

Bogdan Gabriel Bucur. *Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses*. Vigiliae Christianae, Supplements 95. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009, xxx + 238 pp., ISBN 978-90-04-17414-6, € 99.00 / US\$ 147.00 (hardback).

Over the past three years Bogdan Bucur has been informing the scholarly community about the importance of angelomorphism to the study of early Christian pneumatology. In *Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses* Bucur presents in a coherent whole a revised form of the individual arguments he has published in numerous articles. Aside from a minimal amount of restructuring and certain minor changes in content, the book comprises the material found in his doctoral dissertation (Marquette University, 2007), which postdates some of the articles.

Bucur desires to supplement the current understanding of early Christian pneumatology by bringing to the fore the existence of a common, yet underappreciated, strain of pneumatological reasoning that associated the Holy Spirit with angelic characteristics while not reducing the identity of the Spirit to that of an angel. Bucur's goal is not only to highlight this logic, which he calls "angelomorphic pneumatology," but also to show that it often occurs in concert with spirit Christology and a binitarian theological orientation. Moreover, the theological accounts that contain these features represent an early stage in the church's development of Trinitarian theology, namely the point at which the logical schemata by which authors sought to explain their understandings of the Triune God were unable to adequately support their Trinitarian confessions. This state of affairs almost always had a detrimental effect on the theology of the Holy Spirit, whose identity and/or activity often remained partially eclipsed by that of the Word.

Bucur's departure point for this undertaking is the work of John R. Levison on the place of the angelic Spirit in early Jewish thought (*SBLSP*, 1995; Brill, 1997). Levison articulated the need for similar investigations into the place of the angelic Spirit in early Christian thought, a call that was seconded shortly thereafter by Charles A. Gieschen in his own study of angelomorphic Christology (Brill, 1998). This need was briefly addressed by Mehrdad Fatehi's study of Pauline pneumatology (Mohr Siebeck, 2000), but had not yet been the proper subject of a monograph until this study by Bucur, who repeatedly calls attention to the early Jewish roots of angelomorphic pneumatology.

Clement of Alexandria serves as the entry point for Bucur's investigation into early Christian sources that feature the combination of angelomorphic pneumatology, spirit Christology, and a binitarian theological framework. Rather than focusing on the *Stromateis*, however, he contends that the surviving parts of Clement's *Hypotyposesis*, including the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, *Eclogae prophetae*, and *Adumbrationes*, are of the most value to the study of Clement's pneumatology. In this move he stands against Luis Ladaria, who minimized the importance of the *Hypotyposesis* to Clement's pneumatology in the only previous book-length work on Clement's theology of the Spirit (UPCM, 1980), and follows the oft-neglected work of Christian Oeyen (ESIKZ, 1966; *IKZ*, 1965/66; *StudPat*, 1972), whose studies on both Clement and Justin feature prominently in Bucur's thought.

Clement's cosmic hierarchy seems to leave no room for the Holy Spirit, it moves from the Father, to the Son/Logos who is the principle of all things, to the *protoctists*

(“first-created ones”) where multiplicity begins, down through the angelic hierarchy, to the prophets who hold the rank of the highest human beings. Oeyen argued, however, that the seven *protoctists*, in addition to being angelic beings, are a “plural designation of the sevenfold Holy Spirit” (59). Bucur offers a slightly different reading: Clement does not identify the *protoctists* with the Holy Spirit, but rather interprets them as an angelomorphic representation of the Holy Spirit. He emphasizes, though, that Clement does not just associate the seven highest angelic beings with the Spirit, but also associates the Logos with the Spirit – Clement’s angelomorphic pneumatology is accompanied by spirit Christology. Moreover, these two strains of logic do not stand separately, for Bucur shows that the relationship of the one “Spirit” (which is the Logos) to the seven first-created “spirits” (which represent the Holy Spirit) is one of unity and multiplicity. The Logos is the one Spirit who becomes multiform in the seven highest angelic spirits, the *protoctists*. This shift from unity to multiplicity is the means by which the Logos as the one principle of all things who is far removed from all things is able to act among, and even be present to, all things through the *protoctists* and the rest of the angelic hierarchy. Clement is not advocating an ontological identity between the Logos and the Spirit, rather the πνεῦμα is “the dynamic aspect of the Logos... [that] manifests itself in the work of angelic spirits” (79). Nevertheless, his logic blurs the line between the Logos and the Holy Spirit and reveals that Clement’s angelomorphic pneumatology and spirit Christology exist in a binitarian theological framework.

Bucur’s reading of Clement provides a sound explanation of the existence of Trinitarian confessional statements alongside an all-encompassing Logos theology that seems to leave little room for the identity and activity of the Holy Spirit. His argument receives significant support from his ancillary investigations into other authors that, in fact, constitute the majority of his monograph. The book of Revelation, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and Justin Martyr are sources that Clement knew well and therefore provide insight into the pneumatological traditions that he inherited from his “elders” and reworked in his own account. Aphrahat, the fourth century Syriac writer, obviously was not one of Clement’s sources, but his writings are relevant because they are widely recognized to contain traditional perspectives that grant insight into much earlier Syriac exegetical and doctrinal traditions. Aphrahat, then, serves as a control to Bucur’s consideration of Clement and his predecessors. Bucur successfully establishes the presence in each of these texts of an angelomorphic pneumatology existing in tandem with a spirit Christology and in a binitarian theological framework. When combined with similar findings by Georg Kretschmar, Guy Stroumsa, and Loren T. Stuckenbruck with regard to the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, the picture emerges of an early stage of theological reasoning in which the coexistence of a Trinitarian confession and binitarian logic was the norm – a stage in which angelomorphic pneumatology and spirit Christology played a significant role.

Angelomorphic Pneumatology will appeal to and benefit those who are interested in Second Temple Judaism, Christian Origins, Patristics, Syriac studies, the historical development of doctrine, angelology, Christology, and pneumatology. Its extensive notes make it an excellent point of entry into several of these fields of study for the novice, and its breadth of references (across languages and over time) make it a convenient resource for the established scholar as well. A detailed table of contents and thorough indices make the study very accessible. There is little to say negatively about this work. The

failure to provide page numbers for internal references is less than user-friendly. At times Bucur moves quickly through material that could receive a slightly more extended discussion, but one does not get the sense that he is avoiding issues so much as being concise. If the study feels a little repetitive toward the end because he is dealing with similar patterns of thought in several authors, it is the very similarity of thought in these authors that substantiates his claims. In the end, Bucur's conclusions resonate with my own reading of these texts and my own understanding of this period of Christian theology. *Angelomorphic Pneumatology* offers a compelling argument that is written clearly and simply – it was profitable to read and it is a pleasure to recommend.

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