

them in a more unitary way, adding as well the theme of Christ's divine body, which does not occur in Melito.

Asia Minor in the second to fourth centuries was consequently the place of a decisive synthesis of two traditions—apocalypse and mystery—a synthesis that would come to dominate the liturgical life of the church until today. Pseudo-Hippolytus's *Π* witnesses to the application of this synthesis in the paschal celebration or, putting it differently, to a development of the paschal language toward this mystery-apocalyptic vocabulary. In addition, the homily may put in a new light such writings as Philo's *Questions and Answers on Exodus* and Melito's *Peri Pascha*, writings that can be envisaged as the roots of this application. With time, important debates of the church such as the anthropomorphic quarrel eliminated anthropomorphic tendencies, while the christological and pneumatological debates, along with more Greek rhetoric, led to the intricate paschal homilies of the famous Cappadocians, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa.

Pseudo-Hippolytus's homily is consequently important as a pool of testimonia; it displays an affluent terminological and ideological treasury for the Christian theology of the second, third, or perhaps even the early fourth century. The synthesis of Jewish apocalyptic images and Greek mystery terminology definitely witnesses to a period of syncretism, as well as to a Christian community in search of the language to express, and give shape to, its own identity.

THE DIVINE FACE
AND THE ANGELS OF THE FACE
*Jewish Apocalyptic Themes
in Early Christianity and Pneumatology*

BOGDAN G. BUCUR

6

The divine "Face" and the select group of angels conducting their liturgy before the divine throne are themes quite central to the apocalyptic literature of Second Temple Judaism.¹ Leaving aside the Mesopotamian roots

Several months after giving my paper at the First Pappas Conference, I discovered that some of its essential elements had been sketched out three decades earlier by Gilles Quispel ("Genius and Spirit" in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib*, ed. M. Krause [Leiden: Brill, 1975], 155–69). I take this opportunity to dedicate this essay to the memory of the recently departed master:

1. For a presentation of Jewish traditions centering on the vision of God's "Face" and "Glory" their Mesopotamian roots and later development from the Second Temple to later Rabbinic Judaism, see Friedrich Nötscher, "Das Angesicht Gottes schauen" nach biblischer und babylonischer Auffassung (1924; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969); C. L. Seow, "Face" and Jarl Fossum, "Glory," in *DDD*, 322–25, 348–52; Andrei Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, TSAJ 107 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); idem, "The Face as the Heavenly Counterpart of the Visionary in the Slavonic *Ladder of Jacob*," in *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture*, ed. C. A. Evans (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 59–76. For "angels of the Face" see *Jub.* 2.2, 18; 15.27; 31.14; *I Jud.* 25.2; *I Lev.* 3.5; *I QH* 6.13.

of both courtly and visionary language, the scriptural roots of this imagery are to be found in such throne-theophanies as Exodus 33:18–20, Ezekiel 1:26, and Isaiah 6:1–5. Here “God’s form remains hidden behind His light. The hidden *Kavod* (Glory) is revealed through this light, which serves as the luminous screen, ‘the face’ of this anthropomorphic extent . . . a radiant *façade* of His anthropomorphic form.”²

The prominence of these themes in the apocalyptic literature of Second Temple Judaism was only amplified with the emergence of Christianity. In the following pages I shall discuss some of the ways in which early Christian writers—whether so-called Jewish Christians,³ Valentinians, or members of the “great church,” writing in Greek, Latin, or Syriac—used these fundamental concepts as building blocks in the construction of their doctrines of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The Divine “Face” and the “Angels of the Face” in Clement of Alexandria⁴

Clement of Alexandria “Celestial Hierarchy”⁵

On the basis of a theological tradition inherited from primitive Jewish Christian circles, Clement furnishes, especially in his *Excerpta ex Theodoto* and *Elogae prophetae*, a detailed description of the spiritual universe,⁶

2. Andrei Orlov, “Ex 33 on God’s Face: A Lesson from the Enochic Tradition,” *SBLSP* 39 (2000): 135.

3. Throughout this essay, the term “Jewish Christian” will be taken in the sense described by Jean Daniélou in his classic work *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964). As long as the narrative of an early and radical parting of the ways between “Christians” and “Judaism” remains normative, despite its inability to explain a great deal of textual evidence from the first four centuries, the term “Jewish Christianity” remains useful as a description of “Christianity” itself. For more recent treatments of this problem, see the essays collected in *The Ways That Never Parted*, ed. A. H. Becker, and A. Y. Reed, *TSAL* 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

4. The Greek text is that of the GCS critical edition (*Clementis Alexandrini*, ed. O. Stählin, 1913). The Greek text is available in the Ante-Nicene Fathers collection, with slight modifications (indicated as such); references to the *Stromateis* indicate book, chapter, and section. The passages from the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, *Elogae prophetae*, and the *Adumbrationes* are my own translations.

