 “Now Callistus brought forward Zephyrinus himself, and induced him publicly to avow the following sentiments: ‘I know that there is one God, Jesus Christ; nor except Him do I know any other that is begotten and amenable to suffering’ . . . And we, becoming aware of his sentiments, did not give place to him, but reproved and withstood him for the truth’s sake. And he hurried headlong into folly . . . and called us ‘ditheists’ (διθεοῦς)” (*Refut.* 9.11.3); “This Callistus, not only on account of his publicly saying in the way of reproach to us, ‘You are ditheists (δίθεοί ἐστε)’, but also on account of his being frequently accused by Sabellius, as one that had transgressed his first faith, devised some such heresy as the following. Callistus alleges that the Logos Himself is Son, and that Himself is Father; and that though

denominated by a different title, yet that in reality He is one indivisible spirit. And he maintains that the Father is not one person and the Son another, but that they are one and the same; and that all things are full of the Divine Spirit, both those above and those below. And he affirms that the Spirit, which became incarnate in the virgin, is not different from the Father, but one and the same. . . . For, says (Callistus), 'I will not profess belief in two Gods, Father and Son, but in one'" (*Refut.* 9.12.16); "whereas He was visible formerly to Himself alone, and invisible to the world which is made, He makes Him visible in order that the world might see Him in His manifestation, and be capable of being saved. And thus there appeared another beside Himself. But when I say 'another', I do not mean that there are two Gods, but that it is only as light of light, or as water from a fountain, or as a ray from the sun. For there is but one power, which is from the All, and the Father is the All, from whom cometh this Power, the Word. . . . If, then, the Word was with God, and was also God, what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not indeed speak of two Gods, but of one, yet of two persons (πρόσωπα)" (*Noet.* 10–11, 14).

7 Eusebius, *Eccl. theol.* 2.19; 2.7.2.

8 E.g., *Dialogue Between an Orthodox and a Barlaamite*, chaps. 9; 1415 (English trans. by R. Ferweda: *Saint Gregory Palamas: Dialogue Between an Orthodox and a Barlaamite* [Binghamton, NY: Global Publications/ CEMERS, 1999], pp. 56–60. The extrapolation from either the Palamite or the Barlaamite position to "ditheism" is obviously strained. It is not the purpose of this article, however, to discuss the biblical and patristic development of the essence-energy distinction, the Palamite dossier, or the polemical engagement between Roman Catholic scholars of the pre-Vatican II era and the so-called Neo-Palamite direction in Eastern Orthodox theology. Of the abundant scholarly treatments of these topics suffice it to note the following: Vladimir Lossky, *The Vision of God* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983 [1948]); Georges Florovsky, "St Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers", *GOTr* 5 (1959), pp. 119–131; Hildegard Schaefer, "Die Christianisierung der Aristotelischen Logik in der byzantinischen Theologie repräsentiert durch Johannes von Damaskus (ca. 750) und Gregor Palamas (ca. 1359)", *Theologia* 33 (1962), pp. 1–21; Jürgen Kuhlmann, *Die Taten des einfachen Gottes: Eine römisch-katholische Stellungnahme zum Palamismus* (Würzburg: Augustinus, 1968); André de Halleux, "Palamisme et tradition", *Ir* 48 (1975), pp. 479–493; Christos Yannaras, "The Distinction Between Essence and Energies and Its Importance for Theology", *SVTQ* 19 (1975), pp. 232–245; Rowan Williams, "The Philosophical Structures of Palamism", *ECR* 9 (1977), pp. 27–44; Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997); A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); idem, "The Concept of the Divine Energies", *Philosophy and Theology* 18 (2006), pp. 93–120; idem, "The Divine Energies in the New Testament", *SVTQ* 50 (2006), pp. 189–223; Giulio Maspero, *Trinity and Man: Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007), pp. 45–52; Alexis Torrance, "Precedents for Palamas' Essence-Energies Theology in the Cappadocian Fathers," *VC* 63 (2009), pp. 47–70, esp. pp. 64–65; Jean-Calude Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène* (Paris: Cerf, 2010).

9 In fact some authors use "ditheism" interchangeably with "binitarianism". See, for instance, Ioan-Petru Culianu, "Les anges des peuples et la question des origines du dualisme gnostique" in J. Ries, Y. Janssens, J.-M. Sevrin (eds), *Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique: Actes du Colloque de Louvain-la-Neuve, 11–14 mars 1980* (Leuven: Institut Orientaliste de l'Université Catholique de Louvain, 1982), pp. 131, 139.