5. For an expanded version of this section, see Bogdan G. Bucur, “The Other Clement: Cosmic Hierarchy and Interiorized Apocalypticism,” *VC* 60 (2006): 251–68.

6. Clement’s strictly hierarchical universe goes back to earlier tradition. See in this respect Paul Collomp, “Une source de Clément d’Alexandrie et des Homélie Pseudo-Clémentines,” *Revue Phil* 37 (1913): 19–46; Wilhelm Bousset, *Jüdisch-christlicher Schilbertrieb in Alexandria und Rom: Literarische Untersuchungen zu Philo und Clemens von Alexandria, Justin und Tertius* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915); Jean Daniélou, “Les traditions secrètes des Apôtres,” *Erzb* 31 (1962): 199–215. Despite the pertinent critique of some of Bousset’s conclusions (see Johannes Muck, *Untersuchungen*

This “celestial hierarchy”—if the anachronism is acceptable—features, in descending order, the Face, the seven angels “first created” (*protoktistoi*), the archangels, and finally the angels.⁷

For Clement, “the Face of God is the Son.”⁸ The first level of celestial entities contemplating the Face are the angels “first created” (*protoktistoi*). These *protoktists* are seven, but they are simultaneously characterized by unity and multiplicity. “Among the seven,” Clement explains, “there has not been given more to the one and less to the other; . . . [they] have received perfection from the beginning, at the first [moment of their] coming into being, from God through the Son.” Although distinct in number, the *protoktists* are equal, and have the same activity: “their liturgy,” says Clement, “is common and undivided.”⁹ They mark the turning point, where divine unity passes into multiplicity, and conversely, the multiplicity of the world is reassembled into the unity of the Logos.

The *protoktists* fulfill multiple functions: in relation to Christ, they present the prayers ascending from below; on the other hand, they function as “high priests” with regard to the archangels, just as the archangels are “high priests” to the angels.¹⁰ In their unceasing contemplation of the Face of God, they represent the model (*prokenteima*) of perfected souls. These *protoktists* are identified successively with the “seven eyes of the Lord” (*Zech.* 4:10; *Rev.* 5:6), the “angels of the little ones” (*Mat.* 18:10), the “thrones” (*Col.* 1:16).¹¹ Here we find a definite echo of the Jewish and Jewish-Christian traditions about the highest angelic company.¹²

über Clemens von Alexandria [Suttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933], 127–204), the thesis of a Jewish and Jewish-Christian literary source behind Clement remains solidly established (see Georg Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätslehre* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1956], 68n3).

7. The term “hierarchy” was coined centuries later by the anonymous Pseudo-Areopagite. Nevertheless, the multifaceted cosmos of apocalyptic writings such as the *Ascension of Isaiah*, 2 *Enoch*, or the *Epistula Apostolorum* can also be labeled “hierarchical.” Moreover, there are some surprising similarities between the Clementian and Dionysian “hierarchies” (see the brief note by Alexander Golitzin, in his *Et introibo ad altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Precursors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*, AV 59 [Thessalonica: Patristical Institute of Patristic Studies, 1994], 265).

8. *Excerpta* 10.6; 12.1. It is certainly true that “the image of the Son as the Father’s Face may have played a significant role in Valentinian theology” (April DeConick, “Heavenly Temple Traditions and Valentinian Worship: A Case for First-Century Christianity in the Second Century,” in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, ed. C. C. Newman, J. R. Davila, and G. S. Lewis, [JSup 63 [Leiden: Brill, 1999], 325). Nevertheless, the repeated occurrence of the same designation in Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 1.57; 1.124.4; *Strom.* 7.58) and Tertullian (*Adv. Prax.* 14) indicates that “Face” as a christological title was at least as popular in mainstream Christianity as it was in Valentinian tradition.

9. *Excerpta* 10.4; 11.4.

10. *Ibid.* 27.2; 10.6; 11.1.

11. *Strom.* 5.6.35; *Elogae* 57.1; *Excerpta* 10.