10 Friedrich Loofs, "Christologie, Kirchenlehre", *RE* 4 (3rd ed.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1898), pp. 16–56, p. 26.

11 Loofs, "Hilarius von Poitiers", *RE* 8 (3rd ed.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1900), pp. 57–67; idem, "Marcellus von Ancyra", *RE* 12 (3rd ed.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905), pp. 259–265, esp. p. 264 (with reference to Phoebadius and Hillary of Poitiers); p. 265 (with reference to the *Shepherd of Hermas*); idem, "Die Trinitätslehre Marcell's von Ancyra und ihr Verhältnis zur älteren Tradition", *SPAW* 1902, pp. 764–781, repr. in Loofs, *Patristica: Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Alten Kirche*, ed. H. C. Brennecke and J. Ulrich (Berlin / New York: De Gruyter, 1999), pp. 123–140; idem, "Das Glaubensbekenntnis der Homousianer von Serdika", *AAWB* 1909, pp. 1013–1022, repr. in Loofs, *Patristica*, pp. 189–223; idem, *Theophilus von Antiochien "Adversus*

- Marcionem" und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1930), esp. pp. 101–210, p. 278 n. 4, pp. 257–280.
- 12 While still absent from the third edition of Adolph Harnack's *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, in 1894, "Binitarismus" and "Binitarier" are used as technical terms in the fourth edition of 1909.
  - 13 See, in this respect, Loofs, *Theophilus*, pp. 114–205; Wilhelm Macholz, *Spuren binitarischer Denkweise im Abendlande seit Tertullian* (Jena: Kämpfe, 1902); H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth: A Study in the Relations between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church* (London: Mowbray & Co., 1954), pp. 133–136; Raniero Cantalamessa, *L'omelia in S. Pascha dello Pseudo-Ippolito di Roma: Ricerche sulla teologia dell'Asia Minore nella seconda metà del II secolo* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1967), pp. 171–185; H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (3rd rev. ed.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 177–256; Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 26, 53; Simonetti, "Note"; Paul McGuckin, "Spirit Christology: Lactantius and His Sources", *HeyJ* 24 (1983), pp. 141–148; Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 155–156; Alan Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension Before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 208, 214, 252.
  - 14 Loofs, "Christologie", pp. 26–27.
  - 15 F. C. Baur, *Die christliche Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Tübingen: Osiander, 1841), vol. 1, pp. 133–137, 163–186; Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. N. Buchanan (4 vols; New York: Dover, 1961), vol. 1, pp. 190–199, 328–331; vol. 2, pp. 207–209.
  - 16 Joseph T. Lienhard, Review of Loofs, *Patristica*, in *J ECS* 8 (2000), p. 607.
  - 17 The German translation from a few decades later makes the purpose of the book even clearer: *Versuch über den Platonismus der Kirchenväter, Oder Untersuchung über den Einfluss der platonischen Philosophie in den ersten Jahrhunderten*.
  - 18 Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 17.
  - 19 Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, p. 16.
  - 20 Theodor Zahn, *Marcellus von Ancyra: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Theologie* (Gotha: Berthes, 1867), p. 228; Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 2, p. 209; E. R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Jena: Frommannsche Buchhandlung, 1923), p. 186: "Doctrine of the Trinity Justin had none. . . . The Logos was divine, but in the second place; the Holy Spirit was worthy of worship, but in the third place. Such words are entirely incompatible with a doctrine of the Trinity". Cf. Leslie W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 105: "Justin had no real doctrine of the Trinity", because his statement about Father, Son, and Spirit are "the language of Christian experience rather than theological reflection". Other scholars prefer to speak of a "rudimentary" theology of the Trinity: Charles Munier, *L'Apologie de Saint Justin philosophe et martyr* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1994), p. 109. For similar positions, see José P. Martín, *El Espíritu Santo en los orígenes del Cristianismo: Estudio sobre I Clemente, Ignacio, II Clemente y Justino Martir* (Zürich: PAS Verlag, 1971), pp. 253–254; Santos Sabugal, "El vocabulario pneumatológico en la obra de S. Justino y sus implicaciones teológicas", *Aug* 13 (1973), pp. 459–467, at p. 467.
  - 21 Hurtado (*Lord Jesus Christ*, pp. 4, 7, 2) stresses the idea that "the origins of cultic veneration of Jesus have to be pushed back into the first two decades of the Christian movement" and that the high Christology implied by this early Christian binitarianism "began amazingly early", "astonishingly early", "phenomenally early". The later difficulty of articulating a trinitarian monotheistic doctrine was therefore not the result of Hellenization, and not the fabrication of second-century writers like Justin; it was rather "forced upon them by the earnest convictions and devotional practice of believers from the earliest observable years of the Christian movement" (Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, p. 651).
  - 22 Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, p. 600.
  - 23 Segal, "Two Powers in Heaven" and Early Christian Trinitarian Thinking", in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (eds), *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 73–95.
  - 24 Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, p. 651 (emphasis added).