12. For the group of seven angels, see Ezek. 9:2–3; Tob. 12:15; 1 *En.* 20; 90.21; *Prayer of Joseph*. The notion of “first created” is important to the author of *Jubilees* (*Jub.* 2.2; 15.27). Among Christian texts, Revelation mentions seven spirits/angels before the divine throne (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6; 8:2), and

As I already mentioned, the divine "Face" is used as a christological designation. Quite naturally, then, Clement identifies the *prosopon* of Matthew 18:10, the *charakter* of Hebrews 1:3, and the *eikon* of Colossians 1:15 with the Son or Logos of God.¹³

The second element under discussion, the angels of the Face, occupies an area of confluence between Clement's angelology and pneumatology. The cosmological scheme described in *Stromateis* 5:6 or in the *Excerpta* features, in descending order, the Father, the Son, and the *protoclasts*; it seems to reserve no place for the Holy Spirit. Such is not the case, however. Following an older study by Christian Oeyen, which retains its exceptional value even today, I submit that Clement of Alexandria is heir to an archaic *Engelpneumatologie*, for which the seven *protoclasts* "are" the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

Clement's Theory of Prophetic Inspiration

Clement is aware of the two major functions traditionally ascribed to the Holy Spirit, namely the inspiration of Old Testament prophets and the indwelling of Christian believers.¹⁵ However, he often ascribes the same functions to the Logos, even while maintaining some role for the Holy Spirit. He affirms, for instance, that the Logos "tunes" the world—the great cosmos, as well as the human microcosm—through (or by means of) the Holy Spirit, (*hagio pneumatik; Prot. 1.5.3*). "The Logos through the Spirit": this expression is given a precise explanation in Clement's account of prophecy. According to *Eclogae* 51–52, prophecy occurs when the Logos moves the first rank of the *protoclasts*, and this movement is transmitted from one level of the angelic hierarchy down to the next. The lowest angelic rank, and, by consequence, the one closest to the human world, will transmit the "movement" to the prophet.¹⁶ Following the logic of the text, one could say

the *Shepherd of Hermas* knows of a group of seven consisting of the six "first created ones" (ἄρτοι κτισθέντες), who accompany the Son of God as their seventh (*Vis. 3.4.1; Sim. 5.5.3*). Among later Jewish writings, see *3 En. 10.2–6* ("eight great princes", *Pirké de Rabbi Eliezer* (4.23)).

13. *Strom. 7.58.3–6; Excerpta 19.4.*

14. Christian Oeyen, *Eine frühchristliche Engelpneumatologie bei Klement von Alexandria* (Bern: The Other Clement on Father, Son, and the Angelomorphic Spirit, VC 61 (2007): 381–413. In *Excerpta 24.2*, Clement affirms the perfect identity between the Paraclete working (ἐπεργῶν) in the church and the Paraclete formerly active (ἐπεργῶν-ἔν) in the prophets.

15. E.g., *Paed. 2.1.8; 2.2.30; 2.12.126, 129*. In *Excerpta 24.2*, Clement affirms the perfect identity between the Paraclete working (ἐπεργῶν) in the church and the Paraclete formerly active (ἐπεργῶν-ἔν) in the prophets.

16. "The heavens proclaim the glory of God [Ps. 18:2-LXX]. By 'heavens' are designated in manifold ways both the heavens pertaining to distance and cycle [= the sky], and the proximate operation [ἐπέγερτα πρὸς οὐρανὸν] of the first-created angels, which pertains to covenant. For the covenants were wrought [ἐνργήθησαν] by the visitation of angels, namely those upon Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. For moved by the Lord, the first-created angels worked in [ἐνργήσαντες] the angels that are close to the prophets, as they are telling the 'glory of God,' [namely] the covenants. But the works accomplished by the angels on earth also came about for 'the glory of God,' through the first-created

that the prophet represents the highest level in the human hierarchy. A few centuries later, the Pseudo-Areopagite will assign this position to the bishop. Clement, instead, seems much closer on this issue to the *Shepherd of Hermas* (*Mand. 11.9*), for whom the point of contact between the inspiring angel and the community of believers is the prophet, or to the book of Revelation, where the prophet is *twice* described as "a fellow servant" with the angels (Rev. 19:10; 22:8–9).¹⁷ I note, however, Clement's conviction, anticipatory of Pseudo-Dionysius, that "the grades . . . in Church, of bishop, presbyter and deacons, are imitations of the angelic glory."¹⁸

Through a sort of telescoping effect, the first mover—the Logos—is simultaneously far removed from the effect of prophecy and immediately present. This principle of "mediated immediacy" becomes evident when Clement says that Jude refers the action of a lower angel ("an angel near us") to a superior angelic entity, the archangel Michael;¹⁹ similarly, "Moses calls to the power of the angel Michael through an angel near to himself and of the lowest degree (*vicinum sibi et infimum*)."²⁰ Ultimately, the action of inspiration must be referred to the original mover, the Logos, since Clement also applies the outlined theory of angelic mediation to the prophetic call of Samuel (1 Sam. 3), where the text repeatedly mentions the Lord or the voice of the Lord.²¹

In this light it becomes clear how Clement understands the traditional statements about the Logos speaking to the prophets *hagio pneumatik*, as in *Protreptikos* 1.5.3, quoted above: Christ is "casting light, at sundry times and diverse manners, on those who believe . . . through the ministry of the *protoclasts* [*δια τῶν πρωτοκλιστῶν διακονίας*]" (*Strom. 5.6.35*), and the prophet experiences the presence and message of the Logos "channeled" as it were through the "energy" of the proximate angel.

angels. So [the following] are called 'heavens': in a primary sense, the Lord; but then also the first-created [angels]; and with them also the holy persons [that lived] before the Law, as well as the patriarchs, and Moses and the prophets, and finally the apostles" (*Eclogae 51–52*).

17. The statements about the angel being "a fellow servant" with the prophet may serve, on the one hand, to correct any angelolatric tendencies; on the other hand, however, "John's purpose was . . . perhaps to claim for his brothers a certain primacy in the affairs of churches" (Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963], 449).

18. *Strom. 7.13.107.*

19. "When the archangel Michael, disputing with the devil, was arguing over the body of Moses; this confirms the *Assumption of Moses*, 'Michael' here designates the one who argued with the devil through an angel close to us" (*Adumbrationes* in Jude 9).

20. *Adumbrationes* in 1 John 2:1. This principle of "mediated immediacy," by which Clement explains away biblical passages in which a higher angelic being (e.g., the archangel Michael) is said to interact with humans, instead of an angel of "lower" degree, is strikingly similar to how Pseudo-Dionysius will explain why Isa. 6:1 affirms that Isaiah was "initiated" by a seraph (*Celestial Hierarchy* 13.1, 300B).

21. *Adumbrationes* in 1 John 2:1. The same idea occurs in the *Stromateis* in a more veiled manner. See my analysis of *Strom. 6.3.34* in "Revisiting Oeyen," 401–2n74.

It is thereby made clear that the prophets conversed with Wisdom, and that there was in them the "Spirit of Christ," in the sense of "possession by Christ," and "subjection to Christ" (*secundum possessionem et subiectionem Christi*); for the Lord works through archangels and through angels that are close (*per . . . propinquos angelos*), who are called "the Spirit of Christ" (*qui Christi vocantur spiritus*). . . . He says, "Blessed are you, because there rests upon you that which is of his glory, and of God's honor and power, and who is His Spirit." This "his" is possessive, and designates the angelic spirit (*Hic possessivum est "eius" et angelicum spiritum significat*).²²

Once again, the "telescopic" view of the hierarchy is presupposed, so as to convey the presence of Christ through (*per*, presumably rendering *dia*) the work of the lowest angelic level.²³ The Spirit of Christ is treated, in a way that could hardly be more explicit, as a designation for angelic beings: "archangels and kindred angels . . . are called *Spirit of Christ*,"²⁴ "his Spirit" is "the angelic spirit." It is fitting to note at this point that Clement identifies the *protoclists* not only with various types of angels, but also with the "seven spirits resting on the rod that springs from the root of Jesse" in Isaiah 11:1–3, and "the head of the Spirit."²⁵ In other words, the seven *protoclists* also carry a definite pneumatological content.

Is there a tradition in early Christianity that is reworking Jewish apocalyptic traditions about the highest angelic company to speak about the Holy Spirit? The answer, I believe, is affirmative.

The Angels of the Face in Aphrahat the Persian Sage

Aphrahat's²⁶ *Demonstrations*, although written during the second quarter of the fourth century, are, by virtue of their noted "archaism" or "traditionalism," a unique treasure trove of older exegetical and doctrinal traditions. Indeed, unlike his younger contemporary Ephrem of Nisibe, Aphrahat can

22. *Adumbrationes* in 1 Per. 2:3; *Adumbrationes* in 1 Per. 4:14.