- 25 All references are to the following English edition: Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. J. Donceel, with an introduction, index, and glossary by C. M. LaCugna (New York, NY: Crossroad Herder, 1999), pp. 17, 21, 17, 10.
- 26 John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), p. 174.
- 27 Behr, *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), vol. 1, p. 7.
- 28 Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (Leiden/New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 174.
- 29 Revered as "Gregory the Theologian", his writings are translated from Greek into all languages of the Christian commonwealth—Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Slavonic—and are abundantly annotated and commented. Gregory's homilies, the most copied of all Byzantine manuscripts after the Scriptures, were recited on Sundays and feast days over the course of the liturgical year, used in classroom exercises, and eventually "cited, plagiarized, and plundered thousands of times" in treatises and commentaries of all kinds, as well as in poetic compositions that would eventually become the normative and generally received hymnography of Byzantine Christianity. See Jean Noret, "Grégoire de Nazianze, l'auteur le plus cité, après la Bible, dans la littérature ecclésiastique byzantine", in Jean Mossay (ed), *II. Symposium Nazianzenum 2* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1983), pp. 259–266, esp. 264–265; Friedrich Lefherz, *Studien zu Gregor von Nazianz: Mythologie, Überlieferung, Scholiasten* (Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1958), pp. 111–147, 237–257; Leslie Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 285; George Galavaris, *The Illustrations of the Liturgical Homilies of Gregory Nazianzenus* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 9–12; Peter Karavites, "Gregory Nazianzinos and Byzantine Hymnography", *JHS* 113 (1993), pp. 81–98.
- 30 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* 31.13. English trans. by L. Wickham in *St Gregory of Nazianzus, On God and on Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), p. 127.
- 31 Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 346.
- 32 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* 31.33; 1.7; 22.12. As noted by Michel R. Barnes (*The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology* [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001], p. 298), Nazianzen's use of "power" in *Orat.* 31 is similar to that of Gregory of Nyssa in *On the Holy Trinity*.
- 33 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* 31.14 (*On God and on Christ*, p. 127). Much of the scholarly analysis of this passage focuses on the issue of divine causality. For a comprehensive survey of the main positions, see Christopher Beeley, "Divine Causality and the Monarchy of God in Gregory of Nazianzus," *HTR* 100 (2007), pp. 199–214. Beeley's own judgment, with which I agree entirely, is that "to us there is One God, for the divinity is one" in *Orat.* 31.14 should be read in reference to the Father. As Beeley notes ("Divine Causality", p. 211), "the sentence is effectively a paraphrase of the first sentence of *Oration* 20.7, where Gregory first discusses the monarchy of the Father at length: 'There is one God because the Son and the Spirit are referred back to a single cause'. As Gregory explains in the same passage, God the Father is the source and cause that preserves the divine unity".
- 34 Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, p. 347; John Behr, *The Nicene Faith* (Scarsdale, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), vol. 2, p. 356.
- 35 Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (Oxford/ New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 207.
- 36 Although, as Segal aptly notes, "from the point of view of the rabbis, all Christians seem to be 'two powers' sectarians; but from the point of view of orthodoxy, only those who incline in the direction of Origen and Eusebius are" (Segal, "'Two Powers in Heaven' and Early Christian Trinitarian Thinking", p. 94).
- 37 I have argued along these lines in a series of articles and, most recently in a monograph: Bogdan G. Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses* (VCSup 95; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009). Despite the sole reference to Clement of Alexandria in the title, this book makes the same argument in reference to the book of Revelation, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Justin Martyr, and Aphrahat.

- 38 Introduced and insisted upon by Jean Daniélou (*The Theology of Jewish Christianity* [French ed. 1958; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964], pp. 127–131) and, especially, by Christian Oeyen (“Eine frühchristliche Engelpneumatologie bei Klemens von Alexandria”, *IKZ* 55 [1965], pp. 102–120; 56 [1966], pp. 27–47), angelomorphic pneumatology was discussed briefly by Charles Gieschen (*Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998], pp. 6, 114–119) and Mehrdad Fatehi (*The Spirit’s Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul* [WUNT 128; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], pp. 133–137). After John Levison published his research on “the angelic spirit in early Judaism” (Levison, “The Angelic Spirit in Early Judaism”, *SBLSP* 34 [1995], pp. 464–493; idem, *The Spirit in First Century Judaism* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997]) and invited the scholarly community to use his work as a suitable foundation for similar studies of pre-Nicene writings, more substantial treatments followed in both New Testament and early Christian studies.
- 39 G. Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1956), p. 213.
- 40 Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.16.142–143; *Excerpta* 10, 11, 27; *Ecolgae* 56, 57. For a synthetic presentation of the *protoclists*, see Alain Le Boulluec, *Commentaire*, in *Clément d’Alexandrie: Stromate V, tome 2* (SC 279; Paris: Cerf, 1981), p. 143.
- 41 Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.12.87.
- 42 Neither “angelomorphic Christology” nor “angelomorphic Pneumatology” implies the identification of Christ or the Holy Spirit with “angels”. In my book (*Angelomorphic Pneumatology*, noted above), I follow Crispin Fletcher-Louis who argues that the term “angelomorphic” is to be used “wherever there are signs that an individual or community possesses specifically angelic characteristics or status, though for whom identity cannot be reduced to that of an angel” (Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, pp. 14–15; similarly Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 4, 349). The virtue of this definition—and the reason for my substituting the term “angelomorphic Pneumatology” for Levison’s “angelic Spirit”—is that it signals the use of angelic *characteristics* in descriptions of God or humans, while not necessarily implying that either are angels *stricto sensu*.
- 43 Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, pp. 180–204; idem, “Religious Experience and Religious Innovation in the New Testament”, *JR* 80 (2000), pp. 183–205.
- 44 Irenaeus’ catechetical work is surely echoing older traditions, and Origen is explicit about his setting forth the oral doctrine of a Jewish-Christian teacher. For a discussion of these passages, see Kretschmar, *Trinitätstheologie*, pp. 64–67, 73; Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964 [1958]), pp. 134–140. See also, for connections with Philo, Emmanuel Lanne, “Chérubim et séraphim: Essai d’interprétation du chap. X de la *Démonstration* de s. Irénée,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 43 (1955), pp. 524–535.
- 45 *Asc. Isa.* 8:18; 9:27–40 (original in CCSA vol. 7, pp. 400–403, 412–419; English trans. in *OTP* vol. 2, pp. 169, 171–172). For the pneumatology of this writing, see the older research of Kretschmar and Gedaliahu Stroumsa (“Le couple de l’ange et de l’Esprit: Traditions juives et chrétiennes,” *RB* 88 [1981], pp. 42–61, esp. 42–47), as well as the more recent study by Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “The Holy Spirit in the Ascension of Isaiah,” *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins: Essays in Honor of James D. G. Dunn*, ed. G. N. Stanton, B. W. Longenecker, and S. C. Barton, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), pp. 308–320.
- 46 Irenaeus, *Epid.* 10, English trans. by John Behr in *Irenaeus of Lyons: On the Apostolic Preaching* (Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), p. 46.
- 47 Origen, *De principiis* 1.3.4.
- 48 Barnard, *Justin*, p. 106. Cf. Munier, *L’Apologie*, pp. 109–110: “le christomonisme instauré par Justin tend inévitablement à oculter non seulement le rôle prophétique du l’Esprit-Saint . . . mais aussi son action même dans l’Eglise . . .”. See also A. Benoit, *Le baptême chrétien au second siècle: la théologie des pères* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), p. 171.
- 49 Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 61.1. Original in Philippe Bobichon, ed. and trans., *Justin Martyr: Dialogue avec Tryphon* (2 vols.; Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2003), vol. 1, p. 346; English trans. by Thomas B. Falls, revised by Thomas P. Halton in Michael Slusser, ed., *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), pp. 93–94.