23. Oeyen (*Engelphneumatologie*, 27–28) and Wolf-Dieter Haenschel (*Gottes Geist und der Mensch: Studien zur frühchristlichen Pneumatologie* [München: Kaiser, 1972], 79) identify the "angelic propinquity" with the *protoclists*. This interpretation appears to miss half of Clement's intention: the prophetic inspiration is, indeed, worked out through the *protoclists*, who are "close" to the Son; yet the movement is further transmitted in the same way to the archangels, who are "close" to the *protoclists*, and the angels, who are "close" to the archangels. Finally, the lowest angelic rank is the last element in the chain of prophetic inspiration. This is, for Clement, the "spirit" that rests on the prophets.

24. *Spiritus Christi* could, in theory, be translated as a plural ("spirits of Christ"), but Clement is here expanding on 1 Per. 4:14, *τὸ ροῦ θεοῦ πνεύμα ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ἀνακατέβητα*.

25. *Strom.* 5.6.35; *Paed.* 3.12.87.

26. For details on Aphrahat, see the introductory studies by Marie-Joseph Pierre in *Aphrahat, "Les Exposes," SC 349* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1988), 33–199; and Peter Bruns, in *Aphrahat: Unterweissungen*, Fontes christiani 5.1 (New York and Freiburg: Herden, 1991), 35–71.

be described as "entirely traditional, that is, he transmits the teaching that he received, lays out the *testimonia* pertaining to each topic, in order to convince or reassure a reader whose intelligence functions according to this logic of faith."²⁷ Most important for my argument is that "there is next to nothing in his writings to suggest that he had much of any contact at all with . . . the earlier writings of the Greek Church Fathers."²⁸

The following quotes are drawn from Aphrahat's first and sixth *Demonstrations*:

And whatever man there is that receives the Spirit from the water (of baptism) and grieves it, it departs from him until he dies, and returns according to its nature to Christ, and accuses that man of having grieved it. . . . This is the Spirit, my beloved, that the Prophets received, and thus also have we received. And it is not at every time found with those that receive it, but sometimes it returns to Him that sent it, and sometimes it goes to him that receives it. Hearken to that which our Lord said, *Despise not one of these little ones that believe on Me, for their angels in heaven do always behold the face of My Father*. This Spirit then goes frequently and stands before God and beholds His face, and whosoever injures the temple in which it dwells, it will accuse him before God.²⁹

And definitely did He show concerning this stone:—*Lo! on this stone will I open seven eyes* (Zech. 3:9). And what then are the seven eyes that were opened on the stone? Clearly the Spirit of God that abode on Christ with seven operations, as Isaiah the Prophet said, *The Spirit of God shall rest and dwell upon Him*, (a spirit) of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and of courage, of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:2–3). These were the seven eyes that were opened upon the Stone, and these are the seven eyes of the Lord which look upon all the earth (Zech. 4:10).³⁰

Aphrahat argues here one of the axioms of his ascetic theory: the Holy Spirit departs from a sinful person, and goes to accuse that person before the throne of God. It is quite striking that the work of the Holy Spirit is presented in unmistakably angelic imagery (the Spirit "goes frequently"; stands before the divine throne, and beholds the Face of God) and supported by recourse to Matthew 18:10. If the two passages from the *Demonstrations* are

27. Pierre, "Introduction," in *Aphrahat*, 66. For the difference between Aphrahat and Ephrem on the issue of "traditionalism," see Robert Murray, "Some Rhetorical Patterns in Early Syriac Literature," in *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus*, ed. R. H. Fischer (Chicago: The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1977), 110.

28. Alexander Goltzitzin, "The Place of the Presence of God: Aphrahat of Persia's Portrait of the Christian Holy Man," in *ΣΥΝΑΞΙΣ ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΙΑΣ: Studies in Honor of Archimandrite Athanasios of Simonos Petra, Mount Athos* (Athens: Indikta, 2003), 401.

29. Aphrahat, *Dem.* 6.14–15. For the Syriac text, see J. Parisot, *Aphraatis Supplicis Persae Demonstrationes*, PS 1–2 (Paris, 1894, 1897). The English translation is that of J. Gwynn, in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers series.

30. Aphrahat, *Dem.* 1.9.

combined—and it is certainly legitimate to do so, given the common theme (the Holy Spirit), and the formal structure (evidence from the Scriptures for the activity of the Spirit)—it becomes apparent that Aphrahat uses the same cluster of biblical verses that we encountered earlier in Clement: “the seven eyes of the Lord” (Zech. 3:9; 4:10); “the seven gifts of the Spirit” (Isa. 11:2–3); and the “angels of the face” (Mat. 18:10). I submit, therefore, that, just as in the case of Clement, we have here an echo of the tradition about the highest angelic company, combined with a definite pneumatological content.

Yet the use of Matthew 18:10 as a pneumatological proof text should not be taken as evidence that Aphrahat himself consciously and actively promoted an angelomorphic pneumatology. It should be noted that this is neither the only way in which Aphrahat interprets Matthew 18:10,³¹ nor the only image he uses for the Holy Spirit.³² Moreover, it is quite obvious, from the way he writes, that Aphrahat does not see himself as proposing anything new or unusual. He is most likely transmitting an older tradition.

It is certain, however, that no direct literary connection exists between Aphrahat and Clement of Alexandria.³³ Quispel was convinced that the tradition behind both Clement and Aphrahat goes back to Jewish Christian missionaries “who brought the new religion to Mesopotamia, and were also ‘the founding fathers of the church in Alexandria.’”³⁴ If one were to speculate about a common source for the cluster of biblical passages and pneumatological exegesis of Matthew 18:10 that occurs in both authors, a possible candidate would be the source(s) used by Pseudo-Clement *Homily 17*.³⁵

The Seven Spirits in the Book of Revelation³⁶

In between Matthew 18:10 and Clement’s “elders,” perhaps at the same time as the Jewish apocalyptic *2 Enoch*, one finds the seven “angels of the face” in the canonical Apocalypse of John. Four times in this text (Rev. 1:4; 3:1;

31. See the simple quote in *Dm.* 2.20.

32. Aphrahat also views the Spirit as God’s “spouse,” as “mother” of the Son and of all creation, as “medicine,” and as the “bread” that constitutes the divine image imparted to Adam. For more details, see Wifrid Cramer, *Der Geist Gottes und des Menschen in frühchristlicher Theologie*, MBT 46 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1979), 59–85.

33. Among Greek patristic writings available in Syriac translation, “Hermas, Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen are conspicuous by their absence” (Sebastian F. Brock, “The Syriac Background to the World of Theodore of Tarsus,” in his volume *From Ephrem to Romanos Aldershot, Brookfield, Singapore, and Sydney: Ashgate Variorum*, 1999), 37.

34. Quispel, “Genius and Spirit,” 160, 164.

35. For details, see Bogdan G. Bucur, “Matt. 18:10 in Early Christology and Pneumatology: A Contribution to the Study of Matthean *Wirkungsgeschichte*,” *NovT* 49 (2007): 209–31.

36. For an expanded version of this section, see Bogdan G. Bucur, “Hierarchy, Prophecy, and the Angelomorphic Spirit: A Contribution to the Study of the Book of Revelation’s *Wirkungsgeschichte*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008): 173–94.

4:5; 5:6), one reads about “the seven spirits of the Lord.” The first of these references, which occurs in the opening blessing (Rev. 1:4–5), is notoriously difficult to understand.

Revelation 1:4 invokes “grace and peace” from God upon the recipient. The blessing seems to be given by three coordinated entities: God, the seven spirits, and Jesus Christ. Since the source of “grace and peace” can only be divine, the three must, in some way, stand for the divinity (cf. “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit” in 2 Cor. 13:13).³⁷ This is why it seems most likely that the mention of the “seven spirits” corresponds to the expected reference to the Holy Spirit. In other words, the author’s expression “seven spirits” would designate what the early church more often referred to as the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, the angelic traits of the seven spirits are quite obvious. Revelation brings together “the seven spirits before his throne” (Rev. 1:4) and “the seven angels before the throne” (Rev. 8:2) in Revelation 3:1, where we read of the one who “has” (*ho echon*) “the seven spirits and the seven stars.” “The seven stars” are explicitly said to represent “the seven angels” (Rev. 1:20). This well-defined group of seven—the seven stars, the seven angels, the seven spirits—is placed before the divine throne, clearly subordinated to Christ (seven eyes of the Lord, seven stars in his hand, seven horns of the Lamb), ever contemplating the divine Face, offering up the prayers mounting from below and passing on the illumination that descends from above. These are standard elements in the depiction of angelic intercession, contemplation, and service. The simplest solution is to admit that we have here symbolic references to the same reality, which the author conveyed by recourse to the language of angelic worship before the divine throne.