- 50 Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 179, 226–227. See Beeley's excellent discussion on pp. 224–227.
- 51 Leslie W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 106; André Wartelle, ed. and trans., *Saint Justin: Apologies* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1987), p. 62. Similarly, André Benoît, *Le baptême chrétien au second siècle: la théologie des pères* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), p. 171; Charles Munier, *L'Apologie de Saint Justin Philosophy et Martyr* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1994), p. 109–110.
- 52 Theodor Zahn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur 3: Supplementum Clementinum* (Erlangen: Andreas Deichert, 1884), p. 98; Kretschmar, *Trinitätstheologie*, p. 63; W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), p. 264; Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Gottes Geist und der Mensch: Studien zur frühchristlichen Pneumatologie* (Munich: Kaiser, 1972), p. 83. See also the more recent verdict passed by Henning Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist und Weltseele: das Problem der dritten Hypostase bei Origenes, Plotin und ihren Vorläufern* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), p. 123: "Klemens hat explizit den Heiligen Geist weder in seiner individuellen Substanz begriffen, noch seinen metaphysischen Status auch nur ansatzweise bestimmt. Damit fehlen aber auch die entscheidenden Voraussetzungen, die es erlauben würden, im klementinischen Verständnis des Heiligen Geistes den Ansatz zum Begriff einer dritten göttlichen Hypostase zu sehen".
- 53 Norbert Brox, *Der Hirt des Hermas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1991), p. 328: "Wie H. solche Äusserungen in Rom publizieren konnte . . . bleibt ein Geheimnis"; Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), p. 180a: "it is strange that this immensely popular document of the early church was never condemned for christological heresy".
- 54 For a list of mostly positive references to the *Shepherd*, ranging from the second century to the late middle ages, see Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius I/1* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1958 [1893]), pp. 51–58; Brox, *Hirt des Hermas*, pp. 55–71.
- 55 Karl Adam, "Die Lehre von dem Heiligen Geiste bei Hermas und Tertullian," *TQ* 88 (1906), pp. 36–61; J. E. Morgan-Wynne, "The 'Delicacy' of the Spirit in the Shepherd of Hermas and in Tertullian," *StPatr* 21 (1989), pp. 154–157.
- 56 Writers such as Cyril of Alexandria and Maximus the Confessor praised him for his towering learning as "philosopher of philosophers," and Epiphanius of Salamis and Jerome saw in him a learned defender against heresies. By the ninth century, however, the opinion had changed, as one gathers from the harsh criticism leveled by Photius of Constantinople (*Cod.* 109–111). The Byzantine patriarch was especially scandalized by the "impieties", "fables", and "blasphemous nonsense" of some of Clement's writings. It is important to note, however, that Photius did not criticize Clement's pneumatology. See Bucur, *Angelo-morphic Pneumatology*, pp. 25–26.
- 57 Turner, *Pattern of Christian Truth*, pp. 134–135, 474.
- 58 As one reads repeatedly in Gregory's orations, the root of all theology is God's tremendous mystery revealed in Jesus Christ. Using biblical imagery, he likens it to an ascent into the inaccessible darkness of divine mystery, and compares the theologian with Moses ascending Sinai and entering the cloud of divine unknowing, which he identifies with the innermost recesses of the heart (*Orat.* 28.3); and, again, he compares the theological endeavor with access to the inaccessible holy of holies in the Temple. If theology is a matter of divine initiation, and theologians are, as he says, "friends and fellow-initiates" (*Orat.* 28.3), it is also meant to be converted into an effective mystagogy.
- 59 Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 169–173.
- 60 "The angel of repentance, he came to me and said, 'I wish to explain to you what the Holy Spirit that spoke with you in the form of the Church showed you, for that Spirit is the Son of God. For, as you were somewhat weak in the flesh, it was not explained to you by the angel. When, however, you were strengthened by the Spirit, and your strength was increased, so that you were able to see the angel also, then accordingly was the building of the tower shown you by the Church. In a noble and solemn manner did you see everything as if shown you by a virgin; but now you see [them] through the same Spirit as if shown by an angel. You must, however, learn everything from me with greater accuracy . . .'" (*Sim* 9.1.1, *ANF*; emphasis added).

- 61 See Reinhold Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1953), vol. 1, p. 144: "Der Binitarismus is also nicht als ein besonderer Gedankentypus neben dem Trinitarismus zu beurteilen. Er ist nur eine Abbreviatur". Cf. Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (4th ed.; Leipzig: Mohr, 1909), vol. 1, p. 215: "weil der Binitarianismus oft nur als eine Verkürzung ad hoc zu beurtheilen ist und weil dieselben Männer, die als Metaphysiker wie Binitarier erscheinen, als Geschichtstheologen zweifellos Trinitarier waren".