Patristic exegesis—as well as modern-day commentators—has outlined the following exegetical alternatives: (1) Revelation connects the seven spirits/eyes/lamps of the Lord (Zech. 3:9; 4:10) with the rest/tabernacle of the seven spiritual gifts (Isa. 11:2; Prov. 8:12–16); (2) Revelation connects the seven spirits/eyes/lamps of the Lord (Zech. 3:9; 4:10) with the seven angels of the presence (Tob. 12:15; 1 En. 90.20–21).³⁸ The exegetical impasse is evident. Patristic authors from the fifth century onward are overcautious, given the potentially dangerous character of the passage, and tend to appeal to the well-established tradition of combining Isaiah 11:1 and Zechariah

37. See also the list of passages illustrating Paul’s “soteriological trinitarianism” in Gordon Fee, “Christology and Pneumatology in Romans 8:9–11 and Elsewhere: Some Reflections on Paul as a Trinitarian” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays in the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. M. Turner and J. B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 329–30.

38. The first position is held by the vast majority of scholars, patristic and modern. The second is defended by Joseph Michl, *Die Engeltwörterlichkeiten in der Apokalypse des hl. Johannes* (Munich: Max Hueber, 1937), and David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC 52 (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 33–35.

3:9.³⁹ Modern exegetes tend to juxtapose the two solutions, rarely daring to eliminate either possibility.⁴⁰

I suggest that both solutions (equating the seven *protocists* either with the seven gifts of the Spirit, or with seven supreme angels) are partially correct, and can be fused by appealing to a new descriptive category: "angelomorphic pneumatology."

Angelic or Angelomorphic Pneumatology?

The following question imposes itself: is "holy spirit" a designation for the seven "angels of the Face," or is "seven *protocists*" a designation for the Holy Spirit? Briefly put: "angel" pneumatology or "pneuma" angelology?⁴¹

The angelic traits are undeniable. On the one hand, the seven spirits of Revelation and Clement's seven *protocists* are depicted before the divine throne, contemplating the divine Face, offering up the prayers mounting from below and passing on the illumination that descends from above. On the other hand, the pneumatological content is also quite clear: the *protocists* appear in instances where one would expect the Holy Spirit, they carry out functions usually associated with the Holy Spirit, and exegesis fuses the passages suggesting angelic beings (Zech. 3:9; 4:10; Matt. 18:10) with those implicitly identifying the seven as a "gift" of the Holy Spirit.

These observations amount to a distinction between "angelic" and "angelomorphic" pneumatology. Here I follow the convention of using the term "angelomorphic" to denote the angelic *characteristics* of an individual or community, whereas the latter's *identity* cannot be reduced to that of an angel or angels. Thus God or humans can be depicted in an "angelomorphic"

39. I rely on the fragments from patristic commentaries provided by Henry B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1909), 5–6, and Michl, *Engelvorstellungen*, 113–34. For the combination of Isa. 11:1 and Zech. 3:9, see Karl Schütz, *Isaías 11:2 (Die sieben Gaben des Heiligen Geistes) in den ersten vier christlichen Jahrhunderten* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1932), 34.

40. Anne (Revelation 1–5, 34), e.g., is exhaustive in his references but very reserved in advocating the identification between the seven spirits and the principal angels.

41. Far from being a Christian invention, the use of *πνεύμα* to designate an angelic being is widespread in pre- and post-exilic Judaism, witnessed by the LXX and authors of the diaspora, and also prominent at Qumran. See John Levinson, "The Angelic Spirit in Early Judaism," *SBLSP* 34 (1995): 464–93; idem, "The Prophetic Spirit as an Angel according to Philo," *HTR* 88 (1995): 189–207; idem, *The Spirit in First Century Judaism*, AGJU 29 (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: Brill, 1997); and Arthur E. Sekki, *The Meaning of Ruach at Qumran*, SBLDS 110 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 145–71. In the Old Testament, the *locus classicus* is Isa. 63:9–10, where the angel of the Lord is referred to as "holy spirit," in the New Testament, aside from the designation of evil angels as (impure) "spirits," the equivalence of "spirit" and "angel" is implicit in Heb. 12:9 ("Father of spirits"), and Acts 8:26, 29, 39, where Philip's guide is successively described as "angel of the Lord," "spirit," and "spirit of the Lord."

manner.⁴² The virtue of this definition is that it signals the use of angelic *characteristics* in descriptions of God or humans, while not necessarily implying that the latter are angels *stricto sensu*.⁴³ In other words, the seven spirits of Revelation, or Clement's *protocists*, or even "the angels of little ones" (according to the reading of Matt. 18:10 echoed by both Clement and Aphrahat) *are* the sevenfold Spirit in archaic "angelomorphic" language.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the ways in which the apocalyptic themes of the divine Face and the angels before the Face, inherited from Second Temple Judaism, were appropriated in early Christianity. I have limited myself to passages in the only canonical apocalypse, the book of Revelation, a Syriac writer, Aphrahat, characteristically inclined to preserve archaic traditions of Scripture exegesis and theology, and certain writings by Clement in which the Alexandrian master echoes the doctrines and practices of earlier Christian teachers.

These texts and writers illustrate a larger phenomenon in early Christianity: the apocalyptic themes of the divine Face and the angels of the Face, which were part of the matrix of Christian thought, are taken over and used in an effort to account for the Christian faith in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The resulting Christianity, and its correlative angelomorphic pneumatology, were both perfectly acceptable in the early centuries.

Face Christianity never became a major player in classic definitions of faith. Like "Name" Christianity, "Wisdom" Christianity, or "Glory" Christianity, once crucial categories in the age of Jewish Christianity, this concept went out of fashion, giving way to a more precise vocabulary shaped by the christological controversies of the third and fourth centuries. Angelomorphic pneumatology, however, and the associated exegesis of Matthew 18:10 illustrated by Clement and Aphrahat, became problematic with the advent of the Arian and Pneumatomachian confrontations, and were eventually discarded.⁴⁴ In a larger religio-historical perspective, the use of apocalyptic themes such as the divine Face and the angels of the Face as building blocks for an emerging Christian doctrine of Christ and the Holy Spirit illustrates a larger phenomenon, namely the indebtedness of pre-Nicene theology (and by reaction, also of later Christian thought) to the categories inherited from Jewish apocalyptic literature.

42. Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology, and Soteriology*, WUNT 2.94 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 14–15.

43. Cf. Danielou, *Jewish Christianity*, 118.

44. For the polemical counter-exegesis of Matt. 18:10 in the Cappadocians, see Bucur, "Matt. 18:10."

APOCALYPTIC THOUGHT IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

EDITED BY

ROBERT J. DALY, SJ

BakerAcademic
a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan



2009

Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity explores how early Christian understandings of apocalyptic writings and teachings are reflected in the theology, social practices, and institutions of the early church. Experts on patristic and Byzantine Christianity present substantial samplings of biblical interpretation, theology, and visual art from first-millennium Christianity, especially from the East, to demonstrate the depth and variety of meaning early believers found in Daniel, Revelation, and related writings.

"This treasure trove of essays on apocalyptic in the early church explores important aspects of the Apocalypse of John as well as a rich variety of apocalyptic and eschatological themes and motifs in art and literature up to the middle Byzantine period. The fifteen contributing authors represent the cream of contemporary scholars in apocalyptic, and their essays reflect a broad, deep, and impeccable scholarship that often breaks new ground."

—DAVID E. AUNE, Walter Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins,
University of Notre Dame

"This wonderful volume illustrates the prevalence of apocalyptic themes in early Christianity from the book of Revelation to the Byzantine period. The essays range over a vast amount of material, including not only the church fathers but also apocryphal writings and early Christian art. Much of this material is known only to experts and is here made available to a broader readership. This is a first-rate contribution to the history of both apocalypticism and early Christianity."

—JOHN J. COLLINS, Holmes Professor of Old Testament,
Yale University

"A much-needed, comprehensive, and rich study of the Apocalypse as it was read and imaged by early Christian thinkers and artists. This volume will be welcomed by anyone who wants to learn about the complex interpretations of the Bible's last—and most puzzling—book."

—ROBIN M. JENSEN, professor of the history of Christian art and worship,
Vanderbilt University

ROBERT J. DALY, SJ (DrTheol, Julius Maximilians Universität Würzburg), is professor emeritus at Boston College and chair of the Pappas Patristic Institute's board. He is the author, editor, or translator of many scholarly books and articles on the early development of doctrine, patristics, biblical theology, biblical ethics, and liturgical worship.

Cover Image: The Paracession of the Karye Dami,
Revelation of Saint John. Photo by Werner Forman
for Art Resource, NY

BakerAcademic
a division of Baker Publishing Group

Early Christianity
ISBN 978-0-8010-3627-9
9 117 808011036279
www.bakeracademic.com